



Teachers' withdrawal behaviors: integrating theory and findings

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307

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Abstract

Purpose – The article aims to investigate the relationships between different dimensions of organizational ethics and different withdrawal symptoms – lateness, absence, and intent to leave work.

Design/methodology/approach – Participants were 1,016 school teachers from 35 high schools in Israel. A joint model of Glimmix procedure of SAS was used for this analysis, which simultaneously measures lateness using the negative binomial distribution, absence using the Poisson distribution, and intent to leave using the normal distribution.

Findings – Findings indicate that the different dimensions of organizational ethics were related to one another. Formal climate and distributive justice were found to be negatively related to lateness, while a caring climate was found to be negatively related to absence frequency, and procedural justice was found to be negatively related to intent to leave. The results indicate certain differences between ethical predictors, which may arise from extrinsic motivation factors and those that may arise from intrinsic motivation factors. As regards socio-demographic predictors, women teachers exhibit more absence and less intent to leave than men. Teachers with high seniority at their school prefer to respond with absence and a reduced intent to leave, and as the teacher's age rises, the lower are lateness and absence frequency.

Practical implications – School leadership should develop an integrative approach which includes ethics and socio-demographic factors in order to reduce teachers' withdrawal behaviors. Such an approach may be achieved through training programs, developing clear rules, incentives and delegation of power.

Originality/value – The results offer an integrative framework by simultaneously considering various aspects of ethics, withdrawal behaviors, and socio-demographic predictors.

Keywords Ethical climate, Organizational justice, Withdrawal behaviours, Lateness, Absence, Intent to leave, Teachers, Job satisfaction, Israel, Individual behaviour

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Withdrawal behaviors refer to a set of attitudes and behaviors used by employees when they stay at the job but for some reason decide to be less participative (Kaplan *et al.*, 2009). In the present study we focused on three indicators from the wide array of potential withdrawal symptoms: lateness, absence, and intent to leave. The importance of studying teachers' withdrawal behaviors cannot be overstated. Teachers' withdrawal behaviors are very costly and result in decreased school standards.

The present study is part of a larger research project on teachers' withdrawal syndrome and school ethics.

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They also cause increased pressure on those left in the job, resulting in decreased morale in the schools and possibly further turnover (Borda and Norman, 1997; Shaw *et al.*, 2005).

Previous studies (Hackett and Bycio, 1996; Staw and Oldham, 1978) indicate that withdrawal behaviors do not have exclusively detrimental effects for an organization. They argued that withdrawal behaviors may give employees a needed break from job dissatisfaction and stress, and such behaviors might be expected in response to a wide range of noxious aspects of the work role. Thus, by withdrawing, teachers may return to work with higher motivation, which, in turn, can ultimately increase organizational effectiveness.

On the other hand, more recent studies (Carmeli, 2005; Hart, 2005; Koslowsky, 2009; Ulrich *et al.*, 2007) found that these withdrawal behaviors stem also from avoidable causes resulting from perceived unethical conditions, which reduce organizational effectiveness. Employees with such attitudes and behaviors are likely to directly or indirectly reduce their effort at work, which may reflect an unethical perspective in the organization (Shaw *et al.*, 2005).

These findings point to the relevance of examining the ethical predictors that may predict withdrawal behaviors among teachers. The question that this study tried to answer is: what are the patterns of the relationships between the different dimensions of organizational ethics and the three withdrawal symptoms – lateness, absence, and intent to leave work.

Withdrawal behaviors

Lateness is described as arriving late to work or leaving before the end of the day (Koslowsky, 2000). Lateness has been recognized as having motivational antecedents. Theoretically, it is classified into three dimensions: chronic, unavoidable, and avoidable. Chronic lateness is a response by the employees to a bad work situation. Relevant antecedents to chronic lateness are, for example, lack of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Avoidable lateness occurs when employees have better or more important activities to do than to arrive on time. Leisure-income tradeoff and work-family conflicts may be positive antecedents to this type of lateness. Unavoidable lateness is due to factors beyond the employee's control, such as transport problems, bad weather, illness, and accidents (Blau, 1995).

Work absence is "the lack of physical presence at a behavior setting when and where one is expected to be" (Harrison and Price, 2003, p. 204). Sagie (1998) distinguished between two basic types of absence: voluntary absences which are normally under the direct control of the employee and are frequently exploited for personal issues such as testing the market for alternative prospects of employment, and involuntary absences which are usually beyond the employee's immediate control.

