AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS IN DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN FOUR TO SIX-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

by

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This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Nishant Joshi.

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ABSTRACT

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When a child enters school, the learning environment, mainly the teacher, becomes one of the most significant adults in their life beyond the family (Anhert et al., 2013). Teachers can therefore be constructive in enhancing different skills in children, including leadership skills. Due to the fact teachers play a vital role in children's development, the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of developing leadership in children and the strategies they use (if any) to instill leadership in them. The study used a qualitative approach by using interviews, observations, and a checklist as the tools to collect data and gain a deeper understanding of how teachers develop leadership in children with a focus on the strategies that teachers use in instilling leadership in them. Eleven teachers participated in this study from one private and three public schools. Data were collected in person and virtually due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings indicated teachers were well aware of the leaders in their classroom and their leadership characteristics. Furthermore, data showed teachers established developmentally appropriate teaching practices while applying various strategies and indicated teachers lack training in developing leadership in children. Better

understanding the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic impacted leadership contribute to the field of children's development, and the development of leadership skills in children more specifically. The present study points to the importance of teachers' training in developing leadership in children. Future research may focus on how and in what ways virtual settings can be effective in instilling leadership in children.

Keywords: Leadership, Early Childhood, Child Leader, Teachers, Strategies, Techniques, Leadership Theories, Covid-19, Pandemic

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a complex and abstract concept that has continued to evolve and remains highly relevant in today's challenging society. Although the term "leader" was noted as early as the 1300s (Seters & Field, 1990), it was not used in the profession of education until the 1900s. The notion of leadership has been included in the federal definition by the United States Department of Education for gifted children since 1972 (Karnes et al., 1996), yet few studies have focused on leadership in the American early childhood education context (Bisland, 2004; Karnes et al., 1996). Research on the development of leadership skills during early childhood is relatively scarce, and of the studies that do exist, few focus on the teachers' perspectives.

There is abundant documentation and research on adult leadership that is useful as foundational knowledge to understand leadership in general. However, children and adolescent levels of learning and development differ from adults. Furthermore, the social environments and activities within which young children's interactions occur differ from those in other age groups (Lee et al., 2005). For example, adults typically interact through the workplace, and children primarily interact through school-related contexts. Significantly, incentives differ when one is paid for their time rather than being graded for coursework. Therefore, it is inappropriate to simply apply leadership characteristics to children based on knowledge related to adult leadership (Kemple, 1991).

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has drastically impacted leadership in all sectors. One of the most important social institutions affected by the pandemic is

education. Early in the pandemic, it became apparent that schools were inadequately equipped to deal with the crisis in real time (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021). As a result, many children were puzzled about what the pandemic meant and why they were unexpectedly sent home. Some children accepted the sudden change but had to learn to navigate various online learning tools. Many children gained self-confidence and independence in dealing with the multiple challenges in the virtual learning system, enhancing certain leadership aspects (Fleming, 2020).

While teachers were going through various mental and physical health challenges related to stress caused by the pandemic, children were also impacted heavily. School-aged children continue to confront adversity during their significant social, physical, and emotional development phases. Witnessing the adverse impact of COVID-19 on children, it has become essential for teachers to enhance leadership skills in children so they are well-equipped to strive through the several crises that continue to occur in contemporary society. Research has revealed the important influence of teachers in imparting leadership skills in children (Fox, 2012). When leadership skills are developed early, children can better cope with crises and the inevitable changes that often follow (Phillipson & Phillipson, 2013)**.** Thus, teachers' contribution to building leadership early in children's lives may help them to solve many significant problems later in life that arise from global, local, or personal crises (Phillipson & Phillipson, 2013). Given this, leadership education continues to be a significant concern for teachers dealing with young children's development. This study focuses on teachers' perceptions within the social context of developing leadership in young children.

Leadership in Early Childhood Settings

The principles, characteristics, and enthusiasm picked up by children in their early years are often carried throughout their life (Owen, 2007). Therefore, early childhood teachers could construct and foster an environment that helps children attain theoretical learning and the opportunity to explore and learn because children learn through experiences. Leadership characteristics are important because they indicate that a child with these characteristics might have leadership skills. The characteristics of leadership are discussed in chapter two, and further discussed their connection with the findings in chapters four and five.

In his early childhood development and educational theories, Dewey discussed the process of exploring and learning as experiential (Dewey, 1938). The Montessori approach has similar views on teachers designing and setting up environments for effective student learning (Mooney, 2013). When a teacher constructs an environment that allows the children to engage in learning, the students acquire characteristics similar to those utilized in leadership, such as problem-solving, confidence, independence, decision-making, and more. Moreover, when teachers practice and develop their own leadership in the classroom, they tend to be more attentive, involved, and empowering to their students (Certo, 2011; Fox, 2012; Fu, 1979; Lee et al., 2005; Owen, 2007).

Fox (2012) found that some children play in planned and unplanned ways and are not necessarily encouraging or motivating other children directly in the group but are followed by the group in a *de facto* sense. Furthermore, sometimes a child with no desire to lead can initiate an unplanned activity that is followed by other children. Other children might be influenced by that child's communicable behavior and follow that

child, unintentionally elevating that child as the leader of the group. As this example illustrates, leadership emerges in groups; the leader is at the center of the group and represents the will of the group. Additionally, Fu (1979) had similar views regarding the leader and stated that leadership emerges in a group; he also claimed that a leader communicates with others to accomplish a common purpose, more than merely setting goals. According to Fu (1979), leadership behavior emerges when a child influences another child, provides directions, commands, orders, requests, persuasion, etc., and in exchange receives cooperation from those children. A child may or may not know that they have leadership qualities, but their peers will choose whom to follow and with whom to engage. In other words, a group of children chooses their leader among them during play. But on what basis did the children choose their leader during the pandemic when children were engaged in virtual learning?

An article in *Forbes* magazine (Campbell, 2021) discussed that virtual learning hindered children's ability to play in physical groups and therefore impacted leadership development. Specifically, some activities that usually encouraged social skills, such as getting along, playing with other children, and teamwork, were missing from children's lives in virtual learning settings. Although, in virtual settings children learned many different skills such as organization, managing their work, being independent, being problem solvers, being patient (Campbell, 2021). There are many positive and negative impacts of the pandemic that continue to affect leadership development in early childhood educational settings. Due to these impacts, leadership in early childhood settings has taken a different form in the post-pandemic educational environment.

Statement of Problem

There is inadequate documentation on teachers' influence on leadership skills among young children. During the process of overall childhood development, teachers are the essential pillars as they exert influence over children. Therefore, it is important and relevant for teachers of young children to help develop leadership and pro-social behavior in students' first six years of life because during these years children create a sense of self, attitudes toward learning, and various social skills (Hensel, 1991). Teachers must also be aware of their responses to children's leadership behavior during children's young age (Fox, 2012). Due to the severe impacts COVID-19 has had on the education system, leadership development in young children seems more critical now than ever before. Notably, discontinuing the classrooms without stopping teaching and learning has played a vital role during the time of COVID-19, which means children's physical classroom attendance was suspended, but virtual classrooms were set up in its place. The virtual classroom situation demands teachers discover innovative ways to ensure learning outcomes are met, and the curriculum runs efficiently (Herwin et al., 2021). To meet the curriculum needs in the virtual classroom and the limitations of using remote instruction, teachers are incapable of instilling various skills, including leadership skills in children.

Early childhood teachers encourage children's development of leadership behaviors and facilitate developmentally appropriate environments for young children (Fox, 2012). However, sometimes children are discouraged by teachers due to various reasons that hinder their leadership skills (Fox, 2012). The discouragement from the teacher may be due to many factors, such as the teacher's lack of professional training in leadership, age, and experience. In addition to these factors, COVID-19 has created a

greater demand for children to display leadership skills, but it has also identified the current lack of these skills among children in early childhood settings. Children's lack of leadership skills may be attributed to teachers being more involved in finding strategies to organize their material online and the challenges they have met while trying to facilitate learning activities virtually (Herwin et al., 2021).

In early childhood education, leadership is not new, but it has not been discussed widely because information regarding leadership in children is limited and disjointed. That is, the information regarding what leadership looks like in young children and how teachers influence leadership in children, as well as the strategies of instilling leadership in children or the teacher's role in instilling leadership, has not been widely discussed in the literature. Rather than offering novel findings, various leadership studies focused on early childhood development have simply repeated or confirmed existing results. Although these studies have predominantly focused on teachers' perspectives, they have not proposed conceptual frameworks that would generate research toward greater insights. Diverse perspectives are needed in the current research context (Antonakis & Day, 2018), and the findings of this study will complement other studies on leadership in young children (i.e., four to six-years old) while connecting the disjointed and redundant research that presently exists. Early childhood literature on leadership will benefit from this study, which discusses and examines leadership in young children and the various techniques, as well as strategies teachers apply to influence leadership in children.

Research Questions

Teachers recognize leadership in children, but sometimes it is ignored or discouraged for various reasons such as lack of professional training, experience in the

field, the class schedule, and lesson plans**.** This research did not focus on the pandemic effects per se. Since the study data collection time fell at the center of the time of COVID-19 pandemic, its effects were not explicitly examined. However, the researcher did examine the elements that emerged specifically to influence leadership during the pandemic.

The present study will explore teachers' perceptions regarding leadership in young children and the strategies and techniques used in fostering leadership in children. With a focus on leadership and early childhood development, this study provides a foundation for educators, administrators, and policymakers to build upon when constructing curriculums. These stakeholders will benefit from becoming more aware of what young children's leadership looks like in the classroom. Moreover, this study seeks to help policymakers learn strategies to develop leadership in children and in early childhood settings, the importance of teachers' professional development in recognizing leadership, and the goal and skills needed to instill leadership in children. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are the perspectives of teachers in influencing leadership skills in children ages 4-6 in the classroom?
2. What characteristics of leadership do teachers observe in their children during various activities that take place in the classroom?
3. What are the different techniques that teachers apply to encourage leadership in young children?
4. How do teachers apply different techniques to encourage leadership in children in the classroom?

Organization of the Dissertation Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter one includes definitions of leadership, leadership in early childhood settings, a statement of the problem, and the research questions. A review of the literature on leadership in young children, theories, characteristics, the impact of teachers' experience, encouraging teachers through professional development, the techniques that teachers could apply, and why leadership development is restrained in children is covered in Chapter Two. The research methods are presented in chapter Three, which also includes the data collection method, research design, participant recruitment, study setting, and data analysis. Chapter Four presents the findings, and lastly, Chapter Five contains the interpretation of the findings, limitations, and implications for future research within early childhood education settings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

From birth, children begin to sense their world. An increased number of children spend their time in early childhood educational settings, they interact with their peers and teachers, which provides them with different opportunities to lead, follow, and be compliant. Children display many leadership characteristics in the classroom and at home, such as creating play scenarios, solving problems, and correcting, helping, and learning with peers and friends (Lee et al., 2005). According to Lee et al. (2005), these advanced social and cognitive skills are the typical characteristics of leadership in children and can be encouraged differently. Early life experience plays a vital role in children's leadership development. Exposing children to different experiences that enhance social skills, emotional control, management, team building, and early leadership skills—for example being named class monitor or teacher's helper—may nurture leadership development (Riggio & Mumfors, 2011).

Following COVID-19 safety precautions, children and teachers worked in virtual classroom where children were able to acquire many skills such as independence (finishing their assignments on their own), management (by organizing their work via technology), and emotional control (through learning endurance by sitting in one place, listening, waiting for their turn to speak). However, some social skills, such as being helpful to others or interacting with peers while playing, were absent because children learn most social skills when physically involved with social interactions. Social skills,

which can be hard to understand virtually, are nevertheless critical to developing children's leadership (Lee et al., 2005).

Background on Children's Leadership

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), the number of children spending their time in early childhood educational settings pre-pandemic was more significant than it is currently. The pre-pandemic school awarded children opportunities to interact with their peers and teachers, providing them with different opportunities to follow and lead. During the pandemic, teachers and children struggle to make teaching and learning impactful from a distance, decreasing the number of opportunities to instill/enhance leadership in children. However, the post-pandemic situation is different and has made it more challenging for teachers to teach. In the post-pandemic learning environment, children have various challenges because they were not able to display various skills due to attending class virtually. Given these circumstances and comparing the pre-and post-pandemic situation concerning children's leadership, there are essential elements to consider regarding the development of leadership skills in young children, including children's relationships and the learning environment.

Children's Relationships

Children's relationships with peers and teachers are important to the enhancement of a child's leadership skills. Educators can contribute to children's physical and emotional development by supporting their learning and leadership skills during interactions with them and the promotion of positive peer interactions. Lee et al. (2005) found that young leaders brought their personalities to the classroom, providing various opportunities for engagement with their peers and developing leadership skills.

Additionally, Corsaro (1979) stated naturalistic studies about adult-child and peer interaction are important to understanding how children acquire social knowledge and the interactive and conversational skills to articulate that social knowledge.

Since its beginning, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to noteworthy changes in social relationships, creating feelings of isolation and loneliness among many people (Etxebarria et al., 2021), including children. During the pandemic, the social relationships between teachers and children declined due to remote learning. According to a 2020 Professional Education Systems Institute (PESI) presentation by Flakes, it is crucial for educators to intentionally connect and build relationships with children and ensure that connections are also made between peers. To maintain their relationships with children, teachers can use various virtual instructional tools like Flipgrid, digital table tents, and digital collages, where children can also virtually connect to their peers (Flakes, 2020). Also, applying various strategies such as giving extra support to children, focusing on the strength-based approach to positively reinforce the efforts that teachers see in children, and encouraging and showing responsive instructional response to students, initiates the idea that the teacher cares about the learners.

Learning Environment

When children enter school, the learning environment, particularly the teacher, becomes one of the most critical adults in their life beyond the family (Anhert et al., 2013). Not surprisingly, teachers can therefore be constructive in enhancing different skills in children, including leadership skills. Children are actively involved in learning when teachers build their instructions, correlate various learning, and extend the information to the students. Moreover, children display leadership characteristics in the

classroom by creating play scenarios, solving problems, and offering feedback to peers and friends (Lee et al., 2005).

During the pandemic, the learning environment underwent significant changes where technology played an essential role in ensuring the continuity of education for children during COVID-19. Teachers and students met through online platforms to maintain social distancing protocols. As children had no social or physical interaction with teachers or other children, it was hard for them to display their leadership skills. Nonetheless, if physical interaction is impossible, a teacher can make the learning environment effective by using different strategies to instill leadership skills in remote settings. For instance, teachers can provide opportunities to ask questions, offer opinions, and relate new information to enhance learning (Klesener, 2001). Similar to teachers, parents know best what their children's interests are and what motivates them (Hailey, 2013). Parents can also establish a learning environment at home by providing children with different opportunities and support, for example by providing responsibility for house chores, allowing space to share their opinion in family discussions, having their help taking care of siblings, etc. A sensitive and responsive parent-child relationship establishes vital cognitive skills in young children. The relationship also enhances social competence and work skills later in school, demonstrating the connection between social, emotional, and intellectual growth (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).

Understanding Leadership

Definitions

Many definitions of leadership exist as researchers continue attempting to define the concept (Silva, 2016). Additionally, leadership has different meanings for different people (Northouse, 2013) based on a mixture of experience, learning, and acculturation, therefore making it challenging to provide a single, concise definition. Skills that a leader must acquire have been discussed across various leadership definitions. For example, leadership requires skills such as engaging, organizing, motivating, persuading, recognizing, and challenging those whom the leader leads. Velsor, McCauley, and Ruderman (2010) further defined leadership development as growth in a person's abilities to carry out their responsibilities and do so effectively.

The multiple definitions of leadership included here refer to the followers' importance on a leader's influence. Notably, a person's ability to influence the followers is leadership (Baker, 2013). From 1990 to 2018, leadership was defined mainly as influencing the followers and achieving a common goal (see Antonakis & Day, 2018; Seters & Field, 1990). All these theories have added to the idea of leadership, focusing on adults or adolescents, but overall leadership is generally understood as a process by which a leader inspires or motivates other people to attain a common goal.

Several research studies have relied on adult leadership theories to explain child leadership in the classroom context (Certo, 2011; Fox, 2012; Owen, 2007; Shin et al., 2004), which will be discussed further in chapter two. Therefore, it may be required to review adult or adolescent leadership theories to understand teachers' responses and

influence on child leadership. The concept of leadership concept has been divided into the elements in the sections that follow.

Leadership Occurs in Groups

Leadership can occur in many forms and contexts or situations. In their discussion of situational leadership, Seters and Field (1990) defined leadership as occurring internally within group interactions and externally within a situation, which means a person's leadership style must adapt to the group's demand. The definition provided by Seters and Field (1990) is closely aligned with Lev Vygotsky's social-cultural theory (1978), which emphasizes that children internalize thinking and problem-solving strategies through social interaction within groups of their peers. When confronted with a leadership situation, children may display their cognitive as well as social skills. Furthermore, Mooney (2013) pointed out that the leader interacts with other members of the group to achieve a common purpose and is at the center and represents the will of the group. In some cases, the leader opposes the will of the group, but due to their leadership influence over their group, leaders can confidently persuade without being overpowering (Brummelman et al., 2021).

Certo (2011) studied students who participated in a literature circle with ten teachers. A stratified, random sample of 24 students across ability levels was interviewed among 121 participants. Ability level was determined in three ways: (1) state standardized test score levels in reading, (2) teacher verification, and (3) special education services received. A web-based research randomizer was used to achieve randomization within the three groups. Certo (2011) noted that students in peer-led groups expressed themselves more freely and explored interesting topics. The student's

language in the peer-led group was more elaborate and complex, and the students were curious to ask more questions. The study noted important leadership characteristics: social skills, helping, turn-taking, and getting along with others were the most noted student activities. Some students took on the leader role in their group, and others took on different roles. The students who took on the leadership role in the group were the ones who kept the discussion going and helped other students with reading. Certo (2011) concluded that participation in small groups with peer-led discussions and teacher support could help nurture young children's social and leadership skills.

Leadership is Relational

As noted, leadership lies in the relationship between the leader and followers. The perspective of the leader-follower relationship has been explored and discussed in more recent years than in the past definitions; earlier definitions focused more on the leader, yet leadership is a mutual relationship that requires an active companionship of leaders and followers. Understandably, both leaders and followers are involved in leadership (Bolden et al., 2011; Northouse, 2013). Moreover, Antonakis and Day (2018) expanded the definition of leadership as an exchange of ideas between a leader and a follower, a group of followers, or institutions. From this perspective, leaders employ their power to influence change in followers. Finally, Yukl (2009) defined leadership as influencing and facilitating followers to understand the process and the objective to accomplish shared objectives.

Leadership is Influential

Leadership is a formal or informal influencing process during which a leader inspires a group of others to accomplish a common goal. Leadership does not exist

without influence (Northouse, 2013). According to Antonakis and Day (2018), the science of leadership is the study of the process and its outcomes, as well as how the process depends on the leader's traits and behaviors and thus leader traits and behaviors help exert impact over the group. Lastly, Antonakis and Day (2018) defined leadership as the individual's capability to influence, motivate, and facilitate others to contribute toward the efficiency and success of the group.

Leadership is Motivational

According to Northouse (2013), a leader must be able to motivate their followers because motivation may affect leadership. Three aspects of motivation important to developing leadership skills include: (1) willing to confront group problems, which is a very critical aspect; (2) exerting influence; and (3) taking the responsibility of trying to enhance strengths in the group, as well as the overall value of the group. These three aspects of motivation are similar to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Social learning theory posits that children learn through attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Similarly, in classroom settings, leaders can motivate the group by paying *attention.* For example, child leaders pay attention to the followers, as well as group problems such as certain children not receiving their turn to participate fairly; *retention,* including remembering those problems to solve; *reproduction,* for example thinking of ways to provide fair turns to everyone in the group and solving problems; and *motivation,* or inspiring followers/group by strengthening them in various ways. For instance, teachers may choose each student's name individually to take turns or randomly give

them turns. Motivation is vital in instilling leadership in children because one can reproduce learned behaviors only when motivated (Northouse, 2013).

Leaders can improve motivation by providing encouragement and relevant support to their group to attain a common goal (Robnagel, 2016). Leaders use various tools to motivate their followers, for example setting goals, giving feedback, providing attractive incentives, and the independence to work to achieve the goal (Robnagel, 2016).

Leadership is Transformational

Transformational leaders create a connection by engaging with other people and increasing the level of motivation and morality in leaders and followers. These leaders focus on the needs and motives of the followers and try to help the followers utilize their potential to achieve goals (Northouse, 2013). The goal of transformational leaders is to change the minds of the group; enlarge vision, insight, and understanding; clarify purposes; make behavior similar to the group with beliefs, principles, and values; and bring about permanent changes in the group (Sehgal & Pathak, 2007). In general, transformational leadership describes how leaders can introduce, develop, and carry out significant changes among followers. Transformational leaders set out to inspire followers and nurture them toward making changes (Northouse, 2013). For example, a leader can motivate the group members to achieve a common goal by: mentioning the goal, listening to the problems of individuals in achieving the goal, and then supporting those individuals (Mittal & Dhar, 2015).

While there are many different and complementary definitions of leadership, some of these definitions are limited within the context of early childhood development. Due to this limitation, the current study will seek to expand the limited perspectives on

leadership development in the context of young children. This study specifically looked for these elements of the definitions and asked teachers whether they observed and influenced these or other elements, to more clearly describe leadership characteristics they witnessed in young children.

Characteristics of Leadership

Few studies have been conducted on child leadership, yet various leadership characteristics relating to children are found in the literature (Fox, 2012). The literature indicates that a number of attributes/characteristics predict leadership. Meriweather and Karnes (1989) found that interpersonal relations are an essential attribute of leadership, as well as self-confidence, excellent communication skills, intelligence or wisdom, ambition, organization, high moral character, a positive attitude, a sense of responsibility, and decision-making abilities. Furthermore, Barthold (2014) argued that instilling motivation in others for a common goal can be complex. For example, the act of leadership depends on the context, such as the environment, the timing, the culture, the group of people, and the goal. To handle these complexities, an individual must display certain qualities to demonstrate effective leadership, some of which are covered in the following sections.

Social Skills

Social competencies are essential for effective leadership. Important facets of leadership are social skills and involvement in the community. Social skills include a proper understanding of social norms, roles, and scripts, and in addition leaders must have social expressiveness and self-control. Social expressiveness is vital for effective

leadership. It can be understood as differences in interactions, including both formal and informal communication, to build social relationships.

Communication

Assertive communication is a crucial skill every leader needs to succeed. Fortunately, communication begins to develop in children at a very young age. For example, in a typical school day, children interact and play with their peers as they learn how to share and solve problems through collaboration; and importantly, communication plays a critical role in these interactions (Shim, 1997). Effective communication skills, specifically speaking, are developed through education (Frank, 1993). Given that communication is so crucial to leadership, teachers may begin to instill communication skills as a part of leadership skills in children during their early developmental years.

Sense of Responsibility

Demenity and Grogoleva (2016) found preschoolers have a low level of responsibility formation and primary school children have an average level of responsibility formation. They also found that the vital source of responsibility formation at an early age is the emotional feeling, such as being kind, intelligent, obeying rules, and helping adults. Additionally, in children's view, specifically preschoolers, the responsible person shares his everything with everyone, invites everyone to play, and does not offend anyone **(**Demenity and Grogoleva, 2016**).** According to Fox (2012), some school children believe that a sense of responsibility means having a friendship with everyone and not offending anyone. Furthermore, Fox (2012) explained that friendship and sensitivity to others' feelings are strong leadership qualities.

Task Completion

According to Tobernero, Chambel, Curral, & Arana (2009), some leaders are task-oriented; they do whatever it takes to get the job done by their followers. Leaders emphasize structuring, planning, and influencing their followers to complete tasks. Previous studies on leadership in children's groups indicated the presence of emerging leadership and its association with task completion, as well as with adult and peer nomination of leadership (Mercier et al., 2014). Instructing students to persevere can help them finish their assigned work (Phillipson & Phillipson, 2013) and teachers can do this by explaining the task to children, the rules to be followed, and encouraging them to finish the job on time.

Interpersonal Relationships

Manning (2005) suggested that leadership skills could be instilled in young children, especially gifted learners, through mentoring. A successful mentor serves as a leader to their pupil. Manning found that some teachers encourage leadership skills in young children by applying a cross-age mentoring strategy. Furthermore, Manning (2005) found that those teachers who used the cross-age mentoring approach in the classroom revealed the development of characteristics such as decision-making skills, sensitivity to individual needs, problem-solving, and planning skills that are important for strong leadership. Cross-age mentoring also improved the relationship between the mentor and the student (Manning, 2005).

Problem-Solving

Omeroglu et al. (2009) conducted a focus group interview with 11 teachers and found they encouraged the trial-and-error method. According to the teachers, every

problem-solving stage was necessary for reaching the children's answers. Parental involvement was needed to improve the problem-solving skills in children, and finally, the teachers required knowledge and practice to develop problem-solving skills in children. When encouraging problem-solving, teachers should avoid providing solutions to students too early. Instead, students should be allowed to sense their potential to problem solve. Developing a sense of one's capability to deal with puzzling situations is a foundation for building leadership skills (Hillman & Smith, 1981).

Self-Efficacy

McCormick and Martinko (2004) described self-efficacy as the ability to execute a behavior successfully. It is social cognition, a self-evaluative decision that one's abilities will meet the cognitive and behavioral requirements of a task. According to Chemers et al. (2000), self-efficacy is the most operative component of successful leadership and is necessary for team functioning by contributing to leadership effectiveness. Moreover, several studies by Bandura (1977) revealed that belief in one's self-efficacy is the most crucial aspect of leadership activity and decision-making. Research shows that children with high self-efficacy set high-performance goals and develop and work more effectively on task strategies than children with low self-efficacy. Once children attain high self-efficacy, they are less bothered by their failures, and when they fail, they try again (Chemers et al., 2000).

Decision-making

Kase (2010) stated one characteristic of leadership that comes to mind while thinking of great leaders is "decisiveness." Successful leaders are certain and definite about their thoughts. Kase explored three qualities that leaders should develop to become

better decision-makers: emotional intelligence, the ability to cope with uncertainty, and the ability to make choices based on evidence or intuition (Kase, 2010).

Theoretical Guideposts

Theories on Leadership

The approach in which leadership is described and understood is strongly influenced by one's philosophical beliefs on human nature (Bolden et al., 2011). Some theorists believe that leadership results from individual traits and behaviors, while others believe leadership emerges from group relationships. The formal study of leadership in children and related to academics began in the 1930s, yet despite this length of time, teachers still fail to recognize leadership in children (Miller et al., 2013), which may be due to the lack of information regarding leadership in early childhood. These theories are selected because they seem aligned well with early childhood leadership. Therefore, various theoretical beliefs are discussed for a better understanding of the leadership process.

Trait Theory

Evolutionary researchers' focus on leadership was to identify the qualities and traits that differentiate a leader from a follower, and ultimately developed the idea that leadership is inherent. The primary traits explored were energy, dominance, and intelligence, but they resulted in inconsistent findings (Leonard et al., 2014). This approach is one of the oldest leadership theories dating to Plato, who listed several traits he thought were important for effective leadership. Like Leonard and colleagues (2014), Plato identified the importance of intelligence and personality for leadership, including courage, magnificence, apprehension, and memory. Many traits have been linked to

leadership development; however, many are not adequate predictors of trait leadership (Antonakis, 2011). Trait theory is very similar to the "Great Man" theory, which argued great leaders are not made, but rather are born (Amanchukwu et al., 2015) with essential internal characteristics such as charisma, confidence, intelligence, and social skills (Cherry, 2022).

Behavioral Approach

In the 1940s, psychologists paid attention to the behavior of leaders who influenced their followers rather than exploring who the leaders were. Many studies were conducted during this era in various laboratory settings where behaviors of students were observed. These behaviors were termed the "leadership style" embraced by the leaders. The behavioral approach provided a tool for updating training and development (Leonard et al., 2014) and stated that one did not have to be born a leader, but rather leadership could be learned. Wright (1996) discussed four styles of leadership: concern for the task (production-oriented), concern for people (employee-centered), authoritarian or autocratic (directive), and participative (democratic). Furthermore, Fujishin (1997) added laissez-faire to the leadership style. Laissez-faire leadership occurs when the leader takes limited action but allows followers to make other decisions. The behavioral approach is rooted in behaviorism, which focuses on leaders' activities rather than their mental qualities or internal states (Cherry, 2022). Many researchers have criticized the behavior

approach because a leader may be participative in some situations but could be directive in others (Leonard et al., 2014).

Situational Approach

The situational approach suggests that a leader chooses the best action based on the situation or circumstances. Research in the context of the situational approach suggests that leadership style changes with changes in situation. An authoritarian leadership style is most appropriate in a situation where a knowledgeable and experienced group member is needed, whereas **a** democratic form of leadership could be helpful where an expert is required among followers (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

The situational approach outlines four leadership styles: a) directing, in which a leader directs more and supports less, b) coaching, in which a leader directs more and support's more, c) supporting, in which a leader directs less and supports high, and d) delegating in which a leader directs less and supports less (Baker, 2013). Effective leaders should understand their followers, balance direction, and support those followers require in situations (Baker, 2013).

Contingency Theory

According to Fiedler (1976), the developer of contingency theory, no leadership style is best in all situations. Fiedler asserted leadership style depends on one's personality and is inflexible to a large extent; therefore, it is essential to match the leader to the situation rather than vice versa to attain leader effectiveness. Fiedler (1976) identified three essential variables to create the leader-situation match: leader-member relation (the relationship and loyalty between the leader and the follower, which is measured by the Least-preferred Co-worker [LPC] scale), task-structure (the degree to

which there is only one way in which the task can be attained effectively), and position-power (the amount of authority the leader has to reward the discipline of subordinates). This theory introduced the switch from focusing on the personality traits of leaders to the leader and follower relationships (Leonard et al., 2014). Concurrently, Cherry (2022) stated that good leaders could evaluate the needs of their followers, take a standard of the situation, and then adjust their behavior accordingly.

Transformational Theory

The concept of transformational leadership was established by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and Bernard Bass (1985), who emphasized the attainment of organizational objectives through comprehensive approaches (as cited in Lynch, 2012). Transformational leaders recognize their values and those of people in the group to guide their actions, therefore developing a shared way of behaving and acting. Power is shared because these leaders perceive power as expandable rather than limited (Owen, 2007). Overall, transformational leadership is the process in which a leader is engaged with others and creates a connection that promotes enthusiasm and morality in the leader and the follower. Transformative leaders focus on their followers' needs and motives and help them reach their potential (Northouse, 2013).

Path-goal Theory

Path-goal theory is considered one of the modern leadership theories. It focuses on the conditions created by the leader to motivate followers to achieve the goal. In path-goal leadership, leaders and followers plan the path to accomplish their goals. Path-goal theory's four main leader behaviors are directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. The leader decides which behavior to apply and when to achieve

the goal based on the relationship between leader and follower. The theory is one of the first authoritarian leadership theories to suggest ways to lead (Baker, 2013). Notably, leadership theories have changed over time. Originally, leadership theories were based on a person's inherent quality, which then evolved into the learned style, which posited that leadership could be learned. With the addition of path-goal theory, the relationship between leader and follower was discussed and became the focus of the research in the field of leadership.

Some theorists developed the theory that leadership is a process that changes with the situation, signaling that the situation is an important component of leadership. The commonality between all these leadership theories is that they were all based on adults yet are still used to discuss leadership in children (Fox, 2012). Leadership characteristics are the same in all age levels, but children manifest them differently depending on the stage of development. Therefore, it is essential to review the literature on adult and youth leadership to understand leadership behavior and what leadership might look like in children.

Theories on Child Development

Various theorists have worked at building and revising child development theories. While these theorists have not necessarily worked in the field of leadership, their theories are nevertheless aligned with some leadership theories and approaches. These theorists have addressed leadership directly/indirectly while discussing the development phases of children, as evident in the work of John Dewey, who supported progressive education. Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory gave more emphasis on the development of language. Moreover, Erik Erikson provided eight psychosocial stages of

development in which the third stage, Initiative vs. Guilt, can support leadership development. John Bowlby established the theory of attachment, which focused on the nurturing relationships of an adult with a child and how these play a significant role in their development. Many more theories could be described in the context of leadership in children. For example, Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory states the effects of the environment on a child's development. The present study is aligned with Bronfenbrenner's theory of learning about the influence of a teacher on children's leadership skills. For this study, the theorists whose work is most relevant to developing leadership skills in children is explored.

Socio-Cultural Theory by Lev Vygotsky

Vygotsky (1978) claimed that language is a valuable tool that encourages thinking, develops reasoning, and helps in cultural activities like reading and writing. He also recognized that when students collaboratively worked together, shared, and performed or produced, it helped to create a collaborative community of learners. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept, which refers to the difference between a learner's ability to perform a task independently versus with support, is relevant to leadership development, where the teacher can support children in developing skills when needed. The idea of scaffolding in ZPD also plays a vital role in building leadership qualities in children with the help of peers and teachers. Scaffolding is termed "the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some tasks so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill (which) she is in the process of acquiring" (Bruner, 1978, p. 19). Teachers scaffold the learning when needed to achieve the child's learning and encourage these skills (Mooney, 2000). Karnes and Stephens (1999) stated a

similar concept to developing leadership in children, noting teachers could facilitate the development of leadership skills in young children in several ways. For example, teachers can analyze their teaching strategies and become more sensitive to their beliefs and values towards leadership. Teachers can also encourage students to make self-decisions and self-direction to provide opportunities to attain and enrich their leadership skills. Vygotsky's concept of ZPD also influences collaborative learning. Collaborative learning is a powerful tool that encourages children to learn new concepts from peers and adults, which enhances confidence, a higher level of thinking, and self-esteem as well as strengthening various social skills, all thought to be essential for leadership.

Stages of Psychosocial Development by Erik Erikson

Erik Erikson (1963) theorized eight psychosocial stages of development to help understand the acquisition of leadership qualities in a child. The initial four stages are crucial for instilling leadership characteristics in a child, as success in these four stages could result in a strong personality in the young ones. The first stage is Trust vs. Mistrust. Infants develop a sense of trust when interacting with a caregiver who provides reliability, care, and affection, but a lack of these can lead to mistrust. The second is Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, which occurs between 18 months to approximately two to three years of age (during which a toddler develops a sense of personal control over physical skills and independence). In this stage, success leads to feelings of autonomy, and failure results in feelings of shame and doubt. The third stage is Initiative vs. Guilt; this stage is between preschool years to the age of five. In this stage, a child begins to assert control over their environment by planning activities, accomplishing tasks, and facing challenges. Success at this stage develops a sense of purpose, and failure results in

developing a sense of guilt. The fourth stage is Industry vs. Inferiority; this occurs between the ages of six to eighteen. Children can learn new skills and develop a sense of self-awareness and discovery of themselves during this stage (Mooney, 2000). All the stages described by Erikson play a vital role in one's life, but these four stages are essential to the success of developing necessary skills and instilling leadership qualities in young children.

Pragmatism by John Dewey

John Dewey (1938) established progressive education focusing on the relationship between experience and learning. Dewey stated that experiences should be organized so that ideas could be pulled from them for future knowledge, leading to more questions, observations, and experiences. He also favored freedom of intelligence, which could lead a person to make observations, analyze those observations critically, construct questions from the analysis of the observation, and then decide whether the whole procedure was worth the engagement (Moss & Normore, 2006). Dewey (1916) suggested that learning occurs when children are allowed to take leadership roles and assume ownership and when social interaction abounds (as cited in Certo, 2011). Additionally, he stated that education encourages democracy.

