Which transformational leadership behaviors relate to organizational learning processes?

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to examine the relationship between behaviors associated with transformational leadership (TL) and the sub-processes of organizational learning (OL) and to explain these relationships based on the ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) framework.

Design/methodology/approach – Questionnaires assessing leadership behaviors and unit learning processes were filled in by 520 employees from 30 units within 9 organizations.

Findings – Each sub-process of OL was found to be related to different leadership behaviors. For example, distribution was related to TL components directed toward developing followers’ ability (i.e. vision and intellectual stimulation) and created the opportunity to share knowledge (i.e. supportive leadership). On the other hand, the TL components found to be related to interpretation were those that enhance followers’ motivation to work well in a group (i.e. inspirational communication and personal recognition).

Research limitations/implications – Showing that specific TL behaviors are related to different OL sub-processes emphasizes the importance of each OL sub-process as a distinct outcome. In addition, this study begins to address the possible mechanisms that may explain why specific factors enhance some OL sub-processes, but not others.

Practical implications – The study’s findings will assist managers and HR practitioners in recognizing which leadership behaviors are to be enhanced to help address particular sub-processes of OL that need improvement.

Originality/value – This paper is the first to examine the fine-tuned relationships between TL and OL and thus adds another explanation regarding why organizations differ in their learning processes and in their eventual outcomes, such as performance and innovation.

Introduction

Organizational learning (OL) is critical for performance and long-term success of organizations (Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011; Chadwick and Raver, 2015). For this reason, research efforts have been made to understand why some organizations are better at learning than other organizations (Argote and Epple, 1990; Pisano et al., 2001). Furthermore, as organizations need to prepare for the retirement of many employees and deal with new organizational structures and issues of globalization, OL processes, such as knowledge retention and knowledge transfer, are gaining more interest by practitioners and researchers alike. Hence, there seems to be an ongoing call for more investigation of factors facilitating such OL processes (Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011; Chadwick and Raver, 2015).

A prominent, recent elucidation in research examining factors contributing to OL points to the role of TL (Bass, 1985; Flores et al., 2012). However, the existing studies (Bass, 1985; Lam,
have a significant limitation, as they present only a general view of TL and its relationship with OL processes, while lacking a theoretical refinement, detailing:

- which TL dimensions are related to each OL sub-process; and
- theoretical mechanism underlying these relationships.

As Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) previously stated, as TL is a multi-dimensional construct, research should capture how each dimension has a distinct influence on outcomes. Indeed, studies differentiating the TL behaviors reveal that these different leadership behaviors have very different relationships with outcomes (Antonakis et al., 2003), which in part appear to depend on the nature of the outcome and context. As OL is not a single organizational process, but one that consists of multiple, distinct sub-processes (Huber, 1991; Crossan et al., 1999) that occur at different organizational levels and contexts (i.e. at the individual, team and organizational levels (Berson et al., 2006), it seems imperative to understand which TL components/behaviors impact the success of each sub-process of OL, especially as these processes enhance organizations’ performance, competitive power and financial results (Pérez López et al., 2005).

This study aims to address this gap and examines the relationship between each specific TL dimension and sub-processes of OL. We propose specific relationships based on the ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Boxall and Purcell, 2003). The AMO framework has been previously supported in research examining the influence of management behaviors and human resource practices on organizational performance (Paauwe, 2004; Akrofi, 2016). This study applies the AMO framework to OL. By classifying each TL dimension as an ability, motivation or opportunity mechanism, we explain why each behavior is more/less likely to be related to specific OL sub-processes.

