



## Do Leadership Styles Influence Organizational Health? A Study in Educational Organizations

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**Abstract:** This research aims to investigate the effect of leadership styles of school principals on organizational health. Causal-comparative research model was used to analyze the relationships between leadership types and organizational health. For data collection, a Likert type Multifactor Leadership scale questionnaire and Organizational Health scale were administered to 151 teachers working primary and secondary schools in Osmaniye city. Data were analyzed by using multiple regression analysis method. Findings of this study indicated significant relationships between school principals' leadership styles and health of schools, that leadership style of school leaders influence organizational health level of a school. Transformational leadership style was also found out to be closely related to a healthy school environment while transactional leadership style is negatively correlated with organizational health. Individual consideration, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation sub-dimensions are found to effective in the formation of organizational health. In the light of the findings, some recommendations were also presented.

**Keywords:** *School principals, leadership styles, organizational health*

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### Introduction

Although some scholars (e.g. Aldoory and Toth, 2004; Meindl, Ehrlich and Dukerich, 1985) challenge the idea that leadership plays a strong role in organizational performance, and that there are false-assumptions regarding the importance of leadership factors to the functioning of groups, scholars such O'Reilly et al. (2010) and Yukl (1994) have reached a conclusion that leadership truly matters in an organization and that leaders play an important role in the attainment of organizational goals by creating a climate that would influence employees' attitudes, motivation, and behavior. Therefore, despite disputes on the construct of leadership as a strong force in organizations, the common understanding seems to be towards the active role of leadership in the direction of an organization.

Organizations need to be more flexible in responding to customers' needs and reacting to competitors' attempts to undermine their market position (Ograjenšek, 2002). In this "ferocious battle" (Kushwah and Barghaw, 2014:1) where classical leadership approaches do not work well, the survival of any organization is largely dependent on the effectiveness and efficiency of its leaders (Ekuna, 2014). Recent studies have also indicated that types of leadership in an organization influence organizations' performance, efficiency and health to a great extent (Celik, 2007).

There are several definitions of leadership in research literature. For instance, Can (2007, p.261) defines leadership as the "process of affecting others to achieve goals", while Ergeneli (2006, p.215) approaches it as a tool to "force, channelize and coordinate activities of members of a group to reach certain objectives". Celik (2007) emphasizes "usage of power" in leadership and defines it as a power to influence employees' opinions, activities and behaviors towards realization of goals. As a workplace concept that has been an issue analyzed psychologically, sociologically, politically and philosophically (Sisman, 2004), leadership is to make people work together for a particular goal, and refers to sum of knowledge and skills in order to achieve this intended goal (Eren, 1998, p.342; Tagraf and Calman, 2009, p.136).

Various dramatic changes such as globalization, technological advances, social and demographic trends and legal and ethical issues lead to changes in the organization of work which then necessitate that business leaders evaluate and restructure their style and approach in line with these new workplace values (Ekuna, 2014; Kew and Stradwick, 2008;

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Jones and George, 2006). Deficiencies of traditional leadership theories resulted in emergence of new theories and styles of leadership two of which are transformational leadership and transactional leadership (Turan, 1996).

Burns (1978) describes transforming leaders as individuals that inspire his followers in acquiring moral values such as equity and justice. While putting emphasis on moral values, transformational leaders also try to diffuse rapid and effective changes in organization (Celik, 2007). It is a leadership approach for more effective schools, meeting high order needs of employees, directing them to exert extra efforts, by using idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration (Bass, 1990). *Idealized influence* is the degree to which the leader behaves in admirable ways that cause followers to identify with the leader (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Adair (2005) sees it as equal to charisma and as a feature that is endowed to exceptional people. Charismatic leaders display conviction, take stands, and appeal to followers on an emotional level (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). *Inspirational influence* means setting high expectations, giving inspirational speeches to motivate followers and help them focus on goals (Bass and Avolio, 1990). Leaders with inspirational motivation challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goal attainment, and provide meaning for the task at hand (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). *Intellectually inspirational* leaders encourage employees to approach organizational problems in novel ways and stimulate their creativity (Bass and Avolio, 1990). It is also seen as the degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks, and solicits followers' ideas (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). In a nutshell, transformational leaders consider every employee individually, understand that employees have different needs, expectations, traits, listen to every individual in an organization and develop their self-confidence (Avalio, Waldman and Yammarino, 1991).