Recent literature reviews emphasized absence as a variable related not only to the individual's demographic characteristics but also to the organizational environment and social context (Felfe and Schyns, 2004; Martocchio and Jimeno, 2003). Previous studies on teachers indicated that mental problems, lack of support in the workplace, low level of perceived fairness, and negative social relations represent risk factors for sickness absence (Eriksen *et al.*, 2004; Petterson *et al.*, 2005; Josephson *et al.*, 2008).

Intent to leave is the degree to which workers want to exchange their present jobs for other jobs elsewhere (Hanisch and Hulin, 1991) and include dimensions of thinking

of leaving and the desirability of leaving their current job (Blau, 1998). Intent to leave occurs when employees stay at the job but decide to stay for some reason (e.g. low satisfaction with the job coupled with a risk in the case of leaving).

Based on this notion, a teacher who nurtures the thought of leaving his/her work is more likely to do so if the right conditions exist. Teachers who intend to leave their schools may reduce their efforts at work. Those who consider leaving are often the more qualified teachers, who are more likely to find alternate employment, and this may jeopardize organizational standards and affect colleagues' motivation and efforts (Dinham and Scott, 2000; Josephson *et al.*, 2008; Parry *et al.*, 2008). Previous studies indicated that the lack of professional opportunities, restricted professional autonomy, unsatisfactory salary, and poor job satisfaction contribute to a general intent to leave the workplace (Fochsen *et al.*, 2005; Morrell, 2004; Zembylas and Papanastasiou, 2004).

Four major theoretical constructs for the internal structure of withdrawal attitudes and behaviors have been suggested for describing the relationships between various withdrawal behaviors: independent, spillover, compensatory, and progression (e.g. Johns, 2003; Koslowsky *et al.*, 1997). According to the independent model, withdrawal behaviors have different causes and functions, and should therefore be unrelated to each other. Thus, employees can choose different forms of withdrawal (Hulin, 1991). The spillover model posits that withdrawal behaviors are positively related, without specifying any temporal or sequential relationship (Beehr and Gupta, 1978). Thus, an individual is likely to react to certain antecedents with a set of withdrawal behaviors rather than with just one (Koslowsky *et al.*, 1997). The compensatory model proposes that similar functionality causes specific forms of withdrawal to be negatively correlated (Nicolson and Goodge, 1976). The most common construct is the progressive model which posits that withdrawal manifestations occur in progression, starting with relatively mild forms of psychological withdrawal such as occasional lateness, moving to more severe forms such as absence and intent to leave (Koslowsky *et al.*, 1997).

In summary, the literature does not seem to offer a clear single model that describes the relations between the different withdrawal behaviors. Rather, the findings are actually somewhat ambiguous. A few researchers reported that no relationship exists (Ross, 1988), others reported negative relationships (Nicolson and Goodge, 1976), some reported positive relationships (Iverson and Deery, 2001; Leigh and Lust, 1988), while still others claim that there is no sequential relationship between them and they can occur concurrently (Benson and Pond, 1987; Wolpin *et al.*, 1988). These ambiguous findings have led us in the present study to seek out the difference between the various dimensions of withdrawal behaviors through ethical predictors, an approach that has not undergone an in-depth investigation in the past. This approach may contribute to creating some order as well as to the effort to reduce teachers' withdrawal behaviors.

Traditional explanations for withdrawal behaviors

Previous studies have shown that teachers' motivation (intrinsic or extrinsic) is related to job satisfaction (Dinham, 1993; Dinham and Scott, 1998, 2000; Friedman and Farber, 1992; Kelly *et al.*, 2008; Rosenholtz, 1991). A decline in teachers' job satisfaction leads to increased absenteeism and a high level of stress which is associated with a number of negative work outcomes (Conley and Woosley, 2000; McCormick and Ayres, 2009) and in many countries, even with leaving the profession (Zembylas and Papanastasiou, 2004).

Thus teachers' dissatisfaction is associated with decreased productivity (Tshannen-Moran *et al.*, 1998), which may express itself in various withdrawal behaviors.

Overall, "satisfiers" were phenomena and rewards intrinsic to teaching, such as pupil and teacher achievement, recognition from others, self-growth, and positive relationships. "Dissatisfiers", on the other hand, were phenomena more extrinsic to the teaching and included impacts of changes on educational policies and procedures, the declining status of teachers in society, being treated impersonally by employers, new responsibilities in the schools, and increased administrative workloads (Dinham and Scott, 1998). In this study we will investigate the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from the point-of-view of organizational ethics, an approach that was not investigated thoroughly in previous studies.