This study has the potential to provide significant implications for theory and practice. First, we expect to contribute to the literature on TL, by offering a more detailed picture of the relationship between TL and the sub-processes of OL. Such an elucidation is in line with Antonakis et al.’s (2003) recent call for research that adopts differentiated models that allow for an examination of specific sub-components of TL behaviors and will enable researchers to better understand what it is about TL (i.e. which elements of TL) that enhances OL. Our study’s results may point to the fact that it is not about whether or not otherwise similar units have transformational leaders but about the extent to which these transformational leaders behave in particular ways. Moreover, the categorization of the TL dimensions/behaviors in accordance to the AMO framework may serve additional research and provide a better understanding of previously found TL effects. Second, by using the AMO framework, the study may contribute to scholar’s understanding of the mechanisms underlying different OL sub-processes. More specifically, it may explicate why some learning processes succeed more than others do, as they are influenced by different mechanisms (i.e. ability, motivation or opportunity). On a practical note, the study’s findings may assist managers and HR practitioners in recognizing which leadership strategies and behaviors should be deployed to address particular sub-processes of OL that need improvement. Hence, HR practitioners may be better able to impact organizational outcomes by providing various interventions, including training and mentoring programs, to enhance managers’ relevant TL behaviors based on organizations’ learning needs and impediments.

In structuring this article, we present the definitions and dimensions of OL and TL. Next, we elaborate on the AMO theory and explain how it will be applied to the study of relationship between TL and OL. We then develop hypotheses concerning how the TL dimensions/behaviors may be related to the OL sub-processes, based on their classification as an ability, motivation or...
opportunity mechanism. After presenting the research methodology, we move on to present the results followed by a discussion of these results and the study’s limitations, implications and conclusions.

Organizational learning
Several authors have studied the process of OL to define its dimensions or sub-processes (Huber, 1991; Benoit and Mackenzie, 1994; Nevis et al., 1995; Crossan et al., 1999). Although the terms differ from one author to another, the proposed sub-processes in all typologies are similar. Pérez López et al. (2005) revised this research and identified four different sub-processes which combine the essence of all previous categorization:

(1) **Knowledge acquisition**: The process by which knowledge or information is obtained, either externally or internally.

(2) **Distribution**: The process through which individuals, groups or different units of the organization share data and information among themselves, thereby leading to new information or understanding.

(3) **Information interpretation**: The process through which organizations make sense of new information that employees have acquired and distributed.

(4) **Organizational memory**: The storing of knowledge for future use, allowing for the implementation of a shared understanding in the organization’s systems, structures, procedures, rules and strategies.

Transformational leadership
Scholars and practitioners have embraced TL as a way to enhance employees’ performance and satisfaction (Bass and Riggio, 2006). TL is composed of five correlated yet distinct sub-dimensions. These are:

(1) **Vision**: The expression of an idealized picture of the future, based on organizational values.

(2) **Inspirational communication**: The expression of positive and encouraging messages about the organization and statements that build motivation and confidence.

(3) **Intellectual stimulation**: Enhancing employees’ interest in and awareness of problems and increasing their ability to think about problems in new ways.

(4) **Supportive leadership**: Expressing concern for followers and taking account of their individual needs.

(5) **Personal recognition**: The provision of rewards such as praise and acknowledgement of effort for achievement of specified goals (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004).

Transformational leadership and organizational learning
TL has been proposed and found to improve OL (Bass, 1985; Lam, 2002; Flores et al., 2012; Imran et al., 2016). Lam and Pang (2003) found TL to be one of the most accountable factors for OL compared to a variety of external, internal and contextual factors. Amitay et al. (2005) found TL to be positively and significantly related both to OL values and to mechanisms. In a recent study, Imran et al. (2016) revealed that knowledge management process capability partially mediated the TL-OL relationship. While in general TL has not always been found to be positively related to individual level outcomes (Zhu et al., 2013), based on the
aforementioned research, it seems that TL in general is a positive force for OL. Yet, despite the growing scholarly interest in the relationship between TL and OL, the question remains whether certain TL behaviors serve as contingent factors for specific OL processes, but not for others and whether some TL components may be enough for the enhancement of OL overall. To address this question, a series of hypotheses was developed, framing the dimensions of TL as behavioral manifestations that ensure the provision of one of three mechanisms – abilities, motivations and opportunities.

