The Role of the School Principal in Burnout and Job Satisfaction of Secondary School Teachers

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Abstract: The aim of this research is the identification of the role of the school principals in burnout and job satisfaction of Greek teachers that are working in both primary and secondary education. The aim was covered through quantitative research with a structured and online distributed questionnaire used as the main research tool. The research participants are 155 schoolteachers coming from primary and secondary Greek school units. They were collected by using convenience sampling and avalanche method. For the distribution of the questionnaire, the Google Forms platform was used and for the statistical analysis we used SPSS (version 23). The main research results showed that transactional and transformational leadership are more implemented in Greek schools, than laissez-faire leadership style. Teachers' levels of job burnout are positively affected by laissez-faire leadership and negatively affected by the two positive leadership styles. On the contrary, transformational, and transactional leadership has positive impact on job satisfaction levels and negative impact on teachers' burnout. School principals should place emphasis on maintaining the transformational leadership style, which emerged as the dominant one, due to the fact that it leads to increased levels of job satisfaction and the reduction of teachers' burnout. Also, attention should be paid to the case of female teachers, who were found to be more vulnerable to burnout.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Laissez-Faire Leadership, Teachers

1. Introduction

1.1. Theoretical Framework

i). Transformational Leadership

It is a leadership style that is conducive to developing collective trust between working groups so that their members are able to meet demanding challenges [4]. The transformational leadership style is considered to be the most appropriate, in cases where an organization is going to carry out radical reforms and changes [33]. The reason is that through this leadership style strong motivations are cultivated and the levels of commitment of the employees to the company in which they are employed and to the achievement of its goals are strengthened [13]. In any case, the transformational leader aims to create an attractive vision for his subordinates, which becomes an inherent motivation for them [2, 11].

Dealing with the future with an optimistic outlook is an additional key feature of transformational leaders [1]. In fact, transformational leaders aim to provoke spiritual excitement in their subordinates in order for them to achieve their set goals [18]. Finally, they tend to motivate their teams to face finite organizational problems, with a new perspective [19], while at the same time showing respect for the needs of their subordinates and meeting them [20, 29].

ii). Transactional Leadership.

This leadership style is similar to the transformational leadership style described above. More specifically, the transactional leader likes to alternate roles between leaders and subordinates [20]. In this case, the aim is to motivate the existing ones to cover the personal interests of the leader [4, 34]. For this reason, people who practice the transactional leadership style tend to constantly clarify the responsibilities of their subordinates, their performance goals, and the set of tasks they must have completed in a given period of time [31].

In addition, it is pointed out that people who apply the

transactional leadership style do not like to make changes, at the organizational level, but to maintain the same current situation. They tend to apply and faithfully follow the contractual obligations of their subordinates without deviating from them [12]. However, they like to guide their subordinates in achieving specific goals, giving clear explanations both in the roles they play and in their professional duties [3, 35].

iii).Laissez-faire Leadership.

This leadership style represents a type of leadership behavior, in which passive indifference to subordinates is manifested [19]. These leaders show a tendency to step away from their leadership duties while at the same time, they do not give clear directions and instructions to their subordinates. In the performance of their duties, minimal to zero support is provided to subordinates by leaders who apply this particular leadership style [14, 36]. In addition, leaders to be avoided do not like to make decisions, while they are characterized by intense responsibility phobia. In addition, they often show indifference to their teams. The laissez-faire is considered to represent a kind of passive avoidance and ineffective leadership exercise [28].

1.2. Related Research

1.2.1. Leadership Style and Job Satisfaction

On the issue of job satisfaction, Elicker et al. [9] mentioned the special importance of the relationship that develops and exists between employees and their superiors. The better this relationship is, the greater the desired and anticipated job satisfaction that results for employees. In addition, high levels of job satisfaction are intertwined with employees' interest in the organization in which they work [10].

More generally, job satisfaction is an issue that has been approached by several studies, such as those of Singh & Kaur [27] and Dusterhoff et al. [8]. These researchers, in particular, concluded that job satisfaction is strongly influenced by the prevailing cooperative climate in the workplace, as well as by the prevailing regime of supervision of the performance of employees' professional duties by their superiors. Additional determinants of job satisfaction are the existing relationships of employees with their superiors and managers, as well as the levels of their salaries, but also the motivation given to the general human resources by the executives. In both surveys, however, special emphasis was placed on the role played by the employees' relationship with their managers, in order to achieve high levels of job satisfaction.

