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INTRODUCTION

Healthcare is ever changing and considering the recent pandemic, leadership is needed now more than ever from providers. Physician assistants (PAs) are an integral part of an interprofessional team with the capacity to treat patients effectively and efficiently. However, state scope of practice laws and public perception can hinder the ability of PAs to strengthen the workforce by state. Kentucky is among the most restrictive states for practicing PAs. This research aims to bridge the gap in the literature by interviewing PA leaders in Kentucky to create a blueprint on how one can become a PA leader in their respective professional setting.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to describe the PA leadership landscape in Kentucky and outline elements that future and current PAs may reference to help inform their own leadership trajectory.

METHODS

Recruitment and Participants

- Email recruitment letter to identified Kentucky PA Leaders
- Held titled positions or roles that gives them administrative or direct authority and decision-making power within or over an organization or individuals
- Local Hospital Leadership Organizations, Professional Organizations, Kentucky Hospital System Websites, PA Educators

Instrumentation and Analysis

- Demographic and Leadership Interview Questionnaire
- Qualitative semi-structured audio recorded interviews with inductive coding methodology
- University of Kentucky IRB #84006

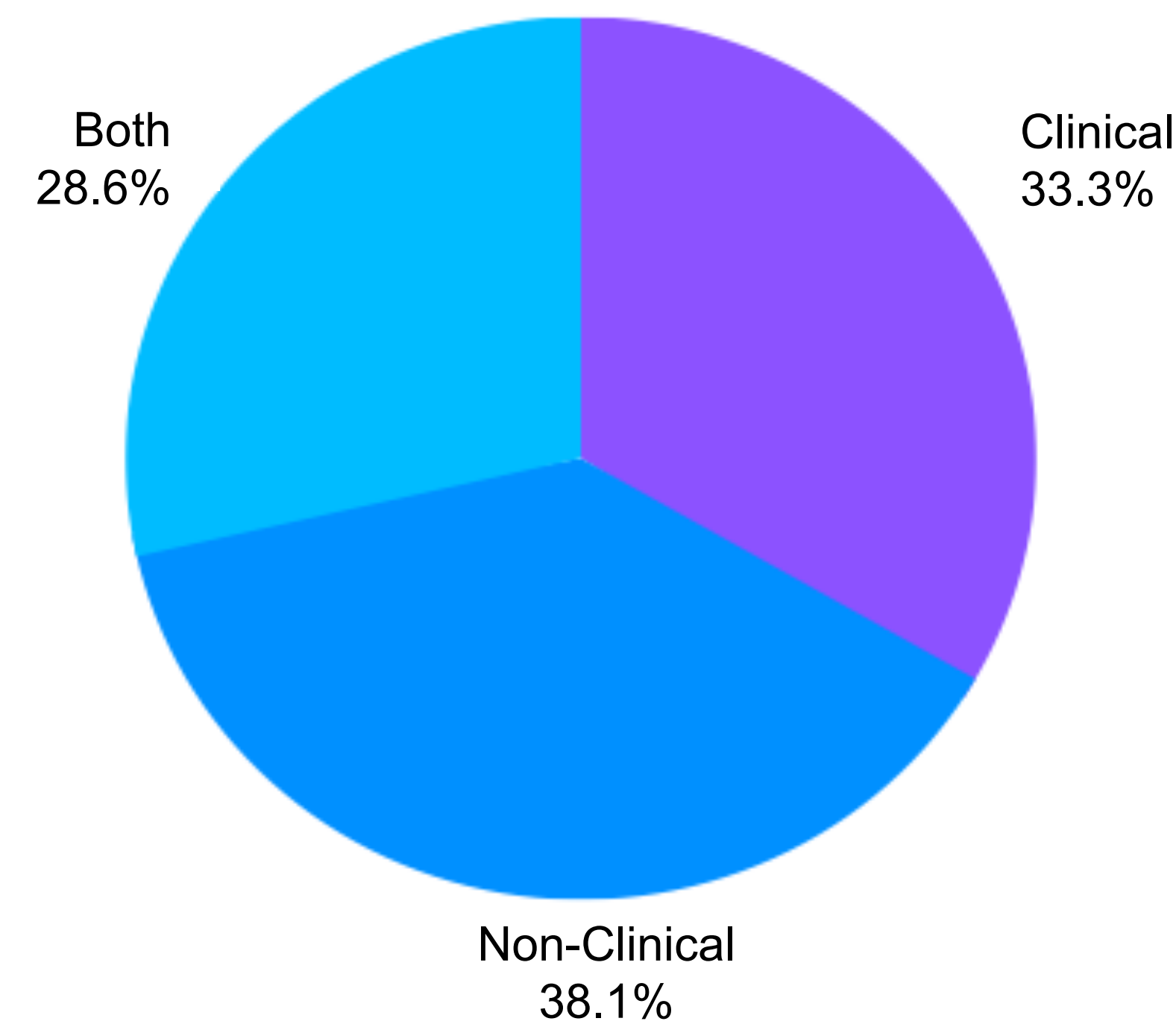
Table 1. Demographics of PA Leaders Interviewed (N=21)

