Research Article

Addiction and leadership: How authentic and transformative leaders are emerging from the adversity of substance use disorder

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Abstract

Objectives: This novel study explores the leadership traits held by people with substance use disorder. The purpose of this study is to help advance understanding of the positive qualities people with substance use disorder possess which can produce positive societal and organizational benefits once that person enters recovery. Additionally, this understanding can provide insight into effective treatment approaches that incorporate personal attributes that are present within active addiction.

Methods: A qualitative methodology was used which included semi-structured interviews, observations, and a focus group which allowed the researcher to conduct a thematic coding analysis. The participants came from diverse backgrounds and included participants from multiple regions across the United States. Leadership was defined as having various dimensions of effective leadership that are found in both Transformational and Authentic Leadership Theories.

Results: The findings revealed that people in addiction possess numerous leadership traits which position them for effective leadership and are further enhanced during their recovery journey. 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.

Conclusion: The impact of this study will change how people view addiction. Identifying the hidden treasures of leadership which are present in those struggling with addiction could illuminate recovery pathways that help identify purpose and value. This would not only advance treatment opportunities but greatly assist organizations that 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.

Introduction

Alcohol and drug addiction is characterized as a neuropsychiatric disorder with various contributing factors such as stress, anxiety, trauma, and depression [1]. The effects of alcohol and drug addiction can lead to destructive behavioral patterns which become habitual and compulsive. If left untreated, the progression of substance use disorder will result in severely negative consequences, including loss of job, relationships, a decline in physical health, and even death [2]. Cognitive abilities, such as memory, reasoning, attention, and perception can all be damaged through the habitual use of alcohol and drugs [1]. It is imperative, therefore, that every possible pathway to recovery be illuminated to help provide purpose, understanding, and motivation for behavioral change that will help those with substance use disorder realize positive change is possible.

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 with 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 people with substance use disorder 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 those qualities and others are found in addiction and are also shared by highly effective leaders. 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 from 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.

Review of relevant literature

The journey through addiction and recovery can be viewed as a crucible experience that forms and extracts unique characteristics that can be incredibly beneficial [4]. The prediction of this study suggests that people struggling with addiction have personality and character traits that make them great 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.

First, the lens through which effective leadership is determined will be based upon two popular leadership theories: Authentic Leadership Theory [5] and Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978). The data collected from the interviews, observations, and the focus group were analyzed to determine if any themes or attributes could be categorized within any of the dimensions of these two theories. Both theories have gained acceptance within the social sciences as reputable and descriptive leadership approaches [6].

Authentic leadership

Authentic leadership gained positive traction in the academic arena in the early 2000s with former Harvard professor and Medtronic CEO Bill George being the first to develop the theory [6]. Authentic leadership theory has four dimensions that help identify it, including self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency [5]. Self-awareness involves how well

an individual knows their strengths and weakness, as well as how they influence others. Internalized moral perspective is about how well a leader uses their moral convictions to make decisions as opposed to allowing external circumstances and people to persuade them. Balanced processing is the ability of leaders to objectively analyze information and understand people's opinions before making a decision. It also means that the person can avoid biased decisions while treating others fairly. Finally, relational transparency is about being open and honest with others, allowing them to see both their positive and negative attributes [6].

Transformational leadership

Transformational Leadership contains four dimensions that can influence follower empowerment. Those dimensions include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership is focused on change, emotions, values, ethics, standards, and vision casting [6]. Transformational leadership can make followers believe in themselves and the organization and leads to the idea that the follower is working for something greater than just a paycheck. Embracing the organization's vision and core values while putting the interest of others first are all hallmarks of transformational leadership.

Traits found in addiction

It has been well established in the literature and business world that successful executives are goal-oriented [7]. Successes are often measured by benchmarks and goals achieved by leaders and organizations. For the person struggling with substance use disorder, they are also focused on obtaining a goal [8]. However, this focus is not typically centered upon organizational performance, but rather on obtaining the next 'fix', which is the drug of their choice. They will often find innovative and creative ways to reach their goal, even with very limited resources. This proclivity keeps the person moving forward towards obtaining their goal despite extreme obstacles. When this same characteristic is placed within the business context, it is an admirable and necessary trait for leaders of organizations to have for consistently performing at a high level.