Similarly, research has shown that the uncooperative and authoritarian behavior of school principals leads to increased levels of teacher burnout. The reason is that through the manifestation of non-cooperative behavior on the part of the principals, the general functional order of the schools is undermined, and the teachers are deprived of the initiatives and freedoms that they should have in the exercise of their teaching duties [22]. This pushes them to increased levels of burnout, to which, however, the above-mentioned reduced job satisfaction also contributes [7].

The research of Platsidou & Agaliotis [23] aimed at measuring the levels of job satisfaction, burnout, and their respective determinants, in Greek and Cypriot special education teachers. The research results showed high levels of job satisfaction, in the formation of which the healthy and satisfactory relationship of teachers with the principals of their schools contributed. The pursuit of transformational and transactional leadership styles, through which the cultivation of good relations of leaders with their working groups is promoted, therefore, leads to increased levels of job satisfaction.

1.2.2. Leadership Style and Job Burnout

Kokkinos [16] conducted quantitative research, in the research sample of which a total of 447 primary school teachers in Cyprus participated. The results of the research showed that the increase in the levels of burnout of teachers was led by the special characteristics of their personality, such as their innate pessimism, as well as certain conditions that prevailed in their work environment. Typical examples of unfavorable working conditions that Cypriot teachers face and become more prone to burnout were their inability to manage naughty students, as well as their lack of understanding and recognition of the effort they put in.

The healthy and transparent communication of the school principal with the teachers proved to play an important role in reducing their burnout levels. The promotion of healthy and transparent communication is reflected on the one hand by the transformational and on the other hand by the transactional leadership style, while it is not supported by the laissez-faire leadership style. The same results were reached by the same researcher [15], in earlier research he had conducted to investigate the determinants of burnout of Cypriot secondary teachers.

Continuing with another similar research, which is that of Platsidou & Daniilidou [24], this is a quantitative research approach, in the research sample of which participated teachers from primary education in Greece and Cyprus. Although the purpose of the study was to measure the correlation that occurs between the results of burnout of teachers in three different measurement scales, however, it was pointed out that in addition to the personality traits of teachers, some working conditions that are still consistent lead to increased levels of burnout, which also depends on the leadership style of school principals. For example, it has been argued that when teachers feel insecure about whether their effort is recognized by so many school principals or in cases where organizational goals within a school year are unclear, or precise instructions and directions are not received from principals, then the chances of increasing burnout levels increase.

The research conducted by Platsidou & Agaliotis [23], concerned a research sample consisting of 127 Greek and Cypriot special education teachers. The results showed low levels of burnout. A key determinant of this outcome was the relationship that teachers had developed with their school principal. Cultivating a sense of teamwork and cooperation in

the school environment, which is initially promoted by the school principal and then supported by both teachers and their colleagues, is another condition that leads to reduced levels of burnout.

1.3. Purpose of the Study and Objectives

Several studies suggest that school principals hold a position directly related to the effective operation of school units, regardless of educational level [25, 26, 32]. For this reason, scholars suggest the adoption of transactional and democratic leadership styles by school principals, so that it is possible to create a pleasant working climate in the school unit. After all, the good and healthy relationship and communication of teachers with school principals increase the levels of job satisfaction of the former [10]. On the contrary, the unhealthy communication and relationship of these parties lead to an increase in the levels of burnout of teachers [7].

From what we have studied, the research that has been conducted and which is purely focused on examining whether the role of the school principal contributes to job satisfaction and can shape the levels of burnout of teachers, through the leadership style that follows, is limited. In particular, in the case of Greece, and more specifically in secondary education, where the primary research of the present research will be focused, the lack of studies similar to this one, brings to the fore a significant bibliographic and research gap. Through this study, the aim is to fill this gap.

Thus, the main point of the originality of the present study emerges, which automatically, due to the above-mentioned lack of bibliography and research, acquires a special importance and a significant role in the enrichment of the already existing cognitive background. Through the findings of our primary research, the principals of the secondary schools of Greece will be able to realize whether, in the end, the job satisfaction of the teachers working in their schools depends on the leadership style that following, which also shapes their prevailing relationships with teachers. They will also be able to realize whether the leadership style they follow contributes not only to the job satisfaction of their schoolteachers, but also to the levels of burnout they experience.

