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Building resilience, navigating crises since 2019: a phenomenological study of leadership factors influencing retail business owners in Lebanon

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BUILDING RESILIENCE, NAVIGATING CRISES SINCE 2019: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL

STUDY OF LEADERSHIP FACTORS INFLUENCING RETAIL BUSINESS OWNERS IN

LEBANON

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

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Doctor of Philosophy in Global Leadership and Change

by

Mira Fadel

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This dissertation, written by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved mother and best friend, Susan Barakat Fadel. Her maiden name, "Barakat", truly signifies the blessings she has bestowed me with. Her enduring spirit, resilience, and passion for business and psychology have been passed down to me. I am here today, because of her unwavering support and sacrifices. One key lesson she often shared with me is, "no pain no gain" I used to think it was harsh. Due to this dissertation journey and many challenges I faced, I have now come to the same conclusion. After adversity, one grows stronger and becomes like a resilient cedar tree. This dissertation is a tribute to the wisdom and strength I have inherited from my mother.

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Fadel, M., Yin, Z., Chen, S., Zhang, K., Hao, T., Llamas, J., & Llamas, M. (2024). Lingering Effects of the Class Ceiling on Leadership Development. *The Scholarship Without Borders Journal*, 2(1), 16.

Fadel, M., Yin, Z., Chen, S., Zhang, A., Hao, T., Llamas, J., & Llamas, M. (2024). Female Leadership Development: From a Non-Western Perspective. *The Scholarship Without Borders Journal*, 2(1), 15.

CONFERENCE PAPERS & PRESENTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The Lebanese population and culture are recognized for their resilience when facing adversity withstanding events such as the Lebanese Civil War, and multiple country invasions. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of retail business owners from different geographical regions and retail types in Lebanon and to identify the leadership factors that kept them resilient while navigating the compounding crises since 2019. The leadership factors included leadership styles, strategies, and agility. The conceptual framework encompassed all leadership factors, the retail industry, cultural context, and resilience. Data for this hermeneutic phenomenology was collected through semi-structured interviews followed by document analysis of the 13 participants. Based on the findings, the study had four major conclusions. A combination of value-centered and adaptive leadership styles was prominent among the retail leaders in Lebanon, which led to collective resilience. The overlap of the strategies during the different phases of the crises affected resilience. High levels of agility coupled with reflective action nurtured resilience in a country in a constant VUCA state. Finally, the interplay of leadership factors resulted in the retail leaders' collective and leadership resilience. So, from the conceptual framework, the researcher proposed the MIRA (Multifaceted Intercultural Resilience Approaches) Leadership model. Therefore, the findings and conclusions indicate that integrating the MIRA Leadership model into training and mentorship programs, and curriculums would benefit business schools, policymakers, and retail business owners to foster collective resilience. The study also encourages other researchers to conduct inclusive studies considering diverse geographic regions and participants, capturing a holistic perspective, and refining the model further.

Keywords: Leadership, resilience, culture, crises, retail, business owners.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter Overview

The opening chapter provided a comprehensive outline for this study. It included the following sections: (a) the background of the study and its significance, (b) the problem and purpose statement, (c) and the pertaining research questions that will guide the study. Key terms used throughout the research were clarified, and the chapter introduced the philosophical and conceptual frameworks that underpin the study. Finally, a chapter summary set the stage for the following chapters.

Background of the Study

In the 1960s, Lebanon held the title of "Switzerland of the Middle East" due to its free-market economy and democratic government (Khalil & Dagher, 2023). The small and beautiful country has an area of 4,036 square miles. Lebanon was also considered a central commercial hub for the Middle East due to its strategic location on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, historical business and trade culture, and fertile agricultural lands (Attieh & Begum, 2022). Lebanese entrepreneurs have Phoenician blood coursing through their veins. Consequently, they spread a legacy of business savviness and creativity locally and globally (Attieh & Begum, 2022). Still, these entrepreneurs and business owners face significant obstacles, such as political instability and corruption.

For instance, in 1975, the onset of the civil war in Lebanon and government mismanagement caused the image and title to slip away gradually (Khalil & Dagher, 2023). The "Country of the Cedars" was destroyed and rebuilt from the ashes seven times, restored, and transformed (Cheaito & Al-Hajj, 2020). Notably, Lebanon blossomed after the civil war from 1975 to 1990 due to financing from Lebanese banks and aided by its geography and relationship

with countries abroad (Hill, 2019). Lebanon has been a role model for other countries that have been challenged with multiple hurdles due to a failing government (Fleifel & Farraj, 2022). Subsequently, Lebanon has often been compared to the mythological bird, the phoenix (Bizri et al., 2020).

Besides, the Lebanese people and culture are frequently revered for their resilience while tackling adversity and are honored by that label (Bizri et al., 2020; Fleifel & Farraj, 2022). As a result of the multiple invasions and widespread missionary education, the Lebanese speak approximately three languages, Arabic, English, and French, often in the same sentence (Baladi, 2018). A customary greeting demonstrating the linguistic blend used in Lebanon is, "Hi كيفك ça va?" The phrase ties in all three languages, with 'Hi' in English 'كيفك' in Arabic, and 'ça va' in French which roughly translates to "Hi, how are you?" Consequently, instead of regressing due to the invasions, the country now holds a pluralistic identity where several cultures and religions thrive like Christianity, Islam, and Druze (Baladi, 2018).

However, since 2019, the country has encountered numerous irreparable crises: (a) the October 17 protests and revolution, (b) the financial scandal and crisis, (c) the COVID-19 pandemic, and (d) the massive Beirut Port Explosion, and healthcare crisis (Fleifel & Farraj, 2022; Khalil & Dagher, 2023). The assailing crises have caused half of the Lebanese population to live below the national poverty line. Even essential services such as fuel and electricity have deteriorated (World Bank, 2021). Lebanon has now earned the title of "Venezuela of the Middle East", since Venezuela has also been experiencing one of the direst economic crises since 2014 (Khalil & Dagher, 2023). Therefore, Lebanese citizens are doubtful whether the Phoenix will be able to overcome these compounding and simultaneous challenges and rise once more (Bizri et al., 2020; Mjaess et al., 2021).

According to the World Bank report (2021), the year 2019 marked the start of the "deliberate depression" witnessed in Lebanon. The financial collapse and crisis were reflected by its ranking as one of the worst three predicaments since the 1990s after the Spanish Civil War. After all, Lebanon had been confronting the worst economic and financial crisis. According to Wehbi (2020), the country had accumulated crippling debt and budget deficits that amounted to 15 % of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Moreover, the Lebanese currency has lost its value in the exchange market since the country depleted 70 % of its dollar reserve. Subsequently, even the banking sector, the pillar of the Lebanese economy, dried up, and local banks became bankrupt (Wehbi, 2020).

 As a result, there were even restrictions on international transfers out of Lebanon (Mjaess et al., 2021). Inflation damage mainly affected the unemployed, retirees, homemakers, and public sector employees since they had no access to their savings and no or limited income (Khalil & Dagher, 2023). On the other hand, private sector workers and business owners were less impacted since they were able to adjust their prices according to the level of inflation. Furthermore, due to the economic challenges, approximately 1,000 to 15,000 doctors and fresh medical graduates had already immigrated in search of stable economic, political, and financial conditions (Fleifel & Farraj, 2022).

Then, political unrest and civil protests occurred during October 2019 when the Lebanese government proposed a package of indirect taxes- even impacting the free messaging application WhatsApp Messenger (Abdo et al., 2020; ILO & Fafo, 2021). Consequently, angry Lebanese nationals protested on the streets. They demanded the resignation of the political cabinet and their replacement with a neutral government that seeks social justice and socio-economic reforms (Abdo et al., 2020). During February 2020, the Lebanese population witnessed their first case of

the global pandemic, coronavirus, which further aggravated the predicament (Bizri et al., 2021). The government imposed a country lockdown and travel restrictions to contain the disease (Attieh & Begum, 2022).

The educational, economic, political, and healthcare sectors took a massive hit, leading to detrimental social and economic repercussions (Bizri et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic even disrupted global trade by 32 %, especially in countries that rely heavily on exports to gain profit, such as the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon (Wehbi, 2020). Consequently, while the government-imposed lockdown reduced case numbers, it has caused the economic recession to revert to an "economic depression" (Wehbi, 2020). Afterward, in August 2020, the country's economy took another significant blow due to the Beirut Port Explosion, where 3000 tons of Ammonium Nitrate exploded and were heard 160 kilometers away in Cyprus (Cheaito & El-Hajj, 2020).

According to Fares et al. (2023), economists and policy experts assessed the physical damage and economic loss to be approximately 10 to 15 billion United States dollars (USD). Consequently, people were displaced from their homes and rendered homeless. The explosion led to the number of COVID-19 cases to soar since: (a) precautions against the virus were ignored when protests took place due to the improper placement of the Ammonium Nitrate, (b) hospitals were wrecked, and (c) hospital beds were filled with casualties (Fares et al., 2023).

According to a report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Fafo (2021), the dual and burgeoning consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut Port explosion on August 4, 2020, have further exasperated the challenges faced by business enterprises. For instance, the Beirut port explosion affected 56 % of privately owned commercial and industrial facilities (such as clothes, cars, food and beverages, and services). Micro, small, and medium

enterprises (MSMEs) are the critical drivers for Lebanon's socioeconomic stability and economic recovery (ILO & Fafo, 2020). Therefore, the ILO and Fafo (2021) conducted a survey (questionnaire) and face-to-face interviews to assess the impact of the challenges, mainly explosion, on business operations. The following types of enterprises were included:

- own-account enterprises comprised 56 %, where only the owner works there

- micro-enterprises were 36 %, which constituted one to five employees

- small, medium, and large enterprises (SMEs) were 8 %, where the owner had employed more than six employees

The survey results divulged that 60 % of profitable corporations before the explosion resumed normalcy and were confident they would remain resilient and prevail over the crises (ILO & Fafo, 2020). Similarly, profitable businesses (especially new and young ones such as startups) were the ones able to display agility and resilience strategies through adopting technology and social media platforms to promote and sell their products. Interestingly, the majority of surveyed enterprises pointed out that it was the ominous economic situation and poor political governance that was affecting their profitability level rather than the Beirut port explosion exclusively (ILO & Fafo, 2020).

Another enterprise survey was conducted by the World Bank (2021) for the years 2019 (pre-crises) and 2020 (post-crises) to evaluate the impact of the compounding crises on formal firms and the labor market in Lebanon. The survey revealed that larger firms were able to adapt more quickly and appeared more resilient than small firms post-crises, affirming the ILO and Fafo survey results. The manufacturing sector suffered more than wholesale, retail, and other services, where 70 % of manufacturing companies witnessed a drop in sales and demand for their

products and services. Nevertheless, the retail sector also suffered substantial losses (World Bank Group, 2021).

Therefore, this study focused on the successful business owners from MSMEs in the Lebanese retail industry and seeks to explore how they fostered resilience during these compounding crises.

Problem Statement

Currently, the Lebanese retail industry has sustained considerable financial loss due to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut Port Explosion, hyperinflation, and economic recession (Bizri et al., 2020; Wehbi, 2020). Accordingly, as per the ILO and Fafo (2021) report, the Lebanese MSMEs that were able to stay resilient and profitable were those with economic reserves (liquid assets set aside for future use). There have been studies and previous research highlighting the role of leadership styles and strategies of certain Lebanese political leaders, such as the prime minister of health, in promoting resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic (Harajli, 2023). Other studies also focused on leaders in the health sector in fostering resilience during crises since 2019 (Salam et al., 2023). Furthermore, there is research on the restaurant sector utilizing leadership strategies to foster resilience during pandemic and economic crises (Harb et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, there is a lack of literature on leaders fostering resilience from the retail service sector, which plays a substantial role in Lebanon's economic growth. Furthermore, while there is mention of financial business strategies to sustain enterprises during the economic situation in the Lebanese context, there is no mention of resilience in particular (Jaroudi & Hammoud, 2019). Moreover, the report by the ILO and Fafo (2021) considered the COVID-19 pandemic, political instability, and deteriorating economic situation yet failed to mention

whether other factors were aiding the Lebanese business leaders to prevail in the retail industry, such as social support, or even global partnerships.

Therefore, the researcher seeks to add to the literature on leadership and resilience theories in times of uncertainty and crises from the non-western perspective and inform businesses and policy-makers on what leadership factors could improve resilience in the retail industry amidst numerous concurrent crises.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the influence of leadership factors such as styles, strategies, and agility on Lebanese business owners' ability to foster resilience, while navigating the compounding crises since 2019. This study aimed to understand and analyze if there were any practical leadership factors (such as theories, frameworks, and models) applicable to the Lebanese business arena and present practical implications for business leaders and entrepreneurs facing similar situations and crises.

Significance of the Study

According to the World Bank Group Report (2021), even though the retail industry in Lebanon suffered immense financial losses, net exports from that industry were one of the positive contributors to the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As a result, the retail industry supported the troubled economy and was a leading source of resilience (Malaeb, 2018). As a matter of fact, the retail industry contributes to 80% of the GDP, and is credited for keeping the country afloat and resilient. The retail industry has been overlooked by researchers in the past, especially during COVID-19 and after the Beirut Port Explosion (Cheaito & El-Hajj, 2020).

Understandably, the majority of the focus was on the medical and the political industries' decision-making and leadership. Consequently, by exploring the leadership factors and practices

within the retail sector, the research could be significant to policymakers, business leaders, and organizations. Moreover, by focusing on the retail industry, the researcher seeks to fill the literature gap.

This study also had significant implications for advancing the understanding of leadership factors that contribute to the resilience of business leaders during crises, especially from a non-western perspective. Suppose corporations desire to remain key players in global development. In that case, they must develop and invest in leaders who have cultural competence and who can appreciate diversity at the home and in foreign countries (Bartlett et al., 2019).

Besides, a successful leader in one country, might fail in another if they are unaware of the cultural contingencies. Therefore, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of leadership, especially during times of crisis. Moreover, this research provided a general guideline for organizations to promote more culturally sensitive leadership practices to foster resilience during times of crises.

Definition of Terms

This section defines critical terms mentioned throughout this study in alphabetical order.

Concept: According to Solonchak and Pesina (2015), a concept is built based on a particular structure and constitutes various interrelated elements that are formed by the researcher to convey meaning and definition to a certain moment and phenomenon. Concept formation is convenient since it is a "trial description" that can constantly evolve based on a situation.

Factors: According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology (n.d-a), a factor can be anything that contributes to a result or has a causal relationship to an action. Another

complementary definition of a factor is an underlying influence that accounts for the variance in an individual's behavior.

Framework: A framework provides a foundation and crucial role for research and inquiry (Partelow, 2023). Frameworks have the ability to connect different ideas while not solely relying on deductive logic. Leadership frameworks included leadership agility.

Leader: The term leader originated in the 1300s, yet it has been defined differently due to the researchers' diverse cultural, historical, and academic backgrounds (Malik & Azmat, 2019). According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology (n.d-b), a comprehensive definition of a leader is a person who rises to a position of authority in an organization or society, like the head of a university department or a military commander. Malik and Azmat (2019) state that a leader sets objectives for their followers and team, and then "rallies" them to achieve these targets and goals.

Leadership: Over the past few decades, leadership theory has gained increased attention and evolved dynamically, resulting in approximately 200 varying definitions (Northouse, 2021). From the 1980s until the 21st century, transformational, trait, authentic, and spiritual leadership theories emerged, among many others. According to Northouse (2021), an all-encompassing definition of leadership is an interactive process where leaders influence their followers to achieve a common good or goal-mutual purpose.

Leadership agility: The term leadership agility is the leader's ability to make wise decisions due to a fast-paced changes and a dynamic environment (Joiner, 2019).

Leadership factors: For the purpose of this paper, the researcher utilized the term leadership factors to represent the leadership theories (styles), frameworks (strategies), and

models (agility) employed by Lebanese business leaders during the crises since 2019 to foster resilience (Researcher Definition).

Models: Models are the middle-ground between theories and data (Wunsch, 1994). Models are visual representations of a person's world view, and are employed to express theories and make predictions.

Organizational agility: The organization's ability to sense and respond to changes based on its external and internal environment (Worley et al., 2014). An agile corporation has four elements: (a) a robust strategy, (b) shared leadership and a change-friendly identity, (c) adaptable design, and (d) value-creating capability. There are three key levers of organizational agility: strategic, operational, and leadership agility (Joiner, 2019).

Resilience: The ability to recover and adjust from hardships and adversity, growing more robust and resourceful (Masten et al., 2021).

Retail Industry: The researcher relied on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) since it has global partnerships. As per the NAICS, the retail industry includes all companies and individuals involved in selling merchandise and services to the end-user or consumer (United States Census Bureau, 2022). The retail industry is composed of motor vehicles and part dealers, furniture and home furnishing stores, electronics and appliance stores, building materials and garden equipment, food and beverage stores, health and personal care stores, gasoline stations, clothing and accessories stores, hobby stores (including bookstores, music stores, and sporting goods stores), general merchandise stores, miscellaneous store retailers (like pet and pet supply stores, florists, and used merchandise stores), and non-store retailers (i.e., electronic shopping, and advertisement services). The National Retail Federation

recently added food services and drinking places such as mobile food services, limited-service eating places, and full-service restaurants (The National Retail Federation & PwC, 2020).

Retail leaders: A retail leader is a person of authority or a business owner in the retail industry (APA dictionary, n.d-b). Accordingly, for the purpose of this study, the researcher will use the term to refer to the retail business owners in Lebanon that were able to survive the compounding crises since 2019 (Researcher Definition). The researcher will use the terms 'retail leader' and 'retail owner' interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

Strategy: An action or program designed to achieve a task (*APA Dictionary of Psychology*, n.d-c).

Theory: Theories offer researcher objectivity through organizing knowledge and framing conducted observations and experiments (Longo & Soto, 2016). Leadership theories include transformational, transactional, and authentic leadership theories, among many others.

VUCA: VUCA usually is an acronym for a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). However, in this study, VUCA will refer to the challenging environment shaped by the multiple crises in Lebanon since 2019 (Researcher Definition).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework justifies why the researcher pursued and conducted this study and highlights the research contributions (Varpio et al., 2020). The conceptual framework has three functions: (a) serves as a roadmap to the literature review, (b) identifies literature gaps in understanding the phenomenon, and (c) underlines the concepts guiding this qualitative study. Currently, scholars pursuing research in leadership are more interested in "advancing the theory" rather than making a positive difference by tackling the world's critical issues (Tourish, 2019).

Therefore, in the second chapter, the researcher discussed the leadership factors among Lebanese business leaders involved in nurturing resilience during the crises since 2019. The leadership factors include leadership styles, strategies, and agility capabilities. The researcher revealed the figure denoting the conceptual framework including the cedar tree as an emblem for resilience. The framework will include the aforementioned leadership factors and resilience.

Philosophical Framework

The researcher identified the philosophical framework that underpins this qualitative study (Drisko, 1997). This framework is one of the primary criteria for meaningful research and internal consistency. The philosophical framework serves as the roadmap that guides and steers the research design (especially the methods), which the researcher will explore in detail in Chapter 3. Four paradigms serve as a foundation for qualitative research to ease identifying the philosophical framework: (a) positivism/post-positivist paradigm, (b) interpretive/constructivist paradigm (the values branch), (c) pragmatic or critical paradigm and (d) transformative paradigm (social justice branch such as the feminist movement; Drisko, 1997; Mertens, 2015).

The researcher rooted the philosophical framework in the social constructivism and values branch (Mertens, 2015). Vygotsky (1978) defines social constructivism as the process of active and continuous knowledge creation through social interactions. The cultural environment and historical background influence the social constructivism paradigm. The researcher had applied a qualitative multi-method approach: (a) interviews, (b) document analysis, and (c) digital and print materials (Husserl, 2012).

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this study was: How, if at all, do leadership factors explain how retail business owners in Lebanon foster resilience navigating the

compounding crises since 2019? Through this dissertation, the researcher explored if leadership theories, models, and frameworks are beneficial for explaining how Lebanese business leaders navigate crises since 2019. The three sub-questions aid in exploring the perceptions of Lebanese business owners and entrepreneurs through a leadership and resilience theory lens, and will be considered when collecting and analyzing data from the interviews:

- SQ1: How might the leadership styles of retail business owners in Lebanon promote resilience?

- SQ2: What leadership strategies might retail business owners in Lebanon employ to foster resilience?

- SQ3: To what extent, if at all, do retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrate agility to nurture resilience?

Through framing the questions in this manner and allowing for a theory-based approach to a technical challenge faced usually by practitioners, the researcher hoped to bridge the practitioner-academic divide.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include but are not limited to: (a) generalizability, (b) sample size and representativeness, (c) data reliability and collection, (d) subjectivity and researcher bias, and (e) the sole perspective of stakeholders. According to Yin (2018), a common consideration is the inability to generalize from case studies since they focus on a specific population, sample, industry, or location, which is in this scenario is the retail industry in Lebanon. The country faces a unique set of crises that could impact the styles, capabilities, and strategies the business leaders use.

Furthermore, Lebanon is a patriarchal society where most enterprises are owned by men and Lebanese nationals (Hofstede, 2011; ILO & Fafo, 2021). Therefore, this disproportionate representation might impact the generalizability of the study and further introduce biases since leadership is an all-encompassing topic affected by various cultural paradigms (Malik & Azmat, 2019). Still, the researcher intended to capture a range of perspectives and a representative sample. They made a conscious effort to include at least two participants from dual nationalities in the sample. Furthermore, the researcher will ensure that half of the interviewees are female.

Still, Yin (2018) contends that the goal is to perform an analytic generalization, not a statistical generation and that the main objective is expansion of the theory. Another limitation is that the number of participants may be limited, especially if the researcher is recommended to use purposeful sampling when conducting a study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Purposeful sampling involves choosing a specific number of participants with particular expertise (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Since the researcher will focus on Lebanese business leaders from the retail industry, there will be a lack of diversity in perspectives and experiences from other industries (i.e., medical, agricultural, manufacturing), indirectly affecting the generalizability of the findings.

Consequently, another limitation arises, which is the reliability and accuracy of the data collected by the researcher since they are only accessing a limited number of sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). According to Flyvbjerg (2006), a common misconception is that only case studies contain bias. However, he argues that bias is a central aspect of human learning, and researchers tend to falsify preconceived notions more often than validate them. Finally, the last limitation the researcher discovered is that the study only considers the perspectives of the Lebanese business leaders themselves and discounts the viewpoints of other stakeholders (such

as employees, government officials, and customers). Various perceptions of the leadership factors employed could have offered a broader interpretation which was applicable to a wider audience (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study encompass: (a) a specific time period and geographic location, (b) contextual factors, (c) exclusions concerning the nationality of business owners and (e) exclusions related to the size of the organization and number of employees (Akanle et al., 2020; ILO & Fafo, 2021).

The researcher had delimited the time frame to the crises that have unfolded since 2019, so it will likely not involve past crises impacting the Lebanese retail business leaders. The researcher established time boundaries to ascertain the approximate beginning and ending of the case as it helps to determine the scope of the data collection and differentiates the subject of the researcher's study from external data such as context (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, the researcher set the geographic boundaries to Lebanon and chose the retail industry to reduce confusion and ambiguity and tighten the connection between the research inquiry and sub-questions and the case.

Accordingly, another delimitation is the researcher's acknowledgment of the contextual factors. They recognized the influence of the economic, financial, political, and social environments' impact on the Lebanese business leaders' factors applied to foster resilience while navigating the crises since 2019. Therefore, the researcher was able to understand on a deeper level the perceptions of the Lebanese leaders and their inferred meaning of the world and current situation through examination based on the specific context (e.g., the multifaceted crisis; Yin, 2018).

The researcher delimited the study to include primarily Lebanese business owners. According to the ILO and Fafo (2021) and World Bank (2021) reports, foreign company ownership in Lebanon is minimal and comprises less than 2 %. Furthermore, the term phoenix and the notion of resilience describes and is affiliated with Lebanese entrepreneurs (Bizri et al., 2020). However, the researcher made a conscious effort to solicit Lebanese entrepreneurs with dual nationalities to capture an all-encompassing perspective.

