An Ethical Approach to Teachers’ Dysfunctional Behaviours: Voluntary Lateness and Voluntary Absence
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Abstract
Voluntary lateness and voluntary absence may be considered dysfunctional behaviours in schools. However, only few studies focus on the relationship between them and ethics. This study will explore the relationships between these behaviours and organizational ethics. Participants were 1,016 teachers. GLIMMIX procedure was used for a simultaneous consideration of voluntary lateness and voluntary absence. Results showed that lateness was related to formal climate and to distributive justice, representing extrinsic ethical motivation factors. Absence was related to caring climate, representing intrinsic ethical motivation factors. The findings may direct principals to focus on improving ethical perceptions among teachers through programs on ethics.

Keywords: teaching, ethics, schools, lateness, absence

Introduction
Withdrawal behaviours refer to a set of attitudes and behaviours used by employees when they stay at the job but for some reason decide to be less participative (Kaplan, Bradley, Lachman, & Hayness, 2009). Growing evidence shows that withdrawal behaviours are systematically inter-related, thus may be viewed as a syndrome (Koslowsky, 2009). The focus of this paper is voluntary lateness and voluntary absence, common in educational system worldwide (Levacic & Downes, 2004; Meier, 2004; Reinikka & Svensson, 2003, 2010; Van Nuland & Khandelwal, in press; Weidman & Enkhjargal, 2008). In most educational systems they are considered dysfunctional behaviours (Kaplan et al., 2009) and an abuse of the system, as when teachers work fewer hours or days than contracted for, yet get paid for the time they did not...
work. A teacher’s absence (either total or due to lateness) affects the working norms of his or her colleagues (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2012), and may result in a waste of public funds (e.g., paying for the declared sicken days and paying for the substitute teachers). These behaviours cast a shadow on school standards, which may lead to a decrease in public trust and parental confidence in the educational system. The present study examines the dysfunctional aspect of voluntary lateness and voluntary absence and its relationship to ethics. 1

Other than the common themes behind both voluntary lateness and voluntary absence, there is also a methodological reason for studying these two symptoms simultaneously. In recent years, the relationships between employee withdrawal behaviours and organizational ethics has been explored, focusing on a single withdrawal symptom (e.g., Blau, 1994, 1995; Bowers, 2001; Bowers & Melver, 2000; Carmeli, 2005; Koslowsky, 2000; 2009). Our new methodological approach enables us to combine lateness and absence in the same study. Using an integrative approach that has rarely been employed, we will consider also the effect of socio-demographic factors on the relationship between ethical aspects and voluntary lateness and voluntary absence, to help distinguish between voluntary lateness and voluntary absence, often investigate as a single behaviour.

The current study is based on the following research points: (1) a syndrome-based approach to various dysfunctional organizational behaviours, (2) a conceptual similarity of lateness and absence, and (3) organizational ethics are particularly relevant to dysfunctional behaviours such as lateness and absence. Based on these points, and coupled with the availability of statistical methodology that enables simultaneous examination of several dependent variables, the purpose of the present study is to explore the relationships between specific dimensions of organizational ethics and voluntary lateness and voluntary absence, and consider the effect of specific socio-demographic factors on these relationships. Unlike most previous studies that pointed at similar antecedents of both withdrawal behaviours, we will seek to point out the unique patterns of each withdrawal behaviours based on the above relationships.

Theoretical Background
The Withdrawal Syndrome
Lateness refers to arriving late to work or leaving before the end of the day (Koslowsky, 2000). Lateness, which has motivational antecedents, is classified into three dimensions: chronic, unavoidable, and avoidable. Chronic lateness is a response by the employees to bad work situation. Avoidable lateness occurs when employees have better or
more important activities to do than to arrive on time. *Unavoidable lateness* is due to factors beyond the employee's control, such as transport problems, bad weather, and accidents (Blau, 1995).

Work absence is 'the lack of physical presence at a behaviour setting when and where one is expected to be' (Harrison & Price, 2003, p. 204). Sagie (1998) distinguished between two basic types of absence: *voluntary absence*, which usually is under the direct control of the employee and are frequently exploited for personal issues, and *involuntary absences*, which are usually beyond the employee's immediate control.

