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The Strengthening of the Positive School Climate by Moral and Contingency Leadership

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Annotation. The study aimed to investigate the influence of the school moral and contingency leadership on the positive school climate. The quasi-experimental quantitative approach, a structured questionnaire, and a non-random cluster sample of respondents were used in the empirical study. The study revealed a positive correlation between moral leadership and a positive school climate as well as a low negative correlation between contingency leadership and a positive school climate.

Keywords: *moral leadership, contingency leadership, positive school climate.*

Introduction and Literature Review

School moral and contingency leadership are meant to be the significant variables that impact a positive school climate. The study aims to investigate the relationship between moral and contingency leadership and positive school climate, as well as the impact of these leadership styles on positive school climate. Research questions include: Is there any relationship between moral leadership and positive school climate? Is there any relationship between contingency leadership and a positive school climate? Following is the conceptual definition of variables in the study. Villanova University (2022), as well as Xhomara (2021), revealed that contingency leadership is focused on the multiplicity

of subjective outputs as defined by experience and revels in the loss of total authority. Certain factors come into play that define whether a particular leader or leadership style will be effective for the given situation. Those factors include the task, the personality of the leader, and the composition of the group that is meant to be led. Moral leadership, on the other side, is based on normative rationality, where rationality is based on what we believe and what we consider to be good. An important component of moral leadership is motivating other people to live up to the required standards of the organization, even in the context of temptations to unethical behaviors (Harvard Law School, 2022; Xhomara, 2021).

Meanwhile, a positive school climate means a setting where all students and staff experience a safe, healthy, and caring environment that fosters learning and high expectations, maximizes potential, and stimulates interest and enthusiasm (Law Insider, 2021).

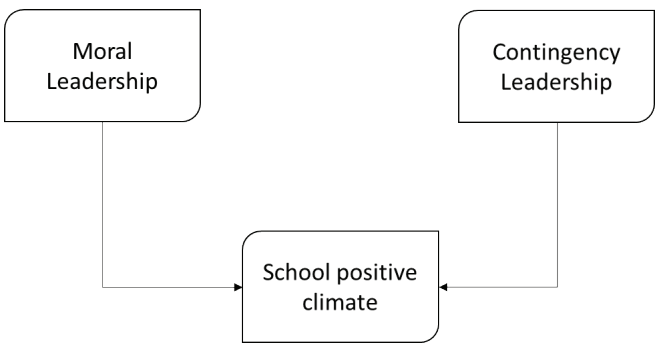
School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. The inside school climate is grounded on examples of students, parents, and school staff's experience of school everyday life and exposure standards, aims, values, interpersonal issues, as well as teaching and learning practices and the structure of the organization (NSCC, 2022).

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of the research study was constructed based on a thorough review of the literature about leadership in schools. The literature examination began with a search for relevant empirical studies through ERIC and Sage using the keywords *moral leadership, contingency leadership,* and *positive school climate*. Figure 1, summarizing the framework resulting from the literature review, proposes a structure of relationship among the three constructs. Moral leadership and contingency leadership as independent variables that are supposed to influence a school's positive climate as the dependent variable.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of Moral and Contingency Leadership Styles and Positive School Climate



