

A Qualitative Study on the Leadership Traits of People with Substance Use Disorder

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Abstract

This study explores the leadership traits held by people in addiction and recovery. The research question sought to discover what leadership traits are found both in leaders and those facing drug and alcohol addiction, and in recovery from addiction. A qualitative methodology was used which included semi-structured interviews, observations, and a focus group which allowed the researcher to conduct thematic coding analysis. The participants came from diverse backgrounds and included participants from multiple regions across the United States. Leadership was defined as having elements of both transformational leadership and authentic leadership dimensions.

The findings revealed that people in addiction possess numerous leadership traits which position them for effective leadership and are further developed during their journey into recovery. The top three traits which emerged from the data indicate that people in recovery from addiction are authentic, tenacious, and empathetic. Additionally, those in recovery have strong abilities to empower and inspire others and demonstrate posttraumatic growth which helps establish significant bonds of trust and commitment among followers.

The purpose of this study is to hopefully change how people view addiction. Identifying the hidden treasures of leadership which are present in those struggling in addiction could illuminate aligning purpose with recovery efforts. This would not only advance treatment opportunities, but greatly assist organizations which need strong leadership. People with substance use disorder have all the right tools to become effective leaders, and this understanding can help mitigate the stigma associated with addiction and paint it in a more positive light.

Keywords: Addiction; Addiction research; Adaptability; Authentic leadership; Completing the task; Determination; Post-traumatic growth; Recovery; Resilience; Transformational leadership; Willingness to take risk

Introduction

Addiction is an epidemic that is destroying lives and tearing apart families and communities. While there are intensive efforts being devoted to prevention and treatment, the problem appears to be getting worse. The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids states that “Heroin and other opioids are ravaging communities across America. Deaths from heroin increased 328 percent between 2010 and 2015, and drug deaths from fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are now seeing a sharp rise as well” [1]. The odds of recovering from drug addiction are low, with an average of 91% of relapse occurring amongst those in recovery from opiate addiction [2]. The situation is critical, but the chances for remaining in recovery are improved when purpose and hope is introduced to the individual in the form of relationships and career [2].

Addiction is often viewed as being merely a character deficit, with no redeemable qualities present for positive societal impact. This qualitative study will explore how people struggling in addiction have personality traits, experiences, and behaviors that make them great leaders. The journey from addiction to leadership can uncover these qualities and create resilient and humble people that have the potential to positively impact any organization or business. While there is a paucity of literature on the topic of how addicts can make great leaders, there is ample research into how resiliency, gratitude, completion of tasks, and posttraumatic growth, for example, are qualities in both addiction and leadership.

This study examines how qualities such as resiliency, gratitude, completion of tasks, persistence in the pursuit of goals, adaptability, and posttraumatic growth are found in addiction and can also be the foundation for leadership. The journey through addiction, often seen

as a failure by society, can be a formative leadership experience for the addict. “Superbosses, of course, don’t think about failure the way most people do. Rather, they are masters at reframing failure as an opportunity in disguise” [3]. The focus of this study is to gain a better understanding of how the driving forces of addiction can become the building blocks for something beautiful and meaningful.

The stigma surrounding addiction presents itself as a barrier for those in recovery of securing meaningful employment and finding purpose. Identifying potential leadership qualities within those suffering from addiction would help lessen the stigma and create a pathway for those in recovery to flourish in a community that supports and encourages their participation and unique contributions. Therefore, the understanding that people struggling with substance use disorder can positively contribute to society is a needed area of study to advance not only the potential of the individual but also expand the recruiting ground for organizations seeking candidates for leadership.

Discussion of Relevant Literature

The journey through addiction and recovery can be viewed as a crucible experience that forms and extracts unique characteristics that

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can be incredibly beneficial. The prediction of this study suggests that people struggling with addiction have personality traits that make them good leaders. The journey from addiction to leadership can uncover these inherent qualities and create resilient and humble people that have the potential to positively impact any organization or business. Resiliency, gratitude, completion of task, and posttraumatic growth are factors in both addiction and leadership.

Janson [4] explored how events in people's lives help develop them into leaders. These events or experiences are termed leadership formative experiences (LFE). Addiction can be determined as a leadership transformative experience, as the journey from addiction to recovery often results in paradigm shifts which leads individuals to be focused on the needs of others as opposed to selfish motives. Painful events in life can help shape their views and behaviors, which often translate into heightened gratitude, commitment, and an appropriate assessment of life's priorities [4]. These leadership formative experiences, such as addiction, help individuals to be able to relate to others on a more personal level. This point of empathetic connection helps create a bond in which community is strengthened and resilience amid adversity emerges.

Similarly, Haroosh and Freedman [5] posited how recovery from addiction can be classified as a posttraumatic growth experience. Posttraumatic growth can occur after people suffer through tragic events in life, but through social support, spiritual development, and reprioritization techniques, experience positive life change. Their study found that posttraumatic growth occurs most often in those who participate in a 12-step program and receive significant social support. Recovery from addiction can be classified as a leadership formative experience due to the posttraumatic growth that often occurs within those who focus on positive life change and share their experiences with others.

Tebes, et al., [6] carried out a mixed methods study which explores how cognitive transformation from traumatic events can predict levels of resilience. Their study revealed that cognitive transformation predicts grief and trauma resolution. The theoretical implication from their study is that traumatic experiences can be indicative of a protective process when risk trajectory is redirected towards enhanced adaptation. The authors suggested that this resilience framework could be closely linked to a recovery mindset.

Persistence in the pursuit of goals is another characteristic which holds relevance to the present study. Ntoumanis, et al., [7] composed multimethod study that examined the effect of the type of motivation upon an individual's persistence in the pursuit of goals. The findings indicated that when a person is motivated by autonomous (based on personal interest, enjoyment, or perceived importance) factors, they are more likely to remain committed to achieving difficult goals. When motivation is based upon factors which are controlled (driven by internal or external pressure, related to social approval), commitment to pursuing difficult goals is comparatively diminished. For those in addiction, the motivation to obtain goals is often driven by internal desire. This can be a good quality when applied to business and organizational goals.

