THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES OF A PRINCIPAL AND

AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN ELEMENTARY READING

by

Joel James Abe

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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APPROVED BY:

Lisa Foster, Ph.D., Committee Chair

Sara Capwell, Ed. D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether a relationship exists between the self-assessed leadership style of a building principal and the achievement of elementary African-American students on a state level reading assessment. The results of this study could have an impact on principal training and preparation, impacting decisions made by central office personnel, as well as improving the performance of the identified group of students in reading. The relationship between a principal's self-assessed style of leadership and the combined pass rate of third through fifth grade African-American students in their school on the end-of-year state assessments. Principal leadership was measured through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and African-American student pass rate was determined using each state level Department of Education's school report card. A Pearson product-moment test was conducted to determine the relationship between leadership style and combined pass rate. This study determined that there was no relationship between a transformational leadership style and African-American student pass rate on reading, no relationship between a transactional style of leadership and African-American student pass rate on reading, and no relationship between a laissez-faire style of leadership and African-American student pass rate on a reading assessment. Further research should be conducted to explore the impact of leadership style on other areas of achievement, as well as whether a relationship exists between leadership style and the length of time a principal works as a building-level leader.

Keywords: academics, leadership, principal, African-American students, achievement

Copyright Page

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my family. This was an incredibly challenging journey and without their consistent support it would have been impossible to finish. To my wife, Heather, I thank you for consistently advocating for me, pushing me, and being the greatest supporter for whom I could hope. I am blessed to have you in my life. To my children, Elizabeth, Holden, and Lillian- I appreciate your sacrifices as many weekends were spent with me working instead of playing, I hope you see that hard work can lead to great things and finishing something you have started is important. You each are full of incredible abilities and promise and I cannot wait to see your futures! I would also like to provide a dedication to my parents, Marla and Jim, for cultivating curiosity and the joy of learning in me at a young age and supporting my educational journey.

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I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Lisa Foster for her consistent support in this process. A doctoral journey can be complicated and long and without someone to consistently pray and encourage you, it can be exceedingly difficult. You were always available to provide feedback, help me navigate the process, and keep me moving when I struggled to find participants. I am deeply thankful. Dr. Capwell, I am thankful for your time and consideration as I worked to finish this journey. I appreciate your willingness to serve on my committee and your assistance in completing this dissertation.

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List of Abbreviations

Computer Adaptive Tests (CAT)

Contingent Reward Transactional (CRT)

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

Every School Succeeds Act (ESSA)

English Language Arts (ELA)

Full Range of Leadership Model (FRLM)

Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Management by Exception-Active (MBE-A)

Management by Exception-Passive (MBE-P)

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)

School Quality Profile (SQP)

South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessment (SC READY)

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

Standards of Learning (SOL)

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative, correlational study is to determine if there is a relationship between the leadership styles of a principal and the achievement of African-American students in elementary reading. This chapter contains the background related to the principal impact on student learning and achievement, as well as historical, societal, and theoretical contexts. The problem statement establishes the necessity and importance of the proposed study, while the purpose statement details how the study will solve the problem. The significance of the study demonstrates how this research contributes to the theoretical field of leadership style, as well as filling in a research gap and having practical implications in improving principal training and African-American student reading achievement. Finally, this chapter provides the research questions that guide the study and the definitions of important and regularly used terms.

Background

School principals can be responsible either directly or indirectly for up to 25% of the student achievement in their school (Corcoran, 2017). As the building leader, the principal can influence instruction and learning in various ways, including supervision of instruction, selection of curriculum, development of staff, and creation of culture and climate (Day et al., 2016; Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018; Zee & Koomen, 2016). With the passage of the Every School Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2010, schools began to have increased accountability to demonstrate meaningful educational growth, particularly within targeted subgroups, such as African-American students (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). The success of this group of students can influence accreditation as well as funding. Across states, student growth is measured through

an annual end of course state assessment (Virginia Department of Education, 2020).

School systems thus have a critical concern for understanding factors that could potentially influence student learning and achievement, particularly in subgroups tied to accreditation. To frame this, it is important to examine the historical framework of principal leadership to see how the problem has evolved, as well as the social implications and theoretical frameworks supporting the influence of leadership styles.

Leadership style has been examined across numerous settings and has been shown to be related to the performance of subordinates and influential on organizational climate and success (Adeyemi-Bello, 2001; Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). According to Avolio and Bass (2004), three main types of leadership exist: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Of these leadership styles, both transformational and transactional have been shown to have a positive influence on an organization, while laissez-faire is more associated with an absence of leadership. Building principals must understand and cultivate their leadership style in to improve student learning and achievement, as well as improve school culture and climate. While their influence on student achievement may be indirect, their influence as leaders of the building may be significant to student growth, particularly in specific subgroups of students (Corcoran, 2017).

Historical Context

In the United States, the principal has played an important role in leading the school, and with this has come increased accountability for student progress (Hallinger, 2005). The requirements of the position initially focused on supporting teachers and improving student learning. With the move towards high-stakes testing and accreditation status, the demands upon school principals increased, requiring principals to have specific knowledge and skillsets to move schools forward (Cross & Rice, 2000). The importance of developing students has

additionally changed as society has progressed. While early school systems were designed to prepare students for work in factories or other labor-intensive jobs, today's students now need to be adept at navigating technology, synthesizing information, and problem-solving (Peurach et al., 2019).

Within the field of education, researchers have consistently worked to identify what makes an effective school principal (Sanzo et al., 2012). Traditionally, an effective principal was measured by their ability to be effective in managing their building, complying with state and district initiatives, dealing with personnel, and keeping the building safe. This view though has changed significantly over time (Kafka, 2009). With the increasing number of students in the building, it became important for the principal to establish more of an independent leadership role within the building. This extended to more authority over instructional practices and materials, responsibility and accountability for school climate and culture, as well as school accreditation status (Kafka, 2009). The leadership style of the principal and its influence on the school overall, as their ability to serve as a visionary for the school establishes motivation for teachers and staff (Chen, 2014).

Historically, the federal government has placed an emphasis on student learning and growth, with specific focuses on certain groups. The original federal mandate was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed in 1965, followed by No Child Left Behind (NLCB) in 2001 (Chenoweth, 2016). Despite these legislative efforts the achievement gap between white students and African-American students continues to exist (Downey, et al., 2019). The importance of education, as a means to close the income gap and reduce the likelihood of poverty, cannot be understated and the mandate remains for schools to provide equitable education and create measurable learning for all students.

Social Context

With the rise of high-stakes testing and school accreditation, the important role of the principal has grown in influence. Current principals must be adept at performing both instructional leadership as well as organizing and structuring a complex organization (Carter, 2016). They establish a culture, supervise teachers, manage behaviors, and can become the figurehead for a school community. With this level and influence, and the importance of their job, it is critical to understand how their specific leadership style can influence student achievement.

The first area where a principal can positively influence the learning of students is through instructional leadership (Day et al., 2016). Effective instructional leadership is demonstrated through knowledge of content, materials, and instructional strategies. This can be developed through coursework and experience; supporting the idea that the more time a principal serves as a building leader, the more effective an instructional leader they would become. Instructional leadership can be demonstrated by shaping instructional programs as well as the effective supervision of teachers and instruction (Lavigne, 2018).

The second area where principals can exhibit a positive influence is on teacher satisfaction and perceptions of efficacy (Fancera, 2016). An effective principal can positively influence teacher morale, limit burnout, and increase their commitment to the school and organization (Herman et al., 2018; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). These factors are important as they lead to staff staying at a school for a longer time, more effective teachers, and an improved educational culture. Secondly, a teacher's perception of self-efficacy has a strong relationship with student achievement (Donohoo, 2018). Principals can influence and support the

development of teacher self-efficacy through instructional leadership and professional development.

Finally, principals play a valuable role in the development of school culture and community (Bartanen et al., 2019). School culture is important in establishing an environment that supports student learning and success. A school that demonstrates culturally responsive instructional practices, as directed by school leadership, is effective in closing achievement gaps and lifting all students (Khalifa et al., 2016). Next, community support and buy-in towards the mission and vision of the school are positive predictors of a healthy school (Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016). Cumulatively, the social impact of a building principal is significant due to their direct and indirect influence on student learning, staff satisfaction, and efficacy, as well as the school culture.

The importance of early reading achievement and future educational success is researched and supported (Chatterji, 2006). Students who are proficient in reading, particularly at the elementary level, are more likely to be successful readers in their later years of schooling. Additionally, struggles in reading have been linked to behavioral concerns or disruptive behaviors (Gunn et al., 2005). Proficiency in reading at the elementary level then has a significant social impact on students and society.

African-American students consistently show an achievement gap in reading (Matthews et al., 2010). The literacy gap in reading among African-American students shows up across the United States and has drawn the attention of Congress and is the subject of significant research (Vanneman et al., 2009). The difference in reading achievement begins at the elementary level with African-American students being on the fringe of both literacy development and growth

(Thomas, 2018). It is critical to understand how the leadership qualities of the school principal can relate to or impact the literacy gap for this specific subgroup of students.

Theoretical Framework

The impact of leadership styles has been explored and examined across organizations and settings (Adeyemi-Bello, 2001; Klein et al., 2013; Merrill, 2015). Historically, leadership has been examined through various lenses, to identify or quantify what creates effective leaders. Early theories centered on whether certain traits were identifiable, others looked at whether a sixth sense or level of intuition was unique in leaders, while some postulated that leadership was fluid and situationally dependent (Greenwood, 1996; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019). Within the educational setting, leadership, including style, practices, and development is regularly covered and explored in classrooms, professional development, and instruction (Sanzo et al., 2012).

The theoretical framework is the full range model of leadership developed by Avolio and Bass (1991). This theoretical framework provides a consistent and research-supported guide to understand and apply leadership styles to individuals. Additionally, the instrument that has been developed and consistently deemed reliable in assessments for measurement, the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Avolio & Bass, 1995). The full range model of leadership has been used in research to explore the impact that it can have on teacher motivation, job effectiveness, and instructional leadership (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Eliophotou, 2014; Eyal & Roth, 2011).

The full range model of leadership includes transformational leadership, transactional leadership, as well as laissez-faire, which is non-leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1991). Within this framework, transformational leadership is considered the most effective, followed by

transactional and laissez-faire (Burgess, 2016). The leadership styles are characterized by distinct practices and actions by the leader and have different impacts on followers.

Transformational leadership heavily focuses on the ability of the leader to improve their followers through motivation and morality (Burns, 1978). Burns, who first started the study of transformational leaders proposed that leaders, as well as their followers, can raise "one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20). Transactional leadership focuses more on the use of incentives to motivate and have subordinates respond to goals and objectives (Khan, 2017). Through these exchanges and transactions, a leader is able to reach consistent goals. Lastly, laissez-faire, or non-leadership, is when the leader abstains from responsibilities, is unconnected, and has limited engagement in organizational goals and objectives. It is connected with negative outcomes for subordinates and a decrease in organizational effectiveness (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019).

Problem Statement

Research has consistently established the vital role that a building administrator can have on both student achievement as well as teacher satisfaction and school culture (Bartanen et al., 2019; Crow et al., 2017; Levin & Bradley, 2019). Research supports that the school principal can influence student learning and achievement, but largely in an indirect manner (Corcoran, 2017). Leadership style can influence various elements of the school organization, via the establishment of culture, development of teacher efficacy, supervision of instruction, and selection of instructional materials (Bartanen et al., 2019; Day et al., 2016; Donohoo, 2018). However, research still needs to be completed to determine whether the specific leadership style utilized by a principal can influence or impact the achievement of specific sub-groups of students. Research by Goddard et al., (2017) found that school leadership, and its ability to impact collective

efficacy played an important role in closing the achievement gap between African-American and white students, with a one standard deviation in efficacy leading to a 50% gap reduction. However, a gap remains in exploring or explaining whether specific leadership styles can contribute to an increase in African-American student achievement. The impact of principals, particularly in specific subjects, is further supported through research by Bodovski et al., (2013) which found that students in schools with strong instructional and discipline climates had a one-half standard deviation advantage over their peers in elementary math growth. As building principals play a vital role in the instructional and discipline climate of a school, understanding the influence on elementary reading is important (Ehrhart & Schneider, 2016). The problem is that while we understand the important role that school leadership can have on learning, we do not yet have a clear understanding of how leadership style is related to the reading achievement of African-American elementary students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative correlational design study was to determine the relationship between the leadership style of a principal and the elementary reading pass rate of African-American students. Within this study, the predictor variables were types of leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Transformational leadership focuses on how a leader affects followers, by developing trust, admiration, and respect for them as a leader. Transactional leadership is characterized by an exchange relationship between leader and follower, where rewards are contingent upon followers meeting objectives. Laissez-Faire leadership is the absence of leadership, where the leader abstains from engaging in the act of leading (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The criterion variable was the overall school wide pass rate of African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade state level end-of-year reading

assessments (Virginia Department of Education, 2020). The pass rate is determined at the school level and found by taking the total number of African-American students who passed their grade level assessment and dividing it by the total number of African-American students who took the assessment. Data will be collected and analyzed from each state's Department of Education through their school report card. The population for the study will consist of active building principals, who have served at their school for the past 3 years, in the states of Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia.

Significance of the Study

The theoretical significance of the study is that it will provide additional research and data into the role principal leadership style can play in specific student achievement. Research has shown that student achievement can be impacted through principal leadership, leading to the need to better understand what characteristics of leadership are most influential (Robinson & Boies, 2016). Miller (2019) found that leadership characteristics demonstrated some correlation with student achievement regarding a school's AYP progress but looking at specific subgroups remains an area for further theoretical development.

The empirical gap that this study looks to address is to provide a better understanding of how leadership styles can influence specific student learning. Recognizing the significance of ensuring that all students show measurable and adequate progress; this study aims to demonstrate how leadership style can impact reading growth. While research has shown areas where a principal can influence a school or indirectly influence student learning, more can be explored in how their style of leading impacts (Corcoran, 2017). This study aims to provide empirical findings to begin to explain how a principal's leadership style can impact elementary African-American student reading achievement.

While principals play a valuable role as an instructional leader, having an indirect impact on student learning and achievement, the importance of leadership style can still be further explored (Corcoran, 2017). As leadership style can be connected with school climate and culture, how this influences the academic performance of African-American students is important. According to Wang and Degol (2016), school climate and culture can have an impact on student learning. This is further supported by research by Adams and Khojasteh (2018) who found that when developing significant non-academic skills, such as self-determination, psychological, social, and emotional well-being, the climate established by the school principal is critical. Within diverse schools, these non-academic factors have been shown to be indirectly and positively related to classroom engagement and learning (Froiland & Worrell, 2016). Thus, understanding whether the leadership style of a principal, which can influence culture and climate, may have an impact on the learning of student groups who most benefit from a school that enhances non-academic dimensions.

This study is significant as findings can be used to improve the professional development of school principals, as well as increase the reading performance of specific subgroups of students. While the full range model, particularly the importance of transformational leadership has been regularly reviewed, particularly in relation to student achievement and teacher satisfaction, gaps remain in the performance of specific subgroups (Burgess, 2016; Day et al., 2016; Dutta & Sahney, 2016). This study will explore whether the leadership styles of a principal are able to have an impact on the learning and achievement of a specific subgroup of the student population.