Of course, not all lateness and absenteeism are signs of dysfunction. Many valid and legitimate reasons (e.g., doctor appointment, illness, and bereavement) may keep a teacher away from the classroom. But some lateness and absences are blatantly illegitimate. This is the case when a salaried teacher is late to class or does not show at all. Instead, the teacher moonlights elsewhere for supplementary income, clearly abusing the system, and depriving students of appropriate education (Campos & Pradhan, 2007). In case of absenteeism, even if the school calls in a substitute teacher, the lessons taught by substitute teachers often are not considered effective (Ingersoll, 2004). In addition, there is the *ethical problem* of paying the substitute teacher while paying the absent teacher for declared sick days on which he or she enjoyed good health (Ingersoll, 2001). In summary, whether the cause of lateness or absence is justified or not, it is still hinders organizational operations and must be controlled.

Four major theoretical constructs for the internal structure of withdrawal behaviours have been suggested for describing the relationships between various withdrawal behaviours. According to the *independent model*, withdrawal behaviours have different causes and functions, and should therefore be unrelated to each other (Hulin, 1991). The *spillover model* posits that withdrawal behaviours are positively related, without specifying any temporal or sequential relationship (Beehr & Gupta, 1978). The *compensatory model* proposes that similar antecedents cause specific forms of withdrawal to be negatively correlated (Nicholson & Goodge, 1976). The most common model is the *progressive model*, according to which withdrawal manifestations occur in progression, beginning with relatively mild forms of psychological withdrawal, such as occasional lateness and moving to more severe forms such as absence (Johns, 2003; Koslowsky et al., 1997).

However, the literature does not seem to afford a clear indication of the interrelations between the different withdrawal behaviours, and the findings are somewhat ambiguous. A few researchers reported no
relationship (Rosse, 1988), others reported negative relationships (Nicholson & Goode, 1976), some reported positive relationships (Iversen & Deery, 2001; Leigh & Lust, 1988), while still others claim that there is no sequential relationship between withdrawal behaviours, and they can occur concurrently (Benson & Pond, 1987; Wolpin, Burke et al., 1988). This inconclusiveness is an impetus for examining the relationships between different ethical factors and lateness and absence, in an attempt to better understand the unique patterns of each withdrawal behaviour.

**Organizational Ethics**

Two approaches to organizational ethics have gained particular interest among scholars in recent years – organizational justice and ethical climate. Each of these concepts provides a unique perspective of organizational ethics, and each proved to be the source of valid predictors of organizational behaviours.

*Organizational justice* refers to equity in the workplace (Greenberg, 1995), the ways how employees’ perceptions of equity are determined, and how these perceptions influence organizational outcomes. Organizational justice research has focused on two key dimensions: distributive justice, which refers to the fairness of the outcomes an employee receives (Adams, 1965) and procedural justice, which describes the fairness of the procedures used to determine organizational outcomes (Pillai et al., 2001).

*Ethical climate* presents another concept of organizational ethics – the employees’ perceptions of organizational norms regarding behaviour and decisions that bear ethical content (Cullen et al., 2003; Victor & Cullen, 1988), so that “employees perceive the existence of normative patterns in the organization with measurable degree of consensus” (Victor & Cullen, 1988: 103). Victor & Cullen (1988) proposed a two-dimensional model of ethical climate. One dimension represents three basic ethical approaches: egoism (maximizing self-interest), benevolence (maximizing joint interests), and principle (adherence to ethical principles). The second dimension represents the various levels of analysis: individual, local (organizational), and cosmopolitan (societal).

Cross-tabulation of the two dimensions produces nine ethical climates. Victor and Cullen (1988) organized these nine ethical climates into five principal categories: (1) caring (egoism at the cosmopolitan level and benevolence at all levels, where employees have a genuine interest in each others’ welfare, both inside and outside the organization), (2) instrumental (egoism on the individual and local levels, where personal and organizational interests are most important), (3) rules
(principle on the local level, where employees are mainly guided by organizational rules and procedures), (4) law-and-code (principle on the cosmopolitan level, where employees are guided by laws, regulations, and professional codes), and (5) independence (principle on the individual level, where employees are guided by personal convictions and personal morality).