Elkington and Breen [8] examined how resilience in the presence of adversity is developed within business leaders. Specifically, the authors explored how reflection and consciousness plays a vital role in the development of resilience for those in leadership. This was a qualitative study which selected 15 male and female business leaders across multiple business and nonprofit sectors. The methodology

involved in-depth interviews, observations and field notes to identify emerging themes and strengthen validity. The findings indicate that how participants mentally process the adversity they face results in positive leadership development. Their perspective to the 'crucible moment' of adversity in life was viewed with realism and optimism [8]. This enabled them to become more collaborative leaders and taught them how to handle any future adversity they faced with resiliency.

While there is a paucity of research directly correlating addiction and leadership, these studies suggest the journey through addiction can help develop leadership skills which can then be appropriately applied in recovery for constructive purposes. This present study will add to the body of knowledge. The ability of people in recovery from addiction to lead with authenticity enables them to earn the respect of others while developing a sense of trust and optimism which is critical in effective leadership. Understanding this potential unlocks high levels of achievement in the person recovering from addiction, as well as allowing companies to identify those future leaders which will help them reach unprecedented success.

Research Question

The aim of this study is to discover what leadership capabilities people in addiction possess. The methodology consists of several interviews, observations, and a focus group with participants to help discover and identify what, if any, characteristics for leadership are often present in those battling addiction. These research questions guided the focus of this study to better understand how people in addiction and recovery have leadership traits.

The research question for this study is, 'do people with substance use disorder possess leadership competencies?' To help answer this question the study first explored the characteristics of those with substance use disorder and then identified characteristics often found in successful leadership. Finally, these sets of traits were compared to see if any were shared by both groups.

Do people with substance use disorder have important characteristics that could make them great leaders?

Conceptual framework

This study looks at leadership through the lens of transformative and authentic leadership theories. The dimensions of each theory are explored which include traits such as adaptability, willingness to take risks, ability to inspire others, self-awareness, and relational transparency. In addition to the traits of addictive behavior which will be examined, addiction will be framed as a posttraumatic growth and leadership formative experience. These concepts are based upon the work by Janson [4] and Haroosh and Freedman [5].

The conceptual framework allows this study to assess what qualities are commonly exhibited in addiction, as well as in leadership. Authentic and transformative leadership theories will provide the interpretive lens for what defines a great leader. The data will be analyzed to determine what themes emerge and what qualities are shared between people in addiction and leaders.

Transformative Leadership Theory [9] and Authentic Leadership Theory [10] are the theoretical foundation from which leadership is defined and assessed. James Downton and James MacGregor Burns were the first to formally introduce, define, and develop transformative leadership [9]. According to Burns [9], transformational leaders 'inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to work toward common goals.' Bernard M. Bass and Ronald Riggio

then expanded upon Burns' original ideas to develop Transformational Leadership Theory [11]. The other theoretical lens for understanding leadership will be Authentic Leadership Theory, which was developed by Bill George in 2003 [10]. The four dimensions of Authentic Leadership Theory are self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective [10]. These two theories serve as the lens for which leadership qualities will be identified and explored throughout the study.

Definition of Key Terms

Adaptability: The capacity to adjust to uncertainty or difficult situations. Often observed in individuals when unexpected circumstances arise, which is demonstrated by the ability to respond in a positive and persistent manner.

Addiction: Addiction is characterized by inability to consistently abstain, impairment in behavioral control, craving, diminished recognition of significant problems with one's behaviors and interpersonal relationships, and a dysfunctional emotional response. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death [12].

Authentic leadership: Authentic leadership is an approach to leadership that emphasizes building the leader's legitimacy through honest relationships with followers which value their input and are built on an ethical foundation. Authentic leadership theory advanced primarily through the work of Bill George [10].

Completing the task: The ability of an individual to keep focus on the goal at hand, and not abandoning the goal amid difficulty.

Determination: Occurs when commitment to achieving a goal is not aborted or abandoned by distraction or fatigue.

Posttraumatic growth: The personal development which occurs as result of living through a traumatic experience. This is the positive psychological change experienced as result of adversity [13].

Recovery: A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential [2].

Resilience: The capacity to quickly recover from difficulties. Can often be referred to as 'toughness' or 'grit'.

Transformational leadership: This is the type of leadership which causes positive change in the lives of others. This type of leadership enhances motivation, morale, and performance, and develops other followers into leaders. Some of the mechanisms involved include connecting the follower's sense of identify and self to the mission of the organization; being a role model for others; inspiring others; and helping others to achieve their full potential through understanding their strengths and weaknesses. The theory was first presented by James MacGregor Burns [9].

Willingness to take risk: The inclination of an individual to make a decision, initiate an action or set out on a journey which forsakes comfort and security in hopes of achieving a greater reward.

Methodology

This qualitative study focuses on understanding how people with substance use disorder have characteristics that are shared by successful leaders. The methodology includes data collected from

interviews, observations, a focus group, and field notes. The questions in the interviews were open-ended which allowed the participants to describe their experiences in their own words. The questions also allowed and supported the exploration of how participants view their styles of leadership, and what role the journey from addiction to recovery played in their personal and professional development. The observations were conducted in the leadership settings of two participants, with the researcher serving as an active observer. The focus group included clients in a residential treatment facility that demonstrated leadership ability while in the program. The interviews, observations, and field notes were all used to triangulate the data for validity and reliability purposes.

Thematic coding was used to help identify categories and emerging themes from the data which was collected. Analysis was then carried out to discover what themes emerged and to help identify the shared characteristics found within addiction and leadership. This approach to inquiry helped answer the research questions through identifying what traits are commonly found within both groups.

