Adult attachment and perceived parental style may shape leadership behaviors

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of both attachment and parental styles in shaping leadership behavioral patterns. Research predictions were that childhood perceived parental experiences will be associated with attachment style, and that both perceived parental and attachment styles will fulfill a significant role in shaping the individual's leadership orientation in adulthood.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors tested the research hypotheses with a field survey data from 90 supervisors belonging to diverse industrial and service organizations. During their attendance in a leadership seminar, the managers' attachment style was assessed using the Experiences in Close Relationship Inventory. They were also asked to report on their childhood experiences using the Parenting Style Index, and to answer questions regarding their leadership behavior, using a short version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire.

Findings – Results indicated associations between parental style, attachment style, and leadership. Specifically, parental autonomy granting was negatively associated with both attachment anxiety and avoidance. Both transformational and transactional leadership styles were positively associated with parental autonomy, but only transformational leadership was also positively associated with parental involvement. In addition, transactional leadership was positively associated with attachment avoidance in close relationships.

Research limitations/implications – Testing the contributions of perceived parental style in childhood and attachment style in adulthood to the manager's manifested leadership style helps to advance our theoretical understanding of important leadership antecedents. The findings may also help practitioners in developing leadership skills and assisting managers in finding ways to moderate their natural tendencies and better depend on, delegate, and empower subordinates.

Originality/value – This empirical study provides evidence of the important role of perceived parental style in the development of adult attachment and leadership styles. The effects found in the study also extend the existing findings by showing that not only the attachment style but also parental style play a significant role in shaping the individual's leadership behaviors.

Keywords Attachment, Leadership, Parental style

Paper type Research paper

Theoretical and empirical studies of organizational behavior have repeatedly shown that leaders fulfill a significant role in employees' well-being, commitment, job satisfaction, and retention (e.g. Karimi *et al.*, 2014). Employees often declare that few things matter more to them than how they are managed and led (e.g. Aabdeen *et al.*, 2016). For many employees, the supervisor is one of the most influential factors in the workplace, and their relationship with their direct manager has a major impact on their performance and workplace engagement (Bommer *et al.*, 2004). However, despite the familiar associations between effective leadership and employee satisfaction, commitment, extra effort, and many other positive consequences (e.g. Bommer *et al.*, 2004; Grant, 2012; López-Domínguez *et al.* 2013), scholars also claim that our knowledge regarding the antecedents of effective leadership behaviors is deficient (e.g. Braun *et al.*, 2013; Popper *et al.*, 2000). Given previous evidence that supports the notion that early childhood experiences may impact leadership schemas (e.g. Hall and Lord, 1995) the current study aimed to explore a number of childhood antecedents in leadership behavioral patterns. The rationale for our study stems from scholars' (e.g. Keller, 2003) idea that in light of the dyadic nature of leadership, it is valuable to observe other literatures that deal with dyadic relationships such as parent-child

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relationships. In this context, we shall explore the attachment literature as well as the parental style literature. Both theories provide in recent years a theoretical foundation to explore individual differences in leadership theories (e.g. Keller, 2003; Popper *et al.*, 2000).

Adult attachment style and leadership

Although originally the attachment theory explained individual differences in the infant-caregiver relationship (e.g. Ainsworth *et al.*, 1978), research in recent decades has shown that the theory is a highly relevant framework for explaining relational cognitions and behaviors across the entire life span (Rom and Mikulincer, 2003). Attachment style has been found to be an important factor in interpersonal relationships that accounts for individual differences in terms of the affective ties formed with significant others along the years (Rom and Mikulincer, 2003).

Generally speaking, the attachment style is defined as a relatively stable characteristic related to expectations about significant others. It is based upon an appraisal of the attachment figure's availability and responsiveness (Galinhal *et al.*, 2012). The attachment experiences are later on internalized into mental representations, termed "working models" that are associated with an individual's affect, cognition, and behavior (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2003). As summarized by Sroufe (2005), on the basis of a 30-year longitudinal study, attachment experiences are vital in the formation process of the person.