Persistence is another trait found in addiction and is closely associated with goal attainment, but with a broader implication. While goal attainment is focused on something in the future, persistence applies to both obstacles and opportunities in the present [9]. In active addiction, people will often be persistent in the request for assistance from others to get what they want. While the disease sabotages this characteristic with manipulative methods to get high, the trait of persistency remains while in recovery. In recovery, people will often still be persistent, but often focused on other people's needs and help keep them from danger. This is both selfless and self-serving, in that it keeps them connected to recovery efforts while simultaneously serving the needs of others.

Individuals in recovery from addiction will often exhibit persistence in their lives by faithfully attending meetings, continually looking for opportunities to help another person struggling, and not getting discouraged when hardships arise (Duvall, Station-Tindall, & Leukefield (2008).

Ntoumanis, et. al., [10] composed a 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 that 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 [11]. This can be a good quality when applied to business and organizational goals.

People in recovery from addiction also demonstrate resiliency, having been traumatized by a disease that for far too many ends in death [12]. Their experiences result in a buoyancy of spirit which helps them face obstacles throughout the rest of their lives. The person in recovery must often remain vulnerable and examine their weaknesses as a defense against relapse. Revealing struggles shows humility and honesty, which invites others into their lives resulting in a tremendous amount of support and strength (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein & Grant, 2005).

Elkington and Breen [13] examined how resilience in the presence of adversity is developed within business leaders. Specifically, the authors explored how reflection and consciousness play a vital role in the development of resilience for those in leadership. This was a qualitative study that 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 on the 'crucible moment' of adversity in life was viewed with realism and optimism [13]. This enabled them to become more collaborative leaders and taught them how to handle any future adversity they faced with resiliency.

Janson [14] 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 that lead 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 [14]. 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 [15].

Similarly, Haroosh and Freedman [16] 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 [17].

Tebes, et. al. [18] carried out a mixed-methods study that explores how the cognitive transformation from traumatic events can predict levels of resilience. Their study revealed that cognitive transformation predicts grief and trauma resolution. The theoretical implication of their study is that traumatic experiences can be indicative of a protective process when the risk trajectory is redirected towards enhanced adaptation. The authors suggested that this resilience framework could be closely linked to a recovery mindset.

While there is a paucity of research directly correlating addiction and leadership, these studies suggest the journey through addiction can help develop leadership skills that can then be appropriately applied in recovery for constructive purposes. This present study will add to the body of knowledge by highlighting the ability of people in recovery to lead others on a relational level which earns the respect of team members while developing a sense of trust and optimism which is critical for effective leadership [19]. Understanding this potential unlocks high levels of achievement in the person recovering from addiction, as well as allows companies to identify 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.

Research question: *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 [14] and Haroosh and Freedman [16].

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 [20] and Authentic Leadership Theory [5] 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 [20]. According to Burns [20], 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 [21]. The other theoretical lens for understanding leadership will be the Authentic Leadership Theory, which was developed by Bill George in 2003. The four dimensions of Authentic Leadership Theory are self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective [5]. These two theories serve as the lens through which leadership qualities will be identified and explored throughout the study.

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 15 participants through 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 during the daily activities of five of the study's 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.

Sample and sampling procedures

Participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling. The 15 participants selected met the criteria of having either a personal or clinical experience with addiction and have also directly participated or observed people in recovery from addiction serving in some form of leadership capacity. Included in the sample are business leaders, an addiction psychiatrist, and neuroscientist, leaders of non-profit organizations, notable authors, 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 (Bolz-Weber, 2015). Another participant gave a Ted Talk which was viewed by over 2 million people (Brody-Waite, 2018), and authored a book detailing his journey from addiction to leadership (Brody-Waite, 2018). Additionally, one of the participants is an Emmy-winning and four-time James Beard Award-winning TV personality, chef, writer, and social justice advocate.

Also included in the participant pool is the CEO of Isaiah House, one of the largest residential treatment providers in Kentucky, and the current Vice President of community affairs and public relations at the Hazelden Betty Ford Clinic. Additionally, the director of research and innovation at Brown University's Center for Alcohol and Addiction studies participated in the study. The remaining participants were in active recovery for at least one year and have demonstrated proficient leadership capabilities in their professional lives, while others are at least six months into treatment and demonstrated leadership qualities while clients at a residential treatment facility.