The practical benefit of this study is that it can influence professional development for school leaders. Recognizing that one style of leadership over another has a strong relationship

with student achievement can influence how districts support and hire their building leaders. If leadership style, which can be cultivated and developed, has an impact not only on student learning central office administrators should actively work to support their principals. This study will support decision-making at the district level, to enhance student learning, a positive culture, and the community at the school level.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the transformational leadership style score of a principal and the overall school pass rate of elementary African-American students on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the transactional leadership style score of a principal and the overall school pass rate of elementary African-American students on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the Laissez-Faire leadership style score of a principal and the overall school pass rate of elementary African-American students on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment?

Definitions

1. *African-American* -A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (VDOE, 2022)

2. *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*- Federal legislation that requires schools to demonstrate academic performance or progress for students (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

3. *Idealized Influence*- Where the leader serves as the ideal role model for the group, and consistently demonstrates expectations through action, the development of relationships,

and the quality of treatment provided by the leader is idealized influence (Jong & Ford, 2020).

4. *Individualized Consideration-* When a leader recognizes that each follower has individual wants and needs, it is the nurturing side of transformational leadership (Sosik & Jung, 2018).

5. *Inspirational Motivation-* The emotional side of transformational leadership, where the leader inspires followers to work towards an achievable dream (Sosik & Jung, 2018)

6. *Intellectual Stimulation-* The ability of the leader to encourage the followers to think creatively and to solve problems with new methods (Bass & Riggio, 2006)

7. *Laissez-Faire Leadership-* The absence of leadership, where the leader abstains from engaging in the act of leading (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

8. *Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)-* An assessment to measure leadership styles according to the full-range model of leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1995).

9. *Standards of Learning (SOL)-* A standardized assessment used by the state of Virginia to measure student growth and learning (Virginia Department of Education, 2020)

10. *School Quality Profile (SQP)-* Measures the quality of school performance on the SOL assessments for each school. Indicates the learning progress of specific student subgroups (Virginia Department of Education, 2020)

11. *Transactional Leadership-* Characterized by an exchange relationship between leader and follower, where rewards are contingent upon followers meeting objectives (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

12. *Transformational Leadership-* Leadership focusing on how a leader affects followers, by developing trust, admiration, and respect for them as a leader (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

For this literature review, a systematic analysis of related works and theories was completed to explore the role of leadership style and African-American reading achievement at the elementary level. Below is a compilation of the literature review which examines critical theories that underpin the research. These theories establish a framework for understanding how leadership can influence an organization. These theories are then practically explored in the review of recent contributions to the field of leadership and school administration. Together, the literature review establishes the significance of the proposed study, as well as identifies the gap within current research that it can fill. Following the structural review of the literature review outline, a summary is provided of research and theories and their impact on the understanding of the role of leadership style on school administrators.

Theoretical Framework

The current study will be based on the full-range theory of leadership which was originally developed by Avolio and Bass (1991). This theoretical framework has roots in historical understandings of leadership, with a focus on the traits, actions, and personal qualities of the leader and their impact on followers. This theory holds that three different leadership styles exist, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Each of these leadership styles presents distinct characteristics and can be measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Transformational leadership is associated with higher quality leadership, followed by transactional, and laissez-faire, which is considered the absence of leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1991).

Transformational Theory of Leadership

The Transformational Theory of Leadership, as proposed by Burns (1978), focuses heavily on the ability of leaders to improve the performance of their followers through motivation and morality. Burns theorized that leaders, as well as their followers, can raise each other to higher levels of success and morality. With the use of these two elements, a transformational leader influences change, in a positive manner within an organization or system. As the theory developed, it transitioned from a theory that was applicable to politics, into a broader construct for all organizations (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The transformational theory additionally holds that leadership can be present and exist throughout an organization and is not limited strictly to those in traditional positions of authority (Cherry, 2020).

When Burns (1978) originally began the development of the theory of Transformational Leadership, he was seeking to identify a differentiation between leaders who motivate through a transactional interaction with subordinates and those who inspire those around them to higher and stronger goals (Ellen, 2018). Burn's views transactional leadership theory as one where leadership influence is based upon it being in the best interest of employees to follow, due to the trade off or transaction that will occur (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003). Transformational leaders separate themselves from transactional through their focus on reciprocal relationships with employees, leading with values, and being courageous in actions (Dumestre, 2016). Burns (1978) goes on to define transformational leadership as

> Such leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights

but a mutual support for common purpose. Various names are used for such leadership,

some of them derisory: elevating, mobilizing, inspiring, uplifting, preaching, exhorting,

evangelizing. The relationship can be moralistic, of course. But transforming leadership

ultimately becomes morale in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical

aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both. (p. 20)

From this original theory, Bass (1985) took the understanding of transformational leadership and

extended it into the Full Range of Leadership Model (FRLM).

Transformational leadership has moved to become one of the dominant leadership

theories over the past three decades (Tintore, 2019). Transformational leadership has been

researched across organizational settings and connected with consistent areas of influence or

impact. These areas of impact, attitude, beliefs, and behaviors, which are how the employee feels

are transformed due to leadership behaviors and have led to an improvement in employee

improvement in other areas, such as performance, commitment, and satisfaction (Anderson,

2017).

The attitude of the employee can impact an organization in many ways. Eagly and

Chaiken (1993) define attitude as "...a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a

particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (p. 1). This implies that attitude is how

one perceives or responds to individuals, events, requests, or even job demands. These attitudes

can be either favorable or disfavor, impacting how it is perceived. Transformational leadership

has been shown to have a strong correlation with the employee's attitude toward the leader (Kim

et al., 2018). The attitude or assumptions of an employee can further be shaped by

transformational leadership by creating a common mentality (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Connecting

with transformational leadership increasing job behaviors and performance through innovative

thinking and actions, Farahnak et al. (2020) found that transformational leadership has a positive

relationship with employee attitudes towards a new program.

Schwitzgebel (2010) establishes beliefs as being related to an individual's mental

acceptance of either a truth or an idea. Related to transformational leadership, leaders in this

style can inspire those around them to hold higher beliefs in what is possible (Ellen, 2018). The

influence on the employee or followers' set of beliefs can be seen in their perception of the

organization, job task, or their own abilities. Transformational leadership has been found to

impact an employee's belief in the organization as well as its outcomes (Givens, 2008). Beyond

this general belief in the organization or its mission and vision, transformational leadership has

an even larger impact on an employee's belief about themselves. This belief about one's own

capability or capacity is identified as self-efficacy. Perceptions of self-efficacy are often related

to an improvement in job performance and outcomes (Chan, 2020; Donohoo, 2018; Gao et al.,

2020).

The behaviors of employees can be a broad concept to define directly, and much research

has been done to try to quantify and create a definition (von Rosenstiel, 2011). Transformational

leaders can influence the behaviors and actions of their employees through change and

implementation of new programming or structures (Guerrero et al., 2017). Beyond this,

transformational leadership often presents as employee empowering and creative thinking. This

style of leadership has been shown to have a positive impact on innovative work behaviors

(Umrani & Afsar, 2019). Innovative behaviors, as related to transformational leadership, create

positive prospects of growth for an organization, and an environment of constant improvement

and knowledge finding (Garcia-Morales et al., 2008). Further, organizations can function as a

team, with each individual's actions having an impact on others. Transformational leadership has

been found to be positively associated with helping behaviors, which is when an employee's voluntary actions support other organizational members' task-related jobs (Lim & Moon, 2021).

Job performance is how well or effectively an employee can complete the work or tasks assigned to them. Employees who are more effective at performing their work provide a positive benefit to the organization. Job performance improvement has been consistently linked to transformational leadership and is supported by the research of Manzoor et al. (2019) who found that "… transformational leadership positively and completely predicts job performance" (p. 436). Additionally, as an employee improves in their performance, a trickle-down effect occurs where there is a further relationship with work engagement (Kasparkova et al., 2018). Further, transformational leadership has been shown to have a direct effect on a sense of empowerment and self-efficacy, both of which lead to improvements in accomplishment striving and job performance (Gao et al., 2020).

Effective organizations have employees who have a high level of commitment to the team, job, and the mission and vision of the company. Transformational leadership has been shown to have the ability to increase the organizational commitment of employees (Kim & Shin, 2019). Organizational commitment can be fostered by a transformational leader through their ability to influence an employee's psychological attachment. This can be attained through developing in the follower a perception of their own work impact (Peng et al., 2019)

Job satisfaction can have a strong influence on employee commitment to the organization as well as their ability to support organizational initiatives. Transformational leadership has been shown to have a predictive influence on affective commitment, the employee's emotional attachment to an organization, as well as the perception of social identity and the psychological contract with the worker (Cassar et al., 2017). Further, the psychological empowerment that can

be developed through transformational leadership can have an additional influence on employee job satisfaction (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015). Job satisfaction can also be related to the follower's perception of self-efficacy. Individuals who feel more proficient or effective at their job will have a stronger sense of satisfaction (Wigfield et al., 2016).

Basic constructs exist within this theory that are significant to understanding and applying it. These constructs work to connect behavioral characteristics with leadership traits (Burns, 1978). The core components of transformational leadership rely on the personal attributes of the leader, as well as demonstrated behaviors. Within the transformational theory of leadership are four key behaviors or actions that a leader must take. These characteristics, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are foundational elements (Antonakis & House, 2014; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Each one has distinct qualities or actions that the leader should demonstrate and have varying effects on subordinates. Together, they are critical to transforming the employees and strengthening the organization.

Idealized Influence

Idealized influence is the ability of the leader to serve as the ideal role model for the group, and consistently demonstrates expectations through actions. This is done through the development of relationships and the quality of treatment provided by the leader (Jong & Ford, 2020). By demonstrating exemplary leadership qualities, the effective transformational leader can exert influence over followers to motivate them to emulate behaviors. This can lead employees to internalize the values of the leader and the organization, creating congruence in actions, behaviors, and goal outcomes. Within this component of leadership attributes and

behaviors, researchers further examine two specific subdomains, Idealized Behaviors and Idealized Attributes (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Idealized Behaviors are the outward actions that the leader engages in and are the visible manifestation of their beliefs, attitudes, priorities, and commitment (Sosik & Jung, 2018). Burns (1978) originally identified the importance of leadership behaviors in recognizing the role that they played in establishing a vision as well as challenging followers to become a better version of themselves. As idealized influence establishes the leader as a role model, their external behaviors become a marker for their followers to take on. The behaviors of the transformational leader establish an unspoken level of expectations that followers see and are expected to emulate and internalize (Afsar et al., 2014). Sosik and Cameron (2010) identify common idealized behaviors such as being moral, transparent, authentic, creative, and persistent.

Idealized attributes are positive personal characteristics that followers provide to transformational leaders (Sosik & Jung, 2018). Through their actions and behaviors, leaders tend to influence how their subordinates see them, as well as their perceptions of what qualities or values the leader may have. The three most important attributes within idealized attributes in the Full Range Theory are charisma, trust, and mutual respect (Bass, 1985). As part of transformational leadership, the leader can help followers reach a higher level of not just professional, but also personal achievement. These idealized attributes can then be internalized within an organization or group, allowing a climate to develop that fosters growth, success, and achievement (McCarley et al., 2014). Beyond how they are perceived by their follower's, idealized attributes are often part of the leader themselves and can manifest themselves within the decisions and actions that the leader takes (Oreg & Berson, 2011). Together, idealized attributes are an important part of transformational leadership in influencing the climate and

culture of the group, by instilling pride in the organization, encouraging followers to think of the group over themselves, and projecting confidence and power (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Inspirational Motivation

According to Sosik and Jung (2018), inspirational motivation is considered the emotional side of transformational leadership. This portion of transformational leadership relies on the leader to be able to inspire their followers to work towards an achievable dream. In turn, followers will be motivated to work towards reaching the endpoint of the task or organizational goal. Sosik and Jung (2018) believe that inspirational motivation relies on three things: Transcendence, Evocation, and Motivation. These emotional triggers form the connection between employee and leader, transforming the relationship and challenging the followers. Behaviors that are associated with this optimism, a focus on tasks to be done, foresight, as well as providing hope and achievable goals (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). The inspirational motivation portion of transformational leadership has been found to increase both organizational commitments, as well as employee creativity (Shafi et al., 2020).

Transcendence within inspirational motivation is the ability of the leader to expand the follower's view or perception of what is possible and to recognize the impact that their actions have on the organization and others (Tintore, 2019). Individuals are prone to find ways to self-optimize their outcomes and place their specific needs first. Within inspirational motivation, a leader assists followers in transcending this point of view and instead focuses on the overall group's needs, leading to an increase in group cohesion and unity (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019).

Evocation is the ability of the leader to first recognize that followers cannot be forced to become inspired, but rather developed through relationships with others and the environment (Arenas et al., 2017). This element of inspirational motivation is significant, as it supports the

delineation with other styles, such as transactional, as it supports the idea of a leader helping followers move to a higher level. Followers cannot be forced into buying into ambitious goals simply through incentives, but rather the ability of the leader to meaningfully connect and inspire in them and the organization to work towards a higher goal (Faupel & Sur, 2018).

Motivation, as provided by a transformational leader, comes from their emotional connection and their ability to inspire their followers (Arenas et al., 2017). The ability of a leader to find unique ways to motivate and connect with their employees, providing psychological empowerment, and allowing the meeting of organizational goals to be fulfilling, minus external rewards, can have a positive impact on productivity and decrease burnout (Tsang et al., 2022). Whereas motivation in some models relies on extrinsic incentives, a transformational leader is theorized to be able to develop intrinsic motivation amongst their team members (Jensen & Bro, 2018).

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is the ability of the leader to encourage the followers to think creatively and to solve problems in new methods (Bass & Riggio, 2006). As transformational leadership seeks to influence followers to become more effective employees and people, intellectual stimulation provides growth opportunities. It is separate from charisma and other personal factors that a leader may have and is instead the rational side of this leadership theory (Robinson & Boies, 2016; Sosik & Jung, 2018). Leaders who demonstrate intellectual stimulation are likely to consider diverse perspectives, encourage followers to see problems from different angles, suggest novel solutions, and be thoughtful and deliberate in decision making (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016).

Individualized Consideration

The last key trait of the transformational leader is individualized or personal consideration. An effective leader must recognize that each of their followers is different and has unique needs. This portion of transformational leadership is considered the nurturing side, as the leader cares for each follower according to their needs (Sosik & Jung, 2018). Demonstrating personal consideration forms the foundation for a relationship established on trust to be developed, leading to a stronger organization overall. A leader who demonstrates personal consideration is likely to treat each person as an individual, provide personalized training and support, and assist others in developing their capabilities (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016).

Basic constructs exist within this theory that are significant to understanding and applying it. These constructs work to connect behavioral characteristics with leadership traits (Burns, 1978). An effective leader can present individualized consideration, which is characterized by the ability to meet the individual needs of those within the organization. Secondly, a leader should provide inspirational motivation, with the ability to present a coherent vision that allows subordinates to enjoin the mission. Thirdly, intellectually stimulating those with whom the leader works encourages creativity and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving. Finally, presenting an idealized influence is the leader's ability to be a role model for their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transactional Theory of Leadership

Transactional leadership theory is based on the belief that the relationship between leader and follower is based upon the incentives, and exchanges of things that the employees want for delivery of a product or service (Harrison, 2018). The roots of the theory are established in the

work of Burns (1978) and were developed with an understanding of military and family dynamics in the mid-20th century. Rewards within this theory are termed contingent and form the basis for the theory. The merits of this model of leadership have been examined frequently in research. Gill (2011) found that while the use of rewards can present a short-term benefit, it can also discourage development and work against competition. On the other hand, Gavan O'Shea et al. (2009) found that the use of rewards can improve employee morale and organizational workings. Over time this theory can be broken into four different approaches, Behavioral, Contingency/Situational, Path-Goal, and Leader-Member Exchange (East, 2018).

