

The Relationship Between Transformational School Leadership and Ethical Climate

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between transformational school leadership and ethical climate. The participants were 764 teachers in 50 elementary schools in Nigde during the 2008/2009 academic year. Two distinct instruments were used in this study. The Principal Leadership Style Inventory developed by Leithwood and Jantzi (1991) was used for determining principals' transformational leadership style and the Ethical Climate Questionnaire developed by Victor and Cullen (1988) was used to determine the ethical climate. Pearson product correlation coefficient and simple regression techniques were used for data analysis. Results showed that principals carried out fostering group goals the highest and holding high performance expectations the lowest among transformational leadership dimensions. Elementary schools had caring at the highest level and instrumental at the lowest level as ethical climate types. All dimensions of transformational leadership were positively related to caring, law and code, and rules ethical climate types. The highest relationship was found between all dimensions of transformational leadership and caring ethical climate type. Instrumental ethical climate was negatively related to providing vision or inspiration, models behavior, fostering group goals, providing support and providing intellectual stimulation. Instrumental was not significantly related holding high performance expectations. The highest negative relationship was found between instrumental and providing support, models behavior. Independence ethical climate was positively related to providing support, intellectual stimulation and holding high performance expectations. Independence was not significantly associated with providing vision or inspiration, models behavior and fostering group goals. School transformational leadership was a significant predict of ethical climate. A simple regression analysis showed that approximately 40% of the total variance pertaining to ethical climate can be explained by transformational leadership behaviors.

Key Words

Transformational Leadership, Transformational School Leadership, Ethical Climate.

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Organization's desire for fulfilling their purposes effectively has introduced the requirement of leadership (Kanungo, 2001). Behavioral scientists have strived to identify the traits, abilities, behaviors, and power sources of a leader that is capable of affecting the followers of group purposes have. Leadership research in the early 20th century focused on traits approach (Aronson, 2001). There have been very few subjects that were more controversial than leadership traits and qualities. These theories were based on the claim that leaders' qualities are different than those of non-leaders (Çelik, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991).

Nonetheless, the opinion that personal characteristics are the only identifiers of good leadership could not be sufficiently proven in the late 1940s and this has resulted in a trend, which points out the leadership style or behavior. The basis of this approach has been the idea of what conduct of leaders would be effective (Aronson, 2001; Erçetin, 2000). In this context, research on leadership effectiveness was based on two basic concepts, namely task orientation and relationship orientation. It was thought that styles were not sufficient in identifying the effectiveness; postulate of "situation creates the appropriate conditions for leadership effectiveness" has been proposed, and many theories based on this postulate were developed. Known as contingency, these approaches have fallen in to disfavor as they were limited to small groups, and new leadership approaches were introduced in the early 1980s. At this stage, many researchers have studied the charismatic leadership phenomenon and the effects of transformational and transactional leadership approaches proposed by Burns (Aronson, 2001; Shamir & Howell, 1999; Şişman, 2004). As opposed to conventional leadership theories that emphasized rational process, transformational and charismatic leadership theories that emphasize the feelings and values have emerged from the late 1980s until today (Yukl, 1999).

Studies on ethical aspect of the leadership have been discussed in the context of transformational and charismatic leadership approaches (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). It is plausible that transformational and transactional leadership approaches proposed by Burns (1978) in particular paved the way for discussion of the relationships between leadership and ethics.

Transformational Leadership and Ethics

Burns (1978) has proposed transformational and transactional leadership approaches. He defined the characteristics of a transformational leader in moral terms and defined this leadership style as moral leadership. According to Burns, in transformational leadership approach, leaders and followers further take each other's motivation and morality to higher levels. Burns has based the relationships between leader and follower to a series of moral principles and developed rules regarding the nature of good leadership in terms of morality (Ciulla, 1995). Burn's theory has focused on moral leadership and led a different view to the leadership theories (Sergiovanni, 1990).

Bass (1985) has further advanced transformational and transactional leadership approaches. He determined the dimensions of transformational leadership as idealized influence (charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Bass, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1993; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Transformational leadership has a high moral development. It develops autonomy and increases the employee satisfaction (Bass, 1999). Transformational leaders ensure that employees are able to look beyond their self-interests for the good of the group and succeed this objective by means of one or more ways. Leaders may be charismatic in the opinion of the followers and thereby inspire them; they meet emotional needs of each employee and/or provide intellectual stimulation. Achieving charisma in the opinion of employees is in the center of transformational leadership. Employees want to identify with them and trust them. Individualized consideration requires paying attention to individual differences among the employees. By means of intellectual simulations, leaders teach handling old problems in new ways and seeing the difficulties in problem solving, and point out realistic solutions (Bass, 1990).