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 by identifying what traits are commonly found within both groups.

Figure 1 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 that are developed along the journey from addiction to recovery and become valuable leadership qualities [16]. These two traits, along with several other qualities, emerged early in the research. Completing the task, persistence in the pursuit of goals, resilience,
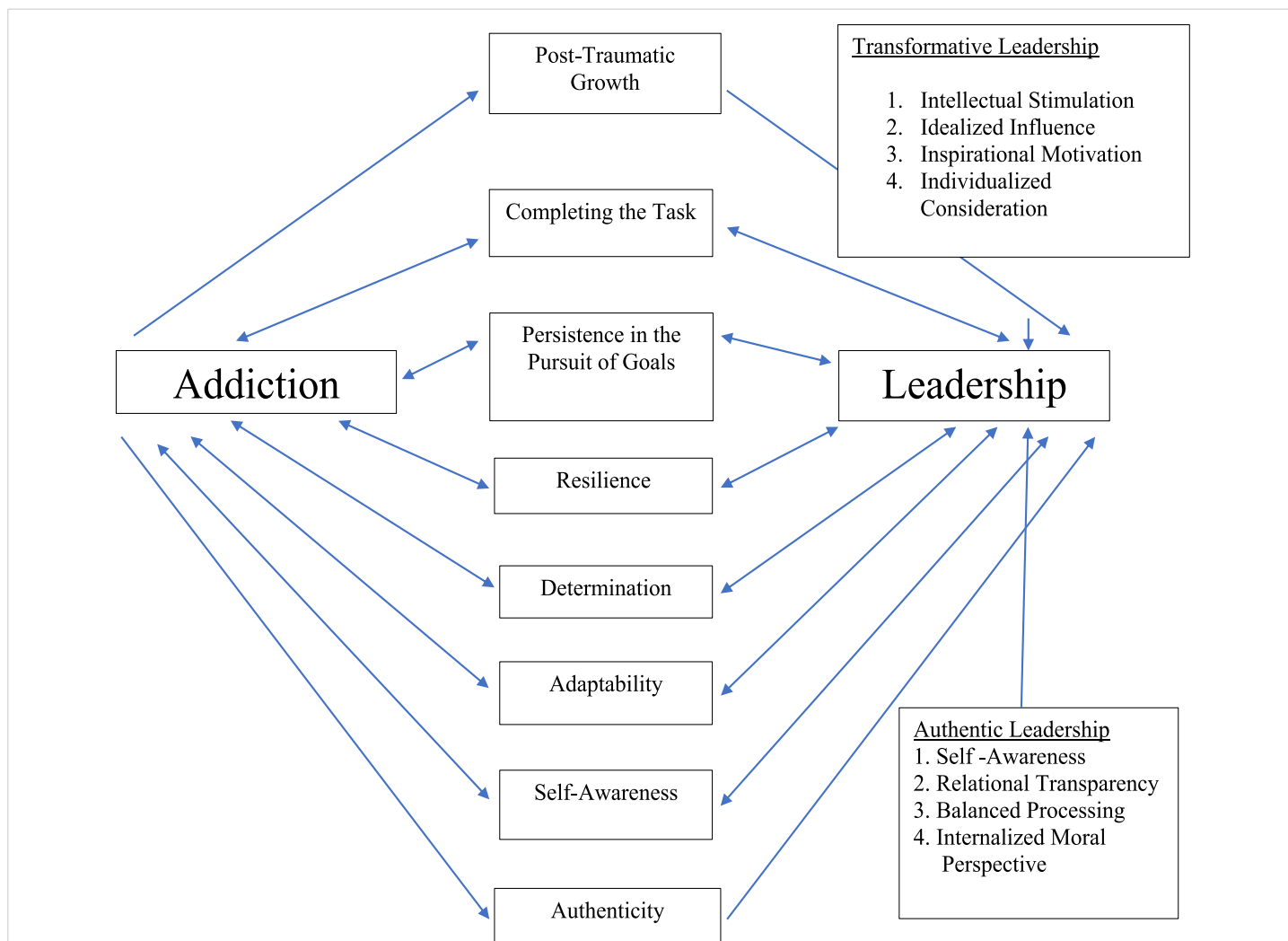
Figure 1: Concept Map showing shared Traits between Leaders and those with Substance-Use Disorder.

determination, adaptability, willingness to take risks, and authenticity are some other traits that are shared by people with substance use disorder and leaders.