The Behavioral Theory of Leadership, as proposed by Likert and Bowers (1969) suggests that leadership can be understood and quantified based on specific behaviors and actions. An effective leader demonstrates behaviors that orient around tasks and people, facilitating the participation of their followers and is democratic in nature. As the theory focuses on behaviors, over traits, or other more deeply engrained characteristics, it holds that leadership can be cultivated and learned through a conscientious focus on actions. The fundamental focus is on what the leader does, and how subordinates perceive these behaviors (Likert & Bowers, 1969). The interrelation between the leader and actions creates a potential feedback loop with employees that assists in the organization meeting their goals (Yukl, 1971).

Likert and Bowers (1969) originally classified behavioral leadership styles into four categories, explorative, benevolent, consultative, and participative. The focus within these styles is the level of involvement and support provided to employees to mutually participate in the decision-making and direction of the organization. Working to simplify the behavioral theory as well as make it more manageable, Behrendt, et al. (2017) group leadership behaviors into two categories, either task-oriented or relations-oriented. Task-oriented behaviors are ones that focus

strictly on completing specific objectives within the organization. These can be demonstrated through the enhancement of understanding, increasing motivation, and facilitating the objective being accomplished. Relations orientations then focus on increasing cooperation and investment in the organization. Examples of relational behaviors include fostering coordination, promoting cooperation, and activating resources (Behrendt et al., 2017). Together, the holdings of the theory, that leadership can be explained and examined through a focus on actions, provides the potential for tangible empirical analysis and investigations.

Connecting with transactional leadership, many of the behaviors as explained by Behrendt et al. (2017), as well as Yukl (2001), are related to the actions of a transactional leader. Using resources to motivate and encourage behaviors can be an incentive-based means to motivate and move employees toward goal completion. The autocratic leader, as defined by Yukl (2001) is focused heavily on output and creating an environment that prioritizes the final product as the point of measurement. A transactional leader, using reinforcers as motivation, can be explained, and understood through the behavioral theory of leadership.

The contingency theory of leadership was established by Fiedler (1964) and focuses on how leadership can change and evolve depending on both external and internal factors. The theory holds that instead of specific traits or aptitudes, an effective leader can use a diverse set of values and skills to lead a group. Foundationally, it provides that a leader can do two things successfully, first a leader can develop positive relationships with subordinates. As Fiedler (1964) identifies "A leader who is liked by his group, who knows exactly what to do and how to proceed, and who holds a relatively powerful position will find it easier to do his job than one who is disliked by his group, has a vague, unstructured task, and has no power" (p. 163). Secondly, the leader must be able to provide appropriate support and structures for the

organization, or as it is formally known initiating support. The final factor of the theory is that the level of power or authority that the leader must control the organization is a significant element (Fiedler, 1964).

Regarding supervision style, leadership flourishes when it can identify certain aspects and circumstances where changing levels of structure, control, and empowerment are needed (Otley, 2016). Within this theoretical concept, the adaptability of leadership can fall within four domains across two factors. These factors include process-related contingencies, such as organizational complexity, as well as uncertainty and product-related contingencies as demonstrated in goals, expectations, power, and expertise (Boehe, 2016). Given a complex system, such as an organization, at times a leader should demonstrate high control and structure, whereas other situations may require empowering subordinates and decreased structures.

Within the contingency model of leadership is the situational theory of leadership. A common thread is shared in that both view leadership as dynamic and dependent upon organizational and situational needs. The situational theory developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969) examined leadership decisions as being based upon the abilities of the employees to complete tasks based upon their task-relevant maturity, which is broken into job and psychological maturity. Ultimately, the ability of the subordinate to complete the assigned job is critical in determining the leadership activities in that situation (Graeff, 1986). This theory connects with the full-range theory of leadership in both transformational and transactional leadership due to a focus on relationships, situations, and employee preparedness (Daniels, 2007). Limitations to this theory and its reliability, as originally theorized, do exist with researchers finding little relationship between leader behavior and followers' readiness for the task (Goodson et al., 1989). Cumulatively, these theories provide a framework for understanding

leadership as a flexible dynamic, where the diverse needs of an organization are met by the flexible demonstration of skills from the leader (Fiedler, 1964).

The Path-Goal theory of leadership, as proposed by House (1971), focuses both on the behaviors of the leaders and their fit to the needs of the employees to complete a task or goal. The theory holds that a balance exists between the behaviors of leaders and employees, as they work through the path toward a specific goal. Based upon factors, such as the attractiveness of the goal, or the value of the reward, subordinates' behaviors can change. Through the actions of the leader, followers increase their expectations, usefulness, and valence. The necessity of the leader to provide both actions and environments through coaching, support and rewards is critical (House & Dessler, 1974). With regards to transactional leadership, this is done through the use of rewards or incentives, as well as clarity of objectives or path toward the goal being met (Liska, 1993).

Leader-member exchange theory (LMX) originated out of work done by Dansereau et al. (1975) and focuses heavily on the relationship between leader and employee. The theory holds that different relationships exist within an organization between the leader and followers. They are formed and developed through relationships, material, effort, and resource exchanges. Within an organization, the leader can maintain different relationships with subordinates, dependent upon performance competency, personality, and upward influence (Linden et al., 1997). The theory connects with the transactional theory of leadership with its focus on the exchange process involved in leader/subordinate relationships and how this relates to job outcomes (Gerstner & Day, 1997).

Within these diverse theories of transactional leadership, the full range theory of what constitutes transactional leadership emerged. Within the full range model of leadership,

transactional leadership, which is based upon the belief that the leader/follower relationship is based upon an exchange of incentives can be broken into three subdomains, Contingent Reward, Management by Exception-active, and Management by Exception-passive (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Harrison, 2018).

Contingent Reward

Contingent Reward Transactional (CRT) leadership is characterized by leader behaviors that emphasize clear roles and task requirements for followers and connects this with either psychological or material rewards for meeting expectations (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The significant element of the leader within Contingent Reward is that they do provide an understanding of what each individual's roles within the organization are, as well as fulfilling these will be rewarded. The major difference between CRT and transformational leadership is that within a transformational leadership framework, the followers identify the needs of the leader, in CRT the exchange exists between employees meeting the needs of the leader and their receiving of tangible reinforcers (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Management by Exception-active

Management by Exception-active (MBE-A) leadership is identified through the leader actively monitoring for problems or issues and addressing concerns proactively (Willis et al., 2017). Their direct supervision of the employees allows them to see or anticipate problems and provide corrective paths to enhance job performance. Interactions between leader and followers are more limited, with the leader engaging within the context of corrective actions or modification of expectations (Jackson et al., 2013).

Management by Exception-passive

The opposite of MBE-A is Management by Exception-passive (MBE-P) leadership where some monitoring or oversight may occur, but the leader only interacts or engages when a problem arises (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). While the leader is still providing oversight and is engaged in the completion of tasks, which differentiates this style of transactional leadership from Laissez-Faire, the decisions by the leader are largely reactionary. Further, the focus of the leader in MBE-P may often be more on the shortcomings or failings of the subordinates, creating negative transactions, than on the positive achievements (Doucet et al., 2009).

Laissez-Faire Theory of Leadership

Within the full range model of leadership, Laissez-Faire is considered the absence of leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). A leader within this style abdicates responsibilities, refrains from providing direction to followers, and has limited participation in the group (Deluga, 1990). The idea of laissez-faire leadership is found across theories on leadership and behaviors and has mixed reviews on its effectiveness (Khan et al., 2016). While regarded as the most infective of leadership styles by Bass and Avolio (2004), the decentralized style of laissez-faire leadership has shown some areas of strength, due to the provision of autonomy to subordinates. In the appropriate setting, this leadership style, allowing followers to exhibit control over the organization, direction, and goals, has shown a positive benefit (Yang, 2015).

The full-range theory of leadership has played a vital role in advancing and informing the study of leadership. According to Antonakis and House (2002), the full range theory is the standard bearer for many of the current theories on the components of behavioral theories on leadership and serves as the base for integrating these ideas into the overall leadership framework. By focusing on behaviors that leaders demonstrate, the full range theory was able to

encapsulate many of the previous behavioral theories, while providing a consistent platform to extend from. Further, while previous theories focused on the exchange or contingent factors, the full range theory and transformational leadership took a differing view of the leader. In this model, the leader moves beyond the rote leadership habits of previous theory, towards transforming their employees to improve as individuals as well as workers (Khan et al., 2016).

This research study connects strongly with the full-range theory of leadership. Using the three major elements of the framework, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles, this study aims to examine how it can specifically influence the achievement of elementary students. Further, while much of the research examines how leadership can directly impact subordinates, this study will also provide insight into the indirect impact leadership behaviors can have on students as well as the school and its climate, as much of the principal's impact on learning is considered indirect (Corcoran, 2017).

Related Literature

School Principal

A building principal affects the learning of students as well as the environment of the school culture (Crow et al., 2017; Sebastian et al., 2019). An effective school principal is able to influence the organization in numerous ways, improving school culture and climate, teacher retention, student progress, and the community as a whole (Bartanen et al., 2019; Guillermo et al., 2016). Through their actions as instructional leaders, supervisors of staff, and organizational aptitudes, building principals exert a tremendous influence on the school, with up to 25% of student achievement being either directly or indirectly attributed to leadership (Corcoran, 2017). To better understand the role and relevance of a principal to a school and its learning community,

it is important to specifically examine their impact on the school, as well as factors that can either directly or indirectly influence student learning.

Impact

With the impact of accreditation and high stakes testing, the role of the principal has grown in importance as well as in the study. The modern principal must perform the dual role of being an effective instructional leader, while also managing a complex organization at the same time (Carter, 2016). The first area where a direct and significant impact can be found is in instructional leadership. This area forms the fundamental nature of what a building principal does to influence or impact student learning. In research, instructional leadership can be broken down into the supervision of instruction within the school, the development of staff, but also the selection of instructional materials (Crow et al., 2017; Day et al., 2016).

Supervision of instruction can be broken down into two general categories, the oversight of teaching practices as well as the provision of evaluation (Lavigne, 2018). In the oversight or supervision portion of the job, the building principal must be aware of the instruction occurring within the school, as well as the alignment with pacing and state standards. In the process of observing instruction, the principal can move to the second important step, providing evaluative feedback (Lowenhaupt & McNeill, 2019). The use of evaluation and feedback is a valuable administrative tool for shaping instruction. It allows the building principal to have a direct influence on the effectiveness of the teachers and their practices and an indirect influence on the student learning experience (Lochmiller & Mancinelli, 2019).

The second element of instructional leadership is in the professional development of staff. Additional training and support offered by the principal provide a valuable way to improve teacher self-efficacy and student achievement (Fancera, 2016). An effective principal is aware of

the needs of both the staff and students and can find developmental opportunities to ensure that staff have the tools to meet student needs. This understanding of specific relevance is critical in providing quality professional development, as teachers regularly feel overwhelmed and are more receptive to targeted development opportunities (Bates & Morgan, 2018; Kennedy, 2016). Research conducted by Meissel et al., (2016), found that targeted and specific professional development could directly improve student learning and increase the performance of students in targeted groups. This research is supported by the efforts of Snow and Matthews (2016) who found that when working on developing early literacy, specific practices by teachers can be effective.

The building principal in many districts is responsible for the selection of materials as well as instructional programs. The curriculums and materials that teachers and students interact with daily can provide the foundation for the learning experience. Day et al. (2016) found that rather than direct instructional leadership improving student learning, the knowledge of the principal over the content and specific needs of the students. Understanding the school and their influence over curriculum selections allows the building principal to improve student learning.

Beyond instructional leadership, the building principal plays a significant role in the creation of school culture and climate. These can be established through the creation of a shared vision and a meaningful partnership with staff (Urick, 2016). The culture within the school can interact with learning in diverse fashions, through the creation of a learning community, the inclusion of all students, and the establishment of expectations, and are a key part of leadership responsibilities (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). By establishing a culture, through actions and support, the building principal can further influence or direct student learning.

Finally, the principal has a large responsibility in shaping the organizational climate of the school. While culture is broad and considers experience, climate establishes itself in procedures, practices, values, and policy (Ehrhart & Schneider, 2016). A principal can have a direct influence on the school's practices and policies through the development of teacher handbooks, ensuring compliance with standards and practices, and school management or organization. Climate plays a critical role in student achievement and according to Maxwell et al. (2017) is a leading factor in understanding student learning and achievement.

Instructional leadership, creation of culture and climate though are not the sole manners in which a principal can influence and impact the learning of students as well the performance of staff members. Leadership style additionally influences both learning as well as staff perceptions of efficacy (Fancera, 2016). Leadership and management style are often interrelated when exploring the way a principal runs the school, utilizes resources, engages the community, and establishes a culture within the building. The leadership style of the principal, whether transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire can impact student achievement through its potential influence on teachers and their instructional practices (Miller, 2019). Further, and equally critical is the ability for an administrator to develop collective efficacy of the staff to perform their jobs. Teacher self-efficacy has a stronger impact on student learning than factors such as socioeconomic status, which many believe to be a significant measure of a student's potential learning (Donohoo, 2018). An effective principal, through leadership styles and practices, can foster and develop this sense of self-efficacy and in the process dramatically improve the academic success of the students (Fancera, 2016).

Impact of Leadership Styles in School Setting

The leadership style of an administrator plays an important and critical role in the success of the school, both academically, but as well as in the development of staff and community impact (Khan et al., 2016; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). An effective leader can develop and foster organizational commitment, as well as encourage cooperation and sharing among followers (Gartzia & van Knippenberg, 2016). Further, a building principal can foster a commitment to the school and an increased level of job satisfaction, leading to improved educational performance and teacher retention (Ch et al., 2017; Sadiartha & Sitorous, 2018). Urick (2016) found that the leadership styles used by building principals can be diverse and that the styles have potential differences in impact. The most common and researched leadership styles within education are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. These three form a theoretical foundation to understand their direct impact on schools and potential administrator retention.

Transformational

Transformational Leadership, which is demonstrated through the meaningful exchange between a leader and followers, who seek to create a vision change, can have a positive impact within the school setting (Bass, 1985). Burgess (2016) found that while many leadership styles can be used within a school setting, transformational leadership is generally the most effective. As the leader of the school, a principal using transformational leadership has shown a positive impact on the long-term achievement of the school (Day et al., 2016; McCarley et al., 2014). Further, transformational leadership, which focuses on the motivation and moral development of staff, can have an indirect influence on the school climate as well as teacher satisfaction (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Dutta & Sahney, 2016). The different behavioral elements of a transformational

leader (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized cConsideration) can have a direct impact on school climate and student achievement.

Idealized Influence

The ability of the leader to serve as the ideal role model for the group, and consistently demonstrate expectations through action, the development of relationships, and the quality of treatment provided by the leader is idealized influence (Jong & Ford, 2020). The first element of idealized influence is then the ability of the principal to serve as a role model for the school and organization, Through the establishment of themselves as a role model they are able to increase trust and utilize different strategies to motivate and inspire their staff (Munir & Aboidullah, 2018). This relationship leads to increases in task focus, creativity, and work achievement (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Humphreys, 2002). Further, when the principal establishes themselves as a role model or is authentic in their leadership, they can have a positive impact on teacher motivation and performance, particularly when navigating changes (Cohen, 2019).

