

Leading the Self: Self-Leadership Skills of Lebanese Private School Principals

Khalil Al-Jammal¹, Norma Ghamrawi²

¹Faculty of Education, Lebanese University

²Faculty of Education, Lebanese University

Abstract

This study attempted to investigate the concept of self-leadership within 80 private schools in Beirut, Lebanon. Through a survey, participant principals were requested to rank the self-leadership skills they believed to exhibit and practice. As such the study highlights the 8 top ranking and the 8 low ranking self-leadership skills displayed by school principals as per their own view point. Moreover, this study sought to identify the obstacles inhibiting respondents from acquiring and practicing self-leadership skills. Data was analyzed using SPSS 18.0. Descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarize the properties of the mass of data collected from the respondents. Percentages were calculated per each item of the survey instrument. Results indicate that while the skills of self-leadership were not being effectively practiced, the concept of self-leadership itself was not clear enough to Lebanese private school principals. This was manifested by the conflicting responses they gave on various items of the survey. The study offers recommendations to help principals enhance their knowledge, attitudes and skills related to self-leadership.

Key words: *school principals, self-leaders, self-leadership, school improvement*

Introduction

Leading others starts with leading one's self (Catron, 2013; Hamm, 2013; Horne, 2013; Stark, 2011). Individuals who cannot successfully lead themselves cannot effectively lead others (Adebi, 2008; Buckles, 2011; Catron, 2013; Hamm, 2013; Horne, 2013; Stark, 2011; Sydänmaanlakka, 2004). Conversely, those who can affect others are in the best position to impact themselves positively:

“The same leadership skills, strategies and principles that allow effective leaders to elicit great results from followers can assist an individual to identify and implement steps to maximize his or her potential. The purposeful, organized application of leadership principles to self-development is called self-leadership. People who approach their development in this manner position themselves for resounding personal and professional success. They are better prepared to lead their lives, teams, and organizations.” (Adebi, 2008, p.1).

According to Bryant (2012b) “self-leadership is the modern version of Socrates command to *know thyself*” (p.3). It is a concept that has to do with the ability to influence one's personal dialogue, emotions and behaviors as he/she poses questions such as: who you are? What can you do? Where are you going from here? (Bryant, 2012b). In other words, it is “the process by which [one] influences[him/herself] to achieve [personal] objectives” (p.12).

According to Bryant (2012a), there are many personal gains for being characterized with self-leadership skills. Some of these gains include: sense of achievement, increased happiness, decreased stress, awareness of strengths and weaknesses, daily-life alignment with values, purpose and passions, increased ability to overcome obstacles (Resilience), and improved relationships.

Moreover, the literature enlists the following organizational gains by virtue of self-leadership. These include: more engaged, empowered and collaborative workforce; improved goal setting and results; faster and better decision making; more creativity and innovation; improved performance and talent

management, enhanced understanding of others' feelings for better interactions; and maximized staff effectiveness (Ander, 2012; Bryan 2012a; Eliason, 2013; Pop, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to:

- 1- Acknowledge the strategies and skills of self-leadership embraced by Lebanese school principals.
- 2- Identify the barriers (if any) preventing principals from acquiring and practicing the strategies and skills of self-leadership.
- 3- Furnish the recommendations for improved practice of self-leadership.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1- To what extent are school principals aware of self-leadership, its strategies and skills?
- 2- What are the barriers that prevent principals to acquire and practice the strategies and skills of self-leadership?

Review of Literature

Self-Leadership and Well-being

Sydänmaanlakka (2004) suggests that self-leadership is the same as talking about total wellness. Top performance requires people to be in good condition; and maintaining high standards demands total wellness or well-being. There are five areas that make up total wellness: physical, mental, spiritual, social and professional conditions (Sydänmaanlakka, 2004). Sydänmaanlakka (2004) explains that when the wellness curve is high in all these areas, people tend to be more efficient and feel better. The five areas and their components are presented in table 1.

Table 1: The Five Areas of Total Wellness

Body (Physical)	Mind (Mental)	Values (Spiritual)	Feelings (Social)	Work (Professional)
Food	Thinking	Values	Management of Feelings	Key tasks
Exercise	Memory	Beliefs	Positivism	Objectives
Rest	Learning	Goals	Relationships	Competencies
Sleep	Creativeness	Meaning	Marriage	Feedback
Breathing	Perception	Spirituality	Hobbies	Development
Relaxation	Problem Solving	Balance	Community	Innovation

This Table has been designs using Figure 1 (The Self Ltd. Model) and Figure 2 (What is Total Wellness?) by Sydänmaanlakka (2004), *What is Self-leadership?*, Retrieved from: <http://www.pertec.fi>

Physical conditions means that the person has to have a balanced diet, and that he/she exercises, sleeps, and rests enough. Mental conditions entail that the person has the ability to analyze data, solve problems, take good decisions, and learn new things. Spiritual conditions indicate that the purpose, beliefs, values, vision and actions of a person's life are in balance. This means that the

person has clear objectives and spiritual stimuli steering his/her life. Social conditions means that the person can take care of his/her relationships with everybody: partner or spouse, children, parents, and friends. That is the person has time for hobbies. Professional conditions entail having clear objectives in work, sufficient competence, feedback about performance, and continuous development (Sydänmaanlakka, 2004).