Literature Review

The relationship between moral leadership and the positive school climate

The moral leadership style is supposed to influence the positive school climate. Many authors have conducted a lot of research to explore the relationship between moral leadership and a positive school climate. According to Dolph (2016), principal moral leadership is related to school success, and Wenno (2017), as well as Abu Nasra & Arar (2020), indicate that principal leadership, amount of students' study time (Xhomara & Hasani, 2018), and teacher performance and academic progress of students positively correlated. Moral management skills, professionalism, teaching improvement as well as problem-based teaching influence positively student learning (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Katewa & Heystek, 2019; Xhomara, 2020); meanwhile, Imhangbe et al. (2019) revealed that democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership together contributed about 68.3% variations of positive school climate. The servant leadership style and the positive school climate are impacted by the vision, influence, credibility, trust, individual study work, and lecturer support (Farling et al., 1999; Manuel, 2017; Xhomara, 2020); at the same time, there is a significant relationship between a leadership team approach and positive school climate (Oketcho et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2017). Partially variation in positive school climate was caused by moral leadership style, management, and administration (Aubrey et al., 2012; Bush & Glover, 2016); meanwhile, Wirawan et al. (2019), as well as Dos Santos (2020) found out that leaders' emotional intelligence importantly predicted both task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership. Some of the components of principal leadership, student-centered teaching, lectures attendance, and previous education output impact positive school climate (Schueler, 2018; Grunes et al., 2013; Xhomara, 2017; Xhomara, 2022); meanwhile, Alonderiene & Majauskaite (2016), as well as Mayes & Gethers (2018), indicate the important positive impact of leadership style on teachers' job satisfaction. Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017), as well as Matson (2018), found that the mixing of leadership styles is most significant; meanwhile, Owan and Agunwa (2019) revealed that competencies of school leaders in supervision, leadership, and communications are significantly related to teachers' job performance. Jackson et al. (2012), as well as Karadag and Oztekin-Bayir (2018), showed that moral leadership is positively related to the affective and normative engagement of teachers and students; and Cirigliano (2017) found that efficient instructional leadership practices supporting teachers with professional development, providing students with necessary education materials, and evaluating instruction through different observations. So, the school's moral leadership is an important variable that impacts the positive school climate. Therefore, it is concluded in constructing the following hypothesis:

H # 1: The variance in the positive school climate is explained by moral leadership.

The contingency leadership and the positive school climate

The contingency leadership style is supposed to influence the school's positive climate. A lot of authors have researched to investigate the association between contingency leadership style and positive school climate. House & Aditya (1997), as well as Shapira-Lishchinsky & Raftar-Ozery (2016), and Xhomara (2020) pointed out the impact of contingency and neo-charismatic leadership approaches on the outputs of school results and knowledge building. Xhomara (2019) indicated that collegial school management influences the prevention of disruptive behaviors and students' life competencies; and at the same time, principal leadership skills were related positively to evaluations of principal efficiencies (Boies & Fiset, 2019); meanwhile, Chow (2016) reveals that leadership approach influences collaborative practices, and knowledge and skills representations. Notman (2017), as well as Preyear (2015), revealed improved results of positive school climate impacted by contingency leadership; meanwhile, it is indicated a positive and moderate relationship between school' transformational leadership style and knowledge and skills to manage diversity as well as students' results (Okçu, 2014; Urick & Bowers, 2014; Xhomara et al., 2019).

Contingency leadership correlates positively with the school success of teachers and students (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2013; Setlhodi, 2019); at the same time, school leadership style shapes the structure of educational management (Chow (2013; Semarco z leadership behavior has a large positive effect on the school's progress; meanwhile, Intxausti et al., (2015) show that principal leadership support instruction and learning process. Positively correlation results were generated between teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and teaching performance (Sivertson, 2018; Spencer, 2019); meanwhile, school leadership teams presenting themselves as displaying the collaborative behaviors styles influence positive school climate (Tsayang, 2011; Magee, 2012; Ogbonna, 2017; Xhomara, 2018). Hence, contingency leadership is an important variable that impacts a school's positive climate. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H # 2: The variance in the positive school climate is explained by the contingency leadership.

Methodology

Research Context

Pre-university education in the country, in addition to the 3 years of preschool education, requires 5 years of primary education, 4 years of lower secondary education, and 3 years of higher secondary education. Children are expected to be enrolled in basic education institutions from age 6–7 through the age of 16. The proportion of students enrolled in upper secondary classes in lower secondary education is increased in the last

years of over 90% of them. The group ages of students in the high school are between 15–17 years old. In the 2020–2021 academic year, the number of 9-year schools was 1109, while the number of public high schools was 346, with a total of 1455 pre-university schools throughout the country. 107,989 high school students were enrolled in secondary education in the 2020–2021 academic year (DPAP, 2020).

