

How Do Arab Students In Higher Education Institutions In Israel Perceive The Impact Of Their School Principals' Leadership, Verbal Communication Skills, And Conflict Resolution Strategies On Their Overall Excellence?

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how Arab students at higher education institutions in Israel perceive their previous school principals' principalship styles, oral communication skills, and conflict resolution approaches, as related to the students' academic performance and identity. It was important to conduct this research because there is currently limited understanding about the ways school leadership could impact students, particularly minority students, development over an extended period of time, in complicated sociopolitical circumstances. In many ways, this research makes vital contributions to reveal the contextualized influence of school principals' relational and motivational dimensions to nurture students' resilience, motivation, and academic trajectories. Using a qualitative methodology, data were collected through semi-structured interviews of a diverse population of 40 Arab students, from varied academic levels. The study's findings reveal the positive influence of a future-focused principalship style, empathic communication skills, and inclusive conflict resolution practices on the students' motivation, sense of belonging, and success. The study recommends including principals' leadership training that incorporates empathy, communication, and culturally efficacious student-centered leadership strategies.

Keywords: Arab students, school leadership, verbal communication, conflict resolution, academic excellence, personal development, transformational leadership, higher education in Israel.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions of Arab students attending higher education institutions in Israel regarding the impact of their former school principals' leadership style, verbal communication skills and conflict resolution approaches on their academic success and personal development. Using a qualitative research design, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 40 students attending various degree levels and disciplines. As such, the study explores five primary research questions focused on the impact of leadership practices on academic motivation, engagement, conflict resolution, and students' overall development. The findings suggested that school principals demonstrating visionary leadership, effective verbal communication skills, and inclusive approaches to conflict resolution had a beneficial, long-lasting effect on the academic journeys and self-beliefs of their students. This research provides a contribution to the existing literature on the long-lasting effects of school leadership on minority students in socio-politically complex contexts and makes several recommendations related to educational policy and leadership training for school principals.

In this study, the principal's ability to lead and motivate students through vision, ethics, and emotional intelligence is crucial in providing students with experiences (Arjanto, 2022; Kamaludin, 2022). The principals' use of language, in the areas of expectations, motivation, and connection, plays an important role - particularly as they connect by using good

communication (specifically transparent, empathetic, and purposeful communication) to help students understand their aspiration to succeed (Rasool & Dayan, 2023; Zorlu & Korkmaz, 2021). Cultural practices such as active listening, mediation, and encouraging conversations created a safe, respectful environment where students felt emotionally safe, and where they felt comfortable enough to engage in academic conversations (Kluger & Itzhakov, 2021; Annet, 2025). This research addresses the accounts of Arab students who transitioned to higher education in Israel from secondary schools - a group subject to systemic inequalities, cultural marginalization, and representation. Their accounts highlight how a range of leadership behaviors can either reinforce barriers for students, or help lay a foundation for resilience, identity building, and academic excellence...

The significance of this research is that it established the principals not only as administrators but also as formative figures in the academic and personal trajectories of Arab students. Further, this research has filled a gap in the literature on higher education by generally focusing on the role secondary school's leadership practices play on a student's outcome in post-secondary education. The research questions aimed to examine the extent to which students understood the principals' leadership style, communication practices and ability to constructively manage conflict in an educational setting included effective or constructive practices. The thematic analysis of the data suggested transformational leadership, genuine transparency in communication, and constructive management of conflict resulted in greater student motivation, emotional security, and self-efficacy. The recommendations were to develop k-12 school district leadership training centered on relational-leadership, empathy and open communication that maintains a focus on academics in relation to equity in racially/ethnically diverse k-12 education, and/or k-12 education that promotes academic engagement in socio-politically charged contexts. Overall, this study concluded that principled, implicit, intentional and constructive forms of leadership can be used as a foundation for long-lasting student-success and equity in education.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Verbal communication within the school:*

Communication is one of the most important aspects of human existence and is crucial in any organization, including schools, for achieving its goals and objectives (Zorlu & Korkmaz, 2021). Effective communication helps improve the management of any organization by fostering mutual understanding between management and subordinates (Soid et al., 2025). Additionally, effective communication increases staff involvement and commitment, leading to better results (Musheke & Phiri, 2021).