Figure displays the relationship between addiction and leadership, focusing on the commonly shared characteristics of each. As pointed out in the literature review, post-traumatic growth and authenticity are traits which are developed along the journey from addiction to recovery and become valuable leadership qualities [5]. These two traits, along with several other qualities, emerged early in the research. Completing the task, persistence in the pursuit of goals, resilience, determination, adaptability, willingness to take risks and authenticity are some other traits which are shared by people with substance use disorder and leaders (Figure 1).

Transformational leadership theory and authentic leadership theory are the framework this study uses to identify qualifying leadership skills. Transformative leaders are known as being adaptive and inspirational, while having an ability to take on risks that others would typically avoid [9]. People in recovery from addiction have learned to adapt through difficult circumstances, naturally pursue risks, and inspire others through their journey. This style of leadership has been shown to be effective in multiple contexts. Participants described their ability to connect on a deep relational level with their followers and help them achieve their potential through inspiration, motivation, and empowerment.

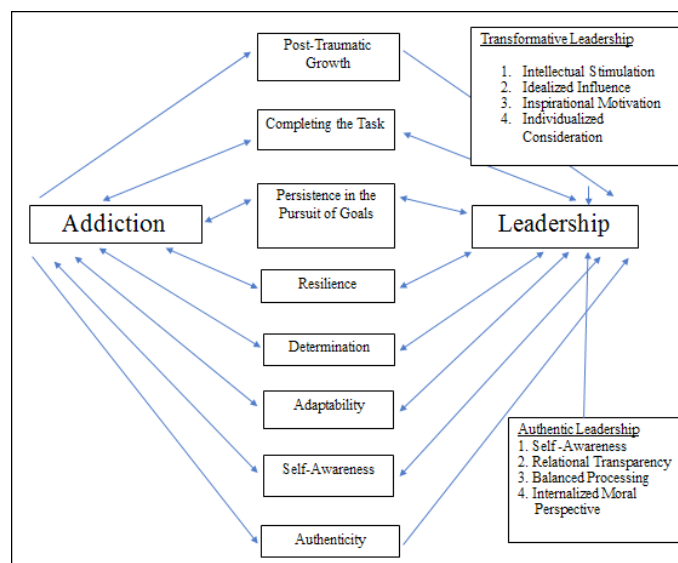


Figure 1: Details the conceptual framework for this study.

Authentic leadership has four dimensions which mark some of the characteristics of those with, or in recovery from, substance use disorder. Self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective are all skills in which people in recovery typically possess as part of their progression through addictive behavior and into sobriety. Self-awareness and relational transparency appeared frequently in the data, with balanced processing and internalized moral perspective appearing less frequently (Table 1).

This concept map of Figure 1 displays the relationship between addiction and leadership, focusing on the commonly shared characteristics of each, and serves as a model for analysis. The traits identified in the model were built upon the literature and hypothesis of the study. The dimensions of transformative and authentic leadership are shown in the upper and lower boxed sections to the right, and qualities shared by people in addiction and leadership are highlighted in the middle row.

Sample and sampling procedures

Participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling. Most of the 15 participants selected have had an experience with addiction and are now in active recovery. Included in the sample are leaders of businesses, an addiction psychiatrist and neuroscientist, leaders of non-profit organizations, successful authors and church leaders, and clients at a residential treatment facility. Four of the participants are highly successful CEOs in active recovery from addiction and one of the participants is a 3-time New York Times bestselling author and Lutheran pastor. Another participant gave a Ted Talk which was viewed by over 2 million people and authored a book detailing his journey from addiction to leadership. Additionally, one of the participants is an Emmy-winning and four-time James Beard Award-winning TV personality, chef, writer, and social justice advocate.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this study were interviews, observations, field notes, and a focus group. The interviews consisted of five questions which were designed to elicit a detailed response to the participant's experiences. Those questions will include the following:

1. Please describe your journey through addiction.
2. What led you to recovery?
3. Tell me about your leadership style.
4. Do you see any benefits to companies hiring former addicts to serve in leadership roles? Do you see any drawbacks?

Table 1: Map onto the eight dimensions of authentic and transformative leadership theories.

Authentic and Transformative Leadership Dimensions	Associated Traits of Individuals with Substance Use Disorders
Self-Awareness	Gratitude, Humility, Adaptability, Authenticity, Spirituality
Internalized Moral Perspective	Gratitude, Humility, Spirituality
Balanced Processing	Humility, Adaptability
Relational Transparency	Gratitude, Humility, Spirituality
Idealized Influence	Goal-Oriented, Resilience, Persistence, Humility, Determination
Inspirational Motivation	Resilience, Persistence, Humility, Determination, Spirituality
Intellectual Stimulation	Goal-Oriented, Adaptability
Individualized Consideration	Gratitude, Humility, Spirituality

5. What else would you like for others to understand about how addiction can be seen in a positive light?

Observations were conducted at a nonprofit organization in Kentucky which has a large recovery ministry. The leader of that ministry, who was also interviewed as part of the participant pool, was observed while carrying out weekly duties which included teaching both large and small groups, interacting with members and visitors, and strategic planning for ministry effectiveness. Field notes were taken of what was observed as the participant fulfilled her duties in that setting. This allowed the qualities of leadership to be displayed, noted, and later analyzed.

The focus group consisted of the participants which are clients at Isaiah House treatment facility. The focus group included 4 residents which are at least six months into treatment and have shown leadership ability within the program. Members of the focus group were interviewed prior to their participation in the group to help provide another form of data collection. The questions for the focus group were crafted to let the participants speak in depth about their experiences in addiction and how they perceive themselves as potential leaders. Data from the focus groups were recorded with an audio recorder and notes taken to help analyze the data collected.

Data analysis

The interviews were recorded then transcribed so that the data could be viewed, interpreted, and analyzed. The words and phrases of the participants were coded into various categories as they emerged. The initial codes named were personality traits, experiences, and character traits. The data collected could then be categorized into those three areas, with the personality traits referring to the personal qualities of the participants, and character traits referring to the moral principles of the participant.