The first attempt to empirically test the notion that attachment could be applied to adults has been conducted by Hazan and Shaver (1987). Since then, adult attachment research has grown exponentially and has been successfully applied to a wide array of adult affects, cognitions, and behavior (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2016). Hazan and Shaver (1987) utilized the earlier attachment typology (Ainsworth *et al.*, 1978) of secure, avoidant, and anxious styles. However, more contemporary research has shown that this typology actually reflects a two-component model of adult attachment style (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2016). A first systematic attempt to test this two-component model has been conducted by Brennan *et al.* (1998). In their study they demonstrated that individuals who score low on the avoidance and anxiety dimensions correspond to the secure style and are characterized by positive experiences with significant others, a sense of confidence in others' availability in times of need, and comfort with closeness and intimacy. By contrast, individuals who score high on attachment avoidance correspond to the avoidant style, which manifests in negative internal representations of significant others, an orientation toward self-reliance, and a tendency for emotional distance. Last, individuals who score high on attachment anxiety correspond to the anxious style, which characterizes people who are uncertain about others' intentions and actions, are high on negative self-appraisal, and exhibit a contradictory behavioral pattern of rejection and desire for closeness.

Attachment research has shown that attachment style is significantly associated with the quality of people's close relationships and daily social interactions (e.g. Cassidy, 1994; Feeney, 1999; Galinhal *et al.*, 2012; Pietromonaco and Barret, 1997; Rom and Alfasi, 2014) as well as with a wide array of relational cognitions and behaviors (e.g. Brennan and Carnelley, 1999; Davila, 2001; Collins and Feeney, 2000; Mikulincer *et al.*, 2011; Reizer *et al.*, 2012; Shaver *et al.*, 2005). Recently, attachment style was also applied to the research field of leadership (e.g. Popper *et al.*, 2000). Researchers in this domain (e.g. Popper and Mayseless, 2003) actually extended Freud's (1961) metaphor of the leader as a father, and proposed that leader-follower relations can be conceptualized in terms of attachment theory (Davidovitz *et al.*, 2007). In this vein, studies have reported an association between the leader's attachment orientation and his or her leadership style. For instance, in a preliminary study of connections between attachment and leadership styles, Mikulincer and Florian (1995) assessed young Israeli military recruits and found that whereas secure recruits were perceived as having the necessary qualities for effective leadership, attachment-anxious recruits were not. This result was later on replicated in a larger sample (Popper *et al.*, 2004).

Another early attempt to explore the association between attachment style and leadership was conducted by Doverspike *et al.* (1997). In their study, they found that securely attached individuals are more inclined to a socio-emotional leadership style, characterized by a concern with developing and maintaining good relationships, whereas avoidant individuals are more inclined to an instrumental leadership style, characterized by a focus on rewards and recognitions. Related findings were reported by Mikulincer and Shaver (2007). They found that avoidant leaders in the military have deficits in both emotional-oriented and task-oriented situations, whereas high anxiety leaders aid soldiers in emotional situations, but interfere with soldiers' performance during task-oriented situations.

In another study linking attachment to leadership, Davidovitz *et al.* (2007) found leaders' attachment style to be associated with leadership-related motives and self-representations and the ability and willingness to serve as a supportive and caring leader. An additional example for this association was found in Popper *et al.* (2000), a study which reported a positive correlation between secure attachment style and behavioral dimensions of transformational leadership, namely, charisma, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Attachment insecurity, on the other hand, correlated negatively with these leadership behavioral patterns. More specifically, avoidant people tend to indicate discomfort with closeness, interdependence, and inattentiveness to relationship-relevant information, while anxious people exhibit more relational leadership.

Despite these encouraging findings, and the promising conceptual application of attachment theory to the domain of leadership, scholars still maintain that this line of research should receive more attention in future studies (e.g. Davidovitz *et al.*, 2007). In pursuing this goal and in an effort to deepen our understanding concerning the factors that are associated with leadership style, we sought to measure not only the role of attachment style in leadership, but also the individual's perceived parental style, as yet another antecedent that shapes the leadership style. This linkage stems from the important role of parents in attachment theory, the emergence of attachment style from the individual's experiences with attachment figures (mainly parents), and the clear importance of parenting for child development. As argued by Jones *et al.* (2015), attachment style is not only related to caregiving in romantic relationships, but also to caregiving in parent-child relationships. As mentioned by Popper and Mayseless (2003), leader-follower relationships are analogous to parent-children dynamics in many respects. As parents, leaders act as role models, guide, direct, and care. In this sense, followers tend to form emotional relationships with their leaders that are equivalent to those formed with parents. Thus, it is suggested that, parent's attachment style has an impact on the evolvement of their parental style (Jones *et al.*, 2015). In turn, the child that has been exposed to those particular parental and attachment styles may develop certain attachment and leadership styles in adulthood.

