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Triumph after Trauma: A Phenomenological Exploration into Women Survivor's Perceptions of the Influence of Trauma on their Leadership

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Triumph after Trauma:
A Phenomenological Exploration into Women Survivor's Perceptions of the Influence of
Trauma on their Leadership

by

Natalya Bannister Roby

A Dissertation submitted to the Department of Leadership,
School Counseling & Sport Management
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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This dissertation titled “Triumph after Trauma: A Phenomenological Exploration into Women Survivor’s Perceptions of the Influence of Trauma on their Leadership

Dr. Matthew Ohlson, Committee Chair

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Dr. Laura Boilini, Committee Member 2

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DEDICATION

To my husband Wesley, this would not be possible without the love and unwavering support you have shown me. Thank you for being my rock. You are my everything.

To my mother, thank you for believing in me no matter what. Your example of strength, resilience and perseverance has always pushed me to dream and achieve more than I even thought was possible.

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To every girl who never thought they could win.

To my younger self, you did it.

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Abstract

Most research around trauma is focused on negative life consequences. Although limited, there is research that explores the influence of resilience and how some survivors may experience growth after trauma (Kirschman, 2004). Furthermore, research is limited on how trauma influences the leadership style and career trajectories of women who have overcome trauma. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used as the methodological framework to explore the perspectives of women leaders who identify as survivors or overcomers of trauma. The study participants are women leaders in middle management positions to senior-level executives in educational organizations serving middle and high school students.

In-depth interviews were used to explore their lived experiences and uncover themes within the domains of childhood trauma, resilience, and post-traumatic growth. Major themes emerged from the data within each of the domains demonstrating triumph after trauma. The participants revealed an alternative narrative to adverse life outcomes associated with trauma and utilized their lived experiences as motivation to benefit themselves and others. Moreover, they demonstrated resilience and post-traumatic-growth in their pursuit to support youth in need by mentoring and advocating for opportunities through education, empathy, and leadership. Additionally, participants demonstrated effective leadership practices within the Bolman and Deal Leadership Typology, with all participants utilizing multiple leadership frames. Participants also reported hyper-independence and workaholism due to their trauma, indicating a need to promote work cultures with additional resources that support leaders and staff who have experienced trauma.

Implications for practice in educational organizations and institutions include trauma-informed leadership training, inclusive work cultures and hiring practices, and promotion of wellness, self-care, and support networks to reduce burnout and enhance quality of life in the workplace. Implications for practice for at-risk girls and young women include natural mentorship, positive coping mechanisms, and leadership opportunities. The results of this study suggest a need to move from conceptual ideas around this phenomenon to a transformational theory grounded in data from lived experiences informing future prevention, intervention, and leadership initiatives for women and girls.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

"You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it." -Maya Angelou

When most people think of girls who have experienced trauma, the idea of them becoming successful future leaders may not be their initial thought. Involvement with the juvenile justice system, academic failure, mental illness, generational poverty, and teenage pregnancy are, unfortunately, empirically linked to the future of girls with histories of trauma, thus supporting the narrative that childhood trauma leads to negative life outcomes for these women. Trauma presents significant factors that may contribute to the detriment of their future, but other factors may propel them to success. It is possible to overcome the intersectionality of trauma, abuse, race, socioeconomic status, and gender. Achieving success in the face of adversity is not an easy feat, and exploring the lived experiences of women leaders who overcame trauma may provide a roadmap to success for girls most vulnerable. According to Patterson et al. (2009), great leaders do not just survive adversity, they thrive.

Problem Statement

This study aims to change the narrative that childhood trauma is linked to negative outcomes for women. Despite difficult life circumstances, there are women who not only overcome childhood trauma but also become distinguished leaders in their respective fields and communities. Wollin and Wollin (1993) framed trauma as a challenge; trauma can be framed as

more of an obstacle to overcome than a barrier. According to Anderson & Danis (2006, p. 2), “not all children who have been exposed to adverse conditions develop negative life outcomes as adults” (2006, p. 2), and there is no conclusive evidence that traumatic experiences are always linked to damaging psychological outcomes (Kirschman, 2004, p. 166). This research may point to a transformational theory for girls and women who have endured traumatic experiences, shifting what society believes their outcomes will be. This transformational idea is that resilience resulting in post-traumatic growth is a process. Additionally, an individual's unique life experiences have an influence on their leadership, and the skills acquired from overcoming their trauma may be utilized as a catalyst for success.

Purpose Statement

The focus of this research is to discover foundational pillars emerging from the data on how traumatic experiences may influence the leadership of women leaders in education. An important goal of this study is to move from conceptual ideals around this phenomenon to a transformational theory grounded in data from lived experiences. The findings of this study may dismantle the common narrative of trauma as a barrier for survivors and newly framed as a triumph that may impact leadership practices and policies in educational establishments while uncovering key components that influence that trajectory.

Research Questions

There is limited research on the influence of childhood traumatic experiences on women in leadership and what factors were most influential in shaping their leadership and career. The findings of this study may be used to inform future prevention, intervention, and leadership

initiatives for girls and women while adding to the empirical research on this topic from firsthand perspectives. Furthermore, the following research question will be examined:

1. What are the perspectives of women leaders in education on how their lived experiences with trauma influenced their leadership?

The subjective perspective of women who defied these odds is a story that should be commonly shared. It deserves more exploration to support the trajectory of girls and women who have experienced trauma directly from women who have persisted and overcome those challenges.

Overview of Conceptual Framework

Resilience Theory

Resilience theory is a multilayered framework that is commonly used in the fields of social work, mental health, and education (Breda, 2001). This theory is rooted in the study of resilient children despite adverse childhood environments, which directly correlates to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and the overall objective of this study. Resilience theory is strength-based, focusing on how people and systems overcome challenges to rise above adversity. This approach will guide this qualitative study's goal to uncover themes in resiliency that shaped female survivors of trauma's leadership practices and career trajectories. Resilience theory will frame the study as it focuses on how individuals overcome adversity and, for some, experience post-traumatic growth. Furthermore, this will guide the study's objective to discover themes in resiliency that influenced the leadership of women survivors of childhood trauma.

Overview of Methodology

A qualitative approach was employed as the methodological framework to explain and interpret the data collected from participants in the study. The study explored childhood trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and their influence on the leadership of women who identify as survivors. This approach will examine women's perspectives rooted in firsthand experiential data through in-depth interviews providing insight into this phenomenon and how that translates into their leadership. A phenomenological case study methodology was used to discover how participants perceive trauma's influence on their leadership. The researcher examined interconnected themes that came forward through the participants' lived experiences. Additionally, codes were identified to make connections in how trauma may influence leadership within the framework of Bolman and Deal's leadership frames. Participant experiences and perceptions were explored using semi-structured in-depth interviews in the setting of their choice.

Significance of the Research

The significance of this research is to explore how overcoming trauma influences leadership in women who work in educational establishments. There is limited research on the influence of traumatic experiences on women in leadership and what factors were most influential in shaping their leadership. More specifically, there are gaps in the literature exploring the lived experiences that promote post-traumatic growth and the emergence of leadership in women survivors of trauma. Also, understanding how trauma may influence their leadership approach will add to the literature by examining the connections between the participants and their dominant leadership frames within Bolman and Deal's leadership framework. The findings

of this study may be used to inform future prevention, intervention, and leadership initiatives and training for girls and women while adding to the empirical research on this topic from firsthand perspectives. The primary issues that will be examined in this study are the following:

- Childhood trauma and risks for girls / Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Resilience
- Post-traumatic Growth
- Leadership and Career Success
- Bolman & Deal's Leadership Frames
- Exploration of connections in experiences to a career pathway

Organization of the Study

This research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study and provides the purpose, problem statement, research question, and overview of the conceptual framework, methodology, and significance of the research. Chapter two examines a comprehensive review of literature related to childhood trauma risk for girls, resilience, post-traumatic growth, leadership and career success, and Bolman and Deal's (1984) four-frame typology. Chapter three explains the research design, methodology, participant selection, and the data collection and analysis processes that will be used for this study. Chapter four presents the participant characteristics, interview process, data analysis, and the study's findings. Chapter five will conclude with implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The review of literature is grounded in the intersection of research concerning the effects of childhood trauma, the risk factors it presents for girls and women, and how the phenomenon of post-traumatic growth and resilience may influence leadership practices. To date, there is limited research on the influence of childhood trauma on women in leadership and what experiences were most impactful in shaping their leadership traits. Interconnected themes and concepts related to the current study are outlined throughout this section. The literature presents a synopsis of correlated research regarding risk factors childhood trauma presents for women. Overcoming these traumas and achieving success in education, leadership, and life overall can be considered a phenomenon, as it truly defies the odds.

Childhood Trauma Risks for Girls

Childhood trauma presents girls with unique life challenges that have been described metaphorically as an earthquake to describe the devastation and its destructive outcomes (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2004). Similar to an earthquake, trauma can be a psychologically seismic experience that can shake and contest our fundamental beliefs (e.g., Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998). These beliefs include, “how we believe people will behave, how events should unfold, and our ability to influence events” (Cann et al., 2010, p. 19). Additionally, childhood trauma is often perceived as setting the stage for a lifetime of problems (Abdulreheman & DeLuca, 2001).

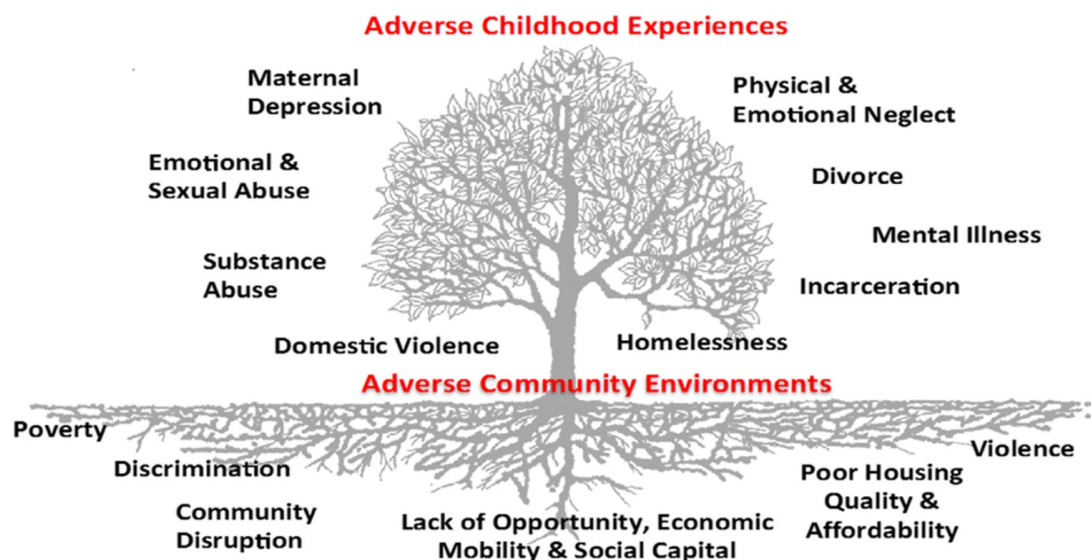
Research has established that the effects of childhood trauma can be devastating psychologically. Furthermore, the literature reveals that psychosocial stressors contribute to the long-term effects of traumatic experiences. Psychosocial stressors are defined as events that

occur within an individual's life that may result in harmful consequences in an individual's social and emotional functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Psychosocial stressors include sexual abuse, domestic violence, emotional abuse, drug use, and juvenile delinquency, which position girls for long-term negative consequences (Chiodo et al., 2009). More often, female juvenile offenders have experienced a variety of traumatic events, with sexual trauma reported most frequently (Ariga et al., 2008). According to Baumle (2018), girls who enter the juvenile justice system frequently live in impoverished communities. Research demonstrates that girls growing up in impoverished neighborhoods are at increased risk of sexual abuse and harassment (Popkin et al., 2010). Lower incomes and higher housing densities are linked to higher rates of teenage sexual abuse, and the prevalence of registered sex offenders in these communities is also related to teenage sexual assault (Mustaine et al. 2014). Sexual abuse puts girls at high risk for long-term negative consequences, including increased risk of domestic violence, emotional abuse, drug use, and juvenile delinquency (Chiodo et al., 2009). Collins et al. (2010) stated that strong evidence supports that adolescents raised in low-income areas have a higher likelihood of experiencing numerous traumas and adversarial experiences and present with signs of traumatic stress at higher rates. This poses an inquiry into the significant challenges of growing up in poverty and how it shapes the trajectories of girls into adulthood. Girls and women who survive the aforementioned traumatic experiences in addition to racial profiling and incarceration rates far exceeding their portion of the population is a phenomenon worth more exploration (Chiodo et al., 2009).

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is correlated to a variety of poor long-term outcomes for adolescents, including increased risk of alcohol and drug use, mental health issues, poor health, and high-risk behaviors (Felitti et al., 1998). ACEs include neglect, emotional, physical, mental, and sexual abuse; bullying; and the death of a parent (Felitti et al., 1998). The original intent of the ACEs study was not to create limits around what should and should not be considered traumatic to an individual (Sonu & Moore, 2021). Researchers understand that there is more to consider than the ten ACEs from the original study, including the relationship between family adversity and community adversity. The Pair of ACEs Tree illustrated (figure 2.1; Ellis & Dietz, 2017) indicates multiple ACEs and their relationship to adverse community environments (Sonu & Moore, 2021).