Strategies of Self-Leadership

Self-leadership strategies can be categorized into three general dimensions: behavior-focused strategies, natural reward strategies, and constructive thought pattern strategies (Gohari, 2012; Ricketts et al., 2012; Tuovinen, 2010). The self-leadership dimensions and their sub-scales are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Self-Leadership Dimensions and their Sub-scales

Dimensions	Meaning	Strategies (or Sub-scales)
Behavior-focused strategies	They are designed to improve self-awareness, which leads to managing one's behavior. Often this dimension involves necessary, but disagreeable tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-goal setting ○ Self-reward ○ Self-punishment ○ Self-observation ○ Self-cueing
Natural reward strategies (Intrinsic Motivation Strategies)	They center on the more enjoyable aspects of an activity. This dimension is applied by focusing individual thoughts on the intrinsic rewards of the activity, or the incentives built into a specific task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work toward building intrinsic motivations ○ Focus your thoughts on the intrinsic motivators
Constructive thought pattern strategies	These strategies can be described as the construction and maintenance of functional thinking patterns—or how one thinks about motivation and creates positive ways of thinking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visualizing successful performance ○ Self-talk ○ Evaluating beliefs and assumptions

Source: (Gohari, 2012; Ricketts et al., 2012; Tuovinen, 2010)

According to Tuovinen (2010), applying self-leadership strategies has the potential to lead to continuous personal effectiveness through positive perceptions of one's own efficacy. This is attributed to the fact that efficacious performances create feelings of success, which in itself creates new motivation, self-confidence and ambition leading to new success. This is illustrated in figure 1.

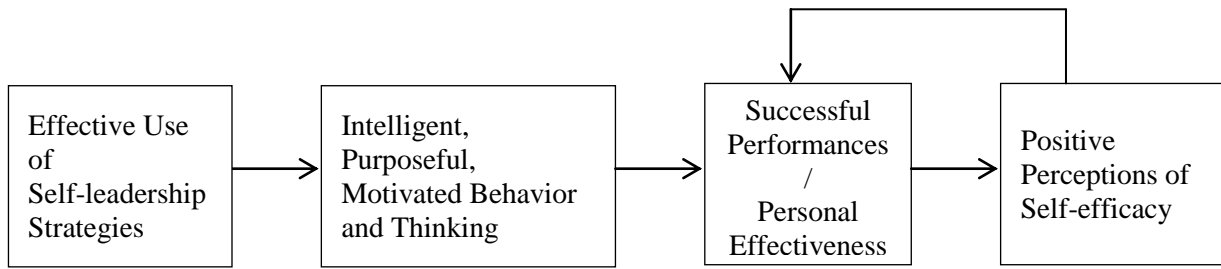


Figure 1: Self-leadership and Personal Effectiveness

This Figure is adapted from Tuovinen (2010), *Self-leadership among Savonia UAS Students*, Retrieved from: <http://theseus.fi>. The author was adapted it from Neck & Manz (2007), *Mastering Self-Leadership - Empowering Yourself for Personal Excellence*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 4th Edition, 171.

Principles of Self-Leadership

The literature highlights several principles and attributes several skills and strategies to self-leadership. These are presented in table 3.

Table 3: 25 Principles, Skills and Strategies to Effective Self-leadership and Related References

Core Principles, Skills and Strategies of Self-leadership	Related References
1. Observe your own behavior (Self-observation)	Esposito(2010), Gohari(2012), Ricketts et al.(2012), Tuovinen(2010).
2. Use the strategy of self-reward	Clegg(2012), Gohari(2012), Ricketts et al.(2012), Tatum(2012), Tuovinen(2010).
3. Use the strategy of self-punishment	Gohari(2012), Ricketts et al.(2012), Tuovinen(2010).
4. Visualize successful performance	Bellows(2013), Gohari(2012), Ricketts et al.(2012), Tuovinen(2010).
5. Converse with oneself in the mind (Positive self-talk)	Bellows(2013), Gohari(2012), Lim(2008), Ricketts et al.(2012), Say(2007), Tuovinen(2010).
6. Believe in yourself	Bossong(2013), Hamm(2013), Levene(2011), Sydänmaanlakka(2004), Tredgold(2013).
7. Be a lifelong learner and renew yourself continuously	Catron(2013), Levene(2011), Stark(2011), Sydänmaanlakka(2004), Tuovinen(2010).
8. Learn from the past (mistakes & challenges)	Chernoff(2012), Daskal(2013), Dennett(1995), Quy(2012b), Stark(2012).
9. Think long-term in every area of your life	Bossong(2013), Gohari(2012), Kahle(2011), Levene(2011), Stark(2011), Tuovinen(2010).
10. Continually set and pursue short term goals for yourself (S.M.A.R.T. goals)	Bellows(2013), Catron(2013), Chernoff(2012), Gohari(2012), Lauber(2013), Levene(2011), Ricketts et al.(2012), Stark(2011), Tuovinen(2010).