Parental style and leadership

Traditionally, the parental style is seen as of central importance in the family climate and childhood experiences and development (Dreikurs, 1995). Dreikurs *et al.* (2004) stated that parental style affected the personality development and interpersonal patterns of children and adolescents. They considered parents as leaders, educators, and role models, and thus provide a conceptual linkage between parental style and leadership. But actually, as mentioned earlier, it was Freud (1939) who introduced back in the 1930s the metaphor of the leader as a father, although this analogy was only recently directly tested by Popper and Mayseless (2003).

Empirical evidence demonstrates that parental warmth, inductive discipline, non-punitive practices, and consistency have positive outcomes on child development (e.g. Dane *et al.*, 2012; Lamborn *et al.*, 1991). This set of parental practices has come to be known as "authoritative" parenting (Steinberg *et al.*, 1994). The authoritative prototype was first identified, together

with other parental behavior patterns, in Baumrind's (1971, 1991) seminal work. Baumrind conceptualized parenting as a dyadic process in which the parent influences the child (Ferguson *et al.*, 2006).

Following Baumrind, Maccoby and Martin (1983) articulated and validated a fourfold parenting typology made up of the authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful types. This typology was based upon the assumption that parental warmth and control represent two dimensions of parental behavior that influence the individual's development (Sovet and Metz, 2014). Parental warmth corresponds to the degree of acceptance, involvement, and responsiveness parents display, whereas parental control corresponds to the degree of strictness and supervision. Authoritative parents tend to be warm but firm. They provide emotional support and grant autonomy, but also have high standards that maintain limits, and encourage clear and bilateral communication. On the other hand, authoritarian parents also have high standards, but they tend to be less emotionally supportive, more directive, strict, and set rules that are not debatable. Indulgent-permissive parents tend to be warm, supportive, trusting, and democratic, but also set low standards and are generally undemanding. Last, neglectful-permissive parents tend to be cold, place few demands on children, and even disengage from the responsibilities of child rearing.

The authoritative parental style has been related to positive developmental outcomes and higher performance on a wide range of measures including school achievement, social development, competence, self-esteem, and mental health compared to the other parenting styles (e.g. Maccoby and Martin, 1983). To illustrate, in a sample of more than 4,000 adolescents, the authoritative parental style was associated with higher academic competence, self-reliance, work orientation, and less delinquency and school misconduct (Lamborn *et al.*, 1991). Although adolescents from authoritarian homes performed well in school, their self-reliance and self-conception scores were relatively low. They had the lowest self-reported drug use and the least amount of somatic complaints. Adolescents from neglectful permissive homes scored the lowest on academic performance, had the highest rates of delinquent behavior and school misconduct, and the largest number of somatic complaints and psychological symptoms. Last, adolescents from indulgent permissive homes scored relatively well on measures of social competence and self-confidence; however, they scored low on school engagement, and high on self-reports of drug and alcohol use and school misconduct (e.g. Lamborn *et al.*, 1991; Steinberg *et al.*, 1994). Other studies have replicated this pattern of results presenting clear advantages of the authoritative style, clear disadvantages for the neglectful style, and mixed outcomes for the authoritarian and indulgent styles. These effects tend to maintain or even increase over time (Steinberg *et al.*, 1994).

In many aspects, the advantages of the authoritative style correspond to the advantages of effective leaders, or more precisely to the advantages of transformational leaders (Burns, 1978). As authoritative parents tend to exhibit warmth and stability, consistent behavioral patterns, involvement, and caring behavior along with setting high standards and engagement (Jones *et al.*, 2015), transformational leaders tend to exhibit similar behavioral patterns toward their followers (Popper and Mayseless, 2003). Given this, we sought to explore the notion that authoritative parents served as role models to their children and enhanced their ability to both create a secure attached orientation as well as a transformational leadership style in adulthood. In the following section, we shall briefly elaborate on transformational (and transactional) leadership and derive research hypotheses accordingly.