Finally, the researcher excluded own-account enterprises and delimited the study to include MSMEs. This decision is informed by the ILO and Fafo (2021) and the World Bank (2021) reports. The reports emphasized that MSMEs are the principal drivers for economic recovery. After all, MSMEs exhibited resilience amidst significantly challenging times like the Beirut Port Explosion and the financial crises (ILO & Fafo, 2021; World Bank, 2021). Therefore, the researcher excluded any Lebanese business enterprise owners that did not have any employees on their payroll.

Assumptions

According to Creswell and Poth (2017), biases and assumptions that influence the research inquiry need to be clarified at the beginning of the study, especially when conducting qualitative research. The researcher made the following assumptions:

- Leadership theories, models, and frameworks could offer insights and explanations for the impact of resilience during the crises since Northouse (2021) asserts that leadership theories provide conceptual frameworks that are applicable to different contexts and scenarios.

- According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), a topic should only be pursued if it is perceived beneficial and of mutual reciprocity for the participant and researcher. The

researcher had assumed that they did not coerce the participants to contribute to this research project.

- The interview will ameliorate the human situation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), so the researcher had assumed that the participant will have the opportunity to contribute to the advancement of leadership factors that foster resilience in the Lebanese retail industry. Otherwise, the researcher will gain insights and understand the experiences of the Lebanese business leaders.

- Participants were willing to offer honest answers since the researcher is from the same culture and nationality, and so is more trusted as an insider and seen as "one of them" (Sanghera & Björkert, 2008).

- The researcher can ask more meaningful questions due to their previous experience in the industry, and knowledge of the culture (Holmes, 2020).

- Since the researcher had spent prolonged time in the participants' setting, they could develop more in-depth information that adds to the study findings' credibility, validity, and accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Therefore, the researcher applied member-checking as a validation strategy to establish accuracy and credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Member checking involves the researcher taking their draft of the data analyses and interpretations to the participants so they can get feedback and judge the accuracy and credibility of what was written.

Positionality

Researcher positionality refers to an individual's world-view which comes from ontological (individual's beliefs based on the nature of reality and the world) and epistemological assumptions (person's beliefs about the nature of knowledge and truth) (Marsh

et al., 2017; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Positionality is also the position the researcher has chosen to assume in a research study, and it impacts how research is performed (i.e., methods and methodology), the outcomes, and the results. In the context of this study, the researcher noticed the following constituents of positionality:

- The researcher is of Lebanese-American heritage, which offers unique insight and a multicultural background to this study. As a result, the researcher had a deep understanding of the social, political, and economic dynamics present in Lebanon, and the accurate interpretation of social cues exhibited by Lebanese citizens.

- The researcher's fluency in three languages (Arabic, Italian, and English) enhanced communication with participants and the ability to gather information accurately. Consequently, this is also an indicator of the researcher's pursuit of intercultural empathy and building a global mindset (Javidan & Walker, 2012).

- The researcher's academic background and knowledge of theories specific to their field of interest might influence their analysis and interpretation of the data.

- The researcher has first-hand knowledge and prior experience in the Lebanese business landscape and has familiarity with participants from the business community. Consequently, this may affect participant's responses and introduce bias during data collection.

- The researcher had received a score of 237 out of 250 on the Schmieder Global Inventory survey, which indicates they had transcended to the highest level of cultural agility and has acquired a global mindset (Schmieder et al., 2016). Therefore, the researcher is open and aware of cultural and religious differences and has the ability to be introspective, enhancing data analysis.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher had suspended their biases as far as possible and employed reflexivity to become a better researcher and reinforce the credibility, transparency, and accountability of this study (Holmes, 2020).

Organization of the Study

This dissertation was organized in the following manner and consists of five chapters.The first chapter encompasses an introduction, the background of the study, a problem statement, a statement of purpose, the significance of the study, key terms and definitions, the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, research questions, study limitations, study delimitations, and researcher positionality. Finally, the chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

The second chapter elaborates on the conceptual framework and covers literature review topics on factors specific to Lebanese business leaders navigating the multiple and progressive crises to foster resilience. Consequently, the literature review covers resilience theory and leadership theories models and frameworks. The chapter concludes with the gaps identified in literature and an overall summary.

The third chapter consists of the methods utilized in the study to support the research design (i.e., methodology, epistemology, and research paradigm) and to explore the phenomenological study. The chapter includes an analysis of the research purpose and questions, design validity and reliability, research setting, sample population, human subject consideration, instrumentation, and data procedures (like data collection, data analysis, and data management) and closes with a concise summary.

The fourth chapter divulges the findings of the research study by including figures, tables, graphs, and quotes from the interview. However, there are no interpretations of the study results in this chapter.

Finally, the fifth chapter provides a thorough explanation of the findings revealed in the prior chapter study, considers the findings, and offers a comparison of interview themes. The chapter concludes with a conclusion, recommendations for future research, implications, and first-person study reflections.

Chapter Summary

The researcher presented the qualitative study's topic in the introductory chapter: the leadership factors' possible effect on the retail business owner's resilience in Lebanon since the compounding crises in 2019. The researcher then provided context by offering the background of the study, including the history of the Lebanese population as a resilient and entrepreneurial bunch. They also highlighted the recent assailing crises since 2019, such as the financial crisis, political protests and divide, COVID-19 pandemic, and the Beirut Port Explosion and Healthcare crisis.

Then, the researcher stated the problem statement, noting that these crises have significantly impacted Lebanon's economy, particularly the retail sector. The retail sector was a main source of resilience for the Lebanese population. Consequently, there was an evident literature gap which prompted the need for research. Next, the researcher mentioned the purpose statement, which is to explore the leadership factors the retail heads in Lebanon might have employed to navigate the crises and remain resilient. They indicated the significance of the study, which is principally to contribute to non-western literature on leadership and resilience and to inform business owners and retail heads of best practices. The researcher then clarified key terms, and mentioned how the term retail heads will be utilized alternatively to retail leaders throughout the paper.

Subsequently, they pointed out the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The researcher disclosed that they will reveal the conceptual framework that encompasses the leadership factors and resilience in Chapter 2. Otherwise, in Chapter 3, they intended to show the theoretical framework that is guided by the researcher's social constructivist paradigm. Lastly, the researcher established the one central question and three sub questions that assist in answering the research problem . They included with the study's limitations and delimitations. The researcher also mentioned their positionality since that is common practice in qualitative research. They then concluded with how the whole study is organized.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter Overview

This chapter reviewed the literature in the field and began by documenting what is known about the leadership practices applied in a crisis and then synthesized the literature on resilience and leadership theory. The chapter sections provided context, a conceptual framework, leadership resilience theory and model, leadership strategies applied for crisis management and building resilience, the interplay between leadership and culture on resilience utilizing Hofstede's dimensions, leadership styles during crisis, leadership agility theory and framework, gaps and inconsistencies found in the literature, and finally a chapter summary. The researcher provided multiple case studies throughout this chapter to showcase the application of these theories in the Lebanese context.

Context

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the leadership styles, strategies, and agility capabilities applied by Lebanese leaders in the retail industry to nurture leadership resilience tackling the compounding crises since 2019. As a result, the overarching research question was: How, if at all, do leadership factors explain how retail business owners foster resilience while navigating the compounding crises since 2019? Three sub-questions stemmed from this question:

- SQ1: How might the leadership styles of retail business owners in Lebanon promote resilience?

- SQ2: What leadership strategies might retail business owners in Lebanon employ to foster resilience?

- SQ3: To what extent, if at all, do retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrate agility to nurture resilience?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this study was inspired by the themes present in the literature, and the research questions. Accordingly, the conceptual framework included: (a) the retail industry landscape in Lebanon, (b) the influence of the Lebanese diverse culture and their leadership style (c) the leadership factors (styles, strategy, and agility) of business owners in Lebanon, and (d) the outcome which is the leaders' resilience (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework
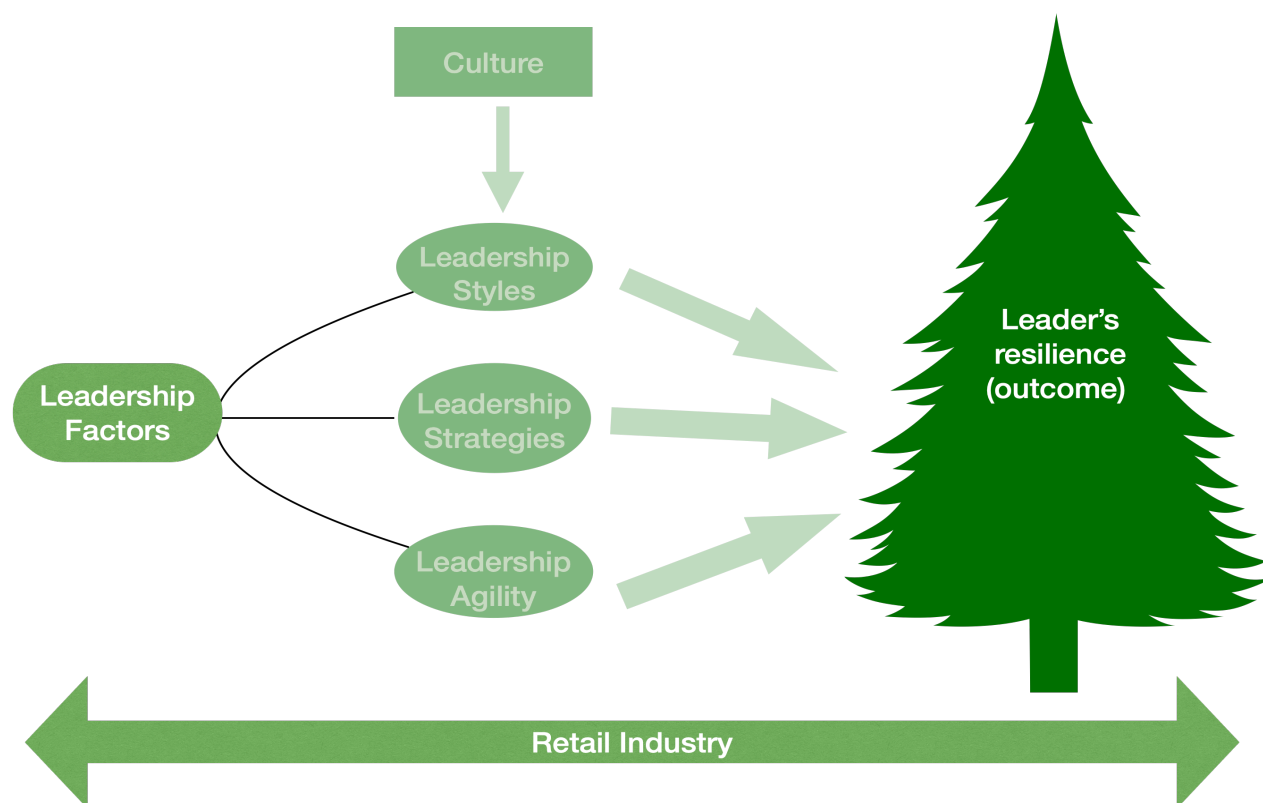
Note. This is in the context of crises

The conceptual framework scaffolded the models, theories, and frameworks grounded in leadership and resilience. The framework took into consideration the impact of the culture on the leadership styles and the volatility of the retail industry given the multiple crises Lebanon had to withstand. The researcher chose the horticultural Lebanese cedar tree to represent Lebanon's former glory and the immortality, steadiness, and resilience attributed to it in the Bible (Handel, 2018; Klimeš, 2013). Hence, the cedar tree symbolize the ability of Lebanese leaders (e.g., entrepreneurs, and business owners) to withstand adversity, adapt, and eventually thrive post-crises.

Subsequently, the literature review : (a) provided an overview of the retail industry in Lebanon highlighting the challenges and need for leadership and resilience, (b) discussed the current literature on resilience providing relevant research and applications in the Lebanese arena, and (c) examined research on the current leadership factors that have been implemented to foster resilience during the crises even in other industries to provide a holistic picture. The literature review only included cases from Lebanon to find the literature gaps.

Firstly, the literature review section on the retail industry provided a background on how the crises affected the retail industry in Lebanon. According to the most recent Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report, the main reason of business discontinuation in Lebanon is due to lack of profitability (Hill, 2019). However, since 2015 the rate has decreased where only one in twelve owners discontinued their business. The researcher framed the current challenges documented in the literature to facilitate understanding of the retail landscape the leaders have to navigate.

Contextual, national or organizational culture impacts the effectiveness of a leadership style (Zeerak, 2022). Hofstede's framework of cultural dimensions is the most widely cited in

psychology, marketing, management sciences, and sociology (Zeerak, 2022). Hence, the researcher applied the cultural dimensions (individualism-collectivism, uncertainty-avoidance, power distance, long-term orientation, masculinity-femininity, and indulgence-restraint) to indicate the perceived desirable attributes that aid in building leadership resilience for business owners working in the Lebanese culture (Minkov & Kasaa, 2021).

Perkins (2009) adds that most leadership studies are US-based, and offering students insight into non-western leadership theory would prepare them to become cross-cultural leaders. Therefore, the researcher included leadership styles used by Lebanese leaders (e.g., transformational, transactional, authentic, among others) to foster resilience, add to the literature, and empower future business leaders.

According to Förster and Duchek (2022), leader's strategies must be paradoxical to nurture resilience when operating in VUCA states. Therefore, the leadership strategies discussed in the review of the literature were based on the three stages of the leaders' resilience model: anticipation, coping, and adaptation (Förster & Duchek, 2022).

Leaders must learn to be agile if they aim to achieve justice and peace during a crisis and multi-faceted change and leadership agility leads to organizational agility (Ravitch, 2020). After all, agility is a requirement if the leader wanted to remain resilient when faced with a state of constant change (Joiner, 2019) The literature review section on leadership agility included defining the theory, introducing the framework, and including case studies demonstrative of leadership agility while in crises in Lebanon.

Finally, the review of literature expounded on the definition of the resilience theory, introduce the leaders' resilience model, and provide a case study of its application in the

Lebanese context. Since the leaders' resilience impacts all stakeholders, the literature review will include former research on organizational and employee resilience (Förster & Duchek, 2022).

To sum it up, by employing this conceptual framework, the researcher explored the possible impact of leadership styles, strategies, and agility on the leaders' resilience (model) of business owners in Lebanon's retail industry during and after the multifaceted crisis since 2019 (VUCA environment). Correspondingly, the conceptual framework (see Figure 1) provided a holistic interpretation of the research context.

Retail Industry in Lebanon

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way retail businesses operate and how consumers perceive brands globally (Tarhini & Hafiz, 2021). In most countries, such as India, consumers substituted their visits to offline channels (i.e., brick-and-mortar stores), settling for online shopping. Lebanon was no exception, where the pandemic exacerbated the economic conditions further, and so many retail businesses resorted to e-commerce (Mekdessi et al., 2021). E-commerce refers to the sale of goods and services on a global scale through mobile applications or web browsing and consists of retail and online purchases and electronic transactions. Yet, Lebanese consumers were still wary of online shopping due to a lack of trust in online sources; only 14% of them would agree to resort to online delivery services once the pandemic ended (Tarhini & Hafiz, 2021).

Still, the Lebanese business owners had to face an additional set of challenges due to the weak internet infrastructure and technology (Najjar et al., 2018). Consequently, consumer spending exponentially deteriorated due to hyperinflation, with their sights focused on everyday essential products offered (Euromonitor International, 2023). Expert analysts at Euromonitor International (2023) projected that grocery retailers are going to outperform non-grocery retailers

due to their shift in demands towards necessities such as food and drinks. Tarhini and Hafiz (2021) conducted a survey of 191 respondents in Lebanon and confirmed that. However, it also revealed that Lebanese consumers have become less price-sensitive post-pandemic, prioritizing health, and quality.

Nevertheless, the economic crisis has motivated consumers to shop in independent outlets such as tobacco, wine, and food specialists found in their local neighborhood especially in Beirut and Mount Lebanon area (Euromonitor International, 2023). Furthermore, Lebanese footwear specialists and designers are relying on tourists and looking beyond Lebanon's borders for sales' opportunities.

The Need for Leadership and Resilience

Leadership is imperative so that organizations can change their dimensions (i.e., structure, people, process, strategy, technological adoption, offering and engagement, or business model) to create a holistic and sustainable environment (Omari, 2019). While some corporations and managers focused on technology, resilient leaders zeroed in on strategies that instigate organizational change and agility. Therefore, the researcher found it critical to delve into the leadership insights of how retail business owners in Lebanon remained resilient.

Leadership Per the Lebanese Culture: Hofstede Insights

Resilience, whether it be organizational or ecological, is influenced by cultural and societal context (Fietz et al., 2021). Culture impacts an organization's choice of location, stakeholder relationships, and leadership styles, which in turn nurtures resilience. Culture varies across countries and even organizations, and it is collective programming that differentiates members of one group or team from another (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Hofstede, 2001, 2011). There are six cultural dimensions created by Geert Hofstede (2001) that can be evaluated

to compare cultures: (a) uncertainty avoidance, (b) power distance, (c) individualism versus collectivism, (d) masculinity versus femininity, (e) long term versus short term orientation, and finally (f) indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, 2011; Minkov & Kasaa, 2021). The two dimensions, indulgence, and long-term orientation were added recently (Minkov & Kasaa, 2021).

Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension

Uncertainty avoidance is concerned with the level of stress a society deals with when faced with an unknown, ambiguous future and adversity (Hofstede, 2011). For example, Lebanon, a non-western Arab country, scores 57 on this dimension, which implies that Lebanese citizens tend to avoid uncertainty and are threatened by ambiguous situations, preferring precision, beliefs, and working hard (Almutairi et al., 2020).

Power Distance Dimension

On the other hand, the power distance index (PDI) captures the behavior and attitude of cultures towards inequalities like gender, ethnicity, or race (Hofstede, 2011). PDI is identified as the degree to which subordinates (the less powerful) at an organization and corporation within a country assume that inequity is normal and accept that power is unequally issued. Lebanon has a PDI score of 62, which signifies that individuals conform to a hierarchical order reflective of inequalities, and justification is unnecessary (Almutairi et al., 2020). Accordingly, autocratic leadership is common, centralization prevails, and underlings suppose their boss will tell them their roles and responsibilities.

Individualism Versus Collectivism Dimension

Hofstede's (2011) individualism dimension measures the extent of interdependence a culture preserves among its group members. In individualist countries and societies, citizens look

after their direct family solely. In contrast, in collectivist societies, individuals are supposed to be loyal to members of their "in-group," which consists of extended family, family, and extended relationships. According to the Hofstede Index (2011), Eastern and less developed or developing countries are predominantly collectivist, while developed Western countries are primarily individualistic. Lebanon is considered a collectivist society where everyone is responsible for their group members since the country scored 43 on this dimension (Almutairi et al., 2020). Therefore, work, and professional relationships are considered morally like family links, and even the employee's in-group is accounted for during hiring and promotion practices.

Kapoor et al. (2021) have conducted a quantitative study using the global innovation index dataset and Hofstede's cultural dimensions data on 84 countries, including Lebanon. The purpose of the study was to examine the extent of country-level stringency moderating the relationship between cultural dimensions (uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and power distance) and national innovation. Kapoor et al. (2021) have affirmed the hypothesis that countries that rank high on power distance and collectivism, like Lebanon, had low innovation levels during the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown. Still, they have disproved the first hypothesis and have found that uncertainty avoidance is unrelated to innovation. Kapoor et al. (2021) add that countries with lower innovation levels reduce household resilience. However, they concede that countries with low power distance, stringent governmental measures, and restrictions also had lower innovation and resilience levels.

Masculinity Versus Femininity Dimension

The fourth dimension and social characteristic, masculinity versus femininity, bears on the distribution of gender values in societies, and this dimension is frequently a taboo issue in masculine countries (Hofstede, 2011). A masculine society is influenced by a competitive

environment that values achievement and success, and there is maximum gender discrimination related to social and emotional roles. A feminine society is characterized by the quality of life and the extent of caring for others (Hofstede, 2011).

While Lebanon has an average score of 48 on this dimension (Almutairi et al., 2020), Tlaiss and Kauser (2019) contend that there are structural inequalities, ascribed gender roles, sociocultural values, and an unsupportive masculine environment that challenge Lebanese female entrepreneurial leaders' resilience and success. The female entrepreneurial leaders demonstrated resilience by overcoming hardships, financial difficulties, and gender stereotypes by combining their masculine (competitiveness) and feminine traits to establish legitimacy (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2019).

Long-Term Orientation Dimension

The fifth dimension, long-term orientation versus short-term orientation, identifies how every society and community balances the past links and experiences with present and future challenges and is positively associated with economic growth (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). A case in point on how long-term orientation helps organizations prevail and outperform during a crisis is the comparative study conducted on Lebanese family and non-family businesses by El-Chaarani and El-Abiad (2019).

The questionnaire was sent out to the sample encompassing 81 small and medium Lebanese family enterprises (SMEs) operating in diverse industries like construction, IT, wineries, retail, oil and gas, and pharmaceuticals. The study's results disclosed that the SMEs were driven by their long-term orientation and the drive to preserve the corporation for future generations, so they were dependent on long-term debt and diversification strategies (El-

Chaarani & El-Abiad, 2019). As a result, they were more resilient to the political turbulence, adversity, and crises witnessed in Lebanon compared to non-familial enterprises.

Indulgence Dimension

The sixth novel dimension, indulgence versus restraint, involves how a person seeks to control their desire impulse and gain gratification based on their upbringing (Hofstede, 2011; Minkov & Kasaa, 2021). Indulgent countries belong to the North and South American, Western Europe, and parts of Sub-Saharan African regions. On the other hand, regions that exhibit restraint include Eastern Europe, Asia, and Arab countries (Minkov & Kasaa, 2021). Mediterranean Europe takes a neutral stance on this dimension. According to Hofstede's (2011) Index, Lebanon scored a 10 for this dimension and was considered a country of restraint and pessimism (Almutairi et al., 2020; Minkov & Kasaa, 2021).

Khalaf (2014) argues otherwise, stating that although the post-war aftermath resulted in the Lebanese youth's pessimism and withdrawal from active citizenship, they have resorted to hedonistic activities and pleasure. Moreover, her workshop revealed that they found solace in excessive consumption and displays of privilege and wealth as a method to control their private lives. As a result, Khalaf (2014) considers that they are no longer as resilient as the older generations.

According to Sommer and Sacco (2019), resilient cultures involve themselves in collective activities that bring pleasure and creativity, like art, since it refreshes failing systems and leads to sustainable democracy since it provides a balance between seriousness and passion. They give the example of Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, who, in solitary confinement and adversity, composed a new strategy for communism in his Prison Notebooks. Consequently, the

Italian revolutionary leader remained resilient by following his passion and pleasure for the cause and aided in the flourishing of his community.

Leadership Styles for Resilience

During times of crisis like natural disasters, wars, or the COVID-19 pandemic, leadership styles have a significant impact on whether the organization prevails or fails and the followers' potential to foster resilience (Alzoubi & Jaafar, 2020; Chhibber & Gupta, 2020). While research on leadership styles during the crisis is limited, it is evident that an authoritarian leadership style is ineffective and, in some cases, detrimental, such as the Chinese government's decision to conceal the COVID-19 outbreak (Chhibber & Gupta, 2020).

Still, some researchers support the authoritarian leadership style during distressing situations due to generating fast responses and keeping control and power within one talented authority figure (Uhr, 2017). On the other hand, risky scenarios require collaboration, humbleness, and compromises. Therefore, transformational, transactional, and coaching leadership styles prove efficient yet are contingent on the situation at hand (Alzoubi & Jaafar, 2020; Chhibber & Gupta, 2020).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership theory is imperative for firms to navigate the challenges of the 20th century (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Transformational leaders inspire their followers to achieve the collective good and possess: (a) idealized influence or charisma, (b) individualized consideration, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) inspirational motivation. Idealized influence refers to leaders that become exceptional role models and examples for their followers (i.e., Nelson Mandela), individualized consideration signifies leaders that maintain a supportive climate, intellectual stimulation describes a leader that encourages innovative and creative

followers, and inspirational motivation represents a leader that promotes a shared vision (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Bass & Bass, 2009; Northouse, 2021).