Method and design

The quantitative design was the approach used in the empirical study. Thus, the quasi-experimental study design as well as regressive tests were used to verify the research hypothesis. Quasi-experimental approaches do not include the selection of respondents' random assignments. Researchers who use a quasi-experimental study design rely instead on other instruments to control threats to validity and reliability. *The matching-only approach*, where researchers match the respondents in the experimental and control groups on specific variables, has been chosen in the study. When some groups of respondents are available for a method and they may be randomly assigned to specific treatments, this approach offers an alternative to the respondents' random assignment. After the respondents' groups have been randomly assigned to the different manipulations, those receiving one treatment are matched with individuals receiving the other manipulations (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2017; Xhomara, 2019). The other research studies focusing on leadership used different research designs apart from the matching-only approach of quasi-experimental approaches.

One experimental group and one control group of school leaders were involved in the research study. Two groups of respondents were non-equivalent. Experimental and control groups of respondents were selected using existing school leaders, including headmasters and deputy headmasters of the high schools. The school leadership was selected to be used as a treated variable, where are controlled threats from the other variables that are not part of the relationship.

Moral leadership and contingency leadership style are regarded as independent variables. Meanwhile, positive school climate is regarded as the dependent variable. The structured questionnaire was used to collect the primary quantitative data of independent and dependent variables from school leaders. The dimensions and items of the structured questionnaire are based on moral leadership style, contingency leadership style, and positive school climate variables. The research questionnaire was based on the sources of *the Questionnaire for leadership style* (Atsebeha, 2016). The constructed questionnaire was piloted with a small group of respondents and then applied to the study to collect the primary data. The Cronbach alpha of the structured questionnaire reliability scale values is between .87 to .94. Therefore, there is a high level of internal consistency in the instrument used in the study. The questionnaires were administered at the end of the second term of the academic year.

Participants

The target population of the study is the population of school leaders of high schools in all educational directorates in the country. From the target population, the cluster random sample of the experimental group of high school leaders (N = 133) and the cluster random sample of the control group of high school leaders (N = 121) were selected to be used in the study to gather quantitative raw data. Relating to qualifications, 18.2% of the experimental group and 23.4% of the control group of respondents obtained a BA degree, meantime, 81.8% of the experimental group of respondents and 76.6% of the control group of subjects obtained a MA degree. Relating to experience, 80% of the experimental group of subjects and 75% of the control group of cases had over 10 years of experience in school leadership; meanwhile, 20% of the experimental group and 25% of the control group had up to 10 years of experience in school leadership. The experimental group of school leaders was trained before investigation using two modules of moral and contingency leadership styles; meanwhile, the control group of school leaders was investigated without training in this topic. The other attributes of the respondents of the two groups remain constant during the investigation. The researchers controlled the other mediator, moderator, and extraneous variables such as school curriculum, teaching, teacher-student interaction, class management, and assessment. Therefore, the other variables do not influence the results of descriptive and inferential statistics in the study.

Procedure

The outputs of the instruments were collected in a synthetic approach to use for the analysis of the results. The descriptive analysis, as well as the bivariate correlation tests, were used for the analysis of data gathered by the instrument. The influence of moral leadership and contingency leadership style on positive school climate was tested using the Pearson correlation output. The linear regression was selected to test the skills of four control measures to predict positive school climate levels by moral leadership and contingency leadership style. The preliminary assumption to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, as well as multicollinearity testing, was used, with no violations noted.

Results

Descriptive analysis

Moral leadership frequencies indicate that 18.8% of the respondents of the experimental group and 24.8% of the control group claim that they never or seldom face moral leadership; 81.2% of the respondents of the experimental group and 42.9% of the control

group claim often or always; meanwhile, 12.8% of the experimental group' respondents and 32.2% of the control group' respondents claim that occasionally face moral leadership.