| Variable | N (%) | M ± SD |
|--|------------|------------------|
| Age | | |
| 25-34 | 1 (4.8%) | |
| 35-44 | 11 (52.4%) | |
| 45-54 | 5 (23.8%) | |
| 55-64 | 3 (14.3%) | |
| 75-84 | 1 (4.8%) | |
| Sex | | |
| Female | 16 (76.2%) | |
| Male | 5 (23.8%) | |
| Race/Ethnicity | | |
| Caucasian | 19 (90.5%) | |
| Asian | 1 (4.8%) | |
| Other | 1 (4.8%) | |
| Years Practicing Clinically | | 15.6 ± 9.3 Years |
| Physician Assistant School Matriculation Age | | 26.2 ± 3.7 Years |
| Degrees Held | | |
| Associates | 3 (14.3%) | |
| Bachelors | 21 (100%) | |
| Certificate | 2 (9.6%) | |
| Masters | 19 (90.5%) | |
| Doctorate | 4 (19.0%) | |

RESULTS

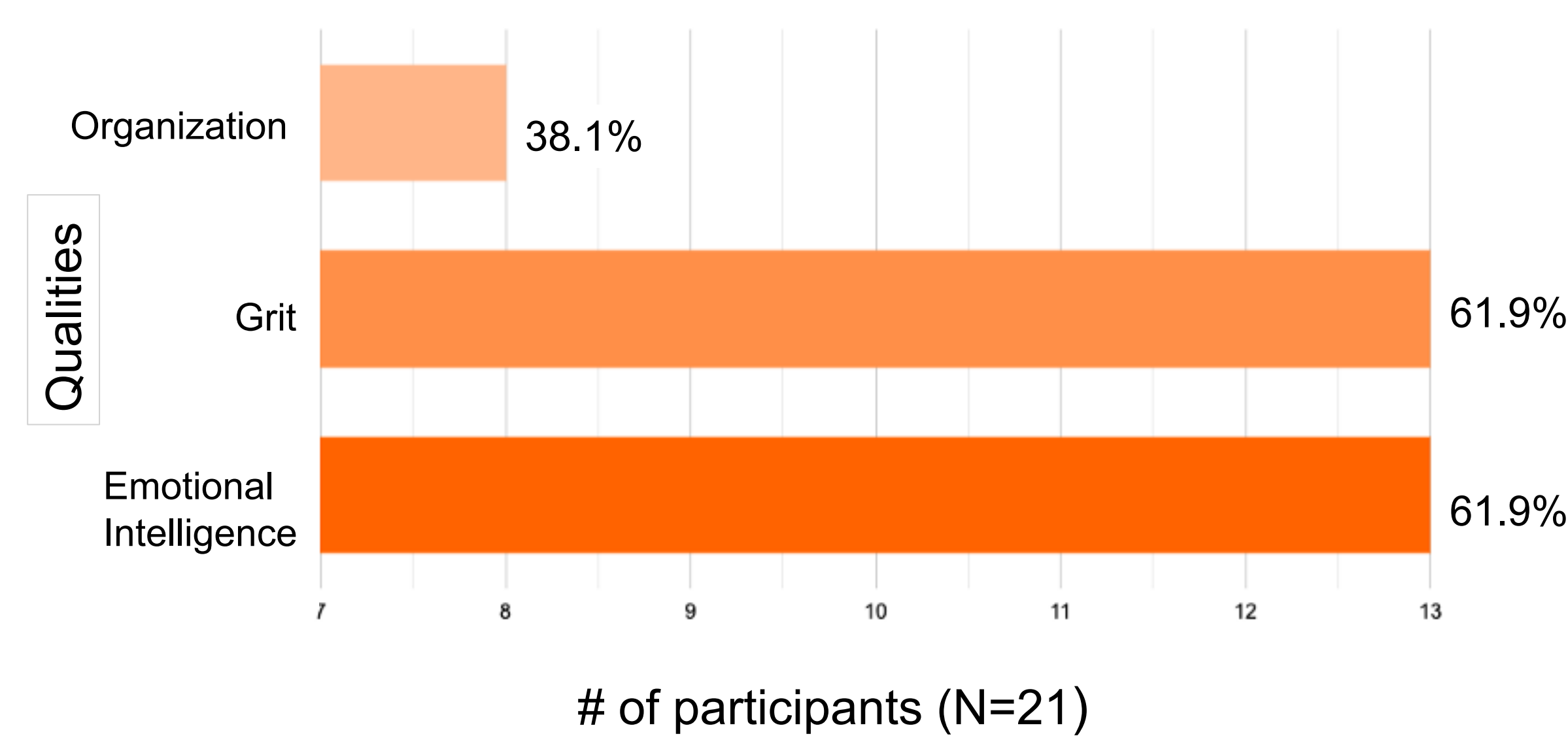
"Instead of just minding the status quo and staying in the job for the job's sake, I have a little bit more tolerance for putting myself out there and taking a risk."

Question 1



"Honestly, I would say breaking the glass ceiling and believing in myself and not being afraid to pursue what I want."