Point of origin of transformational leadership is leader's values and beliefs. Basic purpose of leader's transformational effects is to change the values, beliefs and attitudes of the followers (Conger, 1999; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Transformational leaders make use of constant universal values while formulating the ideal vision for the organization (Erdoğan, 2004; Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007; Özden, 2002). Leader's moral principles and integrity adds legitimacy and plausibility to vision (Mendonca, 2001). This ensures that the leader and the vision proposed by

the leader can be identified with. In this sense, ethical behaviors can be considered as the basis of transformational leadership (Treviño, Brown, & Pincus, 2003). An administrator as an ethical leader finds ways to focus the organization's attention on ethical values, and brings in organization the principles that would guide actions of all the employees (Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000).

Ethical behavior is directly related to leadership in organizations. Research indicates that employees take leader's behaviors as model in organizations. If leaders have ethical conduct, employees also have ethical conduct (Calabrese & Roberts, 2001; Treviño et al., 2000). Leaders also have the responsibilities of guiding the behaviors of the followers and institutionalizing the moral values and ethical conduct standards as well as increasing the effectiveness of the organization (Grojean, Resick, Dickson, & Smith, 2004). Until recent years, ethical aspects of the management were largely abandoned and managers were considered as people who are responsible of ensuring effectiveness merely (Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001).

The researches in transformational leadership have generally tried out to find its effect on employees' attitude, efforts and performance. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman and Fetter (1990) have examined the influence of transformational leader's behaviors on organizational citizenship. In addition, Pillai, Schriesheim and Williams (1999) have studied the influence of transformational leadership on organizational citizenship through operational justice and trust.

Organizational leaders have a critical role in determining an ethical climate. Although there are certain factors to determination and change of the climate, leaders have the greatest impact on the ethical climate (Carlson & Perrewe, 1995; Grojean et al., 2004). Ethical climate legitimates the management's conduct, and ensures that a confidence relationship develops between individuals and groups (Dickson et al., 2001). It has been pointed out that ethical climate has influence on ethical behavior and attitude, and it is related to ethical judgment (Barnett & Vaicys, 2000; Trêvino, Butterfield & McCabe, 1998; Vardi, 2001).

Leadership conducts' moral role and effect process is an issue that was introduced recently. Most of the studies on this issue have been theoretical studies. In the absence of an ethical leader, organizations lose their effectiveness and become soulless structures. Transactional leaders

serve their self-interests. Transformational leadership's effect process is considered to be ethical (Kanungo, 2001).

Although there is great concern for the relationships between leadership and ethics, amount of empirical studies in these fields is fairly limited. Historically, although leadership literature points out that the leader has an impact on the ethics of an organization, those who research the issue of ethics begun considering these relations only recently (Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum, 2005).

Transformational School Leadership and Ethics

Environmental changes have great impact on organizations' purposes and structures. Organizations have to adapt to such changes in order to sustain (Celep, 2004; Gümüşeli, 2001). Given the changes prevail today, transformational leadership is the most appropriate leadership style in schools' restructuring initiatives because this leadership style aims the innovation in organizations and supports teachers (Leithwood, 1992, 1994; Marks & Printy, 2003).

Transformational leadership research in educational environments have been introduced by Leithwood et al. Having adapted transformational leadership models that were developed in non-school contexts to school environments, Leithwood have identified six dimensions to transformational school leadership, namely: identifying and articulating a vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, providing individualized support, intellectual stimulation, providing an appropriate model, and high performance expectations (Geijsel, Slegers, & Berg, 1999; Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Transformational leadership has only recently become the subject of empirical examinations in schools (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). In the context of school, the relationship between transformational leadership and satisfaction (Bogler, 2001; Griffith, 2004; Kirby, Paradise, & King, 1992; Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995), commitment (Geijsel, Slegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003; Yu, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2002), leadership qualifications (Çelik, 1998), organizational conditions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000), school learning culture (Barnett, McCormick, & Conners, 2001), school culture (Şahin, 2004), bullying (Cemaloğlu, 2007), organizational health (Korkmaz, 2007), bureaucratic school structure (Buluç, 2009) has been examined. In addition, Akbaba-Altun (2003)

has examined the elementary school principals' perceptions and performance about transformational leadership.