School functions depend on the effectiveness of communication among those involved (Eklund & Löfgren, 2021). The basic function of school management relies almost entirely on the communication between teachers and students across various school structures and levels (Schlebusch & Schlebusch, 2022). Other functions include assigning specific duties to all staff, ensuring satisfactory performance of duties, maintaining discipline among staff, orienting new staff, developing sound personnel policies, contributing to the professional development of staff, considering students' needs, interests, and rights, initiating curriculum design and reform, maintaining moral tone and disciplinary standards among pupils, developing guidance services for students, maintaining an accurate accounting system, maintaining good public relations with parents and the community, and promoting school-community relations (Ahmady, et al., 2016; Simorangkir et al., 2023). The ability of school management to perform these functions effectively depends on their communication skills

(Manafa, 2016). Communication skill is the competency to convey information accurately, clearly, and as intended. It involves how one gives and receives information and shares ideas and opinions with others (Sumaiya et al., 2022). Effective communication skills include speaking appropriately to people while maintaining good eye contact, using eloquent and tailored language, listening effectively, writing clearly and concisely, being confident, friendly, empathetic, asking questions, being open-minded, and presenting ideas appropriately (Rasool & Dayan, 2023). School management is expected to be competent in all these communication skills and also be aware of their non-verbal behavior and skilled in "reading" their subordinates (İlğan, 2020).

2.2 Conflict resolution strategies

Conflict in schools comes from interactions among students, staff, management and the community while all parties attempt to pursue educational objectives. These interactions can lead to different forms of conflict: student/student, student/staff, staff/staff, principal/staff and finally school/community conflicts. Successful conflict resolution is essential for establishing and maintaining schools' positive school climate. The common way to resolve conflicts is by addressing the basic causes, and finding just and acceptable solutions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018). In their paper, Adeyemi and Ademilua (2012), identified good conflict resolution encourages harmony, while bad conflict resolution and handling conflict lead to disunity.

Effective conflict resolution strategies are important school district leaders, including principals, can implement to maintain a positive and successful school environment. These strategies include active listening, mediation, culture of open communication and collaboration (Annet, 2025). Active listening means that principals listen to all perspectives when resolving conflicts and are mindfully engaged with the parties involved. Mediation is an important strategy whereby the principal serves as a facilitator of meaningful dialogue to support the conflicting parties to see each other's viewpoints (Kluger & Itzchakov, 2021). This stipulates some constructive dialogue needs to occur in the conflict resolution process. Another important strategy for principals to implement is to create a culture of open communication and collaboration between staff and students to reduce conflict before it occurs. An example of this is encouraging regular feedback sessions and meetings to create a transparent culture based on trust. The above strategies support a sustainable and productive school culture that utilizes conflict resolution and support student learning and development (Edmonson, 2008).

2.3 School Principals' Leadership

Effective school principals have a variety of leadership skills that contributes to the success of the school in general. The skills should relate to both internal and external educational environments (Arjanto, 2022). Educational leadership skills should meet national requirements to develop education and international requirements to develop educational development globally (Qiu, 2023). The leader skills of the basic schools' principals develop visionary leadership, communication skills, decision-making skills, emotional intelligence, building and collaboration, strategic planning, adaptability, ethical leadership, crisis management, data-based decision-making, and advocacy skills (Okunlola & Naicker, 2025).

The importance of visionary leadership by elementary school principals is very important in improving the quality of education and achieving the vision of the school (Atika et al., 2021). Visionary leadership includes the ability of principals to establish, articulate, and communicate a purpose and vision for the school and to foresee challenges and changes in the educational system (Liswati et al., 2023). Visionary leadership includes the ability of leaders

to implement the school's mission through supervising teachers, performance evaluations, and fulfilling teacher, academic staff, and supporting staff needs. (Karwan et al., 2021). Furthermore, they have expertise and bring inventions and legislation that mutually promote the implementation of new ideas in education (Öngel et al., 2022). Visionary leadership contributes to stronger schools' mindfulness, and teacher and educational staff performance (Kamaludin, 2022). Nevertheless, there is a lack of facilities and teacher certification that leaders must navigate to improve quality learning. Effective communication abilities are essential for school principals to oversee and motivate teachers, promote teacher quality, and ensure learning quality (Sofia et al., 2023). As such, principals communicate expectations, guide, inform, provide feedback, and create a positive learning atmosphere (Gordon-Phan, 2019). The principal can employ any one or multiple communication patterns including chain patterns and all-channel patterns in communicating (Mesiono et al., 2023). The principal, in the course of instructional leadership and in professional dialogue with teachers, uses various levels of interpersonal communication with regard to improving the quality of learning and teaching (Tahir & Fatima, 2023).