School personnel should promote a desire for constant growth in the child. Education helps foster interaction between people and things, the child and the adult, the individual and the community, and also between the home, school, and the world. Education is also a process of gaining experience that continues throughout life. Educated people may readily learn how to associate and communicate with others in ways that may lessen the barriers of class, race, gender, religion, and national territory; and education is

often thought to help a person to become a democratic citizen. Education positions the teacher as a guide to inspire the learner to take personal responsibility for learning (Moss & Normore, 2006).

Attachment Theory by John Bowlby

Bowlby (1969) established the theory of attachment, or an emotional bond with another person. A child's attachment could be with the mother or the principal caregiver. Bowlby believed that attachment in the early years plays a significant role in later development and mental functioning. Bowlby characterized attachment as an instinctive behavior. He also discussed that instinctive behavior is not innate, but the potential to develop it is natural (Ainsworth, 1969). Therefore, children gain emotional bonding and confidence to explore their environment where warm, supportive, nurturing adults surround them—adults who have consistent behavior, emotions, and actions. Children with higher emotional support from teachers display increased social competence and academic achievement. Children also learn suitable displays of emotion through their interactions with adults. In doing so, they can make sense of others' feelings and behavior, which is very important for children to know for future social interactions (Brock et al., 2018).

Ecological Systems Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner (1977) developed an ecological system theory regarding child development. Bronfenbrenner explained how everything in a child’s environment affects their growth and development. He discussed different levels within the ecological environment that influence children's development, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner,

all these five systems play a significant role in children's lives, but microsystems and mesosystems directly influence childhood development. The microsystem comprises the immediate environment in which a child lives, including direct relationships such as family members they live with, caregivers, peers, or teachers. The interaction with these immediate members influences a child's growth. A mesosystem is a system of microsystems; it is a linkage and process-taking place in the microsystem. Foster (1981) claimed that leadership is teachable and can be created by the acknowledgment of members, which indicates that the immediate surrounding has a more significant impact on a child. Thus, parents and teachers could encourage children to develop those skills necessary to be a leader. When a child enters the school or a childcare center, they interact with members of the new environment which influences the actions and abilities of the developing child. The immediate member a child interacts with in school is the teacher, and a teacher can influence a child's developing actions and abilities (Fox, 2012). Therefore, the ecological theory is the foundation of this study in describing how a teacher, arguably the second most influential relationship the child will have after their parents, matters in developing leadership in young children.

This study is exploratory in nature. Based on the existing literature, not much is discussed on why leadership is essential in early childhood and how learning and teaching about leadership should be involved effectively. The literature on leadership in children is sequenced, based on its significance to the current study. Few studies have discussed teachers regarding leadership in children. Research by Fox (2012), who studied teachers' perspectives regarding leadership development in children, motivated me to learn more about teachers' opinions on leadership in children. Since Fox's study, fewer

studies have focused on and discussed teachers' views regarding leadership in children. The present study will explore teachers' perspectives and further what strategies teachers use to instill leadership and how teachers instill leadership in children.

Teachers' Perceptions on Leadership

Fox (2012) examined teachers' perspectives and leadership behaviors in children aged four to six. One hundred thirty-one teachers who taught early childhood, including teachers of gifted children (pre-kindergarten through grade one), participated in her study. Fox focused on three main questions in her research: (1) How do teachers describe leadership in young children? (2) Given the scenario, how do teachers recognize leadership behavior in young children? (3) Given scenarios, how do teachers believe they might influence (support or discourage) leadership behavior in young children?

Fox used qualitative methods to analyze the responses pertinent to questions one and three and quantitative methods to analyze responses regarding question two. In response to question one, teachers provided different descriptors for describing leadership in young children. The most discussed descriptors included terms and phrases such as "helpful, verbal skills, self-confidence, takes the initiative, role model, and takes charge." In response to question two, 50% of teachers were able to recognize leadership in the given scenarios, and at least 75% of teachers verified leadership in children in more than half of the situations. Teachers were able to acknowledge leadership when several children were involved in the leadership activity rather than merely a few. Interestingly, teacher experience, measured in years, did not affect recognition rates. Teachers' leadership recognition has not been widely discussed in the relevant literature (Fox, 2012).

In response to question three, teachers were more involved when classroom rules were broken. Teachers responded to child leaders in various ways by: encouraging, discouraging, ignoring, and giving mixed messages. Generally, teachers were found to provide discouraging responses more than encouraging ones. Fox found that teachers who recognized leadership in children encouraged the behavior. However, when teachers could not identify leadership in children, they discouraged or ignored leadership behavior. Moreover, data showed teachers might miss opportunities for encouraging leadership in their students, perhaps because they have to follow specific responsibilities in which fostering, modeling, and regulating the process for the well-being of children come first.

The study by Fox (2012) aligns with the teaching during the pandemic; teachers instructing online were overwhelmed with their responsibilities, overworked, and immersed in constant uncertainty. Given this, many teachers found it easier to deliver the lectures to offer as much information as possible at once rather than facilitate collaborative work (Avalos & Siiman, 2020). Additionally, with the extension of remote learning, teachers found it challenging to focus on collaboration because of the intense interaction hours. Participants also stated they focused on the most important curriculum topics instead of developing general social skills (Avalos & Siiman, 2020).

Owen (2007) also studied leadership in young children through a questionnaire completed by 190 primary and secondary school teachers in England and Wales. Eighty teachers who answered the questionnaire were also interviewed. The study was conducted to discover how teachers encourage or discourage young people from exhibiting their leadership potential. The focus of the study was to understand how

decisions about children's leadership potential were made by teachers and how teachers nurtured leadership in children, as well as the factors that caused teachers to avoid acknowledging leadership skills in young children. Most of the teachers viewed leadership similarly, including an action-centered, task-oriented, and project managing model. Teachers saw leadership as task-centered while describing leadership. They also discussed broader concepts such as teamwork, engaging behavior that included actions taken to inspire, motivate and encourage, and people-centeredness, that included achieving potential, empowering others, understanding needs, and respecting individuals.

Owen (2007) stated that in answering the question regarding how teachers knew if children have leadership ability, teachers were mainly concerned with the ways children interacted with their peers, took initiative, enacted responsibility, respected others, engaged in positive interactions, assigned tasks, and listened to others in the classroom. Most (85%) of teachers believed the best age to start developing leadership was between five and seven years, and 85.6% of teachers felt that leadership combined learned and inherent abilities. Discussing nurturing leadership, teachers stated that developing the right culture in school, providing leadership, communicating leadership, integrating leadership into the curriculum, giving independence to children, and providing role models to them was important. Leadership potential was sometimes avoided or discouraged in children due to assessments, curriculum targets, and lack of time and space. Classroom size was also found to obstruct leadership development in children. For example, being in a group of 30 or more can cause children to become intimidated and lack confidence. The study was taken further to explore the perspectives of children

knowing what leadership means to them and whom they consider a leader and why (Owen, 2007).

Mullarky et al. (2008) found a strong disconnection between the literature on developing leadership in young children and interviews conducted with teachers in their study. Mullarky et al. (2008) asserted that dealing with young children required much more effort and attention than the literature had suggested. Promoting leadership skills was what teachers anticipated doing for all children, in theory; however, in reality, developing these skills may be less a significant than first indicated (Mullarky et al., 2008).

Mullarkey et al. (2008) interviewed six head teachers from a childcare center in New York City to understand the following questions: How do early childhood teachers conceptualize leadership in young children? How do they encourage/discourage leadership skills in individual children? And what do they feel about the actual leaders in their classroom? This study revealed that teachers were in the conflicted position of both promoting and limiting the same behavior. Teachers employed both nonintervention and indirect strategies, which proved ineffective and counterproductive, allowing disruptive student behavior. However, the head teachers did not express much about how they promote leadership in the classroom (Mullarky et al., 2008).

Tross (2015) further examined teachers' perspectives concerning leadership in children at a middle school in Brooklyn, New York. Though this study was focused on middle school children, it can be related to young children's leadership development. Tross' work was noteworthy because children participants discussed the importance of developing leadership during the primary school years. The study aimed to understand

the importance of developing student leadership skills in middle school through qualitative methods. Data were gathered via interviews and focus groups comprised of teachers, students, and administrators. The research questions included in the study were regarding the importance of enhancing leadership development in middle school, leadership development, methods to enhance leadership skills in adolescents, characteristics present in middle school leaders, and sought to see if leadership skills were apparent in some but not in others.

In the Tross (2015) study, two administrators were interviewed, and 10 math and ELA teachers participated in the focus group because standardized tests in New York State include ELA and math. The Renzulli Hartman Leadership scale was distributed to the ELA and math teachers responsible for children from sixth through eighth grades to score leadership in students. Ten 14-year-old student participants were assigned to one of the two focus groups based on their leadership characteristic scores. These focus groups were created by the researcher and were named as a higher-rated perceived student leader (those who scored 35 and above) that comprised 12 students and lower-rated perceived student leader (those who scored 34 and below) that included 10 students for a total student sample size of 22 participants.

The main themes developed from the responses to question one (importance of enhancing leadership) were the desire to succeed, greater confidence and higher self-esteem, and hunger for the opportunity. However, the study found barriers; the core curriculum is the priority in middle school, and it provides limited leadership skill development topics and lacks both the application of strategies and materials to teach leadership skills.

In response to question two, “How is leadership enhanced in a middle-school setting?”, the main themes that emerged were: giving responsibility to students and having teachable moments such as conflict resolution through group discussion, students meeting with guest speakers and professionals, and planning field trips.

In response to the third question, “What methods can be used to enhance leadership skills in adolescents?” the themes that were developed through interviews and focus groups were: counselors’ intervention with students in developing problem-solving skills, providing opportunities for ownership and accountability, and student acknowledgment. The final question was “What characteristics are inherent in middle school leaders, and why do teachers think those are apparent in some students and not in others?” In explaining the inherent characteristics that were apparent in some students and not in others, several themes emerged, such as confidence level, natural abilities intrinsic, incentive/rewards, leadership skills in some students, low self-esteem and self-confidence, and negative peer involvement.

The two focus group responses to this question were compared. Focus group one mentioned consistency, good grades, and being focused. While discussing characteristics, they defined leadership as helping and leading their team toward success. Focus group two revealed the following themes: independently driven, focused, study, challenge themselves more, work hard, and become successful. In responding to the characteristics, they defined leaders as being a motivator, a team player, peer mentor, independently driven, and focused. Both groups viewed the teacher as a valuable source of an expert in leadership who could support students to become leaders. Birth order was found vital and researchers recommended examining whether birth order plays a role in developing

leadership skills for future work. The study concluded that teachers do desire to develop leadership skills in children, but restraints on school educators limit their ability to instill leadership in their classroom instructions. The study also revealed teachers had teachable moments where they instilled leadership in children but leadership development was not a part of the school curriculum.

Turgunbaeva et al. (2016) analyzed the literary sources of leadership development in junior school children in Kazakhstan, similar to elementary school in the United States (e.g., children six to 10 years of age). They also studied the characteristics of the designed structural and conceptual model of leadership development in children. The main objectives of their study were to examine the theoretical base of the development of leadership, to define the features of the development of leadership skills in junior school children, and to construct the structural and conceptual model of leadership development in junior school children. The method used in the explanation of the model of leadership development was based on the axiological (principles and values of teachers), system, activity-based, and student-centered approach (See Table 5.1 in Appendix A). The existing model of leadership development in high school children (Vyunova, 2012), senior school children (Inyakina, 2009), manager of the organization (Yevtikhov, 2012), and military school students (Lukhmenyova, 2010) were analyzed to develop the leadership development model for junior school children (as cited in Turgunbaeva et al., 2016). More than 120 participants (third and fourth-grade children) and six teachers from secondary schools in Pavlodar participated in the study.

Table 5.1 (see Appendix A) communicates that the objectives of Turgunbaeva et al. (2016) were intertwined to develop leadership in junior school children. The study

was completed using a unique program compiled for children which included fairytale therapy (a powerful tool that has a psychological and educational effect on child's mind, which is helpful to develop self-consciousness, human values, imaginations, knowledge about the world, and adult's experiences), cooperative games (where children had a common interest and common goal and were using joint effort to achieve their goal), and training exercise (i.e., the active learning techniques that aim to develop personal qualities such as knowledge, abilities, skills and social attitudes). The structural and conceptual model employed by Turgunbaeva et al. (2016) supported leadership development, as leadership was witnessed in the junior school children after the investigation was completed. The experimental class displayed a progression in children's development, demonstrating the model's effectiveness. This model was beneficial for leadership development in junior school children and could be a perfect fit in the current practices and policies in United States early childhood programs, if applied. Furthermore, the model can be used in the present study to determine whether teachers from the model have used any of the objectives.

Researchers like Kretman (1996), the well-known author of the *Leadership Curriculum Guide,* have demanded new models that could develop leadership in children in any environment and fit into the American educational system. However, models like these seem less realistic in situations like the COVID-19 pandemic, where classes were conducted via technology. Nevertheless, similar models could be used in the future, and some of the objectives and activities in developing leadership could be carried over to online instruction as well.

Additionally, the teacher participants study conducted by Avalos and Siiman (2020) stated they did interactive videos with the students that helped teachers and students interact, exchange pictures, and work collaboratively. One teacher participant also discussed the importance of motivation in the virtual classroom and the cruciality of communication. The structural and conceptual model offered above by Turgunbaeva et al. (2016) also allows teachers to observe the leadership process, predict results, and make corrections (2016). Table 5.1 (see in Appendix A) includes the characteristics of leadership that have been described by Certo (2011), Fox (2012), and Mullarkey et al. (2008). Therefore, the model above can also be used to determine whether teachers used the characteristics (given in Table 1) in their interview to explain leadership in children, or if they used it in their teaching and learning process.

Encouraging Teachers Through Professional Development

While school culture and curriculum design may affect students, teachers have the most significant impact on student leadership. Maxcy (1991) concurred, arguing that teachers are the most powerful in influencing leadership development in early childhood classrooms. Encouraging or discouraging leadership development in children, or ignoring children's leadership behavior altogether, depends on the teacher (Fox, 2012). Therefore, it is vital for early childhood educators to attain professional development training on leadership development and support from the school.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) first public draft of the professional standards and competencies for early childhood educators was released in 2018 and focused on the importance of the professional development of teachers. The NAEYC discussed that well-prepared early childhood educators

demonstrate essential skills to partner with families to support children's development and learning, and "possess the skills needed to recognize and support the assets, strength, and unique ways that children make sense of the world, given the variation in abilities and social identities" (p.14).

Mistry and Sood (2012) also examined the leadership culture of early childhood practitioners. They investigated how initial teacher training providers and universities prepare practitioners for leadership and teachers' transition from managing children to managing adults. They also examined how the early years (EY) leadership phase differs from leadership in adults and the challenges for the head teachers to address some of the differences. Three participants (one teacher leader with zero to three years of experience, one teacher leader with more than six years of experience, and one head teacher) from three primary schools, (i.e., primary school A, primary school B, and primary school C; *N=9*) were interviewed. The first group (A) was asked questions related to their university training and the training support they received upon employment. The second group (B) was asked about university training, training support, and professional development they had received to support themselves as leaders. The head teachers from all three primary schools (group C) were interviewed to gain their vision for leadership in their respective settings and the support they provided to teachers to develop leadership. In the university training context, teachers in group A revealed they had more assignments, lectures, and overall university sessions on the subject of leadership and management modules linked to career entry development profiles. Teachers in group B stated they had no training in the university and none for EY or leadership. Headteachers from all schools commented that the newer teachers had a better understanding of

leadership than the experienced practitioners, and they provided a range of opportunities to EY practitioners for their development.

In response to the question about how teachers from group A felt about the transition from managing children to managing adults, one teacher felt worried while two other teachers indicated they were “okay.” However, teachers in group B found it hard to transition to supporting leadership development in Early Childhood (EC) settings. One head teacher stated that giving the practitioners freedom helped bridge the gap between child-centered and adult-centered leadership. In answering the third question about how the EY leadership phase differed from school leadership, all teachers across groups agreed that implementing leadership training during EY was easier, comprised of smaller teams, had a different child-centered curriculum, and was more creative. Most head teachers favored the potential of EY practitioners to develop their skills. The challenge for head teachers was centered on clarifying the notion of EY practice and understanding professionalism. The study provided evidence that reforms should be built on the development of teacher leadership and management abilities by offering intellectual stimulus and support to early and later years practitioners so they can be prepared for various EY leadership roles.

Mistry and Sood’s (2012) study found that there was a complex arena for leadership due to the diversity (including nursery classes, primary schools, and private and voluntary settings) in the teachers’ workforce. Furthermore, Karnes and Stephens (1999) identified the lack of instructions and training provided to teachers in the context of developing leadership skills in young children was an area of concern. Researchers have been successful in recognizing children's leadership, while teachers may not always

acknowledge child leadership behaviors (Fox et al., 2012). One important reason as to why teachers may lack such appreciation for child leadership behavior could be that most teachers are unprepared for this role, having little to no formal leadership training related to their responsibilities (Ebbeck et al., 2003).

Based on the findings from studies by Ebbeck et al. (2003), Fox (2012), and Mistry and Sood (2012), due to the lack of teachers training in leadership or professional training, teachers might not recognize leadership, which might result in discouraging leadership skills in children. Professional development plays a significant role in the teacher's life. It not only teaches the ways to foster child's overall development but also develops techniques for teachers to make their students succeed in their learning. Therefore, teachers should be provided with professional training and workshops in the context of the early childhood classroom to improve their leadership skills. Training can help teachers create environments that encourage independence and self-direction among students and provide opportunities to acquire and enhance their leadership skills (Hillman & Smith, 1981). The notion that identity shapes the perceptions, attitudes, and behavior of a person is critical in leadership development, and identity may be a motivating force to develop leadership (Antonakis & Day, 2018).

The Impact of Teachers' Experience

Teachers' experience impacts student achievement; students are more successful when their teachers are more knowledgeable and experienced (Zhang, 2008). Dewey (1963) stated that the teacher's role is to use professional knowledge and previous skills to recognize environments and activities that will help interact with the existing capabilities and needs of children to create a worthwhile experience for them. Due to the

aforementioned lack of leadership experience and training, many teachers view the classroom as their territory, where they are the leaders and children are the followers (Hillman & Smith, 1981). In these circumstances, the classroom environment remains under the teacher's control, and students are expected to follow the rules and pay attention to the instructions given by the teacher. For some children, the teacher's control of the classroom results in their withdrawal from activities and leads them to become passive recipients of the teacher's directions, causing some students to engage in aggressive behavior. In these cases, children do not develop their leadership potential (Hillman & Smith, 1981). Consequently, teachers must set a classroom environment that develops children's capabilities, including leadership. Therefore, teachers may be provided with professional training and a wide variety of experiences in early childhood education.

Providing Tools for Future Generations

Developing leadership skills during early childhood aims to equip future generations with the tools necessary to become valued resources in their schools and communities as they learn to solve problems and become mentors and role models (Krasnor et al., 2006). The tools that help children attain leadership skills include interactions with those in authority, such as teachers, and the peers with whom they create play scenarios, correct, provide feedback, and help to learn (Lee et al., 2005). Teachers and parents can also provide children with tools such as independence, a sense of responsibility, sense of autonomous decision-making, self-efficacy, interaction skills, and more. These tools can be offered in a learning environment where they are actively involved. Asking questions, creating scenarios where children solve problems, and providing hints to draw out the answers from children's discussions are some examples

of environments where they are actively involved. These environments can be created by teachers and parents alike, allowing children to showcase their leadership qualities.

According to Certo (2011), young leaders bring their personalities into the classroom, such as problem-solving, helping, working independently, communicating, and providing various opportunities for engagement with peers and teachers. They display many skills during classroom activities, so it is very significant for teachers to recognize those skills and encourage them so that these children can become great leaders and valuable citizens in the future. Considering this, it is evident that there is a need to better understand and promote leadership skills in early childhood.

Techniques Teachers Could Apply

According to Gardener (1990), people use less than a fraction of the potentialities that reside in them. Among the untapped capabilities are leadership gifts. Many people do not consider themselves to be leaders; there are several reasons for this, but some individuals likely never sensed their potential in this regard or never understood that they possessed the capabilities to lead (Owen, 2007). Similarly, a child may not know that s/he has leadership capabilities. Still, every child has leadership potential, and every teacher can enable young people to realize their leadership potential in everyday classroom activities.

When a child enters school, their teacher becomes one of the most critical adults in their life beyond the family. The teacher-child relationship has shown success in various aspects of the school adjustment of a child (Anhert et al., 2013). Children are actively involved in the learning process when teachers build their instructions, correlate various types of learning, and extend information to the students. Teachers should

provide opportunities to ask questions, give opinions, and relate new information to enhance learning (Klesener, 2001).

The 21st century education system demands teachers be innovative because there is no substitute for a teacher who creates reliable, involved, and relevant learning experiences for students. Teachers can continue to generate new ideas with the help of their students, facilitate their students to refine those ideas, evolve with resources and experiences, and develop and maintain systems that best support learning experiences and community. The critical role of the teacher is to encourage learning and develop the skills and mindset of students (Couros, 2015). The ideas discussed in relation to leadership development can also be followed with the application of technology. Avalos and Siiman (2020) discussed that during the initial phases of COVID-19, teachers used various approaches to remain connected with students. They gave assignments to students that included pairing students and discussed how remote learning provides students with the working environment they choose, giving them the prospect of independent learning. There are various ways in which a teacher can develop leadership and improve the skills of children in their classroom, regardless of whether it is physical or virtual, as will be discussed in this chapter.

Teachers as Role Models

One of Mahatma Gandhi's best-known quotes is that we should become the change we seek in the world. Therefore, teachers may regard themselves as leaders and display many leadership qualities in their classes; in this regard, teachers feel comfortable practicing leadership. When teachers practice leadership and develop leadership in the classroom, they are more likely to listen to their children, pay attention to them, **be** more

involved with them, and empower them (Owen, 2007). Modeling might be the best way for teachers to develop leadership in children because children often imitate their role models. In developing leadership in the classroom, the transformation should be focused on children and teachers (Owen, 2007).

Nurturing Adult-Child Relationships

In 2009, the NAEYC released the following position statement: “From the earliest years of life, warm, nurturing relationships with responsive adults are necessary for many key areas of children's development, including empathy and cooperation, self-regulation and cultural socialization, language and communication, peer relationships, and identity formation” (p. 13). Fostering relationships is essential to promoting high self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy, the capacity to resolve interpersonal conflicts, and the spirit of cooperation and friendship (NAEYC, 2009). Literature based on classroom processing has discussed the significance of effective social interaction between teachers and children for nurturing academic achievement and social skills (Brock & Curby, 2016). Children who have a warm relationship with their primary caregiver are more likely to develop ideas about other people's thoughts, feelings, and needs, establishing cooperative interaction with others (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). According to Vygotsky, children learn by doing and interacting with teachers, working with friends, and continuing a task until they understand and complete it (as cited in Mooney, 2000).

Anhert et al. (2013) studied the relationship between child and teacher, and its impact on children's cognitive development. Surprisingly, they found that the closer the involvement of children with their teacher, the faster they perform the task. This is a

useful method of cognitive processing in children. When children complete tasks efficiently, they have been internally driven when performing the task. These internal drivers are self-efficacy, goal pursuit, and a feeling of competence that led to further success. These abilities of self-efficacy, goal pursuit, and feelings of competence enhance leadership qualities (Chemers et al., 2000; Mercier et al., 2014).

Encouraging Peer Relationships

There has been an increased awareness of peer relationships in American society. This increase in consciousness is due to the rise in the amount of time that children spend with other children in their classroom. Corsaro (1979) stated that naturalistic studies about adult-child and peer interaction are essential to understanding how children acquire social knowledge, as well as interactive and conversational skills to articulate the social knowledge. Shin et al. (2004) found leadership to be a "relational construct" and suggested that leaders used their social skills to build relationships with their peers and teachers (as cited in Fox, 2012, p. 39). Additionally, Shin et al. (2004) believed young leaders often take the leadership role when they play with a group; they initiate and extend the idea, enhance the play quality, and regulate social interaction simultaneously.

Moreover, Certo (2011) noted that students who interacted with others in peer-led groups expressed themselves more freely and explored the topics that were interesting to them. Their language was elaborate and complex, and they indulged in questioning each other. Essential characteristics of leadership were seen in the study, namely help, turn-taking, and getting along with others. Some students took on the leadership role in their group while others took different roles (Certo, 2011).

However, before the leadership in the group can even take place, group members must decide what kind of person should be included or excluded from the group. Children are more likely to have a peer who is like other group members and who matches the specific norms of the group while other peers who are seen as outside the norms are rejected (Rizzo et al., 2017). Gender and age are often standard criteria for determining who will become the group leader, where the group typically accepts the older and more experienced child in this role (Hillman & Smith, 1981). Therefore, a teacher can intervene by supporting children in constructing a group and its size, thereby providing them with a group task so that they could collaborate to complete the task.

Scaffolding

Teachers can contribute to nurturing leadership in young children by helping them to develop decision-making skills by providing different activities and material to them, improving their interactive skills, and creating a learning environment in which individual differences and unique strengths are confirmed (Lee et al., 2005). According to Bruner (1978), when children learn a new concept, they might need help from an adult in the form of active support. Initially, they are dependent on the adult for their support, but when they acquire the ability to think independently, acquire new skills, and possess greater knowledge, adult support gradually disappears (Wood et al., 1976). Similarly, the teachers in the study by Fox (2012) stated that they played an essential role in supporting and helping children to attain leadership. They also stated that they would model leadership so that children could understand the qualities of good leadership.

Additionally, Certo (2011) concluded that participation in small groups with peer-led discussions with the support of a teacher could help to nurture the young children's

social and leadership skills. Interviews were conducted with a random sample of 24 students across ability levels. They were characterized in three ways: (1) state standardized test score level in reading, (2) teacher verification, and (3) special education services received. Certo (2011) noted that students in peer-led groups expressed themselves more freely and explored the topics that were interesting to them. Their language was also more elaborate and complex, and the students began to ask more questions. The teacher's role was to scaffold the discussion of the students; they also tried initially to scaffold shared leadership by having students comment after each other's ideas and take turns as the leader (Certo, 2011).

Applying Strategies in Curriculum and Teaching to Foster Leadership

In various cases, teachers have found that deciding ways to integrate leadership activities into their instructional time can be both stressful and overwhelming (Couros, 2015). Couros (2015) discussed that leadership development in children can be incorporated in various ways, even if teachers have limited instructional time. Leadership could be integrated into the transition from one activity to another, or it can be easily fit in if children have unexpected indoor recess due to inclement weather or other changes. Moreover, he stated that teachers are already teaching character education, anti-bullying, and social/emotional curriculum; thus, leadership lessons can naturally enhance these topics.

Strategies used by teachers such as modeling, creative drama, group play, simulation, and collaborative work can establish a firm basis for leadership development in children. According to Hillman and Smith (1981), teachers who support leadership in children will possibly accept the value of providing opportunities for students to engage

in leadership activities. Karnes and Stephens (1999) added that teachers should aid the development of leadership in children through evaluating their leadership styles, and being sensitive to their attitudes and values when children display leadership behavior. Furthermore, teachers can develop a range of instructional elements involving the study of local, state, national, and international leaders; definitions and theories of leadership; present and future leaders; moral and ethical qualities of leaders, and more (Karnes & Stephens, 1999). Teachers could plan leadership curriculums, implement them, and then further evaluate the program for leadership outcomes (Karnes & Stephens, 1999). Teachers can also observe and compare children in their classroom to receive a practical perspective on children's social behavior (Stratton & Lindsay, 1999). Because they have the opportunity to observe and interact with children, teachers usually become familiar with children's social skills and behavior (Milfort & Greenfield, 2002).

Lee et al. (2005) gained a richer understanding of the complexity and variety of early childhood leadership in their qualitative multi-case study. The researchers chose to collect the data through teachers' interviews and observations to provide a universal description of emerging leadership behavior in four young children. The age of the participants was between 40 months to 56 months at the commencement of data collection. These four leaders (children) had common leadership characteristics that have been documented in the literature: advanced cognitive skills, verbal language proficiency, creativity, imagination, and independence. Lee et al. (2005) found that young leaders bring their personalities to the classroom, providing a variety of opportunities for developing leadership skills. By encouraging children to offer ideas and encouraging

them to support their peers (Certo, 2011), teachers could help children to develop leadership qualities.

Involving Parents in Learning

Various studies showed that action by parents and the parental values affect the development of leaders. Head Start, a federally funded program designed for low-income parents and their preschool children supports the idea of parental involvement for the cognitive development of children. In fact, parental involvement is the cornerstone of the Head Start Program. By participating in the Head Start Program, parents learn about age-appropriate preschool behavior, positive discipline child-rearing strategies, and appropriate educational materials and activities to engage with children in the home environment, which could develop their cognition (Parker et al., 1999). A sensitive and responsive parent-child relationship establishes stronger cognitive skills in young children and enhances social competence and work skills later in school, demonstrating the connection between social, emotional, and intellectual growth (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).

Why Leadership Development is Restrained in Early Childhood Education

According to the NAEYC position statement (2009), many state standards unfortunately neither focus on important learning objectives, nor on the time/space necessary for children to grow, ultimately hindering children's development of competence. There is a concern for the practices of teachers due to the overloaded standards they have to follow; they also have to keep on a rigid and tightly packed schedule that restrains the valuable experiences such as problem-solving, productive play, collaboration with peers, opportunities for emotional and social development,

outdoor/physical activity and arts. According to Couros (2015), children walk into a school full of curiosity and questions, yet teachers often ask children to hold their problems for later, so that teachers could finish the lessons provided on the curriculum. Educators do not realize that their responsibility is not just to teach the method of the task but to stimulate the curiosity that allows students to learn on their own, wonder, explore, and lead.

The 2009 NAEYC position statement also discussed that most of the educators lack a background in early childhood education, so they have the limited knowledge of best practices with children, and without the knowledge, they are unable to determine what is best for the individual child learning and development. Another reason for lack in teachers training could be due to diversity, which means that teachers are from private or public schools and that some teachers are volunteers (Mistry & Sood, 2012). Ebbeck et al. (n.d.) claimed that most teachers are unprepared for teaching leadership, as they have no leadership training or minimal training to carry out their responsibilities (as cited in Mistry & Sood, 2012). Therefore, teachers should be provided with professional training and workshops in the context of improving their leadership skills. According to Hillman and Smith (1981), training would help teachers to create an environment that encourages independence and self-direction, providing opportunities to acquire and enhance skills in children in context to leadership.

Further, Karnes and Stephens (1999) stated that the lack of instructions and training provided to the teachers in the context of developing leadership skills in young children is an area of concern. Additionally, when teachers interfere and control classroom activities, children might lose interest in the activities. Children might deny

participation in classroom activities, and some children could also engage in aggressive behavior because teachers control on the classroom. Both cases could also be an obstacle to developing leadership in children.

Summary

The studies in this chapter revealed that teachers were well aware of leadership skills in children (Fox, 2012; Mullarky et al., 2008; Owen, 2007). Teachers discussed a variety of characteristics that make a child a classroom leader. However, a gap was found between the practice and theory and teachers could not recognize leaders in their classrooms for various reasons (Mullarky et al., 2008). Moreover, if they do recognize leadership skills, they can unintentionally discourage them for various reasons, such as rigid class schedules (Fox, 2012), lack of professional skills (Mistry & Sood, 2012), and experience (Hillman & Smith, 1981). The latest study included in the literature regarding leadership in children is a research study by Turgunbaeva et al. (2016). Since the research study conducted by Turgunbaeva et al. in 2016, there may have been many changes to teachers' perspectives as well as strategies to instill leadership, so the current research sought to explore teachers' perceptions of leadership in children, in addition to examining the strategies and techniques they use to instill leadership in children.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The major purpose of this study was to examine if and how teachers perceive leadership in young children ages four to six years. Another purpose was to investigate the strategies and techniques these teachers employed in influencing leadership in young children. Chapter two reported that majority of discussion on leadership and its development reflects adult populations; there needs to be more information regarding leadership studies involving children and the development of leadership. Therefore, a gap remains, specifically on how leadership could be developed in young children. Children in the United States spend approximately 180 days of the year in school with their teacher (Parinduri, 2014), and are highly influenced by their teachers (Taylor & Gebre, 2016). Therefore, this study focused on teachers and their perceptions of leadership in children. In this chapter, I will discuss the research questions, study design, participants, setting, tools, and procedures for data collection, as well as the data analysis process.

Research Questions

As noted above, the major focus of this study was on teachers' perceptions of leadership in young children and teachers' potential role in supporting young children's leadership development. To provide more knowledge of teachers' perceptions and roles in young children's leadership development than exists in the present literature, the following four research questions guided this study: (1) What are the perspectives of teachers in influencing leadership skills in four to six-year-old children in the classroom? (2) What characteristics of leadership do teachers observe in their children during various

activities that take place in the classroom? (3) What are the different techniques teachers apply to encourage leadership in young children? (4) How do teachers apply different techniques to encourage leadership in children in the classroom?

Various sources were used to formulate the research questions. My review of the literature on leadership in children was one source. It provided insight into leadership and its various characteristics while revealing an existing gap in theory and teachers' practice regarding leadership in young children. The literature review also laid the foundation for developing the research questions (Mertens, 2010). The research questions also reflect the pilot study I conducted prior to my dissertation research.

For my pilot study, I explored teachers' perceptions regarding the development of leadership skills in children. I used qualitative analysis as a method to answer my questions. I interviewed nine teachers from two schools based on two different curriculum approaches. School A followed the Reggio Emilia approach and school B followed the High Scope approach. The research questions for the pilot study were: (1) What are teachers' perceptions of leadership in young children? (2) How do teachers recognize leaders in their classrooms? (3) How do teachers encourage/discourage leadership behavior in certain children?

The pilot study found that the teachers had a basic knowledge of leadership in children, but they were not able to recognize leadership in their classrooms. Furthermore, there was a mismatch between the theory and the practice. Similar to one of the findings of a study conducted by Fox (2012), the teachers in my pilot study described leadership very well and they were also able to define leadership characteristics. However, while acknowledging leaders in their own classrooms, teachers' responses regarding their

practices to instill leadership did not match the definition and characteristics they gave earlier. For example, one of the teachers defined leadership in children as one who has problem-solving skills, is responsible, and independent. However, when asked "Do you recognize any child in your classroom having leadership skills?", the participant stated that the children in her classroom are too young, so they did not have any of the leadership skills mentioned. The findings from the pilot study inspired me to conduct further research and thus guided the current research study, especially the design of more in-depth questions to explore teachers' perceptions of leadership in young children and to investigate the strategies used by teachers to instill/enhance leadership.

Research Design

This study was designed to understand teachers' viewpoints on leadership and their strategies to instill leadership in children. For this reason, the study used qualitative methodology. Qualitative methods provide the researcher with an understanding of "the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Marriam, 2009, p. 13). The key purpose of qualitative research is to provide detailed descriptions and analyses of peoples' lived experiences (Lichtman, 2010). My interest in this approach developed after I conducted my pilot study and when I began reading the literature on leadership in young children. I wanted to further explore how teachers described leadership and what their perceptions were, specifically related to how their years of teachers' experience could influence their perceptions and their strategies in the context of developing leadership in children. The questions of this research study were formed aiming to create the description of the

perceptions of experienced teachers in elementary schools and the strategies they apply (if any) in the classroom to instill/enhance leadership in children.