**Ability-motivation-opportunity theory: a framework for studying the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational learning**

The AMO framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Bailey et al., 2001) has its foundations in organizational psychology. It focuses on the importance of taking into account variables at the individual level in explaining behavior and performance (as opposed to variables at the organizational level).

The AMO framework was assembled from three basic concepts in psychology: Ability – skills and capabilities requisite for successful performance; Motivation – the impetus toward the desired performance; and Opportunity – contextual and situational constraints relevant to performance. The basis of the framework is that organizations need employees who can obtain required skills (ability), are motivated to contribute in useful ways (motivation) and perform their responsibilities and job duties in appropriately designed structures (opportunity to perform) (Boxall and Purcell, 2011). In line with McDermott et al. (2013), transformational leaders influence employees’ abilities (A) by conveying a clear vision and addressing skill gaps in the process of achieving this vision, as well as intellectually stimulating them by giving them access to training and other development opportunities of both organization-specific and transferrable skills. In addition, transformational leaders influence employees’ motivation (M) by providing personal recognition and inspirational communication of higher motives. Finally, transformational leaders provide employees with opportunities (O) to use their professional judgment and become involved by offering support and acknowledgement of their individual needs.

While existing studies using the AMO framework have yet to regard OL, the framework has previously been applied to the study of knowledge management (Argote et al., 2003). Argote et al. (2003) proposed that an organization’s successful knowledge management depends on ability, motivation and opportunity mechanisms. They further postulated that properties of the organizational unit, be it the entire organization or an individual inside the organization, may impact individuals’ ability, motivation and opportunity to successfully create, retain or transfer knowledge. The current study extends on Argote et al.’s (2003) model, proposing that individuals’ ability, motivation and opportunity may too be important for OL processes.

Figure 1 depicts the theoretical model linking managers’ TL dimensions to the sub-processes of OL. As we elaborate below, in the current study, we claim that leaders that provide vision and intellectual stimulation are likely to impact employee’s ability to create, retain or transfer knowledge. Similarly, leaders showing high levels of personal recognition and inspirational communication motivate employees to pursue knowledge acquisition and to pursue collective sense-making of new information. Finally, supportive leadership creates a context that provides employees with the opportunity to create, retain or transfer knowledge. Based on these notions, we explain below which of the TL behaviors are likely to be related to each of the OL sub-processes.
Transformational leadership dimensions relevant to knowledge acquisition

Knowledge acquisition is the OL sub-process in which information is obtained from internal and external sources (Huber, 1991). It marks the initial stage of OL in which employees should challenge their cognitive maps and stimulate revisions of their prior understandings (Pérez López et al., 2005). Hence, it is likely to depend both on employees’ mental ability to be open toward acquiring new information and on their motivation to engage in such an activity, based on external rewards.

The mental abilities this stage requires may be facilitated by a clear vision, as it offers individuals the opportunity to consider facts and alternative viewpoints. Leaders who articulate a shared vision, exposing the gap between the vision of the ideal organization and the current situation, are more likely to promote learning by enhancing individuals’ belief in his/her ability to obtain new information or knowledge, either intentionally or unintentionally (Zietsma et al., 2002). Moreover, intellectual stimulation seems likely to facilitate followers’ knowledge acquisition, as it gives them a sense of ability to reframe problems, take risks, learn and approach old situations in new ways (Vera and Crossan, 2004).

