3-2023

Educator Perceptions of Teacher Leadership And Its Impact on School Culture

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Educator Perceptions of Teacher Leadership

And Its Impact on School Culture

by

Colter T. Rantz

March 6, 2023

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in

partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

Educator Perceptions of Teacher Leadership

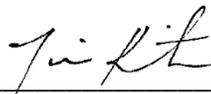And Its Impact on School Culture

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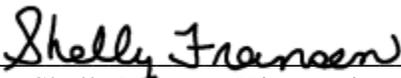
_____   __3/6/2023_____
Dr. Shelly Fransen, Dissertation Chair   Date

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Dr. Tara Roberts, Committee Member   Date

_____   __3/6/2023_____
Dr. Travis Kite, Committee Member   Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: Colter T. Rantz

Signature: _Colter Rantz_____ Date: _3/6/2023_____

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend gratitude to Dr. Shelly Fransen, who was my dissertation chair, for all of her support and encouragement throughout this study. Thank you to Dr. Travis Kite and to Dr. Tara Roberts for their guidance and support throughout this process as well. Thank you to the superintendent of the participating school where research was conducted for allowing their staff members to take part in this study. Thank you to all of the administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers who took the time to participate in focus groups or in the survey. Your time and responses were greatly appreciated and very beneficial in providing adequate data for this study.

Above all, I want to thank my loving wife, Hailey, for her love and support throughout the duration of the entire program. Without her encouragement, this wouldn't have been possible. Finally, I want to thank my son, Ryle, for inspiring me to persevere and for all the love he has shown.

Key Terms

Teacher Leaders

School Climate

Relevancy of Professional Development

Empowerment of Teachers

Abstract

Teacher leadership has been viewed as a way for educators to address their unmet professional needs (Bond, 2021). Teacher leaders ultimately have the means to create a positive school culture overall (Kiral, 2020). This mixed-methods study included a substantial look at the perceptions of educators, from one school district in Southwest Missouri, in regard to teacher leadership and its effect on school culture. The study was also designed to analyze factors that contributed to developing teacher leaders and to positively benefit the school's atmosphere. Focus group interviews were conducted to gain insight regarding the perceptions of instructional coaches and administrators on how teacher leadership is fostered and supported. A survey was conducted to certified teachers to better understand their perceptions of teacher leadership and relevant factors that contribute to a positive school culture. Most participants within the study agreed that teacher leadership does correlate with a positive school culture. The results from this study also provided information in regard to ways that teacher leadership can be created and strengthened. The results of this study can generate wisdom and advice for educators when striving to create a positive school culture through teacher leadership.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Teacher leadership and the impact it has on school culture has been a topic widely discussed among school personnel throughout the last 14 years (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2008.) Superintendents and administration frequently search for answers to build a healthy and flourishing culture throughout the school environment (Clark, 2015; Yeung et al., 2016). Coggins and McGovern, 2014 stated, "For teacher leadership to have staying power, it must prove itself to be genuinely influential — to matter more than other strategies for improving schools." A healthy school culture is important to academic success and contributes to a safe learning environment and the potential to grow socially as well as educationally (Truby, 2018).

Chapter One includes the background of the study and conceptual framework. Also included in Chapter One is the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and the research questions, the significance of the study, as well as the key terms and definitions. Finally, the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions will be provided.

Background of the Study

Teacher leadership has been viewed as a way for educators to address their unmet professional needs (Bond, 2021). In the past, teacher leadership roles were only considered to be those who held positions as department chairs, mentors, and professional developers (Bond, 2021). However, according to Wenner and Campbell (2017), "Teacher leaders remain in the classroom teaching children while simultaneously participating in meaningful activities beyond the classroom that contribute positively to the school" (p. 6).

Bradley-Levine (2018) argued that teacher leaders function with the desire and commitment to positively impact their colleagues' work while having the goal of improving teaching and learning. Leadership is important in transforming educational institutions (Blair et al., 2020). Mieliwocki and Fatheree (2019) claimed the importance of teacher leadership came largely into view toward the beginning of 2008 when school personnel were faced with a variety of situations. Mieliwocki and Fatheree (2019) identified retention of staff and administrators, the role of principals becoming extremely difficult, and the growing recognition of how school culture must change, as a few of these challenges. A negative culture was perceived as a result of a variety of factors within the school system (Mieliwocki & Fatheree 2019). De Nobile and Bilgin (2022) also identified the lack of communication between teachers themselves as a factor. Mieliwocki and Fatheree (2019) suggested:

> Teachers become isolated from one another and are so fully consumed with the work of teaching that communication is hurried, infrequent or task-driven. When they do have precious time together, it is typically reserved for administrative minutiae or so overly micromanaged that they are left uninspired, disconnected, and unheard. (p. 7)

Communication is essential in order to improve employee behavior, morale, and motivation (De Nobile & Bilgin, 2022).

Another factor of perceived negative cultures in schools is when teachers do not feel valued or have a voice in decision making (Mieliwocki & Fatheree, 2019). Mieliwocki and Fatheree (2019) stated:

Teachers want to be valued and their voices heard. In the traditional top-down

approach that still exists in most schools, teachers are told how, what, when,

where, and why to teach. The vast majority of them spend most of their time in

their classrooms with little opportunity to work together. This situation has to end.

Teachers want to be involved in the decision-making process. (p. 32)

The lack of adequate professional development programs also contributed to a perception

of negative school culture (Mieliwocki & Fatheree, 2019). Many teachers view their

current professional development opportunities as successful in preparing them for the

complex set of challenges that exist at work or that they provide a cohesive and

meaningful path to excellence within their professional journey (Mieliwocki & Fatheree,

2019).

Conceptual Framework

The Coherence Framework will guide this study. Fullan (2021) found as society

grows in terms of complexity, the sophistication of leadership becomes all the more

essential. Contemporary frameworks model school leaders as being accountable and

responsible for improving school performance and for increasing innovation (Holloway

et al., 2018). Teacher leaders desire and value a collaborative school culture and approach

to school improvement (Blair et al., 2020). The Coherence Framework generated by

Fullan proposed four components of sophisticated leadership (Fullan, 2021). The four

components of the Coherence Framework include focusing direction, cultivating

collaborative cultures, securing accountability, and deepening learning (Fullan, 2021).

Fullan (2021) created the four components to place leaders and teacher leaders in

a position to cultivate professional capital within school districts. The implementation of

these four components contributed to assisting teacher leaders to self-reflect on the standing of professional capital within the school district and increase the depth of understanding of how schools develop and circulate professional capital as a whole (Fullan, 2021). Furthermore, Power and Boutilier (2009) stated, "In our conversations, similar themes surfaced such as resistance to change, trust and relationship building, and the need to build capacity and leadership in the school" (p. 1).

The Coherence Framework emphasizes the subcategory of focusing direction (Fullan, 2021). When focusing direction, teacher leaders are purpose-driven, establish impactful goals, have clarity of strategy, and change leadership (Fullan, 2021). Fiore (2000) suggested, "Research consistently implies that creating and sustaining positive school cultures invariably leads to increased achievement and morale among all stakeholders" (p. 1). Additionally, Fullan (2021) stressed cultivating collaborative cultures. Within collaborative cultures, teacher leaders must maintain a culture of growth mindset, learning leadership, capacity building, and work collaboratively (Fullan, 2019). According to Koeslag-Kreunen et al. (2021),

> To work toward educational change, teacher teams need to create new ideas and knowledge together. Team learning behavior is defined as the collective discourse activities of team members that enable teams to question traditions collectively, seek controversy, and use multiple inputs. (p. 4)

The Coherence Framework also addresses the subcategories of securing accountability and deepening learning (Fullan, 2021). The component of securing of accountability refers to teacher leaders' ability to have both internal and external accountability (Fullan,

2021). Bloxham and Boyd (2012) identified three critical elements within the component of securing accountability:

1. Teacher leaders need to know who they are accountable to.

2. Accountability dictates feedback in a variety of ways.

3. Grading the relationship that teacher leaders experience in maintaining standards in the curriculum is essential.

The component of deepening learning refers to the ability of teacher leaders to possess clarity of learning goals, precision in pedagogy, and to be able to shift practices through capacity building (Fullan, 2021). In terms of more depth and substance in learning, Noland and Richards (2015) explained there should be more focus on "the relationship between certain teacher leadership behaviors and student outcomes such as learning, motivation, and satisfaction" (p. 1).

Statement of the Problem

Recent literature has provided research-based evidence that without teacher leaders, improvement of schools, positive teacher behaviors, and increased student learning outcomes cannot exist (Bellibas et al., 2020). Caglar and Cinar (2021) suggested improving the quality of teachers improves overall student education. According to research, few qualitative studies have been conducted to see if teacher leadership has an impact on school culture (Neumerski, 2013). However, more quantitative studies have been conducted and this research provides recent information on the impacts of teacher leadership (Bellibas et al., 2020).

Research studies provide evidence to show that a teacher's motivation and job satisfaction can be negatively affected by a variety of factors (Caglar & Cinar, 2021).

One of the main factors that contributed to this was when school principals control teachers' professional activities and when teachers are not given opportunities to make decisions regarding planning their careers (Caglar & Cinar, 2021). Teacher leaders and principals must collaborate effectively to improve their professionalism and their school's overall performance (Mastrangelo et al., 2014). Mielowocki (2019) reported another factor contributing to building a positive school culture through teacher leaders is establishing efficient communication procedures. Teacher leaders must be empowered to freely exchange ideas, given time to collaborate with one another, and be given opportunities to build professional networks with other educators (Mielowocki, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed-method study is to examine the impact teacher leadership has on school culture. The study will investigate the school culture of one Southwest Missouri school district and whether teachers placed in leadership positions have a positive or negative impact. Furthermore, the study will also investigate the practices building principals utilize to encourage teacher leadership in their respective buildings.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses guided the study:

1. When teachers consider school culture, what is the difference in the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not?

$H1_0$: When teachers consider school culture, there is no difference in the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not.

H1ₐ: When teachers consider school culture, there is a difference in the perceptions

of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not.

2. What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the effect strong

teacher leadership has on school culture?

3. In what ways do principals encourage teacher leadership roles and

development?

Significance of the Study

Teachers who take on leadership roles within their districts are considered change

agents who help solve the increasing demands regularly faced by schools (Lieberman &

Miller, 2004). Gabriel (2005) found when teachers are valued and provided with support

for their leadership roles, significant educational change can occur. According to Seltz

and Slade (2014),

Teacher leadership is critical for really helping a school building build their

capacity to increase student learning and student achievement and not only what

that teacher does inside that school building but how that teacher leader works

with the larger community to drive engagement and support for school goals and

for increasing youth success. (p. 10)

Danielson (2006) stated, "It is well recognized, but little acted upon, that the greatest

professional resource available in every school is the expertise of its teachers" (p. 55).

Teachers in leadership roles must use data to make decisions and be willing to take the

initiative to contribute to learning organizations (Danielson, 2006).

Lambert (2003) implied all teachers possess the right, capability, and

responsibility to be leaders. Cansoy and Parlar (2017) suggested, "The relationship of

teacher leadership with different organizational and personal characteristics should be investigated further by future studies" (p. 10). This study is significant because it may be used by districts to improve school culture by placing a stronger emphasis on increasing leadership roles for teachers within schools.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

Teacher Leadership

According to Cosenza (2015), teacher leadership refers to an "opportunity in which teachers contribute to the decision-making process" (p. 79).

School culture

According to Gruenert and Whitaker (2019), school culture is the personality of the school, is resilient, and doesn't conform to traditions (p. 97).

Instructional coach

According to Bean (2004), "Instructional coaches can support teachers in learning new curriculum and instructional strategies, ultimately leading to teacher instructional improvement and increased student learning" (p. 2). Woulfin and Rigby (2017) suggested, "Instructional coaches can help teachers bridge the gap between theory and practice and policy implementation" (p. 1).

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

The scope of the study was bounded by the following delimitations:

Time Frame

The time frame for the study was the fall 2022 semester.

Location of the Study

  The location of the study took place at School District A in Southwest, Missouri. Data were collected at this school district's primary school, elementary school, intermediate school, middle school, high school, and career and technical center.

Sample

  Participants within the sample were male and female. Participants were age 23 and above. Each participant could be classified as a teacher, instructional coach, or administrator.

Criteria

  Within the research study, there was no specific criteria identified for teachers other than each teacher must be certified in the state of Missouri. All instructional coaches within the district were a part of the sample. Only head administrators of each building were a part of the sample.

  The following limitations were identified in this study:

Sample Demographics

  The sample was a limitation for this study as it focused on one district. Within this school district, teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators were surveyed and interviewed within focus groups. Only certified staff members were included in the research aspects of this study.

Instrument

  The survey and focus group questions that were used were considered a limitation for this research study.

  The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The responses of the participants were offered honestly and willingly.

2. The sample was representative of the general population of educators who held teaching certificates from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Summary

A teacher leader is committed to educating their students and equipping them with the skills needed to be better prepared in the social, emotional, and academic aspects of life. As a result, school administrators must seek to provide their teacher leaders with resources, policies, and decision-making opportunities to support their success (Junge, 2019). In Chapter One, the background of the study and the statement of the problem provided evidence supporting the need for teacher leaders to use their skills to create a positive school culture. The coherence framework provided evidence of how the four components of sophisticated leadership, focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, securing accountability, and deepening learning put teacher leaders in a position to create professional capital within school districts (Fullan, 2021). The statement of the problem and purpose of the study were provided. The research questions and hypotheses were identified. The significance of the study, definition of key terms, and the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions of the study were explained.

In Chapter Two, a literature review is included to provide information on several topics that are relevant to this study. The literature review provides background information on the topics of: school culture, characteristics of teacher leaders, teacher leadership styles, the effect teacher leaders have on school culture, professional development for teacher leaders, virtual teacher leadership, and building principal

leadership styles. Additionally, the methods used by building principals to foster teacher

growth, the roles of instructional coaches in supporting teacher leaders, and the impact of

COVID-19 on school culture are also presented.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Creating a positive school culture is a challenge school leaders continually face (Buli-Holmberg et al., 2019). Tore and Cetin (2022) suggested a negative school culture can cause teacher burnout and decrease trust between school leaders and teachers. However, authentic teacher leadership has a positive impact on employee morale, job satisfaction, teacher engagement, professional motivation, and creates a more positive work environment (Tore & Cetin, 2022). One scholar suggested that culture and leadership go hand in hand (Schein, 2010). Schein (2010) insisted, "Culture and leadership can be thought of as two sides of the same coin. The leader is the person who initiates and creates the culture" (pp. 18-19).

Chapter Two begins with a review of the Conceptual Framework. The chapter continues with information regarding the four main categories associated with the Coherence Framework. These include: focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, securing accountability, and deepening learning. Additional information pertaining to teacher leadership is provided. Information outlined includes: what teacher leadership is, how professional development impacts teacher leaders, how teacher leaders are developed, the roles of virtual teacher leaders, and the roles principals have in developing teacher leaders. Leadership styles are also detailed in this chapter. The chapter also includes information about how Covid-19 has impacted teacher leaders and overall school culture. Finally, information is provided in regard to the effects that teacher leaders have on school culture.

Conceptual Framework

As introduced in Chapter One, the basis of this study is the educational perceptions of teacher leadership and its impact on school culture. The Coherence Framework provides the foundation for sophisticated leadership in order to place teachers in positions to cultivate professional capital in schools (Fullan, 2021). The Coherence Framework is also the basis of how schools develop and circulate professional capital as a whole (Fullan, 2021). Fullan and Quinn (2016) suggested the Coherence Framework is not static, however, it is continuous because of several reasons. First, people within an organization come and go, which leads to challenges and opportunities with each personnel change (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Second, the environment consistently changes in ways that are unpredictable, such as with technology, population, economy, and conflict within the world (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Finally, workers within any organization consistently get new ideas which leads to innovation and continuous improvement (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). The Coherence Framework is based on four components: focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, securing accountability, and deepening learning (Fullan, 2021).

Focusing Direction

According to Fullan (2019), focusing direction means that leaders decide on a small number of goals to be pursued and work to get others absorbed in the content of the direction. Goal-setting produces more positive effects on self-management and personal development; those who set goals effectively, perform better as well (Gerani et al., 2020). This component of the Coherence Framework consists of the school's vision and goals as

well as the strategies to begin the process (Fullan, 2021). A former superintendent (Fullan & Quinn, 2016) shared this information in regard to the concept of focusing direction:

>You need to be preoccupied with focus: a state or condition permitting clear perception or understanding; to direct your attention to something specific; a main purpose or interest. With so many issues that feel urgent, the necessity to focus is often overwhelmed by the number and magnitude of the problems faced by the system leader. You need 'one main thing' or central improvement strategy that consists of the leader's nonnegotiable view of what, over time, will have the greatest impact on improving the systems performance for children. (pp. 8–9)

Fullan (2021) suggested focusing direction provides the guidance needed to achieve goals that impact the school.

Cultivating Collaborative Cultures

The concept of cultivating collaborative cultures focuses on building trust through clear communication and expectations, it focuses on the team instead of one's self, and creates an overall common plan for success (Fullan, 2021). This concept also incorporates supporting growth, learning leadership, capacity building, and collaborative work. Within collaborative school cultures, teachers take a shared responsibility for the education of their students (Buli-Holmberg et al., 2019). This collaborative process consists of teachers regularly sharing their ideas, learning from others' experiences, and assessing the strategies that they are using within their own classrooms (Buli-Holmberg et. al., 2019). Many times, leaders do not communicate their expectations to staff or provide feedback that will help them grow professionally (Fullan, 2019). Positive cultures and a sense of trust is built by being direct and honest about performance and

expectations (Fullan, 2019). Leaders should openly communicate staff members' strengths and areas of improvement in order to continuously grow (Fullan, 2019). Fullan (2019) stated, "Cultivating collaborative cultures builds on the direction through capacity-building. As one goes deeper into collaborative work, the specifics of instruction and learning become increasingly evident and become the focus" (Fullan, 2022).

Securing Accountability

Securing accountability focuses on the commitment to continuous improvement of self and the overall organization and has a high sense of urgency for various forms of change, while obtaining sustainable results (Fullan, 2019). By having clear directions and cultivating collaborative cultures, accountability can be obtained (Fullan, 2019). Two forms of accountability occur within organizations, internal and external (Fullan, 2019). Internal accountability refers to the group that is doing the implementation and holds itself responsible for progress and results, while transparently communicating the progress and results along the way (Collén, 2019; Fullan, 2019). Fullan and Quinn (2015) stated, "External accountability is when system leaders reassure the public through transparency, monitoring, and selective intervention that their system is performing in line with societal expectations and requirements" (p. 14). Overall accountability provides staff members with a responsibility to contribute to the overall goals of the organization (Fullan, 2019).

Fullan (2016) encouraged organizations to focus on internal accountability. Collén (2019) described her internal accountability reflection inquiry when she stated, "How do I convey a message that goes against the other person's will, or deal with a conflict between the needs of parent and child, with a suitable, nonjudgmental approach"

(p. 8). Fullan (2016) illustrated internal accountability when he stated, "the group takes self and collective responsibility for its performance and reinforces this by engaging in the external accountability framework" (p. 34). Fullan (2016) suggested the goals of the concept of internal accountability should include: transparency of practice and results, non-judgmentalism, commitment to assessing impact, acting on evidence to improve matters, and engagement in the state accountability system. In order to secure internal accountability, capacity must be built by relating to the external accountability system (Fullan, 2016).

Deepening Learning

Deepening learning focuses on the learning and teaching skills necessary to engage and help all students learn (Fullan, 2019). The Coherence Framework looks at how high learning expectations and purposeful collaboration must take place in order to improve teaching and learning practices for all staff members (Fullan, 2019). Fullan (2016) suggested four elements of the concept of deepening learning. First, he suggested that continuous improvement of instructional practices helps to achieve learning goals (Fullan, 2016.) Second, Fullan (2016) suggested that core strategies must be identified and that continued support must be provided to build expertise at every level. Building teacher capacity is seen as the route to improvement. Third, the district must value staff relationships and take great pride in recruiting and hiring the best people while providing them with mentoring, coaching, and continuous learning opportunities (Fullan, 2016). Finally, collaboration must be welcomed and staff members must work together on a continuous basis (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 44). In order to help students grow academically, teachers are able to help deepen their learning by collaborating with other

staff members, assessing their personal classroom strategies, and allowing other teachers to share advice (Buli-Holmberg et al., 2019).

