# The discrepancy between teachers' perceptions and principals' perceptions of the principals' leadership styles in Jordan

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## Abstract

Leadership style is one of the most important factors determining a school's success, with Transformational Leadership being regarded as the most effective approach. However, little is known about whether teachers and principals perceive leadership qualities the same way. Based on quantitative research model this study examined teachers' perceptions of the leadership styles of school principals and examined school principals' perceptions of their own leadership styles. The purpose of the study was to determine whether there were discrepancies in perception between teachers and principals concerning the principals' approaches to leadership. The research sample consisted of 451 teacher and 340 principals at public schools in Jordan, who were administered a questionnaire. Based on their responses, the study found that there are significant discrepancies between teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership styles and the principals' perceptions on their own leadership styles in a variety of domains. Individualized Consideration, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Idealized Influence, and Contingent Reward are among the traits most marked by discrepancies between teacher and principal perceptions. Ultimately, the study determined that principals view themselves as embodying a Transformational Leadership style whereas teachers perceive principals exhibiting traits associated more with Transactional Leadership.

Keywords: Leadership; transformational; transactional; laissez faire; leadership style; principals, perceptions, discrepancies, Jordan.

#### Introduction

Although leadership has many definitions, all conclude with the same essential outcome: a method of power or influence, which promotes desired actions among others (Armstrong 2006; Donaldson, 2006; Marzano& Waters, 2005; Yukl 2012; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001).

Leadership in general is the art of influencing and effecting change (Yukl 2012). Specifically, it is the way of using power as a tool to guide others into achieving desired objectives; thus, leaders are professionals tasked with influencing specific communities under their dominion to choose ways of thinking or behaving that will ultimately result in attaining shared goals (Razak, Jaffar, Hamidon& Zakaria, 2015; Bass & Avolio 2004; <u>Yukl 2012;</u>)

Theorists have noted that leadership is an important factor that influences employee perceptions of work climate (Holloway 2012; Kozlowski & Doherty 1989). Momeni (2009) determined that leader behavior strongly affects employee morale, attitudes, and behavior, and that 70% of employee perception of organizational climate can be attributed to leadership style and behavior.

Leadership style is affected by the personal experiences and personal background of the leaders, including their convictions and principles (Sampayo & Maranga, 2015). Their attitude toward their constituents can vary between the very classical to the very creative, or between very autocratic to very democratic (Pllana, 2013).

As an Arab country, leadership in Jordan has historically tended toward certain features: a patriarchal approach rife with nepotism; a favoring of personal connections and relations to efficiency; hierarchical regulations; and the rewarding of obedience and submissiveness (Bany-Essa, Arab 2018). counties including Jordan face additional educational management. challenges in including political instability, tight budgets and lack of resources, high youth unemployment, and brain drain, all of which undermine confidence in the educational system(Hornstein & Taylor 2018).

Leadership is one of the most fundamental aspects of an organization that determinesits success, and this includes educational institutions. Jordan faces many challenges in its educational sector, particularly in public education, which serves the majority of people but suffers the greatest from a lack of resources. Thus it is essential to understand the role that leadership is playing in its public schools.

It is important to note that leadership is based on the perceptions of each leader's constituents. The approach of the leader is not determined by the leader's actions themselves, but by how the constituents perceive those actions in relation to their own experiences and the goals of the organization.

While most research examines leadership styles or effectiveness from the perspective of the leader, there is a dearth of research in how that leadership appears from the perspective of the constituents. This study aims to examine that gap and to determine if any discrepancies in perception exist.

## Theoretical background *Leadership Styles*

Leadership style can be defined as "the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. Leadership style has been defined as the consistent behavioral patterns that leaders exhibit when attempting to influence the activities of others with whom they work as perceived by those people" (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2012).

There are different perspectives on the classification of leadership styles (Yukl 2012). The present research examines three styles in the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) developed by Bass and Avolio (1991) building off the work of Burns (1978). The three styles are transformational; transactional; and laissezfaire (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubranamiam 2003; Avolio & Bass, 2001).

The function of transformational leadership is to motivate followers by raising their awareness of the importance of the organization's mission and goals, which causes them to transcend their personal interests (Conger & Kanungo, 1998;Den Hartog & Belschak 2012). Bass's model consists of four elements: idealized influence: inspiring motivation: intellectual stimulation; and individualized consideration. They can be defined as follows:

Idealized Influence: This refers to the leader's personal charisma, where the leader is perceived as powerful and self-confident. The leader personally embodies high-order ideals and ethics, and inspires a sense of duty among followers.

