The Reality of Transactional Leadership Practices among Public Secondary School Principals in the Directorate of Education of Yatta

واقع ممارسة القيادة التبادلية لدى مديري المدارس الثانوية الحكومية في مديرية التربية والتعليم يطا

Mohammed Khalil Ideis [1] - Prof. Dr. Kamal Makhamra[2]

محمد خليل إدعيس [1] ـ أ. د. كمال مخامرة [2]

Al Quds University- Palestine

Abstract:

This study aimed to identify the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Yatta Directorate of Education. A descriptive approach was used to achieve the study's objectives by distributing 108 questionnaires to teachers in the Yatta Directorate of Education. The study found that the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Yatta Directorate of Education was moderate. The area of "conditional reward" was most frequently observed, followed by "management by exception," while the area of "conditional punishment" was the least frequently observed. The results showed no significant differences in teachers' opinions regarding the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Yatta Directorate of Education based on years of experience or academic qualifications. However, differences were found based on gender, favoring males.

Keywords: Transactional leadership, secondary school principals, Yatta Directorate of Education.

الملخص:

هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف على واقع ممارسة القيادة التبادلية لدى مديري المدارس الثانوية الحكومية في مديرية التربية والتعليم يطا، تم استخدام المنهج الوصفي لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة من خلال توزيع (108) استبانات على معلمي مديرية تربية وتعليم يطا، توصلت الدراسة إلى أن واقع ممارسة القيادة التبادلية لدى مديري المدارس الثانوية الحكومية في مديرية التربية والتعليم يطا جاء بدرجة متوسطة وقد حصل مجال (المكافئة المشروطة)، تلاه مجال (الإدارة بالاستثناء)، وكان أقل مستوى مجال (العقوبة المشروطة)، وأظهرت النتائج لا توجد فروق في آراء المعلمين حول واقع ممارسة القيادة التبادلية لدى مديري المدارس الثانوية الحكومية في مديرية التربية والتعليم يطا باختلاف عدد سنوات الخبرة، المؤهل العلمي، بينما توجد فروق تبعاً لمتغير الجنس لصالح الذكور.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القيادة التبادلية، مديري المدارس الثانوية، مديرية التربية والتعليم يطا.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1   **Background**

Leadership has held significant importance since ancient times. With the advancement of civilizations and the rapid expansion of knowledge, numerous themes related to leadership have emerged. Leadership approaches that were once effective in earlier periods are no longer adequate in the contemporary context, which has necessitated greater attention to adaptation and responsiveness to modern changes. These transformations have contributed to creativity and innovation in the educational process and have led to the emergence of modern leadership styles, such as transactional leadership, which is based on mutual exchange of benefits between leaders and their subordinates in order to achieve institutional goals that are clearly defined and continuously pursued to enhance organizational performance (Al-Salimat, 2020).

Educational leadership plays a vital and central role in educational institutions by improving and developing work performance and achieving desired objectives. At the same time, it serves as a precise indicator of institutional success. Its role is reflected in creating a healthy organizational climate characterized by positive relationships, in which staff members work with a sense of comfort and satisfaction. Educational leadership also ensures that all individuals within the institution adhere to educational rules and principles, which in turn contributes significantly to enhancing morale and increasing motivation among staff to exert greater effort toward productive achievement. Educational leadership is viewed as a process that brings about positive change and development, contributing to community building and advancement. Without effective leadership, no meaningful change or reform can be realized within educational institutions (Bani Mustafa, 2014).

Transactional leadership strengthens trust between school principals and teachers in order to achieve the expected outcomes. It also encourages teachers to exert greater effort to attain desired results. Transactional leaders negotiate with teachers by exchanging their efforts and achievements for incentives and rewards based on their performance. This approach plays a fundamental role in improving teachers' performance in schools and yields benefits for teachers, schools, and parents alike. Consequently, it enhances teachers' capacity for productivity and achievement and ensures the attainment of desired educational outcomes for both schools and teachers (Yousef, 2017).

Moreover, transactional leadership directs subordinates' efforts toward accomplishing institutional goals by clarifying roles and responsibilities and providing the necessary resources to perform assigned tasks. This leadership style is grounded in the application of motivational standards through rewards and sanctions as mechanisms to influence and regulate subordinates' performance (Al-Rifai, 2013).

