

TITLE: The Relationship Between High School Mathematics Teacher's Leadership Behavior and Students' Mathematics Anxiety

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OBJECTIVE: To examine the extent students perceive their teachers to be credible leaders in the classroom and to determine the extent to which variations in students' reported mathematics anxiety levels are related to their perceptions of their teachers' leadership practices in high school mathematics classrooms.

METHODOLOGY: Data were gathered from 13 mathematics teachers, and 445 high school mathematics students using the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and Suinn's (1988) Mathematics Anxiety Rating Scale for Adolescents. A Teacher Information Form, consisting of six open-ended questions, was also completed. The research sites were a public high school in New York and one in Connecticut, and all of the mathematics teachers at both schools voluntarily participated.

KEY FINDINGS: The teachers consistently considered themselves to be within the moderate to high range (in terms of percentile scores against the normative sample database) for each of the five leadership practices, indicating that "teachers perceived themselves to be effective leaders in the classroom" (p. 101). However, compared to perceptions of their students, 100% of the teachers were seen in the low to moderate range for each of the five leadership behaviors. Students who perceived their teachers to be challenging the process and inspiring a shared vision in the classroom were more likely to report higher levels of mathematics anxiety. No significant relationships were found for enabling, modeling, or encouraging.

"The results of this study indicate that teachers, as leaders in the classroom, are not perceived to be credible leaders by their student constituents. Furthermore, students who perceived their teachers to engage in the leadership behaviors of challenging and inspiring were more likely to report higher levels of mathematics anxiety in the classroom. This finding suggests that there is a significant relationship between students' perceptions of their teacher's leadership behavior and students' reported anxiety levels" (p. 128).