Relationships between leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment in alternative Arab high schools in Israel

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Abstract. Alternative schools are selective in their nature and planned to provide "better" education than the public schools. Since the early 1990s, this model was introduced with the aim of improving the performance of public schools, and has become the mainstay of contemporary educational reforms. In order for alternative schools to fulfill their potential, however, they must also have effective leadership and high teacher commitment. Leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment are related. This study examined the relationships between leadership styles (LS), and teachers' organizational commitment (TOC) and various demographic variables in 10 alternative Arab high schools in northern Israel. The study sample included 307 teachers. Data was collected using the Multi-Factor Leadership and Teachers' Organizational Commitment questionnaires. Factor analysis was used to identify LS and TOC dimensions. Relationships between TOC and LS and demographic variables were tested in multiple regression models. Factor analysis identified two TOC dimensions (affective commitment and continuous commitment) and two LS dimensions (transformational leadership and transactional leadership). Affective commitment was positively related to transformational leadership, and negatively related to transactional leadership. Relationships were also found between affective commitment and marital status, employment status, and level of education. The findings suggest that to improve teachers' organizational commitment, principals in alternative schools should adopt a transformational leadership style.

Keywords: Alternative schools, Arab education, Israel, organizational commitment, transformational and transactional leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Alternative schools began, in part, as a reaction against traditionally centralized and hierarchical formal public educational models. They sought to improve educational processes and outcomes through child-centered models that restored administrators' and teachers' power and initiative to implement teaching methods and curriculum suited to the identities, needs and abilities of their students (Magadley and Amara, 2018). Alternative schools in Israel developed in the 1990s, with the aim of providing better education than the public schools. They were selective in their nature and charged annual tuition for student attendance to supplement the public education funding. Recent data from the Israel Ministry of Education indicate that alternative schools have made progress in improving student achievement (Ministry of Education, 2018). In order to reach their full potential, however, alternative schools must also have effective leadership and high teacher commitment. The aim of this

study was to identify the dimensions of organizational commitment and leadership style in the unique context of alternative Arab high schools in Israel. In addition, the study explored the relationships of the dimensions of organizational commitment to the dimensions of leadership styles, and to various demographic variables.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Successful organizations depend greatly on the quality of their leadership (Normianti and Suhaimi, 2019; Raji and Bhalla, 2019; Kurland et al., 2010; Sayadi, 2016; Yaakub and Ayob, 1993). Leadership is a combination of ability and knowledge in bringing a group of people together for a shared purpose and stimulating them into action with a view to realizing such this purpose (Zembat et al., 2010). According to Chen and Chen (2008), previous studies on leadership have identified different types of leadership styles that leaders adopt in managing organizations (Hirtz et al., 2007). Two major types of leadership styles identified are transformational leadership and transactional leadership.

Transformational leadership (TL) has been considered the most influential leadership theory over the past two decades (Ribeiro et al., 2018). Transformational leadership style is directed to the future, innovation, change, and reformation. Transformational leaders inspire high levels of motivation by providing a compelling vision and motivating followers to transcend their self-interests. They are charismatic leaders who influence organizational commitment by: a) promoting and modeling values related to goal accomplishment; b) emphasizing the relationship between employees' efforts and goal achievement; and, c) creating a greater degree of personal commitment on the part of both followers and leaders, to the extent that they exceed their expected performance (Normianti and Suhaimi 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2018; Miia et al., 2006; Sivanathan and Fekken, 2002; Carton et al., 2014). According to Burns (1978:20), transformational leaders '…engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality' (cited in Rost, 1991:164). They encourage their subordinates to prioritize the collective interest over individual interests as a way to achieve the organizational targets and the wellbeing of the group (Normianti and Suhaimi, 2019; Bass et al., 2008; Bass et al., 2003).

In contrast, transactional leaders keep the organization going by appealing to the lower order needs of their followers. They appeal to employees' self-interest, and motivate followers to expend greater effort in exchange for rewards that may be of a psychological, political or economic nature, such as praise, recognition, money, and/or status (Ribeiro et al., 2018; Burns, 1978; Oguz, 2010; Rost, 1991). In addition, transactional leaders closely monitor the movements of their followers and

penalize the individuals who deviate or under-perform (Haider and Adnan, 2010).