As an example of the impact of transformational leadership on resilience, a cross-sectional survey was administered by Salam et al. (2023) and included 240 registered nurses at three private hospitals. According to that quantitative study centered in the underserved and resource-scarce area in Lebanon, Sidon, transformational leaders led to an increase in nurses' resilience since it affects motivation and organizational commitment. Furthermore, the nurses' tenure, clinical specialty, and perception of global transformational leadership significantly increased resilience and retention levels (Salam et al., 2023). Nurse managers with more than five years of experience had greater resilience levels than bedside nurses. So, the study recommends that superiors inspire and motivate their underlings, increasing their resilience and retention levels.

The work of Harb et al. (2020) demonstrates that while transformational and transactional leadership have a positive relationship with organizational commitment in the Lebanese public sector, transformational leadership has a more substantial influence. Data for this study was collected through an online survey and consisted of 132 middle managers, where the results even revealed that gender mediated the relationship with the supervisor. Due to the paternalistic society, men were more likely than women to have better and transformative relationships with their higher-ups. Moreover, idealized influence was the leading dimension of transformational leadership that contributed to organizational commitment (Harb et al., 2020). Since Salam et al. (2023) already confirmed that an increase in organizational commitment positively impacts resilience, then the 132 middle managers, especially males, grew more resilient when exposed to a transformational leader.

Transactional Leadership

In contrast to transformational leadership theory, transactional leadership theory is based on an exchange between the leader and follower (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 1990). Transactional leadership is also identified as the carrot and stick approach, where the leader decides to reward or punish liable to an employee's performance (Bass & Bass, 2009; Frei, 2014). Transactional leadership is comprised of two factors: (a) contingent reward which entails a follower's effort in exchange for a certain reward, and (b) management-by-exception, such as corrective criticism, negative reinforcement, and negative feedback. Management-by-exception can be active (MBEA), where the leader urges the follower to grow by concentrating on their failures and complaints, which results in an increase in organizational effectiveness (Avolio et al., 1999; Hasija et al., 2019). Management-by-exception can also be passive (MBEP), where the relationship is negative since the leader only interferes to correct the followers' mistakes (Avolio et al., 1999).

A study by Frangieh and Rusu (2021) sought to investigate how this approach, in particular, impacted Lebanese managerial employees' motivation. The study targeted three dairy manufacturing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) since they were fully operational during the COVID-19 lockdown, and 12 out of 15 qualitative questionnaires were answered. The study's results uncovered that during times of crisis, the employees (who were mostly married) only wanted their basic needs fulfilled and could not handle a salary cut (Frangieh & Rusu, 2021). Furthermore, they wished to be imbursed in US dollars due to the devaluation and volatility of the Lebanese currency. During dire circumstances, a carrot-and-stick transactional seemed to be the best fit for Lebanese employees' motivation during the pandemic and fiscal crisis.

Another study conducted in Lebanon aimed to understand the role of leadership and Human Resource Management practices during times of extreme hardship and crisis (Hakim et al., 2022). The researchers utilized purposeful sampling by contacting university alumni and were successful in gathering intel from managers at numerous diverse industries such as automotive, maintenance and repair, medical, airline, food, and beverage (F&B), and education, among many others. Accordingly, the qualitative study divulged that leaders in Lebanon preferred to employ a transactional rather than a transformational leadership style since (Hakim et al., 2022):

- Leaders were involved in supervising their employees constantly, especially during remote work.

- Leaders did not have the luxury to provide future inspiration for the employees, since they were operating in financial crisis mode.

- Leaders' activities were reactive to economic constraints, and mostly transactional.

- Leaders and followers alike were more focused on financial incentives rather than employee training opportunities.

Likewise, an earlier paper by Zaraket (2018) confirmed that transformational and transactional leadership styles elicit a positive relationship with change management. A qualitative questionnaire was circulated among 250 employees from the governmental sector (government agencies and governmental subcontractors). Only 178 Lebanese public sector employees responded; the majority were male and in their mid-twenties. According to Zaraket (2018), one of the key findings was that communication and exchange are essential when the leader is adopting a transactional leadership style.

Thus, the carrot-and-stick transactional leadership style was unanimously deemed appropriate during crisis management by the employees and leaders in public and private industries (Frangieh & Rusu, 2021; Hakim et al., 2022; Zaraket, 2018). Since a transactional leadership style, especially management-by-exception, impacts organizational commitment, it also strengthens resilience levels (Harb et al., 2020; Salam et al., 2023).

Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic leadership theory is often defined similarly to transformational leadership because they both include a common construct: charisma (Mhatre & Riggio, 2014). Nevertheless, both leadership theories are theoretically different since the former arises from certain character attributions and appears during a crisis (Antonakis & Day, 2017). The concept of charismatic leadership was established in 1977. Later on, House and Howell (1992) elaborated that charismatic leaders exhibit the following personality characteristics: (a) dominance, (b) self-confidence, (c) a strong sense of moral ethics and values, and (d) a compelling desire to motivate and influence other members. They also display particular behaviors such as: (a) being effective role models to their followers, (b) exhibiting competence, (c) describing ideological goals with ethical and moral implications (such as Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream Speech"), (d) communicate and have high expectations from their followers, and (e) evoke task-related motives in followers (Conger et al., 2000; Northouse, 2021)

Charisma positively affects resilience since it is effective during periods of high uncertainty, driving high performance in the face of adversity, challenges, and crises (Istiqaroh et al., 2022). A study in alignment with that finding was conducted in Lebanon during the COVID-19 pandemic (Attieha & Zouhairy, 2021). The study explored the influence of charismatic leaders (educators) on their followers while they worked in virtual teams at non-vocational

educational institutions. While the study's results revealed that gender and experience level did not significantly impact the follower's perception of the leader's charisma, charismatic leaders were found to lead better in crisis (Atteiha & Zouhairy, 2021). Moreover, the charismatic leader was able to overcome obstacles posed by virtual learning, appear resilient in the face of the lack of stability in Lebanon, and deliver quality education online.

Authentic Leadership

The increased levels of fear and uncertainty due to corporate scandals such as the Enron Case and WorldCom led to the development of a new leadership style, authentic leadership theory (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Walumbwa et al. (2008) define authentic leadership as a behavior or pattern exhibited by the leader that fosters a positive ethical climate and psychological capabilities for the follower, leading to a proliferation in self-development. They add that this positive self-development occurs due to increased self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency between the leader and the follower. According to Avolio et al. (2004), four psychological characteristics affect authentic leadership: (a) resilience, (b) hope, (c) optimism, and (d) confidence.

Megheirkouni (2021) has performed an extensive study that encompasses the Middle Eastern countries, Lebanon, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to examine the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational commitment and job satisfaction, while empowerment was the mediator. The quantitative survey included 304 participants from the events industry- specifically sports, culture, and personal events (i.e., weddings, engagements, baptisms, and birthdays). The study's findings disclosed that there was a positive relationship between authentic leaders and the subordinates' job satisfaction, empowerment level, and organizational commitment. The finding is congruent with the work of Salam et al.

(2023), which stipulates that organizational commitment leads to an increase in organizational resilience. Therefore, it could be posited that authentic leaders aid their followers in becoming more resilient.

Adaptive Leadership

According to Heifetz and Laurie (1997), adaptive leadership theory is follower-centered and is defined as helping and mobilizing individuals to tackle tough challenges and thrive in the face of adversity and change. Adaptive leadership theory provided a roadmap for the adaptive leadership process model (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). The three major components included in the adaptive leadership model are: (a) situational challenges, (b) leader behaviors, and (c) adaptive work.

Firstly, situational challenges constitute technical challenges, technical and adaptive challenges, and adaptive challenges (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). Technical challenges are workplace problems that the manager typically solves. On the other hand, technical and adaptive challenges usually do not have a straightforward solution and not only require the leader's support but also the followers' intervention. Finally, adaptive challenges, are central to the process of adaptive leadership and are not easy to locate and tackle (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). Adaptive challenges are difficult since they require the leader to change followers' beliefs and assumptions.

Next, six leader behaviors are included in the adaptive leadership model (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). The first leader behavior is to "get on the balcony," where the leader gets a different and broader perspective during a difficult situation. The second leader behavior is "identify the adaptive challenge," where the leader must observe and diagnose challenging situations. The third leader behavior involves "regulating distress," where the leader creates a

holding and safe environment, provides protection and orientation for the followers, and even regulates their own personal distress. The fourth leader behavior is to "maintain disciplined attention," which entails the leader motivating individuals to focus on the challenging work.

The fifth leader behavior is to "give the work back to the people" through empowering the employees to decide what to do during times of uncertainty. Finally, the sixth leader behavior is to protect leadership voices from below, by resisting the tendency to shut down marginalized voices and give credence to the out-group member. Northouse (2021) emphasizes that there is no specific order to the six behaviors and activities, rather, the most vital aspect is that the leader is motivated to engage their followers in adaptive work.

According to Heifetz and Linsky (2004), adaptive work involves communication and is a process that occurs between the adaptive leader and their followers in a safe holding environment. Adaptive work consists of confronting changes related to priorities or values and is primarily the follower's responsibility. It is important to note that in adaptive leadership, the word followers is not frequently used since it depicts a submissive role (Northouse, 2021). Whereas the true essence of adaptive leadership is interacting with people to motivate them to take part in adaptive work.

A practical case in point of adaptive leadership in practice, is Paula Yacoubian, a current independent female political leader and owner of the Dafa organization. During the Beirut Port Explosion, she had to navigate bureaucratic red tape and pay a huge fee to get a container filled with aid for more than 3,000 families suffering from displacement and property loss due to the situation in Lebanon (El-Masri, 2023). She went live on the social media platform, Instagram, to share her experience.

She demonstrated adaptive leadership through (a) identifying the adaptive challenge, and (b) getting on the balcony, and (c) protecting the leadership voices from below (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). After all, she leveraged her social media platform and following to express concern, acknowledging that most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) do not have $15,000 readily available and cannot resort to bribery, urging for systemic change (El-Masri, 2023). She urged followers to engage in adaptive work and change to minimize potential harm from the challenges ahead, fostering resilience (Southwick et al., 2017).

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Adaptive Leadership and Crisis

Emotional intelligence (EQ) skills are crucial during a crisis, since they enable fluid communication, decision-making, and problem-solving and enhance empathy, consequently reducing stress and anxiety (Heredia et al., 2022). Moreover, EQ skills would promote organizational resilience by helping employees manage and adapt to change during adversity and volatile situations and positively influencing their job performance and satisfaction. According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), EQ is a subcategory of social intelligence that implies the individual's ability to control their own and others' emotions , then to distinguish them and utilize the information to guide their actions and thoughts. They conceptualized EQ through the following mental processes: (a) utilization of emotion in adaptive ways, (b) emotional regulation in self and others, and (c) emotional appraisal and expression in self and others (including empathy).

Goleman (2020) affirms that an effective leader is one that has high EQ and can adapt several leadership styles according to the situation or crisis at hand. Goleman's (2020) conclusion is congruent with the study results of Boyar et al. (2022) where, they assert that higher levels of EQ predicted adaptive leadership. In their study, Boyar et al. (2022) sought to

fill the literature gap and understand the impact of deductive and inductive reasoning (cognitive ability) and emotional intelligence (social ability) on leader adaptability. Deductive reasoning encompasses conclusions founded on the rules and laws and follows a particular premise. In contrast, inductive reasoning often provides some of the premises for deductive reasoning but could go straight to the conclusion (Evans & Over, 2013).

The study's target sample were prospective employed undergraduate student leaders attending college, and while that may seem like a limitation, studies show that a student sample is generalizable to the whole working population (Boyar et al., 2022). They concluded that their study results acknowledge the influence of social (EQ) and cognitive skills (inductive reasoning) on adaptive leadership and leader flexibility, where EQ moderates the relationship. Furthermore, their results show high to moderate levels of EQ and inductive reasoning may provide the leader with more flexibility when evaluating follower's needs and choosing the appropriate leadership approach and style accordingly (Boyar et al., 2022).

Salovey and Mayer (1990) add that EQ contributes to well-being and mental toughness since it helps the person become aware and navigate negative and positive experiences, which leads to a person's growth. Afterward, Goleman (2020) expanded EQ to include: (a) emotional self-awareness, (b) self-regulation, (c) motivation, (d) empathy, and (e) social skills. He even added that an effective leader has high EQ and can adapt several leadership styles according to the situation or challenge at hand. Goleman's (2020) conclusion is congruent with the study results of Boyar et al. (2022) where they assert that higher levels of EQ predicted adaptive leadership.

Self-Awareness. Self-awareness is the first element of EQ that constitutes having a profound discernment of their emotions, needs, drives, motives, strengths, and weaknesses

(Goleman, 2020). A self-aware leader has high self-confidence, and candor, admits limitations and weaknesses, bases decisions on their life values and goals, and is open to constructive criticism. As an example of an initiative aimed at improving physicians' well-being and resilience through improving leadership and artificial intelligence skills and self-awareness, Mansour et al. (2019) shed light on the Leadership Programs for Academic Physicians and Scientists (LeAPS) initiated by the faculty of medicine and medical center at the American University of Beirut.

The LeAPS program benefits the medical practitioner who gets enrolled in the program through: (a) pinpointing the physician's weaknesses and strengths, (b) aiding in the awareness of how the practitioner works and learns best, and (c) guiding the physician to where they can contribute based on their values. Consequently, the physician's self-awareness will increase, which in turn reduces burnout and increases the health practitioner's well-being and resilience (Mansour et al., 2019).

Self-Regulation. Self-regulation is a component of EQ that involves managing one's impulses and overbearing feelings (Goleman, 2020). Self-regulation is vital for leaders since it aids them in creating an environment that fosters trust, arms them with the ability to deal with ambiguity and change and bestows them with the integrity and capability to resist impulsive desires. One example of resilience in action, is a case study depicting how the health system in Lebanon demonstrated self-regulation during the Syrian refugee crisis amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Grimm et al., 2021). The Lebanese Ministry of Health (MoH) sustained and enhanced contracting terms to keep a certain level of quality and service with private and public hospitals. Therefore, the hospitals remained fully operational and there were no signs of disrupted services due to the self-regulating leadership and governance of the MoH in Lebanon. Grimm et al.

(2021) compare the case in Lebanon to Liberia where as soon as Ebola hit, some health centers shut down and others became understaffed, since they relied on instant urges such as short-term donor-based programs (Goleman, 2020).

Intrinsic Motivation. According to Goleman (2020), efficient leaders all have a common trait- a motivation to achieve that goes beyond status and financial gain. Effective leaders are passionate and pursue their goals persistently and energetically. This EQ characteristic is based on: (a) an insatiable desire to achieve, (b) optimism even when challenged with failure during trials and tribulations, and (c) organizational commitment due to the leader setting high expectations for themselves and then the company.

The Lebanese social enterprises and setting are the perfect specimens for how businesses can prevail in a politically unstable environment and challenging "unattractive" industry rife with corruption due to soft skills such as motivation and empathy (Jamali & Kreidie, 2014; McGahan & Porter, 2003). Jamali and Kreidie's (2014) case study included five social enterprises and mentioned their goals and history: (a) Cedar Environmental which was centered on the founder's passion for recycling and waste-management, (b) 2B design was founded due to the CEO's passion for traditional architecture, (c) Souk el Tayeb/ Tawlet had a vision to empower local farmers, (d) Beyond Reform and Development (BRD) was established due to an ardent desire for advocacy and (e) Sara's Bags is impassioned about improving the lives of female prisoners and sustainable fashion.

While the passionate social entrepreneurs in Lebanon who were able to remain resilient are a few, they demonstrated a transformational change. The five founders demonstrated passion, organizational commitment, and optimism, although the situation in Lebanon and its short-term planning structure placed the country in a "bad position" for value creation capabilities (Jamali &

Kreidie, 2014; McGahan & Porter, 2003). An enabling environment is a must if these motivated and socially active leaders want to not only be resilient but thrive and flourish.

Empathy. The most easily identified EQ dimension is empathy, and it includes the capability to appreciate the emotional makeup of other individuals (Goleman, 2020). Moreover, empathy is a skill in treating others in accordance with their emotional responses. Due to globalization, the increasing desire to grow talent, and the rise in team formation, the importance of empathy has been augmented (Goleman, 2020). Successful leaders make use of empathy to: (a) acquire knowledge that helps improve service to customers and the company, (b) retain and build talent in this information economy, and (c) apply cross-cultural sensitivity during dialogue. Al-Mulki et al. (2022) carried out an extensive case study including 27 in-depth interviews with community leaders like the mayor, members of the municipal council, lawyers involved in civil society, and active NGO managers in the community.

The case study focused on municipalities in Lebanon to document the planning, preparedness, and reactivity (adaptation) they had during the COVID-19 pandemic. The nine municipalities, the ones with adequate and inadequate response to the pandemic, emphasized that the people were able to cope due to the social support of their family and friends (Al-Mulki et al., 2022).

The active municipalities demonstrate empathy by providing therapy free of charge, and even the inactive municipalities provide free medication to those in need. Al-Mulki et al.'s (2022) findings indicate that many enablers allowed the municipalities to flourish and thrive during the epidemic, and the key factors were: empathy and social support. These enablers allowed the Lebanese citizens to overcome barriers such as stigma and lack of awareness, ignorance of some religious leaders, and remain resilient in the face of adversity.

Social Skills. Social skill is part of the relationship management of EQ, and it is the capstone of all the other capacities (Goleman, 2020). Socially skilled leaders have the ability to manage relationships, nurture social networks, and establish rapport through bonding over shared interests with people of all kinds to move them in desired outcomes and directions. Some of the key features of socially skilled leaders are: (a) efficiency in leading and maintaining change, (b) masters in persuasiveness (signs of self-regulation, self-awareness, and empathy consolidated), and (c) expertise in collaboration (e.g., building, and leading teams; Goleman, 2020). Alongside intellectual intelligence (IQ), EQ (especially social skills) is a core component of strong leadership.

The Lebanese global fashion designer and mogul, Zuhair Murad represented an effectual socially skilled leader, when he sold limited edition t-shirts with the slogan "Rise from the Ashes" to celebrities and influencers, where he even posted them on his social media page, raising awareness for the disaster since he had a massive following (Issa, 2022). The slogan was meant to highlight the Lebanese people's resilience and empower them to rise again and flourish.

The fashion designer Zuhair Murad, was providing relief to the Lebanese families affected by the Beirut Port explosion through collaborating with a humanitarian organization, thus contributing to the Lebanese citizen's resilience (Issa, 2022). Therefore, to initiate lasting change and mitigate the effects of corruption and political corruption, multiple stakeholders must collaborate and unite, such as the United Nations (UN), and include exemplary leaders, such as the fashion icon Zuhair Murad from the Lebanese society to not only maintain resilience but flourish as well.

Leadership Strategies for Resilience

The need for highly resilient organizations has been amplified due to operating in a globalized and interconnected world that is crisis-prone such as the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, and increasing inflation (Förster et al., 2022). Förster et al. (2022) hypothesized that resilient leaders apply different paradoxical behaviors and strategies to handle crises and VUCA situations. So, they conducted an inductive qualitative study and 32 interviews with leaders or key employees from numerous business sectors (like finance, education, information technology, construction, insurance, and engineering).

The study disclosed that leaders who exhibited conscious recognition (leaders' mindset) and compressed leadership behavior (leaders' actions) were able to foster resilience (Förster et al., 2022). The resilient leaders used the strategy "compressed situational leadership" through three contradicting combinations: (a) tight versus loose leadership (e.g., giving clear guidance, but still providing room for participation), (b) emotional distance versus empathy (i.e., staying calm yet still creating trust and cohesion), and (c) mobilizing versus providing crisis support (such as cooperating with the competition and external consultants, but still providing resources to employees). Accordingly, all these tactics and approaches are coping capabilities that are usually applied during the crisis in the second stage of the leadership resilience model (Förster & Duchek, 2022).

Furthermore, the leaders exhibited three contradictory behaviors when dealing with and recognizing the highly paradoxical demands and crises:

- Strategic (long-term) versus operational (short-term) thinking: Strategic thinking involves scenario planning (outlining and developing multiple scenarios of the crisis) and conceptual thinking (abstract and independent ideas regarding solutions that impact the

corporation's future; Förster et al., 2022). On the other hand, operational thinking includes observation of current developments and data analysis (i.e., reviewing revenue streams). Accordingly, all these activities are included in the first phase (pre-crisis) of the leadership resilience model, anticipation (Förster and Duchek, 2022; Williams et al., 2017). Still, Förster et al. (2022) point out that immediate reaction is essential before the crisis.

- Optimism versus realism: where the resilient leaders underscored the importance of remaining positive, motivated, and persistent (Förster et al., 2022). However, the interviewees maintained that accepting the situation and sticking to the data and facts helped them hold reasonable discussions and confront the crisis. Consequently, staying optimistic and efficiently fulfilling tasks effectively are some of the coping strategies mentioned in the second stage (during the crisis) of the leadership resilience model (Bossmann et al., 2016; Förster & Duchek, 2022)

- Rationality versus intuitiveness: Resilient leaders acted based on experiences and expertise and created crisis-management structures while remaining flexible and open to change (Förster et al., 2022). Change caused by reflection and learning is an integral part of the third stage of the leadership resilience model, adaptation (Förster and Duchek, 2022; Williams et al., 2017).

Therefore, this subsection will include strategies Lebanese leaders utilized to foster resilience and growth based on the three stages of the leadership resilience model (Williams et al., 2017). Harb et al. (2023) point out that the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut Port Explosion were unexpected successively. Therefore, the Lebanese business owners did not plan before the crisis, so this analysis will primarily focus on the "coping" and "adaptation" stages.

The subsection will conclude with a case study showcasing all three phases (pre-crisis, during crisis, and post-crisis).

Coping Strategy: Implementing Positive Psychology Practices

According to Seligman (2002), a positive psychology worldview is centered on positive qualities that help people and communities flourish rather than just endure and survive such as strength and virtue. There are numerous evidence-based protective measures (like optimism, gratitude, spirituality, and self-efficacy) based on positive psychology that fosters resilience catering to multi-level systems (Masten et al., 2021).

According to the ecological systems theory, an individual's development is influenced by these systems that are interconnected: (a) micro-system (family, friends, coworkers, classmates), meso-system (based on interactions between person and micro-system), exosystem (indirect environments such as extended family, or government), macrosystem (social and culture), and chronosystem (environmental changes; Brofenbrenner, 1977). Drawing on the protective measures of Masten et al. (2021) and positive-psychology interventions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), Seligman created the U.S. Army Master Resilience Trainer (MRT) 10-day course and "train-the-trainer" model.

The MRT course was built to aid the noncommissioned sergeants in preventing stress resulting from deployment and combat and developing resilience skills which in turn they can teach their junior soldiers (Oh et al., 2020; Reivich et al., 2011). The program includes four modules, where Module 1 included core competencies of resilience such as self-awareness, self-regulation, optimism, mental agility, character strengths, and connections. Module 2 introduced building mental toughness through activities like energy management, practicing gratitude, recognizing icebergs or deeply held beliefs, pinpointing thinking traps, problem-solving, fighting

counter-productive thoughts, and diminishing catastrophic thinking (Reivich et al., 2011). Module 3 involved identifying team and individual character strengths, and Module 4 required strengthening relationships with peers and family (Reivich et al., 2011). Oh et al. (2020) recommend that the application of the practices in this resilience training course to the civilian sphere so all societies and countries can be psychologically fit.

A cross-sectional study administered in Lebanon in 2020 consisting of 387 adult participants tests the feasibility of coping and resilience strategies, specifically social support and spirituality, during times of psychological distress and adversity from a non-western perspective (Mahfoud et al., 2023). A Google link and form were distributed to participants from North Lebanon, Beirut, Mount Lebanon, South Lebanon, and Bekaa, where approximately 60% of participants were female, 76 % were from urban areas, 82.9 % held university degrees, and 80% were single. The findings of the study affirmed previous studies' results that people who have a strong faith or religiosity and robust social support were more likely to have positive (active problem-solving) engagement coping strategies and, therefore, enhanced well-being (Oh et al., 2020; Reivich et al., 2011).