Transformative leaders are known as being adaptive and inspirational while having an ability to take on risks that others would typically avoid [20]. People in recovery from addiction have learned to adapt to difficult circumstances, naturally pursue risks, and inspire others through their journey. This style of leadership is 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.

Self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective are all traits found within authentic leadership and that has also been demonstrated by people with substance use disorder. These characteristics are then developed and amplified throughout their recovery journey. Self-awareness and relational transparency appeared frequently in the data, with balanced processing and internalized moral perspective appearing less frequently.

The concept map (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 prediction of this 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.

Instrumentation

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

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

Observations were conducted at three nonprofit organizations in Kentucky that are focused on helping individuals become successful on their path to recovery. The participants were observed carrying out daily duties which included teaching both large and small groups, interacting with team members and visitors, and strategic planning for organizational effectiveness. Field notes were taken of what was observed as the participants fulfilled their 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 were clients at Isaiah House treatment facility. The focus group included 4 residents which were at least six months into treatment and had exhibited leadership ability within the program. Members of the focus group were interviewed before they participated 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 leaders. Data from the focus groups were recorded with an audio recorder and notes were taken to help analyze the data collected.

Results

There were 21 thematic codes that were identified and subsequently categorized into eight themes that were ultimately analyzed to see if they fit into any of the dimensions of Authentic and Transformative Leadership theories. The initial codes named were personality traits, experiences, and character traits. The data that was collected was then categorized into those three areas, with 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 Figure 2. The final codes categorized were self-leadership, empathy, inspirational motivation, and tenacity. Two key themes were identified as marking the lives of the participants: Authentic and Transformative. Figure 3 illustrates the data analysis technique which was conducted.
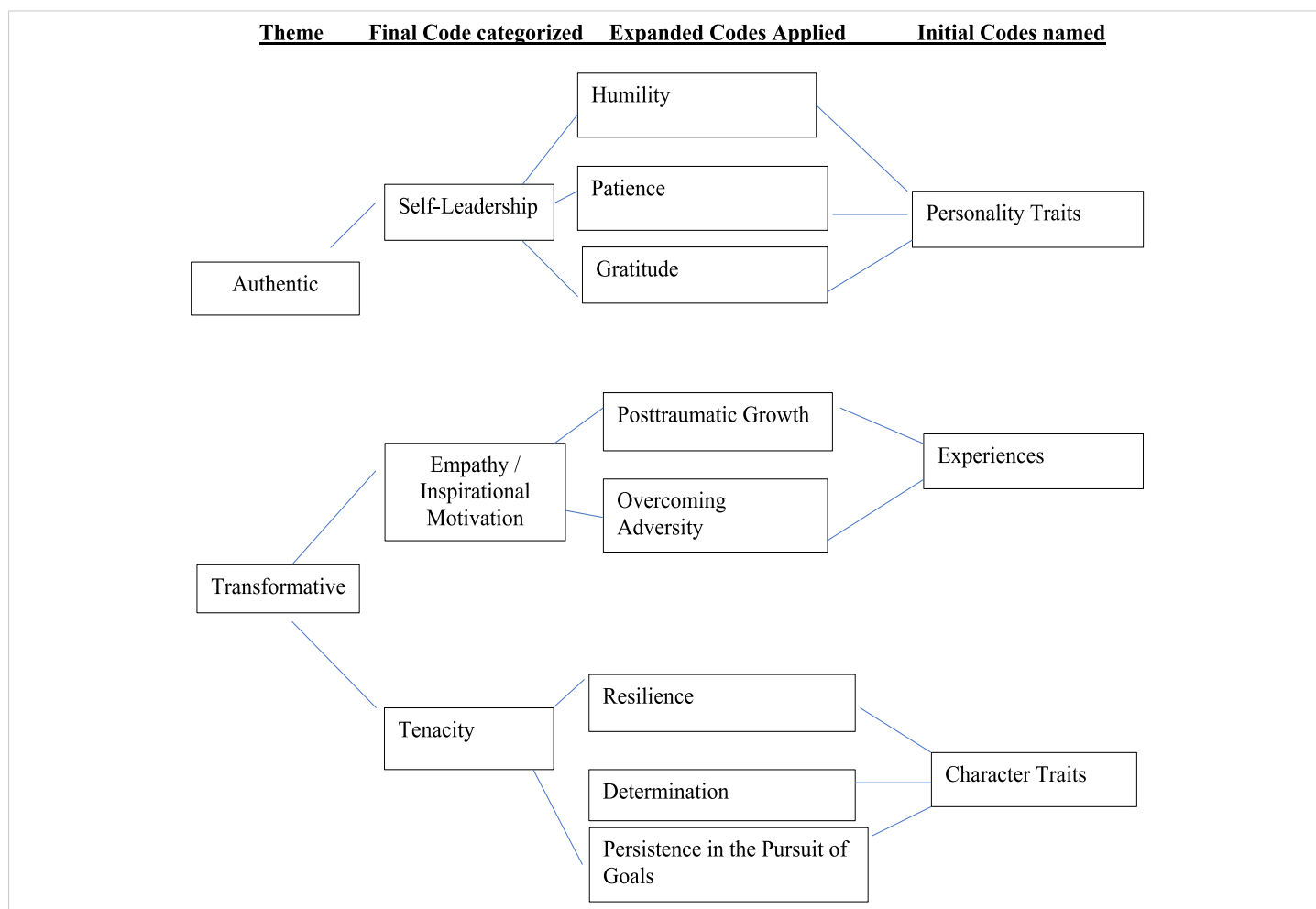

