

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES: A SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CRISIS

By

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The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis research study was to gain a more in-depth understanding of how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are impacting the learning outcomes of many students. The qualitative study sought to investigate how school leaders are addressing the ACEs crisis and how they are implementing a Trauma-Informed Cultures.

Implementing a culturally responsive trauma-informed approach to understand and respond to students can address the impact of disparities, teach resiliency skills, and promote the wellbeing and achievement of all students.

For this study, interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) methods were used with 10 teachers. The data were collected through the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and semistructured interviews highlighting the lived experiences of the participants.

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The findings acknowledged raised awareness regarding mental health, smaller classrooms, social-emotional school initiatives, and community partnerships were providing benefits to the school community and improving the culture. The analysis of all the data revealed that the participants recognize the impact that ACEs have on students, and creating a trauma-informed culture through a culturally competent perspective influences school leaders to lead with empathy and compassion. Ultimately, this study found that developing a culturally responsive trauma-informed approach to understanding and responding to students can address the impact of disparities, teach resiliency skills, and promote all students' well-being and achievement. Among children, those who are exposed to ACEs may have been traumatized and display behaviors in school that hinder their development in socially and academically appropriate manners.

The results from this study have implication for school leaders and educational policy.