

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES AND ITS  
INFLUENCE/IMPACT ON TEACHER SELF-EMPOWERMENT

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by

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES AND ITS INFLUENCE/ IMPACT ON TEACHER SELF-EMPOWERMENT**

Jean Marie D'Aversa

This study was an examination of the extent to which a relationship exists between teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment and teachers' perceptions of their administrators' leadership effectiveness. The study focused on human relations theory to explore and describe the leadership styles of administrators through the perceptions of teachers' self-empowerment.

The participants in this study were general education teachers employed at two secondary schools (Grades 6–12) within a public school district located in the northeastern part of the United States, consisting of 150 teachers. A total of 73 general education teachers were part of the study with 12 study participants volunteering to participate in one of two focus groups with six participants in each focus group. Through a series of triangulated analyses and an explanatory mixed-methods approach, the teacher participants were administered a self-empowerment, Likert-scaled survey, the School Participant Empowerment Scale, developed by Paula M. Short, to determine their perceptions of leadership styles. The study explored the subscales of leadership styles researched by Harvard graduate and Happiness Coach, Shawn Achor.

Several sources of data, such as the survey answers and the information drawn from the two focus groups, were analyzed into a mixed methods explanatory study. The

study also focused on the domains of leadership styles relating to relationships, climate/structure, and task orientation. The teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment were measured through the subscales of involvement, decision-making, and responsibility.

This study compared the culture of the school buildings with a focus on change theory to compare transformational leadership styles. Utilizing the framework set forth by Achor, the theory of positive psychology in the workplace determined the correlation between the teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment and their administrators' leadership styles.

## **DEDICATION**

To my parents, my support system throughout my educational career. My mother, who was an educator, inspired me at a young age. My father, who taught me to work hard and be the best I can. My husband, who encourages me to continue my personal and professional growth. Finally, to my son, who makes me a better person each day. I love you.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

This study was an examination of the extent to which a relationship exists between teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment and teachers' perceptions of their administrators' leadership effectiveness. This study used human relations theory to explore and describe the leadership styles of administrators in two school buildings within a public school district located in the northeastern part of the United States, through the perceptions of the teachers' self-empowerment). Through a series of triangulated analyses and an explanatory mixed-methods approach, participants were administered a survey on the perceptions of teacher self-empowerment and their administrators' leadership style. In addition, a total of 12 study participants volunteered to participate in one of two focus groups with six participants in each focus group.

The study explored the subscales of leadership styles, researched by Harvard graduate and Happiness Coach, Shawn Achor, along with a self-empowerment, Likert-scaled survey, the School Participant Empowerment Scale. The participants in this study were general education teachers employed within two secondary schools (Grades 6–12) that consisted of 150 teachers. A total of 73 general education teachers were part of the study.

This study explored the subscales of leadership styles researched by Harvard graduate and Happiness Coach, Shawn Achor (2010, 2011, 2012, 2018), along with a self-empowerment, Likert-scaled survey, the School Participant Empowerment Scale, developed by Paula M. Short (1994). The participants in this study were general

education teachers employed within two secondary schools (Grades 6–12) that consisted of 150 teachers. A total of 73 general education teachers were part of the study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which a relationship exists between leadership styles and their influence and impact on teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment. This study focused on the human relations theory and explored leadership styles leadership style with teachers' self-empowerment through the teachers' perceptions of various subscale leadership styles throughout a school district. Through a series of triangulated analysis and an exploratory mixed-methods approach, the participants were administered a survey by (Short, 1994) on teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment in relation to leadership styles, which were discovered by Achor (2010, 2011, 2012, 2018). The research focused on participation from subjects in two focus groups within a public school district located in a suburban area in the northeastern part of the United States. The two focus groups consisted of six participants each, for a total of 12 participants, which determined the correlation and influence/impact that administrators' leadership styles had on the teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment within a public secondary school district. The study focused on the domains of administrators' leadership styles relating to relationships, climate/structure, and task orientation. The teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment were measured through the three subscales of involvement, decision-making, and responsibility.

The researcher conducted this research study to determine the correlation and influence/impact between the teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment and administrators' leadership styles. The research study focused on an entire group of

general education teachers ( $N = 73$ ) within two secondary schools (Grades 6–12) in a public school district located in a suburban area in the northeastern part of the United States. The study explored administrators' leadership styles that were provided along with a self-empowerment Likert-scaled survey, the School Participant Empowerment Scale, developed by Short (1994).

Utilizing the theory presented by Achor (2010), the happiness advantage theory purports that the more self-empowered/happy an employee is, the better the outcome is for the business/school. The researcher studied these ideas of Achor (2011) to question if his framework on the business aspect of productivity, happiness, and leadership could be relevant in a school district educational setting. Achor (2011) has spent his life researching positive psychology in the workplace. Achor related all of his studies to his experiences with the Fortune 500 companies that he worked for, the TedEx talks he has given, and his creation of his company, GoodThink Inc., which led him to working with Oprah Winfrey to build an empire of positive psychology studies in the workplace as well as writing numerous articles for The Harvard Business Review.

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

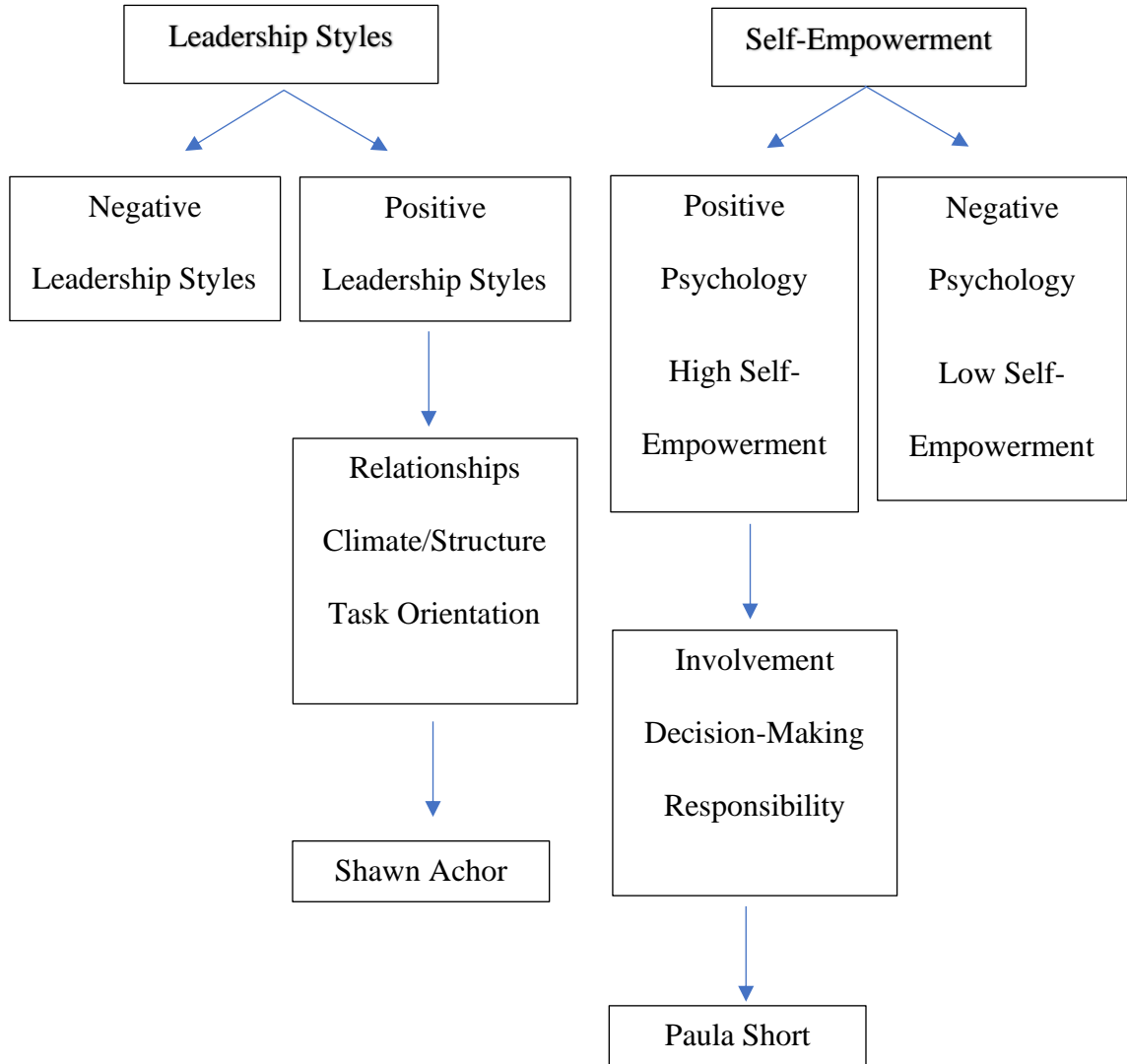
The researcher conducted a series of triangulated analyses and an exploratory mixed-methods approach. Participants were administered a survey entitled the School Participation Empowerment Scale developed by Short (1994). The study focused on the domains of leadership style relating to relationships, climate/structure, and task orientation, and the study determined the impact of administrators' leadership styles on teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment. The participants also attended two focus groups consisting of six participants in each group. The participants in this study were all

general education teachers within two secondary schools (Grades 6–12) that consisted of 150 teachers. Out of the 150 teachers, 73 participated in the study. The public school district in which the study took place was located in a suburban area in the northeastern part of the United States.

During this study, several sources of data, such as the survey and the information drawn from the two focus groups, and the data collected over time were analyzed into a qualitative study. This information was drawn from and focused on the psychology of the teachers through their assessment scores of their administrators' leadership styles and the administrators' influence/impact on the teachers' perceived self-empowerment. Through analysis change theory, positive psychology, and an examination of Achor's (2010, 2011, 2012, 2018) research of over a decade, the researcher examined Achor's (2010) business model and correlational relationship between leadership styles, happiness, and success. The researcher conducted a study to determine if this model would work in the educational school setting between administrators' and leadership styles and teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment.

**Figure 1**

*Interrelated Theory and Concepts and Theoretical Framework*



## **Significance/Importance of the Study**

The research in this study determined if a relationship exists between teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment and administrative leadership styles. This led to a conclusion of the data that there is an impact/influence on three specific subscales of leadership styles that have the greatest influential impact on teacher's perceptions of self-empowerment.

This study related to Achor's (2010) research through the completion of The Happiness Advantage instrument in which employees who had strong leaders felt self-empowered, and they were more likely to be more productive. Achor (2010) stated that

More than a decade of groundbreaking research in the fields of positive psychology and neuroscience has proven in no uncertain terms that the relationship between success and happiness works the other way around. Thanks to this cutting-edge science, we now know that happiness is the precursor to success, not merely the result. And that happiness and optimism (self-empowerment) actually *fuel* performance and achievement, giving us the competitive edge that I call the Happiness Advantage. (p. 10)

This research study analyzed this Happiness Advantage Theory, presented by Achor (2010), to determine which leadership styles promoted teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment among a school district to produce a more positive work environment and culture for all in the district's school buildings.

## **Problem Statement**

Teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment might be affected by the teachers' perceptions of their administrators' leadership styles. Typically, the climate of a building

falls on the leader of that building to shape and grow the school into a positive climate for success. The theory of change, especially in leadership, is transitional and has been researched for many years. Teachers' self-empowerment and positive leadership styles are two factors that a school building needs to function properly. The theory of change describes the causal chain of events that lead from the implementation of an intervention to the desired outcome.

Fullan (1982, 1991) proposed that there are four broad phases in the change process: initiation, implementation, continuation, and outcome. The factors that affect the initiation phases include the existence and quality of innovations along with access to innovations. Lewin (1951) developed a model that describes how people change. He proposed that for people to change, they need to need to move from their current state into one where they realize that change is both possible and required. He suggested that knowledge remains frozen until such time as something comes along to *unfreeze* the person, which may be new information or experiences, but until that takes, place nothing will be altered.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. To what extent is there a relationship between administrators' leadership styles and teachers' self-empowerment?
2. How do administrators' leadership styles shift the mindsets of teachers' self-empowerment within the subscales of relationships, task orientation, and climate/structure?



3. What influence do administrators' leadership styles have on teachers' self-empowerment in a public secondary school district within the three subscales of involvement, decision-making, and responsibility?