Two motivation mechanisms, personal recognition and inspirational communication, seem likely to be positively related with knowledge acquisition, as well. Defined as “The provision of rewards such as praise and acknowledgement of effort for achievement of specified goals” (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004, p. 334), personal recognition occurs when a leader values individuals’ efforts and rewards the achievement of outcomes consistent with the vision, through praise and acknowledgement of followers’ efforts (Rafferty and Griffin, 2004). This TL dimension may encourage employees to demonstrate behaviors directed toward obtaining new information or knowledge, as the leader sees these behaviors as potentially useful to the organization and thus is likely to provide rewards for such behaviors. Inspirational communication, by which leaders enhance confidence among followers that the collective goals will be reached (Wang and Howell, 2010), may further promote knowledge acquisition. Inspirational communication motivates followers to remain optimistic and persevere toward difficult goals even in the face of setbacks and disappointments (Waldman and Bass, 1991) and may therefore promote followers’ openness to the acquisition of new knowledge, despite possible setbacks. Following the aforementioned rationale, we hypothesize that the TL components of vision, intellectual stimulation, personal recognition and inspirational communication will be positively related to the sub-process of knowledge acquisition (H1, H2, H3 and H4).
Transformational leadership dimensions relevant to distribution

Distribution is the sub-process in which the knowledge that was originally individually acquired is shared with others in the organization. It is an essential step for OL to occur, as information that is acquired by an individual but not distributed through the organization can, at best, lead to individual-level learning (Huber, 1991).

Being a group-level process, it is likely to be facilitated both by the organizational members’ mental ability to communicate using a shared language and by the collective ability to think about problems in new ways. A transformational leader who develops a shared vision and communicates that vision to his/her employees equips them with a new shared language, giving them the ability to communicate and share their individually acquired knowledge with others. Intellectual stimulation further helps establish an organizational climate where employees feel challenged and energized to seek innovative approaches in their jobs (Gumusluoglu and Iłsev, 2009). Thus, they may feel better able to engage in a collective discourse, consequently leading to the creation of new coherent interpretations among themselves.

Beyond the TL dimensions which act upon the ability mechanism, distribution is expected to be facilitated by the opportunity mechanism, via supportive leadership. Supportive leadership has been found to be related to people-oriented, friendly, encouraging and trustworthy work environments (Deshpandé et al., 1993). As distribution is a social process, which requires exchanges of ideas among organizational members, a leader’s supportive behavior is likely to set forth an opportunity for successful execution of distribution. Building on the aforementioned rationale, we hypothesize that the TL components of vision, intellectual stimulation and supportive leadership will be positively related to the sub-process of distribution ($H_5$, $H_6$ and $H_7$).

Transformational leadership dimensions relevant to information interpretation

Defined as “the process of developing shared understanding amongst individuals and the taking of coordinated action through mutual adjustment” (Croswell et al., 1999 p. 525), interpretation is a sub-process focused on creating coherent, collective action. During interpretation, organizational members interpret organizational realities through a mutual negotiation of cognitive maps (Flores et al., 2012), with the aim of achieving a shared understanding and coordination in decision-making (Pérez López et al., 2005).

Unlike the two previous sub-processes, interpretation is likely to be dependent on the motivations of organizational members to engage in social negotiation processes rather than on their ability to frame information using new cognitive maps. Thus, we maintain that this sub-process is particularly related to two TL dimensions that facilitate the motivation mechanism: personal recognition and inspirational communication. A leader’s inspirational communication inclines subordinates to take extra effort to generate creative solutions for their problems (Jung, 2000). Moreover, the leader’s use of encouraging emotional appeals fuels group members’ level of collective confidence, known as collective efficacy (Lindsley et al., 1995). The heightened level of collective efficacy may in turn motivate followers to invest efforts in the collective action the sub-process of interpretation calls for.

Personal recognition is likely to enhance employees’ motivation (Danish and Usman, 2010) to contribute innovative ideas for successful completion of negotiation process. As employees witness leaders acknowledging followers’ efforts to contribute and discuss their ideas, they are more likely to be motivated to carry out these commendable behaviors to personally win the leader’s approval. Keeping the aforementioned rational in mind, we hypothesize that the TL components of inspirational communication and personal recognition will be positively related to the sub-process of interpretation ($H_8$ and $H_9$).
Transformational leadership dimensions relevant to organizational memory

Being a process of an ongoing expansion of the organization's ability to influence its future (Senge, 1990), OL is not complete until the shared new understandings and knowledge are implemented in the organization's systems, structures, procedures, rules and strategies. The aim of the organizational memory sub-process, through which knowledge is embedded in the organization, is to ensure persistence over time (Argote et al., 2003) and a competitive advantage, by changing organizational responses to dynamic environments (Flores et al., 2012). This process is carried out at the organizational level, and as such, we do not hypothesize that it is influenced by ability, motivation or opportunity resulting from leaders TL behaviors.

