



## The Resilience of Women Leaders

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### **Abstract**

This study explored the coping skills, beliefs, values, and leadership styles that cultivate and build resilience in women leaders. This study was conducted to understand how women leaders build endurance during adversity. The data examined in this study answer the research question: Why is resilience important for women leaders in the workplace? The findings from this phenomenological study reflect the emerging theories that show resilience is essential to women leaders in the workplace because they are directly impacted by the following cluster values: attitude, beliefs, commitment, determination, fortitude, intentions, desire to overcome, perspective, relentlessness, and self-regulation.

Keywords: Resilience, Women Leaders, Workplace, Adversity, Leadership

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This qualitative study aims to understand further the discussion involving resilience in women leaders. This study is important because it advances and evolves industry knowledge in leadership away from inadequate theories that inaccurately describe the impact of leadership effectiveness. This study was conducted to understand how women leaders build endurance during adversity. The data examined in this study answer the research question: Why is resilience important for women leaders in the workplace?

Using a qualitative approach, interviews with highly successful and influential women leaders within academia, corporate, and government who are resilient women leaders in the workplace discussed the essential coping skills, beliefs, values, and leadership styles that cultivate and build endurance during adversity. Women within their first 10 years of leadership were excluded from the study because they needed sufficient experience and or opportunities to encounter and overcome enough challenges to speak consistently about the themes and patterns of resiliency.

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Reed (2018) stated that resilience does not fluctuate daily or weekly. Instead, resilience reflects a specific pattern of how leaders interpret their current reality and, more importantly, assess opportunities for influencing the future. Furthermore, Reed asserted that one of the most distinguishing differences between resilient and nonresilient leaders is the time spent languishing in the role of a victim. Resilient leaders get up and move on to the adaptation and adjustment mode. At this point, resilient leaders assume responsibility, and then action is taken in an upward trajectory, which is the beginning phase of recovery (Reed, 2018).

According to Chemers (1997), academic researchers ignored the overwhelming challenges related to gender and leadership until the 1970s. Northouse (2018) asserted that women in leadership roles brought about an understanding of the changes in American society that now have a scholarly interest in promoting gender equity in leadership. However, significant gaps in the literature regarding this area of study still need to be researched to explore and address the effects on leadership development activities and the effectiveness of women leaders (Northouse, 2018).

Researchers have discovered that the gender gap in leadership is a global phenomenon where women are disproportionately placed in lower-level and lower-authority leadership positions than men (G. N. Powell et al., 2003). Sobehart and Dougherty (2009) defended the challenge for women leaders: "An issue better understood makes us better able to make a strategic impact on the condition of the underrepresented and underserved" (p. 218). The structured interviews within this study provide scholars and research practitioners with an increased understanding of leader resilience about gender, specifically focusing on the implications for women's professional development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Leadership development research continues to focus on generating theory to understand how, when, and why leadership development should be introduced into an organizational human resource strategy (Collins & Holton, 2004; Yukl, 2002). Compared to the ongoing research efforts in leadership theory and application, the field of leadership development has received very little empirical attention (Collins and Holton, 2004).

Additionally, research on women in leadership and the impact of adversity in the workplace could be more extensive for describing and studying the different experiences and needs for leadership development (Johnson & Indvik, 2001). By filling in the gap, researchers understand the implications surrounding the importance of leader resilience, especially as the number of women in leadership positions continues

to grow. Bass (1985) explained that resilience is a virtue upon which all virtues and values are established. It is a process toward becoming.

According to Northouse (2018), women are underrepresented within the upper echelons of academia, corporations, and government systems. Gervais (2019) discovered that women are among the top leadership ranks in American organizations, occupying over half of all management and professional positions (51.5%). However, more senior executive-level leadership positions show a very different story: Women only represent 5.4% of Fortune 500 CEOs (considered an all-time high; Brown, 2017) and hold only about 20% of the Fortune 500 board member seats (Gervais, 2019).

Galinsky et al. (2013) stated that although men have become more domesticated in recent years, women take on the primary responsibility of childcare, household organization, and chores (Belkin, 2008; Craig, 2006; Pailhe & Solaz, 2008). In response to these ongoing work/home dilemmas, some women consciously chose not to marry or have children, while others attempted to become *superwomen* and struggled to excel in every role (Hewlett, 2002; Nieva & Gutek, 1981).