### **Definition of Terms**

*Climate* – The prevailing trend of public opinion or of another aspect of public life; a region with particular prevailing conditions.

*Culture* – The attitudes and behaviors characteristic of a particular social group. The customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group.

*Decision-making* – The action or process of making decisions, especially important ones.

*Involvement* – The fact or condition of being involved with or participating in something.

*Leadership style* – The stable, behavioral tendencies and methods displayed by a particular superior when guiding a group.

*Positive psychology* – A field of research that focuses on the psychological states (e.g., contentment, joy), individual traits or character strengths (e.g., intimacy, integrity, altruism, wisdom), and social institutions that enhance subjective well-being and make life most worth living.

*Relationships* – The way in which two or more concepts, objects, or people are connected, or the state of being connected.

*Self-empowerment* – The act of giving individuals more control over their lives or their situations.

*Structure* – The arrangement of and relations between the parts/elements of something complex.

*Task orientation* – Focusing on the completion of particular assignments as a measure of success.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

Throughout the past 40 years, the American educational system has been looked at as “at risk.” The U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sterling McMurrin, warned that “the quality of American Education was in danger” (Conant, 1963, p. 34). This called for change in the educational system along with many challenges among teachers and administrators. Following Conant’s study on the dangers of a failing education system, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Educational Reform* (Holmes Group, 1983) was conducted to “raise the bar” and “raise the tide of mediocrity” (p. 174) in American education. As schools worked to meet new standards and implementations, teachers and administrators were given more requirements to meet the criteria. This sparked much debate and research on the quality of education and what factors have an influence on the education being presented. In 1997, the National Commission on Teaching referenced that they set out guidelines and recommendations to follow based on their research. These recommendations included raising standards for incoming students as well as incoming new teachers. This began with university preparation courses for teachers and the creation of professional development courses. Educational facilities hired with the aim of raising the quality of their employees.

President George W. Bush’s initiative, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, was signed into law in January 2002. This required all states to have highly qualified teachers in every public school classroom by 2005–2006. Under NCLB (2002), local schools were required to use a portion of their federal Title I dollars to improve teacher quality. This led to an increase in professional development programs and professional

learning communities. Today, the NCLB (2002) finds that schools that are struggling to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) reports must incorporate new methods of thinking and learning into their curricula. Keiser (2007) stated:

The standards-based, high-stakes testing and accountability era in which educators are currently entrenched has forced school personnel to incorporate new methods of thinking and learning that are dependent on genuine investment and effort on the part of the teachers and other school personnel. (p. 1)

Keiser (2007) believed that leaders cannot isolate themselves from staff in the implementation of school reform. Instead, the school principals or leaders should develop effective working relationship with the staff and encourage a collaborative environment for future development.

With the movement of NCLB (2002), schools are striving to meet their AYP and enhance their curriculum. Short and Johnson (1994) suggested that “the era of accountability has found its way into the public educational from business and industry. Today’s results-oriented and bottom-line cultures has leaders viewing work efficacy as the most significant factor of the empowerment movement” (p. 124). Achor (2010, 2011, 2012, 2018) has dedicated his life to studying, speaking, and writing about positive psychology in the workplace. Achor (2011) concluded that

Thanks to this cutting-edge science, we now know that happiness is the precursor to success not merely the result. And that happiness and optimism (self-empowerment) actually *fuel* performance and achievement—giving us the competitive edge that I call the Happiness Advantage. (p. 10)

Achor (2011) also claimed that

The single greatest advantage in the modern economy is a happy and engaged workforce. A decade of research proves that happiness raises nearly every business and educational outcome: raising sales by 37%, productivity by 31% and accuracy on tasks by 19%. (p. 1)

Achor questioned if a company could do anything to raise the happiness levels of an employee to foster and create greater productivity. One could conclude that employee happiness and self-empowerment can be related to the leadership of a company or an educational facility within which the leadership style come into consideration. Achor (2011) studied the management styles in a KPMG International executive office and conducted a study based on employee outcome and training. He concluded that every single positive metric improved significantly through each of the trainings. (Achor, 2018, p. 2).

One can utilize this theory and understanding of happiness to bring about a change theory in an educational setting. All educational settings and school districts rely on student success and achievement. That is the measurement of all companies or districts. Leadership styles and administrative skills are the key components to determine the culture and environment of a district. Utilizing Achor's belief that leadership styles determine employee happiness (self-empowerment), improving achievement and growth can be directly linked to administrative leadership styles and teachers' self-empowerment. Those teachers who feel self-empowered are, in return, happier in their workplace.

According to Ghosh (2018), "workplace happiness is one of the most valued and pursued goals of an organization. Researchers, scholars and practitioners have

acknowledged the benefits that a happy workforce brings to the table its enormous contributions to business outcomes” (p. 55). Creating a level of success comes from leadership and the top-down method of building a positive culture. Those leadership styles determine whether a company is successful or not. Relating this theory to the educational field, administrators, specifically building-level administrators, have a great impact on the culture of the building. A school principal can make or break a school’s culture based on their leadership styles. Positive and strong leadership skills can improve the morale, culture, and empowerment of the faculty and staff. In return, this culture trickles down to the students.

In 2012, Achor reflected that “every business outcome reports improvement when the brain is positive” (p. 6). He argued that happiness is a precursor to success throughout various levels. While working with Fortune 500 companies, Achor studied management and leadership styles to determine how strong management skills lead to happier employees and company growth and improvement. The more empowered and happier the employees felt, the more productive they were in the workplace.

Empowerment has been defined as a process where school participants develop their skills and grow in knowledge to resolve their own problems (Short, 1994). Empowered individuals believe they have the skills and knowledge to act on a situation and improve it. Empowerment in a school can be viewed as an organization that creates opportunities for competence and growth that can be displayed. Frymier (1987) stated that, “In any attempt to improve education, teachers are central” (p. 9), indicating that teachers should be included in meaningful ways to participate in the critical areas of activity and in organizational goals. Short (1994) researched and described the six

empirically derived dimensions of teacher empowerment, which are involvement in decision-making, teacher impact, teacher status, autonomy, opportunities for professional development, and teacher self-efficacy. “An understanding of the six dimensions should provide the bases for developing strategies for helping teachers become more empowered in their work lives” (Short, 1994, p. 3). Short concluded that low self-empowerment in teachers reveals significant problems with teachers’ work. Teachers are isolated from their colleagues, and many teachers are not involved in many of the decisions within the school—specifically decisions made outside of their classrooms.

The relationship between leadership and empowerment began with research into self-efficacy by Bandura (1997) and the models of leadership created by Avolio et al. (1999). Bandura (year) created a framework and working definitions for efficacy and self-efficacy, which guide current research. Avolio et al. created working distinctions in leadership, defining transformational and transactional leadership as well as laissez-faire. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) developed the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale to measure efficacy in teachers. This instrument measures the factors of student engagement, instructional practices, and classroom management and their correlation to efficacy. These factors, when put together, indicate the level to which a teacher feels able to run a successful classroom.

One may be able to determine a successful leader based on student achievement and successes. However, with NCLB (2002), buildings had to shift toward creating a curriculum as a whole and educating each child as one. Struggling schools had to work together to implement changes to help these struggling students succeed. A successful leader can be measured by the success of a leader’s school, however, it takes more than

one leader to create a climate of inclusivity and educational soundness. With the willingness and assistance of teachers, a school building can be successful.

Empowering teachers to motivate and inspire is the first step to moving in the right direction toward a successful school building. Teacher empowerment has become an integral part of school reform. Teacher empowerment has become increasingly visible within current trends related to educational best practices (Sharp, 2009)The empowerment of employees serves as a significant factor in the success of the schools, businesses, or other organizations in which people are working toward a common goal.

Sharp's (2009) study was used to determine if a relationship exists between teacher empowerment and school principal effectiveness. The research design included the collection of quantitative data to obtain a greater understanding of and detail about the relationships between teacher empowerment and principal effectiveness as perceived by teachers.

The population study was taken from a large Kansas City, Missouri suburban school district. Out of 330 surveys distributed, 101 teachers responded. Overall, 20 correlations were examined in the study. Three domains of the APE were correlated with the six subscales of the SPES forming 18 correlations. The sample consisted of 101 teachers in three different high schools. Utilizing two independent survey instruments, the Audit of Principal Effectiveness (APE), to measure teachers' perceptions of school principal effectiveness and the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) to assess the teachers' perceptions of empowerment, Sharp (2009) was able to determine 18 significant relationships between the scores of the domains and the subscales of the surveys. The data showed correlations between the domains of organizational



development, organizational environment, and educational program among the subscale of professional growth, which was statistically significant. Sharp's (2009) findings help to conclude that based on the data, specific school principal skills relating to the domains had an influence on teacher empowerment.

This current study relates to Achor's (2012) discussion of the Pygmalion effect. This effect was demonstrated in the well-known psychological experiment performed in the 20th century. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) went into an elementary school to administer intelligence tests to the students of the building. The researchers told the teachers the names of student who "the data had identified as academic superstars, the ones with the greatest potential" (Achor, 2012, p. 83). The researchers asked the educators not to spend any more or less time with the students, and not to make the students aware of their scores. At the end of the school year, the students were tested again. Those students tested exceedingly in intellectual ability. The truth behind the study was that the researchers randomly picked those student names to provide to the teachers. There was not any score or factual evidence behind the names provided to the teachers. Researchers concluded that two factors came into effect for the students to achieve such success on the tests. "The belief that the teachers had in the students' potential had been unwittingly and nonverbally communicated. More important, these nonverbal messages were then digested by the students and transformed into reality." This is known as the Pygmalion effect, which is that our belief in another person's potential brings that potential to life. This study was utilized throughout the educational field for years. When someone empowers a person, verbally or non-verbally, that person achieves and succeeds. Leadership styles and leaders can empower their faculty and staff so that they

feel important and valued. Those teachers will have a higher perception of self-empowerment based on the type of leadership in their school building.

A qualitative study by Rushton (2003) was conducted to determine and measure two intern teachers' self-efficacy and growth while teaching in an inner-city school. Through the analysis of four interviews, 12 written reflections and seven transcribed group discussions, the teachers' self-efficacy grew stronger. As they worked through their conflicts, they changed the way they thought about teaching in the school and improved their personal and practical knowledge. The two participants in this study were African American, female intern university teachers who spent a year interning in the elementary school. Both women were completing their master's degrees that specialized in urban/multicultural education.

It does not appear there is known research that exists on the perspective of preservice teachers within inner-city schools. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) concluded, the "dominant paradigms in research on teachers over the past 20 years have excluded the student teachers' choices, questions and interpretive frames" (p. 45). The U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sterling McMurrin, had warned that the quality of American education was in danger nearly 40 years ago (Conant, 1963). *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Educational Reform* (Holmes Group, 1983) followed up that the educational situation had deteriorated even more since 1963. Educational theorists were unsure as to the cause and how to fix the educational system in America.

Prior to the Rushton (2003) study, the only foundation in research regarding the deterioration of education in the United States was in 1997, when the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for*

*America's Future*, referenced important recommendations to turn the system around. The recommendations included raising standards for incoming students as well as for incoming and new teachers. This began with university preparation for the teacher students and professional development for established teachers. Educational facilities had to hire with recruitment standards for employees. However, none of these recommendations included the inner-city schools and the need for highly qualified teachers in those schools.

The primary narratives of the Rushton (2003) study consisted of four in-depth, semi-structured interviews, spaced out over the course of the academic year in which the participants completed their student teaching. The interviews were conducted at a local coffee shop away from both the university and the school. Each interview began with open-ended questions, such as “Tell me the story of the events that led up to you being in this program,” (Rushton, 2003, p. 52). In addition to the four interviews, each participant agreed to write a two-page reflection each week for the first 4 months of the study. Each wrote a total of 12 reflections. The third source consisted of weekly taped discussions that the participants had with other students from their university cohort during the first 3 months of the study. The researcher listened to the audio tapes and read the various written reflection papers from each of the participants. The reflections were coded, and common themes and threads were discussed. Subthemes were created based on the common themes as the weeks progressed. During the course of the year, the participants’ views on conflict and issues greatly changed.

Throughout this process, Rushton (2003) observed a number of changes in how the participants perceived themselves and their ability to deal with conflict in their lives.