Figure 2.1 Pair of ACEs Tree (Ellis & Dietz, 2017)



On the Pair of ACEs Tree, the leaves and the branches represent interpersonal adverse childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, and household stress (Sonu & Moore, 2021). The tree grows

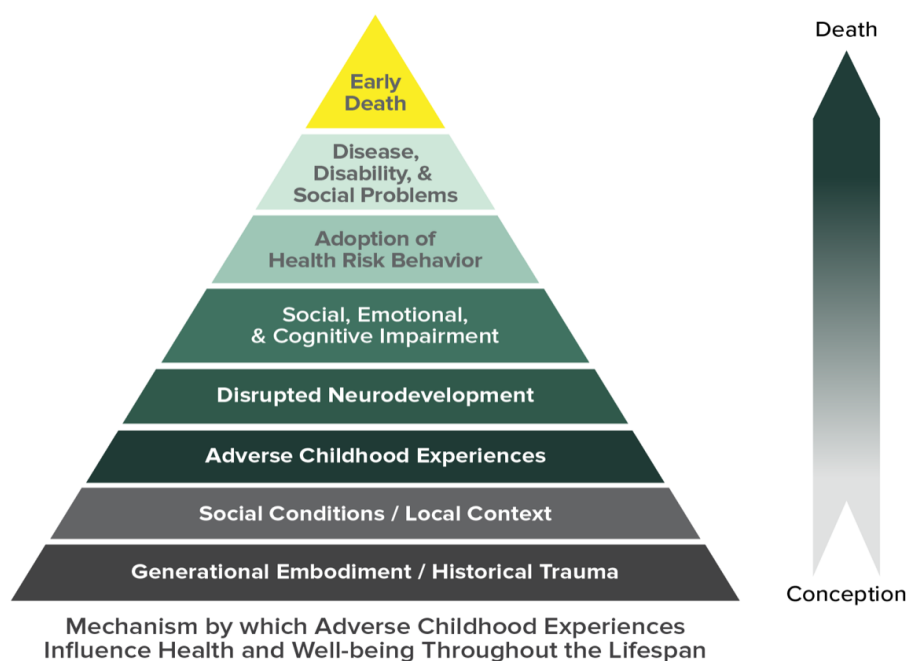
from a network of roots that create the foundation referred to as Adverse Community Environments, which encompasses environmental factors such as violence in the community, racism, discrimination, poverty, and unaffordable housing, which are strongly associated with harmful health outcomes (Sonu & Moore, 2021). Additionally, these community and environmental factors generate the circumstances for interpersonal ACEs to become more prevalent and with a higher severity, especially without appropriate support and resources (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Ellis & Dietz, 2017). The figure goes a step further illustrating that as the Pair of ACEs tree grows, the roots are pulling in resources from the surrounding soil bringing forth the notion that the potential health trajectory of the tree is grounded on what has been historically in the soil, referred to as Adverse Collective Historical Events (Sonu & Moore, 2021). “These are events that have conferred an intergenerational impact, such as slavery, Jim Crow Laws, mass incarceration, the Holocaust, forced displacement of Native Americans, forced separation of families at our southern border, and now the coronavirus pandemic” (Sonu & Moore, 2021). It is essential to include the impact of adverse historical events in the review of the literature on ACEs. A recent study examining the frequency and dissemination of ACEs in a sample of 250,000 adults in the United States discovered that while ACEs are shared across all demographics, ACEs are disproportionately predominant in communities that have been historically marginalized, neglected, and oppressed (Merrick et al., 2018).

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) focus on the most common types of childhood trauma for vulnerable youth, specifically three types of child abuse; emotional, physical, or sexual. Exposure to abuse can have detrimental effects on girls, especially girls of color. Studies have shown that traumatic experiences are more frequently associated with risky behaviors in

girls than in boys (Ariga et al., 2008). More often, female juvenile offenders have experienced various traumatic events, with sexual trauma reported most frequently (Ariga et al., 2008). The aforementioned research encapsulates that the effects of multiple childhood traumas such as poverty, abuse, incarceration, and substance abuse, amongst other Adolescent Childhood Experiences (ACEs), cause a host of long-term negative outcomes for girls. The ACEs framework is significant to this study as the effects of these traumas are linked to homelessness, unemployment, teen pregnancy, generational poverty, self-harming behaviors, dependence on public assistance, and unhealthy relationships. The ACEs study revealed strong correlations between risk factors for disease and well-being throughout the life course (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2

The ACE Pyramid (CDC, 2021)



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ACEs can have damaging effects on health and well-being, which may impact life opportunities such as education and job potential (CDC, 2021).

Youth growing up with one or more ACEs may have difficulty forming healthy and stable relationships. The lifelong effects of ACEs may also contribute to unstable work histories leading to financial hardships, job instability, and depression throughout life (CDC, 2022). Slavic and Croak (2006) postulate that early ACEs may produce unfavorable outcomes for youth as they create persistent difficulties in coping with stressors into adulthood. Though research shows that youth with ACEs are at higher risk for negative life outcomes, the participants in this study may bring forward alternative outcomes that shift the common narrative around ACEs and life consequences.

Resilience

Resilience theory is a multilayered framework commonly used in social work, mental health, and education (Breda, 2001). This theory is rooted in the study of children who proved resilient despite adverse childhood environments, which is directly correlated to ACEs and will serve as the conceptual framework of this study. Although there are numerous definitions of resilience throughout the literature (Breda, 2018; Masten, 2018; Southwick et al., 2014) they all connect to the overarching concept that it is not necessarily the nature of adversity that is most important in shaping our lives, but how we deal with those challenges. This concept also raises questions about a person's genetic predisposition to resilience. A study by Southwick and Charney (2012) explored human biological responses to trauma by examining a group of high-

risk individuals to learn why some people have more robust coping mechanisms through traumatic experiences.

Some scholars define resilience as a trait-like characteristic of a person or family. At the same time, some view resilience as the inadvertent capacity for adapting to adversity resulting from proven success in overcoming challenges, an important concept this research will seek to understand (Masten, 2018). In the below (table 2.1), Greene, Galambos, and Lee (2004) present a variety of ways resilience can be described.

Table 2.1

Resilience

A biopsychosocial and spiritual phenomenon

Involves a transactional dynamic process of person-environment exchanges

Encompasses as adaptation process of goodness-of-fit

Occurs across the life course with individuals, families, and communities experiencing unique paths of development

Is linked to life stress and peoples unique coping capacity

Involves competence in daily functioning

May be on a continuum-polar opposite to risk

May be interactive, having an effect in combination with risk factors

Is enhanced through connection or relatedness with others

Is influenced by diversity including ethnicity, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, religious affiliation, and physical and mental ability

Is expressed and affected by multilevel attachments, both distal and proximal, including family, school, peers neighborhood, community and society; consequently resilience is a function of micro-, exo-, mezzo-, and macro factors

Is affected by availability of environmental resources

Is influenced by power differentials

Researchers agree that the nature of resilience can be complex in nature and as a construct may have different interpretations and meanings across individuals, cultures, and organizations. Additionally, researchers also agree that it is possible for individuals to be more resilient at various times and aspects of their lives than others (Southwick et al., 2014).

A considerable amount of trauma research looks at negative health consequences, such as the link to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Breslau et al., 1998). However, there is literature indicating that most trauma survivors do not experience post-traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, the National Comorbidity Survey trauma exposure rates were greater than 50%, although lifetime PTSD was estimated at 7.8% (Kessler et al., 1995). This body of literature proposes that the majority of people who have experienced traumatic events maintain stable lives and do not always struggle with mental illness (Bonanno et al., 2006). Moreover, the capacity to endure trauma without experiencing PTSD is described by various researchers as resilience (Bonanno, 2004; Lepore & Revenson, 2006).

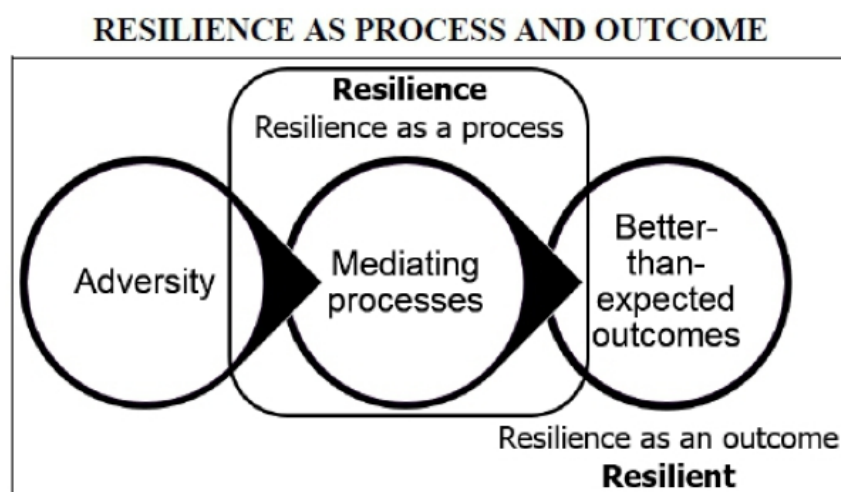
Recognizing differences in outcomes after facing adversity, researchers began to look at what distinguishes individuals with more favorable outcomes from those with negative outcomes. This “salutogenic or resilience question” (Van Breda, 2001, p. 14) brings forth inquiry

about why there are varying outcomes among individuals exposed to the same stressors.

Researchers recognize that other processes mediate or fall in between adversity and negative outcomes (Breda, 2018). Research about resilience comprises three interconnected components: “adversity, outcomes, and mediating factors,” and it is essential to consider all three components in resilience research (Breda, 2018). However, the outcome component is limited in that it focuses only on attaining positive outcomes after facing adversity but does not offer an explanation (Breda, 2018). Breda (2018) offers the following definition of resilience incorporating all three components with a focus on the mediating processes, “The multilevel processes that systems engage in to obtain better-than-expected outcomes in the face or wake of adversity” (p.4). Moreover, for the purpose of this study, this definition of resilience is preferred. Resilience is a process that leads to an outcome (see figure 2.3), and the fundamental focus of resilience research is the mediating processes (Breda, 2018).

Figure 2.3

Resilience as a Process and Outcome (Breda, 2018)



Resiliency Theory provides the conceptual framework for this study as this approach aims to incorporate the participant's childhood growth and development experiences to inform future interventions, which is also a goal this study hopes to inform (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman & Brenner, 2010). Resiliency theory is strength-based, focusing on how people and systems overcome challenges to rise above adversity. This framework will guide the study's goal to uncover themes in resiliency that shaped the leadership of women survivors of trauma.

Post-traumatic Growth

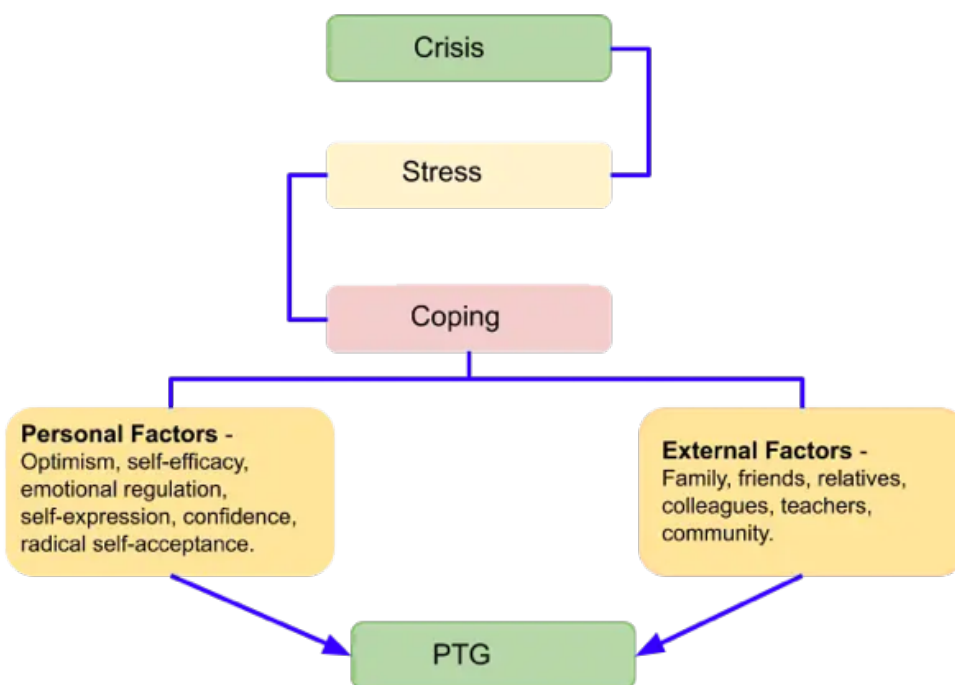
Although the traumas described in this literature review are linked to poor outcomes for girls into adulthood, it is possible to overcome them. The process in which people recover from traumatic experiences is known as post-traumatic growth, in which an individual not only overcomes traumatic experiences but they undergo positive changes as a result of those challenges (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Post-traumatic growth (PTG) is a theory that explains positive transformation following a traumatic experience. This term was developed by psychologists Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun in the 1990s and asserted that individuals who experience a psychological struggle after adversity could frequently see positive growth thereafter.