Idealized influence extends beyond just the ability of the principal to serve as a role model, but also of their ability to create and maintain a shared vision and mission for a school. An effective alignment between the school mission, which is the purpose of the school, and the vision, which articulates the long-term outcome of the school, has demonstrated a positive impact on student learning (Adams & Velarde, 2019; Slate et al., 2008). Further, when a school has a consistent vision and alignment with behaviors and objectives, teachers are generally more satisfied and committed to the school (Dutta & Sahney, 2016). This is significant as teacher retention can play a significant role in the academic achievement of students and the overall school climate and culture (Young, 2018).

Idealized Motivation

School principals has multiple roles within the building and their ability to provide consistent motivation to staff and students is an important part. Idealized motivation, the emotional side of transformational leaders, highlights how a leader must meaningfully connect with their followers in order to achieve ambitious objectives (Sosik & Jung, 2018). Idealized motivation is often termed inspirational motivation, due to the connection between being motivated and inspired. This form of motivation relies on communication and using symbolism to focus the efforts of teachers (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Teacher motivation, which can be fostered, strengthened, and developed through the transformational behaviors of the school principal can have a strong impact on both the teacher as well as overall school achievement (Wiyono, 2017).

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is the ability of the leader to encourage the followers to think creatively and to solve problems in new methods (Bass & Riggio, 2006). These two elements are especially significant in the school setting, teachers who can both creatively think and solve problems are a valuable resource. When leaders foster intellectual stimulation in their followers, a direct relationship is found with creative performance (Thuan, 2020). Intellectual stimulation is reflected through the empowerment of teachers to have control over instructional practices, data interpretation, and pacing, leading to an improvement in student learning (Schildkamp et al., 2019).

Beyond the encouragement of the leader to think creatively and the freedom to solve problems with new methods, a principal can also foster intellectual stimulation through their offerings of professional development. Professional development prescribed by the building principal can be a powerful tool to support the development of teachers and their own perception

of self-efficacy (Kindall et al., 2017; Renbarger & Davis, 2019). Within the framework of transformational leadership, intellectual stimulation is further enhanced as the leader, considering the individual needs of the teacher and school, would provide professional development specific to each instructor.

Individualized Consideration

An effective principal must also recognize that each of their employees are different and have unique needs. This behavioral skill is defined as individualized consideration, or the nurturing side of transformational leadership (Sosik & Jung, 2018). School buildings are diverse environments, as are the students who populate them. As an effective building principal, recognizing that staff members have individual needs can lead to a positive impact on the school (Khaola & Oni, 2020). Finally, a school principal who demonstrates individual consideration can have an impact on the teacher's organizational commitment. According to Berkovich and Bogler (2020), a principal's individual consideration is responsible for 5.4 percent of the explained organizational commitment of a teacher. This increased commitment to the school can improve teacher retention and overall school performance.

Overall, transformational leadership is one of the more studied and supported styles of leadership in the field of education and has been shown to be the most effective (Burgess, 2016). It is, however, not without drawbacks or detractions. Studying transformational leadership and its impact on teachers Berkovich (2017), found that while it was effective in improving emotional well-being, it was more indirect and consistent with individuals versus particular styles. Further, Niessan et al. (2017) examined whether transformational leadership had an influence on teachers' emotional well-being when tired. This research found that it had a positive

effect when teachers were well to medium well rested, while a negative effect when they were tired.

Transactional

Transactional leadership, characterized by the role of incentives in exchange for meeting or surpassing goals and objectives plays a role in the understanding of the influence of leadership styles on subordinates and organizations (Khan, 2017). Similar to transformational leadership, transactional leadership can influence or positively affect the achievement of students as well as teacher performance (Sebastian et al., 2019). The instructional leadership component of a building principal can demonstrate where transactional ideals can develop. Providing clarity of objectives, tasks, and responsibilities of staff is a part of the contingent rewards process of the theory (Hoogeboom & Wilderom, 2019). Research suggests that the transactional style of leadership is generally more prevalently used by new administrators, relative to transformational practices. Focusing on daily tasks and responsibilities, which are notable features of school success, is part of the transactional practices (Schulza & Boscardin, 2018). Transactional leadership is a common and effective leadership style that school principals demonstrate, with potential impacts across the school-learning spectrum. Transactional leadership behaviors can be further broken down into three categories Contingent Reward, Management by Exception-Active, and Management by Exception-Passive.

Contingent Reward

Contingent Reward Transactional (CRT) leadership is characterized by principal behaviors that emphasize clear roles and task requirements for followers and connect this with either psychological or material rewards for meeting expectations (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In the educational setting, contingent reward leadership can be demonstrated when incentives, such as

recognition for completion of tasks, clear expectations, and assistance. This style of leadership has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on teacher self-efficacy, like elements of transformational leadership (Francisco, 2019). Further studies of the use of contingent rewards in the academic setting continue to show that it can have both a psychological benefit, as well as leading to an increase in organizational commitment (Huang et al., 2020). Additionally, a transactional leader using contingent reward behaviors can improve organizational creativity and knowledge sharing (Hussain et al., 2017). All these elements are critical and important when looking at successful and happy teachers.

Management by Exception-Active

Management by Exception-active (MBE-A) occurs when leadership behavior is demonstrated by the principal actively monitoring for problems or issues and addressing concerns proactively (Willis et al., 2017). A principal who demonstrates MBE-A is more likely to be attentive to performance, document concerns or success, and correct mistakes, but only intervene to prevent problems. Though not as effective in supporting employees as either a transformational style of leadership or contingent rewards, MBE-A has been shown to have some positive effect on employees' job satisfaction (Muhammad et al., 2018). Finally, Van der Vyer et al. (2020) found a causal relationship existed between leaders who exhibit these behaviors and teachers' perception of well-being. Teachers' perception of their well-being and contentedness can have an impact on retention, as well as performance.

Management by Exception-passive

The opposite of MBE-A is Management by Exception-passive (MBE-P) leadership where the principal may provide some monitoring, or oversight may occur but only interacts or engages when a problem arises (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Studies exploring this element of transactional

leadership have been limited and data has been collected in other studies. However, research by Shatzer et al. (2014) found that MBE-P had a slightly negative impact on student achievement, relative to other elements of transactional leadership behaviors. A meta-analysis Li and Karanxha (2022) further supports the negative relationship between school outcomes and MBE-P leadership.

Laissez-Faire

Laissez-faire leadership is associated with negative outcomes for subordinates and organizational effectiveness (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). The style is characterized by the avoidance of responsibilities, being unconnected from tasks and relationships, and limited engagement in organizational objectives. As noted, these attributes are negative, especially when subordinates are similarly disengaged. However, in the absence of leadership, employees who are highly motivated to lead can flourish (Huggins et al., 2017; Wellman & LePine, 2017). In a study of Title 1 schools' growth in Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), Miller (2019) found laissez-faire leadership styles to provide the most growth in the short term, though the long-term effects were not explored. Cumulatively, while the style can be effective, in limited circumstances, the overall negative impacts on staff and morale would present this style as the least desirable for a principal to demonstrate.

Reading Achievement of African-American Students

According to the research by the Stanford Center for Educational Policy Analysis (2020), the achievement gap in reading between white students and African-American students continues to exist, despite incremental steps toward closing it. Currently, the gap is between 0.5 to 0.9 standard deviations between the two student groups. These gaps are measured according to student progress on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) at the fourth-grade

level but exist even at the point of school entry in Kindergarten (Reardon & Portilla, 2016). The negative long-term impact of not being grade-level proficient in reading, even in the third grade, has been researched and established (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Research seeking to understand the gap, particularly at the elementary level looks to consider the impact of income disparities, behavioral and academic readiness, as well as societal issues (Bond & Lang, 2018; Jeynes, 2014; Reardon & Portilla, 2016). Schools have focused heavily on ways in which they can help in closing the gap, or strategies that assist in supporting the learning of all students.

Research within this field and at the elementary level has taken various approaches to providing interventions to close the reading achievement gap. Student perception of self-efficacy and motivation to read has shown to have a positive effect on performance (Wigfield et al., 2016). The importance of attitude and belief is further supported by research, with Lee and Jonson-Reid (2016) finding that student self-efficacy has a strong predictive value towards academic learning. Beyond internal factors which could be effective, other factors such as parental involvement and school / behavioral readiness have been shown to be areas of important focus (Joe & Davis, 2009). Finally, research has shown that the professional development of staff, responsive classrooms, and tiered interventions all can provide tangible benefits (Horowitz & Samuels, 2017).

Beyond perceptions of self-efficacy, other school related factors, which can be related to building leadership and climate have shown to have a positive impact on the academic achievement of African-American students. From the framework of culturally responsive teaching is the theory of a warm demander, which is a style of teaching characterized by nurturing and caring, while also maintaining high academic standards (Przybysz, 2021; Sandilos et al., 2017). Teachers who are characterized as warm demanders have been shown to have a

positive impact on African-American student achievement in all content areas, including reading (Sandilos et al., 2017; Ware, 2006). The benefit that this style of teaching provides is twofold. First, the ability to create a classroom environment that is both welcoming to the student and where the student feels valued, allows the teacher to establish routine and discipline (Graham, 2018). The teacher-student relationship, particularly for African-American students, can have an impact on reading achievement where (Whaley et al., 2019). Secondly, within this practice, teachers maintain high expectations for student learning. Teacher expectations can have a strong impact on student learning (Gentrup et al., 2020). These two prongs are significant in understanding the learning of African-American students, as findings by Schenke et al. (2017) suggest that teacher expectations and responsiveness to needs provided more benefit to African-American students, than non-African-American students.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices additionally can impact the reading achievement of African-American students. Teachers who can create a literacy and classroom environment that encourages African-American students to enjoy and invest in reading have been shown to improve the reading motivation of male students of color (Thomas, 2019). Increasing motivation, particularly in reading, can lead to a student spending more time engaged in authentic reading, at home and in school. This is then beneficial in developing more fluent and effective readers (Brandt et al., 2021). Further, CRT encourages teachers to be responsive to the classroom and specific student groups that the teacher works with. Being intentional in the selection of texts, and ensuring that they are culturally relevant, allows readers from diverse backgrounds to effectively construct meaning as well as develop more accurate predictions and inferences (Kibler & Chapman, 2019).

Summary

The achievement gap in reading of African-American students continues to be an issue with broad-scale societal implications (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). While numerous interventions, programs, and strategies have been used within the school setting to close the gap; its continued existence provides an opportunity to further explore factors that could consistently close it. Research supports that factors within the building principal's control can relate to the reading achievement of students (Joe & Davis, 2009). The full-range theory of leadership proposes that three key styles of leadership exist, with each having distinct behavioral characteristics (Bass & Riggio, 2006). These leadership styles can have marked impacts on organizations and the followers within that group. Within the school setting, the importance of the principal as an instructional leader, as well as a creator of climate and culture, in having an impact on student learning is regularly documented (Corcoran, 2017). The gap within research is whether specific leadership styles, when used within the school setting, are more effective at creating an instructional environment that can have a unique benefit on the early reading proficiency of African-American students.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The objective of this study was to determine whether a relationship exists between the leadership styles of a principal and the reading achievement of elementary African-American students. Using a correlational design, this study provided insight and understanding of individual leadership characteristics that can influence student learning. This study used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) as well as specific subgroup pass rates on reading achievement (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The principal's rating on the three leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, were individually correlated with the overall pass rates in reading comprehension of third, fourth, and fifth grade African-American students. Within this chapter, the research design of the study, the participants and setting, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis are covered.

Design

The study utilized a quantitative correlation design, to examine the relationships between leadership styles and the pass rate of elementary African-American student's achievement in reading. A quantitative design is one in which numerical data is collected and analyzed. The correlational design was selected due to its ability to determine, validate, and confirm relationships between variables (Creswell, 2018; Gall et al., 2007). This study was non-experimental, as variables were not influenced or manipulated. A correlational analysis was performed to determine whether a relationship existed between the predictor variables of leadership style, as measured by the MLQ, and the criterion variable, African-American student pass rate on the third, fourth, and fifth grade reading achievement, according to ESSA Annual

Targets and Long-Term Goals on the School Quality Profile, abbreviated as SQP (Bass, 2004; Virginia Department of Education, 2020).

The predictor variables were different leadership styles-- transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire. Transformational leadership focuses on how a leader affects followers, by developing trust, admiration, and respect for them as a leader. Transactional leadership is characterized by an exchange relationship between leader and follower, where rewards are contingent upon followers meeting objectives. Laissez-Faire leadership is the absence of leadership, where the leader abstains from engaging in the act of leading (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The criterion variable was the principal's overall school-wide pass rate of African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading Assessments (Virginia Department of Education, 2020). The pass rate is determined at the school level and found by taking the total number of African-American students who passed their grade level assessment and dividing it by the total number of African-American students who took the assessment. Data will be collected and analyzed from the state's Department of Education school report card.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the transformational leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the transactional leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the Laissez-Faire leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment?

Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this study are:

H$_0$1: There is no statistically significant relationship between the transformational leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment.

H$_0$2: There is no statistically significant relationship between the transactional leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment.

H$_0$3: There is no statistically significant relationship between the Laissez-Faire leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment.

Participants and Setting

Participants for this study were drawn from the population of elementary principals working in the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio, and Georgia. In order to participate in the study, principals must have been at their specific school for the past two academic years. States within the participant pool consist of both rural as well as urban school districts. This provides the opportunity to collect data from a broad and representative population. Participants for the study were selected using random voluntary response sampling. Voluntary response sampling has value as a means to reach a broad and targeted population that is being researched (Privitera, 2016).

With a total population size available the number of participants needed for this study to be appropriately generalizable is 66 principals. This is the minimum number of participants needed for correlational analysis when assuming a medium effect size with a statistical power of 0.7 at the 0.05 alpha level (Gall et al., 2007). The overall sample came from building principals within Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia. Descriptively, within the study 22 number of the participants were male, while 45 were female. The principals were overwhelmingly white, with 58 participants, followed by African American with 9. Demographics by gender and race are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Data

	Total	
Variable	N	%
Male	22	33
Female	45	67
African-American	9	14
White	58	87
Hispanic (non-white)	00	0

Note: Distribution of participants by descriptive statistics

Overall, most of the principals had served in leadership positions for between 6-10 years. Finally, regarding educational achievement level, 42 of the participants had a master's degree, seven with an educational specialist degree, and 18 had achieved their doctorate. Further demographic and descriptive data from the sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	Total	
Variable	N	%
Master's Degree	42	63
Educational Specialist	7	10
Ed. D or Ph. D	18	27
1-5 years	13	19
6-10 years	29	43
11-15 year	13	19
16-20 year	9	13
21+	3	5

*Ed. D could include either an Ed. D or a PhD

Instrumentation

This study used two instruments to measure the relationship between principal leadership style and the pass rate on elementary reading end-of-course tests of African-American students. The first tool used was the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) which measures leadership according to the full range theory of leadership proposed by Avolio and Bass (1991). Secondly, end-of-year state reading assessments were used to measure the proficiency in reading of the specific subgroup of students.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)

The MLQ Form 5X-Short developed by Avolio and Bass (2004), is an internationally recognized instrument that effectively provides measures of three leadership styles,

transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. The purpose of this instrument is to measure the theoretical constructs of the Full Range theory of Leadership (Tejada et al., 2001). The MLQ was based on an instrument developed by Bass (1985) to determine charismatic, or transformational leadership. The scale has been modified over time, moving from a 78-question instrument with six domains to a 70-question, seven-domain scale, to the current MLQ 5X with an eleven-factor model (Green, 2017). The instrument has been used in numerous studies to explore the relationship or influence of leadership styles on school related outcomes (Heissenberger & Heilbronner, 2017; Jaarsveld et al., 2019; Laouni, 2020).

