Ethical dilemmas among teachers with disabilities: A multifaceted approach

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HIGHLIGHTS

- The findings elicited a multifaceted structure of ethical dilemmas.
- The dilemmas emerged among teachers with different disabilities.
- Most of the ethical dilemmas related to disabilities as social issues.
- Many teachers perceived their disability as an educational advantage.
- Dealing with the system is more challenging than coping with the disability.

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the ethical dilemmas that teachers with different physical disabilities face. We conducted 20 In-depth interviews with teachers, with an emphasis on giving voice to those with a variety of disabilities. The findings reveal a multifaceted structure of ethical dilemmas: the "coming out of the disability closet" dilemma, the classroom management dilemma, the equality/equity dilemma, and the healthy/self dilemma. The first three concern disabilities as social issues rather than individual challenges. Hence, for these individual teachers, dealing with the school environment is often more difficult and demanding than is coping with the disability itself.

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1. Introduction

Teachers with disabilities, like most others with disabilities, are often excluded from the public domain and from most research fields (Loden, 2005; Oliver, 2017). Yet there is a growing consensus among researchers about the unique contribution teachers with disabilities make when they work with diverse groups of students (Dvir, 2015; Loden & Teets, 2007; Parker & Draves, 2018; Vogel & Sharoni, 2011).

The lack of research on this subject and the significant influence that teachers with disabilities have on their students reflect the importance of gaining a better understanding of this subject matter. Therefore, the primary goal of this research is to bring to light the most significant ethical dilemmas that teachers with physical disabilities face. In addition, this article compares and contrasts the dilemmas according to the various subgroups of disabilities (visible vs. invisible disability, motor disability, health disability, or sensory disability).

Accordingly, this article explores the ethical dilemmas that teachers with physical disabilities face, reviews teachers' experiences in the educational system, and examines the differences among various teachers' disabilities. In addition, it examines how society itself can affect the dilemmas teachers face.

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2. Theoretical background

2.1. Employment of teachers with disabilities

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly 15% of the world's population has a disability (WHO, 2011). Many of these individuals are employed, and some work as teachers (Dvir, 2015; Fraser, Ajzen, Johnson, Hebert, & Chan, 2010; Garcia-Gomez, Von Gaudecker, & Lindeboom, 2011). Yet to date, only scant research has been conducted about teachers with disabilities (Waldrop & Stern, 2003). When reviewing research literature on this subject, we found that most of the studies focused on legal issues and accommodations and regarded teachers with visible disabilities or deaf teachers as a unique group (e.g., Anderson, Keller, & Karp, 1998; Atkins, Chance, & Page, 2001; Bargerhuff, Cole, & Teeters, 2009; Duquette, 2000; Hankebo, 2018; Santuzzi, Waltz, Finkelstein, & Rupp, 2014). No research referred to any comparisons among different disabilities, nor did any research address the differences between visible and invisible physical disabilities among teachers (Bargerhuff et al., 2009; Duquette, 2000; Santuzzi et al., 2014).

A number of different education systems throughout the world have no official policy that addresses the employment of teachers with disabilities (Dalumy-Torati, 2012). In Israel, this phenomenon is evident in the lack of any official data regarding the number of teachers with disabilities employed in the national public school system. In some countries, such as the United States and Australia, teachers are integrated into mainstream public schools regardless of the type of disability they have whereas in others, such as Israel, many of the teachers with disabilities are employed in schools with students who share the same type of disability.

In Israel, deaf teachers are employed almost exclusively in schools for the hearing impaired where they are integrated with relative ease into the school (Brueggemann, Garland-Tompson, Kleege, 2005). Hankebo (2018) explored the dilemmas and class experiences of deaf teachers in inclusive schools that integrate both students with and without disabilities. He found that deaf teachers were able to establish communication with their students by using body language, signs, and gestures. However, they lacked classroom management skills; did not used alternative instructional methods, assessments strategies and technology; and lacked proper support from the schools. Most of those deaf teachers tended to communicate better with the deaf students than with the hearing students during class time.

Teachers who possess identifying characteristics that differentiate them from their student population are considered "outsider teachers." In addition, teachers with disabilities who teach in mainstream schools are often defined as "outsiders." These definitions broaden the understanding of the complexities of the employment of teachers with disabilities (Makris, 2018).

Previous studies have indicated that teachers with disabilities promote educational values vis a vis the acceptance of individuals who are perceived as "different" (Dvir, 2015; Lewis, Corn, Erin, & Holbrook, 2003). Consequently, students who have rewarding experiences when taught by a teacher with a disability also tend to hold positive views of individuals with disabilities in general (Fakolade, Adeniyi, & Tella, 2017). In addition, students who share the same disability as that of their teacher often become empowered by this interaction. Moreover, it was found that blind teachers in fact have unique and effective strategies for teaching students who are also visually impaired (Lewis et al., 2003). School principals reported that students benefited when instructed by a teacher with a disability. According to the principals, this instruction is the best way to demonstrate to students that an individual with a disability can reach the same level of achievement as anyone else

can (Gilmor, Merchant, & Moore, 1981).

Often, teachers with disabilities reported that over time they gradually learned to "accept" their disability and even to see their disability as a professional advantage. These teachers are aware of their limitations, but they see these as a professional challenge rather than as a barrier (Dvir, 2015). Furthermore, it was found that teachers with disabilities encourage their students to overcome their difficulties (Makris, 2018).

Teachers with disabilities cope with different ethical challenges arising from the way their colleagues and employers perceive their disability. A study focusing on teachers with disabilities in Saudi mainstream schools revealed their point of view regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. These teachers mentioned many cases of discriminatory behavior, stereotypical language, and an inaccessible environment. These barriers, described by the teachers, reflect not only the exclusion of their students, but also their own personal experiences (Aldakhil, 2019).