Table 1

Moral Leadership Frequencies

		Moral leadership			
		Experimental		Control	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never			2	1.7
	Seldom	8	6.0	28	23.1
	Occasionally	17	12.8	39	32.2
	Often	76	57.1	35	28.9
	Always	32	24.1	17	14.0
	Total	133	100.0	121	100.0

The mean and standard deviation values for the experimental group (M= 4.05, SD = .75), as well as for the control group (M= 3.60, SD = 1.32) indicate the same tendency for values as they are measured by frequencies. Hence, there are huge differences in moral leadership values (never or seldom: -6%; often or always: 38.3%; occasionally: -19.4%) between treated and control groups of respondents. In conclusion, most of the experimental group (81.2%), as well as most of the control group of school leaders (42.9%) claim that moral leadership is shown most often or always.

Table 2

Contingency Leadership Frequencies

		Contingency leadership			
		Experimental		Control	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never	19	14.3	38	31.4
	Seldom	33	24.8	49	40.5
	Occasionally	44	33.1	22	18.2
	Often	26	19.5	6	5.0
	Always	11	8.3	6	5.0
	Total	133	100.0	121	100.0

Contingency leadership frequencies indicate that 39.1% of the respondents of the experimental group and 71.9% of the control group claim that they never or seldom face contingency leadership; 27.8% of the respondents of the experimental group and 10.0%

of the respondents of the control group claim often or always; meanwhile, 33.1% of the experimental group's respondents and 18.2% of the control group' respondents claim that occasionally face contingency leadership. Summary statistic values for the experimental group (M= 3.60, SD = 1.32), as well as for the control group (M= 4.05, SD = .75) indicate the same tendency for values as they are measured by frequencies. Hence, there are big differences in the contingency leadership values (never or seldom: -32.8%; often or always: 17.8%; occasionally: 14.9%) between the respondents from the experimental and control group. As a result, most of the experimental group of respondents (71.9%), as well as most of the control group of school leaders (39.1%) claim that contingency leadership is shown most often or always.

Table 3

School-Positive Climate Frequencies

		Positive school climate			
		Experimental		Control	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree			2	1.7
	Disagree	15	11.3	26	21.5
	Undecided	20	15.0	43	35.5
	Agree	56	42.1	31	25.6
	Strongly agree	42	31.6	19	15.7
	Total	133	100.0	121	100.0

Positive school climate frequencies indicate that 11.3% of the experimental group and 23.2% of the control group strongly disagree or disagree about positive school climate; 73.7% of the experimental group and 51.3% of the respondents from the control group agree or strongly agree; meanwhile, 15% of the experimental group of the respondents and 35.5% of the control group are undecided.

Summary statistic values for the experimental group (M= 4.04, SD = .93), as well as for the control group (M= 3.98, SD = .88), indicate the same tendency for values as frequencies. Hence, there are negligible differences in positive school climate (strongly disagree or disagree: -11.9%; agree or strongly agree: 22.4%; undecided: -20.5%) between the respondents from the experimental and control group.

After all, most of the experimental group of the respondents (73.7%), as well as most of the control group of school leaders (53.1%) claim that the positive school climate is shown most often or always.

Inferential analysis

H # 1

Table 4

Pearson Correlations (r) Outputs of the Relationships Between Moral Leadership and Positive School Climate

Correlations					
		Experimental		Control	
		Positive school climate	Moral leadership	Positive school climate	Moral leadership
Pearson Correlation	Positive school climate	1.000	.584	1.000	.766
	Moral leadership	.584	1.000	.766	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Positive school climate	.	.000	.	.005
	Moral leadership	.000	.	.005	.
N	Positive school climate	133	133	121	121
	Moral leadership	133	133	121	121

Referring to Table 4 has resulted in a positive correlation between moral leadership and positive school climate variables for the experimental group, r = .584, n = 133, p < .005, as well as for the control group, r = .766, n = 121, p < .005. Hence, high scores of the moral leadership approach are related to high scores in positive school climate according to the experimental group; as well as the control group.