Transactional leadership, on the other hand, that is considered to be the opposite of transformational leadership aims at maintaining existing structure (Celep, 2004). Transactional leadership has three dimensions: contingent reward, management by exception (active), and management by exception (passive) (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). *Contingent reward* refers to reward systems used by leaders based on their performance and proficiencies and using these reward system as tools to maintain order and discipline at workplace (Geyer and Steyrer, 1998). A leader who has *management by exceptions (active)* leadership style follow employees' performance, tries to prevent them from falling to achieve certain standards and correct their mistakes. A leader who has *management by exceptions (passive)* leadership style does not act until a problem arises (Bass, 1997). In other words, active leaders monitor followers' behavior, anticipate problems, and take corrective actions before the behavior creates serious difficulties, while passive leaders wait until the behavior has created problems before taking action (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). The management by exception passive leaders carry the notion: "do not fix until it is broken!" (Karip, 1998). The final leadership style is *laissez-faire* leadership which symbolizes "lack of interaction". It is also defined as the avoidance or absence of leadership and leaders who score high on laissez-faire leadership avoid making decisions, hesitate in taking action, and are absent when needed (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Geyer and Steyrer, 1998). In such a leadership, the person occupying the highest level of hierarchy does not use power and that power is transferred to low levels of an organization (Rowold and Schlotz, 2009).

The type of leadership used by organizational leaders is known to affect various organizational variables one of which is organizational health. In 1969, Mathew Miles established the concept of organizational health through analysis of school health. He defines a healthy organization as one surviving in changing conditions, capable of challenging problems and one that can continuously develop its skills (Akbaba, 2001, p.31).

Healthy organizations, particularly healthy schools have special characteristics such as being goal oriented, having communicative competence, authority transfer, effective usage of resources, commitment/unity, morality, innovation, independence, adaptation and problem solving (Miles, 1969). Health of organization could be regarded as an indicator for psycho-social status of school (Akbaba, 1997).

Recently, organizational health has become a concept that all institutions and sectors pay attention to since organizational health levels seem to influence various concepts such as job satisfaction, effectiveness, teacher performance, student achievement and it is also being affected by these variables (Celep and Mete, 2005; Korkmaz, 2007). A healthy organization is the one where all the organizational processes are performed efficiently (Xenidis and Theocharous, 2014). It is significantly associated with students' perceptions of being cared, equity perceptions, and engagement levels (Bottiani, Bradshaw, Mendelson, 2014). In healthy schools, there is a high level of harmony among staff and they are successful schools (Hoy, Tarter and Kottkamp, 1991). What is more, there appears to be a high correlation between a strong school vision and organizational health (Korkmaz, 2005). Responsibility of turning schools into healthy schools rest upon school leaders as they are held accountable for realization of school's goals and vision. In that sense, leadership styles of school leaders are significant sources of school health (Cemaloglu, 2007; Fliegner, 1984).

A school with a health organizational climate is one that copes successfully with its environment as it mobilizes its resources and efforts to achieve its goals and a healthy organization is one in which technical, managerial and

institutional levels are in harmony (Hoy and Miskel, 2005). Table 1 shows types of needs satisfied by healthy organizations and strategies used to meet these needs (Hoy et al., 1991).

**Table 1.** Needs and strategies to meet these needs in healthy organizations

Organizational Needs	Strategies
Task needs	Focus on goals Communication adequacy Optimal power equalization
Maintenance needs	Resource utilization Cohesiveness Morale
Growth and development needs	Innovativeness Autonomy Adaptation Problem-solving adequacy

How leadership styles that are employed in day-to-day practices by school leaders inhibit or reinforce schools' organizational health has been an issue that needs close scrutiny. This research, conducted based on primary and secondary teachers' perceptions working in a small city in Turkey, aims to investigate the effect of leadership styles of school principals on organizational health. The study is thought to contribute to existing literature by exploring the effects of transformational and transactional leadership styles on schools' organizational health in educational context. Along with existing literature on the relationship between these two concepts in business sector (Howell and Avolio, 1993; Tagraf and Calman, 2009), on academicians working in tertiary level (Akdogan, 2002) and on teachers (Akbaba, 1997; Cemaloglu, 2007; Yildirim, 2006), this study aims at both validating previous findings gathered from educational organizations and provide a comparison with findings from other sectors, thus helping conceptualize relationships between leadership styles and organizational health.

### Methodology

As the study intends to analyze the relationship between leadership styles and organizational health, causal-comparative research model was used in the study. This model tries to analyze an existing situation or reasons behind a phenomenon on the basis of cause-effect (Buyukozturk, Cakmak, Akgun, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2008, p.15; Fraenkel and Norman, 2008, p.362). Though Karasar (1998, p.82) mentions some problems related to taking findings of this model as cause-effect relationship, it is also expressed that due to technical, economic difficulties faced during implementation process of studies, findings can be used within cause-effect context.