Thus, school principals will be able to assess what leadership style they should apply during the exercise of their managerial and leadership duties, in order to achieve higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout of teachers working in their schools. The importance of this issue concerns not only the formation of levels of job satisfaction and burnout of teachers, but also the fact that the quality of educational services provided to students depends on these levels. In the event that the maximum possible job satisfaction and the minimum possible burnout are achieved in secondary school teachers, this will have a direct positive impact on the wider learning process. This point further increases the need for the present study.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role played by the school principal in shaping the levels of burnout and job satisfaction of secondary school teachers of Greece. In order to meet the specific general purpose, individual objectives are set to be met. These are:

1. Investigating the effect of leadership styles followed by the school principal on teachers' burnout levels.
2. The investigation of the effect of the leadership style followed by the school principal on the levels of professional satisfaction of teachers.
3. Exploring the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction levels in teachers.

In addition, it is emphasized that both the purpose and the objectives are covered on the one hand through a literature review and on the other hand through primary quantitative research.

The research questions that are going to be answered are the following ones:

(1) What is the most popular leadership style followed by secondary school principals?
(2) How big is the burnout of secondary school teachers?
(3) How big is the job satisfaction of secondary school teachers?
(4) How is the leadership style of school principals related to the levels of job satisfaction and burnout of secondary school teachers?
(5) How are the job satisfaction and burnout of secondary school teachers related?
(6) What is the relationship between job satisfaction and burnout levels and the demographic characteristics of secondary school teachers?

2. Method and Materials

2.1. Participants

The type of research followed is a primary quantitative research, based on a structured closed-ended questionnaire. The research sample consists of 155 teachers of secondary education in Greece. The researcher had full access to the research population.

The sampling that was followed is the so-called convenience sampling. This is a sampling method that ensures the ability to collect a larger number of research sample in a shorter period of time [30]. In addition, the avalanche technique was used as a sampling methodology, complementary to convenience sampling. According to the avalanche technique, the researcher is given the opportunity to encourage teachers who have already completed her questionnaire to forward it for completion to their colleagues working in secondary education. In fact, as characteristically mentioned in Zafeiropoulos [30]: "*In this sampling we identify some initial individuals who in turn indicate other individuals. New people suggest other and so on. Thus, the sample grows like an avalanche, which also carries snow and grows as it rolls*" (p. 189). A disadvantage of this technique is that in the end we will not be able to determine the exact response rate of the recipients of the questionnaire, due to the fact that the researcher will not know the exact

number of people to whom the questionnaire was forwarded. However, the benefits of combining convenience sampling and the avalanche method are far greater, as they allow more participants to be gathered, given the time constraints on completing the dissertation.

2.2. Data Collection Tool

The questionnaire consists of four different parts. The first part aims to collect demographic data for the research sample. It consists of a total of eight closed-ended questions concerning gender, age, educational level, years of service, place of permanent residence, marital status, number of dependent children and the specialty of the educational participants.

The second part measures the levels of burnout. This is the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) Occupational Exhaustion Questionnaire, which aims to measure the level of work fatigue. This questionnaire was developed by Kristensen et al. [17] and translated into Greek and weighted by Papaefstathiou et al. [21]. This questionnaire consists of questions that measure burnout in many ways, both from a personal and from a professional and humanitarian approach.

In total, it consists of 19 questions answered through a 5-point Likert scale. Specifically, participants will answer the questions by choosing a number from 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to the weakest answer choice (Not at all / Never) and 5 corresponds to the strongest (Absolutely). More specifically, sentences 1-6 measure burnout from a personal point of view, sentences 7-13 measure burnout from a professional point of view and finally, sentences 14-19 measure burnout from a humanitarian point of view. It is also pointed out that the answers of the participants in sentence 13 are reversed, due to the fact that this is a positively worded sentence, while the rest are negatively worded. Finally, it is clarified that the total score of burnouts is the average of the answers of the participants to all the proposals of which it consists, i.e., the 19 sentences of the questionnaire.

The third part measures job satisfaction levels. The 3-item General Satisfaction scale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Job Satisfaction Subscale (MOAQ-JSS) was used for job satisfaction. In fact, it is clarified that the second negatively worded question must be answered in reverse. The overall job satisfaction score is the average of the participants' responses to these three sentences.

The fourth part aims to record teachers' views on the leadership style of their school principals (transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership style). For this reason, the multifactorial scale of Bass & Avolio [6] was used, which consists of a total of 36 7-point Likert scale questions. Based on the methodology proposed by Bass & Avolio [6] for the analysis of this questionnaire, the following applies: (a) Transformational leadership is composed of questions 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 21, 23, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36 (b) transactional leadership is composed of questions 1, 3, 4, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 22, 24, 27, 35 and (c) laissez-faire leadership is composed of questions 5, 7, 28, 33. The overall score of each leadership leads as an average of the participants' answers to the respective questions which make up the current leadership style as mentioned above.