(Collier, 2016. Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004) claim, "post-traumatic growth is not simply a return to baseline – it is an experience of improvement that for some people is deeply profound" (p. 4). While undergoing a traumatic experience may promote resiliency in some people, a resilient person may not necessarily have been exposed to trauma or adversity (Chowdhury, 2020).

The Model of Life Crisis and Growth frames the significance of environmental and personal factors in producing positive outcomes due to surviving trauma (Schaefer and Moos, 1992). Proponents of this theory highlight that what happens to people is often beyond their control, but whom they choose to endure times of adversity with may influence the outcome. The Model of Life Crisis and Personal Growth is shown in Figure 2.4 and illustrates the significance of interpersonal and environmental aspects that support the coping process that prompts post-traumatic growth (Schaefer and Moos, 1992).

Figure 2.4

Post-traumatic Growth (PTG) Model of Life Crisis (Chowdhury, 2020)



The Model Of Life Crisis

Chowdhury (2020) differentiates resilience as a personal characteristic trait to support individuals in bouncing back from stress and trauma. However, post-traumatic growth is an “enlightened mental state” following exposure to trauma (Chowdhury, 2020). Though resilience can support the process of post-traumatic growth, these two constructs are not the same. Furthermore, a person who is resilient may not undergo post-traumatic growth after enduring a traumatic event. In contrast, another person who has experienced post-traumatic growth may not have necessarily been resilient before the trauma.

Similar to resilience, post-traumatic growth is a salutogenic concept (Mittelmark & Bauer, 2017). Moreover, this notion suggests that life experiences influence a person's sense of judgment, and that a strong sense of judgment may and encourage one to mobilize resources to manage stressors and emotions more successfully (Mittelmark & Bauer, 2017). Additionally, post-traumatic growth signifies the ability to develop optimism following a traumatic event (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, 2004). Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) suggest that having a positive outlook includes being able to relate to others, embracing new possibilities, personal strength, spirituality, and gratitude.

A traumatic experience can initiate the process of post-traumatic growth, where a person develops characteristics over time that promotes positive outcomes after experiencing trauma (Linley & Joseph, 2004). Acknowledging all alternative outcomes of trauma outside of the negative narrative is essential. Exploring how an individual grows as a result of surviving trauma is a relatively new trend (Anderson & Danis, 2006). Though this is not a widely researched topic, it has implications that can support girls and women in their leadership and beyond. It is

imperative to understand how resilience could increase an individual's ability to learn, love, and potentially lead (Linley & Joseph, 2004).

Collecting information about resilience in addition to adverse experiences may support the depth of studies measuring the impact of program interventions. It may guide studies that examine the intervening effects of protective factors on adverse life events (Leitch, 2017). Resilience is a critical component of this research study, moreover, understanding its function within the lived experiences of the participants and their ascendance to leadership. Though interconnected throughout this research, post-traumatic growth is different from resilience. According to Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004), resilience allows people to move forward after traumatic events; however, post-traumatic growth is deeper than battling the adverse effects of trauma. Survivors of childhood trauma can build productive lives despite their challenges if they are resilient, but when they achieve something greater by utilizing their experiences, this occurrence is at the core of post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Leadership & Career Success

As a consequence of posttraumatic growth, Cato (2012) emphasized that unfortunate experiences of childhood trauma, after healing, may bring out unique strengths that translate into strong leadership traits. Cato (2012) emphasized that after healing, unfortunate childhood trauma experiences may bring out unique strengths that translate into strong leadership traits. Childhood trauma survivors who become leaders may be uniquely skilled in transformational leadership as they appear to be consistently supportive and adept in cultivating trustworthiness among their teams (Blume, 1990). According to Bolman & Deal (2003), through

transformational leadership, you lead by developing a collective vision, a strong culture and providing opportunities to learn, consistent with many characteristics of trauma survivors. Childhood trauma survivors are also skillful at asking and answering hard questions (Wollin & Wollin, 1993); this skill is correlated to the psychology of resilience and aligns with the transformational leadership model. With the aforementioned leadership characteristics that may come from childhood trauma, there is tremendous value in transforming the idea of overcoming traumatic experiences as an opportunity for leaders' professional growth and development (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Survivors of childhood trauma are more likely to adopt a transformational leadership approach, (Terr, 1990; Woititz, 2002) with a strong desire to pay it forward. Leadership in educational settings can be characterized as shared (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 2000) and transformational (Burns, 1978) because continuous changes continue to meet the needs of students and stakeholders in the community. Moreover, the transformational leadership paradigm is aligned with the recurring concepts of childhood trauma and ACEs, resilience, and post-traumatic growth for educational leaders. A unique characteristic of some survivors of childhood trauma is their desire to work with high-needs populations. Survivors gain self-worth by feeling needed by others because being wanted was not a typical experience (Blume, 1990, p. 246). Furthermore, survivors of abuse are more likely to deal with feelings of shame and worthlessness (Terr, 1990; Woititz, 2002). As a coping mechanism, they counteract those feelings by giving their best selves while investing in others' potential. Building vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized support, role modeling best practices, seeking excellence, and fostering a positive culture are core dimensions of transformational leadership (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood et al.,

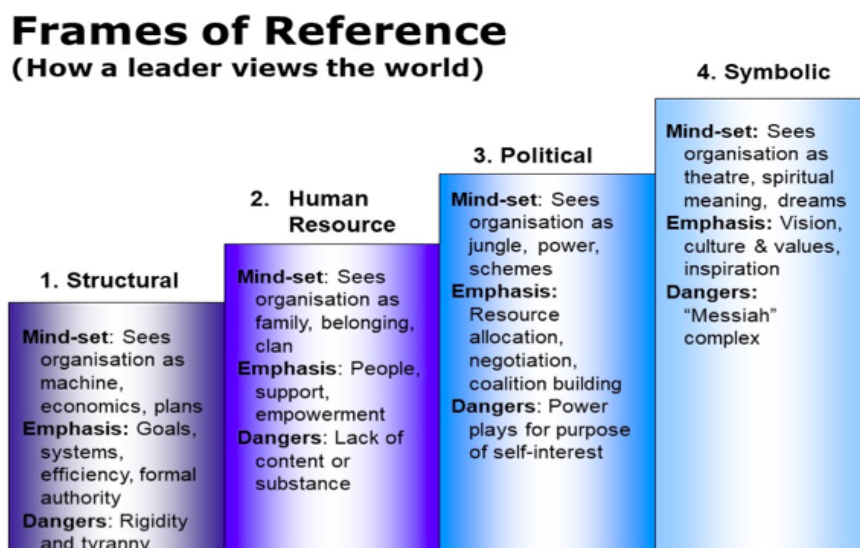
cited in Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000 p. 114). Leaders who have overcome trauma can be skilled at this leadership style as they are perceived as loyal, dependable, and trustworthy (Blume, 1990).

Bolman & Deal's Four Frames of Leadership

In the research of Bolman and Deal (1991) four frames are identified to understand leadership: (a) structural; (b) human resource; (c) political; and (d) symbolic. The Four-Frame Theory used by Bolman and Deal is grounded on the multi-frame view and has been extensively examined by various researchers who agree that there are many benefits in using the multi-frame view. Research indicates that many leaders have a preferred or dominant frame in assessing circumstances, however, when more frames are utilized, decision-making is found to be more effective (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Figure 2.5 is how Richard Daft (2007) presented Bolman and Deal's leadership frame model (1991).

Figure 2.5

Bolman and Deal, 1991, as cited by Daft 2007



Structural: Leaders view the organization as similar to a machine, and decisions are based on economics and efficiency (Daft, 2007). Plans and goal setting are critical with leaders using positional authority to influence their team. Within this frame, tasks driven by data are utilized to guide followers, such as job descriptions, policies, standards, and profit margins. Structural leaders value data, clear expectations, and results and try to solve organizational issues through policies, procedures, and restructuring (Bolman & Deal, 1991). This frame's threat is the rigidity of the leader, which is consistent with very dominant, dictatorial leaders (Daft, 2007).

Human Resource: The human resource frame emphasizes meeting basic human needs. This is a highly relational frame, as these leaders utilize relationships to lead while empowering teams (Daft, 2007). They also tend to delineate issues in individual or interpersonal contexts and find ways to adjust the system to fit the people. When there is alignment between the individual and the organization, both will benefit (Bolman & Deal, 1991, 1997). Leadership styles within this frame include “servant leadership, stewardship, values-led leadership, and some shared leadership styles” (Young, 2020). This frame's weakness is uncovered when the organizational goals become overshadowed by the follower's views, and the leader's support of those followers prevents results from being achieved (Young, 2020).

Political: The political frame operates in the context of individuals and interest groups in competition for limited resources (Tan & Yan, 2015). There are significant differences in the values and beliefs of these groups and these differences may lead to conflict. Conflict is accepted as a normal function of this frame (Tan, et al., 2015). Politicians spend most of their time networking, building relationships, creating coalitions, and negotiating (Bolman & Deal, 1991,

1997). Being perceived as dishonest or deceptive is recognized as the risk in this frame. (Young, 2020).

Symbolic: Leaders utilizing this frame utilize “vision, culture, and values to influence followers” (Young, 2020). These leaders are likely to lead through *transformational* styles and are considered authentic and charismatic visionaries (Young, 2020). Leaders who display the symbolic frame are transformational; they lead by example and encourage their employees to buy into their vision and purpose (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Individuals are inspired to do good work while being committed to the organization’s mission and vision. Leaders in this frame use rituals and ceremonies to help individuals find meaning from their experiences (Tan et al., 2015; Bolman & Deal 1991). The threat to this frame is that leaders, over time, particularly charismatic leaders, may develop “messiah complexes,” and symbols may also appear dishonest, unethical, or self-serving (Young, 2020).

Each frame is a sound set of ideals forming a particular perspective that allows individuals to observe and comprehend the decision-making process more clearly (Bolman & Deal, 2008). According to Bolman and Deal (2008), effective leaders should navigate through the different frames depending on the situation and have the insight and depth to apply the appropriate frames to each situation in the decision-making process. The ability to use multiple frames is essential when leaders adapt their styles to their operating environment. Based on the literature, the Bolman and Deal leadership framework has the foundational structure as well as the flexibility to encompass the leadership perspectives that may come forth in the study.

Chapter Summary

The aforementioned research demonstrates substantial correlating factors pointing to negative life outcomes for women who have experienced childhood trauma. While the majority of research focuses on the harmful consequences of experiencing childhood trauma, research on resilience and post-traumatic growth give way to an alternative narrative for survivors of trauma. Although adverse childhood experiences can be devastating, they can be inspirational to an individual who has conquered them, some utilizing their lived experiences as a motivator to promote the emergence of leadership while shaping distinct leadership philosophies and traits. Although some leadership research suggests positive factors associated with those who have overcome adversities, limited studies have described the connection between exposure to trauma, resilience, post-traumatic growth, and the leadership characteristics women survivors may have gained due to their lived experiences. Furthermore, this study will start to address those gaps by exploring the influence that adverse childhood experiences may have on the emergence of leadership, traits developed, and the dominant leadership frame(s) utilized by women serving in educational institutions in leadership capacities.

In Chapter Three, the methodology for this qualitative research study will be discussed. The proposed design, participant selection, data collection processes, and analysis methods will be described. Chapter Three will also include the researcher's positionality and address the trustworthiness of this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter three details the methodologies used to conduct this research and incorporates the following: (a) purpose of the study; (b) study design; (c) research participants (d) data collection; (d) data analysis and reliability.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the perspectives of women leaders who have overcome trauma and how their lived experiences may have influenced their emergence into leadership and their leadership traits. The study explores childhood trauma, resilience, and post-traumatic growth concerning the lived experiences of women survivors currently serving in leadership capacities in education establishments. A phenomenological methodology will be utilized to provide a deep understanding of how study participants perceive their trauma's influence on their ascendance to leadership. Additionally, the researcher will examine pre-determined codes within the framework of Bolman and Deal's leadership model. Participant experiences and perceptions will be explored using semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Research Question

1. What are the perspectives of women leaders in education on how their lived experiences with trauma influenced their leadership?
 - a. Which leadership frame(s) (structural, political, human resource, or symbolic frame) do these women leaders in education identify with?

Study Design

According to Creswell and Poth, qualitative research begins with assumptions or a worldview, “the possible use of a theoretical lens and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (2016, p. 37). Qualitative research aims to understand the lived experiences of a person or population and brings understanding that cannot be obtained through quantitative means of collection (Beuving & De Vreis, 2015). Qualitative research is a method that creates space for participants to share stories, elevates their voices, and “minimizes the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 45). For the purpose of this study, employing a qualitative method was important in understanding women leaders' perspectives on how traumatic events influenced their leadership. Considering that research has sufficiently established that trauma is linked to negative health and life consequences for women and girls (Chiodo et al., 2009), a quantitative method would not offer the in-depth exploration of the unique perspectives the participants may bring forward offering an alternative narrative through their lived experiences. Furthermore, using a qualitative approach, the researcher encouraged participants to share their stories without assuming that all women leaders in this study who have survived trauma are affected the same way or experience post-traumatic growth. Moreover, this will allow the researcher to examine better how leadership is influenced from the individual's perspectives and then make connections to the overarching themes that come forward thereafter.

According to Creswell and Poth (2016), the primary purpose of phenomenology is to “reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (p.

