2020

Sustainability Strategies of Small Business Owners in Northcentral Texas

Danielson Ledum Dukor
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Danielson Dukor

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Jorge Gaytan, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Denise Hackett, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Robert Banasik, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2020

Abstract

Sustainability Strategies of Small Business Owners in Northcentral Texas

by

Danielson Dukor

MS, Strayer University, 2005

BS, Drake University, 2004

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2020

Abstract

While small businesses contribute significantly to job creation in the United States, they fail financially at alarming rates. Fifty percent of small businesses survive 5 years or longer, and only one-third of small business startups survive more than 10 years. Owners of small businesses could benefit from strategies used to mitigate the small firms' failure rate by obtaining suitable leadership values and skills, understanding the business's nature, and engaging in financial planning. Grounded in Schumpeter's entrepreneurship theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies small home health business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. The participants comprised 3 small home health business owners in Northcentral Texas with successful experience sustaining their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and organizational documents, such as minutes of meetings, financial statements, training manuals, and staff schedules. Yin's 5-step analysis process was used to analyze the data with 4 themes emerging: suitable leadership values and skills, effective staff management, effective customer service, and open and effective communication. A key recommendation is that business leaders understand the importance of personal values such as honesty and integrity toward achieving organizational sustainability. The implications for positive social change include the potential for small home healthcare business owners to increase revenue and provide more jobs, increasing the local tax base to sustain roads, libraries, parks, police, and other community services.

Sustainability Strategies of Small Business Owners in Northcentral Texas

by

Danielson Dukor

MS, Strayer University, 2005

BS, Drake University, 2004

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2020

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my children because the thought of them gave me the courage to finish what I had started. I also dedicate this study to my wife for exhibiting patience and endurance during my study times. I dedicate this study to my friends and families for the patience they exercised when all they heard daily was how I was busy reading or conducting research. I especially dedicate this study to my unfriendly friends and enemies for their cunning and hostile actions that pushed me harder than everything else to earn this noble achievement.

Acknowledgments

I thank Almighty God for His mercy, grace, protection, provision, and strength upon my life. To Dr. Jorge Gaytan, I was blessed to have a mentor and chair like you. I lack the words to express my gratitude, love, and appreciation for your support, dedication, patience, and above all, your professional feedback that articulated my research using a scholarly voice. To Dr. Denise Hackett and Dr. Robert Banasik, thank you for your feedback that helped me to stay on track without deviating from the research focus.

Table of Contents

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small businesses have an essential role in the U.S. economy because of job creation (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Small businesses accounted for 61.8% of net new jobs from the first quarter of 1993 until the third quarter of 2016, yet only about half of all U.S. small business establishments survive 5 years or longer (U.S. Small Business Administration [SBA], 2017). For instance, in the second quarter of 2014, 14,990 businesses started up in Texas and 13,100 exited. Start-ups generated 62,607 new jobs while exits caused 51,770 job losses (SBA, 2016). I conducted this qualitative case study to explore strategies some small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation in Northcentral Texas. This research was necessary to capture and address the success strategies identified from previous studies and to expand the scope of small business sustainability to a different geographical area.

Background of the Problem

In the United States, small businesses comprise 99.9% of all firms, 99.7% of firms with paid employees, and 97.7% of exporting firms (SBA, 2016). According to Schilling, Mazzuchi, and Sarkani (2017), small businesses are key drivers of innovation, producing an average of 13 times more patents per employee than large firms. In a similar view, Artinger and Powell (2015) identified small businesses as contributing significantly to job creation in the United States and boosting the economy. However, Artinge and Powell also noted that these businesses fail at alarming rates.

Approximately 50% of small businesses survive at least 5 years, and only 33% of small business start-ups survive more than 10 years (SBA, 2017). Hyder and Lussier

(2016) stated that small businesses struggle to survive during the first 5 years of operation. In the state of Texas, 49,601 health care and social assistance firms, employing fewer than 500 workers, existed in 2012. An estimated 43,720 healthcare and social assistance firms in Texas employed an average of 20 workers in 2013 (SBA, 2016). The failure of small home health businesses negatively affects the U.S. economy. This study may help mitigate the failure rate of small home health business owners by providing strategies that owners can use to promote the sustainability of their businesses.