The study used an inductive approach, one of the features of grounded theory (Hays & Singh, 2012). I proceeded from detailed data to the formulation of general codes and themes, intending to generate a larger consolidated picture (Creswell, 2011). Grounded theory is described as "a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). The data collection tools used in the qualitative methodology for this research study were a demographic questionnaire, interviews, observations, and a checklist. Interviews helped me gain descriptive information from the interviewee on their feelings, purposes, meanings, sub-contexts, or opinions on a topic, condition, or idea (Lichtman, 2010). All interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, which involved the development of a general protocol (Lichtman, 2010); however, the follow-up questions varied from interview to interview. I used the elaboration technique with my questions, a strategy that provides participants with the opportunity to describe, clarify, and elucidate their responses and also offers space for additional input.

I conducted observations to collect data on teachers' influence in developing leadership in children. Observations allow researchers to collect first-hand, open-ended data by observing subjects at the research site. It is advantageous to observe the actual behavior of participants within the context of the research environment (Creswell, 2011). I observed the teacher in the natural setting of the classroom. My focus was on the teacher, so I noted in my notebook whatever I saw the teacher doing in her classroom. The observation was used to supplement the data collected from the interview.

Furthermore, I also used checklists to collect data. Checklists help researchers to understand personal bias, generalization, and the implications of the study (Frels et al., 2011). I included the items in bullet numbers and asked the participants to reorder them. The checklist included the important characteristics of leadership, which were numerically rank ordered, and teachers were asked to reorder in the form of the most important characteristic as number one, the second important characteristic, until the least important characteristic. A background questionnaire was also collected from the participants, which included questions on their level of education, types of certifications, years of experience in teaching, and the age group they currently taught.

Combining these different methods of data collection provided me with the ability to triangulate my data. According to Merriam (2009), triangulation is a well-known strategy to provide internal validity to a study and has long been used as a strategy to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research. It is the process of validating evidence from different individuals, different types of data, or through different methods. As the information is gathered through different sources, triangulation lends validity, accuracy, and credibility (Creswell, 2011; Mertens, 2010). These different data sources also allowed a more nuanced explanation of teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices in instilling leadership. To check the credibility and accuracy of data and to limit the biasness, I also enlisted the help of a doctoral-level individual outside the study to review the emergent codes and categories, known as an external audit, to ensure greater credibility. I also included the aspects of social environment and the artifacts that were in the classroom in my observation, meaning I noted the physical clues present in the classroom, such as the equipment or posters on the wall of the classroom, in my

research journal. According to Long and Johnson (2000), self-description, journal keeping, peer debriefing, and triangulation are means of validation.

Settings

The study was constricted to the state of Michigan for convenience and uniformity. Due to the emergence of COVID-19 during the middle of the study, many schools made it mandatory to move instruction virtual to minimize disease communicability. For this reason, I conducted observations and interviews in person and virtually via Zoom and Google Meet. I allowed the participants to choose the time and location according to their convenience for the interview. After the interview, participants were asked to provide the time and date for the observation. For consistency, I tried to observe all teachers in the activities where they would interact with children for most of the time.

Participants and Recruitment Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to gather my data. Inclusion criteria included participants who were teachers of four- to six-year-old children in public or private schools. The participants were contacted by sending emails with an attached flyer that described the nature and purpose of the study. The email scripts (see Appendix A) and the flyer (see Appendix A) were approved by the Oakland University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Initially, I made a list of schools to contact regarding the recruitment for the study but after receiving denials from many schools due to the COVID-19 restrictions, I searched for more Michigan schools on the internet and emailed them regarding the request to participate in my study. The email was sent to the directors of the school districts as well as to the school principals along with the study flyer,

clearly indicating the criteria of potential participants (i.e., teachers teaching pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and grade one children), the tools that would be used to collect the data, and the incentive to be provided to teachers for participating in the study. The emails and flyers for the recruitment were sent to eight Michigan school districts and two private schools; three school districts and one private school agreed to participate. Some interested teachers withdrew from the study because the district administrators did not permit them to participate. The reason they stated for not agreeing to participate was that teachers were already overwhelmed and had extra work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Three teachers were quarantined when they were scheduled for an interview and when I contacted them after their quarantine time, they said they were stressed and overloaded and could not participate. Therefore, 11 participants agreed to participate. Some participated in-person whereas others participated virtually.

The participants were then sent the information sheet (see Appendix A) approved by the Oakland University IRB prior to the interview that discussed the research study briefly so that the participants understood the purpose of the study, location, the time required to participate in the study, the reward for participation, the right to leave the study at any time, and the potential risks and benefits of participation. The in-person COVID-19 research participant information sheet was also provided prior to the interview to the participants who were interviewed in-person.

Data Collection Procedure and Instruments

Once participants agreed to participate in the study, an email was sent, including Oakland University's IRB-approved information sheet, as well as an invitation to schedule a mutually convenient time to conduct an interview. Participants were provided

with an in-person COVID-19 research participant information sheet to confirm that the researcher and participant were safe to interact during interviews and observations.

As previously discussed, I used different sources to collect my data. The instruments developed for my data collection were a demographic questionnaire, interview protocol, observation field notes, and checklists. Teachers were asked nine questions during interviews that lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. Data were collected through an audio recorder on a personal laptop, as well as via a smartphone. Observations lasted approximately one hour, and data were collected via field notes. Demographic questionnaires were provided to the participants, and finally, a checklist was sent to each teacher participant.

Demographic Questionnaire

I constructed and used a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) to gather background details for each participant. It contained seven questions related to the educational and professional backgrounds of the participants. The questionnaire was related to age, gender, school district, highest degree, years of teaching experience, and age group of children they presently taught. Participants were prompted to complete the form and send it to me via email or hand it to me before or after the interview.

A total of 11 teachers participated in this study. Seven participants were recruited from three different school districts and four participants were from a private school. All teachers were females teaching pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and grade 1. The average age of participants (n=9) was 34.2 years, ranging from the youngest at age 22 to the oldest at 50 years; two teachers did not respond to the question regarding their age. The

highest level of education was a master's degree (n=7). Participants' levels of education are shown in Table 3.1 and further in Appendix C.

Notably, three teachers had a bachelor's in early childhood education, and four teachers had either a teaching certificate or endorsement in early childhood education. Six teachers (54.5%) had teaching experience more than 10 years, two teachers (18.1%) had teaching experience between 5-10 years, and three teachers (27.2%) had an experience between 1-5 years.

Table 3.1
Participants' level of education.

	Level of Education			
	Master's Degree	Master's Degree in ECE	Teaching Certificate in EC	Teaching Endorsement
Number of Teachers	5	2	1	1
	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree in ECE	Teaching Certificate in EC	Teaching Endorsement
Number of Teachers	1	3	2	0

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol for this study included both close- and open-ended questions. First, participants were prompted with a closed-ended question, for example: *Do you think it is important to develop leadership skills in children?* If the participants responded yes, then an open-ended follow up question was asked, such as: *How do you contribute to children's leadership development?* However, if the participants responded no, the follow up question differed. For example, if a participant responded "no" to the original question, they were asked: *Why do you believe that leadership development in children is not important?*

The purpose of using close and open-ended interview questions was to explore whether the participants validated their responses within the same family of questions (Merriam, 2009). This pattern was developed to attain both descriptions of teachers' views of leadership in young children as well as their experiences in developing strategies that instilled/enhanced leadership in young children. Open-ended questions provided participants with the opportunity to share their opinions or experiences, unconfined by any perspective of the researcher or past research (Creswell, 2011; Merriam, 2009). The interview protocol was reviewed and approved by the committee members and chairperson. To ascertain how teachers viewed leadership in children, the definition or any information regarding leadership in children was purposely not stated to the participants. It was a purposeful study designed to know teachers' perceptions without discussing anything with them about children's leadership before the interview. The prompts or definitions before the interview might have changed the results or could have provided the result with biases.

The interview was designed with a semi-structured style. Semi-structured interviews are common in qualitative studies where the researcher sticks to a recognizable plan but allows for divergence when he or she realizes that new information is needed (Nicholls, 2009). I also added closing questions to provide participants with the opportunity to add anything that they did not mention earlier in the interview (Lichtman, 2010).

I began the interview by making participants comfortable and building rapport. This included casual, friendly small talk, such as how their days were going. As Merrriam (2009) noted, it is a good idea to commence interviews with a question that is

relatively neutral and provides descriptive information. Therefore, I began these interviews by asking a basic question (see Appendix B) on leadership: *Think about a child in your classroom who is a leader. Why do you think he/she is a leader?*

Furthermore, I asked questions that led to an understanding of leadership from the teachers' perspectives, enabling them to provide descriptive information, thoughts, and experiences. Throughout the interview, I remained neutral to participant responses. At the end of the interview, I thanked the participants for their time and participation.

Observation Field Notes

When a researcher conducts a qualitative research study in a school, the foremost tool to collect data is observation (Creswell, 2011). Observation provides researchers with the opportunity to collect first-hand information and then use their knowledge and skills to interpret what was observed (Merriam, 2009). I chose the observation method to triangulate the emergent findings; that is, observation was used with the checklists to confirm or perhaps in some ways oppose the findings from the interviews.

Before conducting observations, I gained access to the classroom with the permission of the school principals and classroom teachers. I also inquired with the teachers about the best times to observe so I knew when the participants would be involved in different activities with the children. I began the observations by making myself comfortable in a location clear of obstruction where I could easily see the classroom and the activities being performed by the participants.

The observations were made *in situ*, or within natural settings. This means that the setting and context pre-existed, and the naturally occurring group or individuals were observed therein (Lichtman, 2010). I adopted the role of non-participant researcher

during the observations, but rather than having some potential influence in the situation that I was observing, I decided to take field notes without being involved in the activities (Creswell, 2011). The common process of taking field notes is to jot down brief notes that the participant considers important to note from the observation period and then write an actual field note at a later time using memories of that observation time period (Bachman & Schutt, 2021). Throughout the observations, I paid attention to the participants and was careful in noting whatever the participant said and did during one hour of teaching and throughout the activities during which they were involved with children in the classroom (Merriam, 2009). At the end of these observations, I also noted down my thoughts, comments, and the classroom in my research journal.

Checklists

Last, I constructed a checklist (see Appendix B) and sent it to participants via email or physically gave it to the participants after they were finished with the interview and observation. The checklists were collected from the participants via email. This was the last step for participants, and they completed their participation in the research study. The checklist was designed to potentially validate the data collected through the interviews and observations. The four domains discussed in leadership literature, namely cognitive, social, physical, and disposition, were numbered one to four on the checklist, and participants were asked to reorder them from one to four, in which one was the least essential domain and four was the most important domain that participants encouraged in children. The domains were organized with specific characteristics under them. The characteristics were written under each domain, and participants were again asked to reorder the characteristics that they like to encourage under that domain in which the

highest number in each domain was equal to the highest encouraged characteristic by teachers. The lowest number represented that the teacher preferred encouraging that characteristic the least. The checklist data source added to the triangulation and validation of the data collected from interviews and observations. These various sources do not necessarily support the same interpretation, enlightening different viewpoints that do not strive for objectivity but are produced by the focus of the analysis (Matte & Kristensen, 2020).

Data Analysis

All 11 interviews were audio recorded via smartphone using the transcription application *Otter.ai.* This application provided transcriptions, but nevertheless, I reviewed each interview to ensure the transcriptions were accurate. Once the accuracy of the transcriptions was confirmed, I deleted the audio recordings to protect participant anonymity. I re-read all 11 transcripts and then organized them by placing each participant's answer to the first question in one Microsoft Word document, answers to the second question, and so on, in another document. I organized all 11 documents similarly. Then, I uploaded the documents into ATLAS.ti software to begin the coding process.

Codes, Categories, and Themes

Interview Analysis

Interview transcription data were organized by research question. I inductively analyzed my data, examining the detailed data collected via interviews and observations to formulate general codes and themes. Throughout this process, I went back and forth reading the textual data and worked to identify specific codes. Moving back and forth gives the researcher an opportunity to uncover a core category or constant comparison

that will serve as the basis for theory development (Hays & Singh, 2012). Next, I used the codes to form categories, and from these categories, I created major themes. The themes and codes that evolved from the data were named as emergent themes or emergent codes.

I applied open and *in-vivo* codes in ATLAS.ti by reading the transcriptions line by line. After completing the coding process, I exported the codes for each research question from ATLAS.ti to a Microsoft Excel sheet for further compression using color coding. To ensure similar codes were grouped, I went back and forth to read my transcriptions and confirm the accuracy of similar codes. I also considered participant tone, meaning, relativeness, and comments while coding. For example, one teacher while discussing leadership stated that she would like to hear more about leadership, so this statement was coded via open-coding and was coded as interested in learning about leadership. Additionally, I applied a second strategy: after exporting the codes from ATLAS.ti to an Excel sheet, I manually assigned numbers to different codes that were similar in meaning, tone, and comment.

For the first research question from interview data, 511 codes were formed. These 511 codes were then compressed to 112 codes, and again recompressed to 46 codes. For the second research question, 488 codes were initially generated. These codes were compressed to 134 codes and again compressed to 53 codes. The third question included 801 codes, which were combined first into 135, and later compressed into 50 codes. Finally, the fourth question rendered 843 codes that were combined first into 140 and later compressed into 37 codes. Once the codes were compressed, I created categories by looking for similar meanings, redundancy, relationships, and connections. In most cases,

I provided a few examples to support the major theme. The excerpts were chosen based on their occurrence or the codes that emerged from the discussion.

Once category formulation was complete, I began to formulate the themes and emergent themes from the data. For research question one, "What are the perspectives of teachers in influencing leadership skills in four to six-year-old children in the classroom?", the themes were: (1) leaders demonstrate a variety of characteristics in the classroom (2) teachers facilitate opportunities to instill leadership in children (3) children acquire leadership in the classroom, and (4) teachers lack training, awareness, and knowledge on leadership in children.

For research question two, "What characteristics of leadership do teachers observe in their children during various activities that take place in the classroom?", the themes were: (1) Teachers observe descriptive elements of leadership in children (2) Leadership is exhibited by children in various activities (3) Teacher encourages leadership (4) Leadership is hard at young age.

For research question three, "What are the different techniques teachers apply to encourage leadership in young children?", the themes were: (1) Teachers involved directly and indirectly in leadership development (2) Teacher identifies leaders and encourages activities in a group (3) Teachers believe in leadership despite their lack of knowledge on leadership and (4) Pandemic constrained social development in children.

Lastly, for research question four, "How do teachers apply different techniques to encourage leadership in children in the classroom?", the themes were: (1) Teachers provide developmentally appropriate practices (2) Teachers' uses their expertise, and (3) Instilling leadership is difficult due to the COVID-19 situation.

Observation Analysis

For the observation analysis, I uploaded the observation field notes in ATLAS.ti and started to denote codes. I applied codes using open coding by reading the transcriptions line by line. After completing the coding process, I imported the codes to an excel sheet. I separated the codes by taking each participant coded individually in the word document. I looked for the patterns and categorized them to form the themes, for this, I used the traditional method of analysis, i.e., using paper and pen. While writing my analysis in chapter four, I converted the final theme into different headings to make it easy to understand (see Appendix C). Various examples and anecdotes from the field notes were provided under those headings.

Checklists Analysis

Finally, I analyzed the checklists that were obtained from the teachers after their interview and observation was completed. The first part of the checklist contained the important domain teachers would like to encourage the most in children to instill leadership. The domains were: cognitive, social, physical, and disposition, which were ordered numerically from one to four. The teachers were asked to reorder them from one to four, where four indicated the most important domain to encourage to instill leadership in children, and one meant the domain that the teacher encouraged the least. The second part included leadership characteristics, which were arranged under the above-given domains. Teachers were again asked to reorder them where the highest number meant the characteristic teachers encouraged the most in children, and the lowest number indicated the characteristic that the teacher wanted to encourage the least. I analyzed the checklists by looking at the domains and the characteristics that were ranked highest and lowest,

meaning important and least important by most teachers. Quantifying the rank order was difficult, so the checklist was analyzed based on the majority of teachers' markings.

Summary

Data were collected to explore teachers' perceptions of leadership development in children, as well as their contributions to influencing leadership in children. The interview and the observation data were analyzed using a multi-step process that included transcribing the audio recordings, developing codes within the data, using these codes to formulate categories, and eventually to create emergent themes. For the observation, categories were transformed into the headings. The example and the anecdotes from the observations of all 11 teachers were organized under the heading to make it explainable for the readers. In chapter four, I will discuss the findings of the four research questions that were the pillars of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

As stated in the previous chapters, the primary purpose of this study is to understand teachers' perceptions of developing leadership skills in children and to investigate the application of various strategies in the classroom geared at developing leadership skills in children aged four to six-years-old. Data were collected from 11 participants using a demographic questionnaire, participant interviews, participant observations, and a checklist filled out by the participants. The methodology entailed a grounded theory approach using an inductive reasoning to analyze the data, as discussed in chapter three.

I will discuss the result in aggregate; thus, all eleven participants are discussed together. The excerpts will be provided from the individual's direct quote as well as the observation I made. Many studies have indicated children with leadership skills as child leadership (Fox, 2012), leadership in children (Owen, 2007), and student leaders (Mullarky, 2008). In this study, I have used the term child leaders to indicate children with leadership skills. The participants of this study used the term "child who is a leader" or "leader" when discussing leadership in children. So, to make it clear, I have used the term "child leader," which means children with leadership skills in this study.

The first part of this chapter is organized by answering the research questions through interview questions pertaining to the research questions, as shown in Table 4.1, teachers' observation (see Appendix C) by the researcher, and checklists (see Appendix C) provided by the participants.

Table 4.1

Formation of Interview Questions Pertaining to Research Questions

Main research questions	Interview questions
Question 1: What are the perspectives of teachers in influencing leadership skills in four to six-years-old children in the classroom?	1. Think about a child in your classroom who is a leader. Why do you think he/she is a leader? 2. What are your perceptions on leadership in young children? 3. Do you think teachers can influence leadership in children? If yes, how?
Question 2: What characteristics of leadership do teachers observe in their children during various activities that take place in the classroom?	4. What are some of the key leadership behaviors you have noticed in children in various activities and situations? 5. What characteristics of leadership in children have you noticed are the most observable in classroom activities?
Question 3: What are the different techniques that teachers apply to encourage leadership in young children?	6. Do you think it is important to develop leadership skills in children? If yes, how do you contribute to children's leadership development? 7. What experiences do you incorporate into activities that develop leadership in children? How do you incorporate leadership in those activities?
Question 4: How do teachers apply different techniques to encourage leadership in children in the classroom?	8. Do you recognize leadership in your classroom? If yes, what do you do to enhance leadership in those children? 9. What do you do besides the curriculum to enhance/develop leadership skills in children? Please give some examples.

Four research questions guided this study:

1. Three interview questions and a checklist were designed to address Research Question One: *What are the perspectives of teachers in influencing leadership skills in four to six-year-old children in the classroom?*

2. Two interview questions and a checklist were designed to address Research Question two: *What characteristics of leadership do teachers observe in their children during various activities that take place in the classroom?*
3. Two interview questions and participant observation were designed to address Research Question Three: *What are the different techniques that teachers apply to encourage leadership in young children?*
4. Two interview questions and participant observation were designed to address Research Question Four: *How do teachers apply different techniques to encourage leadership in children in the classroom?*

The growth of themes from categories, and the development of categories from codes, is one of the ways to analyze data inductively (Creswell, 2011). Similarly, in this study, data were assigned the codes; codes were progressed to subcategories and categories by sorting them by looking for similar patterns. Categories then progressed to themes, and themes provide a more comprehensive concept than codes. Similarly, Merriam (2009) suggested combining data that seem to go together, clustering them, and giving the name to that cluster; this way, categories are formed. Then, categories are again clustered to develop a theme.

In most cases, I provided three or four examples of codes to support the major theme. The excerpts were chosen based on their occurrence or the codes that emerged from the discussion with teachers during the interview or teacher observation. In some instances, during the teachers' interview, there was only one example that supported the theme, which will be discussed further in chapter five. Of note, in this chapter I have use teacher and participant interchangeably.

Research Question One: What are the Perspectives of Teachers in Influencing Leadership Skills in Four to Six-year-old Children in the Classroom?

This research question investigated teachers' perceptions of leadership in young children and explored if teachers could influence leadership in young children. Three interview questions, as shown in Table 4.1, and a checklist (see Appendix C) helped to answer this research question. Four themes were established from the interview data to answer the first research question:

1. Child leader demonstrate a variety of characteristics in the classroom.
2. Teachers facilitate opportunities to instill leadership in children.
3. Children acquire leadership in the classroom.
4. Teachers lack training, awareness, and knowledge of leadership in children.

As shown in Table 4.3, for Theme One, child leaders *demonstrate a variety of characteristics in the classroom,* all 11 participants' responses to the interview questions led to a discussion on the various characteristics of leadership and the leadership demographics they observed in their classroom. The example of the codes assigned to data are indicated in Table 4.2. Note the examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview questions one, two, and three. Most teachers discussed that child leaders were the ones who were confident. One teacher clarified, "I would say that the child that I'm thinking of is a leader because they have just that personality themselves. So, they are confident in themselves." Four of the teachers discussed that the children who were aware of the rules and routines of the classroom are the leaders, and because they knew the rules, they were confident, and let other children know when they think that some children were going off the task. One of the participants explained:

I can think of quite a few, actually, a lot of it just has to do with confidence. The strong root of understanding of what the expectations are of the classroom really helped them feel confident in what they can and cannot do.

Two other teachers discussed that children who demonstrated leadership were the role models of the classroom; she further added that the role models could be displayed in the classroom for other children to follow; she stated that she points to role models in the classroom by saying:

Oh, look how so and so is doing their work. what a good leader you are, and sometimes it's a leader to line up, you know, you're the leader (saying to a child) you go show them how to do it, especially at the beginning when they're learning even how to line up.

Table 4.2

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme One of RQ1

Quotation	Code
"Because we set up routines for them, we assign jobs, and we do things in the same order every day. So, by the time we get to about January, the teachers, we wouldn't have to tell them what to do. They can do it all by themselves."	Child leaders know the rules and routines
"And that helps to develop leadership qualities because their confidence and their expertise leads them to be it helps us to understand what to do in a group situation."	Leaders are confident
"Don't know if the other students truly recognize that they are following the example. I mean, I try to call out like kids all day, like, I like how so and so is sitting quietly and following directions."	Child leaders as role models
"I can see the students who are stronger leaders, they'll be the ones that will be like, okay, this is what we're going to do. Even though the teacher hasn't given any instruction, they're already in their	Leaders' personality

Table 4.2 (Continued)

Quotation	Code
minds trying to think of step by step on the other side."	
"We also have the bossy child, the one who wants to tell everyone what to do. And it depends on the personality of the children, we'll find that some children will gravitate toward that person and follow along with everything they say."	Bossy leaders
"And we have found that the one who has emerged as a leader, is someone who's very positive influence, on the other one who desires to tell everyone what to do, has turned out to be a very negative influence. And so, what we've been trying to do is to steer them sort of in in better directions."	Positive leadership
"They often will have ways that they can lead but quiet ways. shy, quiet kids are the ones who are cleaning things up and then maybe handing a toy to a friend. So, they're not saying a lot of words, but their body language and the way that they are behaving, is showing others a way that they can progress through the day."	Shy kids are leaders
"I think that, to some extent, they're the oldest, like I noticed, my few who stand out kind of as leaders are my oldest children in the family."	Older kid in a family is a leader
"But just a situation where she had more time to grow. She wasn't forced to go to kindergarten last year. And now I was in kindergarten this year, as kind of an older leader."	Older kid in the classroom is a leader
"I think that her parents have given her many opportunities to do things independently and encouraged her and set up situations. So, she's been able to make choices, even though it's really the choice they want her to make. But they've set it up so that she can make one of the choices and feel the ownership of that. She is an only child, the one that I'm thinking of, in my mind."	She is the only child in the family
"I would say I am thinking of another child, also a boy with my boys, shares okay and yes, he might have taken a little bit of his lead from the first child I mentioned." "A lot of them are my girls, too, which I think plays a part in it. The boys will, but they tend to like to lead their boys, whereas my girls will tend to be like, leaders all the time."	Boy/girl as a leader

Table 4.2 (Continued)

Quoatation	Code
"That one quality that we find is that when they're using someone's name, when they're greeting people, and when they're treating everyone equally, they tend to emerge as a leader."	Leaders know how to treat others
"I think that they're really good about welcoming all the kids in the classroom. And something that, like I thrive to see in leaders is seeing their inclusivity."	Child leaders include all kids
"What we have found is that over the couple months that we've been in school, that other children will seek this one person out over and over again and be looking to that person to see what they are going to do next.	Child leaders have a group of followers

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview question one, two, and three.

Some of the teachers mentioned different personalities that they have witnessed in the child leaders of their classroom. While mentioning the personalities, two of the teachers used the term "bossy" for the children who controlled the behavior of other children or the ones who were noisy in the classroom. In contrast, one of the teachers used the term "shy" for the leader's personality in her classroom, nothing they were the ones who led in non-verbal ways. While mentioning the example of the "bossy" leader, one of the teachers described, "so the child that they're wanting to be like a child, they're copying; I see a lot of manipulative behavior in him, I see a lot of, you know, like, trying to get his peers to do things that he wants them to do." While discussing the personalities, three teachers also mentioned positive leadership. The quotations below supported this code. One of the participants described:

> If a child who's positive and who is just accepting to everyone, they might not just think that like, oh, I'm playing with that person because they're lonely, but they're just doing they're comfortable [sic]. They just do. I don't have to say.

While discussing the perspectives on leadership, five participants also discussed leadership demographics such as older children being leaders, older siblings displaying leadership in the classroom, girls as leaders, or boys showing leadership in the classroom. Teachers described leaders in the classroom as having a positive attitude toward others, meaning they accepted all students and were comfortable with everyone in the classroom. Some teachers said they witnessed older children in the family acting as a classroom leader, while other teachers stated older children led the classroom. One teacher favored the only child in the family as a leader, whereas two teachers mentioned the gender of leaders while discussing leadership; one teacher supported girls as evolving as leaders in the classroom, while another teacher mentioned that boys display more leadership in the classroom.

Two of the participants also discussed that they perceived leaders to be empathetic. The teachers stated that leaders knew how to treat others. Teachers also modelled empathy, and one teacher said children watch and learn by "how we treat them and respect them." Two of the teachers also mentioned that leaders who had a sense of empathy also involved all children in their group; they were welcoming. One of the teachers provided an explanation, stating "Just speaking of mentioned [sic] these two boys, my perception [sic], I've learned from them that if a child who's positive and who is just accepting to everyone."

Similarly, as the leader included all the children in their group, the leaders had followers, too. Children liked to follow because child leaders were doing what they are supposed to do. Three teachers reported that other children follow child leaders, and children seek a leader to initiate activity in the classroom. One teacher clarified how she

might convey to a leader that s/he has followers, “oh, look, how you are a leader, and all the kids followed you because you are doing what you were supposed to do.” Therefore, teachers discussed their perceptions of leadership in young children by mentioning various characteristics that they experienced and the demographics of leadership in young children that they witnessed in their classroom. The codes from the interview with teachers in support of theme one is mentioned in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Theme One: Child leaders Demonstrate a Variety of Characteristics in the Classroom

Iteration Two: Categories			
Category 1	***Category 2***	***Category 3***	***Category 4***
Confident children in the classroom	Personalities within the classroom	Leadership demographics	Child leader is empathetic
Iteration One: Codes			
• Child leaders know the rules and routines • Leaders are confident • Child leaders as role models • Child leaders are responsible • Leaders are verbal	• Leaders’ personality • Bossy leaders • Positive leadership • Shy kids are leaders • Child leader is curious • Natural leaders • Silly kid as a leader • Shy leaders are less verbal • Leaders are verbal	• Leaders’ personality • Bossy leaders • Positive leadership • Shy kids are leaders	• Leaders know how to treat others • Child leaders include all kids • Child leaders have a group of followers • Understand others feeling • Child leader shares

As displayed in Table 4.5, for Theme Two, *teachers facilitate opportunities to instill leadership in children,* all 11 participants mentioned their opinion and experiences in facilitating opportunities for children to acquire leadership. Teachers believed that they could influence leadership in children. They further described how they get involved with children and provide opportunities to instill leadership skills, as shown in Table 4.4. Five participants mentioned that they instilled leadership in children by being role models or setting up an example for them. Three of these five teachers were in support of teachers being role models. Teachers described that they modelled good behavior and kindness by saying thank you to children; they also recognized when a child displayed positive behavior, for example, treating other people well. In support of teachers as role models, one participant noted:

> I do think that I'm the leader for them. So, I do believe that teachers play a huge role. And it's just through modeling. However, I model something that is going to be seen through their eyes, and it might be reciprocated as well.

Teachers explained that children learn what they see, so when teachers become a leader and role models in the classroom, it may help them to learn what leaders look like and what leadership is. Among five teachers, two indicated they also instilled leadership by setting up various examples in front of children or by presenting various qualities of a child leader of the classroom or the school and inspiring other children to become like one of the models.

Table 4.4

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Two of RQ1

Quotations	Codes
"I think that some of the most important things that we influence as far as leadership is trying to be the example of how to treat other people. And so, trying to be respectful, so we make a conscious effort to try and say thank you to children. We try to recognize when they're doing something that's positive and quaint, so that when they are watching our example, then they would know how to treat other people the same way. And that does quite often help them when they want to be a leader in a group, because they have already learned that the way to treat someone helps you to get their attention."	Teacher as a role model
'Explaining that like I see what so and so is doing they're making really good choices right now or like they're being really quiet in the hallways that's what a leader should be like we should follow their lead."	Teachers shows by example
"So, what we've been trying to do is to steer them sort of in better directions."	Teachers take charge to encourage leadership
"I do think like I mentioned before, certain character traits tend to lead to kids being leaders, and that they have a level of confidence. But I think when you see that in a kid, you can try to bring it up and make it stronger and draw attention to that."	Teachers encourage leadership
"It's giving the children the opportunity to be the ones who do a lot of learning so that it's not all teacher driven. Its teacher showed, shall I say, teacher Invited and then children that are also participating fully in their process."	Leadership can be taught

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview question one, two, and three.

All 11 participants mentioned that they encouraged leadership in children in many ways. One teacher stated, "encourage them by asking them open-ended questions and giving them experiences to explore those leaderships. You know, a teacher can have lots

of really great motivation." However, three teachers revealed that sometimes children lose track and do not do what they are supposed to. When this occurs, teachers are likely to take charge and interfere by providing students with kind reminders, instructions, and directing them back to their work; one teacher clarified this by saying, "a lot of times, adults, if teachers, me, personally, just people in general, want to always give more instruction or tell them to step by step how to do something." Additionally, three teachers stated that leadership could also be encouraged in children by teaching; they mentioned that leadership was teachable. One of the teachers mentioned that leadership "can be explicitly taught; I do think that we can, you know, form and shape and encourage children to lead in a positive way." Consequently, participants revealed that leadership could be instilled in young children by teachers being role models in the classroom, providing different opportunities, and teaching them to be leaders.

Table 4.5

Theme Two: Teachers Facilitate Opportunities to Instill Leadership in Children

Iteration Two: Category
Teacher practice modeling leadership, provides opportunities, and believes in teaching leadership
Iteration One: Codes
• Teacher as a role model • Teachers shows by example • Teachers take charge to encourage leadership • Teachers Encourage Leadership • Leadership can be taught • Teacher doesn't force kids • Teacher recognizes leadership • Teacher makes pairs to help • Teacher instills leadership • Giving opportunities • Kids can really be fantastic leaders

As displayed in Table 4.7, for Theme Three, *children acquire leadership in the classroom*, the majority of the participants said that children are involved in many classroom activities through which they acquire leadership in different ways; examples are shown in Table 4.6. The teachers believed that most of these activities help children grow into leaders because in those activities the children already demonstrate their skills. Two participants stated that, leaders willingly participate in all classroom activities. One of the participants explained that leaders are individual who wants to participate actively, "someone who looks for tasks above and beyond." Two teachers stated that teachers are role models and that children acquire leadership through imitating their teachers.

Table 4.6

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Three of RQ1

Quotations	Codes
Having the children in the classroom that tend to be more of the leaders is always helpful for the teachers, because then they can help if children are getting off task or maybe going into an area that's closed or something, then the children that are more of the leaders are usually really good about reminding them of what the rules are what we're supposed to be doing at that time.	Leaders participate in the class
"They're using the same tone I went to; I just see that was very good leadership on my part."	Children imitate the teacher
"I think that kids can be really fantastic leaders if the adults can step back, which is very difficult sometimes. But you know, giving a child the space in the room to make mistakes in their leadership skills, or try new things helps them grow more."	Children learn by themselves

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview question one, two and three.

One teacher explained that children learn how to treat other people the same way, when they watch their teachers. And that does quite often help them when they want to be a leader in a group. Similarly, children also gain leadership by learning various things independently while exploring in the classroom. Two teachers mentioned that children leaders like to work and learn independently and often initiate this learning alone, without teacher intervention. One teacher mentioned on children's leadership that "it's not all teacher-driven. It's the teacher shown, shall I say, the teacher invited, and then children are also participating fully in their process."

Table 4.7

Theme Three: Children Acquire Leadership in the Classroom

Iteration Two: Category
Actively involved children and leadership acquisition
Iteration One: Codes
• Leaders participate in the class • Children imitate the teacher • Children learn by themselves • Take turn to be a leader • Child leaders learn from others in the class • They can focus • Leaders impress the teacher

Many teachers discussed the modes of acquiring leadership in the classroom, in which they mentioned that children's participation, imitation, and learning independently were the ways they gained leadership in their classroom.

As displayed in Table 4.9, for Theme Four, *teachers lack training, awareness, and knowledge on leadership in children,* five teachers discussed the importance of training and awareness in the context of recognizing leadership in children. The examples

of the quotations and codes given to those quotations are shown in Table 4.8. Two of these teachers expressed their concerns regarding training and stated that teachers were not trained to instill leadership in children. These teachers revealed they did not receive any training on leadership in children during their career, and one of them stated that they did not hear about "leadership in children" until participating in this study. However, many expressed an interest in participating in leadership training, especially child-focused leadership training. One teacher conveyed her distress and stated that she wanted to help the children who lacked verbal skills, but she was unable to help them. She said:

> That's something that I need more of, because I don't know how to help them. So children who may be nonverbal, or less verbal, or that maybe their transitions are more difficult. I'm not sure how to help those children. And that's something that I would hope to get more training in, like some kind of professional development, because they should also have those opportunities.

Similarly, one teacher also mentioned her interest in leadership in children and suggested that leadership in children should be researched more extensively; she also mentioned that it was a new topic for them that they had never learned about what leadership might look like in young children.

Teachers also provided the reasons for sometimes discouraging leadership in children. Teachers revealed that they have many responsibilities to facilitate in the classroom and tight schedules to follow. However, despite their schedules, they indicated the need to provide space for children to learn and grow to achieve leadership skills. Two of the teachers agreed that teachers might discourage leadership in children. One of the teachers offered an explanation and stated,

There are teachers who, you know, have a hard time doing that. Some teachers want to be the one in charge the whole time and may not release that to, which would encourage their children to show leadership.

Table 4.8

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Four of RQ1

Quotations	Codes
"A teacher can have lots of really great motivation. But if they are very stringent with rules and expectations, then there's no room for that to happen."	Teachers may sometimes discourage leadership
"It's not something that was discussed in my undergraduate career."	Teachers are not trained in leadership
"I think that it's something to be researched more. It's not something that we see, or really discuss. Being new to this is only my second year of teaching my second year in public school. So being relatively new to the early childhood field I definitely think it needs to be researched more."	Leadership in young children is new
"I think it's very hard at this age, because they are all about me."	Children are unaware of leadership behavior

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview question one, two and three.