Research on transformational leadership has generally studied transformational leadership's effect on student, teacher and organizational outputs. Accordingly, the requirement of studying the ethical aspects and effects of transformational leadership has become even more important in context of a school. Schools are the most normative ones among normative organizations and leadership in schools requires high level of moral efforts contrary to routine management because schools are typically moral organizations (Greenfield, 1995, 2004). Burn's distinction between transformational and transactional leadership has an important contribution on forming the educational leadership studies (Greenfield, 2004), much of the current literature emphasizes the need for a heightened awareness of the ethical dimensions of the educational leadership, and this point of view has changed the description of the educational leadership (Campell, 1999; Rucinski & Bauch, 2004).

Organizational Ethical Climate

First theoretical and empirical studies in the field of ethical climate were made by Victor and Cullen (Fritzsche, 2000; Wittmer & Coursey, 1997). Victor and Cullen (1988) developed a model for ethical climate that consisted of two dimensions. They have pointed out that first dimension consisted of ethical criteria used for decision making purposes while the second dimension indicated locus of analysis as a referent in ethical decisions. They based the first dimension on three moral philosophies, namely egoism, benevolence and principle (Agarwal & Malloy, 1999). The second dimension is based on sociologic referent theory (Barnett & Vaicys, 2000). They defined locus of analysis as individual, local and cosmopolitan, and developed nine theoretical ethical climate models by combining these two dimensions.

Victor and Cullen (1988) have developed an organizational ethical climate questionnaire by using this model and further to their studies, identified five ethical climate types, namely caring, law and code, rules, instrumental, and independence.

Ethical climate studies carried out on organizations generally excluded educational organizations. Some of these studies were: the relationship between ethical climate and job satisfaction by Deshpande (1996),

the relationship between ethical climate and behavior by Wimbush, Shepard and Markham (1997), the relationship between the strength of an organization's ethical climate and ethical problems by Bartels, Har-rick, Martell and Strickland (1998), the relationship between ethical climate and misconduct by Vardi (2001), the relationship between ethi-cal climate types and commitment by Cullen, Parboteeah and Victor (2003), Martin and Cullen (2006).

In schools as a social system, human relations have an important role (Bursalioglu, 1994). For a principal making a true decision is bound to his/her view and expectations about people and his/her good and true understanding (Pehlivan, 1998). If relations at schools are based on mor-ality, the quality of education will be redounded (Easley, 2008). Ethical perspective grounded school climate investigations may help evaluating human relations (Keiser & Schulte, 2007). Nevertheless, only a small amount of research has been conducted on schools' ethical climate.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between transformational school leadership and ethical climate, and whether transformational school leadership was a predictor of ethical climate.

Method

Participants

The survey model was used in the study. The participants were 764 teachers in 50 elementary schools in Nigde during the 2008/2009 aca-demic year. Of the total, 379 were females (49.6%) and 385 were males (50.4%).

Instruments

Two distinct instruments were used in this study. The Principal Leader-ship Style Inventory developed by Leithwood and Jantzi (1991) was used for determining principals' transformational leadership style and the Ethical Climate Questionnaire developed by Victor and Cullen (1988) was used to determine the ethical climate.

The Principal Leadership Style Inventory developed by Leithwood and Jantzi (1991) was used in this study because it was thought to be more relevant to elementary schools. Instrument consists of total of 40

items, namely 29 items that determine transformational leadership and 11 items that determine transactional leadership. Sub-dimensions of transformational leadership: Providing vision or inspiration consists of 6, models behavior consists of 4, fostering group goals consists of 5, providing support consists of 6, providing intellectual stimulation consists of 5, holding high performance expectations consists of 3 items. Sub-dimensions of transactional leadership: management by exception consists of 5, and contingent reward consists of 6 items. Instrument is a 5-point Likert type scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree).

Instrument was translated in to Turkish language by the researcher and opinions of 3 linguists were consulted. Afterwards it was translated from Turkish in to English by three different English Language and British Literature specialists and opinions of field experts were consulted to ensure conformity to Turkish language. Researchers, developed the inventory, found the reliability coefficient of the inventory as .95 (Reason, 1995). In this study, Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the instrument was calculated to be .93, with Cronbach Alpha coefficients for sub-dimensions being .66 for providing vision or inspiration, .76 for models behavior, .77 for fostering group goals, .79 for providing support, .79 for providing intellectual stimulation, and .66 for holding high performance expectations. Transactional leadership style was not included in the scope of this study.