The reliability factor of the MLQ, according to independent research by Muenjohn and Armstrong (2009) is 0.86. Further, the MLQ 5X, which is an eleven-factor model, has a goodness to fit index of 0.91 (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Additionally, the instrument has an internal reliability, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, between 0.74 to 0.94 across all scales (Boamah & Tremblay, 2018). Within these eleven factors, eight subscales focus on leader behaviors, with three focusing on the outcome of leadership. Individual subscales are explained further below. The MLQ 5X as administered consists of 45 questions, each using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Not at all" to "Frequently if not always". Responses were scored as follows: Not at all = 0, Once in a while = 1, Sometimes = 2, Fairly often = 3, and Frequently, if not always = 4. The instrument takes approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Each participant receives a score across each of the three styles of leadership based on their answers to specific questions, which will be discussed below. Participants are scored 0 to 4 for transformational leadership, 0 to 4 for transactional, and 0 to 4 for laissez-faire leadership. The higher an individual score within a category, the better the alignment with the particular leadership style. The assessment does not label leaders specifically to the three terms but instead

identifies how much they demonstrate the types of behaviors aligned with each style (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The leaders completes the self-rater form as they reflect upon their leadership practices. Permission to use the MLQ was obtained through Mindgarden (see Appendix A).

Transformational Leadership Component

According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transformational leadership is leadership that meets the higher-order needs of subordinates and improves motivation. It is broken into four components. These four components consist of: (a) Idealized Influence, (b) Inspirational Motivation, (c) Intellectual Stimulation, and (d) Individualized Consideration.

Idealized influence is defined by how the leader is able to serve as a role model for employees and demonstrate values and work ethic through their actions (Jong & Ford, 2020). Through their own behaviors, subordinates or employees want to be like them and emulate their behaviors. This relationship leads to increases in task focus, creativity, and work achievement (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Humphreys, 2002). Idealized influence can be broken down further into two subcategories Idealized Attributes, which are characteristics displayed, and Idealized Behaviors, which are actions a leader takes. Within the assessment, questions 10, 18, 21, and 25 are considered Idealized Attributes, and questions 6, 14, 23, and 34 are scored for Idealized Behaviors.

The second component of transformational leadership is Inspirational Motivation. According to Sosik and Jung (2018), this is considered the emotional side of leadership. It is characterized by the leader being able to inspire the followers towards a reachable dream. The behaviors of a leader inspire optimism, focus on tasks, foresight, and hopes and dreams (Densten, 2002; Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). Inspirational Motivation is measured on questions 9, 13, 26, and 36 on the rating scale.

The third component of transformational leadership is Intellectual Stimulation. Bass and Riggio (2006), identifies intellectual stimulation as the ability of the leader to encourage followers to think creatively and solve problems with new methods. This is done through encouraging diverse perspectives, being deliberate in decision making, and suggesting new solutions (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). Intellectual Stimulation is measured on questions 2, 8, 30, and 32 on the rating scale.

The final component in transformational leadership is individualized or personal consideration. An effective leader must recognize that each of their followers is different and has unique needs. A leader who demonstrates personal consideration is likely to treat each person as an individual, provide personalized training and support, and assist others in developing their capabilities (Korejan & Shahbazi, 2016). Individualized Consideration is measured on questions 15, 19, 29, and 31.

Transactional Leadership Component

Transactional leadership is based upon the belief that the relationship between leader and follower is based upon the incentives, and exchanges of things that the employees want for delivery of a product or service (Harrison, 2018). The exchange, or transaction, which exists between leader and follower, is fundamental to this style of leadership, which is the second most effective style. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), transactional leadership can be broken into three subdomains, Contingent Reward, Management by Exception-active, and Management of Exception-passive.

Contingent Reward, according to Bass and Riggio (2006), is the belief that employees are motivated to complete tasks or objectives based on the reward offered. The idea of contingent rewards is rooted in a transaction existing between supervisor and employee where rewards and

incentives are exchanged for work. Contingent rewards in the transactional model are tangible or physical items. Within the instrument, Contingent Reward is measured on questions 1, 11, 16, and 35.

Management by Exception-Active (MBE-A), is a much more active and overbearing style of leadership. This component is characterized by a focus on forced compliance and the following of rules, expectations, and regulations and is considered less effective (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Sosik & Jung, 2018). MBE-A behaviors are measured on questions 4, 22, 24, and 27 within the MLQ instrument.

Management by Exception-passive (MBE-P) falls within transactional leadership but shares many behaviors and actions with laissez-faire leadership. MBE-P is exhibited when a leader sits back and waits for problems to develop before addressing them. This is a more reactive form of management behavior where action is only taken when absolutely necessary (Sosik & Jung, 2018). MBE-P is measured on questions 3, 12, 17, and 20 on the questionnaire.

Laissez-faire Leadership Components

Laissez-faire leadership, or the absence of leadership, is when the leader abdicates or refrains from providing leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Deluga, 1990). It is a decentralized model of leadership, where followers have significant autonomy and authority to act in either their own or the organization's interests. It is considered the least effective style of leadership within this model. Laissez-faire leadership is examined as a stand-alone style, with questions 5, 7, 28, and 33 being connected to it.

Beyond collecting data to directly examine leadership style, the MLQ 5X also measures leadership success or the Outcomes of Leadership. This is measured across three different subscales that demonstrate the product of leadership. The first is Extra Effort, which is assessed

on questions 39, 42, and 44. The next is Effectiveness, which is measured on questions 37, 40, 43, and 45. Finally, Satisfaction is measured on questions 38 and 41. Positive scoring within these sections is associated with either transformational or transactional leadership styles (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Schaap & Coetzee, 2005). Data from this will not be used within this study, as it falls outside of the three leadership styles being examined.

The instrument has additional research use as it is possible to do within group scoring to differentiate further a participant's leadership style (Green, 2020). It is an extensively used tool used in leadership studies and has demonstrated consistency and reliability across settings (Jaarsveld et al., 2019). Research conducted by Pittenger (2001) found that the MLQ is effective in measuring the constructs within Bass's theory of leadership.

End-of-Year Academic Assessments

Participants were recruited from different states so five different end-of-year assessments were collected: Georgia Milestones Assessment System-Georgia Standards of Excellence, North Carolina Standard Course of Study End-of-Grade (EOG) Assessments, Ohio Learning Standards State Tests, South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SC READY), and Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). Because only the pass rate was being used, the data from these instruments did not need to be transformed into z-scores. Following is a description of each end-of-year assessment used to determine the pass rate.

Georgia Milestones Assessment System

The Georgia Milestones Assessment System is designed to provide summative information regarding student progress in the state toward their grade level adopted standards, the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE). The GSE for elementary reading was most recently adopted in 2015-2016. The assessment is a primary component of the state's accountability

structure (GADOE, 2023). The assessment is provided online to students in grades 3-8 in the spring of each semester.

The three elementary state assessments are similar in number of questions, 46, and material covered. Reading and Vocabulary allow for a total of 32 points, while Writing and Language provides 28 points. Within each assessment, there are six field test items. Student performance is then scored into four categories: Beginning Learner, Developing Learner, Proficient Learner, and Distinguished Learner (GADOE, 2023).

The internal consistency of each of the three tests was assessed by the Georgia Department of Education. Third grade ELA had a Cronbach alpha of .91 and .92 on the two forms. Fourth grade ELA had a Cronbach alpha of .92 and .91 on its two forms. Fifth grade had a Cronbach alpha of .91 and .88 on the respective two forms. Standard Error Measurement (SEM) were additionally applied to the assessments. The SEM for third grade was 3.42, for fourth grade 3.51, and for fifth grade 3.53 (GADOE, 2023).

The Georgia Milestones Assessments have previously been used within academic research. The assessment was used by Gutierrez de Blume et al., 2020, to look at the development of reading comprehension skills through content. Additionally, the Georgia Milestones were used to examine the effectiveness of source evaluation texts (Sparks et al., 2021).

North Carolina Standard Course of Study End-of-Grade (EOG) Assessments

End of grade reading assessments in North Carolina are administered to students in 3rd-8th grades in the last 10 days of each year. The tests are computer based and administered for the majority of students online. The fifth and most recent version of the assessments began development in the 2017/18 school year, before being field tested in 18-19, and finally being

operational in 20/21 (NCDOE, 2022). The standards that the assessment measured are aligned with the Standard Course of Study (SCS) for English Language Arts within the state.

The third through fifth grade reading assessments each have a similar design with 48 total questions being asked. There are a total of five passages, each with eight corresponding questions, mixed with one field test selection and eight questions connected with it. The assessments were designed to balance Reading for Literature (38-42% of total questions), Reading for Informational Text (46-50%), and Language (13-15%) (NCDOE, 2022).

Statistical analysis of the assessment was completed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to measure the reliability of each of the assessments and the questions, with results being publicly available in the Edition 5 Technical Report (NCDPI, 2021). The third grade reading assessment has a Cronbach's alpha range between .89-.91 across three different forms. The fourth-grade assessment has a Cronbach's alpha range between .90-.91 across two forms. The fifth-grade assessment has a Cronbach's alpha range between .90-.91 across three forms (NCDPI, 2021).

Ohio Learning Standards State Tests

In Ohio, students in grades 3-8 take end of course state assessments in Reading in both the fall and spring. Spring assessments are used to determine school level performance. These tests, the Ohio's State Tests, measure students' proficiency towards Ohio's Learning Standards, which have been developed for each grade level (ODOE, 2024). The most recent update to the Ohio Learning Standards occurred in 2017 (ODOE, 2024).

On the grades 3-5 assessments, there is a vertical score for each student ranging from 587-818 for third, 605-835 for fourth, and 624-804 for fifth grade. Bands of scores will range across five categories, Limited, Basic, Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced (ODOE, 2023a).

The three elementary tests have a similar question design, with a possible 40-42 points available on each test. Students are assessed across three categories, Reading Literacy Text, Reading Informational Texts, and Writing (ODOE, 2023a).

Statistical analysis of the assessments was completed by the Education Service Center (ESC) of Central Ohio. The third grade reading assessment had a Cronbach's alpha of .82. The fourth grade assessment had a Cronbach's alpha of .85 and the fifth grade was .87 (American Instittue for Research, 2019). The Office of Assessment for the Ohio Department of Education additionally assessed reliability testing on each of the three assessments. According to the ODOE (2022), the third grade test had a reliability of .86 and a scaled score SEM of 17.94, the fourth grade had a reliability of .88 with a scaled score SEM of 17.11, and the fifth grade had a reliability of .88 with a scaled score SEM of 16.42.

Within academic research, the Ohio's State Tests in reading have been used in numerous studies. Recently, Kogan and Lavertu (2022) used performance on these assessments to determine the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on learning loss in students in Ohio. Further, to measure the impact of high-dosage tutoring, Kortecamp and Peters (2023) used performance on the Ohio's State Tests within their study.

South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SC READY)

Academic testing requirements for state and federal proficiency in South Carolina are assessed via the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessment (SC READY) test. This test is given to students in 3rd-8th grade within the last 20 days of the instructional calendar of each year and is aligned to measure student understanding of the SC READY ELA standards of 2015. The assessment is administered over the course of two days, one measuring ELA writing and the other ELA Reading (SCDOE, 2023).

The third-fifth grade SC READY ELA assessment consists of 66 points for each student. The test is broken down into the following categories Reading Literary Text (17-21 points), Reading Informational Text (17-21 points), Writing (20-24 points), and Inquiry (6-8 points) (SCDOE, 2021). The test is vertically scored with four ranges, Does Not Meet, Approaches, Meets, and Exceeds.

To measure the reliability of the assessments, the South Carolina Department of Education conducted an analysis of each of the tests. Third grade ELA had a Cronbach alpha of .90 for all students The Fourth grade ELA had a Cronbach alpha of .896 for all students. The Fifth grade ELA assessment had a Cronbach of .87 for all students. A classical Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) was additionally conducted for the vertically scored assessments. Third grade had a SEM of 19.17, fourth grade a SEM of 16.22, and fifth grade a SEM of 19.66 on the ELA tests (Zais, 2022).

Academically, SC-READY has been used as part of research. Pate et al., (2020) examined how cardiovascular health is related to academic performance, using scores on the SC-Ready end-of-year test as a variable. Additionally, looking at leadership strategies and teacher retention, Baker et al., (2022) reviewed the academic performance of elementary students using SC-READY assessments in Reading and Math.

Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL)

The Standards of Learning (SOL) tests are administered yearly to students in the state of Virginia. The purpose of this instrument is to measure individual student knowledge or understanding of specific grade level standards. Students in Virginia were first administered SOL tests in 1998, with school accreditation becoming dependent upon student pass rate on the test in 1999 (VDOE, 2020g). The SOL tests have been continuous, except for the 2020-2021 academic

year due to closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, used within the state to determine accreditation or Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for individual schools. The test has changed from a paper-pencil test to a computer based to the current Computer Adaptive Tests (CAT). Students are assessed in the Spring of each year when the state testing window opens. CAT tests allow the degree of difficulty and type of question to change for each individual student, based upon their performance or skills demonstrated on previous questions. Students begin taking the SOL reading assessment each year, starting in third grade. A passing score on the test is 400, with a maximum score of 600. For the purpose of this study, the overall pass rate is calculated by dividing the number of students in the target group passing the test by the total number of students within the group who took it. This pass percentage is published for each school on their School Quality Profile under the ESSA heading (Virginia Department of Education, 2020). Though the criterion variable is the overall pass rate of the school, the individual tests and constructs are discussed below. Scores on SOL tests have previously been used in various studies to explore the effectiveness of instructional interventions (Danaher, 2018; Sterling, 2019).

The third-grade reading SOL test consists of 33 total questions, with 28 being operational and five being field-test items. The questions on the test vary from reading passages to word analysis questions. The test is structured to measure student knowledge on the established grade level standards (SOL) and a test blueprint is available which shows how reporting categories are broken down (VDOE, 2020c). An analysis of internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha for the third-grade reading test is 0.88 (VDOE, 2014).

The fourth-grade reading SOL test consists of 33 questions, with 28 being operational and five serving as field-test items. Passages and questions on the test vary, with students answering multiple choice, selecting all that apply, and drag and drop formats. The test is created

to provide students an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in the fourth grade SOLs. A test blueprint shows the breakdown of questions as well as reporting categories (VDOE, 2020d). An analysis of internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha for the fourth-grade reading test is 0.87 (VDOE, 2014).

The fifth-grade reading SOL test consists of 33 test items, with 28 operational and five field-test items. Questions are a mix of fiction and nonfiction and allow the student to demonstrate proficiency on grade level SOL standards. The test blueprint provides a breakdown by reporting category and standards assessed (VDOE, 2020e). An analysis of internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha for the fifth-grade reading test is 0.85 (VDOE, 2014).

To measure the overall reading achievement of African-American students, these scores are compiled into an overall pass percentage on each school's School Quality Profile under the ESSA heading. The State of Virginia updates each school's progress each year and the pass rate is used to determine compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This rate can range from 0% - 100% and is only shown if total students in the subgroup are present in five percent or more of the school population (USDOE, 2017).

The Virginia SOLs have been used previously in academic research. Thompson et al., (2021) used passing percent on the Standards of Learning reading assessment to evaluate a relationship with librarian's perception of self-efficacy. Further, Malone et al., (2019) used pass percent on the state reading Standards of Learning to examine grade configuration alignment.

