

## Exploring the Healthcare Leader's Perception of Their Role and Leadership Behaviours - Looking Through an Adult Developmental Lens

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**Abstract :** Background: Healthcare leaders work in highly complex and rapidly changing environments. Consequently, they need both flexibility and the capacity to hold multiple perspectives simultaneously. My research explored how healthcare leaders understand and make sense (meaning) of their leadership experiences and how this understanding was manifested in their leadership behaviours. Methods: This grounded theory study was conducted via 2 x 1-hour interviews with healthcare leaders within acute care hospitals. A total of 33 hours of interviews were conducted with 17 participants. Participants were recruited using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded to explore emergent patterns and relationships within the data, utilising constant comparative analysis. Adult developmental stage was defined through a subject-object interview with each participant, in alignment with the tenets of constructive development theory. Findings: Participants from acute care hospitals within Australia have participated in the study, with the majority representing the executive leadership level. Broad categories emerging from the data include; Broadening perspectives and abilities as a leader, Dealing with and experiencing conflict within the workplace, Experiencing rewarding times as a leader, and Leading in alignment with a strong personal values system. Discussion: Successfully dealing with complex challenges requires an ability to engage with nuanced perspectives and responses, an integral part of adult developmental growth. In dealing with conflict, for example, leaders at various levels of adult development approached the situation quite differently. Understanding how healthcare leaders make sense of their experiences can assist in providing insights into the value of supporting adult developmental growth in healthcare leadership.

**Keywords :** leadership, adult development, complexity, growth

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