There is considerable research suggesting that transformational leadership is positively associated with organizational commitment in a variety of organizational settings and cultures (Ismail and Mydin, 2018; Khasawneh et al., 2012). It was found to be positively related to the effectiveness of the leader, the subordinate's effort, job satisfaction, and the subordinate's organizational commitment (Bennett, 2019; DeGroot et al., 2000). According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders are able to bring a deeper understanding and appreciation of input from each member, in addition to encouraging their followers to think critically and to seek new ways to approach their jobs. This charge to seek new ways to approach problems and challenges motivates followers to become more involved in their duties, resulting in an increase in the levels of satisfaction with their work and commitment to the organization.

Organizational commitment is a popularly researched component of employee attitudes that has several dimensions, of which we focus in this study on two of the dimensions most widely examined: affective commitment and continuance commitment (Gokyer, 2018; Bawuro et al., 2018; Meyer et al., 2002; Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001; Mowday et al., 1979; Porter et al., 1974; Chughtai and Zafar, 2006; Mowday et al., 1982). Affective commitment represents an employee's emotional attachment to the organization, identification with the goals and values of the organization, and dedication to the progress of the organization (Bennett, 2019; Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1997). Affective commitment has been found to be related to positive organizational outcomes such as job performance (Ribeiro et al., 2018; Chen and Chen, 2008; Yousef, 2000), employee satisfaction (Chughtai and Zafar, 2006; Meyer et al., 2002; Yousef, 2000), and low turnover (Angle and Perry, 1981; Meyer et al., 2002; Powell and Meyer, 2004). A meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment conducted by Meyer et al. (2002) found that affective commitment correlated negatively with withdrawal cognitions, employee turnover, absenteeism, and stress and work-family conflict. The meta-analysis also found that affective commitment has a strong positive relationship with both job performance and organizational citizenship behavior.

A second dimension is continuance organizational commitment, which represents the desire of an employee to remain a member of an organization because of awareness of the cost associated with leaving it (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). Thus, employees continue in the organization because they need to do so (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Continuance commitment is associated with what employees have provided for the organization in the past. In a reciprocal

manner, continuance commitment presents when employees feel that they will get benefits if they stay and they will incur costs if they leave. For example, employees may enjoy high pay and other benefits related to job seniority if they stay in their current organization, but such benefits may be lost if they move to another organization.

Thus, continuance commitment is the result of the side-bets and the perceived lack of choices for alternative employments outside the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Becker, 1960; Powell and Meyer, 2004; Yahaya and Ebramim, 2016). Meyer and Allen (1984) describe side-bets as anything valuable to employees, such as time, effort, or money that they have invested in the organization over time, that would be lost if the employees resigned from the organization. Powell and Meyer (2004) identified seven side-bets as significant antecedents of continuance commitment. The side-bets are "expectations of others, self-presentation concerns, impersonal bureaucratic arrangements, individual adjustment, non-work concerns, lack of alternatives, and satisfying conditions" (Powell and Meyer, 2004:165).

Leadership plays an important role in determining employees' commitment. Researchers have found that employees who are pleased with their leaders and feel that they are being treated with respect and are valued by their management feel more attachment to their organizations (Bushra *et al.*, 2011). Cooper (2003) asserts that continuance commitment is not desirable by leaders because they expect more than just the compliance from their employees. Leaders expect employees to be more committed in their job and to produce high-quality work in order to improve performance of the organization.

Emery and Barker (2007) found that transformational leadership is more strongly related to organizational commitment than transactional leadership. Transformational leaders are able to influence followers' organizational commitment by promoting higher levels of intrinsic value associated with goal accomplishment, emphasizing the linkages between follower effort and goal achievement, and creating a higher level of personal commitment on the part of the leader and followers to a common vision, mission, and organizational goals. Transformational leaders influence followers' organizational commitment by involving followers in decision-making processes and by inspiring loyalty, while recognizing and appreciating the different needs of each follower to develop his or her personal potential. By encouraging followers to seek new ways to approach problems and challenges, and identifying with followers' needs, transformational leaders are able to motivate their followers to get more involved in their work, resulting in higher levels of organizational commitment.

This view was supported by prior research that showed organizational commitment was higher for employees whose leaders encouraged participation in decision-

making, emphasized consideration, and were supportive and concerned for their followers' development (Mascarenhas *et al.*, 2018; Shila and Sevilla, 2015). Walumbwa *et al.* (2005) used data from China and India and found that transformational leadership was positively related to organizational commitment, and negatively related to job and work withdrawal. They also found that collective efficacy mediated the contribution of transformational leadership to job and work withdrawal and partially mediated the contribution of transformational leadership to organizational commitment and job satisfaction. This stream of research, however, has been very limited in Arab educational settings in Israel. Alternative schools were developed with the aim of restoring more agency, initiative and power to administrators and teachers (Magadley and Amara, 2018; Doll, 1979). As such, they provide an interesting context for examining the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' organizational commitment.

