Willingness to Communicate and Collaborate: The Key Role of Educational Leadership in Primary Education

Maria Karadimou[*] iD
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, GREECE

Kostis Tsioumis iD
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, GREECE

Abstract: This article aims to explore the views of primary school teachers regarding the educational leadership exercised by leader teachers at the human resource management level, and how this can affect their willingness to communicate and collaborate. The theoretical framework analyzes the dimensions of human resource management by a leader teacher, as a communication channel, team empowerer, and creator of a climate of trust. The research was carried out using quantitative method, with a closed digital questionnaire which was completed by 693 primary school teachers from whole Greece. Initially, the analysis was carried out through descriptive statistics and then selected questions were analyzed by statistical inference test. The findings show a shift towards the model of a transformational leader, despite the country's education system remaining highly centralized. In addition, the findings show a correlation between democratic and cooperative staff management, with the axes of inspiration and responsibility on the teachers' side. This article highlights whether the communication skills of a leader teacher affect the functioning of the school. The research was carried out during a pandemic and thus it was not possible to collect qualitative data using interviews with leader teachers so that we can have a comparative approach to the issue.

Keywords: *Cooperation principal with teachers, educational administration, human resources, leadership, primary schools.*

Introduction

The scientific community has shown great interest in educational leadership in recent years, and this is due to a widespread belief that the quality of leadership exercised in a school unit can make a significant contribution to school and other educational outcomes. The world economy contributes to the thinking of societies to realize that its main element is the human resources that consist of them. To be competitive, specialized human resources are necessary which requires trained teachers, but who need the leadership of an excellent leader with the support of all (Bush, 2007). Considering the school unit as an open system, the leader-teacher should act as the connecting link that maintains the balance between the teams and the subsystems as well as to coordinate the expectations of others with their own in a process of mutual commitment (Saiti & Saitis, 2012).

According to Bourandas (2002), a group consists of individuals who develop relationships with each other, pursuing common goals and considering themselves as members. In the field of social organizations, it can take a formal and informal form, where the creation of informal groups is not the work of the formal administration, since it arises as a result of informal relations with the ultimate goal of satisfying social needs. Another definition comes from Saiti and Saitis (2012) who state that the group is the composition of two or more people who have a common goal and interact with each other, while each member holds a position and the prominent one is occupied by the leader.

The leader teacher in the modern school must embody a complex role, to lead an open system with a multitude of subsystems that constantly interact with the possible fear of the conflict of goals between them (Chatzipanagiotou, 2008; Saitis, 2007; Stravakou, 2003). One of the key roles that the leader educator is called to perform is that of human resource management, which is related to the human factor in the workplace, as well as the relationships between this factor and the operation and development of the organization and the achievement of its goals (Armstrong, 2006; Beer et al., 1984; Mathis & Jackson, 2008; Snell & Bohlander, 2011).

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[*] **Corresponding author:**

Maria Karadimou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. ✉ mkaradi@edlit.auth.gr

Literature Review

The leader teacher as a channel of communication between the members of the school team

As defined by law (Government Gazette, 2002), the leader teacher is required to be in contact with the principals, school staff, students, parents, and social organizations. In practice, the leader teacher should inform the school staff about what is happening in his school unit (minutes, programs, plans, problems of the organization) in various ways (written announcements, meetings, discussions, friendly gatherings) to strengthen members' relationships (Saiti & Saitis, 2012; Tichnor-Wagner & Allen, 2016; Tzotzou & Anastasopoulos, 2013). To achieve this, it is deemed necessary by them to have a good knowledge of the issues that will be discussed and the prior information of the association (Krypa, 2017).

The leader teacher is a central figure, and his actions shape the school climate (Price, 2012), as he is called to create communities, aiming at shaping the organizational culture of the school through communication (Saiti & Saitis, 2012). According to Northouse (2015), all the situations that may arise in the school environment and involve in some degree the school leader can be solved through communication since the basic function of a group requires human interaction and presupposes the existence of a voluntary influence on the behavior of team members (Chance, 2013). This implies that participation in dialogue and communication processes is considered particularly important for increasing the dynamics of educational leadership in school (Brezicha et al., 2015; Holloway et al., 2018). Teacher leaders communicate to coordinate both educational and professional development processes (Leithwood et al., 2007), to identify and address problems (Scribner et al., 2007) as well as to discuss teaching knowledge and practices with their peers (Margolis & Deuel, 2009; Supovitz, 2018). As Gu (2014) mentions, with mutual effort, collaboration, and a common sense of dedication, each teacher has greater potential to successfully manage any challenge that may arise.