#### *Participants*

Population of the research consists of 151 teachers working in 5 primary and elementary schools in Kadirli town of Osmaniye province during 2012–2013 educational year. Basic random probability sampling method was used to determine the participants of the study. Two of these schools where data were collected are located in a low socio-economic status neighborhood, one is located in a medium socio-economic status neighborhood and the remaining two schools are located in a high socio-economic status neighborhood. Inclusion of schools located in different socio-economic levels neighborhood is thought to contribute to variety and objectivity of the data.

#### *Data Collection Tools*

For this research, "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire" (Akdogan, 2002) and "Organizational Health Scale" (Akbaba, 1997) were used as data collection tools. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire that contains 45 questions was developed by Bass and Avolio (1990) in the light of situational leadership theory to determine leadership styles. The Likert-type scale was adapted to Turkish by Akdogan (2002) and was resized to contain 36 questions. There are 2 main dimensions of the scale: transformational and transactional leadership and sub-dimensions such as (inspirational motivation, intellectual inspiration, individualized consideration, idealized influence contingent reward, management by exception (active), and management by exception (passive), laissez-faire).

Also, "Organizational Health Scale" which was developed by Akbaba (1997) was used. The scale consists of 25 questions and 5 sub-dimensions: organizational leadership, organizational cohesiveness, organizational identity, organizational product and environmental interaction.

## Findings

Demographic information of the participants is presented on Table 2.

**Table 2.** Demographics of participants

		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male	87	57.6
	Female	64	42.4
Tenure	1-5 years	14	9.3
	6-10 years	25	16.5
	11-19 years	56	37.1
	20 and above	56	37.1
Age	30 and below	21	13.9
	Between 31-40	56	37.1
	41 and above	74	49.0
	Total	151	100

As seen on Table 2, most of the teachers that participated in the research are experienced teachers and most of them are senior citizens.

**Table 3.** Averages, standard error and standard deviation scores

Dimensions	$X_{avg}$	Std. Err.	S.d.
Leadership	3.40	.04	.58
Organizational Health	3.05	.05	.60
Individual Consideration	3.20	.06	.79
Intellectual Stimulation	3.39	.07	.84
Idealized Influence	3.21	.08	.76
Inspirational Motivation	3.13	.05	.54
Management by Exceptions Active	3.28	.04	.55
Management by Exceptions Passive	3.50	.06	.67
Contingent reward	3.34	.06	.72
Laissez-faire	3.44	.06	.72

On Table 3, it is seen that based on teachers' opinions, organizational health of schools is perceived to be on average while a great number of teachers believe that their school leaders use management by exception passive and Laissez-faire leadership styles. Table 4 shows results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis of the effect of school principals' leadership styles on organizational health.

**Table 4.** Results of multi regression analysis of school principals' leadership and organizational health

Independent Variables	B	Std. Err.	$\beta$	t	P	
Step 1	(Constant)	3.35	.55		6.13	.00
	Gender	.07	.10	.06	.679	.50
	Age	.01	.02	.07	.28	.78
	Tenure	.00	.02	.06	.22	.82
Step 2	(Constant)	.96	.39		2.43	.01
	Gender	-.04	.07	-.03	-.61	.54
	Age	.00	.01	.02	.13	.89
	Tenure	.01	.01	.10	.63	.53
	Leadership	.78	.06	.76	14.10	.00***

*Dependent Variable: Organizational Health*  
 $\Delta R^2 = .568^{***}$ ; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

As seen on Table 4, school principals' general leadership scores significantly predicts organizational health ( $\beta=.76$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Based on this model, 57 % of the variance in organizational health is explained by teachers' leadership skills perceptions in this model ( $\Delta R^2=.568$ ,  $p<.001$ ). It could then be concluded that when school principals' leadership skills increase, organizational health becomes better.

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis on the effect of sub-dimensions (inspirational motivation, intellectual inspiration, individualized consideration, idealized influence, contingent reward, management by exception (active), and management by exception (passive), laissez-faire) of leadership styles on organizational health is presented on Table 5.