The Ethical Climate Questionnaire used in this study was developed by Victor and Cullen (1988), and adapted in to Turkish by Sağnak (2005). Reliability coefficient was calculated to be .78 by test-retest reliability method. Questionnaire consists of 26 items and five ethical climate types. Caring consists of 7, law and code consists of 4, rules consist of 4, instrumental consists of 7 and independence consists of 4 items. Respondents were asked to indicate how accurately each of the items described their ethical climate on a 6-point Likert scale (0=completely false to 5= completely true). Instrumental ethical climate was not included in transformational leadership predicting on ethical climate

Analysis of Data

Mean, standard deviation, Pearson product correlation coefficient, and simple regression techniques were used for data analysis.

Results

Means, standard deviations of the transformational leadership dimensions and ethical climate types are given in Table 1.

Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations of the Transformational Leadership Dimensions and Ethical Climate Types

		N	\bar{X}	Ss	K	\bar{X} / K
Transformational Leadership Dimensions	Providing Vision or Inspiration	764	23.14	5.23	6	3.85
	Models Behavior	764	14.37	3.24	4	3.59
	Fostering Group Goals	764	19.96	3.53	5	3.99
	Providing Support	764	22.71	4.36	6	3.78
	Providing Intellectual Stimulation	764	18.52	3.59	5	3.70
	Holding High Performance Expectations	764	10.66	2.32	3	3.55
Ethical Climate Types	Caring	764	28.02	5.11	7	4.00
	Law and Code	764	15.94	2.88	4	3.98
	Rules	764	15.55	2.95	4	3.88
	Instrumental	764	18.00	4.64	7	2.57
	Independence	764	11.94	3.62	4	2.98

Table 1 shows that teachers perceived fostering group goals ($\bar{X}=3.99$) the highest and holding high performance expectations ($\bar{X}=3.55$) the lowest about transformational leadership dimensions. Teachers' perceptions in relation to other leadership dimensions were ($\bar{X}=3.85$) for providing vision or inspiration, ($\bar{X}=3.78$) for providing support, ($\bar{X}=3.70$) for providing intellectual stimulation and ($\bar{X}=3.59$) for models behavior.

Teachers perceived caring ($\bar{X}=4.00$) the highest and instrumental ($\bar{X}=2.57$) the lowest in relation to schools' ethical climate types. Teachers' perceptions in relation to other ethical climate types were law and code ($\bar{X}=3.98$), rules ($\bar{X}=3.88$), and independence ($\bar{X}=2.98$).

The Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used for measuring the correlation between transformational leadership dimensions and ethical climate types. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.*Correlation Between Transformational Leadership Dimensions and Ethical Climate Types*

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Providing Vision or Inspiration	.72**	.73**	.70**	.72**	.43**	.59**	.39**	.42**	-.17**	.04
2. Models Behavior		.73**	.80**	.70**	.37**	.58**	.36**	.42**	-.25**	.04
3. Fostering Group Goals			.76**	.72**	.50**	.66**	.48**	.50**	-.22**	.05
4. Providing Support				.71**	.35**	.62**	.36**	.42**	-.27**	.07*
5. Providing Intellectual Stimulation					.50**	.59**	.44**	.46**	-.15**	.07*
6. Holding High Performance Expectations						.48**	.48**	.42**	.03	.08*
7. Caring							.62**	.66**	-.20**	.11**
8. Law and Code								.62**	-.00	.08*
9. Rules									-.02	.16*
10. Instrumental										.19*
11. Independence										

Results given in Table 2 indicate that there was a significant positive relationship between caring and providing vision or inspiration, models behavior, fostering group goals, providing support, providing intellectual stimulation, holding high performance expectations ($p < .01$). A significant positive relationship was found between law and code and providing vision or inspiration, models behavior, fostering group goals, providing support, providing intellectual stimulation, holding high performance expectations ($p < .01$). There was a significant positive relationship between rules and providing vision or inspiration, models behavior, fostering group goals, providing support, providing intellectual stimulation, holding high performance expectations ($p < .01$). A significant negative relationship was between instrumental and providing vision or inspiration, models behavior, fostering group goals, providing support,

providing intellectual stimulation ($p < .01$). Instrumental was not significantly related to holding high performance expectations. A significant positive relationship was found between independence and providing support, providing intellectual stimulation, holding high performance expectations ($p < .05$). Independence was not significantly associated with providing vision or inspiration, models behavior and fostering group goals.

