Leadership, absenteeism acceptance, and ethical climate as predictors of teachers’ absence and citizenship behaviors

Orly Shapira-Lishchinsky and Tehila Raftar-Ozery

Abstract
The goal of this study was to explore the mediating role of ‘absenteeism acceptance’ between different leadership styles and school ethical climate (SEC) on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) and voluntary absence among Israeli teachers. 304 teachers were randomly selected from 304 different mainstream and special-education schools. The model was analyzed using AMOS 18.0 software. We found that ‘absenteeism acceptance’ partially mediated the relationship between transactional leadership, SEC and OCB, and also found that SEC and transactional leadership positively predict OCB. The theoretical contribution of this study is rooted in its integrative approach. While most previous studies focused on a single leadership style, this study focused on the role of ‘absenteeism acceptance’ as a mediator between ethical aspects such as: SEC; leadership styles; and teachers’ behaviors like voluntary absence and OCB. The practical contribution may include developing school principals’ training programs, focusing on transactional leadership and SEC in order to increase teachers’ OCB in schools.

Keywords
Transactional leadership, transformational leadership, school ethical climate, absenteeism acceptance, teachers’ organizational citizenship behavior, school principals, teachers, schools

Introduction
Previous studies have indicated that teachers’ behaviors include contradictory behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB); this term refers to their contributions to the school atmosphere beyond their formal obligations, which tends to ameliorate school effectiveness. On the other hand, there are teachers who tend to withdraw from their schools via voluntary...
absenteeism; that absenteeism may create a negative school atmosphere that conversely leads to school ineffectiveness (e.g. DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran, 2001).

Based on Ajzen’s (2012) theory which argues that there is a strong link between perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, the primary goal of the present study is to examine whether we can propose an integrative model that includes ‘absenteeism acceptance’ as a mediator between different leadership styles, school ethical climate (SEC), and voluntary absences and teachers’ OCB.

We decided to explore this psychological model in the two primary types of Israeli schools: mainstream; and special-education schools. Our assumption was that the inclusion of contradictory behaviors and different school types in the same study could yield a wider perspective regarding our proposed model.

More specifically, we will examine two primary research questions.

1. Does ‘absenteeism acceptance’ mediate the relationship between different leadership styles, SEC, and voluntary absences and teachers’ OCB?
2. Can we propose an integrative model that could predict contradictory behaviors (e.g. OCB and voluntary absence) among teachers in different school types (e.g. special-education and mainstream education schools), based on perceptions of their leaders and the SEC?

Theoretical background

In this part, we will describe ethical aspects that unite the independent variables (leadership styles and SEC). Then we will describe the mediator ‘absenteeism acceptance’ and its relationships to the independent variables (leadership styles and SEC) as well as to the dependent variables: OCB; and voluntary absence. Finally, we will describe the background variables that may be included in the integrative model.

Leadership in educational systems

In this study we focused on different leadership styles. The criteria for choosing these styles were based on the ethical meaning elicited from each leadership type. Transactional leadership is defined as ‘relationships of exchange’; namely, a system of rewards and goals. This leadership style determines school goals that teachers should achieve and rewards them according to their achievements vis-à-vis those goals (Shields, 2010). Transactional leadership includes an ethical meaning, taking into account that teachers expect fair-minded rewards for their efforts. The second leadership style is transformational leadership; namely, leadership that articulates a vision of the future that can be shared with peers and subordinates, intellectually stimulates subordinates, and takes heed of the individual differences between people (Orphanos and Orr, 2014). The ethical meaning of transformational leadership is derived from previous studies that viewed transformational leaders as moral agents that provide support and treat each follower as unique, while encouraging a climate for expressing their own beliefs and values (e.g. Kanungo, 2001).

The third leadership style is authentic leadership; namely leadership that is defined as an awareness of the way leaders think and act, and are understood by others. Authentic leaders encourage diverse viewpoints and foster networks of collaborative relationships among their followers (Avolio, 2007). The ethical meaning of authentic leadership is reflected by the leader’s own high moral attitude and that of his/her followers, towards making an effort within and outside the organization (Begley, 2006).
Given the fact that each leadership style assumes ethical meaning and includes its own unique characteristics, we may assume that:

H1(a). teacher perceptions regarding their principal’s authentic, transactional and transformational leadership will relate to each other positively;

H1(b). each leadership style will relate differently (e.g. high, low, significant, insignificant) to the other study factors.

