

# Charismatic Leadership and Special Education Teachers' Empowerment

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**Abstract**—In general, leadership is strongly correlated with the empowerment of the followers' personal vision as well as with the effectiveness of their work. On the top of that, the admiration derived of a group of people towards a leader, is a determine factor to characterize the leader as “charismatic—emotionally intelligent”. Consequently, final target along with the adopted strategies are the key points for successful leadership. This is how a high-leveled Job Satisfaction environment for the employees, can be secured, protecting them against Job Burnout syndrome. In Special Education, the consequences of Job Burnout seem to be profoundly serious concerning not only the teacher him/herself but also his/her work efficiency. It has been found that teachers, who face the Job Burnout are usually physically and mentally tired, depressed, and continually anxious, keeping themselves isolated and not easily accessible. This research aims to investigate the correlation between the school leader's emotionally intelligence and the existence of supportive working environment, where the teacher is motivated, inspired and protected by the danger of Job Burnout.

**Keywords**—leadership, emotionally intelligence, empowerment, special education

## 1 Introduction

A charismatic leader concerns the inspiration of the followers towards the completion of their personal goals, which are based on their personal vision. Charismatic leadership might not be related with an attractive personality or with a person, socially accepted within a group of people. The followers' increased performance to the most possible limits is the result of their empowerment and motivation. Most of the times, the employees' personal vision is similar to the organization's which has been declared to the followers by the leader [1]. A leader has the charisma to motivate, passionate and in general activate the followers' best performance. Leaders are usually distinguished by their strategy, tactics, management skills as well as by their personal values. According to Aristoteles, they are capable to understand and support the emotions of their followers [2].

The inspirational influence, the expression of clear and persuasive organizational goals, the group mentoring and guidance, the innovative mentality, the conflict management as well as the building of the appropriate working environment which facilitates the cooperation towards the organization's goals accomplishment, are only a few credentials of a charismatic leadership [3].

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 The school director as a charismatic leader**

During their working career, many teachers could meet and cooperate with a School Leader, capable to inspire his/her followers, identify their personal goals and significantly contribute to associate them with those of school unity (Maxwell, 1998) [4]. The School Leader can also be promoted as a strong connection between the educators and the members of the upper Educational Management unities. At the same time, the individualized and specified goals of each school unity should be aligned with the general instructions of the Education Ministry. As a result, all strategies and tactics followed by each School Principal should comply with them. More specifically, the relevant Ministry sets the expected goals and each School Director could properly utilize the provided means to achieve them. In general, the School Leader is responsible to coordinate the human resources of a school unity to accomplish the targets (Saitis, 2007) [5]. School Leader is actually the coordinator, who takes initiatives, communicates and interacts with the educators, as well as with the total amount of the school community (e.g. parents, students, school staff), in order to secure and establish a balanced and supportive working environment, in favour of the cognitive procedure and academic results (Brinia, 2008). Furthermore, the Leader clarifies the educational and social needs of the school unity and supports the teachers to adopt the appropriate strategies that would be compatible to these needs (Saitis, 2007) [5].

Nowadays, schools shall serve a multidimensional role and for this very reason it is crucial to seek for School Leaders than School Principals. A charismatic school Leader has a vision shared with the team. He/she allocates the educational staff, according to personalized interests, temper, and abilities so that, the vision can be converted into strategy. The difference between the Leader and the Director is that the former promotes his/her ability to inspire and motivate the team, in order to become as much innovative and creative as possible, with the result of a supportive working environment. On the contrary, the latter facilitates his/her power to fulfil the organization goals (Blush & Middlewood, 2005) [6].

### **2.2 Job Burnout in special education teachers**

According to international research findings, Teachers' Job Burnout is significantly correlated with emotionally exhaustion. More specifically, teachers who are close to Job Burnout syndrome, usually express their feeling of fatigue or inadequacy, concerning their job efficacy and their limited energy in the classroom. Job Satisfaction is a quite important factor, which determines the Teachers' professional life quality. As a

result, teachers with low Job Satisfaction level, are more vulnerable to Job Burnout and they often express the feeling of inefficiency [7], [8].

An emotionally exhausted teacher, whose professional health is significantly affected, has been found to be low-efficient concerning his/her job in general [9]. At the same time, teachers' emotional fatigue seems to be a reliable indicator of Job Burnout syndrome which, at extreme levels, could eventually result in a possible abandonment of profession [10]. The consequences derived from teachers' burnout are quite serious for the educator him/herself, as well as, for his/her professional life.

Teachers who keep on working under the shadow of Job Burnout are emotionally exhausted, physically fatigued, depressed, continually anxious, cynical, and distant, without interest. Teachers' Job Burnout syndrome affects not only the educator him/herself, as well as the entire school unity. Teachers facing Job Burnout are not able to contribute properly at their teaching duties and consequently, students' academic results are usually negatively affected [11].

According to recent studies, teachers who work in Special Education field present higher anxiety level and emotional exhaustion compared to their colleagues who work in mainstream schools [12], [13], [14].

A research, conducted in Greece, in 2000, in a sample of 110 teachers working either in Special Education schools or in Special Education classrooms, appeared a medium to high emotional exhaustion [15]. Kokkinos and Devazoglou [16] analysed data, collected from a sample of 745 primary school teachers, 430 of whom were occupied in General Education schools (in the areas of East Macedonia and Thrace) and 315 worked in Special Education field in several areas of Greece. According to the findings, Special Education teachers need to deal with a greater amount of emotional exhaustion compared to General Education teachers.