Mahfoud et al. (2023) attribute this result to the fact that most Lebanese citizens believe in an omnipotent God. So, they were encouraged to handle their problems head-on, feeling that God would improve the situation. Moreover, as a patriarchal collective society, they rely heavily on their social networks and their mesosystem. However, even with high psychological stress, Lebanese adults used active problem-solving engagement strategies rather than negative disengagement strategies (Mahfoud et al., 2023). This finding contradicts Ismail et al.'s (2021) study results based on medical interns in Malaysia, where high psychological distress led to passive disengagement strategies such as avoidance and distraction. Mahfoud et al. (2023)

asserted that a possible explanation could be that the participants may have developed psychological resilience due to emotional self-regulation, so they coped in a positive manner. Therefore, a positive psychology training program would be effective in Lebanon to increase coping and resilience further.

Coping/Adaptation Strategy : Creating Communities of Practice

Wenger and Snyder (2000) assert that a community of practice is the "heart and the soul" of the World Bank Knowledge Management strategy. A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people with varying levels of expertise who share a common concern, dilemma, or passion and engage in dialogue routinely sharing information which results in situated learning (Wenger, 2000). Some of the standard features of CoPs are: (a) knowledge retention, (b) creation and innovation, and (c) improved managerial performance.

In settings where there is moral distress (like healthcare institutions), a CoP could foster a space for mutual trust where professional and personal experiences that cause frustration (like the COVID-19 pandemic) are shared freely (Delgado et al., 2020). As a result, a mutual connection would help in reframing the mindset, restoring moral integrity, and building collective resilience. Hence, the CoP would arm these leaders and followers with adaptation strategies (e.g., managing change) to navigate this VUCA environment.

One example is of how teachers' virtual communities of practice could foster resilience during disasters resulting from a VUCA environment (natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, COVID-19 pandemic), consider the mixed-methods study by Ghamrawi (2022) that involved 17 Arab States including Lebanon. 85% of the participants were teachers, and the study was global. The study's findings revealed that due to the flexibility and adaptability of virtual communities of practice, teachers were able to collaborate (Ghamrawi, 2022). They were also

able to leverage collective intelligence and solve problems creatively by utilizing discussion forums and video conferencing, among other technological methods and web tools.

Moreover, knowledge creation and learning occurred between teachers from different Arab states, facilitating teacher leadership (Ghamrawi, 2022). One caveat cited by a participant was the internet connection. Still, most found the virtual communities of practice beneficial for building coping strategies during a crisis, and even wanted a mobile application to stay connected and share expertise and knowledge to help foster overall resilience in the educational sector (Ghamrawi, 2022). Subsequently, a CoP equips leaders and followers with coping and adapting strategies that lead to collective resilience.

Adaptation Strategy: Cultivating a Growth Mindset

According to Yost (2016), a growth mindset and learning orientation is a cognitive antifragile resilience practice that is based on three criteria: (a) theory-based, (b) can be acquired and learned, and (c) under duress and stress can be reinforced. A strategy is considered anti-fragile when it improves under stress and contributes to a system's growth, improvement, and sustainability. An individual with a growth mindset has the conviction that personal capabilities and characteristics like mental competence can be nurtured, whereas a person with a fixed mindset has the belief that these attributes are unchangeable and fixed (Dweck, 1990; Yeager & Dweck, 2020). Consequently, people with a growth mindset are more likely to thrive and flourish in adverse situations, remain persistent, and seek future trials and tribulations (Yost, 2016). On the other hand, individuals who have a fixed mindset tend to draw back from challenging circumstances and are unsuccessful in meeting their full potential.

The role of growth mindsets on performance, well-being, and resilience is subject to societal norms, and a supportive immediate environment, such as colleagues and superiors (Lou

& Li, 2022). A number of studies support the notion that followers or employees surrounded by a conducive environment to growth mindsets, such as a leader with a growth mindset, a robust support system, and a professional relationship based on trust, have more opportunity to work on their growth mindset (Cheese, 2016; Yeager et al., 2019). Otherwise, if there is a discrepancy between mindset, societal norms, and culture, an employee or even the leader would end up feeling less resilient since they cannot adapt and have a lower sense of belonging (Lou & Li, 2022). A case in point is Lebanon, where an individual growth mindset intervention is not positively related to achievement and well-being.

Still, Yeager and Dweck (2020) argue that in countries with fixed-mindset norms such as China, the mindset significantly impacts fear of failure, which is an antecedent to poor mental health. They add that effective growth mindset interventions are based on active participation rather than just passive instruction. The intervention is also beneficial when the population or country is faced with a setback or challenge. Accordingly, a country like Lebanon, facing multiple crises and operating in a VUCA environment, would benefit from growth mindset interventions to foster resilience.

Strategies of Resilient Retail Leaders in Lebanon

A case study carried out by Jaroudi and Hammoud (2019) sought to explore how Lebanese small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sustain their businesses and remain resilient in light of the geo-economic conditions faced by the country. Consequently, the target population was six successful leaders of SMEs in Beirut. The themes that emerged from the strategies they employed were: (a) targeting niche markets (pre-crisis), (b) creating solid organizational structures (pre-crisis), (c) raising increased awareness in their businesses (during crisis), (d) embedding change management and leadership excellence (post-crisis; Förster & Duchek, 2022).

Firstly, they employed strategic and operational thinking by recreating solid organizational structures (Förster et al., 2022). The fifth interviewee and business leader claimed that before the economic crisis, they had to apply conceptual thinking and shift their business model and structure from project to facilities management to sustain their enterprise (Jaroudi & Hammoud, 2019). Furthermore, the majority of participants/leaders applied operational thinking and data analysis by identifying and creating niche or specialist marketing strategies through producing new innovative software tools (i.e., mobile applications) for these markets to differentiate themselves from competitors and expand in the whole region (Förster et al., 2022; Jaroudi & Hammoud, 2019).

Then, the business leaders remained reasonable during the crisis by sticking to the data and facts and seeking continuous improvement through employee training programs (Förster et al., 2022; Jaroudi & Hammoud, 2019). Conversely, they also exhibited compressed situational leadership by fostering an environment of creativity and trust, reassuring their internal and external stakeholders (e.g., employees and customer base), and mobilizing crisis support by convincing financial institutions and the government to support them. Finally, post-crisis, the business leaders embedded change management practices, where one reported having a drawing board where feedback would be posted so that all employees and the leadership team could adopt a progressive mindset (Förster et al., 2022; Jaroudi & Hammoud, 2019).

Leadership Agility

Leadership Agility Theory and Framework Defined

Due to the globalized economy, income inequality, and new communication technologies, leadership agility is imperative in a VUCA environment, especially after COVID-19 (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). As outlined in chapter 1, leadership agility is defined as the leader's capability to

establish strategic and operational agility by making efficient and wise decisions regarding the fast-paced changes in corporate culture, structures, and processes and adapting personally to the intertwined conditions and environment effectively and daily (Joiner, 2019). Leadership agility is an intentional and proactive leadership development framework that improves leadership effectiveness. Joiner (2019) established the leadership agility framework, which involves three dimensions: (a) the four types of agility, (b) the three key leadership contexts, and (c) the three levels of leadership agility.

The four types of leadership agility are context-setting agility (north), stakeholder agility (east), creative agility (south), and self-leadership agility (west), which are represented graphically on the "Leadership Agility Compass" (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). The leader who seeks to master context-setting agility should have the capability to take in the larger picture, perform an environmental scan, and determine needed outcomes through framing initiatives. The leader engages in stakeholder agility by stepping back and placing themselves in the shoes of their key stakeholders, which creates more substantial alignment and increased support for proposed initiatives. At the same time, the leader who practices creative agility has the ability to creatively transform complex problems into opportunities and desired results (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). Finally, the leader engages in self-leadership agility by leveraging their daily activities and initiatives to transform into the kind of leader they aspire to be and ultimately accelerate their leadership development. Thus, the four types of agility are added value when leaders apply them to real-life situations (Joiner, 2019).

Secondly, the leadership agility framework includes three key scenarios where agile leaders need to operate efficiently: (a) pivotal conversations, which encompass direct conversations where important outcomes are at risk (b) leading teams, and (c) leading and

managing organizational change initiatives (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). The leader's capacity to handle the three situations effectively depends heavily on their agility level, and the level might differ in each of these "arenas."

Ultimately, the third dimension is the most unique attribute of the leadership agility framework (Joiner, 2019). The model was initially composed of five levels to develop emotional and cognitive capabilities that are essential for leadership agility (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). The first three levels represented approximately 90% of managers operating at the heroic leadership mindset, whereas the latter symbolized the 10% of supervisors functioning from the post-heroic leadership mindset. While that is still the case, Joiner (2019) has condensed them into three levels:

- The expert level constitutes 55 % of managers and is based on positional authority and expertise. Leaders at the expert level tend to avoid giving feedback during pivotal conversations, and tend to go to extremes, whether they are being assertive or accommodative. While leading teams, subordinates perceive them more like a supervisor than a manager. Expert agile leaders are focused on organizational change initiatives within their unit or department.

- The achiever level includes 35 % of supervisors who are more malleable to feedback than the expert during pivotal conversations yet still prefer an authoritarian leadership style. They operate primarily as managers when leading teams. Agile leaders at the achiever level seek input, persuade stakeholders to get their consensus, and perform an environmental scan for organizational initiatives.

- The catalyst level encompasses 10 % of managers, and they are the most effective and least likely to burn out in a VUCA environment. At this top agility level, the leader is a

visionary who fosters a participative culture when leading teams and is capable of rethinking and changing basic assumptions for the common good during pivotal conversations. The agile leader at the catalyst level involves diverse stakeholders not just for the buy-in, but because of the belief that strategic decisions and organizational outcomes will improve due to various beliefs and viewpoints.

Therefore, if leaders want to achieve the highest level of agility, they need to engage in reflective action when practicing the three leadership contexts (pivotal conversations, leading teams, and leading organizational change) and the four types of agility (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). Reflective action involves learning from past experiences and incorporating new knowledge and insight into new experimental practices. According to research by Joiner (2019), companies with achiever/catalyst leadership cultures outperform expert/achiever leadership cultures. Achiever/catalyst leadership cultures are essential if companies want to remain competitive and resilient when faced with constant change and adversity.

Agility of Retail Leaders in Lebanon

According to research by Eid and Loon (2023), the Syrian refugee crisis in 2019 also impacted the business sector since it caused friction between social and political groups. The government failed to address how refugees account for 20 % of the population while Lebanese citizens live in extreme poverty. While 40 % of companies have resumed operations and maintained normalcy after the explosion, one-third of participants had to lay off workers, and 17 % witnessed an increase in debt and sales reduction (ILO & Fafo, 2021). Consequently, the nationalist and populist political parties and media have portrayed the refugees as the cause of the challenging economic, social, and security challenges, increasing racism and xenophobia in society- fear and dislike of foreigners (Chit & Nayel, 2013; Weiss & Wilkinson, 2018) .

However, Lebanese enterprises have demonstrated agility in their response and top-down leadership solution by embedding corporate social responsibility (CSR) in their practices, supporting refugees, and maintaining profit (Eid & Loon, 2023). For example, one company that sells baby products increased its supply to include children from the Syrian population, which led to increased support from NGOs such as the United Nations (UN; Eid & Loon, 2023). These business leaders exhibited the highest agility level (catalyst) by rethinking their basic assumptions for the common good (Joiner, 2019).

After all, Lebanon is a strategic site for global business leaders to ascertain how to withstand multiple back-to-back shocks and learn from failure (Eid & Loon, 2023). The country was able to exhibit resiliency due to the funding and financial support of NGOs and CSR practices and demonstrated a compelling example of how post-pandemic global leadership must include agility, ethics, and adaptability skills (Harajli, 2023; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004).

Leadership Resilience

Leadership Resilience Theory Definition

While resilience has been historically pertinent in organizational studies, it has not been as effective and present in the crisis-management literature. However, Williams et al. (2017) bridged the gap by finding a common ground and challenge: facing adversity. As the COVID-19 crisis evolved, it became a test of resilience at the global level (such as the country, industrial, and firm level), so research on and application of leadership resilience became at the forefront (Guistiniano et al., 2020). Resilience is derived from the Latin word "resilire", indicating the ability to bounce back or recoil. Furthermore, the definition of resilience theory in the leadership context is drawn from the psychology, biology, ecology, and engineering literature (Guistiniano et al., 2020).

Leadership resilience is the ability of a leader to deal with and navigate critical situations and crises, while still growing through the process (Förster & Duchek, 2022). Resilient leadership comprises two seemingly opposite or contradictory features (Guistiniano et al., 2020). Leadership resilience is reactive and adaptive. Therefore, leaders fostering resilience must position themselves for more efficient decision-making by balancing and handling contraindications such as anticipation/adaptation, profit/purpose, courage to make unpopular decisions/humility to listen to the crowd, or compassion/hardiness. While resilience is based on the collective and not just one individual, leadership resilience is crucial to nurturing collective resilience (Guistiniano et al., 2020).

Consequently, leadership resilience is essential to the multiple stakeholders (such as the employees, the organization, and themselves). It is dependent on numerous factors like environmental features and individual factors (Förster & Duchek, 2022). Individual factors include (Southwick et al., 2017):

- Genetic and epigenetic factors include inherited genes that mediate the human stress response such as cortisol, serotonin, and adrenaline and genes affected by the environment due to socialization, diet, exercise, or stress.

- Neurobiological factors are particularly interesting to business organizations particularly to human resources, especially in applying management techniques. For instance, the hormone oxytocin mediates social interactions and is essential for teamwork at organizations.

- Developmental factors encompass the type and amount of stress an individual experiences since childhood, impacting how they handle it during adulthood. Research has revealed that unmanageable and repeatedly overwhelming stress during childhood

would lead to exaggerated and failed emotional or behavioral responses when the person transitions into adulthood (Anacker et al., 2014; Masten et al., 2021). Conversely, mastery of challenges and effective stress management early in life prepare the individual or organization for future crises.

- Individual psychosocial factors interact with other genetic and developmental factors to influence stress resilience. Southwick et al. (2017) note that the list of individual psychosocial factors that are associated with resilience is expansive. However, the factors that promote or nurture resilience, according to the literature, are: (a) realistic optimism and risk management, (b) change management and cognitive flexibility, (c) a strong supportive social network, (d) support for an organization's mission and unity of purpose, and (e) character and moral compass (such as wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence), (f) recruiting influential team members from diverse backgrounds and complementary expertise, (g) developing individual team strengths, and (h) leading the team through mutual trust.

Indeed, during the crisis and specifically the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of these individual psychosocial factors became more eminent (Salmony et al., 2022). A study was conducted by Salmony et al. (2022) during the COVID-19 pandemic to investigate how entrepreneurs' personality traits can impact their well-being and business outcomes. The sample included 187 entrepreneurs from different parts of the world, such as India, the United States, Romania, and Germany, among other countries.

The study's findings disclosed that the entrepreneurs' personality traits like emotional stability, optimism, adaptability, creativity, and risk-taking propensity significantly affected the level of their psychological resilience and business success during crises, even when they

belonged to similar industries (Salmony et al., 2022). Moreover, the traits related to creativity and change management allowed some entrepreneurs to perceive the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to embrace online retail rather than a threat (Southwick et al., 2017).

Narrowing the scope to Lebanon, which has been the home country of the oldest academic institutions in the Middle East (such as the American University of Beirut and Lebanese American University) and highly qualified doctors and health professionals (Malaeb, 2018). The high human capital and educational system of the Lebanese expatriates and citizens have been a driving force in the flourishing of the private sector. As a result, the Lebanese human capital contributed to the economy's resilience (Malaeb, 2018). Human capital is the accumulation of features such as life trade, knowledge, creativity, energy, and innovation that individuals invest in their work (Pasban & Nojedeh, 2016). These features are crucial for an organization to gain a competitive advantage and revenue.

The Lebanese expatriates are estimated to be more than three times the number of Lebanese residents (Malaeb, 2018). They were a primary source of resilience, as they provided high social support and sent investments to their families and organizations back home (Southwick et al., 2017). The Lebanese diaspora was successful in reducing the stress and anxiety levels of Lebanese residents resulting from the ambiguous situation in Lebanon (Malaeb, 2018). In turn, the Lebanese population remained resilient and realistically optimistic, turning risky situations and challenges into fruitful opportunities (Salmony et al., 2022; Southwick et al., 2017).

Leadership Resilience Model

Since no researcher has previously attempted to create a resilience model pertaining to leadership, Förster and Duchek (2022) built on the work of Duchek (2020) and Williams et al.

(2017) on organizational resilience to create it. The leadership resilience model is composed of three successive stages: (a) pre-crisis (anticipation), (b) during crisis (coping), and (c) post-crisis (adaptation). The leader must master all phases. They are required to anticipate, cope with, and learn from significant crises to reach a high level of resilience, especially since all levels are equally important (Förster & Duchek, 2022). During the first phase (pre-crisis), leaders must anticipate and be ready to face potential crises. Therefore, preparation and observation are essential, and that could be accomplished through environmental scanning and simulated scenarios based on Kolb's (2014) experiential learning theory (ELT). Experiential learning promotes learning through experiencing rather than solely relying textbooks and learned theories.

In the second phase (during crisis), the leader is faced head-on with adversity and is required to make critical decisions, fulfill tasks effectively, and solve problems creatively while still remaining optimistic, making sense of the situation, and leveraging their social networks through using methods like 'bricolage' (Duchek, 2020; Talat & Riaz, 2020). Bricolage is when the team uses its resources to solve new problems and challenges, transforming them into opportunities (Talat & Riaz, 2020).

On the other hand, in the last phase, post-crisis, the leaders must recover from the crisis and learn from it by possibly adopting a growth mindset (Duchek, 2020; Dweck, 2017). While identifying strengths and weaknesses and performing a situational analysis is essential in the anticipation (pre-crisis) stage, it is also vital for the resilient leader to acknowledge what went wrong in the final stage (adaptation). Subsequently, the three stages of the leaders' resilience model are as dynamic as the economic challenges in Lebanon and might be ideal for tackling them (Förster & Duchek, 2022).

Leadership Resilience in Lebanon

A study by Harb et al. (2023) highlights how the unprecedented economic depression and social crisis since 1850 has severely affected the hospitality industry- particularly the food-service sector in Lebanon. Harb et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative study to explore how the nine restaurant managers adjusted to the economic challenge and the COVID-19 crisis in tandem using Duchek's (2017) model of organizational resilience. The findings of the qualitative research revealed that the leaders in Lebanon focused on coping capabilities during crisis. The restaurant leaders found a bottom-up leadership solution where they organized training sessions for the staff and even tapped into their business connections from other locations across the globe (such as Abidjan) and forged partnerships to prevail during the crises (Harb et al., 2023).

Another bottom-up leadership solution the Lebanese restaurant leaders pursued was engaging in sense-making and even exhibiting adaptive leadership behavior through *protecting leadership voices from below* (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). The Lebanese restaurant leaders were performing tasks such as sweeping the floor to aid the employees (Harb et al., 2023). They were listening to and taking into consideration the concerns of even the most vulnerable employees. On the other hand, a top-down leadership solution that the restaurant leaders used to cope with the crisis was cost-cutting measures such as laying off 50 % of staff and closing unnecessary restaurant areas.

However, less emphasis was exerted on the anticipating capabilities pre-crises, citing reasons such as "having faith that Lebanon would bounce back based on the country's history." Furthermore, most restaurant managers were not able to pinpoint what they learned from the crises other than not relying on banks, and managing organizational change was on the

operational level, and resistance to change was high. Consequently, Harb et al. (2023) recommend that Lebanese leaders need to focus on adapting and anticipating capabilities.

Gaps and Inconsistencies in the Literature

The researcher has identified fundamental inconsistencies and gaps while conducting the literature review on the impact of the Lebanese business owners' leadership factors on leadership resilience during and after crises. Despite the efforts of Förster and Duchek (2022) to close the gap and their success in creating a leadership resilience model, the field of study is still nascent especially in non-western societies.

Furthermore, the case study by Harb et al. (2023) includes the three stages for organizational resilience from William et al. (2017), however it does not include the Leadership Resilience model and forgoes environmental and individual factors affecting resilience. Moreover, there are no concrete examples of either the pre-crisis (anticipation) and post-crisis (adaptation) stages. The study by Harb et al. (2023) is based on restaurants in the hospitality sector, so this study widens the scope.

Secondly, there is a case study by Jaroudi and Hammoud (2019) that includes leadership strategies to sustain businesses during economic turmoil in Beirut, Lebanon. While the case study incorporates Yin's (2018) case study research method, there are six participants from only two industries thus limiting the transferability and generalizability of the study. Furthermore, Jaroudi and Hammoud (2019) only mention resilience once regarding debt reduction, and the study excludes the compounding crises (COVID-19 pandemic, Beirut Port Explosion, "Thawra" revolution) and is limited to the year 2019.

The researcher identified another gap when reviewing the existing literature on Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions and their ability to affect resilience during crises. While

there is research on how the long-term orientation of family businesses can foster resilience during political turbulence and economic crisis, there is a need for additional studies that include other sectors (El-Chaarani & El-Abiad, 2019). The study by Kapoor et al. (2021) highlights the impact of three of Hofstede's (2011) dimensions on resilience and it is a global study that includes Lebanon as one of the countries. However, the study only considers the COVID-19 pandemic, disregarding all other crises.

Alternatively, the literature on leadership styles is very comprehensive – especially pertaining to transformational and transactional leadership styles nurturing resilience. Still, upon further examination, the researcher found that cases of transformational leadership style in Lebanon revolve around the healthcare industry and the public sector (Harb et al., 2020, Salam et al., 2023). Otherwise, research on transactional leadership style was more focused on crisis management rather than resilience, even though the studies included several industries (Hakim et al., 2022).

Likewise, while studies on authentic leadership were comprehensive, even including the UAE, they do not explicitly mention the impact of the leadership theory on resilience, instead on organizational commitment (Megheirkouni, 2021). The growing body of research amplifies adaptive leadership theory's importance in fostering resilience during ambiguity and complexity. However, in the Lebanese context, only components of the theory and model were explored (El-Masri, 2023). The impact of EQ on fostering resilience seems new and could add original knowledge to the leadership resilience field, especially social skills.

Consequently, the researcher has identified various inconsistencies and gaps in the literature, which presents them with the opportunity to contribute in numerous ways to the field

of leadership resilience crisis management and even economic growth when focusing on the retail industry.

Chapter Summary

In short, the researcher laid out her conceptual framework to illustrate the main themes: leadership factors (styles, strategies, and agility), culture, retail industry, and leadership resilience (outcome). Richards and Morse (2013) recommend that the study and report should offer new knowledge. Through identifying the gaps in the literature, the researcher was able to evaluate their writing and move on to the following chapter, research methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter Overview

This chapter outlined the rationale and methodology for a phenomenological approach and adheres to ethical principles for conducting research with human participants (American Psychological Association, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2017). By providing a structure for this study (such as a kind of qualitative method), an experienced researcher could conceptually replicate it and benefit from the transparency (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019). The chapter includes the following headings: (a) context, (b) philosophical framework, (c) phenomenological study design, (d) setting and sample, (e) human subject considerations, (f) instrumentation, (g) data collection, (h) data analysis, and (i) chapter summary.