1.2 Problem statement

Educational institutions in Palestine are experiencing numerous challenges due to the severe financial crisis affecting them. Under such circumstances, schools are in urgent need of leadership that ensures sustainability and success in overcoming prevailing problems. Achieving the objectives of educational institutions requires the provision of incentives and rewards for employees, while simultaneously activating disciplinary measures to prevent negligence and shortcomings in performance. These principles constitute the core focus of transactional leadership and its dimensions.

Furthermore, the studies conducted by Hdeib (2018) and Al-Qaraan (2020) recommended raising school principals' awareness of transactional leadership and educating them about its importance. Accordingly, the present study aims to examine the reality of practicing transactional leadership among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education of Yatta.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study is expected to enrich the body of educational leadership literature by providing empirical insights into transactional leadership practices as exercised by educational leaders in schools within the Directorate of Education of Yatta, as perceived by teachers. It contributes to a deeper understanding of the dimensions and manifestations of transactional leadership in the Palestinian educational context and offers systematic knowledge that may support future research in educational leadership and school administration.

the findings and recommendations derived from this study may serve as a foundation for developing targeted professional training programs aimed at enhancing school principals' capacity to effectively practice transactional leadership within their schools. Moreover, the study is expected to raise principals' awareness of the practical benefits associated with transactional leadership, particularly in improving the efficiency of the educational process and strengthening teachers' responsiveness, cooperation, and commitment. As such, the study provides actionable implications that can support informed decision-making and leadership development within educational institutions.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research aimed to:

1. To identify the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education of Yatta from teachers' perspectives.

2. To examine whether teachers' perceptions of the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education of Yatta differ according to gender, years of experience, and academic qualification.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What is the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education of Yatta from teachers' perspectives?

2. Do teachers' perceptions of the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education of Yatta differ according to gender, years of experience, and academic qualification?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

1. There are no statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the mean responses of the study sample regarding transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education / Yatta due to (Gender, Academic Qualification, Experience).

1.7 Study Limitations

- **Thematic Scope:** The reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education /Yatta.
- **Spatial Scope:** The Directorate of Education /Yatta.
- **Temporal Scope:** The first semester of the academic year 2025/2026.
- **Human Scope:** Teachers in the Directorate of Education of Yatta.

1.8 Definitions of Terms

Transactional Leadership: Transactional leadership is a leadership style based on an exchange relationship between the leader and followers, in which the leader encourages alignment and commitment to the organization by providing both positive and negative contingent rewards (Al-Turki, 2016, p. 8).

Operationally, transactional leadership refers to the relationship established between the school principal and teachers to achieve school goals through motivating teachers and considering their needs and expectations within the dimensions of contingent reward, contingent punishment, and management by exception. This construct is measured by the scores obtained by teachers on the transactional leadership scale.

2. Literature Review

Organizations require modern administrative systems that regulate their operations and enable them to achieve their objectives at both senior and lower administrative levels, while ensuring institutional advancement, sustainability, and continuity. The success of many educational institutions can be attributed to the effectiveness of their leadership and leaders' ability to influence subordinates by motivating and guiding them to exert their maximum potential. This can be achieved through the presence of leaders who possess high levels of competence and professional skills, enabling them to achieve educational goals by evaluating subordinates' performance, fostering their professional development, and enhancing their overall job performance (Al-Salimat, 2020).

Burns (1978) is regarded as the pioneer of transactional leadership theory. This leadership approach is based on identifying a set of needs for which the transactional leader assigns clearly defined tasks to subordinates. These tasks are to be accomplished following an explicit agreement between the leader and subordinates regarding the rewards associated with successful completion. Transactional leadership assists institutions in achieving their goals more efficiently by linking performance to rewards received by subordinates, while also focusing on improving performance and job satisfaction through a systematic exchange-based approach (Al-Aqqad & Salman, 2021).

Al-Alam and Jibril (2020) define transactional leadership as a leadership style that motivates subordinates by establishing relationships grounded in mutual benefit. In this style, the leader clarifies performance standards, expectations, and the rewards that subordinates will receive in return for compliance and effective performance. Consequently, the leader's efforts are directed toward linking the efforts exerted by subordinates with the outcomes and benefits they are expected to obtain.

Similarly, Cai and Vinitwatanakhun (2021) describe transactional leadership as a leadership style based on an exchange relationship between leaders and subordinates, whereby subordinates receive appropriate rewards in return for fulfilling the leader's expectations.

Transactional leadership relies on the use of rewards and sanctions to influence subordinates' behaviors and practices in a manner that ensures respect for mutual interests between leaders and followers. In this regard, transactional leaders influence subordinates by regulating their behavior through agreed-upon rewards and by minimizing performance-related problems through early and direct intervention (Al-Salimat, 2020).