Instructional leadership should cultivate communication skills to keep up with the school vision (Burns et al., 2019), related to its goals and values (Volk & Zerfass, 2018). Instructional leadership skills include talking to teachers about their professional thinking and development through listening, sharing experiences, demonstration, modeling, and representation (Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Daly et al., 2010). For all the above reasons, the communication process is considered necessary, since through it the organized effort can be unified, the behavior of the members can be modified and their performance can be affected (Saiti & Saitis, 2012).

The leader teacher in the role of the school team strengthener

The term leadership includes the concept of influence and specifically in the vertical form of leadership, that which is exercised from above, the leader teacher can influence group processes and functions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of team members, influencing in that way their efficiency (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2013). The most suitable person to play an essential role in the flourishing of a positive climate in the school is the leader teacher thus enhancing the self-esteem of teachers (Whipp & Salin, 2018). In this context, teachers will be able to accept the direction of their activities, if the behavior of the leader teacher seems to provide them with the means needed to meet their needs (Knezevich, 1975).

This implies that empowerment can be applied when leadership is shared among school team members to encourage teachers to participate in decision-making practices and processes (Devos et al., 2014). After all, as evidenced by the empirical data, the interpersonal communication of the leader teacher with the teachers is a good source of psychological support for the latter (Dagenais-Desmarais et al., 2010). Empowerment leadership could be a separate kind of leadership. According to Amundsen and Martinsen (2014) empowering leadership is defined as "the process of influencing the existing ones through the distribution of power, motivation support, and development support, to promote their experience of autonomy, motivation and the ability to work autonomously within the limits of overall organizational goals and strategies".

The leader teacher in promoting a climate of trust in school team members

Trust is a basic element for the relationship between the teachers and the school leaders which helps to develop a shared organizational vision (Tschannen-Moran, 2014), and has proven as an important factor of a school that tries to achieve high performances (Sweeney et al., 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). To have honest communication and strengthening of a school team is required the promotion of a climate of trust by the leader-teacher, while at the same time through effective communication the maximum possible trust can occur (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Demir, 2015; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

In an organization, the value of trust is based on faith and loyalty to the leader (Ngodo, 2008). Especially, in the field of educational organizations, trust is defined as the trust of teachers that the leader-teacher will keep his promise and act in the interest of teachers (Hoffman et al., 1994) as well as the faith and the devotion of teachers to the person of the leader of an organization (Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997).

Characteristically such as content, manner, and quality of communication substantially affect the degree of trust in a school organization (Arlestig, 2008; Balyer, 2017; Young-Ybarra & Wiersema, 1999) while for its construction are considered necessary elements such as open dialogue, open communication, and a framework of favorable structures and supportive relationships (Jefferson & Knobloch, 2008). Trust contributes to the promotion of positive relationships

and the facilitation of the work of leadership, as it will be able to motivate staff to achieve collective management of difficulties, reduce the existence of conflicts, giving time for creative activities (Abrams & Segal, 1998; Chen et al., 2016; Hall & Hall, 1988; Li et al., 2016; Thomsen et al., 2015; Thomson, 1997) which utterly lead to construct a more positive school culture (Hong et al., 2020).

Methodology

Research Reasoning

Educational leadership is a relatively new subject within the educational administration, but of great importance for the modern educational reality, as shown by the results of international research (Mabokela & Madsen, 2003; Pope & Mueller, 2000; Theoharis, 2007) as it is directly related to the educational changes that take place in recent years in the modern school. However, in recent years there has been a strong interest in recording teachers 'perceptions of the role of leader teacher (Hallinger & Liu, 2016; Hariri et al., 2016; Hauserman & Stick, 2013), and the present study comes to lay its stone, as it aims primarily to record teachers' views on the management of human resources by the leading teacher at their school and secondarily to record their views regarding communication issues.

In a school where participatory decision-making is practiced, teachers can better understand the goals of the school unit, wish for their active participation, and be interested in the commitment and implementation of the decisions of the school organization (Antonio, 2008; Athanasoula-Reppa, 2008; Kastanidou & Tsikanderi, 2015). After all, as evidenced by previous findings, the involvement of teachers in problem-solving and participatory decision-making contributes to job satisfaction (Hui et al., 2013; Leithwood, 2006; Lynch, 2010). This parameter is examined in the second part of the study on whether there is a correlation between the forms of leadership exercised and whether it acts as a motivating lever for teachers in communication issues based on McGregor's theory X-Y. According to this, theory X is based on a system of continuous control management with centralized leadership and little involvement in decision-making issues, while theory Y is based on the application of a more democratic and decentralized form of leadership, where it encourages the activity of subordinates and is based on cooperation and the right methods of motivation (Kambouridis, 2002; Robbins et al., 2012).