Two teachers also mentioned that they perceived children as unaware of leadership behavior. In the teachers' opinions, children might not always know they are leaders. One participant illustrated this concept by stating, "I'm not really sure if the leaders necessarily know that they're being leaders at this young of an age, especially in a year like this, where they haven't had a ton of peer interaction."

The developing theme from the mentioned codes and their assigned categories are displayed in Table 4.9. Teachers expressed that they think instilling leadership in children is essential, and they lack experience or training in the field of children's leadership,

which sometimes results in not recognizing leadership in children. Teachers also mentioned that they were interested in learning more about children's leadership.

Table 4.9

Theme Four: Teachers Lack Training, Awareness, and Knowledge on Leadership in Children

Iteration Two: Category
Teachers lack experience/training and expressed interest in children's leadership
Iteration One: Codes
• Teachers may sometimes discourage leadership • Teachers are not trained in leadership • Leadership in young children is new • Children are unaware of leadership behavior

Therefore, research question one asked about teachers' perceptions of influencing leadership skills in four to six-year-old children in the classroom. Participants mentioned the different characteristics they perceive in a leader, their facilitation in developing and instilling leadership in children, their opinion on children acquiring leadership in the classroom, and their views on the lack of training in children's leadership area.

In answering the first research question, teachers mentioned various leadership characteristics they think are essential for children to gain leadership. They also stated that they facilitated children's leadership through teaching and providing different opportunities to them. The results also discussed teachers felt children acquired leadership by actively participating in classroom activities. However, they believed they lack leadership training, which sometimes restricted the recognition and development of leadership in their children.

Research Question Two: What Characteristics of Leadership do Teachers Observe in their Children During Various Activities That Take Place in the Classroom?

This research question was designed to investigate the various characteristics of leadership that children display in the various activities that take place in the classroom and are observable by teachers. Two interview questions, as shown in table 4.1, and a checklist (see Appendix C) helped in answering this question. Four themes were developed from the interview data:

1. Teachers observe descriptive elements of leadership in children.
2. Leadership is exhibited by children in various activities.
3. Teachers encourages leadership.
4. Leadership is hard at this young age.

Teachers discussed various skills and personalities that children demonstrate to elevate themselves as leaders, as shown in Table 4.10. As displayed in Table 4.11, for Theme One, *teachers observe descriptive elements of leadership in children*; all 11 teachers provided the various elements of leadership that they witnessed in their classroom. While answering RQ-1 (research question 1), teachers mentioned that they view various leadership characteristics in children. While answering the RQ-2, it was discovered that teachers again discussed some of those characteristics, because they had witnessed child leaders displaying these characteristics in their classroom. For example, under teachers' perception, participants mentioned that child leaders have a group of followers and are confident, empathetic, and role models. When teachers were asked about the characteristics of leadership that they observed in their classroom, they

discussed many characteristics including the characteristics, as outlined in the paragraphs that follow.

Some teachers stated they witnessed leaders being followed by other children in the classroom activities they chose. They noted followers conformed to participating in the same activity or area that the child leaders selected. “And I noticed, like, a lot of my kids will wait for those certain kids to decide. So, I don't know yet until like, (child’s name) decides or (child’s name) decides, or whatever.” Some teachers mentioned that child leaders are confident; one teacher explained, “when they pair that with just a level of confidence and maturity, kids tend to take notice, and it has a rippling calming effect on the classroom.” Other leadership characteristics that were discussed briefly by the teachers including that child leaders are empathetic. Other teachers mentioned child leaders were role models, while one teacher discussed that child leaders waited for their turns.

Most teachers described various cognitive skills that child leaders displayed in the classroom were witnessed by their teacher. Three teachers mentioned that leaders had the ability to make decisions. One teacher provided insight on child leaders to be able to decide “Standing up for what they like or don't like is a good way to show leadership.” The other two teachers thought that child leaders thought differently from other children and had the ability to think in abstractions, compared to most of their peers. One of the teachers said child leaders “demonstrate great thinking to others in a variety of situations.” In support of child leaders displaying cognitive skills, two other teachers mentioned that child leaders often do not delay offering their opinion to others. One

participant confirmed this, saying, “I see kids that are leaders, putting their feelings and putting their opinions out there in a way that lets them be known.”

Table 4.10

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme One of RQ2

Quotations	Codes
“They start by telling me what area they're gonna start in. And I noticed, like, a lot of my kids will wait for those certain kids to decide. So, I don't know yet until like, (child’s name) decides or (child’s name) decides, or whatever. And then everyone will kind of follow those kids to different areas, whether it be like the dramatic play area, the black area, the writing area.”	Child leaders have a group of followers
“I had a child that didn't know what to do and was kind of hanging out by me. And another little girl that she knew from preschool came over and say, ‘Hey, come play with me.’ And off they went.”	Child leaders are confident
“I feel like it's a difference between like a leader and just wanting attention. So, someone who wants to speak up and help versus just wanting all the turns.”	Child leaders wait for their turn
“Whether we're standing in line to go somewhere, whether we're playing out in the playground, you know, inviting somebody to come into play with them.”	Child leaders are empathetic.
“They're kind of acting as that role model.”	Child leaders are role models
“So, I noticed, like my leaders will be the ones who decide where, like, unconsciously decide where everybody plays”	Child leaders make decisions
“Where they're playing dress up, leaders will almost always emerge that are saying, “What about if we add this thing? What do you think if we add this character? How about if my character said this thing?”	Child leaders have abstract thoughts
“I have one little, when that one little pumpkin hates swing, and he's not afraid to say nope.”	Child leaders have their opinions
“It's like their preferred groups that they play with. So yeah, there's always in my groups of kids,	Child leaders are bossy

Table 4.10 (Continued)

Quotations	Codes
"I don't remember where I heard the term from, but it's a silent leader. My quiet kids are still modeling the classroom expectations."	Child leaders are shy/quiet
"Fourth grade kids in that class were having a real hard time walking down the hallway quietly. And my class was amazing. And so, they showed the big kids, this is how you're supposed to do it. Yeah. Good chance for the little ones to be the leaders and show the big kids."	Young leaders in the classroom

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview question four and five.

While discussing various characteristics of a child leaders, teachers also mentioned the disposition of the child leader they had witnessed while discussing various characteristics of a child leaders. Three of the teachers thought that some leaders of the classroom were "bossy" in nature. Teachers provided various descriptions of "bossy" leaders, allowing this code to emerge during the interviews. One of the participants gave an example that 'bossy" children want to do things or play how they want it to be. Some teachers described them as the loudest children, and some defined them as children who always liked to take charge. However, other teachers said that bossy children were challenging.

In contrast, three of the teachers mentioned that sometimes shy/quiet children were the ones who were classroom leaders. One of these three teachers believed that some leaders were bossy as well. These three teachers did not mention that shy/quiet children had muteness but stated that they were less verbal than other children in the classroom. Shy/quiet leaders were not as verbal as their peers but exhibited various examples of owning leadership in the classroom. One of the teachers offered the following explanation on shy/quiet leaders, "for the ones that are more shy or quiet, like,

they might not necessarily be using their voice to be a leader. But their actions, a lot of times, can be a way for them to be a leader."

Table 4.11

Theme One: Teachers Observe Descriptive Elements of Leadership in Children

Iteration Two: Category		
Category 1 Child Leaders have a group of followers and comprise social-emotional skills.	***Category 2*** Developed Cognitive Skills in Leaders	***Category 3*** Dispositions of Leaders
Iteration One: Codes		
• Child leaders have a group of followers • Child leaders are confident • Child leaders wait for their turn • Child leaders are empathetic • Child leaders are role models • Child leaders are social • Child leaders makes other kid feel important • Some child leaders want to be in spotlight	• Child leaders make decisions • Child leaders have abstract thoughts • Child leaders have their opinions • Leader kids are observant • Child leaders are confident • Leader kid take ownership • Leader kids imitate the teacher	• Child leaders are bossy • Child leaders are shy/quiet • Young leaders in the classroom • Leader kids don't have to be boisterous • Young leaders are aggressive • Kids don't remain shy in young age • Older kids in the classroom are leaders • Leader kids are louder • Leadership in children is not natural • Child leaders are flexible • Other characteristics of a child leader

Teachers also witnessed young children in their classrooms being the leaders. One participant specified the leadership in young children; she said, “Well, at a young age, when you get a leader, they tend to just be kind of straightforward like, come do this with me.” Teachers provided different descriptions when they discussed leadership characteristics in young children. Some teachers numbered specifics, such as taking turns, being social, making other children feel important, taking ownership, and being observant, as shown in Table 4.11.

Additionally, teachers discussed various dispositions of leadership that they had observed in their classrooms and the social-emotional, and cognitive skills that child leaders displayed in their classrooms which were also observable by the teachers.

Table 4.12

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Two of RQ2

Quotations	Codes
“It's not necessarily always the same children, like, there's definitely children in the classroom that I feel like, are more of a leader more often. But we can definitely see those qualities in each child at different times.”	Children display leadership all over the classroom
“The children that are more like, the leaders, the pretend to play scenarios are the ones that are typically more vocal. Kind of wanting to lead the play scenario.”	Leadership in pretend play
“I think that they've also been encouraged a lot in their own skills as children, so the adults or other peers speak to them and encouraging and their kind ways also helps build that confidence.”	Peers encouraging the kid

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained from the interview question four and five.

As indicated in table 4.13, in Theme Two, *leadership is exhibited by children in various activities,* teachers explained various activities that took place in the classroom where they were able to witness children being leaders. One of the teachers also mentioned that many activities occurred in the classroom, so leadership was observed everywhere. One of the participants confirmed that leadership was all over the classroom by providing the example, “then everyone will kind of follow those kids to different areas, whether it be like the dramatic play area, the block area, the writing area, things like that.”

Teachers’ observation during different activities helps them to recognize leadership in children. Regarding leadership in children, one participant confirmed, “It happens in different little packets that you just have to think and notice.”

One activity was choice time when children chose their area to play. Three of the 11 teachers mentioned that they had witnessed leadership when children were involved in pretend play. Child leaders assigned jobs to each other and followed the game's rules. The leaders of the play were primarily involved in running the play scenarios, providing ideas, and were more verbal. Teachers mentioned that sometimes children had a mutual understanding of picking up their roles in pretend play. One of the teachers explained:

> Pretend play in the house area is a huge place to see that too. There's always somebody who wants to do the dishes, somebody who wants to do the cooking, somebody who wants to take care of the baby dolls, things like that. But they're all working together while they're doing it too.

Similarly, teachers mentioned that some activities encourage peer interactions. Child leaders were noticed encouraging their peers. Three of the 11 teachers indicated

leadership was also observed when peer activities are involved in the classroom. One of the teachers stated, “they are teaching as a peer, rather than are [having] us always doing it, allowing them, I guess, would be other ways allowing them to, like, problem solve for their peers rather than us.”

Table 4.13

Theme Two: Leadership is Exhibited by Children in Various Activities

Iteration Two: Category
Leadership is observed in different activities inside/outside of the classroom
Iteration One: Codes
• Children display leadership all over the classroom • Leadership in pretend play • Peers encouraging the kid • Leadership in parallel play • Child is leader of the play • Leadership happens in the playground • Child leaders waits for their turn • Child leader leads in work time • Leadership in writing area • Child leaders knows the rules • Child leaders can often be recognized in the classroom

Another teacher mentioned that when children were with their peers, they behaved well and were confident and other children also learned from them. She said:

> And they're constantly leading by example, they're just a constant and consistent example of appropriate behavior and kindness. And when they pair that was just a

> level of confidence and maturity, kids tend to take notice [sic], and it has a rippling calming effect on the classroom.

Teachers mentioned that they witnessed children displaying leadership in all classroom activities as well as on the playground. Some children were the leaders in pretend play while others were leaders in other activities, such as writing—the leadership role changed from one child to another as the activity changed. Teachers also stated that child leaders were often recognized, regardless of the activity. An example of activities that offer children opportunities to be leaders is displayed in Table 4.12.

As indicated in Table 4.15, in Theme Three, *teachers encourage leadership,* teachers mentioned their support in instilling leadership. This theme occurred while teachers discussed the characteristics of leadership they had observed in children. Teachers said they encouraged leadership in children by acknowledging and supporting them in various ways. For example, teachers provided different opportunities, taught leadership, gave directions, got involved, and developed an environment for children to acquire leadership. While explaining how to instill leadership in children, three teachers mentioned that giving them independence, guiding them, and making rules to follow were examples of instilling leadership. One participant discussed that sometimes teachers need not be involved; she stated:

> But when the children looked and said, well, wait, they are using that square. But let's see, remember, you wait, let's go over and find those triangles that you can make into a square. They sorted themselves. And I didn't even have to step in.

Table 4.14

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Three of RQ2

Quotations	Codes
"You need to kind of teach with them that they acquire that way, rather than just experiencing especially." "I will make it known, like so and so is making a good choice because they are following directions."	Teacher instills leadership in children
"Allowed to go out in the hallway by themselves" "Just working as a team," "having kindness, empathy"	The teacher encourages developing leadership characteristics in children
"Inviting somebody to come into play with them."	Teachers set an environment to encourage leadership

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained from interview question four and five.

By contrast, another teacher mentioned that children should follow the teacher's directions. She said, "I think it's just sometimes it's as simple as knowing the way, having heard the directions, following through with directions, and then everybody kind of follows." Moreover, one teacher also stated that teachers could teach leadership instead of just letting them experience it independently, because children acquire more when its taught. Few teachers also considered developing leadership characteristics in children by providing different opportunities to them.

The characteristics of leadership among children are problem-solving, independence, kindness, working in a team, and many more. One of the participants explained that she provided a scenario to children and asked them questions, which let them think and problem solve. For example, one teacher prompted "What do I do with this when it needs to dry?" She also indicated that she provided opportunities for children to be independent, stating "we make a big deal about being allowed to go out in the hallway by themselves because they can put their projects in the hallway to dry." On the

other hand, one participant mentioned that providing the opportunity for children to work in teams could develop leadership in them. She mentioned:

> We do have children who want to listen to the other children and hearing what they're saying. So, I know being four and a young five is hard, and that but I know that soon will become a very important Leadership. And just working as a team.

Table 4.15

Theme Three: Teacher Encourages Leadership

Iteration Two: Category
Teacher recognizes, supports, and instills leadership
Iteration One: Codes
• Teacher instills leadership in children. • Teacher encourages developing leadership characteristics in children. • Teachers set an environment to encourage leadership • Teacher teaches leadership skills to children • Teacher recognizes the child leaders • Teacher involved in the activities with children • Teacher encourages developing leadership characteristics in children • Teacher gives direction to children • Teacher encourages leadership in shy children • Teacher set modelling for children • Adult encouragement • Teacher think kids can be a leader • Teacher sees all different opportunities of leadership

Another participant discussed the importance of developing kindness and empathy in children because kind children knew how to handle the situation if someone said something unkind or wrong. For example, she said:

> Other types I would also say, having kindness, empathy, you know, students who are good leaders also know, if another child in the group says something wrong, they don't immediately say no, they're like [sic], and they tried to nicely roll with the punches.

Two of the 11 teachers conveyed that they set up an environment to encourage leadership in children. One participant stated that she provided an opportunity for children to stand up and speak for themselves and for their friends. She described:

> Make sure that they know how to stand up for themselves and skills that they might not naturally have as a leader to stand up for themselves to stand up for friends to tell somebody that they're not being nice.

Various examples of teachers encouraging leadership through setting up the environment to foster leadership in children and developing leadership characteristics is discussed in Table 4.14.

This theme was an unexpected theme, which may be emergent from the teachers' answers. Unexpected themes are the one that is not expected to appear during the study (Creswell, 2011). The teachers were asked about the leadership characteristics they had observed in their children; however, the data also showed teachers encouraged leadership which did not answer the question, but was an addition to the themes in answering research question two. The codes in this theme included the teachers' descriptions of how they encouraged children's leadership. Teachers mentioned that they provided various

opportunities for children to acquire leadership and emphasized developing leadership characteristics.

Theme Four, *leadership is hard at a young age,* is displayed in table 4.17. Two codes and one category supported this theme in which teachers mentioned that they believed that leadership was hard for children to acquire when young. Two out of 11 teachers specifically said that children are not aware of existing leadership in themselves. One participant elaborated, stating children were more egocentric at this age. Egocentrism is the developmental stage; thus, they show fewer leadership skills. She stated, "I think a lot of it is being able to stand up for what they know is right. Leadership is hard at this age because they want to go with the crowd."

Similarly, another teacher explained that they do not provide opportunities for children to be independent, and she has not observed children doing things alone. She said, "I mean, for that we don't do a ton of independent work here. It's really collaborative and play based."

Table 4.16

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Four of RQ2

Categories	Codes
"I don't really see a ton of independence in that sense."	Teachers don't see independence in children
"With this age. Yeah, so I noticed. I mean, obviously, none of these kids have been in school together before this is their first year in school and they all come from different areas. So, they won't all go to the same element moving forward."	Teachers think leadership is hard at this young age

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview question four and five.

Similarly, another teacher explained that they did not provide opportunities for children to be independent, and she had not observed children doing things alone. She said, “I mean, for that we don't do a ton of independent work here. It's really collaborative and play based.”

Table 4.17

Theme Four: Leadership is Hard at Young Age

Iteration Two: Category
Teachers’ opinion on leadership in children
Iteration One: Codes
• Teachers don’t see independence in children. • Teachers think leadership is hard at young age

This teacher also revealed that because of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, children did not go to school; children of the same age level were in different developmental stages, and when they returned to school after the pandemic, they lacked some of the social skills that she thought she needed to focus on. In particular, instilling social skills was critical, and was also the reason she found leadership hard to instill in children. In other words, she thought she needed to focus on children’s social skills and other areas of development first. Examples of teachers discussing the hardships of leadership are provided in Table 4.16.

The findings presented in this question asked if teachers were aware of many characteristics of leadership mentioned in the literature, while some are discussed less, or

used different terms, such as bossy and silly. Teachers noted that children leaders acquired leadership in the classroom and on the playground. In contrast, a few teachers suggested that leadership was hard to acquire at a young age because, in their view, children are unaware of their leadership capability. Some teachers discussed their observations of child leaders having in-born leadership capabilities, and others also discussed that they had child leaders who influenced followers in various ways.

Research Question Three: What are the Different Techniques That Teachers Apply to Encourage Leadership in Young Children?

The purpose of this research question was to investigate teachers' contributions to developing leadership and to discover the experiences and strategies they incorporated into activities that helped children acquire leadership skills. Two interview questions, observation data (see Appendix C), the checklists (see Appendix C), and the demographic questionnaire helped answer this question. Four themes were developed from the interview data:

1. Teachers involved directly and indirectly in leadership development.
2. Teachers identify leaders and encourage activities in a group.
3. Teachers believe in leadership despite their lack of knowledge on leadership.
4. Pandemic constrained social development in children.

Theme One, *teachers are involved directly and indirectly in leadership development*, is shown in Table 4.19. Teachers mentioned the different ways they were involved with children; sometimes they taught leadership, and other times they amalgamated various strategies in activities to develop leadership in children, which is exemplified in Table 4.18. Six participants, including the two who taught online,

indicated they could guide leadership directly or indirectly by providing opportunities to children. Two teachers stated that emotional development is essential to achieving leadership. Therefore, they helped children regulate their emotions in various ways, such as by teaching them kindness, standing up for themselves, talking about anger and frustration, and how they want to be treated/treat others.

While stating the importance of social-emotional skills to attain leadership, another teacher referenced the pandemic that the world has been facing since 2019. She said that we all have gone through difficult situations and that being kind to each other is one of the leadership skills that children must acquire to be successful. Thus, teachers were indirectly involved in developing leadership in children in this way. Data showed teachers also taught children to be mindful, which is another indirect involvement of teachers. Three teachers mentioned they involved activities that taught children to be mindful or focused, which teachers thought to be essential for leadership. One teacher specified by providing the following example:

> I think that when we do different, you know, mindfulness activities, some, like calming and some reflection, and things like that, we can kind of help foster that and drawing attention to themselves and drawing attention to their choices.

Conversely, teachers were also involved directly in leadership development in children. Three teachers favored explicit teaching for young children to attain leadership. For example, one of the teachers mentioned that these skills could also be taught. She taught communication skills to children by interacting with them and telling them the language and use of phrases like “thank you.” She said: “I have to do a lot of teaching and explicit teaching, just like communication skills.” One more participant who was

teaching online classes discussed that she taught social skills in addition to teaching academics, which is an important aspect of leadership. She explained, “I teach reading, and [sic] writing, and math, but let's be honest, I'm mostly teaching social skills.” Teachers discussed that sometimes explicit teaching is important to provide the opportunity for children to acquire leadership.

Teachers discussed that they provided opportunities for children to display their skills because they wanted children to be proud of themselves by showcasing the skills they had attained. A teacher teaching virtually showed how to tie up a shoelace; she said, “I have these little wood blocks with shoelaces; why don't you go show them how to do it, and how proud they are of themselves that they can do something.” Teachers also facilitated other activities for children, including children giving compliments to each other; this is a unique way of making children feel proud of themselves. Teachers also provided positive reinforcement by cheering the children on when they displayed various skills in different activities. Teachers mentioned that sometimes they also needed to cheer up children when they noticed that children were giving up. One teacher noted:

> I try to just set a groundwork of their expectations. And, helping them to start like you can do this show me how you do it and then I will help you [sic] and to scaffold, and to work them on that [sic] and then they'll build that confidence and do it on their own.

Although it is difficult for teachers instructing online classes to get involved in many activities directly, teachers were found cheering children on and getting involved indirectly in developing leadership. Three teachers, including the teacher facilitating online classes, discussed that they cheered children up by helping, scaffolding, providing

treats to them, and complementing them; thus, teachers developed or enhanced children's leadership skills and kept them moving forward. One teacher who taught online classes stated that she made sure she mentioned every child's name in the ZOOM meeting when they showed their work.

Table 4.18

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme One of RQ3

Quotations	Codes
"We've been all through these months and always continue your kindness. And they're remembering how kids are being kind to them. So, we talked about that and just that's helping in leadership."	Teachers focus on emotional development in children
"We're kind of super focused…we're really focusing on that social interaction."	Teachers teach children to be mindful
"Okay, and let's do the flip trick. Or do you just put the hood on the head and reach your arms back?"	Explicit teaching
"We also like warm and fuzzies in our classroom that they tried to earn totally a class party.	Teachers cheer up children for their leadership skills.
"We had set this up as the grocery store, counter, cash register was out the bags, the groceries were up here."	Teachers find ways to cooperate in children's learning
"I put on a song like you've got a friend in me from Toy Story. And every time he paused the song, whoever they were closest to, in the classroom, they did have a little conversation, give each other a compliment."	Teachers want children to be proud of themselves
"Doing things in small groups, where like, it's really peer run, where they like, cooperate and coordinate with each other, as opposed to like me leading, like it. Not in a negative sense, but it forces that one of them to kind of step up and be a leader within that group and kind of switching up those groups."	Teacher incorporates peer mentorship

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview questions six and seven.

Similarly, three teachers mentioned that they get involved in children's learning by setting up the activities, observing children displaying leadership, and encouraging those who are shy and quiet. One of the teachers explicated,

> Paying attention to the children who really want to be leaders, noticing those who are maybe on the shy side, but are interested in it, but at the same time, it's a little bit scary for them, because that's a lot.

Teachers communicated that they found ways to cooperate in children's learning. Relatedly, two teachers also discussed the incorporation of peer mentorship for effective learning, including the one teacher who taught virtually. Both teachers conveyed that peer helping peer also developed leadership skills in children. One teacher indicated that when children were in small groups, they cooperated and coordinated with each other instead of the teacher leading the learning. It was seen that one of them stepped up as a leader who helped and mentored other children in the group. Teachers discussed how peer mentorship allowed children to display their leadership skills and exercise academic leadership.

This theme, as displayed in table 4.19, represents the teacher's direct and indirect involvement in developing children's leadership. The indirect involvement of teachers was witnessed in the activities that included emotional development, teaching children to be mindful, cheering and complementing, and peer mentorship. In contrast, the direct participation of teachers was witnessed in the activities that included explicit teaching and where teachers incorporated leadership skills into children's learning.

Theme Two, *teachers identify leaders and encourage activities in a group,* is demonstrated in Table 4.21. This theme conveys that the teachers recognized leaders in

their classrooms and encouraged children to participate in classroom activities to attain leadership skills. The examples are discussed in Table 4.20. Six teachers expressed that they recognized leaders in their classroom children because they comprised different leadership skills.

Table 4.19

Theme One: Teachers Involved Directly and Indirectly in Leadership Development

Iteration Two: Category	
Category 1:	***Category 2:***
Teachers teach and provide opportunities	Teachers set the environment focusing on different developments
Iteration One: Code	
• Teachers focus on emotional development in children • Teachers teach children to be mindful • Explicit teaching • Teachers cheer up children for their leadership skills • Teacher assigns responsibilities to children • Teacher read books to children • Teachers give opportunity to be a leader • Leaders are chosen • Teachers teach different skills • Teacher gives kind reminders to children • Teacher builds relationship with kids • Teacher focuses on the social development of children • Teacher help children to build their language	• Teachers find ways to cooperate in children's learning • Teachers want children to be proud of themselves • Teacher incorporates peer mentorship • Teacher let children be independent • Teacher prepares children for the real life • Teacher set's the classroom environment • Giving time to kids for their learning • Teacher finds curriculum to be helpful in leadership development • Teacher wants children to acquire leadership

Table 4.20

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Two of RQ3

Quotations	Codes
"They're doing exactly what they're supposed to have making sure to catch them at that moment."	Teacher identifies leadership in children
"I hear that from one child talking to another child. And I see those leadership qualities come out. Like, they're not afraid to remind other kids of what to do."	Child leaders are confident
"Back with that role playing. A lot of leadership qualities seem to have come out of that. Because when I did that, there was a lot of, oh, well remember, when Miss XYZ did this with us? Miss XYZ wants you to do it like this. And I hear that from one child talking to another child."	Leaders are extrovert
"When I'm giving students partnerships, or groups really thinking about not only their academic skills, but they're social skills as well. I've got five really great readers, just because they're all at the same level, I'm not going to put them all in the same group. And, you know, maybe try and spread that out the same thing for if I do math groups."	Teacher encourages children's group activities
"As I say, you know, they're talking, I'm making a pizza, I'm making a flower. Oh, can you show us how you did that? So, I'm still trying to capitalize on those opportunities."	Teacher encourages interaction with each other in classroom

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview questions six and seven.

A few teachers stated the approach of identifying leadership in children, (i.e., looking for the leadership characteristics in children); for example, one teacher said, "Talk about kindness, being mindful, helpful. But in all, I think that's the leadership. Right? In all, if you take all the characteristics together, they are leadership."

Other teachers specified that child leaders are confident, and they had witnessed confident children in their classroom; one of the teachers further explained, "like they are confident to speak to anyone about their story or whatever they have read about."

Another teacher added that confident children were not hesitant to speak in front of anyone; rather, they were the first to speak in the classroom. One more teacher added that child leaders were extroverts; they liked to participate in all the activities that take place in the classroom. She stated, “I feel like sometimes leaders can look extroverted, but at the same time, just because they like to speak up, and like to be the one that participates all the time,” which indicated that child leaders liked to share their stories and material and are also verbal.

Most of the teachers, including the teachers teaching virtually, indicated that they encourage different activities that include group activities and peer interaction, led by child leaders, which helps other children to learn skills from them. For example, one teacher indicated, “Thinking of like a large group situation. Allowing them to be a leadership [sic], we give them jobs that allow them also to choose something they're comfortable with.”

Some teachers stated that they prepare some of the group activities to encourage children to obtain leadership. In contrast, some teachers, including virtual teachers said that they encourage activities that include peer interactions and engage children to interact with teachers. For example, one teacher indicated,

> I think that we were there facilitating a lot of those interactions. Until they kind of figure out how to have those interactions on their own. So, I think that one way that we can tribute is being the facilitators of those things.

Table 4.21

Theme Two: Teachers Identify Leaders and Encourage Activities in a Group

Iteration Two: Category	
Category 1:	**Category 2:**
Identified leaders in the classroom	Teacher encourages activities
Iteration One: Codes	
• Child leaders are confident • Leaders are extrovert • Teacher identifies leadership in children • Children are helpful to others • Children have good academic skills • Loudest children in the classroom are easy to pick as leaders	• Teacher encourages children's group activities • Teacher encourages interaction with each other in classroom • Teacher encourages children's participation in classroom activities • Teacher believes leadership to be fostered in young age • Teacher believes children watch and learn • Teachers believe leaders make good choices • Teachers believe in role modelling for children • Leaders can sometimes be bossy • When they are young, they tend to be follower

One of the teachers agreed that classroom interactions are essential for children to develop social skills; she further explained and said, "I think social interactions at school are a big part of learning in the classroom and being successful." Therefore, the teachers indicated that they provide all the opportunities to children through various classroom activities that might encourage them to develop leadership skills.

Theme Three, *teachers believe in leadership despite their lack of knowledge on leadership,* is displayed in Table 4.23. Teachers revealed that they did not have training specifically in learning about leadership in children; some teachers gained knowledge on leadership over time because they believed in the importance of instilling leadership skills in children. Examples are discussed in Table 4.22.

Most of the participants, including three virtual teachers, mentioned they believed in the significance of instilling leadership in young children. These teachers also believed leadership should be fostered at a young age because it helps them throughout their life. Teachers indicated they could introduce leadership through any work children do, for example, putting on their coats; one teacher mentioned she could model or teach students how to put on a coat by themselves, which gives them a sense of independence. However, two teachers said that when children are young, they tend to be followers rather than leaders and like to follow the older children in the classroom. A few teachers also mentioned the importance of role modeling to instill leadership in children because children learn through example. One of the teachers stated that she let the child model for the classroom; she said modeling is a "huge game changer for some of them to be put in the shoes [sic]."

Although teachers believed in the importance of developing leadership skills in children, but they were concerned about the lack of training they themselves had in leadership. Ten participants said that they did not have leadership training. Therefore, the teachers who did not possess the training or skills in leadership said they were unable to prepare activities related to leadership, but did so unknowingly.

Table 4.22

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Three of RQ3

Categories	Codes
"I'm also reading books about it with them, we do a lot of reading aloud. I have an open book for them to go to at any time." "I feel like those are, it's a necessary tool to be successful in today's world. Yes. now until forever."	Teachers believe leadership to be fostered in young age.
"A good leader, also lets others lead. I guess what I'm trying to say is, it can go either way. Okay. I feel like, sometimes, especially at this age, it kind of goes one of the same, because it takes self-regulation, that takes a lot of self, like looking in. And that's a lot for a child to really kind of like the process."	When they are young, they tend to be followers.
"And then if things don't work out, we reel it back in, and, you know, try and teach and model again, and then and then let it happen again."	Teachers believe in role modeling for children.
"We haven't really done a ton of like, specific activities in leadership."	Teacher has not done much on leadership.
"We don't have any direct training about those about how to grow leadership in children and how to, you know, specifically do that."	Lack of training.

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview questions six and seven.

One teacher mentioned she was unsure if she had communicated about leadership specifically with the other teachers; she further said that some of the leadership is designed into the daily routine, like making somebody a line leader and pointing out that their behavior influences others. Another teacher stated, "I wouldn't say we have specific courses, or things like that." She mentioned she did not have any courses related to leadership in children during her undergraduate courses.

Moreover, teachers also indicated that they did not hold any training concerning recognizing leadership in children. Teachers mentioned they engaged in a lot of professional development training throughout the year, but they had not heard of training

to develop leadership skills in children. One teacher explained, “We don't have any direct training about those about how to grow leadership in children and how to, you know, specifically do that” another teacher added,

> I have not personally had any training on it. I think it'd be great to have but we're kind of super focused. I mean, this year all of our training has been on trauma-based teaching, social emotional learning.

Table 4.23

Theme Three: Teachers Believe in Leadership Despite their Lack of Knowledge on Leadership

Iteration Two: Categories	
Category 1: Teachers Believe	**Category 2:** Lack of Teacher Skills and Trainings in Leadership
Iteration One: Codes	
• Teachers believe leadership to be fostered in young age • When they are young, they tend to be followers • Teachers believe in role modeling for children • Teacher believes children watch and learn • Teachers believe leaders make good choices • Leaders can sometimes be bossy	• Teacher has not done much on leadership • Lack of training • Teacher has learned leadership development in children over a time • Teacher has received professional development trainings

Therefore, teachers discussed they considered leadership important and that it should be developed at a young age; they also had some knowledge of leadership characteristics. However, they had concerns about the lack of teachers' training in recognizing or developing leadership in young children.

COVID-19 impacted the human race physically, socially, emotionally, and academically. As displayed in Table 4.25, Theme Four, *pandemic constrained social development in children,* emerged from the data that discussed the COVID-19 pandemic hardships. The participants mentioned the adversities that the pandemic situation explicitly bought into education.

Table 4.24

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Four of RQ3

Quotation	Code
"Like they're way behind it socially, just because I mean, pandemic and everything like that. A lot of these kids have never been to a childcare or preschool or anything like that. So, we're really focusing on that social interaction."	Children are socially behind because of pandemic.

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview questions six and seven.

Teachers stated the aftereffects of the pandemic situation on children and their development, as noted in Table 4.24. One of the 11 participants mentioned that because some children have never been to childcare or schools yet, they lack social skills; she further stated that they are coping with the aftereffects of the pandemic and are more focused on social interactions.

A single code and category supported the fourth theme. This theme emerged from the responses to research question three. It is necessary to include this code and theme because the data collection was performed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite having only, a single code, this theme is still important because the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the education system and resulted in delays in children's development in many ways including social skills which is an important characteristic of leadership.

Table 4.25

Theme Four: Pandemic Constrained Social Development in Children

Iteration Two: Category
Pandemic hardships
Iteration One: Codes
Children are socially behind because of pandemic

Teachers apply various techniques to instill leadership in children. The teachers were involved directly and indirectly in instilling leadership in children through various ways described above; they encouraged various activities they thought might instill leadership in children, and teachers also recognized and believed in instilling leadership in young children. However, teachers believed that they lack training in this field, and that COVID-19 has impacted children's social development hugely. Yet, they applied various techniques, and the process of applying these techniques is discussed in the section below.

Research Question Four: How Do Teachers Apply Different Techniques to Encourage Leadership in Children in the Classroom?

This research question aimed to explore the process of teachers applying techniques to develop leadership in young children in their classrooms. Two interview questions, (as shown in Table 4.1), observation (see Appendix C), checklist (see Appendix C, and a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C), helped to answer this question. Three themes from the interview data were:

1. Teachers provide developmentally appropriate practices.

2. Teachers use their expertise.
3. Instilling leadership is difficult in the COVID-19 situation.

As exhibited in Table 4.27, Theme One*, teachers provide developmentally appropriate practices,* was developed from data where teachers mentioned their involvement in delivering appropriate practices for developing leadership in children. The examples of the codes are indicated in Table 4.26. All participants stated they helped children gain leadership in many ways, for example by teaching about leadership, by guiding them to be leaders, observing children, and recognizing leaders.

One of the participants offered examples of teaching, guiding, and developing leadership in children. She said,

> That's the point of what we're doing here is, we're teaching kids how to become leaders, how to find those qualities within themselves and develop them and how important it is, and how to develop a level of self-confidence and how to communicate and how to do all of those things and why it's important.

Teachers indicated that they facilitated leadership by recognizing a leader, letting that child know that s/he is a leader, and demonstrating that child in the classroom, ensuring others could see that child. Furthermore, teachers also revealed they have to interfere when they think it is needed by providing directions and instructing children. Few teachers, including teachers teaching virtually, mentioned that they interfere and give instruction to children; when they want children to follow the rules or do not see the kind of response they want to hear, they step in.