Thus, transactional leadership is a leadership style in which leaders reinforce their authority over subordinates through reciprocal exchanges, ensuring compliance through the application of rewards and sanctions (Al-Aqqad & Salman, 2021).

Transactional leadership aims to assist employees in satisfying their needs, thereby enhancing trust and motivation toward work, maintaining organizational stability, and ensuring the routine implementation of daily tasks. It also provides opportunities for managers to develop their leadership skills, promotes employees' professional development, addresses their needs, and maintains order and institutional stability (Hdeib, 2018).

Yousef (2017) highlighted the importance of transactional leadership in achieving organizational objectives, activating and motivating employees, and establishing effective monitoring standards to ensure the attainment of set goals. Additionally, this leadership style contributes to enhancing employees' self-worth, emphasizing the achievement of outcomes aligned with both general and specific organizational objectives, promoting institution-based incentive systems, designing quality

assurance procedures, and assisting employees in fulfilling their needs and requirements to achieve high levels of performance.

In this behavioral pattern, transactional leaders are characterized by a high level of activity, as they devote considerable time to monitoring and supervising work during its implementation. They examine systems, operational processes, and performance methods, and anticipate potential problems in order to take corrective actions at an early stage, before such issues develop into complex problems that are difficult to resolve (Northouse, 2013).

Accordingly, transactional leadership is based on mutual exchange with others through clear and conditional principles that define what is required of subordinates in return for meeting their needs and expectations. This includes providing incentives and rewards in exchange for task accomplishment. The foundation of this leadership style lies in contingent reinforcement, whereby subordinates accept the leader's promises of rewards and incentives and seek to avoid punishment in return for achieving the required objectives. Emphasis is therefore placed on productivity while simultaneously considering the needs and preferences of subordinates (Al-Zu'bi & Al-Batayneh, 2014).

Samson and Ayodeji (2019), Yousef (2017), Al-Aqqad and Salman (2021), and Gitoho et al. (2016) indicated that the dimensions of transactional leadership include the following:

- **Contingent Reward:** This dimension represents a reciprocal process between the leader and subordinates, through which employees' efforts are exchanged for rewards. Accordingly, the leader rewards or penalizes subordinates based on their level of performance or underperformance.

- **Contingent Punishment:** This refers to material or non-material sanctions imposed by the leader when subordinates fail to comply with the agreed-upon conditions for task execution or do not achieve the required outputs and outcomes, as stipulated in prior agreements between both parties.

- **Management by Exception:** This is a fundamental principle of transactional leadership, whereby the leader refrains from intervening in subordinates' tasks unless deviations from established rules, regulations, or agreed-upon standards are observed. In such cases, the leader intervenes to correct deviations and restore performance to acceptable levels.

Daraghmeh (2025) conducted a study to explore the impact of school principals' leadership models on teachers' motivation and professional development in Palestinian public schools in the Tubas and Jordan Valley areas. The study adopted a descriptive correlational approach and included a sample of 297 male and female teachers. Data were collected using a questionnaire. The findings revealed that laissez-faire leadership was the most prevalent leadership model, followed by transactional leadership and then transformational leadership. The results also highlighted the importance of promotion systems and incentives in fostering professional commitment and organizational belonging, alongside high evaluations of professional development in enhancing professional values, knowledge, and skills. Furthermore, the

study found a strong, statistically significant correlation between leadership models and both motivation and professional development, with no statistically significant differences attributable to gender, age, years of experience, or academic qualification.

Al-Aqqad and Salman (2021) investigated on the relationship between the degree to which secondary school principals in the Gaza governorates practice transactional leadership dimensions and teachers' organizational identification. The study employed a descriptive analytical methodology and included a stratified random sample of 312 male and female secondary school teachers. Data were collected using a questionnaire. The findings indicated that the degree of principals' practice of transactional leadership dimensions was high from teachers' perspectives. The results also demonstrated a positive, statistically significant correlation between transactional leadership practices and teachers' organizational identification. In contrast, a statistically significant negative correlation was found between principals' use of passive management by exception and teachers' organizational identification.

Al-Masri (2020) explored the degree of transactional leadership practice among secondary school principals in the Gaza governorates and its relationship with their level of organizational ambidexterity from teachers' perspectives. The study followed a descriptive correlational design and involved a sample of 459 male and female teachers, using a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The results revealed that principals' practice of transactional leadership was rated as high, and that their level of organizational ambidexterity was also high. Additionally, the study found a positive, statistically significant correlation between the degree of transactional leadership practice and the level of organizational ambidexterity.