Older models of teacher satisfaction posited two domains for discussing satisfaction and dissatisfaction – the actual work of teaching and the conditions under which work must be performed. Researchers of the International Teacher 2000 Project – an international study on teacher satisfaction, motivation, and health argue for the existence of a "third domain" which highlights the importance of a wider domain of society which is beyond the school and which may influence teachers' stress and determine how teachers feel and act (Dinham and Scott, 2000). Thus, all three of these domains may reveal teachers' withdrawal behaviors under conditions of teachers' dissatisfaction (Hargreaves, 1997; Little, 1996; Nias, 1996).

Another explanation for teachers' withdrawal behaviors – beyond job satisfaction – is the Conservation of Resources (COR) model of Burnout. This model is centered on environmental and cognitive factors associated with resources, defined as those "objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued in their own right or that are valued because they act as conduits to the achievement or protection of valued resources" (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 339). The COR theory suggests that people strive to obtain, protect, and foster valued resources and minimize any threats of resource loss. Threats of resource loss are usually in the form of role demands and efforts expended toward meeting such demands. In a work context, stress is caused chiefly because the work demands typically use up more employee resources, than are replenished (Halbesleben, 2006). Consider the teaching profession: Teachers can use withdrawal behaviors as a means to protect their internal resources (COR) so as to continue to perform well on the job, which may increase school effectiveness (Hackett and Bycio, 1996).

On the other hand, other teachers may simply see withdrawal behaviors as a way to restore perceived equity to the employment relationship. This article will elucidate and elaborate upon the second approach – the ethical point-of-view – which were not given sufficient attention by previous studies to find how organizational ethics may affect teachers' withdrawal behaviors.

Expanding upon the ethical explanation of teachers' withdrawal behaviors

The next sections will explain the different dimensions of organizational ethics that were chosen for the present study, the justification for the selection, what are the ethical elements in withdrawal behaviors, and how different dimensions of organizational ethics may predict withdrawal behaviors?

Organizational ethics

The rapid changes taking place in educational systems increase ethical questions that may affect organizational ethics (Bowers, 2001; Ingersoll, 2004). Organizational ethics in educational systems express the values held by school leaders to their teachers and school environment, and this affects teachers' perceptions and their ethical responses to an internal or external stimulus (Shapira-Lishchinsky and Rosenblatt, 2010). While previous research tended to focus on individual, selected aspects of organizational ethics (Johnsrud and Rosser, 2002; Ladebo, 2005; Rosser and Townsend, 2006), this study deals with a spectrum of such aspects (caring climate, formal climate, distributive justice, procedural justice). These ethical constructs were selected because of increasing research interest in them in recent years, and because they represent different aspects of organizational ethics.

The value known as "ethical climate" describes employees' perceptions about organizational norms regarding behavior and how decisions that relate to ethical issues should be handled (Cullen *et al.*, 2003; Victor and Cullen, 1988). In a study investigating predictors of organization outcomes conducted in Israel, Rosenblatt and Peled (2002) identified two types of ethical climate that emerged as the most powerful and valid predictors:

- (1) caring; and
- (2) formal.

Caring climate is characterized by the employees' genuine interest in each other's welfare. A formal climate emphasizes the organization's rules and regulations, and places great value on upholding them. Precisely because the strict adherence to rules predicates transparent procedures, a formal climate is seen as protecting employees from abusive treatment by employers and others. Both types of ethical climate, i.e. caring and formal, and especially how they are perceived by employees, may be reliable predictors of employees' behavior at the workplace (Peterson, 2002). These factors were adopted in the present study due to their relevance to the Israeli system (where the present study was conducted).

Organizational justice is another concept of organizational ethics that is used to describe equity in the workplace (Greenberg, 1995) and taps how employees' perceptions of equity are determined and how these perceptions influence organizational outcomes. Organizational justice research has focused on two key dimensions: distributive justice which refers to the fairness of the outcomes an employee receives (Adams, 1965) and procedural justice which describes the fairness of the procedures used to determine organizational outcomes (Pillai *et al.*, 2001).

Relations among organizational ethics dimensions. Each of the ethical concepts named here represents a different aspect of organizational ethics as perceived by the teachers, and these are closely interrelated. The ethical climate characterizes the aspect of the workplace environment while organizational justice represents the actions and decisions made by management. Gilligan (1982) viewed the ethics of care and justice as interrelated, since both revolve around responsibility and social relationships and both consider morality as the means for resolving interpersonal conflicts. Formal climate and distributive justice are also closely related, because both concepts are concerned with the rights of employees and of the formal rules and regulations that ensure the fair allocation of benefits.