Transformational and transactional leadership

The full range leadership model was initially articulated by Burns (1978) and subsequently elaborated by Bass (1985). The model states that transformational leaders establish themselves as role models and tend to gain trust and confidence among their followers. Transformational leadership, much like parenthood, is developmental in nature. It places

special emphasis on processes of empowerment, building the follower's confidence, and assisting in reaching self-actualization (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders state future goals and demonstrate ways to achieve them. These leaders constantly challenge the status quo and encourage innovative thinking, mentor their followers, and empower them to their full potential (Eagly *et al.*, 2003). Transformational leadership is often characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Leaders who implement these behavioral patterns are expected to have high standards of moral and ethical conduct, strong and appealing vision of the future, enthusiasm, and inspiration. Transformational leaders dare to challenge the norms and encourage diversity while taking their followers' unique growth needs into consideration (Avolio and Yammarino, 2013; Bono and Judge, 2004).

Unlike transformational leaders, transactional leaders establish a reward-cost orientation among their followers. These leaders tend to address their followers' interests and develop exchange relationships with them (Avolio, 1999). Typically, they clarify their expectations, and reward their followers once these expectations are met. The transactional leadership pattern focuses on command-and-control and is aimed to monitor employees and manage them in rational and economic ways (Bono and Judge, 2004).

Bass and Avolio's (1994) full range leadership model has led to continuous research regarding effects of leadership styles on employees' perception and performance (e.g. Hoyt and Blascovich, 2003; Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Lowe *et al.*, 1996; Salter *et al.*, 2010; Tejeda *et al.*, 2001; Turner *et al.*, 2002). As manifested by contemporary evidence (e.g. Grant, 2012) the full range leadership model is related to a wide variety of positive individual and organizational outcomes. Taken together, the studies have shown that effective leaders' inspirational behaviors can nurture their followers' abilities to contribute to the organization. Accumulated evidence demonstrates that transformational leadership fulfills an important role in individual and organizational performance (Kark and Van Dijk, 2007).

The current study

Despite these encouraging results, Bommer *et al.* (2004) argued that more research is needed to tap into the mechanisms that underlie the association between leadership and its antecedents. Thus, in the current study we wish to follow Bommer's suggestions and further examine whether the parental style and the attachment style are associated with leadership style. Deriving from leadership scholars (e.g. Avolio and Yammarino, 2013; Braun *et al.*, 2013; Burns, 1978; Eagly *et al.*, 2003; Jones *et al.*, 2015; Popper and Mayseless, 2003), we hypothesized that there will be an association between the experienced parental style and transformational leadership style. This linkage stems from the notion that both leadership and parenthood are asymmetrical relationships by nature that hold dependencies. A dependency exists both between children and their parents as well as between followers and leaders (Popper and Mayseless, 2003). The role of both parents and transformational leaders is to assist others (children and followers, respectively) to achieve their goals. Based on the analogy between transformational leadership and effective parenting (Popper and Mayseless, 2003), our first prediction was as follows:

H1. Transformational leadership will be positively associated with effective parental style, manifested in parental involvement, autonomy granting, and supervision.

Following previous studies that demonstrated the usefulness of attachment theory as a framework for studying leadership (e.g. Davidovitz *et al.*, 2007), we hypothesized that there will be an association between leadership style and attachment style. This linkage is based upon previous studies that found that leaders' attachment style is related to leadership-related motives and self-representations (Davidovitz *et al.*, 2007). Specifically, it appears that insecure individuals tend to have difficulties in exhibiting effective leadership behavioral patterns,

such as the ability to support, empower, and provide a safe haven and secure base for their followers (Popper *et al.*, 2000). All these behaviors are basic characteristics of the transformational leadership style, hence our second prediction was as follows:

H2. Transformational leadership will be negatively associated with attachment insecurity (both anxiety and avoidance).

With regard to the transactional leadership style, previous studies demonstrated that anxious individuals tend to exhibit poor leadership capabilities and lack of confidence in their leadership abilities (Davidovitz *et al.*, 2007; Popper and Mayseless, 2003). Apparently, people that are high in their attachment anxiety dimension, tend to hold a preoccupied orientation and hold a higher need for approval (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2016) that might hinder any leadership behavior. On the other hand, avoidant people, although may feel discomfort with closeness and intimacy, can hold certain advantages in their task-oriented behavior that can facilitate transactional-related activities. Indeed, some researchers found that people that are high in their attachment avoidance dimension tend to prefer instrumental behavioral patterns as an effective strategy to achieve emotional distance. For example, Rom and Mikulincer (2003) found that avoidant individuals in teamwork setting maintain and adequate level of instrumental functioning during task. Although their socio-emotional performance is impaired and they have minimum positive impact on group's morale and cohesion, their task-oriented performance is adequate as they contribute to the successful completion of group tasks and the accomplishment of group goals. Due to the instrumental nature of the transactional leadership, our third prediction was as follows:

H3. Transactional leadership will be positively associated with attachment avoidance and negatively associated with attachment anxiety.