The “fundamental” (Bass and Avolio, 1991) proposition of transformational–transactional leadership theory stipulates that transformational leadership has an increased effect on transactional leadership. Bass (1999) described the augmentation effect as the degree to which transformational leadership builds on the transactional leadership base in contributing to the extra effort and performance of followers. Implicit in this argument is the view that transformational leadership must be constructed on the foundation of transactional leadership, and that without the foundation of transactional leadership, transformational effects may not be possible.

Therefore, we may assume that:

H2. teachers’ perceptions regarding their principal’s transactional leadership will be more dominant than transformational leadership in relationship to the other study factors.

While considering the ethical meaning of the different leadership styles, we may also consider the context that may enable these leadership styles to elicit SEC; or alternatively leadership styles that may promote SEC at school.

**School ethical climate and leadership styles**

Ethical climate is a reflection of ethical elements in the work environment as perceived by its individual members. It serves as a perceptual lens through which employees assess situations that help them identify ethical issues and solve ethical problems (Simha and Cullen, 2012). Previous studies identified two dimensions of ethical climate: caring; and formal (e.g. Cullen et al., 1993). A caring ethical climate is characterized by employees’ genuine interest in each other’s welfare inside and outside the organization. At school, a caring ethical climate shows concern for all school stakeholders affected by their decisions.

A formal ethical climate emphasizes school rules and professional codes, and fosters respect for them. In that sort of a climate, teachers are expected to abide by school rules and adhere to the codes and regulations of their profession. It is through ethical rules that everyone in the school learns how to behave – understanding which values are held in high esteem and which behaviors are rewarded (Appelbaum et al., 2005). Because a formal ethical climate is based on transparent procedures, it is perceived to protect teachers from being abused by school management and others. This sort of climate is characteristic of educational systems in the public sector that tend to be bureaucratic in their adherence to rules, thereby protecting teachers from violation of their rights (Rosenblatt and Peled, 2002).

Based on the ethical aspects common to the aforementioned leadership styles and SEC, we assume that:


H3. teachers’ perceptions regarding their principal’s authentic, transactional and transformational leadership will relate positively to SEC.

In the following section, we will describe the variables and relationships that may support our integrative model suggestion.

‘Absenteeism acceptance’ as a mediator between teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ leadership, SEC and their voluntary absence and OCB

Absenteeism acceptance (mediator). Applying Ajzen’s (2012) model which emphasizes the relationship between specific attitudes and specific behavior, Shapira-Lishchinsky and Ishan (2013) developed a measure for teachers’ tendency toward absence. ‘Absenteeism acceptance’ reflects a teacher’s tendency to accept absenteeism, recognizing an effective response to absenteeism without attempting to change it. This measure includes three main aspects: a teacher’s affective response to his/her own absenteeism from work; a teacher’s affective response to colleagues’ absenteeism from work; and a teacher’s general attitude toward work absenteeism.

The relationship between leadership styles and SEC (independent variable) and ‘absenteeism acceptance’ (mediator). Applying Ajzen’s (2012) model which indicates that perceptions lead to attitudes, we may assume high perceived levels of the school principal’s fair exchange relationships (transactional leadership); high perceived levels of treating each follower uniquely by providing support and sharing values (transformational leadership); and high perceived levels of the principal’s own moral ability (authentic leadership) which may increase teachers’ sense of gratitude to their principal, reflected by reducing their ‘absenteeism acceptance’.

Moreover, ethical climate may affect teachers’ ‘absenteeism acceptance’. For example, a caring ethical climate with teachers who are concerned about their colleagues will reduce their ‘absenteeism acceptance’ from school, based on their belief that absence from school will be injurious to other school team members who will have to work harder to compensate for absent teachers. Supporting this premise are the findings of previous studies which indicated that a caring climate relates negatively to employees’ tendency to absence (e.g. Appelbaum et al., 2005). In addition, a formal ethical climate, reflected by school regulations and rules, may be used as a guideline for teachers to make decisions about whether they accept teachers’ absenteeism, including their own (Johns and Hajj, 2016).

The relationship between ‘absenteeism acceptance’ (mediator) and voluntary absence (dependent variable). According to Ajzen’s (2012) study, ‘absenteeism acceptance’ may predict teachers’ voluntary absence. Sagie (1998) distinguished between two basic types of absence: voluntary absence, which is normally directly controlled by the employee and is frequently exploited for personal issues such as testing the market for alternative prospects of employment; and involuntary absence, which is usually beyond the employee’s immediate control, such as periods of mourning after the death of a family member and maternity leave.