While there is a potential conflict between some of the values that characterize the ethical concepts, such as caring vs. equality based distributive justice, Quinn's (1988) competing values model contends that this inevitable tension may in fact contribute to organizational effectiveness in that a dynamic dialogue between two or more contradictory positions may be perceived as complementary instead of conflicting, enabling the incorporation of different conflicting positions (Colnerud, 2006; Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2005), which may provide a broadened perspective when dealing with teachers' withdrawal behaviors. This gives some credence to our integrative approach to the ethics concepts presented here and leads to our first hypothesis:

- H1. The ethical climate (caring, formal) and organizational justice (procedural, distributive) are positively related to each other.

The ethical element in withdrawal behaviors. One of the common characteristics of the withdrawal behaviors discussed in the present study is that they are, for the most part, under the employee's control. This means that they have a considerable voluntary component. Thus, in many cases, the organization-ethics perspective plays a key role in explaining decisions to withdraw from work (Blau, 1994). In the case of teaching, lateness and absence have adverse effects on students, who are entitled to a proper education (Bowers, 2001). Time lost because of lateness is often not compensated, while time lost due to absence (e.g. when the teacher reports absence at the last minute) is made up by colleagues who are normally busy with their own duties, thus adding to their normal workload (Bowers and McIver, 2000).

Teachers who entertain thoughts of leaving, even when present on the job, are likely to invest less effort at work, either because of lower motivation or because of time needed to search for an alternative job, and this may lower students' achievements and damage school effectiveness (Ingersoll, 2001).

In conclusion, withdrawal behaviors may be motivated by various personal and work-related reasons. However, they all share elements of potentially unethical behavior (e.g. the students' interests are compromised for the personal interests of the withdrawing teachers).

The relationship between organizational ethics and withdrawal behaviors

We will present a theoretical framework for our argument, drawn from the literature on social exchange theory (Rousseau, 1995). Social exchange theory has often been used in research on organizational behavior to explain the relationship between employees' perceptions and behavioral reactions (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau, 1995). This theory proposes that the parties in any given relationship seek balance and fairness in it. Employees who feel they have been mistreated by the organization are likely to intensify their negative perceptions of it (Kickul, 2001) and may look for ways to retrieve the benefits they feel entitled to, in order to protect themselves from future mistreatment (Turnley *et al.*, 2004).

Consistent with this theory, we argue that ethical climate and organizational justice are part of the organizational inputs into the social exchange to which employees react. When employees do not feel at ease with organizationally endorsed values, they may react by lateness, or absence, or even intent to leave, depending on the ethical issues involved.

According to the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theory (Deci, 1971, 1975) we may distinguish between the different dimensions of organizational ethics. Extrinsic motivation comes from outside of the individual. Common extrinsic motivations are rewards like money (distributive justice) and threat of punishment by rules (formal climate), which focus on the short term in controlling people's behavior (Kohn, 1993). On the other hand, intrinsic motivation refers to motivation that is driven by an interest in the process itself and exists within the individual rather than relying on any external pressure. Research on intrinsic motivation has focused on the long-term and directed attention to more general benefits of support and justice process (Deci *et al.*, 1999). For example, teachers are likely to be intrinsically motivated if they believe they can be effective agents in achieving procedural justice and if they have goals such as caring for students or colleagues (Covington and Mueller, 2001).

Therefore, if we consider the most common model of the internal structure of withdrawal behaviors which posits that withdrawal manifestations occur in progression, starting with relatively mild forms of psychological withdrawal such as occasional lateness, and moving to more severe forms such as absence and intent to leave, we expect that external ethical factors which focus on the short term like formal climate and distributive justice will affect lateness. As to more severe withdrawal behaviors as absence and intent to leave, we anticipate that internal ethical factors that focus on the long term, like caring climate and procedural justice will affect these behaviors. All these lead to the second hypothesis:

H2a. Formal climate and distributive justice will be negatively related to lateness.

H2b. Caring climate and procedural justice will be negatively related to absence and intent to leave.

The relationship between gender, school seniority, age, and withdrawal behaviors

Previous studies indicate that socio-demographic factors such as gender, school seniority, and age affect withdrawal behaviors among teachers. For example, it was found that women tend to be absent more than men for demographic and occupational reasons (Barling *et al.*, 1994; Blau, 1994; Gupta and Jenkis, 1983; Hammer *et al.*, 2003). It usually ascribes this to the tendency for women to experience work-family conflict more than men. The societal expectation is that women will be more concerned about their family than their career and that family concerns (e.g. in case of illness) will be given higher priority among women than men (Boyar *et al.*, 2005); thus, in cases of children's illness, women tend to be the ones to stay at home and take care.