Figure 1

The Coherence Framework
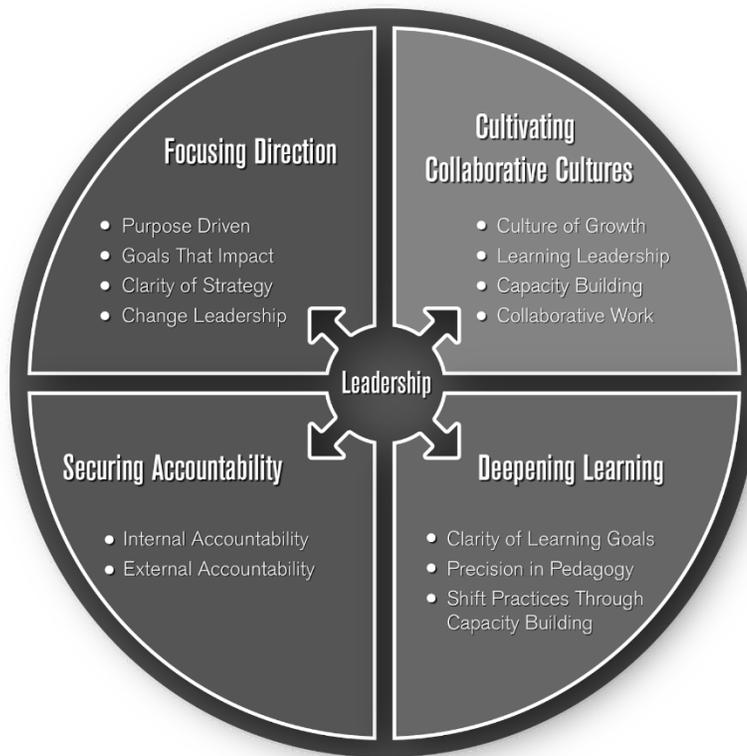
Note. Fullan, M. (2022). Coherence framework extended.

https://michaelfullan.ca/coherence-the-right-drivers-in-action-for-schools-

districts-and-sstems/coherence-framework-extended/

School Culture

According to Karadag and Oztekin-Bayir (2018), "School culture is a social structure that is closely related to leadership in terms of revealing educational institutions' meaning, character, internal dynamics and relationships with their

surroundings" (p. 43). Culture ultimately influences how people think, make decisions, develop perceptions and feelings, and the way in which they act (Tonich, 2021). Tonich (2021) suggested it is considered an invisible hand that guides behavior; however, it is the individual's character that unites, provides meaning and direction, and influences feelings and actions within an organization.

School culture is viewed as an invisible hand because it is the core of how the school members behave and act each and every day (Tonich, 2021). Teachers must be given opportunities to lead and take initiative within schools to foster a positive school culture (Mieliwocki & Fatheree, 2019; Nooruddin & Bhamari, 2019). According to Shafer (2018), leadership and collaboration in a school helps to develop the overall school culture. The effectiveness of an organization or school depends on the culture (Shafer, 2018).

Teacher Leadership

Berry et al. (2010) argued that teachers who have more control over the policies within their school and greater autonomy within the classroom are more likely to remain teaching, as well as feel invested in their overall profession and workplace. However, Berry et al. (2010) found many teachers do not have opportunities to be leaders and have little to no influence in policies and programs. Many teachers are not provided with adequate resources to be effective leaders within their own classrooms (Berry et al., 2010). One teacher stated,

> I don't think teachers are treated like professionals…. Where teachers are worried about being able to have enough materials, enough books [or other supplies], and there are so many kids in the classroom that they can't devote enough time to…

teaching… content, that's a profound disrespect for the profession. (Berry et al.,

2010, p. 6)

When teachers have opportunities to lead, they have more of an impact on student

achievement, feel more empowered within their schools, and are more likely to remain in

their workplace (Berry et al., 2010). Additionally, teachers are often isolated in schools,

having little or no communication with their peers or administrators (Mieliwocki &

Fatheree, 2019). This creates a poor culture where teachers do not have the opportunity to

take initiative for growth or leadership (Mieliwocki & Fatheree, 2019; Nooruddin &

Bhamari, 2019). Teachers need additional opportunities to take leadership of their

professional learning, decision-making, and how learning should take place within the

classroom (Nooruddin & Bhamari, 2019).

Teacher leadership behaviors are also related to influencing school improvement,

having a more positive impact on employee well-being, and establishing a more positive

school culture (Morris et al., 2020). Teacher leadership actions influence school morale,

school culture, and climate (Morris et al., 2020). A teacher's self-efficacy as a leader is

positively related to soliciting parent involvement, communicating positive expectations

for student learning, improving instructional practices, and being able to innovate more

successfully within their classrooms (Berry et al., 2010).

Developing Teacher Leaders

Teacher leadership is the result of shifting power and control to teachers, who are

then supported by their principals, in order for their leadership to be reciprocal and

inclusive of each adult within the school (Webber & Nickel, 2021). Furthermore, teachers

must be trained to be leaders in order to improve student learning and achievement

(Webber & Nickel, 2021). In order for teachers to become successful leaders, they must

participate in professional learning opportunities with their colleagues (Webber & Nickel,

2021). Teacher involvement in collaboration opportunities with their peers is important to

a teacher's self-efficacy and it makes them more effective classroom teachers by enabling

them to obtain extra resources, learn and practice new skills, and exchange ideas (Berry

et al., 2010). Leadership practices, such as communication, professional development, the

use of strategic resources, and empowerment are all strategies that increase student

performance and help develop teacher leaders (Morris et al., 2020).

     Developed teacher leaders are able to apply their leadership skills when they

increase their practical knowledge and develop a personal theory for their educational

action (Chan et al., 2020; Webber & Nickel, 2021). Teachers must value the implications

and social complications of their job, and take responsibility for their knowledge of legal

and administrative tasks. They must also evaluate their own progress through the process

of self-reflection and have an open mind to accept the diversity of perspectives within the

classroom. Additionally, as teachers develop and grow, they should continuously search

for ways to contribute to the educational project within their school buildings and should

seek to increase the personal learning opportunities of the students within their classroom

(Chan et al., 2020).

Professional Development for Teacher Leadership

     Collaboration is essential among educators seeking to learn and grow within their

profession (Junge, 2019; Webber & Nickel, 2021) Junge (2019) stated:

     Collaboration among educators is critical, not just because working with other

     teachers is a nice thing to do and it makes school a more pleasant place to be. In

fact, it turns out that high-performing schools-similar to high-performing

businesses-organize people to take advantage of each other's knowledge and

skills and create a set of common, coherent practices so that the whole is far

greater than the sum of the parts. These teams prioritize collaboration, learn

collaborative skills, practice and refine these skills, and address the inevitable

tensions that arise when working with other humans. (p. 22)

A collaborative culture could be established in several ways (Junge, 2019; Pullan 2016; Safir 2018). Some of these ways include collaboration across subject areas and grade levels, co-teaching, or co-leading projects on a consistent basis, and developing processes that incorporate collaboration when implementing school programs (Junge, 2019). A few other ways to establish a collaborative culture include: designating time and funds to go off campus to participate in team building and using restorative justice practices to help with staff conflict and to rebuild trust amongst team members (Junge, 2019).

Virtual Teacher Leadership

Virtual teacher leadership is a continuously growing piece of interest in today's society as virtual learning opportunities have increased significantly over the last few years (Robertson & Sivia, 2022). Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have also shaped the way online learning has accelerated (Chan et al., 2020; Robertson & Sivia, 2022). Robertson and Sivia (2022) stated, "These changes have illuminated the need for effective school leadership to support teachers in designing and implementing high-quality, online learning programs for students" (p. 3). Online learning platforms require specific organizational planning, sufficient leadership, and commitment from all virtual leaders (Robertson & Sivia, 2022). Campion (2020) suggested challenges, such as

internet issues, isolation from colleagues, and a lack of structure tend to exist in an online setting.

Robertson and Sivia (2022) and Fullan (2013) acknowledged that for teachers to be successful in a virtual realm, new competencies must be developed, time and resources must be made available, motivation must be instilled, and knowledge and commitment must exist from teachers. Successful and equipped teachers are able to promote change, because they are well invested with the new challenges that come along within education (Robertson & Sivia, 2022). A few best practices for virtual leadership include: being a role model, fostering relationships, and taking responsibility (Robertson & Sivia, 2022). Forming relationships with colleagues in an online setting can be difficult as staff members have reported a weaker organizational identification, due to lacking face-to-face interactions (Campion, 2020). To combat this, research shows that a key component of virtual leadership is excellent communication skills (Campion, 2020).

Along with communication, Campion (2020) also suggested specific behaviors, such as building trust with team members, being fair, being a good listener, and fostering a sense of community, help to establish effective virtual leaders. Pullan (2016) determined mindsets, attitudes, skills, and knowledge must be developed in order to work in an online environment successfully. When leading and hosting meetings virtually, leaders must develop a sense of facilitative leadership in which staff members can connect with, collaborate with, and motivate others (Pullan, 2016). When clear communication exists, needs are met, positive relationships are established and maintained, and a community of team members are engaged, and virtual leaders can help staff members and students be successful in an online world (Robertson & Sivia, 2022).

Role of the Principal in Fostering Teacher Leaders

School leadership is the foundation of school improvement and makes a difference in student learning, teacher behaviors, and the overall school culture (Bellibas et al., 2020). It has been assumed for many years that the principal is the sole leader of the school; however, this idea has changed rapidly over the last several years (Lingam et al., 2021). As community members are now realizing how crucial it is to have more leaders within each school, administrators no longer have a sole role, instead, they have a significant role of delegating school leadership to teachers (Bellibas et al., 2020; Lingam et al., 2021).

Teacher leadership can be described as having four key roles, brokering, participative, mediating, and forging close relationships (Bellibas et al., 2020). Brokering refers to transferring school improvement aspects into the individual classroom (Bellibas et al., 2020; Simons, 2020). One example of brokering is making sure that relevant development exists for teachers (Bellibas et al., 2020). Participative refers to teachers taking ownership of school improvement (Bellibas et al., 2020; Simons, 2020). One example of participative is a teacher's positive attitude toward the school (Bellibas et al. 2020). Mediating refers to teachers displaying their own expertise (Bellibas et al., 2020; Simons, 2020). One example of teachers displaying their own expertise would be by leading professional development opportunities within their school building (Junge, 2019). Forging close relationships refers to building relationships among colleagues (Bellibas et al., 2020; Simons, 2020). Building relationships among colleagues could be enabled by consistent collaboration or time spent participating in team-building activities (Junge, 2019).

In order for principals to foster teacher leaders, they must protect instructional time, provide and promote professional development opportunities, and create a culture where teachers collaborate with their colleagues (Bellibas et al., 2020; Lingam et al., 2021). Instructional time could be protected by limiting external interruptions, adopting flexible time schedules, and limiting activities and events (Leonard, 2007). Professional development opportunities could be encouraged by allowing teachers to collaborate, allowing teachers to share knowledge with one another, and solving areas of tension that may exist (Junge, 2019). Collaboration must also take place in order to further the knowledge of teachers and to build a sense of trust among the team (Junge, 2019; Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018).

Principals must also take the time to model leadership characteristics and include staff members during meetings (Simons, 2020). These concepts include: sharing in decision making, providing important information to all employees, creating a shared mission and vision, and allowing staff members to work together frequently (Lingam et al., 2021; Simons 2020).

In order to foster teacher leaders, principals must build strong relationships with their staff members. Simons (2020) stated,

> I spent intentional time with individual teachers by taking walks at lunch and shared my support of what they wanted to do or encouraged them to think through things…urging them to take leadership responsibilities throughout the district. My expectation was that everyone would be highly involved in something and it really didn't matter to me what it was, but I wanted them to be passionate in pursuing something. (p. 3)

Staff members were expected to take leadership roles, but understood that their principals were there to support and encourage them (Simons, 2020; Webber & Nickel, 2021). Staff members were also taught how to work together as a team, learned communication policies and protocols, and held each other accountable to value others' ideas and opinions (Campion, 2020; Simons, 2020)

Over time, leadership approaches have changed significantly, because more people are wanting to increase their skills and leadership abilities (Fatima et al. 2020). It is crucial that an educational leader, such as a principal, ensures there is adequate support for their workers and that their workers feel valued and recognized for the job that they are doing (Fatima et al. 2020). Staff support and the overall presence of the school principal show the employees that the school leader is ready and willing to assist them as professionals (Fatima et al. 2020). When principals are engaged in helping staff members reach their maximum leadership abilities and allow them to take leadership roles, overall school improvement is achieved (Bellibas et al., 2020; Fatima et al., 2020).

Building Principal Leadership Styles

A principal is someone who is assigned the role of leading a school and its teaching and learning procedures (Tonich, 2011). A principal needs the skills and capabilities to lead and direct while possessing leadership qualities (Tonich, 2011; Safir, 2018). School leaders have a responsibility of helping organizations achieve their goals, while also guiding and organizing people (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018). Tonich (2021) declared school leaders are able to direct, guide, protect, offer examples, and provide encouragement, along with having the ability to use all available resources within the organization to reach the overall school goals.

Overall leadership strategies must be established, so that all parties that are relevant to school activities are able to make decisions, be open to suggestions and opinions, and allow various forms of participation (Tonich, 2021). Former views characterized leadership with traits, such as authority, power, interaction with group members, group dynamics, relationship-oriented, task-oriented, authoritative or democratic, and effectiveness (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018). Over the years, numerous leadership styles have been established and researched, one of which is authentic leadership. As stated by Karadag and Oztekin-Bayir (2018):

> Authentic leadership, which is based on self-consciousness and self-awareness, is defined as a process and behavior pattern, which is built on positive psychological competencies and at the same time contributing to the development of these competencies; being formed on transparency, openness and trust basis; guiding meaningful goals and focusing on the development of the followers. (p. 42)

When schools are authentic, they become aware of uncertainties, accept mistakes, understand their responsibilities, and recognize their power and choices as a group (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018).

Established standards contribute to leadership strategies in the way that principals lead their school buildings and how they develop culture (Campion & Campion, 2020; Tonich, 2021). These standards include: facilitating change within the school, regulating the school climate, managing school facilities, overseeing curriculum and instruction, and evaluating school and teacher instructional performance (Tonich, 2021). State school boards have established these specific standards for principals to establish a strong school culture by planning, developing the school organizational unit, leading their school,

managing and regulating change and climate, managing school buildings, community

relations, students, curriculum and development, and learning activities, maintaining

sufficient finances, evaluating technology, and monitoring overall school activities

(Tonich, 2021). Tonich (2021) and Campion and Campion (2020) determined a

correlation exists between a principal achieving these standards and a positive school

culture being formed.

Transparency is another strategy that building leaders can use to establish a more

positive school culture (Junge, 2019). According to Junge (2019), "Open door policies,

personal accountability, and being willing to talk through hard topics and ask challenging

questions contribute to overall transparency" (p. 29). Transparency can be practiced by

establishing and sharing school budgets with staff, allowing staff to have access to shared

folders and databases, encouraging staff to spend informal time in one another's

classrooms, creating group norms to resolve conflicts, and creating opportunities for staff

members to voice concerns (Junge, 2019; Simons, 2020). School principals are agents of

fostering positive school culture (Tonich, 2021; Webber & Nickel, 2021). Overall,

organizational performance is improved by a principal's ability to create a culture based

on vision, integrity, dedication, being open, and demonstrating creativity (Tonich, 2021).

The Impact COVID-19 Had on Teacher Leaders

During the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher leadership became an issue that needed

to be addressed in the areas of action and building pedagogical excellence (Chan et al.,

2020). The virus was unpredictable, there was a shortage of needed information, and the

lack of preparedness affected administration, teachers, and students nationwide (Brion,

2021; Masry-Herzallah & Stavissky, 2021). Teachers had to quickly learn and develop

the skills necessary to adapt to a new learning platform, as well as create new scenarios in order to continue increasing students' academic excellence (Brion, 2021; Masry-Herzallah & Stavissky, 2021).

The Corona virus came rapidly and educators had to adapt to a new online environment in order to meet the academic needs of their students (Masry-Herzallah & Stavissky, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers realized that they also had to develop socio-emotional skills, such as empathy, flexibility, creativity, and active listening (Hernandez Mondragon, 2020). The use of these skills by educators was dependent upon trust between administration, teachers, students and parents, as well as cooperation among their peers in order to promote teaching practices that were successful during this time (Masry-Herzallah & Stavissky, 2021). Teachers were at the forefront of the school system during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the learning of each student during the school closures (Chan et al., 2020).

The Impact of COVID-19 on School Culture

COVID-19 had a major impact on the way schools continued learning and how the closures affected overall school culture (Scott, 2020). To combat a few of these fears and to help provide a more positive school culture, principals adopted multiple strategies (Gill, 2020). School leaders were forced to understand how to create and maintain inviting school cultures during the crisis of the pandemic (Brion, 2021). An intentionally inviting school culture is one where leaders purposefully create an environment where students and staff feel safe and comfortable, where parents are encouraged to participate, and where teachers feel supported (Brion, 2021). Positive school cultures also contribute to student learning and overall staff well-being (Brion, 2021).

School culture was tested during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic (Brion, 2021; Scott, 2020). Many staff members felt that their job after the school closures in March of 2020 was more stressful and that they were not doing enough to support their students (Brion, 2021). Incorporating weekly staff check-ins via a Google survey, meeting with teachers via Zoom, and allowing staff members to collaborate virtually to provide new ideas for online learning are a few examples (Gill, 2020).

Many district leaders encouraged staff members to reach out to teachers in other districts to collaborate and learn new ways to incorporate virtual education and learning during the pandemic (Brion, 2021). This not only provided professional learning opportunities, but also allowed staff members to connect with other teachers who were facing the same challenges (Brion 2021; Gill, 2020). Teachers had to think creatively in order to foster a positive school culture within the virtual learning environment (Brion, 2021).

Principals had to identify ways to help meet the needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic (Brion 2021). It was crucial that students had the resources they needed to learn, they needed to feel a sense of belonging, they needed to feel safe, and in some cases, they may have needed food and water (Brion, 2021). Principals had to make sure that students and teachers were equipped with sufficient technological devices in order for them to communicate (Brion, 2021). Many schools had already adopted the use of technology and online learning, which made the transition to online school during the pandemic somewhat easier (Scott, 2020). Principals also relied on one another throughout the nation for encouragement, support, and guidance throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Gill, 2020).

Some school districts purposely focused on supporting a strong school culture during the time of crisis (Scott, 2020; Brion, 2021). School leaders recognized the fact that they had to adapt or change their leadership style in order to meet the needs of their students, families, and teachers (Brion, 2021). By having overall school expectations to participate in online learning, and a school culture that encourages students to participate on these learning platforms, students were able to continue their learning throughout the pandemic (Scott, 2020).

By having a strong school culture, many teachers took the initiative to make efforts to continue engagement with students by providing online learning opportunities, hosting online trivia nights for families, and delivering prizes on their students' porches (Scott, 2020). Many school districts reported increased participation in parent meetings as a result of engagement efforts (Gill, 2020). According to Gill (2020), "If we look at this crisis as a prolonged interruption until we get back to the way things used to be, we're missing the opportunity" (p. 1). As a result of the pandemic, school districts recognized the need for maintaining a positive school culture, meeting individual needs of students and teachers, and providing technology support to all teachers and students to ensure that they are prepared for the future (Brion, 2021.) By being prepared, meeting needs, and supporting students and teachers, even through a pandemic, a positive school culture can be maintained (Brion, 2021).

The Effect Teacher Leaders Have on School Culture

Teacher leadership and the impact it has on school culture has been a topic widely discussed among school personnel throughout the last 14 years (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2008). Safir (2018) reported,

Embracing emergence and empowering teacher leaders is brave work. It takes

courage to let go of our attachment to hierarchy and detailed plans and to accept

that complex change emerges in homegrown and unpredictable ways. It takes

courage for principals to believe that teachers can hold real leadership roles and

design solutions to their school's most difficult problems. And it takes courage for

teachers to step outside of the classroom and lead their colleagues. (p. 5)

Even though the evolution of teacher leaders takes time and effort, it is essential for

establishing an overall positive school culture (Kiral, 2020; Safir, 2018).

The model of norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes that direct organizational

behavior is recognized as organizational culture (Safir, 2018; Tonich, 2021). An

organization must have a common understanding and agreement of shared beliefs and

values in order to know how to behave (Tonich, 2021). Leaders who are successful, train

teachers to be their own leaders in order to be more effective in their classroom, as well

as share their knowledge and leadership abilities with other teachers in order to grow

professionally (Kiral, 2020). When excellent education is provided by superior teachers,

schools excel (Kiral, 2020).

In order to be a superior teacher that will contribute to a positive school culture,

teachers must be instilled with the values of being a leader (Kiral, 2020). Teacher leaders

also must be provided with support, mentor opportunities, professional development,

coaching, and feedback (Kutsyuruba et al., 2020). Teachers should be encouraged to lead

break-out sessions at professional development sessions, facilitate community circles,

and have opportunities to share expertise with their colleagues (Safir, 2018.) In order for

teacher leaders to be successful leaders, they must share common goals, continuously

learn together, work in harmony, and move forward with new ideas (Kiral, 2020).

Teacher leaders must take the initiative to lead, determine and express the direction, and

put the goals and direction in action (Kiral, 2020).