Objectives

The study was conducted in spring of 2016 and was based on a random sample of 307 teachers from 10 alternative Arab high schools in northern Israel. Its objectives were (1) to identify dimensions of teachers organizational commitment (TOC) and leadership style (LS) as they are perceived by a sample of teachers in alternative Arab high schools in Israel and (2) to examine the relationship between the dimensions of TOC and LS and relevant demographic variables (e.g., gender, job seniority, percent position, marital status, education level).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Instrumentation

A questionnaire was designed, consisting of three sections: 1) a measure of organizational commitment; 2) leadership styles and 3) selected demographic variables.

Organizational commitment (OC) was measured using a questionnaire based on Allen and Meyer (1990). The original scale contained 21 statements, and was slightly revised to better fit the school environment. LS was measured using a questionnaire based on the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X) (Bass and Avolion, 1990). A response to each statement was made on four-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4).

The study team advised the teachers that all information would remain confidential and that participation in the study was voluntary. The level of cooperation was very high, and all of the teachers

completed questionnaires.

Statistical analysis

The statistical methods used for processing the collected data were: (a) descriptive statistics, (b) factor analysis, and (c) multiple regression models. The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 21.0 for Windows.

Factor analysis was used to reduce the large number of individual items into related unities or dimensions and thus facilitate interpretation of the results (Vogt, 1993). Two criteria were used in order to determine the number of factors: (1) the eigenvalue of each factor should be equal to or greater than 1.0 (eigenvalue is the total amount of variance accounted for by a factor), and (2) the loading of each item in the factors should be greater than or equal to 0.4.

Multiple regression analysis is a powerful method of analyzing the contributions of two or more independent variables to one dependent variable. It is based on the assumption that behavior is generally a multivariate approach, and attempts, based on certain values of the independent values, to predict the value of the dependent value (Kerlinger, 1973; Vogt, 1993).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the distribution of the demographic characteristics. The majority of the teachers (58%) were male, and 84% were married. Over 60% were below the age of 40, and characterized themselves as religious. The majority of the sample had master's degrees, over 10 years job experience, and ≥4 years in seniority in their school. Nearly two-thirds had full-time positions, but only about one-quarter held any administrative responsibilities.

Table 2 depicts the results of factor analysis on the items of OC, rotated in the Varimax method. Using a loading >0.40 as the threshold for inclusion, the items were distributed between two primary factors: (1) affective commitment (AC) and (2) continuous commitment (CC). The two factors had an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 and accounted for 42% of the total item variance:

Factor 1 – Affective commitment indicates that teachers feel a strong emotional bonding with the school. This attachment makes them feel that the school's values, goals and objectives are their own, and they are highly committed to its progress and success.
Factor 2 - Continuous commitment focuses on the material instrumental link and the costs associated with leaving the school. Continuous commitment indicates that teachers continue working in the school because they do not want to lose the benefits it provides. They are

doubtful of being able to get another job with comparable benefits, and thus feel the need to remain in their current position.

Table 3 presents the results of factor analysis on the 36 items of LS, rotated in the Varimax option. Using a loading >0.40 as the threshold for inclusion. The items were distributed between two primary factors: (1) transformational leadership (2) transactional leadership. The two factors had an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 and accounted for 35% of the total item variance.

Factor 1, transformational leadership, consisted of 24 items associated with a value-based, charismatic and future-oriented orientation that also included individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation. Factor 2, transactional leadership, consisted of 8 items associated with a reactive orientation.

Table 4 contains the means, standard deviations and Cronbach alpha of teachers' organizational commitment, and transformational and transactional leadership factors. Table 4 shows that Arab teachers in alternative high schools have a high level of affective organizational commitment and less continuous commitment and consider their school principal's leadership style to be transformational rather than transactional.

Cronbach's alpha, which measures the internal reliability or consistency of the items in the factors (i.e. how much the items in an index are measuring the same thing), was computed. It was >0.70 for all factors, indicating that they were reliable in this study sample (Table 4).

TOC results in Table 4 show that teachers in alternative Arab schools had a higher mean level of affective commitment than continuous commitment (3.68 vs. 2.45, respectively, out of a range of 1 to 4). This suggests that teachers in alternative Arab schools identify with the goals and values of the organization and are dedicated to the school's progress. Table 4 also shows that transformational leadership emerged as the prevailing leadership style, with a mean score of 3.17, as compared to the mean score of 1.97 for transactional leadership, out of a range of 1 to 4. This indicates that teachers in alternative Arab schools in northern Israel viewed their principals as role models who demonstrated vision and high professional standards, and avoided the use of power either unnecessarily or for personal gain. The teachers perceived that leadership behaviors such as coaching and mentoring were used to motivate and support their work.