Rosenblatt and Peled (2002) factored analyzed data collected among Israeli teachers, and arrived at a five factor solution, of which two were particularly strong and dominant – caring and formal. In their study of parental involvement in Israeli schools, they found differential patterns of relationships for the two factors vis-à-vis two types of involvement – cooperation-based and conflict-based. Thus, these two factors may then present different facets of organizational ethics. Similarly, Shapira-Lishchinsky and Even-Zohar (2011) who studied 201 nurses from a hospital in northern Israel found that in relation to the factors caring and formal climate, the other factors of ethical climate proved negligible when considering withdrawal behaviour syndromes.

Organizational justice and ethical climate present different aspects of organizational ethics as perceived by the teachers, and therefore are closely interrelated. Organizational justice presents the actions and decisions made by management; ethical climate refers to the workplace environment (Colnerud, 2006). Previous studies viewed the procedural justice and ethics of care and as interrelated, as both revolve around responsibility and social relationships and both consider morality as the means for resolving interpersonal conflicts (Moorman, 1991; Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2005; Ulrich et al., 2007).

Distributive justice and formal climate are also closely related, because both are concerned with the rights of employees and with the formal rules and regulations that ensure the fair allocation of benefits (Gilligan, 1982). In this study we will try to find whether the distinction: procedural justice and caring climate vs. distributive justice and formal climate is reflected in the relationship between different dimensions of organizational ethics and such voluntary withdrawal behaviours as lateness or absence.

The Relationship between Organizational Ethics and Withdrawal Behaviours

According to the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theory (Deci, 1975) we may distinguish between the different dimensions of organizational ethics. Extrinsic motivation comes from outside of the individual. Common extrinsic motivations are rewards like money (distributive justice) and threat of punishment in case employees did
not obey the rules (formal climate), which focus on the short term in controlling people’s behaviour (Kohn, 1993). *Intrinsic motivation* refers to motivation that is driven by an interest in the process itself and exists within the individual rather than relying on any external pressure. Research on *intrinsic motivation* has focused on the long term and directed attention to more general benefits of support and justice process (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). For example, teachers are likely to be intrinsically motivated if they believe they can be effective agents in achieving procedural justice and if they have goals such as caring for students or colleagues (Covington & Mueller, 2001).

The most common model of the internal structure of withdrawal behaviours posits that withdrawal manifestations occur in *progression*. They begin with relatively mild forms of psychological withdrawal such as voluntary lateness, and move to more severe forms such as absence. This progression would lead us to expect that *extrinsic ethical factors*, which focus on the short term like formal climate and distributive justice, will affect lateness. Thus:

**H1.** The relationship between distributive justice and lateness will be higher than with absence.

**H2.** The relationship between formal climate and lateness will be higher than with absence.

However, *intrinsic motivation* refers to motivation that is driven by an interest in the process itself and exists within the individual rather than relying on any external pressure. Research on intrinsic motivation has focused on the long term and directed attention to more general benefits of support and justice process (Deci et al., 1999). For example, teachers are likely to be intrinsically motivated if they believe that they have goals such as caring for students or colleagues (Covington & Mueller, 2001) or if they can be effective agents in achieving procedural justice. Regarding more severe withdrawal behaviours as absence, we anticipate that *intrinsic* ethical factors, which focus on the long term like caring climate and procedural justice, will affect absence. This lead to the following two hypotheses:

**H3.** The relationship between caring climate and voluntary absence will be higher than with lateness.

**H4.** The relationship between procedural justice and voluntary absence will be higher than with lateness.
Moderating Effects of Background Variables: Gender and Seniority

Gender as a Moderator between Distributive Justice and Voluntary Lateness

Studies indicate that women may be affected by distributive justice issues more than men (Lee & Farh, 1999), because they earn less than men and are less rapidly promoted (Blau, Tatum, Ward-Cook, Doberia, & McCoy, 2005; Eagly & Carli, 2007). In Israel, for example, female educators earn about 60% of the salary of their male counterparts, a gap due, primarily, to the distribution of administrative positions (Eagly, Beall, & Sternberg, 2004; Swirski, Conor, Swirski, & Yehezkel, 2001). Although teaching is considered a “pink” profession in Israel, with about 73% of the teaching force consisting of women, the number of male principals is disproportionate to the number of male teachers. In 2005, only 42.6% of secondary school principals in the Jewish sector were women (Addi-Raccah, 2006). These statistics lay the foundation to our contention that women will be more sensitive to distributive justice than men because they experience more distributive injustice than men. Thus, when distributive justice is perceived as low, women may tend to be more late than men. This leads to the next hypothesis:

H5. Gender will moderate the relationship between distributive justice and lateness. For women, this relationship will be stronger than for men.