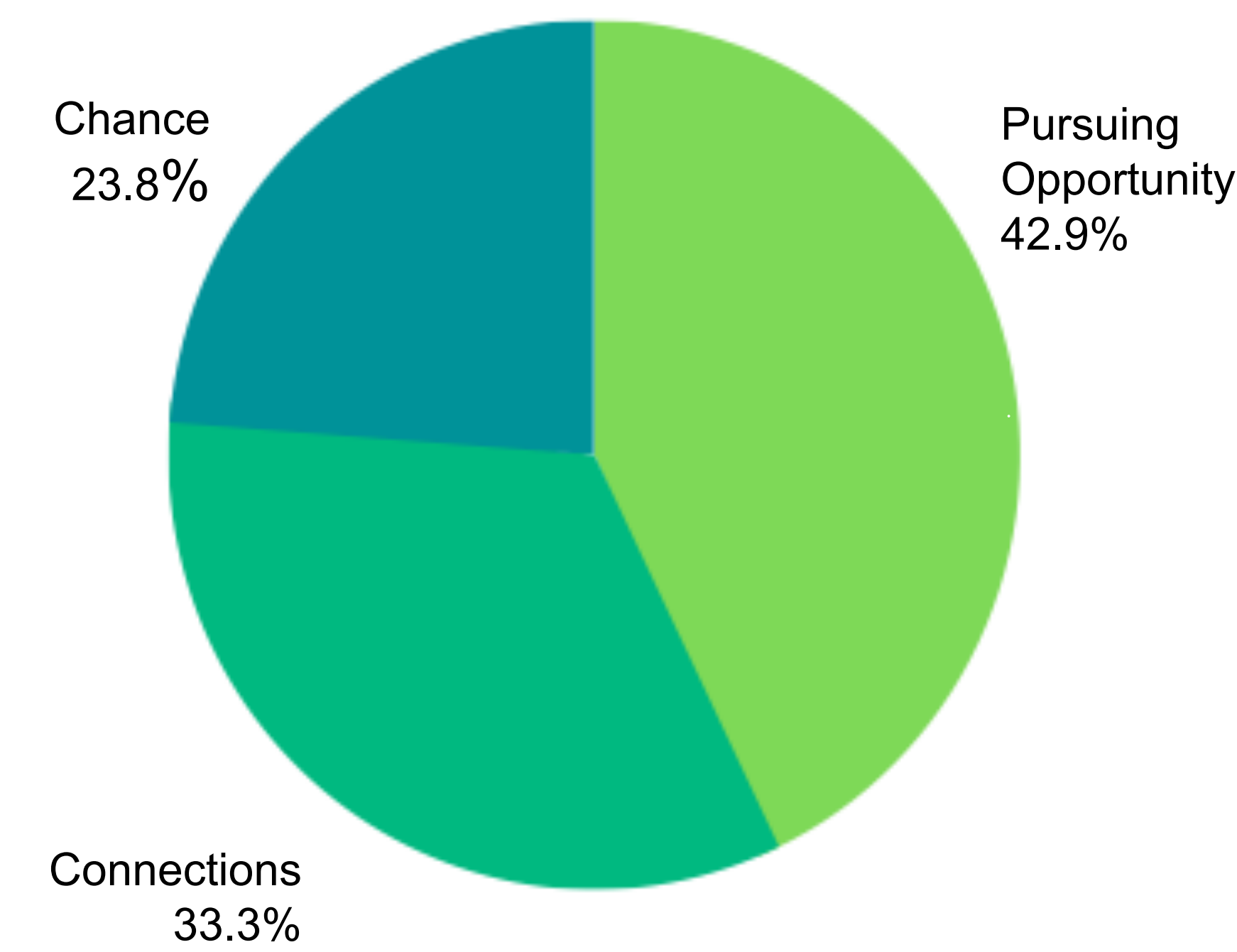
Question 3



Question 1: Please describe your current leadership role.
Question 2: How did you arrive at or pursue your current leadership role?
Question 3: What qualities or factors do you feel that you possess that have contributed to reaching your current leadership role?
Question 4: Do you feel that academic success correlates to leadership?