The diagram below represents the coding procedures for this study. The final codes categorized were self-leadership, empathetic and inspirational, and tenacity. There were two key themes which were identified as marking the lives of the participants: Authentic and Transformative. Figure 2 illustrates the data analysis technique which will be used (Figure 2).

Findings

The data from the research was first organized into 21 thematic codes which were then grouped into eight themes which represent the characteristics of the participant's leadership styles. Then, those themes were analyzed to see if they map onto the eight dimensions of transformative and authentic leadership theories. This approach helps answer the research questions.

Theme 1: Authenticity

The theme which emerged most frequently was authenticity. This is characterized when a person is being true to themselves and is transparent about their strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. Put simply, they behave consistently with what they say, value, and believe. Authenticity was identified 21 times in the data collection process by 11 of the 14 participants. The codes which were categorized into the theme of authenticity were integrity and transparency.

Authenticity was central to the participants in their journey in recovery and approaches to leadership. It also seems that this trait wasn't present during active addiction for the participants but became an essential virtue during recovery. "It's being vulnerable when I am

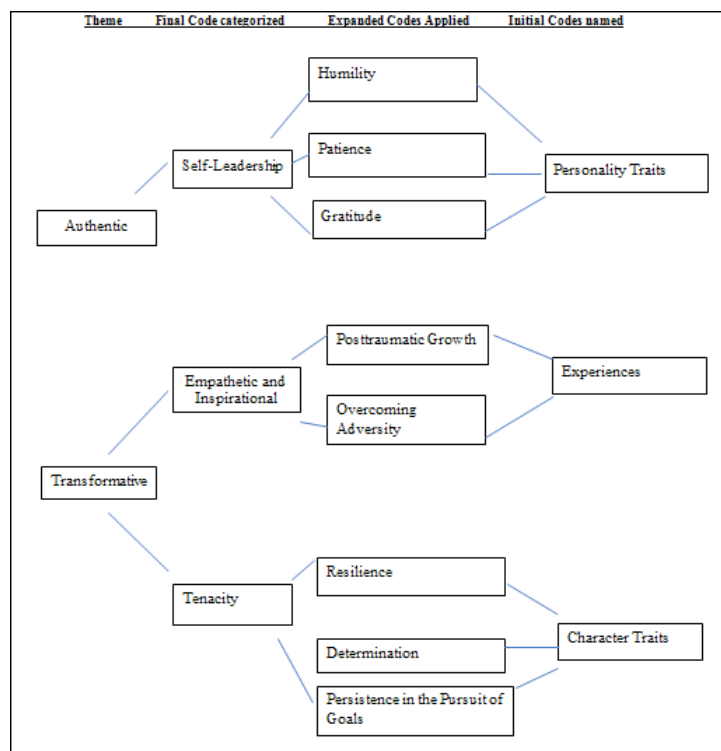


Figure 2: Figure illustrates the data analysis technique which will be used.

scared in a business negotiation, as opposed to trying to lie, to get what I want. All those sorts of things are what recovery has taught me’ (Participant 3). This characteristic translates well from recovery into leadership, especially considering the countless moral failures that have happened in recent years. “But those of us in recovery are conditioned to lead without a mask. And that’s what creates great leadership. It’s about more than balance sheets. It’s about life” (Participant 4).

Through the framework of transformative and authentic leadership, people that lead with honesty and truthfulness earn more trust and commitment from their followers. “I’ll say everybody in this room has somebody that they trust the most and it’s not their boss. It’s the person that has showed them their humanity because we do not want to get kicked out of the tribe. Addiction shows us our humanity” (Participant 2). This insight brings to attention how people that have battled addiction can develop strong relationships through allowing others to identify with them on a personal level. That identification creates a sense of relatability and respect, which results in greater cooperation and trust.

Theme 2: Tenacity (Resilience, Persistence, Adaptability)

Tenacity is a theme which included the codes of resilience, persistence, and adaptability. It was identified 21 times as well in the data and was highlighted by nine of the participants. The journey from addiction to recovery involves adapting to difficult circumstances but not being overwhelmed or undone by them. The constant pressure of facing difficulties creates a buoyancy of spirit which is a highly effective and desirable leadership tool.

“I think people in recovery have the tenacity to work through almost any adversity. Whatever I had to do to get high in addiction, I would do it. I was going to play the part to get what I wanted or needed. So, the tenacity, the power to stick to it, is almost ingrained in every addict I’ve ever met, and they don’t know it yet” (Participant 1). This

resolve was mentioned in some way by nearly every participant and is a powerful tool in the toolkit of any leader. The capability to face all struggles with a resolve to preserve is a competency which many in recovery carry.

Theme 3: Empathy

The theme which was ranked third in frequency was empathy. It was identified 17 times in the data and was highlighted by six participants. Empathy is characterized by the ability to connect with those struggling. It is more than just feeling sympathy for someone but is marked by personal connection to the one suffering. The participants mentioned this as an ability they have cultivated through their own journey through addiction.

“The fact that at the end of the day, companies large and small are, are at their best when their human capital is healthy. When their human capital is nurtured and embraced, they are positioned for success. And there’s no better way to get there than having an empathetic leader” (Participant 8). When leaders care about their followers a heightened sense well-being is created which leads to greater morale and resiliency. “It doesn’t mean you tolerate other people’s shortcomings, but it means you understand their shortcomings and you are willing to help them overcome them, including your own” (Participant 5).

Theme 4: Empowering others

Empowering others was characterized as an important theme which included the codes of treatment and acceptance of others. “You have to treat people with dignity and respect. Love and tolerance of others is our code in recovery” (Participant 5). This theme appeared 16 times in the data and was mentioned by five of the participants. Several participants communicated that they must keep their recovery and accountability central to their lives to remain sober, and this is best carried out when focusing on the needs of others. “I run a production

company that currently has three shows on television, I own a hospitality company, a marketing company, and at the end of the day it's all about relationships with people" (Participant 8).