58). In phenomenological studies, the researcher “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon,” and the focus is on “describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon” (Creswell & Poth, 2016, pp. 57-58). The substance of each participant's experience within this phenomenological approach was gathered to capture *what* they have experienced in addition to *how* they experienced it. Furthermore, a phenomenological approach uncovered how participants experienced and processed their trauma rather than focusing only on the trauma that occurred.

Case studies “involve the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” or multiple systems over time through detailed, in-depth data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p.73). Gathering data for case studies usually involve a multitude of sources such as documents, observations, reports, and interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2016); however, for the purpose of this study, only in-depth interviews will be used to collect the data. Deep consideration was given to this decision, as the researcher did not want to be mistaken as evaluative of the participant in any way by including observations and reviewing documents. The researcher’s intent for this process is to be as organic as possible and interpret the information from the participant as they see it and not what the researcher believes it to be. By collecting the participant’s lived experiences through the in-depth interview process as the exclusive source, the researcher believes it will build deeper trust and offer more reliable data in the process, uninfluenced by any other source. Furthermore, this strategy may allow the researcher to capture more authentic and holistic participant perspectives to reveal a phenomenon that may not otherwise come forth.

Participants

Criteria for participants of this study are as follows: (1) self-identify as a woman; (2) self-identify as a survivor or overcomer of trauma; (3) serve in a leadership capacity ranging from middle management to c-suite executive level in an education establishment; (4) give consent to be interviewed for the study; (5) answer follow up questions from the interview as necessary. Five participants were interviewed for this study.

Women leaders serving in education organizations that are professionally known to the researcher were contacted by phone and followed up by email with an overview of the study (Appendix A). Those parties were encouraged to forward the overview of the study to other women leaders in education, who they believe fall into the criteria not known to the researcher so that additional potential interview candidates may be identified through snowball sampling (Kirchherr, 2018). Once the selection process was complete, a confirmation email and consent form was sent to all participants (See Appendix B).

Data Collection

For phenomenological research, the most common approach is using in-depth interviews (IDI) (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The importance is to “describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it” (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 131). Fontana and Frey (2000) described the in-depth interview as one of the most powerful strategies for gaining an understanding of human beings and investigating topics in depth. IDI interviews allowed the researcher to provoke rich information about the lived experiences and personal perspectives of the participants in the study. Qualitative data were gathered through two semi-structured interviews with participants and used to connect themes related to the research

question. In the first interview, the researcher used open-ended questions about their trauma experiences, perceptions of the impact, and subsequent career paths (see Appendix C). Questions allowed the researcher to probe for opinions, facts, and more details as necessary. Additionally, interview questions were modified to seek additional information to strengthen the findings as this study evolved. In the second interview, the researcher used questions corresponding to Bolman & Deal's Leadership frames derived from the study, "A Qualitative Analysis of the Leadership Style of a Vice-Chancellor in a Private University in Malaysia" (Tan et al., 2015) (Appendix D). Furthermore, the researcher conducted interviews with participants at a location of their choosing and comfort level.

Data Analysis

"The processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process" as they are interconnected and often occur simultaneously in a research study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2016) describe this process as the data analysis spiral. For the purposes of this study, this spiral was utilized to guide the data analysis process. The data analysis spiral evolves in the following four loops: 1. data management and organization, 2. evaluating and noting memos to document themes, 3. defining, classifying, and coding themes, and 4. presenting interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

In loop one, data was organized by documenting and transcribing them through the Otter.ai application and then transferred electronically to a Microsoft Word document. The Word document was carefully reviewed in alignment with the Otter.ai recordings to confirm accuracy.

Loop two comprised reading and memoing developing themes from the IDIs. As each transcript was analyzed, memos and reflections around participant stories, central themes, key

phrases/words, and statements were documented. Moreover, this process assisted in developing a trail that supports the validity of the documentation and analysis process (Silver & Lewis, 2014).

The third loop included defining themes and code classification. Both inductive coding and deductive coding guided this process, allowing themes to come forth directly from the stories of the participants as well as allowing coding themes previously established around Bolman & Deals leadership frames to be a part of the data analysis process. For this study, leadership frame keyword indicators were employed from the study “A Qualitative Analysis of the Leadership Style of a Vice-Chancellor in a Private University in Malaysia” (Tan et al., 2015) (Appendix D).

The fourth loop focused on developing and presenting the researcher’s interpretations of the data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the process of interpretation involves both comprehending the data and the knowledge gained from that process. Additionally, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilized as the framework to interpret the collected data. This approach “is phenomenological in that it involves a detailed examination of the participant’s life world” and aims to discover “personal experience and is concerned with an individual’s personal perception” of an experience, in contrast to “an attempt to produce an objective statement” of the event itself (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021, p. 53).

Positionality

As someone who has served as a leader of an organization that serves students who have experienced trauma, in addition to being a woman with firsthand life experiences that may have

influenced my leadership, I have a unique insight, empathy, and curiosity in relation to the outcomes and narratives associated with those who have overcome trauma. Additionally, this study was birthed through my passion for advancing the lives of marginalized populations in society - offering alternative positive outcomes based on evidence for those who have experienced trauma.

Validity

Trustworthiness is used in qualitative studies to justify the reliability or validity of the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Several approaches were used to establish trustworthiness, including triangulation and member checks. Triangulation refers to using various methods in qualitative research to understand phenomena comprehensively (Patton, 1999).

It is recommended to use translated data segments for member checks, including themes or patterns that emerged from the transcripts (Creswell, 2009). Study participants were invited to evaluate their transcripts and the data themes, offer their interpretations, and provide alternative language as they saw fit (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Furthermore, the researcher offered to capture the participant's interpretation of what may be missing. All participants confirmed that the transcripts were accurate.

Data triangulation was utilized to determine the consistency of the themes and data captured from the interviews (Creswell, 2013). This was established by analyzing and comparing participant themes across their interview data and comparing them to one another (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Furthermore, the study's validity was enhanced by the participation of multiple individuals in this study, providing multiple data sources (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). Consistent core themes across participants with varying childhood experiences strengthened the internal validity (Merriam, 1998).

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 3, the methodology utilized in the study was described. Qualitative research was identified as the best approach to explore how trauma and adverse childhood experiences may have influenced women's leadership in education. In-depth interviews were identified as the primary source for data collection, and the recruitment process for participants was discussed. The phenomenological study design and methodology that inform the research questions were defined. The researcher outlined the study design and data collection, analysis, and validity process.

Chapter 4: Findings

Phenomenology emerged as a qualitative model through the research of Edmund Husserl, who believed a descriptive approach to comprehending a person's lived experience will assist in better understanding human motivation (Flood, 2010; Dowling, 2007). Moreover, he deemed that data taken at face value and without bias approached scientifically will guide the researcher to an essential understanding of human consciousness and lived experiences (Flood, 2010; Dowling, 2007).

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of women who have overcome trauma, the impact these events may have had on their career trajectory, and the evolution and style of their leadership. The specific research question(s) that guided this study are as follows: What are the perspectives of women leaders in education on how their lived experiences with trauma influenced their leadership? Additionally, which leadership frame(s) (structural frame, political frame, human resource frame, or symbolic frame) do these women leaders in education identify with?

This chapter will provide an overview of the participants who were interviewed for the purposes of this research study, a discussion of the major themes identified through the data analysis, and a presentation and evaluation of the research findings. The themes identified from the data addressing the research question are linked to the literature review's overall conceptual framework and core themes.

Participants

All participants self-identified as female, an overcomer or survivor of trauma, and serve in a leadership capacity ranging from middle management to executive level in education settings serving middle and/or high school students considered at-risk. At-risk youth can be defined as “a range of circumstances that place young people at greater vulnerability for hardship, such as substance abuse, school failure, and juvenile delinquency, along with mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety (Lecroy & Anthony, 2018).” Five participants were interviewed for this study. All participants chose to be interviewed through Zoom video conferencing for both interviews. Participants who were professionally known to the researcher were contacted via phone and followed up by email with an overview of the study (Appendix A). Those participants were encouraged to forward the study overview to other women leaders in education whom they believed fell into the criteria resulting in additional candidates being identified through snowball sampling (Kirchherr, 2018). Once the selection process was completed, the researcher made contact by phone to confirm participation. An email, including the informed consent form, was sent to all participants for signature before the interview (See Appendix B).

Participant Characteristics: To be as affirming to the participants as possible, rather than using a standard demographic tool, participants were invited to share demographics that they were most comfortable with. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the individuals who participated in the study based on self-identified demographics that were offered to the researcher. Participants have all acquired a post-secondary education ranging from bachelors to doctorate level. All participants shared that their predominant professional experiences have been working

with at-risk populations. Table 4.1 outlines the current leadership position held by participants in their respective educational establishments. Their years of professional experience are displayed in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.1

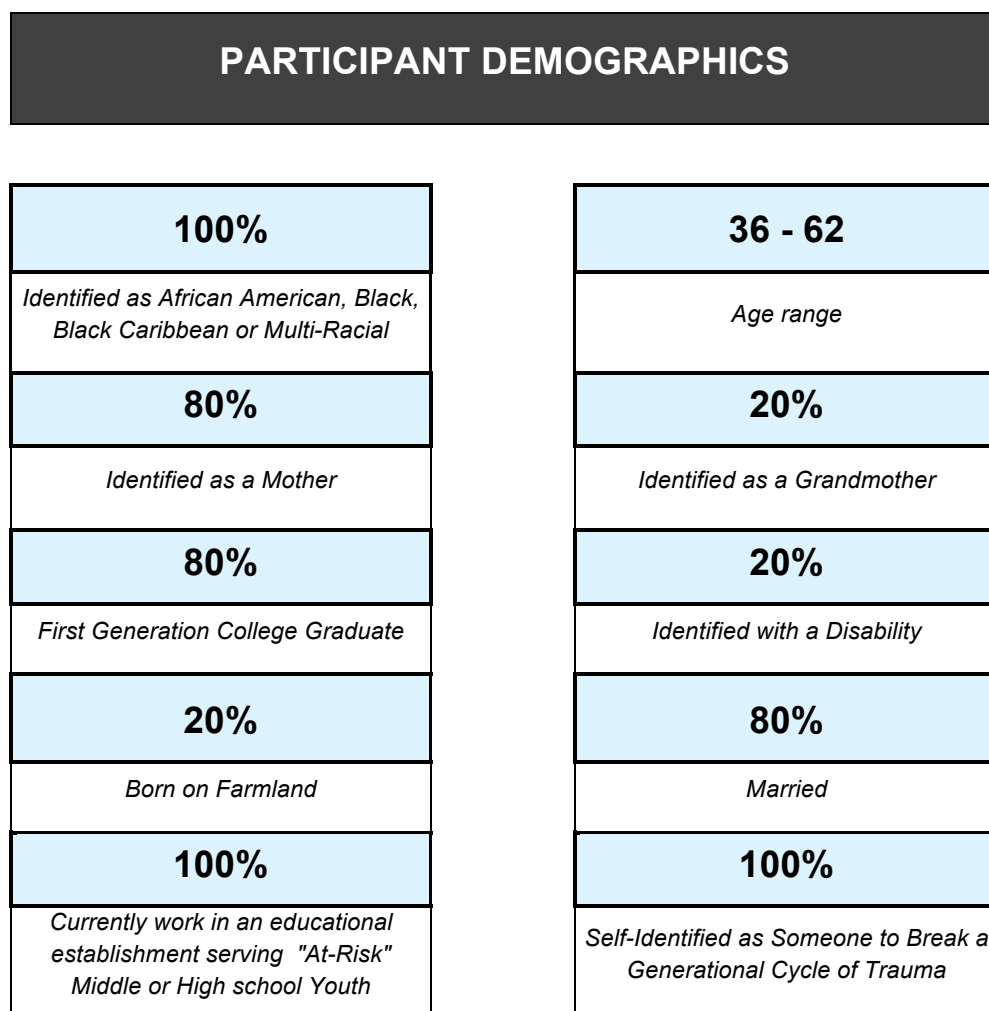
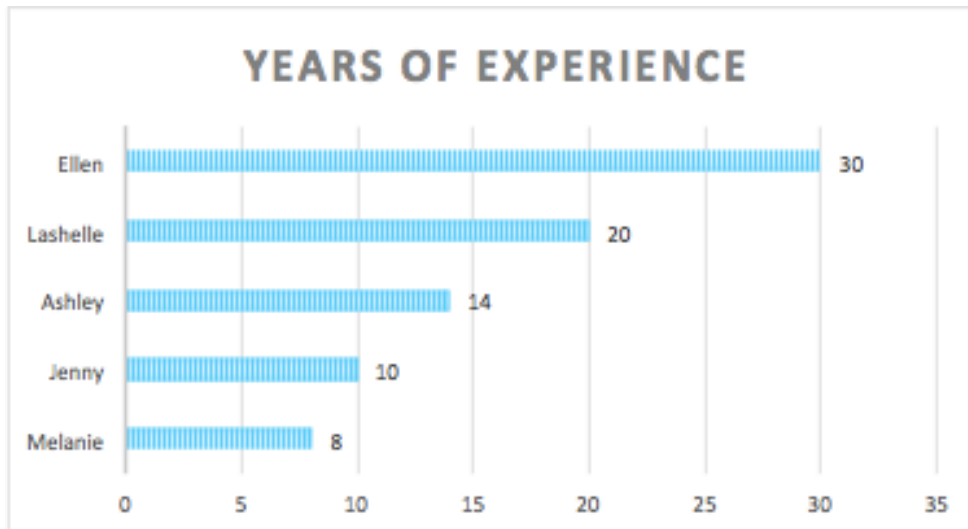


Table 4.1.
Current Leadership Positions
Held by Participants

Participant	Position
Ashley	Manager
Ellen	Sr. Executive
Jenny	Director
Lashelle	Sr. Executive
Melanie	Director

*pseudonyms chosen by participants

Figure 4.2

*pseudonyms chosen by participants

Interview Process

The section intends to provide a brief overview of the interactions between the researcher and participants before the recording, as these interactions will not be distinguished in the analysis of themes. Early in the participation selection phase, it was established that the research was completely voluntary and that the participant could stop the interview or skip questions at any time.

