

**A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY IN UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN AMERICAN
SPIRITUAL LEADERS AND THE BLACK CHURCH ON ELDER MISTREATMENT**

by

Cassandra R. Downey

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study described how the Black Church and African American Spiritual Leaders in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, understood the issue of elder abuse and the Black Church's role in navigating education and resources to those who are victims or at risk. African-American Spiritual Leaders' role and leadership are integral in combating elder abuse among their older members of the church and society. African Americans have always placed a significant portion of their support in the church and frequently turn to them before considering other options. Acknowledging the church's and spiritual leaders' involvement in comprehending the awareness of elder maltreatment is essential when working with the older population, which further emphasizes this obligation. Understanding how the Christian church expresses hope and the likeness of God to its elderly population depends critically on understanding how pastoral leadership illustrates hope and the image of God. This framework outlined used Burn's (1978) transformational leadership theory to explain the Spiritual Leaders' knowledge and expertise to represent their capacity to communicate vision and inspiration for change to the senior population. This study used one research question and two supporting questions. A survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews with African American church leaders who had any information or experience with elder maltreatment served as the primary data-gathering methods for this study. This researcher aims to gather pertinent information for future research studies by looking at the leadership styles of pastoral leaders, their knowledge of elder abuse, and the role of the Black Church in successfully navigating elder abuse.

Keywords: elder abuse, African Americans, elder mistreatment, Black Church, leadership

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Dedication

First, I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him, I would not be here.

To my wonderful spouse, kids, and grandchildren. Your affection has always supported me in following my dreams. I love every one of you more than life itself.

Finally, there aren't enough words to adequately explain how much Mrs. AFHB has loved and encouraged me. You were my mother, my best friend, and my mentor. Because of you, I am the woman I am today. When you left me on 06/06/2022, a piece of me went with you. Because how immortalized your last words, "Cassie, writer the damn paper," are, I wish you were here to see my triumph. Rest in Peace, AFHB.

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Honoring the God who oversees my life. Expressing my gratitude to Him for his grace and mercy in completing yet another chapter in my life.

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List of Abbreviations

African American (AA)

Elder Mistreatment (EM)

National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)

Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

The Black Church has consistently offered a safe environment for increasing the general well-being and giving underprivileged people, particularly African Americans, access to restorative care, safety, sustenance, and other assets (Williams et al., 2018). The growing African American population presents responsibility and expectation to include this race, which those in positions of authority have harmed. These are unique needs in comparison to those of other ethnic groups victimized by societal deception of intervening, avoiding, and providing care for this populace regarding senior mistreatment and abuse (Baruth et al., 2015; Batada et al., 2017). Compared to other races, blatant prejudice and inclination have negatively influenced African Americans' psychological well-being, autonomy, personal growth, and relationships with others (Berkowsky, 2020; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2016; 2017). One study showed that African Americans were twenty-four percent more likely than other racial groups to have experienced emotional injury beyond the lifespan of sixty and 23% more likely to have experienced financial exploitation (Beach et al., 2010).

According to research, blacks have the most significant rate of spirituality, and they frequently place their faith in their spiritual leader before seeking help from other sources (Adkison-Bradley et al., 2005; Avent et al., 2015; Balls-Berry et al., 2015; Franklin & Fong, 2011; Williams et al., 2017; Williams & Cousin., 2021). The problem is that there is insufficient information regarding elder abuse and the Black church in comparison to issues like sexual abuse, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, domestic violence, and health difficulties such as diabetes, cancer, and strokes (Abbott et al., 2018; Acierno et al., 2017; Adib et al., 2019; Anderson et al., 2013; Carnethon et al., 2017; Chatters et al., 2018). The literature reveals a gap in which studies were conducted exclusively on white males (Hodge, 2018; Hodge et al., 2020).

There is also the absence of confident religious leaders interested in such a scientific investigation (Adib et al., 2019). The literature reveals that religious leaders support the most vulnerable persons in society via their emotional, social, and spiritual qualifications. This demonstration of remedial assistance establishes discernment on how spiritual leaders' knowledge, beliefs, biblical scripture, and practices combined may support a solid foundation for healing, transformation, and education regarding elder abuse (Newlin et al., 2012). More research is warranted to address the Black Church and the role it plays concerning elder abuse. This study sought to understand the spiritual leader's knowledge and awareness of addressing elder abuse in the Black church.

Background

Historically and socially, the problem of elder mistreatment/abuse has risen over the recent decades. It has been enhanced by the increase of African Americans living longer, social and political issues, and the movement against social injustices (Berkely-Patton et al., 2018; Watson & Stepteau-Watson, 2015; Williams, 2018; Wingo et al., 2010). Senior abuse can occur in any relationship where trust is inexistent. A few investigations have shown that many perpetrators are either a life partner, close friend, relative, or colleague (Pendergrass et al., 2018; Roulet Schwab & Wangmo, 2017; Strickland et al., 2021; Williams & Jenkins, 2019).

Senior abuse and neglect in African American households are significant areas of concern among African-American communities in the United States (Berkley et al., 2018; Blank et al., 2011; Horsford et al., 2011). The recognition that people aged 60 and older are targets of global societal challenges that imperil social, financial, and well-being outcomes, are the basis of senior mistreatment. Elder mistreatment can result in premature mortality, poor physical and mental health, separation of interpersonal and familial bonds, financial disaster, and other unpleasant

consequences (Carnethon et al., 2017; Santos et al., 2019; Shepherd & Brochu, 2021; Tauriac & Scruggs, 2006). Thus, the Black community has been disenfranchised by societal prejudice when contemplating, anticipating, and judging elder abuse (Brice & Hardy, 2015).

Definition of Elder Abuse/ Mistreatment

The failure to provide a senior's basic needs, such as nutrition, drink, medicine, or security, is known as senior neglect (Pillemer et al., 2021; Rowland & Isaac-Savage, 2013;2014; Sarollahi et al., 2020). Elder mistreatment, on the other hand, refers to the purposeful withholding of assets essential to promote both the physical and mental well-being of the older population, as well as the delivery of material or emotional discomfort (Carnethon et al., 2017; Santos et al., 2019; Shepherd & Brochu, 2021; Tauriac & Scruggs, 2006). A contrast is between intent and action; roughly handling entails willfully injuring the casualty, whereas neglect usually refers to a lack of caretaking (Anetzberger, 2012; Sadrollahi et al., 2020). Senior abuse is now increasingly recognized as a widespread and diminishing issue that demands prompt action from social welfare groups, health care systems, legislators, and the public. For simplicity in this examination, it is necessary to distinguish between the two words and the terms which are connected and frequently misreported based on their meaning (Anetzberger, 2012; Puls et al., 2014; Santos et al., 2019; Shepherd & Brochu, 2021). This study will use the terms senior disregard, senior abuse, elder mistreatment, or senior neglect interchangeably based on their context.

Historical

Although writing and examination on senior maltreatment stood out during the 1980s, research on senior abuse in the African-American population is limited. African Americans account for around 13.3% of the total populace in the US (Bows & Penhale, 2018; Hodge et al.,

2020; Pew Research Center, 2014). They are still the most understudied population in America (Anderson et al., 2013; Burnes et al., 2015; Chatters et al., 2018; Laumann et al., 2008; National Center on Elder Abuse [NCEA, 2016]); Pew Research Center, 2015:2016). Tracing victims or survivors of abuse over an extensive period who sought the Black Church for aid will be especially difficult due to the transient nature of the victims not reporting the abuse (Cunningham et al., 2018). Concerning the severity of elder mistreatment/ abuse among African Americans, African Americans are still 10% more likely than white Americans to experience significant emotional distress because of being subjected to abuse (Bows, 2018). The mental well-being of African Americans is harmed by aspects that may be verified in the realms of money, society, politics, and the environment (Noonan et al., 2016). Compared to their white partners, African Americans are more likely to experience poorer well-being outcomes and a more constrained future (Noonan et al., 2016). African Americans experience more access barriers to healthcare than most of the population, and their non- acceptance of mental health services is cause for concern (Nguyen, 2018).

Most often, the information offered about the mental health of African Americans is not reliable, practical, or easily accessible (Curry et al., 2018; Jackson, 2020). Some studies demonstrate that psychological well-being issues occurs due to various causes, including inherited traits, ecological challenges, stress, and financial obligations (Jackson, 2020). For instance, one study looked at the prevalence of PTSD in urban African Americans. The study showed PTSD was present in 43% of the 184 Black individuals who obtained mental health care (Jackson, 2020). Nevertheless, African Americans remain steadfast in their faith or religion (Anetzberger, 2012; Franklin & Fong, 2011; Magezi et al., 2020:2021).

Clergypersons have flexibility in their more seasoned populace to approaching them when confronted with cases of senior abuse or misuse. A lack of research has been identified on the mental health literacy of the clergy, especially that of African-American pastors dealing with this form of abuse. Although reviews recognize the pastorate's critical job in conveying psychological wellness administrations to their gatherings and networks (Payne & Hays, 2016), there should be more examination concerning this subject of study. Mental health literacy is the degree to which a person understands the causes, management, and treatment of mental illness and how well people interact with those who suffer from it (Jorm, 2012). Research shows that psychological well-being education and perspectives unequivocally correspond with psychological wellness proficiency and improve the probability of a positive psychological well-being demeanor (Kim et al., 2020).

The existing body of research on the mistreatment of elderly African Americans in the United States demonstrates that institutional racism persists throughout a person's life and that health disparities, social injustice, and economic disadvantage are more likely experienced by older African Americans. Elder abuse is defined, understood, and reported in ways influenced by sociocultural values, beliefs, and traditions within the Black community. Successful counteraction and treatment of elderly individuals require equipped and socially proficient spiritual leaders, assets, training, and mindfulness. However, elder neglect has recently been on the radar of research since the 1980s. During the 1970-1989 publication period, "six APA journals (Developmental et al. of Applied Psychology, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Journal of Counseling Psychology, Journal of Educational Psychology, and Journal of Personality and Social Psychology) were content analyzed for the presence of empirical

articles on African Americans” (Graham, 1992, p. 1).” The study discovered a decrease in African American studies among the six publications.

The first generation of research on abuse hindered significant sample issues and methodological constraints (Jackson, 2015; Jackson, 2020). Second-generation studies, advancements in methodology, and the establishment of adult protective service units all contributed to the development of national studies on the subject (Jackson, 2015; Jackson, 2020). Elder mistreatment/abuse was known as a social problem rather than a criminal one (Jackson, 2015). Investigations underrepresented research on elder abuse due to the prevalence of child and spousal abuse in the 1960s and 1970s (Jackson, 2015; Jackson, 2020). A significant factor in the issues' increased visibility and prevalence was that researchers began independently investigating elder abuse rather than lumping it in with "child abuse" or "family violence" (Lowenstein, 2010; Jackson, 2015; Jackson, 2020).

Social

According to current aging trends, almost two billion individuals will be over sixty by 2050 (NCEA, 2016). One in six adults over sixty who have experienced abuse at some point are growing more susceptible to distinct types of abuse (WHO, 2006; 2014). Elder mistreatment is estimated to have affected 320 million older people by 2050 (NCEA, 2016). Abuse or mistreatment of older adults can occur at any time and in any setting. As the senior population has grown, so has the number of older persons whom others have mistreated. Adib et al. (2019) stated that by 2030, 1 in 5 Americans will reach 65 or older, and the prevalence of elder abuse is troubling. The Black Church contributes significantly to the fight against elder abuse because if African Americans feel comfortable seeking spiritual guidance first, this indicates the Black Church is in an authoritative place to help older people report their abuse. The African American

population vies against the church as the most reliable institution (Lumpkins et al., 2013). Due to their trustworthiness, many African Americans turn to spiritual leaders for help in various areas, including therapy, direction, and leadership (Joynt, 2019). Despite remarkable advancements in science and technology, ninety percent of the world's population engages in some religious or spiritual activity (Kovess-Masfety et al., 2017). The world of religion will not end, and the role of pastoral counselors in providing services for mental health issues is more likely to stabilize or even expand rather than diminish (Kovess-Masfety et al., 2017). African Americans have primarily risen in status, authority, and prestige through the church for a considerable time (Stewart et al., 2016). The church plays a leading role in alleviating the community's suffering to help restore and implement equality and reduce social disparities.

Theoretical

The transformational leadership theory predicts that pastors' experiences will vary depending on their background, level of training, and the church they lead (Burns, 1978; Northhouse, 2013;2019). Transformational leadership has received considerable attention in recent decades. According to Bass and Riggio (2006), and Bass (2006), idealized influence, inspiring drive, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration are the four elements of transformational leadership. Inspirational leadership implies that the followers obtain a clear objective or vision from the leader. Idealized influence suggests that the leader is an excellent example of a morally upright individual. Individualized consideration shows that the leader knows the needs of the followers and promotes self-growth.

In contrast, intellectual stimulation shows leaders encourage their followers to be independent thinkers and analytical people. Transformational leadership parallels transactional

leadership, which implies the use of exchange processes and contingent rewards. With these administration characteristics, the groundbreaking authority style can help the church achieve its motivation of changing non-adherents into Pupils of Christ and help satisfy corporate social obligations. According to Grandy (2013), churches have social responsibilities comparable to those of corporations or other organizations.

Prior research on elder abuse indicates that victims of severe elder abuse are likely to turn to religious authorities for guidance and support. Still these spiritual leaders are not fully prepared to respond to these instances (McMullin et al., 2015). A sufficient individual education cycle is a smooth synchronization between a person's psychological, natural, and social parts. The potential open doors, demands, rules, and guidelines are dictated by the climate of the other person (Walsh, 2016). Working with positive influences from one's environment, such as a minister, is integral to shaping an individual's positivity in the face of harmful situations (Karakurt et al., 2014).

Transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006) is a theoretical framework that pastors can use to guide the practice of helping church members and the wider community. Transformational leadership approaches in academia demonstrate the capacity to communicate and disseminate change-inspiring ideas and vision (Schermuly & Meyer, 2020). Suppose leaders adopt the four critical principles of transformational leadership, they will become a better resource for victims, as they will be more willing to use their roles and positions to help bring about change. Trustworthy and motivated leaders are valued and tend to comfort those in need. Clergy members must be encouraged to practice transformational leadership to enhance followers' effectiveness evaluations (Puls et al., 2014). Transformational leadership engages with

church members by providing a knowledge base to make church members feel more comfortable and safer for those who follow the leadership without prejudice. Northouse (2013;2019) and Song (2018; 2019) recognized that transformational leaders can cause conflict when followers recognize the positive forces from leaders to form the right balance.

Situation to Self

The leadership of a religious organization should emphasize loyalty, trust, commitment, and transparency. The religious organization cannot be responsible for finding success in the world. The idea here is that intentionally trying to do good ends up doing more harm than good. Meaning, religious leadership is exercised from this perspective to help the community stay true to its spiritual principles. Spiritual leaders work with the belief that they will positively affect the world by being an example. Their role is deliberately indifferent to intentionally becoming an influence for good. Persuasion is seen as a step by man beyond the realm of God's free will. From general revelation to divine revelation, in Genesis 12:2-3 (NIV) God's declaration to Abram that "all the nations of the earth will be blessed through you." Thus, all the Abrahamic religions understood that their purpose was to make a good influence throughout the world.

The consensus theological stance is that the church has an exterior and inner house. The church must serve vulnerable individuals and develop fellow believers. The church, the body of Christ, has two primary purposes. These are to worship and bear witness. All other functions should help and aim to fulfill these two purposes. My point is that loving and helping those in physical need and loving the truth of those realities makes sense. I do not deny that the church should conduct various activities. My concern is that the duty of witnessing insiders with eyes and outsiders would be placed on a neglected committee. More specifically, imitating the church's outward tendency to provide spiritual care means loving and helping those in physical

need and loving the truth of those bewildered and hopeless. Christians should take the lead in the fight against poverty and injustice. Still, they should not be under the illusion that an improvement in the economic situation will solve human unhappiness, especially involving the quality of life for seniors.

The researcher was a human tool for data gathering and analysis in this qualitative research. My philosophical beliefs, or paradigms, formed the study, impacted my problem-solving approach, and influenced my technique choices (Brown & Duenas, 2019). While I asked open-ended questions, my beliefs influenced the questions' content (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994,). To completely appreciate the function of the human instrument, I must explain my study paradigm and philosophical assumptions, which impacted my interpretation of the study's outcomes. My social constructivist perspective guides my behaviors. Social contact establishes human growth, and interaction develops knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary focus of the phenomenological study is on lived experiences.

My theoretical premise was not to look for objective truth, but rather integrate the lived experiences of African American Spiritual Leaders through their perspectives into a conclusion that might guide programming. Consequently, phenomenological qualitative research was the most suitable approach for this investigation to dive deeper into the participants' stories and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This researcher seeks to be an advocate within the Black church to bolster change in the elderly's lives by partnering with spiritual organizations, which may have trouble talking about elder abuse (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This implies that participants share information, access, and accountability, offer feedback and recognize trends that could otherwise go unreported (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This qualitative method focused on how each participant perceives the study and how they interact to create meaning for the study. Derivations will be made whether the Black church reduces elder abuse if African Americans trust and turn to spiritual leaders before seeking other social support. This was my epistemological assumption. This ideal for education was based on the need for older people to be protected with records of lower healthcare costs, given autonomy, and raised awareness of elder abuse. They enabled me to comprehend better the older adult's personal, cultural, and historical experiences and the Black Church's social construct (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I can follow the evidence as a researcher and make inferences based on what I find in this kind of research.

Problem Statement

The problem is limited research on elder abuse and neglect for the African-American population. Elder abuse is complicated because the number of older people abused reflects older adults treated in crisis divisions, underestimating the data on African Americans. The data does not include those treated by providers or other community agencies who do not need or seek treatment (Ludvigsson et al., 2022). The fact that older people are reluctant or afraid to report abuse to the police, friends, or family is another reason many incidents go undetected (Ludvigsson et al., 2022). Victims must choose between telling others about their abuse and allowing people they rely on or care about to mistreat them (Magezi et al., 2020). People can become indifferent to the requirements and well-being of older members of the society in which they live. As the elderly population has grown steadily over time, so has the percentage of older adults abused by others. Adib et al. (2019) stated that one in five Americans will reach 65 or older by 2030, and elder mistreatment is concerning. Because church leaders are typically the first to seek treatment, they may play a critical role in avoiding abuse. According to Magezi et al.

(2020), there is a void in ministry practice guidelines and recommendations for ministry interventions (Hodge et al., 2020). Both healthcare organizations and faith-based organizations share the goal of promoting local prosperity. Successfully doing this requires organization and serious commitment.

Purpose Statement

This phenomenological study investigates the lived experiences of African American Spiritual Leaders in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who experienced authority and awareness of senior abuse, as well as the church's responsibility to support victims or potential victims distressed with elder abuse. African Americans serving as spiritual leaders and offering a thorough perspective on Black church understanding—frequently disregarded in Christian discourse on spiritual development—are currently regarded as competent experts in this area (Chandler, 2017; Magezi & Magezi, 2021).

Understanding the mental health etiology and diagnosis of the African American community is essential. Because of this ignorance, people believe senior mistreatment is a personal flaw or a divine punishment (Magezi & Magezi, 2021). The Black Church could influence spiritual well-being by changing negative attitudes and laws toward those dealing with psychological illness. The African American church broadly inspects of the extensive sampling to direct this subjective review. African-American spirituality gives a rich focal point into the substance of the Black church insight, which has been, frequently disregarded in Christian Spiritual development writing (Chandler, 2017). This exploratory configuration will give a profound degree of information and familiarity with the congregation's role in teaching about senior maltreatment during its gathering of individuals on senior abuse. This study is directed

basically by an axiological supposition because of the accentuation of the upsides of the members and the specialists (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study's logical framework includes the possibility of resolving the issue of safeguarding older adults from abuse through pastoral leader's awareness and church advocacy.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was the opportunity to understand African American Spiritual Leader's comprehension of elder mistreatment in the Black church to address the recidivism of elder abuse. This topic merits investigation to bring a visible, relatable, and spiritual representation of African-American leaders in the church through the specifics of their experiences. By showing its theoretical, empirical, and practical significance, this study contributes to the existing field of research. This study's theoretical framework is transformational leadership, as it predicts that pastors' experiences will vary depending on their background, level of training, and the church they led to affect significant improvements in people, groups, teams, and organizations (Burns, 1978).

Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study is significant because it supplies a novel application of transformational leadership (Bass, 2000; Burns, 1978). According to Burns (1978), four factors influence a leader's approach. These are individual attention, intellectual stimulation, genuine drive, and idealized influence. By establishing a new path of growth and prosperity in front of the organization, combining these factors can alter individuals and social systems (Joynt, 2017). As described in earlier organizational studies, transformational leadership uses a leader's approach to strengthen team ability and capability, resulting in a change in people and social systems. However, some studies apply the theory to the driving force behind many positive

changes in the world. Transformational leadership can inspire positive change in those who follow (Joynt, 2017; Northouse, 2013; 2019). This study applies transformational leadership theory for the first time to a select group of Black religious counselors and documentation of their experiences shared through this method. For generations, the experiences of African-American clergy have served as a platform for the community's voice.

Empirical Significance

This study's empirical significance fills an existing gap in the literature and contributes new empirical research on elder mistreatment and black religion. The Black church has always been at the forefront of assisting the African-American population with health-related issues and programs. (Noonan, 2016; Powell et al., 2020). The Black church has maintained its position in supplying spiritual, emotional, and prayer, as well as some nutrition programs relating to weight loss to combat obesity persistent disease (Abbott et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2012), awareness and prevention among congregation members and neighborhood residents. Additionally, Black congregations promote testing for infectious diseases or testing to support those living with STIs (Powell et al., 2016; Wingo et al., 2010). Publication on the Black church and mental health is available. However, empirical research on the church addressing elder abuse is void. This study offers a chance to inspire other academics to uncover more nuanced tales that might boost the representation of the Black church in the fight against elder abuse.

Practical Significance

The real-world significance and utility of this study are its practical implications. This study supplies helpful data for the Black church to examine what healthcare topics to cover in their congregation/ministry. Although African Americans attend churches at the highest rate, these congregations may underestimate the number of victims of senior mistreatment compared

to domestic violence (Williams & Jenkins, 2019). For the church to show a level of involvement among older people, the main recommendation would be to gauge church leadership support throughout the ministry to review this impact on the interception and execution and upkeep of chapel-based awareness, education, and programs. The Black church must examine the leaders' authority that guides and directs their practice services to explore and categorize the distinctive features of elder mistreatment, help form a unified concept, and make recommendations for defining the phenomenon (Magezi & Magezi, 2021; Stodolska et al., 2019). While emphasizing and sharing their knowledge, spiritual leaders must recognize that religion may be valuable and damaging to the well-being of older individuals when the figure in charge lacks management abilities, tools, and direction (Campbell & Littleton, 2018). This study will describe real-life experiences and uncover the Black church leaders' contribution to addressing elder mistreatment, ensuring that congregations can meet the needs of their members, and expanding health equity efforts in these communities.

Research Questions

Creswell and Poth (2018) state that Moustakas (1994) asserts that research questions should pique interest in an investigation by supplying direction and highlighting its meaning. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenological research questions should be open-ended, evolving, and non-directional. The authors agree that there should always be genuine experiences and not make any assumptions. More research into the lived experiences of the Black church through African American spiritual leaders in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and their role in addressing elder mistreatment is made possible by the following central research question and sub-questions.

Central Research Questions

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of the Spiritual Leader in the Black Church regarding elder abuse?

Religious stories of perseverance and faith have proven these populations' resilience in poverty and inequality. Many members of racial and ethnic minority groups have relied heavily on the church for social support. Additionally, studies indicate that most African and Latino Americans have solid religious habits and beliefs embedded in them. However, some scholars have investigated the psychological health of the Black church, but not senior abuse (Campbell & Littleton, 2018). To promote inclusivity in church ministry programs, hearing and comprehending the roles and responsibilities of African-American pastoral leaders is essential.

Sub-Question One

SQ1: How are African American Spiritual leaders showing their comprehension of elder abuse?

This first sub-question matches Bass's (2000) factor that influences Transformational leadership: intellectual stimulation. According to Bass (2000), transformational leaders challenge expectations, rethink challenges, and predict current ideas to urge their devotees to be imaginative and inventive. These populations have proven resilient in the face of poverty and injustice because of religious stories of tenacity and faith. Without question, the church has contributed significantly to the social support systems of numerous ethnic and racial minority populations (Kirkbride & Kirkbride (2006). According to Metwally and El-Bishbishy (2014), intellectual stimulation relates to leaders' roles in fostering followers' creativity and innovation.

Sub-Question Two

SQ2: What resources has the African American Church provided to the victims or potential victims of elder mistreatment that effectively decrease recidivism?

This next sub-question connects with Bass' (2006) third variable impacting groundbreaking administration: individualized consideration. By acting as an instructor or advisor, transformational leaders consider the needs of each follower for growth and success (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Individualized thought happens while crisp learning provides valuable open doors and a sustaining environment (Avolio & Bass, 1995; Bass & Riggo, 2006). According to Kirkbride and Kirkbride (2006), individualized consideration considers each person's unique traits, preferences, and dislikes.

Definitions

The following key terms and definitions supply clarity throughout the phenomenological research study.

1. *African American churches*: The African American populace in the US consider these chapels as a position of love and wellbeing. These congregations serve as meeting spaces, offer refuge, develop significant and binding cultural traditions, and enable the neighborhood to express its sentiments and beliefs openly and honestly (Dempsey et al., 2016).
2. *Pastor*: Pastors serve as leaders in prayer and, occasionally, as confidants to churchgoers. They provide direction and counsel to their congregation's members with their financial, spiritual, and mental health (Adksion-Bradley et al., 2005).
3. *Clergy*: A member of the clergy is a religious leader in a congregation of believers who has the responsibility to perform spiritual duties, lead religious services, and offer spiritual and moral counseling following the specific religious convictions of the church community (Pickard, 2012).

4. *Congregation:* To cultivate a sense of belonging and community, a congregation is a collection of people who participate in a religious support system through attendance, networking, and participation. The congregation meets the needs for good mental and emotional wellness (Chatters et al., 2018).
5. *Interior ministries:* These are community-focused services that the church coordinates and is staffed by congregation members (Stansbury et al., 2012). Interior ministries include a variety of healthcare organizations to which church members devote their time and resources (Stansbury et al., 2012).
6. *Mental Health:* The term mental health in the current study refers to a wide range of emotional well-being elements, such as a person's stress management capacity or diagnosable psychiatric disorders (Haynes et al., 2017).

Summary

Senior abuse is a problem because it is well-known, often goes unreported, and has become all too common. There are no examples of African American spiritual leaders addressing elder abuse through education in church ministry in the literature. This transcendental phenomenological study concentrates on how African American clergy understands and works with the Church's involvement in the battle against senior mistreatment. The study hopes to raise awareness of the Black Church and encourage more Black Church members to speak out about being the victims of elder abuse through the spiritual guidance of religious leaders. To incorporate more ministry into the Church so that older people can feel safe and report abuse, it is also worthwhile to investigate this topic to acquire a more profound comprehension of the lived experiences of African- American pastoral leaders.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

Senior abuse is a problem because it is well-known, often goes unreported, and has become all too common. There are no examples of African American spiritual leaders addressing elder abuse through education in church ministry in the literature. This study aims to describe the African American religious leaders' understanding, and awareness, and the church's role in emphasizing their mental health literacy when facing elder mistreatment. The literature review section offers a thorough analysis and summary of the pertinent literature. The topics and examples collected during the study in this section examined how the pastors recognized their influence on expanding wellness and health programs in parishioners of various Christian denominations. Burn's theory of transformational leadership was applied to examine the phenomenon of African American spiritual leaders' lived experiences, their emotional well-being, the ability to advance mindfulness on elder abuse, and the function of the Black church in disseminating psychological well-being administrations to the more senior population, those 60 years of age and older. A theological framework included the need to focus on the creation of human beings in the image of God and their consequent calling to service through their teaching of character, education, and leadership in the church.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational Leadership Theory

Effective pastoral growth necessitates adhering to the principles of transformational Leadership, such as setting a goal of motivating oneself and others to effect change. Using the theoretical framework of transformational leadership theory, pastors can manage their practice of serving churchgoers and the community. (Bass & Bass, 2000; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Theoretical transformational leadership strategies show the ability to put into practice inspiration and vision

for change (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Group interests are far more significant to transformative leaders than personal ones. The primary goal of transformational leadership theory, which is the study's theoretical foundation, is to comprehend and investigate if pastors are better equipped to serve persons who have experienced abuse and need pastoral care. Transformational Leadership encompasses more than merely defining it and discussing implementation strategies for leaders. Leaders must exhibit four fundamental principles to practice transformational Leadership, sometimes called the four pillars. These pillars are discussed below.

Idealized Influence

According to Bass (2006) and Avolio and Gardner, (2005), leaders with "idealized influence" are those who, through their remarkable capacities and high moral principles, lead by example. Since they act in a way that empowers them to assume the part of their supporters, idealized influence transformational leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Respect is earned by showing that followers understand the Leader's authority and skill (Bass, 2006; Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Inspirational Motivation

The second component of inspiring motivation is the limit of leaders' ability to persuade followers to accomplish a great deal in the face of numerous suspicions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Raising followers' awareness of the organization's goal and vision, encouraging them in all endeavors, and fostering a sense of commitment to the organization are the essential qualities of inspirational and purposeful leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Han et al., 2016; Kirkbride & Kirkbride, 2006). Leaders who are transformational and motivational have a positive outlook on the future. They have serious discussions about the organization's next steps and stress the

importance of establishing and encouraging the group with attainable objectives (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Han et al., 2016; Northouse, 2019).

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation improves followers' skills by encouraging them to deliberate for themselves and resolve problems.; In addition, they carefully assess offerings to ensure their acceptance. Intellectually stimulating leaders encourage the examination of each topic from multiple angles and considering other viewpoints to address problems (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Han et al., 2016; Northouse, 2019). Leaders question expectations, reframe difficulties, and anticipate innovative ideas to encourage the efforts of main successor allies to be imaginative and inventive (Avolio & Bass, 1995). As a result, faults made by the members are not honestly assessed, which invites criticism (Bass, 2006).

Individualized Consideration

Transformational leaders pay attention to each follower's requirements for advancement and growth while serving as a coach or mentor (Avolio & Bass, 1995; Bass, 2006). This occurs because of allocating time for training and mentorship, showing team members appreciation considering their unique needs, abilities, and creative capacities, and supporting others in following their interests (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Han et al., 2016; Northouse, 2019).

Grandy (2013) asserts that leaders in the workplace serve as both caregivers and seekers of care.

According to Moeneny and Gourgues (2019), pastors can help suffering church members by encouraging thought. Consequently, pastors may communicate broad and specific concerns about the victims' needs. Pastors' inability to provide transformational Leadership stops them from accepting responsibility for their conduct and assisting elderly victims. Northouse

(2013;2019) defines *transformational Leadership* as a powerful force that increases motivation

in both the supplier and the recipient. When confronted with charges of abuse or first-hand testimony, transformative leaders may succeed (Moeneny & Gourgues, 2019).

Transformational leaders seek to convert their followers' interests into community interests by focusing on more general needs and continually searching for potential causes. *Transformational Leadership* is a psychological, moral, and spiritual process that ensures consistency in environments with equal authority to advance an organization (Bass & Riggio (2006; Han et al., 2016). By illustrating the association's possibilities and offering a consistent model, groundbreaking pioneers urge individuals to accomplish hierarchical objectives (Farazja & Khademi, 2011; Mirkamali et al., 2013).

They also encourage acceptance of collective goals. These influential leaders' traits serve as an example of what makes a strong leader. We need profound pioneers who can rouse their group to improve (Momeny & Gourgues, 2019).

Effective pastoral growth requires adherence to transformational leadership theory, such as having a vision for directing change through inspiring oneself and others. Pastors can employ the theoretical framework of transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006) to manage their practice of serving churchgoers and the larger community. Theoretical, transformational leadership approaches show the capacity to translate inspiration and vision to appropriately realize change (Bass & Riggio, 2006). To transformative leaders, the interests of the collective are more important than self-interest. The main idea of transformational leadership theory used as a framework for this study is to understand and explore the possibility of pastors to be trained to become more of a resource to those victimized and seeking pastoral care within their communal setting (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Pastors can help members who might be having difficulties by providing intellectual stimulation. As a result, pastors may express broad and specialized concerns for the victims' needs. A lack of transformational leadership abilities thwarts pastors' attempts to confess their faults and assist elderly victims. According to Northouse (2019), transformative Leadership is a powerful force that raises motivation levels in both the provider and the recipient. Transparency with audiences may help transformational leaders thrive when facing abuse claims or even first-person testimonials (Momeny & Gourgues, 2019).

By drawing their attention to broader needs and persistently looking for potential motives, transformational leaders aim to turn followers' interests into community interests. According to Bass and Avolio (1995), transformational Leadership is a mental, moral, and spiritual process that promotes organizational growth via dependability in situations of equal authority. By describing the organization's prospects and presenting a model consistent with those prospects, transformational leaders encourage acceptance of group goals, provide a range of forms of support for personnel, and inspire individuals to achieve the organization's aims (Farazja & Khademi, 2011; Mirkamali et al., 2013). The qualities of these influential leaders serve as an illustration of what makes a good leader. Religious leaders who can inspire people to change for the sake of an uncertain future are urgently needed (Momeny & Gourgues, 2019).

Theological Framework

This section looks at the Black Church's Christian perspective on elder abuse, the Black Church's obligation to help older people who have been or might be affected by senior mistreatment, and the need for African-American spiritual leaders to collaborate with the community to find solutions to elder abuse. In their outreach efforts to assist the elderly

population at risk of abuse, pastoral leaders must incorporate biblical teachings on assisting the vulnerable.

The Bible tells us that if one of your brothers falls into poverty and joins you, you must assist him as an outsider or sojourner so he can stay with you (Lev: 25:35, New King James Version, 1982). The Black Church must set up its office activities and potentially open doors to have volunteers, staff, and people in a respectable, consistent, and safe way as its missions expand to include helping vulnerable people (Lachs et al., 2021). A lengthy path to recovery and restoration begins with providing a safe and inviting place for victims of elder abuse to come forth and present their situation.

The outreach ministry and pastor of a Christian church should illustrate that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God. "For He created man in the likeness of God" (Genesis 9:6, New King James Version, 1982). It is credence to the notion that each person was born with a destiny. One can recognize a long road to healing and restoration transformed into God's image when one comprehends God's characteristics and traits. Humanity is uniquely suited for control and dominance because it is relational, reversible, and made. The desire to change into the image of God provides a crucial foundation for trauma healing when communicated adequately to a victim of abuse. Those having trouble maintaining hope can be encouraged by the simple possibility of resembling God somehow.

Giving victims a voice to help them overcome abuse is a crucial component of coping with elder abuse. It is vital to possess the necessary education, tools, and courses that outline what is necessary if one wants to live in the present without being a victim of abuse. Black church pastoral leaders and members can reduce and prevent elder mistreatment using church

resources and training. Training that teaches people how to avoid being a victim can be a valuable tool for Black churches. Teaching people how to oversee their finances and emotions in the face of elder mistreatment is also immensely helpful to their recovery since most older adults are financially exploited (Adib et al., 2019; CDC, 2016;2017; Jackson & Hafemeister, 2012:2015; NCEA, 2016)

The Bible says that Jesus was a leader who desired to assist everyone who chose to pay attention to and accept His teachings on living a life of virtue. Since the church is required to conduct itself in the same manner that Jesus did on earth, it is essential to educate people about the needs of older adults to support them in maintaining their quality of life. Stronger Christians were supposed to assist those whose faith required more assertiveness rather than insist on their way, according to the New American Commentary (Dockery, 1991). Today's Black Church could use this concept as a model or framework to help the elderly.

While Christians have various viewpoints and freedoms, others may struggle to comprehend and apply spiritual principles. Christians who provide spiritual guidance must be willing to pay close attention to the vulnerable older people's requirements and try to assist them in those areas as needed. Christian education, which addresses spiritual and practical needs provided by pastors or teachers, is a two-pronged strategy for assisting older individuals in overcoming any challenges. Victims of elder mistreatment must receive emotional and spiritual support from spiritual leaders, giving them strength, instilling hope, and ending the cycle of elder mistreatment.

In theory, seniors attending Christian churches can face less emotional and spiritual pain because they know the strength of God's love. However, this does not exclude the need to

provide adequate resources from the Black Church. The Christian community can transform in ways related to teaching about being entirely in an intimate connection with Jesus. Religious religiosity constantly impacts Christians' daily lives and is defined as a conceptual and behavioral link to a religious institution (Kerley et al., 2011). Religiousness impacts religious participation and Godly love by encouraging group activities, individual spiritual development, and group learning. The Christian church community has numerous opportunities to influence the implementation of such a change- in this context, "religiosity" (Kerley et al., 2011, p. 42).

An individual's profound and enduring faith in Jesus influences change and transformation. Paul maintained a positive attitude and acknowledged the significance of the prayers of others and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. In addition, he preached the need for Jesus' gentle demeanor. Paul wrote about Jesus' transformation into nothingness as a servant and human infant. God made himself humble by becoming submissive to the point of death when he was found in human form, even death on a cross (Philippians 2.8, KJV). When Paul wrote to Christians in Philippi, he knew that he was nearing the end, and that other people were facing a significant crisis threatening their future.

Since leadership is ingrained in the job, becoming a pastor includes controlling one's family (I Timothy 3:5). The Church's pastor, who serves as a supervisor of God's people, places a high value on leadership. Pastoral leadership that works makes sacrifices. Leaders in the Church must act with discernment and kindness. Clergy members must work with individuals with varying personalities in various situations. Spiritual leadership is spiritual. Acts 20:28 says, "To provide food for God's church, which Christ bought with his blood. Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (KJV). People can only

pay attention to others once they have paid attention to themselves. A man can only influence another spiritual thing to the extent of his knowledge and experience. Pastoral leadership that works is authoritative. A pastor must know his objectives, destinations, and motivations. If not, educated people will not have faith in him and will not stick with him for long. Thus, before they can urge people to follow them, spiritual leaders must first be able to follow and be teachable.

Other Related Theories

Servant Leadership

Another significant component is servant leadership. Greenleaf coined the term servant leader for the first time in 1970, describing it as pastoral leadership (Drummond, 2020). The attributes of servant leadership include paying attention, empathizing, rehabilitation, consciousness, convincing, thinking, vision, leadership, dedication to individual development, and community building (Greenleaf, 1977;2018; van Dierendock et al., 2014). As Greenleaf (2018) indicated, the leaders' goal is to serve others before pursuing success in power, influence, notoriety, or fortune. This theory also believes in organizational stewardship, which encourages others to work for the sake of the community. Leadership is crucial to serving others and occurs in the context of assisting others. These qualities aid the outreach and assistance provided to vulnerable people in managing their predicament.