Problem Statement

In the United States, 530,052 small business owners with fewer than 100 employees closed their businesses in 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). About 50% of small businesses survive 5 years or longer, and only one third of small business start-ups survive more than 10 years (SBA, 2017). The general business problem is that the failure rate of small home health business owners is high in the United States. The specific business problem is that some small home health business owners lack strategies to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies some small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. The target population for the study consisted of three small home health business owners in Northcentral Texas with successful experience in sustaining their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce the failure rate of home health business owners in

Northcentral Texas. The increased success rates of business owners in Northcentral Texas might lead to more tax revenues for communities, resulting in the provision of social amenities and the creation of more jobs for residents.

Nature of the Study

There are three main types of research methods, which are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Yin, 2018). The research method most appropriate for this research study was a qualitative method. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) stated that the qualitative method has a subjectivist and inductive approach to understanding business issues. Researchers use the qualitative method to explore matters from a pragmatic and interpretive standpoint grounded in the lived experiences of the participants (Saunders et al., 2016). In quantitative research, the researcher is detached, neutral, and independent from the research phenomenon in order to gain essential characteristics of real-life context (Yazan, 2015). Quantitative research requires collecting data independently of the researchers' involvement and examining mathematical relationships (Yin, 2018). The quantitative method was not suitable for the study because I did not detach myself from the research phenomenon and did not need to examine mathematical relationships. The mixed method blends the elements of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Yin, 2018). The mixed method was not appropriate for this research study because it did require the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research elements.

I considered several qualitative research designs, including ethnography, phenomenology, and case study. Ethnography research has a direct association with anthropology with a focus on shared patterns of a cultural group (Cibangu, 2013). Researchers use the phenomenological design to explore, describe, and analyze an individual or individuals' lived experiences through their memories and perspectives (Yazan, 2015). Researchers use the case study design to describe an event or individual in depth and for a defined duration. They explore the context and dynamic interactions among the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and real-life events and problems that are bound by time and space (Yin, 2018). A single case study includes only one unit or case whereas a multiple case study includes multiple cases or units (Yin, 2018). A multiple case study design has several advantages over the single case study design, including the generation of more robust data (Yin, 2018). The case study design was the most appropriate design for my study because I explored a phenomenon, which was business sustainability, in its natural setting and bound by time and space.

Research Question

What strategies do some small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have proven successful to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years of operation?
2. How are strategies to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years effectively communicated throughout the organization?
3. Which strategies that you used to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years were the least effective?

4. What role does leadership play in the implementation of successful strategies to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years?
5. What were the key barriers to implementing your successful strategies to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years?
6. How did you address the key barriers to implementing your strategies to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years?
7. What else do you think is important for you to say that I have not asked you regarding strategies used to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years?

Conceptual Framework

Entrepreneurship theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Kuechle (2013) stated that the first step in entrepreneurship theory is developing logical externalities for business sustenance. A small business owner may incorporate the entrepreneurial process of developing a business intention, discovering opportunities, formulating competence, and appropriating the reward (Mishra & Zachary, 2015). Entrepreneurship theory contains the fundamental principles grounding this research study.

The entrepreneurship theory became known from the work of Schumpeter (1934). Schumpeter viewed an entrepreneur as an innovator identifying and pursuing new opportunities and overcoming barriers by performing new things. Schumpeter summarized the role of an entrepreneur as an innovator in the following five ways: the introduction of a new good or quality of good, the introduction of a new method of production, the opening of a new market, the utilization of some new sources of supply for raw materials or intermediate goods, and the carrying out of some new organizational form of the industry.

Entrepreneurship theory was applicable to this study because small business owners need to understand the strategies used to successfully operate a small business. Entrepreneurs have impacted economic development in the United States and globally (Andersson & Evers, 2015; Khosa & Kalitanyi, 2015). Entrepreneurs' skills, capabilities, and characteristics affect the success and survival of small businesses (Frid, 2015). Prospective small business owners may use the strategies and the recommendations from this study to sustain their businesses, thereby furthering the economic growth of their communities and beyond.