11. Work outside your comfort zone	Chernoff(2012), Hudspeth(2013), Manasova(2013), Quy(2013b).
12. Be physically healthy	Catron(2013), Chernoff(2012), Lauber(2013), Say(2007), Sydänmaanlakka(2004), Tuovinen(2010).
13. Be financially responsible	Hunt(2011), Lauber(2013), Smith(2010), Wei(2013).
14. Know and evaluate your personal mission, vision, values and beliefs	Catron(2013), Hamm(2013), Lauber(2013), Ricketts et al.(2012), Say(2007), Stark(2011), Sydänmaanlakka(2004), Tuovinen(2010).
15. Humbleness: be in service	Asmus(2013), Ghosen(2011), Sydänmaanlakka(2004), Yakowicz(2013).
16. Build trust and live in truth	Bossong(2013), Hamm(2013), Horsager(2012), Stark(2011), Sydänmaanlakka(2004).
17. Prioritize your tasks	Asasud(2013), Chobharkar(2011), Covey et al.(1996), Hyatt(2011), Pash(2009), Sydänmaanlakka(2004), Tuovinen(2010).
18. Take time to reflect: know your strengths and leadership imperfections	Catron(2013), Quy(2012b), Stark(2011), Thum(2013), Tuovinen(2010).
19. Create systems and habits to succeed	Clear(2013), Lauber(2013), Levene(2011), Say(2007), Sydänmaanlakka(2004), Tuovinen(2010).
20. Be responsible and accountable for your actions and reactions	Andersen(2012), Galindo(2013), Larsen(2013), Lauber(2013), Levene(2011).
21. Develop self-awareness in all areas of your life	Catron(2013), Ingram(2013), Lauber(2013), Quy(2012b), Ricketts et al.(2012), Theravive(2011), Tjan(2012), Tuovinen(2010).
22. Cultivate and develop your intelligence	Lauber(2013), Quy(2013a), Theravive(2011), Tuovinen(2010).
23. Be passionate, patient and courageous	Andersen(2012), Levene(2011), Quy(2013a), Quy(2012a), Say(2007), Stark(2011), Sydänmaanlakka(2004).
24. Practice the strategy of self-cueing	Gohari(2012), Ricketts et al.(2012), Tuovinen(2010).
25. Use the intrinsic motivation strategies (Natural reward strategies)	Bellows(2013), Gohari(2012), Ricketts et al.(2012), Tuovinen(2010).

The illustration of every principle that appears in table 3 is discussed in what follows:

1. Observe your own behavior (Self-observation)

Observing one's own behavior that may lead to understanding of when and why one does specific behaviors, can lead to being able to reinforce, change or eliminate certain behaviors (Ricketts et al., 2012). Esposito (2010) states that one of the keys to personal development and ultimately self-understanding is observing how mind works, what heart feels and what body experiences. This self-observing habit is essential for managing personality and personal reactivity. The author argues that just as physical exercise is important to well-being, regular self-observation practice is beneficial to mental well-being.

2. Use the strategy of self-reward

This strategy is about using something tangible or abstract to effectively reinforce desirable behaviors and goal attainments (Ricketts et al., 2012). Tatum (2012) argues that self-reward is important for success in life. According to Clegg (2012) rewards are a powerful way to motivate people to get things done. These "carrots" could encourage people to delay gratification until they have made significant progress with their most important tasks, goals, and daily habits.

3. Use the strategy of self-punishment

Another strategy of self-leadership is self-punishing. However, using self-punishment and self-criticism too much should be avoided because it could have a negative influence on morale and performance (Tuovinen, 2010). According to Ricketts et al. (2012), self-punishment strategy can be lead to desirable behaviors. However, this author argues that "constructive criticism has been found much more effective than excessive self-punishment" (p.4).

4. Visualize successful performance

It is about developing mental images of successful future performance (Bellows, 2013; Gohari, 2012; Ricketts et al., 2012; Tuovinen, 2010). According to Bellows (2013), mental imagery becomes realized when the person mentally practices conducting a particular task, for example operating a machine, talking to clients, practicing a speech. Mentally the person goes through the details of performing the task until it becomes second nature. Then, mentally this person visualizes himself/herself completing the task and realizes what success feels like.

5. Converse with oneself in the mind (Positive self-talk)

Conversing with oneself in the mind has been discussed by several researchers (Bellows, 2013; Gohari, 2012; Lim, 2008; Ricketts et al., 2012; Say, 2007). They suggest that most people are in constant mental chatting status. They talk to themselves all day long and, unfortunately, this self-talk is frequently negative. Often it is tainted with guilt about their past or anxiety about their future. This negativity can destroy any seed of hope that they may otherwise have in striving for their dreams (Lim, 2008). Lin (2008) recommends that people need to render their own self-talks more positive as actions are inspired by thoughts.

6. Believe in yourself

Many authors push the leaders to increase their own self-belief (Bossong, 2013; Hamm, 2013; Levene, 2011; Sydänmaanlakka, 2004; Tredgold, 2013). These authors argue that if leaders do not believe in themselves, they cannot lead themselves. If they cannot lead themselves, they cannot lead others.

7. Be a lifelong learner and renew yourself continuously

Many authors emphasize the importance of continued professional development of a self-leader (Catron, 2013; Levene, 2011; Stark, 2011; Sydänmaanlakka, 2004; Tuovinen, 2010). Catron (2013) states that “leaders are readers”; they “read ferociously”. They should be lifelong learners, and be “fanatic” about it.