Method

Participants

In total, 90 managers from diverse industrial and service organizations took part in this study. The participants were all volunteers. Originally, the sample was composed of 116 participants, but 26 were omitted from the analyses due to insufficient responses in the study's questionnaires. Slightly more than half of the sample was male (52.2 percent), with an average age of 39.5 (SD = 8.2). Most of the participants were married (75.6 percent), had one or more children (80.11 percent), and reported being secular (69 percent). The mean education level was 16.07 years (SD = 2.32), and the mean seniority as manager was 5.33 years (SD = 6.98). The participants managed teams of between 1 and 15 members (MO = 3), and most of them (66.7 percent) worked in midsized organizations (ranging from a hundred to a thousand employees).

Materials and procedure

The study was conducted during several leadership seminars. In each seminar, we asked managers upon their arrival to fill out a series of self-report questionnaires. These questionnaires included demographic details and other research tools described below. In order to minimize the effect of forms' order, we mixed the order of the research questionnaires so that participants received different deck of questionnaires. Each deck contained a unique order of the questionnaires.

Attachment style was assessed using the Experiences in Close Relationship Inventory (ECR; Brennan *et al.*, 1998). This questionnaire consists of 36 items in which participants are asked to think about their close relationships and rate the extent to which each item describes their feelings in these relationships on a seven-point scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (7). In all, 18 items assess attachment anxiety (e.g. "I worry about being abandoned");

the rest of the items assess attachment avoidance (e.g. "I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down"). The reliability and validity of the Hebrew version of the ECR have been demonstrated in many studies (e.g. Rom and Mikulincer, 2003). In the current sample, the Cronbach's αs were high for both the anxiety subscale (0.81) and for the avoidance subscale (0.78).

Leadership style was measured using an abridged version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass and Avolio, 1993) as it has often been done in previous studies that used the MLQ. For instance, Heinitz *et al.* (2005) omitted nearly two-thirds of the items and still had acceptable alphas. Also, Popper *et al.* (2000) constructed three leadership descriptions from the questionnaire and used them during their research. In their research, they chose 20 items (from the original 64 items of the questionnaire) with the highest loading and divided them into 3 different scales. For the purposes of the current study, we used the same 20 items from the original MLQ questionnaire as previously been used by Popper *et al.* (2000). The participants were asked to reflect on their leadership behaviors and rate the extent to which each item describes their leadership behavior on a seven-point scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (5).

A factor analysis yielded two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, accounting for 35 percent of the variance. The first factor (accounting for 19 percent of the explained variance) included ten items that measure transformational leadership (e.g. "I help my employees to develop their strengths"). While the second factor (accounting for 16 percent of the explained variance) included ten items that measure transactional leadership (e.g. "I keep track of all mistakes"). Cronbach's αs were high for both the transformational items (0.86) and the transactional items (0.81), allowing two scores to be calculated for each participant by averaging the corresponding items.

In order to assess retrospective perceived parental style during childhood, we used the Parenting Style Index (PSI) developed by Steinberg et al. (1992). Participants were asked to think about their experiences with their parents during adulthood and to rate the extent to which each item describes their experiences on a five-point scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (5). The scale has a total of 24 items divided into three subscales: involvement, autonomy granting, and supervision. The involvement subscale (nine items) measures degree of acceptance and warmth (e.g. "Growing up, I could count on my parents to help me out, if I had some kind of problem"). The autonomy subscale (nine items) assesses degree of encouragement to develop self-thinking and self-decision (e.g. "Growing up, my parents let me make my own plans for things I wanted to do"). The supervision subscale (six items) assesses degree of parental control and monitoring (e.g. "Growing up, my parents knew who I hung out with during my spare time"). The scales were kept in their continuum form. The PSI has been shown to be valid and reliable in past studies (e.g. Steinberg *et al.*, 1991, 1992). In the current sample, the Cronbach's αs were high for all subscales ranging from (0.83) for supervision (0.81) for involvement, and (0.79) for autonomy.