Context

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to explore the impact of leadership factors on retail business owners' ability to foster resilience managing the crises since 2019. Therefore, the primary research question guiding this study was: How, if at all, do leadership factors explain how retail business owners in Lebanon foster resilience navigating the crises since 2019? Moreover, the three sub-questions aided in exploring the perceptions of Lebanese business owners and entrepreneurs through a leadership and resilience theory lens. They will be considered when collecting and analyzing data from the interviews:
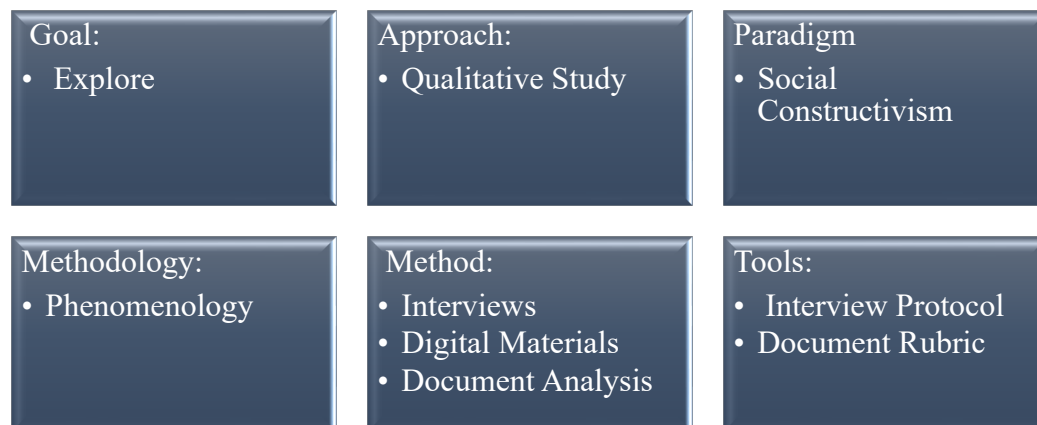
- RQ1: How might the leadership styles of retail business owners in Lebanon promote resilience?

- RQ2: What leadership strategies might retail business owners in Lebanon employ to foster resilience?

- RQ3: To what extent, if at all, do retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrate agility to nurture resilience?

Philosophical Framework

According to Aburn et al. (2016), the term 'resilience' has been frequently researched and used. Therefore, they conducted a systematic review to explore how it is defined in empirical research and concluded that there was no universal definition for resilience. Aburn et al. (2016) recommend that future research explore the concept of resilience from a social constructivist lens rather than limiting it to just a positivist lens especially pertaining to specific population groups. Therefore, since this phenomenological study sought to explore the prevalent factors of Lebanese retail business leaders during the multi-faceted crisis to remain resilient in the face of adversity, social constructivism informed the philosophical framework (Jago, 2024).

Creswell and Creswell (2017) claim that the researcher brings philosophical assumptions into their research which are linked to their chosen interpretive framework. The researcher with a social constructivist paradigm sought to explore and understand the participants' multidimensional views of a situation shaped by social interactions and historical-cultural contexts. Therefore, the researcher also relied on open-ended questions so that they can listen and allow participants to construct their own meaning from the situation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). They already addressed their positionality in chapter 1, which is vital as a social constructivist researcher. After all, they will be interpreting their findings and participants' responses based on their own sociocultural background and personal experiences with the phenomena. The philosophical framework proposed by Jago (2024) will be applied in this study (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Philosophical Framework

Goal:	Approach:	Paradigm
• Explore	• Qualitative Study	• Social Constructivism

Methodology:	Method:	Tools:
• Phenomenology	• Interviews • Digital Materials • Document Analysis	• Interview Protocol • Document Rubric

Research Design

Given the topic of leadership resilience in the context of compounding crises has never been addressed with the chosen sample, the retail business leaders in Lebanon, the researcher chose a qualitative approach (Richards & Morse, 2012). The researcher gravitated towards a qualitative approach since it is exploratory in nature, allows for conducting personal interviews and allows for creative literary-style writing (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researchers assumed that a phenomenology methodology was appropriate since this study seeks to explore the concepts of "leadership" and "resilience" with a group of individuals who have experienced it, and it is widespread in social and health sciences including fields like psychology and sociology. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), a hallmark of a sound qualitative study is that the researcher presents an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon through employing multiple data collection methods. So, they relied on interviews, documents, and digital materials and developed an interview protocol.

The researcher pursued a hermeneutic phenomenology since their goal was to describe the "living experience" of participants and then interpret the "texts" of life (van Manen, 2014, 2019). Phenomenology, rooted in in philosophy, endeavors to describe and understand individuals' lived experiences about a situation or phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher opted for hermeneutic phenomenology, since unlike descriptive phenomenologists they want to focus less on "essence", and more on interpreting the data (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Consequently, the researcher analyzed interpretively present interpretations, themes, and descriptions related to the whole study.

Since the researcher has a social constructivist worldview, they initially contemplated other research designs for qualitative inquiry, such as grounded theory and case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2017).Grounded theory, embedded in sociology, aims to generate a new theory, whereas the intent of this study is to explore the phenomenon within a specific context-the multifaceted crises (Charmaz, 2014). An exploratory case study is bounded by time (since 2019) and place (Lebanon), however since the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the phenomenon- which are leadership factors influencing the Lebanese retail business owners' resilience the researcher leaned towards a phenomenological study (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The researcher was aware that this research could have been a single intrinsic case study since the circumstance and situation being studied in Lebanon is rare and unique (Yin, 2018). However, the researcher's main purpose is to study the meaningfulness of the human experience-particularly a narrative that is underrepresented (van Manen, 2019).

Setting and Sample

The researcher collected data from the interviews in the participants' natural setting where the particular issue or phenomena is under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The chosen

target population/sample for this study were Lebanese business owners and entrepreneurs that have a prominent presence in the retail industry before 2019 in Lebanon yet remained successful since the crises. The sample also included at least two with dual nationalities or international experience since they have contributed positively to the country's resilience.

The researcher employed purposive sampling methods, or purposefully selected the participants, digital materials, and documents so that they effectively understood the research question and problem (Creswell & Poth, 2017). They specifically applied purposeful maximal sampling, which entails selecting cases that show different perspectives of the problem or process as it aligns with their worldview. Therefore, the researcher picked business owners in Lebanon operating one of the three types of retail stores: (a) in-store, (b) non-store and e-commerce, and (c) franchising (The National Retail Federation & PwC, 2020). They included retail business leaders of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). According to Hill (2019) , there is no comprehensive definition of MSMEs since revenue categorization is vague due to Lebanese businesses operating in multiple currencies. Furthermore, most large firms operate in the financial sector. Therefore, the researcher considered solely those from micro, small, and medium enterprises (Hill, 2019). So, she relied on an employee count which was from 5-100. The researcher excluded retail business owners operating own-account enterprises- those who have no employees on their payroll and were operating informally.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the desired sample size for a phenomenology range from 5 to 25 participants. Therefore, the researcher sent recruitment emails to 20 participants they had already identified from different sectors in the retail industry such as arts and hobbies, wine, and spirits, among many others (see Appendix A). There are eight governorates in Lebanon: North, Mount Lebanon, Nabatiyeh, South Lebanon, Aakkar,

Bekaa, Baalbeck, and Beirut. However, the researcher aimed to highlight leaders' experiences from the regions affected and closest to the Beirut Port Explosion- which are Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Still, they recognized that some of the participants would be preoccupied or even unwilling to participate. Therefore, the researcher decided to stop collecting data once the themes reach saturation focusing on the richness of data (Charmaz, 2014).

Instrumentation

According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and while they might use an instrument, it is often designed by themselves. Furthermore, when a researcher uses multiple data sources, they have the opportunity to maintain converging lines of inquiry and data triangulation, which causes the study to be even more valid and accurate (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Yin, 2018). Therefore, the researcher relied on document analysis or qualitative documents, qualitative digital materials, and qualitative interviews.

Document Analysis

The researcher leveraged publicly available documents such as newspapers and magazines which may contain former interviews conducted by the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). There are many advantages to document analysis, like their high level of accessibility and time convenience, and they serve as written evidence. The researcher opted out from using "private" materials since ethical issues might emerge and make the informant uncomfortable.

Digital and Audiovisual Materials

Digital and audiovisual materials is a category of qualitative data which includes social media instruments such as social media text and website main pages (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Therefore, the researcher examined websites, tweets, and Instagram posts since 2019 as it was considered a discreet method of collecting data.

Interviews

In-depth and open-ended interviews are a typical vital and primary source of information in phenomenological studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews since they allow for more flexibility and a better understanding of interviewees' perspectives (Baškarada, 2014). Moreover, the researcher was able to refocus the question or probe for more information if a new theme or topic emerges.

They developed fourteen interview items to capture the experiences of retail leaders in Lebanon navigating a crisis-laden environment through a leadership and resilience theory lens (see Appendix B).

Data Collection Procedures

Once the researcher successfully defended her research proposal and the Pepperdine IRB office approved it, the researcher then began the data collection process. Creswell and Poth (2017) encourage data collection strategies that surpass the typical interview and observation process. So, the researcher included documents and digital and audiovisual materials to supplement and cross-validate the data collected from interviews associated with the retail leaders in Lebanon (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher skimmed publicly available documents and materials for relevance identify key themes, recurring themes, and any contraindications to the interview data. They sought magazines and social media platforms and websites that include any major events held or official statements by the retail leaders since 2019, post-crises. The researcher paid attention to articles and posts that shed light on the leadership factors and dynamics.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the primary form of data collection is through interviewing. The researcher identified participants through two purposive sampling procedures, which were maximum variation, and snowball sampling. They employed maximum variation through using the search filter on social media platforms like LinkedIn to apply diverse criteria such as gender, location, or type of retail industry. While the researcher primarily considered convenience sampling, this method compromises credibility and, so they opted out from using their own "backyard" or organization and instead used snowball sampling, soliciting recommendations from their professional network.

The researcher sent messages to the potential participants via LinkedIn Messages or email, informing them of the study and introducing themselves. Since the business owners are the gatekeeper of the site, the researcher acknowledged their valuable expertise in the email to entice the potential participants to take part in the study. They followed-up with a second-email to those who agreed to participate, attaching the Informed Consent form and a general structure of the interview (i.e., interview items). The researcher offered interviewees either the option to conduct the interviews at their workplace, or any location of their preference so that they remain comfortable. The interview included 14 open-ended questions, that were intended to elicit participants' perspectives views and opinions (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The researcher informed the interviewees that the interview will last for up to an hour and will ask them if they have any questions before the interview commences. They ensured that the proper recording equipment (i.e., a lapel microphone) was available for the interviewees and themselves when conducting the face-to-face interviews. Subsequently, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview, audiotaped the interview, and transcribed it only after gaining the

interviewees' consent. The researcher also had handwritten notes and a back-up recording device in case recording equipment failed (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The researcher included an "icebreaker" or opening question to put the interviewee at ease. They also incorporated probes in the interview to ensure that participants express their ideas thoroughly and no further information is needed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The probes included "Please tell me more" or "Could you explain more about that?" The researcher also incorporated a final follow-up question such as "Is there anything else you would like to add?" and "Who should I contact next to learn more?" (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Next, they thanked the interviewee for their time once the interview had concluded and respond to any questions that surfaced as a result. The researcher reassured the interviewee once more of the confidentiality of the interview and told them they will email them an abstract of the final study, so they can later learn about the project results (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The researcher intended to remain adaptive and prepared to address any data collection challenges. They told the participants in advance about the need for a potential follow-up interview.

Human Subject Considerations

According to Yin (2018), a good researcher seeks to conduct research applying the highest ethical standards. Therefore, the researcher directed their attention towards the ethical guidelines and considerations outlined in the Belmont Report especially since Pepperdine University supports them (The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The Belmont Report is one of the seminal documents on research ethics policy in the United States. It is founded on three basic ethical principles: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. The researcher previously obtained a CITI Program- Human Subjects Training certificate to conduct ethical research (see

Appendix C). They sought Exempt IRB approval and review since the research if it falls under Category 2 as per the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research's (OER) quick decision tool and poses no risk more significant than the one participant encountered during daily routine and activities. The researcher received IRB approval to conduct research on October 11, 2023 (see Appendix D).

Informed Consent

The first principle, respect for persons, entails the participant entering the research voluntarily, and with sufficient information (The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Therefore, the researcher sent out an Informed Consent form (see Appendix E) to provide the participants with information regarding the study's purpose, risks, and benefits. The researcher requested participants' written informed consent, making sure they understood the requirements, and also notified the participants that they could voluntarily participate and even withdraw during the middle of the study if they felt uncomfortable without consequences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Xu et al., 2020).

Minimization of Harm

The second principle, beneficence, is grounded by two rules: (a) do not harm, and (b) minimize possible harms and maximize possible benefits (The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). So, the researcher made the participants aware of a section in the Informed Consent Form that will be dedicated to guaranteeing the confidentiality and anonymity of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Furthermore, the researcher guaranteed confidentiality by storing all audio-recorded and

transcribed interviews in a password-protected and encrypted laptop and files only accessible by them.

The researcher used pseudonyms instead of participants' real names so they could preserve participants' anonymity when sharing the data with a second coder for inter-coder reliability. They cited the possible risks of non-confidentiality like information that infringes on the rights of others and should remain private, and the inclusion of data in the final manuscript that they may have not anticipated (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Maximization of Benefits

On the other hand, the researcher mentioned these key benefits to participants due to contributing to this research study: (a) personal and professional growth, (b) national and economic policy influence, (b) advancement of organizational development practices, and finally, (c) contribution to knowledge. The researcher highlighted the fact that when participants share their lived experiences, they are reflecting on their areas of growth and strengths, which aids in their personal and professional development (van Manen, 2019). They elaborated that the retail industry in Lebanon is essential for economic growth. When participants shed light on their effective leadership practices during crises, they can affect policy-makers' decisions to bolster economic resilience and support the retail industry. Moreover, the researcher pointed out that this study's results and findings could influence their firms' training programs to nurture effective leadership traits that aid in maintaining organizational resilience. Lastly, the researcher informed participants that their contribution would be memorialized in scholarly literature since it would contribute to leadership and resilience theories from a non-western perspective.

Equitable Participant Selection

The third principle, justice, underscores the importance of fairness and equity in research practices (The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Creswell and Creswell (2017) advise researchers to make sure there are no participants that feel unfairly excluded or included in the research study. Therefore, the researcher made a deliberate effort to include participants from numerous and diverse socio-economic, educational, and religious backgrounds striving for equal gender and age representation of business leaders. Moreover, the researcher ensured that the selection of participants was not due to personal bias or favoritism but instead based on merit and alignment with the research objectives.

Data Analysis

Merriam and Grenier (2019) claim that data analysis and collection are an intertwined and simultaneous process in qualitative research. The researcher will categorize the data using as many categories as possible and review and adjust it repeatedly. The researcher also recognized that data collected from image and text for a qualitative study is so rich and dense (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). So, the researcher winnowed the data, which entails aggregating it into approximately five to seven themes reflective of the perspective of the participants. Furthermore, the researcher used a computer qualitative software program, NVivo, as an efficient method for storing the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

NVivo is considered the most powerful tool and software for data analysis since it organizes, analyzes, and visualizes qualitative data (Lumivero, 2023). NVivo handles qualitative research as an iterative process where the researcher can: (a) import transcripts or even transcribe using NVivo Transcription service, (b) open and explore transcripts, (c) code, (d) reflect by reviewing the codes, (e) visualize through a word tree, (f) record insights and journal by using a

memo. Accordingly, NVivo allows for multiple levels of analysis and ensures comprehensive and systemic examination of the data, which aligns with the data analysis process proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2017).

The hermeneutic circle is an iterative process of examining the whole and the parts in hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 2019) According to Saldaña (2021), one of the coding methods for the initial stages of data analysis, is in vivo coding. In vivo coding refers to coding the participants' words verbatim or inductively, which is suitable in exploring participants' lived experiences. Since van Manen (2019) states that coding is lenient in hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher decided to conduct in vivo coding to capture participants' exact words as in the "parts". Then, for the second-cycle of coding after the in vivo coding, the researcher chose pattern coding. Pattern coding involved pulling together a lot of materials creating emergent themes or a meaningful unit of analysis (Saldaña, 2021). Through pattern coding the researcher ensured they captured the "whole" perspective.

Study Validity and Reliability

Study Validity

A researcher must check for the accuracy of the findings through employing certain validity strategies such as triangulation, member checking, pilot interviews, clarifying the bias, peer debriefing, presenting discrepant information, and using rich, thick description (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Triangulation. The researcher employed triangulation, which entails using multiple sources, theories, and methods to offer supporting evidence (Hayashi et al., 2019; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher included numerous leadership theories (transformational, transactional, authentic, among others), the leadership agility framework and even cultural

dimensions theory (Hofstede Insights) to provide a detailed and comprehensive outlook of the leadership factors employed by Lebanese leaders during crises.

Member Checking. Member checking refers to the process of inquiring from participants regarding the validity and accuracy of the findings and their interpretation (Seale, 1999). Member checking aligns with the researcher's social constructivist worldview, since this method acknowledges that data can have multiple interpretations and, therefore it is essential to have a continuous process of data validation (Rose & Johnson, 2020). The researcher ensured the validity and credibility of the research findings by emailing participants and asking them if they would like to review their interview transcripts and offer additional insights and feedback. Consequently, through employing member checking, the researcher provided a comprehensive and representative understanding of the participants' leadership factors in the Lebanese retail industry whilst navigating crises.

Pilot Interviews. Pilot interviews are essential to ensure the validity of the research, and enhance the quality of the interview questions and protocol (Hayashi et al., 2019). Therefore, since the researcher has a convenient geographic location, they interviewed a select group of Lebanese business owners in the retail industry who have experienced the crises since 2019, as an opportunity for feedback and to improve the data collection method.

Researcher Reflexivity. The researcher has clarified her bias and experiences and how they shape her interpretation of the phenomenon from the outset of the study, specifically in the positionality heading of chapter 1 (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). According to van Manen (2019), reflection by the observer is imperative in a phenomenology since it allows for a clear depiction of the phenomenon.

Negative Case Analysis. The researcher decided to disclose any evidence that is contradictory to the pattern of the code or theme (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Therefore, the researcher reported a realistic assessment of the case since real-life scenarios are neither entirely positive nor negative.

Study Reliability

On the other hand, the objective of reliability in qualitative research is to mitigate errors and biases in a study so that another investigator can come to the same conclusion and findings if they would replicate the study utilizing the same methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Yin, 2018). This phenomenological study provided a unique opportunity and phenomenon worth documenting that might be replicable to a broader number of entrepreneurs and business leaders. This study revealed insights, strategies, and effective leadership practices to navigate a challenging environment, whether it be due to social, political, or economic pressures. The researcher's reflexivity and pursuit of data triangulation not only enhanced the study's validity, but also its reliability (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

The researcher enhanced the reliability by obtaining audio recordings and transcripts through Microsoft Transcription service for audio recorded via phone (Silverman, 2021). Further, the researcher subscribed to the qualitative software NVivo to assist with the coding. The researcher required the help of a second coder who was also the secondary investigator. The secondary investigator did not have access to the interviewees' identities yet was an expert in data collection and coding. Consequently, the researcher established intercoder agreement and reliability by comparing if the second coder used the same codes and themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Chapter Summary

The researcher provided an overview of the methodology used for this qualitative phenomenological study in Chapter 3. The social constructivist paradigm guided the data collection approach, where the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and reviewed digital materials and public documents. The chosen methodology aligned with the study's purpose, which considers retail leaders' perceptions in Lebanon to explore the leadership factors that nurtured their resilience. The researcher also discussed the data collection and analysis procedures, which included the interview protocol . The protocol and the researcher's adherence to IRB requirements allowed them to overcome the challenges associated with study validity and reliability.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

Chapter Overview

This chapter presented the findings of this hermeneutic phenomenological study. It documents the lived experiences of retail business owners in Lebanon, focusing on the leadership and resilience exhibited in response to the compounding crises since 2019. Therefore, the main chapter headings included: (a) introduction, (b) sample description, (c) presentation of findings from interviews then document analysis, (d) integration of findings and (e) chapter summary.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology was to explore the influence of leadership factors on retail business owners' resilience while navigating the crises in Lebanon since 2019 by examining their lived experiences. The overarching research question for this study was, "How, if at all, do leadership factors explain how retail business owners in Lebanon have fostered resilience in navigating the crises since 2019?" Three sub-questions led the inquiry:

- SQ1: How might the leadership styles of retail business owners in Lebanon promote resilience?

- SQ2: What leadership strategies might retail business owners in Lebanon employ to foster resilience?

- SQ3: To what extent, if at all, do retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrate agility to nurture resilience?

Accordingly, the interview items were structured subsequently. IQ1-IQ5 were related to the first sub-question, "How might the leadership styles of retail business owners in Lebanon promote resilience?"

1. How would you describe your leadership style?

2. Please elaborate on an imperative leadership skill you have used when navigating crises.

3. How, if at all, have your cultural values influenced the way you lead in the industry?

4. Please share how you might have changed your leadership approach due to the crises.

5. How do you feel your leadership style might have helped nurture your resilience?

Interview items IQ6-IQ9 were connected to the second sub-question, "What leadership strategies might retail business owners in Lebanon employ to foster resilience?"

6. Please share a strategy you might have used to cope with the challenges during the crises.

7. What is a tactic that you might have employed to adapt after the crises?

8. Please describe how your mindset might have influenced your organization's resilience.

9. How, if at all, have any of your actions influenced your organization's resilience?

Interview items IQ10-IQ11 were linked to the second sub-question, "To what extent, if at all, do retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrate agility to nurture resilience?"

10. How, if at all, might your agility in decision-making have impacted levels of resilience?

11. What were some organizational changes you implemented as a result of the crises?

The final two interview items are all-encompassing and would aid in gathering insight for the overarching research question on leadership factors contributing to retail leaders' resilience:

12. Reflecting on the crises, please share one of your top lessons on leadership and resilience.

13. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion today?

Sample Description

The researcher almost achieved equal representation where among the 13 participants, there were 7 male and 6 female (see Table 1). Participants' ages ranged from 28 to 71. The majority of businesses were online and brick-and-mortar. P13 was the only franchise owner. All

participants fit the screening criteria when the researcher recruited them via social media platforms: (a) aged 19 years or older, (b) currently enrolled in the retail sector in Lebanon, (c) fluent in English, (d) occupying a leadership role- business owner in the retail industry, and (e) owner of a micro, small, or medium enterprise.

Only one potential participant was excluded from the study since they had a hectic schedule and showed no interest in committing fully to the study. Two participants had dual nationalities: P5 was Lebanese-French, and P7 was Lebanese-English adding diversity to the participant pool.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Participants	Type of Retail	Main Region	Business Founded
P1	Shoes, and Accessories	Beirut (Airport Area)	1997
P2	Wine and Spirits	Mount Lebanon	1839
P3	Healthy GMO-free snacks	North Lebanon	2016
P4	Art Gallery	Mount Lebanon	2000
P5	Café, Dessert, and Self-Service Restaurant	North Lebanon	1981
P6	Office Materials and Supplies	Mount Lebanon	1970
P7	Miscellaneous (Skin & Body Products)	Mount Lebanon- Dubai	1999
P8	Flowers and Plants	Mount and North Lebanon	1992
P9	Healthy Meal Packages + Diet Products	Mount Lebanon-Beirut	1996
P10	Sanitary and Tiles Business Owner	(South) Beirut	2000
P11	Pharmaceutical Products	Mount Lebanon	2008
P12	Furniture and Home Products	Mount Lebanon	2002
P13	Motor Vehicles	South of Lebanon	1994

Presentation of Interview Data

Data for Interview Item 1

Interview item 1 was: "How would you describe your leadership style?" The following

pattern codes emerged from the in vivo analysis: (a) adaptive, and (b) collaborative.

Adaptive Leadership Style. Eight participants or retail business owners in Lebanon

expressed that their current leadership style is adaptive, describing it as a "mix of different

styles," "flexible and adaptive," and "it depends." For instance, P1 explained, "I am not very

tough and I'm not very lenient." P2 also articulated, "My temperament is easygoing, but also the

business requires you to be more hands on." P6 illuminated this style by stating, "I'm very

adaptive, especially because of the economy in Lebanon and what happened in 2019 and it's still

happening until 2023. You have to be…You can't just implement one strategy or one style since

it's a family business." P4 also characterized her style as adaptive through expressing:

> Actually, being a small business, since it's an art gallery, I am the owner, I am the
>
> director and I have a couple of staff with me…But again, because we live in such an
>
> unstable region-my style, if I may say, is to try to adapt at any time to the current
>
> situation. This is my way of working because we cannot think of- otherwise it would be a
>
> waste of time. We cannot put rules and regulations and break them all the time and make
>
> exceptions all the time. So, it's so much easier just to see things coming and adapt.