Traditional workplace norms made it incredibly difficult for women to rise in the leadership ranks (Normann et al., 2013). Women leaders who take advantage of workplace leave and flexible-hour programs are often diminished and marginalized (Northouse, 2018). Successful and influential women leaders who legitimately take time off from their careers usually find reentry very stressful, returning at a much lower level than the level they left (Williams, 2012). With this understanding, this significance should support answering the research question: Why is resilience important for women leaders in the workplace?

## Literature Review

Resilience is “a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (Luthar et al., 2000, p. 543). Researchers initially thought resilience was an inborn capacity for adaptation and transformation. However, resilience is considered the ability of individuals to adapt to adversity by developing resilient behaviors, thoughts, and coping skills. Resiliency theory stems from the extensive research of Werner (1993). Werner discovered that resilient people were those who, despite exposure to environmental hardships and stressors, could still build successful lives.

According to Coutu (2002), several theories describe the origin of resilience. Coutu asserted that many theories overlap in one of three ways. Resilient people consistently possess three significant characteristics: “a staunch acceptance of reality; a deep belief, often buttressed by strongly held beliefs and values, that life is meaningful; and a determination and an uncanny ability to improvise” (Coutu, 2002, p. 48).

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Forbes (1998) presented Theory F, representing the first scholarly work giving due credit to a woman's leadership style. Theory F identifies and distinguishes the need for managerial and political aspects of leadership, encouraging women to lead with care, determination, and compassion. Forbes contended that influential leaders within the 21st century need to encourage values that align with service and a proven work ethic of care toward others. More completely, Forbes believed influential leaders can acknowledge and embrace the interdependence among all people as they foster and cultivate personal empowerment.

Ramsey and Blieszner (1999) examined the interviews of women leaders over the age of 45 during the mid-1990s. Participants shared their perspectives on life, values, and spirituality. During interviews, the women discussed how they developed the strength to rebound from life's adversities, challenges, oppositions, and disappointments. They spoke about how they exhibited resilience and strong spiritual faith *despite* and *because of* the hardships, struggles, and obstacles they encountered. The challenges they mentioned included poverty, the deaths of parents, siblings, children, and spouses, chronic illness, war, loneliness, depression, fear, discrimination, job loss, and disrespect. Participants exhibited resiliency because of their abilities to garner strength through reflection and thoughts about the past, present, and future, believe in a higher force/God, and find purpose and peace in an afterlife.

K. C. Powell (1998) investigated 12 senior executive women on how they coped with challenging situations, perceive hardships, and overcome obstacles. The women identified several factors connected to community support, self-discipline, and determination contributing to their advancement to senior-level positions. K. C. Powell specifically explained internal barriers, including self-confidence, character, and personality traits, and external barriers, including gender biases/gaps or the *good ole boys* network.

Hamel and Valikangas (2003) believed that the world is becoming chaotic faster than organizations are becoming resilient to the extent that there is a substantial decrease in overall corporate performance earnings, resulting in companies failing to meet yearly projections.

A review of a study on resilience and organizations revealed several personal resilience-related qualities, behavioral dynamics, and many benefits to organizations (Pincott, 2014). Competition for a job or promotion usually falls in favor of the more resilient person because of the long-term probability for success (Siebert, 2005), background and experiences that offer better coping skills (Fredrickson, 2001), the ability to get through tough times (Brooks & Goldstein, 2008), and the ability to learn new skills quickly and effectively (Gorelick et al., 2004). In a study on identifying and building resilience at

work, Warner and April (2012) identified processes and attributes resilient people use to deal with and get through stressful times.

## Research Methodology

The phenomenological research method was used to explore emerging themes and investigate perceptions of resilient, successful women leaders in the workplace regarding their resiliency and leadership. This phenomenological research approach was best suited for this study in order to gain a better understanding of the participants' lived experiences. Data were collected through an in-depth interview to answer the research question: Why is resilience important for women leaders in the workplace? Although participants are from different industries (academia, corporate, and government), they share the experience of facing many adversities while persevering (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam, 2002).