It was found that the primary cause of teachers’ absence is due to declared illness in order to get paid for those days, while the actual reasons may include personal needs, vacation, or exploring other employment alternatives (Miller et al., 2008) that may constitute unethical behavior. Previous studies have shown that teachers who harbor negative attitudes towards their workplace accept the absenteeism of others and their own, and may react by being voluntarily absent from school (e.g. Moletsane et al., 2015).
The relationship between ‘absenteeism acceptance’ (mediator) and OCB (dependent variable). According to Shapira-Lishchinsky and Ishan (2013), ‘absenteeism acceptance’ may reflect personal negative attitudes toward schools. These negative attitudes may lead teachers to downgrade their efforts at school, which may result in lower levels of OCB. OCB is an employee’s contribution to the organization beyond his or her formal obligations (Stamper and Van Dyne, 2001). Previous studies (e.g. Carpenter et al., 2014; Organ, 1988) conceptualized OCB as helpful behaviors that support the social network of an organization, but are not included in the core tasks of the job. All of these characteristics reflect ethical behavior. Applying OCB to the school context, Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2000) describe different dimensions of OCB, which all reflect ethical meaning: on the individual level vis-à-vis students (e.g. donating behaviors); on the team level (e.g. sharing and cooperative behaviors); and on the organizational level (e.g. organizing social activities for the school).

Therefore, applying the above ethical framework, indicating relationships between teachers’ leadership perceptions and SEC, as related to ‘absenteeism acceptance’; and ‘absenteeism acceptance’ as related to OCB and voluntary absence, we may assume that:

H4. ‘absenteeism acceptance’ will mediate the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of principals’ leadership (authentic, transformational, and transactional), SEC and voluntary absence and OCB.

Background variables in the research model. Age, gender, seniority, educational degree and school type were used as background variables. The choice to refer to these factors was based on our interest in how these factors may affect our suggested model. The choice to include them was also supported by previous studies indicating that most of these variables were more likely to be related to absenteeism and OCB (e.g. Farrell and Finkelstein, 2007; Singh and Singh, 2010).

To further illuminate:

Age. Previous studies indicated that age is negatively related to absenteeism. Rosenblatt et al. (2010) found a negative relationship between age and absenteeism from school. In addition, a positive relationship between age and OCB was found. For example, older employees were found to tend to OCB by volunteering more than younger employees in the community (Singh and Singh, 2010).

Gender. Shapira-Lishchinsky (2009) found that male teachers are absent more often than women teachers. Women’s jobs in school allow them to combine a professional pursuit and family life; they want to keep their jobs and are thus more likely to reduce their voluntary absence, in contrast to men who are absent despite their jobs at school, based on their assumption that they can find another job more easily than most women teachers. In addition, Farrell and Finkelstein’s (2007) study indicates that women are more likely to be involved in OCB than men because of their dominant caring-for-others dimension.

Seniority. Shapira-Lishchinsky and Rosenblatt (2010) found a negative relationship between seniority and absence. This relationship may be rooted in the fact that high seniority in teaching implies reduced opportunities for alternative employment and eligibility for financial and social benefits. Therefore, as teaching seniority increases, teacher absence is reduced.

Academic degree. Rosenblatt et al. (2010) found that the more educated the teacher is, the less he or she will be absent from school; this relationship may be explained by the fact that those teachers’ educational level provides promotional opportunities which offer teacher satisfaction, thereby
leading to fewer absences. Smith et al. (1983) found a positive relationship between OCB and academic degrees. Their assumption was that education represents a socio-economic status; middle-class people with resources and leisure preferred OCB more than lower-class people.

**School type.** Internationally, we found no work contracts that distinguish between regular and special-education teachers. For example, in the US across districts and states, teachers are granted 10 days of annual paid leave due to personal illness. Additional days (excluding school holidays) are considered unpaid leave (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2015). However, in Israel, while teachers in mainstream schools do not have the liberty to choose their vacations and must take vacation time during the set calendar days, in special-education schools, the teachers can take up to 10 vacation days during the school year and make up those days during the summertime, when students in special-education schools still attend classes (Association of Israeli Teachers, 2008). Thus, considering the regulations surrounding the freedom to choose when to be absent which may promote teachers’ positive perceptions, it seems that in Israel’s case, the type of school may affect teachers’ voluntary absenteeism.

Therefore, we may assume that:

H5. gender, seniority, age, academic degree and school type will affect teachers’ voluntary absence and OCB.

Figure 1 summarizes the study model.

![Figure 1. Summary of the theoretical research model.](image)

**Method**

**Research context**

The present study was conducted in Israeli public elementary schools (1st–6th grade) in the two main types in Israel: mainstream and special-education schools, located in two central districts that included
secular and religious public schools. 304 teachers were selected randomly (76% response rate), including 150 teachers from mainstream schools and 154 teachers from special-education schools. Only teachers who had worked in the school for more than one year were included in the study, to ensure that all respondents had sufficient time to develop perceptions and attitudes about their respective schools.