Of note, communication management by the principal is integral to teacher professionalism, decision-making, and ultimately, overall enhancement of the learning process (Sumarni et al., 2023). Communication facilitates the delivery and receipt of essential information, ensures the improvement of functional school performance, and facilitates effective instructional leadership enabling the attainment of expected student learning objectives, is attributable to the role, skills and practice of the principal (He et al., 2024; Akomodi, 2025).

School principals' problem-solving skills are important because they are important for decision making, ways to facilitate improvement, implement performance ethics to enhance schools (Suparman, & Macariola, 2022). Research shows that the problem-solving ability of principals with good problem-solving skills can help them tackle burnout and create self-efficacy beliefs (Suciati et al., 2024). It was found that the application of main problem-solving management has the opposite effect on academic achievement increasing tribute, interest, and public excitement (Suparman, Sasongko, & Kristiawan, 2021). Principals need to have crisis management principles because crises can pose a threat to educational institutions. Yet studies show that primary school principals have only moderate performance in their crisis management principles (Steinsund & Eid, 2024). Solutions to school problems, therefore, using effective leadership practices is critical to the role of principals, however performance in this area, is differently defined by gender, academic degree and work experience (Othman et al, 2024). Expert principals' ability to strategically solve ill-structured, complex problems can surpass that of their average colleagues (Sinnema et al., 2021).

3. Materials and Methods

The purpose of the present study was to use a qualitative research approach to examine the influence of school principals' leadership styles, verbal communication and conflict resolution on Arab students studying in higher education in Israel. A qualitative methodological approach was utilized as it gives an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants with an emphasis upon exploring complex social phenomena such as educational leadership and how it shapes academic excellence (Lim, 2025). A qualitative approach is ideal for research with the purpose of explaining the meanings and specific interpretations individuals assign to their experiences and typically produces rich, telling data, rather than structured and limited in scope the data we'd receive from quantitative measures like surveys (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2023). Qualitative methods in this study, produced meaningful and contextualized views of the realities experienced by Arab students in Israel

that considered their sociocultural and educational contexts.

The data collection tool used in this research was semi-structured interviews. These interviews enabled a flexible, yet structured platform for participants to communicate their thoughts in depth while still addressing all of the critical areas of interest related to the research questions (Tahir, 2024). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to gather rich, qualitative data related to the perspectives of individuals as they allow for openness and space for reflection while still keeping a focus on the outcome of the study (Maher & Bedwei-Majdou, 2025). The interview guide included questions about students' perceptions of their principals' leadership styles, their communication styles, and how they resolved conflicts during the time they were in school. The interviews were conducted in Arabic, tape-recorded with participant consent, and later transcribed for analysis.

The research sample was identified as Arab students from Israeli institutes of higher education because they could reflect on their experiences in secondary forms of education, while they were partaking academic forms of study. The sample consisted of 40 students from wide-ranging disciplines and levels (BA, MA, and PhD), and years (first-year, second-year and third year). The aim was to include a wide-range of perspectives and experiences to strengthen the research findings. The sample will be sufficient enough to meet thematic saturation around no new themes appear (Ahmed, 2025).

Simple random sampling was utilized to sample participants from the target population. Simple random sampling was used in this instance because it would ensure fairness and limit researcher bias by providing a random sample of eligible students the same probability of being chosen for the study to evenly sample (Noor et al., 2022). Using simple random sampling in this instance was useful as an effort to improve the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings by reducing potential for selection bias (Subedi, 2023). Participants were approached through academic departments and student networks, once they had provided informed consent to participate, ethical principles were observed throughout the study procedures. The ethical principles of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw were all strictly followed.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis across the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing a report. Thematic analysis allowed for the systematic identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns among data. NVivo software provided an efficient way to code and organize the interviews and engaged with the data in an efficient manner, allowing for a rigorous and transparent analysis. Overall, this method made it easier to identify how leadership behaviors, communication styles, and conflict management strategies impacted student motivation, engagement, and personal growth, and how they partnered in excellence.