Al-Alam and Jibril (2020) investigated the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership, as perceived by first-cycle basic education teachers, and teachers' self-efficacy. The study was conducted on a sample of 160 male and female teachers in El-Mahalla Educational Administration, Gharbia Governorate. The researchers employed measures of transformational and transactional leadership, as well as a self-efficacy scale. The findings indicated no statistically significant differences between males and females in transformational or transactional leadership. The study also revealed a positive, statistically significant correlation between transformational leadership and teachers' self-efficacy, as well as a positive correlation between transactional leadership and vicarious experiences and persuasion, while negative correlations were found with achievement and emotional arousal. Moreover, no statistically significant interaction effect was found between transformational and transactional leadership on teachers' self-efficacy.

Yousef (2017) conducted a study to identify the degree of transactional leadership practice among public secondary school principals in Palestine and its relationship with achievement motivation. The study sample consisted of 1,471 male and female secondary school teachers from the northern governorates of the West Bank. Two questionnaires were used to measure transactional leadership and achievement motivation. The findings revealed a high level of transactional leadership practice. No statistically significant differences

were found in teachers' responses attributable to gender, academic qualification, or place of residence, while statistically significant differences were observed with respect to years of experience, in favor of teachers with less than five years of experience.

The reviewed studies collectively highlight the significance of transactional leadership as an effective leadership model within educational institutions, particularly in enhancing teachers' motivation, organizational identification, professional development, and institutional performance. The findings consistently indicate that transactional leadership contributes to improving educational outcomes through structured incentives, clear expectations, and accountability mechanisms. Moreover, the absence of statistically significant differences across most demographic variables underscores the universality of this leadership model's impact.

Despite the valuable insights provided by these studies, a clear research gap remains regarding the specific context of the Directorate of Education of Yatta. Therefore, the present study seeks to build upon previous research by examining the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in Yatta, thereby contributing context-specific empirical evidence and enriching the existing literature on educational leadership within the Palestinian educational system.

3. Method and Procedures

3.1 Research Methodology

The descriptive and quantitative approach was followed to describe the phenomenon inquestion.

3.2 Research Population and Sample

The study population consisted of all teachers working in in public schools affiliated with the Palestinian Ministry of Education in the Directorate of Education/Yatta, totaling (1,721) teachers during the academic year (2025–2026). a random sample of (108) male and female teachers was selected. Table (1) presents the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 1. Distribution of study individuals according to variables

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	60	**55.6**
	Female	48	**44.4**
Experience	Less than 5 years	27	**25.0**
	5-10	15	**13.9**
	More than 10 years	66	**61.1**
Qualification	Bachelor's degree or lower	102	**94.4**
	Master's degree or higher	6	**5.6**
Total		**108**	**100**

3.3 The Study Tools

The research instrument was developed in the form of a questionnaire, drawing upon the theoretical framework and relevant previous studies. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Demographic Information, including gender, years of experience, and academic qualification. Transactional Leadership Practices, comprising 24 items distributed across three dimensions:

- Contingent Reward.
- Contingent Punishment.
- Management by Exception
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3.4 Validity

To check the construct validity of the questionnaire, Pearson correlation was used to compare each item with its domain and with the overall scale.

Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficients between the domain s and the total degree of the tool

Scale	Pearson's r	Statistical Significance
Contingent Reward	0.781	**0.0001
Contingent Punishment	0.647	**0.0001
Management by Exception	0.774	**0.0001

Correlation is significant at the α ≤ 0.01 level.

The statistically significant correlations between all domains and the total scale indicate strong internal coherence, confirming that the instrument's dimensions collectively capture the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals.

3.5 Reliability

To assess the reliability of the study instrument, Cronbach's Alpha method was used for each domain as well as for the overall questionnaire. Table (3) presents the reliability coefficients for the study tool.

Table 3. Results of Reliability Coefficients Using Cronbach's Alpha.

Scale	N. Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Contingent Reward	9	0.942
Contingent Punishment	6	0.833
Management by Exception	9	0.943
Total	24	0.952

3.6 Procedures

1. After reviewing relevant literature, the researcher developed the initial versions of the two study instruments.

2. These instruments were reviewed by 8 expert judges, whose comments were incorporated into the final versions.

3. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of teachers in public secondary schools within the Directorate of Education /Yatta.

4. Teachers completed the questionnaire, and the collected data were then processed and analyzed statistically using SPSS.