8. Learn from the past (mistakes & challenges)

Mistakes create opportunities to learn, to make a change, and to become smarter, wiser, and better (Chernoff, 2012; Daskal, 2013; Dennett, 1995; **Quy, 2012b**; Stark, 2012). Quy (2012b) states that self-leaders should learn from past mistakes and render these lessons to be learned from. Only then, failure becomes success and instead of looking at what is missing and how far they still have to go, leaders would focus on what is present and how far they have come (Quy, 2012b).

9. Think long-term in every area of your life

One of the habits often practiced by highly successful people is the habit of setting long term goals. Long term goals compel people to work with discipline and concentration rather than going about their life mindlessly and routinely. (Bossong, 2013; Gohari, 2012; Kahle, 2011; Levene, 2011; Stark, 2011; Tuovinen, 2010)

10. Continually set and pursue short term goals for yourself (S.M.A.R.T. goals)

Successful people are objective and rational. They have a balanced and logical thinking. Successful people don't only have a long-term thinking for their lives; they also create and pursue short-term goals. Like the long-term goals, the short-term ones must be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely (Bellows, 2013; Catron, 2013; Chernoff, 2012; Gohari, 2012; Lauber, 2013; Levene, 2011; Ricketts et al., 2012; Stark, 2011; Tuovinen, 2010).

11. Work outside your comfort zone

Most people are reluctant to accept a new responsibility or a challenge simply because they do not think that they are ready. In other words, they feel uncomfortable and believe that they require additional knowledge, skill, or experience before they can aptly partake in the new opportunity (Chernoff, 2012; Quy, 2013b). However, this kind of thinking stifles personal growth and success. Self-leaders often stretch themselves and hence tend to work outside their comfort zones (Chernoff, 2012; Quy, 2013b).

12. Be physically healthy

A good physical condition means eating, exercising, resting adequately, sleeping, breathing, and relaxation (Sydänmaanlakka, 2004). According to Lauber (2013), diet and physical fitness impact every emotion, thought, action and outcome. What people put in their body directly affects their brain chemistry and energy. Their level of activity also determines moods, energy and the ability to think clearly. By treating their body poorly, they are treating their mind poorly, which negatively impacts their moods, emotions, thinking and results.

13. Be financially responsible

(Lauber, 2013) emphasizes the importance of proper personal financial management exhibited by self-leaders and considers it to leave strong impact on one's mood, emotions and how he/she approach the realization of his/her vision and mission.

14. Know and evaluate your personal mission, vision, values and beliefs

Successful self-leaders recognize and evaluate their personal mission, values and vision. Knowing why they are here, what guides them and what they want, gives them the foundation for their life and for what type of leader they want to be (Catron, 2013; Hamm, 2013; Lauber, 2013; Ricketts et al., 2012; Say, 2007; Stark, 2011; Sydänmaanlakka, 2004; Tuovinen, 2010).

15. Humbleness: be in service

Ghosen (2011) states that humble leaders are more likely to be effective in the workplace and are often more liked by their sub-ordinates. A humble leader is approachable and genuinely cares about others. Such a leader often works towards the actualization of greater good to be served and works tirelessly to assure that those who are responsible for the work are taken care of, encouraged, and rewarded.

16. Build trust and live in truth

Self-leaders invest in trust and trusting relationships with their sub-ordinates and peers (Bossong, 2013; Hamm, 2013; Horsager, 2012; Stark, 2011; Sydänmaanlakka, 2004). Leaders who inspire trust garner better output, morale, retention, innovation, loyalty, and revenue, while mistrust fosters skepticism, frustration, low productivity, lost sales, and turnover.

17. Prioritize your tasks

Effective prioritizing is an important core self-leadership skill (Sydänmaanlakka, 2004; Tuovinen, 2010). Through prioritizing self-leaders engage in the most important and necessary tasks first, leading to efficient management.

18. Take time to reflect: know your strengths and leadership imperfections

Reflection makes self-leaders even stronger leaders because it gives them a realistic image of their strengths, and an accurate appraisal of areas where they may want to continue improving. Reflecting helps to give self-leaders the ability to identify areas where they are confident, but remain humble and continuously work on actions to address their imperfections. Great self-leaders see themselves as having the ability to continuously improve and are committed to taking actions each day that get them closer to their leadership objectives (Catron, 2013; Quy, 2012b; Stark, 2011; Thum, 2013; Tuovinen, 2010).

19. Create systems and habits to succeed

To be successful, to live their mission and to achieve their vision, self-leaders must establish goals, systems and habits which move them forward. They must break bad habits and instill great ones. They must use systems that push them out of their comfort zone. They must do whatever it takes to achieve their goals. (Lauber, 2013; Levene, 2011; Say, 2007; Sydänmaanlakka, 2004; Tuovinen, 2010)

20. Be responsible and accountable for your actions and reactions

Self-leaders take ownership of their decisions, actions and outcomes. Self-leaders hold themselves accountable for their deeds and refrain from playing the role of victims (Andersen, 2012; Lauber, 2013; Levene, 2011).