Figure 2: Coding Map for Categorizing Traits found in Addiction.

Findings

After the data was organized into the 21 thematic codes, they were then grouped into eight overall themes that 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.

Theme 1: Authenticity

The theme which emerged most frequently was authenticity, as it represented 14% frequency of all the themes which emerged from the data analysis. 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 approach 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 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).
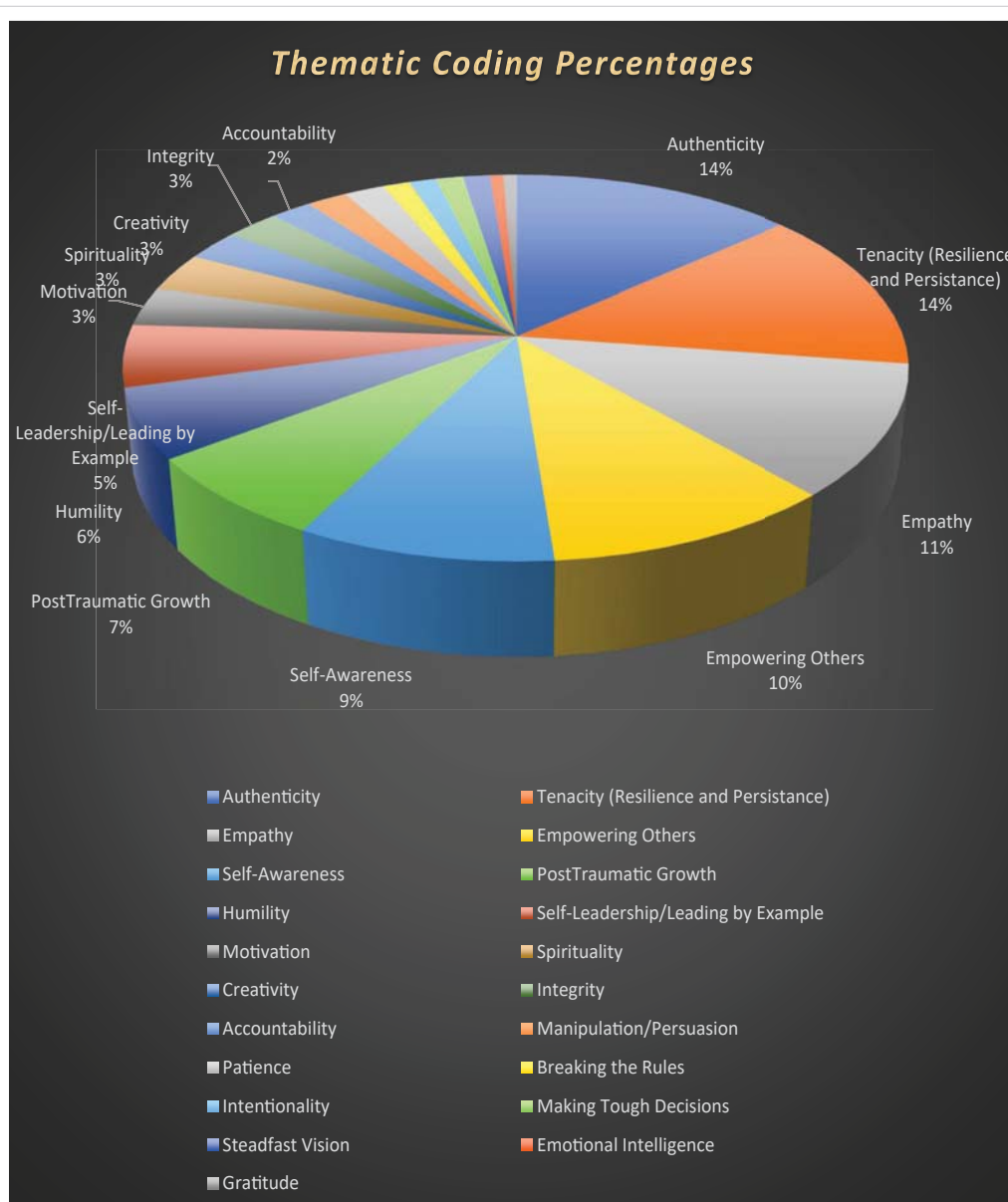