Theme 5: Self-awareness

The next theme which was emerged most frequently was self-awareness. It was mentioned 14 times and by three of the six participants. Self-awareness is described as conscious of one's own character, feelings, motives, and desires. The codes which were categorized into the theme of self-awareness were self-leadership, spirituality, accountability, surrender adherence, and intentionality.

"People in recovery must be self-aware and accountable. I see that as a blessing because it makes us better people. So, if you tell me that I could have a whole staff of people who are focused on getting better, a better version of themselves daily, I'm going to ask you how I can find more" (Participant 4). People in recovery from addiction are taught through various 12-step groups, sponsors, and support groups that they should always be doing a fearless moral inventory of themselves every day.

Theme 6: Posttraumatic growth

Several of the participants mentioned how they were able to be grow personally, professionally, and spiritually through the journey from addiction into recovery. It was highlighted 11 times, mentioned by seven of the participants across all three instruments. This characteristic can take many forms and can also be experienced as resiliency, humility, social intelligence, being focused on others above self, empathy, and inspiration. "Our normal has been flipped upside down recently, but for the person that has come through addiction; their world has always been flipped upside down. They are used to this and know how to thrive in those environments" (Participant 2).

Posttraumatic growth enabled the participants to be creative and find solutions to problems in business and life. This perspective is advantageous in leadership when organizations face unique problems which require innovative solutions and leaders which are relatable to their followers. "When people go through addiction, which includes tremendous trials and devastating setbacks, they are then able to relate with other team members on a level that inspires, encourages, and motivates" (Participant 1).

Theme 7: Humility

Humility repeatedly emerged as a theme which included the codes of compassion, understanding, and surrender adherence. "I think being an addict conditioned me to surrender to something that can make my life better and become really good at following its process" (Participant 2). "You have to keep your failure fresh. That way you are connected to your weaknesses while simultaneously helping others develop strengths in those same areas" (Participant 9). This theme appeared in the data nine times by 11 participants.

Theme 8: Self-leadership (Leading by example)

A central attribute personified by all participants was self-leadership. It emerged eight times from four participants and was evident in all three instruments. "Truly great leadership invites others to walk the journey with you. It's not about 'do what I say but do as I do.' That's what makes addicts the best leaders. We don't lead from having the answers, we lead from having a process for leading ourselves" (Participant 1). "We have a purpose now. It's why we get up every day. We've been through hell and now we've come out the other side. We survived a living death and we're entirely grateful and humble because of our journey. Now, we just want to share this with others, and it starts with leading ourselves" (Participant 6) (Table 2).

Table 2: Thematic Coding Results - Leadership Traits found in Addiction.

Theme	Coded Quotes	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10	Participant 11	Observations	Focus Group (4)
Authenticity	21	0 of 9	2 of 12	9 of 19	2 of 18	1 of 17	0 of 5	1 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	2 of 6	2 of 6	2 of 19	0 of 5
Tenacity (Resilience and Persistence)	21	3 of 9	1 of 12	5 of 19	0 of 18	2 of 17	2 of 5	3 of 24	1 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	1 of 6	3 of 19	0 of 5
Empathy	17	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	5 of 18	7 of 17	1 of 5	0 of 24	0 of 10	1 of 9	1 of 6	0 of 6	2 of 19	0 of 5
Empowering Others	16	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	0 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	7 of 24	3 of 10	2 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	3 of 19	1 of 5
Self-Awareness	14	0 of 9	4 of 12	0 of 19	4 of 18	2 of 17	0 of 5	0 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	3 of 19	1 of 5
Posttraumatic Growth	11	1 of 9	1 of 12	0 of 19	0 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	2 of 24	0 of 10	2 of 9	1 of 6	0 of 6	2 of 19	2 of 5
Humility	9	0 of 9	0 of 12	1 of 19	1 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	2 of 24	1 of 10	1 of 9	2 of 6	0 of 6	0 of 19	1 of 5
Self-Leadership/ Leading by Example	8	0 of 9	0 of 12	2 of 19	0 of 18	1 of 17	0 of 5	0 of 24	2 of 10	3 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	0 of 19	0 of 5
Motivation	5	0 of 9	0 of 12	2 of 19	0 of 18	0 of 17	1 of 5	0 of 24	1 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	1 of 6	0 of 19	0 of 5
Spirituality	5	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	0 of 18	1 of 17	0 of 5	3 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	1 of 19	0 of 5
Creativity	4	1 of 9	2 of 12	0 of 19	0 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	0 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	1 of 6	0 of 19	0 of 5
Integrity	4	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	1 of 18	1 of 17	0 of 5	0 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	1 of 6	1 of 19	0 of 5
Accountability	3	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	2 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	1 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	0 of 19	0 of 5
Manipulation/ Persuasion	3	2 of 9	1 of 12	0 of 19	0 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	0 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	0 of 19	0 of 5
Patience	3	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	1 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	1 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	1 of 19	0 of 5
Breaking the Rules	2	0 of 9	1 of 12	0 of 19	0 of 18	0 of 17	1 of 5	0 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	0 of 19	0 of 5
Intentionality	2	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	2 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	0 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	0 of 19	0 of 5
Making Tough Decisions	2	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	0 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	2 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	0 of 19	0 of 5
Steadfast Vision	2	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	0 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	1 of 24	1 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	0 of 19	0 of 5
Emotional Intelligence	1	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	0 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	0 of 24	1 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	0 of 19	0 of 5
Gratitude	1	0 of 9	0 of 12	0 of 19	0 of 18	0 of 17	0 of 5	0 of 24	0 of 10	0 of 9	0 of 6	0 of 6	1 of 19	0 of 5

Table 2 represents all 21 codes which emerged from the data, which were condensed down into the eight themes previously mentioned. Figure 3 represents the frequency distribution of coded themes ranked in percentages, and Figure 4 presents the thematic findings in graph form (Figures 3 and 4).