Operational Definitions

Entrepreneurial failure: A psycho-economic phenomenon characterized by the entry of a new venture into a spiral of insolvency and/or the entrepreneur's entry into a psychological state of disappointment (Khelil, 2016; Thom, 2016).

Entrepreneurial opportunity: A discovered or created situation in which new goods, services, raw materials, markets, and organizing methods are conceived as having a potential for exploitation through entrepreneur-led action to form and transform them into new means, ends, or means-ends relationships (Oyson & Whittaker, 2015).

Entrepreneurial success: The state of having financial returns and nonfinancial achievements from entrepreneurial activities; nonfinancial achievements include employees' happiness, the entrepreneur's happiness, personal achievement, and self-fulfillment (Thom, 2016).

Entrepreneurship: The process of discovering, evaluating, and exploiting opportunities to create future goods and services (Gurses & Ozcan, 2015).

Small business owner: An individual who conceives, launches, and assumes the risk for new economic activities in the form of a business venture (Turner & Endres, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts that are considered to be true without verification (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). In qualitative research, the researcher starts with certain assumptions (Yin, 2018). My first assumption was that the study participants would provide an appropriate representative sample of the larger population of the study. The second assumption was that the participants would be honest and thoughtful in their responses during the interviews. My third assumption was that the concept of business sustainability was universal across industries and organizations. The fourth assumption was that the data I collected from participants would assist in answering the overarching research question. My fifth and last assumption was that participants would be willing to participate in the study and that I would have access to organizational documentation.

Limitations

Limitations are constraining factors that researchers encounter in conducting a research study (Berg, Witteloostuijn, & Brempt, 2017). The first limitation was that only a few individuals would participate in the study, which would prevent the application of findings across the home health business industry. The second limitation was the potential for bias on the part of the participants which might lead to exaggeration, understatements, or misrepresentation. The third limitation was the potential inability of the participants to recall their past experiences accurately due to the short nature of the interview. The fourth limitation was that some participants could choose not to participate in the study. The fifth and final limitation was the time limit for interviews.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the restrictions that researchers impose to focus the scope of a study (Rule & John, 2015). The first delimitation of the study covered the type, size, and years of operation of the participating businesses. The study population consisted of small home health businesses in operation for more than 5 years. A second delimitation was the location of the businesses, which was Northcentral Texas.

Significance of the Study

The SBA (2016) leaders stated that from 2004 to 2014, an average of 78.5% of new businesses in the United States survived 1 year, and only one third of these establishments survived 10 years or more. In the state of Texas, 25,324 business establishments opened in the first quarter of 2014 and 21,128 closed (SBA, 2015). More than 50% of all small businesses fail within their first 5 years due to poorly executed sustainability strategies (Gandy, 2015). In this study, I focused on the sustainability strategies of small home health business owners in Northcentral Texas, by exploring the strategies some small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. Business owners may use the recommendations from this study to increase their success rates beyond the first 5 years of operation.

Contribution to Business Practice

In the United States, 530,052 small business owners with fewer than 100 employees closed their businesses in 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Small business owners' financial success translates into success for the entire nation (Kyser & Hill, 2016). The purpose and aspiration of every small business owner is to be financially successful (Lussier & Corman, 1995). Small home health business owners may use the results of this qualitative multiple case study as examples of successful strategies they can use to succeed financially and sustain their business operations beyond the first 5 years.