Seniority as a Moderator between Caring Climate and Voluntary Absence

Regarding seniority, studies showed that years of service affect teachers’ withdrawal behaviours. At an advanced stage of the teaching career, high seniority means that teachers have tenure and it is thus harder to fire them (Ingersoll, 2004; Liu & Meyer, 2005). Thus, considering the negative expected relationships between caring climate and voluntary absence (H3), we assume that they will be affected by the level of seniority. Hence:

H6. Seniority will moderate the relationship between caring climate and voluntary absence. The higher teachers’ seniority, the higher their voluntary absence.

Method

Population and Sample

Participants were 1,016 teachers (67% response rate) from 35 high schools which are part of a 52-school in Israel. The average number of teachers in each school was 54.74 (SD = 25.54). 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 ethical perceptions about their schools. Women constituted 68% of the sample. Participants’ average age was 43.19 years (SD = 9.42); average school seniority was 12.60 years (SD = 8.48), and average teaching seniority was 17.90 years (SD = 9.39). The majority of teachers (86.1%) were tenured; the others were employed through temporary contracts. These characteristics, roughly, represent the composition of the teacher body in the network under study, and in Israeli high schools in general (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

Data Collection
All schools in the network were approached by the researchers, and the 35 schools included in the study were those whose principals agreed to cooperate. Data were collected using questionnaires that were voluntarily self-reported by teachers during their free time on school premises.

Measures

Variables and Measures

Lateness. Lateness was measured by a single item adapted from a measure of withdrawal behaviours developed by Blau (1994, 1995) and by Neal, Chapman, Ingersoll-Dayton, & Emlen, (1993). The use of a frequency measure to assess avoidable lateness is based on studies of absenteeism, which found frequency to be a pertinent indicator of voluntary absences (Dalton & Mesch, 1991; Sagie, 1998). For the purpose of this study, lateness is defined as arriving 6 or more minutes after the bell. Previous studies have shown that arriving 6 minutes after schedule is unacceptable in many organizations, which is the rationale for defining lateness in this study as 6 minutes or more after the bell (Blau, 1994). Teachers in a pilot study confirmed that up to 6 minutes is perceived as legitimate lateness.

The choice of a 30-day period over which to report lateness was based on a pilot study in which teachers were asked about a reasonable time span in which lateness could be remembered. Following Johns’s (1994) discussion of self-reported absence measures, the 30-day period would seem to be long enough to afford reliability, yet still short enough to minimize memory loss, thus offering a valid picture of lateness in schools.

Absenteeism behaviour. We asked teachers to report each absence incident separately. To aid memory, we attached a calendar to each questionnaire. It is generally believed that absence frequency is the best measure of voluntary absence, whereas absence duration (total number of days lost) is the best reflection of involuntary absences (Blau et al.,
Because our purpose was to investigate the relationship between ethical perceptions and voluntary absence, the measure used was absence frequency, i.e., the number of times a teacher was absent during the reporting period, regardless of the number of days lost (Blau et al., 2004). In order to obtain a reliable profile of teacher absence, we decided upon a 5-month period (one semester), assuming that it is reasonable to expect teachers to be able to remember their absences during this span of time (Johns, 1994).