Procedures

Before starting the study, permission for principals to participate in the study was elicited by district superintendents. Each superintendent of a public school system in the state of Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, and Virginia was sent a request letter, detailing the study

and purpose, as well as asking permission to email building principals within their division. (See appendix B). Appropriate paperwork was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Liberty University for approval (see appendix C). Permission was received, and using the district's webpage, an email list of building principals was created.

Each principal was sent an email detailing the study, its purpose, and their responsibilities as potential participants (see appendix D). Instructions concerning participation were enclosed in the email and participants were able to provide permission to participate by clicking on a survey link. Those who elected to participate filled out a brief survey, collecting demographic information and to ensure that they met the required time administrating at that school, as well as an adequate percent of African-American students participating to have relevant scores. Participants then received an email from Mind Garden, as well as further instructions, with a link to the MLQ 5X. Principals who had not responded to the initial email received a follow up reminder one week after the initial Mind Garden email. Data from respondents was electronically stored at Mind Garden until the completion of the survey window.

Upon the closing of the data collection window, data from Mind Garden was entered into the Statistical Processing for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for statistical analysis. Privacy for participating administrators was provided by converting their names to numbers and the maintenance of records in the secure Mind Garden application and in a password protected data set in SPSS. Additionally, identifiable information, including administrator names was kept in a hard copy only, in a locked file box. Protections and guarantees of anonymity were conveyed to participants during the introductory stage of the study.

Each state Department of Education maintains a school report card for each public school

within the state. To determine the pass percentage of African-American students on the elementary Reading assessments, data from each participating Principal's school was collected. Data from the school report card was then correlated with the MLQ 5X results of the building principal.

Data Analysis

All data collected was organized into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program to be analyzed. The researcher used a Pearson product-moment (Pearson r) to determine the relationship between the predictor variables and criterion variable. A correlational design is appropriate in this study, as it is used to determine the direction and degree of a relationship between variables (Gall et al., 2007). Scores on each leadership style were collected and correlated with combined student subgroup pass rate on the 2021-22 third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment. The predictor variables were leadership style, either transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire. The criterion variable was the pass rate within the subgroup. The data analysis conducted was identical for each of the research questions and null hypotheses.

Each of the hypotheses required the same analysis. First, the data sets were visually inspected for missing or inaccurate entries. Next, scores and data were screened to determine whether any inconsistencies or extreme outliers existed. This was done via a scatterplot and a visual inspection for any extreme outliers or problems within the data sets. Prior to conducting the analysis, assumption testing was done. The assumption of bivariate outliers, linearity, and bivariate normal distribution were measured through a scatterplot and line of fit. A visual inspection was used to determine whether any data existed as an outlier. For linearity, the researcher looked to see if a linear relationship existed between paired data points and inserted a

line of fit. For bivariate normal distribution, the researcher looked for the presence of a cigar shape within the data (Gavin, 2008; LAERD, 2020). On the scatterplot, the predictor variable, score on leadership style was on the x-axis, with the criterion variable, pass rate, on the y-axis. These assumption tests were completed to ensure that no major assumptions were being violated so that the analysis results would be valid. Additionally, descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation were reported for all variables.

The three null hypotheses were tested using a Pearson Product-Moment correlation test. Since three tests of significance were conducted, a Bonferroni correction was needed to guard against Type I error. The alpha level was calculated to be $\alpha = 0.05/3 = 0.0167$ which is rounded to $\alpha = 0.02$ (Warner, 2013). The Pearson Product-Moment correlation test provides a correlation coefficient (r) between -1 to 1 which shows the strength and direction of the relationship between the predictor and criterion variable (Gavin, 2008; Martella et al., 2013). With a positive relationship, as behaviors on the leadership style increase or are more prevalent, the African-American pass rate on the elementary reading assessments will similarly increase. With a negative relationship, as behaviors on the leadership style increase, the pass rate of African-American students on the reading assessment will decrease. A score close to zero demonstrates little to no relationship between variables. The closer r is to one determines the strength at which the variables are correlated. Each of the null hypotheses tested produce a correlation coefficient that shows whether a relationship exists, as well as its strength and direction.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter Four presents the findings from the research study. First, the research questions and null hypotheses are presented. Next, the statistical analyses for this study, using the Statistical Packages of the Social Sciences (SPSS), are presented. Descriptive statistics of the participants are presented and analyzed. Next, an overview of the findings and specific results broken down by each hypothesis is provided. The goal of this study was to determine whether a statistically significant correlation existed between the leadership styles of a building principal and African-American student achievement in reading at the elementary level.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the transformational leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the transactional leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment?

RQ3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the Laissez-Faire leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African-American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment?

Null Hypotheses

$H_0 1$: There is no statistically significant relationship between the transformational leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment.

H₀2: There is no statistically significant relationship between the transactional leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment.

H₀3: There is no statistically significant relationship between the Laissez-Faire leadership style score of a principal and the combined pass rate of elementary African American students on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment.

Descriptive Statistics

This correlational study was conducted to determine whether the leadership style score of a building principal, as measured by the Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ5x-self) was correlated with the achievement of African American students in elementary reading, as measured by the End-of-year State Assessments. There was a total of 67 principals who participated in this study and the overall student performance in Reading was gathered from the school report card, as maintained by each state's Department of Education.

Superintendents in the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Ohio were contacted to request permission to solicit permission from elementary principals in their divisions. Principals within divisions that granted permission were contacted via email and asked to take a voluntary study that would measure their leadership style and provided informed consent. Principals who elected to participate were sent a link to MLQ5x-self and they answered a series of Likert-style questions that measured their leadership across three styles: Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire. Data was compiled by MindGarden and sent to the researcher who then entered it into SPSS for analysis.

Descriptive statistics were compiled to examine the demographic information of the participants. Of a total of 67 participants in the study, 67% were females and 33% were males.

The education level of participants shows that the majority of the participants, 63%, held a

Master's degree, while 10% held an Educational Specialist degree, and 27% held a Doctoral

degree. The years of experience in education were broken down into five separate bands of tie.

The majority of the principals had worked in administration for between 6-10 years, while the

fewest number of participants had worked for 21+ years. Table 3 shows the demographic

breakdown by gender, education level, and years of experience in administration.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics

	N	%
Female	45	67.16
Male	22	32.83
Ed. D	18	26.86
Ed. S.	7	10.44
Master's	42	62.68
1-5 years	13	19.40
6-10 years	29	43.28
11-15 year	13	19.40
16-20 year	9	13.43
21+	3	4.47

*Ed. D could include either an Ed. D or a PhD

An examination of the mean shows that principals scored higher in Transformational

leadership style, followed by Transactional, and finally Liassez-Faire. Measures of central

tendency of participants is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational	67	2.99	0.40
Transactional	67	2.24	0.57
Laissez Faire	67	0.77	0.54

Examining the overall pass rate of elementary African American students on their end-of-year state reading assessment, the average school pass rate was close to 60%. Scores within this set of data ranged from 100% to 22%, showing a fairly broad range. Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for state assessments.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pass Rate	67	59.09	16.39

Results

There were three null hypotheses for this study. The findings for each null hypothesis are presented below. The findings include the results of any data screening, assumptions, and inferential statistical analysis.

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis H_01 stated that no statistically significant correlation existed between the Transformational leadership style score of a principal and the combined African-American student achievement on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment. Before final analysis being conducted, the researcher screened the data and conducted assumption testing to ensure the analysis would be appropriate.

Data Screening

The data sets were visually inspected for missing or inaccurate entries. Scores and data were screened to determine whether any inconsistencies or extreme outliers existed. This was done via a scatterplot and the visual inspection for any extreme outliers or problems within the data sets (see Figure 1). There were no significant outliers identified.

Figure 1

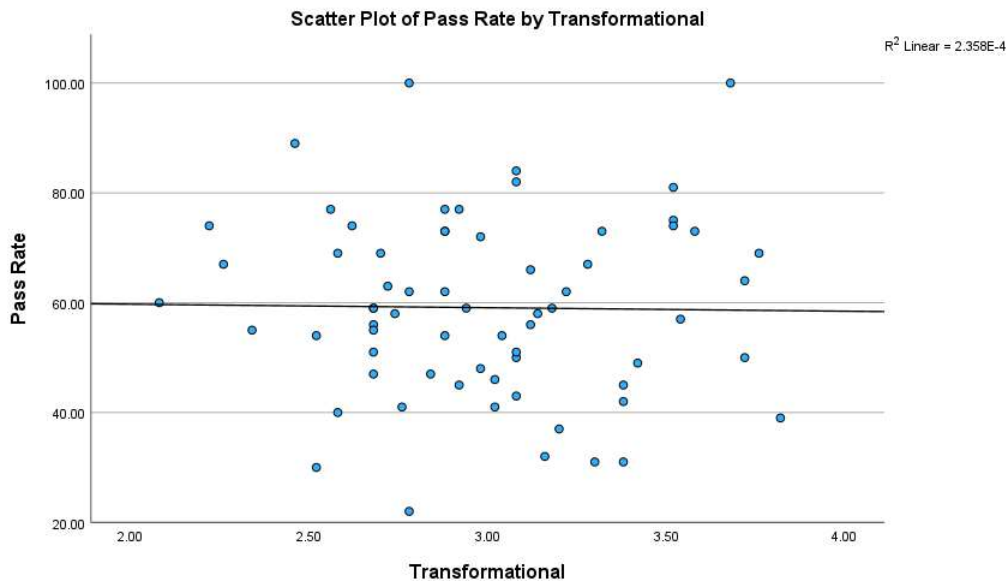*Scatterplot of Transformational Leadership Style and School Pass Rate*
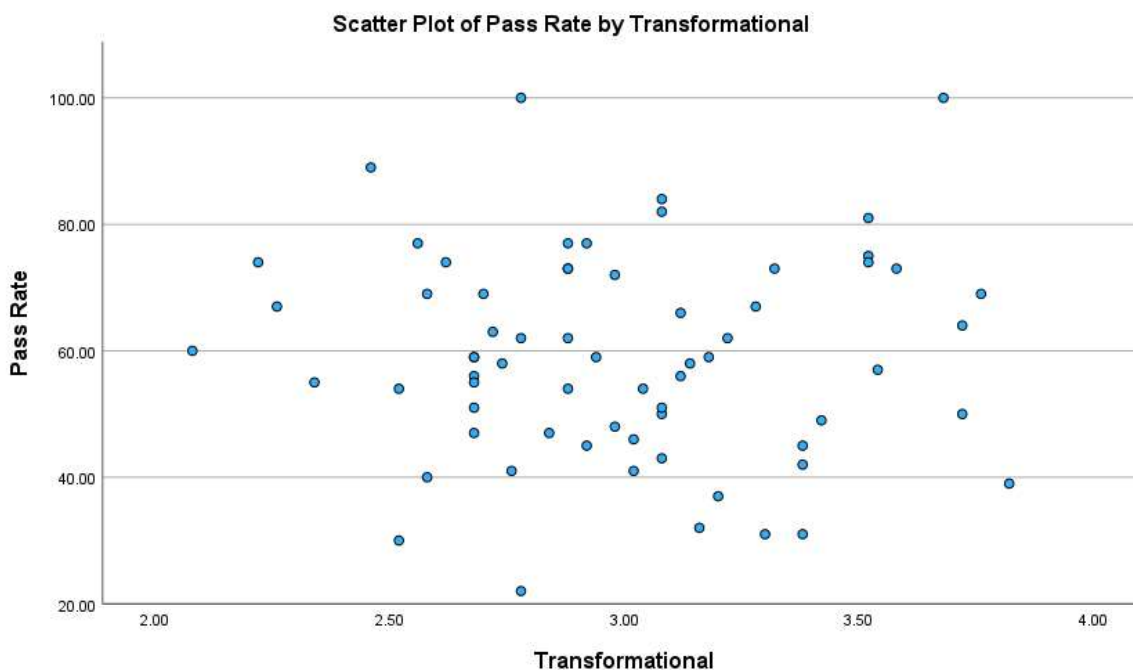
Assumptions

Prior to conducting the analysis, assumption testing was completed. The assumptions of bivariate outliers, linearity, and bivariate normal distribution were measured through a scatterplot and line of fit. A visual inspection was used to determine whether any data existed as an outlier. For linearity, the researcher looked to see if a linear relationship existed between paired data points and insert a line of fit. For bivariate normal distribution, the researcher looked for the presence of a cigar shape within the data (Gavin, 2008; LAERD, 2020). On the scatterplot, the

predictor variable, score on Transformational leadership style is on the x-axis, with the criterion variable, pass rate, on the y-axis (see Figure 2). This assumption test was completed to ensure that no major assumptions are being violated so that the analysis results would be valid. All three assumptions were tenable, so analysis continued.

Figure 2

Scatterplot of Transformational Leadership Style and School Pass Rate with line of fit

Findings

The null hypothesis that no statistically significant correlation exists between the Transformational leadership style score of a principal and the combined African-American student achievement on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment was not rejected. A Bonferroni correction was needed to guard against Type I error. The alpha level is calculated to be $\alpha = 0.05/3 = 0.0167$ which is rounded to $\alpha = 0.02$ (Warner, 2013). According to the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, $r(67) = -.02$, $p = .902$.

Table 6

Transformational Leadership and Combined Pass Rate

		Transformational	Pass Rate
Transformational	Pearson Correlation	1	-.02
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.902
	N	67	67
Pass Rate	Pearson Correlation	-.02	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.902	
	N	67	67

The positive relationship between transformational leadership and other elements associated with this leadership style, Extra Effort (EE), Productivity (EF), and Satisfaction (SAT) was found to exist within this data set (See Table 7).

Table 7

Transformational Leadership and Extra Effort (EE), Productivity (EF), and Satisfaction (SAT)

		Transformational	EE	EF	SAT
Transformational	Pearson Correlation	1	.48**	.62**	.50**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	67	65	65	65
EE	Pearson Correlation	.48**	1	.20	.37**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		.106	.002
	N	65	65	65	65
EF	Pearson Correlation	.62**	.20	1	.56**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.106		<.001
	N	65	65	65	65
SAT	Pearson Correlation	.50**	.37**	.56**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.002	<.001	
	N	65	65	65	65

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis H_02 stated that no statistically significant correlation existed between the Transactional leadership style score of a principal and the combined African American student achievement on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment. Prior to final analysis being conducted, the researcher screened the data and conducted assumption testing to ensure the analysis would be appropriate.

Data Screening

The data set was visually inspected for missing or inaccurate entries. Scores and data were screened to determine whether any inconsistencies or extreme outliers existed. This was done via a scatterplot and visual inspection for any extreme outliers or problems within the data set (see Figure 3). There were no significant outliers identified.