**Table 5.** Hierarchical multiple regression analysis results to assess the best predictors of the effect of school leaders' leadership sub dimensions on organizational health

Independent Variables		B	Std. Err	$\beta$	t	p
Step 1 (Enter Method)	(Constant)	3.35	.55		6.13	.00
	Gender	.07	.10	.06	.68	.50
	Age	.01	.02	.07	.28	.78
	Tenure	.00	.02	.06	.22	.82
Step 2. (Stepwise Method)	(Constant)	1.35	.40		3.40	.00
	Gender	-.02	.07	-.06	-.27	.79
	Age	.00	.01	.04	.23	.82
	Tenure	.01	.01	.08	.51	.61
	Ind. Consideration	.23	.10	.31	2.38	.02*
	Insp. Motivation	.22	.10	.25	2.18	.03*
	Idealized Influence	.32	.09	.29	2.25	.02*
	Intellect. Stimulation	.17	.08	.24	2.17	.03*
Transact. Leadership	.23	.10	-.32	3.24	.02*	

*Dependent Variable:* Organizational Health

$\Delta R^2=.579^{***}$ ; \* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$ , \*\*\* $p<.001$

As shown on Table 5, among school principals' leadership sub-dimensions, individual consideration ( $\beta=.31$ ), inspirational motivation ( $\beta=.25$ ), idealized influence ( $\beta=.29$ ) and intellectual stimulation ( $\beta=.24$ ) significantly predict organizational health. School principals' transformational leadership behaviors (individual consideration, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation) together explain 58 % of variance in organizational health ( $\Delta R^2=.579$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Also, transactional leadership styles negatively influences school organizational health ( $\beta=-.32$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and significantly predicts % 32 of organizational health.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Similar to various other studies (Cemaloglu, 2007; Fliegner, 1984; Korkmaz, 2007; Yildirim, 2006), results of this research show a significant relationship between school principals' leadership styles and the health of the organization. Based on this finding, it could be reasoned that type of leadership a school leader uses has a determining effect on the level of health teachers think their school has. The way a school leader acts during organizational processes could act as an inhibiting or reinforcing factor in the development of organizational health. To further clarify this, when a school leader influences teachers towards visional goals, inspires them, motivates them to help a school effectively achieve its goals and shows great care to every individual he or she works with, that school will have more chances to survive in fast changing conditions, will be more capable of challenging problems it faces, can continuously develop its skills which are features of a healthy school specified by Akbaba (2001).

Studies carried out by Cemaloglu (2007) and Korkmaz (2005) have also found out that individual consideration and idealized influence are the strongest predictors of organizational health. Yildirim (2006), on the other hand, combined intellectual stimulation and individual consideration and showed that these dimensions significantly predict all sub dimensions of organizational health.

Findings of this study corroborates Korkmaz (2007)'s finding that transformational leadership has an effect on organizational health and that transformational leader guides school staff to develop themselves. Therefore, it could be concluded that teachers who work with leaders who they believe display high levels of transformational leadership also believe they have a healthier school environment which could be further explained that when school leaders collaboratively create a shared vision, inspire and influence teachers towards realization of the school mission and goals, directs their energies towards school mission, shows active consideration of each teacher's daily work, based on teachers' perceptions, their school becomes stronger in terms of adapting itself to "disruptive outside forces" as emphasized by Hoy and Miskel (2005).

In a similar vein, Yukl (1994) found out that creative activities of leaders and a climate to promote learning also foster organizational health. Other studies (Hater and Bass, 1988; Howell and Avolio, 1993) have also revealed that transformational leadership strengthens organizations. Transformational leaders motivate their employees to work towards higher goals and lead them to exert more efforts for their organizations.

This study has also found out that transactional leadership variables have negative effects on organizational health. It could be noted that transactional leaders supporting status-quo by only following the directions given by central administration are not likely to have positive impacts on organizational health. In line with this, Korkmaz (2007) has also shown that transactional leadership decreases organizational health. Since transactional leaders put a lot of emphasis on bureaucracy and rules, this weakens leader-subordinate relationships and negatively affects organizational health. Thus, based on teachers' opinions, it could be concluded that school principals' transformational leadership styles contribute to teachers' success and effectiveness. At schools where school principals have transformational leadership styles organizational health may not be expected to be negatively affected.

### *Suggestions*

In the light of the findings, the following recommendations were made: Top managers should focus on the leadership styles of school principals and the importance of its impact on organizational health. Use of transformational leadership styles should be encouraged and should be supported by the policy makers. When a certain type of awareness about leadership and organizational health is created, employees would become more enthusiastic and determined, a better leader-subordinate relationship could be created and employees' perception level and job performance could be developed. School principals' in-service training activities towards developing leadership styles should be organized. This way, school leaders' enrichment of opinions about leadership could be promoted and schools could become healthier and more efficient. By extending the sampling, further studies could be made in different cities and towns on the effect of leadership styles on students and parents.

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