The study included 83.5% women. The average age was 38.66 years (standard deviation (SD) = 14.07). Average teaching seniority was 14.93 years (SD = 10.16). 89.75% of the teachers had a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree. The rest had non-academic educational degrees. The majority (78.5%) of teachers was tenured; the remaining 21.5% were employed via temporary contracts. These figures are roughly representative of the teaching population in Israel’s educational systems in general (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

Data collection and ethical considerations

The study was conducted based on teachers’ perceptions on an individual level, according to the NIH Office of Extramural Research (2011) guidelines. First, we described the study goals and the need for teachers to participate via the school principals’ network at the Israel Ministry of Education. We asked principals to spread our message among their teachers through the school’s email system and encourage them to participate in our study. The school receptionists subsequently sent us lists of teachers who had volunteered; we randomly selected one teacher in each school to contact. If a teacher did not agree to participate, the second teacher on the list was asked to participate, and so forth until a teacher did agree. Our research assistants met them in person and explained the study’s aims and methods; we then assured each participant that all identifying details would be kept confidential.

Participants received a letter explaining the aims of the study, the commitment to maintaining their confidentiality, and their right to leave the study at any time. They were also asked to sign an informed consent form to participate. Anonymity was a contributing factor in obtaining teacher consent to participate, and may explain the fact that the response rate was as high as 76%. The teachers answered anonymous questionnaires that included items relating to teacher perceptions about their principal’s authentic leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, SEC, ‘absenteeism acceptance’, OCB, and personal background. In addition, teachers also provided copies of their absence records from the school receptionists. They put their questionnaires and anonymous absence records in self-addressed stamped envelopes for the research coordinator, and then passed them on to their school receptionists, who forwarded them to us.

Variables and measures

Authentic leadership was measured with a composite score consisting of 16 items (α = 0.94) pertaining to the dimensions: self-awareness (α = 0.95); relational transparency (α = 0.92); internalized moral reasoning (α = 0.93); and balanced processing (α = 0.96) from the original Avolio’s (2007) authentic leadership questionnaire. One sample item: “My principal says exactly what he or she means”.

Transactional leadership was measured with a composite score consisting of 23 items (α = 0.96) pertaining to the dimensions: contingent reward (α = 0.96); management by exception-active (α = 0.93); and management by exception-passive (α = 0.98) from Bass and Avolio’s (1991) original 58-item questionnaire. One sample item: “My principal makes sure that teachers will get rewarded when they achieve their goals”.

Transformational leadership was measured with a composite score consisting of 35 items (α = 0.98) pertaining to the dimensions: inspirational motivation (α = 0.95); intellectual
stimulation ($a = 0.96$); individualized consideration ($a = 0.98$); and idealized influence behavior ($a = 0.97$) from Bass and Avolio’s (1991) original 58-item questionnaire. One sample item: “My principal encourages teachers to develop themselves”.

School ethical climate (SEC) was measured with a composite score consisting of 27 items ($a = 0.98$) pertaining to the dimensions: school caring climate ($a = 0.98$); and school formal climate ($a = 0.96$) from Cullen et al.’s (1993) original ethical school climate questionnaire. One sample item: “In this school, people are expected to follow their own personal and moral beliefs”.

Absenteeism acceptance was measured with a composite score consisting of 9 items ($a = 0.89$) pertaining to the dimensions: affective reaction to coworkers’ absenteeism ($a = 0.90$); affective reaction to own absenteeism ($a = 0.88$); and cognitions concerning absenteeism ($a = 0.89$) from the questionnaire developed by Shapira-Lishchinsky and Ishan (2013), based on Foust et al.’s (2006) questionnaire for predicting lateness from work. One sample item: “I accept teachers who are absent from work once a month”.

Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) was measured with a composite score consisting of 22 items ($a = 0.96$) pertaining to the dimensions: extra-role behavior toward the student ($a = 0.98$); extra-role behavior toward the school ($a = 0.95$); and extra-role behavior toward the team ($a = 0.97$) from Somech and Drach-Zahavy’s (2000) OCB scale. One sample item: “I volunteer for tasks that I am not required to do”.

Response options for all items ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Voluntary absenteeism was measured by frequency of absence as found in school records over a period of 6 months as submitted by the participating teachers. It is generally believed that absence frequency is the best measure of voluntary absence, as compared to absence duration (Blau et al., 2004; Sagie, 1998). Thus, the present study focused primarily on the absence frequency measure, based on the assumption that perceptions and attitudes significantly affect measures of voluntary absence.