Results

The correlation matrix for all the variables is presented in Table I. The table shows that the subscales of parental style are intercorrelated, and also the two attachment subscales and the leadership subscales. In addition, there were some associations between parental style and attachment. Specifically, parental autonomy granting was negatively correlated with both anxiety and avoidance in attachment.

In line with our first prediction that transformational leadership will be positively associated with effective parental style, we found transformational leadership to be positively correlated with parental involvement and autonomy granting. In other words, managers who manifested transformational leadership behavioral patterns, perceived their parents to be more involved and granting autonomy while growing up. However, in contrast

to our prediction, we could not find an association of transformational leadership and parental supervision. It should be noted that parental autonomy granting was also associated with transactional leadership.

In order to further test the unique contribution of perceived parental style to transformational leadership, we performed a hierarchical linear regression in which the transformational leadership style was predicted by entering in the first step demographic variables, and in the second step parental and attachment subscales. In addition, in order to deal with common method variance we used transactional leadership style as control. The regression analysis, as presented in Table II, shows that the predictive variables taken together accounted for 27 percent of the variance of transformational leadership (R^2 change = 0.27). This was found to be a significant predictive model (F (8, 88) = 3.14, $p < 0.001$). Hence, our first research hypothesis was partially supported. It is worth mentioning in this context that seniority had also a predictive value, indicating that, the more experienced a manager, the more transformational he or she tended to be as a leader. Taken together, these findings suggest that managers who manifested transformational leadership behavioral patterns tended to be more experienced and to perceive their parents to grant more autonomy and to be more involved.

Our second prediction, *H2*, did not receive any support. Specifically, both the Pearson's correlation analysis and the hierarchical linear regression analysis did not yield any support for this prediction as transformational leadership did not significantly correlated with any of the attachment dimensions.

Last, our third prediction, *H3*, received some support. In accordance to our prediction, we found positive correlation between transactional leadership and attachment avoidance. However, in contrast to our prediction, we could not find any association between attachment anxiety and transactional leadership (see Table I).

In order to further test the unique contribution of attachment style to transactional leadership, we performed a hierarchical linear regression in which the transactional leadership

Table I.
Pearson's correlation matrix and descriptive statistics for all variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Transformational leadership	2.77	0.72						
2. Transactional leadership	3.92	0.49	0.15*					
3. Parental involvement	3.83	0.69	0.36**	0.14				
4. Parental autonomy-granting	3.60	0.84	0.26*	0.23*	0.47***			
5. Parental supervision	3.81	0.90	0.01	−0.05	0.46***	−0.07		
6. Attachment anxiety	3.20	1.11	−0.04	−0.08	−0.19	−0.49***	0.03	
7. Attachment avoidance	3.11	0.92	0.06	0.21*	−0.11	−0.21*	−0.09	0.24*

Notes: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

Table II.
Regression coefficients predicting transformational leadership

	B	SE *B*	*β*
Age	−0.02	0.01	−0.21
Education	0.02	0.02	0.06
Seniority	0.03	0.01	0.38**
Parental involvement	0.19	0.06	0.27*
Parental autonomy granting	0.17	0.08	0.20*
Parental supervision	−0.01	0.07	−0.01
Attachment anxiety	−0.01	0.05	−0.02
Attachment avoidance	0.08	0.06	0.03

Notes: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

style was predicted by entering in the first step demographic variables, and in the second step parental and attachment subscales. In addition, in order to deal with common method variance we used transformational leadership style as control. The regression analyses as presented in Table III show that the predictive variables taken together accounted for 15 percent of the variance of transactional leadership (R^2 change = 0.14). This was found to be a significant predictive model (F (8, 88) = 4.20, $p < 0.05$). Hence, our third research hypothesis was partially supported. It is worth mentioning that parental autonomy granting had a predictive value to transactional leadership. Taken together, these findings suggest that managers who manifested transactional leadership behavioral patterns tended to be more avoidant in their attachment in close relationships and perceived their parents to grant more autonomy. The remaining predictive variables of age, education, seniority, parental involvement, parental supervision, and attachment anxiety made no significant contribution.