Ferrari and Vaclavik (2016) assert that servant leadership places a high importance on empathy, comprehension, and collaboration. According to Ferrari and Vaclavik (2016) and Greenleaf (1977), a servant leader's objective is to help others while delegating tasks to others. In the Christian community, helping the elderly is a fantastic example of serving others. The pastor of a Christian church might show his commitment by including missionary outreach activities for the elderly. According to Greenleaf (1997), the primary objective of servant leaders is to enable

followers to realize their self-worth in terms of task efficiency, community stewardship, inspiration, and forthcoming management abilities. They likewise give guidance and work to win adherents' trust and dedication (van Dierendock et al., 2014). Ferrari and Vaclavik (2016) claim servant leaders encourage individual participation, organizational development, and teamwork among their followers. These traits and qualities determine how well the Christian church community can assist victims in addressing abuse.

Van Dierendock et al. (2014) assert that servant leadership emphasizes a desire to serve and empower others to do the same. The distinction can be evident in the care the servant-first person takes to ensure that the needs of others who are most important to them are satisfied. According to Greenleaf (1977), the most accurate but challenging test is: Do those served mature as individuals? (2014, p. 6). Serving marginalized people comes naturally to servant leaders, claimed Sendijaya et al. (2008). According to Greenleaf (1977), A form of leadership known as "servant leadership" fosters moral and ethical development in both leaders and followers. Servant leadership is still essential, even if Greenleaf is not religious. *Worker initiative* traits include having a pleasant, fair attitude, mindfulness, self-guided positive exhibiting, and emphasizing supporter improvement (Greenleaf, 1977; Sendijaya et al., 2008). According to Ferrari and Vaclavik (2016), transformational leaders are moral representatives who are attentive to and sympathetic to others' needs. Transformational and servant leadership may positively influence outreach programs that serve people over 60.

Organizational Change Leadership Theories

Change management is a theory of organizational change leadership. According to Jones & Recardo (2013), when managing the change, the most efficient method of implementation and the humanistic aspects of the intended change must be considered. If their team wants to change,

pastors in Christian churches need to be prepared to adopt the new ideology. According to Cran (2016), the primary goal of change management is to lessen the pain and distractions caused by change. Members and leaders of Christian churches need to be aware that a cycle of change will always determine when, how, and how much change is necessary. Acceptance of change is even more difficult because the steps involved in implementing it can vary depending on the circumstances.

Organizations that have attempted implementing change initiatives have failed frequently, according to Drummond (2020). Change management is just as important as successful change implementation. Drummond (2020) asserts that leaders must be determined to assist subordinates in achieving organizational change goals. Change is more complex to manage and implement because it is only sometimes readily accepted. Influential leaders demonstrate their ability to manage and implement change while encouraging team acceptance.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

One of the most compelling points of view on human improvement might be Maslow's hypothesis. It suggests that individuals wish to achieve self-actualization, discover life's purpose, and realize their full potential. Despite the theory's beautiful nature, it has received much criticism. One of the main objections is that it emphasizes the "self," interpreted as an individualistic perspective on life. Maslow's later addition of the "Transcendence" level appears to be more compatible with "spirituality" because individuals appear to be now able to overcome the "self" and commit themselves to a higher goal.

According to Maslow's theory, individual needs are arranged in a hierarchy to describe people's motivations (Maslow, 1943). Maslow proposed a structure for classifying conditions based on prepotency and appearance probability. Maslow (1943) distinguished between growing

needs and deficiency needs in his classification of needs. Self-actualization, self-respect, and achievement are among the growing needs, while the need for safety, a sense of belonging, respect, and love are among the deficiencies (Maslow, 1943). Utilizing the concepts of gratification and deprivation, Maslow also provided an overview of the dynamic forces that link people's needs to their behavior (Maslow, 1943).

The conflict between the fulfillment of the more compelling needs and the rise of the less practical needs, according to Maslow (1943), is the primary factor causing this combination of human needs. This is, in contrast to Maslow's argument that fundamental demands are widely contrasted with other superficial acts and wants. Other theorists proposed that people's basic wants are associated with their natural behavior.

On the other hand, Sadri and Bowen (2011) suggested that needs are interdependent and that it is unnecessary to treat a need alone because every drive depends on the state of other goals (whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied). Jerome (2013) also found that meeting employees' low-level needs was crucial to improving their performance, giving a glimpse into their higher-level needs. Maslow (1943) says that when a person's needs are unmet, or they have much prepotency, dissatisfaction will precede their actions.

Related Literature

The following topics in this literature review are the five variables of elder mistreatment, the incidence and prevalence of elder mistreatment, elder mistreatment in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, estimation of elder mistreatment, African- American Pastor's Leadership styles, African American health issues related to elder abuse, The African American Church, The church roles, integration and transformation of science and theology in the church, identification of the gap, and summary.

History of Elder Abuse

In response to worries about the growing number of aged, disabled, and needy individuals being abused, new government programs known as "protective services units" were formed in the 1950s. This condition was later referred to as "self-neglect" (Jackson, 2016; Wolf, 2000), which happened by accident at a period in history when society was financially secure and ready to finance such projects (Jackson, 2016). Public welfare officials were made aware of numerous elderly citizens experiencing functional limitations while living independently because of the increased visibility of issues relevant to older Americans. (Jackson, 2016; Wolf, 2003). For instance, while the proportion of elderly widows living alone increased from 18% in 1940 to 62% in 1990, the proportion of elderly widows living with adult children decreased from 59% to 20% at the same time, Americans lived longer lives than they had in the 1930s (Jackson, 2016). In the 1950s, men and women had life expectancies of 65.5 and 71.7 years, respectively (Jackson, 2016: 2020). The elderly population increased from 8.1% in 1950 to 9.8% in 1970 (Jackson, 2016). Elder abuse cases increased because of this rise. This realization sparked the pursuit of solutions to the challenges faced by vulnerable older people.

In 1966, Congress financed six demonstration projects to evaluate the performance of the protective services units formed in numerous states. This venture was the first and only experimental assessment of the adequacy of defensive administration. One study discovered that older individuals who participated in these treatments were more inclined to be confined to residential care homes and died at a greater rate than those who received regular treatment (Jackson, 2016). The new law and development of a policy solution to the issue of poor and functionally limited older adults required protection, institutionalization, and guardianship when

necessary. Institutionalizing older adults was regarded as the most effective strategy for providing these individuals with adequate food, shelter, and practical assistance. This initial concept focused primarily on self-neglect rather than elder abuse. Medical providers were the first to identify elder abuse (Teaster et al., 2010).

Butler and Hayward (1997) concluded that at this time, fewer elders were dependent on their families for financial support or housing. This is due to the account of elder abuse called "Granny Battering," which was published in the scientific journal *British Medical publication* in 1975 (Jackson, 2016). However, in "Why Survive?" Robert Butler wrote the first American account of elder abuse: *In the United States, being old* (Jackson, 2016). Although elder abuse focuses on seniors' susceptibility and inequality, research has shown that caregivers of children and adults abused them due to the stress of caring for fragile and intellectually impaired older persons. The caregiver stress theory emerged from Steinmetz's research for the next two decades. Based on the structure and mechanisms for responding appropriately to elder abuse, in the 1970s, the protective services paradigm was kept and adopted. (Jackson, 2016).

Title XX of the Social Security Act was introduced by Congress in 1975, mandating states to develop protective services for abused or neglected older individuals (Teaster et al., 2010). In 1987, Congress revised the Older Americans Act (Title I) to protect older persons against exploitation, neglect, and abuse (Jackson, 2015). Because child abuse and elder abuse shared a conceptual foundation, state legislators modeled elder abuse protective services legislation after child protective services laws (Hafemeister, 2010). "Adults in need of protective services" are replaced with "victims of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation" in several jurisdictions, according to Hafemeister (2010). Each state was to establish elder abuse reporting

legislation modeled after child abuse notification statutes (Hafemeister, 2010), which is still in place today.

In the 1990s, the public's opinion of elder abuse shifted dramatically. The demonstrable beginning point for this transformation was the considerable progress achieved by battered women's growth and the subsequent identification of familial cruelty, two separate concepts at the time (Jackson, 2016). Senior mistreatment and violent conduct at home were conceived differently in the 1970s; therefore, they shared nothing.

Variables of Elder Mistreatment

Elder abuse, sometimes referred to as abuse of older people, is any act- one time or repeatedly- or any inappropriate action- that takes place in a relationship where an older person is expected to be trusted and causes them hurt or grief (CDC, 2016). This kind of violence, which encompasses psychological or emotional abuse, financial abuse or exploitation, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect and self-neglect, is against human rights. It causes a significant loss of respect and dignity. Each type of abuse is addressed below.

Psychological or Emotional Abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse is when a senior experiences trauma due to being the target of coercive or threatening actions. Regulating behavior, being excluded from society, or causing property damage are all examples of humiliation or shame (CDC, 2016). In the National Elder Mistreatment Study on older people, this kind of abuse was prevalent at a rate of 4.6% in the earlier year (Acierno et al., 2009). A lack of responsiveness is one of the most common manifestations of emotional abuse, uneasy or suspicious conduct, and a desire to avoid or avoid establishing new acquaintances (Muehlbauer & Crane, 2006). According to research, depressive

symptoms are an indication of abuse. Emotional abuse was twice as likely to happen to older people who needed help with their ADLs and those who had been through trauma.

Financial Abuse or Exploitation

Monetary maltreatment or double-dealing is the unapproved or inappropriate utilization of a person's assets for profit or financial gain (CDC, 2016). According to Acierno et al. (2009), 5.2% of older individuals experienced this maltreatment in the previous 12 months, according to Acierno et al. In 2009, financial abuse from an unknown source was reported by 6.5% of older adults. Large withdrawals, switching bank accounts, and signing a senior's check without permission indicate potential financial abuse (Muehlbauer & Crane, 2006). Furthermore, Garre-Olmo et al., (2009) found that single people were more likely than married or widowed people to report financial abuse.

Physical Abuse

A person experiences physical abuse when hurt, assaulted, threatened with a weapon, or unjustly detained (CDC, 2017). According to Acierno et al. (2009), 1.6 percent of older individuals experience this maltreatment. Due to a longer recuperation time, physical aggressiveness can be extremely dangerous for older adults. Death or lifelong disability can arise from minor injuries (WHO, 2014). Physical abuse signs include bruises, unexplained injuries, and refusal to seek emergency care for repeated injuries (Muehlbauer & Crane, 2006). In 96% of cases, a relative or friend was the offender, while 3% included a stranger (Acierno et al., 2009; Adib et al., 2019).

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is any sexual action initiated against the victim's will, including the victim's incapacity to understand or agree to the act (CDC, 2016). This involves purposeful touching of

the genitalia, anus, groin, breasts, mouth, or any other location that causes discomfort. (CDC, 2017). According to Adib et al. (2019), the average annual incidence of this abuse among older people has dropped to 7% in a year.

Neglect and Self-Neglect

Neglect is ignoring an older adult's physical, emotional, and social needs or safeguarding them from threats (CDC, 2017). This occurs from a caregiver or other trusted persons. Last year, 5.1% of people were victims of this type of maltreatment (WHO, 2014). Weight loss, sunken eyes, and lying down are all signs of neglect, according to Muehlbaure and Crane (2006).

Risk Factors for Elder Abuse

Jackson and Hafemeister's (2012) study endeavored to recognize factors that propose senior maltreatment among 71 Adult Protective Services (APS) representatives in the US. The study uncovered that the gamble factors for different types of senior abuse changed fundamentally over time (Jackson & Hafemeister's, 2012). For instance, the author's findings indicated that victims of financial exploitation were less likely to perceive their relationship as poor and to be physically or psychologically aggressive toward them when they lived alone, did not have children, or had no family history of family violence in their childhood. Chronic weakness, past horrendous encounters, an absence of purpose of social administration, and help with ADL were extra risk factors distinguished (Jackson & Hafemeister, 2012).

Ethnicity: In 2010, the distribution of the senior population showed significant ethnic variations. The percentage of senior individuals who identified as Black, Asian, other ethnicities, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander was only 9%, 4%, 2%, and less than 1%, respectively (West et al., 2006). The senior population claimed to be of white origin was 85%

(West et al., 2006). Other research included 5,776 older Americans and found that non-Whites (3%) had a higher likelihood of being physically abused than Whites (1.4%) (Levin, 2014).

Sexual Orientation: Elder maltreatment and the lesbian, gay person, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community are related, although there is little study on the subject. However, sexual orientation is a factor in the prevalence of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation among the aging population (Walsh et al., 2011). Studies on lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender older people are less than those on gay men. (NCEA, 2016). According to research, transgender older individuals are more likely to encounter physical and psychological abuse in nursing homes and assisted living institutions (Walsh et al., 2011).

Age: Age, orientation, nationality, financial status, and sexual orientation are among the demographic characteristics influencing older people to be vulnerable to elder abuse. The U. S. 2010 Census found that around 40 million people aged 65 and over, 12 times as many as in 1900 (West et al., 2006). One to two million seniors who depend on family members or other caretakers for care and protection- adults ages 65 and older- have been abused (Acierno et al., 2009). Elderly abuse victims are more likely to be over 80, suffering from a chronic illness, and needing assistance with everyday activities (NCEA, 2016). According to the NCEA (2016), elderly individuals aged 80 and up are mistreated and neglected three times compared to other forms of abuse.

Gender: In the older population in 2010, women exceeded males everywhere except those aged 65 to 69 and over 90 (West et al., 2006). Adult women are more vulnerable to abuse than men (NCEA, 2016). Women were one of the critical markers of physical, sexual, and neglect in a survey sample of 6,589 older people from across the United States (outside of Alaska and Hawaii) (Acierno et al., 2009).

Socioeconomic Status: Since the mid-1980s, more adults have worked over 55, increasing the share of earned income, according to FIFAS's Older American 2012 Key Indicators of Well-Being report. However, as indicated by their cramped, subpar dwellings, some older adults live in poverty or at low-income levels. According to a nationwide survey of 6,589 senior persons, lower affluence was a factor in elder abuse, including physical, sexual, and neglect, prior traumatic experiences, and a lack of utilization of social services (excluding Alaska and Hawaii, Acierno et al., 2009).

Incidence and Prevalence of Elder Mistreatment

Decreased physical, mental, and intellectual abilities, social barriers, and an increased danger of acquiring severe and potentially fatal conditions are all linked to elder abuse. (Adib et al., 2019; Cuevas et al., 2020; Meyer et al., 2017). According to Kumari and Sangwan (2020), religion plays a vital part in managing a few persistent illnesses and enhances the overall health of senior citizens. Seniors typically become reliant on routine duties, meeting needs, and coping with problems in life. Due to the numerous challenges, elders cannot stop mistreatment against them without assistance (Adib et al., 2019). Sadrollahi et al. (2020) found that among elderly people "45 percent experienced mental maltreatment, 45.6 percent experienced financial maltreatment, 22.2 percent actual maltreatment, and 16.6 percent rejection in addition to being emotionally neglected in 29.8 percent, cared for in 35.6 percent, financially ignored in 37.8 percent, and given authority in 41.2 percent of cases" (p. 63–64). It is crucial to provide the older generation with a spiritual framework.

Elder Mistreatment in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (2021), cases of elder mistreatment in Milwaukee County in 2009 was at 5,316 instances of abuse or neglect reported in Wisconsin. The Milwaukee County Department on Aging referred to 790 cases of elder abuse (MCDS), accounting for 15% of all reports (Wisconsin Department of Health Services (2021). The Milwaukee County Domestic Violence Association (MCDA) is the central organization in Milwaukee County that handles elder abuse and neglect complaints. The MCDA identifies eight distinct forms of abuse. These are emotional, physical, financial, sexual, self-neglect, extreme confinement or restriction, and treatment without consent.

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the number of substantiated cases of abuse was significantly higher than those of unsubstantiated claims. According to the Wisconsin Annual Elder Abuse and Neglect Report (2021), there were 4,487 (47.7%) substantiated cases, 2,923 (31.1%) unsubstantiated cases, and 1996 (21.2%) of unable to substantiate claims of elder abuse (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, [WDHS], 2021). The same report showed that the primary reason for call /issue identified self-neglect was 44.8%, the highest reported compared to 21.6% financial exploitation, 9.0% neglected by others, 6.7% physical abuse, 4.9% emotional abuse, 0.5 sexual abuse, and 0.1% treatment without consent. The annual report showed 12.2% were informational- only calls that did not involve any allegations or forms of abuse.

The report showed that the victims in Milwaukee County tended to be Caucasian (61%), female (64%), and over 75 (63%). Frailty (72%), Alzheimer's dementia (24%), and other comorbidities (19%) were the most frequently reported conditions. The criminal activity carried out by adult children was (48%) or by spouses (14%). In 41% of cases where life-threatening medical demands remained unmet, self-neglect was to blame. The number of reports filed (45%) demonstrates the relevance of medical professionals and community groups' understanding and

reporting of such cases and associated characteristics. According to research, some elderly abuse victims got aid enabling them to live freely, with just 13% in assisted living facilities (WDHS, 2021).

The report also showed that most adults were white (62%), followed by African American (25%) and not reported or unknown (12%). Seventy percent of the calls to MCDA were regarding a particular older adult for the first time. Between 2006 and 2009, self-disregard was the most frequent type of elder mistreatment in Milwaukee County, with 875 cases reported. In 26% of cases, medical professionals reported self-neglect. Twenty-two percent of referrals came from elderly relatives, while 12.2% came from agencies. Self-neglecting elderly in Milwaukee County tended to be frail (64.8%) and frequently had Alzheimer's disease, related dementia (19.77%), or another mental illness. Also, 21.5 of these older people had another condition (23 percent), and 15.4% used alcohol or illegal drugs. More than 96% of self-neglect cases occurred in older adults' homes, and 52.3% of victims lived independently in their apartments or homes. However, elderly couples living together in their own homes comprised 29.9% of cases. Adult self-neglect can happen when an older adult lives with someone who either does not care for them or cannot—the characteristics of self-neglect victims. Unmet physical needs, unsafe or unsanitary living conditions, or unmet medical needs accounted for 39.8% of the substantiated self-neglect cases in Milwaukee County that were deemed life-threatening.

The Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. (GWAAR) is a non-profit organization ensuring that aging-related programs and services are available in all 11 tribes and 70 counties in Wisconsin. GWAAR offers aging lead agencies in our service area which included preparation, specialized help, and promotion to ensure that projects and administrations

in Wisconsin are accessible and top-notch to meet the changing requirements of more established individuals. Access to benefits, such as the Wisconsin Elder Abuse Hotline and an online reporting tool for elder abuse victims and others, is included in the GWAAR seminars and training. The Wisconsin Guardianship Support Center (GSC) offers data and backing on guardianship of adults, protective custody arrangement, entitlement and benefit programs in Wisconsin, and estate planning without delivering explicit, legitimate counsel. The Wisconsin Senior Work Program (Insightful) assists more established adults with securing preparing positions and allows those 55 and older an opportunity to foster new abilities. The GWARR created Wisconsin's Manual for Senior Regulation and Advantages (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2023).

The disabled and older adults are the primary focus of the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). The ADRC provides information on diverse services and activities, including how to apply for long-term care options, programs, and benefits. The ADRC provides assorted services, such as assistance with state programs like Medicare and Social Security, adaptive equipment, domestic services, transportation, housing and home safety upgrades, and wellness programs (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2021).

Estimation of Elder Mistreatment

At the national and European levels, recent events have raised awareness of elder abuse and neglect. Social and health organizations' statistics only scratch the surface of elder abuse's prevalence. Numerous situations are overlooked compared to other fields or kinds of misuse. For example, maltreatment of children or intimate partners; professionals typically lack knowledge and expertise on how to handle such cases. Several adverse outcomes, including lower personal satisfaction, chronic weakness results, suicidality, and a higher threat of death, have been

connected to senior maltreatment (Dong et al., 2009; Fisher et al., 2011; Olofsson et al., 2012). Many sectors and governments are concerned about stopping elder abuse (Sethi et al., 2011). According to WHO (2014), international population-based research suggests that abuse in institutions may be more common than previously thought, with 4-6% of older people experiencing abuse at home. In Spain, the proportion of elderly individuals living at home varies from 0.8 percent for those 65 and older to 29.3 percent for those 75 and older, according to De Donder et al. (2011). Different definitions of abuse and approaches to assessing and treating elder abuse may impact studies. The choice of the measuring instrument used in research, such as whether to discuss elder abuse, reliability, and validity, will vary based on the author's definition and point of view.