**Data analysis**

In the present study, correlations, hierarchical regression analyses and structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS 18.0 were used. We focused on SEM analyses to test the hypothesized path models and address the research questions (Arbuckle, 2014).

**Results**

Because we were interested in determining whether school type affects our proposed model, we tested the correlations between the study variables separately for each school type: mainstream; and special-education schools. Correlations for the study variables are presented in Table 1 (mainstream school type) and Table 2 (special-education school type). We found similar correlations among both school types: For example, the three leadership styles (authentic, transactional, and transformational) were found to be positively correlated to each other (supporting H1a) and to the school’s ethical climate (supporting H3).

No significant relationship was found between ‘absenteeism acceptance’ and absence frequency in either special-education or mainstream school types. In both school types, gender, seniority and age did not affect voluntary absence and OCB. However, in the special-education school type but not in the mainstream school type, we found that the higher the teacher’s academic degree, the more the teacher’s absence frequency was reduced ($r = -0.23, p < 0.01$).
Table 1. Correlations of the study variables – mainstream schools ($n = 150$).

|       | Mean | Standard deviation (SD) | 2     | 3     | 4      | 5      | 6      | 7      | 8      | 9      | 10     | 11     |
|-------|------|-------------------------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 Gender | 1.8  | 0.47                    | 0.15  | 0.21**| 0.08   | 0.11   | 0.11   | 0.04   | 0.12   | 0.05   | 0.09   | 0.04   |
| 2 Academic degree | 2.49 | 0.98                    | 0.41***| 0.30***| 0.05   | 0.09   | 0.12   | 0.11   | 0.01   | 0.08   | 0.08   |
| 3 Age | 37.54 | 15.45                  | 0.65***| 0.12   | 0.1    | 0.12   | 0.09   | 0.02   | 0.12   | 0.11   |        |
| 4 Seniority | 16.46 | 10.71                  | 0.12   | 0.09   | 0.12   | 0.09   | 0.09   | 0.09   | 0.14   | 0.11   |        |
| 5 Authentic leadership | 3.3  | 1.2                     | 0.95***| 0.81***| 0.88***| 0.77***| 0.70***| 0.11   |        |
| 6 Transactional leadership | 3.34 | 1.16                    | 0.87***| 0.92***| 0.78***| 0.75***| 0.12   |        |
| 7 Transactional leadership | 3   | 1                       | 0.89***| 0.81***| 0.80***| 0.03   |        |
| 8 School ethical climate | 3.09 | 0.979                   | 0.80***| 0.80***|        |        |
| 9 Absenteeism acceptance | 2.62 | 0.959                   | 0.71***| 0.05   |        |
| 10 Organizational citizenship behavior | 3.03 | 1.08                     | 0.06   |
| 11 Absence frequency | 1.44 | 2.43                     |        |

**p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 (SD = 2.43).
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
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<th>3</th>
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<th>6</th>
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<th>8</th>
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*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.
Regression analysis findings

Since the correlation analyses indicated that most of the study variables did not predict absence frequency, additional checking by hierarchical regression analyses was designed to find the most significant predictors of ‘absenteeism acceptance’ instead of absence frequency as compared to OCB. Table 3 and Table 4 present the hierarchical regression analyses. Regression analyses indicated that the background variables (academic degree, seniority, gender, age, and school type) and authentic leadership did not predict ‘absenteeism acceptance’ or OCB. In addition, we found that transactional and transformational leadership predicts ‘absenteeism acceptance’ and OCB among teachers, whereas the relationship with transactional leadership was stronger than transformational leadership (step 2, Table 3 and Table 4). However, adding SEC (step 3, Table 3 and Table 4) cancelled out the effect of transformational leadership, supporting H2, in terms of the dominance of transactional leadership over transformational leadership.

### Table 3. Hierarchical regression analyses to predict absenteeism acceptance.

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<td>0.003</td>
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<td>0.146</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.224**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School ethical climate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.304***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

R²=73.4%.

### Table 4. Hierarchical regression analyses to predict organizational citizenship behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic degree</td>
<td>–0.031</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>–0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>–0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>–0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>–0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.115</td>
<td>0.153</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School type</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational leadership</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.232*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School ethical climate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.479***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.290***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.500***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05; ***p < 0.001.

R²=69.5%.
Considering the high correlations between leadership styles and SEC (Table 1 and Table 2), we may consider the possibility of multicollinearity. However, we found in both hierarchical regression analyses (Table 3 and Table 4), that in the second step when we added both transformational leadership and transactional leadership, the relationship of each one of them with the dependent variables (absenteeism acceptance, and OCB) was found to be significant, and one variable did not cancel out the other. In the third step, when we added SEC, it affected only transformational leadership and not transactional leadership, reflecting that each one of them (transformational leadership, and transactional leadership) has its specific characteristics, supporting H1(b). In sum, all of these findings reduce representation of multicollinearity problem.