Aim

The purpose of this study is to record the views of primary school teachers on educational leadership exercised by leader teachers in the field of human resource management, and how this affects their desire to communicate, as the communication skills of a leader teacher can affect the whole functioning of the school organization.

Research questions

- What do primary school teachers believe about the ability of leadership teachers to manage human resources?

- How do demographic characteristics affect teachers' views on human resource management?

- What is the relationship between human resource management by the leader teacher and their views on communicating with their colleagues?

Sample

The sample in this study consists of 693 primary school teachers in Greece.

Table 1. Demographic Data

Demographic Characteristics	*n*	*%*
Gender		
Male	148	21.4
Female	545	78.6
Age		
<=35	142	20.5
36-50	267	38.5
>51	284	41.0
Years of work experience		
<=13	211	30.4
14-26	312	45.0
>27	170	24.5

Table 1. Continued

Demographic Characteristics	n	%
Place of work		
Urban	398	57.4
Semi-urban	185	26.7
Rural	110	15.9
Employment relationship		
Substitute	162	23.4
Permanent (yearbook list-epetirida)	263	38.0
Permanent (24 months-reached base at ASEP)	34	4.9
Permanent (30 months)	15	2.2
Permanent (ASEP)	219	31.6
Type of educational degree		
Pedagogical Academy	64	9.2
Technological Institute (TEI)	10	1.4
University	253	36.5
In-service training education	22	3.2
In-service training in special education	5	0.7
Master's degree	312	45.0
Doctorate	27	3.9
Professional occupation		
Kindergarten teacher	196	28.3
Kindergarten teacher (Special Needs)	20	2.9
Elementary teacher	303	43.7
Elementary teacher (Special Needs)	68	9.8
Specialty teacher	89	12.8
Specialty teacher (Special Needs)	17	2.5

The questions above are part of a broader questionnaire that seeks to explore the multifaceted phenomenon of educational leadership. This axis consists of questions regarding the views of teachers on the evaluation of human relations, management by their school leader teacher (1-12), and of their views about the issue of school management of human relations in a school organization (13-16). Given that the data collection tool is improvised and is not a weighted product by the scientific community, to ensure its validity it was necessary to be piloted to a small group of teachers who identified some verbal ambiguities that made it difficult to interpret the questions. After its completion, the necessary corrections were made to make it an attractive and unambiguous questionnaire. The data collection was followed by the reliability control phase of the tool, where the Cronbach alpha factor was utilized, according to which a set of questions with a value equal to or greater than 0.7 is considered reliable (De Vaus, 2008). In this tool, the Cronbach alpha reliability index has the value a = 0.948 which is considered as an indication of a reliable set of questions. For statistical analysis we implemented parametric statistics, such as s t-test for the differences between means, given the large sample size and its robustness against the violation of basic assumption, e.g. normal distributions. Similarly, for ANOVA tests, the analyses adopted the proper calculations depending on the Leven's test of equality of variances.

Descriptive analysis

The teachers who participated in the research were asked to answer a 5-point Likert scale and state their degree of agreement or disagreement (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the statements

	Question	M	SD
1.	Encourages the active involvement of all teachers in decision making	4.33	.891
2.	Informs the teachers' association before making decisions	4.39	.913
3.	Distributes power to empower teachers	3.99	1.039
4.	Inspires teachers to exercise their duties democratically	4.23	.999
5.	Inspires a sense of security for teachers' free expression	4.31	.976
6.	Encourages and supports the professional development of teachers	4.29	.983
7.	Promotes basically a harmonious coexistence with his colleagues, indifferent to power relations	4.23	1.001

Table 2. Continued

	Question	M	SD
8.	Encourages the exchange of views between teachers in the form of working groups	3.97	1.122
9.	Leaves enough freedom for teachers to develop initiatives	4.21	.914
10.	Forms a climate of trust with teachers for the effective performance of their responsibilities	4.28	.961
11.	Forms a positive atmosphere with teachers for student performance	4.33	.884
12.	Forms a climate of trust with teachers to effectively manage inequalities	4.27	.915
13.	Communication and dialogue between me and other teachers are key to my school's success	4.63	.616
14.	Meeting the challenges at my school requires a collective spirit from all teachers	4.70	.561
15.	My empowerment and emancipation are significantly influenced by the teacher leader	3.83	1.013
16.	My views on the evaluation of teaching practices and methods I follow should be discussed with my colleagues	3.96	.913