2.3. Data Collection Process

Initially, before the distribution of the questionnaire began, its quality control was carried out. The questionnaire was registered on the Google Forms platform and sent to a total of ten Greek secondary school teachers. They were informed that they participated in the pilot test of the questionnaire and were invited to complete it and submit to the researcher their comments and suggestions for improving the questionnaire.

After completing the pilot test of the questionnaire, we proceeded with all the necessary corrections that were needed for the research tool to take its final optimized form. It was then transformed again on the Google Forms platform. Since then, it has started sending it electronically through emails. Thus, research data were collected electronically.

Moreover, it is mentioned that the recipients were informed about the purpose of the research, where the results of the research will be used, the preservation of their complete anonymity and the voluntary nature of their participation. Also, the personal contact details of the researcher were disclosed, so that they have the opportunity to contact her in case they want to cover a specific question about the specific research.

2.4. Data Analysis

The research data collected from the participants' responses to the questionnaire was quantitative. After they were entered into the statistical software SPSS, version 23 of which was used, the statistical analysis followed. Descriptive and inductive statistics were used for the statistical analysis of the quantitative research data collected.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive results of the constructed variables.

Table 1. *Variables construction.*

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational leadership	4.52	1.36
Transactionalleadership	3.74	0.86
Laissez-faireleadership	2.45	1.32
JobBurnout	2.54	0.67
JobSatisfaction	4.15	0.74

The answer to the first research question regarding the determination of the predominant leadership style of the school principals of the secondary education teachers of Greece, is that it is the transformational leadership, which obtained the highest average of evaluations (4.52). It is followed by transactional leadership as the second most popular, with a mean score of 3.74 out of 7 and finally, the less popular is the laissez-faire leadership style, which collected the lowest mean score (2.45) (Table 1).

The answer to the second research question concerning the determination of the burnout levels of secondary education teachers in Greece, is that the mean score of 2.54 out of 5. This means that the job burnout levels of the participants are low to moderate (Table 1).

The answer to the third research question concerning the determination of the professional satisfaction levels of secondary education teachers in Greece, is that its mean score is 4.15 out of 5. This means that the levels of job satisfaction of the participants are high (Table 1).

To answer the fourth research question, a Pearson correlation test is performed. Statistically significant results occur in the case where p-value<0.05 (Table 2).

Table 2. *Correlation between leadership style, job burnout and job satisfaction.*

	Job Burnout	Job Satisfaction
TransformationalLeadership	-0.19*	0.36*
TransactionalLeadership	-0.03*	0.22*
Laissez-FaireLeadership	0.25*	-0.15*

(*) Statistically significant correlation (p-value<0.05).

Table 2 shows that transformational and transactional leadership, show positively leadership styles have positive statistically significant correlations with job satisfaction and negative statistically significant correlations with burnout. This means that the more transformational and transactional leadership is implemented, the higher the job satisfaction tends to be and the lower the burnout tends to be. In contrast, laissez-faire leadership showed a positive statistically significant correlation with burnout and a negative statistically significant correlation with job satisfaction. This means that the more laissez-faire leadership is applied, the higher the burnout and the lower the job satisfaction of secondary education teachers in Greece tends to be.

To answer the fifth research question, a Pearson correlation test is performed. Statistically significant results occur in the case where p-value <0.05. The results showed that there is a negative statistically significant correlation between burnout and job satisfaction of secondary education teachers in Greece (Pearson Correlation=-0.19).

Table 3. *Correlations of job satisfaction and burnout with demographic characteristics of teachers.*

	JobBurnout	JobSatisfaction
Gender	0.26*	-0.16*
Age	-0.13	0.03
Education	-0.21	0.17*
Years of service	0.00	0.01
Marital status	0.01	0.01
Residence	-0.04	-0.08
Number of children	0.08	0.09
Specialty	-0.15	-0.01

(*) Statistically significant correlation (p-value<0.05).

The results show that a total of three statistically significant correlations emerge. More specifically, the gender of secondary education teachers in Greece showed a statistically significant correlation with burnout and job satisfaction. In the case of burnout, the statistically significant correlation that emerged is positive. This means that women tend to experience higher levels of burnout compared to men. In the case of job satisfaction, the resulting statistically significant correlation is negative. This means that women tend to experience lower levels of job satisfaction compared to men. This is probably due to the greater sensitivity of women compared to the sensitivity levels of men.

The next statistically significant correlation that emerged concerns the educational level of secondary education teachers in Greece. More specifically, the educational level of teachers showed a positive statistically significant correlation with their job satisfaction. This means that the more educated the secondary teachers of Greece are, the higher their levels of job satisfaction. Most likely, secondary education teachers in Greece who have a higher level of education, such as postgraduate and doctoral level, enjoy better and more favorable treatment from school principals, compared to lower secondary education teachers in Greece.