The researcher asked the participants if they had any questions about the process, informed consent, interview questions, or if anything was needed to make this process as comfortable as possible while reiterating that they could skip any questions and stop the interview at any time. All participants shared that they felt comfortable with what had been presented, sent informed consent electronically, and all participants chose to keep their cameras on while on Zoom. Interviews were conducted one-on-one via Zoom, ranging from 90-120

minutes. Interview responses were documented verbatim, and pseudonyms created by the participants were created to protect their identities. Each participant answered all questions in the interview sequence and offered additional information such as reflections, experiences, and perceptions. Participants also answered the researcher's supplemental questions, which emerged from the interview. During the interview, the researcher consistently shared summarized statements with the participant to clarify and confirm that their words were comprehended as they intended and that their perspectives were captured accurately, employing reflexivity participatory collaboration. Reflexivity as mutual collaboration suggests that research participants partake in reflexive discussions with the researcher in which they communicate their ideas and interpretations, complementing and adding insight into the researcher's approach in examining, revising, and honing their interpretations (Finlay, 2003). Participants also expressed excitement about the opportunity to share the challenges they have endured from a strength-based lens.

An application that transcribes audio into text, Otter, ai, was utilized, and the transcriptions were examined for accuracy by the researcher. Participants were provided with a copy of their transcripts and asked to member check for validity to confirm that experiences and perceptions were represented the way they intended. This exploratory study established triangulation by examining and comparing participants across their interview data. By using triangulation and member-checking of the interview data, the trustworthiness of the research was established. Additionally, Excel was utilized to organize, categorize and analyze the interview data into keywords, codes, and themes to assure consistency and dependability within the study.

Jenny	<i>"Significant event or series of events that shift the trajectory of that person's life and outcomes"</i>
Lashelle	<i>"It is two-fold: 1. Events or experiences that are beyond someone's control 2. Trauma is curated through risk factors"</i>
Ellen	<i>"A significant incident that happened at any point that influences decisions daily"</i>

**pseudonyms chosen by participants*

Data Analysis

The study followed the subsequent phases for the investigation in phenomenology as follows: (1) repeatedly listening to participants' interview audio in order to ascertain the participant's perspectives thoroughly; (2) transferring audio interviews into textual data through Otter, ai; (3) identifying trends such as keywords, themes, and notable quotes in transcribed interviews; (4) sharing the preliminary analysis of interpretations, themes, and descriptions with the participants to address validity and consistency (5) organizing the results within the core themes of the study; trauma risks for girls, resilience and post-traumatic growth, and (6) summarizing the commonalities within the phenomenon to address the research question.

In this study, the below themes in Table 4.3 were identified to address the research questions addressed below:

Research Question 1 (RQ1). *What are the perspectives of women leaders in education on how their lived experiences with trauma influenced their leadership?*

Emerging Study Themes

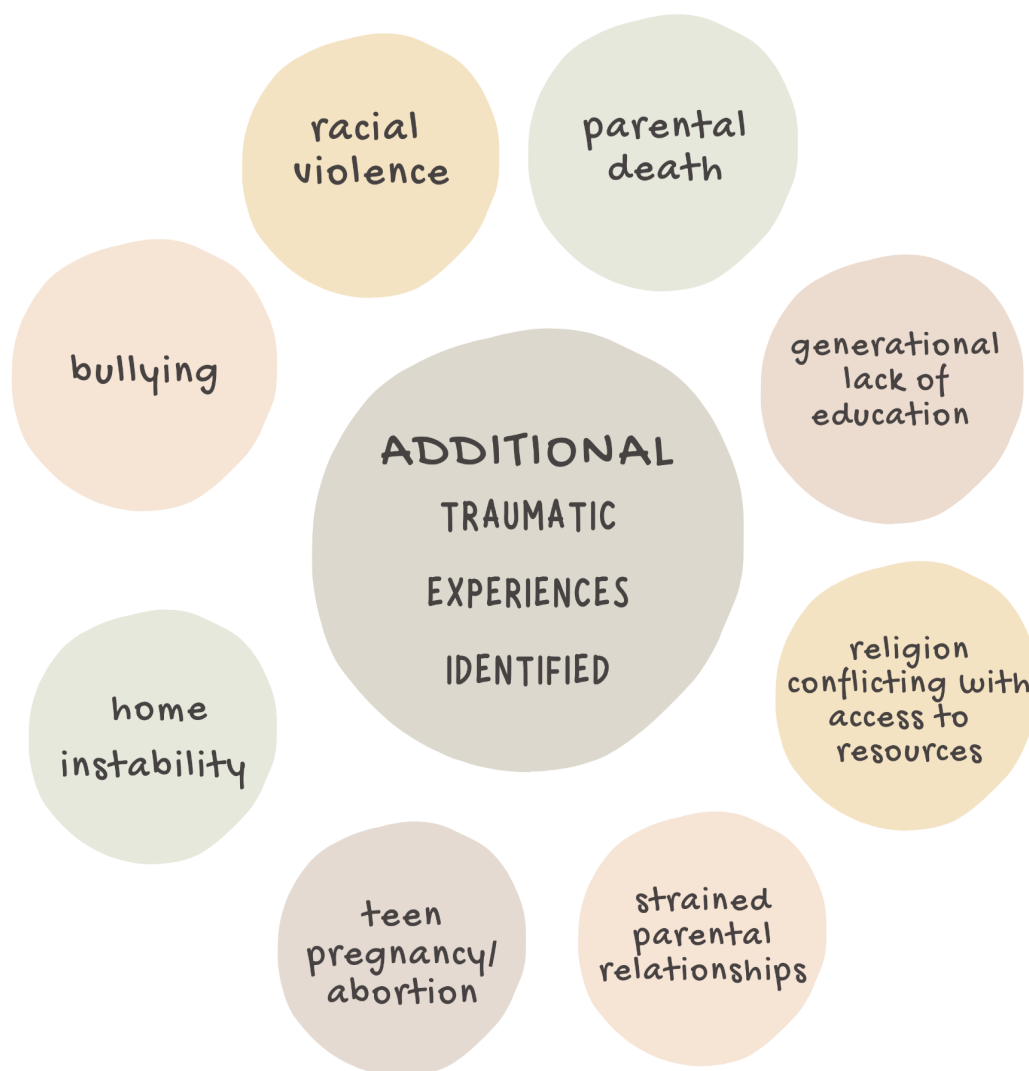
Table 4.3

Emerging Theme	Participant Experiences	Study Core-Theme
Abuse	100% of participants shared that abuse was present for them, whether directly encountered or witnessed.	Trauma Risk for Girls
Poverty	80% of participants shared that they experienced challenges associated with generational poverty, poverty, or low socio-economic status	Trauma Risk for Girls
Domestic Violence	80% experienced or witnessed domestic violence	Trauma Risk for Girls
Parentification	80% experienced parentification; raising siblings; stepping into a parental role	Trauma Risk for Girls
Coping Mechanisms	100% of participants shared ways in which they coped to navigate the challenges of trauma	Resiliency
Hope & Possibility	100% of participants shared remarks about looking through life from a lens of possibility, hope and potential	Resiliency
Independence	100% of participants expressed a strong notion of independence and self-reliance as a pathway for them to break generational cycles	Resiliency
Purpose	100% of participants believed that the challenges they faced gave them a deeper sense of purpose in life	Post-Traumatic Growth
Purpose	100% of participants shared that overcoming trauma had an influence on choosing a career path in which they can "give back" to those with similar lived experiences	Post-Traumatic Growth
Mentorship	100% of participants mentioned mentorship in the interview process; receiving mentorship was important for some and being a mentor to others was consistent among all participants	Post-Traumatic Growth
Leadership and Career Success	100% of participants shared positive leadership traits they believe were gained from overcoming challenges	Post-Traumatic Growth
Leadership and Career Success	100% of participants spoke about empathy as being a positive consequence of their lived experiences and a critical leadership skill. .	Post-Traumatic Growth

Trauma Risk for Girls Major Themes

Participants reported the following core themes related to traumatic experiences in childhood (1) Abuse, (2) Poverty, (3) Domestic Violence, and (4) Parentification. Although not experienced by all, other significant forms of trauma experienced by participants are listed in Figure.

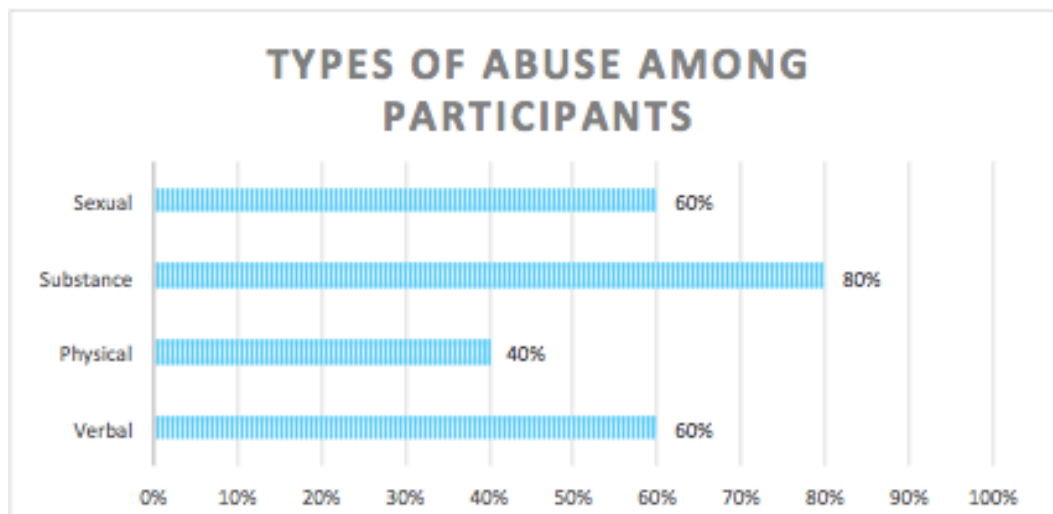
Figure 4.4



1. Abuse

100% of participants shared that they experienced abuse directly or indirectly - primarily in the domains of sexual, substance, physical, and verbal. Research demonstrates that children who experience maltreatment will undergo many more difficulties with their mental health, substance abuse, and inadequate physical health than those who have not experienced abuse (Putman, 2006). Moreover, studies show that these children are at a significantly higher risk of not completing their education or attaining employment (Putman, 2006). The types of abuse are outlined by percentages experienced by participants in Figure 4.5

Figure 4.5



Related quotes:

- *"I don't ever remember being a virgin"*
- *"We were told that we were no one during racial integration in schools"*

- *“Growing up with my grandfather being an alcoholic made me feel so embarrassed like we couldn’t have anyone over.*
- *“The sexual abuse I endured as a child made me feel guilt like it was my fault even though I know now it wasn’t. I didn’t even realize how much I went through until I became an adult. Sometimes I look back like, wow, I can’t believe I made it through all that I experienced.*

2. Poverty

80% of participants shared that they experienced challenges associated with generational poverty, poverty, or low socioeconomic status. Children growing up in poor, impoverished neighborhoods have high risks of undergoing severe stressors and multiple traumas (Kissler et al., 2008). Participants shared a notion of never wanting to be in a position of need again, contributing to an ongoing drive for independence and financial stability. Participants spoke about the normalcy of generations living together and poverty being a significant motivator for success.

Related quotes:

- *“In my home, I have pictures of cotton fields to remind me where I come from”*
- *“I witnessed a lot of dysfunction not only in my home but in my community from the challenges that poverty brings”*
- *“Growing up in poverty helped me shape independence and determination, I never want to repeat these cycles or relive certain things”*

3. Domestic Violence

According to the US Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women, “Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that one partner uses to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner (US Department of Justice, 2023).” “Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, psychological, technological, or threats of actions or other coercive behavior patterns that influence another person within an intimate partner relationship (US Department of Justice, 2023).”

80% of participants shared that they have experienced or witnessed domestic violence in their household. Empirical data has indicated that experiences with domestic violence significantly decrease educational achievements after primary school graduation (Bo & Yating, 2023).

Related quotes:

- *“It was normal for me to see husbands hit their wives”*
- *“Growing up in a home with domestic violence” affected the way I responded to situations regarding my safety and the safety of others. I am hyper-vigilant with triggers and situations threatening the safety of those around me.”*
- *“I lived with my aunt, and some days I could not understand why I would see her crying so often, and then realized they had some domestic things going on because her husband was into drugs.”*
- *“Growing up in an environment of domestic violence instilled a strong desire to protect and fight for others that I love. I didn’t care about how I was; I only cared that everyone*

around me was ok. My well-being was second to those that I loved. I still struggle with putting myself first.”