Regarding intent to leave, the difference in career perceptions reveals that many females choose teaching primarily because its working conditions (e.g. working hours and holidays that match their children's schedules) may better suit traditional female roles (Cushman, 2005). By contrast, men may choose the teaching profession as a means of social mobility (Ladebo, 2005), therefore increasing men's intent to leave work. Another explanation for females' lower intent to leave derives from the similarity-attraction theory, which suggests that individuals are attracted to and prefer to interact with similar others (Kim *et al.*, 1996). Thus, women working with other females may be more satisfied and committed to their jobs (Elvira and Cohen, 2001). Based on this theory and on evidence that female teachers predominate over males in

the school systems, female teachers may be less likely to leave their schools. Indeed, female teachers constitute 66.8 percent of the teaching force in Israeli high schools (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008) and 51.9 percent internationally (OECD, 2006).

Furthermore, studies showed that years of service (seniority) affect absence and intent to leave. At an advanced stage of the teaching career, high seniority implies tenure, which makes it harder to fire employees. This may explain why higher seniority was correlated with higher voluntary absence (Ingersoll, 2004; Liu and Meyer, 2005). With regard to intent to leave, teachers' tendency to leave decreases over time. High seniority implies the accumulation of organization-specific work experience and eligibility for financial benefits. Hence, the higher the seniority, the lower the intent to leave (Lachman and Diamant, 1987).

Regarding age, higher age implies reduced opportunities for alternative employment. Hence the higher the teachers' age, the lower the teachers' frequency of lateness or absence in order to keep their jobs (Ladebo, 2005). All these lead to the third hypothesis:

H3a. Women will tend to be absent more than men while men will harbor an intent to leave school more than women.

H3b. School seniority will be positively related to absence frequency and negatively related to intent to leave.

H3c. Age will be negatively related to lateness and absence frequency.

Method

Study sample

A total of 1,016 teachers from 35 selected schools participated in this study, representing approximately 67 percent of schools affiliated to a large high-school network in Israel. Of this number, 73 percent of the teachers agreed to participate. The average number of participating teachers from each school was 54.74 (SD = 25.54), and the average number of classes per school was 20.11 (SD = 9.30). The sample comprised 68 percent women, and the participants' average age was 43.19 years (SD = 9.42). Average school tenure was 12.60 years (SD = 8.48) and average job seniority was 17.90 years (SD = 9.39). The teachers included in the study had all worked in the school for a minimum of one year, thus enabling all respondents to have had adequate opportunity to develop perceptions about their schools. In terms of teacher status: the majority of the teachers (86.1 percent) were tenured, while the others were employed through temporary contracts. These features are similar to other schools in Israel (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008).

Data collection

The 35 schools included in the study were those whose principals agreed to cooperate (from 52 schools in the network). Data were collected using questionnaires that were voluntarily self-reported by teachers during their free time on school premises.

Variables and measures. *Lateness.* Lateness was measured by a single item adapted from a measure of withdrawal behaviors developed by Blau (1994, 1995) and by Neal *et al.* (1993). The use of a frequency measure to assess avoidable lateness is based on studies of absenteeism, which found frequency to be a pertinent indicator of voluntary

absences (Dalton and Mesch, 1991; Sagie, 1998). In Israel, in addition to being late to school in the beginning of the day due to personal reasons, teachers might be late to class after the breaks because of the system where the teacher, rather than the pupil, moves from classroom to classroom. Specifically, participants were asked: "Over the past 30 days, how many times were you late to class?" (For the purpose of this study, lateness is defined as arriving six or more minutes after the bell.)

The 30-day period over which teachers were asked to report their lateness was selected on the basis of a pilot study, which asked teachers to suggest a reasonable time span for which someone could accurately be expected to remember his/her incidence of lateness. Following Johns's (1994) discussion of self-reported absence measures, the 30-day period would seem to be long enough to afford reliability, yet still short enough to minimize memory loss, thus offering a valid picture of lateness in schools.

Previous studies have shown that a six-minute lateness is not normatively acceptable in various organizations and thus provides the rationale for defining lateness in this study. This span varies slightly from one workplace to another: in hospitals, lateness was defined as at least eight minutes past the beginning of the shift, whereas in banks, it was defined as at least five minutes after the start of the shift (Blau, 1994). Teachers in a pilot study confirmed that less than six minutes is perceived as legitimate lateness.

Absenteeism behavior. Teachers were asked, "How many workdays did you miss in each of the last five months?". We asked teachers to report each absence incident separately and to each questionnaire we attached a calendar as an aid to memory.