Figure 3

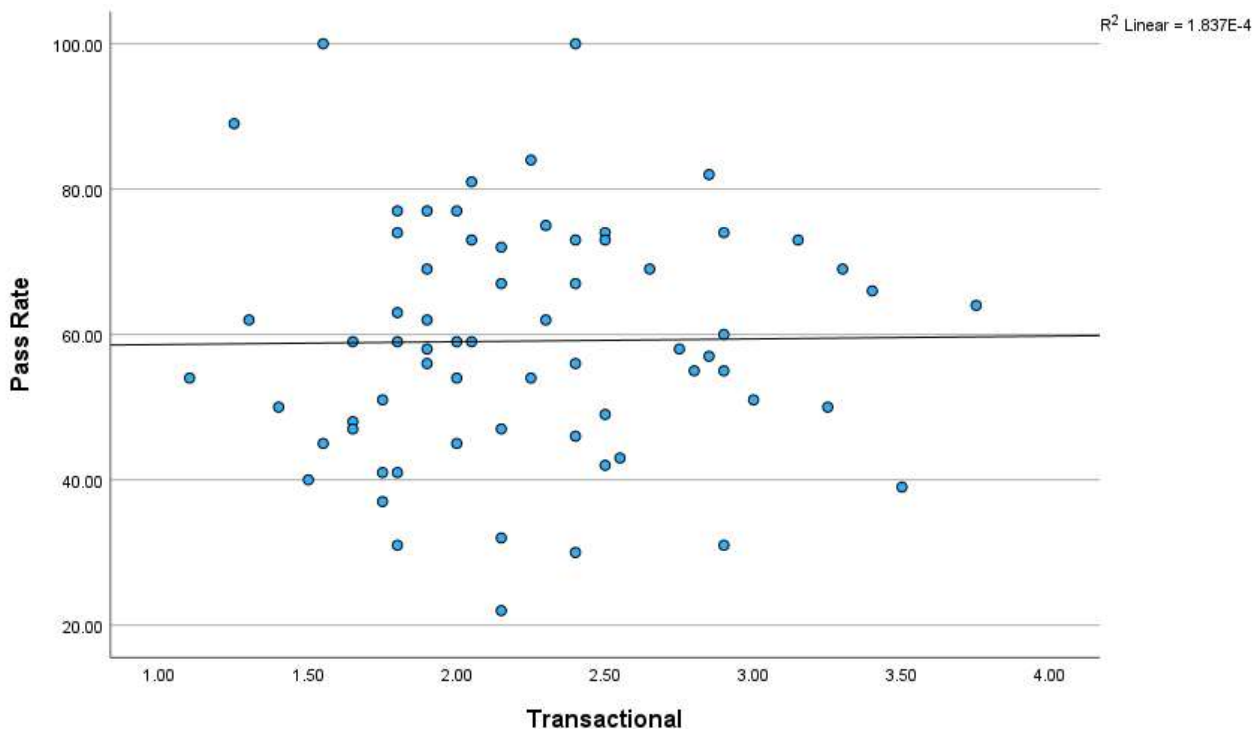*Scatterplot of Transactional Leadership Style and School Pass Rate*
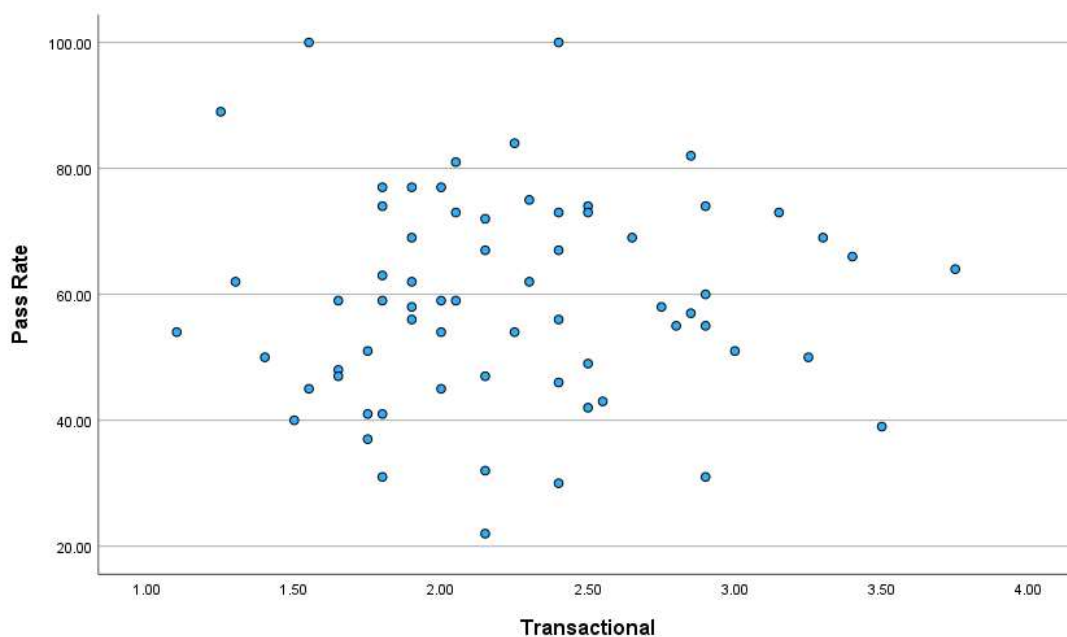
Assumptions

Prior to conducting the analysis, assumption testing was completed. The assumptions of bivariate outliers, linearity, and bivariate normal distribution were measured through a scatterplot and line of fit. A visual inspection was used to determine whether any data existed as an outlier. For linearity, the researcher looked to see if a linear relationship existed between paired data points and insert a line of fit. For bivariate normal distribution, the researcher looked for the presence of a cigar shape within the data (Gavin, 2008; LAERD, 2020). On the scatterplot, the predictor variable, score on Transactional leadership style is on the x-axis, with the criterion variable, pass rate, on the y-axis (see Figure 4). This assumption test was completed to ensure that no major assumptions are being violated so that the analysis results would be valid. All three assumptions were tenable, so analysis continued.

Figure 4

Scatterplot of Transactional Leadership Style and School Pass Rate with Line of Fit

Findings

The null hypothesis that no statistically significant correlation exists between the

Transactional leadership style score of a principal and the combined African-American student

achievement on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment was not

rejected. A Bonferroni correction was needed to guard against Type I error. The alpha level is

calculated to be α = 0.05/3=0.0167 which is rounded to α = 0.02 (Warner, 2013). According to

the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, $r(67) = .01$, $p = .913$ (see Table 8).

Table 8

Transactional Leadership and Combined Pass Rate

		Pass Rate	Transactional
Pass Rate	Pearson Correlation	1	.01
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.913
	N	67	67
Transactional	Pearson Correlation	.01	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.913	
	N	67	67

The positive relationship between transactional leadership and other elements associated with

this leadership style, Extra Effort (EE), Productivity (EF), and Satisfaction (SAT) was found to

exist within this data set (see Table 9).

Table 9

Transactional Leadership and Extra Effort (EE), Productivity (EF), and Satisfaction (SAT)

		Transactional	EE	EF	SAT
Transactional	Pearson Correlation	1	.00	.40**	.43**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.997	.001	<.001
	N	67	65	65	65
EE	Pearson Correlation	.00	1	.20	.38**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.997		.106	.002
	N	65	65	65	65
EF	Pearson Correlation	.40**	.20	1	.56**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.106		<.001
	N	65	65	65	65
SAT	Pearson Correlation	.40**	.38**	.56**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.002	<.001	
	N	65	65	65	65

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis H_03 stated that no statistically significant correlation existed between the Laissez-faire leadership style score of a principal and the combined African American student achievement on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment. Prior to final analysis being conducted, the researcher screened the data and conducted assumption testing to ensure the analysis would be appropriate.

Data Screening

The data sets were visually inspected for missing or inaccurate entries. Scores and data were screened to determine whether any inconsistencies or extreme outliers existed. This was done via a scatterplot and visual inspection for any extreme outliers or problems within the data set (see Figure 5). There were no significant outliers identified.

Figure 5

Scatterplot of Laissez-faire Leadership Style and School Pass Rate
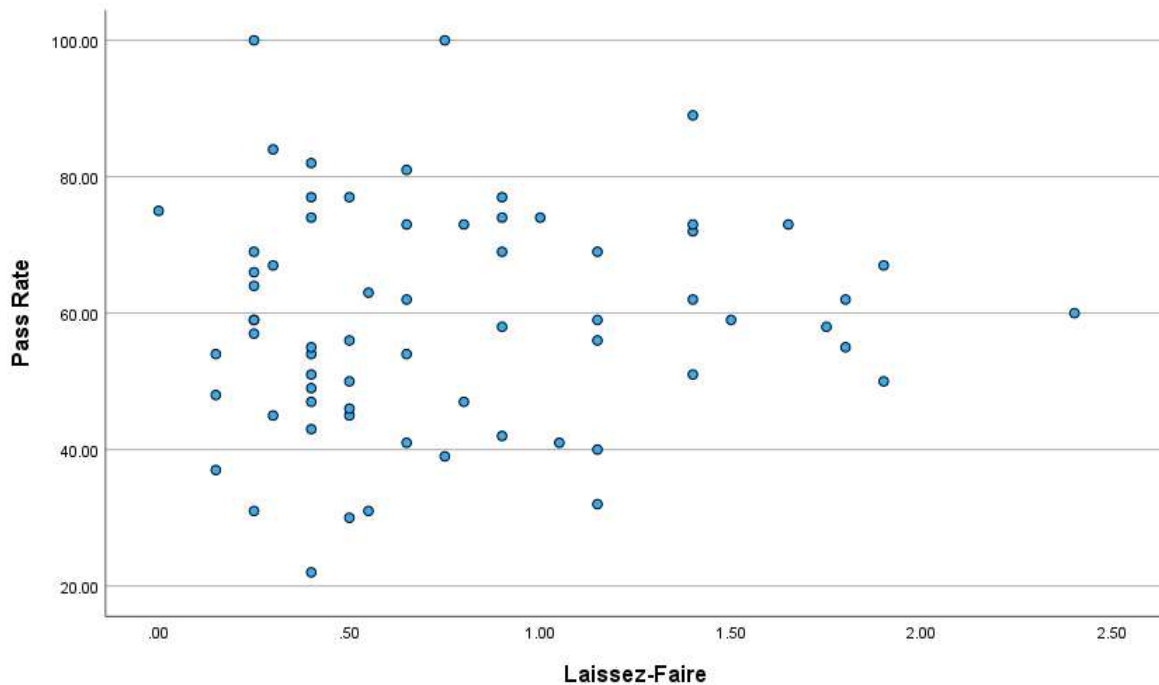

Assumptions

Prior to conducting the analysis, assumption testing was completed. The assumptions of bivariate outliers, linearity, and bivariate normal distribution were measured through a scatterplot and line of fit. A visual inspection was used to determine whether any data existed as an outlier. For linearity, the researcher looked to see if a linear relationship existed between paired data points and insert a line of fit. For bivariate normal distribution, the researcher looked for the presence of a cigar shape within the data (Gavin, 2008; LAERD, 2020). On the scatterplot, the predictor variable, score on Laissez-Faire leadership style was on the x-axis, with the criterion variable, pass rate, on the y-axis (see Figure 6). This assumption test was completed to ensure

that no major assumptions are being violated so that the analysis results would be valid. All three assumptions were tenable, so analysis continued.

Figure 6

Scatterplot of Laissez-Faire Leadership Style and School Pass Rate with Line of Fit
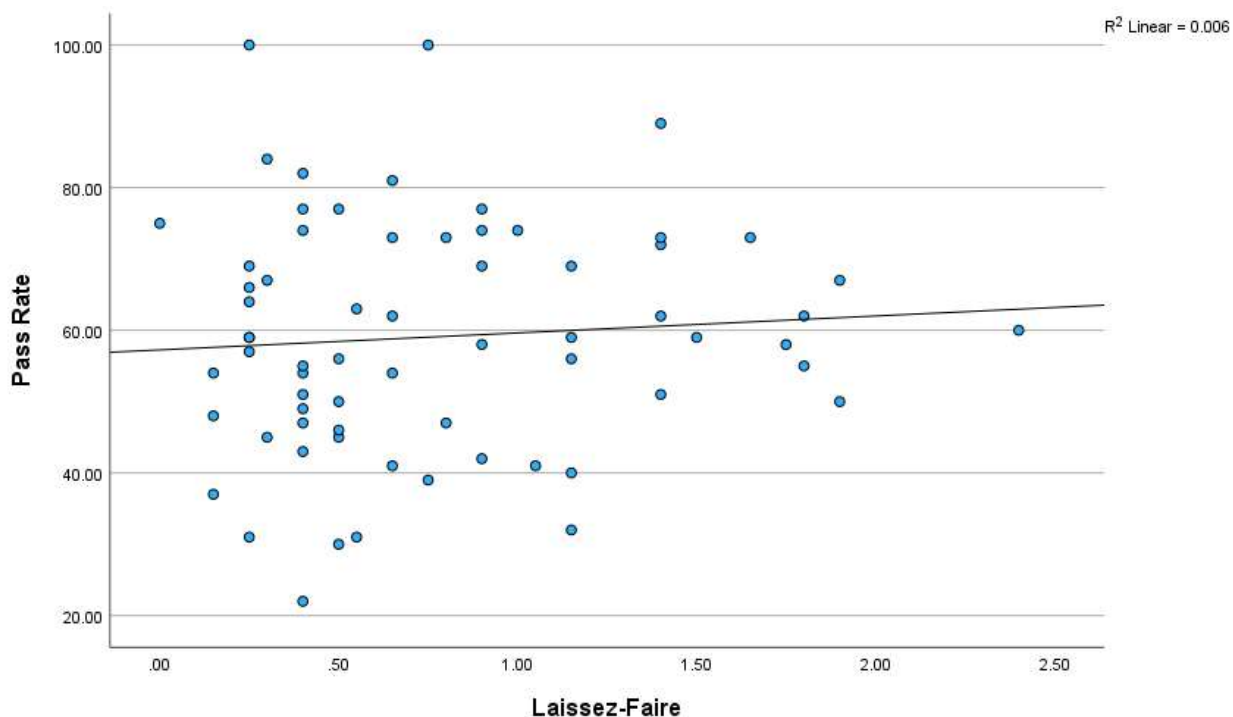
Findings

The null hypothesis that no statistically significant correlation exists between the Laissez-faire leadership style score of a principal and the combined African American student achievement on the third, fourth, and fifth grade end-of-year state Reading assessment was not rejected. A Bonferroni correction was needed to guard against Type I error. The alpha level was calculated to be $\alpha = 0.05/3 = 0.0167$ which was rounded to $\alpha = 0.02$ (Warner, 2013). According to the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, $r(67) = 0.08$, $p = .530$ (see Table 10).

Table 10

Laissez-faire Leadership and Combined Pass Rate

		Pass Rate	Laissez-Faire
Pass Rate	Pearson Correlation	1	.08
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.530
	N	67	67
Laissez-Faire	Pearson Correlation	.08	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.530	
	N	67	67

The negative relationship between transactional leadership and other elements associated with this leadership style, Extra Effort (EE), Productivity (EF), and Satisfaction (SAT) was found to exist within this data set (See Table 11).

Table 11

Laissez-faire Leadership and Extra Effort (EE), Productivity (EF), and Satisfaction (SAT)

		Laissez-Faire	EE	EF	SAT
Laissez-Faire	Pearson Correlation	1	-.22	-.39**	-.47**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.075	.001	<.001
	N	67	65	65	65
EE	Pearson Correlation	-.22	1	.20	.38**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.075		.106	.002
	N	65	65	65	65
EF	Pearson Correlation	-.39**	.20	1	.56**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.106		<.001
	N	65	65	65	65
SAT	Pearson Correlation	-.47**	.38**	.56**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.002	<.001	
	N	65	65	65	65

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Summary

All three null-hypotheses failed to be rejected, indicating that no relationship exists between the predictor variable, principal leadership style, and the criterion variable, the combined pass rate of third, fourth, and fifth grade African-American students on their end of course state reading assessment. Of the three leadership styles, only Laissez-Faire showed a slight positive impact on achievement, while both transformational and transactional demonstrated a negative relationship. The 67 participants showed diversity in educational level, as well as years of experience in leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The impact that a principal's leadership style can have on the achievement of a targeted group of students in reading is important to understand, with the influence of federal ESSA objectives and state level accreditation being tied to closing the achievement gap. This chapter discusses the results of this study, in relation to both theory and current literature. Additionally, the implications and limitations of the study are discussed. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the leadership style/behaviors of a head principal have a relationship with the reading achievement of African American students in elementary reading. To determine whether specific leadership styles had a relationship, this study was organized around three research questions. Each question compared leadership style, as measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (5x) with African American student achievement on end of course state reading assessments. Null hypotheses were correspondingly developed for each question and principal participants were solicited to participate in the voluntary study.