Implications for Social Change

A positive social change may take place if a larger percentage of small home health business owners in Northcentral Texas manage their businesses successfully for more than 5 years. Stephan, Patterson, Kelly, and Mair (2016) stated that positive social change is a process of transformation to generate beneficial outcomes and awareness. The success of small home health business owners may translate into more jobs, better opportunities, higher income, and improved living conditions of individuals and their families in Northcentral Texas and other areas. Mikolajek-Gocejna (2016) concluded that successful small business leaders invest in improving the social and economic conditions of communities by providing jobs and donations to schools, shelters, food banks, scholarship funds, community sports, and cultural arts programs. If small home health business owners in Northcentral Texas are more successful in sustaining their businesses, they may be better able to contribute to the public good.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

I reviewed the literature on small business sustainability published in various journals and seminal scholarly books. Google Scholar, linked to the Walden University Library's website, served as the primary source for accessing journal articles. Databases used to obtain literature for this study included Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, Sage Premier, Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest Central. I also accessed various open journals, such as those of AOSIS OpenJournals and ScienceDirect, to obtain literature related to small business sustainability. AOSIS OpenJournals provides open access to peer-reviewed scholarly journals from various academic disciplines. Similarly, ScienceDirect provides both fee-based and open access to a full-text scientific database containing journal articles and book chapters. In some instances, I accessed government websites to obtain information about small business sustainability.

The strategy for searching through existing literature entailed the use of keywords and phrases in the various databases. I applied filters to database searches to narrow down the search results. These filters included specific keywords, a specified time period, and specific databases. When using Google Scholar, I gave preference to articles published in or after 2016, ensuring the literature was topical and relevant. Second, I gave preference to articles that were available in Walden University Library databases. The keywords and phrases I used in my search were *entrepreneurship theory*, *small business*, *home health business*, *entrepreneurial success*, *characteristics of entrepreneurs*, *entrepreneurial opportunities*, *entrepreneurial orientation*, and *firm performance.*

I used Crossref and Ulrich's Periodicals Directory to verify that literature was peer reviewed. There are 353 references in this study; 317 of the references are scholarly peer-reviewed articles representing 90% of the total. In addition, there are 22 books representing 6%, six government documents representing 2%, and eight nonpeer-reviewed references representing 2% of the total. The total references published within the 2016-2020 period number 237, which is 67% of the total references. The literature review includes 81 references. The total references in the literature review published within the 2016-2020 period number 57, which is 70% of the total references. Seventy-one references in the literature review are peer-reviewed articles, representing 88% of the total references, and 10 references are books and government websites, representing 12% of the total number of references in the literature review section.

Literature Review Organization

The literature review section has several subsections. It begins with an introduction, which includes information about the strategy for searching the literature, the frequencies, and percentages of peer-reviewed articles as well as publication dates. In the next section, I focus on the application of the literature to the research question and include a brief description of the purpose of the study. The topics I discuss in the literature review are entrepreneurship characteristics, entrepreneurial behavior and firm performance, and the strategic management of small business owners. Throughout the literature review, I compare different points of view in previous research and their relationship to this study.

The first topic, entrepreneurship characteristics, includes a critical analysis and synthesis of the conceptual framework I selected for my study, which is entrepreneurship theory. In discussing this topic, I use supporting theories from relevant literature on the topic of small business sustainability. Some of the supporting theories are systems theory, chaos theory, and complexity theory.

The second topic, entrepreneurial behavior and firm performance, starts with a brief overview of the development of the small business sustainability construct over time. I discuss common concerns relating to the construct as well as the various definitions, antecedents, and consequences of small business sustainability. The third and final topic for discussion is the strategic management of a small business owner. The subsection starts with a general discussion about leadership and strategic approaches as it relates to small business sustainability. Strategic approaches reviewed include an overview of strategic management, analytical approaches to strategic management, emergent approaches to strategic management, and some studies on the importance of both deliberate and emergent strategic management.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies some small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. Developing an understanding of such strategies required a qualitative approach, more specifically an exploratory multiple case study. The findings from this study might provide insight into small business sustainability from leaders having successfully implemented strategies to keep their own businesses in operation.

The findings of the study may assist with the development of appropriate strategies for small business owners. Once an understanding of the underlying meaning emerges and appropriate strategies are identified, leaders may be equipped with the skills to improve small business sustainability. The findings from the study might improve business practice by identifying appropriate strategies, leading to increased productivity and organizational competitiveness. The potential for social change rests in the development of strategies to improve small business sustainability and personal well-being.