One of the difficult situations teachers with disabilities cope with is the challenge of finding a job. Many school principals are reluctant to hire teachers with disabilities because they are concerned that these teachers will not be as efficient as their nondisabled colleagues are (Loden & Teets, 2007; Vogel & Sharoni, 2011).

2.2. The definition of "disability"

The importance of the use of language in the context of disabilities has been discussed at length in recent years (Riddell & Watson, 2014; Shakespeare, 2010; Ziv, Mor, & Eichengreen, 2016). Different organizations may have different definitions of the term "disability." Although there are some formal definitions of the term "disability," it seems that these definitions are insufficient for the study of disability as a phenomenon, as disability is complex, multidimensional, and dynamic (Ben Moshe, Roppman, & Haber, 2011).

The definitions of disabilities, and the personal experiences of having one, vary among people with different types of disabilities. Invisible disabilities are defined as physical or mental states that are not immediately identified by the observer whereas visible disabilities are easily identified by others based on external appearances, restricted movement in space, or basic communication (Matthews & Harrington, 2000). Samuel (2003) specifically referred to the distinction between invisible disability and nonvisible disability. She chose to use the term "nonvisible" to refer to disabilities that cannot be identified by others whereas the separate and distinct term "invisible" was used to emphasize the that group's social oppression. In her view, the visibility of a disability cannot simply be divided into a clear dichotomy between visible and invisible because people with different types of disabilities define themselves differently.

The "visibility" factor of a disability affects the sense of stigma and shame and the need for that person with disabilities to expose his or her situation to others (Matthews & Harrington, 2000). Despite this distinction, various studies have indicated that social stigma is a significant factor for all people with a disability, regardless of whether they have a visible or invisible one or if they define themselves somewhere along this continuum (Scambler, 2009). Another point of view regarding the self-definition of people with disabilities is based on that person's ability to maintain a "normal" life similar to that of people without disabilities. Many people with disabilities are opposed to having a disability-related definition, and some groups even object to being labeled altogether. The deaf community, for example, claims that deafness is not a limitation and should not be considered a disability at all (Riddell & Watson, 2014).

2.3. Ethical dilemmas of people with disabilities

An ethical dilemma is a conflict based on moral values. Such a dilemma arises when in the course of decision-making, different sets of beliefs or values conflict with one another, leaving one to decide which of these takes precedence over the other (Glanz, 2010; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2018). These types of conflicts are typically based on a desire to avoid inflicting harm on someone or preventing a third party from harming someone else (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2013; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2016).

The research literature emphasizes the importance of ethics in education, regarding the teacher as a moral agent and considering his or her moral authority (Sergiovanni, 1996; Tirri, 1999). The perspective of ethical dilemmas reveals the most significant values to the participants and the difficulties and challenges they face. Additionally, this perspective enables a complex and multifaceted perception of reality (Berlak & Berlak, 1981; Chowdhury, 2018; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2019).

Having a physical disability may result in many ethical challenges for the person with the disability. The disability might reveal a variety of ethical dilemmas concerning family, social relationships, and everyday activities (Falvo, 2005). In recent years, a great deal of literature regarding disabilities has focused on critical disability theory. This approach stemmed from criticism of the traditional discourse about disabilities that was used as a means of suppressing people with disabilities and of violating their human rights. This theory is based on the social model that assumes that a disability is not primarily a question of medicine or health but is primarily an issue of ethics, politics, and power (Devlin & Pothier, 2006). In addition, a great deal of academic literature has already been devoted to the challenges and dilemmas related to living with a physical disability. To date though, these issues have not been reviewed through the lens of ethical dilemmas (Eichengreen, Almog, & Breyer, 2016; Samuels, 2003).

People with disabilities often face ethical dilemmas associated with the conditions and social stigmas related to having such disabilities. These ethical dilemmas are most prevalent among people with invisible disabilities (Eichengreen et al., 2016). These individuals are often marginalized by the "disabled" community because of their complex dual identity of belonging to both the disabled community and to nondisabled society.

One specific ethical dilemma that presents a challenge to people with disabilities is the question of how to define one's disability in relation to others and to oneself (Samuels, 2003). A previous study indicated that people with disabilities perceived their own disability in a similar manner to how society perceived it, which means negatively (Wright, 1980). As a result, a person with a disability is likely to try to hide his or her disability altogether or to conceal certain aspects of it. A more recent study (Samuels, 2003) suggested that many people with disabilities try to "pass" as "normal," without revealing their disability at all.

Motivation to conceal a disability therefore might be influenced by a person's desire to avoid negative stereotypes and also may result from one's belief that the disability is not relevant to the situation and simply not worth disclosing. In these particular cases, the person does not deny his or her disability but in fact expands the definition of normality to include him or herself (Watson, 2002). Although people with disabilities often decide to avoid disclosing their disability due to the aforementioned reasons, this decision can mean that they give up the legal right to accommodation. Therefore, the ethical dilemma of disability disclosure can affect one's chances of fully integrating at the workplace (Wilson & Woloshyn, 2018).

Moreover, a person with invisible disabilities is often suspected of pretending that he or she is impaired and consequently suffers from a lack of recognition of his or her identity as a person with disabilities (Samuels, 2003; Santuzzi et al., 2014). Those with invisible disabilities not only have to decide whether to disclose their disability, but they also need to decide in what way to do so, to what extent, and to whom to disclose it. Hiding one's disability generally requires a great deal of effort and planning. Furthermore, concealing it might instill a sense of dishonesty in the person with disabilities and cause social isolation (Almog, 2011; Jans, Kaye, & Jones, 2012). The ethical dilemma of disability disclosure is particularly complex because of the fear of negative responses from loved ones and from society at large. People with invisible disabilities are often afraid to be labeled as abnormal and stigmatized similar to the way that those with highly visible disabilities fear being labeled (Almog, 2011).