In the first level of analysis, an attempt was made to investigate whether there is a correlation between the variables and the demographic characteristics of the sample. For the above, it was necessary to use One-way ANOVA which refers to the effect of a categorical variable on a quantitative, and specifically on their averages when the quantitative variable belongs to more than 2 groups (Stamovlasis, 2016). For cases like Gender, the t-TEST was used respectively, which compares the means of a quantitative variable belonging to two different groups (Stamovlasis, 2016). To correlate the variables with each other and the possible relationships that result from them, the Pearson coefficient was used which evaluates whether there are statistics for the existence of a linear relationship between the same pairs of variables in the population (Kent State University, 2021).

Findings/Results

One-way ANOVA

To examine the effect of demographics on teachers' views, a one-way test was performed, which identified questions with a p (sig) =<0.05. The examination of multiple comparisons revealed the categories that are statistically significant and will be presented with the largest difference in means.

Specialty

Statistical significance with variable specialty was observed in the following dependent variables:

Table 3. One-way ANOVA for Variable Specialty

Q	F	p	MXA	MNA	MD	sig
2	2.705	<.05	Kindergarten teacher (4.54)	Elementary teacher (Special Needs) (4.12)	.418	<.05
3	2.923	<.05	Kindergarten teacher (4.18)	Elementary teacher (Special Needs) (3.75)	.429	<.05
4	4.035	<.01	Kindergarten teacher (4.40)	Elementary teacher (Special Needs) (3.87)	.530	<.01
6	3.331	<.01	Kindergarten teacher (4.47)	Elementary teacher (Special Needs) (3.97)	.499	<.01
7	5.108	<.01	Kindergarten teacher (4.43)	Elementary teacher (Special Needs) (3.65)	.782	<.05
10	4.901	<.01	Kindergarten teacher (4.43)	Specialty teacher (Special Needs) (3.65)	.782	<.05
12	3.887	<.01	Kindergarten teacher (4.42)	Elementary teacher (Special Needs) (3.96)	.468	<.01
13	4.298	<.01	Kindergarten teacher (4.78)	Specialty teacher (Special Needs) (4.24)	.540	<.01
14	3.325	<.01	Kindergarten teacher (4.82)	Elementary teacher (Special Needs) (4.57)	.243	<.05
16	4.119	<.01	Kindergarten teacher (4.17)	Specialty teacher (Special Needs) (3.71)	.461	<.01

Note. MD=Mean Difference; MXA=Max (Average); MNA=Min (Average)

Studies

Statistical significance was observed with the variable studies in the dependent variables:

Table 4. One-way ANOVA for Variable Studies

Q	F	p	MXA	MNA	MD	sig
1	2.266	<.05	Pedagogical Academy (4.47)	TEI (3.50)	.969	<.05
2	2.564	<.05	Pedagogical Academy (4.50)	TEI (3.50)	1.000	<.05
3	2.501	<.05	Pedagogical Academy (4.05)	TEI (2.90)	1.147	<.05
4	3.927	<.01	University - Pedagogical Academy (4.31 - 4.30)	TEI (3.00)	1.312	<.01
5	2.991	<.01	Pedagogical Academy (4.41)	TEI (3.40)	1.006	<.05

Table 4. Continued

Q	F	p	MXA	MNA	MD	sig
7	3.911	<.01	Pedagogical Academy (4.48)	TEI (3.00)	1.484	<.01
8	4.355	<.01	Pedagogical Academy (4.16)	TEI (2.60)	1.556	<.01
9	3.412	<.01	Pedagogical Academy (4.42)	TEI (3.30)	1.122	<.01
10	5.221	<.01	Pedagogical Academy (4.44)	TEI (2.90)	1.538	<.01
11	4.646	<.01	Pedagogical Academy (4.55)	TEI (3.30)	1.247	<.01
12	4.910	<.01	Pedagogical Academy (4.45)	TEI (3.10)	1.353	<.01

Note. MD=Mean Difference; MXA=Max (Average); MNA=Min (Average).