Teacher leaders ultimately have the means to create a positive school culture

overall (Kiral, 2020). When teachers are given leadership opportunities, they feel valued,

supported, and encouraged (Kiral, 2020). In turn, they will seek to be better educators

within their classroom by seeking various ways to be involved in professional

development opportunities and by collaborating with other school leaders to share

knowledge and learn new ideas, strategies, and skills (Junge, 2019).

School principals help teachers become better teacher leaders by allowing them to

take additional leadership opportunities, mentor new teachers, and lead staff meetings for

other school members in order to share their expertise and knowledge (Webber & Nickel,

2021). When principals support teachers, teachers support their colleagues, and everyone

in the school steps up to be a leader in their own way, they are able to make a difference

in the lives of students and colleagues (Kiral, 2020; Webber & Nickel, 2021). A

successful school is filled with teacher leaders desiring to make a difference, and in turn,

a positive school culture is created (Kiral, 2020).

Summary

In Chapter Two a review of literature containing information and research

focused primarily on school culture was presented. The review of literature included the

coherence framework, school culture, teacher leadership, developing teacher leaders,

professional development for teacher leadership, virtual teacher leadership, the role of the

principal in fostering teacher leaders, building principal leadership styles, the impact of

COVID-19 on teacher leaders, and the impact of COVID-19 on school culture. Finally, the chapter concluded with an exploration of the effect of teacher leaders on school culture.

In Chapter Three, an overview of the problem and purpose is presented and the research questions are provided. The research design and ethical considerations taken throughout the study will be described. Details about the population and sample chosen for the study will be provided. Finally, the data collection processes and data analysis procedures will be explained.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

School culture is influenced by administrative leadership, crises, such as the

COVID-19 pandemic, virtual leadership opportunities, professional development, and the

overall fostering of teacher leadership (Junge, 2019; Kiral, 2020; Tonich, 2021). The

perceptions of staff members in regard to teacher leadership provides a correlation of

how school culture is influenced (Kiral, 2020). Research studies have steadily increased

to see how teacher leadership and school culture correlate (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir,

2018).

Within this chapter, the problem and purpose overview and the research design

are provided, along with the population and sample size of the study. The instrumentation

consisting of survey statements and focus group discussion questions for instructional

coaches and administrators is also outlined. Following this, reliability, validity, and

triangulation of the study are explained. The data collection process is outlined. Data

analysis is also explored in order to show how the results of the study will be explained.

The chapter closes with the ethical considerations to make sure that specific processes

were used to protect the identity of the districts, schools, and participants of the study.

Problem and Purpose Overview

School administrators have recognized a need for positive school cultures to exist

for both teachers and students (Pullan, 2016). Principals have learned that in order to

create positive school cultures, a team effort must be established and teacher leaders need

to be identified and molded (Campion & Campion, 2020). Additional focus on fostering

teacher leaders must be established in the areas of professional development for teacher

leaders, virtual teacher leadership, and how to respond to various crises within the educational realm, while still maintaining a positive school culture (Campion & Campion, 2020; Webber & Nickel, 2021). Once teachers become teacher leaders, they must be given opportunities to lead within their job, have time to collaborate with their team members at school, and have time to grow professionally (Berry et al., 2010; Campion & Campion, 2020; Webber & Nickel, 2021). Each of these factors plays an important role in shaping how teacher leaders contribute to a positive school culture.

Several studies have addressed how building leadership styles, crises in the world, and professional development contribute to creating a positive school culture (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2021; Tonich, 2019). However, the number of studies that have addressed how teacher leadership affected overall school culture have been minimal (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2021). The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions that teacher leaders have on the impact of developing a positive school culture. The perceptions of administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches were gathered through surveys and focus group interviews.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. When teachers consider school culture, what is the difference in the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not?

    $H1_0$: When teachers consider school culture, there is no difference in the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not.

    *$H1$*a: When teachers consider school culture, there is a difference in the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not.

2. What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the effect strong teacher leadership has on school culture?

3. In what ways do high school building principals encourage teacher leadership roles and development?

Research Design

A mixed-methods research design was utilized in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed. Johnson and Christensen (2020) believed, "By combining two (or more) research methods with different strengths and weaknesses in a research study, you can make it less likely that you will miss something important or make a mistake" (p. 50). Furthermore, Mertens (2020) suggested, "Because mixed methods designs incorporate techniques from both the quantitative and qualitative research traditions, they can be used to answer questions that could not be answered in any other way" (p. 318).

Data for this study were collected via survey and focus group discussions. Using a variety of data collection methods provided increased reliability and validity (Mertens, 2020). Surveys allowed for a greater number of responses while focus groups allowed for increased knowledge and depth of information that contributed to the overall research study (Mertens, 2020). Research from the Literature Review in Chapter Two was also used to gather data for this study. Since multiple forms of data collection took place, triangulation of data was performed in order to examine and test validity within the study (Guion, 2022).

Population and Sample

The participating district was selected as a convenience sample. According to Johnson and Christensen (2020), "Researchers use convenience sampling when they

include in their sample people who are available or volunteer or can be easily recruited and are willing to participate in the research study" (p. 253). The researcher is employed as a teacher by the participating district.

Survey participants were a census sample, because all PK–12 certified teachers in the district were invited to participate in the survey. For the purpose of this study, a certified teacher refers to all district-employed teachers certified by the Missouri Department of Secondary and Elementary Education in grades PK–12. There were a total of 172 certified teachers within the participating district that were sent a survey. A census sample collects data from everyone in the population (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The two focus groups were also census samples, as all instructional coaches and all building principals were invited to participate in the focus group discussions. One focus group consisted of six building principals and another focus group consisted of five instructional coaches. Mertens (2020) determined six to nine participants are an adequate amount for a focus group discussion (p. 362).

Instrumentation

This study included three different instruments. The quantitative instrument was a survey adapted from another source provided from the Ohio Department of Education (2019). The qualitative portion of this study included two instruments, one for the instructional coach focus group discussion and one for the principal focus group discussion.

Survey Instrument

The survey (see Appendix A) given was titled, School Culture: Teacher Leadership Readiness Survey, (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). Survey-based

questions allow for quick responses from participants and are easy to use to obtain

information that can be used as first-hand data or for later empirical research (Lu et al.,

2021). The survey participant pool was the 172 certified teachers within the participating

school district. The data collected from the survey was used to answer research question

one. The use of an online survey allowed for the collection of data regarding information

and perceptions from a significant number of people (Kindley, 2016). The survey that

was used included statements that support teacher practices and that research has shown

to facilitate teacher leadership, such as a unified vision of school mission, developmental

focus, autonomy, collegiality, collaboration, participation in decision making,

administrative support, attitudes toward recognition, and general work environment

(Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

Focus Group Instruments

The discussion questions for both focus groups were developed based on research

questions two and three and information and findings from the Review of Literature in

Chapter Two of this document. Discussion questions (see Appendix B) for the

Instructional Coach focus group were designed to answer research question two.

Discussion questions for the building principals (see Appendix C) were designed to

answer research question three. Discussion questions for the focus groups were designed

to obtain thoughtful expressions of participants' perceptions and understanding of the

selected research topic (Shoemaker et al., 2020). The discussion questions for each focus

group needed to be specifically related to the role of either an instructional coach or a

building principal, in order to get accurate feedback.

Open-ended discussion questions that were created for both focus groups allowed for various participant perceptions and responses to be collected (Brendel, 2022). Further questioning provided additional information from each of the participants (Brendel, 2022). All of the questions that were created were used to obtain the perceptions of how staff members viewed how teacher leadership affects school culture.

The instructional coach focus group questions were developed using research in Chapter Two in regard to teacher-powered learning models, student learning, how teacher leaders strengthen or weaken the school culture, and how positive cultures are created (Bond, 2021; Junge, 2019.) The building principal focus group questions were developed using research in Chapter Two in regard to defining teacher leadership and the relationship between teacher leaders and a positive school culture, fostering a positive school culture, and encouraging teacher leaders (Junge, 2019; Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018; Nooruddin & Bhamari, 2019).

Reliability. According to Mertens (2020), the test-retest measure of reliability "involves administering a test to a group of individuals, waiting a period of time, and then administering the same test to the same individuals a second time" (p. 420). The survey was administered to a group of teachers, not participating in the study, at two different times, one week apart. This allowed for a comparison of the responses to determine if the responses were consistent.

Questions that were selected for the focus groups were field-tested by a group of participants that did not participate in this research study. By using field-testing, reliability was ensured by assessing the questions ahead of time, to make sure that they would provide accurate responses. Reliability in this research study referred to the

consistency of responses from participants (Jhangiani et al., 2015) Questions were then altered with revisions, as a result of the field-testing experience. Field-testing also provided an opportunity to display validity within the research study. When participant responses are consistent and the responses measure what the research is supposed to, validity exists (Jhangiani, 2015).

Validity. A triangulation of sources was also created within this research process, in order to make sure credibility was upheld (Guion, 2022). Triangulation is a method used in qualitative research processes to examine and test validity within the study (Guion, 2022). Triangulation involves using multiple methods or data sources in order to understand the main topic that is researched (Carter et al., 2014). This process helps to ensure reliability and validity within the research process (Carteret al., 2014; Guion, 2022). The different viewpoints and perceptions from each of the participants, along with their individual experiences, also contributed to the credibility of this research study.

Data Collection

The quantitative portion of the study included a voluntary survey. After district permission was received (see Appendix D) and the study was approved by the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board, building principals, building instructional coaches and certified teachers were emailed a copy of the survey letter of participation (see Appendix E), which included the survey link. District email addresses were gathered from the district website. A copy of the research information sheet (see Appendix F) was the first page of the survey and by completing the survey the participant provides consented to participate.

The qualitative portion of the study included two focus group discussions. One focus group included all district instructional coaches and the other focus group included all district building principals. A letter of participation (see Appendices G & H), the research information sheet, and a copy of each respective groups' focus group discussion questions were emailed to the instructional coaches and the building principals. Focus group discussions were scheduled on a day and time that is convenient for all participants. To ensure voluntary participation for each focus group, the research information sheet was reviewed and acknowledgment from each focus group member was recorded prior to the focus group discussion.

Data Analysis

After the survey collection ends, a Mann-Whitney U was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not. According to Coolidge (2021), "The Mann-Whitney U test is the nonparametric equivalent of a t test for independent groups. It is commonly used in experiments where the data are skewed or the underlying distributions are not normal" (p. 427).

The qualitative data were collected and analyzed using open and axial coding. The focus group discussion questions were recorded and transcribed, the data were analyzed and organized according to various patterns in responses. The analysis process began with utilizing the coding process, which enables the researcher to organize data in a way where similarities and differences can be clearly distinguished. Within qualitative analysis, coding is viewed as an activity that creates and assigns a word or phrase to symbolize, summarize, and capture some attribute of portions of language-based or visual

data pieces (Saldana, 2016). Coding serves as a way for readers to understand how the researcher defined categories and how data were assigned to those categories (Saldana, 2016). The categories, patterns, similarities, and differences were then compared to multiple literature sources that were reviewed in Chapter Two in order to align the findings with prior research studies.

Ethical Considerations

Extra precautions were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. All survey participants were provided a research information sheet. Participants were informed that they may remove themselves from the study at any time. Participants had the option to complete the survey or opt out. No identifying information was collected from survey participants. Focus group participants were also be provided with a copy of the research information sheet and informed they would have the option to opt out at any time.

The sample size for the survey was large and no identifiable information was collected. The research information sheet outlined any risks and all participants were provided with an opt-out opportunity. This was included on the first survey page for survey participants, and completion of the survey indicate consent.

Because all instructional coaches and all building principals participated in the two focus group discussions there was a possibility that they could be identified, due to the small sample size. The research information sheet was reviewed with all focus group participants prior to the focus group discussion and acknowledgment of consent to be recorded. Alphanumeric codes were assigned to each focus group member to ensure anonymity of focus group participants.

Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the problem and purpose of the research study and the hypotheses and research questions were clearly restated. The research design process was created with the intention to allow for the identification of the perceptions that school staff members had on how teacher leaders affect school culture. Details regarding the population and sample size were provided. Information was also provided regarding the instrumentation used to collect data, along with the aspects of reliability and validity.

Chapter Three also included details about the data collection process and how the data were analyzed. Finally, ethical considerations were addressed to ensure that the steps taken within the research process allowed participant and school district information to remain confidential. In Chapter Four, the results of the survey and focus groups will be documented. The data were organized and analyzed in order to specifically identify the perceptions that staff members have on how teacher leaders affect school culture.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to investigate educator perceptions of teacher leadership and their impact on school culture. To better understand educator perceptions of teacher leadership and their impact on school culture, a Likert-type scale survey was sent to all certified teachers in one southwest Missouri school district. Two different focus groups were also conducted. One focus group included instructional coaches, while the other focus group included building principals from the district. Survey statements and questions for the focus groups were designed to address the research questions.

The focus groups and survey were completed with school personnel from buildings in one southwest Missouri district. To retain anonymity, each building was assigned a letter value. Each personnel member within that building was assigned a numeric value. Table 1 illustrates each building in the district and the number of participating school personnel by category, instructional coaches, building principals, and certified teachers.

Table 1

Focus Group Participants

Participating Buildings	Building Grade	Instructional Coaches	Building Principals	Certified Teachers
Building A	Elementary	1	1	35
Building B	Elementary	1	1	36
Building C	Elementary	1	1	24
Building D	Secondary	1	1	30
Building E	Secondary	1	1	41
Building F	Secondary	1	0	6

Survey

A Likert-type scale survey was distributed in one participating school district in the southwest Missouri region. The survey was emailed to 172 certified teachers from the district; a total of 40 responses were received. To protect the identities of the participants, no identifying data were collected from the survey. Several analyses were conducted as a result of the focus groups and survey responses. The first analysis focused on teacher leadership and school culture from a building instructional coach perspective. The second analysis focused on teacher leadership and school culture from a building principal perspective. The third analysis focused on teacher leadership and school culture from a certified teacher's perspective. Following all analyses, all of the responses were organized to review the information and evaluate how teacher leadership affects school culture.

Quantitative Data

Survey Statement 1

Participants in the study were asked to rate their perception of how teachers and administrators share a common vision of the mission or purpose of the school. Survey response data revealed 95% of participants agreed, somewhat agreed, or strongly agreed that teachers and administrators share a common vision of the mission or purpose of their school (see Figure 2). Of the 95% of participants that agreed, somewhat agreed, or strongly agreed, 25% strongly agreed. In contrast, 5% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that teachers and administrators share a common vision of the mission or purpose of their school. No participants somewhat disagreed that teachers and administrators share a common vision of the mission or purpose of their school.

Figure 2

Teachers and Administrators Share a Common Vision of the Mission/Purpose of This

School
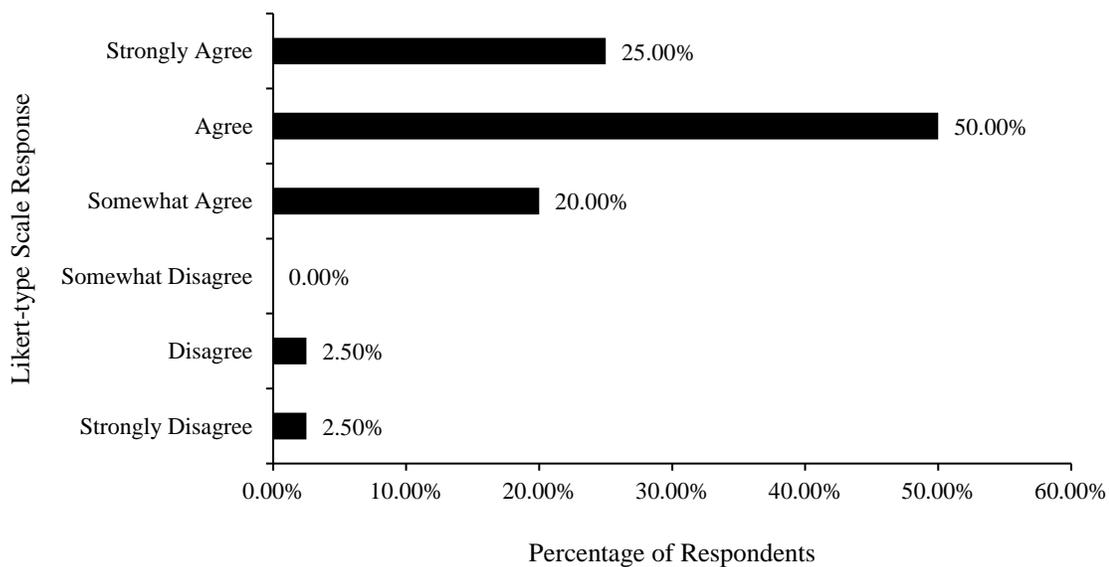
Survey Statement 2

Participants in the study were asked to rate their perception of how they are

expected to improve their practice by gaining new knowledge and skills. Survey response

data revealed 97.5% of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed they are

expected to improve their practice by gaining new knowledge and skills at their school

(see Figure 3). Out of the 97.5% of participants indicating somewhat agreed, agreed, or

strongly agreed, 32.5% strongly agreed they are expected to improve their practice by

gaining new knowledge and skills at their school. In contrast, only 2.5% of participants

disagreed they are expected to improve their practice by gaining new knowledge and

skills at their school.

Figure 3

At This School, I Am Expected to Improve my Practice by Gaining New Knowledge and

Skills
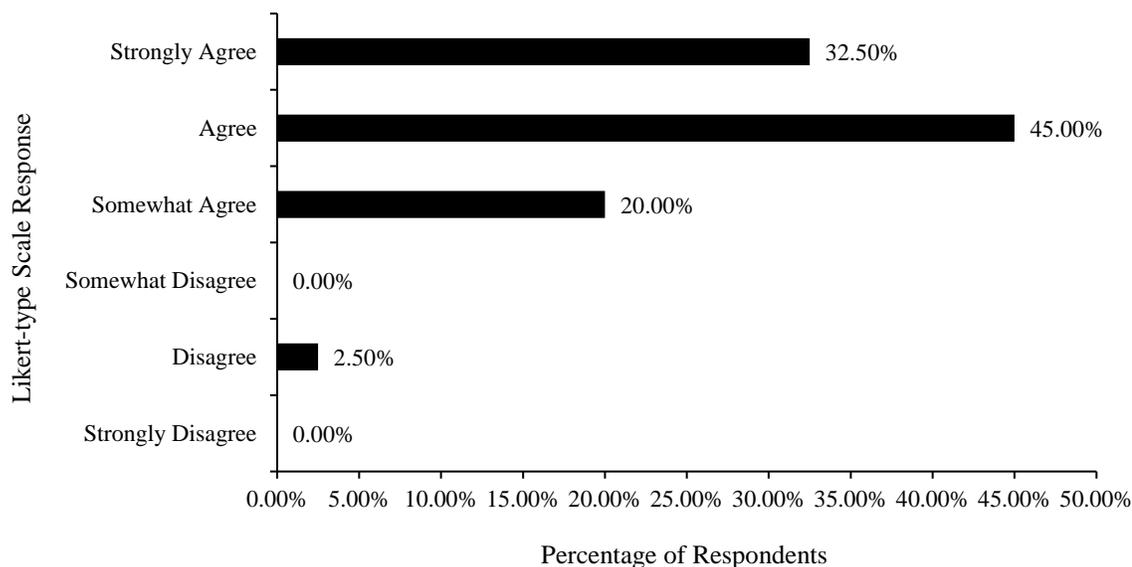
Survey Statement 3

Participants in the study were asked to rate their perception of how they are

encouraged to take initiative to make improvements at their school. Survey response data

revealed 97.5% of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed they are

encouraged to take initiative to make improvements at their school (see Figure 4). Out of

the 97.5% of participants indicating somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed, 22.5%

of participants strongly agreed they are encouraged to take initiative to make

improvements at their school. In contrast, 2.5% of participants strongly disagreed they

are encouraged to take initiative to make improvements at their school.