Inspiring Motivation: This trait refers to the leader's ability to motivate followers by looking to the future with a sense of optimism, representing an idealized vision, and stressing ambitious but achievable goals. Followers are inspired to undertake challenges due to the leader's motivating influence.

Intellectual Stimulation: This trait describes actions or behaviors from the leader that appeal to followers reasoning and analytical skills. It encourages them to think creatively and solve challenging intellectual problems.

Individualized Consideration: This trait refers to a leader's ability to see followers and individuals, and respond to their individual needs with coaching, care, and guidance(Avolio & Bass, 1999).

Taken together, these elements have the potential to produce superior results through the leader's ability to motivate others through his or her personal charisma, ability to challenge and inspire, and ability to recognize and tend to individuals' specific needs (Bass 1999; Avolio & Bass 2001; Ozgenel& Karsantik 2020).

The second style in the FRLM is transactional leadership. This approach consists of 3 elements, which are: conditional reward; management with active expectation; and management with passive expectation. These elements can be described as follows:

Conditional reward:This behavior stipulates which actions from employees will generate material or psychological rewards. Transactional behaviors will make task requirements and potential for reward clear, and follows through.

Management with active expectation: Transactional leaders may actively monitor followers' performance and take action if expectations are not met. This element entails close monitoring of followers' adherence to standards.

Management with passive expectation: Conversely, the transactional leader may take measures only after issues ofnon-compliance arise. It does not entail close monitoring of employees during the process of completing tasks, but reacts to the outcome when the tasks are completed. (Avolio & Bass 2001; Ozgenel & Karsantik 2020)

The final style in the FRLM framework is laissez-faire. This is the most passive and generally considered the least effective approach (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubranamiam 2003). Laissez-faire leaders give vast degrees of freedom to their followers and do not demonstrate authority in decision-making, delegating duties, or other responsibilities typically adopted by leaders (Avolio & Bass 2001).

School principals may adhere to one leadership style, or adopt different styles for different situations (Ozgenel & Karsantik 2020). *Educational Leadership* 

More than two decades worth of research has consistently confirmed the importance of effective school leadership in attaining educational outcomes. Studies have determined thatleadership is an important factor in what students learn in schools (Fullan, 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood,Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

The role of the principal is essential to the creation of an educational climate that cultivates high standards, academic success, and a work environment that empowers teachers to obtain shared goals and visions. To do this, the principal must not only be an instructional leader and an educator, but a community advisor and vision setter as well (Firestonem, Riehl, & Murphy, 2005, Turnadi, Sasongko, Kristiawan, Oktaria, & Susanto, 2021).Due to rapid changes and developments in organizational structures, effective leadership is the most important determinant of whether an organization succeeds (Bass 1997). According to many researchers, this is true for schools as well (Ahmet 2015; Bogler, 2001) Effective school principals are required to form a healthy school culture and climate that maximizes the talents and skills of teachers, students, and administrators (Ahmet 2015)

Several studies have examined leadership styles in an educational context. Some have sought to determine the type of leadership used in a specific educational situation ( Razak et al 2015; Smith, Minor, Brashen, & Remaly 2017). Others have studied the effect of particular leadership styles in educational institutions (Ahmet 2015: AlOqlah,2021; Asimiran,, Abd. Kadir, & Moshood 2020;Ozgenal & Karsantik 2020). Additional studies have examined the attitudes among principals and/or teachers toward different leadership styles (Inandi,& Gilic 2021).

This study builds off the latter approach in seeking to examine the perceptions among teachers and principals of leadership styles, and to identify any discrepancies in these perceptions.

# **Materials and Methodology**

Based on quantitative research model this study examined teachers' perceptions of the leadership styles of school principals and examined school principals' perceptions of their own leadership styles. In addition, the study examined the discrepancy between teachers and principals' perceptions of principal's leadership styles.

The research sample consisted of 451 teacher and 340 principals at public schools in Jordan.

The instrument in this study was a questionnaire developed from Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (5x-short), (Avolio, Bass, and Jung, 2004). The questionnaire consists of 21 items divided into three domains: (a) transformational leadership (b) transactional leadership and (c) laissez faire leadership. The three domains consist of seven sub-dimensions. The questionnaire is 5-point Likert type where the rating includes (1) Not at all, (2) Rarely, (3) Sometimes, (4) Often and (5) Always.