Collaborative Leadership Style. Two business owners in Lebanon clearly stated that they

had a collaborative leadership style. P11 declared, "My leadership style is collaborative. I like

open communication with my team so they can perform their tasks perfectly. I employ an open-

door policy with my clients." Similarly, P13 stated, "I would describe my leadership style as

collaborative with motivation, direction and guidance at its core." On the other hand, three

participants showcased aspects of a collaborative leadership style when articulating how they view themselves as leaders through in vivo codes like "modern leader likes leadership to come from every single person," and "perfectionist that improves with team." For example, P7 explained, "I think it's very…modern. In a way that I do things outside the box. I don't like to do conventional things in general, so I like leadership to actually come from every single person that is in the company." Whereas P8 portrayed herself as, "if you want to be a perfectionist, you should be allowed to make errors, so I always accept the errors and I ask them please change the way you work to the better …You know, I'm not here to judge, we're a team and we have to improve together." P9 also emphasized self-leadership so one can engage in collaboration through:

> Before starting as a leader, you have to know how to lead yourself first. So, you cannot be a good leader if you don't know how to lead yourself. So, you have to know how to inspire and guide others. Collaborate with team members. Teamwork. All of this.

Data for Interview Item 2

Interview item 2 was: "Please elaborate on an imperative leadership skill when navigating crises" The following pattern codes emerged from the in vivo analysis: (a) adaptation, (b) communication, and (c) passion.

Adaptation. Seven participants identified adaptation as an imperative leadership skill when navigating crises. P1 explained, "well, adapting to financial challenges and financial savviness is vital because now the banks are not opening any Limited Liability Companies and we don't have as many credits to do our job as we used to." Likewise, P11 stated, "one imperative leadership skill is adaptation since each crisis required a different solution… I'm a pharmacist that needed to acquire business knowledge such as how much stock to buy it wasn't

enough to just be a "pharmacist" anymore." P10 also articulated the need to adapt and shift

salaries to US dollars during the economic crisis:

> A leader who can adapt is better equipped to respond to evolving situation promptly and
>
> fast. I'm going to give an example about the depreciation of the currency, just in order to
>
> see how the Lebanese felt during this economic crisis. At the end of October 2019, when
>
> the revolution started every 1500 Lebanese lira was equivalent to one US dollar. During
>
> the crisis and the economic collapse, value of the Lebanese lira dropped down sharply, it
>
> lost 94% of its value. Anyway, in order to keep my, let's say it in this way, they are under
>
> poverty. They are-they got very (x2) poor. So, in order to keep my business running and
>
> let my employees feel secure and motivated and to strive in their work, I made a decision
>
> to shift their salaries from Lebanese pound to US dollars.

Communication. Four participants highlighted communication as an imperative skill

while managing crises. For instance, P3 expounded on the importance of communicating the

plan, "the most important thing is that you actually communicate, you communicate the plan,

you look at your insurance, you look at your fire distinguishers you make sure that you have

everything in place in case of a possible situation." P7 also expressed that open-communication

with employees and no panic are crucial, "we should not first of all, you should not panic during

crisis. That's the most important thing. So, when you have a leader- you are the leader first, so

you have to give that sense of belonging. No panic, no stress for your employees. And you have

to do open- communication." Similarly, P12 emphasized daily communication, "I believe that

communication by that time was very crucial to happen on each and on a daily basis, you

know?"

Passion. Two participants articulated that passion was an imperative leadership skill when navigating crises. P4 directly mentioned that her passion drove her to open her business initially, "back in 1999, no one around me really encouraged me to go forward with this project. They told me, 'in this time of crisis why on earth would you start a business?! It is simply suicidal' Despite all the prevalent challenges…I was driven by my passion." Whereas P7 exhibited passion since he was seizing opportunities during crises when others were retreating:

> There was the global crisis in 2008, where actually we did something completely crazy
> and when everyone was literally pulling back and trying to collect their money from the
> market and stopping to buy stock and didn't want to expand, I actually decided to do
> everything that everybody didn't want to do. So I doubled on the stock, I gave more credit
> to the clients… And I remember that year in 2009 we had 42% growth versus most
> companies closed went bankrupt, due to the crises.

Data for Interview Item 3

Interview item 3 was: "How, if at all, have your cultural values influenced the way you lead in the industry?" The following pattern codes surfaced from the in vivo analysis: (a) respectful, (b) people-centric, and (c) multicultural.

Respectful. Five participants responded that their cultural values led them to be respectful leaders, including "respect for the elderly," "respect for diversity," or "respect for the environment." P5 stated ,"as Lebanese we have a very diverse culture, so I learned to respect all religions and ethnicities. We cater during all events whether it is Eid, or a Holy Communion. Here, we have freedom of choice and opinion." P6 explained, "respecting the elderly is a must. This is a value we have been taught since a young age. When I came to work at the family business, I was the youngest…with time I learned to balance respect with practical decision-

making." P3 discussed how her personal values of respect for the environment are translated in her company:

> What you see today in the company is a is a translation of my values, my personal values, and I'm trying to bring that across through this business. So always my mindset is that anybody that does contact with our snacks will understand this culture of environmental consciousness, of what it needs to put a good product out there. A good product that's not only good for you, but also good for your environment, good for the people, good for the planet. It's always in this mindset, you know, that even when we communicate that our marketing campaigns are always in this mindset, so, we did a marketing campaign for the summer. We called it, "our snacks are good for the summer." What does that mean that these snacks are good for the summer? What are we doing? You know, does it stop just eating the snack and throwing the wrapper?

People-Centric. Four participants articulated they attach value to the people in Lebanon, considering "employees are like family in Lebanese businesses," "personalizing contact is part our culture," and "we are attached to people and the culture." P8 declared, "I look into the eyes of people when I show them what I do and it's like I'm setting an example for them. It makes me proud… Lebanese people are attached to this country because we're attached to each other." P12 shared, "So whenever we got into this stage into this crisis, I remember I used to sleep at night and I used to think about the employees, their families… I think these values are very common in the Lebanese businesses." P4 also elaborated how being a small country allows for personal interactions:

> The cultural aspect is as important as the economic one. To personalize the contact is part of our culture. Actually, again being part of this region of the world where it is a small

country and small population, we are very close to people and the personal interaction

with clients is mostly important and very special. The client likes to see the owner. He

likes to discuss with the owner. Obviously the staff is always here to welcome, to be

helpful, so it's very personalized. So this part of our culture really interferes in our work

and we apply it all the time. To be kind, to be helpful and as much as we can to be caring

because that's what the clients like. We have staff to do it and besides we don't have the

problem of long distance. We suggest payment facilities, free delivery to try the artwork,

to hold a piece for the customer. It is quite exceptional, but we tend to trust people and

they appreciate it.

Multicultural. Four participants expressed that as Lebanese they are exposed to multiple

cultures which causes them to be "flexible," "adapt to different customer needs based on

country," and be "the best leaders in the world." P2 indicated, "I think Lebanon has an eclectic

culture, so it's not really Western or eastern culture. I think because we're exposed to multiple

cultures, we might have more flexibility when we tackle certain ideas or problems, and that's

why Lebanese businessmen in general are quite resourceful." Similarly, P1 concluded, "

Lebanese women are highly educated, we are social, and love business travel so maybe because I

am here I got those 15 years of banking experience and lead now in retail like this." P7 also

described how having a multicultural background enables him to think differently:

I studied in France, I studied in England, in Canada, where I graduated, I lived in Saudi

Arabia, in Lebanon in Dubai in Singapore traveled the world in business, so you know, I

have multicultural backgrounds today. And so having the access to be able to get in touch

with other cultures gives you a completely different perspective on how to think and how

to act…one of the best leaders in the world are Lebanese and we have more Lebanese

living outside Lebanon than in Lebanon. So, combining this can give me an edge to be

able to think differently.

Data from Interview Item 4

Interview item 4 was: "Please share how you might have changed your leadership

approach due to the crises." Two pattern codes originated from the in vivo analysis: (a) resource

management, and (b) shift in responsibilities.

Resource Management. Eight participants implied that they adapted how they manage

their resources due to the crisis such as "allocated limited resources," "closed my second space,"

and "find other creative solutions." P7 mentioned, "because I've seen this happen a bit before, so

we brought in an economic leader from Greece and another one from Cyprus to tell us how did

they get out of their crisis, which was similar to Lebanon." P10 disclosed, "So, what I have done,

I collaborated with our HR team to introduce Wellness initiatives and provide resources to help

our team to make them feel secure." P11 elaborated, "Medication was unavailable for some

period of time, so now when medication is available, I need to take precaution to survive and

order a bit more stock in case crisis hits again… I order 2 to 3 months in advance." P12 declared,

" the key difference if you want to say between the Lebanese and other nationalities… the whole

country was going to one of the biggest economic crisis in the world during the pandemic and we

used to always have a solution."

Shift in Responsibilities. Four participants noticed a shift in their responsibilities towards

employees and their business due to the crises, citing feeling "more responsible," "more

accountable," and "protective of employees and bakery." P2 pointed out, "it made me a bit less

democratic because sometimes being too good-natured might lead people on to thinking that

they're not accountable when it comes to their actions. Accountability is very important

especially when you're in a time of crisis." P3 expressed, "when there's danger, you automatically think you flee or you fight, or you rethink. And I think in my situation I was like, okay, I right away drew my borders, you know I want to protect what I've built." P8 noted, "During the crisis, I felt more responsible because before the crisis things were going well and I used to go with the flow. And with the crisis, I felt this weight of the responsibility…I have to decide everything."

Data for Interview Item 5

Interview item 5 was : "How do you feel the way you lead helped nurture your resilience?" Two pattern codes emerged from the in vivo analysis: (a) presence in resilient culture and (b) strength from support networks.

Presence in Resilient Culture. Seven participants revealed that due to their presence in Lebanon where there have been "past and present-day obstacles," they maintained their "long-term vision," and "goals," to remain resilient. P2 explained, " I think already our culture is resilient so being present in Lebanon as a business…. means that we've basically gone through all kinds of crises, and they've mitigated them successfully." P5 disclosed, "We have been through so much in a short period of time, but I think the resilient mindset most Lebanese have, that I have, helped me overcome all these issues and helped my bakery, shop, café, remain to this day." P10 noted, "Being the head of the family business navigating through Lebanon's numerous obstacles, has challenged our resilience. And I sincerely believe that my leadership style has been an important factor in this resilience." P12 shared:

> I believe today if any problem occurs we will be able to solve any kind of problems because we saw the worst, this is what I used to say. They used to tell me that, "What about now?", or "What if this or this happens?" I used to tell them like we saw the worst,

so why are we still afraid? So, think about any (x3) anything bad happening to a country or to a company happened here and we still survived, and we still managed. So, this created like a strong self-awareness if you want to say resilience.

Strength from Support Networks. Six participants expressed as leaders they tend to garner strength from support networks for their resilience, where P11 pointed out "we had really tough periods of time…my only option is to remain resilient relying on close ties." P1 noted, "my great strength and advancement comes from my employees because now my employees are less paid than they were used to…They told me we can endure with you, waiting for a better moment to come so we can all recover." P13 revealed, "to bounce back after a crisis or challenge I have learned to use the proper resources such as a supportive network, and to consider different opinions from different worldviews across the organization in order to avoid blind spots." P7 shared:

> So again, as an owner and founder and leader, it's very hard because it's very lonely at the top and people expect you to have all the answers. Even in the most difficult times, they expect you to have all the answers. So, I can tell you that it's been a very hard journey, sleepless nights, sleepless weekends. But the fact that I had the core team always around that which is called the steering committee that we sat and we discussed everything. That was my biggest backbone, to be honest, that's my team. For me, I'm worth nothing without my team or any leader for that matter.

Summary Response to Sub-question 1

Sub-question 1 was: "How, if at all, the leadership styles of retail business owners in Lebanon, nurtured resilience while managing the compounding crises since 2019?" The first five interview items related to the participants' lived experiences (see Table 2). The retail business

owners in Lebanon highlighted teamwork and flexibility described their current leadership style as: (a) adaptive and (b) collaborative. They considered the following crucial leadership skills when leading in crises: (a) adaptation, (b) passion, and (c) communication. The retail business owners' cultural values centricity impacted how they lead in the industry such as: (a) respect, (b) multiculturalism, and (c) people-centricity. They changed their leadership approach due to crises through: (a) resource management, and (b) shifting responsibilities. Finally, the leaders nurtured resilience through: (a) presence in resilient culture and (b) strength from support networks. As such, the pattern codes were further refined to two overarching themes that encompass what leadership styles were crucial for fostering resilience while navigating crises: (a) adaptive, and (b) value-centered.

Table 2

SQ1 Summary

SQ1: How might the leadership styles of retail business owners in Lebanon promote resilience? (IQ1- IQ5)		
Sample in-vivo codes	**Pattern Codes**	**Themes**
"mix of different styles" "can't implement just one style" "friendly but tough"	• Adaptive Leadership • Adaptation • Resource Management • Shift in responsibilities	Adaptive Leadership

SQ1: How might the leadership styles of retail business owners in Lebanon promote resilience? (IQ1- IQ5)

Sample in-vivo codes	Pattern Codes	Themes
"women-led business" "both hierarchal and egalitarian leadership"	• Collaborative Leadership • Communication • Passion • People-centric • Respect • Multicultural • Presence in resilient culture • Strength from support networks	Value-Centered Leadership

Data for Interview Item 6

Interview Item 6 was: "Please share a strategy you used to cope with the challenges during the crises. The following pattern code or meta-theme, "market expansion and contraction strategies", emerged from the in vivo codes.

Market Expansion and Contraction Strategies. All 13 participants listed strategies that focused on the market expansion and contraction to cope during the crises. These strategies included "diversifying income streams," "community outreach," "cost-cutting," and "e-commerce." For instance, P3 revealed, "during the first crisis, which was since 2019 and went to

2020. So, I needed to secure our revenue that came from the export market. So, I quickly pivoted the business…I was able to inject capital in the UAE market." P5 mentioned, "We collaborated with local shops in the souk to provide free meals to frontline workers, their families, and those in need, especially in the mountains…This initiative not only contributed to the community, but also generated positive publicity." P10 mentioned a range of strategies from diversification to e-commerce where he noted, "we assessed regional and the global markets in Africa, Middle East, and even I sold materials to USA which created a layer of protection against fluctuation in the economy...We made significant investments to build our online presence and e-commerce capabilities." However, P2 was the only one who identified "market research" as a strategy to cope and disclosed:

> The main strategy is always do enough market research not to jump into assumptions. This is very important. I think this might be a recurring theme because people assume a lot…So we're small businesses. We're not like Apple or whoever. So your market is quite small and it's about finding the right audience, so audiences might shift, but doesn't mean that your market is eroding or shrinking. Sometimes lifestyles might change doesn't mean that consumption might go down.

Data for Interview Item 7

Interview item 7 was: "What is a tactic or plan you employed to adapt after the crises?" Two pattern codes developed from the in vivo analysis: (a) contingency planning and (b) implementing sustainable initiatives.

Contingency Planning. Seven participants either directly or indirectly mentioned contingency planning to adapt after the crises. P11 mentioned implicitly, "optimizing inventory management" as an aspect of contingency planning. Likewise, P6 noted another aspect of

contingency planning which is organization during and after crises, "during covid we got the ISO-9001…it helped organize the business." On the other hand, P2, P3, and P13 directly mentioned contingency planning as a strategy to adapt after crises. P2 stated, "if you've experienced a sudden decrease in your regular market you should have a contingency plan." P3 remarked, "we exercised a private label project in the UAE. So, in case things go really bad in Lebanon that bakery would produce snacks in the UAE for us…we have a contingency plan." P13 revealed, "we now have set a contingency plan to mitigate the consequences of any future crisis including an evacuation plan for people and assets like the cars, data, archives, are protected in a safe zone."

Implementing Sustainability Initiatives. Six participants claimed they implemented sustainability initiatives to adapt after the crises. P5 stated, "So yeah, we introduced those QR code menus, so less carbon footprint, and all restaurants aligned with that. We added healthy options to align with the health-conscious preferences that emerged during the pandemic." P8 explained she added solar panels to a new wholesale market because she had "increased in visibility" P12 expounded that she added solar panels due to lack of electricity:

> We didn't have any sort of problem we didn't face in Lebanon, so one of them was the was the electricity and the fuel and all of this stuff. So as a company, as a partner of this holding, we switched to sustainable initiatives, so we had like the Solar panels and we started recycling and we started to get money out of it somehow.

Data for Interview Item 8

Interview item 8 was: "Please describe how your mindset might have influenced your organization's resilience." The pattern code or meta-theme that emerged from the in vivo analysis was a growth and positive mindset.

Growth and Positive Mindset. All participants revealed either implicitly or explicitly that a growth and positive mindset led to a resilient organization that withstood the crises. Participants like P7, P8, and P10 described a growth and positive mindset indirectly. P7 articulated, "I've learned from experience when you're at the top, everybody expects you to have the answers. So, you always have to stay positive, think positively, smile- everything's okay." P8 also noted, "I have always been optimistic, so with my team, I always talk about the future, even in the worst times and what we will do and how we will improve… and we will do beautiful things." P10 pointed out, "My mindset has always been about cultivating a culture of continuous learning, collaboration and adaptability and empathy…this has translated into an organization that is not just resilient in the face of the challenges but also constantly evolving and growing." Otherwise P5 directly mentioned a positive and growth mindset:

> We started as a chocolate and pastry shop, we now have a café and restaurant. The café happened right after the pandemic even with the economy going down and the lira going up, I believe the Lebanese survive and love life and that is why I want to keep growing. I have so many ideas that I would implement if we were not always in crisis, but you know the crisis allowed me to be more present online so I don't know if I am just positive or it was really an opportunity. I think because I am positive my business is still here and resilient.

Data for Interview Item 9

Interview item 9 was: "How, if at all, have any of your actions influenced your organization's resilience?" Two pattern codes resulted from the in vivo analysis: (a) team collaboration, and (b) brand promotion.

Team Collaboration. Eight participants found that team collaboration influenced organizational resilience. P1 explained, "I have been showing the employees all the challenges we are going through because of each crisis. I always take in consideration their advice and input to keep the company going on and so we can bounce back." P7 highlighted, "I used to take a lot of their opinion and advice before taking the final decision…if you don't trust your teammates, then you cannot thrive." P12 also disclosed that team meetings during crises eventually led to scenario planning, "So whenever we had like a problem, after gathering and meeting with all the team and finding the solution, tackling the solution, if you want, we used to like create a scenario."

Brand Promotion. Five participants considered promoting their brand impacted the organization's resilience positively. For instance, P2 claimed, "Because I do all of those online tutorials, I'm perceived as a credible authority in my particular field, which translates positively onto the business intentionally." P4 revealed, "I chose to participate at a certain point at a pop-up gallery so that was to replace the space closed in 2019… So, the exposure was very positive, and I met new clients there and it was amazing!" P5 stated, "We have a famous influencer from my village, she is my friend, so I asked her to promote the business during the tough times. I was very active on Instagram posting reels… helped in resilience of the family business." P8 articulated:

> So, one action I took I don't know it was just an idea, but this made me very visible, and it was thinking about the monthly subscriptions. So, during COVID, everybody had to stay at home and people did not dare to move and to go buy flowers. So, I implemented this system of flower subscriptions. But it was a surprise bouquet arrangement, Okay?...People were so happy, and people told me, wow, during the COVID this was the

most beautiful thing waiting for the flowers and putting living things in this dead and

dreadful environment. This was a small action, but people loved it. So, it was a small

action with big social impact (x2), yes, and big visibility, everybody told me, ah you

created this idea of subscriptions!

Summary Response for Sub-question 2

Sub-question 2 was, "what leadership strategies might retail business owners in Lebanon

employ to foster resilience?" IQ6-IQ9 related to the participants' lived experiences (see Table

3). The pattern codes were condensed into two themes: (a) coping and (b) adaptation strategies.

The theme "coping strategies" includes market expansion and contraction . The theme

"adaptation strategies" encapsulates the pattern codes: (a) implementing sustainability initiatives,

(b) contingency planning, (c) growth and positive mindset, (d) team collaboration and (e) brand

promotion.

Table 3

SQ2 Summary

SQ2: What leadership strategies might retail business owners in Lebanon employ to foster resilience? (IQ6- IQ9)		
Sample in-vivo codes	**Pattern Codes**	**Themes**
"community outreach" "e-commerce" "cost-cutting"	Market expansion and contraction strategies	Coping Strategies
"learned from experience" "online tutorials" "posting reels"	• implementing sustainability initiatives	Adaptation Strategies

SQ2: What leadership strategies might retail business owners in Lebanon employ to foster resilience? (IQ6- IQ9)		
Sample in-vivo codes	**Pattern Codes**	**Themes**
	• contingency planning	
	• growth and positive mindset	
	• team collaboration	
	• brand promotion.	

Data for Interview Item 10

The third research question explored, "to what extent, if at all, did the retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrate agility to foster resilience?"

Interview item 10 was: "How do you believe your agility in decision-making impacted your resilience?" The following pattern codes developed from the in vivo analysis: (a) proactive decision-making, and (b) flexibility in decision-making.

Proactive Decision-Making. Nine participants mentioned that being proactive when making decisions through "anticipating currency value decrease," "keeping up with new models," and "problem identification, monitoring, analyzing, assessing, and conducting," helped foster their resilience. P1 elaborated, "we used to rely on shoe imports from Italy and Spain. Now, we are importing from Turkey. They have very good quality, but it is cheaper. Lebanese customers care a lot about the quality and we are the experts." P10 pointed out, "Agility allowed us to swiftly move and source from alternative suppliers when our regular channels faced

disruptions. This ensured continuous product availability, which was crucial for customer or stakeholder trust and maintaining sales momentum." P2 also recalled:

> Throughout the past 10 years, I shifted the focus towards brown spirits and downsized wine. Now there is a lot of emotional connection with wine because there is this legacy and all that stuff. But this shouldn't be an obstacle, you should always look at what's better for your business. Since what's better for your business is ultimately what's better for you.

> *Flexibility in Decision-Making.* Four participants noted that flexibility in decision-making, by "Darwinian way of thinking," "taking small steps," "not a lot of hierarchy," and "adapting to customer needs that changed dramatically," aided in fostering resilience. P8 revealed, "I told you I never do big projects or big strategic projects. It's always like small mutations and I keep them going…it has succeeded till now I hope it will still succeed." P9 disclosed, "So, you have to look at the way you change with life, which you cannot have the same decision-the same way to taking decisions or working." P12 shared:

> I think that maybe that our flexibility and problem solving based on the rapid responses also enabled us all to create and to have maybe a new open minded creative side which was not available earlier. Because we didn't have that many problems or crises so just like the phoenix (x2)… the Lebanese are very known, they come out of the ashes. They come out stronger and better. So, this is it. The crises, the fiscal crisis, the revolution and problem, the pandemic, the economic crisis, all made us better today I believe.

Data for Interview Item 11

Interview item 11 was: "What were some organizational changes you implemented as a result of the crises?" The following pattern codes emerged from the in vivo analysis: (a) streamlining, and (b) offering security.

Streamlining. Eleven participants included a form of streamlining when discussing organizational changes due to the crises. Participants included the following streamlining strategies, "expand online sales channels," "downsized products that relied on imports," "remote work policy," "reintroducing more sustainable and cheaper vehicle options," "keep A players together to build trust," and "reinforcing website." P7 mentioned, "So we never downsized the team, we took different decisions, yet we started to lead more per KPI so that the people that are really not performing, they will leave automatically by themselves." P3 stated:

So, I replaced admin work with the system- with the new streamlined system. We really work on trying to reduce time for data entry, so everything called manufacturing, invoicing, delivery. So, things are happening quicker for things to be much more agile.

Maintaining Security and Sustainability. Two participants mentioned that as a result of the crises they implement security and business sustainability measures. For example, P11 noted, "I kept the health precautions, such as a glass obstacle near the cashier for security and health safety from robberies. I had put it up during COVID to help customers feel secure and keep the business sustainable." P1 disclosed:

I resorted to downsizing, laying off employees, yet still giving them time to search for another job. And if I have some particular…case like one of my employees has a sister who is handicapped and of course he has children and all this and he couldn't find any job as a driver. So, I let him keep working and I gave him time- as much as he needs to find something else more fruitful for him.