**Rationale for the Use of Self-reports of Lateness and Absenteeism**

The attitudinal and behavioural data collected with self-report scales is somewhat problematic, because of the risk of compromising validity and due to inaccuracy caused by memory decrement and systematic bias (Blau et al., 2005; Nicholson & Payne, 1987). However, the focus of this study was on self-reported lateness and absenteeism. At present, Israeli schools do not maintain lateness records. As for absenteeism, we obtained school records in order to check whether the self-reported data in this study were indeed accurate. We aggregated our teacher-level self-report scores by schools and correlated these data with the school-record data for each school. We did not find any significant differences between the data sources regarding the average duration of absence (Wilcoxon test, $Z = -.392$, $p = 0.695$), and therefore were able to conclude that the self-report data was consistent with school records and hence could be used confidently.

**Organizational justice.** This 21-item measure was based on Moorman (1991) and was translated into Hebrew by the Shapira-Lishchinsky (2007). A factor analysis (principal components, Varimax rotation) yielded three factors, of which the first two, representing the dominant types of justice (distributive and procedural), were selected for the present study. **Distributive justice** assessed the fairness of various school outcomes, including pay level, work schedule, and work load ($\alpha = .87$, 20.33% of explained variance). **Procedural justice** assessed the degree to which job decisions included mechanisms that ensured the acquisition of accurate and unbiased information, a voice for teachers in school matters, and an appeal process ($\alpha = .94$, 37.08% of explained variance).

**Ethical climate.** We replicated Victor and Cullen’s (1988) original 26-item measure. We used the Obvarimax procedure, which allows interdependence between variables. This process yielded six factors, the first two of which were adopted for the present study. The rationale for this was that both factors had an above 15% explained variance, while the next factors had lower levels of explained variance.
The two factors chosen were: (a) “caring” climate, a factor which included six items, with a reliability of \( a = .86 \), and 15.87% explained variance. (b) “formal” climate, a factor which included nine items, with a reliability of \( a = .87 \), and 15.68% explained variance. For the remaining four factors, explained variance levels were found to be relatively low (6.85-9.61%).

Sample items, number of items, response range and reliability coefficients obtained in this study are presented in Appendix 1.

Control variables: Gender. 0 = men, 1 = women. School seniority: 1-44 years (\( SD = 8.48 \)).

Analysis

In the present study we used clustered data, where two observations of two different dependent variables were taken for the same sample. Therefore, our analytic approach was to simultaneously consider the two dependent variables and their relationships with a set of independent variables. Because both dependent variables – lateness and absence – represented count data, we used a joint model, where absence is characterized by a Poisson distribution and lateness is characterized by a Negative Binomial distribution. We employed the GLIMMIX procedure of SAS for this analysis (SAS Institute Inc, 2008).

In addition to direct effects, we also looked at interactions between ethical factors (caring climate, formal climate, procedural justice, and distributive justice), withdrawal behaviours (lateness, absence), and control variables. The control variables were gender (binary, 0 = men, 1 = women) and seniority (three categories: mean, mean plus \( SD \), and mean minus \( SD \)).

The independent variables in the study model were centralized.

Results

Correlations Analysis

A simple correlation matrix between the study independent variables is presented in Table 1. As expected, the two dimensions of ethical climate – caring and formal – were relatively highly correlated (\( r = .543, p < .001 \)), and the two dimensions of justice – distributive and procedural – were modestly correlated (\( r = .371, p < .001 \)). More interesting were the diagonal correlations between dimensions of the two ethical concepts. We found that caring climate and procedural justice were very highly correlated (\( r = .707, p < .001 \)). This high correlation may support our assumption that both variables represent intrinsic motivation factors. The correlation between the other two dimensions...
of organizational ethics assumed to represent extrinsic motivation factors—distributive justice and formal climate—was highly significant ($p < .001$) but relatively modest ($r = .485$), compared to the variables that represent intrinsic motivation factors. The remaining two correlations for which we did not assume any correlations were found relatively low in relate to the other correlations present above (distributive justice and caring climate — $r = .37$, $p < .001$; procedural justice and formal climate — $r = .35$, $p < .001$).