Table 5

Beta Standardized Coefficients of the Relationships Between Moral Leadership and Positive School Climate

Coefficients[a]_Experimental									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Correlations		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	1.084	.353		3.067	.003			
	Moral leadership	.715	.087	.584	8.235	.000	.584	.584	.584

a. Dependent Variable: Positive school climate

Coefficients[a]_Control									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Correlations		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	.783	.205		3.827	.000			
	Moral leadership	.768	.059	.766	12.993	.000	.766	.766	.766

a. Dependent Variable: Positive school climate

According to the experimental group, as shown in Table 5, the beta value for the school's positive climate is .584; meanwhile, according to the control group, the beta value is .766. The result means that according to the experimental group, 58.4% of the variance in positive school climate is explained by moral leadership; meanwhile, according to the control group, 76.6% of the variance in positive school climate is explained by moral leadership. The result was coherent with some other published papers, which argued that moral leadership influences positive school climate (Oketcho et al., 2020; Katewa & Heystek, 2019; Wenno, 2017; Abu Nasra & Arar, 2020; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Farling et al., 1999; Manuel, 2017; Aubrey et al., 2012; Bush & Glover, 2016; Dolph, 2016; Schueler, 2018; Grunes et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2017). Therefore, according to the experimental group, as well as the control group, moral leadership strongly predicts a positive school climate. In conclusion, based on the statistical outputs shown above, *H # 1: The variance in the school's positive climate explained by moral leadership*, is supported.

H # 2

Table 6

Pearson Correlations (r) Outputs of the Relationships Between Contingency Leadership and Positive School Climate

Correlations					
		Experimental		Control	
		Positive school climate	Contingency leadership	Positive school climate	Contingency leadership
Pearson Correlation	Positive school climate	1.000	-.243	1.000	-.057
	Contingency leadership	-.243	1.000	-.057	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Positive school climate	.	.004	.	.005
	Contingency leadership	.004	.	.005	.

N	Positive school climat	**133**	**1333**	**121**	**121**
	Contingency leadership	**133**	**133**	**121**	**121**

According to Table 6, referring to the experimental group there is a low negative correlation between contingency leadership and positive school climate, r = -.243, n = 133, p < .005, as well as referring to the control group, r = -.057, n = 121, p < .005. To sum up, high scores on the contingency leadership design are related to high scores in positive school climate according to the experimental group; as well as the control group.

Table 7

Beta Standardized Coefficients of the Relationships Between Contingency Leadership and Positive School Climate

Coefficients[a]_Experimental									
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Correlations		
	Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	4.511	.215		20.937	.000			
	Contingency leadership	-.202	.071	-.243	-2.862	.005	-.243	-.243	-.243

a. Dependent Variable: Positive school climate

Coefficients[a]_Control									
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Correlations		
	Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	(Constant)	3.439	.210		16.357	.000			
	Contingency leadership	-.055	.089	-.057	-.620	.536	-.057	-.057	-.057

a. Dependent Variable: Positive school climate

According to the experimental group, as shown in Table 7 the beta value for positive school climate is -.243; meanwhile, according to the control group, the beta value is -.057. The result means that according to the experimental group, 24.3% of the variance in positive school climate is explained negatively by contingency leadership; meanwhile, according to the control group, 5.7% of the variance in positive school climate is explained also negatively by contingency leadership. The result was not persistent with some other studies, which argued that contingency leadership style impacts positive

school climate (Zhu et al., 2011; Rowley, 2013; House & Aditya, 1997; Shapira-Lishchinsky & Raftar-Ozery, 2016; Preyear, 2015; Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2013; Setlhodi, 2019; Notman, 2017). Therefore, according to the experimental group, as well as to control group contingency leadership predict a negative positive school climate. In conclusion, based on the statistical outputs shown above, *H # 2: The variance in the school's positive climate is explained by the contingency leadership*, is failed.