Table 4.26

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme One of RQ4

Quotations	Codes
"I think it's just recognizing it and verbalizing it to the kids and, you know, facilitating kids that are being leaders and making sure that others can see that. Because once the other kids see that, you're pointing out them being a leader that they want to turn to." "Kind of give them like a map, if we get through this, this and this, we may have time to go outside and enjoy the sunshine today."	Teacher facilitates in instilling leadership
"Go into your breakout room and raise your hand if you need help or something." "So, I think it's just like with the playground and lining up and washing hands, you know, or so and so is sitting nicely, why don't you go do this."	Teachers' step-in when needed
"We might do like an afternoon large group where we do music and movement together, and we let the children make up the music and the movements and bring it out that way."	Teacher does child-initiated learning
"I feel like that would allow them on their own. To make those connections, that's kind of far but I guess that's what it is. To me. Having that independent play. It allows them on their own to make the connections more intrinsically."	Teacher encourages children's play

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview questions eight and nine.

One of the virtual teachers stated they must provide instructions when children struggle with anything and also because of their online platform. Other participants said:

> And if we didn't, then we would help them understand how they could be a better leader or a better model, or just identify if they're not in the right circumstance to be that leader, and then we will step in.

Table 4.27

Theme One: Teachers Provide Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Iteration Two: Categories
Teachers Involve, Encourage, and Facilitate
Iteration One: Codes
• Teacher facilitates in instilling leadership • Teachers' step-in when needed. • Teacher does child-initiated learning. • Teacher encourages children's play. • Teacher assigns jobs to children in classroom activities • Teacher encourages problem solving skills • Teacher provides positive reinforcement • Giving verbal skills to children • Teacher encourages social and emotional development in children • Teacher provides independence to children • Teacher provides instructions • Pairing children • Teacher teaches kindness • Teacher works on the overall development of children • Reading books is encouraged by teachers • Motivation is important • Teacher conducts different activities • Teacher set structured/unstructured routine

To develop leadership in children, teachers discussed they like to give children opportunities for children to take the initiative in their learning. A few teachers, including one virtual teacher, discussed and agreed to provide opportunities that include child-

initiated education to children, for example, asking children what they want to do for the large group. One of the teachers mentioned that she let the children choose music and dance movements; another teacher stated that children should also be allowed to explore; she said, “Give them the words and give them the room to make mistakes and learn because that's why we're here.”

Child-initiated learning encourages leaders to explore. Teachers also encourage children’s play, which helps children to build their leadership skills. Three teachers, including the virtual teacher, agreed that indoor or outdoor play is vital for children. One of the teachers stated, “Let's say science concept, and try and incorporate a lot more play and project in that too, to help build those leadership skills.” Teachers mentioned how they facilitated, encouraged, and involved themselves in instilling leadership in children. The different techniques used by teachers to promote leadership in children are discussed in Table 4.27.

As exhibited in Table 4.29, Theme Two, *teachers use their expertise,* was constructed based on teachers’ descriptions of their classroom and knowledge on leadership in children. Teachers mentioned they learned about leadership in children through various resources. One teacher discussed that they did not have any curriculum specifically geared toward leadership development. The other teacher mentioned that whatever knowledge she held on leadership in children was attained through discussing with her colleagues, such as asking them, “What have you been doing? Or how have you been trying to do this?”, especially the individuals who've been teaching longer than she has been teaching.

Table 4.28

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Two of RQ4

Quotations	Codes
"The website says the leaders in me. That was a lot and that is still very popular. Still very popular."	Teacher self-learns through various resources
"And outdoors, you do see a lot of different behavior outdoors, because there might be kids who inside the walls of the classroom may not be leaders, but as soon as you get them outdoors, they will be the leaders of the games."	Leadership happens outdoors
"It's just recognizing the kids, when they're doing something that they should, they're following the directions. They're, they're showing the other kids that they heard what they are supposed to be doing."	Teachers recognize leadership in children
"We have found children that have older siblings that use certain language with them, we find that they repeat things they've heard from their siblings, kind or unkind."	Children imitates
"So, it just allows that intrinsic kind of moments where they can figure that out on their own just, I feel like sometimes it's not just being told what to do."	Children are self-advocate
'We get a lot of children that will give just, oh, remember, we're supposed to stay with our buddy or so and so come back, you're in front of the line leader. That's not your job."	Children know what they are supposed to do.

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview questions eight and nine.

Teachers used their expertise to recognize leadership and knew when and where it occurred. Three teachers indicated they saw children displaying leadership outdoors. One of the teachers mentioned that some children may not be leaders indoors but might display leadership when outdoors. Another teacher agreed that leaders were easy to observe in the playground, stating:

> Sometimes it's harder to manage some of those things outside. But having those children that are more of a leader, still, they're giving those reminders and reminding them to play in more of a positive way.

Conversely, one of the teachers stated she witnessed leadership indoors. When she noticed it, she “capitalized on those children” and provided them with more opportunities to exhibit those elements of their leadership. Teachers acknowledged leaders based on the knowledge they gained over time, and they modelled the leaders by displaying and discussing their behavior in the classroom. They also let the leaders know other children should follow them.

Teachers also discussed their opinion on child leaders based on their own classroom observations. Three teachers, including one virtual teacher, stated she had witnessed children imitating their teacher, older sibling, and classroom leaders. Therefore, teachers facilitated those children who were leaders because other children follow them. She exhibited their examples to ensure other children could see and learn from them.

Teachers also indicated child leaders were self-advocates and spoke for themselves. While supporting self-advocacy, one of the teachers provided an example of a child who was hurt while playing on the playground. Before playing again, the child reminded his classmates, “Remember, you cannot pull my arm, you cannot touch, and you don't want to do that to anybody else either.” Teachers also mentioned that child leaders knew the classroom rules and regulations and were well aware of the classroom expectations.

Table 4.29

Theme Two: Teachers Use Their Expertise

Iteration Two: Categories	
Category 1:	**Category 2:**
Teachers' knowledge	Teachers' classroom observation
Iteration One: Codes	
• Teacher self-learns through various resources • Leadership happens outdoors • Teachers recognize leadership in children • Teacher think children should be comfortable in all they do • Teacher thinks instilling leadership is important	• Children imitates • Children are self-advocate • Children know what they are supposed to do • Bossy children • Child is the leader of the activity • Negative behavior in the classroom • They have different strengths • They'll tend to come to me before • Trying to resolve things on their own • Leaders are confident by making good choices • Child leaders are exposed to activities other than school activities • Quiet/shy leaders in the classroom

In this theme, teachers mentioned their knowledge of leadership in children and the ways they had gained that information. They also discussed they were able to acknowledge leadership in their classroom in various activities that take place inside and outside the classroom. Because of their acknowledgment, they were able to enhance leadership in child leaders and instill leadership in other children.

As exhibited in Table 4.31, Theme Three, *instilling leadership, is difficult due to the COVID-19 situation*, focuses on the hardships teachers feel in instilling leadership in children. This theme was emergent and evolved when teachers discussed strategies for investing in leadership and how hard it has been for teachers to develop many skills, including teaching and learning in pandemic situations, as indicated in Table 4.30.

Two of the three teachers who were teaching virtually stated one of the impacts of the pandemic was teaching and learning procedures moved online. Teachers discussed the Zoom platform mostly while talking about online classes due to the restrictions on in-person classes because of COVID-19. One teacher indicated some children needed extra help, and with the online platform, it was impossible when there was no one around them to explain physically.

Table 4.30

Examples of the Responses and Codes Representing Theme Three of RQ4

Quotations	Codes
Unfortunately, just with this online platform, it's harder for students who struggle a little bit more because they still need the teacher so much, and then there's no actual teacher around them, you know, I leave the screen, and I'm gone.	Impact of COVID-19
"I really think that a big piece that's missing that normally isn't, is proximity." "And we do some stuff right now on the Zoom."	Teachers believe instilling leadership is hard.

Note. The examples are extracted from the data obtained through interview questions eight and nine.

Teachers also believed that instilling leadership is difficult, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the teachers stated, "I really think that a big piece that's missing that normally isn't, is proximity." Teachers conveyed they used the Zoom platform for teaching and were not able to do all the activities that they typically did in a

normal classroom. Teachers use online platforms for teaching, such as Zoom and Google Meet. In this theme, teachers discussed online platform involvement and its impact on instilling leadership in children. Furthermore, they discussed the hardships they had to face while teaching children various skills, including academics.

Table 4.31

Theme Three: Instilling Leadership is Difficult Due to the COVID-19 Situation

Iteration Two: Category
Category: Leadership is hard.
Iteration One: Codes
• Impact of COVID-19. • Teachers believe instilling leadership is hard.

The findings displayed teachers provided developmentally appropriate practices while choosing activities and/or strategies for children; teachers also used their knowledge based on their observations of their classrooms and the expertise they gained through different resources and overtime working as a teacher.

Observation Analysis

In addition to other methods for collecting data, I also conducted observations to investigate teachers' involvement in instilling leadership in young children in their classrooms. Eleven observations were conducted. Among them, three teachers were teaching virtually because of the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions and were observed online via Zoom. Eight teachers were observed in the natural setting of their

classrooms. Two of these eight teachers were observed from the window, following the COVID-19 social distancing protocol at that school.

All teachers were observed for an hour. The observations occurred when teachers were involved and interacting with the children. Prior to the observations, teachers were asked what time of the day they were involved with children most so I could observe them during that window of time. All teacher participants suggested the morning large group time except one teacher who said afternoon. I played the role of the non-participant observer, meaning I watched from a far distance without mingling with the teachers. I started observing the teacher and began writing my field notes. I noted down what the teacher said and did. Rather than paraphrasing, I wrote the exact words, as suggested by Yin (2011). Paying attention to the action and verbatim comments related to the research questions is beneficial so researchers know what to focus on in the observation (Yin, 2011).

As the information sheet provided to the participants regarding the research study mentioned, no information that personally identified the study participants were included in the published results of this research, presentation, or at conferences. Therefore, participants' names were not revealed; they were given the codes for my remembrance. After I finished analyzing the observation data, the codes were deleted, which is one way of exhibiting research integrity (Yin, 2011).

Observations helped me to triangulate my data; observation data were used to complement interview data. For the observation analysis, first, all 11 observation field notes were typed because they had first been handwritten. Next, the typed notes were then uploaded into ATLAS.ti as 11 different documents. The data were open-coded and

imported to Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word. The goal of coding was to organize "unstructured and messy data to ideas about what is going on in the data" (Richard & Morse, 2007, p 133). Microsoft Word was used to document manual coding, including formulating categories from the codes given to the data. Categories were made by merging codes with similar patterns, and then the themes were constructed based on examining said categories. These themes became the heading of the observation analysis.

Gibbs (2007) provided a helpful list of items that may be coded from field notes, including specific acts or behavior, events, activities, strategies/practices, states, meaning, participation, relationships, conditions, consequences, settings, and reflection. Per my research questions, I chose to concentrate on excerpting the codes that discussed the process or the techniques used by the teacher, which indicated activities in the classroom, teachers' practices, teachers' behavior, teachers' participation, and teachers' relationships with children. The teacher might know or unknown of the fact that these techniques help in instilling leadership in children. I organized the categories that discussed the techniques the teacher applied to encourage leadership, which resulted in three main themes or headings: (1) activities in the classroom, (2) children engaged in various jobs in the classroom, and (3) ways teachers encourage leadership in the classroom. An explanation of the episodes and its example with anecdotes are also presented under each heading. Appendix C shows the excerpts of the observed activities in one part and the observed techniques (under various headings) in another part of the table, indicating how teachers performed in instilling leadership in the children. In the examples of the quotes, the letter T indicates "teacher," and the letter S indicates "student."

Observed Activities in the Classroom

Different activities in each classroom in which teachers were involved were noted. The activities were found to be similar in most classrooms. The activities observed in almost all classrooms included book reading and children/teacher interaction through questioning and answering, pretend play activity, and choice time/plan sharing activity**.**

Book Reading and Children/Teacher Interaction Through Questioning and Answering

All 11 teachers had book reading time; the books were in context to the projects and lesson plans they were doing with children in the classroom. Four teachers read books related to emotions and problem solving, one teacher let children explore the book of their choice during their quiet time, two teachers had the children read letters, and four teachers read books on earthworms and how to buy groceries. The teachers sometimes asked questions between her reading and scaffolded the questions to receive their responses. One example is a teacher started reading sentences, showing the pictures, and asking questions. For example, she asked:

She held the picture, and the children began saying happy, happy.

T: “How do you know he is happy?”

One student said that he is smiling

Another student said that he is showing his teeth

T: “I like showing his teeth, smiling.”

S: “I get dimples on my cheek when smiling.”

T: “You know, that was very observant.”

Plan Sharing Activity

The plan sharing activity was encouraged by the teacher in which teachers asked children about their plan to work with different materials or in areas of their choice. Four teachers mentioned this activity as "plan sharing," which does not necessarily mean the other seven had the same term. However, all teachers were noticed asking for children's plans or telling them their plans. Some teachers asked for children's plans for the work area or material, and some teachers listed their plans for the activity they would be doing with children in the classroom. Seven of the 11 teachers shared their plans about the next activity or the material they were using; one teacher discussed the rules and regulations of the next activity. Three of the seven teachers were virtual teachers who discussed their schedules and materials for the day. Four of the total teachers allowed children to choose their work area or the material they wanted to play with or work. One of the conversations between a teacher and a student is noted below,

T: "What do you plan to work on today?"

S: "Art area."

T: "What will you do in the art area?"

S: "Draw."

Upon asking the teachers about the plan-sharing activity, the day after the observation was finished, four teachers from the same school mentioned that it was part of the High Scope curriculum. In this curriculum, they focused on plan-do-review (Wiltshire, 2011), which encourages children to plan the project, initiate the plan on the project, and then review with their teacher the steps taken to accomplish the project.

Pretend Play Activity

Pretend/dramatic play was performed by the children, but sometimes teachers were involved, too. In some class schedules, pretend play was under choice time, whereas in other classrooms, it was referred to by teachers as free play. Children were observed grocery shopping, driving cars, and having dialogues, spaceships, and rocket launching in the classrooms. Six of the 11 teachers let the children play pretend/dramatic play in their classroom. All six teachers were involved in children's pretend play, including one teacher teaching online but acting as talking to Santa and asking to gift a pointer to the classroom. For example, she pretended to pick up a phone and said, “is this Elf who just left the gift? Then she said, “oh, that is a hard decision, the kids are not in my classroom, but I can see them in Zoom. She looked at the children and said, “it may be a special gift. I would ask Santa maybe a new tapper for our calendar board, and the kids can use that when they come to school or are the calendar boss. She concluded with, “Thanks for the call today; we hope to get a call tomorrow” and pretended to end the call.

One of the teachers went one by one to the different groups engaged in dramatic play or pretend play and asked them questions regarding their various scenarios. One of the teachers participated as one of the sellers in the grocery shop pretend play and was noticed engaging in dialogue with students. For example,

> T: “Your turn, sir; I will start bagging the lemonade and water. You owe me fifteen dollars, and go ahead and bag your groceries.”

Teachers seemed to display examples of humanity and social norms in front of the children with the help of pretend play. Two of the teachers were noticed facilitating a puppet show in which they used puppets' dialogues. With the help of the puppets, one of

the teachers was engaged in a Billy goat and gruff story with children, and another displayed bad behavior versus good behavior.

It was interesting to note that one of the teachers conducted the “mystery child” activity. On asking a teacher about the mystery child activity, she explained the process in which the teachers picked a child randomly and asked them to pick one of the names written on the popsicle sticks; the names were hidden. A child picked up a name and showed it to the teacher without seeing it. The teacher observed the mystery child that was chosen for the entire school day, and at the end of the day, she revealed all the positive things/behavior s/he did throughout the day. The children had to guess the mystery child’s name and the instructor helped the children guess correctly. Upon guessing correctly, the child was applauded. If the child did not display positive behavior, then the mystery child's name was not revealed.

Physical Activity

Physical activity included all activities incorporating children’s movements in the classroom. Five of the 11 teachers noticed that they did not have any physical activity. Six teachers were involved in physical activity. Three teachers were observed engaged in doing yoga poses with children, where the teacher was seen doing the yoga poses while the children imitated her. One virtual teacher was involved with children in dance and music, one teacher involved the children in an activity that had children moving in the classroom and talking to their peers on the topic given by the teacher, and one teacher was involved in outdoor play with children.

Children Engaged in Various Jobs in the Classroom

It was observed that teachers allowed children to choose classroom jobs. In some of the classrooms, children chose jobs while in other rooms teachers assigned jobs to the children. Teachers referred to children with jobs as class helpers, a child in charge, bosses, and leaders. The classroom jobs included weather person, child counter, snack person, etc. In one of the classrooms, the job-choosing procedure was as stated below:

> The teacher takes the random popsicle sticks out one by one in which names were written, and children will see their names and stand up, take their popsicle sticks, and stick them on the job they want to do throughout the day. One by one, each child gets up and chooses, and the rest select the job leftover.

Child Counter

> T: "I need my child counter to come on up; I wonder how many kids are here today."

A child takes the counting stick and touches every child, and says, "nine."

Meteorologist

> T: "Who is our meteorologist?"
>
> S: "I am."
>
> T: "Come on over, our meteorologist; what letter will you make, a letter m or w?"

Another example of when teachers let each child decide what their job is.

Calendar Person

The teacher asked the children to pick up the square, and then she asked a student whose job was to organize the classroom calendar.

> T: "Where is November, letter N?"

S: [Points to November]

T: “There you go, that’s November; you got it.”

Weather Helper

Then, the teacher called on the weather person for the class.

T: “Let’s see if our weather helper can find out.”

The teachers who were instructing virtually also had jobs for children. The teacher wrote all children's names on the piece of paper, folded and shuffled them. She started to sing a song and think out loud: will it be green names, “I do not know, would it be yellow, pink, or blue.” The teacher picked a name and announced, “the lucky person is …(name).” It's your turn to be a calendar boss (name).

T: “Once you are ready, you can go for it; we say after you.”

S: “Ready”

T: “Today is……...? the day is ……...?”

T: “Oh, I can tell you practiced. Could you do it one more time, in case someone has no headphones on?” and a child repeated.

Teacher's Encouragement to Children

Teachers were observed encouraging children in a variety of ways. They were noticed interacting with children, providing them the opportunities to make decisions, modeling the examples they wanted children to imitate, providing positive reinforcement in various ways, and giving directions when they thought they needed them.

Teacher Step-in

Teachers were directly involved with children in their classroom. They provided instruction in the in-person classrooms and the virtual classrooms. It was observed that all

teachers gave instructions to children regarding current activities, including telling rules, or when they were involved in problem-solving with children. For example, one teacher instructed children about using the whiteboard and markers. She said:

T: “Once you are done drawing with your weather prediction, you can start erasing your board.”

T: [to a child] “I noticed you forgot to close your marker; make sure you close your marker.”

The teachers also instructed children on the steps to be taken for the next activity or the next activity that children needed to accomplish, such as when children were learning about earthworms and the teacher provided children with earthworms. Some of the instructions were related to the safety of the children.

Teachers were also involved in asking various questions of the children. The questions were related to the book they were reading or the activity they were doing. A few of the teachers scaffolded the answers. Moreover, some teachers were witnessed sharing the classroom rules or the activity rules with children. For example, while doing the earthworm activity, the teacher taught students how to hold and handle the earthworms.

T: “Be gentle, do not drop it. If you want to touch it, you may; if you want to hold it, you may; but do not keep it out for a long period.”

Teachers Provide Role Modeling

All the teachers modeled the behavior that they thought children should follow. They modeled the behavior by being models themselves and sometimes giving the example of a child who displays appropriate behavior in the classroom. One of the

teachers also modeled appropriate behavior using a strategy such as a self-talk. One example of modeling described in the field notes showed the teacher using self-talk to model:

[She holds the jack in the box and shows and says] “Oh! This is jack in the box!”

[and then she self-talks], “I don’t know what the jack in the box is. It’s a box?”

Another example was when the teacher displayed the process, she wanted the children to do on the screen. For example, she showed how to read by keeping her finger on the word. She said:

T: “Watch how I use my reading figure.”

Additionally, she modeled the following rule/behavior by saying the example loudly, such as T: “I see hands up; she knows exactly what we do next?” Some teachers were observed modeling from the book, and one teacher provided examples to the children from the book she was reading. For example, the teacher read, “It’s okay to be proud of yourself,” then she asked, “Raise your hands if you are proud of yourself.” I observed the teacher was modeling the examples from the book. For instance, she said: “It’s important to know what other people celebrate, and learning about others is fun and exciting. It also discusses empathy and kindness. What do other people think about others?” The teacher displayed how to show if they agree or disagree by making a body pattern; by doing thumbs up or thumbs down. Similarly, one more teacher demonstrated an example from the book and then asked a question. The teacher read, “It’s okay to be proud of yourself,” then she asked: “Raise your hands if you are proud of yourself.”

The teacher also modeled the example by displaying the role model in front of the children and giving examples, such as a student interrupted in between when the calendar

boss was speaking. The teacher asked him if he could wait. The child agreed and said that he could wait. So, the teacher displayed this example in front of the classroom. She said:

T: “Did you listen to what he said, ‘I can wait after the calendar.’”

Teachers Provide Motivation

Some teachers provided positive reinforcement to children when they noticed they did what they were told, answered the question correctly, followed the classroom rules, and displayed exemplary behavior. Some teachers provided an abundance of positive reinforcement by acknowledging a child and their work; however, some just complimented the students with phrases such as “good job,” “awesome,” or “I like it.”

Additionally, teachers used different phrases to reinforce children’s positive behavior. A teacher said, “thank you” and repeated the children’s phrases. For example,

T: “Can anybody tell me what an author's job is? (name) what author's job is?”

S: “They grow the letters.”

The teacher noted the child was correct and that authors “build the words.”

Another example was the teacher providing positive reinforcement to children who exhibited good work or behavior in the classroom. One observed scenario was when one child came to the teacher; he showed his drawing and said:

S: “Miss (name), I drew this.”

T: “Oh wow! You can write your name over it, so people will know who made it.”

Another teacher provided positive reinforcement to some children for following the rules that the teacher explained before the project started. One said:

T: “I am impressed with (name). I wanted to compliment her; she threw away the paper, washed her hands, and wiped the whole table. I also want to compliment (name) that she did the same.”

Teachers Provide Shared Control

It was witnessed that teachers ensured children decided the games they wanted to play, the books they wanted to read, the materials they wanted to play with, and the classroom jobs they wished to choose. All the teachers allowed children to make their decisions. Children also decided what they needed, wanted to play, or where to sit in the classroom. For example, one excerpt from the field notes stated:

> The teacher had them sit on the floor and then asked them to choose their color square on the mat and sit on the mats.

The teacher also let the children decide their play area. The children planned and chose the area and play material to play with. For example, a child came to the teacher and told her she wanted to have a choice time drawing on the smart board.

T: “Thanks for asking about the smart board. I can work on it and let you play.”

Moreover, the teacher allowed children to decide how much they wanted to read in the virtual classroom. For example, a teacher asked a child: “Do you wanna read a row or a whole thing?”

S: “the whole thing.”

[Student read ABCD….]

T: “Oh (name), you are so proud of yourself. Aren’t you?”

Teachers Provide Social-Emotional Support to Children

Most teachers were involved in physical or virtual classroom activities to provide social and emotional support to children. The most important technique witnessed in almost all the observations was teachers' interactions with children. Teachers interacted with children in various ways throughout all activities, such as in their story reading, pretend play, planning time, large group activities, small group activities, choice time, etc. Teachers also interacted through communication with students; for example, in one of the teacher observations, it was noticed that a girl came to the teacher with a book in which different emotions were displayed. She pointed out the sad feeling and told the teacher that she was sad. The teacher asks her why she was sad; the student explained she missed her parents. The teacher told her that it was okay to be sad sometimes. She also told her that she was sad yesterday and sometimes it happens that we feel sad.

It was observed that most of the teachers' interactions took place in the virtual classroom. The teacher shared, discussed, and listened to the children. The teacher let children share their stories, activities that they were doing at home, or the play materials. For example,

S: "Yesterday, I built a ginormous snowman."

T: "What did you use for his nose?"

S: "A carrot."

T: "That is a great way to do it, awesome!"

During one of the observations, the teacher was noticed playing the role of the misbehaved child in a puppet show; the role play performed by the teacher displayed kindness and empathy. Two teachers were also witnessed wishing good morning to

children in different languages. For example, she asked, “What language will we do (name)?”

S: “Japanese.”

T: “Do you remember how we say hello in Japanese?”

S: “Konni Chua”

T: “That’s right, it’s this yellow [showing on the board, she sings] Konni Chua (child’s name), Konni Chua (child’s name), we are glad you are here today.”

Child-Initiated Learning

Teachers were witnessed providing opportunities to children to share their views regarding the activities to perform in the classroom. They were also provided the opportunity to choose their work area, which has been already discussed in the excerpt related to the activities. One of the teachers was noticed putting children art work on the wall. A few children were also witnessed correcting the teacher; an example is provided below:

T: [singing] “We have been in school for 54 days [she purposely said 54 and engaged in self-talk; acted like she was confused]

S: “It is not 54 days, Mrs. XYZ. We have been in school for 59 days.”

Teachers Build Relationships

A few teachers were observed dancing and singing with children. The children followed the dance steps of the teacher. One of the virtual teachers was also observed singing and dancing to songs with her children. I observed children doing the dance moves virtually. A few of the teachers were witnessed listening to children carefully. For instance, a child showed his artwork, and the teacher said, “wow, that’s awesome; that’s a

lot of colors; tell me, what have you made?" The child explained what he drew, and she listened to him carefully. She again said, "awesome." A few teachers were also observed indicating children as "friends." For instance, one of the teachers said,

T: "Last job left, my friend."

[Another teacher, while waiting for some children, was observed saying],

T: "Almost there, may be one more friend."

Indirect Involvement

Some teachers were noticed setting up and organizing environments for children before activities. A few teachers were also seen moving around the classroom and observing children. For instance, one teacher observed that some children did not want to try to touch an earthworm. She did not insist they pick up the earthworm; instead, she indirectly let other children know that it was okay if some children did not want to touch an earthworm. The above-given techniques were the primary techniques witnessed during an hour-long observation, which is also explained in Appendix C with examples.

Checklist Analysis

The checklist was provided to the teachers after completing their interviews and observations. The teachers were asked to reorder the domains from one to four that they would like to encourage the most in children to attain leadership, with four representing the most important domain, and one denoting the least important domain. The domains were: Cognitive (knowledge and intellectual skills), Social skills (communicative contexts), Physical (physical and mental strength), and Disposition (emerging knowledge, skills, and attitude) as shown in Appendix C. Eight teachers opted for social skills as the essential domain to develop to attain leadership, and only three teachers selected

disposition as the vital domain. None of the teachers chose cognitive or physical domains.

A table with leadership characteristics under each domain was provided, and participants were again asked about what characteristics of leadership from the domains in the given table they would like to encourage the most in children. They were asked to rearrange the number (the highest number in each domain = encourage the most and lowest number in each domain = encourage the least). The participants were also told not to repeat the number in domains.

Cognitive Domain

The participants were given the leadership characteristics options under the cognitive domain: (1) problem solver, (2) verbal skills, (3) communicated well verbally with peers, (4) decision-making skills, (5) decision-making skills, and (6) higher concentration/focus. They were asked to rearrange the number (the highest number in each domain = encourage the most and lowest number in each domain = encourage the least). They were also asked not to repeat the numbers.

It was noticed while analyzing the data that five teachers among 11 chose "Communicates well verbally with peers" as the most important leadership characteristic they sought to encourage the most in children. Three teachers opted that problem solver was an important characteristic they sought to encourage the most; two teachers mentioned verbal skills as an important characteristic, and only one teacher selected decision-making skills as the characteristic that wanted to encourage. None of the teachers chose "high concentration/focus" as a leadership characteristic they would like to encourage in children. Moreover, it was ranked as the lowest, with four teachers

ranking it as the least important characteristic needed to instill leadership with decision-making skills. Three teachers marked verbal skills as the least essential characteristic required to instill leadership in children in the cognitive domain.

Social Skills Domain

The participants were given the leadership characteristics options under the social skills domain: (1) helper, (2) empathetic/sensitive to feeling of others, (3) self-confident, (4) able to make friends, (5) taking initiative, and (6) directing ideas. They were asked to rearrange the number (the highest number in each domain = encourage the most and lowest number in each domain = encourage the least). They were also asked not to repeat the numbers.

While analyzing the checklist data, it was witnessed that six teachers among 11 marked "empathetic/sensitive to feelings of others" under the social skills domain. The teachers thought "empathetic/sensitive to feelings of others" was the most important social skill that the teachers wanted to encourage the most in children to instill leadership in them. Two teachers stated that "self-confidence" was an important characteristic of social skills they want to encourage. One teacher thought "able to make friends," one teacher marked "taking initiative," and one perceived "directing ideas" was an important characteristic of social skills that teachers sought to encourage in children to instill leadership in them. None of the teachers marked "helper" as an essential characteristic of social skills to be encouraged; furthermore, it was marked as the least important characteristic by one teacher in addition to "taking initiative," which was also marked least important by one teacher. Seven teachers marked "directing ideas" as the least characteristic required to instill leadership in the social domain.

Physical Domain

The participants were given the leadership characteristics options under the physical domain: (1) energetic/ high energy level and (2) not concerned about being overworked. They were asked to rearrange the number (the highest number in each domain = encourage the most and lowest number in each domain = encourage the least). They were also asked not to repeat the numbers.

While examining the data, it was noticed that most of the teachers chose "not concerned about being overworked" as the important characteristic the teachers would like to encourage in children to instill leadership. The data showed six teachers supported this characteristic. However, five teachers chose "energetic/high energy level" as the important characteristic that should be encouraged, and six teachers marked it as the least important characteristic. Additionally, five teachers marked "not concerned about being overworked" as the least important characteristic required to instill leadership in children.

Disposition Domain

The participants were given the leadership characteristics options under the physical domain: (1) flexible, (2) independent, (3) responsible, (4) organized, organizes material and activities, (5) concentrates on tasks and their completion, and (6) highly aware. Teachers were asked to rearrange the number (the highest number in each domain = encourage the most and lowest number in each domain = encourage the least). They were also asked not to repeat the numbers.

Being "responsible" was the characteristic that the teachers chose to be important in encouraging leadership in children. Seven of 11 teachers marked it as the important one. One teacher chose "flexible" one marked "independent," one chose

"organized/organizes material and activities," one marked "highly aware" as the most significant characteristic, and four teachers marked it as the least important characteristic. Moreover, three teachers marked "responsible" as the least important, and two marked "independent" as the least important characteristic. Additionally, two teachers marked "Concentrates on tasks and their completion" as the least important characteristic necessary to instill leadership in children in the disposition domain.

For a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of children's leadership, the checklists provided by the participants were analyzed based on the participant's answers. The participants were asked to mark the most important domain/characteristic in the checklist that they would like to encourage in children to instill leadership in them.

Therefore, most of the teachers picked social skills domain as an important domain to have in children to gain leadership among cognitive, social, physical and disposition domains. Then the teachers chose the important characteristics from each domain that they sought to encourage and that they thought was important for children to acquire leadership. For example, teachers chose "communicated well verbally with peers," which they thought as an important characteristic of the cognitive domain that a child should have to acquire leadership. Teachers chose "Empathetic/sensitive to the feelings of others" as an important characteristic of the social domain. They also opted for "Not concerned about being overworked" as an important characteristic of the physical domain. Finally, teachers picked "Responsible" as an important disposition domain that a child should gain to obtain leadership.

Summary

In Chapter Four, I presented the findings from my study. The findings were extracted from the data in the form of codes, categories, and themes, and were demonstrated through the examples and excerpts provided. These examples were the participants' responses to the interviews and observations. Throughout the chapter, I explained how I developed themes through categories and codes. I also provided the codes' descriptions and the exemplar quotations representing the codes that supported the categories and themes in tables and appendices. During the teacher's observations analysis, all the activities and discussions of the teacher with children were coded, so there were as many codes as the activities and interactions accompanied by the teacher. Additionally, I also provided the checklist analysis as the supporting data. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings and the connection of those findings with the previous literature and theoretical concepts, discuss implications and limitations, and suggest future research based on the discussion of the present study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was twofold: First, to understand teachers' perceptions on developing leadership skills in children, and second, to investigate the application of various strategies in the classroom inclined to develop leadership skills in children aged four to six-years-old. In this final chapter, I will discuss the findings and how they relate to and connect with the existing literature and theories. Some of the terms may appear redundant in this chapter because these terms have been used as leadership characteristics in some cases, and in other cases, as strategies by the teachers—for example, role modeling. In answering the question related to teachers' perception regarding leadership in children, teachers discussed that they perceive child leaders as role models. However, in answering the question related to teachers' strategies, they discussed that they provide role modeling to children to instill leadership because children learn what they observe in the classroom. I will also address the implications and limitations of the study, make recommendations for future research, and draw conclusions about the study. Notably, the following four questions directed this study:

1. What are the perspectives of teachers in influencing leadership skills in four to six-year-old children in the classroom?
2. What characteristics of leadership do teachers observe in their children during various activities that take place in the classroom?
3. What are the different techniques that teachers apply to encourage leadership in young children?

4. How do teachers apply different techniques to encourage leadership in children in the classroom?

Interpretation of Findings

RQ 1: What are the perspectives of teachers in influencing leadership skills in four to six-year-old children in the classroom?

This research question aimed to explore teachers' understandings of leadership in children and to further investigate whether the teachers thought they could influence leadership in children. Additionally, I sought to better understand the teachers' perceptions of leadership influences. The findings from this study add to other prior work that investigated teachers' perceptions on developing leadership in children or children's leadership in general (Flynn et al., 2015; Fox, 2012; Lee et al., 2005; Owen, 2007). The findings related to research question one was extracted from the data collected through interviews and checklists.

Theme One: Leaders Demonstrate a Variety of Characteristics in the Classroom

This theme represented teachers' views on leadership. They explained the various characteristics of leadership in children they observed, particularly those children they believed to be leaders in their classrooms.

Confident Children in the Classroom

Data from the interview demonstrated that leaders are *Confident Children in the Classroom.* While I reviewed the leadership literature, self-confidence was the most discussed characteristic. For example, Tross (2015) highlighted the importance of being confident as a part of acquiring leadership in middle school children. Likewise, Fox (2012) stated the descriptor "self-confidence" in her study as important for children to

gain leadership. Other characteristics of leadership in Fox's study that children attained were helpful, verbal skills, taking initiatives, role modeling, and taking charge. In the study by Mullarkey et al. (2008), teachers discussed children being confident when asked about their concept of leadership in young children. Most of the teachers in the current study discussed the importance of confidence in their interview; however, while completing the checklist, only two out of 11 teachers marked self-confidence as the characteristic they sought to encourage most. Teachers may perceive other leadership characteristics as more important than being confident to attain leadership. One of the reasons for not marking self-confidence as an important characteristic was maybe teachers thought other characteristics such as children being empathetic were more important than self-confidence.

The findings also demonstrated teachers perceived confident leaders have the following characteristics: they are role models, verbal, responsible, and know the rules and routines of the classroom. These findings are similar to the results from the checklist of the present study in which seven of 11 teachers (63.6%) marked "responsibility" as the most important characteristic they seek to encourage; however, responsibility was not discussed much in the interview by the teachers as an essential characteristic of leadership. Five teachers (45.4%) agreed that child leaders "communicated well verbally with peers." Examples of "role modeling" were also provided by the teachers during the interviews, but it was not an option provided on the checklist.