21. Develop self-awareness in all areas of your life

Self-leaders must be self-aware in all areas of their life (Catron, 2013; Lauber, 2013; Quy, 2012b; Ricketts et al., 2012; Tjan, 2012; Tuovinen, 2010). Self-leaders can more easily interpret their thoughts and emotions and figure out what their true feelings and motivations are. Self-awareness is important because once they are able to figure out these things about themselves, they can make the changes they need to make their life better (Theravive, 2011).

22. Cultivate and develop your intelligence

Theravive (2011) suggests that self-leaders are emotionally intelligent. They have flexible mindsets that supports them in empathizing with others. This in turn make people get attracted to them and tend to follow them (Stark, 2011; Sydänmaanlakka, 2004).

23. Be passionate, patient and courageous

Self-leaders must be passionate, patient and courageous (Andersen, 2012; Levene, 2011; Quy, 2013a; Quy, 2012a; Say, 2007; Stark, 2011; Sydänmaanlakka, 2004). Without these features, subordinates tend to get repelled from dealing with them.

A Passion and Bias for Action

24. Practice the strategy of self-cueing

Self-leaders should practice the strategy of self-cueing (Gohari, 2012; Ricketts et al., 2012; Tuovinen, 2010). They should increase positive cues and decrease negative ones. A self-leader can concentrate the effort to eliminate distractions and influences that promote negative behavior. Both negative and positive attitude and behaviors are contagious, which affect the whole team. (Chernoff, 2013; Raghunathan, 2013; Rich, 2010; Tuovinen, 2010; White, 2013)

25. Use the intrinsic motivation strategies (Natural reward strategies)

According to Ricketts et al. (2012) the “activities that are naturally rewarding can increase competence and give individuals a feeling of self-control and purpose. Through activities such as creating a more enjoyable work environment or appreciating a more pleasurable job feature, an individual can increase his or her performance levels.” (p.12).

Methodology

Research Tool

Data was collected via a questionnaire for the purpose of this quantitative study. Based on an extensive review of the literature of self-leadership, the researchers developed a questionnaire consisting of 34 items. The instrument was piloted on a sample comprised of 8 principals. Therefore, few amendments for language and syntax were introduced.

The survey instrument consisted of three sections: A, B and C. Section A, consisting of 25 items, requested participants to identify the top 8 characteristics of self-leadership enjoyed by them through their own lens. Section B, consisting of the same 25 items, requested respondents to rank the top 8 characteristics of self-leadership least enjoyed by them through their own lens. Section C, consisting of 9 items, requested respondents to identify barriers that inhibited them from practicing self-leadership.

In sections A and B, the participants were asked to rank the items; while in section C, a four point likert scale was used to rank participants' responses. Response choices were: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree.

The Sample

The sample of this study, consisted of 100 private school principals, localized in the *Mohafazat* (Governorate) of Beirut. Along with the survey, a cover letter and an informed consent form were attached beside the full contact information of the researchers. The cover letter detailed the purpose of the study, guarantee of anonymity for participants and how data will be used.

Principals were invited to complete the questionnaire and return it back, along with the signed consent form, to the given address by regular mail, as a scanned document via email or fax. If this way is not available, respondents were invited to return the questionnaire back, along with the signed consent form, to the assistant to the researchers. Only 91 surveys were returned, out of which 80 questionnaires were usable.

Finally, it should be noted that the empirical work was conducted between February 17th and March 31th, 2014.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS 18.0 for windows. Descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarize the properties of the mass of data collected from the respondents. Percentages were calculated per each item of the survey instrument.

Results and Discussions

1. Ranking of the Top Eight Characteristics of Self-leadership Enjoyed by School Principals through their Own Lens.

Table 4 presents data collected on section A of the questionnaire.

Table 4: Ranking of the Top Eight Characteristics Enjoyed by School Principals through their Own Lens

	Items	Number	%	Ranking
1	I possess a set of clear principles and values that govern my behavior across my life; the fact that makes me gain trust of others easily.	55	68.75%	7
2	I trust myself/I believe in myself.	58	72.5%	6
3	I enjoy high credibility with respect to others/others trust me.	48	60.0%	10
4	I bear full responsibility of my acts and reactions and hold myself accountable for that/ I don't hold others accountable for my own deeds.	24	30.0%	18
5	I work hard to know myself well and develop self-awareness in all the aspects of my life.	19	23.75%	21
6	I do my best to develop my intelligence in all domains: social, linguistic, mathematical, etc...	11	13.75%	22
7	I spend my money reasonably and based on my financial potentials (I don't waste money and I don't care to exhibit courtesy in front of others)	68	85.7%	4

