

**Authentic Leadership as a Mediator between Professional
Identity, Organizational Ethical Climate and Organizational
Citizenship Behavior, Organizational Politics Behavior and
Turnover among Elementary School Principals in Israel**

by

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ABSTRACT

The central purpose of this study is to examine authentic mediating leadership between professional identity and the ethical organizational climate, and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), organizational politics (OP), and turnover among elementary school principals in Israel. In addition, the study examines whether there is a relationship between organizational political behavior and citizenship behavior, and principals turnover their position prior to retirement.

The theoretical framework of this study relies on the Sequence Theory developed by Ajzen & Fishbein (2005, 2012), that deals with the relationships between perceptions – attitudes – behavior, tracing the relationship between a person's attitudes and his/her behavior. Furthermore, the study attempts to trace the relationship between these two behaviors that are perceived as mutually opposed: citizenship behavior (viewed as positive behavior) and political behavior (perceived as mostly negative), and primary school principals leaving their positions prior to receiving their pension.

The central question this study tries to answer is, to what extent is the integrative model, that includes personal attitudes of the professional identity type and organizational attitudes of the ethical climate type, likely to explain citizenship behavior and political behavior, and whether there is a link between those behaviors, and elementary school principals in Ministry of Education districts leaving their positions, not upon retirement.

The study sample included 410 elementary school principals, from various districts throughout Israel, and was based on self-reports that were transmitted using a questionnaire. The study focused on SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) using the Amos program to test the research hypotheses and to validate the entire model.

The study indicates mediating relationships between authentic leadership that reflects the school principal's attitudes, and between citizenship behavior and political behavior. A dimension of "relational transparency" of authentic leadership mediates between the "sense of self- efficacy" dimension of professional identity, and between the "inner external resource" dimension. A "self-awareness" dimension of authentic leadership mediates between a "formal ethical climate of rules, law and code" dimension of the ethical climate and citizenship behavior and political behavior on the "inner external sense" dimension.

The current study's findings attest to the links between personal attitudes of the professional identity type, and organizational attitudes of the ethical climate type, and between authentic leadership, as well as to the links between authentic leadership and citizenship behavior, political behavior and turnover not due to retirement.

The present study indicates that school principals who perceive their professional identity positively, and maintain a formal ethical climate in the school they administer, are authentic leaders who practice citizenship behavior and make little use of inappropriate influence tactics from the organizational political field. A surprising, unexpected finding is that authentic leadership does not necessarily mediate between ethical climate on the "caring ethical climate" dimension, and citizenship behavior. No mediating relationship was found between authentic leadership in all its dimensions, or with resignation not due to retirement.

No relationships were found between citizenship behavior and political behavior, nor were any links found between citizenship behavior and political behavior, with turnover not due to retirement. In other words, each of these behaviors is independent. This finding strengthens the hypothesis according to which school principals can simultaneously implement both citizenship behavior and also political behavior, without relationship to their turnover resignation.

An additional finding is that there is a link between ethical climate on the "formal ethical climate" dimension, and authentic leadership on the "self-awareness" dimension, and with political behavior on the "inner external resource" dimension. Similarly, expectations notwithstanding, no relationship was found between authentic leadership on the "transparency" and "morality and ethics" dimension with citizenship behavior, nor between "morality and ethics" with any one of these behaviors.

An important finding arises from this study, that there is an additional component for principals' citizenship behavior, not yet expressed in research about elementary school principals' citizenship behavior. This additional component is found in the parents' sphere, and sheds light on the principals' complex, extensive labor.

Theoretically, this study has contributed to the creation of an integrative model not previously researched, explaining links between behaviors perceived as mutually opposed: on one hand, citizenship behavior, and on the other, political behavior and turnover not due to

retirement among elementary school principals, based on the Sequence Theory of Ajzen & Fishbein (2005, 2012), within a broad framework that includes personal variables and organizational variables.

Practically speaking, these findings lead to the conclusion that in order to increase citizenship behavior and to decrease political behavior, authentic leadership among elementary school principals should be enhanced, and action should be taken to empower them personally and organizationally. High perceptions of professional identity generally and particularly on the "self-efficacy" dimension, and of the ethical climate on the "formal ethical climate" dimension, are likely to bring about increased authentic leadership and to constitute a tool that is likely to help find principals who are suitable for the task of administering an elementary school. Similarly, the findings are likely to help those in charge of identifying negative behavior and dealing with it, together with fostering positive behavior, both during professional training of principals as well as during their work.

Due to the great significance of the school principal's work, it is important to carry out further research to examine unique aspects for support of principals' needs. Another subject that requires attention is the deepening of principals' personal identity and reinforcement of the sense of positive ethical climate in their organization. These things should be done along with consideration of developing authentic leadership among principals, since behavior of this type will enable them to cope with opposing behaviors: on the one hand, with political behavior that is perceived as negative behavior, although it is often necessary for efficient organizational functioning, and on the other hand with citizenship behavior that may earn praise, but frequently contains exploitation and modern bondage.