Owen (2007) discussed the importance of having role models in the classroom to instill leadership in children with other characteristics such as responsibility, respecting others, engaging in positive interactions, etc. Teachers discussed that child leaders are

confident in their ability to follow the rules and routines. While reviewing the literature, I found that studies related to leadership in children have not discussed following rules and routines; instead, only one prior study conducted by Fox (2012) focused more on teachers maintaining rules and routines in the classroom. Perhaps teachers in the current study view that children are confident because they were well aware of the classroom rules and routine, they completed their responsibilities and they let other children know the rules.

Personalities Within the Classroom

Interview data indicated child leaders display different *personalities within the classroom.* Lee et al. (2005) found that young leaders exhibit their personalities in the classroom, which provides a variety of opportunities for engagement with their peers and helps in developing leadership skills. The current research findings also demonstrated that child leaders also are helpful, organized, trustworthy, problem solvers, and independent. These characteristics were further discussed as an important aspect of leadership acquisition in studies by Certo, (2011), Fox (2012), Lynch and Simpson (2010), Manning (2005), Omeroglu et al. (2009), and Tross (2015) The outcome from the current research study's checklist showed that most of the teachers thought encouraging problem-solving in children was important to encourage leadership, and a few teachers considered supporting the characteristics "independent" and "organized" as an important characteristic of leadership. Surprisingly, none of the teachers marked "helpful" as an important characteristic to be stimulated regarding leadership, which was the essential characteristic of leadership found in studies conducted by both Certo (2011) and Fox (2012).

Additionally, teachers who participated in this study mentioned various types of personalities that have been less discussed in the literature on children's leadership; the teachers explained leadership characteristics such as bossy, curious, positive, natural, silly, shy, verbal, and less verbal. "Bossy" was an evolving code that came across while discussing their perceptions of leadership in children. Based on data analysis, teachers described a bossy leader as one who wants to tell everyone what to do or control the behavior of others. One of the teachers depicted bossy leaders as negative leaders. Shin et al. (2004) discussed that child leaders displayed positive and negative aspects of leadership, which should not be used as two parts of one spectrum but as an "interwoven multidimensional construct" (p. 313). Based on the literature review, some studies discussed challenging, disruptive children while discussing leadership in children. In the study by Fox (2012), the descriptor "not bossy" was used by participants in describing the characteristics of leadership in children.

Shin et al. (2004) mentioned that children, with their dynamic interaction, gain social influence over their peers and place themselves as powerful leaders. A powerful personality is termed as the "bossy" personality of a leader in the current study, few of the teachers mentioned that children with bossy personality tends to direct other children by controlling their behavior and telling them what to do and what not, which is aligned with the leaders discussed in the situational approach (see page 39). The situational approach is when leaders, in some situations, direct their followers more than they support them (Baker, 2013). The situational approach is discussed in the context of the adult leadership theory, which was also observed in children by the teachers. Teachers stated that they had witnessed children directing other children in their classroom, which

means that being directive is also a leadership personality seen in young children. This finding was similar to those of Shin et al. (2004), who used the term “powerful leaders” in the context of child leaders who exerted power over their followers, and Wright (1996), who used the term authoritarian or autocratic for leaders who direct other children. Another emergent code in this category was “shy leaders,” which was interchangeably used to describe quiet leaders. Teachers denoted shy children when they perceived that shy or quiet leaders may be experts but might choose jobs that do not require verbal skills. While I reviewed the literature, I did not find any explicit mention of shy or quiet students related to leadership in children.

The current study's findings discussed that leaders combine two perspectives: leaders are born and leaders are made. This finding was similar to Fox’s (2012) findings that 85.6% of teachers felt that leadership combines learned and inherent abilities. Teachers in the current study believed natural leaders existed, which meant these leaders have acquired leadership innately. In teachers’ opinions, children were born leaders, and that leadership is inherent. Similarly, Foster (1981) had a similar definition of leadership that leaders are born, not trained, similar to the trait and great man theories. Amanchukwu et al. (2015) mentioned great leaders are not made; they are born. Therefore, what is found in the adult leadership research on trait theory (see page 38) is also mirrored in the present study because, in teachers’ opinion, children are born leaders, and leadership is inherent. One teacher stated some of the characteristics related to leadership are not taught; they are inherent in children. For example, she stated that child leaders have internal confidence, which teachers cannot necessarily teach them. This

finding was also discussed in the literature (Fox, 2012; Tross, 2015) that some children are born with inherent leadership skills.

Despite teachers' perceptions that children seem to be born with certain leadership characteristics, they also recognized that various aspects of leadership can be taught. In the present study, teachers stated that they taught and encouraged leadership in children for them to acquire leadership skills. This finding relates to the Leonard et al.'s (2014) behavioral leadership approach with their adult subjects. The behavioral approach (see page 38) discussed by Leonard et al. is that efficient leadership results from many learned skills. Additionally, researchers who focused on children had similar findings, supporting that leadership is teachable (Tross, 2015; Turgunbaeva et al., 2016).

In the present study, teachers stated that they witnessed that leadership as teachable and learned by children. Some teachers mentioned they teach leadership by inviting children to learn skills; they teach children through role modeling and sometimes by giving them instructions to follow. Further studies on how leadership is taught in settings with children as contrast with adults can shed light on what can be learned and through what methods at different developmental stages and will help to fill the gap between children's leadership and adult leadership. These findings suggest that teachers working with children can combine instructions, modeling, and reinforcement to support and teach leadership. As the behavioral theory of leadership supports that leadership is teachable, Karnes and Stephens (1999) provided various instructional elements for teachers to teach leadership to children.

Another emergent code was *positive leaders.* The findings implied teachers believed children who asserted positive influence in the classroom were positive leaders.

The teachers might have used the term positive leaders to clarify the contrast between influencing others using more positive behavior than using those they perceive as more negative behaviors. Although the term positive leader was not explicitly present in the literature related to children's leadership. The findings from this study showed that teachers described aspects of leadership as more positive or more negative.

The term positive leader was not present in the literature related to children's leadership. The findings in this study showed that teachers used positive leaders against negative leaders. According to teachers, negative leaders are those who may challenge and direct children or are authoritarian. Teachers might believe that children who request rather than command are less authoritarian and more positive. For young children, modeling adult leaders such as their teachers may be important to their learning leadership skills, but teachers may not be aware of this as learning versus challenging. For example, when a teacher directs children or unknowingly displays authoritarian behavior, children are likely to imitate. Children could display the same behavior, which the teacher then terms as negative behavior, creating challenges for them. Therefore, being mindful of their own activities, teachers can help children to acquire leadership. Similar to this study, future researchers studying leadership in children may include extensive observation by observing young children's behavior in the classroom. This may help bring more awareness regarding leadership in children. In addition, characteristics perceived as positive or negative in children may differ from what is seen in positive or negative behavior in adults. The implication for practice might include professional development with teachers on how young children learn and demonstrate leadership.

Nearly all the studies (Certo, 2011; Fox, 2012; Karnes et al., 1996; Lee et al., 2005; Mullarkey et al., 2005; Shin et al., 2004) related to leadership in children stated that leaders have verbal skills that indicated it is important to acquire verbal skills to gain leadership. The participants in the current study also expressed that, leaders are verbal. However, while completing the checklist, only two of 11 teachers marked verbal skills as an important skill to attain leadership, indicating that when teachers were asked about leadership characteristics, they discussed verbal skills. In contrast, when they were asked to mark the important characteristic on a checklist, most teachers did not mark verbal skill as a vital characteristic to acquire leadership. The reason might be that they also view leadership skills in quiet/shy/less verbal children.

Teachers in the present study also indicated shy or quiet children as leaders. These teachers reasoned that because those child leaders know the classroom rules and routine, they are helpful to teachers and perform exceptionally well when doing classroom jobs. They saw quiet children as having some leadership skills but lacking verbal skills. However, children with verbal skills come out more as leaders than shy or quiet children because teachers think they influence other children verbally (Mullarkey et al., 2008) compared to shy or quiet children. Vygotsky (1978) also provided the importance of language with particular emphasis on verbal language. Children with verbal skill collaborate efficiently with their peers and adults, which enhance their cognitive and social skills that are essential for gaining leadership. More studies are indicated to discover the leadership behavior in young children versus older children and adults and the role of verbal skills in leadership.

As child leaders are social and have verbal skills, they also display curiosity. Teachers in the present study used the term leader when talking about the curious children in their classroom. The teachers added that curious leaders ask many questions; they always want to know what the next activity is and frequently ask about the rules and routines of the classroom, which was similar to the finding of Certo (2011) that child leaders are curious. The term “curious” has been only used by Certo (2011) in the context of leadership personalities. It may be that curiosity in children is more visible when they actively communicate with others.

Furthermore, one of the teachers also mentioned silly children as leaders while talking about the leaders’ personalities in their classrooms. The teacher explained that silly leaders have many friends who follow them. Similarly, Mullarkey et al. (2005) also discussed “silly” as an aspect of the leaders’ personalities; their participants also referred to silly children in their classroom. Like participants in the present study, rather than mentioning the positive attributes, they found students being silly was both challenging and seen as non-compliant behavior by teachers. The connection to leadership appears to be because other children are interested and engaged by a so-called silly child. The implications are to explore ways for teachers to see the positive aspects of how humor can be used to engage and distract, this also illustrates how leadership qualities are not only perceived as what is exhibited by the child, but also the response of others to that child. Future research can illuminate the complexity of children’s relationships in groups. The findings on the leaders' personalities in this study differ slightly from previous studies regarding leadership in children; the present study found teachers observed different personalities in the classroom, such as bossy, non-verbal, silly, and curious,

which are descriptors not often discussed in the existing literature. In addition, little is known about leadership characteristics perceived as positive or negative. Teachers in the present study agreed that some of these leadership behaviors of children could be challenging for teachers regarding compliance and following the classroom rules. An implication of the study is to support teachers' strategies to help children to understand their role as leaders and as a positive influence.

Although the findings on leadership personalities in this study, such as bossy, shy/quiet, positive, curious, and silly, are supported by a few studies (Certo, 2011; Mullarkey et al., 2008) they point to the need for the further research. Because few studies have been done with the focus on young children it may be that the words that teachers used in this study are more often used to describe children in this age group versus descriptors in leadership research on older children and adults. Observational studies can reveal more about why teachers see some aspects of leadership as positive or negative.

Leadership Demographics

Similar to the previous research findings on leadership in children, in this study teachers noticed various leadership demographics in their classrooms, including age and gender. One teacher discussed that older siblings tend to be leaders, and two teachers expressed that the oldest children in the classroom were leaders. Furthermore, two teachers favored girls as leaders; however, most teachers mentioned boys while discussing leaders in their classrooms. These findings were similar to Hillman and Smith (1981), who stated that sex and age are the standard criteria for determining who will become group leaders. The older and more experienced child is accepted by the group of

children. The birth order in forming leaders in children has also been discussed by Tross (2015), but due to the small sample size of children, Tross was not able to conclude it the birth order is significantly related to developing leadership.

Additionally, Mawson (2011) stated that leadership among boys was more hierarchical than the girls based on the eight children participating in his leadership-based strategy. One teacher in the current study opined that the "only" child in a family tends to be a leader in the classroom, stating that an only child has leadership skills because they might have been allowed to make their own choices; that is, they might be allowed to do things independently. Hardy et al. (1978) said that the only children and first-born females displayed leadership among their siblings and peers.

The findings on leadership demographics in the current study indicated that from the perspective of teachers, if children are given opportunities to learn and display their leadership, leadership could be acquired or learned by anyone, across age, gender, or birth order. Regardless of what aspects of leadership are seen an innate or learned, all children can benefit from opportunities to showcase their leadership skills. The implications are to support teachers' strategies to showcase and further enrich leadership in children. The findings also indicated that mostly boys displayed leadership; further studies can reveal possible gender differences in opportunities given by the teacher.

Child Leader is Empathetic

This category represents the finding that teachers thought and noticed child leaders were empathetic. For example, teachers stated that child leaders understood others' feelings, knew how to treat others, including other children in their activities. They also have a group of followers and share their thoughts and materials with their

peers. Data from the checklist matched the findings from the interviews: six teachers marked "empathetic/sensitive to other feelings" as the most important social skill they would like to encourage in children to attain leadership. This finding was similar to those noted by Brock et al. (2018), who stated the importance of being empathetic and that children learn to display suitable emotions through interacting with adults. Interaction helps children to make sense of how others feel and what behavior they should have toward other people, which is essential learning for their future social interactions—and social interaction is a crucial tool to attain leadership (Lee et al., 2005). Additionally, the characteristics discussed by Fox (2012) revealed "empathetic" as an essential characteristic for acquiring leadership. Moreover Shin. et al. (2004) also stated that children display empathy by helping and caring for their peers. Empathy is seen as a strong characteristic of leadership, according to Brock et al. (2018), Fox (2012), and Shin. et al. (2004) and the present study.

The findings in theme one includes children who display leadership are confident, exhibit different leadership personalities in different situations, have different dispositions, and are empathetic. After identifying the above-mentioned characteristics/personalities of child leaders, the next step was to ask what teachers do to instill/enhance leadership in children, which is addressed in theme two.

Theme Two: Teachers Facilitate Opportunities to Instill Leadership in Children

The second theme that arose from my study, *Teachers Facilitate Opportunities to Instill Leadership in Children,* centers around the assistance provided by teachers to instill leadership in their students. Findings from this theme helped to answer the first research question regarding teachers' perspectives on leadership in children.

Teacher Practice Modeling Leadership, Provide Opportunities, and Believe in Teaching Leadership

This category represents the findings that described the opportunities teachers provide to children in their classrooms to instill leadership. Data from the interviews showed teachers practiced modeling leadership in their natural and virtual classrooms by acting as role model, making a child a role model, or by demonstrating different scenarios and extracting examples from them. The findings indicated most teachers think that children emulate whatever they see, so they model leadership in their classroom under the premise that students would copy the model. This finding is supported by Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which states learning through observation.

Bandura asserted that most of the human behavior is learned through modeling. Children pay attention to the behavior of the model, remembers what s/he saw and heard, and reproduce the behavior and expect a reward. Owen (2007) shared similar views, namely that teachers acting as role models could be the best to develop leadership in children because children try to imitate their role models. Similarly, the teachers in the study by Fox (2012) stated that they played an essential role in supporting and helping children to attain leadership through modeling. In this study, many participants stated that children lead by example. For this reason, the teacher mentioned that a child who accomplishes the behavior expected in the classroom is modeled by the teacher in the classroom to display what an ideal leader looks like. Moreover, the teachers likely modeled leadership so the children would understand the qualities of good leadership.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that teachers provided different opportunities for children to acquire leadership, such as modeling leadership. For example, teachers

may form partners for specific activities and, in doing so, pair a leader with a shy or quiet child or partner a child leader with a student who needs extra help. Peer relationships have also been supported by Vygotsky (1978) in his discussion regarding collaborative learning with peers. In his ecological theory, Bronfenbrenner (1977) also discussed the importance of peer-to-peer relationships for a child's overall development, including leadership. Similar findings have also been discussed in a study by Certo (2011), who concluded that participation in peer-led discussions in small groups with the support of the teacher could help to nurture young children's social and, more importantly, leadership skills. Furthermore, peer mentorship is also supported by Tross (2015). Therefore, peer mentorship helps in nurturing children's growth; they learn various skills from each other and is also likely to include the development of leadership.

Teachers in the current study revealed they provided opportunities for children to acquire leadership by recognizing leaders or leadership skills and encouraging them by finding unique ways to enhance such qualities in children. Similarly, Mullarky et al. (2008) discussed that the participants of their study recognized leadership and encouraged them by monitoring and curtailing the leadership behavior and redirecting child leaders. Teachers intervene and discourage leadership in children who act as dominant and overpowered in the classroom. Therefore, the study discussed that the meaning of encouraging and discouraging leadership was the same in their study (Mullarky et al., 2008). In contrast, certain literature also indicated that some teachers fail to recognize classroom leaders, which inadvertently discourages leadership in children. For example, Fox (2012) stated that 96% of teachers recognized leadership, encouraged

leadership by praising and thanking child leaders, and four percent did not recognize leadership.

A few of the participant teachers in the current study also discussed that sometimes they had to discourage leadership knowingly when children did not display leadership in a positive way, and that this was challenging for teachers. The findings in the study by Mullarky et al. (2008) stated that the majority of the teachers recognized leadership and they were well aware of the characteristics of leadership. An unanswered question in the present study reflects the challenges of teaching in a virtual environment and how that impacted student behavior. The virtual educational environment gained its importance recently when the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this study included some participants teaching virtually; these teachers may have had fewer chances to provide leadership opportunities to children remotely. Some of the participants teaching virtually mentioned they found it challenging to step back and give children the freedom to explore. Exploration is an essential aspect of learning; however, teachers must provide several additional instructions while teaching virtually, which may have hampered their time and ability to focus on leadership development. Hence, most of the teachers were able to recognize leadership in children, so they were able to encourage leadership in them. However, during the observation teachers in virtual environments were more engaged in finishing the lesson plan and were not likely to witness and recognize leadership, so they were overall less likely to encourage leadership in children. This finding points to how teachers could provide opportunities to children who are virtually engaged in learning and navigate the limitations in the virtual setting through the use of different strategies. The teacher might be modeling leadership, but she may not

observe the imitating behavior in a child, or a child may not witness the model unless a teacher points out and reminds a child to watch the model. Professional development to improve teacher support of leadership in the virtual environment is needed. There could also be more explicit instructions to young children about ways to be a leader in a virtual learning environment. Further research can broaden our understanding of how leadership might be demonstrated differently in virtual and in-person classroom settings. Future work can also focus on how and in what ways virtual settings can be effective in instilling leadership in children.

Additionally, the findings of this study indicated that teachers believed leadership could be taught. This finding represents teachers' perceptions of teaching leadership, which has already been discussed in answering research question one. This finding further asserts that teachers can develop leadership in children using various methods, which include teachers' intervention in children's learning. Per the present study's findings, teachers stated they intervene by giving instructions for children to follow; however, they also mentioned they provide freedom to children to explore and learn from their own mistakes. Interestingly, findings also showed teachers interfere by asking open-ended questions as they believe this expands children's thinking. Because leadership can be taught, the teachers could be provided with the tools for training and developing leadership (Leonard et al., 2014). As a result, training teachers regarding leadership development in children will help to recognize and enhance leadership in children.

Therefore, the current findings suggest teachers believe that leadership can be taught and children can learn. Teachers also witnessed children acquiring leadership through learning themselves or with their peers, which leads to theme three.

Theme Three: Children Acquire Leadership in the Classroom

The third theme, *Children Acquire Leadership in the Classroom,* revolves around the finding that children learn various leadership skills through their involvement in the several activities that take place in the classroom. This theme helped to further answer research question one.

Actively Involved Children and Leadership Acquisition

This category represents the finding that children are actively involved in the activities that take place in the classroom, and through participating in those various activities, they acquire leadership skills. For example, children may acquire leadership by imitating their teachers, and teachers in this study shared that those children see their teachers as leaders. Some of the participants in this study also stated that children attained leadership either by learning themselves via observation, rules, and routines, and/or learning from other peers in the classroom.

According to some of the teachers' responses in the present study, child leaders participate in all the classroom tasks and take them seriously. They also help their peers to finish assigned tasks. These interview data align with conclusions drawn in a 1996 study by Wright, which outlined four leadership styles. One of these four styles suggested that leaders are production oriented, meaning they are concerned with completing assigned tasks. A theoretical concept related to this finding comes from Erikson's third stage: Initiative vs. Guilt (Mooney, 2013). This stage occurs between the preschool years and the age of five. In this stage, a child begins to assert control over their environment by planning activities, accomplishing tasks, and facing challenges. Success at this stage develops a sense of purpose, and failure results in developing a sense of guilt. Erikson's

third stage, Initiative vs. Guilt, could be related to the current findings that finishing tasks given by the teacher could lead children to feel success, and success leads them to gain leadership. However, it raises a question that children who do not finish task on time, do they gain leadership? If yes, what motivated them in acquiring leadership.

Owen's (2007) study also discussed that most teachers view leadership as task oriented. Child leaders are focused on their tasks and are also involved in delegating tasks to other children. Although teachers in the current study discussed that children were involved in the tasks and worked on them until finished, they did not mark encouraging "concentrates on tasks and their completion" on the checklist. This finding made me question if there were other characteristics teachers think are necessary to mark than the "concentrates on tasks and their completion." Also, if "concentrates on tasks and their completion" was undervalued, then the question is how do teachers acknowledge leaders when various tasks or activities are offered to children? Perhaps a closer look at how these questions are asked is warranted in a future study.

Teachers noticed participation in classroom activities as a part of supporting leadership and also described providing opportunities to lead. The majority of the participants mentioned that various activities took place in the classroom that required assigning leadership roles, for example, serving as the line leader, calendar person, weather person, etc. The person assigned to these leadership roles changed daily, so each student had a turn to fill each role. Turn-taking is a leadership characteristic discussed by Certo (2011), namely that children learn while taking turns holding specifically assigned roles.

The participants in this study who were instructing children online asserted that children attending school remotely learn things differently. The students were actively involved in the activities and discussions in the virtual environment, but this was not the same being in the physical classroom, where children were involved with others physically. Importantly, children joining virtual classes have learned to participate online and have gained endurance by sitting in one place, listening, and waiting for their turn to speak, as well as additional social skills. Virtual classes may provide children the platform to learn and build upon some skills but are less effective for others because children are not involved physically and socially with each other as in the in-person classroom environment. Importantly, Lee and colleagues (2005) observed that social skills were hard to understand when displayed virtually. This creates a barrier for teachers to navigate, as social skills are critical to developing leadership in children. Future research can increase our knowledge about the different ways in which teachers can support leadership in virtual teaching and learning and strategies to minimize barriers (i.e., less, evidence of leadership related to social skills). The pivot to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic may result in more virtual learning in the future. An implication from this study is for future research that can inform professional development supporting effective uses of technology and virtual teaching strategies related to leadership.

Theme Four: Teachers Lack Training, Awareness, and Knowledge on Leadership in Children

The fourth theme, *teachers lack training, awareness, and knowledge on leadership in children,* emerged because teachers discussed that they had little or no

training in leadership, which may have contributed to their lack of awareness about facilitating leadership acquisition in children. This theme helped to further answer research question one, which focused on teachers discussing their perceptions on training related to leadership.

Teachers Lack Experience/Training and Expressed their Interest in Children's Leadership

The findings showed some teachers saw themselves lacking awareness of leadership in young children. Moreover, participants stated that they did not have any professional leadership training. When teachers lack leadership training and foundational knowledge, they might not recognize leadership in children even though the children exhibit leadership in many ways throughout the classroom. Shy or quiet children may have leadership skills, but being quiet/shy, they do not appear to participate in leadership activities that require verbal skills. For example, one of the participants mentioned that children should not be deprived of opportunities, so she wants to have training on helping children who are quiet/shy/less verbal and do not accept the transitions quickly in the activities or the learning setting because of their shy/quiet nature. According to Mistry and Sood (2012), teachers had no leadership training during their university studies. They also mentioned because of the lack of training, they found it hard to support leadership development in early childhood settings when children are in transition from one activity to another. Fox (2012) also suggested examining the experience of teachers and its impact on instilling leadership in children. Furthermore, she discussed the importance of teacher training related to leadership for instilling leadership in children. Finally, Karnes and Stephens (1999) specified the lack of instructions and training offered to teachers

about developing leadership skills in young children is an area of concern. The present study points to the importance of teachers' training in developing leadership in children. It seems teacher training in this area is long overlooked, since the literature has pointed this out as a problem as far back as 1999.

Some participants in the study discussed the lack of awareness and training in the field of leadership in children, and a few of the teachers were interested in learning more about the topic. Some teachers in the current study were concerned about instilling leadership during the pandemic because they were unaware of how they could do that. Other participants also mentioned they did not learn leadership in children in their undergraduate careers; they were interested in learning more about it and mentioned that more research is needed in this field. Finally, some teachers discussed their interest in learning more about leadership in young children. However, it was not reflected in the data as this discussion took place after the interviews were finished, during informal conversation. Therefore, professional development training can help teachers to create environments that encourage independence and self-exploration among students, providing opportunities to acquire and enhance their leadership skills (Hillman & Smith, 1981).

In answering the first research question, teachers mentioned various leadership characteristics they think are essential for children to gain leadership. They also perceived that they facilitated children's attainment of leadership through teaching and providing different opportunities to them. The results also showed teachers felt that children acquired leadership by actively participating in classroom activities. However,

they believed they lacked leadership training to help them to recognize and develop leadership in their students.

RQ 2: What Characteristics of Leadership do Teachers Observe in their Children During Various Activities That Take Place in the Classroom?

The purpose of this research question was to know the leadership characteristics that teachers notice in their classroom activities. The findings are extracted from interviews, observations, and checklist data.

Theme One: Teachers Observe Descriptive Elements of Leadership in Children

The first theme of research question two, *teachers observe descriptive elements of leadership in children,* explored data on teachers' observations of leadership characteristics in the various activities that take place in the classroom. Studies conducted by Certo (2011), Fox (2012), Krasnor et al. (2006), Lee et al. (2005), Owen (2007), Tross (2015), and Turgunbaeva et al. (2016) have discussed the characteristics of leadership.

Child Leaders Have a Group of Followers and Comprise Social-emotional Skills

This finding represents teachers' observations of their classroom. Teachers noticed that children followed child leaders in the classroom. Based on the analysis of data in the present study, the followers were children who conformed to participating in the same activity or same area of play the leader selected. The leaders directed play through his/her ideas and initiated play. Followers were likely to follow the leaders' directions. These findings are similar to the various definitions of leadership that describe the importance of the follower and influence of a leader, though not necessarily related to children. However, companionship of leaders and followers is evident in the literature (Owen, 2007) related to leadership in children. Additionally, a person's ability to

influence others is defined as leadership (Baker, 2013). According to the participants, the leader's influence was also visible in children's activities in the current study. Teachers mentioned that they had witnessed the influence of the leaders over their followers in many play episodes. Additionally, the current study was associated with Bolden et al. (2011) and Northouse (2013), who found leadership is a mutual relationship that requires an active companionship of leaders and followers. That is, both leaders and followers are inherently involved in leadership. It would be interesting to see in the future studies whether follower children take the leadership roles sometimes.

The present study's findings demonstrated that children who are leaders are role models. Teachers present role models purposefully so that other children can follow them. For example, one of the teachers provided an example of role models by saying the names and saying they are making a good choice because they are following directions. Krasnor et al. (2006) supported the concept of teachers creating role models in the classroom and mentioned role modeling as a tool to equip future generations with valuable resources in their schools and communities.

Child leaders also like to imitate their teachers. The findings from the data stated that child leaders liked to use the words or phrases in their play that are used by the teacher. The children followed the behavior of the teacher and imitated them. A similar finding was discussed in the study conducted by Owen (2007). When teachers practiced leadership, as well as developed leadership in the classroom, they were more likely to listen to their children, pay attention to them, get more involved with them, and empower them. One way for teachers to develop leadership in children because children try to

imitate their role models. In working on developing leadership in the classroom, the transformation should be focused on children as well as on teachers (Owen, 2007).

As some participants were teaching the classes virtually, the findings also discussed children not following rather than following other children. This finding was based on interview data. One of the participants mentioned that some children did not follow other children and instead stuck with their own answers. The teacher appreciated those children for being different and obstinate, as they did not change their answers because their friends did. Teachers also stated younger children follow older students as their leaders because older children show the younger ones the etiquette of working in a group. This finding is in support of the literature on the leader-follower relationship, as well as how leaders influence their followers.

This category included references that child leaders have social-emotional skills. The findings revealed children-leaders were empathetic and had social skills as well. While discussing social skills, teachers mentioned their view that child leaders waited for their turn to share ideas and had a willingness to share their discoveries with others. Some teachers also discussed that the social aspect of children made them the leader of the classroom.

Certo (2011) discussed turn-taking as an essential characteristic of social skills that child leaders display. Some of the essential characteristics of leadership noticed in Certo's (2011) study were social skills, in which helping, taking turns, and getting along with others were the most prevalent. The teacher's role was to scaffold the students' discussion, meaning teachers instilled social skills in children.

Social skills are an essential concept of socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky (1978), who described children's development through social skills and collaborative play. His socio-cultural theory supports this study, as the teachers in the present study discussed social skills in children, meaning they knew having social skills was an important aspect of leadership acquisition. They mentioned helping, sharing, interacting with peers, turn-taking, and more as the social skills they observed in their classroom. Eight of 11 teachers marked social skills in the checklist as the most important domain they would like to encourage in children to instill leadership. Several leadership theories such as those by Erik Erikson (1963), John Bowlby (1969), John Dewey (1916), Lev Vygotsky (1978), Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), as well as literature by Certo (2011), Fox (2012), Mullarky et al. (2005), and Owen (2007), discussed the importance of social skills in attaining leadership.

The participants of the present study also discussed child leaders as empathetic. The participants discussed that it is essential that child leaders have a kind relationship with their peers and others. The findings also showed that child leaders understood other children's feelings, were kind, and liked to help children who were struggling in the classroom. Six of the 11 teachers marked "Empathetic/sensitive to feelings of others" on the checklist as the most important social skill they sought to encourage among children to instill leadership. When teacher-participants were asked about their perceptions of leadership in children in research question one, they described viewing child leaders as generally empathetic; however, they also described that they have child leaders being empathetic in their classroom. Teachers' perception might be the reason they see empathy as one of the leadership characteristics of a child leader, or it could be

compounded because they know empathy is the characteristic of leadership as well as they observed empathy in their children.

Developed Cognitive Skills in Leaders

The findings from the study revealed that child leaders displayed cognitive skills along with other skills. Lee et al. (2005) interviewed teachers to gain a richer understanding of leadership among children. In their study, the teachers discussed the significance of advanced cognitive skills, among other characteristics that a leader should acquire. Similarly, in the present study, teachers discussed that child leaders exhibit critical thinking in various situations, which might mean initiating play and directing play while adding various strategies.

Moreover, teachers in this study discussed child leaders as making good choices. To teachers, making good choices might mean that child leaders do what they are supposed to, but it might also mean they behave or imitate their teachers. The teachers also stated that child leaders think critically; they present their ideas in the group, they are capable of solving problems and thinking of possible ways to keep their play going. According to Vygotsky (1978), children are mostly involved in collaborative learning, and doing so, they learn new concepts from their peers or adults whose scaffolding enhances their critical thinking.

The findings of this study revealed that one of the cognitive skills that child leaders develop is the ability to make decisions. Child leaders make decisions and are adamant about their decisions; in other words, sometimes their peers' decisions do not influence them. The findings in the present study also indicated that child leaders are the ones who decide their roles during play or other classroom activities, for example,

pretend play, because child leaders were described as confident and observant. Thus, they might make the decision based on their observations. Dewey (1916) had similar thoughts when he discussed the freedom of intelligence, which could lead a person to make observations, analyze those observations critically, construct questions from the observation analysis, and then decide whether the whole procedure was worth the engagement. Therefore, child leaders might also observe their environment and make decisions based on the information they took and analyzed while observing their surroundings in the classroom.

Kase (2010) stated that one of the characteristics of leaders is decisiveness. More specifically, Kase (2010) explored three qualities that leaders should develop to become better decision-makers: emotional intelligence, the ability to cope with uncertainty, and the ability to choose evidence or intuition. Although children do not necessarily possess these skills to make decisions due to their developmental stage, if they are given choices and asked questions, they own the decision-making skill. Lee et al. (2005) argued that decision-making skills are one of the essential skills a leader in children should have, which is why teachers should promote the development of decision-making skills in children by involving them in different activities. The interview data and the literature both stated the importance of decision-making skills when acquiring leadership. However, only one teacher out of 11 marked “decision-making skills” in the checklist as an essential characteristic they would like to encourage. The teacher's decision not marking “decision-making skills” makes me wonder if providing more options in the checklist was the reason for not choosing it as an essential skill, which could be a

limitation of this study. Researchers who build from the findings in this study will want to note the limitation and create different/richer items on the checklist.

The findings also indicated that child leaders with cognitive skills were confident enough to share their opinions. One of the participants stated that child leaders had their views, and sometimes they stood against the crowd to bring their ideas to the attention of others to be known in the classroom. A study by Klesener (2001) also mentioned that giving children opportunities to offer their opinions is essential. Therefore, cognitive skills are an important aspect that should not be overlooked while instilling leadership in children.

Dispositions of Leaders

The findings demonstrated that teachers discussed common personalities among children, such as bossy, silly, shy/quiet, etc., when they were asked about their perceptions in research question one. In contrast, in research question two, they discussed their observation of some of those characteristics in their classroom and elaborated, saying child leaders were observed as being loud, flexible, and lacking inherent leadership skills. These findings have been discussed in research question one. Still, they resurface in this question because, as one of the teachers pointed out, their perceptions of leadership are likely influenced by what they observe in the classroom and vice versa. A possible limitation of this study is that some participants saw their perceptions and observations as being mutually influential.

Teachers observed that some child leaders were bossy, aggressive, louder, flexible, shy/quiet, and void of inherent leadership skills. Referring to bossy leaders, participants mentioned labeling bossy leaders as a negative aspect of leadership is

something they observed as teachers, but made it clear they want to avoid that term when they are talking with children in the classroom. Teachers revealed that "bossy leaders" are the loudest and always want to take charge of their group. Some teachers also stated that bossy leaders are not encouraged and are given reminders to avoid being bossy. This may result in teachers giving children a mixed message about desired leadership behavior. This is addressed by Mullarkey et al. (2008) as they noted teachers identify authoritative leaders as disruptive students. Teachers in another study pointed out that child leaders can be non-bossy and could coordinate the activities (Fox, 2012). Teachers' strategies and direct intervention could help prevent children from being disruptive in the classroom. As suggested in the discussion of finding related to question one, future research can help to illustrate the complexity of leadership as it is observed in children. Various other leadership characteristics, including young and older leaders in the classroom, have also been established in the data.

In contrast, the findings in this study also exhibited leadership was observed in “shy or quiet” children. Few studies referred to silent or quiet leaders. However, the study conducted by Fox (2012) used the term non-verbal in discussing leadership in children. In their study, non-verbal children were primarily engaged in activities that required little or no verbal skills. One of the teachers in the present study mentioned shy or quiet children as “silent leaders.” Teachers responded that the “shy or quiet” children were less likely to use verbal communication to lead, but leadership could be observed in their actions.

The data in the current study showed that child leaders were also flexible, which is aligned with studies of adult leaders in situational theory, where leadership style changes with the change in the situation (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Though the

situational approach is discussed in the context of adult leadership, teachers in the current study mentioned that they observed child leaders displaying flexibility when the situation changes during their work or play time indoors or outdoors (i.e., changes in schedule, children they are interacting with, materials). For example, if children in a group do not want to play according to the direction of the leader, the leader's child will change in response to the wishes of others but on his or her terms.

Child leaders being "flexible" was also mentioned by Fox (2012), who studied teachers' perceptions regarding leadership in young children. In Fox's study, only one participant marked "flexible" as one of the essential characteristics of leadership, similar to the present study where only one of 11 teachers marked "flexible" in the checklist as an important characteristic teachers encourage to instill leadership in children. It would be interesting to know more about flexibility in studying leadership in children because flexibility might have a different meaning from what is described in adult leadership.