A summary of the study's hypotheses is detailed in List of hypotheses and depicted in Figure 1.

\[ H1. \] Vision will be positively related to the sub-process of knowledge acquisition.

\[ H2. \] Intellectual stimulation will be positively related to the sub-process of knowledge acquisition.

\[ H3. \] Personal recognition will be positively related to the sub-process of knowledge acquisition.

\[ H4. \] Inspirational communication will be positively related to the sub-process of knowledge acquisition.

\[ H5. \] Vision will be positively related to the sub-process of distribution.

\[ H6. \] Intellectual stimulation will be positively related to the sub-process of distribution.

\[ H7. \] Supportive leadership will be positively related to the sub-process of distribution.

\[ H8. \] Inspirational communication will be positively related to the sub-process of interpretation.

\[ H9. \] Personal recognition will be positively related to the sub-process of interpretation.

Method

Research design

This study used a cross-sectional design implemented through questionnaires provided to employees within organizational units. We randomly approached unit heads within nine organizations and asked for their permission to include their employees in our study. Data were collected via questionnaires given to the workers during work group meetings. Respondents who agreed to participate were guaranteed full confidentiality, as questionnaires remained anonymous and were filled in without the presence of the work unit leader.
Sample
The final sample included 520 employees within 30 work units embedded within the nine organizations. Four of the organizations were from the public sector (e.g. municipality and public healthcare organization) and five from the private sector (e.g. high technology organization and hotel) in Israel. The composition of the sample was as follows: 166 employees (32 per cent) worked in the high-tech sector; 269 (52 per cent) worked in the health services sector; 13 (2 per cent) worked in hotel services; 25 (5 per cent) worked in municipality services; and 48 (9 per cent) worked in an energy company. 34 per cent of the participants were men, and 37 per cent held a managerial position.

Measures
For all measures, the respondents answered a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Transformational leadership
We used the 15-item measure developed by Rafferty and Griffin (2004) in which there are 3 items for each sub-dimension of TL (i.e. vision, inspirational communication, intellectual stimulation, supportive leadership and personal recognition). A sample item for the vision sub-dimension is: “Has a clear understanding of where we are going.” The coefficient alphas for each sub-dimension were 0.60 for the vision items, 0.76 for the inspirational communication items, 0.79 for the intellectual stimulation items, 0.87 for the supportive leadership items and 0.70 for the personal recognition items.

Organizational learning
Pérez López et al.’s (2005) scale was used to measure four dimensions of OL: external and internal knowledge acquisition, knowledge distribution, knowledge interpretation and organizational memory. The items of external knowledge acquisition and internal knowledge acquisition were combined into one seven-item measure, as the exploratory factor analysis showed that all seven items loaded onto the same factor. The coefficient alpha for the combined knowledge acquisition scale was 0.86. Three items examined knowledge distribution (coefficient alpha = 0.72). Six items examined knowledge interpretation (coefficient alpha = 0.87), and seven items examined organizational memory (coefficient alpha = 0.84).

Control variables
To examine the relationship between TL dimensions and OL processes aforementioned and beyond what may be explained by gender, age, education and managerial status, we controlled for these variables.

Data analysis
As data were collected from employees belonging to 30 work units within 9 organizations, we analyzed the data using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) (Bryk and Raudenbush, 1992). The advantage of HLM is that by modeling individual, group and organization-level residuals, scholars may acknowledge that individuals within one group may be more similar to one another than to individuals in other groups, as well as that groups within one organization may be more similar to one another than groups within other organizations (Bryk and Raudenbush, 1992). A statistical analysis software mixed-model procedure was used.
Results
We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to examine the fit of our nine-factor model (four OL subscales and five TL subscales). Our analysis provided acceptable fit ($\chi^2(623, N = 501) = 1897, p < 0.001$, goodness of fit index = 0.82, comparative fit index = 0.86, root mean square error of approximation = 0.06).

