BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Engrossed in the field of Positive Psychology, this research project is an area of Transformational Leadership, focused on exploring experiences that contribute to a life of empowerment and flourishing. This research was ontological-phenomenological in nature and used narrative inquiry to gather stories from the participants. This exploration was transformative in nature, and it sought to discover experiences that allowed for transformation to occur, and in the process of the transformation, standing on flourishing and empowerment created a space where whatever is, is perfect. The research focuses on exploring experiences that are correlated with a life of empowerment and flourishing, with the aim of contributing to this field and literature, as Selman and Ketsdechtrish (2000) propose, “Psychology should be able to help document what kinds of families result in children who flourish.”

Transformational parenting and teaching, as used in this research, refers to the transformation of the adult role that a parent, teacher, or any significant adult in the life of the child, so that the integrity of the essence of the child is honored and respected, and the flourishing adult might freely emerge in the future. Maria Montessori expressed the true meaning of transformative teaching in her structuring of her methodological, “We shall be formed by a child as he was considered before - a powerful being - an empty vessel that must be filled with our wisdom. This dignity will arise in fullness in front of our eyes as he reveals himself as the constructor of our intelligence, as the being wise, guided by the inner teacher, in joy and happiness works indefatigably, following a strict time-table, to the construction of that motor of nature. MAN [sic]. We, the human teachers, can only help the great work that is being done, as servants help the master.” (Montessori, 1962, Chapter 1, Section 4, para. 1)

RESEARCH METHOD

The research focused on exploring experiences during childhood that correlate to an adult life of empowerment and flourishing. Of particular interest was observing whether unconditional loving is present in these experiences. The research is foundational and employs a method of qualitative research.

Population and Sample: A Sample of twelve adult participants were recruited to this study, with no restrictions on gender, ethnicity, geographic location, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, family history, or lifestyle preference. The sample size of the ten participants was determined by the ten participants that were identified by the Personnel Department.

The PERMA test results were analyzed using a descriptive statistical method, and the data was calculated and measured using SPSS. Various PERMA results plus happiness and flourishing scores (including Negative affect, Positive affect, Engagement and Meaning scores) were measured.

FINDINGS

Interviews were coded by content and the emerging themes were: Current experience of life, Negative experiences that influenced, Significant Adult that influenced, Values that were experienced and learned, Ways of being of the Significant Adult (Ontology), and What was Provided to the Child.

1. Significant Adult that influenced: Eleven sub-codes were identified, the most significant adults were: MOM (33%), Dad (16%), Grandparents (14%), Aunt/Uncle (11%).

2. Values that were experienced and learned: Sixteen sub-codes, top five were: Hard Work (21%), Responsibility (15%), Care for Others (15%), Resilience (10%), Being of Service – Contribution (9%).

3. Ways of being of the Significant Adult (Ontology): Nineteen sub-codes, top five were: Loving (18%), Caring & Nurturing (15%), Empowerment (13%), Nurturing Care (7%), Conversations (6%), Imagination (6%).

4. What was provided to the Child: Twenty-six sub-codes, top five were: Unconditional Loving (16%), Support (10%), Empowerment (8%), Nurturing & Care (6%), Conversations (6%), Imagination (6%).

DISCUSSION

Finding experiences that are correlated to a life of flourishing can bring opportunities for transformation in the world. Some of these experiences can be shared with conscious parents and teachers or any significant adult in the life of a child, the chances for increasing flourishing in the planet multiple.

Implications for Parenting & Teaching.
- The nuclear core family is in most cases where the significant adult who can generate a lasting impact of empowerment can be found, however, as important as the family is the influence that teachers have in generating empowerment and flourishing adults. Parents, grandparents, aunts, family members and teachers must never lose awareness of how significant their actions and “ways of being” are in the life of the child.
- The most impactful experience that an adult can give to a child for their future empowerment is unconditional loving and support, an adult that is certain to have their loving and possessions, which matters in shaping a fullness life. Being of service was a fulfilling behavior that the adult exemplified to the child, transformational leadership in action.
- The most impactful “Way of Being” of significant adults is being loving, caring, nurturing and present. Equally important are expressions of love that are not necessarily physical but that the child can truly get being loving and nurturing. Particularly relevant is the distinction that empowering adults were identified as “loving but firm” in a majority of our findings.
- The values of unconditional adults were hard work, responsibility, and care for others.

Implications for Montessori: Montessori Principles are aligned with Transactional Teaching in which the adult undergoes transformation to be of service to the child, for his or her nurturing and empowering. It is recommended that Montessori schools educate parents into transformation because the influence of the teacher is substantial. The promotion of a holistic approach to learning. The Montessori method is to promote continuous learning and self-directed learning. The Montessori method promotes self-regulated learning, and the teacher is a facilitator.

Limitations & Next Steps: It was challenging to find empowered adults and have a larger study sample. Next steps include sharing findings with a larger audience and recruiting more participants into the study to explore changes and enrichment of findings.

REFERENCES

These are references that are relevant to the research findings in the study.