5. The results were interpreted, discussed, and used to formulate recommendations.

3.7 Statistical Tests

- Descriptive Statistics: Used to calculate means, standard deviations, coefficient of variation, frequencies, and percentages.

- Pearson Correlation Coefficient: Applied to verify the construct validity of the study instrument.

- Cronbach's Alpha: Used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire (acceptable level ≥ 0.60).

- Coefficient of Variation: Used to compare data dispersion across groups.

- Independent Samples t-Test: Applied to detect differences between two independent groups.

- One-Way ANOVA: Used to examine differences among more than two groups within the sample.

- Scheffé Post Hoc Test: Used to identify differences between multiple levels of a variable when ANOVA results are significant.

4. Results and Discussion

The study results were analyzed using appropriate statistical procedures through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to answer the research questions and interpret their findings.

Q1: What is the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education/Yatta from teachers' perspectives?

To address this question, means and standard deviations were calculated.

Table (3). Means and Standard Deviations of the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education/Yatta from teachers' perspectives.

Scale	N	Mean	SD	Level
Contingent Reward	108	3.76	0.82	High
Contingent Punishment	108	3.28	0.58	Moderate
Management by Exception	108	3.67	0.85	Moderate
Total	**108**	**3.57**	**0.67**	**Moderate**

The results indicated that the reality of transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education/Yatta from teachers' perspectives were Moderate, with a mean of (3.57).

Hypothesis Tests:

1. **Are there significant differences at the significance level (α ≤ 0.05) in the mean responses of the study sample regarding transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education / Yatta due to (Gender, Qualification)?**

   The following summarizes all hypothesis tests.

Table (5). t-test Results for Gender, Qualification.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-test	Sig.
Male	60	3.70	0.66	2.368	0.020
Female	48	3.40	0.65		
Qualification					
Bachelor's degree or lower	102	3.58	0.68	0.659	0.511
Master's degree or higher	6	3.39	0.26		

The results showed there are statistically significant differences due to Gender, but there are statistically significant differences due to Qualification.

The researcher attributes this result to differences in leadership styles between males and females and their impact on the practice of transactional leadership within the educational environment. Male leaders tend to adopt leadership strategies characterized by firmness and directive approaches, which may enable them to achieve more effective outcomes in educational settings. In contrast, female leaders often face additional challenges in asserting their leadership authority due to prevailing social and cultural constraints, which may influence their performance within the framework of transactional leadership.

This finding is inconsistent with the results of previous studies, including those conducted by Al-Alam and Jibril (2020), Yousef (2017), and Daraghmeh (2025), which reported no statistically significant differences in transactional leadership practices attributable to gender.

In addition, the researcher interprets this result by suggesting that leadership training and practical experience play a significant role in shaping principals' practice of transactional leadership, leading to similar perceptions among teachers. In addition, the shared school environment in which principals operate contributes to the application of transactional leadership in a relatively consistent manner, resulting in no observable differences in practice.

This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies, including those by Yousef (2017) and Daraghmeh (2025), which also reported no statistically significant differences attributable to the academic qualification variable.

2. **Are there significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the mean responses of the study sample regarding transactional leadership practices among public secondary school principals in the Directorate of Education / Yatta due to Experience)?**

Table (6). ANOVA Results for Experience

Experience	SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (P)
Between Groups	0.695	2	0.347	0.763	0.469
Within Groups	47.807	105	0.455		
Total	**84.502**	**107**			

The results showed there are no statistically significant differences due to Experience.

This result emerged because school principals, regardless of their years of experience, receive similar training in leadership skills, which reduces potential differences among them. Transactional leadership relies primarily on communication skills and trust-building, which are competencies that can be acquired at various stages of professional life. As a result, principals tend to employ comparable strategies when dealing with organizational and instructional situations, leading to homogeneous leadership practices across experience levels.

This finding is consistent with the results of Daraghmeh (2025), while it contrasts with the findings of Yousef (2017), which reported statistically significant differences in favor of principals with less than five years of experience.

Recommendations

1. Emphasizing the reinforcement of positive behavior through rewards as a more effective approach to performance management.

2. Paying greater attention to organizing training programs that promote the culture of transactional leadership among school principals and enhance their awareness of its benefits.

3. Developing a clear conceptual understanding among school principals of transactional leadership as a leadership style based on the exchange of rewards and sanctions in return for task performance.

4. Encouraging school principals to apply contingent punishment appropriately to reduce violations within schools and limit school-related problems, thereby improving the educational process.

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