



TITLE Identifying Emancipated Foster Care Youth Attitudes Toward Youth Care Worker Leadership Practice

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this quantitative quasi-experimental study is to test the theory of transformational leadership that relates leadership practice (model, inspire, challenge, enable, encourage; DV) to demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity, involvement with law), for emancipated youth in Southern California (Orange County, Riverside, San Bernardino and Los Angeles.).

METHODOLOGY

A sample of 90 emancipated youth was extracted from four facilities in Southern California (Orange County, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles). To be included in this study, participants had to be a prior juvenile dependent that emancipated or aged – out of the foster care system and between the ages of 18-25 years of age. They completed the LPI-Observer about their youth care worker and provided demographic information. There were 63 females that participated in the research survey: 18 were involved with the law. There were 27 males and 12 were involved with the law. Forty-two participants had been in foster care for two years, 20 spent 2-5 years and 28 were in foster care for more than five years. The participants were generally either African American (34) or Hispanic (31). Internal reliability (Cronbach alpha) in this study was .89 for Model, .91 for Inspire, .92 for Challenge, .90 for Enable, and .92 for Encourage.

KEY FINDINGS

The most frequently reported leadership practice was Enable, followed by Model and Encourage, and then Inspire and Challenge. ANOVA revealed no significant differences, however, between the five practices. MANOVA test revealed that a significant difference did not exist between emancipated youths' gender, ethnicity or involvement with the law on a model containing five leadership behaviors. The author concludes:

The results of the research study indicated that, on average, the youth care workers demonstrated the leadership practice behaviors across the five domains at least *sometimes*, which is in the top half of the scale available. This indicates that the emancipated youths in general felt their youth leaders exhibited an adequate, although not outstanding, level of the five leadership qualities. The strongest quality according to the youths was enable others to act, while the weakest rated quality is challenge the process. This indicates that perhaps the youth workers' ability to enable others to act was their strongest trait, while they struggled with challenging the process (p. 81).

...the findings were non-significant, indicating rough equivalence between youths of different genders and ethnicities in regards to how they rated their care workers on the five leadership practices. These results indicate that the youth's gender or ethnic groups are not important or influential in how they perceive their care workers. Understanding the impacts of gender or ethnic group on youths' perceptions of their care workers is of great value in that it provides insight into how individual youths are being worked with and whether they perceive treatment as different based on gender or ethnic differences. The results suggest this is not the case; males and females perceive their care workers similarly, as do youths of different ethnicities (p. 82).

It is recommended that care workers encourage the youths they are working with to strive to become leaders rather than followers. Youth care workers should strive to cultivate leadership qualities in those they are working with by showing the youths how they can lead in any situation and how their opinion matters. While strong leadership qualities among youth care workers are important, it is also important that youths be taught to harness their own innate leadership qualities. This may lead not only to greater opportunities for youths once they exit the system, but also the possibility of youths desiring to give back to the system by acting as youth care workers themselves. Creation of a program by foster care agencies aimed at training former emancipated foster care youths to become youth care workers can allow the emancipated foster care youth not only to contribute to society by helping foster care children that are in the program and helping those individuals that are in the system they just exited, but also to receive a salary and benefits through stable employment (p. 86).