According to a study, the community's prevalence of elder abuse can range from 0.8% to 30.1% because of the significant rise (Dong et al., 2009). The probability that older people are likely to be abused or neglected increases with the population's age. Elder mistreatment targets the fundamental rights of older adults who need support and care, especially those with complex dependence needs (Fisher et al., 2011).

African American Pastors' Leadership.

Because of their influence, pastors of African-American descent have been pioneers and inspirations for addressing regional and societal issues in the community. A few African American ministers in the South taught the requests of the White enslavers during slavery. However, in private discussions, these clergy began to chastise enslavement's violence and evil behavior (Chandler, 2017). To provide pastoral care in various situations, a caregiver needs to be sensitive to the context of the care seeker. Pastoral counseling and care methods encompass three

fundamental principles—contextuality, different viewpoints, and authentic participation in providing spiritual care — advised by Lartey (2003). Secondly, the contextuality principle of the spiritual caregiver's position requires them to analyze each thought and conduct in the context of the situation in which they occur. The sociological, cultural, political, economic, and environmental dimensions of the congregation and community settings are thus taken seriously because of their impact on how people live and understand them. Second, the idea of diverse viewpoints recognizes that there are often several solutions to a single issue. Two persons may investigate the same problem from different angles and come to vastly different conclusions. So, the two divergent viewpoints should be considered seriously through listening and dialogue because all viewpoints may help resolve or handle a given problem. The third principle is authentic participation, which accords all parties concerned with the freedom to converse about a problem-solving strategy on their terms with a shared concern for each other's integrity as the top priority (Lartey, 2003).

In pastoral care, the receivers' spiritual and emotional well-being is critical. Because contextuality stresses individual realities, it is vital to widen the across-cultures' spiritual care perspective to include all ages of life whose voices remain silenced due to forms of abuse. Contextuality involves respecting people's customs and traditional message aspects while being faithful to the Gospel.

African Americans' Health Issues Related to Elder Abuse

Despite a recent fall in religious affiliation, African Americans remain one of the most devout ethnic/racial groups in America. (Fahmy, 2018). Moreover, 80% of African Americans believed in a religion, according to the Pew Center's most recent Religious Landscape Study

(Pew Research Center, 2015). More than Whites or Hispanics, Masci's (2018) survey respondents detailed going to chapel no less than one time each week (47%) and praying daily (73%). Cox and Diamant (2018) found that Black women are primarily religious., scoring 83% are deeply religious. On a scale that considered how frequently they pray, attended church, respected religion, and believed in God. An examination of church attendance in a nationwide sample showed a negative correlation with both victimization and perpetration of domestic violence, notably lowering racial disparities in male perpetration but not female victimization (Williams & Jenkins, 2019). Even among white women, African American women are more likely to report abuse than white women, regardless of who attends church regularly (Williams & Jenkins, 2019).

Given the amount of religious participation among African Americans, it should come as no surprise that Black people, particularly women, commonly utilize religion and faith as coping techniques for various personal concerns, including intimate partner violence. (Nguyen, 2018 & St. Vil et al., 2017). According to one study, prayer is a coping mechanism for 90% of battered Black women regarding domestic abuse (Williams & Jenkins, 2019), which is also the percentage of African Americans who use prayer and faith as a means of coping with general difficulties and pain (Chatters et al., 2018). Few women go to their clergy, with estimates ranging from one-quarter to one-third of all female clergy requesting help from a church leader (Hamby, 2014).

Black clergy has expressed concern about the church's readiness in studies, but they also believe the church should participate in preventative measures (Bent-Goodley et al., 2012). In a poll, two-thirds of seminarians, the majority of whom were female, were found to know someone in their congregation who had been the victim of domestic abuse. However, an even more

significant percentage thought church officials had the required training to support victims (Bent-Goodley et al., 2012). Other publications on the role of the Black church investigated similar issues regarding ministers' education, talent, and preparedness to collaborate with other groups that may be of aid (Bent-Goodley et al., 2012; Dyer, 2017). One article showed that women seeking aid from religious institutions to address domestic abuse receive a lukewarm response. The delay in obtaining treatment raises the danger of bodily injury or death (Clark, 2015).

The African American Church

The Black Church is the oldest and longest-running organization in the African American community. The Black Church was established during the Civil Rights era and emerged from slavery (Brice & Hardy, 2015; Chandler, 2017; Collins, 2015; Watson & Stepteau-Watson, 2015; Watson, 2017), and has helped to develop methods and assets to address the community's universal needs instead of merely focusing on members' spiritual well-being, in contrast to its White counterparts (Hays, 2015). Enslavers allegedly dictated sermons on submission to their master's to African American pastors, according to Watson and Stepteau-Watson (2015). If the teachings of the African American clergyman did not threaten slavery, enslaved people might worship and pray together (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 8; Stepteau-Watson & Watson, 2015). According to Chandler (2017), due to restrictions placed on enslaved people attending worship services, a phenomenon arose in which African American worshippers sought out secret locations beyond the enslaver's power to hold services and listen to individuals who had learned to read the Bible.

The African American Church, the community's most trustworthy organization, contributed to creating social structures and cultural standards within the African American

community (Collins, 2015). After slavery was abolished, the African American Church served as an outlet for enslaved people to assemble, exchange ideas, and get resources to help them thrive in a society that did not acknowledge them as citizens (Chandler, 2017; Collins, 2015). The government set up assets to aid whites in rebuilding as the southern states began to recover from the Common War, but no one addressed the problems facing enslaved people. According to Brice and Hardy (2015), the African American Church arose as the organization that could help African Americans create care systems that laid the groundwork for African American social services.

The Church Roles

Along with other cultures, the Black Church bears a special responsibility for comprehending and dealing with issues surrounding elder abuse in its community. Recognizing that elder abuse is a real issue, calling it by its name, and acknowledging that it does occur and is a crucial function for the Church. Significant African American community concerns have long been discussed in the Black Church. Older Black people report finding solace in religion during challenging times (Brewer & Williams, 2019). The pastor's ability to control the congregation's expectations is principally responsible for the growth of the Church (Lartey, 2013). He asserts that a pastor's primary duties are guiding, guarding, and reprimanding the local Church.

Similarly, Lartey (2013) claims that although a minister's function has grown to include other duties, it still involves directing, protecting, educating the community, and handling several church projects. The expectations of the congregation lead the evolution of church activities. Communities may occasionally expand to the point where a pastor must invest time and energy in developing tighter contacts with laypeople who might help with new tasks. The need for staff

meetings, administration, training, delegation, evaluation, and planning may arise when a pastor expands his team to fulfill the increased demand from the Church (Masenya & Booyse, 2016). The pastor must be an imaginative and compelling visionary to whom the congregation can relate to overseeing these initiatives (Masenya & Booyse, 2016). However, because of these societal expectations, the pastors could encounter unforeseen issues, such as a void with family (Masenya & Booyse, 2016). Additionally, church leaders may help foster relationships within the senior community, opening countless avenues for enhancing older adults' bodily, mental, and spiritual well-being (Adib et al., 2019; Cuevas et al., 2020; Santos et al., 2019).

To assist individuals in developing their own opinions regarding the cosmos and life in general, ministers impart God's direction and instructions. The Church must take the initiative and position itself as an essential resource for local Christians, particularly those who have been the victims of elder abuse. As pastors attempt to recruit and support people whose families have experienced senior maltreatment, the managerial style of a pastoral leader is crucial (Smith, 2020).

All networks have senior abuse, even those where dynamic temples assist the area (Williams, 2018). While many of these casualties adapt to the ruthlessness of their lives, others are looking for the genuine importance of presence (Cuevas et al., 2020). Owing to the continuing developments, the ministry frequently provides more subtle recommendations. The minister's responsibilities as an authoritative person include giving social guidance, dispensing knowledge, and giving leadership counsel. Believers are driven by their convictions and principles to see that silence may imply more compassion while dealing with senior abuse. Many unmet needs before houses of worship may ultimately achieve their potential in improving

overall spiritual health in trusted networks among Black Americans, especially among leaders and those who anticipate chronic health problems (Su et al., 2019). Pastors may not be aware of the extent to which they withhold information from the Church about health difficulties, according to Su et al. (2019); further study is required.

Integration and Transformation of Science and Theology in the Church

Despite medical advances, several diseases still result in more significant deaths among African Americans than White Americans (Carnethon et al., 2017). African Americans' mistrust of the White medical establishment is one reason they are dying from treatable diseases (Carnethon et al., 2017). Cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure are among the most preventable diseases that kill more African Americans. (Carnethon et al., 2017).

Spiritual leaders can alleviate the senior's spiritual anguish and solitude by acting as an advocate or support systems. Religious resources provide strength and hope, which lessens the suffering caused by elder abuse. Realizing God's love's power paves, the way for this, which is possible by accepting God's love's transforming power. However, in all these things, we are more than conquerors in Him who love us, the apostle Paul writes in Romans. People cannot be isolated from God's affection, which is uncovered in our Ruler, by anything that God has made, including what is accepted to be passing, life, holy messengers, realms, and powers, as well as things present and what might be on the horizon, levels, and profundities (Romans 8:37, New King James Version, 1982). Christian doctrine holds that the fullness associated with Jesus may directly impact social, emotional, physical, and moral enhancements. On a logical and developmental level, religious dedication to disciplined religion influences Christians' daily lives (Hodge et al., 2020).

Pastors and churches must practice pastoral care when assisting senior abuse victims. In times of pain, distress, and anguish, it is necessary to persuade individuals that it is wise to turn to God. If they want to demonstrate God's unconditional love, churches must provide individuals with offenses with opportunities, pastoral care, and therapy. Church leaders will accomplish this by commemorating God's tenderness and mercy. This dedication is significant because Christians, assemblies, and houses of worship have frequently engaged in actions that have harmed, traumatized, or damaged their members or others. Senior adults may gain from pastoral leaders' efforts to help their congregation and community comprehend the purpose of transforming into earthly reflections of God. Older adults can benefit from a safe environment provided by spiritual leaders and knowledge of how to report and defend themselves against elder mistreatment. It is critical to have access to accurate information, training, and tools that teach individuals how to recognize elder abuse. Through education and resources, pastors and members of Christian churches can significantly influence the prevention and reduction of elder mistreatment recidivism.

The Christian Church may employ training that gives people the tools they need to overcome discouragement as a powerful weapon. Another successful way to protect older adults from mistreatment is to teach them financial and emotional coping strategies that may assist them in coping with their anguish. This idea can give the modern Christian Church a framework or paradigm for serving the older population. While some Christians have freedom and unwavering beliefs, others may need help comprehending and applying those concepts. The spiritual leader needs to be willing and open to trying to meet the needs of older adults and other vulnerable people.

Identification of the Gap

This study emphasized the connection between Christian church leaders' ability to influence change in victims of elder abuse and responses from churches to elders' abuse. When a Christian leader employs a shift in the board thinking, it results in effective transformation. This stimulates others to provide persuasive reasons to followers why restructuring the hierarchy is beneficial or needed and to include believers in the change (Parent & Lovelace, 2018). A leader must articulate a compelling vision to entice volunteers to assist the vulnerable population. The change process will then begin. As per Parent and Lovelace (2018), a drop in representative fulfillment might make workers set forth less energy or even leave the firm with the most significant skill level. It is fundamental that those attempting to end senior maltreatment set up proper techniques for caring for their prosperity.

One way to deal with change is to see change as an opportunity to create something better (Williams, 2019). Williams maintains that it is not a poetic exaggeration to say that houses of worship and other present-day establishments will likely change. Stress caused by elder maltreatment is alleviated by comprehending the problem. Having an unmistakable hierarchical mentality is helpful while supporting individuals who have endured pressure-related injuries. A traumatized person's capacity for communication and decision-making is hindered significantly by stress due to an unconscious response (Williams, 2019). Pastoral pastors in Christian congregations can influence individuals to prevent elder mistreatment. Jeremiah 29:11: "Because I know the thoughts that I consider about you, declares the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of ill, to give you a future and hope" (KJV).

In the past, the African American Church's leadership has excelled at advocating for and addressing social and political challenges (Barber, 2015). African Americans in Wisconsin had much higher mortality rates from heart disease, hypertension, and stroke than Caucasians in 2015, according to the Wisconsin Department of Health website. According to Brand & Alston (2018), the literature research showed that many African-American pastors concurred and wished to promote health and wellness (Williams et al., 2018). The faith-based program Heart Smart successfully reduced African American cardiovascular risk, according to Tettey et al, (2017). However, the researchers recommended more research to see whether these advantages persisted over time. The grant-funded study by Batada (2017) lasted ten years. The last two years have given the African American Church the tools to gauge and assess health initiatives. Nonetheless, the authors pointed out that further qualitative studies are necessary to measure the success of these initiatives. However, more investigation was required to determine how nondenominational African American pastors of primarily African American congregations encouraged involvement in and described the effectiveness of health and wellness initiatives (Rowland & Isaac-Savage, 2014; Tettey et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2018).

Research showed one denomination should be included in future studies examining African American pastors' functions and viewpoints concerning health services delivery in their churches. While Rowland and Isaac-Savage (2014) used nondenominational pastors, the study was focused entirely on them. A Pew Research Center survey reveals that nondenominational congregations have experienced the most significant growth (Pew Research Center, 2015). Rearing in a denominational church is no longer the norm for American "Black Christians (Suh & Russell, 2015).

In this assessment, those born in the United States with African ancestry are called African Americans. The literature continuously found that African American churches used several strategies to address health inequalities. According to Campbell and Wallace (2015), mega-churches use technology to develop resources to address health inequities, enabling members to use social media to learn how to advocate and be educated on their health. In their 2015 study, Balls Berry et al. (2015) looked at Black men's attitudes toward addressing diabetes with their pastor in casual settings like a church-affiliated barbershop. Participants believed that more education was required even if they were informed about diabetes, according to Balls-Berry et al. (2015). A barbershop can be the best location. Gross et al. (2017) explored how African American pastors influenced their congregations' well-being by collaborating with religious institutions. This follow-up study focused on African American pastors whose female congregants had taken part in a survey of women and exercise (Gross et al., 2017). Gross et al. (2017) reported that researchers concluded that pastors might act as role models by working with other organizations and improving the community's and their members' health.

The research indicates that it has become popular to investigate how African American churches handle their members' mental health problems (Avent et al., 2015 & Bilkins et al., 2016, African American pastors' attitudes and convictions toward addressing mental issues in their congregations examined by Avent et al. (2015).

According to the findings, African American pastors preferred to deal with mental health issues inside their area of expertise (religions). They accepted the advice of outside counseling agencies (Avent et al., 2015). Bilkins et al. (2016) investigated the impact of racial prejudice on African-American pastors requesting assistance to provide mental health services to their

congregations. Pastors who had experienced discrimination were less likely to recommend their followers to outside mental health care, according to Bilkins et al. (2016).

A few noteworthy findings in the literature review showed that the perceptions of African American pastors regarding their influence on their congregations and communities were investigated by Harmon et al. (2018) using a qualitative research methodology. The results showed that pastors thought their religious beliefs, church heritage, and denomination contributed to their capacity to impact their Church and the neighborhood. They saw this power as a considerable duty (Harmon et al., 2018). Brand and Alston (2017) explored the involvement and accomplishments of African American ministers who advocate health in their congregations to see if specific characteristics had an influence. Brand and Alston's (2018) study examined the studies done in 2017. The researchers developed a model (PREACH) utilizing qualitative techniques to determine if a church is ready to assist in health promotion (Brand & Alston, 2018). The PREACH model is a valuable tool for pastors to assess their competence to promote health, according to Brand & Alston (2018). To find out how churches can support health promotion, the researchers noted that more study is necessary.

Watson (2017) explored the attitudes of African American pastors regarding their decision to conduct health promotion initiatives in their churches using a qualitative technique. The study discovered that while pastors were aware of the need for health initiatives, they also admitted that a few barriers kept some pastors from advocating for health. The study's sample comprised only African-American pastors from the Baptist, Methodist, and African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) faiths (Watson, 2017). According to Watson, future research should involve pastors from various congregations, places, and denominations.

Studies on elder abuse and religion show that spiritual leaders are crucial in combating mental and physical health issues; however, much of the published research indicates that elder abuse is in the categories of family violence and other forms of abuse, such as domestic violence. As a result, they are raising questions about how to turn elder abuse into its topic. By linking elder abuse to other forms, categorizing it as such does not provide victims of elder abuse with a support network. This study aims to fill this gap.

Summary

The church has done little to demonstrate how Spiritual Leaders educate victims of elder mistreatment, even though elder abuse is a persistent problem for public health (Bows & Penhale, 2018; Cuevas et al., 2020; Curry, 2018). The church is known as a resource for reaching larger audiences by speaking out against elder mistreatment or bringing awareness to stop it since it gives safety and support. It is possible to discuss openly with clergy their understanding and knowledge of elder mistreatment because 90% of Americans identify as religious (CDC, 2017). According to Zust et al., (2018), ministers should openly discuss senior maltreatment anticipation methods in their gatherings. The possibility that a senior maltreatment casualty should stay in an undesirable relationship may be supported if information from the meeting is private, which may limit discussion. Embracing transformational leadership and relieving pastors of embarrassment about dealing with elder mistreatment can be accomplished through open Christian communication and language.

Transformational and servant leadership is the combination of both worker (care) and groundbreaking (vision) administration methods of leadership (Northouse, 2013;2019).

Transformational servants meet the organization's and each follower's needs by caring for,

leading, and serving their church ministry. The theories also discovered a balance between the church's faithfulness and its members, influence through service rather than conventional motivation, and giving the church members autonomy and interconnectedness (Northouse, 2013;2019). This segment provides an engaged outline of what is acknowledged and not identified and how this study can contribute to the current literature's voids.

Chapter Three: Methods

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study described the lived experiences of African American Spiritual Leaders' understanding and awareness of senior abuse, as well as the role of the Black Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Spiritual leadership usually encompasses the values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to authentically inspire oneself and others to experience a sense of spiritual survival through purpose and involvement while offering spiritual, physical, and mental wellness to vulnerable seniors (Burns, 1978).

This chapter discussed the research's setting and the participants, who were African American spiritual leaders. The interpretive framework, social constructiveness, philosophical presumptions, researcher positionality, and role are all presented. In addition to this, the interview questions, the processes, data-gathering strategies, analysis, and synthesis are described. This study's reliability, dependability, confirmability, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations were well-examined.

Research Design

Seven African American church leaders from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, were purposefully recruited for this study to share their perspectives on elder abuse in the Black Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A qualitative examination was the best choice in this phenomenological research plan, which centered around shared components of different individuals' encounters inside a given gathering. The review's fundamental objective was to decide the exact idea of a given situation (Neubauer et al., 2019). The primary procedure is to accumulate data from gatherings of people who are straightforwardly encountering the occasion or peculiarity through

this method. The researcher chose snowball sampling to concentrate on a specific group of participants. When working with a targeted population, snowballing sampling findings may be more generalizable (Daniel, 2012). An in-depth interview was the qualitative tool used to learn more about the goals, principles, and practices of church leaders providing therapy to the most vulnerable individuals. Pastors engage directly with their members in the congregation and the local area. The fundamental reason for the inquiry questions was to evoke data about the members' encounters with the peculiarities. This assessment principally centered around the pastors' familiarity with and cognizance of senior abuse in the Black Church. A qualitative report was the ideal choice since lived experiences are direct encounters instead of secondary data.