The qualitative data derived from the semi-structured interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, which enabled the researcher to identify patterns and common themes across the responses of the participants (Christou, 2023). The data analysis process was both interpretative and iterative (Morgan & Nica, 2020). The aim was to make sense of how the Arab students in higher education portrayed their experiences with school principals in their past. The transcribed interviews were read closely to locate meaningful segments of text that represented the students' interpretations of leadership, communication and conflict resolution. Similar responses were grouped together to form categories, which were then organized into overarching themes, representing similarities and distinctions among the participants. The NVivo software assisted with the organization and categorization of the data, followed each step of a coherent analytical process. The objective was more than to just describe students'

experiences, but to interpret its significance as related to educational success, motivation and development. This approach to thematic analysis afforded both a structured approach and open approach, while capturing and defining the complexity and richness of participants' lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

4. Results

The results that follow aim to demonstrate how students interpret the responsibilities of school principals in students' academic journeys, development, and school climate. In their analysis, the students emphasized how principals' leadership styles, manner of communication, and methods of resolving conflict will affect how they will be led. The reflections also revealed an overwhelming respect and admiration for school principals who are empathetic, assert, and provide empowerment through meaningful conversations and establish a culture of safety and inclusiveness. The themes discussed provide a description of how effective leadership enhances not just academic success but develops students' emotional well-being and development as well.

Theme 1: Perceived Influence of School Principals' Leadership Styles on Academic Excellence

All participants highlighted how impactful their principals' leadership styles were in shaping their academic success and long-term motivation. One student shared, '*...my principal believed in me more than anyone else did. When he said to me, "You are capable of more than you think you are," I began to believe it too.*' This perception aligns with Sasan and others (2023), who asserted that transformational leadership, characterized by their vision, inspiration, and individual support, positively affects student achievement through the creation of a supportive academic climate. Participants noted that principals exhibiting visionary leadership, while motivating students to establish goals and promoting success, created a climate for students to be successful. This notion is supported by the findings of Rusmita and others (2023); reporting that principals should build and communicate a school vision to augment student achievement. This view was also supported by Pellitteri (2021) who observed how leaders adapt to their contextual surroundings and display emotional intelligence, driving to improve educational success in a socially and culturally complex educational environment, like the one seen in the Arab sector in Israel..

Theme 2: Impact of Principals' Verbal Communication Skills on Student Motivation and Engagement

Participants mentioned that verbal communication from principals was a significant leverage for motivation and engagement. There was one student who stated, '*When our principal spoke to us about our futures, he did not just communicate. He indicated to us that we were visible and we could do it.*' A different student also said, '*His words stayed with me after I left school. He said "Your future is in your hands." That became my saying.*' These experiences mesh with Hartfield and others' (2024) assertions that effective communication improves school management and allows students to feel connected to both students and leadership. Musheke and Phiri (2021) demonstrated that verbal encouragement and connection through language improve student involvement and academic productivity. Rivana and others (2024) also found that principals who communicate expectations and demonstrate empathy contribute to an inclusive school environment and advance motivation. The results show that communication is more than instruction, it is a relationship based intervention that transforms students' sense of self-worth and engagement in academics.

Theme 3: Effectiveness of Conflict Resolution Strategies in Fostering a Positive Learning Climate

Students mostly agreed that the principals' processes for handling conflict had immediate ramifications on their school experience and ability to learn. One participant spoke of their experience as follows: *"When fights happened or problems arose, our principal never just punished us—he invited us in, listened to us, and then got us to talk it out. That taught me respect, a lot of respect."* Another student said, *"He didn't yell. He removed us from the conflict, calmed us down, and got us to solve it. It made school a place we felt was safe."* These examples resonate with Amaquin and Sibag (2025), who explain that equity-centered and participatory approaches to conflict resolution are key in promoting a school climate of harmony. Similarly, Kluger and Itzhakov (2021) focused on the role of listening in conflict resolution, while Annet (2025) highlighted the importance of opening up channels of communication and mediation as means for serious conflict management. Either way, if done well these methods bring about the right educational atmosphere, which gives students respect and a voice—in turn they feel emotional safety and focus on learning.