According to Creswell and Poth (2016), the phenomenological inquiry is a path to an experience's underlying meaning. Phenomenological methods of study are used to examine the structures/streams of consciousness relative to the experience of the participants, searching "for essential, invariant structure (or essence) or the central underlying meaning of the experience" of a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 52; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

The participants selected for this qualitative study had experiences with leadership and an awareness of resilience. They were in a position to describe and communicate their feelings and thoughts about their lived experience. Therefore, a purposeful participants process was adopted (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Patton, 2002). According to Punch (2013), research purpose is critical to making sound sampling decisions. By engaging a purposeful participants process, this study focused more on the quality of data collected, which is appropriate and necessary for a qualitative study (Patton, 2002). The process and methodology involved asking participants to describe perceptions and their imagination and memory of experiences (Polkinghorne, 1989). Women within their first 10 years of leadership were excluded from the study because they needed sufficient experience and/or opportunities to encounter and overcome enough challenges to speak consistently about the themes and patterns of resiliency.

An in-depth interview is a methodology for data collection within a phenomenological study (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Polkinghorne, 1989). In-depth interviews offer a very flexible data-gathering tool and are easily modified to accommodate a variety of research and applied situations (Punch, 2013). Punch (2013) believed interviewing is one of the main tools of qualitative data gathering a "good way to access people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality" (p. 175). As it turns out, an in-depth interview is a preferred tool among feminist qualitative

researchers whenever there is a choice for a nonhierarchical research relationship between participant and researcher (Punch, 2013). Furthermore, Punch identified in-depth interviewing as a tool that minimizes status and gender differences between researcher and participant, increasing communication, rapport, breadth, and depth of disclosures that can translate into a more comfortable environment, which enhances greater data quality and insights for the study in question.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Strauss and Corbin (1994) suggested that, as researchers, we sincerely understand that we must accept full responsibility and hold ourselves accountable for the interpretative roles of what we observe, hear, and read. Colaizzi (1978) concurred and contended that researchers carry into their research the sensitizing possibilities of their own personal and research experiences, training, readings, beliefs, values, and explicit theories used within disciplines that might be useful.

### **Data Collection**

The target population for this phenomenological study consisted of women leaders who occupy senior-level positions within academia, corporate, and government. Three women leaders participated in the study. The inclusion criteria included women with (a) more than 10 years of experience in a senior-level leadership position; (b) the knowledge and ability to read and comprehend written and spoken English language; and (c) consistent access to electronic media, which included a functioning landline telephone, cellular device, and or a computer network were included. For this study, a leadership role is defined as having responsibility as a manager of 10 or more people or having been or still being a significant leader on a high visibility/large project within the workplace.

Also, women who were unable to read and comprehend written and spoken English and who did not have access to electronic media (i.e., functioning landline telephone, cellular device, and or a computer network) were excluded from participating in the study, as this is a requirement for all communication between the participants and the researcher. Males were excluded, given that the study focuses on identifying similarities across lived experiences that involve women leaders and their perspectives on resilience.

### **Informed Consent Procedures**

A recruitment letter was mailed to prospective participants interested in learning more about the study, outlining an overview of the research. An email script was developed explaining the details of the research for those individuals who are interested in the research study. The researcher created a separate email script for individuals who still needed to meet the inclusion criteria and sent it to them accordingly. For the

participants who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate in the study, an email was sent to each individual with an Informed Consent Form for the research study participation document.

The consent form included the purpose of the study, procedures, any possible risks or benefits to participating, a participation statement, confidentiality of information, and contact information for answers to interview questions. For audiotaping semistructured face-to-face interviews, each participant was emailed a voluntary consent to audiotape document before the interview.

### **Interview Guide**

An interview protocol was created to guide the interview organization and implementation. The interview protocol included instructions for each interview. The six interview questions were developed to stimulate an in-depth discussion of women leaders' lived experiences with significant challenges they encountered in the workplace.

- IQ1: How would you define resilience?
- IQ2: How does/has resiliency worked for you in the context of your role as a woman leader?
- IQ3: Would you please share with me three experiences of significant challenges during your tenure as a leader?
- IQ4: What personal characteristics or abilities did you use to overcome each of those significant challenges?
- IQ5: When reflecting on these experiences of significant challenge, what other thoughts might you have about the role of resilience in leadership?
- IQ6: What recommendations would you provide to young female leaders striving toward a senior-level position?