Employment relationship

Statistical significance with variable employment relationship was observed in the following dependent variables:

Table 5. One-way ANOVA for Variable Employment relationship

Q	F	p	MXA	MNA	MD	sig
1	7.723	<.01	Permanent (24-months) (4.50)	Substitute (4.00)	.500	<.05
2	6.646	<.01	Permanent (yearbook) (4.5)	Substitute (4.07)	.428	<.01
3	6.562	<.01	Permanent (24-months) (4.26)	Substitute (3.64)	.623	<.05
4	7.170	<.01	Permanent (24-months) (4.47)	Substitute (3.88)	.588	<.05
5	4.888	<.01	Permanent (yearbook) (4.46)	Substitute (4.04)	.421	<.01.
6	4.791	<.01	Permanent (24-months) (4.56)	Substitute (4.02)	.540	<.05
7	4.462	<.01	Permanent (yearbook) (4.40)	Substitute (3.99)	.415	<.01
8	8.876	<.01	Permanent (24-months) (4.21)	Substitute (3.54)	.663	<.05
9	7.823	<.01	Permanent (yearbook) (4.41)	Substitute (3.92)	.487	<.01
10	8.074	<.01	Permanent (yearbook) (4.44)	Substitute (3.92)	.521	<.01
11	6.855	<.01	Permanent (yearbook) (4.49)	Substitute (4.04)	.450	<.01
12	9.668	<.01	Permanent (30-months) (4.60)	Substitute (3.91)	.686	<.05
13	4.525	<.01	Permanent (yearbook) (4.72)	Permanent (24-months) (4.32)	.399	<.01

Note. MD=Mean Difference; MXA=Max (Average); MNA=Min (Average).

Work environment

Statistical significance was observed with the variable work environment in the dependent variables:

Table 6. One-way ANOVA for Variable Work environment

Q	F	p	MXA	MNA	MD	sig
2	5.641	<.01	Semi–urban (4.53)	Urban (4.29)	.238	<.01
7	4.461	<.05	Semi–urban (4.38)	Urban (4.14)	.243	<.05
8	3.387	<.05	Semi–urban (4.13)	Urban (3.88)	.250	<.05
10	3.402	<.05	Semi–urban (4.40)	Urban (4.20)	.204	<.05
11	3.984	<.05	Semi–urban (4.45)	Urban (4.25)	.208	<.05

Note. MD=Mean Difference; MXA=Max (Average); MNA=Min (Average).

Gender

To examine the effect of variability gender on human relationship management questions by their school leader, a t-test with a significance level of 0.05 was performed. The analyzes showed a correlation of the gender factor only with question 14 according to which teachers consider that meeting the challenges in their school requires a collective spirit from all teachers, where a statistically significant difference was observed with (F=11,774 (p=0.01 and sig2t=0.009). Specifically, it is found that women (Average=4.73), compared to men (Average=4.59), support more the above assumption.

Age

Statistical significance with variable age was observed in the following dependent variables:

Table 7. t-test for Variable Age

Q	F	p	MXA	MNA	MD	sig
1	10.215	<.01	51=< (4.46)	>=35 (4.06)	.408	<.01
2	11.389	<.01	51=< (4.51)	>=35 (4.08)	.433	<.01
3	9.992	<.01	51=< (4.16)	>=35 (3.69)	.468	<.01
4	11.049	<.01	51=< (4.39)	>=35 (3.92)	.475	<.01
5	8.951	<.01	51=< (4.48)	>=35 (4.06)	.412	<.01
6	8.942	<.01	51=< (4.45)	>=35 (4.03)	.419	<.01
7	8.222	<.01	51=< (4.41)	>=35 (4.04)	.373	<.01
8	14.028	<.01	51=< (4.2)	>=35 (3.61)	.592	<.01
9	13.384	<.01	51=< (4.41)	>=35 (3.96)	.451	<.01
10	12.824	<.01	51=< (4.45)	>=35 (3.96)	.489	<.01
11	10.909	<.01	51=< (4.5)	>=35 (4.1)	.398	<.01
12	14.706	<.01	51=< (4.45)	>=35 (3.96)	.496	<.01
13	3.296	<.05	51=< (4.69)	>=35 (4.53)	.162	<.05
16	4.074	<.05	51=< (4.07)	>=35 (3.85)	.222	<.05

Note. MD=Mean Difference; MXA=Max (Average); MNA=Min (Average).