Because our purpose was to investigate the relationship between ethical perceptions and voluntary absence, the measure used was absence frequency, i.e. the number of times a teacher was absent during the reporting period, regardless of the number of days lost (Blau *et al.*, 2004).

In order to obtain a reliable profile of teacher absence, we decided upon a five-month period, which represents one semester in Israel, and it is reasonable to expect teachers to be able to remember their absences during this span of time (Johns, 1994).

Rationale for the use of self-reports and retroactively measures of lateness and absenteeism. The attitudinal and behavioral data collected with self-report scales is somewhat problematic, because of the risk of compromising validity and due to inaccuracy caused by memory decrement and systematic bias (Blau *et al.*, 2005; Nicholson and Payne, 1987). However, focus of this study was on self-reported lateness and absenteeism. At present, Israeli schools do not maintain lateness records. As for absenteeism, we obtained school records in order to check whether the self-reported data in this study were indeed accurate (only school-level duration data was available). We aggregated our teacher-level self-report scores by schools and correlated these data with the school-record data for each school. We did not find any significant differences between the data sources regarding the average duration of absence (Wilcoxon test, $Z = -0.392$, $p = 0.695$), and therefore were able to conclude that the self-report data was consistent with school records and hence, could be used confidently.

Despite the problematic aspect of using self-report scales, there are several advantages to self-report measures of lateness and absenteeism. First, record-based assessments have been found to be inappropriate measures of attitudes, especially in sensitive matters (Johns, 2003). Second, only self-report measures ensure anonymity,

which was a condition for approaching the study site (Johns, 1994). Third, self-reported absence data has highly correlated ($r = 0.64$) with record-based measures (Johns, 2003). Given that lateness and absenteeism are both considered withdrawal behaviors (Hanisch and Hulin, 1990; Koslowsky *et al.*, 1997), there are grounds to expect a similar correlation between self-reports and record-based measures with respect to lateness. Finally, while people may attribute less lateness or absence to themselves than is actually true, owing to the deviant connotations of lateness and absenteeism (Blau, 1994; Johns, 2003), this study is interested in teacher's perceptions about their lateness and absence more than in their actual behavior.

Intent to leave. This measure tapped into teachers' tendency to leave their work. The measure was adopted from Walsh *et al.* (1985). Rosenblatt and Inbal (1999), who used this scale in studies of Israeli teachers, reported a reliability rate of $a = 0.90$. One sample item is: "I often think about leaving my school"

Ethical climate. We replicated Authors' factor analysis of Victor and Cullen's (1988) original 26-item measure. We used the Obvarimax procedure, which allows interdependence between variables. This process yielded six factors, the first two of which were adopted for the present study. The rationale for this was that both factors had an above 15 percent explained variance, while the next factors had lower explained variance levels.

The two factors chosen were:

- (1) "Caring" climate, a factor which included 6 items, with a reliability of $a = 0.86$, and 15.87 percent explained variance. One sample item is: "In this school, people look out for each other's interest".
- (2) "Formal" climate, a factor which included 9 items, with a reliability of $a = 0.87$, and 15.68 percent explained variance. One sample item is: "In this school, the law or ethical code of the profession is a major consideration". For the remaining four factors, explained variance levels were found to be relatively low (6.85-9.61 percent).

Organizational justice. This 21-item measure was based on Moorman (1991) and was translated into Hebrew by Rosenblatt and Hijazi (2004). A factor analysis (principal components, Varimax rotation) yielded three factors, of which the first two, representing the dominant types of justice (distributive and procedural), were selected for the present study. Distributive justice assessed the fairness of various school outcomes, including pay level, work schedule, and work load ($a = 0.87$, 20.33 percent of explained variance). One sample item is: "Overall, the rewards I receive here are quite fair". Procedural justice assessed the degree to which job decisions included mechanisms that ensured the acquisition of accurate and unbiased information, a voice for teachers in school matters, and an appeal process ($a = 0.94$, 37.08 percent of explained variance). One sample item is: "My principal makes sure that all teachers' concerns are heard before school decisions are made".

Response options for ethical climate, organizational justice, and intent to leave ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Background characteristics. The following background characteristics were measured: age, gender (men = 0, women = 1), and school seniority.

Data analysis strategy. Since lateness, absence, and intent to leave were recorded for each subject, a joint model of Glimmix procedure of SAS was used for this analysis for

these three variables as dependent variables (SAS/STAT, 2009). Thus, our analysis simultaneously considered the three dependent variables and their relationships with a set of independent variables (caring climate, formal climate, procedural justice, distributive justice) with the Negative Binomial distribution for lateness, the Poisson distribution for absence, and the Normal distribution for intent to leave.