Entrepreneurship Theory

In this section, I present a critical analysis of the entrepreneurship theory and its supporting and contrasting theories. Sirilarbanan (2017) used entrepreneurship theory as a research framework to explore strategies needed for small business sustainability. Sirilarbanan conducted a qualitative multiple case study on three Thai restaurant owners in Salt Lake City, Utah, using open-ended questions in semistructured interviews. Sirilarbanan found the following eight unique themes: (a) characteristics of the entrepreneur, (b) educational attainment and management skills, (c) financial planning skills, (d) marketing strategies, (e) level of competitive advantage of the business, (f) skill level of the entrepreneur concerning the use of social networks and human relationships, (g) technology and innovation skills, and (h) government supports and social responsibilities.

Sirilarbanan (2017) concluded that small business owners must possess entrepreneurial characteristics of a risk taker, decision maker, creator, and allocator of resources, and must also be ambitious, adaptable, innovative, persistent, self-confident, and self-sufficient. Sirilarbanan added that individuals who are obtaining education and training develop entrepreneurial competencies, which in turn leads to small business sustainability. Sirilarbanan indicated that government support and policies are necessary tools that will help entrepreneurs to create strategies for business sustainability. These support mechanisms include loans, free or reduced education or training programs, and legal frameworks, among others.

Wani (2018) used entrepreneurship theory to study strategies to sustain small businesses beyond 5 years. Wani conducted a qualitative multiple case study to explore strategies three small ethnic grocery business owners located in Anchorage, Alaska, used to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years. Wani conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to provide the participants with the flexibility to express themselves freely and, at the same time, to enable the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the responses to the interview questions.

Wani (2018) used entrepreneurship theory as the conceptual framework and found eight themes for the small ethnic grocery stores business sustainability. These themes include formidable entrepreneurial characteristics, the educational attainment and management skills of the entrepreneur, adequate financial planning, and implementing effective marketing plans to gain a competitive advantage. Others include effective use of social networks and social responsibility and, finally, the motivation of the entrepreneur.

Wani (2018) found that new business enterprise investors and the success of entrepreneurs depend on the entrepreneurs' characteristics. Wani stated that successful entrepreneurs are inquisitors, decision makers, innovators, self-disciplined, self-motivated, and managers. Wani also concluded that education, training, and managerial skills are some other factors that generate efficiency, acquiring knowledge of consumer behaviors and resource allocations, adapting to a changing environment, and improving opportunities for sustainability of small businesses. Wani added that entrepreneurs' education sharpens critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, risk-bearing, team collaboration, and self-reliance skills of entrepreneurs.

Johnston (2018) also used entrepreneurship theory to research the strategies successful small business owners use to stay in business beyond the first 5 years. Using a qualitative multiple case study, Johnston's study included owners of five successful small businesses in the Richmond area of Virginia. Johnston explored the strategies business owners used to ensure business growth, increase revenues, stimulate job creation, foster social unity, and promote local economic stability. Johnston conducted semistructured interviews with five participants. Analysis of the data collected resulted in four main themes: solving a problem, start-up money, marketing, and great customer service. Johnston contended that these four themes are key to small business owners' success and sustainability.

Johnston (2018) found that business owners who are able to identify and solve customer problems have a higher probability of being in business beyond the first 5 years. Johnston also discovered that money is a critical factor in small business sustainability and, therefore, small business owners should explore both traditional and nontraditional funding sources. Johnston also stated that marketing of the services and products using social media and technology are vital to the small business owners' success and being in business beyond the first 5 years. Finally, Johnston encouraged focused customer service strategies for positive business dividends.

Yang (2016) used entrepreneurship theory as the conceptual framework to study the strategies successful small retail services business owners apply to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years. In this qualitative case study, Yang used seven open-ended questions in semistructured interviews with two participants to gain ideas and insights on their businesses in the San Diego County, California. Six themes emerged from analysis of the data collected, which are the entrepreneur's education and training skills, motivation, brand awareness, community involvement, client loyalty, and small business survival tactics.