Discussion

The main objective of the current study was to explore whether perceived parental style and attachment style can account for leadership behavior. Overall, the results provide important information regarding these associations and demonstrate the relevance of both parental and attachment styles in explaining leadership tendencies.

Our first prediction, *H1*, was partially confirmed. Specifically, in line with our prediction the findings demonstrate that managers' perception of parental autonomy granting had a predictive value for both transformational and transactional leadership. However, parental involvement manifested a predictive value only for transformational leadership, and parental supervision had no significant contribution to any leadership subscale. These findings are in line with previous research that demonstrates associations between parental style and interpersonal patterns of behavior (e.g. Dreikurs *et al.*, 2004), and once again supports Popper and Mayseless's (2003) notion that the domain of parenthood can be applied to the study of leadership.

By reviewing findings from both developmental psychology literature and leadership literature, researchers note that what "good" parents do and how they behave with their children, closely corresponds with what transformational leaders do and how they behave with their followers (Popper and Mayseless, 2003). Our research findings support this claim and can suggest that by being exposed, during childhood, to a parental role model that is sensitive, responsive, and supportive, the individual is more prone to exhibit similar behaviors as an adult leader.

It appears that through parental style the child gains insights regarding interpersonal behaviors. These insights are internalized and later on behaviorally manifested in adulthood. Specifically, in our research, parents' perceived behaviors of autonomy granting seemed to have an important effect on leadership manifestation in adulthood. Perhaps it could be argued that

	B	SE *B*	*β*
Age	−0.01	0.01	0.05
Education	−0.02	0.02	0.01
Seniority	0.02	0.01	0.24
Parental involvement	0.15	0.06	0.07
Parental autonomy granting	0.18	0.05	0.19*
Parental supervision	−0.04	0.05	−0.01
Attachment anxiety	−0.10	0.04	0.04
Attachment avoidance	0.02	0.04	0.13*

Note: *$p < 0.05$

Table III. Regression coefficients predicting transactional leadership

receiving more autonomy as a child creates a space for both transactional and transformational leadership behaviors to evolve in adulthood. However, it seems that granting autonomy may not be enough in order to endorse the development of transformational leadership and that parents should also exhibit active involvement in order to promote a transformative leadership style. In other words, parental autonomy granting is a basic feature for leadership development in general. Yet, by being exposed, as a child, to both parental autonomy granting and parental involvement, the individual is more likely to exhibit high standards of leadership as an adult. Following Baumrind and others (e.g. Ferguson *et al.*, 2006; Lamborn *et al.*, 1991), it can be argued that by acting in an authoritative manner, parents are manifesting transformational leadership role model for their children. Exhibiting involvement and autonomy granting, that are two essential features of leadership, may have an imprinting effect on the child. Through this imprinting effect, the parent leadership model is internalized and contributes to the individual's ability, later in life, to act as a transformational leader in the workplace.

Interestingly, managerial seniority, as mentioned before, also explained some variance in transformational leadership. This finding supports the notion that much like parenthood, transformational leadership evolves with time as the individual develops a sense of self-efficacy and competence (Popper and Mayseless, 2003). As suggested by Judge and Piccolo (2004), transformational leadership develops with time and tends to builds on the base of transactional leadership. This finding can also be explained by the basic need of senior managers to act as transformational leaders in a sense that they should heavily rely on delegation and employees' empowerment. In other words, senior leaders' managerial capacity does not allow them to rely upon command-and-control and transactional cost-reward approaches. They are usually in charge of large groups and cannot afford to micromanage. Thus, senior executives are inclined to use more delegation and to nurture employees' capabilities, and hence tend to hold a transformative leadership style. Naturally, this is an exploratory explanation that ought to be systematically tested in future studies. Specifically, it would be interesting to explore this notion during a longitudinal study, which may tap into the mechanisms underlie developmental processes of transformational leadership.

Our second prediction, *H2*, was not confirmed, as we found no significant association between these variables. Originally, the rationale for this prediction was based upon previous research (e.g. Davidovitz *et al.*, 2007) that demonstrates the usefulness of attachment theory as a framework for studying leadership. In their study findings, Davidovitz *et al.* (2007) clearly highlighted the detrimental effects of the attachment insecurity on the quality of leadership. In line with these findings, we speculated that the basic orientation of self-reliance and superiority held by avoidant people, and the preoccupation and dependency orientation held by anxious people, would both inhibit any manifestations of transformational leadership. This line of thought was already given some support in previous research (e.g. Popper *et al.*, 2000) that found significant correlations between secure attachment and leadership patterns of charisma, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. However, as seen above, we failed to show this effect in the current study.