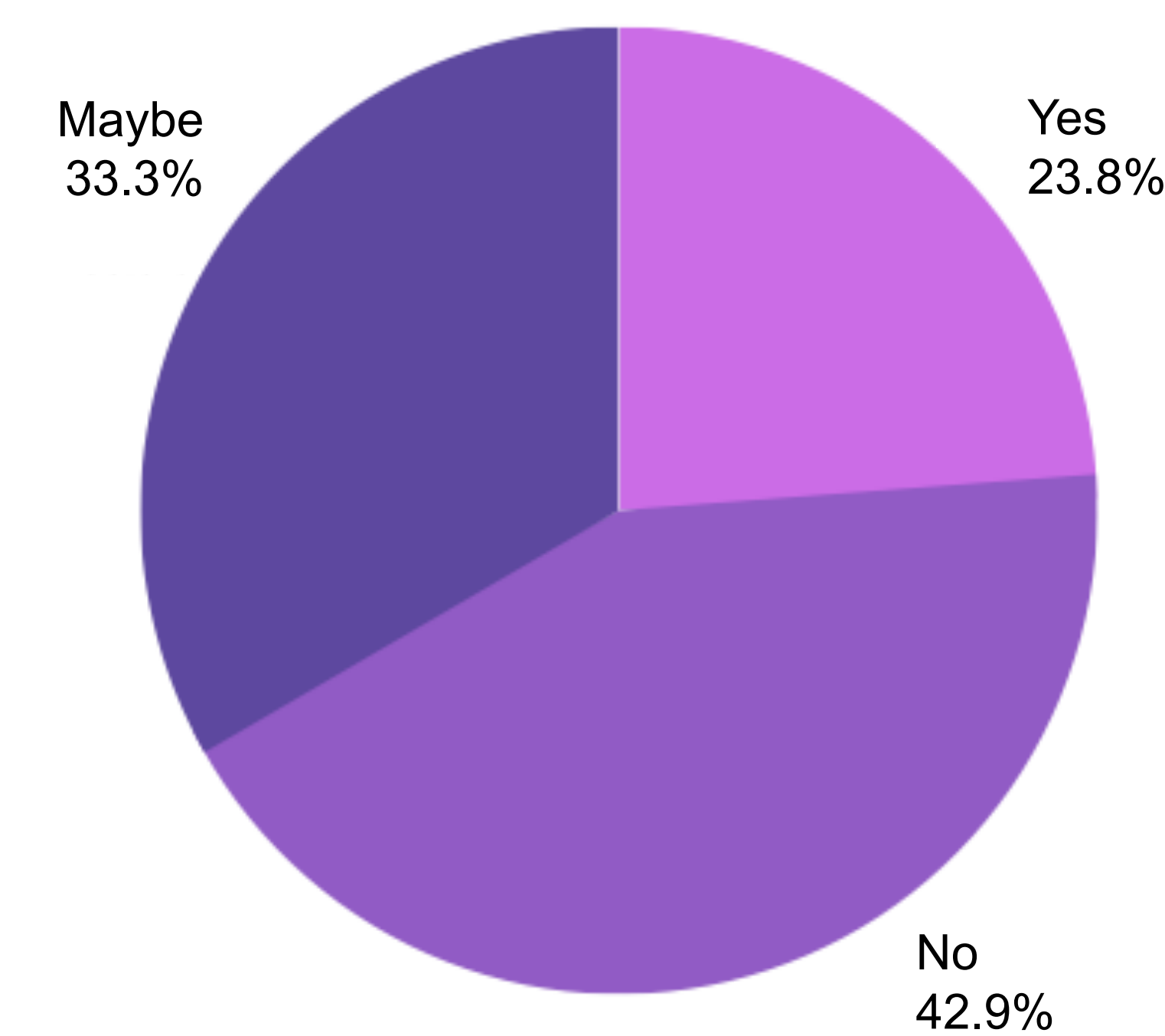
"The big thing is just building relationships and contacting people, and that leads to opportunities."

Question 2



"You can be super smart, but if you don't have people skills, emotional intelligence, or the ability to read a room, you're going to be sunk."

Question 4



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Of the 21 participants, the majority were female within the 35-44 age range. Most participants were Caucasian and held a master's degree as their highest level of education. Most participants held a non-clinical leadership role within a professional organization, a university, or elsewhere outside of a clinical setting. The majority of these leaders achieved their current role by pursuing it themselves, more so than by chance or through their connections. Our study identified that grit and emotional intelligence are shared qualities of our participants and play a role in becoming a leader. At the same time, the survey found that many of the participants feel that academic success does not correlate to success as a leader.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- The data suggests that there is a diverse range of leadership roles for PAs in the state of Kentucky including clinical and non-clinical positions. Clinical leadership positions and non-clinical leadership positions can be held concurrently. In conclusion, the PA leadership scene in KY is promising and contains influential factors that can guide aspiring individual PA leaders and enhance the PA profession.
- A primary theme of this data revealed that many participants achieved leadership roles by actively pursuing a potential leadership opportunity and by utilizing earnestly developed professional connections.
- A prospective PA leader in the state of Kentucky should emphasize building positive relationships, continuously improving their knowledge base, confidently take advantage of presented opportunities, and pursue a path that they are competent in and enjoy.
- The data shows three encompassing leadership qualities that participants attributed to their success as a leader—organization, grit, and emotional intelligence. One should reflect on their own characteristics and strive to model these qualities in their personal development to accomplish success as a PA leader.
- There is a discrepancy in the correlation of leadership to holistic academic success versus the correlation of leadership to academic performance alone. A primary theme emerged that most participants agreed academic success correlates to leadership, but not because of academic achievement or status directly. Rather, the work ethic and proficiencies that one develops within a PA program will cohere with success as a leader. Future PA leaders should focus on developing the skills required to achieve academic success, such as discipline, organization, and mastering time-management.

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