**Analysis of Relationships between Organizational Ethics, Gender, Seniority, and Withdrawal Behaviours**

Regression analysis of the GLIMMIX procedure (Table 2) showed that teachers who perceived their schools’ distributive justice as unethical tended to be late to work ($t = .74$, $p = .046$), while no significant relationship was found between distributive justice and absence, supporting H1. We also found that teachers who perceived their schools’ formal climate as unethical tended to be late to work ($t = -2.44$, $p = 0.015$), while no significant relationship was found between formal climate and absence, supporting H2. Also, teachers who perceived their schools’ caring climate as unethical tended to be more absent ($t = -2.49$, $p = 0.013$), while no significant relationship was found between caring climate and lateness, supporting H3. Only, H4 was not supported – the relationship between procedural justice and absence was not found to be significant. Thus we may say that the majority of our hypotheses (H1, H2 and H3) support our distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors.

In regard to control variables, Table 2 shows that gender and seniority were related to absence (women and senior teachers tended to be more absent).

**Moderation (Gender, Seniority) Analysis**

We tested for interaction effects between ethical variables and control variables by the two separate distributions (Negative Binomial and Poisson). Table 3 presents these results.

**Gender.** For women (but not men) distributive justice is negatively related to lateness; women who perceived their schools to practice just distribution tended less to be late ($t = -3.22$, $p = 0.001$). These results are illustrated in Figure 1, and support H5.

**Seniority.** In order to interpret the interactions regarding seniority, we formed three regression lines: mean seniority (medium seniority), mean plus one standard deviation (high seniority), and mean minus standard deviation (low seniority). Results showed that for low-senior-
ity teachers and for medium- seniority teachers, the more caring was the school climate, the less these teachers tended to be absent \( (t = -3.19, p = 0.001; t = -2.49, p = 0.013, \) respectively). This effect was not found regarding high-seniority teachers, thus supporting H6. These results are depicted in Figures 2.

**Discussion**

Based on the assumption that lateness and absence are interconnected (being two different manifestations of withdrawal syndrome), and can usually be considered to be a dysfunction in educational systems, the two behaviours were analyzed simultaneously. Using the GLIMMIX procedure, we examined the relationships of these behaviours with four constructs of organizational ethics: distributive and procedural justice, and caring and formal climate. All in all, results mostly reflect the study’s main theoretical idea: The two voluntary withdrawal behaviors – lateness and absence – differed in respect to indicators of organizational ethics: each behaviour was related to a different ethical indicator, along the lines presented in the study hypotheses; while lateness was more sensitively to *extrinsic ethical motivation factors*, absence was more sensitively to *intrinsic* ethical motivation factors.

Our first two hypotheses posited that lateness would be related to *extrinsic* ethical motivation factors with long-term effect (formal ethical climate, distributive justice) more strongly than absence was. Results showed that this hypothesis was mostly supported. Lateness was related to formal ethical climate, while absence was not. Lateness, unlike absence, was also related to distributive justice.

Our following hypotheses posited that absence, more than lateness, would be related to intrinsic ethical motivation factors with long-term effect (caring climate, procedural justice). Results showed that this hypothesis was partially supported. Absence was indeed related to caring climate (in particular for medium- and low-seniority teachers), while lateness was not. The fact that absence was not related, contrary to the hypothesis, to procedural justice, may be explained by the problems in Israel regarding absence policy. Because state-wide policy is not clear, teachers do not associate their withdrawal behaviours (absence and lateness) with such policy, even when policy is initiated at the school level. Thus, policy procedures derived from perceptions of procedural justice (e.g., requirements to report early on planned absence), are not strong enough to influence behaviour.

Regarding the relationship between gender and withdrawal behaviours, it was found that women tend to withdraw from work more than men. This could possibly be explained by the fact that women, more
than men, tend to experience work-family conflict (Barling, MacEwen, Kelloway, & Higginbottom, 1994; Blau, 1994; Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003). The societal expectation is that women will be more concerned about their family than men (Boyar et al., 2005); thus, in cases of children's illness, women tend to be the ones to visit the doctor (which results in lateness) or stay at home and take care (which results in absence).

The examination of the relationship between distributive justice and lateness revealed that women were more sensitive to distributive justice than men, which may support our assumption that female teachers experience more distributive injustice than male teachers (e.g., men are promoted to more prestigious and better paid jobs, such as the job of school principal). The paucity of rules regarding lateness in the Israeli educational system may explain the fact that among women, perception of distributive justice affects lateness but not absence. However, such rules exist in regard to absence. Thus, in cases of low distributive justice, women prefer to be late than absent, perhaps lending credence to the theory that woman, more than men, tend to act by the rules in order to increase their social desirability (Eagly, Eastwick, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2009). In this study perhaps, men did not associate their perceptions of distributed rewards with their option to come late to work because of their confidence of getting more than their fair share of promotions.