The lives of those with disabilities are filled with uncertainty for an array of reasons, such as the unpredictable nature of the condition, a deterioration or worsening of health, or a need to decipher unclear symptoms. This often affects the way that people with disabilities make ethical decisions about their lives (Falvo, 2005). In terms of employment, people with disabilities tend to prefer jobs with more flexible hours, part-time jobs, and accessible workplaces (Schur, 2003).

2.4. Ethical challenges among teachers with disabilities

Many aspects of employing teachers with disabilities relate to the field of ethics (Loden & Teets, 2007). When interacting with their students, teachers with disabilities often aspire to empower and to advance students with disabilities and other students who are perceived as different in any manner (Dvir, 2015; Vogel & Sharoni, 2011). As part of this endeavor, teachers with disabilities see themselves as agents of change and aim to improve their colleagues' perspectives, too, about people with disabilities (Dvir, 2015).

The critical decision about disclosing one's disability is one of the greatest ethical dilemmas for employees in general and for teachers specifically (Stanley, Ridley, Manthorpe, Harris, & Hurst, 2007; Wilton, 2006). Because teaching is a profession that involves interacting with youth, the ethical decision about disclosing one's disability is extremely complex. These teachers worry that they might lose their authority because of the attendant breakdown of student-teacher boundaries (Goode, 2007). However, by concealing their disability, they lose their legal right to any accommodation (Wilson & Woloshyn, 2018).

Some disabilities, when exposed, result in more severe exclusion than do others. For teachers with HIV, revealing their disability has led to social exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination, inadequate care and support, physical debilitation and psychological stress. All these conditions worsened their ability to perform in class effectively. In these cases, the decision regarding disability disclosure is even more complex (Moyo & Perumal, 2019).

Already during the job interview process, each candidate must decide whether to disclose his or her disability (Sassin, 2011). Teachers with disabilities are primarily concerned that school principals will avoid hiring them if they know about their disability. This concern is consistent with studies that show that principals are indeed reluctant to hire employees with disabilities (Graffam, Smith, Shinkfield, & Polzin, 2002; Stanley et al., 2007).

The longer someone hides his or her disability, the harder it is to reveal it to colleagues. After time has passed, these teachers have formed personal relationships with their colleagues, and it becomes exceedingly difficult to continue hiding a disability from them. However, disclosing the disability after a long period might make colleagues wary or change their attitudes toward that teacher

(Baron & Byrne, 2000).

Quite often, the teachers are reluctant to disclose their disabilities because they are worried that they might be discriminated against or considered less professional because of it (Gabel, 2001; Riddick, 2003; Valle, Solis, Volpitta, & Connor, 2004; Vogel & Sharoni, 2011). The ethical dilemma of disability disclosure affects not only school principals but also the school staff, the students, and their parents (Makris, 2012).

Teachers with disabilities often face discrimination at different stages of their careers, from the moment they start their training to become educators, while seeking employment, and in the schools where they work (Makris, 2012). Employees who are able to perform the essential functions of a position, with or without accommodation, are allegedly protected against discrimination by law. However, there is no specific definition of "essential functions" for teachers. Some might consider the ability to teach children the central criteria for this, others might take advantage of this ambiguous definition to justify discriminatory behavior (Parker & Draves, 2018). In addition, the bureaucracy in the education system is so complex that teachers with disabilities sometimes become lost in the system (Makris, 2012).

Although teachers with disabilities do believe in their competence as educators, their colleagues often doubt their ability to be professional (Anderson, Keller & Karp, 1998; Duquette, 2000).

In one study that focused on 900 teachers with disabilities in the United States, it was found that one of their greatest concerns during their training and at the beginning of their careers was how well they would perform in the classroom. This concern was intensified by their families and friends (Gilmor et al., 1981).

According to Gilmor et al. (1981), many of the teachers interviewed reported that they were told, by both family and friends, that no school would ever hire them and that they were not capable of teaching. To cope with challenges at work, teachers with disabilities purposely spend more time preparing lessons than their able-bodied colleagues do (Vogel & Sharoni, 2011). Consistent with this claim, separate research conducted by Anderson, Keller, and Karp (1998) found that most teachers with disabilities believe that they are indeed meeting the requirements of competent educators and that they are undeniably conducting themselves as exemplary professionals. Many of them deemed their ability to help students with certain difficulties as greater than that of their able-bodied colleagues. Even before starting their first job, many of these individuals viewed themselves as potential positive role models for students with disabilities (Dvir, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The study participants included 20 teachers with an array of physical disabilities from various regions in Israel and working in different grade levels. This range allowed for a broad and diverse picture of the study's topic. Each participant defined him or herself as either a person with a disability or as one defined that way by others. The different disabilities among these teachers can be divided into three distinct groups: 1) motor disabilities (e.g., difficulty walking, use of a wheelchair), 2) sensory disabilities (blindness and deafness), and 3) health disabilities (chronic illnesses).

The participant group was composed of four men and 16 women, all of whom had worked as teachers in recent years. The gender breakdown of the group accurately reflected the real ratio of women to men working as teachers in the field (Central Bureau of Statistic, 2013). The teachers interviewed for this study worked in different schools varying in geographic location, sectors within the Jewish segment of schools (Jewish secular state-run schools, religious state-run schools, religious ultra-Orthodox schools), age groups (elementary school, middle school, and high school), and special education versus "regular" teaching institutions.

The four teachers working in a special education schools differed in their disabilities. One had an invisible health disability, two were deaf, and one had a very obvious motor disability. Only one deaf teacher worked solely with students who share her disability.