### **Interview Procedures**

Each individual participated in a 30-minute audio-taped, semistructured interview to reveal significant challenges experienced as a woman leader and what strategies are believed to encourage and promote resilience in her leadership roles. To maintain confidentiality, each interview was conducted in the participant's workplace, an agreed-upon workspace, home, or via telephone – whichever was most convenient for the participant. At the start of the interview, the researcher discussed the study's purpose and confidentiality procedures, and the participant was offered an opportunity to ask

any questions regarding the study. To ensure the participant's right to privacy, all collected data (i.e., audio-taped interviews, field notes, written documentation) were secured in a locked drawer, and computer files were stored and encrypted on a password-protected external USB throughout the study.

Collected data were not stored on the hard drive of any computer or laptop. By Regent University research protocol, the researcher destroyed all audiotapes and data after 30 days, with the demagnetization of audiotapes and professional shredding of all paper documents. The research study results did not include information regarding the participants' identities. The researcher included the participants' industry types and locations. However, no names, places of business, or other identifying factors were published.

While conducting the interviews for this qualitative study, a prescribed research protocol served for accuracy, credibility, and transferability (Yin, 2014). Permission to proceed with a qualitative study intended for publishing must receive proper approval from the Institutional Review Board of Regent University. Application to the board includes Informed Consent Forms for each participant's signature. The consent forms were written at a level of communication to facilitate a clear understanding by the participants involved in the research. This research study was not published.

## **Data Analysis**

A manual coding process analyzes data to determine the dynamic concepts, themes, and theoretical frameworks. The coding process followed an induction process. Patton (2002) stated:

Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's data. Findings emerge from the data through the analyst's interactions with the data. Qualitative analysis is typically inductive in the early stages, especially when developing a codebook for content analysis or figuring out possible categories, patterns, and themes. (p. 542)

According to Miles et al. (2018), "Coding is divided into two major stages: first cycle and second cycle coding" (p. 64). The first-cycle coding methodology represents codes initially designated to data units, and the second-cycle coding methodology works in concert with the resulting first-cycle codes (Miles et al., 2018, p. 64).

According to Chenail (2012), coding in qualitative data analysis is a function of repetition in that each code must include the unique qualities of that which is being coded to create an essential and meaningful code. Miles et al. (2018) emphasized that "codes are primarily, but not exclusively, used to retrieve and categorize similar data



units so the researcher can quickly find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular interview question, hypothesis, concept, or theme” (p. 63).

## Results

The findings from the perceptions of three women leaders who believe resilience is important for women leaders in the workplace follow. The first-cycle data units describe the experiences that generate the first-cycle codes. The participants provided experiences and perceptions that influenced the first cycle coding methodology.

Table 1 contains excerpts from Interview Question 1.

Table 1: Induction Process – Interview Question 1: How would you define resilience?

Participant	Interview answers with codes
1	“I define resilience as the ability to recover (Code: Recover) in the midst of struggle (Code: Struggle) or hardship (Code: Hardship). It is having the strength (Code: Strength) and determination (Code: Determination) – deep down, in your heart and soul, gut type of strength to run back, fight back, talk back, yell back and get on your feet no matter what your situation is (Code: Relentless).”
2	“Resilience is facing a difficult situation with little or no help or resolution and figuring out how to still do your best. It is perseverance (Code: Perseverance), strength (Code: Strength), self-discipline (Code: Self-discipline), inner courage (Code: Courage), and determination (Code: Determination) beyond a setback. It is a switch. For some people, you have to turn it on or off; for others, the resilience button stays on, so they are always aware (Code: Awareness) and ready.”
3	“Resilience is becoming stronger (Code: Strength) by your struggle (Code - Struggle). It is the capability to recover (Code: Recover), adjust, adapt, and overcome (Code: Overcome) from a misfortune. Resilience is dealing with tough times and tough (Code: Tough) conditions that stretch beyond your capacity and changing (Code: Change) in a way that makes you better so you can return (Code: Return) stronger than you were before your setback.”

First-cycle coding generated 19 codes for Interview Question 1. The codes represent the values from each participant using induction coding analysis. Table 2 contains the clustered codes that display attitude, beliefs, commitment, and determination.