Simple regression analysis was used for measuring the predictive level of school transformational leadership on ethical climate and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Results of Regression Analysis Predicting Score of Transformational Leadership on Ethical Climate

Variable	B	Std. Error	β	t
Constant	32.45	1.76		18.39
Transformational Leadership	.37	.01	.63	22.44**

$R^2 = .39$ ** $p < .01$

Table 3 indicates that school transformational leadership was a significant predictor of ethical climate and approximately 40% of the total variance on ethical climate was explained by transformational leadership behaviors ($R = .63$, $R^2 = .39$, $p < .01$). Transformational leadership appeared to be a significant predictor of ethical climate.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between transformational school leadership and ethical climate. Results showed that all dimensions of transformational leadership had high mean scores. Principals carried out fostering group goals the highest and holding high performance expectations the lowest among transformational leadership dimensions. According to the results, it may be stated that elementary school principals mostly exhibit transformational leadership style. These results are similar to previous research results (Çelik, 1998; Karip, 1998).

It was determined that elementary schools had caring at the highest level and instrumental at the lowest level as ethical climate types. Other ethical climate types had been law and code, rules and independence

respectively. These results are consistent with schools' purposes and their characteristics of being value-based organizations. Moreover, these results support results of the research that explains the organization type as a significant variable in determination of ethical climate (Agarwal & Malloy, 1999; Brower & Shrader, 2000; Fritzsche & Becker, 1984).

Caring climate has a different role in school life (Rosenblatt & Peled, 2002). In this ethical climate people show a sincere interest in each other's goodness, and it's based on communication, empathy and commitment (Dempster, Carter, Freakley & Parry, 2004; Starratt, 1991; Willower, 1999; Wimbush & Shepard, 1994). It can be said that these results related to ethical climate are appropriate to schools' organizational characteristics.

The finding showed that all dimensions of transformational leadership were positively related to caring, law and code, rules ethical climate types. The highest relationship was found between all dimensions of transformational leadership and caring ethical climate type. Instrumental ethical climate was negatively related to providing vision or inspiration, models behavior, fostering group goals, providing support and providing intellectual stimulation. Instrumental was not significantly related holding high performance expectations. The highest negative relationship was found between instrumental and providing support, models behavior. Independence ethical climate was positively related to providing support, intellectual stimulation and holding high performance expectations. Independence was not significantly associated with providing vision or inspiration, models behavior and fostering group goals.

These results are in support of theoretical explanations and research results pertaining to transformational leadership in a few aspects. Firstly, it confirms the assertion that transformational leadership is based on deontological ethical basis (Aranson, 2001; Kanungo, 2001; Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007) at organizational (rules), and cosmopolitan (law and code) levels while it partially confirms at individual level (independence). Secondly, it is consistent with the opinion that transformational leadership is altruism-oriented (Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007), goes beyond the self-interest and focuses on the good of the organization and that of the community (Bass, 1999) and is a human-oriented process (Celep, 2004). It was found that all dimensions of the transformational leadership were positively related to caring that is based on benevolence,

and out of holding high performance expectations they were negatively related to instrumental ethical climate that is based on egoism. Thirdly, it is similar to Grojean, Resick, Dickson and Smith's (2004) opinion that all dimensions of transformational leadership support ethical climate in different ways.

Results of the study indicated that school transformational leadership was a significant predict of ethical climate. It was found that approximately 40% of total variance pertaining to ethical climate can be explained by transformational leadership behaviors. According to results, it may be stated that transformational leadership has a significant effect on ethical climate. The more transformational leadership behaviors are realized, the stronger will the ethical climate is. These results are similar to research findings of Engelbrecht, Aswegen and Theron (2005).

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership dimensions and ethical climate types and the extent of transformational leadership as a whole in predicting the ethical climate of the schools. All dimensions of transformational leadership predicting ethical climate may be studied. Because this study is limited to transformational leadership style, effects of other leadership styles on ethical climate may also be studied. Because ethical climate research on educational organizations are very limited, studying ethical climate relation with variables such as satisfaction and commitment might provide significant contribution to literature.

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