One possible reason for the discrepancy between our findings and previous ones (e.g. Popper *et al.*, 2000) is the variance in the method used to measure attachment tendencies. Specifically, we used the ECR (Brennan *et al.*, 1998), which is the most common measurement for attachment nowadays. This questionnaire was not use in the study conducted by Popper *et al.* (2000). Alternatively, these researchers applied Bartholomew's Relationship Questionnaire (Griffin and Bartholomew, 1994), which was a common attachment measurement in those days. Moreover, it should be noted that while Bartholomew's questionnaire includes four descriptions of four attachment styles: secure, preoccupied (ambivalent), fearful, and dismissing, the ECR uses a more contemporary two-dimensional approach for attachment measurement. Possibly this variance in attachment measurement might have caused the current result pattern.

Last, our third prediction, *H3*, gained some support. Specifically, we found a positive contribution of attachment avoidance to transactional leadership, but no significant contribution to attachment anxiety. This finding is congruent with previous research (e.g. Rom and Mikulincer, 2003) and is in line with other recent studies (e.g. Reizer *et al.*, 2012) that demonstrate the beneficial power of attachment avoidance in several professional contexts. Specifically, although most attachment research has repeatedly shown attachment insecurity to be associated with poorer adjustment in a wide range of social, emotional, and behavioral domains (e.g. Cassidy and Shaver, 2008; Collins and Feeney, 2000), some recent studies have found areas in which avoidant people might have an advantage. For example, in a research conducted in a teamwork setting (Rom and Mikulincer, 2003) the researchers found the effective instrumental functioning and task-promotion activities of avoidant people in teams. Other contemporary studies found similar results (e.g. Reizer *et al.*, 2012) and implied that avoidant people are perhaps better equipped than less avoidant to succeed performing without social support and proximity to others. It appears that avoidant individuals' positive self-perception and self-reliance (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007) may explain avoidant leaders' minimized engagement in relational leadership, empowering followers and providing support. On the other hand, their concrete and emotionally detached orientation assist them in exhibiting a transactional leadership tendency – that is almost entirely based upon reward-cost orientation and has a direct impact on the promotion of tasks.

Before closing, it is important to note some specific limitations of the current study that may restrict the generalizability of the findings. First, all the participants were employed in business-oriented organizations. In order to generalize the findings, future studies should consider non-profit organizations and government agencies. Second, the current research was design as a cross-sectional study and therefore should be cautiously interpreted. Further research on this topic would benefit from a longitudinal design despite its demanding requirements. Third, as often been conducted with the MLQ, we used an abridged version of the questionnaire. Although this procedure has been conducted in other studies (e.g. Heinitz *et al.*, 2005; Popper *et al.*, 2000), future researchers should try to employ the full range in order to receive a more comprehensive perspective over the phenomenon of leadership. Fourth, all the data received during the study were self-reported by each study participant. Hence, a potential for bias and response artifacts that might influence participants' response pattern should be seriously considered. Future studies should consider assessing the variables using followers' assessments and maybe even parents' reporting of their parental style. Last, we used in the current study regression analyses in order to tap on the associations between the research variables. It should be noted that regression analyses do not entirely allow for the intercorrelations among variables to be weight. We recommend future studies to use more advanced analysis methods, especially structural equation modeling, that will allow determining the adequacy of model fit to the data.

In spite of these limitations, the current study underscores the relevance of attachment style and childhood parental experiences in the managerial context. The mechanism governing the ways in which attachment and parental style contribute to leadership style has yet to be fully understood; however, this study sheds some light on this issue and has some practical implications. For example, avoidant attachment style in close relationships might prevent managers from displaying effective transformational leadership style. Therefore, human resource personnel and executive coaches are advised to assist highly avoidant managers in finding ways to moderate their self-reliant tendency and better depend, delegate, and trust subordinates. Also, during managerial screening processes, it would be beneficial to explore the individual's experiences of parental involvement and autonomy granting given their impact on transformational leadership.

Finally, psychologists and social workers that practice parental consultation should take our findings into consideration and emphasize the important role of positive modeling and authoritative behaviors in promoting children's well-being and their future leadership capabilities.

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