Conclusion and Implications

One main limitation of the research study should be admitted as part of the conclusions. The raw data of the school's moral and contingency leadership, as well as the school's positive climate, are made based on self-reported instruments. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of these school leadership styles on the school's positive climate. The assumption was that these school leadership styles would have an impact on the positive school climate. The study found that there are big differences in the moral leadership values of the experimental groups of respondents compared to the control group of school leaders. Referring to most of the experimental group of respondents (81.2%), as well as to most of the control group of school leaders (42.9%), it is revealed that moral leadership is shown most often or always in high schools. Thus, high schools should support the development of moral leadership as an important variable that may play a positive role in the high school teaching and learning. It is shown that there are considerable differences in the contingency leadership values of the experimental group of respondents compared to the control group. According to most of the experimental group of respondents (71.9%), as well as most of the control group of school leaders (39.1%), the study indicated that contingency leadership is shown most often or always. Hence, high schools should support the development of contingency leadership as an important variable that may play a positive role in the high school environment. The study also found that there are very small differences in the positive school climate of the experimental group of respondents compared to the control group. Referring to most of the experimental group of respondents (73.7%), as well as to most of the control group of school leaders (53.1%), it is revealed that positive school climate is shown most often or always.

The study revealed a positive correlation between moral leadership and positive school climate for the experimental group (r = .584), as well as for the control group (r = .766). The study also found out that according to the experimental group, 58.4% of the variance in positive school climate is explained by moral leadership; meanwhile, according to the control group, 76.6% of the variance in positive school climate is explained by moral leadership. Thus, high schools should support moral leadership as an important variable that strongly predicts a positive school climate. The study found a low negative

correlation between contingency leadership and positive school climate (r = -.243), at the same time according to the control group (r = -.057). It is also shown that according to the experimental group, 24.3% of the variance in positive school climate is explained negatively by contingency leadership; meanwhile, according to the control group, 5.7% of the variance in positive school climate is also explained negatively by contingency leadership. The results of this study in coherence with other researchers' findings about the influence of moral and contingency leadership on a positive school climate have important implications for future research. This research should investigate various variables and their relation to positive school climate, as well as replicate in various contexts the relationship between contingency leadership and positive school climate. The results of this study also have important implications for practice. Therefore, high schools should promote moral leadership as an important variable that influences a positive school climate. Overall, the findings of this study enhanced theoretical and practical understanding of moral and contingency leadership as important variables that influence positive school climate in high schools.

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Mokyklos pozityvaus klimato stiprinimas moraline ir atsitiktinumu grįsta lyderyste

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Santrauka

Manoma, kad svarbūs kintamieji, darantys įtaką teigiamam mokyklos klimatui, yra mokyklos moralinė lyderystė ir atsitiktinumu (nenumatytu atveju) grįsta lyderystė. Tyrime naudotas kvazieksperimentinis kiekybinis metodas. Buvo sudarytas struktūruotas klausimynas ir atsitiktinė klasterinė respondentų imtis. Tyrimas atskleidė teigiamą koreliaciją tarp moralinės lyderystės ir pozityvaus mokyklos klimato eksperimentinėje grupėje (r = .584), taip pat ir kontrolinėje grupėje (r = .766). Tyrimas taip pat parodė, kad eksperimentinėje grupėje 58,4 proc. mokyklos teigiamo klimato dispersijos paaiškinama moraline lyderyste; kontrolinėje grupėje 76,6 proc. mokyklos teigiamo klimato dispersijos paaiškinama moraline lyderystė. Nustatyta žema neigiama koreliacija tarp atsitiktinumu grįstos lyderystės ir pozityvaus mokyklos klimato (r = -.243). Remiantis eksperimentinės grupės duomenimis, 24,3 proc. mokyklos pozityvaus klimato dispersijos neigiamai paaiškinama atsitiktinumu grįsta lyderyste, o kontrolinės grupės duomenimis, 5,7 proc. mokyklos pozityvaus klimato dispersijos taip pat neigiamai paaiškinama atsitiktinumu grįsta lyderyste. Išvados rodo, kad radiniai tik sustiprina teorinį ir praktinį supratimą apie moralinę ir atsitiktinumu grįstą lyderystę, kaip svarbius kintamuosius, turinčius įtakos mokyklos pozityviam klimatui vidurinėse mokyklose.

Esminiai žodžiai: *moralinė lyderystė, atsitiktinumu grįsta lyderystė, mokyklos pozityvus klimatas.*

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