3.2. Data collection

The sampling we used for this study was a purposeful sample strategy, as is common in qualitative research. Therefore, we actively selected the most appropriate sample of teachers to respond to the research questions by using snowball and voluntary sampling methods (Marshall, 1996). After receiving approval from the Ministry of Education, we published an explanation about the study on social media asking teachers with physical disabilities to volunteer to be interviewed. Subsequently, a number of potential participants responded to the researchers' request via email or Facebook. Every potential participant was vetted with specific questions about his or her disability plus background as a teacher and received an explanation about the study goals in greater detail. Interviews were then scheduled with the selected participants.

The individual interviews took place at the participants' homes with each one lasting 40—70 min. Each was audio-recorded and later transcribed into print. During each interview, the participant was asked to share his or her experiences of being a teacher with a disability. Teachers were asked additional questions for clarification on specific topics as needed and asked to add pertinent information about issues and contexts that we had identified as ethical dilemmas.

3.3. Data analysis

We analyzed data by constructing categories based on the information collected and based on a priori constructs from relevant literature. Open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) were used to interpret the data to develop categories representing ethical dilemmas that participants faced as teachers with disabilities.

In the open coding phase, data segments were separated, sorted, and then combined in a new and distinct way by comparing their different components for similarities and differences between each one. Each new category was assigned a name that best describes its meaning. Once in place, these new categories guided the process of "theoretical sampling" in which statements, events, or cases that emphasized that meaning were sought out.

The axial coding phase was primarily characterized by exploring the relationship between the main categories and smaller subcategories. In this phase, the categories identified in the initial coding stage were further divided into new ones.

In the selective coding phase, both major and minor categories were formed by correlating groups of data with each other, thereby determining which ones were most dominant. To accomplish this, the initial data categories first needed to be closely observed to determine which one encompassed the most data in relation to the participants.

During the next stage, all the categories were reexamined and edited, and new categories were then created to reflect the issues that had not previously arisen during the initial stages. Out of all these categories, the main ones were conceptualized and defined, and henceforth they became the basis for the entire study. These categories were the ones selected because they contributed the most to defining and clarifying ethical dilemmas that teachers with

disabilities face. Finally, according to grounded theory (Glaser, 2017), a theoretical conceptualization of the descriptive image arose from earlier stages while we used terms from relevant studies from which we could then clarify the data and construct the theory.

3.4. The study challenge

The various disabilities could be divided into visible and invisible categories. However, this division does not reflect a clear dichotomy. Although motor disabilities tend to be obvious, some motor disabilities are in fact invisible. For example, amputees using a prosthetic leg can often hide their disability with their wardrobe choices. In contrast, health disabilities are usually invisible.

Yet some health disabilities cause physical conditions that can be quite obvious. Sensory disabilities cannot be detected based on appearance but can be easily noticed during a close interaction or conversation.

3.5. Ethical considerations

Several criteria must be adhered to in an effort to safeguard research ethics. All the participants were made aware of the purpose and procedure of the study, and they consented to being recorded. All personal information remained strictly confidential, and every participant was given a fictional name to maintain participant anonymity. Guaranteeing this was crucial, especially given that some participants had never before publicly divulged information about their specific disability.

During the interviews themselves, the specific term "disability" was not necessarily used; rather, we used the term that each individual used to describe him or herself. For instance, the phrase "Tell me about your work as a deaf teacher" was used rather than the phrase "Tell me about your work as a teacher with a disability." This helped show respect for the manner in which a person chooses to define him or herself and helped prevent imposing external labels on individuals.

4. Findings

The study's findings suggest that teachers with disabilities struggle with four major ethical dilemmas: a) The "*coming out of the disability closet*" *dilemma*—whether to reveal a disability to the school staff; b) The *classroom management dilemma*—how to conduct a lesson without letting the disability interfere in any way; c) The *equality/equity dilemma*—whether or not to try to appear "like all the other teachers" or instead exercise the legal right to handicap accommodations and d) The "*healthy-self*" *dilemma*—whether to focus more on one's work or on one's medical needs. These various dilemmas provide insight into the difficulties that teachers with disabilities face in their efforts to integrate into the school system.

Each dilemma is based on an explicit choice the teacher has to make (whether to reveal or hide the disability, how to conduct the lesson, what to focus more on in everyday life, and whether or not to use accessibility accommodations). Each conflict is based on contradictory values that are each of equal importance to the teacher (an overview of these dilemmas is provided in Fig. 1).

4.1. "Coming out of the disability closet" dilemma

The dilemma of whether to expose one's disability is a highly fraught one, and it preoccupies most people with invisible disabilities. The teachers in this study commented a great deal on this issue and expressed feeling conflicted between protecting their own interests on the one hand and being forthright and honest on the other.

Many teachers described trepidation about revealing their disability for fear of others questioning their professional ability and character.

"I had this fear that if I were to tell them [the school staff], they'd think I was worthless. They'd probably still think I am a lovely teacher, but they definitely wouldn't forget my disability. So ultimately I decided not to tell anyone, and it was really hard. […] One time when I had to miss work for three weeks [for medical reasons], I had to keep making excuses… and naturally, she [the school principal] kept asking questions about my absence. It was a very difficult experience" (Rachel, elementary school teacher in an ultra-Orthodox school, approximately 35 years old, approximately 15 years of seniority, with cystic fibrosis and diabetes).