Concerns, such as mentoring teachers along with students' behaviors, and the lack of support from the university were common threads. As the participants grew accustomed to the new situation, they expanded their coping skills and came to believe that they would be able to teach. Both teachers experienced initial shock and personal conflict during the first several weeks of school, which lasted for about a month. There was a contrast between what they thought the teaching experience in an inner-city school would be like compared to what they were doing.

A limitation in the Rushton study was that growth is natural in the maturation process. These participants were growing as time passed and they were learning more. They became familiarized with their daily routine and schedule, easing a lot of tension and stress that they had had. This caused their conflict and doubt to go away within the first month. Another limitation on the study was the population/sample size and generalization across subjects. The extent to which one can generalize from the sample to the target population, it is difficult to generalize across a small sample size of two. The two participants were both African American females and both were in the same program at the university and worked as interns in the same school. This is not representative of the entire population or group. The participants attended a small school within a small setting. The teacher was also the researcher and was providing the treatment. This could have caused bias to the Rushton study. Although both participants were African Americans teaching predominantly African American students, the participants felt a great discrepancy between their personal norms and those of their students. There also appeared to be a perception from the participants' instructors and other students that, because they were African American, they ought to understand the experiences of these

inner-city students. Over time, both participants adjusted to the environments in which they worked, and their self-efficacy began to grow and encourage their self-empowerment (Rushton, 2003).

A qualitative study conducted by Yasmineen et al. (2019) explore the existing level of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among special education secondary school teachers to improve the quality of education in special education school at secondary level in Pakistan. The study was conducted within two government special education secondary schools of the hearing impaired, visual impaired, and physically impaired children in Punjab, Pakistan. The participants were 38 hearing-impaired children and 11 visual-impaired children. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with nine head teachers at the special education secondary schools. The interview process included four opened-ended questions. All interviews were audio recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim, and observation notes were taken by the researcher. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select the male and female special education teachers at the school district. Prior to initiating the interviews, the participants completed a demographic data collection form that included their gender, age, qualification, and experience. The interviews were conducted in the Urdu language. . The data were analyzed to draw conclusions by using a thematic analysis approach. The researcher listened to the audio recording of the interview numerous times to become familiar with the data and then the transcripts of the interviews were prepared. Transcribed data were then translated from Urdu into English.

The findings of the Yasmineen et al. (2019) study indicated that the special education teachers were motivated based on intrinsic and extrinsic themes. The intrinsic

themes were satisfaction, achievement, and joy. The extrinsic themes were based on promotion, salary, and facilities. The main finding of the researchers were that most teachers received motivation in the form of feeling enjoyment, honor, interest, and achievements. The outside factors of motivation for the teachers were low in value such as a limited chances of promotion, low salaries, limited facilities, and no job security.

In 2019, Francisco's research study was aimed at investigating the effects of school principals' transformational leadership styles on teachers' self-efficacy. To conduct this study, Francisco used a sample of 260 secondary teachers in the Plaridel District, SDO-Buclan during the 2018–2019 academic school year. The instrumentation of the Multifactor-Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 5X, by Bass and Avolio (1998), along with the Teachers' Self-Efficacy Scale 1, by Tschanmen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) were used to describe the transformational leadership styles of the school principals along with teachers' self-efficacy.

The Francisco (2019) study utilized the descriptive-correlational method of research between the independent and dependent variables. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5X measured leadership regarding 10 factors related to transformational leadership styles, and it consisted of 45 questions. The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale 1 consisted of three parts with 24 questions, which sought to gather responses on the teachers' self-efficacy based on the subscales of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. The researcher distributed and collected all questionnaires to the participants personally.

All data were processed through SPSS system, and it was concluded that the transformational leadership styles of the school principals were satisfactory. The higher

level of assessment was in the categories of inspirational motivation, contingent reward, effectiveness, and satisfaction. Francisco (2019) concluded:

Significant management implications were drawn from the findings in the study:

1. The need for the school principals to make more active involvements in planning and implementing school activities,
2. The need to enhance the clarification of roles from leaders to followers, offering the contingent rewards towards work completion,
3. And the need to enhance school principals' competencies in doing strategic planning which may define clearly the schools' vision-mission statement near to its actualization.

A quantitative study by Valckx et al. (2020) examined the relationships within an interpersonal personal learning community (PLC) characteristics (collective responsibility, reflective dialogue, and practice). Previous research on the influence of these interpersonal PLC characteristics had generally been conducted through small-scale qualitative studies. Any previous large-scale quantitative studies that confirmed the interplay between these interpersonal PLC characteristics were therefore needed (Bryk et al., 1999; Hargreaves, 2007). The study aimed to enhance the researchers' understanding of how certain school context and teacher factors (transformational leadership by the principal, teacher autonomy, and teachers' self-efficacy) can facilitate the development and improvement of interpersonal PLC characteristics within a school setting.

Valckx et al. (2020) utilized the data from an online teacher survey and collected data from 324 teachers of mathematics, French, and general studies in 80 departments of 33 secondary schools in Flanders, Belgium. The sample included 267 (82.4%) female and 57 (17.6%) male teachers. A path analysis approach was based on the data from the

online teacher survey, which was conducted to investigate the research questions: How is collective responsibility, as a mental characteristic of PLCs, related to reflective dialogue and practice as behavioral characteristics of PLCs?, How are transformational leadership by the principal and teacher autonomy as school context factors related to collective responsibility, reflective dialogue, and practice as interpersonal characteristics of PLCs? How are transformational leadership by the principal and teacher autonomy as school context factors indirectly related to collective responsibility, reflective dialogue, and practice as interpersonal characteristics of PLCs via teachers' self-efficacy?

Through the use of a path analysis, a hypothesized model of relationships between the variables was tested to statistically determine the extent to which it is consistent with the data that was presented. The sample comprised 149 mathematics teachers (46.0%), 137 French teachers (42.3%), and 38 teachers of general studies (11.7%). The average teaching experience was 15.31 years ( $SD = 9.88$ ), varying from 1 year to 41 years. The construction of the theoretical model included many factors, such as school principal leadership and teacher autonomy as well as self-efficacy at the teacher level. The subscales measure three interpersonal PLC characteristics: collective responsibility, reflective dialogue, and practice.

The constant controls for the study were the two variables of demographics based on teacher variables, gender, and teaching experience. The researchers provided descriptive statistics and correlations for all the study variables. A path analysis, a regression, and a chi-squared test was conducted to take into account the fact that observations are not independent because of cluster sampling. The results indicated that the descriptive statistics and correlations showed that teachers felt a collective



responsibility for student learning in their department ( $M = 3.82$ ;  $SD = .65$ ). For transformational leadership by the school principal ( $M = 3.70$ ;  $SD = .68$ ), teacher autonomy ( $M = 3.76$ ;  $SD = .43$ ), and teachers' self-efficacy ( $M = 3.67$ ;  $SD = .46$ ), the means were rather high. This indicates that the teachers perceived their school principal as a leader who frequently exhibited transformational practices, that they experienced freedom in their school, and that they strongly believed in their ability to achieve goals. (Valckx et al., 2020).

Based on the data from the Valckx et al. research study, it was concluded that there was a positive direct relationship between transformational leadership by a school principal and teachers' collective responsibility. The greater the teachers' perceptions of their principal as a transformational leader, the greater their perceptions of collective responsibility in their department. (Valckx et al., 2020). Teacher autonomy has no direct significant relationships with collective responsibility and reflective dialogue.

There were limitations in the Valckx et al. (2020) study. The researchers only used the self-reported data from the teachers, the participants were volunteers, and this limited the sample size. The study also only involved the subjects and teachers from the mathematics, French, and general studies departments. Future research should include the same study with broader subjects and more teachers in other school districts/levels.

Sehgal et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study to explore the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teacher effectiveness. The research was to explore the role of collaboration among school teachers and school principal leadership throughout India. The purpose of the research came about because there is little evidence and informational studies on self-efficacy in India. Sehgal et al. (2017) stated,

There is a significant teacher shortage in India, which is a ‘Right to Education’ area. Being that this is a fundamental right in the Constitution of India, it becomes essential to ensure quality education and teachers are one of the most important assets.” (p. 349).

The researchers collected data from 575 secondary school teachers and 6,020 students representing Grade 6–12 from 25 privately owned schools in India. Teacher self-efficacy, collaboration, and school principal leadership were reported by the teachers, and the effectiveness of each teacher was captured from approximately 10 students each who were taught by the corresponding teacher. Data were analyzed using SEM-PLS.

Participation in this study was voluntary. Through a cross-sectional research design, the data were collected in two rounds, with a time gap of 6 months. In the first round, the participating teachers had taught students for 8 months in duration. In the second round, the teachers had taught students for a 2-month duration. To examine the perceived teacher effectiveness, a 25-item version of the Students’ Evaluation of Teaching Rating Scale, developed by Toland and De Ayala (2005). Teacher self-efficacy was measured using the shortened version of the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), and it had three dimensions: student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management Sehgal et al., (2017).

The research results confirmed a positive association between teacher self-efficacy and three dimensions of teacher effectiveness, namely, teachers’ delivery of course information, teachers’ role in facilitating teacher-student interactions, and teachers’ role in regulating students’ learning. Results also confirmed that both collaboration and school principal leadership are positively related to teacher self-

efficacy. Collaboration among teachers was positively related to teacher self-efficacy. This would lead to future research in the area for school improvement. The research indicated that schools need to focus on enhancing self-efficacy of their teachers and give importance to teacher collaboration and school principal leadership to improve their effectiveness in terms of the subscales of delivery of instruction and teacher-student interactions. A limitation in the Sehgal et al. research was a gap in collecting participant data. There were two time gaps between surveys and data collection. The data were collected in two rounds, with a time gap of 6 months. This time lapse could have skewed the data and perceptions of the participants of the study because their judgements and perceptions may have changed over time. Growth is natural in the maturation process and the participants were growing as time passed and they were gaining more knowledge than they had at the start of the study.

Riggs (2017) performed a correlational study between teacher-perceived high school principal leadership style and teacher self-efficacy. Riggs utilized this quantitative correlational study to determine the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and leadership style. Riggs (2017) found that “a relationship existed between teacher self-efficacy and student outcomes and research indicated a relationship between leadership style and teacher self-efficacy. Also, the effect of principal leadership on teacher self-efficacy indicated a relationship to classroom effectiveness” (p. 66).

The Riggs study consisted of 139 certified high school teachers from rural public high schools in the state of South Dakota. The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between teacher-perceived principal leadership style, as measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 2015),

and the self-efficacy of rural South Dakota high school teachers, as measured by the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale.

Bandura (1997) stated that self-efficacy is a belief in one's personal capabilities. People with high self-efficacy take control over their lives with high goals and by meeting difficult challenges. These people employ excellent coping strategies and demonstrate optimism and move forward in the face of adversity (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy can be strengthened through mastery experiences, modeling, social persuasion, and enhancing one's physiological state. Individuals beliefs in their efficacy can affect their psychological well-being and performance.

As the need for qualified special education teachers increases, the number of qualified special education teachers available for hire is decreasing. As more positions are vacated, children will not have the benefit of a special education teacher and may receive instruction from a substitute.

A correlational analysis design study was conducted by Sciarretto (2019) to identify the relationships of self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and professional development opportunities of special education teachers. Sciarretto explored the relationships between variables using correlational and descriptive statistical analysis. The participants for this study were drawn from a suburban high school in Western Connecticut. Thirteen special education teachers with Connecticut Special Education certification and holding a teaching position were sought out to participate in the study. The data were collected through three surveys given to the proposed target population.

Twelve special education teachers completed the Special Education Teacher Retention Survey, the Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale , and the Job Satisfaction Index

via SurveyMonkey. The research questions for the study focused on the correlations of self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and professional development for high school special education teachers.

A weak positive correlation was found in relation to the variables of self-efficacy and professional development, and a positive correlation was found with the variables of self-advocacy and professional development. There was no correlation found regarding experience and self-efficacy and professional development. Descriptive analysis revealed positive responses regarding individual items.

A study conducted by Steele-Dadzie (2004) compared the relationships among teacher self-efficacy, student self-efficacy, and student performance in an affluent and high performing school district in New Jersey within three schools. The researcher investigated the relationships among 34 Grade 8 teachers' self-efficacy, 133 students' self-efficacy and performance. A total sample size of 167 individuals participated in this study. The use of scales determined the measurement of the teachers and students' perceptions of academic efficacy. The performance variables consisted of the students' second semester grades and their New Jersey Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA).