8	I take care about my health and physical fitness.	40	50.0%	12
9	I set clear goals for myself(short term) and work on achieving it.	54	67.5%	8
10	I set a priority list for my tasks (based on importance and necessity) and do respect this priority list.	52	65.0%	9
11	I think and set long term plans for all the domains of my life.	23	28.75%	19
12	I let go all the habits that may act as an obstacle confronting my success in life and acquire others that help me achieve such success.	29	36.25%	17
13	I scrutinize my behavior repeatedly and analyze it so as to improve it.	32	40.0%	16
14	I follow self-rewarding strategy: I reward myself when I put a lot of effort on a task or fulfill an important achievement.	38	47.5%	13
15	I sometimes rely on self-punishment if I fail in completing a task or when I recognize that I am not putting the needed effort for a task. In this case I deprive myself from things that I would like to do (and/or I rely on self-critique strategy).	7	8.75%	24
16	I enjoy a high degree of patience and would not surrender in front of complex tasks.	36	45.0%	14
17	I ensure that I get close to positive and successful people who inspire and motivate me. I flee away from those who deter the will of others and who do not view any value for anything.	22	27.5%	20
18	I produce images pertaining how success looks like for a given task that I intend to carry out in the future (I view details for carrying the task and envision results prior to inception).	10	12.5%	23
19	I talk to myself positively, despite some mistakes I committed in the past or few concerns about the future.	62	77.5%	5
20	I secure, occasionally, time for reflection and contemplation so as to depict my areas of strengths and weaknesses.	3	3.75%	25
21	I am a life-long learner: I work to improve my knowledge and skills continuously in several areas.	70	87.5%	2
22	I know very well how to neglect or deal with material negative vibes (such as TV in office or bedroom). Besides, I can manage this environment so as to motivate myself and reinforce my positive behaviors.	35	43.75%	15
23	I enjoy a serving spirit as well a high degree of humbleness.	69	86.25%	3
24	I force myself to escape my comfort zone, so I don't hesitate to accept new responsibilities or new challenging duties even if I felt I am not up to its challenge (such as lack of some skills).	44	55.0%	11
25	I learn from the past: I learn from my mistakes and the challenges that confronted me in the past.	75	93.75%	1

Table 4 shows that the top 8 characteristics of self-leadership enjoyed by school principals through their own lens were (respectively):

1. I learn from the past: I learn from my mistakes and the challenges that confronted me in the past (25).
2. I am a life-long learner: I work to improve my knowledge and skills continuously in several areas (21).
3. I enjoy a serving spirit as well as a high degree of humbleness (23).
4. I spend my money reasonably and based on my financial potentials: I don't waste money and I don't care to exhibit courtesy in front of others (7).
5. I talk to myself positively, despite some mistakes I committed in the past or few concerns about the future (19).
6. I trust myself/I believe in myself (2).
7. I possess a set of clear principles and values that govern my behavior across my life; the fact that makes me gain trust of others easily (1).
8. I set clear goals for myself (short term) and work on achieving it (9).

According to table 4, the 8 characteristics were chosen by the majority of school principals; the percentage of those who chose these characteristics varied between 67.5% and 93.75% of participants. It should be noted that 5 of them (25, 21, 23, 7, and 19) were chosen by the vast majority of principals (the percentage of respondents varied between 77.5% and 93.75%).

On the other hand, table 4 indicates that only 3 other characteristics were chosen by the majority of school leaders (the percentage varied between 55.0% and 65.0% of participants). The 3 characteristics are (respectively):

1. I force myself to escape my comfort zone, so I don't hesitate to accept new responsibilities or new challenging duties even if I felt I am not up to its challenge –such as lack of some skills (24).
2. I enjoy high credibility with respect to others/others trust me (3).
3. I set a priority list for my tasks (based on importance and necessity) and do respect this priority list (10).

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that only 11 out of 25 self-leadership characteristics listed in table 4 are enjoyed by the majority of school principals.

2. *Ranking of the Top Eight Characteristics of Self-leadership Least Enjoyed by School Principals through their Own Lens*

Table 5 presents data collected on section B of the questionnaire.

Table 5: Ranking of the Top Eight Characteristics Least Enjoyed by School Principals through their Own Lens

	Items	Number	%	Ranking
1	I possess a set of clear principles and values that govern my behavior across my life; the fact that makes me gain trust of others easily.	49	61.25%	9
2	I trust myself/I believe in myself.	51	63.75%	8
3	I enjoy high credibility with respect to others/others trust me.	36	45.0%	14
4	I bear full responsibility of my acts and reactions and hold myself accountable for that/ I don't hold others accountable for my own deeds.	56	70.0%	6