Research Themes and Associated Leadership Dimensions

The themes identified from the data were then analyzed to see if they answer the research question and support the study's hypothesis. The traits which were identified provided sufficient information on the characteristics of those in addiction and recovery. Next, these traits were then examined through the dimensions of transformative and authentic leadership.

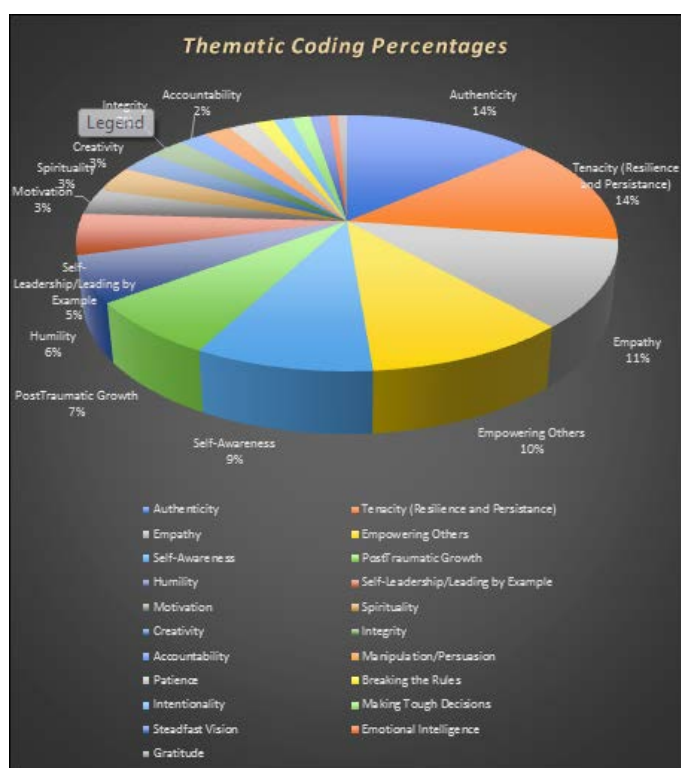


Figure 3: Frequency Distribution of Coded Themes.

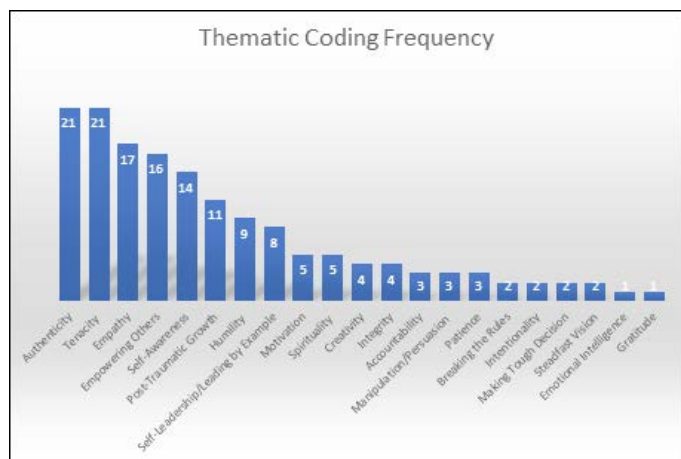


Figure 4: Leadership Traits found in Addiction (Ranked by Theme).

Self-Awareness: The ability to understand and recognize personal strengths and weaknesses.

Associated codes and themes: Authenticity, Self-Awareness, Gratitude, Self-Leadership, Accountability, Posttraumatic Growth, Humility, Spirituality.

Internalized moral perspective: This is a commitment to values and is manifested as a high level of consistency between words and behavior. Also, this is represented by a commitment to one's own conviction to adhere to their values and not let outside pressure compromise their beliefs and actions.

Associated codes and themes: Persistence, Tenacity, Intentionality, Integrity.

Balanced Processing: The pattern of decision-making which considers all interests and parties that would be affected. This attribute is marked by being as fair as possible towards everyone on the team.

Associated codes and themes: Empathy, Integrity, Humility.

Relational Transparency: This is demonstrated by accepting critique, being vulnerable, and open about weaknesses.

Associated codes and themes: Authenticity, Humility, Patience.

Idealized Influence: Often this dimension is also referred to as charisma. This can be defined as a person that is inspirational and motivational and includes when a person places the good of others above own self-interests. **Associated codes and themes:** Persistence, Resilience, Motivation, Tenacity.

Inspirational Motivation: This is exuded when a leader places high value on others, is honest, and has integrity. **Associated codes and themes:** Authenticity, Empathy, Persistence, Creativity, Motivation.

Intellectual Stimulation: The ability to create a vision to help motivate others and communicate a clear sense of purpose and mission.

Associated codes and themes: Creativity, Breaking the rules.

Individualized Consideration: This is marked by individual attention given from the leader to the follower. It is personal and includes great listening and attentive skills.

Associated codes and themes: Empathy, Integrity, Humility, Patience, Spirituality (Table 3).

Table 3: Leadership Dimensions, Corresponding Codes and Themes.

Leadership Dimensions	Corresponding Codes and Themes
Self-Awareness	Authenticity, Self-Awareness, Gratitude, Self-Leadership, Self-Leadership, Accountability, Posttraumatic Growth, Humility, Spirituality
Internalized Moral Perspective	Persistence, Tenacity, Intentionality, Integrity
Balanced Processing	Empathy, Integrity, Humility
Relational Transparency	Authenticity, Humility, Humility
Idealized Influence	Persistence, Resilience, Motivation, Tenacity
Inspirational Motivation	Authenticity, Empathy, Persistence, Creativity, Motivation
Intellectual Stimulation	Creativity, Breaking the Rules
Individualized Consideration	Empathy, Integrity, Humility, Spirituality

Discussion

Authenticity

People in recovery from addiction have shown characteristics of authenticity as a method for sobriety. This aspect of their journey is

also a desired leadership trait according to Authentic Leadership Theory. Authentic leaders are open and honest and have a willingness to be transparent and vulnerable. This characteristic creates trust and respect from followers and increases their resolve to accomplish the goals set before them. Authenticity seems to develop more so during the recovery phase of addiction as it is vital to maintaining long-term sobriety.