Yang (2016) emphasized the importance of small business owners to establish, understand, and promote community involvement for sustainability. Yang also stated that client loyalty is a primary strategy for small business sustainability. Therefore, small business owners should build cordial relationships with clients to gain their loyalty. Yang added that the visibility of the business owners in community events promotes client loyalty and marketing exposure.

Klein (2016) established a connection between entrepreneurship theory and the theory of the firm. Klein stated that entrepreneurs establish firms, and these firms embody entrepreneurship. Klein critiqued the focus of researchers on benefits and costs of organizing, managing, and governing transactions when dealing with the theory of the firm, while neglecting the fact that entrepreneurs are mostly those establishing the firms.

In Klein's study, entrepreneurs establish, operate, configure, dissolve, and work through a firm; therefore, the theories of the firm might be considered applications of the entrepreneurship theory.

Klein (2016) extended the discussion of the relationship that exists between the theory of firm and entrepreneurship theory through the lens of contemporary versus the judgment-based view of the entrepreneurship theory. Klein identified contemporary entrepreneurship research as focusing on the concept of entrepreneurial opportunities, asking why, when, and how (a) opportunities arise, (b) certain individuals or firms discover and exploit those opportunities and not others, and (c) different modes of actions used to exploit those opportunities. The *judgment* in the judgment-based view describes the decision-making ability of the entrepreneur under uncertainty, which sometimes falls between rational decision-making and random guessing or intuition (Klein, 2016). The judgment-based view stipulates that even if the entrepreneur may seek advice, it is the responsibility of the entrepreneur to accept or reject the advice and make the final decision for the firm (Klein, 2016).

Bylund and McCaffrey (2017) researched the concepts of entrepreneurship theory and organizational uncertainty. Bylund and McCaffrey contended that most researchers focusing on entrepreneurship direct their attention to innovation and ignore or set aside the role of uncertainty. Uncertainty proceeds out of doubt for future compatibility of the organization at different levels (Bylund & McCaffrey, 2017). In addition, Bylund and McCaffrey used the four levels (L1, L2, L3, and L4) of Oliver Williamson's (1975) hierarchical model of institutional systems as their framework for entrepreneurial action.

L1, the highest level, represents the norms and culture of the society; L2 for political regulations; L3 for governance, organizations, and long-term contracting; and L4 for everyday bidding for market resources. Bylund and McCaffrey stated that entrepreneurs could face extreme difficulties when operating in L1. Bylund and McCaffrey also stated that Knight's (1985) judgmental entrepreneur functions in L4 by allocating resources, L3 by organizing firms, and L2 by shaping public affairs. Bylund and McCaffrey also added that while Schumpeter's (1934) innovative entrepreneurship with a focus on new firm formation aligns with L3, Kirzner's (1973) alert entrepreneur aligns with L4 because of its response to price discrepancies and to correcting entrepreneurial errors.

Bylund and McCaffrey (2017) noted that the environment affects the quality and quantity of the society's entrepreneurship. The government, for example, can exert regulatory barriers, taxes, labor regulations, and negative incentives for profit-seeking entrepreneurs. Changes in government policies and regulations can sometimes paralyze some entrepreneurs especially with changes in city codes on business types and locations. Bylund and McCaffrey acknowledged that uncertainty is the main feature of the entrepreneurial environment, but that the relationship between the entrepreneurial action and decision-making processes is still ambiguous.

Packard (2017) researched the concept of interpretivism as a key component of entrepreneurship theory and postulated that entrepreneurship theory relies more on the scientific philosophy of interpretivism. Packard defined interpretivism as an intentional action and interaction at the individual level and, therefore, is a more appropriate meta-theoretical foundation to a more successful and holistic theory of entrepreneurship.

Packard emphasized that the human intention is the key determinant of behavior. It is not the existence or nonexistence of opportunities that make an entrepreneur but the intentional will of an individual to act in the creation of something rather than presuming the existence of opportunity (Packard, 2017). Packard also conceived of entrepreneurship as a continually unfolding process rather than an event or series of events tied to an outcome.