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between the TOC and the LS and demographic variables. Table 5 revealed positive relationships between teachers' affective organizational commitment and transformational leadership (t = 6.849, p < .000), but negative a relationship to transactional leadership (t = -7.424, p < .000). Furthermore, there were significant relationships between teachers' affective

Table 1. Demographic and professional characteristics of the study sample.

Demographic and professional variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	179	58
Female	128	42
Marital status		
Married	263	84
Single	44	16
Age		
20-29	60	20
30-39	124	40
40-49	72	24
50+	51	16
Religiosity		
Religious	183	63
Secular	114	37
Educational level		
BA	147	48
MA+	160	52
Work experience		
1-3	34	11
4-10	118	38
11+	155	51
Seniority		
1-3	86	28
4-10	176	57
11+	45	15
Employment status		
Full time	193	63
Part time	114	37
Role in the school		
Professional teacher	173	56
Class teacher	134	44
Holding administrative position		
Yes	84	27
No	223	73

commitment and marital status (t = 1.982 p < .05), employment status (t = -2.657, p < .05) and level of education (t = -2.657, p < .05); where teachers' affective commitment was higher among married teachers, those with part-time positions, and those with undergraduate degrees.

The full multiple regression model, presented in Table 5, significantly predicted affective organizational commitment (F(12, 306) = 12.914, p < .05; Adj: R^2 = .318) and explained 32% of the variance in teachers' affective commitment, with the transformational leadership factor as the strongest predictor (β = .318, p < .000).

Table 2. Dimensions of organizational commitment: Factor analysis results, Varimax Rotation.

Items	Factors	
	Affective commitment	Continuity commitment
I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization	.765	-.135
I do feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization	.740	.051
I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it	.687	.067
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization	.674	.161
I do feel like 'part of the family' at my organization	.641	.080
Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire	.508	-.205
I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organization.	.492	.007
I truly believe that the problems of this school are also my problems	.474	-.173
It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my school now	.175	-.107
I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one	.112	.064
It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to	.119	.772
I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization	-.082	.768
Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now	.275	.724
I am afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up	.003	.720
One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice—another organization may not match the overall benefits I have	-.093	.649
One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives	-.374	.597
Eigenvalue	3.46	3.15
% of variance	21.78	19.79

Table 6 reveals that there were significant relationships between teachers' continuous commitment and transactional leadership (t = 3.193, P < .05) and gender (t = 2.664, P < .05). The full multiple regression model significantly predicted continuous organizational commitment (F(12, 306) = 1.363, p < .05; Adj: R^2 = .059) and explained 6% of the variance in teachers' continuous commitment, with the transactional leadership factor as the strongest predictor in the model (β = .194, p < .05).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and teachers' organizational commitment in the unique context of alternative Arab high schools in northern Israel. In a setting aimed at providing principals with greater autonomy, initiative and agency, transformational leadership emerged as the main leadership style. These results reflect the findings of many other studies across various sectors which also found that successful organization leaders used transformational leadership more often than transactional leadership (Berkovich, 2018; Cho *et al.*, 2019; Chirchir *et al.*, 2014; Nguni *et al.*,

2006; Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016; Trottier *et al.*, 2008).

The findings also demonstrated a positive relationship between transformational leadership and affective organizational commitment. Consistent with the literature, when school principals considered and met teachers' needs and concerns, inspired them to go beyond minimal expectations, and encouraged them to be innovative in resolving their schools' problems, teachers' organizational commitment increased (Onder, 2019; Berkovich, 2018; Mascarenhas *et al.*, 2018; Bono and Judge, 2004).

Furthermore, in terms of teachers' organizational commitment, the finding of high affective commitment implied that teachers identified with their schools and felt motivated to serve. Teachers' continuous commitment scores, in contrast, were much lower, suggesting that teachers had more of an emotional than lower-order transactional attachment to the teaching profession and to their school. It also suggests that teachers were proud of being associated with the teaching profession and of teaching in alternative Arab high schools.

This scenario implies a good working environment in these schools. These findings are consistent with results reported elsewhere (Saeed *et al.*, 2013; Clinebell *et al.*, 2013; Omidifar, 2013) and with the assertion that

Table 3. Dimensions of leadership style: Factor Analysis Results, Varimax Rotation.