The primary purpose of the study was to compare the relationships of teacher self-efficacy, student self-efficacy, and student performance. Steele-Dadzie (2004) defined motivation and self-efficacy/self-beliefs as "I can" (self-efficacy) and "I cannot" (helplessness), and the researcher utilized a Likert-scale rating among the teachers and students. The researcher discussed the numerous sources used throughout the study and cited nine sources in his literature review. The demographic variables of interest were

gender, ethnicity, and school. Information on the schools was provided on the self-efficacy forms and by collecting data for each school separately. The schools also provided data on gender based on the GEPA registration forms. All (100%) the studies reviewed measured perceived self-efficacy by using a self-reported scale. This is an indication of the preponderance of quantitative research among the reviewed studies. The Likert scale, which provides a range of response options, ranged from a 4-point scale to a 100-point scale. There were two 4-, 7-, and 10-point scales, five 5-point scales (41%), and one each of 6- and 10-point scales. The 5-point scale was the most widely used scale among the 12 articles reviewed.

Steele-Dadzie (2004) utilized two scales, Bandura's (1997) Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale and Bandura's (1997) Children Self-Efficacy Scale. Teacher and student responses on the self-efficacy questionnaires were recorded as raw scores based on a 7-point scale for the students and a 9-point scale for the teachers. These scales had subscales: efficacy to influence decision-making, efficacy to influence school resources, instructional efficacy, disciplinary efficacy, efficacy to enlist parental involvement, efficacy to enlist community involvement, and efficacy to create a positive school environment.

Two sets of measures of academic achievement were also used in the Steele-Dadzie (2004) study. The first consisted of the children's grades in math, science, and language arts for the marking period immediately preceding the administration of the GEPA. The second measure of academic achievement, the GEPA, was taken by the students in March 2003 and was used as the primary criterion variable.

In summary, the female students perceived themselves as more efficacious for all of these variables except regarding self-efficacy for leisure and extracurricular activities.

The males and females did not differ in self-efficacy for academic achievement, for social self-efficacy, and for self-assertive efficacy. The findings from this review suggested that self-efficacy beliefs play an important role in predicting academic performance.

A limitation of the Steele-Dadzie (2004) study was that an analysis was not conducted to explore a direct relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student performance because most of the teachers did not provide their name on the questionnaire. This did not allow the researcher to identify which students were associated with their subjects and the relationship between student performance on the GEPA. Another limitation was the location and population of the study. It was conducted in an affluent school district and it only studied three schools. This study was not representative of the entire state or area. The sample consisted of 133 students with School #3 contributing the highest number of students, 75, or 56% of the sample. The sample consisted of close to equal numbers of male and female students. The results were also highly skewed toward School #3, which contributed more than 50% of the students in the sample. The data were also skewed in the direction of teachers who had more than 10 years of teaching experience.

This researcher took the Steele-Dadzie (2004) study into consideration when conducting this research. Although the study is not focused on the student self-efficacy, the researcher feels that the higher the teacher self-efficacy, the better the students will perform. This stems from the leaders of the building and their specific leadership styles. The Steele-Dadzie (2004) study focused on change theory and self-efficacy, which was studied within this researcher's district. The researcher also incorporated the theory shown in Figure 1, along with change theory to determine which leadership styles

affected teacher empowerment. The idea of personal mastery among teachers and involvement in decision-making, such as professional development and leadership styles, can have an impact on teachers' self-empowerment. Utilizing the theory presented by Achor (2010), the happiness advantage theory purports that the more self-empowered/happy an employee is, the better the outcome is for the business/school. The researcher studied these ideas of Achor (2011) to question if his framework on the business aspect of productivity, happiness, and leadership could be relevant in a school district educational setting.



## CHAPTER 3

### Research Questions

1. To what extent is there a relationship between administrators' leadership styles and teacher self-empowerment?
2. How do administrators' leadership styles shift the mindsets of teachers' self-empowerment within the subscales of relationships, task orientation, and climate/structure?
3. What influence do administrators' leadership styles have on teacher self-empowerment in a secondary public school district within the three subscales of involvement, decision-making, and responsibility?

### Research Methodology

This study focused on the human relations theory which explored leadership styles (LS) with teacher self-empowerment (SE) through faculty perceptions of leadership styles within their building. Through a series of triangulated analyses and an explanatory mixed-methods approach, participants were administered a survey on the perceptions of teacher self-empowerment and their administrators' leadership style ( $n = 73$ ). In addition, a total of 12 study participants volunteered to participate in one of two focus groups with six participants in each focus group.

The information collected was utilized to focus on the psychology of the teachers through their assessment of leadership styles and its' influence/impact on perceived teachers' self-empowerment. Through the analysis change theory, positive psychology, and an examination of Harvard graduate and professor Shawn Achor's research for over a decade, the researcher examined Achor's business model and correlational

relationship between leadership styles, happiness, and success. The researcher conducted the study to determine that this model does in effect work in the educational school setting between leaders and leadership styles and teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment. The study also explored the subscales of leadership styles researched by Harvard graduate and Happiness coach, Shawn Achor, along with a self-empowerment Likert-scaled survey, "School Participant Empowerment Scale" developed by Paula M. Short. The participants in this study ( $n = 73$ ) were general education teachers within two secondary schools, (Grades 6–12) which consisted of 150 teachers. A total of 73 participants were part of the study along with two focus groups consisting of 6 educators in each.

### **Setting**

This research study focused on an entire group of secondary general education teachers within two secondary schools that instructed Grades 6–12 in a public school district located in a suburban area in the northeastern part of the United States, and it consisted of 150 educators to sample for this study. Out of the 150 targeted participants, 73 volunteered for the study (48.7%). At the time of this study, the school district was ranked within the top 5% of all 4,239 schools in New York State, consisting of 3,678 students in Grades K–12. This information consisted of combined math and reading proficiency testing data for the 2018–2019 school year (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2020). The school also had a 95.5% graduation rate, the teacher-to-student ratio was 12:1, and the median household income is \$119,950.

The researcher received written permission from the two school principals of the two secondary level buildings as well as the written permission from the Superintendent

of Schools. The creator of the School Participant Empowerment Scale, Short (1994), granted permission to the researcher for use of her instrument. At the time of this study, the researcher worked in the location of the study. The researcher was a former teacher in one of the study buildings and was serving as an administrator in that building. The researcher administered the study through a survey and two focus groups consisting of six people each. Each participant in the focus group was asked the same five questions, which were open-ended questions. The researcher documented all of the answers onto a color-coded note sheet. The self-empowerment survey was administered through a faculty meeting and a follow up email link was used for the participants to complete. The faculty was made aware of the survey and its purposes prior to the distribution of the survey link. All participants signed a consent form and were guaranteed anonymity as well as the decision to remove themselves from the study at any point in time.

The researcher was aware that there could be a bias as an administrator and supervisor of the secondary general education teachers. The researcher made it clear that the survey would be anonymous and no one would be known who participated. The focus groups were determined by volunteer participants as well as random selection, which was not needed. The focus groups consisted of 12 participants total: five male and seven female educators. The two focus groups ( $n = 12$ ) consisted of 6 participants in each group. Each participant was asked the same five open-ended questions relating to their perceptions of positive leaders and leadership styles which leads to positive self-empowerment among faculty and staff.

1. How do you feel a successful leader incorporates task orientation into his/her leadership style, and is this important to you as an educator in that building?
2. How do you feel a successful leader approaches climate and structure of the building into his/her leadership style, and is this important to you as an educator in that building?
3. How are relationships among faculty/staff and leaders effective for a leader and his/her leadership style, and how is this important to you as an educator in that building?
4. What leadership styles make a successful leader and an unsuccessful leader in which you as an educator in that building feel self-empowered or unappreciated?
5. What do you feel is the relationship between leadership styles among building/district leaders and teachers' self-empowerment?

### **Survey/Instrument**

The researcher utilized the School Participant Empowerment Scale, survey by Short and Rinehart (1992a, 1992b). The authors granted permission for use to the researcher prior to the start of the study. The survey consisted of 38 Likert-scale questions based on the subscales of involvement, decision-making, and responsibilities (Appendix C). The researcher coded each question based on the subscales that determined the relationships and correlations between teacher self-empowerment and administrators' leadership styles based on those subscales (Table 1). The questions were divided into the three subscales to determine the correlation between the teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment among the subscales.

**Table 1***Coding of Survey Questions in Subscales*

Subscales	Questions	Color
Involvement	3, 4, 8, 12, 16, 19, 25, 26, 30, 31, 37, 38	Red
Decision Making	5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 17, 23, 24, 30, 35	Orange
Responsibilities	1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 36	Green

**Participants/Sample**

The sample of 73 participants consisted of educators who worked as both middle school and high school teachers and who taught Grades 6–10. Out of the 73 participants, 28 were male and 45 were female, (Table 2). Each participant ranged in years’ experience from 1 to 22 years ( $M = 9.32$ ,  $SD = 6.037$ ). The survey that was distributed to the participants was developed by Short (1994, Appendix A). The survey included 38 questions regarding the mindset and opinion of each individual educator. All the questions were answered in the form of an emotional response scale rated as 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly Agree*. The survey evaluated the perceptions of the teachers’ sense of self-empowerment among the subscales of the leadership styles of relationships, task orientation, and climate/structure based on research by Achor (2011).

Two focus groups were created with six participants in each ( $N = 12$ ). The teachers were both male ( $n = 5$ ) and female ( $n = 7$ ) and were employed within the public school district in which the study took place, which was located in a suburban area in the northeastern part of the United States. This study sample provided a diverse group of educators of various ages and ethnicities in the school district. Utilizing the information

outlined by Krueger (2002), the researcher asked the two focus groups the same five open-ended questions. The researcher also established a systematic notification system, transcription, coding, and communication strategies as stated by Krueger, to collect the data.

The sampling method was simple random sampling in which each member of the district throughout the two buildings was given an equal opportunity and probability of being asked to take the survey. An advantage of this random method of sampling is that the survey was equally distributed among all participants. However, the researcher was aware that there could be a limitation because the survey could have been biased. This mixed-methods study took place in the a public school district in which the researcher was employed at the time of this study and this study was not representative of every school district in the northeastern part of the United States.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of Participants in Study*

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Female	45	61.6
Male	28	38.4

*Note.* There were 73 participants in the sample, and no observations had missing or miscoded data.

### **Data Collecting Procedures**

District administrators were contacted and granted the researcher written permission to complete the research study throughout the school district and the specific buildings.

The survey was presented, discussed, and administered via Google Forms at a faculty

meeting. The survey was emailed to each secondary teacher's private school-issued email on their school-issued device. The Superintendent of Schools granted the researcher written permission to complete the study in the district and to administer the study to faculty in those two buildings. The Superintendent allowed the researcher to utilize faculty meeting time in both buildings to discuss the study as well as to handout consent forms. Short (1994) granted permission to the research to use the survey School Participant Empowerment Scale in the study. The survey consisted of 38 questions regarding the mindset and opinion of each individual educator. All the questions were answered in the form of an emotional response scale rated as 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly Agree*. This survey evaluated the perceptions of the educators' self-empowerment within the school district to determine if there was a correlation or relationship between self-empowerment and the perception of the administrators' leadership styles based on the subscales of responsibility, task orientation, and climate/structure.

All information was given to the participants in both written and oral form. The educators were provided with a written description and consent form for participation in the research study, which all were returned prior to the study starting. The survey was administered through a Google Forms document, which was the primary method of instruction in this school district, and the survey was anonymous to all.

Two focus groups were developed based on the participants who took the survey and returned the consent forms. The 12 volunteer participants of the focus groups were divided into two focus groups consisting of six participants in each group. The researcher

provided the groups with a series of five identical open-ended questions based on the subscales from the School Participant Empowerment Scale (Short, 1994).

All data were collected, downloaded to Microsoft Excel, and then uploaded to the SPSS system management tool, which were analyzed by the researcher. The researcher conducted a data analysis and produced a written report to discuss the findings. The study was conducted in a suburban high school in a district in the northeastern part of the United States. One factor that had to be taken into consideration was the previous 2.5 school years were different than most because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This made educational programs limited and much instruction was delivered virtually. The electronic details of the pandemic also put a great deal stress on the school districts and on the teachers emotionally and financially. This may have skewed the survey of self-empowerment given the emotional strain within school districts during this pandemic and with the utilization of virtual instruction, to hybrid instruction, and finally back to in-person teaching with limitations.