The questionnaire was translated to Arabic and validated by ten professors from

faculty of colleges from several Jordanian universities. In this study, the questionnaire's internal consistency Cronbach Alpha value was calculated as 0.91, and each leadership style domain (Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez fair) of the questionnaire based on this factor analysis was found to be highly reliable (Cronbach's Alpha of the three subscales are 0.91, 0.92 and 0.88, respectively).

The data were analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 and t-test.

#### Results

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of Principals' responses, ranked in a descending order
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Rank	Ν	Domain	Mean	SD
1	2	Inspirational motivation	2.94	.907
2	1	Idealized influence	2.81	.952
3	5	Contingent reward	2.75	.875
4	3	Intellectual stimulation	2.69	.843
5	4	Individual consideration	2.67	.876
6	6	Management by exception	2.52	.805
7	7	Laissez faire leadership	2.30	.926

Table 1 shows that for principals' responses "Inspirational motivation" was ranked the highest (M = 2.94, SD = .907), and "Idealized

influence" was ranked second highest (M = 2.81, SD .952), while "Laissez faire leadership" was ranked last with (M = 2.30, SD = .926).

	Table 2. Means and standard deviations of Princ	pal's res	ponse, ranked in a descendin	g order
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Rank	Ν	Domain	Mean	SD
1	1	Transformational leader	2.78	.825
2	2	Transactional leadership	2.63	.776
3	3	Laissez fair leadership	2.30	.926

Table 2 shows that "transformational leader" was ranked the highest (M = 2.78, SD .825),

while "laissez fair leadership" was ranked last with (M = 2.30, SD = .926).

Table 3. Means and standard	deviations of teachers'	responses.	, ranked in descending order

Rank	N	Domain	Mean SD	_
1	1	Idealized influence	2.33 1.070	
2	2	Inspirational motivation	2.33 1.093	
3	5	Contingent reward	2.31 1.152	
4	6	Management by exception	2.23 .989	
5	3	Intellectual stimulation	2.20 1.150	
6	4	Individual consideration	2.02 1.084	
7	7	Laissez faire leadership	1.97 .857	

Table 3 shows that "Idealized influence" and "Inspirational motivation" were ranked the highest (M = 2.33), while "Laissez faire d standard daviati

leadership" was ranked last with mean (M =1.97).

0	Table 4	4.Means and standard deviations of teachers' res	ponses, ranked in d	lescending order
Rank	Ν	Domain	Mean	SD
1	2	Transactional leadership	2.27	1.015
2	1	Transformational leader	2.22	1.059
3	3	Laissez faire leadership	1.97	.857

Table 4 shows that "Transactional leadership" was ranked the highest (M = 2.27), while "Laissez faire leadership" was ranked last (M = 1.97).

Domain	Job	Ν	Mean	SD	t	df	Р
Idealized influence	Principal	340	2.81	.952	2.345	101	.021*
	Teacher	451	2.33	1.070			
Inspirational motivation	Principal	340		.907	2.988	101	.004**
	Teacher	451	2.33	1.093			
Intellectual stimulation	Principal	340	22.94.69	.843	2.396	101	.018*
	Teacher	451	2.20	1.150			
Individual consideration	Principal	340	2.67	.876	3.268	101	.001**
	Teacher	451	2.02	1.084			
Contingent reward	Principal	340	2.75	.875	2.115	101	.037*
	Teacher	451	2.31	1.152			
Management by exception	Principal	340	2.52	.805	1.571	101	.119
	Teacher	451	2.23	.989			
Laissez faire leadership	Principal	340	2.30	.926	1.907	101	.059
	Teacher	451	1.97	.857			

Table 5. T-test results of Principal and Teacher responses

*Note.*  $*P \le 0.05$ .  $**P \le 0.01$ 

Table 5 shows that there were statistically significant differences in Idealized Influence due to job variable(t = 2.345;  $P \le 0.05$ ) in favor of the Principal (M = 2.81). There were also statistically significant differences in Inspirational Motivation due to the job variable (t =2.988;  $P \le 0.01$ )in favor of the Principal (M = 2.94). There were statistically significant differences at (t = 2.396;  $P \le 0.05$ ) in Intellectual Stimulation due to the job variable in favor of the Principal (M = 2.69). There were statistically

significant differences Individual Consideration due to the job variable (t = 3.268;  $P \le 0.01$ ) in favor of the Principal (M = 2.67). Finally, there were statistically significant differences in Contingent Reward due to the job variable (t =2.115;  $P \le 0.05$ ) in favor of the Principal (M =2.75).