Years of work experience

Statistical significance was observed with the variable years of work experience in the dependent variables:

Table 8: t-test for Variable Years of work experience

Q	F	p	MXA	MNA	MD	sig
1	10.870	<.01	27=< (4.52)	>=13 (4.11)	.410	<.01
2	11.156	<.01	27=< (4.55)	>=13 (4.15)	.395	<.01
3	9.337	<.01	27=< (4.19)	>=13 (3.75)	.439	<.01
4	8.502	<.01	27=< (4.42)	>=13 (4.01)	.409	<.01
5	7.987	<.01	27=< (4.51)	>=13 (4.12)	.393	<.01
6	6.289	<.01	27=< (4.46)	>=13 (4.11)	.351	<.01
7	9.234	<.01	27=< (4.49)	>=13 (4.05)	.436	<.01
8	10.687	<.01	27=< (4.18)	>=13 (3.69)	.489	<.01
9	15.422	<.01	27=< (4.48)	>=13 (3.97)	.510	<.01
10	14.638	<.01	27=< (4.51)	>=13 (4.00)	.507	<.01
11	8.693	<.01	27=< (4.51)	>=13 (4.14)	.368	<.01
12	14.624	<.01	27=< (4.49)	>=13 (4.01)	.479	<.01
13	5.093	<.01	27=< (4.74)	>=13 (4.54)	.201	<.01
15	3.466	<.05	27=< (4.01)	>=13 (3.76)	.248	<.05
16	5.545	<.01	27=< (4.14)	>=13 (3.82)	.311	<.01

Note. MD=Mean Difference; MXA=Max (Average); MNA=Min (Average).

Cooperation Axis

Hypothesis 1: Testing the correlation between collaboration inspiration from a teacher leader and teachers' desire for collaborative responsibilities.

The variable 1 presents with 13 (r =,360), and 14 (r =,315) low positive correlation coefficient, while with 16 (r =,181) zero correlation coefficient and statistically significant at the significance level of 0.01.

The variable 7 presents with 13 (r =,360), and 14 (r =,323) low positive correlation coefficient, while with 16 (r =,182) zero correlation coefficient and statistically significant at significance level 0.01.

The variable 8 presents with 13 (r =,346), 14 (r =,253), and 16 (r =,224) low positive correlation coefficient and statistically significant at a significance level of 0.01.

Hypothesis 2: Checking the correlation between management exercise at the level of cooperation and teachers' desire to take cooperation responsibilities.

The variable 10 presents with 13 (r =,401), and 14 (r =,348) low positive correlation coefficient, while with 16 (r =,182) zero correlation coefficient and statistically significant at a significance level of 0.01.

The variable 11 presents with 13 (r =,408), 14 (r =,335), and 16 (r =,202) low positive correlation coefficient, and statistically significant at a significance level of 0.01.

The variable 12 presents with 13 (r =,389), and 14 (r =,317) low positive correlation coefficient, while with 16 (r =,194) zero correlation coefficient and statistically significant at significance level 0.01.

Democracy Axis

Hypothesis 3: Checking the correlation between inspirational democratic behavior inspiration by a leader teacher and teachers' desire to take on responsibilities for democratic management of professional relationships.

Variable 15 presents with 4 (r =,234), 5 (r =,252), 6 (r =,257), and 9 (r =,242) a low positive correlation coefficient and statistically significant at a significance level of 0.01.

Hypothesis 4: Examining the correlation between democratic leadership exercised by the leader teacher and teachers' desire to take on democratic professional management responsibilities.

Variable 15 shows with 2 (r =,144) zero correlation coefficient and with 3 (r =,227) low positive and statistically significant at a significance level of 0.01.

Discussion

Demographics indicate the image of a female-dominated profession at a rate of 78.6%, as evidenced by relevant research data, according to which the majority (99% in Greece) in the profession of kindergarten teachers are women (Frosi-Papadimou & Kuimtzi, 2001; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2021). In addition, the teachers who participated in the survey belong to the age of 36 years and over in a percentage of 79.5%, 45% of the sample has a master's degree, while 76.6% are employed permanently.

The analysis of the results showed that teachers believe mainly that the leader teacher in their school tends to be quite democratic and cooperative and that they agree that they should use in their daily educational reality, human relationships, as the averages of their answers show, which are above 3.8 (max=5). These results are encouraging, given the centralized nature of the Greek education system with little space for autonomy for teachers. The above findings highlight a trend of change of the leader teacher, who over the years tends to embrace more participatory forms of leadership to address the complexity of educational issues, where to manage it must utilize the collective strength of staff, their experiences, and their cognitive background, since their hierarchical power alone is not enough (Dumay, 2009; Petra et al., 2017).