4. Discussion

The present research findings are in line with the research findings of Benoliel & Barth [7] and Perrone et al. [22] at the time when they argued that when we follow a leadership style that does not promote collaboration and teamwork and results in authoritarian behaviors, it leads to reduced levels of job satisfaction. Such characteristics are highlighted in the laissez-faire leadership style, as described, and analyzed by Moss & Ritossa [19].

In addition, the identification of these research institutes regarding the influence of the followed leadership styles on the levels of burnout of teachers occurs with the research of Kokkinos [16] and Platsidou & Daniilidou [24]. These are two research, research samples of which included Cypriot teachers. Similarly, the results of these surveys have shown, as in the case of the present study, that when leadership styles are followed, that promote collaboration and teamwork, such as transformative and transactional leadership styles, then teachers' burnout levels tend to be reduced. Exactly the same was proved in the context of the present research, a fact which brings us in complete agreement with the findings of the two-above research.

Due to the fact that transformational and transactional leadership styles have a positive effect on job satisfaction and a negative effect on the burnout of secondary school teachers of Greece, the high levels of job satisfaction of the participants and their low levels of burnout are justified. On the contrary, the findings of the present study showed that the laissez-faire leadership style has a positive effect on the burnout of teachers and a negative effect on their job satisfaction. At this point, it is pointed out that several scholars have argued for the influence of leadership style on employee job satisfaction levels. Typical examples of such

scholars are Goje & Prada [10] and Elicker et al. [9], with which the findings of the present study are in line with the part of the relationship that exists between job satisfaction and followed leadership style.

In addition, it has been shown that teachers' job satisfaction levels are negatively correlated with their burnout levels. In fact, female secondary school teachers have been shown to be more prone to burnout and more satisfied with their work environment than men. Higher education teachers, such as those with postgraduate and doctoral degrees, may be treated more favorably by school principals than those with a lower level of education. Finally, it is pointed out that our research has shown that age, marital status, years of service, place of permanent residence and the specialty of secondary education teachers are not characteristics that have a statistically significant effect on their job satisfaction levels and their burnout.

5. Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from this project are identified with the corresponding findings of other scholars who dealt with the issue of the influence of the school principal's leadership style on the job satisfaction and burnout of teachers. However, the value of this research lies in the fact that it concerns the case of Greek secondary school teachers, where a research gap is identified, especially after the period of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, during which both teachers and school principals suffered even more pressure due to the successive and significant changes experienced in the nature of their profession and the obligations arising from it.

More specifically, the present study revealed, as mentioned above, the positive effect of the transformational and transactional leadership style and the negative effect of the laissez-faire leadership style on teachers' job satisfaction. The exact opposite is the case with their burnout levels. This is also confirmed by the fact of the high levels of job satisfaction of the teachers in the research sample, combined with the fact that it turned out that the dominant style of leadership followed in the schools in which they work is the transformational one. This is a finding, through which a positive omen can be seen for the way in which the school principals of the Greek secondary education manage their leadership tasks towards the teachers at their schools.

However, due to the fact that the research sample cannot be representative of all Greek secondary school teachers, we cannot safely generalize the specific result. But this does not cease to be a positive sign for Greek secondary schools, especially during the current period which is accompanied by the crisis suffered by the education sector due to the coronavirus pandemic. By maintaining a transformational leadership style, school principals, even during the current period of the pandemic crisis, help to maintain consistently high levels of job satisfaction and corresponding consistently low levels of burnout among their schoolteachers, which is highly valued important also for the promotion of the qualitative and effective learning process.

6. Recommendations

Given the results of this study, we suggest that Greek secondary school principals continue to maintain the transformational leadership style they already seem to be applying, in the context of applicating their leadership duties towards teachers. Special attention, however, should be given to the case of female teachers, due to the fact that they have been found to be more sensitive to burnout, compared to men.

In addition, due to the fact that in this research it emerged that teachers with a higher educational level show higher levels of job satisfaction, under no circumstances should this group of teachers be positively discriminated against the rest. It is possible that teachers with a higher educational level have higher levels of job satisfaction because they receive more recognition from school principals and their colleagues. The existence of discrimination in the human resources, however, on the part of school principals, might lead to a climate of dissatisfaction, a fact which on the one hand deviates from the transformational leadership style and its basic characteristics and on the other hand lurks the risk of limiting the job satisfaction of the other teachers.

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