Figure 4

At This School, I Am Encouraged to Take Initiative to Make Improvements
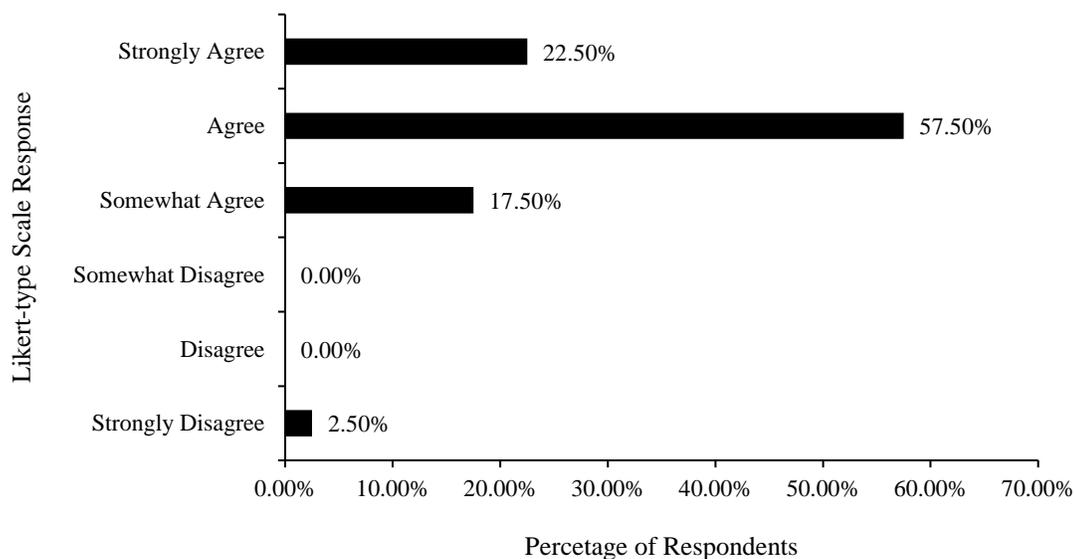
Survey Statement 4

Participants in the study were asked to rate their perception of how their ideas and opinions are valued and respected at their school. Survey responses revealed 82.5% of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed their ideas and opinions are valued and respected at their school (see Figure 5). Survey responses also revealed 17.5% of participants somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed that their ideas and opinions are valued and respected at their school. Out of the 17.5% of participants indicating disagreed or strongly disagreed, 5% strongly disagreed that their ideas and opinions are valued and respected at their school. In contrast, 27.5% of participants strongly agreed that their ideas and opinions are valued and respected at their school.

Figure 5

At This School, My Ideas and Opinions Are Valued and Respected
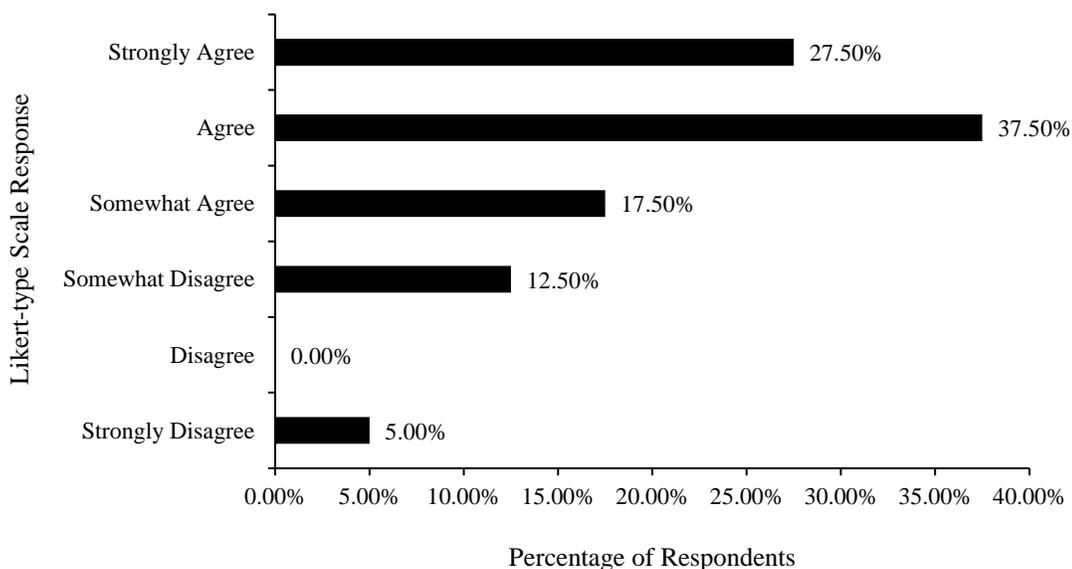
Survey Statement 5

Participants in the study were asked to rate their perception of collaboration with other teachers on instructional and student-related matters. Survey responses revealed that 87.5% of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that they are able to collaborate with other teachers on instructional and student-related matters (see Figure 6). Out of the 87.5% indicating somewhat agreed, agreed, or disagreed, 32.5% strongly agreed that they are able to collaborate with other teachers on instructional and student-related matters. In contrast, 12.5% of participants somewhat disagreed or disagreed that they are able to collaborate with other teachers on instructional and student-related matters. No participant strongly disagreed that they are able to collaborate with other teachers on instructional and student-related matters.

Figure 6

At This School, I Collaborate with Other Teachers on Instructional and Student-Related

Matters
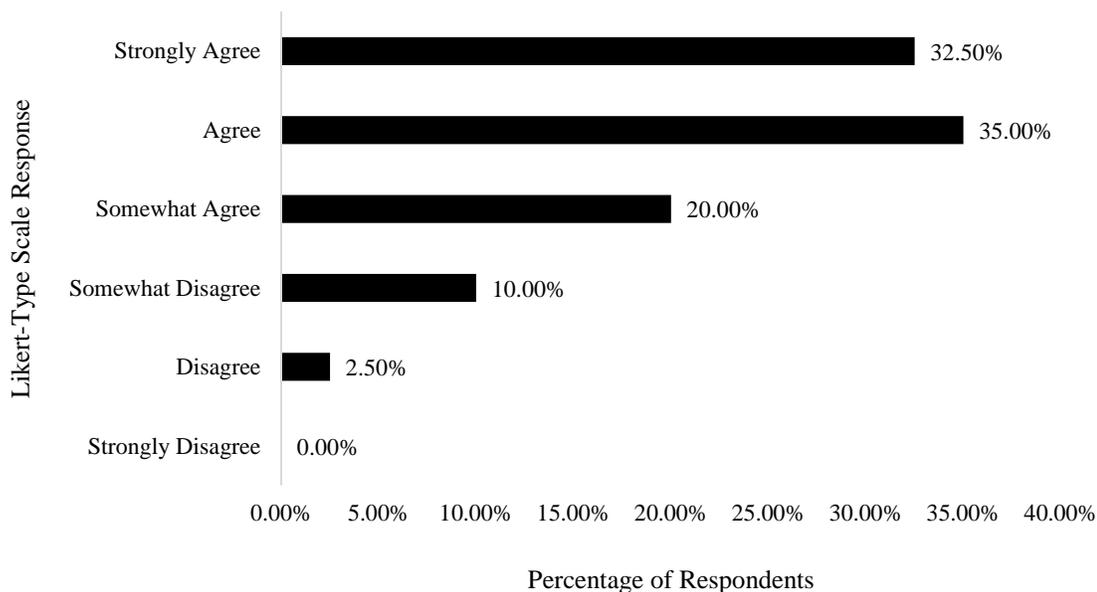
Survey Statement 6

Participants in the study were asked to rate their perceptions of how they

participate in decisions that affect them at their school. Survey responses revealed 82.5%

of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed they are able to participate in

decisions that affect them at their school (see Figure 7). Out of the 82.5% of participants

indicating somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed, 12.5% strongly agreed they are

able to participate in decisions that affect them at their school. Survey responses also

revealed 17.5% of participants somewhat disagreed or disagreed they are able to

participate in decisions that affect them at their school. No participants strongly disagreed

they are able to participate in decisions that affect them at their school.

Figure 7

At This School, I Participate in Decisions that Affect Me
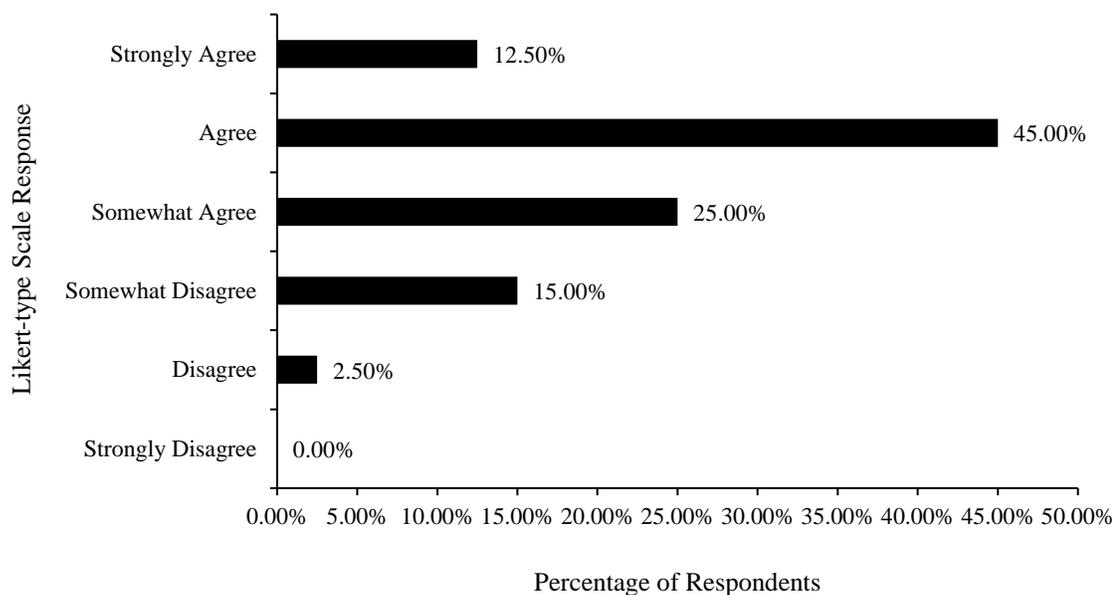
Survey Statement 7

Participants in the study were asked to rate their perception of how their principal, faculty, and staff work together as a team in their school building. Survey responses revealed 92.5% of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that their principal, faculty, and staff work together as a team in their school building (see Figure 8). Out of the 92.5% of participants indicating somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed that their principal, faculty, and staff work together as a team in their school building, 12.5% of participants strongly agreed. In contrast, survey responses revealed 7.5% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that their principal, faculty, and staff work together as a team in their school building.

Figure 8

At This School, the Principal, Faculty, and Staff Work as a Team
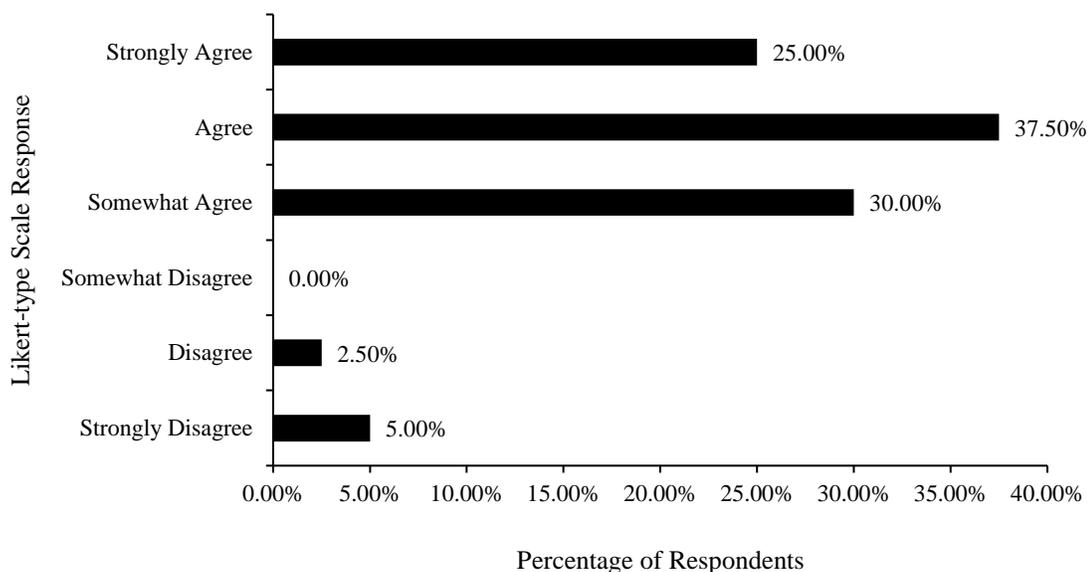
Survey Statement 8

Participants in this study were asked to rate their perception of how they are recognized for their professional accomplishments within their school building. Survey responses revealed 75% of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed they are recognized for professional accomplishments at their school (see Figure 9). Out of the 75% of participants that somewhat agreed, agreed or strongly agreed that they are recognized for professional accomplishments at their school, 15% of participants strongly agreed. Survey responses also revealed 25% of participants somewhat disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that they are recognized for professional accomplishments at their school. Out of the 25% indicating somewhat disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed, 5% of participants strongly disagreed that they are recognized for professional accomplishments at their school.

Figure 9

At This School, I Am Recognized for My Professional Accomplishments
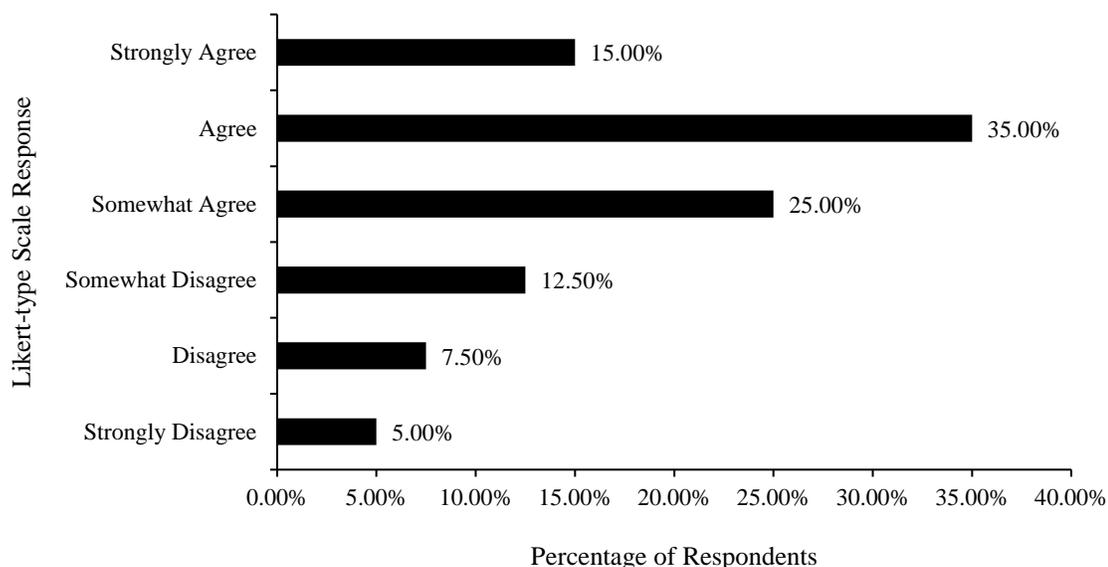
Survey Statement 9

Participants in the study were asked to rate their perception of how generally satisfied they are with the work environment among teachers at their school. Survey responses revealed that 95% of participants somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed they are generally satisfied with the work environment among teachers at their school (see Figure 10). Out of the 95% of participants indicating somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed they are generally satisfied with the work environment among teachers at their school, 35% of participants strongly agreed. Survey responses also revealed 5% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed they are generally satisfied with the work environment among teachers at their school. Out of the 5% of teachers that strongly disagreed or disagreed they are generally satisfied with the work environment among teachers at their school, 2.5% strongly disagreed.

Figure 10

I Am Generally Satisfied with the Work Environment Among Teachers at This School
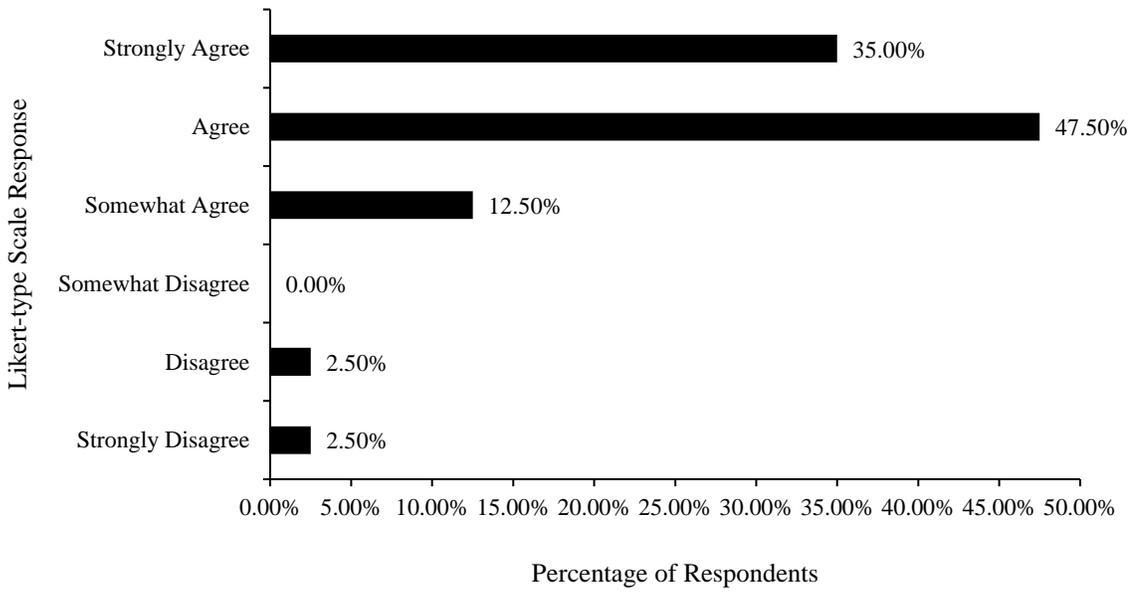
Survey Statement 10

Participants in the study were asked to rate whether or not they identified as a strong teacher leader. Survey responses revealed 80% of participants identified as strong teacher leaders. In contrast, 20% of participants did not identify as strong teacher leaders (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Do You Identify as a Strong Teacher Leader?
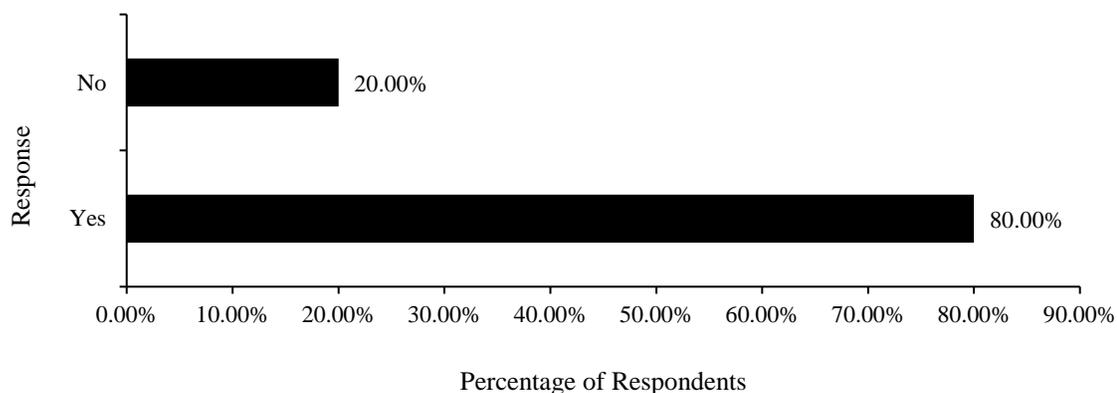
Mann-Whitney U Analysis

  The Mann-Whitney *U* Analysis was used to compare the survey responses of teachers who claimed to be strong teacher leaders versus teachers who claimed not to be strong teacher leaders. This test was found appropriate to administer, as there was a small number of teacher responses and the number of teachers who claimed to be or not to be strong teacher leaders was different. The Mann-Whitney *U* Analysis results informed the researcher if the null hypothesis should be rejected or not rejected (Bialowas, 2021). If $p < 0.05$, there is a significant difference between the groups, and the null hypothesis should be rejected (Bialowas, 2021). If $p > 0.05$, there is no significant difference between the groups, and the null hypothesis should not be rejected (Bialowas, 2021). The z-score and probability determinations are listed in Table 2. The figures following Table 2 show survey responses, according to the teachers who answered *yes* to identifying as a strong teacher leader, compared to the teachers who answered no to identifying as a strong teacher leader.

Table 2

Mann-Whitney U Test Results of Teachers' Perception on How Teacher Leadership

Effects School Culture

Survey Statements	z	p
Statement 1	0.10144	.92034
Statement 2	0.10144	.92034
Statement 3	0.10144	.92034
Statement 4	-0.06763	.9442
Statement 5	1.3356	.18024
Statement 6	0.7946	.42952
Statement 7	0.98057	.32708
Statement 8	-0.86222	.38978
Statement 9	-0.35503	.71884

As shown in Figure 12, 75% of all survey participants, both those who identified as strong teacher leaders and those who did not, responded strongly agree or agree to Survey Statement 1. However, the other 25% of respondents varied. Of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 21.88% responded somewhat agree and 3.13% responded disagree, while only 12.50% of those participants who did not identify as strong teacher leaders responded somewhat agree, and 12.50% responded strongly disagree. The Mann-Whitney *U* analysis determined; *p*=.92034. Since *p* was greater than .05, there was not a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not, for survey statement 1.