### **Trustworthiness of the Design**

The criteria used by this research to ensure trustworthiness include credibility, dependability, and transferability. The interviews during the focus groups were recorded and verbatim notetaking was used to verify the credibility of the participants' answers. Triangulation of the data was used with various sources of data, such as field notes, interview transcriptions, color coding, and survey answers to ensure the dependability of the study. According to Krefting (1991),

The triangulated data sources are methods to assess against one another for cross-checking data and interpretation. This strategy of providing various slices of data



also minimizes distortion from a single data source or from a biased researcher, as may be the case in data based on a single application of one measure.

### **Research Ethics**

The voluntary participants were provided information regarding the study during a faculty meeting both verbally and in written form. The participants were emailed the survey to their work-assigned emails along with a Google Form link. The participants were given 2 weeks to complete the survey. The participants were ensured confidentiality as the survey did not ask for a name or any details of the participants identity, which would jeopardize the participants. The group of educators provided their consent on the consent form prior to taking the survey, which was also included in the survey instructions. There was an introduction page explaining that the survey would be anonymous and that participation is voluntary.

During the two focus groups, each participant was issued a number instead of using their names, which aligned with their open-ended answers to the questions. At any time throughout the survey, if any participant felt that they did not want to continue, they could have stopped answering the questions, and their survey would have been discarded. This was not an issue during the survey because all 73 participants took the survey, and the 12 participants who were a part of the focus groups did not stop their participation.

### **Data Analysis Approach**

The data collected from the survey were analyzed and input into the SPSS system management tool. The variables and information input was utilized for the researcher to run a descriptive table. The descriptive statistics of items was put into a chart with the correct demographic data and characteristics of the participants in this study. The

descriptive statistics included the mean self-empowerment scores and the median and standard deviations figures. All data were calculated in the descriptive statistics as well. A linear regression analysis was completed to determine the differences in the relationship between the sense of self-empowerment and the administrators' leadership style subscales, and all information was coded to determine if there were any relationships or correlations between the teachers' self-empowerment scores and the administrators' leadership style subscales.

Given the small population of the participant sample and respondents ( $n = 73$ ), the findings did not have strong statistical validity and this caused weak reliability, trustworthiness, and validity. One cannot generalize by this sample that it represents all like individuals. Surveys tend to be polarized where one is not getting a representation of the range of individuals out in the general public.

### **Researcher Role**

The researcher was aware that there might have been a slight bias because the researcher, at the time of this study, was an administrator and supervisor of the secondary general education teachers in this study. The researcher clarified to all participants that the survey would be anonymous and that it would not be known who participated. The volunteer participants determined the focus groups. During the focus groups, the researcher was neutral and provided the same five open ended questions to each participant while taking notes, coding, and recording.

### **Conclusion**

The researcher utilized various methods to conduct this study to determine if there was a correlation and influence/impact on teacher self-empowerment as it related to

administrators' leadership styles. During this study, the research involved multiple sources for data collection such as the survey and two focus groups. The two focus groups consisted of six educators per group who also volunteered to participate in the study. Utilizing the information outlined by Krueger (2022), the researcher asked the focus groups the same five open-ended questions. The researcher also established a systematic notification system and transcription and communication strategies as stated by Kruger, to collect the data. This data collected over time involved multiple sources of information that were analyzed into a qualitative study, downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet, and then uploaded to SPSS system management tool, which was analyzed by the researcher.

## CHAPTER 4

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment and administrative leadership styles. Utilizing a Likert-scaled survey as well as focus groups, the researcher was able to utilize participants in secondary education. This chapter presents key findings obtained from the 73 participants in the study and 12 participants split into two focus groups. The focus group transcripts were organized into separate files that included each participant's answers to each individual interview question and was coded by the researcher.

Through a series of triangulated analyses and an explanatory mixed-methods approach, the teacher participants were administered a self-empowerment, Likert-scaled survey, the School Participant Empowerment Scale, developed by Paula M. Short, to determine their perceptions of leadership styles. The study explored the subscales of leadership styles researched by Harvard graduate and Happiness Coach, Shawn Achor.

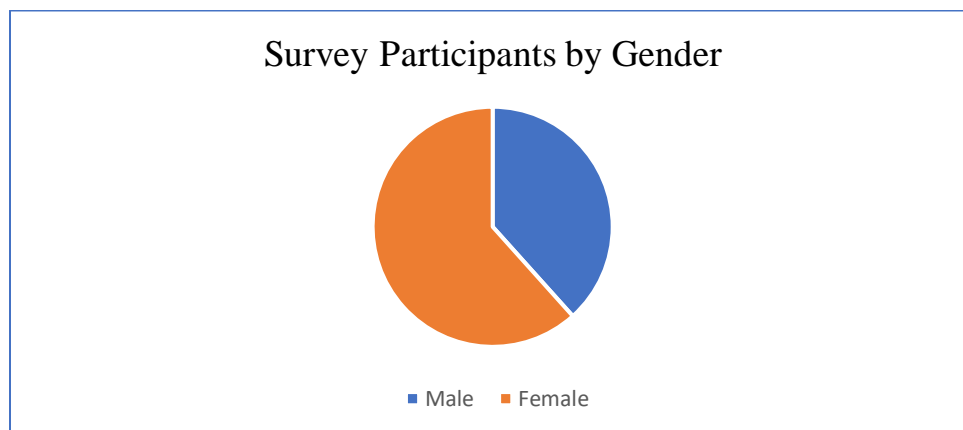
Several sources of data, such as the survey answers and the information drawn from the two focus groups, were analyzed into a qualitative study. The study also focused on the domains of leadership styles relating to relationships, climate/structure, and task orientation. The teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment were measured through the subscales of involvement, decision-making, and responsibility. Subsequently, the use of SPSS Management System was utilized to analyze data collected from the survey. Microsoft Excel and Word were utilized to code and organize the focus group data collected during the interviews.

This study compared the culture of the school buildings with a focus on change theory to compare transformational leadership styles. Utilizing the framework set forth by Achor, the theory of positive psychology in the workplace determined the correlation between the teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment and their administrators' leadership styles.

The sample of 73 participants consisted of educators who worked as both middle school and high school teachers (Table 2, Table 3) and who taught Grades 6–10. Out of the 73 participants, 28 were male and 45 were female (Figure 2). Each participant ranged in years' experience from 1 to 22 years ( $M = 9.32$ ,  $SD = 6.037$ ). The survey included 38 questions regarding the mindset and opinion of each individual educator. This led to a conclusion of the data that there is an impact/influence on three specific subscales of leadership styles that have the greatest influential impact on teacher's perceptions of self-empowerment. Evidence supporting the findings for each research question is presented using themes supported by verbatim quotes relevant to the particular research question.

**Figure 2**

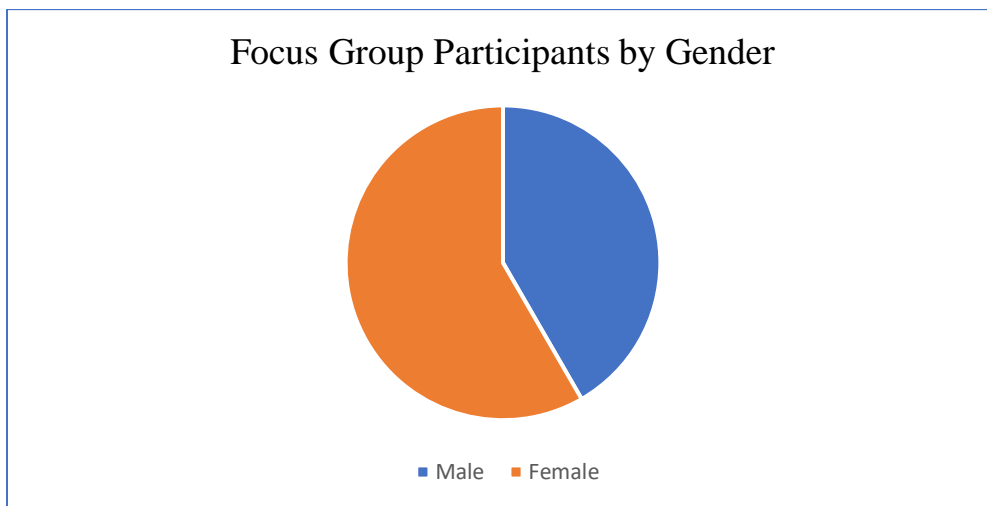
*Survey Participants by Gender*



The focus groups consisted of 12 participants in which 5 were male and 7 were female. The two focus groups ( $n = 12$ ) consisted of 6 participants in each group, (Figure 3). Each participant was asked the same five open-ended questions relating to their perceptions of positive leaders and leadership styles which leads to positive self-empowerment among faculty and staff.

**Figure 3**

*Focus Group Participants by Gender*



### **Research Question 1**

To what extent is there a relationship between leadership styles and teacher self-empowerment?

The relationship between leadership styles and teacher self-empowerment was determined based on the survey answers from the “Teacher Self-Empowerment Survey” by Paula Short as well as the two focus groups. Throughout the study, the data from the participants ( $n = 73$ ) who took the survey showed that teachers’ perceptions of self-empowerment were directly linked to how they felt their leader collaborated with them in

the building. The 12 questions related to involvement scored the highest with a 64% satisfaction rating while responsibility came in last with 51% and decision-making with a 52% satisfaction. The data collected from the survey concluded that there is a direct relationship between the leadership style and teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment. A leader who engages in the building and lets the faculty and staff be involved, leads to an increase in the self-empowerment from teachers. The leadership style of involvement surveyed the highest in the self-empowerment section of the survey as well as scored highest in the focus groups.

The focus groups consisted of 12 participants total with 6 participants in each group. Each participant took the survey prior to the focus group. Throughout the focus groups, each participant was asked the same 5 open ended questions. Each answer was transcribed and coded and analyzed by the researcher. The common key code which reappeared numerous times is administration allowing teacher involvement within the building. Teachers felt self-empowered when they were allowed to make decisions and have input on their classrooms and building level ideas. Many key coded words which repeated were leaders who communicate, follow through and do not micromanage their staff. They involve their staff and support the staff in the building. Many negative leadership styles that repeated were controlling leaders, micromanaging, secretive, not visible and does not explain/communicate decisions.

Participant 3 described having a leader who is involved in the academics and athletics of the building as the perfect leadership style. The participant described that if the teachers feel that they are involved with the leaders and the building, they will feel more empowered. Participant 3 stated,

The relationship between leadership style and teacher self-empowerment is a direct correlation. If the leadership style is positive, direct, and inclusive, the teachers' self-empowerment will be higher. The perfect blueprint for a leader to achieve buy in and a successfully empowered staff is to involve the teachers and their ideas, include them in decision-making, meetings and events and be upfront and communicate with them. If you can do that as a leader, then you will be successful. You need to have your staff feel that you value their ideas and opinions and that you are on their side. There is a direct impact on the teachers and staff's empowerment if the leadership style is negative/weak. I have seen this many years, one administrator comes in with new ideas and no one buys into it, then it falls apart. The building morale and empowerment goes down. Once you get an administrator who respects the staffs' input, morale and empowerment goes up again.

The data collected through the focus groups was coded into key categories based on the number of times a phrase was repeated. When the questions were asked in the focus group regarding leadership styles and empowerment, the key phrases which repeated were "valued," "supported," "involved," and "teamwork." The participants mentioned being "part of a team" sixteen times throughout the focus group questions. Participants stated that a good and strong leader who has positive qualities is one which will be successful. That persons' leadership style is directly related to the morale and self-empowerment of the teachers in the building.



## Research Question 2

How do leadership styles shift the mindsets of teachers' self-empowerment in the subscales of relationships, task orientation, and climate/structure?

Data collected throughout the two focus groups focused on the teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment throughout the subscales of relationships, task orientation and climate/structure. The two focus groups ( $n = 12$ ) consisted of 6 participants in each group. Each participant was asked the same five open-ended questions relating to their perceptions of positive leaders and leadership styles which leads to positive self-empowerment among faculty and staff. The questions which directly related to the subscales were questions 1 through 3.