Results

Table I presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables.

On the whole, correlations among the ethical variables were as expected. All ethical perceptions were significantly inter-correlated at levels ranging from medium to high, confirming our integrative approach. Results also showed that gender, age, and school seniority were related to distributive and procedural justice (not included: age and school seniority, which were not found related to procedural justice).

In addition, school seniority was found negatively related to caring climate while age was found negatively related to formal climate. Thus, gender, age, and school seniority were included as control variables in subsequent analyses.

Hypotheses testing

H1 stated that ethical climate (caring, formal) and organizational justice (procedural, distributive) are positively related to each other. Findings (Table I) indicate that both caring and formal ethical climates were positively related to both distributive and procedural justice. *H1* was therefore supported.

H2 stated that formal climate and distributive justice will be negatively related to lateness while caring climate and procedural justice will be negatively related to absence and intent to leave. Results showed the following (Table II): Formal climate and distributive justice were found negatively related to lateness while caring climate (and not procedural justice) was found negatively related to absence frequency. Procedural justice (and not caring climate) was found negatively related to intent to leave. These results showed that *H2* was partially supported.

H3 stated that women would tend to be absent more than men while men will harbor intent to leave their school more than women. In addition, school seniority were hypothesized to be positively related to absence frequency and negatively related to intent to leave. Finally, age was posited to be negatively related to lateness and absence frequency. All parts of this hypothesis were confirmed. Thus, in sum *H3* was fully confirmed.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the patterns of the relationships between different dimensions of organizational ethics and different dimensions of teachers' withdrawal behaviors.

While previous withdrawal behaviors research has focused mostly on job satisfaction, motivation, stress, and conservation of resources (COR) as explanations for withdrawal from work, this study "sheds light" on the withdrawal behaviors from another point-of-view-the ethical view. First, we found that the interrelationships between the ethical perceptions gave credence to our integrative approach, where these perceptions were considered in one cohesive theoretical framework. This integrative approach to perceptions of organizational ethics makes a contribution to the existing

Table I.
Individual-level means,
standard deviations and
correlations

	M	SD	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender ^a			-0.180**	-0.097**	-0.059	0.002	-0.083**	-0.085**
2. Age	43.19	9.42	-	0.634**	-0.058	-0.077*	-0.064*	-0.033
3. School seniority	12.60	8.48	-	-	-0.063*	-0.037	-0.083**	-0.059
4. Caring climate	3.29	0.73	-	-	(0.86)	0.543*	0.714**	0.445**
5. Formal climate	3.88	0.60	-	-	-	(0.87)	0.513**	0.233**
6. Distributive justice	2.79	0.89	-	-	-	-	(0.87)	0.452**
7. Procedural justice	3.67	0.77	-	-	-	-	-	(0.94)

Notes: *N* = 1,016; **p* < 0.05, ***p* < 0.01, ^aMen = 0, Women = 1

Table II. Results of the joint model of Glimmix procedure of SAS relating to lateness, absence and turnover

	Lateness		Absence frequency		Intent to leave	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Constant	1.806**	0.470	1.447***	0.277	4.712***	0.301
Caring climate	-0.094	0.105	-0.157**	0.060	-0.106	0.006
Formal climate	-0.234*	0.099	-0.034	0.0575	-0.100	0.065
Procedural justice	0.082	0.095	0.024	0.055	-0.364***	0.0613
Distributive justice	-0.125*	0.063	0.047	0.035	-0.036	0.039
Gender	0.097	0.112	0.212**	0.067	-0.280***	0.071
School seniority	0.011	0.007	0.014**	0.005	-0.011**	0.004
Age	-0.017**	0.007	-0.026***	0.004	-0.004	0.004

Notes: $N = 1,016$. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. ^aMen = 0, Women = 1

literature, where the three ethical perceptions traditionally have been studied separately with regard to teachers' withdrawal behaviors.

Second, we based our theoretical argument for the hypothesized relationships between ethical perceptions and teachers' withdrawal behaviors on the social exchange theory (Rousseau, 1995). Essentially, we argued that teachers expect their principals to provide working environments of high ethical standards, and in exchange teachers show loyalty by coming on time, consistently reporting for work, and remaining in their jobs. However, in this study, we found some support for our hypothesis that there are different patterns of relationship between ethical predictors and withdrawal behaviors which may reflect extrinsic motivation arising from outside the individual with a short-term effect on withdrawal behaviors as well as ethical predictors which reflect intrinsic motivation arising within the individual with a long-term effect.