When teachers try to hide their disabilities, they encounter practical difficulties as well as emotional ones. Practical difficulties
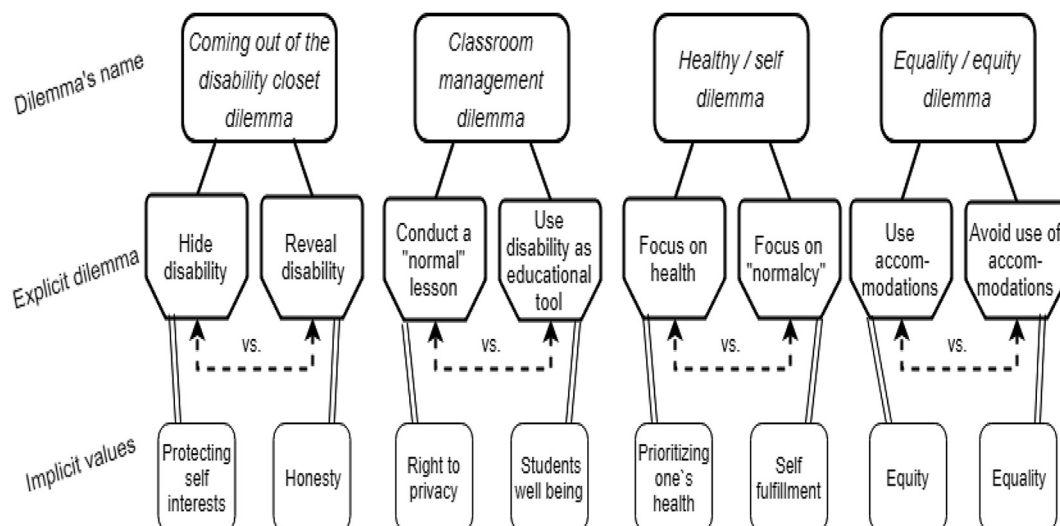

Fig. 1. A multifaceted model of ethical dilemmas among teachers with disabilities.

mentioned often included absence from school for medical reasons that could not be explained and hiding essential medical equipment such as an insulin pump. For example, Rachel described a method she used to hide the bottle of her I.V. antibiotics:

"Sometimes I wear shorts under my skirt, and I put it [the bottle] where they can't see it. It is a catastrophe, a nightmare!"

The most significant ethical difficulty that teachers referred to was the concealment of some kind of a secret. Some felt that they were being dishonest to their friends and colleagues and in a way felt guilty about that.

"I had many dilemmas, especially about whether or not to tell the staff and the school principal. On the one hand, I was carrying this big secret inside of me, which was really hard, and on the other hand, there is a price you pay for going ahead and revealing it. Anxious thoughts come to mind, such as 'They might not want me anymore,' or 'They might think I don't fit in there,' or 'They might even take pity on me'" (Dana, high school physical education teacher, approximately 30 years old, approximately 10 years of seniority, with cystic fibrosis).

Ultimately, the teachers had to consider the different sets of values in regard to exposing their disability and then decide whether to "come out of the disability closet." The majority of the teachers in this study eventually decided to tell at least some of their colleagues about their disability.

4.2. Disability management in class dilemma

Educating students and promoting their emotional development are the most important tasks for teachers to undertake. Therefore, when in the classroom, teachers with disabilities must decide how to manage themselves in a way that positively influences their students' well-being. These teachers must choose whether to conduct a "normal" lesson or instead use their disability as an educational tool. Ultimately, each individual teacher must decide between the contradictory values of doing what is best for the students in the class versus maintaining his or her right to privacy.

For teachers with disabilities, one of the more difficult ethical dilemmas is deciding whether to talk openly about their disability or to simply ignore it. Some of them do indeed decide to have frank conversations about it with their students.

Gal, for example, is a blind teacher who believes that letting students ask him about his disability is no less important than is teaching the academic material itself.

"In the first class, they [the kids] had so many questions about my blindness. So I decided to dedicate the whole first lesson to the subject. And now, ever since, that is exactly what I do in every new class" (Gal, high school art teacher, approximately 40 years old, approximately three years of seniority, blind).

Overall, many teachers in this study believe that using one's own life experiences with a disability can contribute a great deal when reaching out to students.

"These days, there is an awareness of issues surrounding one's body image. So many kids feel they're different in a way; this one is too fat whereas this one is too thin, and maybe this one has an illness. So they get to see me and talk to me. […] I can use my own experience to help them deal with whatever difficulties they are going through" (Aviv, high school science teacher,

approximately 45 years old, approximately three years of seniority, with cystic fibrosis).

Some teachers even "use" their disability to make a point about coping with difficulties. These teachers aspire to be a personal example in overcoming challenges.

"I think being a personal example is the most important thing. I walk around the classroom, I carry the projector myself, and the kids can see that" (Jonathan, high school science teacher in a religious school, approximately 60 years old, approximately 35 years of seniority, who lost his legs).

Some teachers aspire to be a role model for those children who have disabilities themselves.

"It is very important that deaf pupils have a deaf teacher. They can look at me and feel we are the same. The can see me as a role model for success" (Irit, elementary school teacher in a special education school, approximately 45 years old, approximately 15 years of seniority, deaf).

Furthermore, teachers with disabilities address the dilemma of how to conduct themselves in class when symptoms of their disability flare up. The teachers interviewed in this study described phantom pain, insulin pumps beeping, fatigue, and coughing fits all occurring during class time.

"Sometimes I have this phantom pain that can sneak up on you, and then you can't move. If this occurs while I'm teaching in class, I have to stand still for a few seconds. But that's OK; teachers don't have to move all the time" (Jonathan, high school science teacher in a religious school, approximately 60 years old, approximately 35 years of seniority, who lost his legs).

As part of exercising their inherent right to privacy, some individual teachers choose to "cover it up," as Rachel said, and conceal these symptoms from the class.

"One time my insulin pump started beeping in class. The girls thought it was a cell phone vibrating, and I played along and covered it up. I even pretended to be looking for that phone" (Rachel, elementary school teacher in an ultra-Orthodox school, approximately 35 years old, approximately 15 years of seniority, with cystic fibrosis and diabetes).

Most of the study participants mentioned the dilemma of managing their disability in class, regardless of its type. This suggests that this dilemma is indeed significant, emphasizing its importance in the discussion.