The correlation of the variables with the demographic characteristics of the sample shows that the specialty of teachers that characterized their school leader teacher as democratic and cooperative are kindergarten teachers, while on the opposite side there are mainly special education teachers and specialty teachers. This finding is probably due to the small capacity of Greek kindergartens (an association of 2-3 people), while it is common in the kindergartens not to separate the role of the leader teacher (kindergarten administrator) and this of a teacher (Nerantzidou, 2017; Theocharidi, 2012). As a result, no person is called to stand out from the teachers' association and decisions are basically made as a product of collective decision. In addition, the specialties and especially of Special Education, which seem less positive, are called to fill working hours in many schools, where they often meet each school unit, even once a week. This is probably due to their lack of satisfaction with the need to create social relationships, where based on McClelland's theory of achievement it contributes to the cooperation, acceptance, respect, devotion, and confirmation of the individual from the team to which they belong (Koziori & Alexandropoulos, 2020), resulting several times to be ignored by the school leadership even in matters of information.

Regarding the variable studies, it turns out that the teachers who tend to feel that their school leadership is based primarily on the principles of cooperation and democracy are the graduates of the Pedagogical Academy. They are older teachers since the Pedagogical Academies ceased to operate permanently on July 1, 1991 (Evangelopoulos, 1988), who have many years of service and probably feel that both their experience and their confidence contribute to the respect of their opinion, and to be part of a participatory management model. The opposite view seems to be embraced by the graduates of Technological Institutes, who are employed in primary education in specialty positions, whereas analyzed above, in many circumstances due to their few teaching hours in each school, they do not feel active members of an association.

Regarding the working relationship of teachers, from the correlations results that those with a permanent employment relationship evaluate the leader teacher at their school more positively than the substitutes. In addition, permanent teachers through ASEP also tend to show a low appreciation of the democratic and cooperative nature of the leader teacher. These findings are probably due to the change of educational environment for the above groups, the substitutes who work every year in another city, while the permanent ones through ASEP because they are younger than the other permanent teachers and are in transfer procedures, so they also have a different position every year. The above fact could be interpreted on the basis that the removal from the immediate social environment of a person is associated with lower levels of social support (Schoenbaum, 2012). Considering the above, it is understood that the other groups can build a good framework of human relationships over time, as a result, they perceive themselves as part of a participatory management model.

The results from the work environment give us the feeling that teachers working in a semi-urban environment consider their school leader teacher more cooperative and democratic than teachers working in an urban environment. This is probably because in semi-urban environments the capacity of schools in human resources is less than those in urban centers, resulting in the leader teacher being part of a team and not standing out so much from the rest of the teachers' association. At the same time, this implies better personal contacts between members of the educational community which helps to flourish a participatory management model. However, there is a less positive attitude in rural work environments, which is probably based on Fiedler (1976) theory that leadership is related to the work environment and its effectiveness is related to the conditions served by the leader, with the result that larger units are forced to cultivate a collaborative climate, which will help to resolve issues that arise at regular intervals. Pashiardis (2017) also supports the above, where the leading teachers in modern society should be influenced and accept the influence of the environment (external-internal) to be able to be considered successful and effective in their work.

Variable gender did not appear to have a significant effect other question results apart from 14, according to which women are warmer in addressing school challenges through a collective spirit in contrast to men who are more isolated and less speaking (Rosch et al., 2014), while as Björk (2000, p.11) argues "Women tend to use communicative forms of governance, as opposed to men who use the power of control and rules, which they often impose silently".

The ANOVA test on age groups showed that in all questions related to teachers' views regarding their school leader, older teachers, aged <= 51 present a more democratic and cooperative leader-teacher profile, in contrast to the younger ones aged >=35, which is probably due to lack of formed relationships in a school unit, as well as to how well prepared and not feared they feel in expressing themselves. There were no differences in the questions regarding their views on what they think about human relationships concerning the age factor.

The ANOVA test on the years of service showed that in all questions the views of teachers with more educational experience tend to highlight the profile of a more democratic and cooperative leader teacher compared to those with fewer years of service, which is confirmed by the above correlation with age. Of course, the same attitude is observed in the questions regarding the teachers themselves about human relations at school, which is probably because the teachers with more experience have developed a culture of cooperation and communication, understanding over the years how important it is for the needs of their work.

Regarding the correlations of the questions of the 1st with the 2nd axis in the field of cooperation, it emerged that teachers who feel that their school leader teacher inspire them to exercise a collaborative form of administration, encouraging them to participate actively in decision making, and based on a harmonious coexistence indifferent to power relations, are those who tend to consider that communication between colleagues is a key element in the communication of their school, and that meeting the challenges at school require a collective spirit. While only those who believe that the leader teacher in their school encourages the exchange of views between teachers in the form of working groups are those who tend to believe that their views on the evaluation of teaching practices and methods should be discussed with their colleagues. The above findings assume that the leader teacher should be the person who will take initiative and seek to gain the trust of all participants in the educational process, motivating them to improve and work as a team, putting down their ambitions to promote the progress and development of the team to which they belong, in such way to structure their school unit to support simultaneously the human interests (Day & Sammons, 2013; Goleman, 2000; Raptis & Grigoriadis, 2017; Saiti, 2021).