We used SEM by AMOS 18.0 software in order to explore an integrative model that was based on previous studies (e.g. Arbuckle, 2014), indicating that considering all variables in the same model may elicit new findings as compared to bivariate correlations (Table 1 and Table 2) or hierarchical regression analyses (Table 3 and Table 4). Thus, we tested our proposed model, the mediating effect of ‘absenteeism acceptance’ between the different styles of leadership (authentic, transactional, and transformational), SEC and voluntary absence and OCB, while keeping in mind the different school types (mainstream and special education schools) (Figure 2).

In the SEM literature, several “rules of thumb” cut-off criteria have been suggested to evaluate model fit. None of these criteria has been universally accepted due to the lack of compelling theoretical rationale and empirical evidence (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Wolf et al., 2013). In addressing these issues, Hu and Bentler (1999) have suggested several alternatives for cut-off criteria. They argue that cut-off values close to 0.90 for both the Tucker–Lewis index and comparative fit index, close to 0.06 for root mean square error of approximation, and close to 0.05 for standardized root mean square residual, would justify the conclusion of a relatively good fit between the hypothesized model and the data. As shown in Figure 2, the indices indicate a good model fit of the study measures.

Based on the integrative model elicited from SEM analysis H1 (a) which argued that teachers’ perceptions regarding their principals’ authentic, transactional and transformational leadership would relate to each other positively was supported in addition to the correlation analyses (Table 1 and Table 2). For example, we found positive relationships between authentic leadership and transactional leadership ($\beta = 0.79, p < 0.001$), between authentic leadership and transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.95, p < 0.001$), and between transactional leadership and transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.84, p < 0.001$). We also found additional support for H1 (b) which argued that each leadership style would relate differently to the other study factors. For example, while we found positive relationships between transactional leadership and OCB ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.01$) and between transactional leadership and absenteeism acceptance ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.01$), the other leadership styles (authentic and transformational leadership) were not found to be significantly related to OCB.

In addition to the correlation results, we found strong positive relationships between each of the different styles of perceived school leadership and SEC among teachers which may confirm our hypothesis that all of these independent variables contain ethical meaning (H3).

We found partial support for hypothesis H4, which claims that ‘absenteeism acceptance’ will mediate the relationship between the different leadership styles (authentic, transformational, and transactional), SEC, and voluntary absence and OCB. Using the Sobel test (Table 5), we found that ‘absenteeism acceptance’ partially mediated the relationship between transactional leadership and OCB. We found a significant relationship between transactional leadership and OCB ($\beta = 0.270,$
After adding the mediator ‘absenteeism acceptance’, the relationship value was reduced yet still significant ($\beta = 0.198$, $p < 0.05$). The 0.072 reduction was deemed to be significant according to the Sobel test ($Z = 6.38$, $p < 0.01$). Because the indirect relationship was still found to be significant, we could draw the conclusion that we found a partial mediation (this finding may lend additional support for H2, implying the importance of transactional leadership over other leadership styles).

Similarly, we found that ‘absenteeism acceptance’ partially mediated the relationship between SEC and OCB. We found a significant relationship between SEC and OCB ($\beta = 0.519$, $p < 0.05$). After adding the mediator ‘absenteeism acceptance’, the relationship value was reduced yet remained significant ($\beta = 0.462$, $p < 0.05$). The 0.057 reduction was deemed significant according to the Sobel test ($Z = 4.70$, $p < 0.01$). Because the indirect relationship was still found to be significant, we may conclude that we found an additional partial mediation.

H5, which claims that background variables (gender, seniority, age, academic degree, and school type) will explain voluntary absences and OCB, was not supported (based on Tables 1–4, and Figure 2). We found a positive relationship only between gender and academic degree ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.05$).
While previous studies discussed how teacher burnout affects OCB and voluntary absenteeism (Halbesleben and Buckley, 2004; Petitta and Vecchione, 2011; Swider and Zimmerman, 2010), this study aims to learn how predictors with ethical meaning may affect our study model, based on teachers’ perceptions on an individual level. More specifically, the goal of this study is to develop an integrative perspective to better understand the psychological model of different leadership style dimensions, SEC, ‘absenteeism acceptance’, OCB and voluntary absence, while taking into consideration two primarily school types, mainstream and special-education schools.