1. How do you feel a successful leader incorporates task orientation into his/her leadership style, and is this important to you as an educator in that building?
2. How do you feel a successful leader approaches climate and structure of the building into his/her leadership style, and is this important to you as an educator in that building?
3. How are relationships among faculty/staff and leaders effective for a leader and his/her leadership style, and how is this important to you as an educator in that building?

The participants in the focus groups answered the five open ended questions, three of which were directly related to research question 3. While the focus groups were administered, the researcher took detailed notation and transcriptions for each of the participants' answers. When questioned about focus group question 1, *How do you feel a successful leader incorporates task orientation into his/her leadership style and is this*

*important to you as an educator in that building?*, the participant elaborated on the building that they work in currently. Participant 1 noted that being in a secondary school building the environment is much different than an elementary level. A successful leader has a lot more on their plate such as testing and Regents exams, midterms, finals, college credits, AP Exams, proms and graduation. Participant 2 stated,

It is a tough job being a task-oriented leader for secondary. They must focus on all levels of the building as well and maintain order and structure. Creating a positive environment comes from the top down and the building leader needs to make time into the day to delegate and work with the faculty to keep order. Task orientation can range from anything such as setting up committees and involving student, faculty and staff input for events or projects. Being in the secondary level, I am able to see all various building level duties in which the leader must work on. I have had the pleasure of the past 11 years of working with numerous building leaders. All are different in styles of leadership. A task oriented, organized, and focused leader is what is required for a secondary level.

Upon being questioned with focus group question 2, *How do you feel a successful leader approaches climate and structure of the building into his/her leadership style and is this important to you as an educator in that building?*, many of the repeating coded words the researcher found were “friendly,” “outgoing,” “welcoming and caring.” The participants noted numerous times that being a leader in the secondary level required a lot of knowledge, skills and focus. The leader is the top of the food chain in the building and the trickle-down effect is something that is real. Participant 7 stated,

Working in the district for 20 years, I have seen it all. I know that the culture of the building is constantly changing with each new leader and Superintendent. There is always a new focus on something else that is related to the district. One year we get someone who is focused with athletics and works on the fields and courts and wants to be at every game. The next time we get a leader they are making new curriculum maps and changing all of the academics. I feel that the culture has to find a happy medium between the two. Being academically and athletically focused is great, if it is balanced. Being a leader at the sports games but also at Mock trial shows that you are working to support all students. The climate of the school is determined by the leadership and the faculty. If the leader is supported by the faculty, then it is a winning situation.

Upon discussing focus group question 3, *How are relationships among faculty/staff and leaders effective for a leader and his/her leadership style, and how is this important to you as an educator in that building?*, there were many key words that repeated for coding. The researcher noted that the term “teamwork, team player or team” was stated 32 times within this discussion question. A second key coded word was “communication” which was stated 26 times and “being in the loop” was mentioned 18 times. Participants focused on this question at great length in which their answers took the longest amount of time. Participant 5 who was a 5-year employee, mentioned that being in the secondary level for the past five years and having three different administrators is tough. The constant change and inconsistencies with leaders caused confusion among the staff. Each leader does their own thing and has their own way of doing things.

### **Research Question 3**

What influence does leadership style have on teacher self-empowerment in a secondary public school district in three subscales of involvement, decision-making and responsibility?

The data concluded that there is a direct correlation and relationship between teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment and the three subscales of involvement, decision-making and responsibility. The five highest mean scores for the 38 questions in the "Teacher Self-Empowerment Survey," by Paula Short were questions 38, 31, 16, 32 and 37. Out of the five questions, four of them fell into the subscale of involvement. One fell into the subscale of responsibility.

The five highest mean scores for the 38 questions in the "Teacher Self-Empowerment Survey," by Paula Short were questions 38, 31, 16, 32 and 37. Out of the five questions, four of them fell into the subscale of involvement. One fell into the subscale of responsibility. The mean score for the highest scoring question in self-empowerment was question 38 with a mean of  $M = 3.88$  with a standard deviation of .644, (Table 3). Question 31 had a mean of  $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.259$ , question 16,  $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = .884$ , question 32,  $M = 3.38$   $SD = 1.36$ , and question 27 had a mean of  $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 1.238$ . The data collected suggested that the teachers' perceptions of high self-empowerment were among those who felt that they were highly involved in the district and/or building. Their involvement within the district led to higher self-empowerment among the staff.

Utilizing the data collected and analyzed from the survey it was determined that the subscale of the leadership style of involvement has the most impact on the teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment. The teachers surveyed scored the highest in that category for being involved as having a direct relationship to being self-empowered. The second highest subscale of decision-making leadership styles scored second in the self-empowerment survey. This shows that teachers who are able to have involvement and input in decisions and are able to provide their feedback into the decision-making of a building/classroom feel they are more self-empowered. The leadership style of responsibility fell last on the list as being a direct relationship with self-empowerment. This concluded that teachers who feel their leaders have a style of responsibility and providing them with more responsibilities make them self-empowered. This was the lowest scoring in the survey.

Within the focus groups, the 12 participants stated that the leadership style is a direct correlational influence on the subscales of involvement and decision-making. Responsibility fell last again throughout the focus groups. Key words or phrases which were provided were "teamwork," "input," "opinions valued," and "working together." Participant 11 described working as team and stated, "it takes a village to raise a child, therefore a leader needs assistance from that village, which is us, the teachers. We should be involved and have input in decision-making along with the leader." Participants within the two focus groups discussed the need to feel valued and be asked of their input/opinions. Participant 9 described the relationship as a "balance."

In order to be a part of a good building/team you need to work together. The leadership subscales only work if there is balance. You cannot be 100% in for

involvement but do not allow anyone to make a decision. There has to be a balance between the leader, the teachers/staff and then the subscales. The main subscale is involvement, that will lead to higher empowerment, however responsibility and decision-making are also important. The ideal leadership style will honor all three of the subscales and take them all into consideration. Ultimately, it is his/her building they should have the final say in the outcome.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics in Sub Scales: Involvement, Responsibility, and Decision-Making*

Statistic	<i>N</i>	Range	Min	Max	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Involvement	73	23.00	25.00	48.00	38.1370	7.42989
Responsibilities	73	27.00	30.00	57.00	45.5205	9.48699
Decision-Making	73	21.00	16.00	37.00	25.8493	5.85631
Valid <i>N</i>	73					

*Note.* There were 73 participants in the sample, and no observations had missing or miscoded data. *SD* = Standard Deviation.

### **Results Findings**

The sample of 73 participants consisted of educators who worked as both middle school and high school teachers (Table 4) and who taught Grades 6–10. Out of the 73 participants, 28 were male and 45 were female. Each participant ranged in years’ experience from 1 to 22 years ( $M = 9.32$ ,  $SD = 6.037$ ). Two focus groups were created with six participants in each ( $N = 12$ ). The teachers were both male ( $n = 5$ ) and female ( $n = 7$ ) and were employed within the public school district in which the study took place, which was located in a suburban area in the northeastern part of the United States.

**Table 4***Summary of Participant Characteristics in Focus Groups*

Participant	Gender	Years Experience
Educator 1	Male	1
Educator 2	Male	11
Educator 3	Male	4
Educator 4	Female	1
Educator 5	Female	5
Educator 6	Female	6
Educator 7	Male	20
Educator 8	Male	1
Educator 9	Female	5
Educator 10	Female	7
Educator 11	Female	9
Educator 12	Female	18

**Table 5***Mean Years of Experience by Gender*

Gender	N	Mean Years
Male – 1	28	7.93
Female – 2	45	10.18

Throughout the study, the three subscales of involvement, responsibility and decision-making were examined in the survey by Paula Short. The 73 participants in the study took the 38-question survey. The subscale of involvement focused on 12 questions out of the 38 in the survey. This equated to a total of 60 points for a 100% satisfaction rate in this category. The participants' perceptions of self-empowerment based on involvement ranged by 23.00 points, with a minimum of a 25 out of 60 (42%) and a maximum of 48 out of 60 (80%). The mean rate of teachers' perceptions of involvement

was 38.14 points out of 60 for a score of 64% satisfaction of teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment with a standard deviation of 7.43. (Table 3)

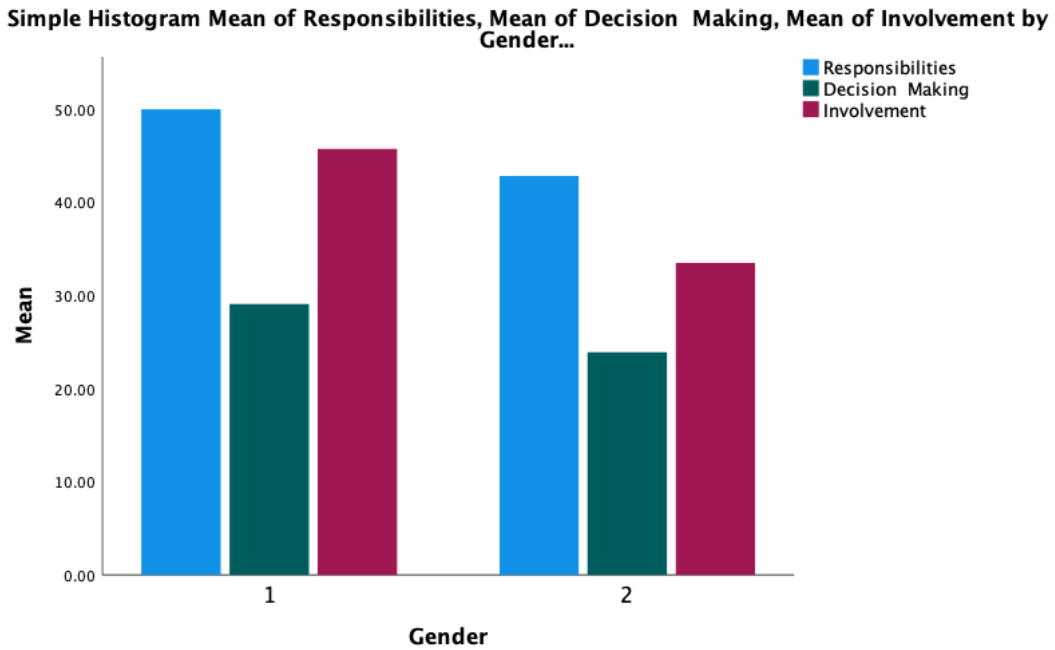
The subscale of responsibility focused on 18 questions out of the 38 in the survey. This equated to a total of 90 points for a 100% satisfaction rate in this category. The participants' perceptions of self-empowerment based on responsibility ranged by 27.00 points, with a minimum of a 30 out of 90 (33%) and a maximum of 57 out of 90 (63%). The mean rate of teachers' perceptions of responsibility was 45.52 points out of 90 for a score of 51% satisfaction of teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment with a standard deviation of 9.49.

The final subscale of decision-making was analyzed through 10 questions in the survey for a total of 50 points to equal a 100% satisfaction rate. The participants' perceptions of self-empowerment based on decision-making ranged by 21.00 points, with a minimum of a 16 out of 50 (32%) and a maximum of 37 out of 50 (74%). The mean rate of teachers' perceptions of decision-making was 25.85 points out of 50 for a score of 52% satisfaction of teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment with a standard deviation of 5.86.