Figure 3: Frequency Distribution of Coded Themes.

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 shown them their humanity because we do not want to get kicked out of the tribe. Addiction shows us our humanity." (Participant 2). This insight illuminates how people that have battled addiction can develop strong relationships by 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 that included the codes of resilience, persistence, and adaptability. It was identified 21 times as well in the data, accounted for 14% frequency of all identified themes, 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 that many in recovery carry.

Theme 3: Empathy

Empathy was ranked third in frequency, with 11%, and was identified 17 times in the data 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 a 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 of 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 that included the codes of treatment and acceptance of others and accounted for 10% of all coding frequencies. "You must treat people with dignity and respect. Love and tolerance of others are 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-Aawareness

The next theme which was emerged most frequently was self-awareness. It was mentioned 14 times by three of the six participants and accounted for nine percent of all the coding frequencies. Self-awareness is being conscious of one's 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 grow personally, professionally, and spiritually through the journey from addiction into recovery. It was highlighted 11 times, accounting for seven percent of all coding themes, and was 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, empathy, and increased focus on the wellbeing of others. "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 who 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 that 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 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 and accounted for six percent of all thematic coding frequencies.

Theme 8: Self-Leadership (Leading by Example)

A central attribute personified by all participants was self-leadership. It emerged eight times from four participants, occurred in five percent of the thematic coding data analysis, 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 1 represents all 21 codes that 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.

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.

A. **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.

B. **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.

C. **Balanced processing:** The pattern of decision-making that 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.

D. **Relational transparency:** This is demonstrated by accepting critique, being vulnerable, and being open about weaknesses. Associated codes and themes: Authenticity, Humility, Patience.

E. **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 their self-interests. Associated codes and themes: Persistence, Resilience, Motivation, and Tenacity.

F. **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.

G. **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.

H. **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.

Discussion

This was an explorative and novel study that sought to determine how people in addiction have leadership traits. The study examined leadership through the lens of transformational and authentic leadership theories and used a qualitative methodology to answer the research question. The instruments included interviews, observations, field notes, and a focus group which allowed the collection of data that was analyzed through thematic coding. There were 21 traits that were revealed by the data before then being categorized into eight themes. Themes such as authenticity, empathy, self-awareness, tenacity, posttraumatic growth, and leading by example all map onto the leadership dimensions of transformative and authentic leadership. The study, therefore, offers support for answering the research question in the affirmative and supporting the hypothesis that people with substance use disorder have leadership traits Table 2.