Another characteristic presented through data analysis was that leaders are "not natural," indicating that respondents believed leadership is teachable. Teachers help children learn the critical skill of a leader, which is to stand up for themselves and their friends. This is a skill that can be both innate and taught. The teachers in the present study agreed that children were taught leadership at young ages in addition to their natural leadership abilities. This finding is similar to the theory of behavioral approach that discusses leadership as a learned trait (Leonard et al., 2014). The results are also identical to Foster (1981), who stated leadership was teachable and that teachers could encourage children to develop the skills necessary to be leaders through their instructional methods. It was also found that older children among siblings are leaders in

the classroom, though few participants indicated that sometimes young children exhibit leadership in the classroom. Children are leaders to their young siblings; however, in the classroom, everyone is of the same age, so the responsibility is to learn how to lead children of similar ages. Tross (2015) found birth order was vital to leadership, and researchers have recommended examining whether birth order plays a role in developing leadership skills for future work.

Theme Two: Leadership is Exhibited by Children in Various Activities

The second theme of research question two explored focused on teachers' observations of leadership in various activities that take place in the classroom.

Leadership is Observed in the Playground

Findings showed that teachers noticed leadership in children when they were involved in outdoor activities, stating that outdoor activities allowed children to display their leadership skills. They took the initiative to go to their peers and ask them to play with them or to offer play to others. They initiated the games, gave other children ideas, and directed them. It appeared that other children liked to follow their lead. This finding could be related to what Erikson (1963) described in his theory as the third stage, Initiative vs. Guilt, which occurs between preschool years and the age of five. In this stage, children begin to assert control over their environment by planning activities, accomplishing tasks, and facing challenges. Success at this stage develops a sense of purpose, and failure results in developing a sense of guilt. Furthermore, Shin et al. (2004) stated that young leaders often take the leadership role when they play with a group; they initiate and extend the idea, enhance the play quality, and regulate social interaction at the same time. Ultimately, this success helps them to acquire and learn more leadership

skills. Similarly, this finding is also supported by Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, who discussed the importance of collaborative play, which enhance social skills in children that results in gaining leadership. Studies conducted by Brock et al. (2018), Brock and Curby (2016), Certo (2011), Fox (2012), and Lee et al. (2005) have also discussed that social skills are the critical domain to acquire leadership.

Leadership is Observed in the Classroom

The findings showed that teachers have witnessed leadership in every activity of children in the classroom, such as pretend play, parallel play, work time, group time, writing time, etc. Data revealed that child leaders display leadership by waiting for their turn, encouraging their peers, knowing the rules, and leading play activities.

Lee et al. (2005) and Certo (2011) mentioned child leaders wait for their turn, whereas Corsaro (1979), Fox (2012), Lee et al. (2005), and Owen (2007) discussed the importance of peer-to-peer relationships for building leadership in children. Fewer studies have focused on child leaders knowing the classroom rules. Similarly, in the present study, the participants did not discuss child leaders knowing the rules, though there was a discourse on children following the rules.

Teachers also stated they had observed leadership during pretend play activities, particularly "house," where children play different roles and display their leadership skills the most. With mutual understanding, children picked up the roles for themselves. Moreover, teacher-participants also mentioned that pretend play provided the opportunity for children to expand their thinking by creating ideas and then initiating them. Children were more verbal when they performed pretend play in the classroom. Dewey (1916)

suggested that learning occurs when children are allowed to take leadership roles, assume ownership and when social interaction abounds (as cited in Certo, 2011).

Teachers also witnessed leadership in parallel play between children in their classroom. For example, one of the participants mentioned that when children play with Legos, they sit together but they play on their own. They also talk to each other while playing with their Legos, and if someone needs a certain size piece, they dig in the bucket to help find it. Thus, children were observed helping, communicating, and using their verbal skills in their parallel play, which are the important social skills. Certo (2011), Fox (2012), Lee et al. (2005), and Owen (2007) each used helping and interacting and using verbal skills as the main characteristics of leadership in their studies.

Similarly, leadership was also noticed during writing time. Teachers mentioned children liked to follow the leader in the writing area as well, which aligns with the idea that leadership happens in groups. Certo (2011) concluded that participation in small groups with peer-led discussions accompanied by the support of a teacher could help to nurture young children's social and leadership skills. Similarly, the current study indicated that teachers noticed leadership all over the classroom because it happens in the group; it happens inside and outside in the playground, choice, and pretend play areas, as well as during parallel play, writing, and group time.

Theme Three: Teacher Encourages Leadership

The third theme of research question two, *teacher encourages leadership,* explored the data to answer research question two based on teachers' observation of leadership in various activities that take place in their classrooms. This unexpected theme emerged from the data when teachers discussed children's leadership in their classrooms.

Teachers Recognize, Support, and Instill Leadership

The findings exhibited that they support leadership in children when they witness it in their classroom. Teachers discussed that they think children could be great leaders. The teachers also mentioned that they instill leadership through teaching, directing, encouraging, modeling, different activities, and providing different opportunities. Teachers mentioned that they also provided opportunities to shy or quiet children to gain leadership. As in the present study, teachers provided various examples of how they provide different opportunities to children to gain leadership, which means they had some knowledge on leadership in children.

Recognizing leadership is an essential step for supporting and instilling leadership. If a teacher knows what leadership looks like or the characteristics of leadership in children, then she can support leadership by encouraging, instilling, and enhancing it in children. According to the study by Fox (2012), teachers discouraged leadership in children because they were unaware of leadership skills. When children displayed those skills, they unknowingly and sometimes knowingly (because of the tight schedule or other reasons) ignored and discouraged those skills. The participants in the present study seemed to have some knowledge of leadership that helped them to recognize leadership in children; even though, as emerged in another theme, some teachers expressed lacking knowledge and training in leadership. Teachers' encouragement in instilling leadership is further discussed in this chapter.

Theme Four: Leadership is Hard at Young Age

The fourth theme of research question two, *leadership is hard at young age,* explored the data to answer research question two based on teachers' observation of leadership in various activities that take place in their classroom.

Teachers' Opinion on Leadership in Children

The findings demonstrate that two among 11 teachers shared an opinion generated from their observations of their classrooms that children did not display leadership qualities at their young age. One of the participants also mentioned she had not noticed independence in children in her classroom, which means that the teacher did not provide activities that allowed children to be independent. She mentioned that their curriculum is collaborative based which means teachers might provide the opportunities to children to gain leadership. However, being independent is also one of the essential characteristics of leadership which the teacher mentioned that they do not provide.

Another participant stated that acquiring leadership for young children was hard as their decisions are based on their peers' decisions; they are not self-advocates and like to follow other children in the classroom. Also, acquiring leadership is hard for young children because many do not consider themselves leaders. There could be various reasons, but according to Owen (2007) it is likely some children never understood that they possess the capabilities to be a leader. For these and other reasons, teachers felt instilling leadership was difficult at a young age.

Interestingly, one of the reasons teachers felt leadership was hard at a young age is also cited by Mullarkey et al. (2008), who found when teachers do not recognize leadership in children in their classroom, they are likely to believe that acquiring

leadership is difficult at a young age. Similarly, Fox (2012) found that teachers who could not recognize leadership discouraged leadership.

Additionally, teachers might not provide opportunities for children to display leadership in their classrooms. The findings in the current study presented that those teachers with less than five years of experience and teachers with more than 10 years of experience had the same view that leadership is difficult to instill in children of young age. Fox (2012) reported a similar finding that years of experience do not influence leadership identification. Fox's results revealed no relationship between the years of experience and the number of leadership scenarios correctly identified by the teachers. The present study's findings and the literature review suggested that years of experience do not help recognize or influence leadership.

Hence the findings presented in this question stated that teachers were aware of many characteristics of leadership mentioned in the literature, however, some characteristics are less discussed or have used different terms. For example, the current study has used the term bossy which is termed as authoritarian or dictatorship in the study conducted by Mullarkey et al. (2008). The teachers noted that children leaders acquire leadership in the classroom and on the playground. One of the teachers mentioned that leadership is witnessed "all over the classroom," meaning in all the activity and play area of the classroom, across all developmental domains. In contrast, a few teachers suggested that leadership is hard to acquire at a young age because, in their view, children are unaware of their leadership capability. It may also be the case that due to a lack of knowledge, time, or awareness teachers do not always observe and recognize leadership in children. Some teachers discussed their observations of child leaders having in-born

leadership capabilities; some of the teachers also discussed that they have child leaders who influence their followers through various ways. Interestingly, these findings are aligned with some of the adult theories of leadership, such as the trait theory, the situational theory, and the behavior theory, which points to the fact that teachers think children display some of the behavior and skills that are witnessed in adult leaders. More research is needed to further expand what are the other characteristics of leadership that teachers could instill in young children.

RQ 3: What are the different techniques that teachers apply to encourage leadership in young children?

The purpose of this research question was to explore the various techniques and strategies teachers applied in their classrooms to influence leadership in children. Teachers play a significant role in children's learning (Anhert et al., 2013), and therefore teachers may influence leadership in children through their different techniques in their classroom.

Theme One: Teachers Involved Directly and Indirectly in the Leadership Development

The first theme, *teachers involved directly and indirectly in the leadership development,* explored the data to answer research question three. This theme discussed findings on teachers' involvement in instilling leadership directly and indirectly in their classrooms. These findings are based on the data extracted from the interviews, observations, and checklists.

Teachers Teach and Provide Opportunities

The findings showed that teachers were directly involved with children to instill leadership in them by applying different techniques, such as teaching different skills, providing different opportunities to children, and choosing leaders for various jobs in the classroom.

Teachers Teach

Data in the current study showed that some teachers were involved in explicit teaching; they taught the lessons and gave instructions, and also prepared children to self-advocate, which teachers believed instilled leadership in children with other learning. While observing teachers in this study, it was found that all 11 teachers provided instruction before and after the activities to children in their classroom, followed by questioning and answering between children and the teacher. Moreover, explicit teaching was also noticed while observing the virtual classroom for an hour in the present study, where teachers were involved in teaching. For example, during observation, all three teachers online included a display of the material and instruction that children would need in the activity and also how the activity was carried out. Thus, explicit teaching was observed. Vygotsky (1978) did not support explicit teaching; instead, he discussed that children's learning should be scaffolded when needed. Explicit teaching is the opposite of what John Dewey and other theorists have discussed. According to Dewey (1938), children should be allowed to imagine and learn by gaining experiences. Similarly, Karnes and Stephens (1999) stated that teachers could encourage and teach students to make self-decisions and self-direction by providing opportunities to attain and enrich their leadership skills. The observation data indicated that the virtual classroom teachers

did not provide opportunities for children to learn through their observations or experiences, as they discussed during the interviews.

The findings also revealed that teachers teaching in-person teach different skills to children to acquire leadership. Most of the teachers also discussed that they develop leadership in children by providing opportunities to children to interact socially with their peers and teachers in the classroom through storytelling or other group discussions. Shin et al. (2004) found leadership to be a "relational construct," meaning leaders can use their social skills to build their relationships with peers and teachers through these interactions. The observation found that teachers teaching online interacted with children more often than those teaching in person. For example, some teachers let children share their material and stories, and children were observed sharing their play activities performed at their homes. Moreover, teachers asked questions based on their stories and material. The present study found that the teachers primarily focused on social skills. The study by Certo (2011) also discussed social skills; it stated that recognized leaders displayed social skills.

Therefore, teachers were observed in conducting the activities that involved social-emotional development of children. Interestingly, teachers were observed singing and dancing with children online. Teachers were also more concerned and aware of children's overall development, mainly their social emotional development. While observing, teachers were witnessed having a lot of conversations with children, and a positive student-teacher relationship was observed.

Similarly, teachers in the current study stated they taught social skills to children; according to them, social interactions are a big part of learning. Some teachers also

discussed that teaching and focusing on social and emotional development through different techniques is essential for children to instill leadership. For example, storytelling with the help of the puppet show in the classroom also showed them different emotions and pictures. They focused on teaching the different emotions, such as happiness, sadness, anger, frustration, etc., and also taught students how to treat other people with the help of language. Notably, leaders need cognitive skills to solve group problems or complete tasks, which was not the teachers' focus while discussing teaching leadership. Also, children were engaged in many physical activities in the playground and the classroom, but teachers did not discuss the importance of physical domains in instilling leadership. While marking checklists, less than half of the participants selected "energetic/high energy level" as an essential characteristic they would like to encourage in children.

Findings from the data revealed that teachers also teach children to be aware. They stated it was essential to teach children to be thoughtful of themselves, their bodies, their feelings, and others in their classroom. Teachers used the term "mindful" to be aware of themselves and others in the classroom. One of the participants said that she performed mindfulness through self-reflection and positive affirmations across different activities. They perform a few exercises, explicitly thinking about being their best self and doing their best. The student and teacher close their eyes for some time to picture their best self. In the literature, mindfulness was not discussed as a strategy to instill leadership in children. However, the examples mentioned by teachers indicated that teaching being mindful could be an effective strategy for instilling leadership.

Teachers Provide Opportunities

The data showed teachers offered opportunities for children to display their leadership in the classroom. For example, teachers discussed how they chose children to perform the responsibilities of different jobs in the classroom and that this was the best way to exhibit their leadership. They mentioned they cheerfully called the name of the children and gave them their classroom jobs. Some teachers mentioned they offered children the chance to choose their jobs for the day. Some classroom jobs discussed by the teachers were line leader, snack person, weather person, child counter, light person, and song selector. In virtual classrooms, however, the only jobs were weather person and child counter. Teachers mentioned that giving students classroom jobs gives them a sense of responsibility. The findings from the observation data showed all teachers provided opportunities for children to choose their daily jobs. However, there were very few daily jobs for children in online classes.

Tross (2015) sought to discover ways to enhance leadership in middle school children, revealing many strategies to enhance leadership. One of those strategies was giving responsibility to children to enhance leadership skills, similar to a study by Owen (2007) where giving responsibility has been discussed (Tross, 2015). As noted earlier, seven teachers out of 11 marked “responsible” on the checklist as the essential characteristic of leadership they encourage in children.

The findings also showed that teachers read books to children. Teachers noted they sometimes read certain books that have leadership characteristics present in the plot. They mentioned they also model the examples and scenarios from the books related to leadership that would help children not only in acquiring leadership but throughout their

lives. Book reading was also witnessed in the observation. Remarkably, eight of the 11 teachers read aloud a particular book that contained the leadership characteristics.

In contrast, one of the teachers let the children explore the book such as animals related book or body parts in which children were looking at the picture, and two of the 11 teachers read literacy books. The literature review did not reveal any studies that discussed book reading as a strategy to instill leadership. Children learn many things by reading books, whether reading by themselves or listening to them being read by their teachers. Most of the teacher were involved in reading the leadership related book. Reading could also be an effective strategy for instilling leadership in children

The interviews and observations in the present study also revealed teachers build relationships with children for interactive learning and children's comfort. According to Anhert et al. (2013), question-answers method between children and teachers are best for building relationships among each other. The teacher-child relationship has indicated success in various aspects of school adjustment of a child (Anhert et al., 2013). According to Vygotsky (1978), children learn not only by doing but also by interacting with teachers, working with friends, and continuing a task until they understand and complete it. It is essential for children to receive nurturing relationships from their teachers. Statistics show children who have a warm relationship with their teachers are more likely to develop ideas about other people's thoughts, feelings, and needs, thus establishing cooperative interactions (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). Therefore, the findings of the current study show that teaching through different strategies and providing various opportunities to children could instill leadership in children.

Teacher Set Environment Focusing on Different Developments

The findings showed that teachers are indirectly involved in children's learning by creating a classroom that provides the opportunity for cognitive, social, and physical development of children. Furthermore, teachers displayed classroom expectations by modeling, with the help of classroom leaders, so that other children could learn. Moreover, they helped, scaffolded, and worked with children to build their confidence. Setting up the learning environment and providing a nurturing teacher-child relationship helps children to develop their skills. This finding is similar to that of Lee et al. (2005), who discussed that teachers could contribute to nurturing leadership in young children by creating a learning environment in which individual differences and unique strengths are confirmed. Though the teachers discuss modeling in virtual classrooms, they did not mention the development of environments for children's learning, mainly focusing on instilling leadership in them. Interestingly, observation data displayed that the teacher modeled social behavior and kindness in her virtual classroom when she pretended to talk to Santa and showed her gratitude for the gift Santa had promised to send to her classroom. This whole scenario, as an example, is described in chapter 4 in the pretend play segment.

While reviewing the literature, Klesener (2001) suggested various techniques for teaching virtually. Teachers can provide opportunities to ask questions, offer opinions, and relate new information to enhance the learning process (Klesener, 2001). The observation data demonstrated that all the teachers provided opportunities for children to interact with each other in the classroom—activities such as sharing time involved interaction between teacher and children and peer-to-peer. Teachers told children to share

their stories or material in the virtual classroom and were involved in asking questions and letting the children decide their answers by raising their hands. Similarly, in the in-person setting, children were allowed to share their views regarding activities in the classroom by the teacher. Additionally, teachers provided shared control to children such a allowing children to make decision for the area to play and with the material to play.

This study also found teachers incorporated peer mentorship. Peer mentorship is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) social-cultural theory, which emphasizes children internalize thinking and problem-solving strategies through social interaction within groups of their peers or partnering with their peers. Findings demonstrated the reason behind pairing peers is the strength of one peer could help the other peer; it also provided specific encouragement to the other peer in need. Certo (2011) discussed the peer-led group, demonstrating that children attained social skills in peer-led groups, and their language was more elaborate and complex. The students who took the leadership role in the groups were the ones who kept the discussion going and helped other students with reading. However, peer-to-peer interaction was witnessed in the activities but peered mentoring was not seen during the observation session.

Additionally, a few teachers also mentioned they instill leadership in children in indirect ways. Namely, they do this by cooperating in children's learning by encouraging them to participate in classroom activities, incorporating activities for boys and girls, and having them collaborate with children from other age groups. According to Certo (2011), children display many skills during classroom activities, so it is very important for teachers to recognize those skills and encourage them so that these children can become great leaders and valuable citizens in the future. Similarly, Hillman and Smith (1981)

discussed teachers who supported leadership in children would possibly accept the value of providing opportunities for students to engage in leadership activities. Therefore, teachers may use direct ways through interactions and indirect ways through setting the environment with other children of different ages to instill leadership characteristics in them.

Some of the participants in the present study discussed collaborating with children from other age groups. While reviewing the literature, this process was introduced as "cross-age mentoring." Manning (2005) found that those teachers who used the cross-age mentoring approach in the classroom revealed the development of characteristics important for strong leadership. The present study has discussed Bowlby's (1969) theory of attachment, which also supports that attachment for children with their teacher or primary caregiver is essential for their development. Children are attached to their teachers and their peers and therefore tend to gain confidence to explore their environment (Bowlby, 1969). However, children may not be comfortable with children who are older or younger than them, so it would be reasonable to question how cross-age mentoring could be beneficial in developing leadership skills in them. Teachers can pair up children with the identified leaders of the classroom; the identified leaders have been discussed in theme two.

Theme Two: Teachers identify Leaders and Encourage Activities in a Group

The second theme explored the data to answer research question three. This theme discussed findings on teachers' recognition of leadership in their classroom and the strategies developed by them to instill leadership. These findings are based on the data extracted from the interviews, observations, and checklists.

Identified Leaders in the Classroom

Participants discussed that they were well aware of the leaders of their classroom, and they identified various characteristics leaders exemplify while they are in their classroom. Some of the teachers mentioned that child leaders were helpful. The characteristic "helpful" was an essential characteristic discussed in this study as well as in the review of literature (Certo, 2011; Fox, 2012; Lee et al., 2005). Teachers also mentioned that child leaders were helpful; they were helpful to their peers and the teacher in the classroom. However, while reviewing the checklist, none of the teachers marked "helpful" as a characteristic they sought to encourage in children to instill leadership qualities. Interestingly, the literature reviewed in this study indicated that being helpful was a skill seemed necessary for leadership. The interview findings seemed to be consistent with the literature. However, while marking the checklist, teachers thought other characteristics were more necessary than the characteristic "helpful." Were the teachers' perceptions changed when providing them with other characteristics options in the checklist? Perhaps they found other characteristics more important than helpfulness. Therefore, the open-ended questions in the checklist would serve the purpose of knowing the view of the participants in the context to leadership characteristics.

Teachers also mentioned that child leaders were extroverted and generally louder in the classroom regarding verbal communication, making them easier to choose as leaders in the classroom. Children being loud may have two meanings: first, they could be seeking attention, or they may be engaging in disruptive behavior, which is typically considered negative. If a child is an attention seeker, s/he may have a group of children in which he could act as the leader. A teacher mentioned that the loudest children rose as

leaders, and those children were the easiest to pick out as leaders. Similarly, Fox (2012) posited the identical argument that it is easier for teachers to pick noisier children than quiet children. Though teachers discussed shy children's leadership fewer times, it would be interesting to know teachers' strategies to provide opportunities to the quieter or shy children to display their leadership skills.

Teachers Encourage Activities

The participants stated they encouraged children's participation in all classroom activities, whether in a large group, small group, or individually. Additionally, teachers discussed children gained not only academic but also social skills through their group interactions. This finding is consistent with Certo's (2011) study, which mentioned children acquired leadership and social skills when they participated in small groups. The participants in the present study also discussed that teachers encouraged interactions between peers and the teacher and children. While observing teachers, it was found that teachers were involved in activities encouraging peer-to-peer learning. For example, in one of the observations, children were given the talking tools (a stuffed pouch) and were encouraged to talk about the book they read while holding the talking tool; then, s/he would pass the talking tool to the peer for his or her turn. They also discussed the book with their teacher at the end.

Children's involvement in group activities can not only strengthen their interactions with peers but could also improve the teacher-student bond. Certo (2011) further added that peer-led discussion also needed adult support that helped in nurturing leadership skills among students. According to Hillman and Smith (1981), teachers are likely to accept the value of providing opportunities for students to engage in leadership

activities if they want children to gain leadership skills. Participants in the present study discussed they enjoyed facilitating mindfulness activities with children in which teacher-initiated reflection drew attention to the choices children made, who they are, and who they can become.

Furthermore, teachers discussed activities that prescribe responsibilities to do certain classroom jobs for the day. For example, the line leader, weather person, child counter, snack person, etc. These classroom jobs were self-chosen or assigned by the teacher. The observation data confirmed the interviews finding that teachers assign the classroom job of the day to children, and some teachers let children decide the classroom jobs. The jobs provide a sense of responsibility to children, which is an essential characteristic of attaining leadership. Responsibility was also highly marked by the teachers in the checklist, confirming the interview and observation findings. Sense of responsibility plays an essential role in acquiring leadership which has already been mentioned in previous studies and teachers in the present study, who marked "responsibility" as the important characteristic teachers seek to encourage in children to gain leadership. These activities are provided by teachers to children and involve children planning and completing tasks, which develops a sense of achievement and success (Erikson, 1963).

Theme Three: Teachers Believe in Leadership Despite Their Lack of Knowledge on Leadership

The third theme explored the data to answer research question three. This theme discussed findings on what teachers believed about leadership, despite lacking knowledge

on the topic. These findings are based on the data extracted from the interviews, observations, and checklists.

Teacher Believes

Teachers discussed they believed children display leadership, and it should be fostered at a young age. Riggio and Mumfors (2011) discussed that exposing children to different experiences at an early age enhances their social skills, emotional control, team-building capabilities, management skills, and leadership acumen. Additionally, Phillipson and Phillipson (2013) stated when leadership skills are developed early, children gain many skills and also coping skills, which are important for rapidly changing social circumstances (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic).

One example was observed during the observation of the participant teacher; the teacher called a student to pick a name from all the children's names written on the popsicle sticks kept upside down. The student picked the name and did not see it; only the teacher saw it. The student whose name was picked was the mystery student of the day. The teacher tended to observe this child's behavior throughout the day and then check marked her list (of behaviors) that the child displayed that day. If that child displayed the behavior on the teacher's checklist, his/her name was announced in the classroom, and s/he became a role model. If the behavior was poor, the mystery student was not announced and the next day, another mystery student was chosen. Children wanted their names to be announced, so following this strategy, it was observed that the participant was developing many leadership skills in children from a young age.

Teachers also believe children often watch and learn, so it is crucial for teachers to provide examples through modeling. Teachers reported they performed modeling by

offering examples of students who are well-behaved or those who follow classroom rules. Teachers also acted as role model so children could watch and learn from them. Therefore, teachers could practice leadership knowing children try to imitate their teacher or role model (Owen, 2007). The observation data displayed that few teachers modeled the behavior by being role models and pretend play; for example, one of the teachers displayed good behavior by showcasing through a puppet show. Two of the teachers were involved in the grocery shopping pretend play, where they created scenarios showcasing the social behavior that the children are supposed to have while going grocery shopping. Interestingly, two teachers also modeled good listening, alertness, and kindness by thinking aloud. Thinking out loud is the way when teachers have self-talk; for example, one of the teachers modeled good listening and alertness by pretending to wash her ears. She pretended to turn the ears, saying it is Monday; we might need to clean them out. Listening to this, the children were attentive and sat quietly. Finally, a few of the participants mentioned that child leaders make good choices. Still, they became bossy sometimes, indicating they were either not aware of self-regulation and/or did not have a sense of self-reflection, which is an important aspect of leadership.

Lack of Teachers Skills and Training in Leadership

Teachers discussed they had never received leadership training or professional development concerning leadership in young children. Two teachers mentioned they had abbreviated leadership training, among other special training, but did not have any direct training that focused on leadership development among younger students specifically. Some teachers mentioned that they had training in children's safety, security, health, trauma, and social-emotional development. However, if children are provided with

leadership skills, they can inevitably learn to be safe, secure and gain the ability to control their social-emotional feelings.

Many educators have discussed that leadership in children has been considered since the 1930s, yet surprisingly, we still do not have teacher training in this area of development (Fox, 2012; Hillman & Smith, 1981; Karnes & Stephens, 1999; Mistry & Sood, 2012) on teaching teachers to recognize and instill leadership in children. Teachers also mentioned that they had to pay for their training, and professional development was not sponsored by their school district or departments. The observation data also discussed that some teachers discouraged the child's initiative in learning. Two of the 11 teachers with one to five years of experience discouraged children's initiative, which is an essential leadership skill, by saying, "this is not an option" or "this is not the right choice." Few teachers were also witnessed giving lots of instruction rather than providing them the opportunity to explore. Providing instruction and not giving choices to children might be due to teachers' lack of leadership training. Teachers need to have information, experience, and professional development to facilitate the development of leadership in their students.

Listening to teachers' discussions in the context of training and their interest in learning more about leadership in children made me think about why the education system still lacks training for teachers to understand leadership in children. As discussed in chapter two, teachers are the immediate member other than the parents, so teachers can help children acquire leadership. Teachers' training in learning leadership in children can help teachers to recognize and instill leadership skills in children.

Theme Four: Pandemic-Constrained Social Development in Children

The fourth theme explored the data to answer research question three. This theme focused on findings where teachers discussed leadership related to the pandemic. These findings were based on data extracted from the interviews, observations, and checklists.

Pandemic Hardships

Teachers shared the difficulties they faced while teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers discussed the impacts of the COVID-19 situation, primarily that due to the school closure, children fell behind socially. Participants noted a lack of social norms prompting them to focus on social interactions. The findings showed there was a shift in children learned social skills during the COVID-19 lockdown as compared to children at the same level pre-pandemic. Teachers who were instructing virtually discussed that although they provided opportunities for children to engage in teacher-student or peer-to-peer interactions, it was different from children meeting physically with their friends and peers at school and interacting with them in person. This finding can be connected to the Ecological System Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner, that the microsystem influences the child the most; the interaction with the member in the microsystem influences the child's growth. Children could not meet their friends in person during the COVID-19 pandemic, which hindered their social development.

While observing teachers in the virtual classroom, it was found that many of the activities essential for the social development of children were missing; the reason might be that those activities are not meant to be performed online. For example, pretend play, plan sharing activity in which a child shares his plan of play, and physical activity, mainly play. One of the teachers also discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

on the social development of children. However, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were not observed in the in-person classrooms during an hour of observation; I observed that the teachers were seen involved with children, in my opinion they were as involved as they were, before the pandemic. In the in-person classrooms, children were physically together playing with each other, which demonstrated social growth. However, it was not observed in the virtual classroom. Children had fewer opportunities to share or talk to each other in a virtual environment. Yet, some of the teachers build their instructions by being mindful of the virtual settings. Teachers created some of the strategies in the virtual settings they had used in their physical classroom. They provided examples of good leaders, and they had children as role models in the virtual classroom. Teachers also provided different jobs to children as discussed in the physical classroom. Teachers encouraged children to share their stories or to show their favorite items in the virtual classroom so that children learn some of the social skills aspects such as turn taking or listening, but still, teachers discussed that social skills are hard to instill in virtual classes. The virtual classroom was the result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, the findings in the current study were that teachers applied various techniques to instill leadership in children. The teachers were involved, directly and indirectly, in instilling leadership in children through various ways described by the above-given headings. They encouraged various activities that they thought might instill leadership in children, and teachers also recognized and believed in instilling leadership in young children. However, teachers believed that they lack training in this area, and they also thought that COVID-19 impacted children's social development immensely.

Nevertheless, they applied various techniques, and the process of applying techniques is discussed in the following section.

RQ 4: How do teachers apply different techniques to encourage leadership in children in the classroom?

The purpose of this research question was to explore how teachers employ various strategies in their classrooms to influence leadership in children. While reviewing the literature, many studies discussed teachers' work to instill leadership skills in children, for example, Fox (2012), Lee et al. (2005). Therefore, this question sought to investigate the specific techniques used by teachers to instill leadership in their students.

Theme One: Teachers Provide Developmentally Appropriate Practices

The first theme explored the data to answer research question four. This theme focused on findings where teachers discussed developmentally appropriate practices for instilling leadership in children. These findings were based on data extracted from the interviews, observations, and checklists.

Teachers Involve, Encourage, and Facilitate

Participants discussed various ways of involvement in facilitating leadership under developmentally appropriate practices (DAP). DAP guides the early childhood professionals instructing children from birth to eight-years-old. It is based on the understanding of child development and determination of what is appropriate for each child in context to his/her ability, culturally, and linguistically (NAEYC, 2020). Teachers

stated they encouraged child-initiated learning and allowed children to explore and choose the activity they wished to initiate.

According to Vygotsky (1978), teachers can encourage children to make decisions and self-direction that helps them attain leadership skills. The interview findings showed teachers were involved in children's overall development, including social, emotional, physical, and cognitive developments. The observation data confirmed the interview findings and provided additional evidence that social development was encouraged by pretend play, group discussion, pairing children together for interaction, and group activities. Second, emotional development was encouraged when teachers interacted with children individually and in groups and while reading books aloud. Third, physical development was encouraged by allowing children to play outside and by initiating yoga in the classroom. Finally, cognitive development was encouraged by giving students tasks to complete, which included critical thinking and problem-solving. For example, teachers asked questions from the book that they read together out loud, provided them with different scenarios based on the book, and asked discussion questions again. Interestingly, teachers also included books on emotions and taught children how to take care of each emotion; some teachers also initiated puppet shows and displayed different good and bad behavior through a puppet show. The children’s verbal, problem-solving, and empathetic skill development were marked by most of the teachers in the checklist as skills they would like to encourage children to gain to develop as young leaders. Participant-teachers also mentioned that they designed structured and unstructured activities for children and that structured activities were mostly teacher-initiated, whereas unstructured activities were typically children-initiated. Surprisingly,

the structured activities were observed the most; the teachers followed the lesson plan for these activities.

Participants discussed that motivation and positive reinforcement were essential in a structured or unstructured activity when children explore the material or the activity. Flakes (2020) stated that applying various strategies, such as scaffolding, focusing on the children's strengths, positively reinforcing the efforts that teachers see in children, and encouraging and showing responsive instructional responses to students, initiates the idea that the teacher cares about the learners. For example, throughout the observations, several teachers provided positive reinforcement by asking a child to repeat the things that s/he said before and told the other children to hear what the child said, and then encouraged that child by complimenting him/her.

Therefore, the findings from the interviews, observation, and checklist included examples that teachers got involved in children's activities and encouraged leadership by instilling it through initiating various child-appropriate and developmentally appropriate activities. Teachers also use their knowledge when applying strategies to instill leadership which is discussed in the next theme.

Theme Two: Teachers Use Their Expertise

The second theme explored the data to answer research question four. This theme focused on findings where teachers discussed their expertise; some leadership-based knowledge was from their classroom observation. These findings were based on data extracted from the interviews, observations, and checklists.

Teachers' Knowledge

Some participants mentioned they viewed leadership as necessary for children. One participant also mentioned they had gained information and leadership experience from resources they had previously explored. This finding coincided with the previously discussed result that teachers were not provided with leadership training, as data here indicated that teachers self-learn leadership from various sources. Moreover, because teachers have some leadership knowledge, they said they could recognize leadership among students in the classroom. These findings are significant because the literature shows student accomplishment is affected by teachers' experience; that is, students are more successful when their teachers are more knowledgeable and experienced on the topic, which in this case refers to leadership (Zhang, 2008).

Observation data exhibited that teachers took the names of children who helped the teacher in the classroom activities. The teacher also photographed some of the students who displayed leadership skills; this was a gesture to encourage children, which means that teachers were knowledgeable about instilling leadership through positive reinforcement. Based on their knowledge, teachers also believed that children should be comfortable in whatever activity they do. This was also witnessed in an online observation when a child asked a question. The teachers responded that he could do whatever made him most comfortable. Therefore, most teachers knew to support and encourage children to instill leadership in them.

Teachers' Classroom Observation

Some participants discussed leadership based on their classroom observations because the teacher earned the expertise in leadership so she could observe the leadership

in the classroom. Teachers stated that they have witnessed that children have different strengths; some lead by being bossy, some lead by displaying negative behavior, some are confident to advocate for themselves, and some lead in a *de facto* sense by leading activities in the classroom. These findings correlate with literature from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2018), which stated early childhood educators must "possess the skills needed to recognize and support the assets, strength, and unique ways that children make sense of the world, given the variation in abilities and social identities" (p. 14). Therefore, NAEYC can provide professional development training to teachers in recognizing skills in children so that they value skills present in children and know strategies for their further development.

Surprisingly, one teacher mentioned that quiet and shy children also display leadership in non-verbal ways. This finding was discussed in this chapter in answering the characteristics of leadership. It is essential to mention that the teacher acknowledged these leadership characteristics while observing their classroom. Teachers were well aware of the children's strengths and encouraged leadership in children according to their strengths. Remarkably, the observation data demonstrated that the teachers discouraged children's negative or bossy behavior by saying, "this is not an option," and saying, "please make the right choices." The teacher also exhibited that if the mystery student did not display appropriate behavior, the mystery student was not announced, which means that the appropriate behavior was not followed. This example encouraged children to display good behavior in the classroom.

Based on their knowledge, teachers gained leadership expertise, using it to instill leadership in children. It was interesting to note that teachers mentioned that they used

children's strengths in instilling leadership in them, meaning teachers knew their children very well. They also knew what strategies would be developmentally appropriate to instill leadership in their students. However, what they think of instilling leadership in children in the situation like COVID-19 pandemic is discussed in the next theme.

Theme Three: Instilling Leadership is Difficult Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic Situation

The third theme explored the data to answer research question four. This theme focused on findings where teachers discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning, specifically how hard it would be to instill leadership in the classroom. This theme emerged from interviews, observations, and checklists data.

Leadership is Hard

Some participants mentioned the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning. Few of the participants in the current study believed that because most of the teaching and learning process was virtual, it was hard to teach them many skills, and leadership was one of them. Some teachers also mentioned that due to increasing cases of the COVID-19 pandemic, children were away from the school in a lockdown situation and fell behind socially, requiring them to learn critical social skills first after joining in-person classrooms.