4. Parentification

Parentification is defined as a “disturbance in generational boundaries, such that evidence indicates a functional and emotional role reversal in which the child sacrifices his or her own needs for attention, comfort, and guidance in order to accommodate and care for the logistical and emotional needs of a parent, sibling or both (Hooper, 2007, p. 323).” 80% of study participants shared that they experienced parentification by raising siblings and stepping into a parental role in the parent's emotional, mental, or physical absence.

Related quotes:

- *“I could not always be real; I had to be strong for my siblings that I was raising”*
- *“Helping to raise my siblings, I felt like I had an obligation to be a strong role model because my influence was so integral. I never wanted to be seen as a failure or someone they couldn’t depend on. I carried that responsibility proudly.”*
- *“Taking care of my siblings affected my ability to depend on others as an adult. As a child, I learned what it meant to be independent and how to set myself up so that my security was not contingent on others.”*

Resilience Major Themes

As a part of the interview process, the researcher asked participants to define “overcomer or survivor of trauma” in an effort to understand their perception of the term and empower them to

speak from the perspective of their definition. The participant's wording differed, but core definitions were consistent among individuals, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

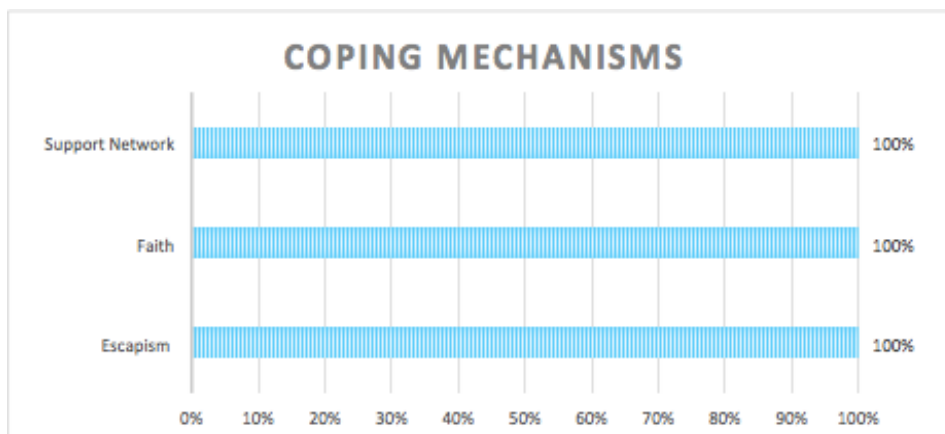
PARTICIPANT DEFINITION OF "OVERCOMER OF TRAUMA"	
Melanie	<i>"Somebody who has been through it and has not allowed it to make them throw in the towel"</i>
Ashley	<i>"Someone who has used their lived experiences with trauma as a stepping stone and did not let it stop them"</i>
Jenny	<i>"A person who acknowledges experiences as part of who they are but not allowing it to put their life on a negative trajectory"</i>
Lashelle	<i>"Someone that does not allow trauma to do what it was purposed to do. It can cripple and paralyze you; an overcomer is a person that pushes back so that trauma does not do what it was purposed to do"</i>
Ellen	<i>"Perseverance - you have to believe that you are here for a reason and do what is necessary to persevere"</i>

A keyword repeatedly used by participants, in addition to a consistent theme throughout this study, was resilience. For this study, the following definition of resilience is “the multilevel processes that systems engage in to obtain better-than-expected outcomes in the face or wake of adversity ” (Breda, 2018, p. 4).” The objective of resiliency theory as the conceptual framework for this study sets the focus on the participant’s lived experiences of growth and development (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman & Brenner, 2010). Through the lens of this framework, we look at resilience as a process that leads to an outcome (see Figure 2.3) with a focus on the mediating processes (Breda, 2018). Although experiences of trauma may have varied among participants, resilience became a shared foundational pillar that connected all participants throughout the study. The themes correlating to resilience were (1) coping mechanisms, (2) hope and possibility, and (3) independence.

1. Coping Mechanisms

In the view of all participants, coping strategies in childhood into adulthood were critical in overcoming the trauma they experienced. Although participants varied in their recollection and communication of the mediating factors that influenced their growth and development process, consistent themes did emerge. The following coping mechanisms displayed in Figure 4.6 were most prevalent among the participants, (1) having a network of support, (2) escapism, and (3) faith.

Figure 4.6



Participants reported a consistent theme of having a strong network of support as a way to support them through their trauma. Support networks included aunts, alternative school staff, siblings, and like-minded friends.

Escapism through various avenues also appeared as a consistent theme for all participants in coping with trauma. 100% of participants shared that music helped them cope and for many diverted their attention away from a negative circumstance they were facing. Reading was also a consistent form of escapism, as 60% shared that reading was a way to dream beyond their circumstances and serve as a positive outlet.

Finally, from the perspective of all participants, reliance on their faith was consistent in persevering through their trauma - although for some, faith was more present in adulthood.

The coping mechanisms discussed are critical when considering resilience as a process and its mediating factors. When examining favorable outcomes these women have achieved despite their trauma, the positive ways they coped offers insight into the resilience process.

Related quotes:

Escapism

- *"Motown music took me to a place of freedom."*

- *“Reading saved my life - it took me away from my situation so that I could escape to a better place in my mind. It also kept me away from trouble”*
- *“Reading was important to me because it was my only avenue to escape my reality and circumstances. It was my ticket to dream, explore, and live in another world full of possibilities.”*

Faith

- *“There were some times where all my external resources were gone- when I hit my lowest, I turned to my faith. I was in a hole by myself and asked God to pull me out. It was a reality check and I realized that through my faith I was not alone.”*
- *“While religion and spirituality have been a part of my life since before I could think for myself, it wasn’t until adulthood that I understood the value of spirituality. My core religious beliefs have allowed me to heal from the trauma I had as a child and help me navigate the challenges of adulthood.”*

Support Network

- *“I looked up to my aunts as a support network and role models; they also had similar lived experiences, and they made it out.”*
- *“My support network made me feel safe and heard- sometimes I couldn’t see beyond the dark hole I was in, and my support system gave me light.”*

Although not shared among all, additional coping mechanisms participants shared are captured in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7

2. Hope & Possibility

A strong connection to hope and possibility were described as an important aspect of seeing beyond their current circumstances and another pathway to healing. Participants discussed how

trauma could leave some people feeling hopeless or permanently damaged due to the circumstances they have experienced and witnessed. However, all participants felt that part of their overcoming was a relentless and intrinsic sense of hope that they could achieve their goals and become more than what their current circumstances presented them with. This has also affected the way that they live their lives as adults as they collectively look to the future about the possibilities of achieving more, either themselves or through their children and grandchildren. Their confident and optimistic outlook on what can be versus what should have deterred them is a consistent motivator among the overcomers in this study.

Related Quotes:

- *“Ambition and hope guided me because reality could not, and I wanted to do something that hadn’t been done in my family before”*
- *“Hope was important because it allowed me to envision a brighter future, even in the face of difficulty or uncertainty. When we have hope, we are more resilient, motivated, and capable of overcoming challenges and pursuing our goals.”*
- *“Seeing life through a lens of hope and possibility is the light to reach in a world full of darkness. Without light, we have no hope or nothing to strive for”*

3. Independence

Participants reported a general theme of independence to create stability and consistency in their lives. For participants, lacking access to resources created a strong sense of self-reliance that motivated them to pursue their education and be ambitious with their career goals. Although the participant's experiences of trauma varied in several ways, all upheld the importance of learning early on how to be independent as a means to create stability and success. For some, this also

brought forth hyper-independence, which makes them feel as if they must make decisions and achieve things without the help of others.

Related Quotes:

- *“Independence was crucial to me. It allowed me to be intentional in my healing journey from trauma. Being independent empowers us to take control of our own lives and to make choices that support our healing. By cultivating a sense of independence, we can build self-esteem, self-reliance, and a stronger sense of identity, all of which are vital to recovering from the effects of trauma.”*
- *“I am who I am not in spite of, but because of the sense of resilience and independence I have gained through my experiences”*
- *“Independence for me was out of necessity. After years of needing to get my needs met on my own, I developed hyper-independence and struggle to have interdependent relationships. While it is something I work to cultivate within my leadership team and among my colleagues, I operate under the premise that others may not truly live up to their promises. As such, I am readily prepared to pick up slack and take on additional responsibilities to ensure outcomes are successful under my direction.”*

Post Traumatic Growth Major Themes

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) is the process in which people recover from traumatic experiences, and the individual not only overcomes but undergoes positive changes as a result of overcoming those challenges (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). In the view of all participants, positive characteristics were developed as a result of overcoming their lived experiences with

trauma. The following themes in post-traumatic growth emerged from interview data, (1) Purpose, (2) Mentorship, and (3) Leadership and Career Success.

1. Purpose

100% of participants believed that the challenges they faced gave them a more profound sense of purpose in life. Their lived experiences validate research claiming that post-traumatic growth may offer an opportunity for the discovery of deeper meaning in an individual's life, and belief in one's sense of purpose may lead to increased levels of life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Tripplett et al., 2012). 100% of participants shared that their lived experiences have influenced their career path in an effort to give back. Participants shared a sense of being mission-driven and chose careers where they believed they could fulfill their purpose. Additionally, a subtheme that came forth for participants as they spoke about their purpose was their desire to give back.

Related quotes:

- *"I have a personal obligation to leverage hope and opportunity to students because they deserve that"*
- *"I want to be what I needed for 15-year-old me to our students, but I also want to be what I needed for the people who work for me."*
- *"Because of my past, I always had a deep interest in working with kids who are typically overlooked; I believe it is my purpose to fight for those kids."*
- *"It is important for people to see success in themselves through my example in my role- I want them to feel like, now that I see you, I know that I can do it."*

- *“My purpose in life is to be the person I wished I had at their age.”*

2. Mentorship

100% of participants mentioned mentorship in the interview process. Receiving mentorship was important to some, but being a mentor to others was consistent among all participants. Researchers examining the results of gender-specific mentoring programs indicated that teen girls experienced authentic and improved emotional support, increased confidence, development of new skills, and fellowship that relieved the stresses of daily life (Spencer & Liang, 2009). Mentors can encourage girls to push themselves further, expose them to new experiences, and help girls and women see the world from different perspectives. A wealth of literature reveals that mentoring positively impacts teenagers' emotional, social, and academic performance (Tierney et al., 1995).

Related quotes:

- *“It’s more than just a job, position, or title. It is my duty to give back, mentor, teach, and empower others in a way that lifts them out of their circumstances and give them hope”*
- *“ I didn’t realize that mentorship was an organic process. I didn’t know I was mentoring or being mentored so many people and those were the most successful mentor relationships I have had. You gain more from an authentic experience with someone who can relate to you , motivates you and see things in you that you may not see in yourself”*
- *“I personally believe that mentorship played an important role in helping me become the successful woman I am today, and I am now passionate about giving back and helping others in the same way that I was helped. Mentorship is a powerful tool for personal and*

professional growth, and I believe that everyone should have access to mentorship opportunities to help them reach their full potential.”

3. Leadership and Career Success

100% of participants reported that their lived experiences influenced their career path. This research aims to discover foundational pillars emerging from the data on how traumatic experiences may influence the leadership of women leaders in education. The participant's perceptions of how trauma may have influenced their leadership and career trajectory were uncovered through the interview discussion, and essential subthemes themes emerged in this particular area, addressing how their lived experiences have influenced their leadership.

The most significant subtheme that came forward in this domain was empathy. Empathy was a keyword used consistently throughout the interview process by all participants. Empathy can be defined as the unique capacity of the human being to feel the experiences, needs, aspirations, frustrations, sorrows, joys, anxieties, hurt, or hunger of others as if they were his/her own (Clark, 1980). Participants feel that their experiences have given them deep empathy for others who have also endured challenging experiences. They view empathy as a positive benefit as a result of overcoming their challenges and use it as a tool in their lives, careers, and leadership practices. According to Wenchao & Xinchun, empathy is a vital positive psychological trait and has essential effects on the post-traumatic growth and prosocial behavior of those who have experienced trauma (2020).

The other subtheme is potential. All participants shared that their connection to the lived experiences of youth who are considered at-risk is essential to their effectiveness in their

roles. They also see themselves as able to understand people, lead through connectivity and meet their staff where they are. Overcoming their trauma has helped shape how they view the world and the people around them. Many participants shared that this outlook has made them more skilled at looking at the potential in others by looking at their staff and students through a lens of possibility, seeing where they could potentially be rather than where they currently are.

Finally, relatability showed up for some leaders as an important factor in connecting with their supervisors. Participants appreciated leaders that lead from a place of empathy, modeled consistency, cared about them as a person first, and showed a vested interest in their potential - as participants reported they are demonstrating this through their leadership.