Table 2: First-Cycle Codes and Values Clusters – Interview Question 1

Code clusters	Values cluster
Determination (2), Perseverance	Determination
Awareness, Change, Courage	Fortitude
Strength	Intentions
Overcome, Recover, Struggle, Hardship, Return	Desire to Overcome
Relentless, Tough	Relentlessness
Self-Discipline	Self-Regulation

There are many ways of reorganizing codes and assembling them into specific clusters because they seem to go together (Miles et al., 2018, p. 82). Clustering is a process that can assist with further explaining comprehensive levels of qualitative data as it helps researchers better understand data by grouping and then conceptualizing ideas that have similar patterns or characteristics (Miles et al., 2018, p. 276). Table 3 contains excerpts from Interview Question 2.

Table 3: Interview Question 2: How does/has resiliency worked for you in the context of your role as a senior leader?

Participant	Interview answers with codes
1	“God and spirituality (Code: Spirituality). I trust God (Code: God). I grew up believing that God would not burden me with more than He knew I could handle. I could feel the cogs and wheels turning inside me as a leader (Code: Leader) whenever I had a setback (Code: Setback). I remember feeling like God wanted me to do something else, go somewhere else, or just be still. I allowed adversity (Code: Adversity) to teach instead of tearing me apart. Resiliency worked for me sometimes in a way that forced me to sit down and shut up long enough to realize what was happening so I could reassess, reorganize, and readdress (Code: Reorganize).”
2	“Pick your poison... Either way, there is judgment. As a senior leader, resiliency has worked in a capacity (Code: Capacity) to emphasize and draw on my success and strengths (Code: Strength). It makes me work harder and overall builds (Code: Growth) my self-confidence (Code: Self-confidence), mainly when I reflect on what occurred. Resiliency has

Participant	Interview answers with codes
	permitted me to advocate for myself because I know I deserve to be where I am.”
3	“I had to adapt and overcome (Code: Overcome) as a senior leader. Once you gain enough experience in the area of resilience, you become agile (Code: Agility) and flexible. You have to study yourself and the things within your environment. Resilience makes you seek knowledge, skills, mentoring, and motivation (Code: Motivation). It also makes you creative (Code: Creativity). As a senior leader, when things did not work out, or I had a surprise or setback, I immediately became innovative about how to resolve a problem or fix a situation.”

First-cycle coding generated 14 codes for Interview Question 2. The codes represent the values from each participant using induction coding analysis. Table 4 contains the clustered codes that display attitude, beliefs, commitment, and determination.

Table 4: First-Cycle Codes and Values Clusters – Interview Question 2

Code clusters	Values cluster
God, Spirituality	Beliefs
Leader	Fortitude
Adversity, Overcome, Set-back	Desire to Overcome
Recognize, Agility, Strength, Motivation, Capacity	Intentions
Self-Confidence, Growth	Self-Regulation
Creativity	Relentlessness

Table 5 contains excerpts from Interview Question 3.

Table 5: Induction Process – Interview Question 3: Would you please share with me three experiences of significant challenges during your tenure as a leader?

Participant	Interview answers with codes
1	“My first situation was when I was responsible for organizing a seminar for visiting professors, and my colleague challenged my entire presentation, suggesting I was incompetent (Code: Tolerance). We had an audience, by the way. The second was when I interviewed for a consulting position in my community right after giving birth to my second child. I was challenged (Code: Challenge) about possibly pulling

Participant	Interview answers with codes
	the “mommy card” in the middle of the project. The last incident was last year. When I expressed an interest in becoming a chef. I am not sure if you want me to tell you about the outcome or not...”
2	“We had just experienced our second decline in market share against a major competitor, so everyone was on edge and paranoid (Code: Endurance). The bottom line was that the steering committee, primarily men, needed to find my skills, experience, and knowledge base more helpful and relevant. I was dismissed from the committee without a say (Code: Disappointment). The second challenge I experienced was when my vice president gave me feedback on my performance appraisal that spelled out that I was an idiot (Code: Unexpected). My level of education was challenged, I was asked personal questions about my family...I was in an interracial marriage at that time. My leadership style or lack thereof was criticized and so on...”
3	“Well, there was that time when I had a family member that had become chronically ill rather quickly. The person passed away while I was on a forced business trip, but that is another story. In any case, I felt guilty about not helping out and requested time off (Code: Emotional). Someone else in my department had just returned to the office after getting approval for the same situation...a man, by the way. It just so happens that our team was in the middle of business planning (Code: Planning). I was reprimanded for not having my priorities in order. The third challenge was when my boss promoted one of my subordinates to be my boss. I went on a business trip, and when I returned, one of the guys that worked for me was promoted without my knowledge (Code: Unexpected), and I had to report to him on two of the projects I was working on.”