Authenticity

People in recovery from addiction must practice rigorous

Table 1: 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		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
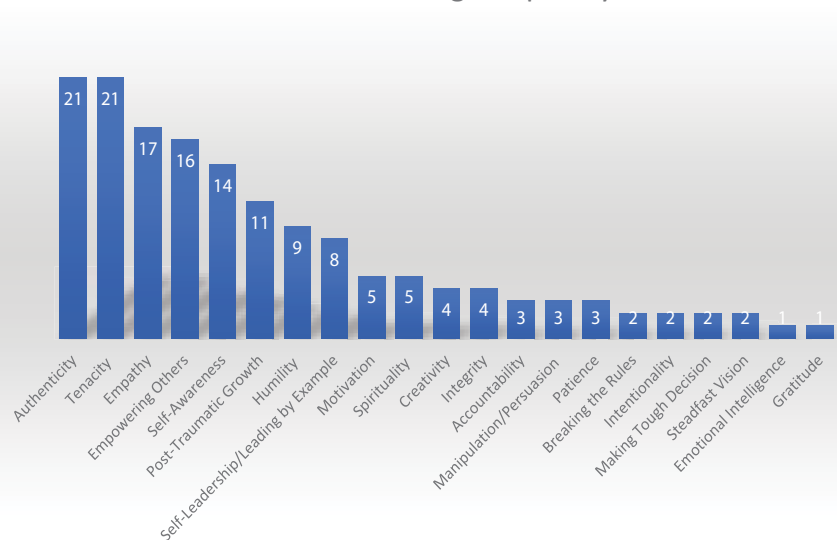
Figure 4: Frequency of Leadership Traits found in Addiction (Graphed in left to right order).

Table 2: Leadership Dimensions and Corresponding Codes and Themes in Addiction.

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

authenticity as a necessary component of sobriety. 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 behavioral 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 leader's goal is to be a better version of their selves each day, that same mission carries over into the lives of everyone on the team. People in recovery from addiction must practice authenticity on a daily basis which positions them favorably for effective leadership.

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 are labeled as tenacity in this study. Several participants mentioned how resiliency, persistence, and adaptability have 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 was 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 can offer it in abundance to those around them.

Empathy

People in addiction and recovery from addiction are

generally able to relate well to others [22]. 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 that 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 members' performance by giving them the tools and motivation to succeed [23]. 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 the behavior has practical application for the organizations they lead since the welfare of others is always at the forefront of the leaders' minds.

Self-Awareness

Individuals in addiction and recovery are often cognizant of their 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 analyses and is demonstrated through a variety of attributes. The pain and suffering involved in addiction can serve to deepen 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 in recovery serves as motivation for followers and

allows people in recovery to share their stories 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 have 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 [24]. 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 who 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, nearly 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. The only exception is a neuroscientist and addiction psychiatrist who observed the behavior patterns of people with substance use disorder. 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 that are 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.

Conclusion

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. Will corporations be willing to take a chance on hiring someone with a criminal background? Will 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. 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 [25]. 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 to the organization. Entire workplace cultures can be transformed through the leadership of people in recovery from addiction. Those that have faced addiction and found recovery aren't great leaders because they are perfect, they are great leaders because they are not perfect. This honesty and vulnerability garner respect and support from followers and their commitment to self and group improvement inspire goal achievement. The crucible of addiction can be viewed as a prime training ground for leadership.

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 with addiction enters into 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 treatment model for drug and alcohol dependence. This focus on leadership would allow those in recovery to synergize their naturally occurring strengths for the purpose of successfully leading others. Having a purpose is instrumental in maintaining long-term recovery, and therefore treatment approaches that incorporate this understanding 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.

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 the 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 present 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 by 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 our understanding of how leaders in recovery compared to other leaders.

Definition of key terms

Adversity: The difficulties and limited opportunities which arise from physical, mental, or social losses, and includes disruptions in life, fragmentation of structures, and opposition to personal development [26].

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 an 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 [27].

Authentic leadership: Authentic leadership is an approach to leadership that emphasizes building the leader's legitimacy through honest relationships with followers who value their input and are built on an ethical foundation. Authentic leadership theory advanced primarily through the work of Bill George [5].

Completing the task: The ability of an individual to keep the focus on the goal at hand, and not abandon 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 a result of living through a traumatic experience. This is the positive psychological change experienced as a result of adversity [28].

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 (SAMHSA, 2016).

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

Substance use disorder: Behavior that includes a pattern of compulsive and habitual substance use which is not deterred by significant social, occupational, legal, or interpersonal adverse consequences [29].

Transformational leadership: This is the type of leadership that causes a 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 identity 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 (1978).

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

(Appendix)

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