Figure 12

Teachers and Administrators Share a Common Vision of the Mission/Purpose of This

School
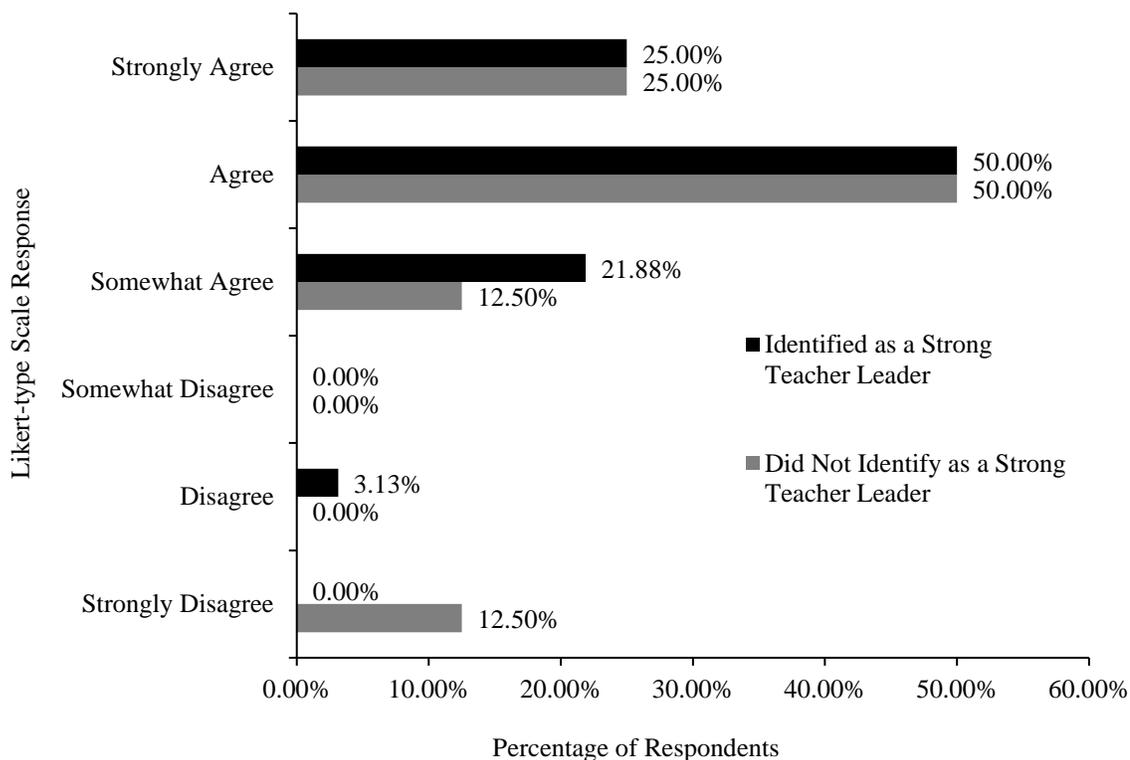
As shown in Figure 13, out of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 75.01% responded strongly agree or agree to Survey Statement 2, compared to 87.50% of participants who did not identify as strong teacher leaders. Of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 3.13% responded disagree. Of the participants who did not identify as a strong teacher leader, 12.50% responded strongly disagreed. The Mann-Whitney *U* analysis determined; *p*=.92034. Since *p* was greater than .05 there was not a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not, for survey statement 2.

Figure 13

At This School, I Am Expected to Improve my Practice by Gaining New Knowledge and

Skills

As shown in Figure 14, out of the participants who identified as strong teacher

leaders, 81.25% responded strongly agree or agree to Survey Statement 3, compared to

75.00% of participants who did not identify as strong teacher leaders. Of the participants

who identified as strong teacher leaders, 15.63% responded somewhat agree, and 3.13%

responded strongly disagree. Of the participants who did not identify as a strong teacher

leader, 25.00% responded somewhat agree. The Mann-Whitney *U* analysis determined

p=.92034. Since *p* was greater than .05 there was not a significant difference between the

perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not for

survey statement 3.

Figure 14

At This School, I Am Encouraged to Take Initiative to Make Improvements

As shown in Figure 15, out of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 65.63% responded strongly agree or agree to Survey Statement 4, compared to 62.50% of participants who did not identify as strong teacher leaders. Of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 18.75% responded somewhat agree, 12.50% responded somewhat disagree, and 3.13% responded strongly disagree. Of the participants who did not identify as a strong teacher leader, 12.50% responded somewhat disagree, and another 12.50% responded strongly disagree. The Mann-Whitney *U* analysis determined *p*=.9442. Since *p* was greater than .05 there was not a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not for survey statement 4.
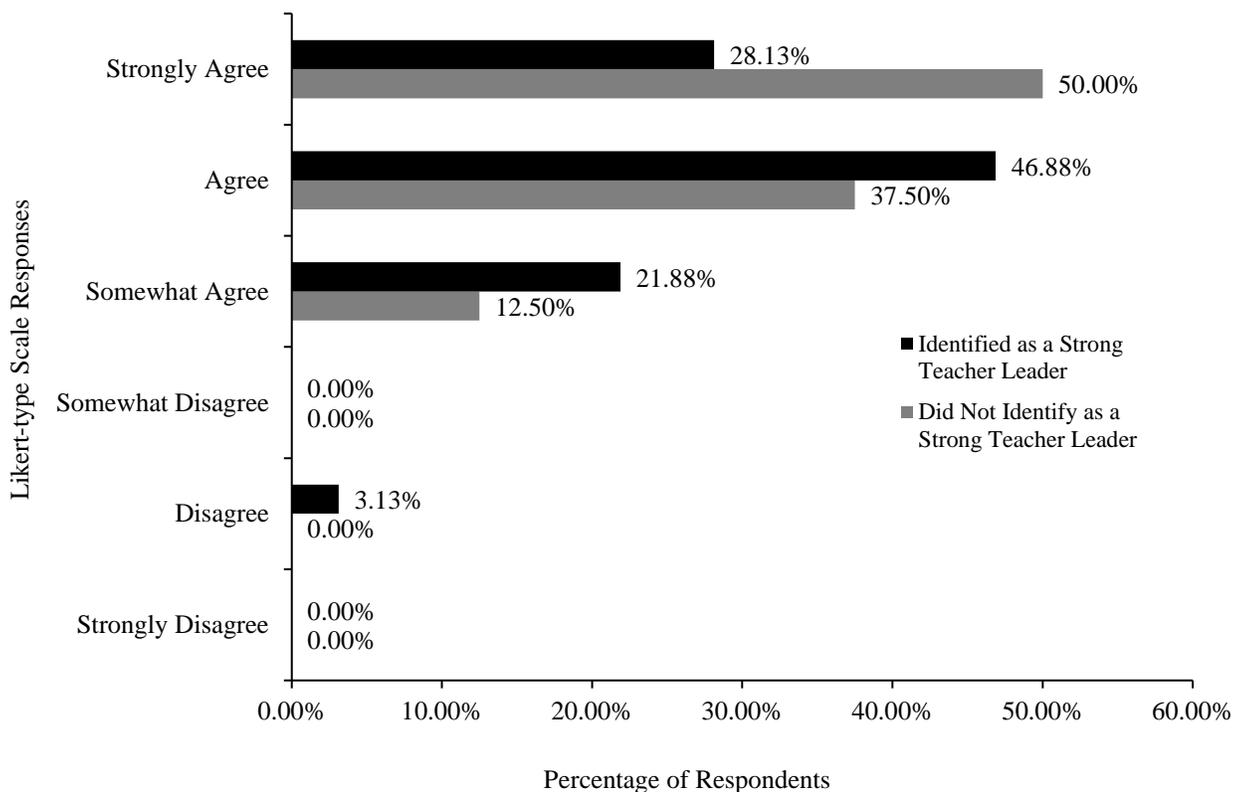
Figure 15

At This School, My Ideas and Opinions Are Valued and Respected

As shown in Figure 16, out of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 75.01% responded strongly agree or agree to Survey Statement 5, compared to 37.50% of participants who did not identify as strong teacher leaders. Of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 15.63% responded somewhat agree, 6.25% responded somewhat disagree, and 3.13% responded disagree. Of the participants who did not identify as a strong teacher leader, 25.00% responded somewhat disagree. Both participants who identified as strong teacher leaders and those who did not identify as strong teacher leaders did not have a response for strongly agree. The Mann-Whitney *U* analysis determined *p*=.18024. Since *p* was greater than .05, there was not a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers who identified as strong teacher leaders and those who did identify as strong teacher leaders for survey statement 5.

Figure 16

At This School, I Collaborate with Other Teachers on Instructional and Student-Related Matters

As shown in Figure 17, out of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 59.38% responded strongly agree or agree to Survey Statement 6, compared to 50.00% of participants who did not identify as strong teacher leaders. Of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 28.13% responded somewhat agree, and 12.50% responded somewhat disagree. Of the participants who did not identify as a strong teacher leader, 12.50% responded somewhat agree, 25.00% responded somewhat disagree, and 12.50% responded disagree. Both participants who identified as strong teacher leaders and those who did not identify as strong teacher leaders did not have a response for strongly agree. The Mann-Whitney *U* analysis determined *p*=.42952. Since *p* was greater

than .05 there was not a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not for survey statement 6.
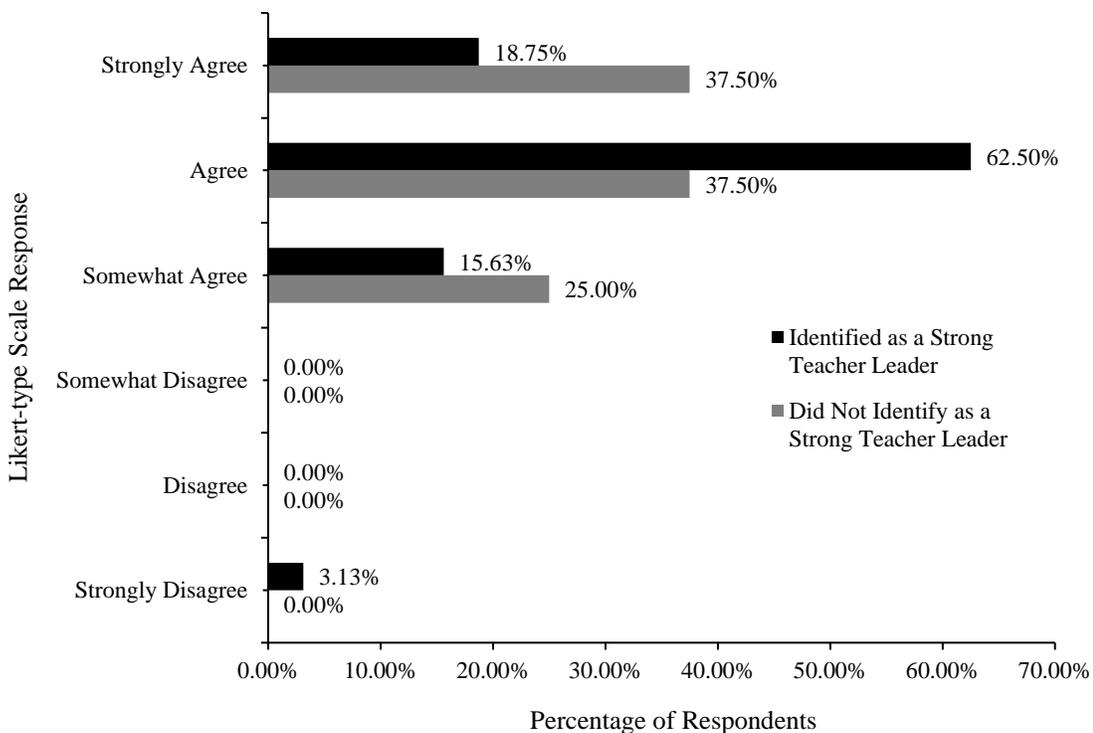
Figure 17

At This School, I Participate in Decisions that Affect Me
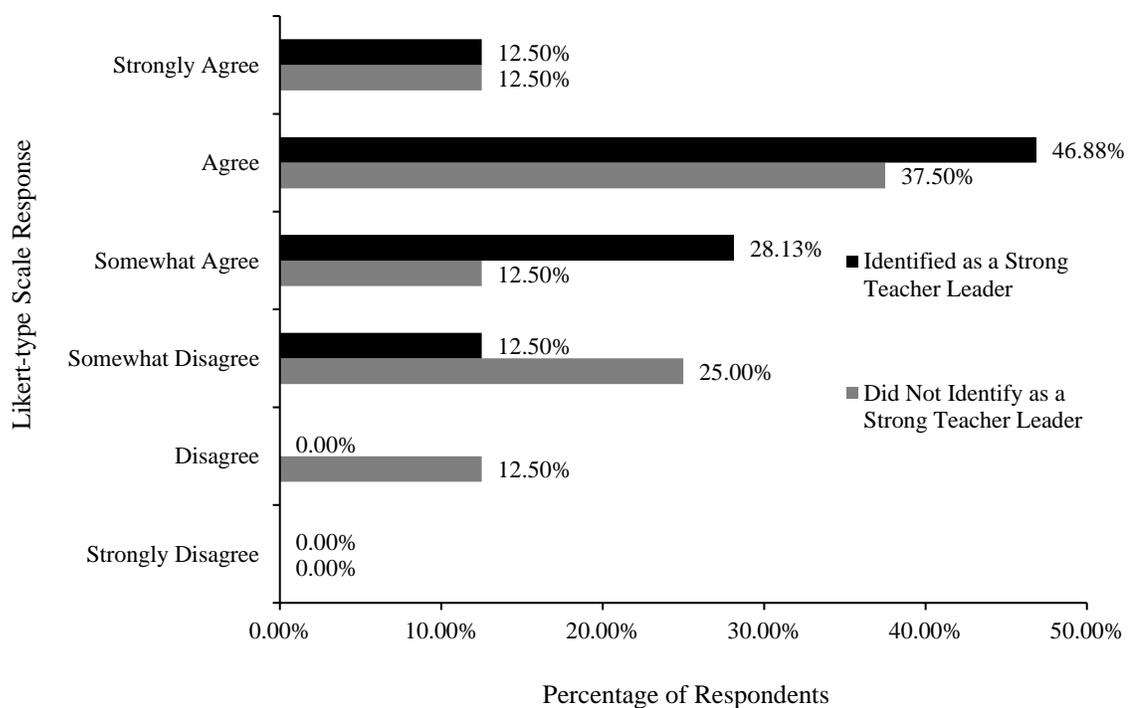
As shown in Figure 18, out of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 65.63% responded strongly agree or agree to Survey Statement 7, compared to 50% of participants who did not identify as strong teacher leaders. Of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders 28.13% responded somewhat agree and 6.26% responded disagree or strongly disagree. Of the participants who did not identify as a strong teacher leader, 37.50% responded somewhat agree and 12.50% responded strongly disagree. The Mann-Whitney *U* analysis determined *p*=.32708. Since *p* was greater than .05 there was not a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not for survey statement 7.
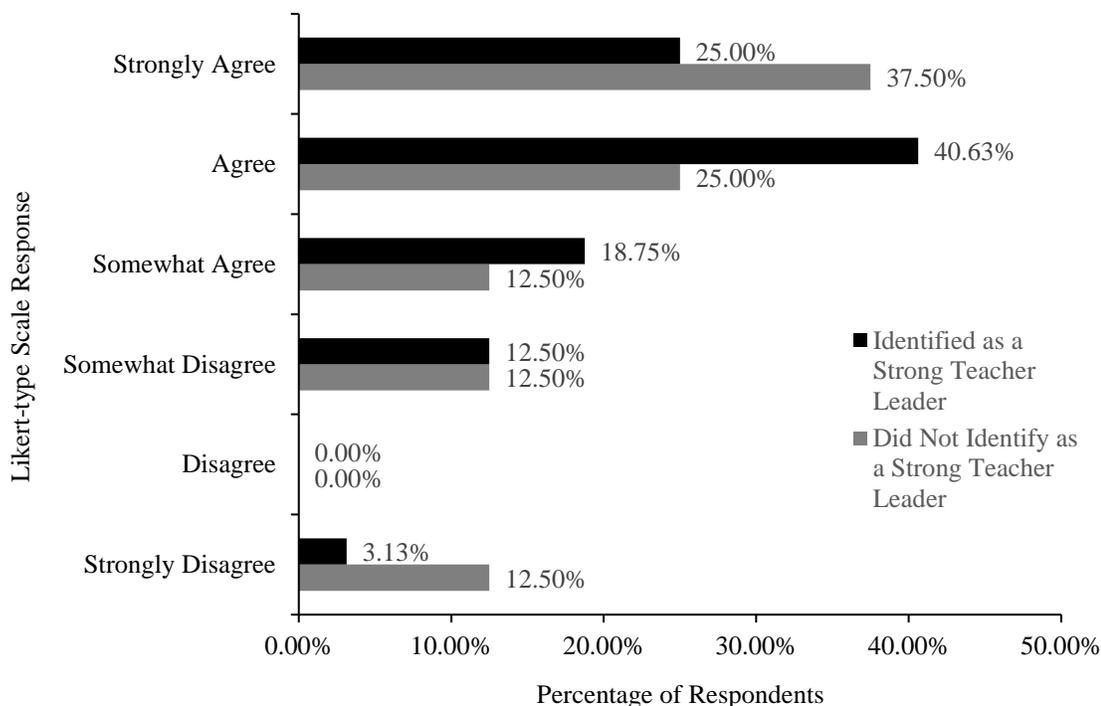
Figure 18

At This School, the Principal, Faculty, and Staff Work as a Team
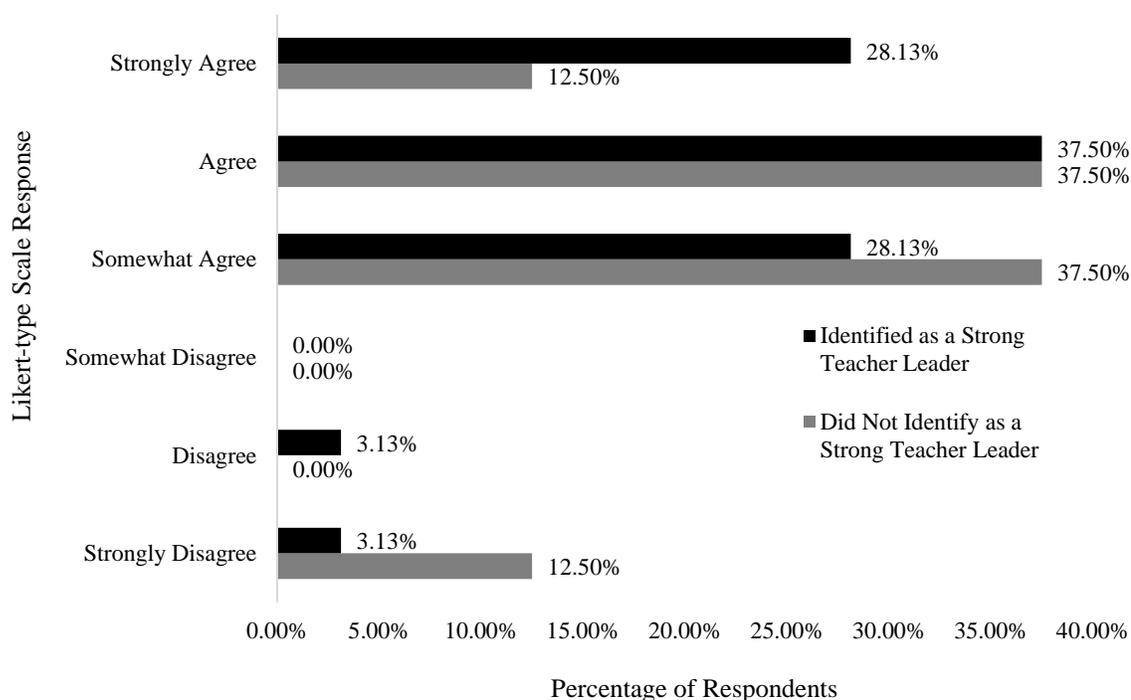
As shown in Figure 19, out of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 46.88% responded strongly agree or agree to Survey Statement 8, compared to 62.50% of participants who did not identify as strong teacher leaders. Of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders 25.00% responded somewhat agree, 15.63% responded somewhat disagree, 9.38% responded disagree, and 3.13% responded strongly disagree. Of the participants who did not identify as a strong teacher leader, 25.00% responded somewhat agree and 12.50% responded strongly disagree. The Mann-Whitney *U* analysis determined *p*=.38978. Since *p* was greater than .05 there was not a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not for survey statement 8.
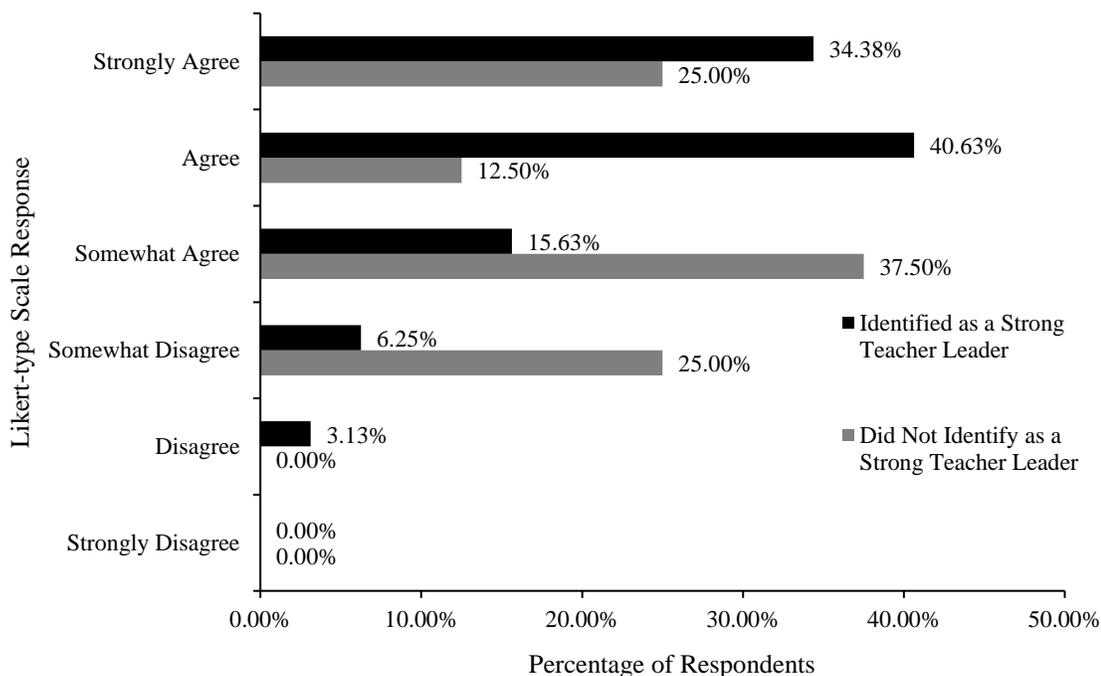
Figure 19