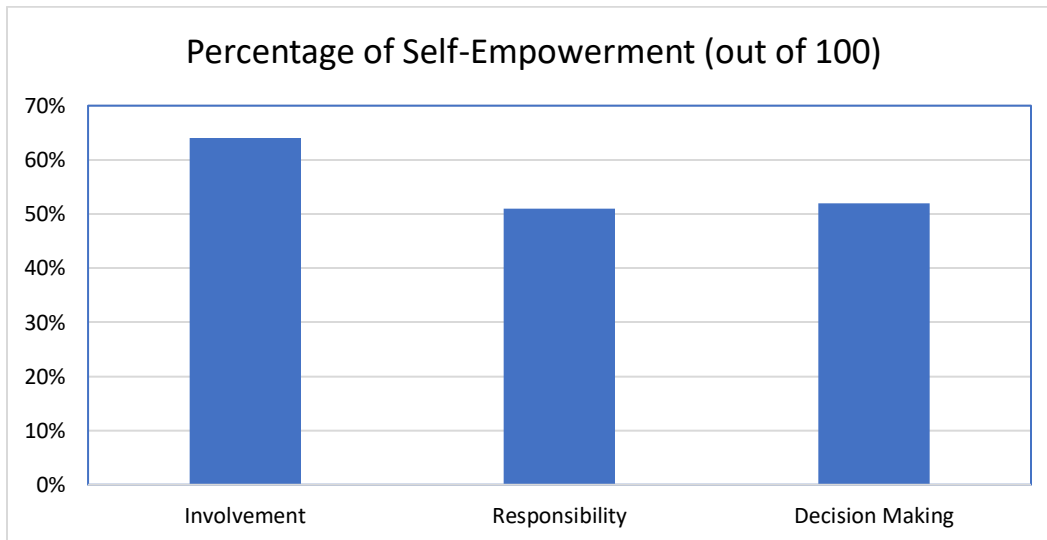
**Figure 4**

*Histogram of Mean Scores, Decision Making, Involvement, and Responsibility vs. Gender*



**Figure 5**

*Bar Chart of Mean Scores, Decision Making, Involvement, and Responsibility*



Participants in for the survey ( $n = 73$ ) were administered 38 questions in the form of a Likert scale. The researcher collected the data to analyze participants' perceptions of self-empowerment in the three subscales of responsibility, decision-making and involvement. The data was then analyzed in the SPSS management system by gender. Males were coded as gender 1 and females as gender 2. There was a total of 73 participants in the study, 28 males (38%) and 45 females (61.6%).

Upon analyzing the data, the male participants rated highest and felt more self-empowerment when they were given more responsibility and involvement (Figure 2, Figure 3, Table 3) Males rated the score of involvement with a score of 45.68 out of the 60 possible points (76%) and 12 questions relating to the subscale in the survey. Females rated involvement and responsibility as the top highest with a score of 42.78 out of 60 (71%). Males rated responsibility as a mean score of 50 points. Out of the 18 questions related to the subscale of responsibility, the males rated it as 50 out of 90 (56%) while the females rated it a 42.78 out of 90 (48%). The final subscale was decision-making in which males rated it a mean score of 29 out of the 50 possible points (58%) or 12 of the questions while females' mean score was a 23.87 (48%).

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Mean Scores of Involvement, Decision-Making, and Responsibility by Gender*

Description	Gender	<i>N</i>	Mean
Involvement	1	28	45.68
	2	45	33.44
Decision-Making	1	28	29.04
	2	45	23.87
Responsibilities	1	28	49.93
	2	45	42.78

Participant focus groups were administered after the survey data was collected. Two focus groups consisting of six participants in each were asked five of the same open-ended questions. Focus group open-ended question 2 asked, *how do you feel a successful leader approaches climate and structure of the building into his/her leadership style, and is this important to you as an educator in that building?* When placing a value on the climate of the building (12 out of 12) indicated with conviction that the principal greatly influences the building environment. Participants used words and phrases such as: “happy” (P4), “cheery” (P2), “welcoming and bright” (P3), “greatly impacts” (P4, P10), “heavily impacts and influences the culture/environment” (P12), Participant 3 stated, “The building leader is the single more important person to shape the building. If he/she is visible, happy and welcoming, it will in return trickle down to the rest of the crew. It reminds me of the book, *Lead Like a Pirate*.”

Participant 11 stated that being in many different roles as a teacher, the sole purpose of why someone would go into administration is to “be able to make changes.” Here, the “leadership styles can make or break a building.” Participant 11 noted that this person has worked with numerous and diverse leaders all with different leadership styles. The one that was most effective and self-empowering was the one who was happy, communicate and worked as a team, “a good team player.”

## **Conclusion**

The subscale of involvement showed a direct relationship between the teachers’ perceptions of self-empowerment and high scores both on the survey and among the focus groups. The five highest mean scores for the 38 questions in the “Teacher Self-Empowerment Survey,” by Paula Short were questions 38, 31, 16, 32 and 37. Out of the

five questions, four of them fell into the subscale of involvement. Throughout the focus groups, the constant coded key phrase was involvement or being “part of a team.” The participants also had a high perception of self-empowered when they were allowed to make decisions and have input on their classrooms and building level ideas. Many key coded words which repeated were leaders who communicate, follow through and do not micromanage their staff. They involve their staff and support the staff in the building.

## CHAPTER 5

### Implications of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which a relationship exists between leadership styles and their influence and impact on teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment. This study focused on the human relations theory and explored leadership styles leadership style with teachers' self-empowerment through the teachers' perceptions of various subscale leadership styles throughout a school district.

Through a series of triangulated analysis and an exploratory mixed-methods approach, the participants were administered a survey by (Short, 1994) on teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment in relation to leadership styles, which were discovered by Achor (2010, 2011, 2012, 2018). The research focused on participation from subjects in two focus groups within a public school district located in a suburban area in the northeastern part of the United States. The two focus groups consisted of six participants each, for a total of 12 participants, which determined the correlation and influence/impact that administrators' leadership styles had on the teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment within a public secondary school district. The study focused on the domains of administrators' leadership styles relating to relationships, climate/structure, and task orientation. The teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment were measured through the three subscales of involvement, decision-making, and responsibility.

Quantitative data was collected of 73 participants through a Google Survey through a Likert-scaled survey, the School Participant Empowerment Scale, developed by Paula M. Short, to determine their perceptions of leadership styles. The study explored the subscales of leadership styles researched by Harvard graduate and Happiness Coach,

Shawn Achor. The data collected was put into an excel sheet and analyzed through the SPSS management data system.

Several sources of data, such as the survey answers and the information drawn from the two focus groups, were analyzed into a qualitative study. The study also focused on the domains of leadership styles relating to relationships, climate/structure, and task orientation. The teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment were measured through the subscales of involvement, decision-making, and responsibility. Here, the two focus groups consisting of six participants in each, were given five open-ended questions regarding the relationships among the subscales and leadership styles. The researcher transcribed the participants' answers as well as color coded them into key phrases to check for repetition and common threads.

Qualitative data was collected through two focus groups consisting of six participants in each ( $n = 12$ ). Each of the participants in the focus groups were asked five of the same open-ended questions. The focus group data was transcribed and coded by color and key topic/theme. Upon reviewing the data collected from the survey by Short as well as the transcriptions of data, the researcher determined the relationships between the leadership styles among the subscales.

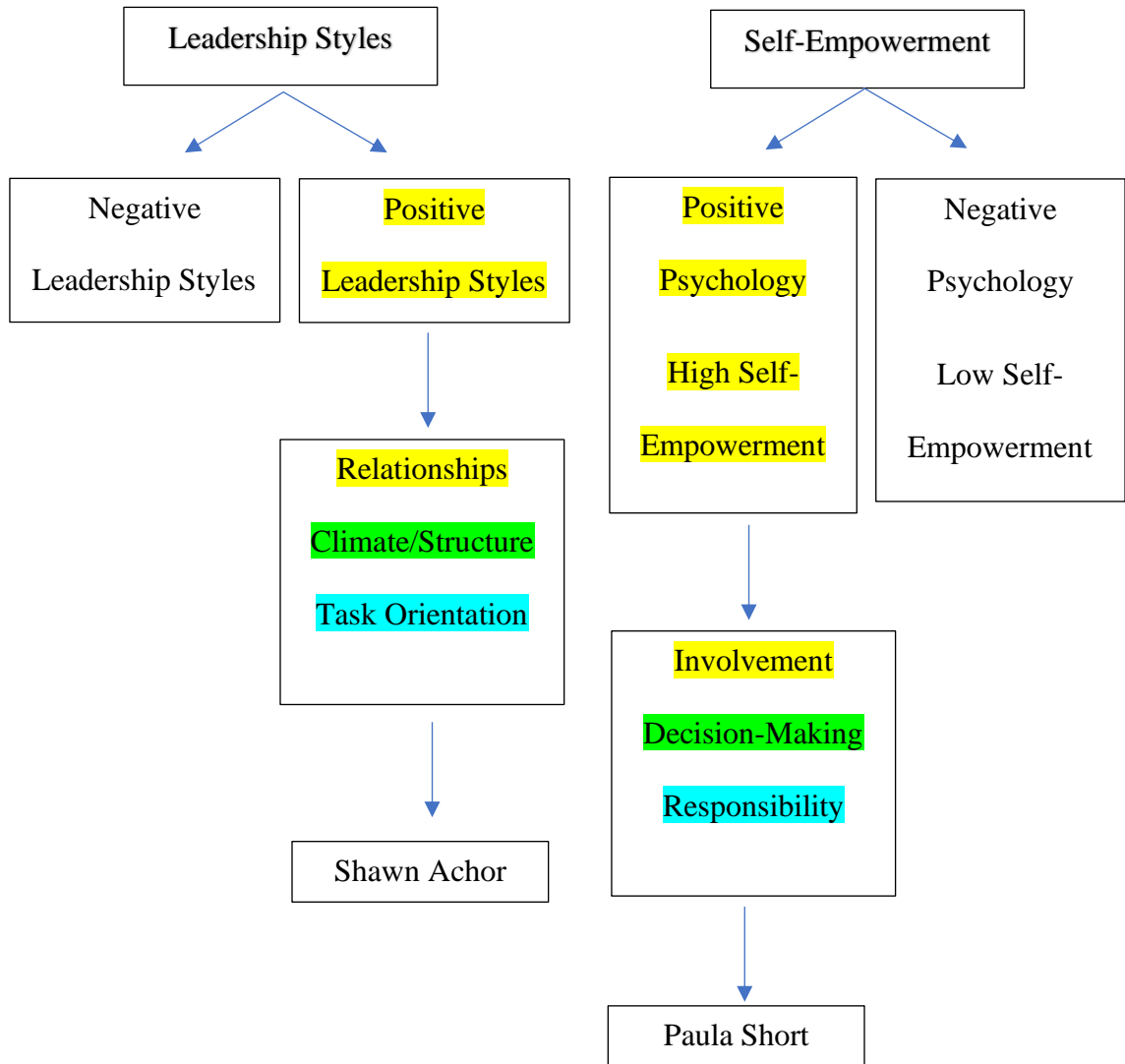
Throughout the analysis of data from the survey as well as two focus groups, it was determined that the perfect blueprint/outline for success for a leader can be determined, (Figure 6). The leadership styles which relate to the teachers' highest perceptions of self-empowerment were outlined in order in figure 6. Utilizing Shawn Achor's style of positive psychology and leadership styles, those who are positive leaders and have a positive leadership style would have the highest impact on teachers'

perceptions of self-empowerment if they had direct positive relationship among the faculty/staff in the building. Those who feel that they are a positive relationship with their leader, in return feel more self-empowered. The second leadership style had the second largest impact on self-empowerment was the climate/structure. Those who felt that the working climate and environment was positive as well as the leader creating a positive environment, the higher the self-empowerment. Task orientation was concluded to have the least influential impact on the perceptions of self-empowerment. Many described the task orientation as a leader who can be over controlling and a “micro-manager.” Participant 2 in the focus group described a task-oriented leader needs to learn to prioritize but also delegate to others.

Analyzing Paula Short’s theory of self-empowerment, the more positive a leadership style, the more self-empowered the teachers feel. Utilizing positive psychology in the workplace as well as involvement leads to high self-empowerment. The data in the survey concluded that the trait of decision-making in a leadership style came in second place in which the leader who involves staff in decision-making will relate to a higher self-empowered staff. The lowest scoring leadership style for self-empowerment was responsibility. Based on the results from the survey, it was determined that the highest self-empowerment would come from a leader who has the leadership style of being positive with relationships and involvement among his/her staff. In return, the staff would have a high perception of self-empowerment.

**Figure 6**

*Interrelated Theory and Concepts and Theoretical Framework Blueprint/Determination*



**Relationship to Prior Research**

In 2012, Achor reflected that “every business outcome reports improvement when the brain is positive” (p. 3). He argued that happiness is a precursor to success throughout various levels. While working with Fortune 500 companies, Achor studied management and leadership styles to determine how strong management skills lead to happier



employees and company growth and improvement. The more empowered and happier the employees felt, the more productive they were in the workplace. Throughout the study, the researcher coded the focus groups answers. Each of the 12 participants were asked the same five open-ended questions in which the researcher coded. Upon reviewing the data, Achor is correct with his study and reasoning that the more empowered the employees felt, the better the workplace which in return would like to success. Throughout the focus groups, many participants elaborated at length on questions 4 and 5, What leadership styles make a successful leader and an unsuccessful leader in which you as an educator in that building feel self-empowered or unappreciated? What do you feel is the relationship between leadership styles among building/district leaders and teachers' self-empowerment?