Furthermore, observations showed fewer opportunities for children to emerge as leaders in the classroom during remote meetings. Interestingly, interactions between teachers and children were witnessed more during remote meetings, but the communication and collaboration among children were observed fewer times while online. In observing virtual classrooms, many leadership characteristics discussed in the

literature, such as problem-solving, helping, communication, concentrating on tasks and their completion, being able to make friends, and a high level of awareness were absent.

Therefore, in answering the fourth research question based on how teachers apply different techniques to instill leadership, the results showed teachers provided developmentally appropriate practice while choosing the activities or the strategies for children. Furthermore, teachers also used their knowledge based on their observation of their classroom, and the expertise they gained through different resources and over their time working as a teacher.

Limitations

The limitations of this study involve the sample size, the conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The present study was conducted amid the COVID-19 pandemic, many potential participants felt uncomfortable and were concerned about participating due to exposure or declined due to personal restrictions. Moreover, many school districts denied participation due to following COVID-19 preventative measures and restrictions. Therefore, fewer teachers agreed to participate than was anticipated.

Additionally, all teacher participants were female; the findings may have been different with a non-homogenous sample in terms of gender. The findings could have also been impacted by the data gained from the overwhelmed and stressed teachers affected by the pandemic. Observation, as a research method, may have influenced the participation and the results. Because teachers were aware that they were being observed, they might have responded to children differently under these conditions than they would typically without being observed. Two teachers were observed from the window rather than from inside the classroom; because of the COVID-19 restrictions. Because I was not

allowed to go into the classroom, the observation took place from just one viewpoint, a window, which could have impacted my hearing of the teacher and, consequently, the results.

Some teachers were interested in participating, but a higher authority's denial made them withdraw from the study. Three teachers were quarantined when they were scheduled for an interview and when I contacted them after their quarantine time, they said they were stressed and overloaded and could not participate. The teachers' denial for various reasons impacted the sample size and the results.

As the interview questions were constructed before the pandemic happened and did not comprise of the question related to COVID-19 or its impact on developing leadership in children, so enough data were not collected on this situation. However, the follow-up questions were asked on the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts of virtual setting to gather some of the data on this situation. Also, including more open-ended questions in the interview and checklist might have influenced the responses. For example, teachers discussed decision-making skills, being helpful, and concentration on tasks as an important leadership characteristic. Still, while marking none or few, teachers marked them in the checklist, which could be the limitation.

This study explored the teachers' view and their observation of leadership in the context of their classroom. Some participants saw their perceptions and observations as being mutually influential, which could be a possible limitation. Three teachers were observed virtually. Social skills are hard to understand when displayed virtually. The virtual classroom creates a barrier for teachers to navigate, as social skills are critical to developing leadership in children. Also, the virtual observation might have impacted the

result. It may be that they do a lot of activities in-person rather than virtually, or that the activities when in-person are different those online. Observation time was proposed for the limited time (i.e., an hour), the findings could have been different if the teachers had been observed for an hour at other times and on several days.

The one reason that this study is less conducive to generalizability is its small sample size (Babbie, 1995). However, it could be transferable, which means it can invite the research readers to make connections between the components of the study and their own experiences. For example, teachers can apply the strategies discussed in this study in any of the elementary grades they teach.

Implications

The findings from the study will be beneficial to teachers, administrators, policymakers, and curriculum designers in providing useful information on leadership in children and the techniques that the curriculum makers can design through this study for children to help them to acquire leadership. The outcomes from this study might be helpful to the teachers if some situation like covid-19 occurs, it will guide teachers to use the strategies regarding instilling leadership in children discussed in the current study. The participants have discussed many strategies they apply with children to instill leadership while teaching online.

Many terms, such as positive leaders or bossy leaders, were not discussed regarding children's leading personalities in earlier studies; this study will add information regarding children's leaders' personalities and will help teachers recognize leaders in their classrooms. The leadership model, as prepared by Turgunbaeva et al. (2016), can be recreated by adding the strategies to the table that were observed during

the participant observation and discussed by the teachers to instill leadership in children. This model can also be used for teachers' training regarding instilling leadership in children, where teachers can learn the leadership objectives, strategies, and anticipated outcomes. Teachers can also practice the strategies from the study in their teaching that could help in developing leadership in children. For example, providing them the peer-led activities or in pairs, or providing them with various classroom jobs. The teacher can become their role model because as the study found that children learn through examples or imitating their teachers. Moreover, NAEYC can provide professional development training to teachers in recognizing skills in children so that they can value skills present in children and know the strategies for their further development.

Researchers and educators might want to include other leadership characteristics when employing the checklist from this study, such as role modeling, following rules, etc., which teachers in this study stated were essential but were not present in the checklist. Because it was not an option in the checklist, teachers could not mark it as a critical characteristic.

This study intended to investigate the influence of the experience of teachers in instilling leadership in children. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions and less availability of teachers, I could not collect the wide range in context to years of experience of teachers. Future researchers are suggested to investigate the influence of the years of experience of teachers and its impact on instilling leadership in children.

The findings from this study suggest implications for teachers working with children combining instructions, modeling, and reinforcement to support and teach leadership. An implication of the study is also to support teachers' strategies to help

children to understand their role as leaders and as a positive influence that could further enrich leadership in them. The implication for teachers is to also explore ways to see positive aspects of how humor can be used to engage as well as distract children from being silly.

Further studies that include observing young children's leadership behavior in the classroom may help bring more awareness to the topic. In addition, characteristics perceived as positive or negative in children may differ from what is seen in positive or negative behavior in adults. The implication for practice might include professional development with teachers on how young children learn and demonstrate leadership.

This study provides the transferability of the results. The detailed information provided in chapter three in context to setting, sample, procedure, and role of researcher allows readers to make an informed decision weather they can transfer the findings to their own situations (Bitsch, 2005).

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings from the current study provide many routes for future research in the area of leadership in young children. In the present study, I did not acquire a wide range of teachers' teaching experience to examine the impact of teachers' experience on leadership. Further investigation into leadership and examining teachers' expertise in influencing leadership in young children is essential. It would also be interesting to investigate leadership in elementary school children from grades one to five.

Also, the sample of this study was limited to female participants; it would be important to explore the perception of male teachers in developing leadership in young children. Since this study was conducted in Michigan, future studies could examine

children's leadership in other regions. Future work could compare the facilitation of leadership development between public and private schools or various school districts.

As the present study includes the impact of COVID-19 on children's leadership, future studies could focus on the development of leadership in children in the pandemic situation or the teaching strategies to develop leadership in children in pandemic-like cases.

Knowing the leadership theories on adults, such as behavioral theory or situational theory, it would be interesting to learn during which age learning/developing leadership takes place, or if the learning/development happens throughout one's life span. Additionally, more studies are indicated to discover the nature of leadership in young children versus older children and adults and the role of verbal skills in leadership. Also, further studies on how leadership is taught in settings with children as contrast with adults can shed light on what can be learned and through what methods at different developmental stages. Some teachers discussed their observations of child leaders having in-born leadership capabilities; some of the teachers also discussed that they have child leaders who influence their followers through various ways. Interestingly, these findings are aligned with the adult theories of leadership, such as trait theory, situational theory, and behavior theory, which points to the fact that teachers think children display some of the behavior and skills that are witnessed in adult leaders. More research focused on young children and leadership is important to bridge this gap.

The present study points to the importance of teachers' training in developing leadership in children. Eleven participants advocated to include teachers' professional development training in the field of leadership in acknowledging leaders among children.

Karnes and Stephens (1999) discussed the lack of training for teachers in leadership, years later Tross (2015) suggested the importance of training in this field, and twenty-four years later, since 1999, the current study still discusses the importance of professional development training for teachers in acknowledging leadership. Therefore, it is really important for teachers to gain professional training in leadership in terms of helping children to acquire leadership. Professional development to improve teacher support of leadership in the virtual environment is also recommended. Children could receive explicit instructions to young children about ways to be a leader in a virtual learning environment. Further research can broaden our understanding of how leadership might be demonstrated differently in virtual settings versus in-person classroom settings. Future research can also focus on how and in what ways virtual settings can be effective in instilling leadership in children. It would be interesting to see how teachers enhance leadership skills in the recognized leaders and how do teachers acknowledge leaders when various tasks or activities are offered to children. Perhaps a closer look on exploring children's leadership in future studies is warranted.

The findings on leadership personalities in this study, such as bossy, shy/quiet, positive, curious, and silly are supported by a few studies. Some of these are seen as positive and some as negative; they point to the need for further research. Because few studies have been conducted with a focus on young children, it may be that the words teachers used in this study were more often used to describe children in this age group versus descriptors in leadership research on older children and adults. Observational

studies can explore more about why teachers see some aspects of leadership as positive or negative.

Finally, it would be interesting to see in future studies if follower children take leadership roles sometimes if being flexible in children's leadership might have a different meaning from what is described in adult leadership. Also, if there are possible gender differences in the opportunities given by the teacher, future research can help to illustrate these complexities of leadership in children.

Conclusion

This study explored teachers' perceptions of developing leadership in children by asking four questions. Each question was answered through themes and the examples provided in the categories. The findings were summarized by displaying the connection with the previous literature and theories regarding child development. Various findings were related to the early childhood theories of Lev Vygotsky, Urie Bronfenbrenner, Erik Erikson, John Dewey, and John Bowlby. The results were also connected to several theories of leadership, i.e., the Trait theory, the Behavioral theory, the Situational theory etc.

Some researchers have briefly discussed the perceptions of teachers in the context to leadership in children (Fox, 2012; Mullarky, 2008), and few of the researchers among them have focused on the strategies for instilling leadership in children.

Data gathered in this study narrowed the gap between what teachers percieved in the context to leadership characteristics in children and what they actually observed in their classroom. For example, the characteristics teachers perceive to develop leadership in children, such as confidence, responsibility, verbal, etc., were similar to the

characteristics they observe in their classroom in addition to other characteristics that teachers discussed such as bossy, shy/less verbal etc. Furthermore, some researchers have examined leadership in children, and some have discussed that teachers play a vital role in developing leadership in children (Fox, 2012; Mullarky, 2008; Tross, 2015). It was little known how teachers instill those leadership skills in children. This study explored and provided different strategies and techniques that teachers apply in instilling leadership in children, filling the gap in how do teachers instill leadership in children. The uniqueness of the findings from this study is the reliability of data drawn through the triangulation method in which interviews, observation, and checklists from teachers were involved.

Various definitions of leadership discuss the characteristics that leaders should possess. The participants discussed several strategies that they apply to instill leadership in children. The findings indicated that teachers applied some strategies to let children acquire leadership. These strategies may be from the characteristics provided in leadership. For example, responsibility is one of the leadership characteristics but can be used as a strategy; when teachers want to instill leadership in children, they will encourage giving children various jobs or activities to children that will instill a sense of responsibility in them and ultimately one of the leadership skills. Therefore, the current study has redundant terms, which sometimes define the characteristics teachers want to develop in young children, and in other cases, refer to the strategies used to develop leadership skills.

This study contributes to current research on leadership in young children as it begins to explore the perceptions and observations of teachers of young children,

strengthening what is known about what teachers perceive as leadership, what they observe in classrooms as leadership, and what they feel influences leadership in young children. Study findings elaborate on the types of strategies teachers apply to support leadership, adding to existing studies that have only discussed teachers' views concerning leadership in children. During teachers' observation, it was noticed that teachers used their lesson plans while teaching, which might have created opportunities of instilling leadership in children. However, it is not known if the teachers were aware that they were also instilling leadership in children through their curriculum. For example, the teachers discussed somewhere in their interview that they did the project on kindness with children in which they emphasized on helping each other. Helpful is one of the important characteristics discussed in the literature as well as in the current study, but it is not known that if the teachers were aware that through their project, they are also teaching leadership. In addition, findings from the study also provided the novel impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that evolved from the discussion with teachers.

Teachers discussing learning through the virtual classroom and its impact on learning leadership skills was new also in this study. Professional training for teachers teaching in virtual environment can benefit the teachers in instilling leadership.Well-informed and trained teachers can make a difference in influencing leadership in young children. The current findings will be helpful to the administrators, policymakers, leaders of various educational organizations, and educators to gain awareness of and conduct more research on the training and professional development of teachers concerning recognizing and developing leadership in young children.

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APPENDIX A

Table 5.1 from Turgunbaeva et al. (2016)

Objective:		To Develop Leadership in Junior School Children	
Objective Block	Tasks:	1. To motivate to accept the leading role; 2. To develop leadership skills; 3. To develop self-analysis skills; 4. To form a culture of perception of leadership subjects.	
Conceptual	Theoretical Framework	Theories:	L. S. Vygotsky, R. L. Krichevsky
	Methodological Framework	Approaches:	Systems, activity-based, axiological, personality oriented
		Principles:	Subjectivity, individualization, and natural conformity
Stages of development of leadership	1. The child studies itself and its leadership potential 2. Self-management, self-regulation organization of activity of others		
Organizational and activity-based	Type of activity	Learning Work Game Communication	Needs, motivation, attitude, emotions
	Criteria of formation	Motivational component, Activity component, And Reflective component	Actions, activity, leadership behavior The leader's ability to self-analyze, the culture of perception of leadership subjects
Result and criteria	Indicators	Motivation to accept the leading role, self-analysis, and leadership activity. The ability to perform leadership activity. A formed culture of perception of leadership subjects.	

Table 5.1 Continued

Result	Junior school child with developed leadership	Proper-leadership component:	1. Psychological qualities: communicativeness. 2. Personal ability to lead, high self-esteem. 3. Organizational qualities: the ability to create a team and manage it.

IRB Approval and Study Recruitment Materials

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

Date: December 6, 2021

Study #: IRB-FY2020-123

Study Tile: Teachers' Perceptions in Developing Leadership Skills in Young Children: Based on the Years of Experience of Teachers in Early Childhood

Submission Type: Modification

IRB Decision: Exempt

Research Team:
Sweta Joshi
Darlene Groomes

The IRB has reviewed the Modification submission related to the above referenced study and determined that the changes listed below do not affect the exemption status of the study. The study remains Exempt per federal regulations.

Since the research involves in-person interactions, IRB exemption is granted with the following understanding:

1. The research will be conducted while wearing face masks or other appropriate PPE; and
2. Appropriate social distancing will be always maintained during the research procedures, or, if not, the research activity will be completed in one hour or less; and
3. The research activities do not involve members of populations at greater risk for infection or serious outcomes or activities considered to be higher than minimal risk according to the CDC; and
4. Permission from the Interim Director of the Lowry Center and the Principal of Beck Centennial Elementary School to conduct the in-person research has been provided.
5. Because this research involves no more than minimal risk to participants, permission to proceed with the in-person research activities is granted by the IRB Manager on behalf of the Vice President for Research.

The approved Modifications are as listed:

- **Addition of two in person locations**: Addition of Lowry Center at OU and Beck Centennial Elementary School in Utica School District. Permission letters are attached.
- **Addition of consent process**: participants will receive the In-person Research COVID 19 Research

Information Sheet for Exempt Research
Teachers' Perceptions in Developing Leadership Skills in Young Children: Based on the Years of Experience of Teachers in Early Childhood

Introduction

You are being asked to be in a research study that is being done by Sweta Joshi, under the direction of Dr. Darlene Groomes, Associate Professor, Department of Human Development and Child Studies, the faculty advisor for this project.

Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary. You can choose to stop your participation at any time or skip any part of the study if you are not comfortable. Your decision will not affect your present or future relationship with Oakland University, the researcher, or the department of Human Development and Child Studies.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the perceptions of teachers in context to leadership in children. Also, to determine if the years of experience of teachers affect their perception.

Who can participate in this study?

You are being asked to participate in the study because you are a teacher and are directly involved with four to six-year-old children; your age is 18 and above.

Where will this study take place?

This study will take place in all the schools of Michigan . The interview will be taken virtually or in-person and will be audio recorded, the demographic questionnaire will be emailed to fill prior or after the interview, an hour teacher virtual observation or in-person will be conducted via taking notes and finally the checklist which will be filled by the teachers via email.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked to participate in virtual or in-person interview, virtual or in-person observation, fill demographic questionnaire and the checklist. The interview will be virtual or in-person, observation of teachers will be conducted in the small group/activity through Zoom/Google meet/WebEx or in-person where researcher will take notes and the checklist will be provided to teachers to be completed.

How long will I be in the study?

Participation in this study will take approximately an hour and thirty-five minutes. The interview of each participant will take approximately 30 minutes followed by an hour observation and finally the demographic questionnaire and the checklist and that will take approximately 5 minutes.

Are there any risks to me?
For this study, the potential risks are that in remembering your past experiences, you may feel vulnerable or may have emotional discomfort.

There may be a risk that someone who is not part of this research may accidentally see your personal information. We will try to make sure that this does not happen by keeping your research records as confidential as possible. When the results of this research are published or presented at conferences, no information will be included that personally identifies you.

Are there any benefits to me?
The possible benefits to you for participating in the research study are that teachers will gain information about leadership skills in children and participants could do self reflection and could learn to recognize leadership skills, enhance, and encourage those skills in children. The result will benefit new teachers or teachers with less experience, they will be able to learn leadership in young children.

Will I receive anything for participating?
For taking part in all three parts of this study, you will receive $30 gift card as the token of appreciation."

What if I want to stop participating in this study?
If you want to stop participating in this study, you may choose to leave the study at any time, or refuse to answer any questions that may be asked during the study. If you leave the study prior to the observation and completion of the checklist, you will not be entitled to the gift card. Your decision will not affect your present or future relationship with Oakland University, the researcher, Early Childhood department.

Any new information that may affect your willingness to participate in the study will be provided to you as soon as possible.

Who do I contact if I have questions about this study?
For questions about the study you may contact Sweta Joshi, sjoshi2@oakland.edu, 435-553-9469. The Faculty advisor is Dr. Darlene Groomes and her phone number is 248-370-4237 or via email at groomes@oakland.edu.

For questions regarding your rights as a participant in human subject research, you may contact the Oakland University Institutional Review Board, 248-370-4898.

In-Person Research COVID-19 Research Participant Information Sheet

Requirements for In-Person Procedures for Indoors, Outdoors, or Essential Research until Further Notice

1. Researchers and research participants must pass self-screening prior to in-person interactions. Passing requires an answer of "No" to all the following questions:
   - In the past 14 days, have you experienced any of these symptoms?

     - Fever or chills
     - Cough
     - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
     - Fatigue
     - Muscle or body aches
     - Headache
     - New loss of taste or smell
     - Sore throat
     - Congestion or runny nose
     - Nausea or vomiting
     - Diarrhea

   - In the past 14 days, have you been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19?
   - Are you 65 year of age or older, or immunocompromised, or have chronic health conditions?

   If your response to any of the above questions is "Yes", **do not** participate or continue your participation in the face-to-face procedures. Please contact the researcher to cancel your appointment.

2. A distance of 6 feet must be maintained between researchers and participants throughout in-person interactions, unless participation requires closer contact. In this case, research activities should be completed in one hour or less.

3. Surgical or cloth masks must be properly worn (over the nose and mouth) by researchers and participants throughout in-person interactions. Masks and other protective gear that may be needed will be provided to you by the researcher.

4. Research spaces and equipment, if any, are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before and after in-person interactions according to the universal and university procedures.

5. Be aware that the researcher will be contacting you at 7 and 14 days after the in-person research procedures as follow-up check for COVID-19.

6. If you participate in an in-person research study and within 14 days discover that you are COVID-19 positive, you must contact the researcher with this information. The researcher is required to inform others who were in contact with you about the positive diagnosis without providing your name.

7. If you have any safety concerns while participating in the research, you are highly encouraged to contact the IRB Manager, Dr. Judette Haddad at haddad@oakland.edu or call 248-370-4898.

How to Protect Yourself and Others

Please follow the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for protecting yourself and others.

- Wash your hands often

- Avoid close contact
- Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily

For CDC Guidance regarding additional prevention measures, please see https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html. For extra precautions for high risk people, see https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html. For additional information about COVID-19, see https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html.

Calling all teachers of Pre-kindergarten, Kindergarten, and Grade 1!

You Are Invited to provide your insights on Leadership in young children

Participation in the research study will include:

- **Demographic survey and checklist (via email)**
- **Teachers' online or in-person interview**
- **Virtual or in-person observation (observing teachers)**

Participants of the study will receive a $30 gift card as a token of appreciation. Participant's convenience and social distancing will be respected.

For more details, please feel free to contact Sweta Joshi (Principal Investigator) sjoshi2@oakland.edu/ cell phone: 4355539469 or Dr. Darlene Groomes (Advisor) at Groomes@oakland.edu.

Dear Principal,

Hello and thank you for taking the time to read this letter. My name is Sweta Joshi, a Ph.D. candidate in the Early Childhood Department at Oakland University. I am writing to you to request permission to conduct a research study at your school. I have been approved by the Rochester school district and IRB Oakland University to conduct my research study in the Rochester school district. I would greatly appreciate it if you permit me to conduct my research study at your school.

The current pandemic and issues within our profession have been quite the challenge. We know that the effects have stretched to 2021. Your assistance in naming teachers who may best participate in my research and to examine the leadership in young children is very critical to the present and future of education systems. It is important to examine leadership especially at this time when we are struggling to thrive and to work with full potential to secure our future education system. Our profession is at the heart of preparing future leaders—our current society needs to learn/enhance leadership skills from a very young age and this is the right time to encourage leadership skills in young children.

I assure you that being an educator and a responsible human being, I will abide by all the school district rules and the state regarding COVID-19 while conducting my study and interacting with your staff. For your consideration, I will conduct research virtually or in-person on young children's leadership skills by studying teachers' perceptions of young children's leadership skills (teaching 4 to 6-years -old children. I have approval to interview teachers (virtually or in-person) that will be audio recorded, observe teachers through Zoom/Google meet/WebEx or meeting in-person when teachers conduct small groups (observation will not be recorded), collect demographic information, and checklist from teachers through emails for my study. The participants will be receiving gift cards worth $30 as a token of appreciation for participating in the research study.

My research has the potential to make educators aware of all the elements of leadership among youth, so that these skills can be recognized and enhanced for a fruitful future. It would be a privilege to have your school contribute to the data that seeks to understand how teachers make an impact on the leadership of young children.

Please find the attached permission letter. You are free to contact me at sjoshi2@oakland.edu if you have any questions or concerns. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Sweta Joshi <sjoshi2@oakland.edu> Tue, Nov 2, 2021 at 2:22 PM
To: D G <groomes@oakland.edu>
Cc: Joshua Yax <yax@oakland.edu>

Hello Joshua,
I hope you are doing well!

I am Sweta Joshi, a Ph.D. candidate in Early childhood. I appreciate your permission to approach teachers and conduct my study at your highly reputed center in the most challenging times.
My study has been approved by the IRB and my committee under the supervision of Dr. Groomes (dissertation chair). My dissertation research is on perceptions of teachers on leadership in context to young children. I will be conducting thirty-minute interviews and an hour of observations of teachers teaching 4 to 6-year old children and collecting the demographic survey and a small checklist from them via email. Please let me know what day and time will work best for the teachers. If you want me to ask them, I can do that as well. I would appreciate your guidance on this.

I want to send the information sheet to you before proceeding further to get the idea of the study and the participation. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.
Thank you, Dr. Groomes, for reaching out to Joshua and discussing my study with him.

Thanks again.

[Quoted text hidden]
--
Sweta Joshi, M.ED
Ph.D Candidate, Early Childhood Education
Human Development and Child Studies
Oakland University

"Knowledge is the product of the interaction between an individual and the environment, understanding such as something social and cultural, not just physical"- Lev Vygotsky

Information Sheet .docx
33K

Joshua Yax <yax@oakland.edu> Wed, Nov 3, 2021 at 1:24 PM
To: Sweta Joshi <sjoshi2@oakland.edu>
Cc: D G <groomes@oakland.edu>

Hi Sweta --- I have spoken with the four Lowry preK teachers (Karina Noble, Emily Kramer, Kendra Barnett, Jenny Harp) and they are on board with participating in your study. Please reach out to them to find what days and times work best for visits, interviews, data collection, etc. I've listed their emails below:

Karina Noble - knoble@oakland.edu
Emily Kramer - emilykramer@oakland.edu
Kendra Barnett - kbarnett@oakland.edu
Jenny Harp - harp@oakland.edu

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
Powered by Google

Sweta Joshi <sjoshi2@oakland.edu>

Reg: Research study

5 messages

Sweta Joshi <sjoshi2@oakland.edu> Thu, Oct 14, 2021 at 11:46 AM
To: beckquestions@uticak12.org

Hi Christine,
Hope you are doing well!!

My name is Sweta Joshi, a Ph.D. candidate in the Early Childhood Department at Oakland University. I am writing to you to request permission to conduct a research study at your elementary schools. Following the covid-19 guidelines, I am doing my study virtually/in person (participants can choose any). I have been approved by IRB Oakland University to conduct my study.

For my dissertation, I am collecting Teachers' insight on young children's leadership skills. The participants (teachers: pre k to grade-1) will be receiving gift cards worth $30 as a token of appreciation for participating in the research study. Additionally, the participants will be receiving some classroom supplies from me.

I will highly appreciate it if you permit me to conduct my research study at your schools. As educators, it's our responsibility to keep going with our research to bring better changes to our education system; for this, I need your support. Please find the attached flyer.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.
--
Sweta Joshi, M.ED
Ph.D Candidate, Early Childhood Education
Human Development and Child Studies
Oakland University

"Knowledge is the product of the interaction between an individual and the environment, understanding such as something social and cultural, not just physical"- Lev Vygotsky

study flyer-2.docx
1741K

WILSON, CHRISTINE <christine.wilson@uticak12.org> Mon, Nov 1, 2021 at 2:16 PM
To: Sweta Joshi <sjoshi2@oakland.edu>
Cc: "EATMON, CHELSEY" <chelsey.eatmon@uticak12.org>, "HOUSE, TAYLOR" <taylor.house@uticak12.org>

Hello Sweta,

APPENDIX B

Data Collection Instruments: Research Questions and Key Constructs, Interview Questions, Demographic Questionnaire, and Checklist

Main research questions	Interview questions
Question 1: What are the perspectives of teachers in influencing leadership skills in four to six-years-old children in the classroom?	• Think about a child in your classroom who is a leader. Why do you think he/she is a leader? • What are your perceptions on leadership in young children? • Do you think teachers can influence leadership in children? If yes, how?
Question 2: What characteristics of leadership do teachers observe in their children during various activities that take place in the classroom?	• What are some of the key leadership behaviors you have noticed in children in various activities and situations? • What characteristics of leadership in children have you noticed are the most observable in classroom activities?
Question 3: What are the different techniques that teachers apply to encourage leadership in young children?	• Do you think it is important to develop leadership skills in children? If yes, how do you contribute to children's leadership development? • What experiences do you incorporate into activities that develop leadership in children? How do you incorporate leadership in those activities?
Question 4: How do teachers apply different techniques to encourage leadership in children in the classroom?	• Do you recognize leadership in your classroom? If yes, what do you do to enhance leadership in those children? • What do you do besides the curriculum to enhance/develop leadership skills in children? Please give some examples.

Interview Questions

1. Think about a child in your classroom who is a leader. Why do you think he/she is a leader?
2. What are your perceptions on leadership in young children?
3. Do you think teachers can influence leadership in children?
4. What are some of the key leadership behaviors you have noticed in children in various activities and situations?
5. What characteristics of leadership in children have you noticed are the most observable in classroom activities?
6. Do you think it is important to develop leadership skills in children? If yes, how do you contribute to children's leadership development?
7. What experiences do you incorporate into activities that develop leadership in children? How do you incorporate leadership in those activities?
8. Do you recognize leadership in your classroom? If yes, what do you do to enhance leadership in those children?
9. What do you do besides the curriculum to enhance/develop leadership skills in children? Please give some examples.

Demographic Questionnaire for Teachers

- **Name:** _____
- **Age:** _____
- **Gender:** ___Female ___Male
- **School district:** ____Rochester School District ___Avondale School District

  ____Other (please mention)
- **Level of Education- Highest Degree** (please check mark the one you completed**)**:

____Bachelor's Degree

____Master's Degree

____Bachelor's Degree with CDA Credentials

____Master's degree with CDA credentials

____Bachelor's Degree in ECE

____Master's Degree in ECE

____Teaching certificate related to early childhood

____Degree /Trainings related to leadership

____Other (please describe)

- **Years of experience in teaching (**please check mark)**:**

___current graduate student ___between 1 to 5 years

___between 5 to 10 years ____more than 10 years

- **Age group teaching at present (**please check mark the one you are teaching currently**)**

___Prekindergarten (ages: 4-5) ____Kindergarten (ages: 5-6)

___Grade 1(ages: 6-7)

Checklist for Teachers

I. What domain would you like to encourage the most in children to attain leadership? Please reorder each domain 1,2,3,4.
4 is the most important domain to attain leadership and 1 is the least.

Domains	Reordering
1) Cognitive (knowledge and intellectual skills)	_____
2) Social skills (communicative contexts)	_____
3) Physical (physical and mental strength)	_____
4) Disposition (emerging knowledge, skills and attitude)	_____

II. What characteristics of leadership from the domains in the given table, you like to encourage the most in children? Please rearrange the number (highest number in each domain = encourage the most and lowest number in each domain = encourage the least). Please do not repeat the number in domains.

Developmental Domains/Disposition	Reordering Numbers
a) Cognitive	
1. Problem solver	_____
2. Verbal skills	_____
3. Communicates well verbally with peers	_____
4. Decision making skills	_____
5. Higher concentration/focus	_____

b)	**Social skills**	
1.	Helper	_____
2.	Empathetic/sensitive to feelings of others	_____
3.	Self-confident	_____
4.	Able to make friends	_____
5.	Taking initiative	_____
6.	Directing ideas	_____
c)	**Physical**	
1.	Energetic/ high energy level	_____
2.	Not concerned about being overworked	_____
d)	**Disposition**	
1.	Flexible	_____
2.	Independent	_____
3.	Responsible	_____
4.	Organized/ organizes material and activities	_____
5.	Concentrates on tasks and their completion	_____
6.	Highly aware	_____

Note: The domain has been included from Fox (2012)

APPENDIX C

Data Analysis

Participants demographics

Participants	Highest degree of the participant	Years of experience teaching	Age-group participants teach
1	Mater degree in ECE	More than 10 years	Kindergarten
2	Master degree	More than 10 years	Grade 1
3	Bachelor's in ECE	Current graduate	Pre- Kindergarten
4	Master degree	Between 1-5 years	Grade 1
5	Master's degree in ECE	Between 5-10 years	Pre-kindergarten
6	Bachelor's degree	More than 10 years	Pre-kindergarten
7	Master's degree in ECE	More than 10 years	Pre-kindergarten
8	Bachelor's in ECE	Between 1-5 years	Pre-kindergarten
9	Bachelor's degree in ECE with teaching certificate related to ECE	Between 5-10 years	Pre-kindergarten
10	Master degree	More than 10 years	Kindergarten
11	Mater degree with teaching certificate related to ECE	More than 10 years	Kindergarten

Observed Activities that Teachers Perform with Children in the Classroom to Instill Leadership

Participants	Classroom Activities
N=11	⇒ Group activity ⇒ Jobs in the classroom ⇒ Plan sharing activity ⇒ Pretend play/dramatic play ⇒ Question and answer ⇒ Read aloud ⇒ Physical activities ⇒ Children reading and exploring ⇒ Learning about warm ⇒ Choice time ⇒ Puppet show ⇒ Mystery student activity ⇒ Activity on COVID-19 ⇒ Activity in pairs ⇒ Child initiated activity ⇒ Questioning from the story ⇒ Morning meeting ⇒ Other activities

Observed Techniques Applied by the Teachers in the Classroom to Instill Leadership in Children (Techniques are the various strategies used by the teachers to instill leadership in children).

Techniques Used by Teachers to Instill Leadership	
Teacher Step-in *(Teachers' interaction with children)*	
Examples	
• Teacher intervenes to solve the problem • Teacher help children • Teacher gives instructions • Teacher asks questions • Teacher reminds children • Teacher shares rules to follow • Teacher being involved • Teacher gives job • Children follow rules • Teacher warns • Teacher brings children attention • Teacher tells the rules • Children explains the jobs	• Teacher calls a child near • Teacher revise • Teacher pair up the children • Problem solving by teacher • Teacher suggests • She tries to solve the problem • Teacher tells the rules • Teacher encourages outside play • Teacher shares the story • Teacher scaffold answers • Teacher is multi tasker • Teacher is concerned Teacher encourages practicing
Teachers Provide Role Modeling *(Examples displayed by teachers through various ways in front of the children)*	
Examples	
• Teacher presents various example • Teacher says thank you • Teacher organizes • Children mimic • Teacher models	• Teacher organizes • Puppet show • Teacher says kind words • Teacher does role play • Teacher models by doing self-talk
Teachers Provide Motivations *(Teachers provide reinforcement to children through various ways)*	
Examples	
• Teacher takes children's help • Positive reinforcement by the teacher • Question answers encouraged • Teacher makes sure children learn • Teacher appreciates children for being attentive	• Teacher acknowledges children • Teacher complements • Teacher encourages children to do body pattern • Teacher cheers up the names
Teachers Provide Shared Control *(Teachers let children decide for themselves sometimes)*	
Examples	

- Teacher let children to decide
- Teacher let children be independent
- Loud children in the classroom
- Choice time
- Students asks questions
- Teacher and children choose area and activity in the choice time

Social Emotional Development
(Teachers support children's social and emotional learning)

Examples

- They talk about being sad
- Teacher interacts with children
- Teacher shares her plan
- Teacher encourages to take turns
- Teacher encourages helping each other
- Teacher tells about happy emotions
- Teacher discuses about being sad and problem solving
- Teacher encourages learning different culture
- Teacher encourages children to be kind
- Puppet show
- Teacher shows empathy
- Teacher pair up the children
- Teacher encourages children to imagine
- Teacher encourages children to listen
- Teacher discusses about emotions
- Teacher soothes a child
- Teacher wishes children good morning
- Children wants to shares things by showing to teacher

Child Initiated Learning
(Teachers let children to provide their opinion)

Examples

- Teacher asks children view
- Teacher gives importance to children
- Children reminds teacher
- Student correct the teacher

Builds Relationships
(Teachers becomes partner in learning)

Examples

- Teacher sings
- Teacher indicates as friends to children
- Teacher listens
- Singing and dancing in zoom meeting

Indirect Involvement
(Teachers is involved indirectly with children to instill leadership)

Examples

- Teacher set an environment
- Teacher moves all over the classroom
- Teacher observes

Checklist Results: The number of Participants Ranking the Most Important Domain for Instilling Leadership in Young Children

Domains	**The number of teachers marked the domain as 'most important'**
Cognitive	None
Social	8
Physical	None
Disposition	3

Checklist Results: The number of Participants Ranking the Most Important Characteristics in Each Developmental Domain for Instilling Leadership in Young Children

Characteristics of Cognitive Domain and Number of Participants Rated it 'Most Important'	Characteristics of Social Domain and Number of Participants Rated it 'Most Important'	Characteristics of Physical Domain and Number of Participants Rated it 'Most Important'	Characteristics of Disposition Domain and Number of Participants Rated it 'Most Important'
• Problem solver- 3 • Verbal skills - 2 • Communicates well verbally with peers - 5 • Decision making skills - 1 • Higher concentration/focus - 0	• Helper - 0 • Empathetic/sensitive to feelings of others - 6 • Self-confident - 2 • Able to make friends - 1 • Taking initiative - 1 • Directing ideas – 1	• Energetic/ high energy level - 5 • Not concerned about being overworked – 6	• Flexible - 1 • Independent - 1 • Responsible - 7 • Organized/ organizes material and activities - 1 • Concentrates on tasks and their completion - 0 • Highly aware – 1