Summary Response for Sub-question 3

Sub-question 3 was, "to what extent, if at all, did the retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrate agility to foster resilience?" Interview items 10 and 11 related to the participants' lived experiences (see Table 4). The four meta-themes or pattern codes include: (a) proactive decision-making, (b) flexibility in decision-making, (c) streamlining, and (d) keeping security and sustainability initiatives. Consequently, the retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrated agility through flexible and proactive decision making coupled with strategic streamlining and business sustainability measures.

Table 4

SQ3 Summary

SQ3: What leadership strategies might retail business owners in Lebanon employ to foster resilience? (IQ10- IQ11)		
Sample in-vivo codes	**Pattern Codes**	**Theme**
"keeping up with new models" "Darwinian way of thinking"	• Pro-active decision-making • Flexibility in decision-making	High Level of Agility
"keep A players together to build trust" "expand online sales channels" "remote work policy"	• Streamlining • Keeping security and sustainability initiatives	

Data for Interview Item 12

       The last two interview items disclosed the participants broad reflections and additional insights on leadership and resilience.

       Interview item 12 was: "reflecting on the crises, share one key lesson or on leadership and resilience." Three pattern codes emerged from the in vivo analysis: (a) lead self, (b) do deep diagnosis, and (c) adapt and learn.

       Lead Self. Reflecting on the crises, seven participants shared the importance of leading oneself, such as "stay calm to survive," "trust intuition and judgment," "be authentic," and "listen to gut feeling." P4 mentioned, "I felt that I have to close this branch and I did, so that was very good. It was a very fast, but very important decision." P9 reemphasized, "I told you and I say it all the time - Lead yourself. Start with leading yourself." P12 reflected, "I believe when you have enough passion and enough resilience enough self-belief that you can do, and you can change no matter what happens in Lebanon and then you will stay in Lebanon, and you will grow in Lebanon."

       Deep Diagnosis. Three participants reflected on the crises and noted that it was a "great opportunity for a deeply reflected diagnosis on the operations." P2 emphasized, "when you want to take decisions, don't jump into assumptions quickly. Try to take a step back…and analyze beyond the noise that you might be hearing whether from other business owners or from the market itself." P3 added:

       I think when there's a crisis, you really have to do a good diagnosis on your business…

       believe that we've come out stronger because we did a good diagnosis and I changed

       things in the business. So, to keep things as is doesn't make sense, to change things very

       radically doesn't make sense.

Adapt and Learn From Mistakes. Reflecting on the crises, three participants disclosed the "importance of adaptability," "crisis positive thing for my business," and "changing many things." P10 shared, "At the end, everyone should learn from their mistakes. Because as I said in the beginning- There's no success without mistakes." P8 noted:

> When you have a crisis, when you have a problem, in agriculture it could be crop disease or in the country you have crisis. When you have a problem you have to change and you think about all your business and how do you work and what you can improve. You do not improve without crisis. Thanks to the crises I improved.

Data for Interview Item 13

Finally, interview item 13 was: "Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion today?" Seven did not feel the need to and anything, whereas the other six highlighted the pattern code, "Personal Values in Leadership."

Personal Values in Leadership to Thrive. Participants displayed personal views and values in leadership such as "a title does not make a leader," and "it's not the founder that drives the business." P1 expressed, " I want the Lebanese people, to feel more belonging to their country. If we did, we would thrive." P12 shared, "Leaders are made from hard work, resilience, and dedication. So, I do not think the title makes me who I am today. My job and my work does." P7 revealed, "I probably don't know why you chose me. But you know, I don't think we did anything special. I think we did it because we had to do it."

Summary Response for Interviewee Reflections

The final interview items, IQ12 and IQ13, were interview reflections and additional insights on leadership and resilience. The meta themes for interview item 12 were: (a) lead self,

(b) deep diagnosis, and (c) adapt and learn. IQ13 had a single pattern code, personal values in leadership.

Presentation of Document Analysis Data

All participants provided the researcher with interviews they had conducted previously. These interviews were present online (i.e., blog or online article) or in print via newspaper or magazine article. The researcher conducted a holistic thematic analysis to answer all research questions to provide additional depth to the phenomenon . Seven of the thirteen participants had mentioned during their interview the topic of SQ1, "How might the leadership styles of retail business owners in Lebanon promote resilience?" One theme emerged from the documents, value-centered leadership.

Value-Centered Leader. All participants embodied leadership based on values to foster resilience during crises such as "democratize health," "offer quality," "be trustworthy," and "quality for loyalty." P4 disclosed that "quality is non-negotiable," in a popular local fine arts print magazine and added, "I'm doing less but keeping the quality." P9 advised after the Beirut Port Explosion in an online Lebanese magazine "You must stay strong like a cedar!" During an interview with a Lebanese daily economic newspaper, P8 the florist demonstrated the values of feminism and patriotism, when she stated, "I studied agriculture to prove that all professions are women professions. I opened my own agricultural business because I wanted to contribute to my country and do what others won't do especially in times of crisis." P12 was the only one that articulated value-based and adaptive leadership during an interview she shared on her company website amidst COVID-19:

I am a leader that values teamwork, inclusivity, quality and reliability… In times of

uncertainty like these adaptive and flexible leadership is a must, and I apply all of these

values in my role as a general manager and owner in the home textile business.

The second research sub-question was, "What leadership strategies might retail business

owners in Lebanon employ to foster resilience?" All participants had included strategies they

used as leaders to foster resilience while navigating crises. The researcher identified two

prominent themes: (a) marketing strategies, and (b) positive and growth mindset.

Marketing Strategies. Six participants mentioned marketing strategies such as "offering

online consultations," "direct marketing," and "digital communication," as critical components

for resilience while navigating crises. P2 the wine and spirits business owner indicated during an

interview shared in an independent top English-language news outlet in Lebanon, " During

slower market phases, we've learned that investing more in understanding our target audience

and intensifying communication with our clients is the way to go. Scaling back on marketing can

lead to missed revenue opportunities." P5 noted during an interview in a Lebanese travel

magazine, "I wrote a Facebook post to share that we will deliver during pandemic especially our

bestseller- the cheesecake. People were only thinking about food at this point. I got so many

positive reviews and orders!" P6 divulged in an interview shared in a Lebanese business blog,

"we broadcasted a video on WhatsApp and Facebook showcasing how we were sterilizing the

factory and labor camp during the pandemic."

Positive and Growth Mindset. Seven participants noted that positive and growth mindset

will lead to "resilience during crises," and "getting the golden Lebanon back." For instance, P1

stated in an interview reposted on her company's website, "I will let the grief from the Beirut

Port Explosion and my love for Beirut be my motivation to fight back to rebuild our dreams!" P3

the sustainable energy bars business owner during an interview with a global magazine for business owners under 30 explained, "passion leads to persistence and commitment to goals while also helping others achieve goals. This leads to a positive energy that is contagious and required to overcome this crisis!" P1l, the pharmacist, shared in an interview in a daily local newspaper, "During COVID, I tried to help I listened and learned from my customers, and I always kept smiling."

The third research question was, "To what extent, if at all, did the retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrate agility to foster resilience?" Eleven of the thirteen participants had discussed agility for resilience in their interviews. The researcher identified the theme agility and adaptability for a sustainable business.

Agility and Adaptability for Sustainable Business. The participants mentioned that agility and adaptability during crises is crucial for a sustainable and resilient business. For example, P8 mentioned in the Lebanese daily economic newspaper , "we were preparing some bouquets to sell to Tawlet and Souk el-Tayeb for the benefit of the Red Cross." P6 stated in the same Lebanese Business blog, "because of the financial crisis, we had to review monitor and manage our performance even more often than usual… to achieve the continual improvement of our Quality Management system." P7 shared in a renown Middle- Eastern business blog that they were at the top of the Game during the COVID crisis by, "ensuring agility and adaptability on the business front ultimate objective to protect the business and the employees, we resorted to a three phased approach to ensure the sustainability…accelerating digital presence to ensure the full support of the partners." P13 in an interview in an online specialized Lebanese Automotive magazine described a quick decision so his business continues he made due to the electricity and

fuel crises, "You know that electric cars are now trending, right? Well, I focused on hybrid models. For the Hyundai Ionic hybrid, I marketed it as no gas, no electricity no worries!!"

Integration of the Findings

According to van Manen (2019), the interpretation of participants' lived experiences is a central component of a hermeneutical phenomenological study. Therefore, the researcher integrated the document analysis with the interview findings to: (a) triangulate the data, and (b) provide historical context to deepen the understanding of the participants' journey. The researcher also engaged in the hermeneutic circle here where the parts (interviews, and documents) were integrated to provide an overall understanding of the phenomenon. Table 5 demonstrates how the findings were complementary with key themes being re-emphasized: (a) value-centered leadership, (b) adaptability (b) coping strategies, (c) adaptation strategies, and (d) high agility.

Table 5

Document Analysis and Interviews Integration

Sub-questions	Methods	
	Interviews	Document Analysis
Leadership Styles	Value-Centered	Value-Centered
for Resilience	Leadership	Leadership
	Adaptive Leadership	
Leadership	Coping Strategies	Marketing Strategies
Strategies for	Adaptation Strategies	Positive and Growth
Resilience		Mindset

Sub-questions	Methods	
	Interviews	Document Analysis
Leadership Agility for Resilience	High levels of Agility	Agility and adaptability for sustainable business

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented the data. There were three sub-questions, and related interview items. Key findings from the study were selected for detailed analysis in chapter 5:

- F1 (linked to SQ1): The majority of retail business owners in Lebanon frequently cited utilizing adaptive to foster resilience. Adaptive leadership, or a mix of leadership styles, allowed the retail leaders to adapt to the crises, learn new skills, and remain resilient.

- F2 (linked to SQ1): Value-centered leadership outlined by the retail leaders' passion, reliance on support networks, and presence in a resilient culture allowed them to nurture resilience when facing compounding crises.

- F3(linked to SQ2): The retail business leaders in Lebanon coped with the crises and nurtured resilience by using marking contraction and expansion strategies such as cost-cutting and implementing e-commerce and marketing strategies.

- F4 (linked to SQ2): The retail business leaders in Lebanon adapted after the crises through strategies like contingency planning, brand promotion, marketing strategies, and having a growth and positive mindset to promote resilience.

- F5 (linked to SQ3): The retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrated high levels of agility. Agility allowed them to sustain their businesses and make proactive decisions to

remain resilient while navigating the crises anticipating currency changes and customer needs.

- F6 (linked to SQ3): The retail business leaders stated that self-leadership, a deep diagnosis, and agility and adaptability are keys to positive change and improvement when navigating crises.

- F7 (linked to SQ1): The six retail business owners in Lebanon who offered additional insight believed those personal values in leadership, such as resilience, hard work, and responsibility, led the business to succeed and thrive during the challenging crises.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

Chapter Overview

Chapter 5 provided a synthesis and discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 4 and recommendations for future research. The chapter commenced with a study summary reemphasizing the purpose of the study, underpinning conceptual and theoretical framework, methods and methodology applied, and key findings. The chapter was structured in the following manner: (a) context, (b) findings, (c) conclusions, (d) implications, (e) recommendations for future research, (f) evaluation, and (i) chapter Summary.

Context

The purpose of the study was to explore the leadership factors retail business owners in Lebanon employed while navigating the ongoing crises since 2019 to maintain resilience. The leadership factors included leadership styles, strategies, and agility. The conceptual framework guiding the study encompassed the leadership theories and resilience theory in the retail setting. The researcher's ontological stance was from a social constructivist paradigm. Therefore, they examined the lived experiences of the retail leaders in Lebanon, creating a holistic narrative of leadership for resilience in unique crisis contexts. The main research question guiding this inquiry was, "How, if at all, do leadership factors explain how retail business owners in Lebanon have fostered resilience in navigating the crises since 2019?" Three sub-questions guided this hermeneutical phenomenological study:

- SQ1: How might the leadership styles of retail business owners in Lebanon promote resilience?

- SQ2: What leadership strategies might retail business owners in Lebanon employ to foster resilience?

- SQ3: To what extent, if at all, do retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrate agility to nurture resilience?

The study sample contained 13 retail business owners in Lebanon from different types of retail and geographical regions. The researcher conducted interviews in October 2024 and then collected older interviews since 2019 from the same participants regarding leadership and resilience. Consequently, the researcher achieved data triangulation and provided a more evolutionary and historical perspective (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; van Manen, 2019).

Findings

- F1 (linked to SQ1): The majority of retail business owners in Lebanon frequently cited utilizing adaptive to foster resilience. Adaptive leadership, or a mix of leadership styles, allowed the retail leaders to adapt to the crises, learn new skills, and remain resilient.

- F2 (linked to SQ1): Value-centered leadership outlined by the retail leaders' passion, reliance on support networks, and presence in a resilient culture allowed them to nurture resilience when facing compounding crises.

- F3 (linked to SQ2): The retail business leaders in Lebanon coped with the crises and nurtured resilience by using marking contraction and expansion strategies such as cost-cutting and implementing e-commerce and marketing strategies.

- F4 (linked to SQ2): The retail business leaders in Lebanon adapted after the crises through strategies like contingency planning, brand promotion, marketing strategies, and having a growth and positive mindset to promote resilience.

- F5 (linked to SQ3): The retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrated high levels of agility. Agility allowed them to sustain their businesses and make proactive decisions to

remain resilient while navigating the crises anticipating currency changes and customer needs.

- F6 (linked to SQ3): The retail business leaders stated that self-leadership, a deep diagnosis, and agility and adaptability are keys to positive change and improvement when navigating crises.

- F7 (linked to SQ1): The six retail business owners in Lebanon who offered additional insight believed those personal values in leadership, such as resilience, hard work, and responsibility, led the business to succeed and thrive during the challenging crises.

F1: Adaptive Leadership Style

The hermeneutic phenomenological study contributed significantly to the field of leadership and resilience in the context of unique, multifaceted crises. Firstly, F1 offered a unique non-western perspective that was once under-represented in research. The understanding of adaptive leadership for resilience in the retail context, has been enhanced with a multicultural lens.

Participants described their leadership style as a "mix", utilizing transactional, transformational, and even servant leadership to build their employee's security and resilience. P10 elaborated that the use of multiple leadership styles was due to the various wars the country was exposed to. He explained, "In 1973, the Civil War started. 1982, Israeli War...October 2019 revolution started. February of that year we had COVID, so also in 2019. During these challenges and during these crises I put different plans. I used some techniques such as rewards and punishment to manage the team members. I focused on serving team members, ensuring they have resources and support they need to feel secured."

F1 aligns with previous research (Alzoubi & Jaafar, 2020; Chhibber & Gupta, 2020), emphasizing that leadership styles are most effective when the leader adapts them to the situation at hand. Previously, there was only one case study showcasing adaptive leadership for resilience in Lebanon, and it involved a political leader and social activist (El-Masri, 2023). When the researcher explored the lived experiences of retail business owners navigating crises in Lebanon, they added to the literature and application of adaptive leadership for resilience.

Previous research by Hakim et al. (2022) highlighted that transactional leadership during COVID-19 was fundamental for the resilience of employees, while a study by Zaraket (2018) claimed that transactional leadership and communication are essential when there are organizational changes. Thus, this study connected the dots between both research papers identifying transactional leadership style as crucial yet contingent to the "situation at hand" as pointed out by retail business owners P1, P2, and P11. F1 also validates the conceptual framework, affirming that an effective leadership style maintains resilience while navigating crises in the retail industry.

F2: Value-Centered Leadership Style

On the other hand, F2 was a noteworthy finding. A value-centered leadership style led the retail business owners to be more resourceful adaptable and flexible, which fostered resilience in Lebanon. F2 offers a significant contribution to the existing literature on leadership and resilience, especially from a multicultural context.

The emphasis on a value-centered leadership style for resilience while managing crises simultaneously supports, contradicts, and extends previous research. F2 illuminates the importance of leadership based on ethics and cultural values for resilience (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Bass, 2009; Fietz et al., 2021; Heredia et al., 2022; Hofstede, 2011; Northouse,

2021). F2 supports the notion that Lebanese cultural values positively affect leadership styles to foster resilience (Handel, 2018). P2 and P12 noted that their presence in a resilient culture led to their survival, thriving, and resilience. Consequently, F2 also affirms the applicability of the conceptual framework since culture impacts leadership styles and leads to resilience in the retail industry during VUCA contexts.

According to Tirmizi et al. (2023), value-centered leadership encompasses transformational, ethical, servant, charismatic and authentic leadership. The definition of value-centered leadership theory varies across sectors and countries, yet resiliency, honesty, logic, and innovation are important traits post-crisis.

Tirmizi et al. (2023) add that value-based leadership is less prevalent in the private and for-profit sectors, than in non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This study sheds light on the role value-based leadership plays in the private sector- specifically, how value-based leadership played a significant role in the retail business owners' resilience while navigating the compounding crises in Lebanon since 2019. While previous research was conducted on transformational and authentic leadership in the Lebanese context, there was an opportunity to study the interplay of the different value-based leadership styles for resilience in a unique cultural and socio-economic backdrop such as Lebanon (Harb et al., 2023; Megheirkouni 2021; Salam et al., 2023).

F3: Coping Strategies

F3 supports and supplements the during crises stages and coping strategies of the leadership resilience model and research by Förster and Duchek (2022). The retail leaders in Lebanon utilized market expansion and contraction strategies and marketing strategies to cope during the crises. They already had online presence on e-commerce platforms, yet they invested

further in social media pages to solidify communication with consumers. This contradicts research by Tarhini and Hafiz (2021) and extends Omari's (2019)- especially since the retail business owners decided to maintain not start an online presence, and consumers did rely on e-commerce. P5's response in the interview and document analysis was consistent where he generated positive publicity, albeit through different strategies such as leveraging social media and community outreach. Also, 12 out of the 13 participants had online and brick-and-mortar presence.

This study demonstrated examples of Lebanese leaders applying conceptual and strategic thinking (Förster et al., 2022), where they creatively applied community outreach, cost-cutting, and ecommerce. The study's F3 complements and affirms former research by Jaroudi and Hammoud (2019) where the restaurant business owners cited producing new innovative tools and forging partnerships. Similarly, cost-cutting measures were utilized as a coping strategy in research by Harb et al. (2023). F3 also increases the generalizability of Ghamrawi's (2022) study results where communities of practice not only benefit educational settings, but also retail leadership contexts.

F4: Adaptation Strategies

Likewise, F4 supports and supplements the post-crisis stages and adaptation strategies of the leadership resilience model and research by Förster and Duchek (2022).The retail leaders claimed that the actions they took to maintain the organization's resilience were brand promotion, and team collaboration. P12 even included how team collaboration eventually led to scenario planning which is also part of the anticipation or pre-crisis stage. P2 mentioned how their resilience as a leader through creating online tutorials due to the crises led to an increased brand awareness.

A growth and positive mindset was a recurring meta-theme in the interviews and document analysis. The retail leaders cited a growth mindset was crucial adapting after the crises and fostering organizational resilience. Interestingly, their positive mindset helped them to cope with crises. Consequently, this led to a willingness to learn from mistakes and improve fostering a culture of continuous learning as P10 pointed out.

This study finding contradicts research by Lou and Li (2022) that states that a growth mindset would not lead to resilience in a country like Lebanon since the environment (such as culture, societal norms, leader, and member exchanges) is not conducive to it. After all, the retail business owners in Lebanon cited that they learned from their mistakes, kept their team informed, and received continuous feedback remain resilient navigating stress and crises affirming Yeager and Dweck's (2020) theory and Yost's (2016) claim . This study also contradicts the work of Almutairi et al. (2020) that Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions are based on since they embraced change and did not avoid uncertainty, leading to their individual and community resilience.

Furthermore, the retail business owners in Lebanon implemented sustainability initiatives to adapt after the crises since they had to deal with lack of electricity and fuel. P12 mentioned they added solar panels and started recycling which ended up profiting the businesses. The retail leaders in Lebanon also indicated that they utilized contingency planning as a strategy to adapt after the compounding crises through inventory management and gaining quality certifications. Notably, P3 mentioned she used contingency planning in anticipation for future crises due to the regional conflict between Israel and Palestine and the ramifications that might result in Lebanon (especially Tripoli) through exercising a private label project in the United Arab Emirates. Likewise, P13 said that he is using contingency planning since he located at the South Lebanon

in case the situation gets worse and has created a "safe zone" for his cars, employees, and archives.

According to Duchek (2020), performing a situational analysis, and identifying strengths and weaknesses is part of the pre-crisis (anticipation) and post-crisis (adaptation) stages of resilience. F4 strengthened their argument by providing a tangible case and including how contingency planning (including evacuation plans) was utilized by the retail business owners in to adapt and mitigate future crises since 2019.

F5: High Levels of Agility

F5 illuminates the high levels of agility which retail business owners in Lebanon demonstrated to maintain resilience navigating the crises since 2019. Joiner and Joseph (2007) highlighted the importance of leaders at the catalyst level of agility during VUCA environments considering them less likely to burn out and the most effective. F5 affirms that providing concrete examples. Firstly, nine retail leaders mentioned that proactive decision-making nurtured resilience. For instance, P2 demonstrated agility, was able to rethink assumptions and change a legacy of winemaking to brown spirits (i.e., whisky) for the common good of his family business and employees. P1 also had the stakeholders' best interest in mind when she still anticipated Lebanese customers' demand for quality yet looked for a cheaper import country to keep the business running and resilient.

P1 also demonstrated catalyst level agility when she had to have a pivotal conversation with one of the employees she had to lay-off giving him time to find another opportunity yet still informing them of the risky situation due to the crises. Consequently, she maintained the security and business sustainability which led to a resilient and loyal workforce . This study supplemented Joiner and Joseph's (2007) research by displaying the interaction between the

different types of agility given real life examples and personal testimonies. For instance, P2 exemplified the interaction between context-setting and stakeholder agility when he took in the larger picture and placed himself in the stakeholders' shoes.

The other four retail business owners in Lebanon stated that flexibility in decision-making fostered resilience. P8 took incremental steps based on experience and insight to make a profound impact through experimenting and reflecting on the outcome. P12 demonstrated agility describing how flexibility in problem solving led to unleashing creative agility which resulted in resilience and coming out stronger like the phoenix, illuminating the importance of creative agility for resilience. P12 expounded that while the crises (i.e., Beirut Port Explosion, COVID-19 financial crises, and economic crises) were many at the same time, the Lebanese were known for rising from the ashes or challenges.

Therefore, this study also adds to the work of Joiner and Josephs (2007) concerning the impact of creative and context-setting agility in tandem and illuminates the importance of creative agility for resilience. It also complements the case study by Sommer and Sacco (2019), where they mention that resilient cultures involve themselves in creative and pleasurable activities. On the other hand, it contradicts the assertion by Al-Mutairi et al. (2019) categorizing Lebanon as a culture of restraint and pessimism.

The retail leaders in Lebanon also stated that they implemented organizational changes as a result of the crises: (a) streamlining, and (b) maintaining security and sustainability. P7 explained that he kept the A players together to build and lead per key performance indicators (KPIs) to motivate employees and facilitate their advancement and development, resulting in a trusting and a resilient workforce. P11 showcased agility by creatively finding a solution for the glass obstacle previously used for COVID-19 to protect the business from increased robberies

due to the economic and financial crises. As a result, the retail leaders' changes led to a more sustainable and resilient business.

Joiner and Josephs (2007) maintained that if leaders wanted to achieve the highest level of agility, they must engage in reflective action during different leadership contexts and types of agility. Therefore, this study supplements this assertion when participants mentioned they engaged in streamlining through methods such as the " glass obstacle" mentioned by P11. It was first installed during COVID to instill a sense of sense of safety and security for the clients and employees. Then, the retail leader practiced reflective action, and kept it due to the worsening economic and financial crises that led to robberies in the neighborhood.