Husserl (1965) set the standard for transcendental phenomenology at the University of Gottingen. Husserl developed transcendental phenomenology by integrating the philosophical concepts of "epoch (putting aside preconceptions), noema (the phenomenon or experience), and noesis (perceiving or thinking)" (Moustakas, 1994; Sheehan, 2014, p. 20). Neubauer et al. (2019) state that Husserl argued that the shared characteristics of the experiences of the target population could be revealed by examining their lived experiences. Using the social constructiveness framework, this concept is predicated on the idea that learners create knowledge via social interaction and assistance from others. Lev Vygotsky, a psychologist, established this hypothesis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study aims to evaluate African American Spiritual Leaders' perspectives on elder abuse, which is a perfect fit for the phenomenological research technique since qualitative studies look at a full view of the lived experiences of a particular topic. Utilizing natural phenomenology, the researcher could find likenesses in the lived encounters of African American spiritual leaders and the role of the Black church's mental literacy regarding senior mistreatment.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of the Spiritual Leader in the Black Church regarding elder mistreatment?

Sub Question One

How are African American Spiritual leaders showing their comprehension of elder mistreatment?

Sub Question Two

What resources has the African American Church provided to the victims or potential victims of elder mistreatment that effectively decrease recidivism?

Setting

The setting for this study was in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Milwaukee is the largest city and capital of the state of Wisconsin. In 2020, Milwaukee, Wisconsin's populace of 593,000 individuals had a median age of 31 and a household of \$43,125 (WDHS, 2021). The study shows "African American (non-Hispanic) (38.3%), White (non-Hispanic) (34%), Other (Hispanic) (8.16%), White (Hispanic) (8.03%), and Asian (non-Hispanic) (4.57%)" are the five most prominent ethnic groups in Milwaukee (WDHS, 202, p.72-73). Milwaukee has the largest inner-city and the highest number of African Americans residing there (WDHS, 2021). These socioeconomic situations provide issues for spiritual leaders and increase the likelihood that African Americans may become victims of elder abuse (Douglas & Hopson, 2001). According to Cohall and Cooper (2010), "...pastors serving in communities with high needs such as

unemployment, poverty, inadequate housing, and crime appear to view their roles as sociopolitical leaders, a role beyond providing spiritual guidance for their communities" (p. 41).

The research recruited participants via Facebook.com and Instagram. The researcher also recruited via email addresses obtained directly from church websites and using snowball sampling. The researcher used the same recruitment letter for all participant solicitation methods. The recruitment letter were sent using DocuSign and via email addresses. The interviews took place based on the agreed-upon date and time via an online platform between the participant and researcher using Teams or Zoom. The inclusion criteria were African American Spiritual Leaders who were over 18 and served in a leadership ministry in a church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for more than five years.

Participants

The research collected a purposeful sample of seven African-American Christian leaders between June 2023 and August 2023. While Earls (2017) and Boyd (2018) found that the majority of pastors start their careers in their 20s, participants in this survey included people as young as 18 years old. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative uses small, purposively selected, and carefully situated samples (p. 55). Because the saturation point for the data was reached at seven, the researcher discontinued recruiting (Saunders et al., 2018). After reviewing the interview transcripts, the researcher excluded three of the 10 in the analysis for different reasons. Although the study was open to church leadership titles of pastor, bishop, minister, priest, clergy, reverend, or pastoral counselor, the only titles represented were minister, pastor, evangelist, and youth minister. The primary religious affiliations were 4 ministers, 1 youth minister, 1 evangelist, and 1 pastor. The researcher used pseudonyms based on the 2023-2024 Liberty University's dissertation handbook (n.d.). Pseudonyms were used to protect the

participants' confidentiality. The pseudonyms were randomly picked and had nothing to do with the individual.

Table 1

Participants Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Title	Denomination	Education
Betty	30-39	African American	Female	Minister	Lutheran	Bachelors
Cherie	60 +	African American	Female	Pastor	Baptist	Bachelors
Danny	60 +	African American	Female	Youth Minister	Catholic	Masters
Dotty	40-49	African American	Female	Minister	Non-denominational	Masters
Josh	40-49	African American	Male	Minister	Baptist	Bachelors
Kathy	50-59	African American	Female	Minister	Non-denominational	Bachelors
Rose	50-59	African American	Female	Evangelist	Baptist	Masters

Participant Exclusions

The criteria to exclude study participation:

1. Religious leaders from other ethnicities
2. Christians not in a leadership position in the church
3. Participants whose ministry is located outside of Milwaukee, Wisconsin
4. Participants who had less than five years of ministry experience
5. Participants under the age of eighteen

After completing the initial screening questionnaire, the researcher ruled out three potential volunteers. The researcher left one out since they did not hold a lead ministry position in the church. The researcher excluded the other after not returning the consent form. The researcher excluded the last one due to needing to return the interviewers' messages. After the researcher analyzed each transcript, no other participants were excluded.

Procedures

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study before the research could begin, guaranteeing that the welfare and rights of the human subjects would be adequately upheld. Because the research required gathering certain privileged information about specific people, obtaining IRB permission was essential to gaining participants' support for the safety of the data and enhancing the credibility of the study. After confirming IRB approval, I obtained information regarding the potential participants. Before any data was collected, the participants were briefed about the study so they could decide whether or not to participate in it. An inclusion survey and recruitment letter were emailed using DocuSign. This allowed the participants to complete the survey electronically and return it. I then used phone interviews and email correspondence to set up interviews via TEAMS or Zoom to collect data from the research participants. Creswell & Creswell (2017), spoke about the issues of accessibility and availability, which affect the practicality of other techniques for gathering data, such as conducting in-person surveys. The interviews were recorded, lasting from 45 to 60 minutes, after which the transcripts were reviewed during the data analysis. The researcher made sure all the information needed had been obtained from the phone discussions by getting to know the research participants.

Nevertheless, the participants were taken into consideration when creating the interview questions. I produced interview protocols for the spiritual leaders, followed by the spiritual

leader's personal experience with elder mistreatment, church ministry, elder mistreatment, and conclusion questions. A thorough process outlining how the interviews were to be performed was included in the interview protocol. The format of the many questions was designed to address the topic's issues considering the participant's situations, enhancing the interview quality. The instrument used in the data was NVivo.

The Researcher's Role

The researcher was the primary tool and objective interpreter of the survey respondents' answers. None of the individuals were personally connected to the researcher. Additionally, the researcher had no conflicts of interest because she was not a part of any established church. The researcher did not have any educational or professional authority over the participants. The author explained this study's purpose, revealing all the elements, such as identifying and addressing elder abuse in the church and the leadership abilities of the pastor to help or advocate for their senior population.

Interpretive Framework

This researcher used the social constructiveness framework in this study. As African Americans work to raise awareness of elder abuse, the researcher gained an understanding of the diverse lived experiences of African Americans. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the framework helped me comprehend the perspectives and life experiences of the study participants. The interviews conducted by the researchers will, as necessary, facilitate the flow of information and follow-up questions. In the following sections, a researcher's philosophical presumptions influenced additional information needed to conduct the study.

Philosophical Assumptions

In this section, the researcher discusses the lens through which the study's constraints are observed worldwide. The ontological, epistemological, and axiological presuppositions of the researcher were studied. The purpose of this investigation was explained and discussed well in this part.

Ontological Assumption

The researcher's viewpoint on the truth is an ontological supposition. The researchers' ontological perspective is that there was only one all-encompassing perspective during this investigation: the one from the Bible. As a Christian, the researchers see reality in God's statement and plan for the world I endorsed. Matthew 7:12 says, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want to be treated, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (KJV). On the other hand, Christians are aware that heaven and earth are within His realm, even though we, as humans, may encounter difficulties in navigating the differences that exist on the planet. We must do his work and do what God has commanded.

Epistemological Assumption

An epistemological premise is how knowledge is perceived (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From an epistemological viewpoint, inquiries understand what information is and how intelligence is legitimate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study's interpretive system was a social constructiveness framework, so the members provided the data and information. Wisdom is imparting knowledge through the sharing of language and culture. The Black Church should include resources for preventing elder abuse in their sermons or ministries, and the study participants will discuss how they came to understand elder abuse. In this review, the specialist could make abstract determinations for this data.

Axiological Assumption

An axiological presumption is made on the importance of values to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher approached this study considering the researcher's prejudices and experiences after working as a mental health professional for the last 25 years. During my career, I have encountered many vulnerable older adults needing safety and protection from elder abuse. Being aware of the challenges seniors face in obtaining basic requirements and the emotional and psychological toll that mental instability may have on them. To better comprehend the participants' lived experiences, the researcher bracketed their experiences throughout this study. This study's conclusions and suggestions on creating spiritual resources for senior congregation members will be helpful to African-American spiritual leaders and the Black Church.

According to Moustakas (1994), when reviewing each interview record, all subjects and expressions were analyzed equally to see if they contained any components necessary for understanding the peculiarity. This interaction is known as horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). The researcher searched each transcript for common phrases, words, and themes relevant to the research questions. Any phrases used repeatedly or unrelated to the research were considered to be outliers. When the horizontalization cycle is complete, the information will be grouped and ordered by codes into center topics (Moustakas, 1994).

The topic upheld the examination questions using NVivo coding for the coding process. Rather than relying on the research's prior assumptions, the research relied on the participants' comments and explanations, which resulted in codes that could be analyzed for deeper patterns and arranged into extended themes. The transcriptions were compared to the data after it was categorized into themes, demonstrating that these expressions were expressed during or pertinent to the interview. These topics will not be included if these criteria are satisfied (Moustakas, 1994).

After the structural and textual descriptions were complete, a textural-structural report was created using verbatim examples from the interview transcripts using the themes and essences of experiences. The analysis concludes with the creation of a composite description.

In qualitative research, the interview is the most common method for collecting data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldana & Omasta 2021; Roger et al., 2018). According to Creswell & Poth (2018), interviews are a fundamental method of inquiry that brings people together by allowing them to comprehend better and make sense of the experiences they are sharing. Interviews turned out to be the most successful method for this study to explore the lived experiences of African American spiritual leaders and the significance that these participants place on their awareness of elder mistreatment when serving an older population. These interviews allowed the participants to pick important aspects, think about them, and share them in a way that allowed them to make sense of them by delving deeper into an extensive examination of what they encountered. This researcher attentively listened to their life stories and validated their self-worth and integrity as professionals who have successfully navigated the interpersonal landscape of the therapeutic field with all its diverse and challenging situations. (Seidman, 2019). Those firmly convinced that emphasizing the lived human experience is essential are needed to complete this work. The interviews were solely audio to ensure accuracy during transcription, and all participants agreed prior to the interview. Respondents were informed that their records would be under a pseudonym for privacy (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

The in-depth interview approach was the best choice since this study aimed to gather firsthand knowledge of elder abuse via the experiences of African American Spiritual Leaders. (Saldana & Omasta, 2021; Seidman, 2019). By asking the same questions, in-depth interviews

foster consistency across participants to elicit pertinent data on the same topics. According to Corbin and Strauss (2015), open-ended inquiries enabled targeted responses and fresh perspectives. When guided by open-ended questions, which offered them plenty of freedom to explore, participants were encouraged to share their stories openly without judgment.

The goal of asking in a safe environment is to promote healing by generating replies from the subject instead of research interviewing, which tries to acquire data to foster a more profound comprehension of the subject (Seidman, 2019). The researcher used active listening techniques throughout the interview to emphasize the participants' precise and nuanced meanings of their experiences of elder mistreatment (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2012). This researcher paid close attention, kept the recording, used self-reflection, and sought clarification in gaps. The data I obtained are deemed real-life representations of the participants (Heppner et al., 2016; Roger et al., 2018).

Data Collection

Interview Questions

Introduction and Self-Identification:

1. Kindly address me as if we had just met.
2. Please specify your title and the time you have held this position.
3. Outside of Ministry, where else have you worked professionally?
4. What led you to the call of ministry?
5. How would you describe yourself as a Spiritual Leader?

Spiritual Leaders' Personal Experience with Elder Mistreatment:

6. How would you describe your understanding and awareness of elder mistreatment?
7. What role do you play in educating your congregation about elder abuse?

8. What have been your experiences with professional development or training on encouraging elder mistreatment prevention in your church and the community?
9. What techniques have you used to encourage the older population to come forth with being victims of elder mistreatment?
10. What kind of education or training have you or the leaders of your church ministry attended to address elder abuse?
11. How have you been able to identify the older population that was a victim or potential victim of elder mistreatment:

Church Ministry and Elder Mistreatment:

12. What activities has your church made to bring awareness regarding elder mistreatment?
13. What community partnerships has your church partnered with to fight elder mistreatment?
14. What teachings can be applied in your church organization to help address senior mistreatment?
15. How have you or the church been able to identify victims or potential victims of elder mistreatment?
16. Who oversees the provision of this assistance?
17. What social support systems does your church feel would benefit the older population in your congregation and the community?

Conclusion:

18. How do you anticipate your church's approach to identifying elder abuse victims or potential victims to evolve over the next few years?

19. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with elder mistreatment?

Open-ended questions allow clergy to explain to the interviewer how their leadership, awareness, and understanding contribute to preventing elder maltreatment. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the introduction to an interview is crucial because it establishes rapport between the interviewee and the researcher. The questions concentrate on the conversation on important topics, including spiritual growth, leadership responsibility, and intercommunity cooperation. The examinations were planned considering the congregation's historical involvement in community activities. The following two are unique to the region and require more investigation: How can a church assist its senior members in protecting themselves from elder abuse?

Question Explanations

According to Patton (2015), the purpose of questions 1 through 6 was to build rapport with the interviewee by asking experience-based and recall-based questions. They concentrated on gathering information about the members' backgrounds, particularly the decision to seek services, and researchers and practitioners are very interested in stakeholder engagement strategies. (Tomaszewski, 2020). Questions 7 through 10 focused on the participant's experiences with professional elder mistreatment, while the knowledge portion of question 6 sought the participant's cognitive perspective on elder abuse (Englander, 2012).

Questions 11 through 16 were knowledge questions that asked participants how much they thought the participant's mindset contributed to the idea of elder mistreatment and the church's responsibility for elder abuse and older members. According to Jorm (2012), stigma and

other obstacles may make it challenging to get mental health assistance. Due to cultural obstacles, African Americans have difficulty accessing and using professional mental health services. The clergy are aware of the stigma surrounding mental health in the African-American community; thus, they are not blind to this issue. Pastors admit that historical racism, discrepancies in the medical system, and an absence of employment prospects prevent African Americans from getting help (Stansbury et al., 2012).

Questions 17 and 18 relate to change by promoting behaviors whether the Spiritual Leader or the church can bring trust between the church and the older population to provide a safe place to report the alleged mistreatment or abuse. This interest results in opportunities for education and outreach, procedure evaluation, consultations, clinic-focused services, and spiritual support and resources (Stansbury et al., 2012). Stansbury et al. (2012) discovered that collaboration among regulated and unregulated mental health participants strengthened when culturally relevant and respectful collaborations were encouraged. Understanding each other's roles and abilities is necessary for clergy and mental health professionals to collaborate well (Seidman, 2019).

Document Analysis

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is still a discipline that is evolving and reinventing itself, and its validity and dependability are regularly questioned, according to Lincoln and Guba (1986). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—the four characteristics that validate qualitative research are the foundation of a study's reliability.

Credibility

In qualitative study, credibility is crucial in internal validation. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), researchers must ensure they measure the intended outcome. Peer debriefing and member checking will help this research to establish credibility in this research.

Dependability

According to Creswell and Poth (2018) and Moon et al. (2016), dependability entails demonstrating that the study's findings are trustworthy, consistent, and replicable if necessary. With the same population and procedures, it will be possible to replicate all participant selection, data collection, and data analysis and synthesis procedures from this study. The reviewed literature will support the phenomenon and the researcher's plans. Utilizing notes and memoranda will give a review trail of the scientist's contemplations and encounters during this review. The chair and committee members will evaluate the audit trail to ensure this design and analysis are accurate.

Confirmability

The degree to which respondents influence a study's findings rather than the researcher's bias, incentive, or interest is known as confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Predisposition should be excluded from research and information analysis to guarantee that the member's thoughts and feelings are the sources of the information gathered and the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The members should review their meetings and make any essential changes to achieve this. An audit trail was created because of the data and items used in data collection, analysis, and the open and transparent participant selection process. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), reflexivity is the process by which a professional is aware of their predispositions, values, and experiences when authoring subjective research.

Transferability

Furthermore, this researcher will employ data-gathering methodologies to support critical themes and validate results. The researcher will achieve adaptation by keeping an intelligent record that provides a reasonable tale for others to utilize in determining the level of comparability to their organization (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This qualitative component of the study's expert panel was recruited to ensure diversity and a range of church sizes. The study's conclusions apply to churches of any size. The expert panelists' knowledge of ministry outreach was a crucial consideration. To accomplish transferability, this researcher will employ substantial, rich, in-depth accounts of African American clergy's lived experiences acquired via data-gathering techniques while locating participants for this qualitative study utilizing snowball sampling.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers resolve to protect the freedoms of the participants who take part in the interview (Saldana & Omasta, 2021). According to Roberts and Hyatt (2018), confidentiality and informed consent are two methods for verifying volunteers' protections. This researcher will use various methods to establish the security considerations for these participants.

Nonmaleficence and Beneficence

Ethics guidelines place volunteers' rights and the obligation to protect them from harm at the forefront (Moustakas, 1994). This fundamental rule, often known as the "principle of nonmaleficence," has come to be synonymous with the phrase "above all, do not harm" (Babbie, 2016; Roger et al., 2018). The IRB committees ensure that risks are minimal when designing research studies. The participants were shielded from participation-related "stress, discomfort, embarrassment, invasion of property, or potential threat to reputation" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 80).

Ultimately, beneficence implies helping others; it prioritizes kindness, healing, or progress over nonmaleficence (Heppner et al., 2016). Avoiding harm is only one aspect of proper ethics. Additionally, it creates a positive legacy, effectively enhancing the happiness, success, or advancement of others (Billups, 2021). The purpose of this study was to evoke beneficial influences.

Informed Consent

According to Roberts and Hyatt (2018), informed consent entails disclosing the procedures and risks before participants indicate their willingness to continue. The study will ensure that each participant's dignity is respected by allowing them to terminate at any time without adverse consequences despite the potential harm it could cause (Heppner et al., 2016). The study's obligations, risks, and responsibilities were clear through informed consent. Before participating in any of the procedures, each participant completed and returned the consent form (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Omasta & Saldana, 2021). It ensured that the participants' values of freedom and autonomy were upheld throughout the study (Roberts & Hyatt, 2018).

Confidentiality

Heppner et al. (2016) assert that maintaining participants' identities ensures confidentiality and protects their well-being. Because the data supplied in this study included sensitive personal information, it was imperative to urge the participants to use pseudonyms to maximize the possibility that they would provide truthful responses. Confidentiality covers more than only the identities of the research participants; it also covers "what will be done with their data" (Sieber, 1992, p. 35). The participant forms and audiotaped interviews were kept confidential under lock and key for three years, and only the researcher had access to them (Roberts & Hyatt, 2018).

Summary

In Chapter 3, the social constructiveness framework is used to discuss the essential elements of this transcendental phenomenological design. Because qualitative studies examine a comprehensive view of the lived experiences of a particular issue, the phenomenological research approach is an excellent fit for this study to assess African-American Spiritual Leaders' views of elder mistreatment. This chapter describes how this phenomenological study was conducted under the necessary ethical guidelines and the fundamentals of transcendental phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The following chapter will explain the analysis of the data collected. It will include a comprehensive examination of the data, a discussion of the conclusions, and an explanation of the results.