4.3. Equality/equity dilemma

All employees with disabilities are protected by law against discrimination and have the right to receive accommodation according to their needs. However, in actuality, many teachers hesitate to take advantage of this law. It should be emphasized that this is not only a practical issue of whether or not to use the accommodations but also an ethical one. It seems that the dilemma of whether to demonstrate that they are as capable as any other teacher (equality) or instead to take advantage of the legal rights afforded them (equity) is quite common for teachers with different types of disabilities. Nearly all the teachers interviewed in this study referred to this specific issue.

Many of the teachers expressed feeling that "because of my disability, I know I have to be a hundred times better than all the others" (Sofia, elementary school English teacher, approximately 65 years old, approximately 30 years of seniority, with cerebral palsy). Consequently, they make a concerted effort to prove that they are just as good as anyone else is in this job.

School field trips are an important element in the education system. Therefore, the frequency of the *equality/equity dilemma* rose dramatically when the topic of field trips arose. Although many teachers with disabilities insist on attending field trips regardless of their disability (as part of their equality ideology), many of them nevertheless need special accommodations to do so.

"Going on school field trips is amazing and fun, and the kids really appreciate the teachers who go with them. […] If suddenly I can't carry my bag, they take it themselves! […] They see me take medications during the trip, they see me take a moment to catch my breath, and then they see me keep walking" (Aviv, high school science teacher, approximately 45 years old, approximately 3 years seniority, with cystic fibrosis).

"When there was a field trip scheduled, I came with my private car and took the crutches in the trunk" (Jonathan, high school science teacher in a religious school, approximately 60 years old, approximately 35 years of seniority, who had lost his legs).

Other teachers, however, feel that despite the perception of being equal to their colleagues, there is simply no possible way they can join the school field trips.

"For many years, I used to go on field trips. […] then I told myself that this isn't safe anymore! They [Management] can't make me go! They can't force me to do something that is dangerous to me! So I told the school principal that I just wasn't going anymore. I told him that I was going to continue to be a teacher but no more field trips; that's it. And he didn't respond positively at all" (Miri, art high school teacher, approximately 55 years old, approximately 30 years of seniority, with diabetes).

According to this research, teachers with disabilities see themselves as successful and professional and go out of their way to prove this to their colleagues. Most of these teachers are confident that they have a moral and legal right to receive special accommodations because of their disability. Nevertheless, sometimes there are cases in which these teachers prefer to give up their inherent rights to avoid appearing different in any way.

4.4. "Healthy/self" dilemma

This dilemma came to light only among teachers with long-term health disabilities. People who live with a chronic illness often feel conflicted between their desire to live a full life, professionally and personally, and their responsibility to take good care of themselves. This dilemma tends to influence the way they manage their time and affects how they determine whether they are going to focus more on doing "normal" work or focus more on managing and maintaining their health. For example, some teachers described how committed they are to teaching and how this commitment sometimes affects their health for the worse.

"When I am in class, I'll always try to stand on my feet and teach! Just the other day I taught a whole class with a chair on my head because it was relevant to this play I was teaching as part of the lesson plan… and then, after the lesson was over, I went into the office and kind of fell apart while breathing heavily and almost fainting… and then I got up and moved on to the next class. And this is how it's been working for me for the past few years" (Dalia, high school literature teacher, approximately 40 years old, approximately 15 years of seniority, with Crohn's disease).

Some teachers neglected their commitment to taking medication or to visiting the doctor because they did not want to miss a day of work.

"I don't visit the outpatient clinic very often. It's not ideal but… I have a friend who goes once a month, but I can't see myself missing a day of work once a month. So I prefer to wait for the next school vacation and go then. The medical staff is not happy about this, but they know this is the way I am" (Tova, elementary school teacher in a religious school, approximately 25 years old, approximately three years of seniority, with cystic fibrosis).

The explanation that teachers give for this behavior is not just "responsibility as a teacher" (Dana, high school physical education teacher, approximately 30 years old, approximately 10 years of seniority, with cystic fibrosis) but also the feeling "Teaching is special. It gives me something." (Rachel, elementary school teacher in an ultra-Orthodox school, approximately 35 years old, approximately 15 years of seniority, with cystic fibrosis and diabetes). Many of the teachers with chronic health disabilities feel that their work is an important distraction from their disability, one that helps them emotionally but not physically. All of them live by the notion that, to some extent, it is worth paying a health price to gain personal and professional fulfillment.

5. Discussion

The primary purpose of this research was to explore the ethical dilemmas of teachers with physical disabilities. The teachers interviewed referred to their difficulties and challenges and to their desire to succeed. Additionally, they expressed a multifaceted structure of four main ethical dilemmas in their work that stem from having a disability. Because ethical dilemmas arise from a conflict among competing values, these dilemmas reflect the most significant values for the teachers. Each dilemma revealed not only the core values that are important to the teachers but also the hardships of handling situations relevant to their disability. The "coming out of the disability closet" dilemma reflects a conflict between the value of doing what is best for the individual teacher and being honesty. The classroom management dilemma reflects tension between doing what is best for the students' well-being versus the teacher's right to privacy. The equality/equity dilemma channels the conflict between the belief that they are as capable as any other teacher (equality) and the decision to take advantage of the legal rights afforded teachers (equity). The "healthy/self" dilemma expresses the friction between one's commitment to professional fulfillment and one's focus on personal medical needs.

Even though the teachers' dilemmas that came to light in this research were diverse and complex, the majority concerned how other perceived the teachers, the desire to integrate, and the fear of rejection. This is consistent with the social model of disability (Shakespeare, 2010). According to this model, society is considered the critical factor in determining what people with disabilities experience and the difficulties such people face. Most of the challenges a disabled person experiences arise from a lack of adjustments, prejudice, and societal ignorance as opposed to the physical aspects of the disability itself. This model has developed in recent decades as a result of the struggles with exclusion and oppression

of people with disabilities and has grown out of the political arguments promulgated by the UPIAS (Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation) organization (Oliver, 2017; Shakespeare, 2010).

