

# The Effect of Thought Self-Leadership Training on Graduate Student Self-Leadership Skills and

Wisconsin Teaching  
Fellows &  
Scholars

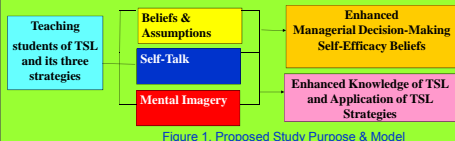
## Managerial Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Perceptions

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### Introduction

- ❖ Little attention is paid to teaching students about cognitive distortions (e.g., extreme thinking, magnifying, etc.) that can fuel dysfunctional thinking patterns & decision-making inefficacy (Burns, 1980).
- ❖ Further et al. (2012) argue that students' constructive thought patterns can be optimized through targeted education in the classroom.
- ❖ The underlying premise of thought self-leadership (TSL): people can influence and control their own thoughts through the application of three cognitive strategies that lead to constructive thought patterns & ultimately individual/organizational performance (Neck & Manz, 1996).
- ❖ Moreover, research confirmed that SL behaviors were translated into action through their effects on self-efficacy (Prussia et al., 1998).



### Hypotheses

In General:

- $H_2: m_1 = 0$  (Population median difference is zero).
- $H_2: m_1 \neq 0$  (Population median difference is not zero).

The null and alternative hypotheses in my study are:

- $H_2$ : The TSL teaching method has no effect on graduate students' pretest and posttest TSL cognitive strategies scores, TSL quiz scores, and managerial decision-making self-efficacy beliefs scores.
  - $H_2$ : The TSL teaching method has an effect on graduate students' pretest and posttest TSL cognitive strategies scores, TSL quiz scores, and managerial decision-making self-efficacy beliefs scores.
- These hypotheses are tested at a .05 level of significance.



### Methodology

Figure 2 Pre-Experimental, One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design



Table 1. TSL Teaching Outline

	TSL training outline	Program Focus	Training Methods
Week 1	Overview	Definition of TSL strategies	Instructor lectures
Week 2	Beliefs & assumptions	Theoretical orientation	Film analysis
Week 3	Self-talk	Examples of real life application	Individual and group exercises
Week 4	Mental imagery	Application to ethical situations	
Week 5	Summary		Neck & Manz (1996, pp. 449-450)

Instruments: MDMSEQ (4 subscales) (Myburgh et al., 2015); TSL (3 subscales) (Houghton & Neck, 2002); TSL Quiz (Houghton & Lewis-Brim, 2013)

### Quantitative Results

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 24. Figure 3 shows descriptive statistics of socio-demographic and program characteristics of MPA students in the MPA 715 Leadership and Ethics course in Fall 2017.

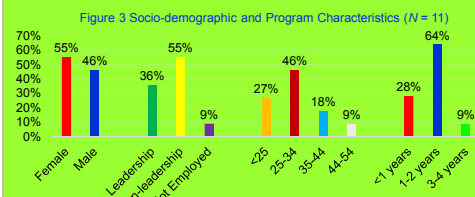
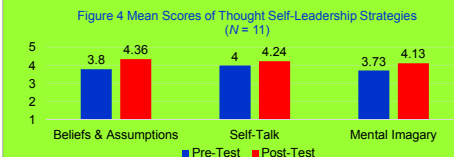
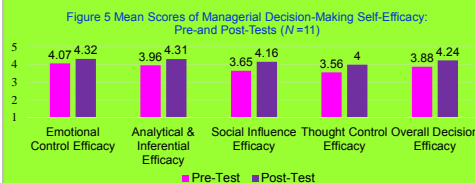


Figure 4 shows that the mean scores of the post-test were higher. Given the small sample size, a nonparametric analysis, Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Test (Blalock, 1960), was further used to compare the pre-test and post-test scores and find out if there were significant differences or not.



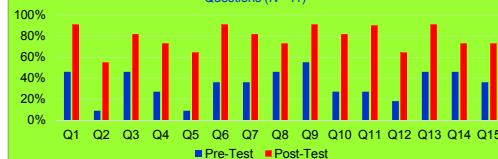
- ❖ The sum of negative ranks for beliefs & assumptions,  $T = 4.50$ . The critical value of  $T$  for two-tailed test for  $N = 11$  at  $\alpha = 0.05$  is 11 (Blalock, 1960, p. 612). Since  $T = 4.50$  is smaller than  $= 11$  critical value  $T$ , the null hypothesis was rejected. Moreover, since  $p = 0.018 < \alpha = 0.05$ , there were statistically significant differences between the scores of pre-test and post-test. In other words, the TSL teaching method appears to have influenced students' beliefs & assumptions scores from pre-test to post-test.
- ❖ The sum of negative ranks for self-talk,  $T = 12.0$ ,  $p < 0.398$  and for mental imagery,  $T = 6.50$ ,  $p < 0.057$ . The null hypotheses were supported.