Packard (2017) noted that viewing or defining entrepreneurship from the functionalist paradigm directs the focus and function of the entrepreneur to the creation of new enterprise and the creation, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities as a market activity. Packard stated that the functional view requires the existence of some social reality through trade. In Packard’s view, the interpretive view or approach is more progressive with a process-theoretic definition founded in individual intentionality and expectation rather than on specific events or results. Packard, therefore, defined entrepreneurship as the intentional pursuit of new economic value.

In a similar argument against the concept of entrepreneurial opportunities as a viable concept in the theory of entrepreneurship, Ramoglou and Tsang (2017) stated that opportunities are neither discovered nor created. Ramoglou and Tsang argued that there is the awareness that opportunities exist in the economy, but that no one knows when and where they exist or their successful actualization. Ramoglou and Tsang also stated that it is only after the realization of profit that one knows that an imagined opportunity is a real one.

Ramoglou and Tsang (2017), in their sensibility approach to the theory of entrepreneurship, noted that entrepreneurs know that *opportunity* does not mean expectation, plans, efforts, and outcomes but rather the conditions leading to the outcomes that motivate entrepreneurial efforts and leading to plausible expectations and meaningful plans. Ramoglou and Tsang concluded that opportunities are propensities that objectively exist to be creatively actualized and that the premise that both discovery and creation of opportunities exist before the realization of successful outcomes is a fatal error.

Frederiksen, Wennberg, and Balachandran (2016) used entrepreneurship theory as the conceptual framework to study the relationship between labor mobility, entrepreneurial entry, and knowledge transfer. Frederiksen et al. argued that labor mobility predicts entrepreneurial entry but not the subsequent performance of entrepreneurs. In the research study using employer data from Sweden to analyze matched employees, Frederiksen et al. found an increased likelihood of entrepreneurial entry with high rates of geographical and industry mobility but with no effects on entrepreneurial performance. Frederiksen et al. concluded that the relationship between labor mobility and entrepreneurial entry do not necessarily imply knowledge transfer.

Frederiksen et al. (2016) examined the pre-founding characteristics of entrepreneurs in the context of prior industry, geographical mobility, and the propensity to the founded new firm. Frederiksen et al. stated that highly mobile individuals find themselves constantly searching for new jobs because they become misfits, as established organizations tend to standardize their job criteria, which directs the individuals to enter entrepreneurship for different job experiences. Frederiksen et al., therefore, contended that selection and situational mechanisms might drive an individual's mobility to entrepreneurship that is different from their formal job experience and resulting in unaccompanied knowledge transfer into their founding firm. Frederiksen et al. also examined how prior job mobility of firm founders affected entrepreneurial performance and concluded that while mobile individuals are more likely to enter entrepreneurship, they do not necessarily exhibit better performance.

Other Supporting Theories

A small business owner or an entrepreneur will perform more of the following tasks to be successful: risk control, plan, organize, focus on the market, seek opportunities, have self-confidence, and take initiatives (Coda, de Castro Krakauer, & de Franca Berne, 2017). Other business tasks, according to Coda et al. (2017), include focusing on resources, ensuring quality and efficiency, dealing with people, innovating, setting goals and objectives, and being resilient in decision making. The tasks of a business owner are many and complex. Other theories supporting the entrepreneurship theory concerning business start-up and management include (a) systems theory, (b) chaos theory, and (c) complexity theory.

Systems theory. Systems theory is vital to the small business owner because systems theory enables the small business owner to understand the different elements of a business and their functional interrelationships for sustainability. Turner and Endres (2017) stated that systems theory enables researchers to identify both distinct parts and interrelationships within the system, instead of addressing only individual patterns, and that small business owners depend on the systems' activities of marketing, networking, and technology. Turner and Endres also stated that systems thinking using systems theory includes (a) financial actions, (b) internal and external stakeholders, and (c) social and environmental concerns, which all can contribute to systemic performance and business sustainability. Petricca, Bekele, Berta, Gibson, and Pain (2018) stated that systems theory emerged as an analytical lens for gathering insight into the way a system functions. Petricca et al. also posited that systems theory includes the interdependent components of norms, operations, regulations, and resources, which are helpful elements of a business start-up and management. The system theory was therefore relevant in this study in aiding the small business owner in understanding the various business elements and their interdependencies in starting and sustaining a business endeavor.