Participants stated that a successful leader is one in which trusts their faculty and staff and strives to make them happy. Participant #5 stated,

I love to work in a building when you know that the administration cares about you. It is evident. You can feel it in the hallways, and everyone seems happy.

Almost like Disneyland! I have worked in many buildings throughout the district and each one has its own vibe. A successful leader is one who can make the building "happy" and make sure that the staff has input and is involved. The community is involved which in return makes the students feel welcome at school. When the staff and teachers are happy, we all perform better in the classroom. This is contagious and trickles down to the students who want to perform and do better in school.

Workplace happiness and the feeling of appreciation was a repeating theme throughout the focus groups. This relates to the previous literature of Ghosh (2018), who claimed, “workplace happiness is one of the most valued and pursued goals of an organization. Researchers, scholars, and practitioners have acknowledged the benefits that a happy workforce brings to the table its enormous contributions to business outcomes” (p. 127). The theme of the leader creating the climate and environment from the top, to trickle down among the faculty. A school principal can make or break a school’s culture based on their leadership styles. Positive and strong leadership skills can improve the morale, culture, and empowerment of the faculty and staff. In return, this culture trickles down to the students.

Keiser (2007) believed that leaders cannot isolate themselves from staff in the implementation of school reform. Instead, the school principals or leaders should develop effective working relationship with the staff and encourage a collaborative environment for future development. This was evident throughout the study in both the survey results as well as the focus group answers. Throughout the survey, the answers which received a high rating of involvement in the building was also the teachers’ perceptions of a high level of self-empowerment.

Participant #4 in the focus group compared the level of involvement in the building as “if you feel that you are being asked to be part of the team, you will want to play. You feel like you are a part of the team and game.” The participant also noted that being new to this building, this person is now getting accustomed to the new style of leadership.

The building leader is the captain of the ship. They are the one who can take the ship in the direction that it chooses. We are the shipmates and have to work together to ensure that we are all on the same page for the common goal. As a teacher, the leader must maintain communication and contact with their faculty and staff. Everyone should work together as it takes a village to raise a child and run a building.

The relationship between leadership and empowerment began with research into self-efficacy by Bandura (1997) and the models of leadership created by Avolio et al. (1999). Bandura (year) created a framework and working definitions for efficacy and self-efficacy, which guide current research. Avolio et al. created working distinctions in leadership, defining transformational and transactional leadership as well as laissez-faire. Based on the results of the data from the focus groups, as well as the self-empowerment survey by Paula Short, it was determined that involvement was the number one subscale to promote self-empowerment. This would follow a transformational leadership style in which the leader includes the faculty/staff in decisions and information around the building. They listen and take their ideas into consideration when making decisions regarding the daily functions of the building.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The researcher was aware that there could be a limitation in that the survey can be bias. This mixed methods study took place in the school district in which the researcher is employed and was not representative of every school district across Long Island, New York. One factor to take into consideration is that the past 2.5 school years were different than most with the COVID-19 pandemic. This made educational programs limited and

much instruction only virtual. It also put a lot of stress on the school districts and teachers emotionally and financially. This may have skewed the survey of self-empowerment due to the emotional strain in school districts during this pandemic with the utilization of virtual instruction, to hybrid and finally back in person with limitations.

The researcher was also aware that there might have been a slight bias as the researcher is an administrator and supervisor of the secondary general education teachers. The researcher clarified to all that the survey will be anonymous and that it will not be known who participated. The focus groups were determined by volunteer participants as well as random selection if needed to narrow the sample size down to six subjects per focus group. During the focus groups, the researcher was neutral and provided the same five open-ended questions to each participant while taking notes, coding, and recording. The researcher noted that the term “teamwork, team player or team” was stated 32 times within the focus group discussion question, *how are relationships among faculty/staff and leaders effective for a leader and his/her leadership style, and how is this important to you as an educator in that building?*

### **Recommendations for Future Practice**

Based on the findings, analysis and conclusions of this study, the researcher has provided recommendations for the future in this field. The data collected among the top five mean scoring question in the “Teachers Self-Empowerment Survey,” By Paula Short, suggested that four out of the five top scores fell in the involvement subscale. This suggests that for future practice, administration must involve the staff and stakeholders in various tasks throughout the district and building. The data showed that teachers’ perceptions of high self-empowerment were among those who felt that they were highly

involved in the district and/or building. Involvement in the building for a faculty of staff member can be in various ways. Building and district level committees are a common way to implement feedback and input into decisions. School district level leaders should seek to hire leaders who are transformational and create a positive and welcoming environment for their staff. Principals should be aware and receive professional development in promoting teacher self-empowerment as well as creating a friendly culture in the building. The principals should be aware of how to stimulate their teachers intellectually and create opportunities for them to problem solve challenges in the workplace.

The focus group data was coded and determined that the subscales of task orientation, climate/structure, and relationships. Utilizing the theory presented by Shawn Achor (2010), the happiness advantage theory purports that the more self-empowered/happy an employee is, the better the outcome is for the business/school. The researcher studied these ideas of Achor (2011) to question if his framework on the business aspect of productivity, happiness, and leadership could be relevant in a school district educational setting. The subscales were used to create the five open-ended questions for the focus groups, in which the data collected was coded.

The results from the survey as well as the focus group discussion and coding determined that the highest self-empowerment would come from a leader who has the leadership style of being positive with relationships and involvement among his/her staff. Therefore, the perfect outline of what leadership styles have the greatest impact on teacher self-empowerment (Figure 6), can be a leader who is positive, involved, and has

positive relationship and climate among the staff within the building will result in staff having a higher perception of self-empowerment.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher determined that additional research can be conducted in this study. If the researcher was to conduct a second study to build upon these findings, one could create focus groups among the leaders of the district/building. The same five questions could be asked to the leaders in the form of questions regarding their faculty and staff. A cross reference coding system could be utilized to measure if there are a correlation of key coded words based on their answers of the five open-ended questions. The survey of self-empowerment could be linked to the building and district level leaders as well if they were asked to take the survey based on their own experiences when in the classroom. An analysis of their thoughts and their assessments of their own leadership styles in the focus groups would create data to help the leaders analyze their own styles.

The sample size of 73 provided limited reliability to the data along with 12 for the focus group. Future research would benefit from an increased sample size to ensure this study's results could be applied to its population with greater certainty. The researcher could expand the search for participants into neighboring district communities with a similar demographic. The correlation approach of this study does affirm that strong leadership styles such as involvement, relationships, and culture/climate cause teachers to be more satisfied and motivated in their work in schools and increase their self-empowerment. The data concluded that there is a direct correlation between the teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment among many of the six subscales. Thus, a future study

that determined specific tasks in each subscale would provide more of a blueprint for future leaders to follow to create a self-empowered school or district.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the mixed method explanatory study, the researcher took detailed notes, transcriptions, and data analysis. The use of the Self-Empowerment Survey by Paula Short as well as the findings of Positive Psychology in the workplace, Shawn Achor and two focus groups determined that there is a direct correlation on many levels. The first direct relationship that was determined was the relationship between the leadership styles and teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment. It was concluded that there is a direct relationship among the two. The leadership style that involves the teachers in a positive and welcoming environment is one that received the highest self-empowerment among the staff.

The researcher added the theory of Positive Psychology in the workplace with the subscales of relationship, climate/structure, and task orientation to determine that there is also a direct influence an impact on self-empowerment with these subscales. It was concluded that a leader who has a positive relationship with the staff as well as a positive climate/structure in the building will have a higher rate of teachers' self-empowerment. The last concluded data from the focus groups determined that in order for high self-empowerment among the teachers, the leadership style should be one that is positive, involved, makes decisions and also creates a positive climate. Those subscales scored the highest in self-empowerment. Behind those top scoring subscales, a leader who has the style of being a decision maker, taking responsibility and having task orientation is one who can lead to a small increase in the teachers' perceptions of self-empowerment.

# Appendix A

## IRB Approval Memo

Date: 12-6-2022

IRB #: IRB-FY2023-98

Title: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES AND ITS INFLUENCE/IMPACT ON TEACHER SELF – EMPOWERMENT

Creation Date: 10-12-2022

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Jean D'Aversa

Review Board: St John's University Institutional Review Board

Sponsor:

### Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	<b>Exempt</b>
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### Key Study Contacts

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## **Appendix B**

### **School Participant Empowerment Scale**

Developed by Paula M. Short and James S. Rinehart (1992a, 1992b)

*Please rate the following statements in terms of how well they describe how you feel.*

*Rate each statement on the following scale:*

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I am given the responsibility to monitor programs.
2. I function in a professional environment.
3. I believe that I have earned respect.
4. I believe that I am helping kids become independent learners.
5. I have control over daily schedules.
6. I believe that I have the ability to get things done.
7. I make decisions about the implementation of new programs in the school.
8. I am treated as a professional.
9. I believe that I am very effective.
10. I believe that I am empowering students.
11. I am able to teach as I choose.
12. I participate in staff development.
13. I make decisions about the selection of other teachers for my school.
14. I have the opportunity for professional growth.
15. I have the respect of my colleagues.
16. I feel that I am involved in an important program for children.

17. I have the freedom to make decisions on what is taught.
18. I believe that I am having an impact.
19. I am involved in school budget decisions.
20. I work at a school where kids come first.
21. I have the support and respect of my colleagues.
22. I see students learn.
23. I make decisions about curriculum.
24. I am a decision maker.
25. I am given the opportunity to teach other teachers.
26. I am given the opportunity to continue learning.
27. I have a strong knowledge base in the areas in which I teach.
28. I believe that I have the opportunity to grow by working daily with students.
29. I perceive that I have the opportunity to influence others.
30. I can determine my own schedule.
31. I have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers in my school.
32. I perceive that I make a difference.
33. Principals, other teachers, and school personnel solicit my advice.
34. I believe that I am good at what I do.
35. I can plan my own schedule.
36. I perceive that I have an impact on other teachers and students.
37. My advice is solicited by others.
38. I have an opportunity to teach other teachers about innovative ideas.

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## Appendix C

### School Participant Empowerment Scale – Color Coded/Subscales

Developed by Paula M. Short and James S. Rinehart (1992a, 1992b)

Please rate the following statements in terms of how well they describe how you feel.

Rate each statement on the following scale:

*1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree*

*\*Subscales created by the researcher. The average of each subscale for the 4 participants was input into SPSS.*

Red- Involvement (11 questions) 55 total points

Orange- Decision Making (9 questions) 45 total points

Green- Responsibilities (18 questions) 90 total points

1. I am given the responsibility to monitor programs.
2. I function in a professional environment.
3. I believe that I have earned respect.
4. I believe that I am helping kids become independent learners.
5. I have control over daily schedules.
6. I believe that I have the ability to get things done.
7. I make decisions about the implementation of new programs in the school.
8. I am treated as a professional.
9. I believe that I am very effective.
10. I believe that I am empowering students.
11. I am able to teach as I choose.

12. I participate in staff development.
13. I make decisions about the selection of other teachers for my school.
14. I have the opportunity for professional growth.
15. I have the respect of my colleagues.
16. I feel that I am involved in an important program for children.
17. I have the freedom to make decisions on what is taught.
18. I believe that I am having an impact.
19. I am involved in school budget decisions.
20. I work at a school where kids come first.
21. I have the support and respect of my colleagues.
22. I see students learn.
23. I make decisions about curriculum.
24. I am a decision maker.
25. I am given the opportunity to teach other teachers.
26. I am given the opportunity to continue learning.
27. I have a strong knowledge base in the areas in which I teach.
28. I believe that I have the opportunity to grow by working daily with students.
29. I perceive that I have the opportunity to influence others.
30. I can determine my own schedule.
31. I have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers in my school.
32. I perceive that I make a difference.
33. Principals, other teachers, and school personnel solicit my advice.
34. I believe that I am good at what I do.

**35.** I can plan my own schedule.

**36.** I perceive that I have an impact on other teachers and students.

**37.** My advice is solicited by others.

**38.** I have an opportunity to teach other teachers about innovative ideas.

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