5	I work hard to know myself well and develop self-awareness in all the aspects of my life.	62	77.5%	5
6	I do my best to develop my intelligence in all domains: social, linguistic, mathematical, etc...	69	86.25%	2
7	I spend my money reasonably and based on my financial potentials (I don't waste money and I don't care to exhibit courtesy in front of others)	24	30.0%	20
8	I take care about my health and physical fitness.	31	38.75%	17
9	I set clear goals for myself(short term) and work on achieving it.	28	35.0%	18
10	I set a priority list for my tasks (based on importance and necessity) and do respect this priority list.	26	32.5%	19
11	I think and set long term plans for all the domains of my life.	43	53.75%	11
12	I let go all the habits that may act as an obstacle confronting my success in life and acquire others that help me achieve such success.	54	67.5%	7
13	I scrutinize my behavior repeatedly and analyze it so as to improve it.	35	43.75%	15
14	I follow self-rewarding strategy: I reward myself when I put a lot of effort on a task or fulfill an important achievement.	38	47.5%	13
15	I sometimes rely on self-punishment if I fail in completing a task or when I recognize that I am not putting the needed effort for a task. In this case I deprive myself from things that I would like to do (and/or I rely on self-critique strategy).	64	80.0%	4
16	I enjoy a high degree of patience and would not surrender in front of complex tasks.	33	41.25%	16
17	I ensure that I get close to positive and successful people who inspire and motivate me. I flee away from those who deter the will of others and who do not view any value for anything.	45	56.25%	10
18	I produce images pertaining how success looks like for a given task that I intend to carry out in the future (I view details for carrying the task and envision results prior to inception).	66	82.5%	3
19	I talk to myself positively, despite some mistakes I committed in the past or few concerns about the future.	15	18.75%	23
20	I secure, occasionally, time for reflection and contemplation so as to depict my areas of strengths and weaknesses.	71	88.75%	1
21	I am a life-long learner: I work to improve my knowledge and skills continuously in several areas.	9	11.25%	25
22	I know very well how to neglect or deal with material negative vibes (such as TV in office or bedroom). Besides, I can manage this environment so as to motivate myself and reinforce my positive behaviors.	40	50.0%	12
23	I enjoy a serving spirit as well a high degree of humbleness.	22	27.5%	21
24	I force myself to escape my comfort zone, so I don't hesitate to accept new responsibilities or new challenging duties even if I felt I am not up to its challenge (such as lack of some skills).	18	22.5%	22
25	I learn from the past: I learn from my mistakes and the challenges that confronted me in the past.	12	15.0%	24

Table 5 shows that the top 8 characteristics of self-leadership least enjoyed by school principals through their own lens were (respectively):

1. I secure, occasionally, time for reflection and contemplation so as to depict my areas of strengths and weaknesses (20).
2. I do my best to develop my intelligence in all domains: social, linguistic, mathematical, etc. (6).
3. I produce images pertaining how success looks like for a given task that I intend to carry out in the future: I view details for carrying the task and envision results prior to inception (18).
4. I sometimes rely on self-punishment if I fail in completing a task or when I recognize that I am not putting the needed effort for a task. In this case I deprive myself from things that I would like to do and/or I rely on self-critique strategy (15).
5. I work hard to know myself well and develop self-awareness in all the aspects of my life (5).
6. I bear full responsibility of my acts and reactions and hold myself accountable for that/ I don't hold others accountable for my own deeds (4).
7. I let go all the habits that may act as an obstacle confronting my success in life and acquire others that help me achieve such success (12).
8. I trust myself/I believe in myself (2).

According to table 5, the 8 characteristics were chosen by the majority of school principals; the percentage of those who chose these characteristics varied between 63.75% and 88.75% of participants. It should be noted that 5 of them (20, 6, 18, 15, and 5) are chosen by the vast majority of principals (the percentage of respondents varied between 77.5% and 88.75%).

However, the comparison between Tables 4 and 5 shows that responses of participants may sometimes lack objectivity and certainty. For example, the majority of respondents (72.5%) rank the item 2 among the top 8 characteristics enjoyed by school principals (rank 6), the majority of them (63.75%) rank the same item among the top 8 characteristics least enjoyed by principals (rank 8). Also, the majority of participants (68.75%) rank the item 1 among the top 8 characteristics enjoyed by school principals (rank 7), the majority of them (61.25%) rank the same item among the top 9 characteristics least enjoyed by principals (rank 9).

3. Obstacles Confronting the Practice of Self-Leadership by School Principals

The obstacles confronting the practice of self-leadership by school principals are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Obstacles that inhibit me from Practicing Self-Leadership

	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1	Exhausting administrative daily routine	73.2%	13.6%	7.1%	6.1%
2	Lack of enough university preparation or in-service training	81.6%	16.2%	1.0%	1.2%
3	Personal challenges	31.1%	12.4%	35.6%	20.9%
4	I don't believe that this concept has to do with increasing the productivity of the school	66.8%	18.5%	12.4%	2.3%
5	Lack of financial resources	61.2%	13.3%	17.5%	8.0%
6	Lack of time	84.5%	3.6%	2.1%	9.8%
7	Political turbulence within the country makes these ideas look silly	92.7%	3.5%	3.0%	0.8%
8	Stakeholders do not give weight to this concept	95.2%	2.3%	1.8%	0.4%
9	Lack of incentives	88.9%	3.6%	2.1%	5.4%

According to Table 6, the vast majority of participants (the percentage varied between 81.6% and 95.2% of respondents) “strongly agree” that the following 5 items are an obstacle preventing school principals from practicing self-leadership skills (respectively):

1. Stakeholders do not give weight to this concept (8).
2. Political turbulence within the country makes these ideas look silly (7).
3. Lack of incentives (9).
4. Lack of time (6).
5. Lack of enough university preparation or in-service training (2).

In addition, table 6 shows that the majority of respondents (the percentage varied between 61.2% and 73.2% of principals) “strongly agree” that the following 3 items are a barrier inhibiting school leaders from practicing self-leadership skills (respectively):

1. Exhausting administrative daily routine (1).
2. I don’t believe that this concept has to do with increasing the productivity of the school (4).
3. Lack of financial resources (5).

Regarding these 3 items, if “agree” responses are grouped with “strongly agree” ones, the percentage of participants becomes even greater; it can varied between 74.5% and 86.8% of respondents.