As can be seen in Table I, Model 2, in a model including both the control variables and the TL dimensions/behaviors, knowledge acquisition was found to be positively related to vision ($H1$), intellectual stimulation ($H3$) and personal recognition ($H4$). $H2$ was not supported, as inspirational communication was not found to be related to this sub-process of OL. Model 2 was significantly better than Model 1, which included only the control variables ($\Delta$-2loglikelihood = $29.6, p < 0.001$).

As indicated in Model 4 of Table I, in a model including the control variables and the TL dimensions/behaviors, distribution was positively related to vision ($H5$), intellectual stimulation ($H6$) and supportive leadership ($H7$), supporting all three relevant hypotheses. Model 4 was significantly better than Model 3, which included solely the control variables ($\Delta$-2loglikelihood = $51.2, p < 0.001$).

As can be seen in Model 2 of Table II, in a model which included both the control variables and the TL dimensions, interpretation was positively related to inspirational communication and personal recognition, supporting $H8$ and $H9$. Model 2 was significantly better than Model 1, which included solely the control variables ($\Delta$-2loglikelihood = $36.2, p < 0.001$).

Finally, while not hypothesized, as can be seen in Model 4 of Table II, once both the control variables and the TL dimensions were included in the analysis, organizational memory was found to be significantly related to vision. However, the overall strength of this

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<th>Table I. HLM results examining the relationship between TL and knowledge acquisition and interpretation</th>
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Notes: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001; aGender 0 = male and 1 = female; bAge 0 = below 40 and 1 = 40 and above; cEducation 0 = up to first degree and 1 = second and third degree; and dManagerial status 1 = managerial position and 0 = otherwise.
model was low, as it was not significantly different to Model 3 which included only the control variables (Δ-2loglikelihood = 1, n.s). Thus, it seems that when it comes to building a strong organizational memory, there are no specific TL behaviors that enhance this process.

**Discussion and conclusion**

The aforementioned presented results support this study’s principal premise that the extent to which each OL sub-process is apparent in a work unit is related to the deployment of different leadership behaviors. In other words, leaders should use different TL behaviors to enhance the specific OL sub-process taking place in their unit or team. These findings imply that leaders who manifest some TL behaviors, but not others, may still be able to promote certain OL processes. Moreover, these findings suggest possible mechanisms that may explain why specific TL behaviors were found to be related to each OL sub-process.

The results of this study indicate that in the case of knowledge acquisition, the TL components that are of relevance are those that activate the ability mechanism, such as vision and intellectual stimulation, as well as personal recognition, which is a motivation mechanism. The findings regarding vision and intellectual stimulation lend support to earlier writings on the dependence of knowledge acquisition on an individual’s ability to examine one’s existing mental models or cognitive maps (Zietsma et al., 2002). These findings support Lyles and Salk’s (1996), proposition that a shared vision legitimizes the acquisition and assessment of new knowledge, as well as Zietsma et al.‘s (2002), claim that a clear vision convinces individuals to consider facts and alternative viewpoints expanding their ability to take in new information. Similarly, to vision, intellectual stimulation enhances employees’ interest in and awareness of problems and strengthens their ability and propensity to think about problems in new ways (Bass, 1985). The findings further
imply that, as knowledge acquisition takes place at the individual level (Huber, 1991; Crossan et al., 1999), the TL motivation enhancement behaviors that should be used during this stage are individual-focused. For this reason, personal recognition, which is individual focused, is relevant to knowledge acquisition, whereas inspirational communication, which enhances motivation and confidence at a more collective level, is less relevant to knowledge acquisition.