At This School, I Am Recognized for My Professional Accomplishments
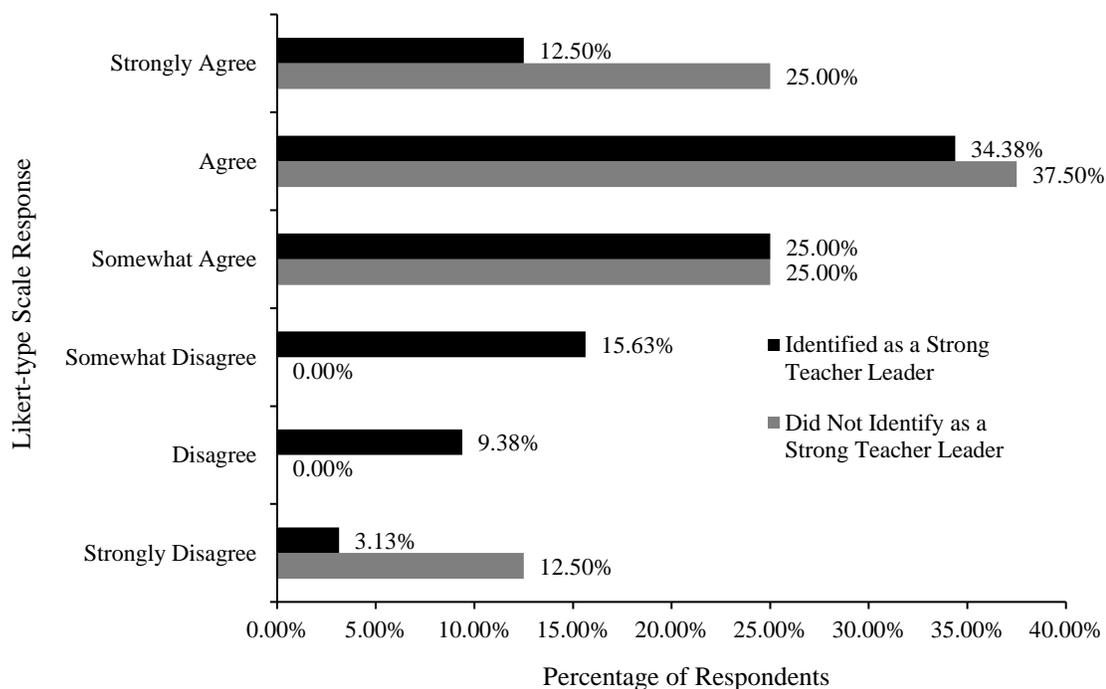
As shown in Figure 20, out of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders, 84.38% responded strongly agree or agree to Survey Statement 9, compared to 75.00% of participants who did not identify as strong teacher leaders. Of the participants who identified as strong teacher leaders 12.50% responded somewhat agree, compared to 3.13% who responded strongly disagree. Of the participants who did not identify as a strong teacher leader, 12.50% responded somewhat agree and 12.50% responded disagree. The Mann-Whitney *U* analysis determined *p*=.71884. Since *p* was greater than .05 there was not a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not for survey statement 9.

Figure 20

I Am Generally Satisfied with the Work Environment Among Teachers at This School
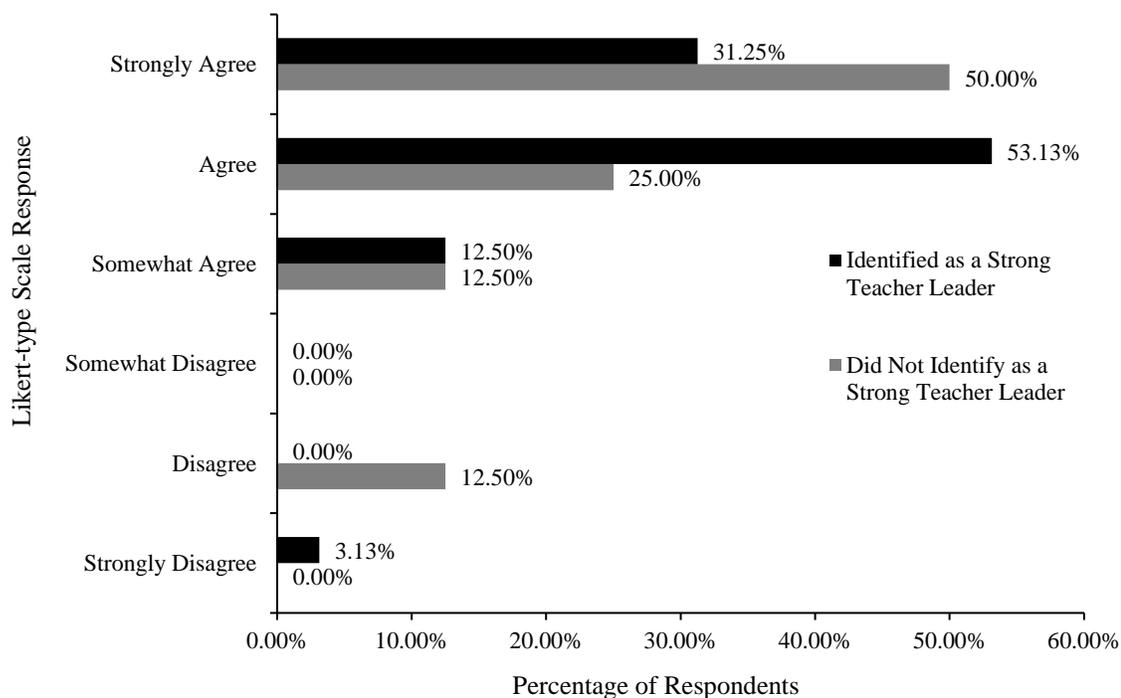
Research Question One asked: When teachers consider school culture, what is the difference in the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not? The null hypothesis stated: When teachers consider school culture, there is no difference in the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not. The *p*-values for each building were greater than .05, which provided statistical evidence that there were not any significant differences in the responses from teachers that considered themselves to be strong teacher leaders and teachers that did not consider themselves to be strong teacher leaders. As a result, the null hypothesis was not rejected because no significant differences were found.

Qualitative Data

Two focus groups were completed in one school district in the Southwest Missouri region. The focus group consisted of instructional coaches and building principals from six school buildings within the same district. Focus group participants were provided with an alphanumeric code to ensure anonymity. For example, the first person is referred to as A1, since they were the first person from school A, and the second person is referred to as A2, since they are the second person from school A. This pattern was continued throughout the 11 focus group participants.

Instructional Coach Focus Group Question One: Teacher-Powered Governance.

How does a teacher-powered form of governance model impact student learning?

A common idea that arose from this question was that with a teacher-powered form of governance, student needs are put first.

Instructional coach A5 mentioned:

The further you get away from the classroom, I think the more disconnected you become, and the people who know their students best are the people who are in the room with their students. They're the people who are also getting a lot of professional development about teaching and best practices. These are the people in the classroom doing the work, so they are empowered. I can't help but think that that is going to benefit the students.

Participant D1 agreed with Participant A5 in regard to empowerment. Participant D1 stated:

I believe empowered people empower others. In this situation, empowered teachers will empower students. By giving teachers ownership of the student

learning process, students will then build ownership of their own learning. This in

turn creates a better environment to where students will be even more successful.

Participant C1 suggested that any time a teacher is in power, it gives a level of

professionalism and they believe more in themselves, which transfers to everything else.

Another participant, A1, also asserted:

> I agree just overall that the teachers are the ones in the classroom so they really
>
> have the best insight of what do their students need and what they really need to
>
> achieve further learning. It's really important to just have those teacher leaders.

According to participant C1, "In order for schools to be successful, teachers must be on

board while also having a voice and being heard."

Instructional Coach Focus Group Question Two: Student Achievement.

In what ways might it improve student achievement)?

A consensus among the focus group members was that there must be "buy-in"

from teachers in regard to any changes or growth opportunities. Barriers must be

removed in order for teachers to be willing to try new things in order to further student

success, according to participants B1 and D1.

> Participant E1 stated:
>
> If we don't involve teachers in some form of leadership…then there's no buy-in.
>
> If there's not the buy-in, there's really not the implementation unless it's forced
>
> implementation. When it's forced implementation, it's probably not as effective
>
> as voluntary implementation.

According to participants E1 and B1, if teachers are given the power to make decisions and try new things within their classrooms, they will have more opportunities to grow, and student achievement will increase.

Participant C1 stated:

I think just any time that someone is in power, the teachers, you know, understand that level of professionalism. They begin to have belief in themselves, and that concept just transfers to everything else. It is hard to make any sort of change or have impact when the teachers are not on board.

Participant B1 agreed that teachers have the best insight on how to make sure that students are being successful within the classroom.

Instructional Coach Focus Group Question Three: Strengthening School Culture.

In what ways do you feel strong teacher leaders strengthen school culture?

Several of the participants acknowledged that teachers having a voice and being willing to speak for others helps to strengthen school culture. Participant E1 suggested that when teachers are willing to talk, it empowers other teachers to talk, as well. They stated, "When more teachers are willing to speak, you hear more voices and more perspectives."

Participant C1 claimed:

I mean, just having people being willing to speak up to share ideas to share thoughts and you know, anytime you have that, it's going to be a positive school culture and atmosphere. Especially if you're wanting some sort of change to happen, you can't just have one or two people and expect everyone to follow. I

mean we (staff members) to have several teacher leaders who can take the reins

and learn to lead others.

Participant A1 agreed that when teachers are willing to share ideas, relationships are built

and positive school culture exists. Participant D1 stated, "They (teachers) literally build

the culture. They set the tone and the expectations within the classroom and building."

Instructional Coach Focus Group Question Four: Weakening School Culture.

In what ways do you feel strong teacher leaders weaken school culture?

Participant E1 stated:

I can see this with, I think, with leadership team. Sometimes people feel like

they're on the outside. I think that is kind of detrimental for school culture by

having that inside and that outside group. In the end, they think there becomes a

perception that the inside is going to decide anyway. So, what does it matter what

the outside thinks?

Participant B1 agreed that some teachers might feel alienated. According to participants

B1 and C1, when strong personalities and opinions exist, it can be difficult for others to

speak up and take leadership. All participants insisted that they would rather have too

many leaders, versus too few.

Participant D1 stated:

I do not think it's problematic to have lots of leaders as long as you recognize that

leadership looks different in different situations. Some leaders are in the front and

vocal; others are behind the scenes but just as impactful.

Participant B1 stated, "It is important to have leaders in all areas within the school

building."

Instructional Coach Focus Group Question Five: Fostering Positive Culture.

How can you foster a positive culture in each classroom within the district?

A common theme from all participants in response to the question was that of empowerment. Participants A1 and B1 reported that empowerment leads to creating a positive school culture, because teachers feel supported and encouraged to try new things. Participant E1 stated:

> As instructional coaches our job is to empower teachers and so by doing that, I think hopefully we are helping those who are more inclined to possess leadership qualities. I would imagine that they're building confidence, that if they feel empowered to try new things, the students would benefit from that.

Participants B1 and C1 maintained that by giving teachers more opportunities to try new things and being able to help take things off their plate, they and their students will be more successful.

Instructional coach E1 suggested that it is a challenge to try to foster a positive school culture within the classroom.

> This participant stated:
>
> Honestly, I don't think I can personally do this within each classroom in the district. Within my own building, I can work to encourage teachers and students. I can provide support in various ways. I can let people know that I care!

Participant D1 implied that it is important to encourage teachers and provide support as much as possible, in order to foster a positive school culture overall.

Instructional Coach Focus Group Question Six: Determining Positive Culture.

How do you determine if a classroom displays a positive culture?

Participants B1, C1, and E1 all agreed that when students want to be in a classroom for the right reasons, a positive culture exists. They also agreed that they can tell when a classroom displays a positive culture by listening to the teachers and seeing how the teachers interact with students.

Participant A1 mentioned:

Our students visit other classrooms, and I think if they are representing in those other places, to me, that speaks volumes. If they can take those expectations that they hear in their home classroom and really transfer them, they really set an example that that speaks volumes.

According to Participant E1, a positive school culture is observed when the students are eager to learn from the teachers, and there is a level of respect, comfort, and trust. Participant D1 stated, "I look to see if students feel safe with their teacher and with each other. I look to see if students have ownership of parts of their learning."

Instructional Coach Focus Group Question Seven: Collaboration.

How can teachers effectively use collaboration to foster teacher leadership characteristics?

A common concept that was shared in response to the question was that of taking leadership roles in collaboration and professional development meetings. Participants C1 and E1 suggested more teachers need to lead meetings and share their experiences and ideas at professional development training opportunities. Participant C1 believed many teachers are scared to lead or share ideas. Participant B1 stated, "If teachers are in a structure where people are listening to them, where their team is listening to them, which validates those thoughts and that communication piece, which builds those leadership

skills to build that confidence." All participants agreed that when teachers take on leadership roles in this way, other teachers will listen, and hopefully take the initiative to lead and share ideas as well. Participant D1 mentioned, "Teachers can model effective leadership characteristics to each other while collaborating. They can provide each other with feedback and help to empower each other."

Instructional Coach Focus Group Question Eight: Teacher Leader Roles.

What are teacher leader roles and how do they play a factor in developing a positive school culture?

Participants B1, C1, and E1 all agreed that many schools have a hierarchy of leadership, which makes it difficult for many teachers to take on leadership roles. They shared that many schools have leadership teams or a department head where one person is the voice for several different teachers.

Participant B1 reported:

We have a role for each grade level. We have a teacher leader that represents their grade level. They are the bridge between administration and teachers. It creates an open pathway for communication between those two groups, kind of unifying them. That's a big help and again, opening up that voice, creating the pathway for leadership.

Participant A1 thought the leadership teams were beneficial for teachers, who don't view themselves as leaders, to have their voices heard. However, Participant C1 thought that these teams could be negative in terms of teachers not expressing their ideas and opinions because it isn't their defined job to do so.

Participant D1 stated:

Teacher leader roles are diverse. Teachers can lead departments or teams. Teachers can be leaders to students. They can serve on committees and help make plans for the future. They can give feedback and serve as liaisons. All of these examples contribute to school culture by providing support, giving feedback, and helping guide the direction of the building.

Participant E1 shared, "When teachers view themselves as leaders, it has more of a positive impact on school culture because those teachers are empowered to try new things to promote student achievement and staff success."

Research Question Two asked: What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the effect strong teacher leadership has on school culture? As determined by the instructional coach focus group, instructional coaches perceive that strong teacher leadership encourages a positive school culture. Several participants mentioned that when teachers take leadership opportunities, they can help guide the school and determine what the overall school culture will look like. Other participants shared that when teachers take the initiative to represent their grade level and classroom, an open door for communication exists with administration, allowing for a better school culture to be obtained. Overall, the instructional coaches believed that teachers should have a voice, teachers must be encouraged to lead, and teachers must have opportunities to grow in their profession. All of these factors contribute to the effect that strong teacher leadership has on school culture.

Principal Focus Group Question One: Teacher Leadership.

How would you describe teacher leadership?

There were several common themes among participants in regard to how principals described teacher leadership. These ideas included: empowerment, trust, and treating teachers as professionals. Participant D2 suggested when teachers are treated with respect and as professionals, that increased opportunities for feedback and reception of feedback occur. Participants A2 and F2 agreed that teachers need to be empowered in order to try new things. Participant F2 mentioned administrators should empower their teachers in order for teachers to take risks, try new things, and be willing to find new ideas to further student success and their own professional growth. Participant A2 observed that everyone within the school is expected to be a professional, meaning that teachers are not micromanaged and have freedom to make decisions to better their class.

Participant C2 stated,

Teacher leadership is important to establish and maintain in order to ensure the voices of teachers are taken into account when making various decisions within a building and district. Teacher leadership provides teachers with an opportunity to make a positive difference in their building or district.

Participant F2 agreed with Participant C2 in regard to giving teachers the opportunity to make a positive difference within their building or district.

Participant F2 stated,

Teachers take the initiative and responsibility to impact the culture of the building, department, and classroom in a positive way, not only doing what they are directed to do but taking the initiative to try new things. Teacher leaders also hold others accountable.

Participants A2 and G2 agreed that teachers are expected to take ownership and have fresh perspectives within their classroom and school building. Both participants also noted that teachers must be willing to promote the idea of having a growth mindset.

Principal Focus Group Question Two: School Culture and Teacher Leadership Relationship.

What is the relationship between school culture and teacher leadership?

One common idea from the participant responses was the focus of the teacher leader will drive school culture. Participant D2 observed that if a teacher focuses on relationships, reflection, and growth, positive school culture will be created. Participant A2 agreed and suggested that when teachers reflect and take ownership, they will grow as professionals.

Participant F2 stated,

It is important in your culture that everyone feels that administrators are invested. Therefore, it is important that we visit with teachers, visit with kids in the room, and see what is really going on in the classroom and the impact that is being made.

Participant A2 believed that when teachers work together and form trust, a positive school culture is built. Participant B2 suggested that building instructional coaches helps foster teacher leadership by providing extra support to teachers and helping them grow as teacher leaders. In turn, Participant B2 suggested, teachers are more empowered and equipped as teacher leaders, teachers feel that the principals and instructional coaches are invested in their success, and a positive school culture is a result.

Participant C2 stated:

In my opinion, it takes a strong group of teachers to help create and maintain a

positive school culture. Teachers and admin must work together and build solid

relationships with one another in order to create a culture of trust.

Participant E2 agreed with Participant C2 in regard to the need for a strong culture of

trust and autonomy in order to build an overall school culture that remains positive.

Principal Focus Group Question Three: Fostering Positive Culture.

How do teachers foster positive school culture within their buildings?

One common idea in regard to how teachers foster positive school culture within

their buildings is that of collaboration. Participants A2, B2, D2, and E2 all believed that

teachers need time to work together and time to discuss things in order to build

relationships and foster a positive school culture. Participant A2 claimed that

administrators must be genuine toward teachers so that teachers are encouraged to show

the same genuine attitude to their students. Participant F2 agreed and added that

administrators must set the tempo for how each staff member approaches each day.

Participant C2 reported:

Teachers can help foster a positive school culture in many ways. Teachers can

take the initiative to lead in various capacities, whether on a leadership team or

simply a team designed to help with school culture. It is important for teachers to

work together as a team, along with administration. Strong teachers can drive

culture!

Both participants F2 and A2 suggested that teachers must consistently look for ways to

improve as teachers and in turn, school programs and school culture will be improved.

Participant E2 argued that teachers must set goals, be direct, be transparent, tell the truth,

take ground, and make a difference in order to foster positive school culture within their building.

Participant A2 stated:

Administrators must enable teachers with time to work together and time to really be able to discuss things. Everything does not have to be decided in an instant. This is hard work and it deserves conversation. It is actually good when we disagree with things because it gives us an opportunity to chew over the content a little bit and decide because most decisions regarding student learning are complex. Sometimes when an administrator springs into action and doesn't really allow the time to dig into it, you end up with halfway decisions and disorder.