On the other hand, table 6 indicates that “personal challenges” (3) are not really an obstacle preventing principals from practicing self-leadership skills. In fact, if “disagree” responses are grouped with “strongly disagree” ones, this implies that 56.5% of participants do not consider these challenges as a barrier inhibiting them from practicing self-leadership.

Thus, the overwhelming majority of school principals “strongly agree” or “agree/strongly agree” that 8 of the 9 “obstacles” mentioned in Table 8 inhibit them from practicing self-leadership.

Conclusion

This study shows that the top 8 characteristics of self-leadership enjoyed by school principals and the top 8 ones least enjoyed by them were identified by the majority of respondents. In addition, the results show that only 11 out of 25 self-leadership characteristics listed in the questionnaire are enjoyed by the majority of school principals. Thus, this study provided a relatively dark image of self-leadership as exhibited and practiced by a sample of private school principals in Lebanon.

However, the results show that participants’ responses may sometimes lack objectivity and certainty. The contradiction in these responses could mean that the concept of self-leadership is still unclear for principals and the skills of self-leadership do not seem to be practiced wisely enough by them. The responses of school principals about the obstacles that inhibit them from acquiring and practicing self-leadership skills support this hypothesis. In fact, the overwhelming majority of participants “strongly agree” or “agree/strongly agree” that 8 of the 9 “obstacles” listed in the questionnaire inhibit them from practicing self-leadership. The number of obstacles mentioned by them is significant. However, the content of these barriers is even more significant.

Indeed, these obstacles show that the concept of self-leadership remains vague for school principals:

- The majority of respondents consider that the “lack of financial resources” inhibit them to acquire the self-leadership skills.
- The majority of them “don’t believe that this concept has to do with increasing the productivity of the school”.

However, this goes opposite to the literature of self-leadership which assures that many activities related to acquiring self-leadership skills are free or not expensive. Also, the literature of effective

self-leadership assures its importance as a basic component for leading others (Bossong, 2013; Buckles, 2011; Catron, 2013; Chernoff, 2012; Hamm, 2013; Horne, 2013; Stark, 2011).

In addition, the results of this study show that the majority of principals did not value enough the power of collaboration, delegation and prioritization. In fact, the majority of them consider the following items as a barrier preventing them from acquiring and practicing self-leadership skills:

- Lack of time
- Exhausting administrative daily routine
- Political turbulence within the country makes these ideas look silly

These “obstacles” also assure that the concept of self-leadership is still ambiguous for school principals. The acquisition of the skills related to collaboration, delegation and prioritization enables principals to have time to learn and practice self-leadership and leadership skills instead of being limited to managerial tasks (Al-Jammal & Ghamrawi, 2013b).

So, school principals explained that they did not practice self-leadership due to some obstacles. However, the acquisition of these skills could help them to overcome these obstacles, including the following one: “lack of incentives”. The acquisition of self-leadership skills enables school principals touse the intrinsic motivation strategies (natural reward strategies) which are considered as essential for the effectiveness of self-leadership (Bellows, 2013; Gohari, 2012; Ricketts et al., 2012; Tuovinen, 2010). Thus, the barriers and constraints can be transformed into resources and drivers for success.

Moreover, based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that training providers, colleges of education and stakeholders do not give weight to self-leadership concept. In fact, the majority of respondents stated that the “lack of enough university preparation” or “in-service training” prevent school principals to be effective self-leaders. Also, “stakeholders do not give weight to this concept”.

Obviously, the 8 obstacles mentioned above must be taken into consideration when proposing recommendations to help school principals to lead themselves well and then to lead others better.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The sample of this study is one of the limitations confronting the validity of this study. In fact, geographically, the sample was localized in the *Mohafazat* (Governorate) of Beirut; the other five Lebanese *Mohafazats* were not represented in the sample. Future research should attempt to involve a larger and more representative sample of school principals across Lebanon.

In addition, the sample included only private school principals. No principals from the public school sector were involved. Future research should involve such participants so that a more comprehensive understanding of practicing self-leadership skills is derived.

Regarding the methodology, it could be improved. In fact, the current methodology has employed self-rating by school principals. It would be more valid to request the administrative teams surrounding the principal complete surveys as well. Finally, the current study has employed the quantitative method. It would be more valid to employ the qualitative method as well. In other words, the conduction of a semi-structured interview with school principals would be an added value for this study. Future research should take these points into consideration.

Recommendations

School principals are called to enhance their knowledge, attitudes and skills related to self-leadership. Several ways and activities can be used to achieve this purpose, such as (Al-Jammal & Ghamrawi, 2013a; ATA, 2010; Kessie, 2012):

- Reading professional books and articles
- Participating in formal training sessions
- Taking additional college courses (formal courses)
- Having informal dialogue with others (teacher leaders, peers, friends) about books they read on self-leadership, activities practicing by each one to acquire self-leadership skills, attributes of famous leaders and how they demonstrated self-leadership
- Having direct communication with famous leaders and discussing with them about how they acquired self-leadership skills.
- Building Personal/Professional Learning Networks-PLNs

Training providers and colleges of education are encouraged to make use of the findings of this study in designing their curricula related to school management (or school leadership), educational supervision and teaching diploma.

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