F6: Agility for Positive Change

F6 emphasizes the multiple types and components of agility for positive change such as self-leadership, adaptability and agility, and a deep diagnosis. P12 emphasized the role of leading oneself through self-belief and resilience which would lead to not only withstanding any crisis in Lebanon, but even growing. Consequently, her passion and self-belief allowed her to embrace change and remain resilient affecting employee morale and resilience. Similarly, P4 elaborated on how self-leadership and trusting her intuition steered her out of harm and aided her agility in decision making to close the Beirut branch just one day before the Port explosion.

Subsequently, when P4 listened to her gut feeling, and decided to close her branch, she preserved her employees' lives and prevented financial loss by demonstrating a high level of agility due to her proactivity and self-leadership. Similarly, three retail business owners in Lebanon stated that the crises were an opportunity to diagnose the business and take strategic and informed decisions. P3 emphasized how a good diagnosis is crucial to come out stronger from the crises. P2 also cautioned about jumping into conclusions quickly, and emphasized how

quick is not always agile. Hence, the retail leaders emphasized the importance of not only quick, but strategic decisions for agility and resilience linking strategy to agility.

Another three retail business leaders in Lebanon claimed that the lesson they would like to share is "adaptability and learning from mistakes." Interestingly, P8 was even thankful for the crises, since due to that she was forced to improve her business, change, and innovate. The retail leaders had previously described an adaptable leadership style as a core skill and style to navigate the crises since 2019. They had also mentioned earlier that a growth mindset, and improving through learning from mistakes as an essential strategy for businesses to grow and remain resilient amidst the ongoing challenges. Therefore, self-leadership, business diagnosis, and adaptability and learning from mistakes caused the retail business owners to embrace change and grow in Lebanon amidst crises.

According to research conducted by Joiner (2019) in the US and Europe, companies and leaders that practice reflective action and have an achiever/catalyst culture outperform other companies and remain resilient when faced with adversity. In essence, this study provides a non-western context and case-study where the country is in a constant VUCA state, extending the applicability of the Leadership Agility framework (Joiner & Josephs, 2007) and its interconnectedness to resilience.

F7: Personal Values

F7 was based on the last question six out of the 13 retail leaders chose to elaborate on, providing additional insight on how personal values in leadership also promotes resilience. P1, P7, and P12 shared different sentiments on what makes a leader such as hard work, duty, resilience, belonging and humbleness. F7 aligns well with charismatic leadership theory by House and Howell (1992) which is characterized by a strong sense of moral values, and ethical

implications. It also complements Attieha and Zouhairy's (2021) assertion that charismatic educational leaders lead better in crises. This study provides the retail leadership lens and multiple crises context extending the applicability of charismatic leadership theory.

Furthermore, the participants' desire to "feel a sense of belonging" and statements like "a title does not make a leader" and "we did it" are indicative of understanding the needs of others and social values indicating high emotional intelligence that leads to collective resilience (Goleman, 2020). As a result, F7 also supports the study by (Heredia et al., 2022). According to Tirmizi et al. (2023) all these traits and leadership styles are demonstrative of a value-centered leadership.

Study Conclusions

The researcher listed then expanded on the following conclusions from the findings:

- C1 (related to F1 & F2 & F7): A blend of adaptive and value-centered leadership styles is instrumental when navigating crises to foster resilience in VUCA environments-such as Lebanon.

- C2 (related to F3 & F4): The retail leaders in Lebanon employed strategies based on the phase of the crises. While they primarily used coping and adapting strategies during and after the crises, they mentioned utilizing contingency planning in anticipation of future crises.

- C3 (related to F5 & F6): The retail business owners in Lebanon showcased the highest level of agility. They were learning from their mistakes and adapting to new practices, and they were reactive and adaptive nurturing collective resilience. A combination of self-leadership, deep diagnosis, and ability to adapt and learn from mistakes during crises led to the resilience and agility of the retail business owners in Lebanon since 2019.

- C4 (related to F6 & F7): The relationship between leadership factors led the retail business owners in Lebanon to embrace change and grow into resilient leaders.

C1: Blend of Leadership Styles

C1 derived from F1, F2, and F7 shed light on adaptive and value-centered leadership styles for crises resilience in a unique socio-economic, political, and cultural background. At the same time, an unexpected and interesting finding was when the retail business owners in Lebanon mention value-centered leadership as a cornerstone for resilience. Participants touched on a "resilient mindset," "culture is resilient," "relying on close ties," and "improving together as a team." Therefore, the retail business owners' core values were crucial for collective business resilience and sustainability. Furthermore, the retail leaders stated that due to being in close proximity to "multiple cultures," makes them "adaptable and flexible," and so they end up being more resourceful and better leaders. Retail leaders in Lebanon consider they are exposed to an eclectic or multicultural setting.

Consequently, the dual and balanced approach of adaptive and value-leadership styles in face of the multifaceted crises in Lebanon led to prolonged resilience in the retail industry. The adaptive leadership framework was previously criticized for not explaining or providing concrete evidence to how the evolution of values leads to the greater common good (Northouse, 2021). This study finding fills the literature gap and provides the retail business owners' lived experience as testimony. Therefore, through this hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher provided a holistic and nuanced understanding of leadership styles for resilience.

C2: Multi-phased and Intertwined Strategies

C2 derived from F3 and F4 entailed the coping, adaptation , and even anticipation strategies the retail business owners employed to maintain resilience while navigating the

multiple crises since 2019. The overlap of the strategies to different phases in the crises suggest that the leadership strategies could be collated to foster resilience as suggested in the conceptual framework. Therefore, in the future the researcher intends to explore whether these strategies overlap in other crises-laden countries and adjust accordingly.

C3: Role of Agility and Reflective Action

C3 derived from F5 & F6, expounded on the importance of retail business owners' agility and reflective action to foster resilience while navigating the compounding crises since 2019 in Lebanon. The findings revealed that agility in all its types (i.e., self-leadership, context-setting, creative) when coupled with a deep diagnosis or reflective action, results in a positive change during crises. So, since the leadership agility framework is applicable in Lebanon where there is a very complex crisis-context due to multiple socio-political and economic factors, there is a possibility it could benefit other countries with similar issues.

C4: The Interplay of Leadership Factors

C4 derived from F6 & F7, clarified the interplay of the leadership styles, agility, and strategies for crises resilience in the retail industry. C4 emphasizes the holistic relationship among leadership factors contributing to leader's resilience.The conceptual framework combines the leadership factors-leadership styles, agility, and strategies- with resilience, the cultural context, and the retail industry. The study validates the conceptual framework since self-leadership agility, deep diagnosis, adaptability, and value-centered leadership guided the retail business owners in Lebanon to embrace change during the compounding crises and to remain resilient.

Therefore, the MIRA (Multifaceted Intercultural Resilience Approaches) Leadership Model is proposed, emerging refined from the conceptual framework. The model is adjusted to

display the interconnectedness of the leadership factors and the conclusions. Culture is in

gradient color to display a mix between eastern and western cultures generalizing the

applicability of the MIRA Leadership model.

Figure 3

MIRA Leadership Model
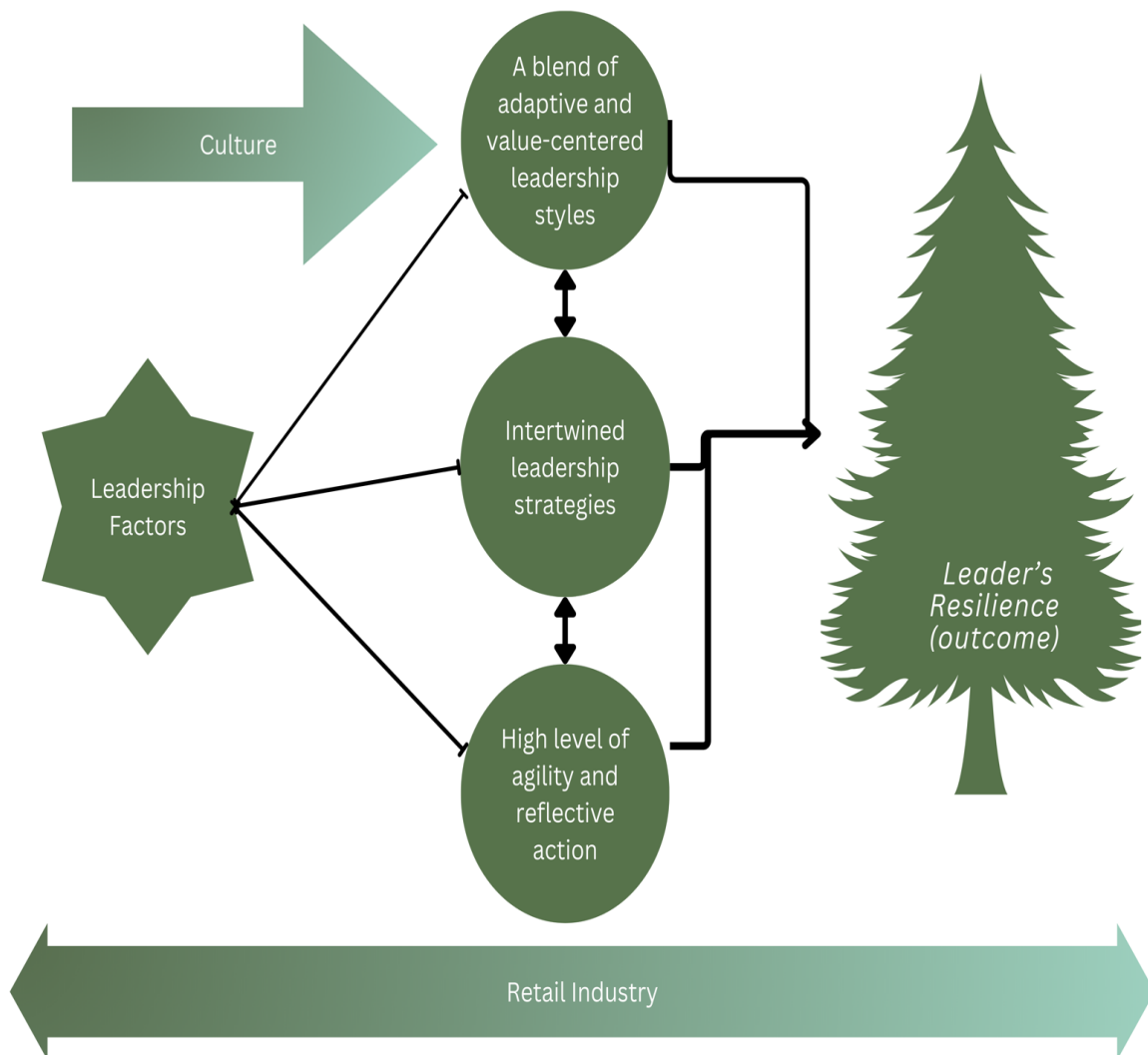
Implications

The hermeneutical phenomenological study had significant implications for research. Firstly, qualitative studies are usually criticized for their lack of generalizability (Creswell & Creswell, 2019). However, this study's particularity led to a clear examination and application of leadership and resilience theories in Lebanon, a country in a constant VUCA state. As a result, it emphasizes the need for cross-cultural research when conducting studies related to leadership and resilience.

Furthermore, this hermeneutic phenomenological study included different types of retail business owners from different geographical regions to explore leadership and resilience theories. The connectivity of the leadership factors was represented in the MIRA Leadership Model from a cultural and the retail industry context. This methodology encourages other qualitative researchers to conduct more inclusive studies capturing a range of rich experiences. The integration of document analysis and interviews is usually uncommon in phenomenology. However, researchers could strive to accomplish that in the future as it provides a deeper understanding of the research participants.

While this study extended the applicability of the Leadership Agility Framework, it also enriches its theoretical foundations. After all, since the framework is applicable in diverse cultural settings, researchers might test its feasibility. The researcher also considers that the MIRA Leadership Model challenges existing leadership theories by including a wider range of factors, so researchers could explore additional factors and the feasibility of the framework in different geographical regions and socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts.

Stakeholders in the retail industry, such as business schools and training institutes, retail business leaders, and policymakers can integrate the MIRA Leadership Model into their

initiatives. For example, policymakers could make use of the insights from the MIRA Leadership

Model to formulate policies that nurture resilience in VUCA contexts. Since the UN and World

Bank already are acting as donors for SMEs that are women-owned or incorporate sustainability

(Hill, 2019), they may plan to support and finance particularly "agile" SMEs or be a supportive

network easing access to limited resources.

Business corporations could commence professional leadership development programs

based on the MIRA Leadership model. Since a growth and positive mindset to foster resilience

was a recurring theme in both the interviews and document analysis, organizations could create a

safe space and "culture of continuous learning", and experimentation resulting in reflective

action . Organization's training programs could also include workshops to enhance self-

leadership (such as emotional intelligence), so that leaders become more adaptable and resilient

when faced with new crises and challenges. Another option would be incorporating Artificial

Intelligence (AI) or technology into training programs to create potential scenarios where the

leader and employees are assessed based on agility in decision-making, and whether the decision

was grounded in values or profit.

Even business schools could embed the principles of the MIRA Leadership model into

the business simulation such as CAPSIM. This will not only provide students with real-world

learning scenarios, but a cultural and socio-economic context in a VUCA environment.

Therefore, this would prepare the future generation of leaders to navigate complex challenges

and build their global leadership mindset capabilities early on.

Retail business owners globally could benefit from mentorship programs experimenting

with the MIRA Leadership model and sharing feedback based on their experience. Previously P7

mentioned being mentored by an economic leader from Greece and Cyprus on how to allocate

resources to be a more adaptable and resilient leader navigating the crises. Consequently, if retail leaders from Lebanon were to mentor and be mentees to retail business owners from countries facing similar crises (i.e., Venezuela) then this would benefit both. Mentorship could also occur across sectors or based on different regions where there could be potential partnerships forged resulting in collective resilience.

Recommendations for Future Research

Firstly, the researcher recommends that future researchers employ quantitative methods to validate the results and qualitative analysis from this study testing the efficacy and broader applicability of MIRA Leadership Model in Lebanon. For example, a survey or questionnaire would be offered through platforms like Qualtrics or Survey Monkey. Subsequently, a broader sample of retail business owners in Lebanon from different regions and retail types would be more agreeable to participate, due to ease of access and convenience. As a result, the findings will be generalizable to a wider sample.

Another recommendation for future research would be a follow-up study to assess how the leadership factors evolved over time . A follow-up study would be valuable especially since there is a threat that looming war between Palestine and Israel, would extend to Lebanon. After all, the changing and uncertain geopolitical landscape in Lebanon could also have an impact on consumer demands and producer supplies.

Evaluation

The hermeneutic phenomenology study is not without its limitations. The volatile situation between Palestine Israel and on the borders in South Lebanon and the threat of an impending war started to unfold end of November 2023. The interview process had ended by that time, and now Israel is warning Lebanon that it plans to expand the war as per media outlets such

as the Washington Post (Hudson et al., 2024). Beaumont (2024) asserts that there has been limited exchange of missiles across the border since October 8. However, since the killing and bombing of Deputy Head of Gaza in Beirut's Suburbs, Hezbollah has been warning of retaliation. So, there is hope that the conflict would be contained at the borders.

The Biden and the US administration find it hard for the Israeli defense forces to be victorious since they would be spread too thin (Hudson et al., 2024). Still, the Lebanese population are living in a constant state of anxiety. Therefore, the situation presents a novel and significant challenge for the retail business owners, where they might have to incorporate other leadership factors such as styles and strategies to maintain resilience. Furthermore, they might have to implement other organizational changes to remain agile to accommodate new supply chain adjustments and therefore resilient. The researcher focused on Beirut and Mount Lebanon area because it was the most affected by the explosion. However, the unfolding condition has implications for a wider context within which the research was conducted.

The situation in Lebanon impacted the researcher and the way they conducted the research, yet they are more than content with the study's outcome. Still, the researcher learned to remain adaptive dealing with electricity, WIFI-cuts, and a turbulent socio-political environment. Similar to the participants, the researcher's support network and personal values led her to persist in this rewarding yet tiresome journey. After all, traveling internationally twice per term to attend classes during COVID had revealed the researcher's untapped inner strength. The researcher learned one key lesson that she would like to impart to the reader, "remain resilient because out of adversity, flows hope and greatness." As the researcher reflects on this dissertation journey, she feels privileged to share the lived experiences of retail business owners that have contributed to collective resilience in Lebanon.

Chapter Summary

The researcher presented a discussion of the findings with reference to the literature review and participants' narratives. They then presented the study conclusions and their implications. This qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study explored the leadership factors that influenced the retail leaders' resilience in Lebanon while handling consecutive crises since 2019. The leadership factors included leadership styles, strategies, and agility. The researcher interpreted the lived experiences of 13 individuals or participants in Lebanon from various types of retail and geographical regions. They utilized document analysis and interviews, to not only ensure data triangulation and study validity, but also to depict the evolution of participants' experiences as the crises progressed.

Subsequently, the researcher ensured a holistic representation of the retail leaders in Lebanon. They made four main conclusions related to crises-resilience: Integration of two diverse leadership styles (C1), overlapping strategies (C2), high-level agility and reflective action (C3), *and the interplay of leadership factors outlined in the MIRA (Multifaceted Intercultural Resilience Approaches) Leadership model (C4)*. The substantial findings elucidated the role of multifaceted leadership approaches when navigating complex challenges and contributed to Western and non-Western literature on leadership in VUCA settings. They endorsed the MIRA Leadership model's potential application in theory and practice.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Script

PEPPERDINE
— UNIVERSITY —

Written Recruitment Script

Dear [Recipient name],

I hope you this email finds you well.
My name is Mira Fadel, and I am a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study exploring the possible influence of leadership factors on Lebanese retail business owners' ability to foster resilience, while navigating the compounding crises since 2019. The crises include the Beirut Port Explosion, COVID-19 pandemic, and the financial and economic downfall. Given your expertise and experience in the retail industry, I believe your voluntary participation via Interview would add value to my study. You would be contributing to the field of leadership and resilience.

The interview is anticipated to take no more than one hour. It will be conducted at your workplace or a location of your preference. While the interview will be audio recorded for reference and coding purposes, rest assured strict confidentiality procedures will be in place. Participants have the choice between using their real names or pseudonyms to protect their identity and maintain anonymity. I will keep all data stored securely on a password protected laptop. The encrypted files will only be accessible to the inter-coder and myself.

It would be an honor and privilege if you decide to participate in the study. If you would like more details or if you know any other retail leaders that might be interested, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience through email at mira.fadel@pepperdine.edu or by phone at 76105070.

With Gratitude,

Mira Fadel
Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology
Doctoral Student

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

Icebreaker: Tell me a little about how you started your career

1. How would you describe your leadership style?

2. Please elaborate on an imperative leadership skill when navigating crises.

3. How, if at all, have your cultural values influenced the way you lead in the industry?

4. Please share how you might have changed your leadership approach due to the crises.

5. How do you feel the way you lead helped nurture your resilience?

6. Please share a strategy you used to cope with the challenges during the crises.

7. What is a tactic or plan you employed to adapt after the crises?

8. Please describe how your mindset might have influenced your organization's resilience.

9. How, if at all, have any of your actions influenced your organization's resilience?

10. How do you believe your agility in decision-making impacted your resilience?

11. What were some organizational changes you implemented as a result of the crises?

12. Reflecting on the crises, please share one of your top lessons on leadership and resilience.

13. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion today?

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval Letter

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: October 11, 2023

Protocol Investigator Name: Mira Fadel

Protocol #: 23-09-2228

Project Title: BUILDING RESILIENCE, NAVIGATING CRISES SINCE 2019: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF LEADERSHIP FACTORS INFLUENCING RETAIL BUSINESS OWNERS IN LEBANON

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Mira Fadel:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

APPENDIX D

CITI Program Certificate

CITI Program

Completion Date 23-Apr-2022
Expiration Date 22-Apr-2027
Record ID 41167106

This is to certify that:

Mira Fadel

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

GSEP Education Division
(Curriculum Group)
GSEP Education Division - Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE)
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Pepperdine University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wded81eaa-de66-4b16-8c0c-10f242c29396-41167106

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

IRB #: 23-09-2228

Participant Study Title: Retail Leadership & Crises Post-2019: Your Experience in Building Resilience
Formal Study Title: BUILDING RESILIENCE, NAVIGATING CRISES SINCE 2019: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF LEADERSHIP FACTORS INFLUENCING RETAIL BUSINESS OWNERS IN LEBANON
Authorized Study Personnel
    Principal Investigator: Mira Fadel, Ph.D. Candidate Office: +961 76105070
    Secondary Investigator: Martine Jago, Ph.D. Office: (949) 701-6374

Key Information:
If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:
    Retail business owners who have been in active leadership roles before 2019
    Procedures will include interviews, follow-up sessions, and analysis of publicly available documents such as digital content.
    Two visits are required.
    These visits will take approximately 2 hours total.
    There are no or minimal risks associated with this study.
    There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.
    You will be provided a copy of this consent form for your records.

Invitation
You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being approached for this study because you are a business owner or leader in Lebanon who has navigated the challenges of the compounding crises since 2019. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate.

What is the reason for doing this research study?
Given the challenges faced by Lebanese business owners since 2019, this study aims to (1) understand how specific leadership styles, strategies, and agility capabilities influenced their resilience during these crises, and (2) determine if any leadership factors are relevant in the Lebanese business arena. This research offers insights for business leaders and entrepreneurs facing similar situations.

What will be done during this research study?
You will be asked to participate in an open-ended interview at your workplace or any location of your preference to explore the leadership factors affecting your resilience. Then, with your consent, some of your public interviews in magazines or social media posts might be reviewed to provide context. After this period, there might be a follow-up session for further questions. Each visit will take approximately 1-2 hours to complete.

How will my data be used?
Your data will solely be accessed by me and the secondary investigator. No external parties will have access to your information. We will maintain its confidentiality throughout the research process.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?
The study poses no greater than minimal risk than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Still, there is a potential risk of confidentiality loss, and minimal emotional or psychological distress from reflecting on your leadership experiences since the crises. There is no information being collected that would pose risk to any personal employee outcomes at work. Participant's response to these questions should not pose any risks to the participant's reputation, employability, financial standing, and educational advancement.

What are the possible benefits to you?
The introspective nature of the interview might offer you self-reflection and a deeper understanding of your leadership journey since the crises that began in 2019. Also, sharing your lived experiences in leadership in the context of crisis might aid you in identifying areas of strengths, and potential professional growth. However, you may not get any benefit from being in this research study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?
The benefits to science may include better understanding of leadership resilience, particularly in the face of crises. It will add to academic literature on the topic. The benefits to society include how the findings could bolster the Lebanese retail sector by shedding light on pivotal leadership

factors that contribute to resilience, potentially informing future training programs and policy decisions.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?
The alternative to participating in this research study is not to participate. Your decision to participate or not participate will not affect your current or future relationships with the researcher.

What will being in this research study cost you?
 There is no cost to you for being a participant in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?
You will not receive any financial compensation for your participation in this study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?
Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form. Furthermore, if you find any aspect of the study challenging, I recommend the following resources:
- Embrace Lebanon Lifeline: [1564]
- Lebanese Red Cross Hotline: [140]

How will information about you be protected?
Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for 3 years after the study is complete. The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Pepperdine University, and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential. All audio-recorded and transcribed interviews will be stored on a password-protected and encrypted laptop, ensuring that only the researcher has access to them. In any situation where the data might be shared (e.g., with a second coder for inter-coder reliability), pseudonyms will replace participants' real names, ensuring anonymity is maintained. Your trust is crucial, and every step has been taken to ensure that your participation remains confidential and your identity protected.

What are your rights as a research subject?
 You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form. For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310)568-2305
Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?
You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw') at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University (list others as applicable). You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of informed consent
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant Feedback Survey
To meet Pepperdine University's ongoing accreditation efforts and to meet the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) standards, an online feedback survey is included below:

https://forms.gle/nnRgRwLgajYzBq5t7

Participant Name:

_____

Name of Participant: Please Print

Participant Signature:

_____   _____

Signature of Research Participant   Date

Investigator certification:

My signature certifies that all elements of informed consent described on this consent form have been explained fully to the subject. In my judgment, the participant possesses the capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research and is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate.

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date