- ❖ The sum of negative ranks for analytic & inferential efficacy ( $T = 7.50$ ,  $p < 0.022$ ), social influence efficacy ( $T = 2.50$ ,  $p < 0.006$ ), and overall managerial decision-making self-efficacy ( $T = 8$ ,  $p < 0.026$ ) were smaller than  $= 11$  critical value  $T$ ; therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected. In other words, the TSL teaching method appears to have influenced graduate students' analytic & inferential efficacy, social influence efficacy, and overall decision-making efficacy scores from pre-test to post-test.
- ❖ The null hypotheses were supported for emotional control ( $T = 8.50$ ,  $p < 0.182$ ) and thought control efficacy ( $T = 14$ ,  $p < 0.168$ ).

### Quantitative Results

Figure 6 Frequencies on Correctly Answered Quiz Multiple Choice Questions (N=11)



- ❖ The sum of negative ranks for Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q9, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14 ( $T = 0.00$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and Q10 ( $T = 4.50$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) were smaller than  $= 11$  critical value  $T$ ; therefore, the null hypotheses were rejected. In other words, the TSL teaching method appears to have influenced graduate students' quiz scores on these questions from pre-test to post-test. The null hypotheses were supported for Q7 ( $T = 4.00$ ,  $p < 0.059$ ), Q8 ( $T = 0.00$ ,  $p < 0.083$ ) and Q14 ( $T = 8.00$ ,  $p < 0.257$ ).

### Qualitative Results (N = 10)

1. What TSL strategy could aid you the most in the process of starting a nonprofit organization? **40% positive thinking**
2. What TSL strategy could aid you the most in managing this nonprofit organization successfully? **40% imagined experience**
3. How would you feel if the organization fired you? What thought patterns could aid you the most? **70% opportunity thinking**

### Discussion of Major Findings

The TSL teaching method has enhanced graduate student:

- ❖ **Knowledge of thought self-leadership.** The quiz showed that students' knowledge on pre-post test scores increased in terms of knowledge about the (1) TSL concept (Q1, 6, 9), (2) beliefs & assumptions concept (Q3, 4, 5), (3) imagined experience concept (Q12, 13), (4) self-talk concept (Q2), and opportunity/obstacle thinking concepts (Q10, 11, 15).
- ❖ **Knowledge in the application of beliefs & assumptions cognitive strategy.** That is, students learned to identify dysfunctional types of thinking and replace them with more constructive thinking (Neck, 1996).
- ❖ **Knowledge in the application of opportunity thinking.** Students were able to identify opportunity thinking as a strategy when presented by challenges and setbacks. Opportunity thinkers tend to try harder and persist longer in the face of challenges and use constructive ways to deal with challenges situations, leading to successful outcomes (Neck, 1996).
- ❖ **Overall managerial self-efficacy beliefs.** Such beliefs influence students' decision-making competence to: mobilize motivation, utilize analytic/problem-solving skills, exercise social influence, and modify distorted cognitions to make accurate decisions (Myburgh et al., 2015).
- ❖ **Analytic and inferential efficacy beliefs.** Such beliefs enhance student capability to effectively utilize sources of information and evaluate, process and integrate information in the decisions (Myburgh et al., 2015).
- ❖ **Social influence efficacy beliefs.** Socially efficacious students are less likely to yield to others' influence and are confident in exercising influence in social encounters and resource acquisition (Myburgh et al., 2015).

### Teaching Implications, Study Limitations & Future Research

#### Teaching Implications

- ❖ Teaching students to manage their own thinking may be useful, for developing students' constructive thinking patterns and strengthening their beliefs in their capabilities to affect personal control in decision-making at a university setting.

#### Study Limitations

- ❖ Nonparametric statistics was used for this study due to lack of sample size. Therefore, students' gains in this course cannot be compared with students' gains in other universities.
- ❖ Students' enhanced decision-making self-efficacy beliefs may be attributable to factors other than the course, such as students' maturation and the effect of MPA advanced education.

#### Future Research

- ❖ This study was pre-experimental in nature. Future research needs to replicate the study using designs with a control group.
- ❖ Data collected from several leadership classes would allow not only doing better analysis with pre-post study design, but also allow for testing correlational relationships among the variables.

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### Ethical Considerations

- ❖ Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the UW Oshkosh Institutional Review Board.



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