Related Quotes:

- *“Gaining empathy through my lived experiences gives me the empathy and perspective to truly understand the needs of youth who have experienced trauma. Because I have a thorough understanding of the needs, I am able to assess and support youth in crisis in a highly effective manner. It’s something that cannot be taught.”*
- *“I approach people with a what happened to you vs. what is wrong with you approach - you don't know what you can overcome until you been through it.”*
- *“I’m deeply committed to my “why,” and it is the root of every interaction and every decision I make.”*

- *“Through my leadership, I seek to lift and empower my team to think of not “what is” but what “it could be.” My leadership mindset is about always being intentional with elevation of our services and taking our students' experience to the next level.”*

Bolman & Deal Leadership Typology Results

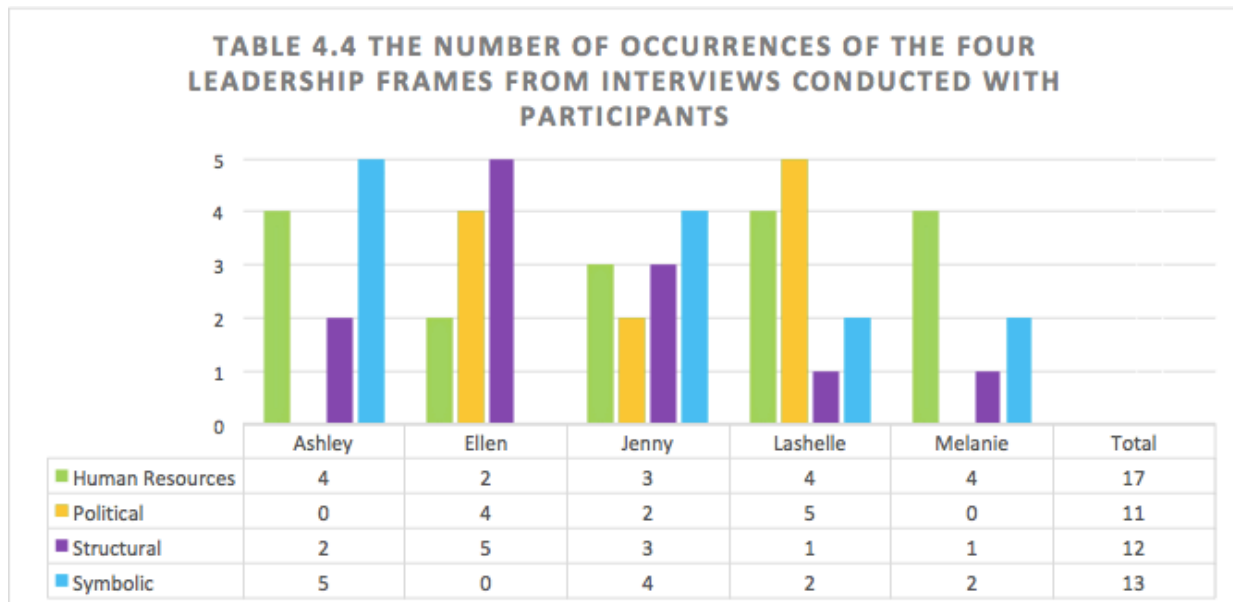
Bolman and Deal (1991) provide a leadership model encompassing four frames through which leaders operate: (a) structural; (b) human resource; (c) political; and (d) symbolic. Research indicates that many leaders have a preferred or dominant frame in assessing circumstances. Each frame includes a set of beliefs and assumptions that leaders operate through, influencing priorities.

Participants answered a set of questions corresponding to Bolman & Deal’s Leadership frames derived from the study, “A Qualitative Analysis of the Leadership Style of a Vice-Chancellor in a Private University in Malaysia” (Tan, et al., 2015) (see Appendix D). Codes were identified to make connections on how trauma may influence leadership within the framework of Bolman and Deal’s leadership model. The coding measures were derived from the study “A Qualitative Analysis of the Leadership Style of a Vice-Chancellor in a Private University in Malaysia” (Tan, et al., 2015). Coding criteria utilized in analyzing interview data to assess the leadership frames of participants can be found in Appendix E.

Research using the Bolman and Deal model revealed a relationship between leadership efficacy and preference of frames used, with multiple frames connected to a more effective leadership style (Thompson, 2000). Content analysis was used to ascertain the participants' leadership frames because it allowed the researcher to streamline and consolidate large amounts

of data. This mechanism uses “pre-designed categories in much the same way quantitative researchers use operational definitions at the beginning of the research (Tan et al., 2015, p. 8).” Content analysis of Bolman & Deal’s leadership frames was examined using the data from interview schedule 2 of this study and extracted and categorized by pre-determined codes using Excel. The emergence of pre-determined codes from interview data linked to the leadership frames is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5



100% of the participants utilize the human resource frame demonstrating a strong focus on care for others, coaching, trust, and relationships. 100% of participants also operate in the structural frame, prioritizing accountability, strategy, logic, and clear structure.

This analysis demonstrates that all participants utilize multiple frames in their leadership practices, indicating that they have a multi-frame view. Bolman & Deal’s model has established how leaders’ perspectives relate to their leadership effectiveness and that utilizing a multi-frame

orientation produces the most effective leaders (Tan et al., 2015). 100% of participants utilize a minimum of three frames in their leadership approach, and 40% utilize all four.

Conclusion

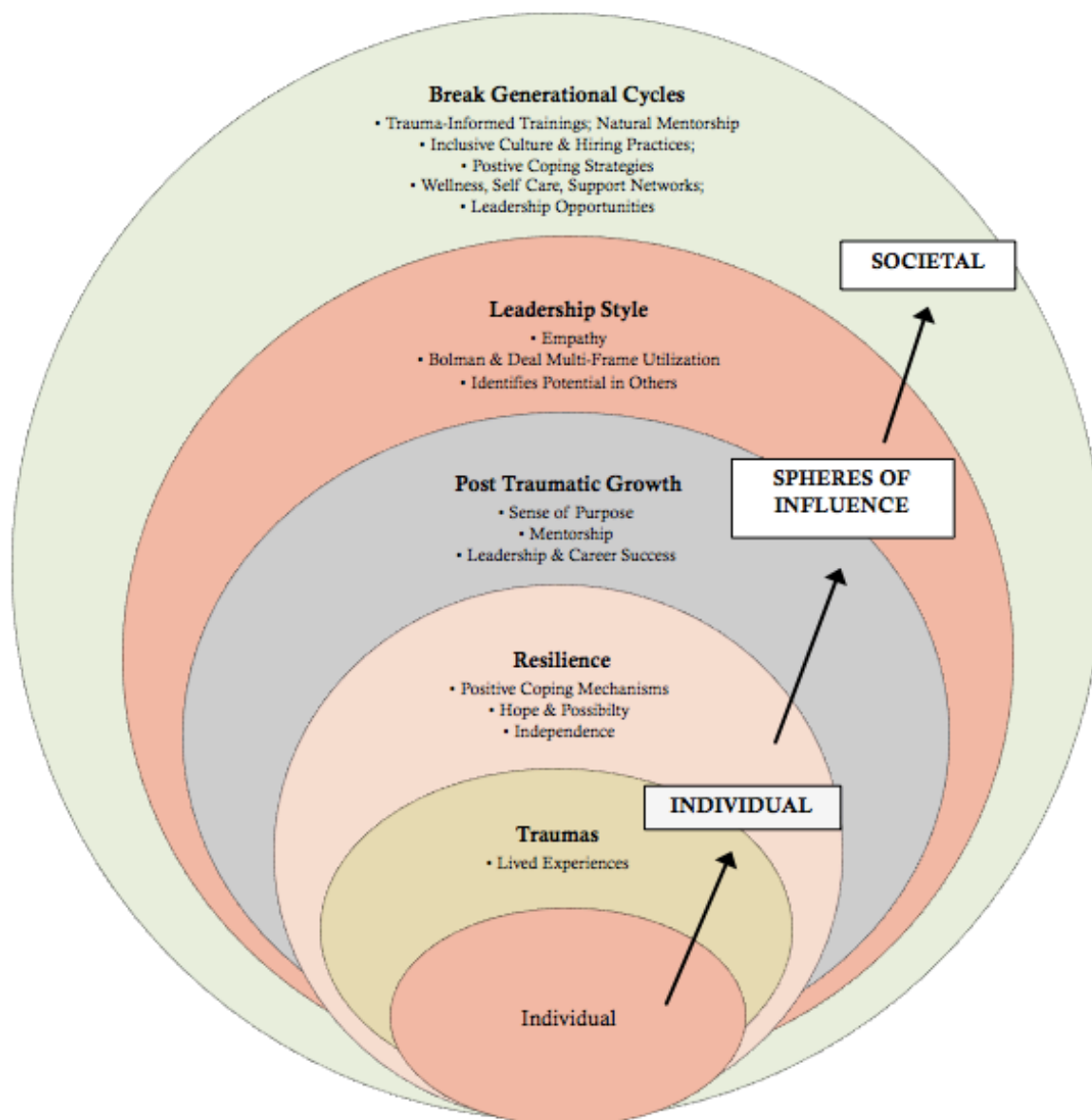
The results of this study are organized in the context of the literature regarding trauma risk for girls, resilience, and posttraumatic growth. Additionally, considerations regarding the lack of prior research on the impact of childhood trauma on leadership were significant in uplifting the stories of these participants who defied the odds. This study explored the phenomenon of their success in leadership despite what most empirical research indicates about the trajectory of those who have experienced childhood trauma. The findings of this study demonstrate that these women overcame their childhood trauma with their resilience - and discovered purpose, achieved career success, and demonstrated highly regarded leadership practices as they exhibited post-traumatic growth.

Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion

This study was exploratory in nature as it examined the perceptions of women leaders in education settings who have overcome their trauma and how it has shaped their leadership. Participants of this study have demonstrated a new narrative that is underrepresented in most empirical research. All participants have completed their post-secondary education, are gainfully employed, and successfully operate in leadership roles in educational settings. An important goal of this study is to move from conceptual ideals around this phenomenon to a transformational theory grounded in data from their lived experiences. Figure 5.1 visually represents this process depicting an individual experiencing trauma and surviving through the resilience process-affecting the individual. Then moving towards a greater sense of self and purpose through post-traumatic growth, influencing those in their sphere of influence. Finally, utilizing knowledge gained through the individual's lived experiences, breaking generational cycles and impacting society, paving the way for a grounded theory through the results of this research.

Figure 5.1

PATHWAYS OF TRAUMA TO TRANSFORMATION MODEL



Implications

Implications for Practice in Educational Organizations and Institutions

The study's findings counter the common narrative of trauma as a hindrance to success for women and reframed as a potential triumph that may impact high-level leadership practices in educational institutions and organizations. This study uncovered key components that influence that trajectory. Their unique insight, passion, and skillset working with at-risk populations are valuable in education settings. Participants in this study alluded to being the “go-to” person for taking on challenging tasks and are considered more effective in supporting youth identified as particularly difficult. Their presence and well-being are essential in impacting the lives of youth most in need, and these leaders demonstrate the possibility of breaking generational cycles. Investing in training, tools, and supports for leaders who are overcomers of trauma to promote their growth and development and expand on their potential is imperative.

1. Trauma-Informed Leadership Approach

All participants shared the significance of empathy in their leadership toward others and alluded that they have not typically received this style of leadership towards them. Trauma-informed leadership acknowledges that people, including leaders, may endure challenges due to existing and past trauma and respond with a compassionate and empathetic approach (Koloroutis & Pole 2021). Trauma-informed leaders understand the importance of their teams to “feel heard, protected, prepared, and seen by organizational leaders” (Koloroutis & Pole 2021, para. 2). A trauma-informed leadership approach will

offer additional support to current leaders and may promote upward mobility for potential educational leaders who may have experienced trauma. Trauma-informed leadership training could seek to educate future educational leaders about the potential impact of trauma on the lives of the students and staff they aspire to lead. Additionally, involving those with lived experiences, families, and the community, as part of the design, delivery implementation process, and ongoing evaluation may provide more buy-in from those affected and improve intended outcomes.

2. Inclusive Work Culture and Hiring Practices

A core theme throughout this study is the purpose participants feel in serving at-risk youth and leading teams who also serve that population. They shared that they have successfully connected with this population, thus promoting more favorable outcomes for their students and staff. Hiring leaders with shared lived experiences with the student population may provide a valuable perspective to staff and teachers working directly with youth as they reported consistency in looking through a lens of possibility for both students and staff. Valuing the unique perspectives and leadership expertise of people who have overcome trauma may bring tremendous value to organizations prioritizing inclusion. Education institutions hiring individuals with shared lived experiences of the student population should consider a strategic plan that provides transparency for stakeholders in their inclusivity goals for the organization's recruitment, hiring, and retention plans. Incorporating students and staff who are representative of the population served in the interview process may support this process and foster a culture of inclusivity. All participants demonstrated that they operate in Bolman & Deal's Human

Resource Frame, which strongly focuses on people relationships, coaching, trust, and care. Cultures that are welcoming, promote connectivity, a sense of belonging, and are inclusive may provide future leaders and current staff with essential tools and resources to apply for leadership roles, participate in interview processes, and succeed in roles upon hire.

3. Promote Wellness, Self-Care, and Support Networks

The findings of this study have direct and practical implications for supporting educational leaders who have experienced trauma. This qualitative study pointed to a need to promote wellness, self-care, and support networks in the workplace. Participants in this study shared comments about failure not being an option and having trouble delegating responsibilities, as healthy independence in practice can be blurred for some. Although not always explicit, there were consistent remarks suggesting workaholism and hyper-independence from all participants throughout this study.

Research states that a history of trauma may contribute to compassion fatigue and can show up as workaholism (Killian, 2008). Moreover, specific training on professional self-care may prove beneficial for these leaders in preventing future burnout. Leaders who are survivors of trauma may benefit from tools and processes with a self-care component to support their overall well-being in the workplace.

This study uncovered that educational leaders who overcame trauma could also benefit from a social support network in the workplace, particularly from other women who can empathize with their lived experiences. This may help these leaders build trust,

make meaningful connections, and know they are not alone on their journey - ultimately creating interdependent relationships contrary to hyper-independence.

