# Abstract

Even 20 years ago, leadership among populations with disabilities was considered a contradiction of the Social Darwinism paradigm (Spencer, 1898), which contends that people with any kind of disability, physical, mental or intellectual, cannot be leaders. In contrast, according to the UN Convention (2006) and the innovative agenda of the Disability Movement (Pfeiffer, 1993), people with intellectual disabilities (ID) can indeed represent themselves and be leadership partners in planning policy towards them in community contexts, including the boards of community centers, colleges, advisory councils and similar institutions (Caldwell, Hauss, & Stark, 2009).

Field observations report the existence of informal leadership (Morgenson, DeRue, & Karam, 2009) among people with ID in schools for students with ID, and in residential, employment and leisure settings. These leaders are not appointed by the supervisors; rather, they grow up within the group. However, supervisors recognize their influence on followers, and therefore delegate authority to them, empowering them in the eyes of the group.

The main purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenon of leadership among adolescents and adults with mild and moderate ID (IQ = 45-70). In the absence of leadership theories that deal with this population, the current study was based on models and theories of leadership in a population with typical development (TD). The model found relevant to the research population was the triadic model proposed by Popper (2007) and Van Vugt, Hogan, and Kaiser (2008), which forms the basis of three main research questions in this study.

First, what are the special cognitive, personality and social strengths and abilities that distinguish leaders with ID from followers with ID, and that make their peers consider them charismatic? This question is based on the **Trait Approach** (Zaccaro,

2007) that focuses on leadership skills, and forms one side of the leadership model (Popper, 2007). Second, what are the dominant leadership styles in a population with ID? This part of the study is based on the **Situational Theories** (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Bernson, 2003), and forms the second side of the leadership model. Third, what is the nature of the relationship between leaders and followers, as observed in the leadership simulations we conducted (Fisher & Bibo, 2000)? This part is also based on **Situational Theories**, and is the third side of the leadership model.

The research population in this study were 117 people with ID ($N$ = 117) divided into two groups: Leaders ($N$ = 27) and followers ($N$ = 90). Of the total population, 48.7% were male and 51.3% were female. Participants were classified by the staff of the various frameworks using a socio-metric questionnaire (Padin-Rivera et al., 1986). Below, we present the questions, hypotheses and findings of the study relating to each of the three parts.

**Part I: Leadership skills among leaders with ID: Cognitive, emotional and social clusters**

The goal of this part was to ask what differences there are between the skills and traits of leaders and those of followers in a population with ID. In the absence of studies that examined this issue in a population with ID, this hypothesis is based on studies of leadership in a population with TD, which found differences between leaders and followers in three clusters: The cognitive, emotional and social clusters (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Taggar, Hackett, & Saha, 1999; Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002). We hypothesized that leaders with ID will score higher than followers in all three clusters. To examine differences in the cognitive cluster, we used three tests relevant to the research population. Passive vocabulary was tested with the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test 4th edition (PPVT-IV; Dunn & Dunn, 1997 Version A), (word

fluency) (Van der Elst, Van Boxtel, Van Breukelen, & Jolles, 2006) and decision-making ability (Suto, Clare, Holland, & Watson, 2005). Differences in the social cluster were measured using a questionnaire on social information processing (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Hebrew translation Tur-Kaspa & Bryan, 1994).

Two-way ANCOVA (2x2) for passive vocabulary and two-way MANCOVA (2x2) for active vocabulary and decision-making ability, with covariate control for chronological age, to neutralize the effect of age differences were carried out. The findings show that the leaders' scores on all three tests of the cognitive cluster (passive vocabulary, word fluency and decision-making) were significantly higher than those of followers. Covariance analysis also indicated that for the six stages of social intelligence, leaders showed a significantly higher cognitive ability for deciphering social situations and choosing appropriate behaviors than followers.

To test the differences in emotional cluster, we used three tests: Attachment style questionnaire (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; translated into Hebrew and edited by Tolmtz, 1988). Self-image was tested using the 'He is/I am' questionnaire (Glantz, 1981); self-efficacy was assessed by a general self-efficacy questionnaire (Chen & Gully, 1997, translated into Hebrew by Grant-Flumin, 1998). The analysis indicated that leaders do not differ from followers on any of the three tests of the emotional cluster. Furthermore, the scores of leaders and followers on self-esteem and self-efficacy were relatively high.

Discriminant analysis was conducted to examine which of the clusters has the highest intensity of differences between leaders and followers. These findings show that higher intensity differences between the two groups were found for social information processing (19.70**), followed by decision-making (10.42**), and language and communication ability (passive vocabulary [8.31**] and active vocabulary [7.40**]). The measure of cognitive abilities that best distinguished between leaders and followers

is social information processing. The results of the study are consistent with results in the population with TD, which show that leaders have a higher ability to decipher social situations, solve social problems of followers and respond to the needs of followers (Riggio & Reichard, 2008).

Logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine the extent to which background variables: Gender and baseline cognitive ability and dependent variables: Cognitive cluster abilities (passive and active vocabulary, decision-making), social cluster abilities (social information processing) and the emotional cluster abilities (attachment styles, self-esteem, self-efficacy) contributed to predicting which participants in the current study were leaders or non-leaders. It was found that background variables are not predictors of being in the leadership group. Similar to the above results for the three clusters' abilities, we found that measures of the cognitive cluster (passive and active vocabulary, and decision making) and measures of the social cluster (social information processing) predicted 39% of the covariance for belonging to the group of leaders.