There statistically were no significant differences in Management by Exception and in Laissez Faire leadership as a result of the job variable(P > 0.05).

Leadership Style	Job	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Р
Transformational leader	Principal	340	2.78	.825	2.889	101	.005**
	Teacher	451	2.22	1.059			
Transactional leadership	Principal	340	2.63	.776	1.970	101	.052
	Teacher	451	2.27	1.015			
Laissez faire leadership	Principal	340	2.30	.926	1.907	101	.059

Table 6. T-test results of Principal and Teacher responses

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# Teacher 451 1.97

# *Note.* \* $P \le 0.05$ . \*\* $P \le 0.01$

Table 6 shows that: There were statistically significant differences in the domain of Transformational Leadership due to the job variable (t = 2.889;  $P \le 0.01$ )in favor of the Principal(M = 2.78). There were no statistically significant differences in Transactional and Laissez Faire leadershipas a result of the job variable(P > 0.05).

## Discussion

Leadership is necessarily about perception. It is the relationship between leaders and their followers or constituents, who must perceive their leaders as embodying the role. Therefore, this study examined whether the teachers' perceptions of their leader (their principal) was in congruence with the way the principals viewed their own leadership style.

The study determined that principals primarily view themselves as transformational leaders. Teachers, on the other hand, primarily view their principals as transactional leaders. Both were in agreement that principals exhibit fewer of the traits or behaviors associated with Laissez-Faire leadership.

The most significant difference between teachers and principals regarded the traits and associated with behaviors Individualized Consideration(*t* =3.268;Р  $\leq$ 0.01). Principalswere significantly more likely to view leadership approach their as having consideration for teachers as individuals. individualized **Ouestions** measuring consideration included statements such as "I help others develop themselves" and "I give personal attention to others who seem rejected."

There was also a statistically significant difference in the realm of Inspirational Motivation, with principals viewing their leadership as more motivational than teachers do(t = 2.988;  $P \le 0.01$ , M = 2.94). Questions measuring this trait included statements such as "I provide appealing images about what we can do" and "I help others find meaning in their work."

Intellectual Stimulation and Idealized Influence also showed statistically significant differences between the perceptions of principals and teachers ( $P \le 0.05$ ). In both cases, the principals felt that they manifested these qualities in their leadership more than the teachers perceived them to. Principals were more likely to rate themselves higher on statements such as "I enable others to think about old problems in new ways" (Intellectual Stimulation) and "Others have complete faith in me" (Idealized Influence.)

.857

The final statistically significant difference was in the domain of Contingent Reward ( $P \le 0.05$ ). Principals were more likely to feel that they embodied the trait of Contingent Reward, measured by statements such as "I provide recognition/reward when others reach their goals."

Taken in sum, the results indicate that teachers perceive their principals' leadership style as embodying more of the traits and behaviors associated with transactional leadership. Principals, on the other hand, perceive their leadership as more transformational in nature. Thus, there are discrepancies significant between the perceptions of leadership styles, which could indicate that the principals' leadership is not as effective as it could be or as they believe it to be. Many studies suggest that the transformational style of leadership is more effective than the transactional approach, so principals may improve their efficacy by strengthening the traits and behaviors associated with this method.

While this study determined that there are discrepancies in perceptions of leadership among principals and teachers, it did not account for variables that could potentially affect these perceptions – for example, it did not look at whether the principals were male or female, how many years of experience they had, or their level of education. It is possible that personal biases among the teachers or other factors could account for the differences in how they perceived their principals.

Additionally, this study was conducted during the Covid-19 period which was a particularly challenging time for principals and teachers alike. Therefore, principals' and teachers' perceptions were measured during a chaotic time that had many atypical challenges. Effective leaders were more positioned to handle these challenges, although they were still operating in uncharted waters. Teachers also endured high levels of stress, which may have affected their perceptions.

However, ultimately the study determined that a principal's leadership style may not be what they intend it to be, as perceived by the teachers under their dominion. Significant discrepancies were found. Future studies should consider to examine the leadership style and effectiveness of leaders not only from the perspective of the leaders, but from the constituents as well.

# **Declaration of Interest Statement**

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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