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

To understand African American spiritual leaders' knowledge, awareness, and understanding of elder abuse in the Black church- via their lived experiences- this transcendental phenomenological study examined the perspectives of seven African American Spiritual Leaders in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The participants' information included where they provide spiritual services and the narrative analysis of the data in this study. The study data was divided into codes and placed into themes that emerge from a larger context of the research questions and are consistent with the theoretical framework that underlies it. Finally, responses to the investigation questions were discussed for future research. A pseudonym was assigned to safeguard the participants' identities.

Participants

The participants in this study were African American Spiritual Leaders from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who shared a familiar role in ministry to articulate their understanding, awareness, and knowledge of elder abuse in the Black church—seven people who satisfied the research requirements and agreed to participate made up this study. The participants met the following inclusion criteria: Church based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, hold the title of pastor, bishop, elder, or spiritual leader, others, African American ethnicity, 18 and over, recognized as having a leadership position in the church for five years or more. Exclusion criteria included other ethnicities and other religious structures outside of Milwaukee. Age and gender were not considered an inclusion or exclusion. Applicants held a range of education, training, and experiences, which offered a specific context for their views about the phenomena.

Table 1*Participants Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Title	Denomination	Education
Betty	30-39	African American	Female	Minister	Lutheran	Bachelors
Cherie	60 +	African American	Female	Pastor	Baptist	Bachelors
Danny	60 +	African American	Female	Youth Minister	Catholic	Masters
Dotty	40-49	African American	Female	Minister	Non-denominational	Masters
Josh	40-49	African American	Male	Minister	Baptist	Bachelors
Kathy	50-59	African American	Female	Minister	Non-denominational	Bachelors
Rose	50-59	African American	Female	Evangelist	Baptist	Masters

Betty

Betty is a single African American female, approximately 30 to 39 years old, from a middle-class background. She holds a bachelor's degree and has been in the ministry for five years. Betty reports other employment in administration and felt a desire to serve others. She describes herself as a radical believer who loves the Lord and seeks to do his work in the community. Betty reports ministering in a Lutheran church.

Betty describes not being too familiar with elder mistreatment. She reports hearing stories about elder abuse taking place in nursing homes. She stated she had no experience identifying any victims or potential victims of elder abuse and had no professional or educational training or teachings regarding elder abuse.

Cherie

Cherie is a married woman with no children. She is around 60 years old, has a bachelor's degree, and is the lead minister for a Baptist church's women's and senior ministries. Cherie has over 20 years of experience as an administrator and in the medical profession. Her call to ministry stems from her observations of the elderly struggle in daily life, and she considers herself someone with a kind heart and an inspiration that inspires others.

Cherie explains her knowledge of elder maltreatment, stating that the elderly population is often disregarded and needs assistance and empathy. "I feel that the church has a major role in participating and helping to get this information out to the community."

Danny

Danny is an African American Youth minister who has been in ministry for five years in a Catholic Church. She is approximately 60 and older, holds a master's degree, and has worked in customer service and counseling. She reports a passion for working with the youth to see them progress in building a relationship with the Lord.

Danny describes her understanding and knowledge of elder abuse as a vulnerable population that is not willing to expose their abuser and is secretive about it. She reports no firsthand experiences with elder abuse or professional or educational training on elder mistreatment. She identified that her church provides no teachings or activities to address elder inequity.

Dotty

Dotty is a married African American woman. She is approximately 40 -50 years old and is from a middle-class household. She claims to have spent 15 years in the ministry at a Baptist church. She has a varied background in collaborating with vulnerable people. She holds a master's degree in psychology and has studied divinity. Her call to duty derives from her

religious background and upbringing. She believes the Holy Spirit is nurturing her spiritual abilities to help fellow believers and her lessons on honoring the Lord.

Dotty's direct experience with elder abuse came while attending graduate school. She stated that no Christian educational programs in her church address this topic. Dotty added, "I think that the church must be involved in helping to address this problem."

Josh

Josh is a 40-49-year-old African American who identifies as a Baptist church pastor. He has been in the ministry for 12 years and works as a professional counselor in the community. Josh lives in his home with his spouse and three children. He has a bachelor's degree and has held numerous customer service-related professional roles. Josh claims that his vocation to service was his comprehension and awareness of elder abuse as limited. "Elder abuse is when an older person is not properly cared for but nothing else," he explained.

Kathy

Kathy is a single African American female, approximately 50 to 59 years old. She is a minister in a non-denominational church and holds a bachelor's and other certificates. Her background is instructing children and adults, working in healthcare, and leading the church's women's ministry. She identifies as a caring and loving person who enjoys working in ministry.

Kathy describes her understanding and awareness of elder abuse solely coming from her background working in the medical field. She reports having no personal experience in addressing or identifying victims of elder mistreatment. She says she does not know of collaborations between the church and other community partners to address injustice against the elderly. Kathy stated, "This right here just brought awareness to me, and I can share that with the leadership."

Rose

Rose is a single African American female, approximately 50 to 59 years old. She holds a master's degree and has served as the lead minister for their health and wellness ministry for over five years. She also has a background in community mental health. Her vocation to ministering began after working in the community and seeing the need to address an individual's mental health. She describes her ability to assist vulnerable populations through her gift to treat the whole person through their physical, spiritual, and mental health components.

Rose described her experience with elder mistreatment coming through her work within there and taking that and transferring it to the church and environment. She reports no knowledge of the church directly addressing elder maltreatment but discussed the implementation of programs such as diabetes, fitness, and mental health training and community involvement. Rose stated, " I think having somebody come in and kind of talk do a comprehensive training about it, but it would be nice to have somewhere within a model some support group."

Results

This study's data produced a thorough list of codes for categorizing comments and replies, then structured into themes representing the participants' beliefs and experiences. The following section offers a detailed account of the participants' experiences and words used to characterize and explain the phenomena under investigation. In addition, this part examined how the themes answered the study questions.

Theme Development

First, the researcher looked over the text and listened to the interview audio to reacquaint herself with the participant's comments and assist in organizing the participants' experience. After that, while reviewing, this researcher made preliminary comments on the right side of the

document. The notes were categorized as descriptive and conceptual in this study to assist the researcher in "thinking more in-depth" about the topics identified in the transcript (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 95). The researcher also kept a separate notebook to "bracket" and record her "reflections" on her opinions, viewpoints, responses, and thoughts. The researcher next entered each transcript statement into NVivo to compare the statements, combine and reject them, and cluster the remarks into subsets from which the researcher finally constructed personal experiencing themes and subthemes. For each transcript, this researcher prepared a table of the personal experiential themes and subthemes, along with the matching statements that best supported the themes. The final stage was to organize each personal experiencing theme and its subtheme to cluster by recognizing similarities and contrasts to generate the final group main and sub-themes using NVivo.

Emerging Themes

The data review and analysis produced three themes that resurfaced in the participants' replies. The lived experiences of each participant show comprehension, relationships, and church roles.

Theme 1

Comprehension

The spiritual leader stressed elements of raising awareness of the church's senior members and attending to their needs while outlining their lived experiences. Spiritual leaders specify a degree of knowledge necessary to handle the needs of each aged person and the duties and obligations of the head pastor and any affiliated ministers. All spiritual leaders also emphasized the depth of personal understanding required when learning about elder abuse within transformational leadership. The absence of professional development/ training in the

congregation that applies to their competency as leaders and ministry was lamented by all attendees. Although knowing elder abuse was referred to as “none,” each minister felt pleased with their ability to be honest.

Creating Their Understanding

The first topic developed as all seven participants were asked to share their understanding or knowledge of elder abuse as spiritual leaders. Some participants wished they had a better grasp and awareness of the prevalence of elder abuse in their areas. When asked if they had any issues with their comprehension of elder abuse, all the participants replied affirmatively. Furthermore, a few participants highlighted how challenging it was for them to be in a leadership capacity while needing to understand the subject thoroughly.

I suppose my interpretation would be any harsh behavior, including verbal or emotional abuse, stated Dotty. I would only be aware of it because of my schooling. My majors were human services and psychology. I have learned about it in my coursework and the positions I have done, and when I go to check if someone is being taken advantage of, I consider them a vulnerable group.

Josh asserts: "I wish I had more training and understanding on the topic. I find it difficult to answer these questions due to not knowing that I was not providing the best quality care to people across the lifespan."

Danny said, "My learning experience of senior abuse has not been forthcoming. Honestly, I do not know anything about it. So, I think I should step up to the plate because I am reaching that age."

Cherie said: "Elder abuse forms in my head in a way that I comprehend and am aware of. I realize that abuse victims may find it difficult and frightening to cope. Even though I

have never advised someone who has been a victim of elder abuse. I need to take classes, attend workshops or do anything to assist my clients properly."

When asked if they felt inadequate to work with the senior population, Betty responded that because she did not understand the topic and only heard about elder abuse from others, she found it challenging to meet the needs of the individual and would refer the person to a secular counselor.

The data gathered from these interviews demonstrated that spiritual leaders' spiritual care assists persons in acquiring awareness, openness, and a secure atmosphere, allowing vulnerable seniors to achieve autonomy and successfully express themselves. Furthermore, the discovered themes suggested that spirituality and spiritual leaders assist seniors in processing their emotions, helping them to deal with psychological anguish that impacts their mental and physical well-being. As a result, spiritual leaders give spiritual and mental health counseling to individuals and their families, resulting in holistic well-being. Five participants felt they had created their understanding based on the minimum information and lived experiences. Participants who believed they understood and knew about elder abuse were able to help the seniors and give resources; however, none of the interviewees cited any religious training or solutions for supporting the elderly and vulnerable people.

Responsibilities and Obligations

Being aware of elder abuse against individuals 60 and older is part of understanding the duties and obligations of spiritual leaders. Regardless of their status, everyone agreed that they needed to continue learning to fulfill their obligations. Josh and Danny, who have little prior experience with the issue, discussed how difficult it is to reconcile their leadership roles. Josh discussed how unpleasant it was for him to be ignorant about elder abuse and how his duty was

to help anyone who would approach him for assistance or general information. They discussed focusing on him as the subject matter expert, not using any of her skills and experience in the church and having personal conversations. Danny acknowledged that despite her desire to study more on the topic, she focuses on working with the youth and not the older population.

Regardless of how frequently they worked in the church, participants shared a similar dynamic, but there was a tendency toward a more equal distribution of tasks and obligations. To avoid what she perceived as "overlooking or forgetting" about the elderly population, Dotty said that it was essential for all spiritual leaders to understand one another and that everyone in leadership needed to be on the same page. This is due to the concept's stringent demand for obligations and accountability. Cherie talked about the power of spiritual leaders and their leadership capacity. She claimed that bringing a person closer to God is the foundation of the spiritual leaders' power. She became a minister to assist people because she cares, said Cherie.

Senior Needs

In all data sets, there was comparatively little discussion of the various proportions of older adults in the church among those adjusting to society. According to participants, spiritual leaders must learn how to support and be knowledgeable of seniors with/at risk for elder abuse, which means using their platform of leadership skills to reach a vulnerable community. Despite the mutual desire for all the spiritual leaders to learn more about elder mistreatment, Josh discussed the difficulty of regulating this due to needing more comprehension. Danny also discussed the needs of older adults to support behavioral or emotional regulation. Several other participants also discussed the seniors' needs requiring navigating outside forces such as family, relationships, loneliness, and trust. Betty further described the needs of seniors as "Meeting them where they are. We must address the whole person and not a piece of them."

Humility

Humility emphasizes the spiritual leader's responsibility to the congregation members to develop healthy communication practices that foster understanding, nurturing, guidance, support, and spiritual care. When it comes to comprehending elder abuse, everyone discusses the distinct effects of spirituality. When asked whether they had to overcome anything, most participants found it challenging to be a leader of people who struggle to think for themselves.

Josh stated, "I feel convicted about not being aware of this topic." Being engaged and loyal in the sphere of ministry for ten years. "I never thought about what I was doing in the Church to serve everyone."

Danny said, "So, it is coming to the light. Maybe I should step up to the plate because I do not know anything about it, so maybe I should get more educated in that area."

Kathy stated, "As a leader, I must consistently evaluate a situation's benefits and drawbacks to justify my choices. I realize now that I have not considered all the church's populations and situations, primarily since I work in the mental health ministry."

Relationships

All the attendees discussed the various relationships that go into raising elder abuse awareness to promote the services and care provided to the elderly population. So, developing connections is a crucial part of leadership abilities for reintegration. Regardless of their status, clergy members discussed the value of the time required to build relationships with their flock. A few individuals have been able to dedicate themselves to the ministry for extended periods. Others said that being out of the top leadership positions changes their viewpoint, which may hinder the church's efforts to raise its senior members' knowledge. Developing the link necessary to accomplish what they view as a successful and trustworthy relationship falls on the shoulders

of all ministry leaders. Additionally, each participant went to great lengths on certain spiritual leaderships they formed when facilitating programs, identifying victims or potential victims of abuse, and the expected and unexpected relationships established among the Black church.

Service/Care

The subtheme emerged: These church leaders' education and training did not equip them with all the skills needed to meet the demands of the church addressing victims of abuse. The pastors in this research entered the ministry because God called them, and they acquired their education and experience to lead churches through seminaries or college degrees. Following graduation and beginning their careers in local churches, the spiritual leaders were unaware that the function of a minister was more nuanced than what their college and seminary education had taught them. Dotty felt disheartened as she did not think her training adequately prepared her to manage her personal and ministry life. Kathy felt the same way, disappointed that education did not adequately prepare her to work with church elders. Josh expressed the unrelenting process of church ministry, leading to being tunnel-focused on events rather than on individuals in the church. "Our church provides service announcements on events happening in the church and in the community, but not on people who are members and need care or prayer. The church no longer considers this.

Spiritual Leadership Relationships.

While spiritual leadership has many of the same concepts as general leadership, it also has unique characteristics that must be recognized and implemented for spiritual leaders to succeed. Spiritual leaders put much effort into abandoning their goals and following God's. Therefore, knowing God's intention for themselves and their organizations is essential for spiritual leadership. Although it seems straightforward, many Christian leaders need to put this

fundamental principle into practice. They were referring to the spiritual figurehead who is exceptional in both the caliber of his guidance and the quantity of his followers.

Spiritual leadership entails genuinely motivating and inspiring employees via hopefulness /faithfulness in the vision to serve their congregation and community and fostering a corporate culture founded on selfless, loving principles to build a highly motivated, devoted, and productive staff. However, when the traits of spiritual leaders differ within a religious organization, the spiritual director on their growth, a feeling of purpose, meaning, and worth to serve others from a position of humility and sacrifice that refers to God. When asked to explain their involvement in teaching their congregation against elder abuse?

Betty said: "Until I read over the survey you sent. I never thought about it in the in the church."

Danny: " You know, at present, no role at all."

Dotty said: In my congregation, I would be undergirding spiritual messages. Further than that, I do not. I do not think our church has had any recent workshops or Christian education courses on elder abuse, and I would like the lay teacher to be aware of that. However, I know that we do uphold our Mother's ministry, and the person must be a certain age to be a part of the Mother's ministry. Furthermore, they have specific caregivers and certain adjectives that look out for them, and that are over that ministry ensure that the mothers are provided for. Thus, any person who is over the age of 65 is more than welcome to the Mother's Ministry for Women. I am not sure exactly what our ministry is doing concerning educating on elder abuse or the older men in the church. That may be an area that I am not aware of.

Josh said: "Not at the moment, no role."

The following follow-up question was asked to each participant: - What have been your experiences with professional development or training on encouraging elder mistreatment prevention in your church and the community?

Betty: We have had, over time, different workshops but not on elder abuse. We had different workshops on recognizing seniors with specific disabilities going into dementia or Alzheimer's.

Cherie: Now, in the past, working in the healthcare field, I have had training from different workshops. However, I have not used any training or information in the church or the community.

Rose: I have always been there in the community whenever problems emerge. I make use of our Department of Aging as a resource. Considering that is where you would report elder abuse? As a result, I utilize them as resources and try to attend training that focuses on the senior population, including issues like dementia and other chronic medical illnesses that influence mental health. However, there is nothing on elder abuse education in the church.

All these responses provided contributing factors, and in all the answers obtained from the spiritual leaders, the interviewee acknowledged the subject in their responses to the questions about religious leader training, increased involvement of the spiritual leaders, and a request from the senior or head pastor to assist them within the call of ministry to provide service and care to seniors.

Theme Three:

Church Role/Obligation

This theme utilized data gathered through inquiry and probing subgroups that questioned all ministry leaders to reflect on their time in ministry. It examined how the church's education program includes disseminating preventative measures and resources for elder abuse and partnerships with other stakeholders. During this reflective thinking, they could determine how they saw themselves as spiritual leaders whose acts are responsible to God and the church and community people they serve. Their remarks represent the stories and testimonials.

Each participant answered the following question: What activities has your church made to bring awareness regarding elder mistreatment? Or what community partnerships has your church partnered with to fight elder mistreatment?

Betty: None. There has been no discussion on the church partnering with any social programs to address elder mistreatment.

Cherie: Nothing precisely on elder abuse. Our leaders have gone to senior living assisted facilities.

Danny: "I am not aware of any information regarding elder abuse to the church, and I cannot say there are any specifics on our church's partnerships with the community."

Dotty: Our church recently collaborated with a physician at a neighborhood hospital in the city. In addition to discussing aging, they spoke further about dementia. The senior population's susceptibility is far greater than just dementia. They also had a series of workshops on health. One was the Christian education courses that anybody could take based on dementia. Thus, that is something that I think the church should start to embrace more and bring more awareness.

All the spiritual leaders agreed that seminary schools should include more information on elder abuse and wellness in their education model or ministries. However, their deepest desire is for the churches to embrace this newfound awareness regarding seniors to safeguard them, assist with managing their mental and physical health, and provide adequate resources. One spiritual leader suggests the church take this information seriously and begin implementing a ministry for men 60 and over. She reports they have one for the mothers but nothing for men. Kathy expressed that this form of education can be anything we discuss on a Sunday morning regarding love and sharing the love of God. I believe any of those lessons can help us be more aware of elderly abuse. Meanwhile, Dotty said, "That is a great question. The church can offer more training on elder abuse and bring others in to train or assess older people. I think all church leaders should be a part of these trainings to understand what is happening in the church and the community."

Within this data, there was meaningful discussion about spiritual leaders and the Black church lack of knowledge, understanding, involvement, and resources to provide to the older population in the church and community. While discussing the importance of advocating for the seniors' mental and physical health, Cherie declared, "Older adults are usually ignored and given subpar care. They are frequently ignored, and their needs still need to be met. I find it challenging when older people are mistreated and humiliated since no one seems to care. More has to be done to protect them."

Research Questions

This transcendental phenomenological study sought to describe African American spiritual leaders' interactions with elder abuse in the Black Church. One primary and two secondary research questions served as the direction for the phenomenological design investigation. The

research questions were designed to gather information not found in the literature and raise awareness of mental health issues among church leaders, such as elder abuse. Seven African-American spiritual leaders participated in the study and offered a range of responses. Although there were many different viewpoints, several of the replies had characteristics. The spiritual leaders' answers to the interview questions were directly related to the study's goals and provided information on their lived experiences. Despite the variety of the responses, a few recurring themes connected them all. This research aims to spread knowledge about elder abuse among Christians by bringing it to the attention of ministries and their leadership teams. Below is a list of the participants' questions and responses.

Central Research Question

The study's first research question was: What are the lived experiences of the Spiritual Leader in the Black Church regarding elder abuse? The central theme that answered the central research question is Theme 1: Comprehension, which resulted in four subthemes: creating one's understanding, responsibilities and obligations, senior needs, and humility.

Theme 1: Comprehension

During one-on-one interviews, the first topic was each participant's comprehension of the senior citizens in the church addressing elder abuse. Everyone who participated was asked: "How would you describe your comprehension and knowledge of elder neglect? Even though they offer spiritual care at the church, each participant reported having minimum to no comprehension of elder abuse. Spiritual leaders' experiences with relationships had many characteristics, including a sense of inadequacy while working with the elderly population.