Theme 4: Relationship Between Principals' Leadership and Students' Personal and Educational Development

Many students described how what their principals exhibited through their leadership, affected not only academic, but their personal development. One said, *"The principal encouraged me to take responsibility, not just in school, but in life. It's something I still carry with me till this day."* Another said, *"Yes, he wanted us to get good marks, but he-degree and he wanted us to become good people."* This was similar to Kamaludin (2022), who wrote about visions of leadership for the broader development of self-discipline, responsibility, and resilience. Karwan and others (2021) stressed that effective school leadership includes academic performance, developing life skills, and ethical maturity. Okunlola and Naicker (2025) defined effective principals with emotional intelligence and communication capacity could formulate personal development through modelling adaptive and ethical leadership behaviors. This theme encompassed the principals as mentors of life, guiding students beyond academics.

Theme 5: Identification of Most Impactful Leadership, Communication, and Conflict Resolution Practices

Participants shared numerous particular practices which they felt were significant in regard to leadership, communication, and conflict management. One student stated, *"What helped me the most was the fact that my principal took the time to talk to us one-on-one. Even when he was busy, he still made the time, and that made me feel like I mattered."* Another stated, *"He always pushed for feedback and would ask for our opinions. That made us feel valued and part of the school."* These comments convey the strength of shared leadership and a personal connection while communicating and working through conflict, which complements the conclusions of Rasool and Dayan (2023) about leaders demonstrating empathy, clarity, and being approachable when communicating. Literature supports principals who regularly promote dialogue, respect, and responsiveness to student feedback as producing a sense of belonging and collective responsibility (Manafa, 2016; Tahir, & Fatima, 2023). Beyond literature, Bentsalo and others (2025) suggested creating a safe, productive school climate required promoting open dialogue and trust. Altogether, these are the practices that serve as appropriate foundations to foster students' academic progress as well as their emotional health

when utilized in practices over time..

5. Discussion

The results of this research contribute to understanding how Arab students enrolled in Israeli higher education understand the impact of leadership, verbal communication, and conflict treatment in their previous school principals on their academic and personal development. The results contribute to the notion that school leadership is important, not just for academic outcomes but for student motivation, resilience, and self-perception. During the reflective process on their experiences in high school, it became evident how the influences of their principals' positive behaviors lingered well into their academic careers.

First, it is clear that the students involved in this study greatly emphasized the effects of leadership in school principals on their academic pathway and achievements. Students described leaders who exhibited vision, support, and, in particular, emotional intelligence with the most positive impact on their overall educational experiences. These findings align with the work of Atika and others (2021) and Liswati and others (2023), who offer aspects of visionary leadership, with a mission for the school and sufficient oversight to produce positive academic results. The results also correspond with the work of Kamaludin (2022), which describes leadership that provides trust and self-efficacy will encourage students to set goals and ultimately achieve success in their education having a transformative impact in communities with practical disadvantages or complex cultures. Moreover, principals who exhibited transformational leadership characteristics - those who encouraged the students, inspired and mentored them - had effects in terms of ongoing motivation and personal development, especially for students of the Arab sector in Israel experiencing a complex socio-political educational space.

Apart from leadership style, the study indicated that verbal communication skills were seen by students as a powerful motivator. Participants spoke of the words used by their principals, which were seen as encouragement that built confidence in themselves and their commitment to their studies. This supports Zorlu and Korkmaz's (2021) argument that, clear and supportive communication is foundational for students' success. Rasool and Dayan (2023) also found that the manner at which principals communicate (with clarity, compassion, and confidence) helps to develop a positive emotional tone in schools that enhances students' emotional and motivational engagement. Musheke and Phiri (2021) advocate that communication is crucial in building relational trust between leaders and learners, which can impact students' academic performance. The reflections of students in the present study demonstrate that communication was not only functional, but also relational and transformative .

Another major theme found was the students' perception of their principals' approach to conflict resolution. When students experienced conflict managed through active listening, dialogue, and fairness, they were able to trust their principals and feel safe in their schools. This perception supports Russo and others' (2025) research, which stated that fairness in handling conflict increases respect and collaborative climate in schools. Kluger and Itzhakov (2021) argued that listening has significant power in mediating interpersonal conflict, which aligns with students stating they appreciated principals, who mediated rather than punished conflicts. Annet (2025) reiterated that open lines of communication and collaborative communication would prevent escalation and promote emotional health in educational environments. The evidence in this study demonstrated that students felt respected and more attentive when conflict was managed inclusively and restoratively, which supported their ability to achieve academically.