Regarding the first study question (Does ‘absenteeism acceptance’ mediate the relationship between different leadership styles, SEC, and voluntary absences and teachers’ OCB?), we found that transactional leadership leads to acceptance of absenteeism from school, and as a result, increases OCB. These findings can be explained by the fact that teachers tend to accept absenteeism, since they may feel that the principal rewards (material, and emotional) are not commensurate with the actual hard work they invest, including the time they put in after hours (e.g. talking on phone with parents, examining evaluations, and preparing school lessons). Nevertheless, it seems that their caring attitude toward the school still leads them to tend towards OCB. These findings suggest that teachers can have opposing attitudes and behaviors; on the one hand, teachers will tend to be absent; yet on the other hand, they will act above and beyond expectations out of a sense of professional responsibility. Furthermore, these findings may be supported by previous studies indicating that contradictory behaviors may be expected in the same person at the very same time and that a positive perception of SEC leads to greater acceptance of teacher absence, and as a result, to higher OCB (e.g. Coyne et al., 2013; Sackett et al., 2006; Vardi and Weitz, 2004); therefore, our findings may be explained by the fact that an ethical climate in school is characterized by collegial relationships and support.

With further regard to the mediating effect of absenteeism acceptance, we also found among school staff, that this may lead participant teachers to perceive that their colleagues will understand the reason for their absence. As a result, participant teachers will tend to accept theirs’ and other teachers’ absenteeism. This is not to say that participant teachers purposely take advantage of the system, but rather that they believe their surroundings will be sensitive to their needs and thereby accept their absence. This belief may reflect participant teachers’ perception of theirs’ and others’ absenteeism as a less severe phenomenon than in other less supportive climates. In the aftermath, these participant teachers compensate for their ‘absenteeism acceptance’ tendency by increasing their OCB because of their caring attitude toward the school (just as the school cares about their

### Table 5. Testing the mediating effect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediation effect (absolute value)</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Indirect effect</th>
<th>Direct effect</th>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Mediator variable</th>
<th>Independent variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sobe test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>6.38**</td>
<td>0.198* (0.061)</td>
<td>0.270* (0.064)</td>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
<td>Transactional leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>4.70**</td>
<td>0.462* (0.062)</td>
<td>.519* (0.063)</td>
<td>OCB</td>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
<td>School ethical climate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.

### Discussion

While previous studies discussed how teacher burnout affects OCB and voluntary absenteeism (Halbesleben and Buckley, 2004; Petitta and Vecchione, 2011; Swider and Zimmerman, 2010), this study aims to learn how predictors with ethical meaning may affect our study model, based on teachers’ perceptions on an individual level. More specifically, the goal of this study is to develop an integrative perspective to better understand the psychological model of different leadership style dimensions, SEC, ‘absenteeism acceptance’, OCB and voluntary absence, while taking into consideration two primarily school types, mainstream and special-education schools.

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need to be absent). These findings may further support Vardi and Weitz’s (2004) approach that attitudes and behaviors perceived as contradictory may emerge in the same person. It is important to note that we also found that a high level of SEC boosts teachers’ tendency to give above and beyond that which is required of them, and that leads to OCB.

The insignificant relationship between OCB and voluntary absence may support the independence of each factor; notably, they can appear together in the same person, but they can also appear separately, without any interdependency. We also found a direct positive relationship between transactional leadership and OCB, indicating that the primary compensation for the teachers’ efforts, namely emotional or material reward, boosts motivation to work and invest beyond what is expected.

Thus, regarding the second question, namely, whether we can suggest an integrative model that could predict contradictory behaviors among teachers in different school types, based on their perceptions of school leaders and the SEC – the answer is yes. However, it is instructive to note that the elicited integrative model yielded noteworthy findings, some of which were supported by previous studies (e.g. Vardi and Weitz, 2004).

The research findings prove that there are significant positive relationships between the three leadership styles. For example, the positive relationship between transformational leadership and authentic leadership may explain why transformational leadership is reflected by ethical school principals, who encourage their teachers to reflect their own beliefs and values, and by authentic leadership, as reflected in the school principal’s own high morality. The high positive correlation between transactional leadership and transformational leadership is supported by Judge and Piccolo’s (2004) results, revealing that transformational and transactional leadership are strongly related.

In any event, we found that the most dominant leadership style was transactional leadership (based on SEM and the regression results), supporting the “fundamental” proposition of transformational–transactional leadership theory (Bass and Avolio, 1991). This finding reflects the view that transactional leadership is the basis for transformational leadership, and that transformational leadership must be constructed upon a foundation of transactional leadership (Bass, 1999). In general, these findings are supported by Judge and Piccolo’s (2004) study indicating that the transactional leadership spectrum is highly effective and in some cases was found to be more effective than transformational leadership.