Taking into consideration the research findings along with the existing bibliography, Job Burnout syndrome is quite usual within the field of education. At the same time the Job Satisfaction level seems to be a protective factor against Job Burnout. For this very reason, the Leadership Style has a crucial role for establishing a secure working environment, maintaining a high-level Job satisfaction and at the same time preventing from Job burnout. A research conducted in Greece, in 2019, with sample of 285 Primary School Leaders in General Education, concluded in a strong correlation between the Transformational Leadership Style and the factor of Job Satisfaction, which is a protector against the Job Burnout [17].

### **2.3 Emotional intelligence and charismatic leadership**

In general, a charismatic Leader concentrates on establishing a cooperative and stable working environment which can secure employees' emotional empowerment. During the decades, Leaders used to be the emotional shelter for their followers against any threat or uncertain situation [18].

Emotional intelligence is defined as a person's ability to recognize his/her feelings, as well as, the others' feelings, to distinguish the differences among them, to name them appropriately and to use this emotional information for setting plan and guidance. In general, emotional intelligence includes a group of abilities and skills, which enable individual to understand and handle his/her own emotional situation, and others as well,

aiming to personal and social development [19]. The emotional intelligence is a kind of mediator between the Leader and the employees, securing thus the dialog and as a result the effective communication.

A highly emotionally intelligent Leader appears several characteristics, which differentiate him/her from others. Such characteristics are the non-critical behaviour towards his/her colleagues, the recognition of others' emotionally considerations, the followers' guidance, and support through personal experience. This kind of Leader is also honest concerning his/her feelings and intentions, taking any responsibility he/she needs to. What is more, detail matters to him/her without ignoring at the same time the key—points of a situation. He/she is also quite supportive to his/her followers being decisive and a very efficient conflict manager within the team. Leader has a strong self-confidence and honestly cares for his/her followers' progress (Louis et al, 2010) [20]. A great number of studies highlights Leader's emotional intelligence to be crucial for the structure of a motivational and inspirational work environment where, employees are secured from potential Job Burnout syndrome [21].

An international research investigated the success factors of senior executives, in a sample of 515 Leaders in Japan, Germany, and Latin America. According to the findings there are three determinant factors which affect the Leader profile: their previous working experience, the responsibilities they used to have in previous workplaces and their emotional intelligence level [22]. Moreover, studies conducted in international companies showed that, top management employees, with higher emotional intelligence are 15–20% more effective in achieving company's KPI's compared to those with lower emotional intelligence [23].

International literature supports that the Leaders, who are able to handle their own feelings and set their own satisfaction of minor importance, appear as role models for their followers gaining thus their respect [24]. Within this tactic the Leader may achieve the “idealized influence” offering at his/her followers the essential emotional support and initiatives for enhancing their performance [25]. Additionally to the gift of understanding others' feelings, an emotionally intelligent Leader can distinguish others' personal expectations supporting them towards the fulfilment through an inspirational motivation; an additional characteristic that differentiates this Leader [26]. Furthermore, it is worth to be mentioned, that a Leader with high leveled emotionally intelligence, recognizes the uniqueness of every single team's member with different needs and priorities. This individualized consideration of each person makes the followers to feel that they are special, and their Leader regards at them accordingly [27]. The above-mentioned special characteristics of an emotionally intelligent Leader are also found in the theory of Transformational Leadership, one of the most effective leadership style, a fact that indicates the correlation between the emotionally intelligent Leader and the Transformational Leader.

A team working environment that secures employees' motivation and inspiration is one of the fundamental points of Transformational Leadership style. To be more specific, Transformational Leadership facilitates the cooperation between the team and the leader, aiming to organization's goals achievement. As a result, the Transformational Leader becomes a role model who motivates his/her followers' by creating a challenging and supportive environment [28]. The Transformational Leader inspires the employees so that each personal goal to be identified to these of the organization. As far as the Transformational Leadership style in the school context, Leithwood pinpointed three basic sectors: Setting Direction, Developing Human, Restructuring School [29].

Several studies conclude that the Transformational leadership supports several important school life factors such as the school culture, the school climate as well as the students' academic and cognitive results and their emotional development via teachers' support [30]. As a result, it is obvious that a Transformational Leader guides properly the whole organization towards a common vision, supporting teachers to work together to achieve the goals. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned correlation between the emotional intelligence and the Transformational Leadership style along with the benefits derived from the Transformational Leader, the contribution of an emotionally intelligent Leader to a school unity is profound.

### 3 Conclusion

According to existing literature, Leadership practises are mainly oriented to followers' motivation and inspiration appropriate elements for organization's goals. What is more, Leaders' emotional intelligence is correlated with their ability to inspire, persuade, and arouse their follower's interest. The bond and the interaction between the emotional intelligence and the leadership style is of crucial importance especially during decision-making procedures. Similarly, in educational context, school director has the key role to build the desired relationships between the whole team, Leader and educators. Charismatic leadership characteristics, as well as the leadership style in general, are strongly connected with the emotional support offered to the teachers by the Leader, aiming to support their multitasking and demanding role [31], [32]. In other words, empathy is strongly characterizing a charismatic Leader and at the same time it seems to be a protecting factor against employees' Job Burnout syndrome, a syndrome quite common in education field [33].

Last but not least, many international studies are strongly support that there is a bond between the Special Education Teachers' emotional support and their Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment. On the top of that, a charismatic leader can be a collateral for a stable school culture which can reinforce teachers' longstanding stay in a specific school unity [34]. Consequently, it seems that a highly-emotionally intelligent and charismatic Leader can secure schoolteachers' spiritual and emotional health and development [35], [36].

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