Regarding the relationship between seniority and withdrawal behaviours, we found that more years of service are related to more teachers' voluntary absence. We may explain this finding by the fact that at an advanced stage of the teaching career, high seniority implies the accumulation of tenure, organization-specific work experience and eligibility for financial benefits, thus teachers chose to continue in school but withdraw from it (Ingersoll, 2004; Liu & Meyer, 2005).

In the matter of the relationship between caring climate and voluntary absence, we found that medium-to low seniority affects this relationship. We suspect that low-seniority teachers were mostly without tenure. As such, a caring climate may be particularly important to them during induction and socialization into the school environment. These teachers apparently reacted to a low ethical climate with long-term aspect absence. In contrast, high-seniority teachers, who are likely tenured and enjoy work perks and union protection, did not necessarily associate the perceived caring level in their workplace with their attendance behaviours.
Theoretical Implications for Scholars

One contribution of this study is based on the findings that ethical factors relate negatively to voluntary lateness and absence, supporting our study approach, that these behaviours may be considered, in certain situations, to be main symptom of dysfunction in educational systems. The second contribution of this study leans on our findings indicating that our division based on extrinsic and intrinsic ethical motivation factors may support the differences that exist between lateness and absence. The study findings indicate that although lateness and absence are both withdrawal behaviours, we may not consider them to be on par with each other, at least in their ethical factors. Moreover, our integrative approach, which considers both ethical and socio-demographical factors, makes the difference between these withdrawal behaviours deeper and sharper.

Practical Implications for Teachers’ Ethical Education

The study results imply that school leadership aiming at reducing dysfunctional behaviour, such as voluntary lateness or absence, in educational institutions should focus on organizational ethics. In particular, schools should promote high standards of caring climate and distributive justice, and consider the effects of gender and seniority. Educational leaders should understand their ethical and moral obligation to create and promote ethics-oriented schools in regard to the difference that exist between lateness and absence based on extrinsic and intrinsic ethical motivation factors. Such awareness may be achieved through teachers’ ethical workshops which may help teachers to develop their sensitivity to issues of ethical behaviours in educational systems.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Studies

To date, the variables and constructs presented here have been mostly presented separately in the literature. This paper presents an innovative approach in an attempt to explain an integrative phenomenon and examine the variation that exists between different ethical factors and the emerged variation that exists between lateness and absence.

The self-reported study instrument was vulnerable to a same-source bias. Also, with self-reports, results could have been influenced by social desirability responses. Moreover, there was a risk of compromising validity and of inaccuracy due to memory decrement and systematic bias (Blau et al., 2005; Nicholson & Payne, 1987). Although our analysis of schools’ average absence records is consistent with our findings regarding absence self-reports, we recommend that future studies guard more effectively against self-report bias.
In addition, factors such as organizational ethics seem to be most appropriate for voluntary behaviours. However, it is often difficult to classify a particular incident as an example of voluntary or involuntary withdrawal behaviour. Yet the present study attempted to cover two withdrawal behaviours by postulating the existence of several types of antecedents where one or a combination of them may provide an adequate explanation for the behaviour.

Traditionally, withdrawal behaviours have been of interest to administrators because of their associated cost. Future studies should investigate whether these costs may be balanced against the benefits of teachers’ withdrawal behaviours (conservation of resources) although these benefits are difficult to measure directly.

The study sample was limited to teachers in Israeli high school, and this may have affected external validity. However, as our main results proved consistent with those of other studies on school ethics and voluntary turnover (e.g., Ingersoll, 2001, 2004), there is reason to expect that they may apply to other schools in Israel and elsewhere.

Notes
1 The present study is part of a larger research project on teacher withdrawal syndrome (lateness, absence, intent to leave) and school ethics.
2 Tenure in the Israeli public education system is granted after three years of service.