Subtheme 1: Creating Own Understanding. The participants explained a profound sense of no real experience with elder abuse in the church. Their descriptions aligned with the literature

about spiritual leaders who must become educated on various mental health topics. Participants experienced a range of comprehension, including no training, were unprepared to address elder abuse, and were removed from the topic altogether. Josh described feeling inadequate speaking on the topic. Josh said: "I wish I had more training and understanding on the topic. I find it difficult to answer these questions due to not knowing that I was not providing the best of quality care to people across the lifespan." Cherie said: "My understanding and awareness of elder abuse forms in my mind in a way that I understand it. I understand the abuse to be challenging and scary for victims. Although I have never counseled anyone experiencing elder abuse, I must attend training, workshops, or something to minister to those I serve effectively. I have worked with victims of domestic violence and depression."

Danny said: "My learning experience of senior maltreatment has not been forthcoming. Honestly, I do not know anything about it. So, I should step up to the plate because I am reaching that age."

Each participant discussed their unique experiences and responsibilities in the church with a modest sense of assurance or comfort in their preparation to confront elder abuse in the church, even though the interview focused on the lived experiences of African American Spiritual Leaders. This brings us to subtheme 2: commitments and responsibilities.

Subtheme 2: Responsibilities and obligations. This theme focused on describing the participants' responsibilities and roles in the church from the following research questions: How would you describe your role in educating your congregation on elder neglect? Participants described themselves as unaware of those in the church facing challenges such as abuse. Josh and Danny, who have little prior experience with the issue, discussed how difficult it is to reconcile their leadership roles. Josh discussed how unpleasant it was for him to be ignorant

about elder abuse and how his duty was to help anyone who would approach him for assistance or general information. They discussed focusing on him as the subject matter expert, not using any of her skills and experience in the church and having personal conversations. Participants had a comparable dynamic regardless of how frequently they worked in the church, although there was a tendency toward a more equitable allocation of responsibilities and obligations. Additionally, suppose African American pastors have high mental health literacy and are in regular touch with their church and the community, who may have mental health issues. In that case, they may function as social agents by urging their community to seek professional therapy (Stansbury et al., 2012). Dotty asserted that all spiritual leaders needed to understand one another and that everyone in leadership needed to be on the same page to avoid what she viewed as "overlooking or forgetting" about the senior population, which led to subtheme 3, senior needs.

Subtheme 3: Senior needs. The interview question, "How have you been able to identify the older population that was a victim or potential victim of elder mistreatment?" was in line with this subtheme through one-on-one interviews. Several participants concurred that older persons in the church must have their needs addressed for the spiritual leader to support elder abuse victims or future victims. Due to their lack of knowledge of elder abuse or because of interpersonal interactions, several participants talked about having trouble managing seniors' demands. According to Rose, the demand for elders to be acknowledged and cared for results from spiritual leaders adopting a more thorough strategy to forge more profound and lasting connections. Danny claims her leadership abilities were insufficient when working with senior church members. According to Betty, seniors' needs should be met "where they are. The entire person must be addressed, not just a portion." This led to subtheme 4, humility.

Subtheme 4: Humility. Participants encountered sentiments of grief and humiliation while attending to the needs of older adults. Two participants gave their perspectives on humility by discussing how they changed their opinions on the elderly population and their leadership abilities. Josh said, "I feel convicted about not being aware of this topic." Having spent ten years actively involved and devoted to the ministry, "I never thought about what I was doing in the church to serve everyone." As a leader, Kathy said, "I have to continually consider the benefits and drawbacks of a situation to provide a strong justification for my choices. Now that I work in the mental health field, I understand that I have not considered all the church's people and problems."

This study question supports Lartey's (2013) assertion that a minister's role and leadership skills must expand to include not just the church's mandate to offer spiritual sustenance but also additional responsibilities involving guiding, safeguarding, and teaching the community, particularly the most vulnerable members of it. Most participants discussed the leadership styles they used to grow and transform a community. This type of leader focuses on the organization's mission by motivating their followers through role modeling the vision and challenging everyone to grow and ask questions based on the needs of the individual.

Sub-Question One:

The study's first sub-question was: How are African American Spiritual Leaders showing their comprehension of elder abuse? The central theme that answered SQ1 is Theme 2: Relationships. This theme comprised two subthemes: service/care and spiritual leadership relationship.

Theme 2: Relationships

This subject focused on the experiences of African American spiritual leaders creating relationships with their elderly vulnerable population while serving in ministry leadership roles in the church. In-depth interviews with participants revealed the following experiences, which were shared: All the participants discussed the loss of connection with their older population to highlight the services and care provided to this demographic. This subject is crucial since all ministry leaders oversee forging the bonds necessary to accomplish what they regard as a successful and dependable partnership to promote others' vulnerability and foster an environment of responsibility.

Subtheme 1: Service/Care:

What kind of education or training have you received, or the church's ministry leaders, regarding elder abuse? This subtheme discussed the role of the spiritual leader in fostering awareness, openness, and a safe setting for vulnerable seniors to feel safe and secure. The participants' shared experiences information was obtained through interviews. According to Rose, the people she ministers to feel encouraged and strengthened by her service or care. Dotty states that she uses her leadership abilities to advance good communication techniques while offering spiritual care in her ministry. Many participants think that offering spiritual support to the people they serve is sufficient. Regarding the difficulties in addressing the requirements of persons abused, all participants said they could not provide adequate counseling to abuse victims. Because of their lack of knowledge or training about elder abuse, spiritual leaders are constrained in ministering to older adults.

Subtheme 2: Spiritual Leadership Relationship

What training or professional development have you received to promote elder abuse prevention in your church and community? This subtheme led to the leader's vulnerability

presentation, which inspired followers to foster better rapport, communication, and productivity. The foundation of spiritual leadership is humility. The climate of trust and authenticity fostered by someone who feels called to worship and respect God fosters improved innovation and organizational success. The theoretical foundation of transformational leadership theory has a connection to this subject. It is common for transformational leaders to be more understanding of their team members' troubles and obstacles, and they are more likely to offer support and encouragement (Bass, 2006). Josh talked about how uncomfortable it was for him to be unaware of elder abuse and how his responsibility was to assist anyone who would come to him for aid or general information. I am in a position ordained by God to serve and provide hope to people who wish to be near to God, Cherie said repeatedly, describing her leadership style as "loving and caring." I cannot believe I have not even thought about our senior congregation and what they are going through, Rose says. For the members of my church, I must do more. All participants said they felt at ease speaking about their opinions and feelings regarding their lack of knowledge and leadership abilities regarding elder abuse.

Sub Question Two:

The study's second sub-question was: What resources has the African American Church provided to the victims or potential victims of elder mistreatment that effectively decrease recidivism? The central theme that answered SQ2 was Theme 3: Church Role has two subthemes: resources and partnerships.

Theme 1: Resources

This topic was established based on the church's education campaign, which included distributing preventative measures and resources for elder abuse. It centered on the church's role in providing resources that reduce the recidivism of abuse to people who are victims/or at risk.

To gather the experiences of every participant, individual interviews were carried out, and participants were asked to ponder and respond to the following question: "What efforts has your church made to raise awareness of elder abuse? Kathy stated she has not, although she has volunteered at several nursing homes. Although the church has a health and wellness ministry team, Rose said they have not discussed elder abuse. Danny noted zero. This information contained much discussion regarding spiritual leaders and the church's lack of involvement, resources, and education.

Theme 2: Partnerships

This study is consistent with the evidence that suggests the church needs to give education on elder abuse. This theme described the church's collaboration with other community partners and stakeholders to address elder mistreatment. Participants shared their experiences through in-depth interviews, answering the following question, "What community partnerships have your church partnered with to fight elder neglect?" All participants reported no recollection of their church partnering with other community systems to address elder abuse. Kathy shared that most of the pastoral team is over the services offered within the church and that programs and services must be approved through them first, and then a minister is selected to oversee the ministry. Kathy also mentioned that most of the pastoral team does not have access to all the information in the church, which must be a priority when placing someone in a ministry leadership role. Rose mentioned that her church has a mental health ministry, but their community partnerships have addressed mental, physical, and nutrition- not elder abuse.

This study is consistent with the scant evidence showing that the church provides education about elder abuse. All participants agreed that the church must do more to help the senior population. Participants agreed that the church must provide community workshops and

pastoral/ leadership training and partner with community partners to utilize their expertise and training programs.

Summary

Every participant, regardless of role or title, reported that their leadership skills, in their perspective, were vital to supporting seniors with/at risk of elder mistreatment in the church. Pastors participating in the phenomena have access to an exclusive group of those 60 and older, making it a unique experience. This study described the lived experiences and subsequent perspectives of African American spiritual leaders in a large city district that heavily relies on spiritual guidance to support the fight against elderly individuals with/at risk mistreatment. An in-depth semi-interview of data sources revealed three main themes and eight subthemes. Pastors' experience with elder abuse in the Black Church means having comprehension. The subthemes of developing one's understanding, duties and obligations, elder needs, and humility all relate to and are represented by this subject.

This study found that the participants needed more comprehension of the phenomenon to address the topic. Additionally, comprehension in the Black Church supports the church leadership with/at risk for elder abuse in the church setting, which is about relationships. The themes that arose as pastors reported on the connections that developed with their congregation and community illustrate the concept of relationships. The Spiritual Leaders relationship with the older population was void due to a loss of connection, communication, and working together with other spiritual leaders in the church.

Finally, having comprehension and knowledge of this population of older adults in this specific setting means more roles from the Black Church. Church roles for vulnerable seniors emerged as a subtheme alongside more resources and partnerships. Clergy's experience with

their leadership skills influences their engagement with advocating and providing more resources and partnerships. Further, within the subtheme, The church did not provide any training or information to participants or ministry leaders, and the church did not develop any professional relationships with other social service programs to address seniors' needs regarding elder abuse.

This study provides factual evidence that African American Spiritual Leaders lack understanding and knowledge of elder abuse awareness or prevention. The study offers empirical evidence that older people in the Black Church are neglected when discussing an aspect of their mental health that involves elder abuse. The pastors reported an overwhelmingly positive perspective of their leadership skills and the church's role in disseminating for the older population with/at risk for elder abuse. No participant had any negative feelings about the research.

Table 2

Theme Development

Themes	Subthemes	NVivo Coding
Comprehension	Creating Own Understanding	No experience, did not receive any training, no knowledge, unprepared, challenging, none, some, little, removed, challenging
	Responsibilities and Obligations	Being more aware, being unaware, communicating, being proactive, being unprepared, receiving training, facing challenges, receiving help, being inexperienced, and developing professionally
	Senior needs	Reach the senior's needs, education, training, listening, unprepared, leadership skills, love, compassion, positive

		relationships, support systems, awareness, trust, community, church,
	Humility	Readiness, necessary for them, spirituality, God, proactive, learning experience, they need more help, humble, fear, sadness, experience, leadership skills
Relationships	Service/Care	Slowing down, grow together, voice my opinion, church, prayer, love, support, more time, leadership across the church, more time, more awareness of seniors in the church, God, service, commitment
	Spiritual Leaders relationship	Loss of connection, not working together, not supported, included, overlooked, not offered, self
Church Role	Resources	. None, have not heard, few, little, some, something needed, support systems, training, education, church growth, lack of communication, community, partnership, collaboration, programs, awareness, collaboration
	Partnerships	More understanding, none, more needed, growth, inclusion, awareness, training, collaboration, self-awareness, church, community, better leader, raising church standards, make a difference, more professional development, commitment, incorporate knowledge

Five: Conclusion

Overview

This phenomenological study aimed to describe African American Spiritual Leaders' comprehension and awareness of elder abuse. This study primarily targeted African-American Spiritual leaders residing and ministering in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. However, it was not open to other ethnicities or churches outside of Milwaukee. The qualitative findings of the action-based study demonstrated that the thesis statement was correct. When confronted with the factual situation of African American spirituals illustrating their comprehension of elder neglect in the church while serving in a role of leadership, the participants answered in practical ways to address the needs for religious organization involvement in developing a broad knowledge of how to help the older population within the church's footprint. The study's conclusions, discussion to other recent studies, limitations and delimitation, and future recommendations.

Summary of Findings

A thorough analysis of the participants' experiences resulted in multiple codes relating to the participant's or the church's lack of knowledge and understanding about recognizing elder abuse, inadequate training on EA via the church or personally, and the absence of social collaboration, resources, and programs concerning EA in the church. Three themes arose from these codes. These are a lack of information about elder abuse, further training on elder maltreatment for religious leaders, and the teaching of EA in the Black church.

The first theme revealed the spiritual leaders' experiences with a lack of comprehension and information about elder abuse. Participants who stated and used favorable terms while expressing their church experience were able to recognize and were more aware of the issues that come with being a spiritual leader who lacks knowledge and comprehension of elder abuse.

Several participants expressed a need for further learning and education on identifying and working with victims of elderly maltreatment while giving spiritual advice to older adults. Some participants stated that the study made them more receptive to being open-minded toward vulnerable elders. Others expressed their desire for their church to address the issue of elder maltreatment to encourage seniors to have an opportunity to share their feelings in a safe environment. When expressing their experiences with their knowledge and comprehension of the church and elder abuse, no participant used any unfavorable comments. However, one participant reported feeling guilty for not knowing anything about the issue or where to obtain information or resources.

The second theme represented the spiritual leader's need for further relationships. Participants with little experience or training in elder abuse managed to restrict their comments. All participants have held positions for at least five years. Despite their position as church leaders, the spiritual leaders voiced worry about not knowing about elder abuse due to the church's elderly demographic. Participants with more elders in the church reported they were less likely to suspect any maltreatment was occurring with church members due to the lack of communication or connection with this population. They had no firsthand experience with elder abuse and just learned about it from other people's experiences.

The third theme stressed the need for the Black church to take an active role in the community by offering training sessions, educational programs, and resources on elder abuse. While in ministry, everyone had a unique perspective, perception, training, and experience with elder abuse. Some participants expressed gratitude to their church for adopting mental health wellness, women's ministry, and health training. Other participants had no information to provide

on how their church disseminated elder abuse information. Three research questions directed the study.

Central Research Question:

What are the lived experiences of African American Spiritual Leaders in the Black Church Regarding Elder Abuse?

Some participants reported understanding some aspect of elder abuse because of their college education or from hearing about other people's own experiences, while others did not. Participants in the study discussed how they are adept at meeting people's spiritual requirements but have not taken any action to address their mental health needs. One participant discussed possible ways to alert her church to this new knowledge. In comparison, other pastors lamented their lack of leadership abilities and expertise to help individuals experiencing or in danger of abuse.

Participants in the research talked about how this has given them insight into their leadership skills and knowledge to support seniors in dealing with psychological distress that impacts their mental and physical well-being. Additionally, it inspired those presents to minister comprehensively. This data aligns with past examinations showing the disparity between African American Spiritual leaders and their support in scientific studies to compensate for treating mental health concerns in the Black Church and the community addressing elder mistreatment. One participant stated that they were not prepared to take an interest in meeting the elderly's needs in the church, which made her feel disconnected. The participants sharing their lived experiences demonstrate how crucial it is for spiritual leaders and the church to take responsibility and to work together by taking a proactive approach to those who perhaps are

overlooked or lost through connections. Utilizing questions and establishing a rapport instead of waiting for them to come to them can help promote advocacy to combat elder abuse.

The participant's responses show that spiritual leaders are not requested or required to become a part of the phenomenon of providing elder abuse education. Although the emphasis was on elder abuse, each participant was cautious to point out that the situation was new and frequently depended on their honesty. All participants agreed that they must take a more proactive approach to educate themselves to educate their congregants and the community they serve to combat abuse. The discovery of the leader's lived experience with elder abuse in the church was minimal.

Sub Question One

How are African American Spiritual Leaders Showing Their Comprehension of Elder Abuse?

The study's participants discussed the benefits of staying connected to the church and its members because it allowed them to adhere to their spiritual teaching and guidance. However, some study participants also discussed the challenges of not being actively involved in raising awareness of elder abuse within the church or the community. According to all participants, showing their understanding of elder abuse is complex and unprepared. One participant shared that she has no professional or educational training regarding elder abuse, and two other participants reported that their understanding of elder abuse has been through their education and other people's firsthand experience. All participants acknowledged mental health stigma; however, they did not apply this knowledge in the church or community.

Participants in the research described how this study has altered their attitudes about and respect for older adults. Some claimed it gave spiritual leaders a new viewpoint on the critical

contribution their leadership skills and subject-matter expertise play in the fight against elder abuse. Additionally, it increases awareness among the clergy in the church and community since indicators of spiritual development and transformation regarding mental health are visible both inside and beyond the boundaries of institutional religious rituals and traditions. This issue is associated with the aspect of intellectual stimulation that Bass (2006) noted as impacting transformative leadership. African American spiritual leaders have been at the center of encouraging followers to cultivate their creativity and innovation. Undoubtedly, the Black church has significantly contributed to the social support systems among several cultural backgrounds and racial minority populations (Kirkbride & Kirkbride, 2006). Hart (2009) stated that "Transformation includes development or inner freedom (p. 160)." It serves as a reminder that conditions that transformation and the search for new meaning may involve crises like elder abuse because the older population regularly encounters external constraints that limit their independence on the outside.

Spiritual leaders in the church ought to receive training, attend in-services, or collaborate with other knowledgeable professionals to build a working relationship to effectively comprehend how their spiritual practices must be incorporated into the church's organization to affirm a vision that meets the needs of the whole person, including their physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and mental health well-being as well as those of the church.

Sub Question Two

What Resources has the African American Church Provided to the Victims or Potential Victims of Elder Mistreatment that effectively decrease recidivism?

Participants in the study expressed their challenges in identifying resources in the church for victims or potential victims of elder abuse to reduce recidivism. During the research, there

was no mention of the participant's experiences with the church's resources for helping persons dealing with elder abuse. Rose shared that her church participates in community education regarding mental health, fitness, and diabetes but has not provided any education, training, or sermons on elder abuse. Dotty shared that the church must be involved in helping to address elder abuse. Kathy shared that her church does not have any partnerships in the community to address elder injustice.

This information is consistent with previous analyses that demonstrate how the Black church's lack of social services or other stakeholder partnerships, as well as the shortage of research on the topic of this investigation—clergy members' perceptions, attitudes, and intervention responses regarding elder abuse—contribute to the difficulty in understanding elder abuse. All the participants agree that the church must do more to assist the elderly and that clergy members need to get training to help them understand their vital responsibilities in elder abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment.

Discussion

This study explored the lived experience of seven Christian pastors in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area. The researcher used a thematic analysis to identify three themes and eight subthemes. In this discussion, the research arranged the literature review into two sections. This session included theoretical literature and empirical literature.

Theoretical Literature

Through in-depth interviews and applying transformational leadership theory, this study explored the pastoral leaders of Christian churches' knowledge of elder abuse, capacity to confront elder abuse, and leadership collaboration on elder abuse in the Black Church. The four pillars of transformational leadership are idealized influence (acting as mentors or coaches),

individual consideration (attending to the followers' needs), intellectual stimulation (encouraging innovative ideas), and inspirational motivation (communicating the vision and providing motivation) from the psychological process that underpins transformational leadership (Northouse, 2013;2019).

Although transformational leadership framework has dramatically influenced almost every aspect of leadership practice, including Christianity, this research revealed that pastors' experiences varied depending on their educational background and the church they lead that provides care for the elderly (Bass, 2006; Northouse, 2019). According to Northouse (2013), the transformational leader is "deeply respected by their followers, who typically place a great deal of trust in them," and this leadership style "affects both society and individual systems through change" (pp. 191-193). Service is the essential component of spiritual organization (Antonakis, 2012). Our response to God's command to love and serve our neighbor comes through our job. This study produced four critical conclusions.