Research Question 1

The first research question examined the relationship between the transformational leadership style of a principal and the achievement of African American students in elementary reading. To measure principal leadership style, elementary principals took the MLQ 5x-self survey, which measures transformational leadership behaviors. Student achievement in reading was then accessed through each state's Department of Education's School Report Card, which

provides the overall pass rate of African American students on the end of course state assessment. The null hypothesis for this question, that there was no statistically significant relationship between transformational leadership and outcome failed to be rejected, indicating no impact. With an effect size of -.02, the impact of correlational leadership was minimal and close to random.

Burgess (2016) found that while many leadership styles can be used within a school setting, transformational leadership is the most effective. This is accomplished through the transformational leader's ability to motivate those working under them to do more than intended or thought possible. This effectiveness is in part due to the ability of the principal to impact school culture, climate, and teachers' perception of efficacy (Bartanen et al., 2019; Crow et al., 2017; Guillermo et al., 2016). Related to student achievement and outcomes, these factors have consistently been connected with positive relationships (Adams & Velarde, 2019; Cohen, 2019; McCarley et al., 2014). Finally, when looking specifically at the targeted population, Africa-American students, school culture, climate, and teachers' perception of efficacy all have related to positive outcomes (Schenke et al., 2017; Thomas, 2019; Whaley et al., 2019)

Within the MLQ5x-self, these levels of influence would be reflected in the principal's rating of whether they generate extra effort (EE), are productive (EF), and create satisfaction amongst their teachers (SAT). This study's results support the idea that transformational leadership can have a positive relationship with these measures. Principals within this study showed a strong significant relationship between their levels of transformational leadership and their perception of creating extra effort (.48), being productive (.62), and creating satisfaction (.50). Table 7 is the correlation between transformational leadership and these measures.

Despite the perceived positive influence on traditional outcomes of transformational

leadership, this study fails to support the idea that transformational leadership can have a positive impact on African American student achievement in reading. These findings do support previous research regarding transformational leadership within the school setting. Miller (2019) examined the transformational leadership of a principal and student achievement as measured by AYP and found no relationship. Berkovich (2017) found that while elements of transformational leadership, improving the emotional well-being of staff, could occur, it was more of an indirect result. Further, Niessan et al. (2017), found that the impact of transformational leadership is inconsistent and more dependent on situations and environments.

Research Question 2

The second research question examined the relationship between the transactional leadership style of a principal and the achievement of African American students in elementary reading. The study failed to reject the null hypothesis, that no relationship existed between transactional leadership style and elementary African American reading achievement, indicating that the transactional leadership behaviors of a principal had no impact on outcomes. With an effect size of .01, the relationship is close to zero and only nominally positive.

Transactional leadership, which is characterized by an exchange of incentives for the meeting of goals has also been shown to have positive outcomes when used by a supervisor (Khan, 2017). Within the school setting, transactional leadership has been related to positive student learning outcomes (Sebastian et al., 2019). The effectiveness of this type of leadership is often found in the clarifying of expectations and job responsibilities, clear motivators for reaching targets, and in developing of teachers' perception of self-efficacy (Hoogeboom & Wilderom, 2019; Huang et al., 2020).

Similar to transformational leadership, transactional leadership has been connected with

positive outcomes in employee production, success, and job satisfaction (Francisco, 2019; Muhammad et al., 2018). Within this study, higher transactional leadership scores were related to the perception of a staff that put forth extra effort (.40), as well as increased satisfaction with work (.40). Principals within this study did not show a relationship though with their perception of teachers providing extra effort (.00) due to their leadership styles. These results are like the findings of Muhammad et al., (2018), where transactional leadership was found to positively influence job satisfaction. Table 9 displays the relationships between transactional style of leadership and extra effort (EE), productivity (EF), and satisfaction (SAT).

The results of this study do not directly align with the results or prediction of much of the research on how transactional leadership can influence student outcomes. They do however support research from Shatzer et al. (2014) when the impact of Management by exception-passive (MBE-P) was found to have a negative impact on student achievement. Further, a meta-analysis Li and Karanxha (2022) further supports the negative relationship between school outcomes and MBE-P leadership.

Research Question 3

The third research question examined the relationship between the laissez-faire leadership style of a principal and the achievement of African American students in elementary reading. To measure principal leadership style, elementary principals took the MLQ 5x-self survey, which measures laissez-faire leadership behaviors. Within this study, the null hypothesis of no relation between laissez-faire leadership behaviors and student outcomes was not rejected. This study found there to be no relationship between laissez-faire leadership and student learning, with a small but negligible positive effect .08.

While laissez-faire leadership is not as highly researched as transactional and

transformational, it is associated with negative outcomes for individuals and organizations (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). The absences of support and follow through tend to lead to a demoralization of followers and less commitment to work and outcomes. Studies though in laissez-faire leadership have not always shown a negative outcome. In some cases, such as a situation where the employees are highly motivated, absent leadership has led to positive outcomes for the organization (Huggins et al., 2017; Wellman & LePine, 2017). Within the educational setting, one study done by Miller, 2019, found that laissez-faire leadership had a positive correlation with student outcomes when related to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for a school.

This research supports findings regarding how laissez-faire leadership can impact employee performance as measured by extra effort, productivity, and satisfaction. Across each of these measures, laissez-faire leadership was associated with negative outcomes in extra effort (-.22), productivity (-.39), and satisfaction (-.47). The effect size on these ranges from small to medium but does indicate undesirable outcomes. Table 11 presents the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and work outcomes.

Implications

This study will have implications across existing theory, as well as research and practice. Each implication will be examined to determine how this study either adds to or extends our understanding of school leadership style and its relation to student learning, as well as how it can influence or impact current practices and processes.

Implications for Theory

The full-range theory of leadership holds that certain leadership characteristics and behaviors can be organized into three different styles, transformational, transactional, and laissez

faire (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The focus of the research on this theory focuses heavily on how each of these leadership styles can have an impact on followers and organizational or group outcomes (Antonakis & House, 2014; Kasparkova et al., 2018; Tintore, 2019). This study analyzes how the leadership styles of a school principal can impact student learning of African American students in reading at the elementary level.

Within current research, transformational leadership is held as the highest level, as it has consistently led to a positive increase in organizational and employee outcomes (Tintore, 2019). Transformational leadership is associated with an increase in the employee's willingness to work towards organizational goals, positive feelings about work, and a stronger level of satisfaction with the job (Chan, 2020, Donohoo, 2018; Givens, 2008). The findings of this study offer a mixed level of support and differ from current research. Transformational leadership did demonstrate a positive impact on teacher's work, effort, and satisfaction, which theoretically should translate into better student performance, but on the contrary, it demonstrated no relationship with performance on the reading assessments. Within the theoretical field, the study adds questions about transformational leadership in the school setting. While teachers appear to be happier and work harder, the end output does not align.

Transactional leadership theory is based on the belief that the relationship between leader and follower is based upon the incentives, and exchanges of things that the employees want for delivery of a product or service (Harrison, 2018). Current research in this field has looked heavily at how the exchange of incentives or rewards can influence the behavior of employees (Gavan O'Shea et al., 2009). The findings have shown that from an organizational and employee level, transactional leadership can lead to short term gains but have negative effects further into the future (Gill, 2011). The findings of this study support much of this research, as it was found

that higher levels of transactional leadership behaviors led to an increase in productivity as well as satisfaction. Further adding to the body of research, this study looked specifically at whether transactional leadership can have an influence on a level below direct employee and on their product/outcome. The findings that transactional leadership did not impact student learning may help researchers better understand the level of influence that certain leadership behaviors have in more complex organizations.

Within the full range theory of leadership, laissez-faire is characterized by the absence of leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Generally, research on laissez-faire leadership has focused on it as an undesirable form of leadership, where supervision is minimally applied and desires to support or develop the individuals do not exist, leadership is abdicated (Deluga, 1990). While this is generally perceived as a negative, this style of leadership has some positive components. Laissez-faire leadership provides high levels of autonomy to followers and allows them to exert more control over an organization (Yang, 2015). The findings of this study support research that shows that employee satisfaction, effort, and productivity are negatively impacted by laissez-faire leadership, while it is important to note that these indicators are being provided by the supervisor. On the other hand, of the three leadership styles presented, laissez-faire had the most positive impact, even if it was statistically negligible.

Implications for Practice

Building level leadership has been shown to have an impact on both the learning of students as well as school environment and culture (Crow et al., 2017; Sebastian et al., 2019). Much of the research though has examined how a principal can influence a school as an instructional leader, selector of materials, or by providing professional development (Day et al., 2016; Fancera, 2016; Lavigne, 2018). Leadership style, particularly as it relates to teachers,

would have an impact on school climate, perceptions of efficacy, and culture, all of which can influence student learning and achievement (Donohoo, 2018; Ehrhart & Schneider, 2016; Maxwell et al., 2017). This study has implications for current practice, as it examined the influence that specific leadership behaviors can indirectly influence student learning.

This study found that the reading achievement of elementary African American students in reading was not influenced by the leadership style/behaviors of the building principal. Across all three measures, the relationships were close to zero, which suggests that specific leadership behaviors may not have the ability to influence student outcomes, at least in such a targeted area. While research clearly finds that building level leaders do have the ability to influence the school, teachers, and students through various means. It is possible that the specific behaviors of the principal, as measured by this instrument may not be as influential on learning, though they do appear to support other important factors for a school, such as extra effort, productivity, and satisfaction. These three elements should have a positive relationship with an effective school (Ehrhart & Schneider, 2016; Fancera, 2016).

Limitations

With the results of this study, it is important to understand the limitations which may have impacted results. This study was conducted during the 2022/23 school year and was reliant upon the student pass rate of the 2021/22 school year. This year was impacted due to the COVID-19 school closure as well as potential state, district, and school level mitigation.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, most schools in the researched region shut down and then had various mixtures of in-person, remote, and blended instruction for the following two school years (Klosky et al., 2022). These closures and a mixture of instructional models had a negative impact on students across the country, regardless of the state's responses, but students

remote and blended were more impacted (Fisher, et al., 2022, Hamilton, 2022). Further, upon the return to normal instruction, the growth of students, particularly in reading, is lower than during pre-pandemic years (Domingue et al., 2022). Cumulatively, scores for academic performance of African American students in reading may be influenced by factors beyond just leadership style.

A second limitation of this study is the sample size. With participants being potentially available across six different states the number of principals this sample represents is significantly larger than the number of respondents. It may be difficult with such a discrepancy to generalize the findings outside of this study.

A third limitation of this study involves the lack of consistency with the criterion variable, African American pass rate on end of course reading assessments. To satisfy the number of participants necessary to run the study, principals were selected from across five different states. Each state creates its end of unit reading assessment, leading to the potential for broad differences in scores and pass rates.

Recommendations for Future Research

To further increase the understanding of how leadership behaviors by a building principal can influence both school climate and culture, as well as student outcomes, the following research options should be considered:

1) Across settings the benefits of transformational and transactional leadership have been explored, but schools are a somewhat unique environment. Future research should examine whether teachers and other staff members experience positive culture, climate, and environmental outcomes based on the principal's leadership behaviors.

2) This study examined a specific demographic and targeted subject. Future research should step back and look at overall school achievement, as the influence of leadership on student outcomes may be indirect and experienced more broadly.

3) Laissez-faire leadership has been found to be effective in environments with motivated individuals who seek autonomy. This fits the description of many teachers and should be studied as a means to understand whether more teacher autonomy can lead to better student outcomes and teacher retention.

4) This instrument could be used to measure the leadership style of central office level leaders as they work in a more corporate structured world. These measures of leadership styles could then be analyzed against principal and school levels of achievement.

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APPENDIX A

mind garden

www.mindgarden.com

To Whom It May Concern,

The above-named person has made a license purchase from Mind Garden, Inc. and has permission to administer the following copyrighted instrument up to that quantity purchased:

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

The three sample items only from this instrument as specified below may be included in your thesis or dissertation. Any other use must receive prior written permission from Mind Garden. The entire instrument may not be included or reproduced at any time in any other published material. Please understand that disclosing more than we have authorized will compromise the integrity and value of the test.

Citation of the instrument must include the applicable copyright statement listed below. Sample Items:

As a leader ....
> I talk optimistically about the future.
> I spend time teaching and coaching.
> I avoid making decisions.

The person I am rating....
> Talks optimistically about the future.
> Spends time teaching and coaching.
> Avoids making decisions

Sincerely,

Robert Most
Mind Garden, Inc.
www.mindgarden.com

APPENDIX B

Permission to Conduct Study

Dear Superintendent

I am a student at Liberty University, and a Principal at ████████████████████ ██████. I am currently working on my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. I am conducting a research study entitled The Relationship between Leadership Styles of a Principal and African-American Student Achievement in Elementary Reading. The purpose of this study is to identify whether a relationship exists between a principal's leadership style, as measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X) and the overall school performance of African-American students on the most recent SOL Reading assessments (3rd-5th grade). I am requesting your permission to contact your elementary principals asking for their willingness to take short voluntary survey regarding their leadership style.

The results will be published and made available to you. However, all school, district, and principal information will remain strictly confidential. All identifiable information will be secured and protected for all participants. The study does not provide any foreseeable risk for you, the principals, or district for participating.

An affirmative reply to this email will acknowledge your permission for me to contact elementary principals in your district, that you understand that there is not foreseeable risk to you, or the principals, and that all information will remain confidential. If you have any questions concerning this research study or request, please call me at (XXX) XXX-XXX.

Thank you,

Joel Abe

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval

Date: 3-26-2024

IRB #: IRB-FY21-22-950
Title: The Relationship Between Leadership Styles of a Principal and African-American Student Achievement in Elementary Reading
Creation Date: 4-9-2022
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Joel Abe
Review Board: Research Ethics Office
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
Submission Type	Renewal	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
Submission Type	Renewal	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved

Key Study Contacts

Member	Lisa Foster	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Joel Abe	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	
Member	Joel Abe	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	

APPENDIX D

Principal Recruitment Letter

Dear Principal,

As a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the completion of my dissertation. The purpose of the research study is to determine the relationship between principal leadership style and the overall school pass rate of African-American students on Elementary Reading Standards of Learning assessments; Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade. I am writing to request that you participate in this study. The Superintendent has provided me with permission to contact you in this regard.

If you were serving as the building principal for the 2020/21 at your current school and are willing to participate you will be asked to click a link at the end of this email. The questionnaire should take around 15 minutes to complete and will measure your leadership style on the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X). As part of the survey, additional demographic information will be collected as well as your school's name. You will not be asked to provide your name and all identifiable information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click the link below. A consent document will be the first page. This document contains further information regarding the research and will require you to click to see that you have read the consent information and are willing to participate in the study. If you have any additional questions, please contact me at ███████████████

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Joel Abe