According to the progressive model, we may explain these findings thus: that in the presence of internal factors such as a low caring climate, teachers prefer to be absent rather than late, or in an environment perceived as having a low standard of procedural justice, teachers harbor an intent to leave, and this, because the atmosphere in the organization (caring climate) and the justice process (procedural justice) are very significant factors in the teachers' perspective. Thus, teachers prefer to respond by means of severe forms of withdrawal behavior, such as absence and intent to leave (in compare to lateness).

We may explain these results, that in the case of low formal climate and low distributive justice, teachers prefer to be late than to be absent, because these external factors may be perceived as less significant to teachers than internal ethical factors such as caring or procedural justice. Moreover, since the educational leadership considers absenteeism to be a more severe behavior problem than lateness, rules have developed against teachers' absenteeism. Consequently, teachers respond to an unprotective atmosphere (formal climate) or to perceptions of inappropriate rewards as against investments (distributive justice) through lateness, behavior which the Israeli educational system has not yet developed formal rules to counter.

In this study we did not find full support for our hypothesis that caring and procedural justice – since they arise from intrinsic motivation factors – will elicit the same response, namely voluntary absence or intent to leave. What we did find was that while caring climate affects voluntary absence, procedural justice affects intent to

leave. These findings indicate that even when considering ethical predictors arising from intrinsic motivation factors, there might be a difference between them while we predict different dimensions of withdrawal behaviors. Future studies may investigate the difference between the internal ethical factors that arise from the intrinsic motivation theory.

With regard to the socio-demographic variables, we found that women teachers prefer to be absent and harbor less intent to leave than men. It seems that since teaching reduces the conflict of family-work, women teachers prefer to stay in their jobs. However, in a case where they are required to stay at home (e.g. sick child), they will give family need their first priority and will be absent from work.

We found also that in the case of high seniority at a school, which in Israel is generally accompanied by tenure, teachers prefer to be absent and concomitantly reduce their intent to leave. This may be explained by teachers' taking advantage of their eligibility for social benefits which make it harder to fire them; thus, teachers engage in voluntary absence but still prefer to remain in their jobs.

With regard to age, the higher the age, the lower are the frequencies of lateness and absence. We may explain the different results between advanced age and higher seniority at school when predicting different dimensions of withdrawal behaviors as follows: in Israel, high school teachers may change schools, yet they may not be granted tenure in their new school. Thus, despite their advanced age, the fact that they have changed schools diminishes their rights of tenure. And in such cases, their more advanced age implies reduced opportunities for alternative employment. Hence, the higher the teacher's age, the lower the frequency of lateness or absence.

Theoretical and practical implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to our knowledge of teachers' perceptions of organizational ethics by simultaneously considering various aspects of ethics and withdrawal behaviors. While previous studies usually focused on one ethical factor at a time or one withdrawal behavior, our results offer an integrative framework. Practically, the study results imply that school leadership should develop an integrative approach and focus on organizational ethics and sociodemographic predictors in order to reduce teachers' lateness or absence and to attract high-quality teachers. Educational leaders should understand their ethical and moral obligation to create and promote ethics-oriented schools (Scheurich and Skrla, 2003; Skrla *et al.*, 2004). Such awareness may be achieved through leaders' training programs focusing on ethical education.

In particular, school leadership policies should reduce teachers' absence by promoting high standards of a caring ethical climate using workshops and activities to vent emotions, increasing the level of formal ethical climate in schools by developing clear school rules to deal with teachers' lateness, promoting distributive justice in schools by giving economic and emotional incentives to excellent teachers with low frequency of lateness, and reducing the level of teachers' intent to leave by increasing the level of procedural justice through the delegation of power to teachers. All these activities may attract and retain high quality teachers in the educational systems.

Limitations and future research

The self-reported study instrument was vulnerable to a same-source bias. Also, with self-reports, results could have been influenced by “social desirability” responses, endangering the “trueness” of the study findings. Moreover, there was a risk of compromising validity and of inaccuracy due to memory decrement and systematic bias (Blau *et al.*, 2005; Nicholson and Payne, 1987). Although we took some precautionary action, namely collation of our subjects’ self-reported responses and the school records on teacher absences, we recommend that future studies apply another precaution against self-report bias.

Another limitation of the study is related to the generalizability of the research results. The study sample was limited to teachers at high schools in Israel, and this may have affected external validity. However, inasmuch as our main results have been shown to be consistent with those of other studies on school ethics and teacher withdrawal behaviors (Ingersoll, 2001, 2004; Rosenblatt and Peled, 2002), it is reasonable to assume that other schools, in Israel and elsewhere, may show similar results.

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Further reading

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