By shedding light on the influence of Black Christian leaders and the Black Church on elder abuse, this research contributes to the body of literature. *African American Spiritual Leaders' Mindset* is an initiative that seeks to alter the mindset that underpins the objectives that direct the organization's programming. Elder abuse prevention initiatives must transform the system's overall culture, meaning that to alter the system's culture to serve all populations across all stages of life, pastoral leaders must begin putting their skills and assets to use in this direction. The study's base is rooted in leadership and the capacity of leaders to affect change. Members of the clergy lead both spiritually and transformatively.

Empirical Literature

This study's empirical significance adds to an existing gap in the literature and contributes new empirical research on elder mistreatment, spiritual leaders' leadership, and the Black Church. A new growth of literature points to the relevance of basing strategies of planned social change within the sphere of religion when addressing Black Americans. Transformational leadership describes a kind of leadership that transforms people and social structures while also bringing about significant and constructive change in followers to promote self-autonomy (Bass & Bass, 2000). This finding supports the current research because many respondents have shown an interest in being expanded beyond their normal limits for a meaningful reason. Leaders who establish an intense environment and pay great attention to the needs of individuals foster a fruitful environment of trust. Leaders serve as mentors and counselors, assisting individuals in becoming more self-aware (Bass, 2006). Leaders who choose to lead with affection and concern for their followers must be adaptable and intelligent. The pioneer may be tidy and ordered while establishing deep relationships with members.

The key concept is that spiritual leaders should demonstrate influence and competence while empowering further improved expertise (Farazja & Khademi, 2011). The church should develop a mission statement and foster a culture of trust. These two criteria are conceptual frameworks that encourage change and improve performance. This accomplishment is through a clear and practical vision statement on the congregation's goals, which will influence individual behavior and achieve beneficial effects. A trusting environment where leadership values everyone's integrity and potential will inspire and motivate members to work toward common goals. This study highlights the value of expanding transformational theory to acknowledge the role of a spiritual leader and individual personalities and character traits as ministry team

members. The theoretical foundation for comprehending spiritual leaders expanded because of this.

Implications

This study's in-depth interviews of data sources revealed practical implications for practice and support. The inner city of Milwaukee relies heavily on the leadership of spiritual leaders to support inclusion for seniors with mental health or disabilities.

Theoretical Implications

This study used transformational leadership theory as a guide (Burns, 1978). The theory emphasizes a meaningful, positive change in followers for self-sufficiency and improvement of societal systems (Burns, 1978). The pastors' participants in this study spoke on their intent to develop an awareness of elder abuse to support the integration of education in the Black church and community. The theory of leadership also incorporates perceived behavior control, which spiritual leaders in this study affirmed impacted their intent to continue the three main themes developed by the data in the study, which include lived experiences with a lack of knowledge of elder mistreatment, spiritual leadership training, and more involvement from the Black church, and they have all reinforced the ideas and theory of transformational leadership. When participants in the study described their leadership experiences in the church, many noted the importance of adaptation and understanding. Some mentioned being aware of the difference between themselves and other spiritual leaders. Others share the importance of how little they know about elder abuse and what the church does to assist the older population. One participant mentioned the importance of bringing this study to their senior pastor, which will shed some light on the topic.

The study's findings showed that spiritual leaders and the church contributed to an individual's safety, trust, and well-being, affecting their relationship quality, especially for the older population. The most crucial factor was that spiritual leaders needed to be aware of their cultural backgrounds, comprehend the customs and practices that make up the knowledge on elder abuse, and be molded by training and involvement in the church's educational model. Six out of the 7 participants were female, and one was a pastor. The study participants supported being knowledgeable and connecting with the church to bring awareness of abuse when cultural challenges arise. Everyone thinking of sharing this study with their church can benefit from continuing to recognize and embrace this information.

Empirical Implications

The study aims to fill a gap in the body of knowledge about African American pastors' experiences and subsequent views of their understanding of elder abuse in the Black Church. Much of the available literature explores pastors' perceptions and attitudes toward mental health and leadership skills (Bent-Goodley et al., 2012; Dryer, 2016). However, it fails to examine African Americans' unique position in the Black church addressing elder abuse. This study's findings extend those found across research and situated them in the context of the phenomenon described. This study narrows the focus to Black clergy in a large urban area setting and reinforces the perceived benefits of the leadership skills described in some literature (Curry et al., 2018). Additionally, this research offers insight into viewpoints that affect actions that lessen the difficulties pastors face when addressing the older population's needs.

Empirically, this study also provides evidence for shifting viewpoints and attitudes of spiritual leaders towards those with mental health addressing elder abuse.

Much of the literature reinforced the concept that pastors have negative attitudes toward mental health and often lack awareness and understanding (Payne & Hays, 2016). Only limited research supported the idea that the presence of other African-American pastors may mitigate some of those feelings (Jorm, 2015). This study's data revealed data that increases support for mitigating negative feelings towards those addressing abuse when providing better comprehension and training.

The participants' experiences with elder abuse were consistent with the findings of earlier research on psychiatric difficulties and church culture to understand better the impact these challenges have on pastors' ability to provide treatment. Surprisingly, just a few participants recognized elder abuse awareness as a component of their spiritual character in the church. Betty mentioned, "When individuals are victims of abuse, they are less likely to disclose it because they are afraid and do not know where to turn."

The study gives verifiable proof that African American spiritual leaders need understanding and information on senior maltreatment and the various contributing factors. As indicated by some participants, the older populace is ignored while addressing their psychological and actual prosperity because of an absence of help from the lead minister, organizations, correspondence, assets, and continuous education. As indicated by the review, some pastorates give emotional well-being health inside the African American population; however, they neglect to interface bringing their insight inside the Black church. This study provides authentic evidence of the need to help pastors with information and local area assets and train them to be more proactive in tending to psychological maladjustment and senior maltreatment in the congregation and local area.

The study provides factual evidence that African American spiritual leaders lack understanding and knowledge of elder abuse and the multiple contributing variables. According to some participants, the elderly population is disregarded when addressing their mental and physical well-being due to a lack of support for the lead pastor, partnerships, communication, resources, and continuous education. According to the study, some clergy provide mental health wellness inside the black community but fail to link bringing their knowledge within the black church. The study provides factual proof of the need to assist clergy with knowledge and community resources and teach them to be more proactive in addressing mental illness and elder abuse in the church and community.

Practical Implications

This study described the lived experiences of African American Spiritual leaders' understanding and awareness of elder abuse. The researcher's goals were that this study's data and the themes would help share the lived experiences of African American spiritual leaders to their respective leadership styles and understanding the needs of the older population, and on the success of the Black church taking a proactive role to help defend seniors in the church. The study's conclusions have practical implications that Black churches may consider when working with individuals 60 and older.

The researcher hoped that the data would aid in developing processes and models to encourage and promote an equal connection to one's community and inspire spiritual leaders, seminaries, and universities to broaden their curriculum to include training and instruction in mental health addressing elder abuse. The three themes developed by this study, namely, a lack of understanding of elder abuse, spiritual leadership training, and increased engagement from the

Black church, provided practical implications discussed in the theoretical and empirical implications sections.

This study found that an individual's experiences may perhaps influence the support or opposition from their church senior leader despite their lack of understanding of elder abuse. Kathy regretted that she had never heard this issue discussed in church. She stated that this influences her life because she is approaching this age. Cherie stated that she bears responsibility for not discussing senior abuse in her sermons or for educating her people through contact with community members.

Ministers must strive to understand more about mental health and not isolate it from spiritual issues. Nonetheless, programs meant to train people for their duties must adequately prepare them for mental illness. According to the Bible, men perish for lack of knowledge, and pastors succumb to the pressures of church service, not comprehending the road to recovery and prevention.

Church assemblies should likewise be educated and helped defeat essential and judgmental perspectives toward people or ministers who experience the ill effects of psychological illness. The Bible teaches how the congregation of Christ is to work and help each other without misleading judgment, with spiritual leaders, precisely, ought to be encouraged (Philippians 2:3; Galatians 6:6-9, 1 Peter 2:17). Several participants in this survey stated that they did not feel equipped to assist victims of elder abuse. Although research studies show that more churches promote mental health, current religious participant results show unfavorable attitudes toward mental illness persist among Christian congregations (Jorm, 2012).

Delimitation and Limitations

The delimitation of this study contributes to the fact that there have been significant investigations on the ethnicity of other religious leaders over the years; this researcher chose to limit the participants to African American religious figures in the urban area of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; thus, the experiences of Black clergy in other areas may differ, as may the experiences of clergy in smaller communities. This study aimed to add to the literature on the lived experiences of African American Spiritual Leaders in the Black church dealing with elder maltreatment by describing their lived experiences.

As with any study involving human subjects, this study had limitations. While an unbiased research study would be ideal, other options may exist. To minimize researcher bias, the researcher needed to focus on the design features and avoid asking questions that would lead or steer the participants to a likely result. To minimize bias, the researcher designed the interview and had the questions reviewed by a mentor to acquire an impartial second opinion.

Furthermore, the transcendental phenomenological approach used to describe the experiences of Black clergy in their personal lives and with members of their congregation in their response to elder abuse, which may not be representative of all clergy; even though the Black church is heterogeneous, the capacity to generalize to all Black churches may not be possible. The fact that clergy leaders were inclined to assess themselves on self-reflective questions may be a limitation of this study.

Likewise, denominational theological differences may restrict the study's findings to the churches and participants. Finally, because the interviews contained self-reports, participants may have sought to help the researcher by responding congruent with their understanding of the study's aim. Despite these limitations, the findings of this study provide valuable issues for other spiritual leaders and future research on the topic.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research must examine the relationship between the Christian church and public agencies that want to help the elderly. Strategic planning that incorporates and supports both viewpoints is critical. The Christian church recognizes its biblical obligation to assist the weak and those seeking wholeness. When it comes to helping the elderly, Christian church leaders should avoid external confrontation with community services and form successful relationships to help this group. Innovative solutions enable the Christian church to play an essential role in satisfying the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the elderly.

Further investigation on identifying and alleviating the emotional distress linked with elder abuse with joint efforts of community agencies and the Christian church would most certainly be critical sources of change support. Additional mixed-method designs should investigate aspects of older individuals' needs, including mental and physical trauma, as well as the ability of the Christian church pastoral leader to assist in this area. A more in-depth focus group might be helpful in future studies on this issue, explicitly stressing the political and financial constraints that impede the process.

Considering other religious groups within the Christian church would significantly broaden the scope of the study of elders and the Christian church. With a larger sample size, researchers may zero in on certain Christian groups educated about and eager to help the elderly. Furthermore, incorporating a broader geographical region would be advantageous because it would allow more individuals to contribute insight.

The current research study revealed that the Christian church pastoral leaders' awareness of ministry outreach to inform and impact their activities to address elder maltreatment was lacking to a statistically significant degree. The Christian church religious leader had no

connection with their outreach mission to affect the elderly population and elder abuse while navigating the spiritual constraints in the church or community. The study addressed a need for elder abuse and Christian church leadership by demonstrating a lack of significant resources and understanding of elder abuse, individuals' emotional needs, traumatic stress, and the Christian church's awareness to give suitable assistance in these areas.

The study explored other aspects to help comprehend elder abuse: Christian church pastoral leaders' attitude to leadership, knowledge of elder abuse factors, and awareness of related emotional distress. The research added to the body of knowledge by delving into the theological and theoretical framework of Christian church leaders and community elder maltreatment resources and support services. The research showed the biblical mandate of the Christian church community to help individuals in need, as well as the theoretical basis for social assistance programs. Finally, the pastoral leader and community of the Christian church have a biblical duty to be extensions of Christ on earth by exhibiting compassion and kindness to the vulnerable and needy.

Summary

If they were a victim of elder abuse, who would they turn to for help? This study discovered that spiritual leaders' understanding of elder abuse, knowledge of it, and leadership abilities are crucial to preventing elder cruelty because of African American spiritual leaders. Clergy inspire their congregations to address social, political, and healthcare issues because they are knowledgeable, dependable, and well-known community leaders (Campbell & Wallace, 2015). African American clergy serve as community leaders, and in general, Black churchgoers rely on and seek the advice of clergy for guidance in all areas of life. The Black church leaders in this study carefully documented their interactions with members of their congregation or community

and with potential victims or actual victims of elder abuse. The participants in this study defined elder mistreatment. They talked about how they understood it, dealt with it, the obstacles faced, and what they thought was required to address elder mistreatment issues in the Black Church. Considering the dangers of autonomy, independence, and avoidance or stigma for members dealing with elder abuse, the Black clergy talked about the function of the spiritual leader's leadership abilities, the significance of community involvement, and the value of collaborating with other mental health specialists.

Concerns about elder abuse in the Black Church, as viewed through the eyes of Black clergy, emphasized the value of cooperation and community involvement with mental health professionals in addressing elder abuse. A more in-depth inquiry is required to understand what stakeholders require of the Black community. Black clergy, Black families, and mental health experts who work with the senior Black population are all potential stakeholders. These stakeholders may benefit from a collaborative effort that allows them to work together to better the aging population, community, and church. More research is needed to analyze the influence of a church community comprising Black clergy, Black families, and mental health specialists on the welfare of the Black community.

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Appendices

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 6, 2023

Cassandra Downey

Mollie Boyd

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY22-23-1491 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY IN UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUAL LEADERS AND THE BLACK CHURCH ON ELDER MISTREATMENT

Dear Cassandra Downey, Mollie Boyd,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: June 6, 2023. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal-risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, **oral** history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP

Administrative Chair

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Consent Form

Title of the Project:

A Phenomenological Understanding African American Spiritual Leaders and the Black Church
on Elder Mistreatment

Principal Investigator: Cassandra Downey, Doctoral Candidate, Community Care & Counseling, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an African American ethnicity, currently serving as a senior/lead spiritual leader in your church, have held a senior/lead position for 5 years in your church, pastor a church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and be over the age of 18. Taking part in this study is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this phenomenological study aims to understand how African American Spiritual Leaders in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, experienced understanding, and awareness of senior abuse, as well as the role of the Black Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in an individual interview (45 minutes to 1 hour). This interview will be audio recorded and will be conducted either online or over the phone.
2. Participate in member checking. This is reviewing your transcript of the interview for accuracy (if participated desire, 30 minutes).

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include sharing information to be able to better understand and assist victims of elder mistreatment in the African American population in Milwaukee, Wisconsin by providing mental, physical, and spiritual care to adults 60 and over.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Electronic data will be stored on an encrypted and password-locked computer and hardcopy data will be stored in a locked file cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and paper copies will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recording will be password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Cassandra Downey. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

Dear Pastor:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to discover African American Spiritual Leaders understanding, awareness, and experiences with elder mistreatment affecting older persons aged 60, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an in-depth, audio-recorded, online or phone interview (45 minutes-1 hour), and participate in member checking. Member checking consists of the participants reviewing the transcripts of interviews for accuracy (30 minutes, if participant chooses to). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, individuals must:

- ❖ Be of African American ethnicity.
- ❖ Currently serve as a senior/lead spiritual leader in their church.
- ❖ Have held a senior/lead position for 5 years in their church.
- ❖ Pastor a church within the inner-city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- ❖ Be over the age of 18.

For your review, I have attached a survey. Please complete the survey and return it to the email provided below. If you should meet the criteria for the study, a consent form will be emailed to you separately, providing additional information. If participants agree to participate, they will email back the consent form to the researcher's email address below.

For more information or questions regarding the in-depth interviews, please contact me at

██████████

Sincerely,

██████████

APPENDIX D**Demographic Survey Questions****A Phenomenological Study in Understanding African American Spiritual Leaders and the Black Church on Elder Mistreatment**

1) Do you pastor a church in the inner city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin?

_____ Yes _____ No

2) Are you currently serving in a senior or lead spiritual position in the church?

_____ Yes _____ No

3) Have you been in a senior/lead position for 5 years in the church?

_____ Yes _____ No

4) Are you over the age of 18?

_____ Yes _____ No

5) Are you of African American ethnicity?

_____ Yes _____ No

6) Are you willing to participate in this study?

_____ Yes _____ No

APPENDIX E

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of the Spiritual Leader in the Black Church regarding elder abuse?

Sub Question One

How have African American Spiritual Leaders demonstrated their comprehension of elder abuse?

Sub Question Two

What resources has the African American Church provided to the victims or potential victims of elder mistreatment that effectively decrease recidivism?

APPENDIX F

Individual Interview Questions

Introduction and Self-Identification:

1. Kindly introduce yourself to me as if we had just met.
2. Please specify your title and the time you have held this position.
3. Outside of Ministry, where else have you worked professionally?
4. What led you to the call of ministry?
5. How would you describe yourself as a Spiritual Leader?

Spiritual Leaders' Personal Experience with Elder Mistreatment:

1. How would you describe your understanding and awareness of elder neglect?
2. How would you describe your role in educating your congregation on elder neglect?
3. What have been your experiences with professional development or training on encouraging elder abuse prevention in your church and the community?
4. What techniques have you used to encourage the older population to come forth with being victims of elder neglect?
5. What training or education have you or your church ministry leaders participated in to address elder neglect?
6. How have you been able to identify the older population that was a victim or potential victim of elder mistreatment:

Church Ministry and Elder Mistreatment:

1. What activities has your church done to bring awareness regarding elder neglect?
2. What community partnerships have your church partnered with to fight elder neglect?
3. What training can be implemented in your church ministry to help address senior neglect?

4. How have you or the church been able to identify victims or potential victims of elder neglect?
5. Who oversees the provision of this assistance?
6. What social support systems does your church feel would benefit the older population in your congregation and the community?

Conclusion:

- 1.. How do you anticipate your church's approach to identifying elder abuse victims or potential victims to evolve over the next few years?
2. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with elder abuse?

APPENDIX G
Participants Demographics

Table 1*Participants Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Title	Denomination	Education
Betty	30-39	African American	Female	Minister	Lutheran	Bachelors
Cherie	60 +	African American	Female	Pastor	Baptist	Bachelors
Danny	60 +	African American	Female	Youth Minister	Catholic	Masters
Dotty	40-49	African American	Female	Minister	Non-denominational	Masters
Josh	40-49	African American	Male	Minister	Baptist	Bachelors
Kathy	50-59	African American	Female	Minister	Non-denominational	Bachelors
Rose	50-59	African American	Female	Evangelist	Baptist	Masters

APPENDIX H
Theme Development

Table 2*Theme Development*

Themes	Subthemes	NVivo Coding
Comprehension	Creating Own Understanding	No experience, did not receive any training, no knowledge, unprepared, challenging, none, some, little, removed, challenging
	Responsibilities and Obligations	Being more aware, being unaware, communicating, being proactive, being unprepared, receiving training, facing challenges, receiving help, being inexperienced, and developing professionally
	Senior needs	Reach the senior's needs, education, training, listening, unprepared, leadership skills, love, compassion, positive relationships, support systems, awareness, trust, community, church,
	Humility	Readiness, necessary for them, spirituality, God, proactive, learning experience, they need more help, humble, fear, sadness, experience, leadership skills
Relationships	Service/Care	Slowing down, grow together, voice my opinion, church, prayer, love, support, more time, leadership across the church, more time, more awareness of seniors in the church, God, service, commitment

	Spiritual Leaders relationship	Loss of connection, not working together, not supported, included, overlooked, not offered, self
Church Role	Resources	<p>.</p> <p>None, have not heard, few, little, some, something needed, support systems, training, education, church growth, lack of communication, community, partnership, collaboration, programs, awareness, collaboration</p>
	Partnerships	<p>More understanding, none, more needed, growth, inclusion, awareness, training, collaboration, self-awareness, church, community, better leader, raising church standards, make a difference, more professional development, commitment, incorporate knowledge</p>