

**The Contribution of Authentic Leadership
and School Ethical Climate in Motivating
Teachers toward Citizenship Behavior and
the Reduction of Social Loafing**

by

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Abstract

This study examines the relations between the perceptions of school ethical climate and of authentic leadership of school principals and counselors, and teachers' group citizenship behavior and social loafing.

Underpinned by multilevel theory, which aims to provide a more integrative understanding of the phenomenon that keeps recurring in different levels of the organization (Kozlowski & Klein 2000), the purpose of this study is to develop an integrative multidimensional model probing the perceptions of teachers, counselors, and principals regarding the relations between perceptions and behavior at the level of school leadership and the school teaching staff, that influence the organizational effectiveness of the school. In terms of "phenomenon", we might say that the present study examines how aspects of authentic leadership and moral behavior at the level of school leadership are expressed in the perceptions and behavior of the school staff.

Three key theories provide the theoretical framework for this study, allowing for the assumption that relations exist between the different variables. The first is the theory of continuity (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011), which holds that an individual's perceptions and tendencies affect his or her behavior. The second one is the theory of social learning (Bandura, 2005, 2012), which emphasizes the contribution of social norms to the shaping of a person's positions. Finally, the third theory is that of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2008), which describes how an environment that responds to a person's basic psychological needs promotes forms of autonomous motivation in individuals. These three theories are commonly used for the characterization of the psychological processes through which the social environment affects the individual, and therefore have been chosen as suitable for understanding teachers' pro-organizational behaviors. Accordingly, it was assumed that principals' and counselors' authentic leadership and school ethical climate might explain teachers' behaviors, such as citizenship behavior, at the individual and group level, as well as social loafing.

The study's unique contribution lies in its focus on the authentic leadership of counselors and principals, who constitute the core of the school management in elementary schools in the present age, while examining the relations between authentic leadership and school ethical climate on the one hand and citizenship behavior and

social loafing among teachers on the other hand. Previous research on these relations has not yet taken into account the different points of view of principals, counselor and teachers.

The research population for this study comprised educators from 50 schools from different districts in Israel. In each school the counselors and the principals were asked to respond to a questionnaire which examined their perceptions of their authentic leadership, their perception of the school ethical climate and their motivation. The teachers, however, were asked to respond to a questionnaire which included their perceptions of the authentic leadership of each of the principals and school counselors, their perception of the school ethical climate and their motivation. In addition, they were asked to respond to a questionnaire which examined their perception regarding their personal and group organization citizenship behavior. The data analysis was based on multilevel structural equation modeling (MULTILEVEL SEM) analysis, comprised of two levels: the teachers' level, consisting of their perceptions, and the school level, consisting of the principals' and counselors' perceptions.

The main findings point to the decisive effect that teachers' perceptions of school leadership have on their behavior. The high variance found between schools in various aspects confirms the hierarchical structure of the school organization and indicates both the importance of developing the teaching staff as a working group, as a mechanism through which school effectiveness can be promoted, and the importance of the interpersonal relationship between the level of school leadership and the level of the school staff as a basis for creating a proper group behavioral norm. Moreover, the findings of this study highlight the need for creating a clear ethical framework, whose foundations rest on an appropriate formal ethical climate and on a caring ethical climate. Furthermore, the study findings enhance the important role of internal motivation, which heightens the school effectiveness in comparison to external motivation that harms it. In addition, the study findings indicate that the new leadership, shared by principals and counselors, is important and appropriate for better educational practice.

From the **theoretical** point of view, the study contributes to the advancement of our understanding of the authentic leadership of school staff, including the school principal and counselor, in our times. From the **practical** point of view, the study's findings provide significant knowledge that might help the focusing of working plans of

principals and counselors, in order to increase teacher's readiness to promote positive behaviors such as group citizenship behavior and to reduce negative behaviors such as social loafing.