Also, for those in recovery being authentic and humble are the primary tools for effective recovery and avoiding a return to old lifestyle patterns. This focus is incredibly beneficial for those leading an organization since it requires continual assessment of interpersonal relations and fosters trust through accountability. When the goal is to be a better version of yourself each day, this carries over from those leaders into the lives of everyone on the team. This theme appeared frequently among the participants in this study.

Tenacity

The trait which captures the ability of people in recovery to get back up when knocked down, to press forward against difficult obstacles, and approach life with fierceness and grit is labeled as tenacity in this study. Several participants mentioned how resiliency, persistence, and adaptability has played a central role in their lives and allowed them to not give up even when they had previously failed. "In active addiction we tried to control everything around us, the environment, our biology, and the chemistry of our brains. From that we developed a tremendous ability to focus on what needs to get done and a willingness to do whatever it takes to see something through to completion. This manifested itself first very poorly for me in addiction, but in recovery it was like a gift which everyone around me benefited from" (Participant 2). The resolve to go the extra mile, to not give up or give in, and to finish what is started is found in abundance in people in recovery. This attribute is often cultivated in recovery from addiction, and those that have gone down that journey are able to offer it in abundance to those around them.

Empathy

People in addiction and recovery from addiction are generally able to relate to others well. Participants in this study noted that there is a sense of appreciation for those experiences in life which are marked by suffering and pain yet can lead to personal growth. The ability of people in recovery to richly invest in the lives of others allows them to become leaders which are respected, trusted, and imitated. This interpersonal transparency is a cornerstone of transformational leadership and cultivates an environment which is safe and supportive. This climate fosters personal and professional growth and helps strengthen resolve and commitment to the mission of the organization.

Empowering others

Great leaders elevate their team member's performance through giving them the tools and motivation to succeed. According to the data collected in this study, the transformative and authentic leadership exhibited by people in recovery is often purposed towards the good of others. The motivation for this selfless focus does not rest on organizational benchmarks, rather, it is centered upon the understanding that their choices and behavior are driven by a higher calling. According to several participants, their motivation for doing the right thing and helping others was that their life depended upon it. Their focus on others is not just about being unselfish but also serves as a reminder that they are called to 'give back'. This impetus for behavior has practical application for the organizations they lead since the

welfare of others is always in the forefront of the leaders' mind.

Self-awareness

Individuals in addiction and recovery have shown to be cognizant of their own strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. Several participants highlighted this attribute when discussing their daily leadership activities. This understanding helps them recognize when they need help from others. This understanding sets aside potentially hazardous attempts to take on complicated tasks alone for the sake of cultivating a team approach when facing obstacles. Self-awareness and authenticity are closely associated, with self-awareness being the knowledge of strengths and weaknesses and authenticity being how those beliefs are supported through behavior. Leaders which are self-aware are continually seeking ways for personal and professional improvement. This focus helps improve those around them as well as the organizations they are leading.

Posttraumatic growth

This theme runs rampant across all the data analysis and is demonstrated through a variety of attributes. The pain and suffering involved in addiction can serve to allow for deep relational bonds of trust and inspiration between leader and follower. The crucible moments in the lives of addicts can be used to build stronger and more empathetic visionary leaders for any organization. The journey from suffering to triumph serves as motivation for followers and allows people in recovery to share their story which in turn builds confidence. Several participants mentioned that their experiences in addiction helped form and shape them into the leaders they are today. The wisdom and compassion gained from their journey has carried over into their leadership roles as they guide their organizations into record-breaking growth and success.

Humility

Several participants mentioned how managing their own lives better enables them to stay connected to their larger purpose of serving others, thereby maintaining a proper perspective which leads to a humble outlook towards life and others. This ethic is vital in recovery, where pride and an unexamined life can lead one back into old lifestyle patterns of addictive behavior. So not only is humility a virtue for those in recovery from addiction, but it also serves as a valuable trait when leading others in any context. When team members see their leaders as being humble it creates a greater sense of trust, respect, and commitment. People like and follow leaders that model expected behavior, are approachable, and are open about their shortcomings. This quality is a valuable leadership tool, and people in recovery from addiction make this a priority in their everyday life.

Limitations of the Study

While this research focuses on the leadership traits of people in addiction, there are limitations to the study. First, all the participants in the study have successfully demonstrated leadership traits, either early in addiction or treatment or later in recovery in their professional lives. This could lead to an overgeneralization that all people in addiction are leaders. This is not the objective of this study, but rather the purpose is to identify whether people in addiction and recovery possess traits which are also found in leadership. So, the shared experiences of the participant pool may lead to creating a false assumption that every addict becomes a great leader. There are other variables, such as education and family life that could be at play in the development of leadership competencies.

Another limitation of the study is the personal experience of the researcher. The researcher battled active addiction for 17 years before finding recovery and being promoted to various leadership roles. These experiences cannot be separated from the life of the researcher so additional interpretive measures were included to offset researcher bias. Members of the researcher's dissertation committee served as analytical contributors by reviewing the study and its' data. Differing interpretations of the data were welcomed, but all who reviewed the data agreed that the thematic coding was correctly analyzed, and the methodology was appropriately applied.

Implications for practice

There are several implications from this study, including how it could broaden the hiring pool for leadership positions within organizations. Historically, leaders have been groomed in the classroom to excel in leadership and usually have no prior experience in drug or alcohol addiction. The findings of this study suggest that people that have been through addiction should be considered for leadership roles. Their past mistakes can be viewed as building blocks instead of disqualifiers. Although many have had legal and professional troubles, this study suggests giving people in recovery a second chance to showcase their leadership qualities can greatly benefit any organization.