**Concept of charisma and perception of limitation in a population with ID**: Having found differences in skills between leaders and followers with ID, we now consider the concept of charisma in a population with ID. Charisma is defined as an individual's unique quality that makes others see him or her as remarkable and having outstanding capabilities (Weber, 1968). The current findings indicate that leaders with ID do have charisma, derived from high abilities in the cognitive and social clusters. Unlike people with TD, charisma in people with ID is not due to the emotional clusters.

Our study is the first that shows a cognitive awareness to disability of people with ID. They understand that there are individual differences between them and others in their peer group. They value the ability of leaders to manage a budget, make vocational

decisions, and to identify and deal with social problems. Therefore, they chose these leaders to represent the group to the school staff and supervisors in work and residential settings.

**Part II: Leadership Styles in a Population with ID**

The aim was to determine the dominant leadership style among the leaders with ID. Leadership styles were examined using the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire (Fleishman, 1989; Fleishman, Mumford, Zaccaro, Levin, Korotkin, & Hein, 1991), which differentiates between social-collaborative style and authoritative-task oriented style. Accordingly to research of leadership style among people with typical development (TD) we hypothesized that both leadership style will be found among people with ID?

*T*-tests for dependent groups indicated that leaders with ID tend to use the social-collaborative leadership style, but there are also those with an authoritative-task oriented leadership style. This finding is consistent with the theory that the two leadership styles can exist in the same leader (Ayman, Chemers, & Fiedler, 1995; Fiedler, 1967; Fiedler, Chemers, & Mahar, 1976). It was also found that female leaders with ID tend to use social-collaborative leadership style unlike male leaders with ID who tend to have an authoritative-task oriented leadership style. Thus, the connection between gender and leadership style among both people with ID and people with typical development (TD) were found to be similar.

Another goal was to test correlations between leaders with ID and their leadership style. Pearson correlations indicate that the afraid component of the attachment style has a significant negative correlation with a social-collaborative leadership style. In addition, a significant positive correlation was found between measures of the cognitive cluster (passive vocabulary and decisions-making ability) and a social-collaborative leadership style.

**Part III : Interaction of leaders with followers, according to the situation approach**

The goal in this section was to investigate the mutual relationship and quality of interaction between leaders and followers with ID. Interactions between leaders and followers were observed in simulated leadership situations in 12 groups consisting of a leader and followers, for example: A violation of the students' or employees' rights in school or a vocational framework. The simulations were recorded, coded and analyzed using the qualitative method of Shakedy (2003). The analysis was conducted in three stages: Content analysis, mapping and theoretical analysis. The analytical categories for the content analysis were both verbal behaviors, including discussion management and presentation of goals, and non-verbal behaviors, like eye contact with participants. In the mapping stage, categories were constructed on the basis of the LMX a model (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and included the following parameters: Initiative, planning, decision-making ability, knowledge, information and concepts, initiating group discussion and dialogue, awareness of the other's needs, inclusion of the other, attentive listening and empathy. For the theoretical analysis, meta-categories represent the elements of mediated literacy and quality interaction according to Lifshitz and Klein (2007, 2001). This approach relates to meaningful learning occurring between a mediator (staff member, parent) and the mediation recipient (child, student), through three components: Cognitive (focus, expansion, communication), social (solving social problems) and affective (autonomy and encouragement).

This study found, for the first time, that the quality of interaction between the participants themselves, that between leaders and followers with ID, are also conducted using the components of mediated literacy interaction (Lifshitz & Klein, 2007, 2011). We found that population with ID is also able to reach out and manage a quality interaction between leaders and followers, as shown by results of the Wilcoxon test and

*t*-test. However, the findings show that the leaders' scores were higher than those of followers. That is, the interaction conducted by the leaders is richer and of higher quality, including more of the three components of quality interaction (Lifshitz & Klein, 2007, 2011) to the follower.

**Comparative-structural model of effects of the skills of leaders/followers, leadership style, and relationships between leaders and followers**. In order to examine the links between the skills of leaders and followers in the three clusters, the style of leadership and qualitative measures of interactions among leaders and followers, we conducted a path analysis or Structural Equation Model (SEM).

Path analysis of the leaders found that their cognitive cluster abilities have a positive, significant effect (β =.61**) on the cognitive component (initiation, planning, decision-making, knowledge of concepts, knowledge of details and dialogue initiating). The path analysis of followers found no significant effects between the skills of the followers and the three components of the interactions between them and leaders.

In conclusion, the present study is based on a leadership model developed for the population with typical development (TD; Popper, 2007). The findings from the first question indicated that the charisma of leaders in ID population stems from having higher cognitive and social abilities than their peer group. Results of the second research question indicated that there are similarities between the leaders with ID and leaders with TD regarding both leadership styles, and the correlation between leadership style and gender. The findings from the third research question show that among people with ID, as for people with TD, both leaders and followers are able to conduct quality literacy interactions (Lifshitz & Klein, 2007, 2011) among themselves without the involvement of an adult with TD. Yet, the quality of the leaders' interaction is higher than that of the followers. The study includes recommendations for further research and practical implementation.