Participant F2 agreed that teachers need time to collaborate, but also included that teachers need to be heard. This participant maintained that administrators must take the time to hear what teachers are saying and be willing to listen and consider what is being said.

Principal Focus Group Question Four: Determining Positive Culture.

How do school leaders determine if a positive school culture exists within their building?

Two participants concurred that when staff members treat each other with respect, talk to one another, and want to be around one another, a positive school culture exists. Another two participants agreed that staff retention is a way to determine if a positive school culture exists within their building. Participant A2 suggested that when staff members like and respect one another, they are willing to go the extra mile and help one another.

Participant A2 stated,

It doesn't matter how many, you know, cupcakes are at the Christmas party. If I

can't hardly look you in the face, I'm not going. So, those kind[s] of things all

indicators, I liked (Participant F2's) idea of it's not always about them liking one

another. Do they like and respect each other? You know, will they go, the extra

mile for people?

Participant A2 insisted that when administrators and staff members are genuine, others

will open up and be more willing to help one another. This participant also acknowledged

that when teachers are involved, a positive school culture will exist within the building.

Participant F2 stated,

You (Participant A2) mentioned the word being genuine. That's where the word

genuine really takes off because then people recognize you are being genuine,

they'll answer you honestly. Whatever you're trying to ask or find out, for

instance, Hey, how are you doing? How is your classroom? When they know

you're being genuine, they'll open up to you and you can help. It's easier to fix

the problem. That's an important aspect.

Participant C2 claimed, "You simply get to know your people. You have conversations

and build relationships, while encouraging some high academic expectations and constant

growth. Relationships come first; growth will come next." Participant E2 agreed with

Participant C2 in that administrators must be willing to talk to teachers, talk to students,

and ask good questions in order to know if a positive school culture exists within the

building.

Principal Focus Group Question Five: Encouraging Teacher Leader Roles.

In what ways do principals encourage teacher leadership roles and positive school culture?

Two common threads emerged in regard to how principals encourage teacher leadership roles and positive school culture, allowing teachers to make decisions and listening to teachers' ideas.

Participant C2 stated,

Relationships with your staff are the keys to creating and maintaining a positive school culture. People need to feel loved and supported to perform well. Constant collaboration with team members and encouraging constant collaboration among all departments and teams is vital.

According to Participant D2, principals must be present with staff members, build comfort, and providing opportunities for more frequent and honest feedback. In contrast, Participant F2 asserted that principals must be willing to listen to teachers and encourage them to run with their ideas. Participant A2 shared that principals must be willing to honor teachers' ideas and to give teachers opportunities to lead according to their individual strengths.

Participant A2 stated,

Trusting your people to know their business and then letting them do it makes sure that administrators don't get in the way all of the time. I don't want to micromanage their business. They are more than capable to do their job.

Participant F2 agreed with the statement as a way to make sure staff members feel empowered and a positive school culture exists. Participant E2 suggested that a culture of

trust must be established between administration and teachers in order to build a positive school culture.

Principal Focus Group Question Six: Professional Development.

How does continuous professional development foster teacher leadership qualities?

One common theme shared between Participant A2, B2, and F2 was the need to stay current in the profession in order to be the best teachers they can be. Participant D2 shared that teachers must be instilled with the idea to be lifelong learners and administrators must be willing to provide professional development opportunities with effective feedback in order to foster teacher leadership qualities. Participant E2 agreed that a culture of learning and growing must always exist within team members. Participant A2 stated, "Teachers need to feel the efficacy involved in being in such a great profession, and one way to contribute to that is through staying current with the latest strategies and ideas." Participant F2 also believed that teachers must stay connected and collaborate with others in their content area in order to grow as professionals, which in turn fosters teacher leadership qualities.

Participant C2 claimed,

Professional development must happen in the areas needed. To constantly push initiatives can cause fatigue in a team. Administrators and instructional coaches must find professional development in areas directly linked to building and district goals as well as a district's strategic plan.

Participant F2 suggested professional development must be relevant in order to foster teacher leadership qualities. Participant F2 also asserted that notable

changes have been seen when professional development is relevant to teachers. Participant F2 noted:

They (teachers) now want to build and expand upon what they learn. They want to share what they learn. You (teacher leaders) want professional development to be a continuous thing and something to look forward to attending. As an administrator, we want to listen to what is being shared and be able to generate ideas out of that. That's important.

Participant A2 agreed that when professional development is relevant to teachers, they will be more apt to share what they learn with other teachers. In turn, Participant A2 argued that more new ideas would be shared and explored, which would help foster teacher leadership qualities.

Research Question Three asked: In what ways do principals encourage teacher leadership roles and development? According to responses received from the principal focus group, principals encourage teacher leadership roles and development in a variety of ways. As determined from the focus group, several principals agreed that relevant and consistent professional development opportunities must be offered to teachers in order for them to grow and develop in their professional careers. The principals also agreed that a culture of learning must exist within team members. Several principals shared that creating relationships with teachers, listening to their voice, and giving them opportunities to collaborate with their team members encourages them to take on leadership roles. The principals claimed that when teachers are given the opportunities to share their ideas and be heard, they are more likely to take the initiative to lead.

Summary

Chapter Four included the responses and perceptions from the 11 participants in both focus groups and surveys that were conducted within one Southwest Missouri school district. The perceptions of how teacher leadership affects school culture were obtained through questions presented to both focus groups. All questions presented were designed to provide data and information in relation to how instructional coaches, teachers, and building principals viewed teacher leadership and its effect on school culture within their school buildings.

Important information in regard to how teacher leadership affects school culture will be presented in Chapter Five. Findings drawn from the data obtained will be presented. Conclusions to all of the research questions within the study are described. Finally, implications for practice will be provided and topics to consider for further research will be detailed.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

The perceptions of teacher leaders when considering their impact on school culture can inform administration, teachers, and all other stakeholders within education of factors that are necessary to promote teacher leadership (Bond, 2021; Fullan, 2001). In order for schools to establish an overall positive school culture, strong teacher leaders must exist within each building (Schein, 2010). To establish a positive school culture, teacher leaders must be provided with relevant professional development, be given opportunities to lead, and must be supported by their administration (Safir, 2018; Tonich, 2011). Teachers must take ownership of their professional careers and be willing to grow and act like leaders (Bellibas et al., 2020; Simons, 2020).

Teacher leaders must be given an environment in which they can participate in making decisions and where they can take the initiative to lead their peers (Bellibas et al., 2020). School leaders must establish a culture of trust and allow teachers to take on additional leadership roles (Simons, 2020). Teachers have a responsibility to be the leaders of their classrooms and they must be willing to take the steps necessary to help their students be successful (Buli-Holmberg et al., 2019). Clear directions must be established so teachers know how to lead, whom to lead, and what expectations are required of them to be successful leaders (Fullan, 2019).

Administrators and instructional coaches are able to receive valuable information from the perceptions of teachers in regard to the impact that teacher leadership has on school culture (Bond, 2021; Kiral, 2020). When teachers are given the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions, administrators must be willing to truly listen and take notes (Simons, 2020). Communication and relationship building is a key piece to

understanding how teachers perceive their leadership capabilities (Simons, 2020). Administrators have learned that delegating leadership to teachers is a primary role in school leadership (Bellibas et al., 2020; Lingam et al., 2021).

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the perceptions that school members have on teacher leadership and its impact on school culture. Additionally, to further research focused on the factors within each school that contributed to what helps create and empower teacher leaders. Chapter Five includes a review of the findings following observations from the building instructional coach and administrator focus groups, results from the survey given to certified teachers, various patterns and differences throughout the study, and conclusions. Chapter Five concludes with the implications for practice and suggestions for future research.

Findings

This mixed-methods study involved researching and examining the perceptions of educators regarding teacher leadership and its effect on school culture. The study was designed to answer three research questions. Certified teachers participated in a survey that requested participants to respond to Likert-scale type statements that were designed to gather data to answer the first research question. School instructional coaches were asked to participate in a focus group discussion to gather data to answer research question two. The final component of this mixed-methods study was a focus group discussion, which gathered perceptions from building administrators to answer research question three.

Following survey completion, the responses were analyzed to gain information on the perceptions that teachers had in regard to teacher leadership and its impact on school

culture. After the focus groups were completed, the responses were transcribed and then analyzed to gain information in regard to how instructional coaches and administrators viewed teacher leadership and its impact on school culture. The results of both the survey and the two focus group discussions were triangulated with the review of literature and then connected to the corresponding research questions.

Research Question One

When teachers consider school culture, what is the difference in the perceptions of teachers who identify as strong teacher leaders and those who do not?

The certified teachers who participated in the survey answered a question in regard to if they identified as a teacher leader. Survey responses and findings were then analyzed accordingly based on whether or not the teachers identified as being a teacher leader. According to the survey data, 75% of the participants perceived that the teachers and administrators shared a common vision and purpose for the school. Of those participating in the survey, 97.5% also perceived that they were expected to improve their practice by gaining new knowledge and skills.

Based on survey responses, 97.5% of the participants were under the perception that they were encouraged to take initiative to make improvements at their school and that their ideas and opinions were respected and valued. When asked about having time for collaboration, 87.5% strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that they did have a significant amount of time to spend collaborating with peers on instructional and student-related matters, while 12.5% of the participants somewhat disagreed or disagreed.

When participants were asked if teachers were able to participate in decisions that affected them, 82.5% percent of participants strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat

agreed, while 17.5% percent of participants somewhat disagreed or disagreed. Of those

participating in the survey, 92.5% of the respondents perceived that the principal, faculty,

and staff worked together as a team and 95% of respondents perceived that they were

generally satisfied with their work environment. When asked about their perception on

being recognized for professional accomplishments, 75% of the participants felt valued

and recognized, while 25% of the participants did not feel that they were recognized at all

for their accomplishments. The results of the statistical evidence gathered proved that

there were not any significant differences in the responses from teachers that considered

themselves to be strong teacher leaders and teachers that did not consider themselves to

be strong teacher leaders.

Research Question Two.

What are the perceptions of instructional coaches regarding the effect strong

teacher leadership has on school culture?

The participants of the school instructional coach focus group shared their

perceptions of how strong teacher leadership effects school culture. According to the

perceptions of the instructional coach participants, teacher leadership does encourage a

positive school culture. A common theme among the participants was that of encouraging

teacher leadership. Two participants commented that when teachers are encouraged to

take leadership roles or have an opportunity to make decisions, it makes teachers feel

more valued. Another participant argued that empowering teachers will empower

students and that when teachers take ownership of what their students are learning, they

will also take ownership of what they are learning. Participants also mentioned that when

teachers feel a sense of power in decision making, it makes them feel encouraged and motivated to be even more successful within their classroom.

Two participants noted that teachers who are given opportunities to lead will help guide the school and facilitate the overall direction of how school culture will look. Other participants agreed that teachers have the best view of what will make their classrooms successful. Therefore, they must be given the freedom and power to make decisions that will best fit their students' needs. Participants also commented that when teachers are given opportunities to lead, they will be motivated to try new strategies and activities in their classrooms, which will lead to additional student engagement.

Research Question Three.

In what ways do principals encourage teacher leadership roles and development?

The participants of the school administrator focus group shared valuable insights in regard to how principals encourage teacher leadership roles and development. Among the participants, one of the first themes discussed was in regard to how a strong teacher leader is defined. The participants agreed that strong teacher leaders are teachers who are treated with respect, who are professionals, and who take opportunities to lead and make a positive impact within their school and district.

Among the participants, there were also several ideas that were shared, including focus on professional development, creating relationships with teachers, and allowing teachers to have opportunities to lead. All of the administrators agreed that teachers must be provided with relevant and consistent professional development opportunities. Two participants mentioned that teachers must be instilled with the idea to be lifelong learners. Furthermore, administrators must establish a culture of learning among team members.

Two other participants also mentioned that teachers must be given opportunities to collaborate with their peers in order to share knowledge and learn from one another and that principals must encourage their teachers to accept leadership roles.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this research study were based on the responses of the participants involved in the survey and focus groups, as well as the research questions that guided this research study. The conclusions were also based on the research provided in Chapter Two within the review of literature. This section includes the main themes that were identified from the data gathered from the survey and the focus group discussions regarding the impact of teacher leadership on school culture.

Teacher Leadership Has a Positive Impact on School Culture

The participants of the instructional coach and administrator focus group discussions, as well as the survey participants, shared consistent perceptions in regard to how teacher leadership has a positive impact on school culture. Even though there were various responses given throughout the focus groups and within the survey, the responses and data remained similar across the varying groups of participants. Several instructional coaches shared that when teachers are given opportunities to lead, whether in their leadership groups or during collaboration time as an entire staff, they feel valued and a positive school culture is a result. Other instructional coaches commented that teachers are the experts of their classroom and when they are given the freedom to make decisions and lead their class to the best of their abilities, their students will be more successful. Another instructional coach commented that when teachers lead their peers through leadership groups, better communication exists between the administrators and teachers.

After a careful analysis of responses in comparison to the research, teacher leadership has a positive impact on school culture because of a variety of factors. First, administrators must empower teachers (Kiral, 2020). When teachers are given motivation to lead and a voice to make decisions, teachers feel more empowered, and in turn, a positive school culture is created (Kiral, 2020).

School administrators enable teachers to become strong teacher leaders by giving them opportunities to lead their team, mentor new teachers, and by providing their expertise through leading staff meetings and collaboration time (Junge, 2019; Webber & Nickel, 2021). Another way that teacher leadership impacts school culture, according to the focus group participants, is by creating a culture of lifelong learning. When teachers are seeking to learn more and grow professionally, they become even more successful within their own classrooms, as they are able to provide new strategies, resources, and ideas to their students (Berry et al., 2010).

Relevant and Consistent Professional Development Opportunities Foster Teacher Leadership

When analyzing responses from the instructional coach focus group, administrator focus group, and teacher survey, consistent perceptions of how relevant and consistent professional development opportunities foster teacher leadership. The instructional coaches and administrators both agreed that teachers must be given opportunities to grow professionally. There was also a consensus among teachers in regard to the perception that they are expected to grow continuously in their professional career. In order to grow and become teacher leaders, results showed that relevant and consistent professional development opportunities must be offered.

After a careful analysis of responses in comparison to the research, relevant and consistent professional development foster teacher leadership. Collaborating with other teachers, sharing new ideas with other educators, and mentoring new teachers all contribute to the growth of teachers professionally (Junge, 2019; Webber & Nickel, 2021). Teachers must be encouraged to take time to attend professional development opportunities, on or off campus, in order for them to continuously grow and learn ways to successfully meet the needs of the students within their classroom (Pullan, 2016; Safir, 2018). Across both focus groups, participants agreed that professional development opportunities must be relevant in order for teachers to gain the knowledge they need to be successful teachers, but also to not obtain a perception that the professional development they are attending does not apply to them. According to one researcher, in order to make professional development opportunities relevant to teachers, collaboration should be across grade levels or subject areas and teachers should have opportunities to lead one another to share subject-matter expertise (Junge, 2019).

Relationships and Trust Must Be Established to Help Foster Teacher Leaders

When analyzing responses from the instructional coach focus group, administrator focus group, and teacher survey, consistent perceptions of how relationships and trust must be established to help foster teacher leaders. Several administrators from the focus groups agreed that teacher leadership begins with relationships and trust. Once relationships are built and trust is established, feedback and support are likely to be accepted more by the teachers, in turn, allowing the teacher to grow professionally. Several instructional coaches agreed that when trust is established between teachers and leaders, harder conversations are easier to have and better communication exists. The

focus group participants also agreed that when trust is established, teachers have increased freedom to try new strategies and ideas within their classroom, ultimately leading to the potential of greater success of their students. Transparency was another area that both the instructional coaches and administrators agreed that needed to be addressed in order to build trust.

After a careful analysis of responses in comparison to the research, relationships and trust must be established in order to help foster teacher leaders. One researcher commented that administrators must be willing to spend extra time with teachers, supporting and encouraging them, and to motivate them in pursuing what they are passionate about (Simons, 2020). Administrators must show their support by being present among their teachers and by assisting them in growing as professionals (Fatima et al. 2020).

Another way to build relationships and trust is by having school administrators model leadership qualities and skills needed to be a successful leader (Tonich, 2011; Safir, 2018). Educators must also realize that in today's society, principals are not the sole leader of the school (Lingam et al., 2021). Instead, schools are made up of a variety of leaders that include principals, instructional coaches, and teachers, all who are invested in making a difference in their school and school culture overall (Bellibas et al., 2020; Lingam et al., 2021). Trust must also be established by administrators and other school leaders being transparent with one another (Junge, 2019). Transparency can be established within a school by allowing staff to have access to important documents or shared folders, creating opportunities for staff members to voice concerns, and by sharing school budgets with staff members (Junge, 2019; Simons, 2020).

Teachers Must Be Given Opportunities to Lead in Order to Foster Teacher Leadership

When analyzing responses from the instructional coach focus group, administrator focus group, and teacher survey, consistent perceptions of how teachers must be given opportunities to lead in order to foster teacher leadership were shared. Several members from the instructional coach and administrator focus group agreed that teachers are professionals, they know what is best for their students, and they are experts in their fields. They mentioned that when teachers are given opportunities to lead and teach their peers, they feel more valued and respected. This in turn creates a greater sense of growth for the other teachers, as well as the teacher leading, because it increases their leadership skills. Several administrators within the focus group also mentioned that teachers need to be involved in leadership teams and have opportunities to make decisions that will affect school improvement and school culture.

After a careful analysis of responses in comparison to the research, teachers must be given opportunities to lead in order to foster teacher leadership. Teacher leadership is described as having four main roles including mediating, brokering, participative, and forging close relationships (Bellibas et al., 2020). Mediating includes teachers displaying their expertise, while participative means taking ownership of school improvement (Bellibas et al., 2020). When teachers take ownership and are given opportunities to lead, such as in professional development meetings, they will have an increased motivation to grow professionally and be the most successful teacher that they can be for their students (Bellibas et al., 2020; Simons, 2020). When teachers are given opportunities to lead and have time to empower their peers, not only are additional teacher leaders created, but a more positive school culture is established overall (Bellibas et al. 2020; Junge, 2019).

Teacher Empowerment Leads to Strong Teacher Leadership Qualities

When analyzing responses from the instructional coach focus group, administrator focus group, and teacher survey, consistent perceptions of how teacher empowerment leads to strong teacher leadership qualities were shared. Several administrators from the focus group agreed that teachers must feel respected and valued in order to be successful teacher leaders. Other administrators agreed that there are several ways to know if teachers feel empowered, valued, and respected. Some of the ways shared include teachers will have better communication with administrators and their peers, teachers will want to spend time together outside of traditional meeting times to collaborate with one another, and teachers will have a stronger desire to learn and try new strategies within their classrooms.

After a thorough analysis of responses in comparison to the research, teacher empowerment does lead to strong teacher leadership qualities. In order to feel empowered, teachers must know that their administrators support them and that they encourage them to be leaders (Simons, 2020; Webber & Nickel, 2021). It is also crucial for administrators to take the time to recognize their teachers when they are doing well in their position (Fatima et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, administrators were able to empower teachers in new ways, such as by allowing staff members to collaborate virtually, incorporating weekly staff check-ins, and by meeting with teachers via Zoom to make sure they not only had resources to be successful, but they were doing well in general (Gill, 2020). Safir (2018) suggested that administrators empowering and encouraging teachers takes bravery. When administrators are willing to motivate teacher leaders, they understand that they are trusting their teachers to make decisions, create

solutions to solve difficult problems within the school, and for teachers to step outside of the classroom and lead their peers (Safir, 2018).

Avoiding Teacher Neglect Fosters Teacher Leaders

When analyzing responses from the instructional coach focus group, administrator focus group, and teacher survey, consistent perceptions of teachers feeling neglected when there is a lack of teacher leadership existed. Several participants who took the survey disagreed that their ideas and opinions were valued and respected, that they collaborated regularly with their administrators and colleagues, and that they were recognized for their personal accomplishments. Several administrators commented that teachers need to feel valued.

One participant suggested getting out of the office, spending time with teachers, and letting them know their voice is heard as effective methods to minimize teachers feeling neglected. Several instructional coaches also agreed that teachers need support throughout the day, such as resources, time to collaborate and talk to their peers, or someone to just stop by their classroom to check on them. Another participant explained that when teachers felt valued and not neglected, a better school culture exists and when a better school culture exists, more teachers will be willing to step out and be leaders.

After a careful analysis of responses in comparison to the research, when teachers do not feel neglected, they are more inclined to be strong teacher leaders. In today's society, all educators have had to develop a sense of empathy and the skill of active listening in order for strong relationships to be built (Hernandez Mondragon, 2020). When administrators purposefully create a positive school culture where teachers are not

neglected, there is greater staff well-being, teachers feel more supported, and there is an increase in student achievement (Brion, 2021).