The traits possessed by people in active addiction and recovery can be applied to positive change and progress that can be valuable to all organizations seeking next level leaders. The drive to always raise the bar and challenge norms, achieving more but liking it less, being vulnerable with weaknesses, going against the status quo, developing resiliency in the face of extreme situations, and growth from suffering can often be identified as characteristics in the lives of addicts. However, these same traits could also be considered desirable leadership attributes. When an individual struggling in addiction experiences sobriety and recovery, they have more to offer than most people realize. In many cases, they have what it takes to become great leaders. Therefore, if companies would look past the stigma of addiction as a barrier in the hiring process, and actively seek to employ those in recovery from addiction, then hope and purpose would be given to the individual in recovery. This would not only increase the chances for long term sobriety for that individual, but also advance the effectiveness of the company through dynamic leadership.

Another practical implication is that leadership training should be incorporated into the model of treatment for drug and alcohol dependence. This focus on leadership would allow those in recovery to use their skillset as a purpose in life. Having purpose is instrumental in maintaining long-term recovery, and therefore treatment centers incorporating this modality would help increase the success rates of their organization. Connecting those in recovery to pursuing future leadership roles would also instill hope and confidence, while also providing a platform for them to flourish throughout life.

Finally, creating a leadership center for those in long-term treatment would be incredibly beneficial to the person in recovery and society in general. Many individuals transitioning from recovery into their careers may lack some of the awareness and idiosyncrasies of society. How to dress professionally, public speaking, and general business courses would help prepare those in recovery with the tools necessary for employment in the business world. This leadership center could be made available for clients in the later phases of long-term residential treatment. It could include a 3–6-month learning laboratory for clients that have demonstrated leadership competencies during the early phases of treatment. During this leadership development phase

clients would attend classes and workshops focused on general business knowledge, social etiquette, leadership theories, and resume building. This approach would lead to increased commitment, purpose, and planning on behalf of the person in recovery, all of which are necessary for prolonged sobriety.

Implications of study and recommendations for future research

This study changes how we see addiction. It paints it in a positive light, not only for the redeemable connotations, but as well for the present value possessed by those with drug and alcohol dependence. The focus of many treatment programs has been on discontinued use of drugs and alcohol as the only measure of success. Instead of focusing on future outcomes, this study suggests that effective treatment should consider the personality traits and experiences of clients as key indicators of giftedness. These attributes can help clinicians and providers create opportunities to foster leadership traits while simultaneously instilling sound recovery principles. This approach would increase abstinence and sobriety outcomes through facilitating interest in areas the client is already inclined. The focus and attention would give the client purpose and meaning while helping improve their self-confidence, accountability, and hopefulness.

This study can also serve as a foundation for future research. One possible topic to explore is how leaders with a background in addiction perform compared to leaders with no background in addiction. A quantitative study could be conducted by selecting two groups of leaders from within the same company. Rates of advancement, promotions, and salary increases could be compared between the two groups to determine if the leaders with a past of addiction performed better than those leaders without such experience. The results could broaden understanding on how leaders in recovery compare to other leaders.

Another topic for future research is determining what other factors apart from addiction impact leadership development. Social intelligence, education, and family background could also play a significant role in the leadership development of those in recovery. A three-way ANOVA test could be conducted to determine how social intelligence, education, and family background impact leadership development for those in recovery. Findings from such a study could help close any gaps in whatever areas need addressed.

Conclusion

This was an explorative study which sought to determine how people in addiction have leadership traits. The study first examined leadership through the lens of transformational and authentic leadership theories. Both theories combine for eight dimensions of effective leadership such as self-awareness, authenticity, inspiration, and motivation. The study then carried out a qualitative methodology which included interviews, observations, and a focus group. The data collected and analyzed resulted in seven themes emerging which represented the traits of addiction. Themes such as authenticity, empathy, self-awareness, tenacity, posttraumatic growth, and leading by example all map onto various leadership dimensions of transformative and authentic leadership. The study therefore offers support for answering the research question in the affirmative and supporting the hypothesis. Yes, people in addiction do have leadership traits.

This study can serve as the building block for future studies on the topic. Broadening our understanding of how these leadership qualities can be best developed and implemented into society offers a

challenging and opportunistic dilemma. Would corporations be willing to take a chance on hiring someone with a criminal background?. Would companies be willing to invest the money and resources necessary for securing a gifted leader with a checkered past?. Learning how we can better identify these leadership traits in addiction can help in prevention efforts as well. Connecting children and adolescents to future leadership roles will help fill their lives with focus and purpose, serving as mitigating variables in drug experimentation and dependence.

The findings reveal that there are more than a limited number of leadership traits that people in addiction possess. What was discovered is that leadership can't be boiled down to a mere list of qualities to be learned or mastered. Leadership does, however, come down to interaction and agreement, as suggested by Transformational and Authentic Leadership theories. Leadership is a process between people and momentum is built when interpersonal bonds are established and strengthened. These bonds are cultivated expeditiously when common values and experiences are identified. For the person in recovery from addiction, the suffering and hardships experienced in addiction can serve to unite and inspire those around them to achieve the impossible. That's because the person in recovery knows nothing is impossible, and that attitude spreads like a fire.

Finally, people in recovery from addiction are great leaders because of their attitude. The data reveals that those in recovery strive to be humble and honest, live lives with integrity and grit, and are tenacious, resilient, and compassionate. This makes those around them aspire to reflect those qualities in themselves, which elevates trust, motivation, and commitment for the organization. Those that have faced addiction and found recovery aren't great leaders because they're perfect, they're great leaders because they aren't perfect. This honesty and vulnerability

garners respect and support from followers and their commitment to self and group improvement inspires goal achievement. The crucible of addiction can be viewed as a prime training ground for leadership.

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