First-cycle coding generated eight codes for Interview Question 3. The codes represent the values from each participant using induction coding analysis. Table 6 contains the clustered codes that display attitude, beliefs, commitment, and determination.

Table 6: First-Cycle Codes and Values Clusters – Interview Question 3

Code clusters	Values cluster
Disappointment, Emotional	Attitude
Planning	Commitment
Endurance	Determination

Code clusters	Values cluster
Challenge	Desire to Overcome
Tolerance, Unexpected (2)	Relentlessness

Table 7 contains excerpts from Interview Question 4.

Table 7: Induction Process – Interview Question 4: What personal characteristics or abilities did you use to overcome each of those significant challenges?

Participant	Interview answers with codes
1	“Emotional Intelligence (Code: Emotional Intelligence), personal accountability (Code: Accountability), excellence, strong character, and how I will not allow anyone to define me. I focus on my potential (Code: Potential) instead of my limitations. My favorite quote is from Frederick Douglass: “The collapse of character begins with compromise.” I check my mind, body, and spirit whenever I take on a challenge (Code: Challenge). I find my balance, and then I find my strength.”
2	“I grew up surrounded by strong females who bounced back (Code: Bounce-back) from any and everything. They were strong role models and teachers of resilience. I overcame my challenges (Code: Challenge) by defeating failure and making a liar out of those who did not want me to be successful. I focused on creativity (Code: Creativity), conflict resolution, competence...you have to know what you are talking about and how to do it (Code: Confidence). Demonstrate, perform at the highest level, be results-oriented, and remember you are human. I believed in a force much greater than me. I kept my faith and my family close.”
3	“It was necessary for me to be dynamic and also be willing to change (Code: Dynamic). Challenges will change you for better or for worse. Resilient people change for the better. They grow. I grew and overcame (Code: Endurance), if you will. Challenge makes me competitive, self-confident, and ambitious (Code: Ambitious). Adapt and overcome through encounters (Code: Adapt) with resilience/adversity, developed unique skills and expertise to be considered indispensable.”

First-cycle coding generated 11 codes for Interview Question 4. The codes represent the values from each participant using induction coding analysis. Table 8 contains the clustered codes that display attitude, beliefs, commitment, and determination.

Table 8: First-Cycle Codes and Values Clusters – Interview Question 4

Code clusters	Values cluster
Emotional Intelligence	Attitude
Accountability	Commitment
Bounce-back, Endurance	Determination
Challenge (2)	Desire to Overcome
Potential, Dynamic	Perspective
Creativity, Adapt	Relentlessness
Confidence	Self-Regulation

Table 9 contains excerpts from Interview Question 5.

Table 9: Induction Process – Interview Question 5: When reflecting on these experiences of significant challenge, what other thoughts might you have about the role of resilience in leadership?

Participant	Interview answers with codes
1	“For the sake of time, I think that covers the big buckets. Resilience is knowing who you are as a leader (Code: Leader) and that you can push through any situation and allow it to make you stronger (Code: Strength).”
2	“The harsh reality is, men rule this rule, and we as women cannot expect handouts (Code: Tough). You have to earn it and fight to keep it. I have learned to be sturdy, strategic, and resourceful (Code: Resourceful). Always keep the lights on...The world is fast-paced and unpredictable (Code: Unpredictable).”
3	“Learn tolerance (Code: Tolerance), but do not allow people to run over you because you will lose credibility, and your colleagues will not value your opinion. Maintain strong values and believe (Code: Believe) in something meaningful and give purpose (Code: Purpose) to your life outside of work. Listen more often than you speak.”

First-cycle coding generated eight codes for Interview Question 5. The codes represent the values from each participant using induction coding analysis. Table 10 contains the clustered codes that display attitude, beliefs, commitment, and determination.

Table 10: First Cycle Codes and Values Clusters – Interview Question 5

Code clusters	Value clusters
Purpose	Commitment
Leader, Believe	Fortitude
Resourceful, Strength	Intentions
Tolerance, Unpredictable, Tough	Relentlessness

Table 11 contains excerpts from Interview Question 6.

Table 11: Induction Process – Interview Question 6: What recommendations would you provide to young female leaders striving toward a senior-level position?