The "healthy/self" dilemma was the only one of the four that represented an internal conflict regarding a teacher's personal point of view and identity as a person with a disability. This particular dilemma arises from the tension between medical obligations and the desire to live a full and fulfilling life, both personally and professionally. One item regularly mentioned in previous research is the aspiration of individuals with a chronic health disability to fully integrate their physical condition into their lives. In addition, in previous research, the complex topic of coexistence between "living a life" and "living an illness" was touched upon often (Whittemore & Dixon, 2008). The unique perspective that arose in research was the consideration of this conflict as an actual dilemma between two values: the value of living a "good" life and the value of living a healthier and perhaps longer life.

This research addresses teachers with different disabilities that vary in their visible recognition (*visible disability and invisible disability*) along with the physical functions that are affected by them (motor disabilities, sensory disabilities, and health disabilities). Some teachers fell into more than one category. For example, teachers with a motor disability caused by an illness (health disabilities) would fall into both categories. This difficulty of dividing disabilities into distinct groups is consistent with Samuels' (2003) difficulty to divide disabilities. While taking into consideration the fluidity of these categories, this distribution reflects the differences among the dilemmas that teachers with different types of disabilities face.

The findings reveal that teachers with both visible and invisible disabilities along with teachers from all the disability groups (motor, sensory, and health disabilities) define themselves as people with disabilities and discuss how their roles as teachers are affected by their disabilities. Although previous studies have attempted to tackle these issues among teachers who are blind or deaf, this study explores these issues within a wider range of physical disabilities (Almog, 2011; Hankebo, 2018; Parker & Draves, 2018). The study's findings reveal that all groups of teachers must deal with dilemmas arising from the physical challenges of their disability as well as from the interaction with the school staff. Additionally, the findings reveal that the teachers with health disabilities faced a greater number of ethical dilemmas than did those in other categories. Each type of dilemma was mentioned by at least one teacher in this study group.

The grand total of dilemmas was also largest among teachers with health disabilities. Another group with a high number of total dilemmas was that of teachers with invisible disabilities. The large number of dilemmas among teachers with invisible disabilities can be attributed to several issues: The two groups mentioned (health disabilities and the invisible disabilities) overlap nearly completely. The *"coming out of the disability closet" dilemma* is unique to those teachers with an invisible disability; the needs for adjustments for people with invisible disabilities are often overlooked, so they must decide themselves whether they want to fight for their rights (as described in the *equality/equity dilemma).*

The "healthy/self" dilemma is unique to those teachers with a health disability. In this context, the obviousness of the disability is irrelevant. The more an illness requires monitoring, the more the ethical dilemma intensifies (Ferguson & Walker, 2014). Although many people with a motor or sensory disability are perfectly healthy, those with a health disability have to constantly deal with treatments, side effects, and deterioration (Falvo, 2005).

The "coming out of the disability closet" dilemma, however, is unique in that it applies only to those teachers with an invisible

disability. This unique attribute was unsurprising because the issue of revealing one's disability is inherent in a disability that can be concealed (Almog, 2011; Valeras, 2010).

Many ethical dilemmas identified in this research reflect the challenges faced by all people with disabilities, not just those employed as teachers. The issues that arose regarding disclosure, balancing medical needs with work, and ensuring equal access are mentioned in a large number of studies about disabled people in the workplace (Santuzzi et al., 2014; Schulman-Green et al., 2012; Schur, 2003; Taylor, 2000; Wilton, 2006). The dilemmas unique to teachers are those that relate to classroom management. These specific dilemmas concern the complex relationship between a teacher, the students, and the classroom setting. The ways in which a disability can be an educational advantage came up continually during the course of the interviews. Many interviewees talked about ways in which they can use their disability to educate and inspire others. This is consistent with previous findings regarding different samples of teachers with disabilities (Dvir, 2015; Makris, 2018).

The teachers interviewed in this study vary in the types of schools in which they teach. Although in Israel, many teachers with disabilities work in schools where students have the same disability as the teachers do, in this study, only one participant fit that particular definition—a deaf teacher who works in a school for the deaf (Brueggemann, Garland-Thomson, & Kleege, 2005). This circumstance actually allowed us to better understand the integration and exclusion of teachers with disabilities. Thus, the desire to inspire their students was not unique only to those teachers working in special education classes. Yet teachers who do teach children with disabilities emphasized the importance of serving as a positive role model for them. This was consistently mentioned regardless of whether the teacher had the same disability as the student had.

The issue of disclosing one's disability has been mentioned in other prominent studies about people with invisible disabilities (Eichengreen et al., 2016; Samuels, 2003; Stanley et al., 2007). Deciding whether to reveal or conceal one's disability is difficult, and this dilemma preoccupies most people with invisible disabilities (Eichengreen et al., 2016; Samuels, 2003; Santuzzi et al., 2014). The resemblance between disability disclosure and sexual orientation disclosure was a subject reviewed previously. Samuels (2003) used the term "coming out of the closet" to describe people with disabilities disclosing their disability to others. According to Samuels, both disability and sexual orientation are social labels that, once revealed, are oftentimes judged as outside the norm. In addition, most people with disabilities, as is true with many in the LGBTQ community, grew up as the only individual in their family with that specific label (Eichengreen et al., 2016).

Each of the teachers' four ethical dilemmas is premised on the dilemma of whether to hide or disclose one's disability. Although the motives for determining how to reach this decision were different for each dilemma and represented varying values, each teacher shared a similar desire to make the best decision possible about the extent to which he or she should conceal the disability.