Implications for Practice for At-Risk Girls and Young Women

1. Natural Mentorship

Natural mentoring, also known as mentoring informally, is considered a more effective strategy for mentoring youth at risk of developing unhealthy lifestyle behaviors (Development Services Group, 2019). 100% of participants mentioned mentorship in the interview and shared that it was important to them. Throughout the interview process, the researcher could ascertain that the most impactful mentor relationships discussed were those that were informal. In a multitude of studies, researchers have distinguished that youth who have a natural mentor active in their lives have more positive psychosocial outcomes than those without a natural mentor (DuBois & Silverthorne, 2005; Hurd & Zimmeran, 2014; Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, & Notaro, 2002). Providing opportunities for youth who are faced with trauma to connect with mentors they can relate with authentically may serve as a critical strategy in elevating youth outcomes.

2. Positive Coping Mechanisms

In the view of all participants, coping strategies during childhood into adulthood were essential in navigating and overcoming their trauma. Research suggests that using coping skills may decrease the occurrence of post-traumatic stress disorder for victims of childhood maltreatment (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005). Moreover, girls who have experienced significant exposure to trauma presented with decreased levels of trauma symptoms if they communicated using higher levels of avoidant coping (Elsy et al.,

2013). Although both escapism and avoidant coping have negative connotations as they can also be used harmfully for those coping with trauma, all participants shared healthy strategies in which they used escapism to aid in their survival and navigate very difficult circumstances that were out of their control. Escapism was one of the few ways for participants to gain control and safely manage their stressors. Offering healthy coping methods that provide an escape and promote feelings of safety during challenges may prove successful as an effective strategy in supporting girls and young women experiencing trauma.

Educational leaders may observe increased positive outcomes in students dealing with trauma by encouraging them to adopt healthy coping mechanisms that align with their needs and interests in an effort to help them cope in and outside of school. Participants reported that positive support networks and faith were also essential coping strategies. Encouraging students to join school clubs or pairing them with a mentor may provide additional support, as participants shared that positive support networks were also critical. Participants varied in their experiences with mental health services; some shared that they had engaged in mental health support while others did not. However, all participants expressed their belief in the importance of mental health support during their interview. Research on school-based health centers offering mental health services revealed a connection to improved academic outcomes, school attendance, and preventing school dropout (Larsen et al., 2017). Although not directly explored in this study, providing access to mental health support may benefit youth facing trauma while adding to their support network.

Additionally, this study presented faith as another core theme in coping.

Providing youth access to information about where they can explore their spirituality and beliefs, within the confines of school policies, could offer students another mechanism for navigating the unique challenges trauma brings and overcoming them.

3. Leadership Opportunities

Despite the unique challenges that come with childhood trauma, participants of this study have all ascended into leadership positions. This study's findings reported that 100% of participants operate in multiple leadership frames within the Bolman and Deal Framework. Prior research on leadership frame preference in connection to leadership effectiveness shows that managers frequently use one or two frames (Tan et al., 2015). However, the most effective leaders operate within multiple frames, particularly three or more (Tan et al., 2015). The findings of this study suggest that women leaders who have overcome trauma have a propensity to be effective in leadership roles. Furthermore, offering leadership training and opportunities for at-risk girls and young women may support their leadership growth and development at an early stage.

Recommendations for Future Research

Findings from this study brought forth critical themes addressing the research question directly from the lived experiences of women in leadership who overcame their trauma. Although the research question is addressed, additional questions emerged as the study unfolded. Based on the findings of this study, consideration of study limitations, and the lack of

literature on this phenomenon, several recommendations for future research should be considered:

1. An unintended outcome of this study was that all participants identified as Black, African-American or a Woman of Color (WOC). This demographic was not intentionally targeted but ended up being the population sample. Future research would need to explore the connections between WOC and an increased prevalence of exposure to traumas. Additionally, expanding the research to include other cultural, gender, racial, and ethnic identities to discover consistencies and differences among the perceptions and experiences of the populations and how it translates to leadership in education settings.
2. Phenomenologists are interested in identifying shared elements of individuals' lived experiences with typical sample sizes ranging from 1 to 10 persons (Starks & Brown, 2007). The sample size was intentionally small, with a target range of 4-6, ultimately resulting in 5 participants. For this phenomenological qualitative study, the researcher's goal was to go as in-depth as possible during the interview process to better understand and convey the lived experiences and perceptions of participants with a small sample size. The researcher was intentional about the interview being the only source of data for this study as a way to build trust with participants affirming that their lived experiences are enough and their perceptions are valid.

A larger sample size may look at other data sources, such as speeches, documents, and other articles outside of the interview. Future research with a larger sample size in a quantitative design may uncover additional themes and concepts limited through this study's methodology. A quantitative design will allow constructs, such as resilience and

post-traumatic growth, to be measured with evidence-based assessment tools, allowing more details to unfold within this phenomenon.

3. Finally, a more in-depth investigation into the leadership frames and participants. The results of this study demonstrated that participants are utilizing multiple frames within the Bolman and Deal model, suggesting effectiveness in their leadership. Further exploration into how traumatic experiences may have influenced the results of their multi-frame use will be important. Participants spoke to empathy, adaptability and exhibited survival skills throughout this study. Examining a possible correlation between those characteristics and their ability to utilize multiple frames will be significant in moving this research forward. Additionally, inquiry around how the specific types of trauma they experienced may have influenced their dominant leadership frame.

Conclusion

This phenomenological qualitative study is significant to the field of educational leadership, particularly for establishments serving at-risk student populations. There is limited research on the influence of childhood trauma on women in leadership; therefore, this study explored the perspectives of women leaders in education on how surviving trauma influenced their leadership. This study explored women survivors' lived experiences within the context of trauma risk for girls, resilience, and posttraumatic growth. Participants of this study have experienced various ACES and other forms of trauma that could have taken their life on an entirely different trajectory based on the majority of empirical research. A multitude of research establishes that adverse childhood experiences can be lifelong and may contribute to unstable work histories leading to financial hardships, job instability, and depression throughout life

(CDC, 2022). The women in this study demonstrated the contrary; they not only survived their trauma, they are thriving. They are in critical leadership positions in education establishments serving young people in need. They are successful, respected, and give back to their communities through their found purpose and mission-driven leadership. These overcomers have shown that there are much more possibilities for girls experiencing trauma than the research suggests. At the intersection of opportunity and capability, there is much to gain from overcoming lived experiences involving trauma, as it may serve as a catalyst for personal and professional growth and success (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Through their courage and sharing their story of trauma to triumph, they can change the narrative that childhood trauma is perpetually linked to adverse outcomes for women. They have proven that it is possible to overcome the intersectionality of trauma, poverty, abuse, parentification, and other traumas. Despite their past traumas, the women in this study went on to live purposeful lives defined by hope, possibility, and their personal views of success. The intent of the researcher is to share the lessons discovered from this research to propose a transformational theory suggesting that an individual's unique life experiences can significantly influence leadership.

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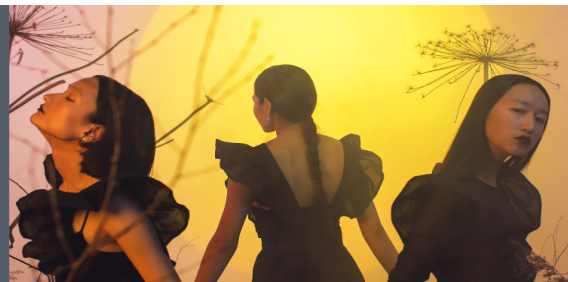
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Appendix A - Study Overview

Triumph after Trauma in Leadership

PROSPECTIVE
PARTICIPANT
STUDY OVERVIEW



You are requested to participate in a research study entitled "Triumph after Trauma: A Phenomenological Exploration into Women Survivor's Perceptions of the Influence of Trauma on their Leadership" through the University of North Florida College of Education and Human Services. The objective of this study is to examine how trauma may influence the leadership trajectories, characteristics and perceptions of women survivors. Participation in this research study will require a 2-4 hour time commitment. During this time, I will ask you to participate in two interviews in the setting of your choice. In the first interview, questions will be about your experiences with trauma. The second interview will focus on your leadership traits and point of view as a leader in an educational organization. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may choose to stop participating at any point without retribution. You may refuse to answer any question you choose at any point during the study.

With your permission, I would like to record and transcribe the conversation to ensure accuracy. You will be invited to ensure accuracy by reviewing the transcription with the ability to redact information as you see fit. Although the findings of this study may be published, no information that can identify you will be included.

The risks of participation in this research include possible feelings of discomfort while recounting your lived experiences. The potential advantages of participation in this study are 1. You will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences as someone who has overcome trauma and risen to leadership. This experience may support you in your leadership by bringing awareness of your dominant leadership frame and opportunities for potential growth. 2. An opportunity to share your unique lived experiences as a way to inspire others who have experienced trauma through your leadership success. Finally, your participation may support other leaders who have had a similar lived experience and are looking for alternative narratives to support their leadership trajectory.

If you are interested in being interviewed as a part of this research, please contact:

Natalya Bannister Roby
n01422429@unf.edu
321-695-7378
Doctoral Candidate
College of Education and Human Services University of North Florida

Appendix B - Informed Consent to Participate in Research

1. You are volunteering to participate in a research study titled "Triumph after Trauma: A Phenomenological Exploration into Women Survivors' Perceptions of the Influence of Trauma on their Leadership" through the University of North Florida College of Education and Human Services lead by doctoral candidate, Natalya Bannister Roby.
2. By agreeing to participate, you will be asked to complete: (1) two interviews scheduled at a time and in a location of your choice, including a virtual Zoom option with your choice to have the camera off or on. Interviews are expected to be approximately sixty to ninety minutes, with a target start date of May 31, 2023, upon IRB approval. You are also being asked for your permission to record this interview for transcription and data collection purposes.
3. This study will involve minimal risk. The probability of harm and discomfort will not be greater than your daily life encounters. Risks may include emotional discomfort from answering interview questions.
4. You will not directly benefit from participating in this study. Indirect benefits will include promoting our understanding of how childhood trauma may influence the leadership of women survivors and the opportunity to support leaders who have had similar lived experiences and are looking for alternative narratives to support their leadership trajectory.
5. There are no alternative procedures.
6. Although the findings of this study may be published, no information that can identify you will be included.
7. There is no compensation for your participation in this study.
8. Questions concerning this research may be addressed to Natalya Bannister Roby, at 321-695-7378. If you have concerns regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of North Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB) by email at irb@unf.edu or by phone at 904-620-2498

9. No service of any kind to which you are otherwise entitled will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to “not participate” in the study.

10. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study. If you choose to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with the University of North Florida or any other participating institutions or agencies.

11. At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

Participant Name Print _____

Participant Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix C - Interview Protocol

1. How do you define trauma?
2. Based on your definition of trauma, what factors and/or experiences from your childhood/youth do you feel shaped the person you are today?
3. In what ways did those experiences affect or shape you?
4. How, if at all, did these experiences influence your leadership trajectory, your leadership presence and/or how you lead others?
5. How would you define “overcomer” or “survivor” of trauma?
6. Can you point to any positive characteristics or outcomes that have come as a result of the challenges you have experienced?
7. Have your experiences influenced your career path?
 - a. Do you think your experiences have supported your effectiveness in an educational organization?
 - b. What can you link from your experiences with overcoming challenges or trauma to your successful outcomes as a leader?
 - c. Do you leverage tools or skills you may have gained from overcoming trauma into your leadership, if any?
8. If you could tell me some of the experiences that have positively impacted your leadership, if any, what would they be?
9. Do you believe that overcoming trauma, based on your personal definition, can bring forth positive characteristics in a person or leader?

- a. How do you leverage those characteristics with those you lead?
10. What else would you like to share with me that you have not already shared?

Appendix D - Leadership Frames

Corresponding Leadership Frames to Bolman and Deal's Leadership Frame Typology

Derived and modified; (Tan, et al., 2015)

1. How would you describe an effective leader?
2. What would you consider to be your leadership strengths?
3. How do you see leadership in the areas of rules, roles, goals, and policies? (Structural)
4. Are human relationships an important feature in your leadership? (Human Resource)
5. How do you handle power and conflict within the scope of your leadership? (Political)
6. How important are culture and celebration in your leadership? (Symbolic)

Appendix E - Criteria for coding leadership frame responses

Derived; (Tan, et al., 2015)

Leadership Frame	Frame-related keywords
Structural	Goals, rules, roles, policies, strategy, clear, logical thinking, accountability, attention to detail, clear structure, chain of command, analytical, technical, clear decisions
Human resource	Relationships, needs, empowerment, support, sensitive, concern for others, builds trust, open, collaborative, participative, helpful, responsive, receptive to ideas and input, recognition for good work, good interpersonal skills, good listener, coach and develop people, caring
Political	Power, conflict, influence or manipulate others, ability to mobilize people and resources, skillful and shrewd negotiator, persuasive, anticipates and deals with organizational conflict, gets support from people in power, strong support base, succeeds in conflicts, strong alliances, tough, aggressive
Symbolic	Culture, rituals, ceremonies, symbols, story-telling, celebrations, able to excite and motivate, inspirational, energize and inspire, charismatic, imaginative, creative, sense of mission, generates enthusiasm, generates loyalty