Moreover, with regard to the relationship between the different leadership styles and SEC, we may explain these findings based on the fact that these different leadership styles, which focus on ethical meaning, may promote SEC. That is reflected, for example, by authentic leadership including aspects of high moral ability, by transactional leadership including aspects of fair reward in return for their efforts, and by transformational leadership including aspects of support while encouraging others to reflect values.

We assumed that we would find differences in the proposed research model, taking into consideration the Israeli regulation variance between the two major types of Israeli educational systems (mainstream and special-education schools). However, this study found that the type of school does not affect the research model. Possible explanations for these findings may be based on the fact that the Israeli educational system, akin to educational systems across the world such as in Argentina (Hanson, 1998), Cyprus (Pashiardis et al., 2011), Korea (Lee, 1998), and Turkey (Yildirim, 2003), is highly centralized and is thus controlled by the Ministry of Education (Tubin, 2011). Therefore, it seems that although regulations regarding a “flexible year” differ, most other procedures are the same. Hence the model is not affected by school type. Moreover, it seems that
perceptions about principals’ leadership or SEC among teachers are the relevant factors in predicting teachers’ OCB or ‘absenteeism acceptance’, as opposed to factors such as school type and regulations regarding teachers’ absenteeism.

Finally, we found that ‘absenteeism acceptance’ did not predict teachers’ absenteeism. In contrast to Shapira-Lishchinsky and Ishan’s (2013) study which found a positive relationship between ‘absenteeism acceptance’ and voluntary absence, this relationship was not found in our study. This finding may be explained by the fact that the ‘absenteeism acceptance’ examined in the former study related to junior high schools, whereas in this study ‘absenteeism acceptance’ was examined in elementary schools. It may be that aspects of self-emotional response, emotional response to colleague absence, and a general approach to work absence that exist in the ‘absenteeism acceptance’ measure, do not influence voluntary absence among teachers in elementary schools, since their motivation to be absent from school may differ from the motivation of junior high school teachers.

Contribution, strengths, limitations, and future research

Theoretically, this study proposed a parsimony-integrative model on the teacher level regarding factors that have typically been investigated separately in the literature. In practice, developing school principals’ leadership training programs and spotlighting the promotion of transactional leadership and SEC may be instructive in advancing teachers’ OCB in schools. Methodologically, in this study we focused on teachers’ individual level in order to develop an integrative approach. As a result, we found it appropriate to sample one teacher from each school, which contributed to avoiding school membership interdependence. Future studies may also consider the effect of school level on the different leadership styles and SEC by using nested models based on multi-level models.

The main goal of this study was to develop a parsimony-integrative model in order to understand better the mediating effect of absenteeism acceptance. Therefore, we did not refer to the different dimensions of the study variables. Future studies in line with the literature regarding the relationship between contingent reward and transformational leadership (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Piccolo et al., 2012) may encourage studying the relationship between the different dimensions of leadership styles (e.g. contingent reward and transformational leadership) and the other study variables and their dimensions.

Based on ethical considerations, the teachers submitted their questionnaires attached to their anonymous absence records, thus these data may be considered largely self-reported, and therefore subject to some bias. Indeed, collecting data from a single, self-report source opens up the possibility that the results may be due to common-method variance; that is, variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than the constructs that measures represent. However, self-ratings seem the most feasible way to assess perceived leadership styles, as they represent subjective mental representations. Also, following Podsakoff et al. (2003) participants were assured that there were no right answers or wrong answers, thus reducing common-method variance as well.

In any case, we reduced this bias based on the fact that teachers could not change these absenteeism records, and they voluntary submitted these records with their questionnaires. In this respect, this study does not differ from previous work (e.g. Lovelace et al., 2001; Shapira-Lishchinsky and Even-Zohar, 2011). More recent research suggests that self-reported data are not
as limited as was previously believed, and that people often accurately perceive their social
environment (e.g. Benoliel and Somech, 2014).

Future studies should further examine the relationships arising in this study, and encourage
development of a specific tool for different educational levels (elementary, junior high and
high schools) to pinpoint the specific factors that may predict teachers’ absenteeism on each
level.

Another limitation was the fact that the sample was drawn from only two districts in Israel.
Thus, in order to generalize the findings, additional research is needed in other districts in Israel
as well as beyond Israel’s borders. A further limitation of the study is that the relationships’ flow
in the model is unidirectional, although a relationship in the opposite direction is also a reason-
able expectation.

Moreover, future research should consider other models, such as the conservation of resources
model, and additional factors such as burnout and motivation, while considering different educa-
tional regulations.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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