References


Table 1. Means, SD, correlations and reliability coefficients ( )
of the study variables (N = 1,016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Seniority</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Caring climate</th>
<th>Formal climate</th>
<th>Distrib. Justice</th>
<th>Procedural justice</th>
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<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.97**</td>
<td>-0.180***</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>-0.086**</td>
<td>-0.065**</td>
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<td>Seniority</td>
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<td>8.485</td>
<td>0.634***</td>
<td>-0.063*</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>-0.068*</td>
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<td>Caring climate</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>.732</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
<td>.543***</td>
<td>.368***</td>
<td>.707***</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal climate</td>
<td>3.885</td>
<td>.602</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
<td>.485***</td>
<td>.350***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distributive justice</td>
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<td>(.87)</td>
<td>.371***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedural justice</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001, * men = 0, women = 1
Table 2. The relationship between lateness, absence, and organizational ethics, controlled by gender and seniority (GLIMMIX analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Withdrawal symptom</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Pr(t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distribution effect Lateness</td>
<td>-0.115</td>
<td>0.966</td>
<td>-1.19</td>
<td>0.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender a</td>
<td>Lateness</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority</td>
<td>Lateness</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring climate</td>
<td>Lateness</td>
<td>-0.120</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence</td>
<td>-0.159</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>-2.49</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal climate</td>
<td>Lateness</td>
<td>-0.242</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>-2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence</td>
<td>-0.044</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
<td>0.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive Justice Lateness</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural justice</td>
<td>Lateness</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.606</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a Gender: Male = 0, Female = 1, DF = 959

Table 3. The interaction between ethical variables, control variables and withdrawal behaviors (GLIMMIX analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction F(DF)</th>
<th>Withdrawal symptom</th>
<th>Interactive B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Pr(&gt;t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring climate X seniority 4.83</td>
<td>Lateness Low seniority</td>
<td>-0.297</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>-2.37</td>
<td>0.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium seniority</td>
<td>-0.120</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
<td>0.252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High seniority</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absence Low seniority</td>
<td>-0.240</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>-3.19</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium seniority</td>
<td>-0.159</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>-2.49</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High seniority</td>
<td>-0.078</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>-1.01</td>
<td>0.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive justice X gender a 3.25 (0.039)</td>
<td>Lateness Male</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.233</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>-3.22</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absence Male</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.545</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a Gender: Male = 0, Female = 1, DF = 959
Figure 1. The interaction effect of distributive justice and gender on lateness

Figure 2. The interaction effect of caring climate and seniority on absence
Appendix  
Study measures, sample items and reliability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure (Source)</th>
<th>Sample items</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Caring climate** (Victor & Cullen, 1988) | The following statements deal with your attitudes toward your school.  
1. In this school, people look out for each other’s good.  
2. In this school the major concern is the good of all the teachers in school.  
3. In this school, it is expected that you will always do what is right for the community. | 6 | .86 |
| **Formal climate** (Victor & Cullen, 1988) | The following statements deal with your attitudes toward your school.  
1. Everyone is expected to stick to school rules and procedures.  
2. In this school, the law or ethical code of the profession is the major consideration.  
3. The most efficient way is always the right way in this school. | 9 | .87 |
| **Distributive justice** (Moorman, 1991) | The following statements deal with your attitudes toward your school.  
1. I think that my level of pay is fair.  
2. Overall, the rewards I receive here are quite fair.  
3. I feel that my school responsibilities are fair. | 5 | .87 |
| **Procedural justice** (Moorman, 1991) | The following statements deal with your attitudes toward your school.  
1. My principal makes sure that all teachers’ concerns are heard before school decisions are made.  
2. To make school decisions, my principal collects accurate and complete information.  
3. All school decisions are applied consistently across all affected employees. | 12 | .94 |
| **Lateness** (Blau, 1994; 1995) (Neal et al., 1995) (Johns, 1994). | Participants were asked: “Over the past thirty days, how many times were you late to class six or more minutes after the bell?” | 1 |
| **Absence** (Johns, 1994) (Johns, 1994) | Participants were asked: “How many workdays did you miss in each of the last five months?” | 1 |

Except for the questions regarding lateness and absence, responses were rated 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).