

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE **research**

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TITLE Teacher Perceptions of Leadership Style: An Analysis of Age and Gender

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to determine if the South Carolina School Report Card (SCSRC) ratings of gender and age influenced teachers' perception of their principals' leadership practices.

METHODOLOGY The population for this study consisted of K-12 public school principals in two counties in the State of South Carolina. Two separate counties at different parts of the State were chosen to better represent the overall population of teachers, with one school district located in a rural region and the other in an urban area. Upon approval by each principal, the researcher sent two surveys for each teacher in each school. The first survey collected demographic data and South Carolina School Report Card (SCSRC) rating for the school, and the second was the Leadership Practices Inventory. A total of 740 surveys were distributed and 442 usable were returned. The typical respondent/teacher was female (83%), between 31-50 years of age (52%), and with a School Report Card Rating of Excellent/Good/Average (68%). Internal reliability for the LPI scales in this study was: Modeling (.90), Inspiring (.92), Challenging (.92), Enabling (.91), and Encouraging (.95).

KEY FINDINGS

Results demonstrate that there was no significant main effect for SCSRC rating based on age, or gender. The mean scores for participants in schools rated Excellent/Good/Average was lower in three categories than for schools rated Below Average/Unsatisfactory. Male respondents' mean scores were higher than females in four of the five LPI subscales but not statistically different except for the leadership practice of Encouraging the Heart. Mean scores for respondents age 31-50 rated their principals' leadership practices lower than the other two age categories on all five leadership practices. The mean scores for teachers in schools rated Excellent/Good/Average were not significantly different from teachers at schools rated Below Average/Unsatisfactory.

The author concludes: “For the present study, the results that teachers in the lower performing schools rated their principals higher in three of the five subscales of the LPI indicates the working environment and relationship between principals and teachers may not always be tied to student achievement. Additionally, it may show that the principals in the lower performing schools are doing more to engage their faculties in their efforts for improvement. Principals in both higher and lower performing schools may encourage additional feedback on their job performance to bridge the gaps in teacher perception and practice” (p. 90).