The data showed a clear connection between the leadership styles of school principals and student personal development. Specifically, students identified the actions of their previous

principals with the development of life skills such as responsibility, integrity, and resilience, which they now see as valuable in their university studies. Our findings were consistent with those of Karwan et al. (2021), who argued that effective school leadership does not only support academic growth but also leads to the ethical maturity and development of life competencies. Many of the students we interviewed indicated that they had principals who exhibited emotional intelligence and engaged in ethical decision-making (Okunlola & Naicker, 2025). Students described being mentored by principals who modeled adaptive and principled action. The findings of this study support the belief that when educational leaders make the decision to practice educational leadership holistically, they fully prepare students for both academic and life challenges. This is critically important in minority communities because the layers of support for students become imperative.

Finally, students identified specific leadership practices that they saw being most influential, including: individualized relationships, legitimizing student voice, providing regular and consistent feedback, and the physical presence of their principal and their availability. These practices pointed to a relational and participatory style of leadership, which fits with Manafa's (2016) and Tahir and Fatima's (2023) findings that effective principals create inclusivity, and belonging, by ensuring open lines of communication and promoting the shared decision-making process. In addition, these behaviors align with Bentsalo and others' (2025) conclusion that sustained academic progress and student well-being require the establishment and maintenance of leadership that engages and fosters the dialogue and empathy and trust that promotes their students' needs. In this study, these practices that students remembered and highly valued were intentional and deliberate actions taken by the principals, that highly impacted their student experience. Overall, these practices allow for the academic and emotional needs of students to be met, fostering a culture of excellence that is rooted in care and respect.

In summary, this study's findings evidenced the relationship between school principal leadership practice – based on vision, communicative behaviors, and empathy – and Arab student academic achievement and success. More importantly, the study reported that when principals lead intentionally, listen to their students like they would listen to their own children, resolve conflict positively, and provide students with a voice in their learning, intellectual and emotional means for excellence can take shape informing future academic and personal success. These findings provide insights into support for school leadership development pathways and school leadership policies, particularly in culturally diverse and socio-political contexts (like the Arab Sector in Israel). Future research may investigate how best to sustain and scale these practices toward educational equity and longer-term educational outcomes for Arab students.

6. Conclusion

The findings from this study establish that Arab students in higher education institutions in Israel view their previous principals' leadership style, verbal communication and conflict resolution style as having a strong impact on their academic success and personal growth. From all the themes, the students emphasized the importance of principals, who were visionary and empathetic, with good communication skills, setting the stage for a school that was both academically supportive and emotionally safe. The leadership styles that reflected transformational characteristics, such as motivation, trust, and an understanding of emotions, were ultimately the most effective systems for enhancing motivation, personal growth and educational esteem. Furthermore, when students perceived their principals engaged in the learning process, communicated in a transparent manner, and resolved conflicts with fairness

and dialogue, they perceived school as a place where they felt safe and encouraged emergent confidence to pursue success.

The synthesis of the findings shows that one aspect of the role of principalship is not only about administrative actions, it is also about relational interactions. The principals' effective verbal communication was beyond instructional; it was affirmation and respect that confirmed students' beliefs in their own abilities. Even conflict resolutions that involved fairness and listening, developed a community of trust and collaboration that gave students direction and scope to engage in their learning. The findings are consistent with what Musheke and Phiri (2021), Kluger and Itzhakov (2021) and Rasool and Dayan (2023) stated, that leadership which utilizes communication, empathy and ethics can facilitate considerable change in educational situations. Participants of the study recalled certain interactions, gestures and leadership actions that took place over a considerable length of time that created long-lasting effects, highlighting the significance of principals being present, approachable and supportive in the continuous routine of school life.

Even with these somewhat positive findings there are still several questions that require consideration. First, although this study studied students' perspectives, further research could seek to understand principals' and their perceptions of their own impact and their development (training) of these important leadership traits. Also, future research could explore the institutional and policy constraints sufficiently to understand the limits on principals' role for relational leadership in institutions with limited resources or within political and social challenges. Finally, it is also important to consider that longitudinal studies of early leadership influences can have lasting impacts on students' educational pathways and careers. It is critical to follow through on ongoing development of leadership to support messages of inclusive, communicative, and conflict-resilient leadership. Ultimately, this study provides further support for the position that school leadership, if guided with intent, empathy, and presence, has the potential to alter student possibilities and trajectories especially within minority communities in complex schooling and social contexts.

7. References

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