In the "coming out of the disability closet" dilemma, the issue is seen extremely clearly; however, in terms of the other three dilemmas, the issue of disclosure versus concealment is mentioned only indirectly. For example, the "healthy/self" dilemma revolves around the delicate balance of "living a life" and "living an illness" (Ferguson & Walker, 2014; Schulman-Green et al., 2012; Whittemore & Dixon, 2008). This issue can be interpreted as a choice between accepting one's disability or aspiring to normalcy (Morris, 2014). This interpretation sees denying one's illness in essence as hiding it from oneself. The *classroom management dilemma* entails the disclosure dilemma, too. In this case, the

teacher does not necessarily hide his or her disability from the students but rather tries to make it less obvious and prevent it from disrupting the class. The *equality/equity dilemma* reflects the teachers' understanding that taking advantage of their legal right to disability adjustments necessarily means that other people will learn about the teachers' disability and therefore about the limitations these teachers have (Wilson & Woloshyn, 2018).

In terms of students, the teachers' primary motivation to reveal their disability derived from their desire to "use" it to inspire students and provide an educational lesson (Dvir, 2015). Finally, in regard to school staff, the teachers' principal motivation to hide their disability from colleagues stemmed from the fear of a perceived negative stigma and unfair judgment (Capewell, Ralph, & Bonnett, 2015; Joachim & Acorn, 2000).

This research allows us a fuller understanding of the ethical dilemmas of teachers with disabilities and their needs for better integration into schools. The results highlighted herein might open the door to establishing a coping system that could provide the teachers with both emotional support and legal guidance.

6. Conclusion and implications: toward inclusive teacher education

This study examined the ethical dilemmas that affect teachers with disabilities. Literature on ethical dilemmas has largely focused on the professionals' and caregivers' perspectives and on those dilemmas arising from working with "clients" or other weakened populations, such as students, patients, or people with disabilities (Goldenberg, Werdyger, Lerner, & Pasternak, 2014; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2016; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2018). The literature however overlooks ethical dilemmas of those clients or of people with disabilities themselves.

This study's core focus is on the ethical dilemmas of teachers with disabilities, a unique group that plays parallel roles as both the "professionals" and as the weakened population. In this sense, this study is unique not only in examining an issue that has yet to be researched within this population but also in giving a new meaning to the concept of ethical dilemmas as an issue relevant to weaker groups in society, such as those with disabilities themselves. Providing people with disabilities a voice and allowing them to express their ethical dilemmas contributes both to the literature on this subject and to the fight of people with disabilities for equal rights.

The study's findings emphasize the complexity of the careers of teachers with disabilities. These findings also indicate that most of the teachers' dilemmas concern social issues, such as interactions with colleagues and supervisors and not the actual physical impairment itself. This implies that organizational changes may improve teachers' experiences and positively influence teachers' professional performance. The four specific dilemmas that teachers describe provide a basic framework that could be used for building enrichment programs for teachers with disabilities and their colleagues. Namely, different recommendations, based on the different dilemmas, could be tailored to and used by school principals, policy makers, and teacher training programs.

Many of the teachers described their fear of being judged unfairly because of their disability and having to face being labeled with negative stereotypes (the "coming out of the disability closet" dilemma and the equality/equity dilemma). Thus, establishing an effective system of communication between teachers with disabilities and their colleagues would go a long way toward limiting these stigmas and could consequently make the occurrence of these dilemmas less frequent.

This can likely be accomplished by creating a continuing education program for teachers that exposes them to people with disabilities and encourages an open and honest discussion about these issues. A more inclusive work environment would certainly help reduce the negativity attached to people with disabilities.

Some teachers detailed personal and professional challenges arising from self-managing their disability (the healthy/self dilemma). They could benefit from a more personal relationship with a principal who would acknowledge their hard work and accommodate their specific needs. In addition, during teacher training programs, it is recommended that student-teachers with disabilities be informed about available support systems.

When discussing appropriate accommodations, some teachers described their school's environment as not conducive to meeting their specific needs (the equality/equity dilemma). It is essential that teachers with disabilities be provided effective legal advocacy, which starts with these teachers knowing their legal rights. They should feel comfortable approaching their immediate supervisors to request accommodations, and in turn, the principals and supervisors should be well acquainted with the legal obligation required of them. As such, teachers and principals should be encouraged to take courses that will expose them to the unique difficulties people with disabilities face. Endeavors such as this should be expected to help them understand all people with disabilities better, including teachers and students with disabilities.

Another item that often arose in this study was the teachers' belief that they could use their own disability as an educational tool (the classroom management dilemma). This particular finding is consistent with the conclusions of other recent studies in this field and indicates the importance of establishing an effective support system that assists teachers with disabilities. Accordingly, it would be desirable to broaden the potential field of employment of teachers with disabilities. Teacher training programs should therefore focus on empowering student-teachers with disabilities and encouraging them to explore various ways in which their disability might contribute to their future students.

Furthermore, to fulfill the unique potential of teachers with disabilities, it is necessary to create an appropriate platform for interacting with students. This can be accomplished by establishing a more flexible and open framework such as field trips that are more accessible to teachers with disabilities. In situations such as these, the teachers would have additional opportunities to portray themselves as personal examples, which would also allow students to engage further with the teacher and perhaps discuss the teacher's disability.

7. Limitations and directions for future study

In this study, in-depth interviews were used to explore the ethical dilemmas of teachers with disabilities. One important research limitation to note is the use of only one source for data collection. It was decided not to use additional tools such as observations out of concern for infringing upon teachers' privacy and out of a desire to be sensitive to this unique group of people.

Teachers with disabilities are a unique and relatively small and group on which extremely limited research has been conducted. For this reason, it was decided to interview a wide variety of teachers with different disabilities working with different age groups hailing from an array of religious backgrounds. Future study that would focus on specific groups such as teachers with only health disabilities, on teachers with only sensory disabilities, or on a specific religious group might bring to the fore other findings not revealed in this study. In addition, we strongly recommend conducting further research that would explore the issues we observed through a different lens and from a different point of view. One such idea is research based on interviews with students who are taught by teachers with disabilities.

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