Participant	Interview answers with codes
1	“Always be self-aware (Code: Awareness), and not let your guard down. Hold yourself accountable (Code: Accountable) and seek out mentors who are where you want to be. Also, find a network or community of like-minded people you can call on for support. Maintain control of your emotions and keep your business to yourself.”
2	“Cope, courage, confidence, (Code: Courage) class, competence, collaborate, change (Code: Change), consistency... (pause)... creativity (Code: Creativity), commitment (Code: Commitment), and communication... Also, find a good mentor.”
3	“Gain respect while enduring your challenge (Code: Endurance). Don’t give up. Ensure you are self-directed (Code: Determination) in learning, staying current on technology, etc. Keep right on your side. Do not lie, cheat, or steal. It is never a good outcome (Code: Character) when you engage in such behavior. It is not worth it. Also, network when the opportunity (Code: Opportunity) is non-threatening and right.”

First-cycle coding generated 10 codes for Interview Question 6. The codes represent the values from each participant using induction coding analysis. Table 12 contains the clustered codes that represent a display of attitude, beliefs, commitment, and determination.

Table 12: First Cycle Codes and Values Clusters – Interview Question 6

Code clusters	Value clusters
Commitment, Accountability	Commitment
Determination, Endurance	Determination

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Code clusters	Value clusters
Awareness, Change, Courage	Fortitude
Opportunity	Perspective
Creativity	Relentlessness
Character	Self-regulation

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After removing all redundancies, first-cycle coding generated 47 codes and 10 value clusters for Interview Questions 1-6. The codes represent the values from each participant using induction coding analysis. Table 13 contains the clustered values.

Table 13: First Cycle Codes and Values Clusters – Interview Questions 1-6

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Code clusters	Value clusters
Emotional Intelligence, Disappointment, Emotional	Attitude
God, Spirituality	Beliefs
Planning, Accountable, Purpose, Commitment	Commitment
Struggle, Hardship, Overcome, Challenge, Recover, Return, Adversity, Set-back	Desire to Overcome
Determination, Perseverance, Endurance, Bounce-back	Determination
Awareness, Courage, Change, Leader, Believe	Fortitude
Capacity, Reorganize, Motivation, Strength, Agility, Resourceful	Intentions
Potential, Dynamic, Opportunity	Perspective
Tough, Relentless, Unpredictable, Creativity, Unexpected, Tolerance, Adapt	Relentlessness
Self-Discipline, Self-Confidence, Growth, Confidence, Self-Regulation Character	

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## Discussion

This study aimed to understand the essential coping skills, beliefs, values, and leadership styles that cultivate and build endurance during adversity. The three purposeful participants collectively explained resilience relative to women's role in leadership by describing lived experiences that involved values associated with resilience. The data examined in this study answer the research question with emerging themes that show resilience is essential to women leaders in the workplace because the values addressed in the participants' interview questions directly impact their attitude, beliefs, commitment, determination, fortitude, intentions, desire to overcome, perspective, relentlessness, and self-regulation. The participants spoke candidly about situations and circumstances that influenced the coping skills necessary to reinforce their beliefs, values, and leadership styles. Some high-frequency codes relate to strength, determination, challenge, and the unexpected. These codes align with emerging theories associated with resilience, especially during adversity.

Qualitative methods are recognized as appropriate where research on a particular topic is lacking, such as in this case: women leaders with lived experiences of resilience. Using phenomenological methods assumes that the lived experience still needs a deeper understanding and description before the field proceeds with a more conceptual or theoretical perspective

(Polkinghorne, 1989). Recommendations for future research include inductive coding analysis with additional interviews and research questions to understand a more definitive theoretical framework with emerging themes that support leadership styles and constructs.

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### About the Author

Nicole Parker is pursuing a Ph.D. in the School of Business and Leadership, concentrating on Resilience and Leadership. She earned a Master of Business Administration and a Bachelor of Science in Marketing. Nicole is a retired U.S. Army Colonel, serving over 27 years in logistics, operations, finance, marketing, and public affairs. She was Vice President of Product Development for the United Parcel Service (UPS) eCommerce Group, worked in several management positions for The Coca-Cola Company in Global Marketing and Advertising, and was a Commodity Buyer for Mars, Inc. Currently, Nicole engages with nonprofit organizations that support homeless families and mentoring programs for young adults.

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