Regarding the correlations of the questions of the 1st with the 2nd axis in the field of cooperation, it emerged that the teachers who feel that their school leader teacher exercises them a form of administration based on cooperation and specifically forms a climate of trust with teachers for effective performing of their responsibilities, for student performance, and for the effective management of inequalities, it is those who tend to consider that communication between colleagues is a key element in their school communication and that addressing the challenges in their school require a collective spirit. While only those who believe that their school's leading teacher can create a positive climate for student performance are those who tend to believe that their views on the evaluation of the teaching practices and methods they follow should be discussed with their colleagues. The trust in the school leader is an important factor for the improvement of student's achievement (Day et al., 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2017) since the leader teacher in the context of the school unit is "the person who acts as a beacon, guiding the teachers in a common vision or goal for the benefit of the students" (Kontaxi, 2008, p. 7).

Regarding the correlations of the questions of the 1st with the 2nd axis in the field of democracy, it emerged that the teachers who feel that their school leader teacher inspires them to exercise a democratic form of administration, inspiring them to exercise their duties democratically, feel safe to express themselves freely, encouraging and supporting their professional development, and giving them the freedom to develop initiatives (4,5,6,9), are those who tend to consider that their empowerment and emancipation are significantly influenced by their leader teacher their school. After all, according to the teachers, their ideas and experiences are essential for the planning of the development of the school unit. Therefore, teachers can function as an integral part in the creation and implementation of the vision, and not being the last to whom the instructions reach about the administration of educational policy (Hinnant-Crawford, 2016; Murphy et al., 2009).

Finally, regarding the correlations of the questions of the 1st with the 2nd axis in the field of democracy, it emerged that teachers who feel that their school leader is exercised by a democratic form of administration, distributing power to empower them (3), are those who tend to feel that their empowerment and emancipation is significantly influenced by their school's leading teacher. As supported by literature (Chitiris, 2017; Yukl, 2009), through leadership influence processes are attempted, motivation facilitates the members of a team to achieve the success of the organization to which they belong.

Conclusion

Educational leadership is a key element in the effectiveness of a school organization by many researchers (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2009; Kythreotis et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2005).

In recent years, there has been a trend of moving from the model of a charismatic leader and the concentration of power in one person to transformational forms of leadership, where leadership emerges because of the work of many interconnected people as a group (Dieronitou, 2014). This seems to emerge because of the present study, and this is particularly encouraging especially considering the centralized nature of the Greek education system.

In addition, the findings show that there is a correlation between the exercise of leadership based on the principles of democracy and cooperation at the level of administration, inspiration, and taking responsibilities. This makes sense given that encouraging leader teachers make a significant contribution to strengthening collective support but also to staff cohesion, as it is a feedback process that leads to strong relationships of trust (Bryk et al., 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990).

Having a school leader teacher who embraces the values of cooperation, responsibility, trust, and participation plays a catalytic role in managing the human factor and in establishing good interpersonal relationships with actors inside and outside the school environment, aiming at a smooth and effective operation of the school organization (Kythreotis, 2015; Tzotzou & Anastasopoulos, 2013).

To summarize, teacher-leaders have the potential to create an environment of school trust for all members of the educational community-teachers-students-parents, who can form "guides of change" (Bryk et al., 2010).

Recommendations

The findings of this study could be the basis for investigating other extensions of future research. Specifically, it would be interesting:

The qualitative approach of the subject in question with interviews of teachers for the further investigation of issues that concern them, and that the use of the questionnaires does not allow.

The study of the perceptions of secondary school teachers, so that there can be a comparison of the two levels of education and the role played by the communicative nature of the leader teacher in each of them.

Finally, it would be interesting to correlate the perceptions of teachers on the one hand in matters of human relations management, and on the other in matters of cooperation of the leader teacher and themselves with the wider society.

Limitations

This research was carried out entirely during a pandemic and for this reason, it was not possible to collect qualitative data in the form of interviews with leader teachers, so that we can have a comparative approach to the issue.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Karadimou: Conceptualization, design, analysis, writing, data acquisition, data analysis/interpretation, drafting manuscript, statistical analysis. Tsioumis: Editing/reviewing, critical revision of manuscript, supervision, final approval.

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