The school principal:	Factors	
	Transformational leadership	Transactional leadership
Instills pride in me for being associated with him/her	617.	-.073
Goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group	489.	-.240
Acts in ways that build my respect	622.	-.068
Displays a sense of power and confidence	490.	-.288
Talks about his/her most important values and beliefs	501.	-.072
Highlights the importance of having a strong sense of purpose	596.	-.127
Considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	650.	-.162
Emphasizes the importance of having a collective sense of a group mission	619.	-.089
Talks optimistically about the future	.588	-.207
Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished	.516	-.189
Articulates a compelling vision of future	569.	-.272
Expresses confidence that goals will be achieved	646.	-.043
Re-examines critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate	689.	.035
Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems	555.	-.163
Gets me to look at problems from many different angles	618.	-.155
Suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments	644.	-.092
Spends time teaching and coaching	613.	.184
Treats you as an individual rather than just as a member of a group	192.	.209
Considers me as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations than others	549.	-.177
Helps me to develop my strengths	590.	-.068
Provides you with assistance in exchange for your efforts	655.	-.048
Discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets	554.	-.030
Makes clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved	592.	.142
Expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations	650.	-.064
Focuses attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards	447.	.322
Concentrates his/her full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints, and failures	132.	.376
Keep tracks of all mistakes	271.	.217
Directs my attention toward failures to meet standards	407.	.330
Fails to interfere until problems become serious	-.042	.525
Waits for things to go wrong before taking action	-.228	.570
Shows that he/she is a firm believer in "If it ain't broke, don't fix it"	-.014	.644
Demonstrates that problems must become chronic before taking action	-.242	.558
Avoids getting involved when important issues arise	-.112	.610
Is absent when needed	-.324	.558
Avoids making decisions	-.275	.538
Delays responding to urgent questions	-.127	.477
Eigenvalue	8.49	3.06
% of variance	26.05	9.38

Table 4. Means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha of teachers' organizational commitment and transformational, transactional leadership factors.

Factors	Means	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Affective commitment	3.68	.48	.78
Continuous commitment	2.45	.60	.80
Transformational leadership	3.17	.45	.92
Transactional leadership	1.97	.52	.75

Table 5. Relationships between the leadership style and demographic variables and teachers' affective organizational commitment.

Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-value	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
Transformational leadership	396.	.058	.366	6.849	.000
Transactional leadership	-.346	.047	-.384	-7.424	.000
Gender	.039	.052	.041	.745	.457
Marital status	.148	.075	.114	1.982	.048
Work experience	.085	.050	.123	1.713	.088
Seniority in the school	.056	.047	.075	1.203	.230
Employment status	-.157	.059	-.161	-2.657	.008
Educational level	-.172	.053	-.182	-3.255	.001
Role in the school	-.088	.052	-.092	-1.690	.092
Administrative position	.093	.060	.085	1.558	.120
Religiosity	.029	.051	.030	.576	.565
Age	-.044	.031	-.095	-1.422	.156

(F(12, 306)=12.914, p<.05; Adj: R^2=.318)

Table 6. Relationship between the leadership style and demographic variables and teachers' continuous organizational commitment.

Variable	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-value	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
Transformational leadership	.078	.088	.056	.890	.374
Transactional leadership	.227	.071	.194	3.193	.002
Gender	.213	.080	.170	2.664	.008
Marital status	.011	.114	.006	.094	.926
Work experience	.043	.076	.048	.564	.573
Seniority in the school	.035	.071	.036	.493	.623
Employment status	-.126	.090	-.100	-1.399	.163
Educational level	-.016	.080	-.13	-.201	.841
Role in the school	.000	.080	.000	.002	.999
administrative position	-.030	.091	-.021	-.330	.742
Religiosity	.126	.078	.098	1.625	.105
Age	-.039	.048	-.065	-.825	.410

(F(12, 306)=1.363, p=. p<.05; Adj: R^2=.059)

subordinates want leaders who are honest, competent, forward–looking and inspiring (Kouzes and Posner, 2019; Kouzes and Posner, 2017).

In conclusion, the study findings showed that transformational leadership was stronger than transactional leadership among principals, and affective commitment was stronger than continuance commitment among teachers in alternative Arab high schools. Principals have an important role to play in maximizing the potential of alternative Arab schools to improve educational processes and outcomes. Our findings indicate that school principals can strengthen teachers' organizational commitment through adopting a transformational leadership style that provides personal attention to staff members, communicates high expectations for teachers and students alike, and provides

a model for the behavior of teachers.

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