When it comes to distribution, the relevant TL components are those directed toward developing followers’ mental ability (i.e. vision and intellectual stimulation) and creating the desired opportunity for the sharing of knowledge at the group level (i.e. supportive leadership). The finding regarding supportive leadership is of special theoretical interest, for two reasons. First, it fills the gap in the literature regarding the precise role this TL behavior has in the OL process. Though scholars (Senge, 1990; García-Morales et al., 2012) have previously noted that the presence of a supportive leadership style is closely linked to OL, the mechanism behind this relationship was not explored. This study reveals that distribution is the sole OL sub-process that is related to supportive leadership. Second, it shows supportive leadership as related to a social process, e.g. distribution, which takes place at the group level and not at the individual level. It seems that supportive leadership promotes cooperative processes among unit/group members, as with such support employees feel more confident in sharing their knowledge with others and thus use the appropriate opportunity to do so.

As the results of this study indicate, as interpretation takes place after knowledge acquisition and distribution are completed, the TL components required for the effective execution of this sub-process are not those that enhance followers’ ability but rather those that enhance followers’ motivation to work well in a group or unit, such as inspirational communication and personal recognition. Hence, it may be postulated that a leader encouraging his/her followers and using emotional appeal may fuel their level of collective efficacy (Lindsley et al., 1995), which consequently leads employees to invest efforts in the collective action and generation of shared understandings and practices.

In sum, this study took a step forward in demonstrating theoretically, empirically and practically the relationship between TL and OL. Its findings contribute to the current leadership literature by answering the call to examine TL behaviors as separate constructs (Antonakis et al., 2003; Van Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2013) and adding validity to this call by showing that different TL behaviors are indeed related to different consequences in the form of different OL sub-processes. More specifically, the approach taken in the current study clarifies how certain TL behaviors operate and relate to OL, as an organizational outcome. Moreover, by applying the AMO framework, we could predict which TL behaviors will be related to specific outcomes, categorizing these behaviors in a new way.

To the OL literature, this study contributes by using the AMO framework to explain the relationship between TL and OL. Showing that leadership behaviors that are more ability-oriented versus motivational or supportive and more individual versus collective are related to specific OL sub-processes provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying these OL sub-processes. While previous research has found that TL in general is related to OL processes (Imran et al., 2016), by using the AMO framework, we show that depending on a particular outcome (e.g. OL process) under examination, different elements of TL are related to that outcome. Thus, not only is it important to break down leadership behaviors when trying to understand how to promote OL processes but also further using the AMO model as a guiding framework has the potential to reveal additional factor relating to specific OL processes.
Beyond the theoretical contribution of the study, its findings are useful for HR practitioners, especially for leadership training and development. As our findings indicate that leaders/managers can benefit by exhibiting the behavior that influences a specific subprocess of OL. Hence, our findings may help HR practitioners to effect organizational outcomes by providing managers with interventions to enhance relevant component of TL based on an organizations’ learning needs and impediments.

Limitations and future research
Accompanying these contributions are several limitations, some of which may provide avenues for future research. The first limitation relates to the cross-sectional nature of the study which limits its causal interpretative power. Therefore, we propose that future research use experimental designs to substantiate the direction of the relationships between TL dimensions and OL sub-processes. Such studies may include interventions, such as workshop and training sessions, intended to manipulate and enhance managers’ TL behaviors. Second, while previous research regarding the relationship between TL and OL has been conducted in Israel (Amitay et al., 2005), questions may arise as to our ability to generalize the results of this study to other Western contexts. Yet, data were collected from a range of organizations some of which were subsidiaries of multinational firms and some of the Israeli organizations included in this study have their own subsidiaries overseas making generalizability more likely. In any case, we encourage scholars to replicate our study in other contexts.

In conclusion, this study helps us understand why organizations may differ in their learning and as a result in their eventual outcomes, such as performance and innovation. We found that different leadership behaviors are related to different OL sub-processes. This study may open up the floor for additional investigation of other factors relating to specific OL sub-processes.

References


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