Authentic leadership is a way for administrators to show support and combat the feeling of neglect among their staff members (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018). When administrators display authentic leadership, they are transparent, open-minded, trusting, guide goal setting, and focus on the development of their staff members (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018). Another way to help teachers not feel neglected is by engaging in opportunities to help their staff members reach their maximum leadership abilities, being willing to assist them as professionals, and by allowing them to take leadership roles (Bellibas et al., 2020; Fatima et al., 2020).

Implications for Practice

The perceptions of teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators suggested a common result of how strong teacher leadership affects school culture. Having data related to these perceptions will help instructional coaches guide their practices, administrators to focus on supporting more relevant and consistent professional development opportunities, and will allow for teachers to have more opportunities to step into additional opportunities of leadership. With a better understanding and knowledge of how school culture is driven by teacher leadership, schools will have a better system for the development of a positive school culture overall. Teachers will also be more empowered to be leaders, knowing the impact that they will make in their classrooms and school building. The following implications were developed after a thorough analysis of the data collected during this study.

Districts Can Improve School Culture by Placing a Stronger Emphasis on Increasing Teacher Leadership

Participants in this study agreed that teacher leadership should be consistently promoted and encouraged. Teacher leadership is a way for teachers to meet their professional needs (Bond, 2021). The instructional coaches who took part in the focus group agreed that teachers who take on leadership roles have better communication with administrators and in turn, can positively affect decision-making and school culture. Strong teacher leaders are able to not only teach successfully within their classroom, but they are able to participate in activities outside of the classroom which lead to a positive school culture (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teachers who participate in learning opportunities, in which they will grow professionally, become even better teachers and leaders for their present and future students (Webber & Nickel, 2021). The participants of the administrator focus group agreed that when teacher leadership is fostered, a more positive school culture exists. Teacher leaders have a strong desire and commitment to not only improve teaching and learning, but to also make a positive impact within their school (Bradley-Levine, 2018).

Instructional Coaches Can Be a Motivating Force

Instructional coaches support teachers in learning new curriculum, while also providing resources and training for new instructional practices and strategies (Bean, 2004). Within the instructional coach focus group, the participants agreed that one of their main jobs is supporting teachers in their classroom by providing resources or ideas for new instructional strategies. Instructional coaches work with teachers and administrators to determine the best methods of instruction and to provide the most

relevant professional development opportunities to increase educator and student success (Spaulding & Smith 2012) The participants also agreed that collaboration among their instructional coach team and teachers is essential to help foster teacher leadership. In order for teacher leaders to be successful, teachers must consistently learn together and work closely with their peers (Kiral, 2020). Instructional coaches must take the time to participate in leadership teams and go over professional development goals in order for teachers to be motivated to reach their maximum success within the classroom (Spaulding & Smith, 2012).

Administrators Need to Encourage Relationship-building and Trust

When reviewing the responses from the administrator focus group, it was clear that administrators should build and keep strong relationships with their staff members. The participants within the administrator focus group agreed that relationship-building is the key to developing trust and overall teacher leaders within schools. Principals must be willing to build strong relationships with staff members in order to foster teacher leadership (Simons, 2020). Two participants commented that building trust and relationships through consistent communication is essential to retaining educators and making them feel valued. Communication between administrators and teachers is crucial in order to improve teacher morale and motivation (De Nobile & Bilgin, 2022). Trust also must be established through educator decision making and by allowing teachers to freely exchange ideas during collaboration time (Caglar & Cinar, 2021; Mieliwocki, 2019). In turn, administrators must be willing to collaborate with their staff members in order to be successful professionally and to improve their overall school's performance (Mastrangelo et al., 2014).

Instructional Time Must be Protected

Instructional time must be protected by limiting external interruptions, adopting flexible schedules, limiting activities and events throughout the school day, and giving teachers opportunities to make decisions that will affect their classrooms (Leonard, 2007). According to the participants within the administrator focus group, teacher leaders must be given flexibility within their classrooms in order to develop new strategies to encourage student learning. Many schools spend significant amounts of time on professional development opportunities that do not have any benefit to the classroom (Spaulding & Smith, 2012).

One participant shared that teachers must spend their time focusing on new strategies that are relevant to their subjects, in order for their students to be successful within the classroom. Teacher leaders must take the initiative to lead their classrooms, make decisions to best benefit their students, and take the steps necessary to meet their professional goals (Kiral, 2020). Two participants agreed that administrators must trust their staff to make decisions and be the leaders that they need to be within the school to ultimately make a difference in school culture and student success.

Professional Development is Essential to Develop Quality Teacher Leaders

Responses from the administrator focus group indicated that administrators view professional development as a key component to develop teacher leaders. The participants from the administrator focus group also agreed that professional development must be consistent and relevant in order to meet the needs of teachers. There are significant amounts of money and time devoted to professional development that has little impact within the classroom (Spaulding & Smith, 2012).

One participant suggested that teachers collaborate within their content areas or reach out to other schools as needed to make sure that who they are collaborating with is beneficial to their teaching position. Teachers must also be willing to lead professional development opportunities in order for their expertise to be shared with their peers (Junge, 2019). The administrators within the focus group agreed that teachers must be encouraged to be continuous learners, always staying up to date with the most recent research and strategies in order to help them be successful within the classroom. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the teachers who had relevant professional development and were trained in online learning and new technology had a smooth and successful transition to a new way of teaching and learning (Scott, 2020). One participant suggested that teachers should always stay current with new strategies and technology in order to be successful in their ever-changing profession.

Teachers Must Be Willing to Step into Leadership Roles

When teachers exhibit leadership qualities and have opportunities to lead, they will instill change within the school organization (Bellibas et al., 2020; Fatima et al., 2020). The participants of both focus groups agreed that teachers must be willing to step into leadership roles, be willing to make decisions, and be willing to teach their peers. Two participants agreed that teachers are able to guide the school culture positively when they are focused on being strong teacher leaders.

When teachers participate in leadership opportunities, they feel valued and supported (Kiral, 2020). Teachers who are given opportunities to lead, such as in professional development meetings, have an increased motivation to grow professionally and be even better educators within their classrooms (Bellibas et al., 2020). Teachers are

more successful when they are able to train others in their profession to be leaders by equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need (Kiral, 2020). One participant commented that when teachers lead other teachers, more motivation exists to learn and be the best educators that they can be.

Recommendations for Future Research

This mixed-methods study was designed to gather the perceptions of educators on teacher leadership and its impact on school culture. Instructional coaches, administrators, and teachers perceive and understand that teacher leadership plays a vital role in regard to the impact of school culture. The majority of participants agreed that professional development, professional experience, and efficacy all play a key role in fostering teacher leaders.

According to the participants of this study, professional development is a key component of fostering teacher leadership. Without professional development opportunities, teachers do not have opportunities to lead, they are not able to share their expertise with their peers, and they are not able to grow as professionals in the areas that they are most passionate about and successful. By gaining perceptions of educators in regard to how professional development creates strong teacher leaders, a researcher could determine if professional development does in fact have an impact. In addition, the researcher could use quantitative data to see if a correlation exists between teachers who participate regularly in relevant professional development opportunities and school culture.

Another recommendation for future research would be to increase the number of districts that participate in the study. Within this research study, participants were

selected from only one district. By selecting participants from multiple districts, including districts from different cities and states, a researcher would be able to review data to determine if similar results are obtained. A mixed-methods study could be conducted to see if the data still shows that teacher leadership does have an impact on school culture.

Another recommendation for future research would be to focus on how educational technology plays a role in fostering teacher leadership while resulting in impacting school culture. Within this research study, the relevancy and efficacy of professional development was a key aspect. Within professional development and fostering a culture of continuous learning, educational technology is a growing component. A mixed-methods study could be performed to determine if the use of educational technology contributes to strong teacher leaders and school culture.

An additional mixed-methods study examining educational experiences or credentials could be conducted. The data from this study would show if there is a correlation between the amount of experience or credentials a teacher has and teacher leadership. A researcher could survey educators that have several years of experience, compared to educators that have only a few years of experience. A researcher could also obtain data from educators that are highly certified or who have advanced degrees and evaluate if those factors contribute to strong teacher leadership.

Summary

Teachers must be given opportunities to lead in order to help shape an overall positive school culture in their buildings (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018). Teachers will begin to see the need for leadership and will desire to increase their leadership skills and

abilities (Fatima et al., 2020). Even though the process of establishing teacher leaders takes time and effort, it is essential for developing a positive school culture overall (Kiral, 2020; Safir, 2018). This mixed-methods study was designed in order to obtain the perceptions of teacher leadership and its impact on school culture. One hundred and seventy-two certified teachers participated in the survey for this study. The focus groups consisted of five building instructional coaches and six building administrators. The survey responses were analyzed, and graphs were created in order to provide data for this study. The focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in order to provide data for this study.

The findings and conclusions from the data in this study were detailed in Chapter Five. The main themes identified included teacher leadership having a positive impact on school culture, relevant and consistent professional development opportunities foster teacher leadership, relationships and trust must be established, teachers must be given opportunities to lead, teacher empowerment, and avoiding neglect. Each of the conclusions found were related to the research questions that were offered throughout the course of the study.

Implications for practice were also provided in Chapter Five. These implications included districts improving school culture by placing a stronger emphasis on increasing teacher leadership, instructional coaches as a motivating force, administrators encouraging relationship-building and trust, the protection of instructional time, the necessity of professional development to develop quality teacher leaders, and teacher willingness to step into leadership roles. Each implication was supported by data from this study and the review of literature.

Finally, four recommendations for future research were presented in Chapter Five. Future research topics included a study investigating the importance of professional development in creating a positive school culture, recreating a similar study using multiple districts, and the role educational technology plays in fostering teacher leadership and its impact on school culture. The last recommendation suggested a study that would look at the correlation between the amount of experience or credentials a teacher has and teacher leadership.

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Appendix A

Teacher Survey

Table 1. Teacher Leadership Readiness Survey

Survey Items	Response Scale					
	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)
1. Teachers and administrators share a common vision of the mission/purpose of this school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. At this school, I am expected to improve my practice by gaining new knowledge and skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. At this school, I am encouraged to take initiative to make improvements.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. At this school, my ideas and opinions are valued and respected.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. At this school, I collaborate with other teachers on instructional and student-related matters.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. At this school, I participate in decisions that affect me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. At this school, the principal, faculty, and staff work as a team.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. At this school, I am recognized for my professional accomplishments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I am generally satisfied with the work environment among teachers at this school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Do you identify as a strong teacher leader?   Yes_____ No_____

Table 2. **Teacher Leadership Readiness Survey Scoring Rubric**

Survey element and description	Levels		
	Inhibiting (*Average score of teachers is below 3.00*)	**Developing** (*Average score of teachers is 3.00 to 4.99*)	**Promoting** (*Average score of teachers is 5.00 or above*)
1. Mission/purpose: *Teachers' actions are guided by a shared mission and purpose.*	School **does not have** a shared mission/purpose statement as indicated by most teachers.	School has **somewhat** of a shared mission/purpose and vision as indicated by teachers.	School has a **strong** sense of a shared mission/purpose and vision as indicated by most teachers.
2. Developmental focus: *Teachers are focused on gaining new knowledge and skills and are encouraged to help others learn.*	School **does not have** a developmental focus in which most teachers are expected to improve practice by gaining new knowledge and skills.	School has **somewhat** of a developmental focus in which teachers are expected to improve practice by gaining new knowledge and skills.	School has a **strong** developmental focus in which most teachers are expected to improve practice by gaining new knowledge and skills.
3. Autonomy: *Teachers are encouraged to take initiative and be proactive in making improvements and innovations.*	School **does not have** an autonomous climate in which most teachers take initiative to make improvements.	School has **somewhat** of an autonomous climate in which teachers take initiative to make improvements.	School has a **strong** autonomous climate in which most teachers take initiative to make improvements.
4. Collegiality *Teachers' ideas and opinions are valued and respected by their colleagues.*	School **does not have** a collegial environment in which the ideas and opinions of most teachers are valued and respected.	School has **somewhat** of a collegial environment in which the ideas and opinions of teachers are valued and respected.	School has a **strong** collegial environment in which the ideas and opinions of most teachers are valued and respected.
5. Collaboration *Teachers collaborate on instructional and student-related matters by discussing strategies, sharing materials, or observing one another teaching.*	School **does not have** a collaborative environment in which most teachers consistently collaborate with each other on instructional and student-related matters.	School has **somewhat** of a collaborative environment in which teachers consistently collaborate with each other on instructional and student-related matters.	School has a **strong** collaborative environment in which most teachers consistently collaborate with each other on instructional and student-related matters.
6. Participation in decision making: *Teachers are actively involved in making decisions and having input on important matters that affect them.*	School **does not have** a shared decision-making process in which most teachers participate in decisions that affect them.	School has **somewhat** of a shared decision-making process in which teachers participate in decisions that affect them.	School has a **strong** shared decision-making process in which most teachers participate in decisions that affect them.

Table 2. Teacher Leadership Readiness Survey Scoring Rubric—continued

Survey element and description	Levels		
	Inhibiting *(Average score of teachers is below 3.00)*	**Developing** *(Average score of teachers is 3.00 to 4.99)*	**Promoting** *(Average score of teachers is 5.00 or above)*
7. Administrative support *Teachers are supported by administrators that work with them as a team.*	School **does not have** a supportive administration that functions as a team with most teachers.	School has **somewhat** of a supportive administration that functions as a team with teachers.	School has a **strong** supportive administration that functions as a team with most teachers.
8. Attitudes toward recognition: *Teachers are recognized for their contributions or roles they take on, as indicated by mutual respect and processes.*	School **does not have** a professional attitude toward recognition in which most teachers are recognized for their professional contributions.	School has **somewhat** of a professional attitude toward recognition in which teachers are recognized for their professional contributions.	School has a **strong** professional attitude toward recognition in which most teachers are recognized for their professional contributions
9. Work environment: *There is overall satisfaction with the work environment.*	School **does not have** a positive work environment in which most staff are generally satisfied.	School has **somewhat** of a positive work environment in which staff are generally satisfied.	School has a **strong** positive work environment in which most staff are generally satisfied.

Recommendations:

- Elements at the "Inhibiting" level are likely limiting teacher leadership in the school; consider implementing new strategies and practices that are meant to improve the specific element.

- Elements at the "Developing" level may be slightly limiting or supporting teacher leadership in the school. Thus, assess the current strategies and practices and consider implementing new ones that could further develop the specific element.

- Elements at the "Promoting" level are likely actively supporting and promoting teacher leadership in the school; continue with the current strategies and practices.

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Appendix B

Instructional Coach Focus Group Questions

1. How does a teacher-powered form of governance model impact student learning (Junge 2019)?

2. In what ways might it improve student achievement (Junge 2019)?

3. In what ways do you feel strong teacher leaders strengthen school culture (Junge 2019)?

4. In what ways do you feel strong teacher leaders weaken school culture (Junge 2019)?

5. How can you foster a positive culture in each classroom within the district (Junge 2019)?

6. How do you determine if a classroom displays a positive culture (Junge 2019)?

7. How can teachers effectively use collaboration to foster teacher leadership characteristics (Junge 2019)?

8. What are teacher leader roles and how do they play a factor in developing a positive school culture (Bond 2021)?

Appendix C

Principal Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe teacher leadership (Junge, 2019)?

2. What is the relationship between school culture and teacher leadership (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018)?

3. How do teachers foster positive school culture within their buildings (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018)?

4. How do school leaders determine if a positive school culture exists within their building (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018)?

5. In what ways do principals encourage teacher leadership roles and positive school culture (Karadag & Oztekin-Bayir, 2018)?

6. How does continuous professional development foster teacher leadership qualities (Nooruddin & Bhamani, 2019)?

Appendix D

Permission Letter

Date:

RE: Permission to Conduct Research in ████████████████████

To: ███████████, Superintendent of Schools

      I am writing to request permission to conduct research in the ████████████ ██████. I am currently pursuing my doctorate through Lindenwood University and in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled *Teacher Leadership: Educator Perceptions of School Culture.* I am asking permission to invite all certified teachers to participate in an online Teacher Leadership Survey. Additionally, I would like to invite all instructional coaches and all building principals to participate in two separate focus group discussions with their peers. The focus group discussions will be audio and or video recorded. The purpose of the focus group discussions is to identify educator perceptions of teacher leadership and its impact on school culture.

      If you agree, please sign below, scan this page, and email to me, Colter Rantz, at Cr488@lindenwood.edu.

      Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding this study.

Sincerely,

Colter Rantz

Doctoral Student at Lindenwood University

Approved by:

_____

Print name and title here

_____   _____

Signature   Date

Appendix E

Letter of Participation for Survey

Date:

Dear Prospective Participants,

My name is Colter Rantz, and I am requesting your participation in my doctoral dissertation research project at Lindenwood University. The study is entitled *Teacher Leadership: Educator Perceptions of School Culture*. Participants will be asked to complete a 10-minute online survey. We are conducting this study to identify educator perceptions of teacher leadership and its impact on school culture.

I have received permission to conduct research from the ███████████████████. In order to conduct my research, I would like to invite all certified teachers within the district to participate in the completion of an online survey at the following link: https://lindenwood.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_agHK9nW864JxJMq. The survey should take 10 minutes or less to complete.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. All information obtained through this research will be reported anonymously. I will only receive the anonymous data collected from the survey. Participants will indicate consent by completing the research instrument but may also review the informed consent form attached to this email.

Thank you in advance to those willing to participate and support this study. I hope the results of this study will identify educator perceptions of teacher leadership and its impact on school culture. If you have questions, you can contact me at Cr488@lindenwood.edu. Dr. Shelly Fransen, the dissertation chair for this research project, may be contacted at sfransen@lindenwood.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Colter Rantz
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Appendix F

Research Information Sheet

LINDENWOOD

Research Information Sheet

You are being asked to participate in a research study. We are doing this study to determine educator perceptions of teacher leadership and its impact on school culture. During this study you will be asked to participate in a survey. You will also be asked to either participate in an online survey or a focus group discussion. The survey will take about 10 minutes and the focus group discussion will take approximately 45 minutes to complete this study.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time.

There are no risks from participating in this project. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

We will not collect any data which may identify you.

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data are members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, representatives of state or federal agencies.

Who can I contact with questions?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Colter Rantz: Cr488@lindenwood.edu

Dr. Shelly Fransen: sfransen@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

Appendix G

Letter of Participation for Instructional Coaches' Focus Group Discussion

Date:

Dear Prospective Participants,

My name is Colter Rantz, and I am requesting your participation in my doctoral dissertation research project at Lindenwood University. The study is entitled *Teacher Leadership: Educator Perceptions of School Culture*. Participants will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion which will last approximately 45 minutes. We are conducting this study to identify educator perceptions of teacher leadership and its impact on school culture.

I have received permission to conduct research from the ███████████████████. In order to conduct my research, I would like to invite all instructional coaches to participate in the focus group.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. All information obtained through this research will be reported anonymously. I will only receive the anonymous data collected from the survey. Participants will indicate consent by participating in the focus group discussion but may also review the informed consent form attached to this email.

Thank you in advance to those willing to participate and support this study. I hope the results of this study will identify educator perceptions of teacher leadership and its impact on school culture. If you have questions, you can contact me at Cr488@lindenwood.edu. Dr. Shelly Fransen, the dissertation chair for this research project, may be contacted at sfransen@lindenwood.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Colter Rantz
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Appendix H

Letter of Participation for Building Principal Focus Group Discussion

Date:

Dear Prospective Participants,

My name is Colter Rantz, and I am requesting your participation in my doctoral dissertation research project at Lindenwood University. The study is entitled *Teacher Leadership: Educator Perceptions of School Culture*. Participants will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion which will last approximately 45-minutes. We are conducting this study to identify educator perceptions of teacher leadership and its impact on school culture.

I have received permission to conduct research from the ████████████████████. In order to conduct my research, I would like to invite all building principals to participate in the focus group.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. All information obtained through this research will be reported anonymously. I will only receive the anonymous data collected from the survey. Participants will indicate consent by participating in the focus group discussion but may also review the informed consent form attached to this email.

Thank you in advance to those willing to participate and support this study. I hope the results of this study will identify educator perceptions of teacher leadership and its impact on school culture. If you have questions, you can contact me at Cr488@lindenwood.edu. Dr. Shelly Fransen, the dissertation chair for this research project, may be contacted at sfransen@lindenwood.edu.

Thank you for your time,

Colter Rantz
Doctoral Candidate
Lindenwood University

Vita

Colter T. Rantz completed his undergraduate degree at Missouri State University in 2013 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary English Education. He furthered his education by earning a Master of Arts degree in Educational Technology from Southwest Baptist University.

Colter began his teaching career in public education as a high school English teacher at Monett School District in 2014. He then transferred to Reeds Spring Schools in 2015 to serve as a high school English teacher. He continues his studies in educational leadership as he prepares for future opportunities to lead teachers and students.