Chaos theory. Turner and Endres (2017) used chaos theory as one of the frameworks in studying the strategies for enhancing small business owners' success rates. Turner and Endres used a multiple case study to explore strategies three small-business coffee shop owners in Duval County, Florida, used to succeed in business beyond the first 5 years. Turner and Endres stated that chaos theory is relevant in the study of organizations because it indicates that systems are in constant evolution over time and undergo ongoing and unpredictable patterns of fluctuation. Turner and Endres supported their application of chaos theory in organizational management from the work of Huu and Kock (2011). According to Huu and Kock, systems continuously self-organize to adapt and invent ways to adjust to the dynamic or changing environment. Huu and Kock also stated that changes in a system's structure can dramatically influence the behavior of the system and that innovation and creativity still occur even in chaos.

Complexity theory. Törnblom (2018) stated that one could view organizations as complex systems coping with technology shifts, evolving cultural contexts, and changes in employee motivation and values. The concept of complexity theory came from Weaver (2004). Complexity theory is vital to the study of small businesses because its focus is more on how management or leadership sustains a business entity with the rapid changes in a complex environment. Complexity theory deals with a framework of behaviors that facilitate creativity, learning, and adaptability in complex adaptive systems by examining leadership roles and practices that affect the generation of adaptive dynamics in transdisciplinary science (Makinen, 2018). Individuals use complexity theory to highlight the importance of connecting ideas, information, people, resources, and technology (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Entrepreneurial Characteristics

Understanding the behavioral profiles of small business owners and comparable entrepreneurial characteristics is vital to understanding the sustainability strategies of small business owners (Coda et al., 2017). Fuentelsaz, Maicas, and Montero (2018) stated that an entrepreneur’s characteristics of risk tolerance, alertness, education, and previous experience influence innovation in new ventures.

While some researchers downplay on the importance of opportunities in the formation and survival of an entrepreneurial venture (Packard, 2017; Ramoglou & Tsang, 2017), some other researchers see the effective grasp of opportunity as a viable characteristic of an entrepreneur for business sustainability (Coda et al., 2017; Davidsson, 2015; Glaeser, Kerr, & Kerr, 2015; Nunes, 2015; Schumpeter, 1965). Nunes (2015) stated that an entrepreneur is a person maintaining a business venture, willing to take risks, and focusing on the creation of new innovative products to generate profit. Glaeser et al. (2015) stated that while skills to recognize opportunities can save business owners time and money, Davidsson (2015) reiterated the importance of effective opportunity identification and utilization by stating that successful small business owners identifying business opportunities can convert the commonplace into a unique and unforeseen business opportunity to generate revenue and achieve profitability. Motivation, innovation and creativity, risk tolerance, managerial skills, and education are some of the characteristics of an entrepreneur (Schumpeter, 1934).

Coda et al. (2017) stated that a business owner or an entrepreneur performs more of the following tasks to be successful: controlling risk, planning, organizing, focusing on the market, seeking opportunities, having self-confidence, and taking initiatives. Coda et al. also stated that other tasks of a business owner include focusing on resources, showing concern about quality and efficiency, dealing with people, setting goals and objectives, and making decisions. Coda et al. classified business executives as entrepreneurs and argued that entrepreneurship does not require, but may include, the creation of a new organization.

Entrepreneurial motivation. Motivation is a vital ingredient for starting and succeeding in any business. Lack of confidence or the existence of skepticism is counterproductive to small business success. Santos, Silva, Rodrigues, Marques, and Leal (2017) stated that one of the challenges entrepreneurs face is their motivation to start a business and their aspirations for entrepreneurial growth. A related concept of motivation is hope. Small business owners also use hope, especially in times of uncertainty, as a motivating factor toward growth (Seaton, Waggoner, & Alexander, 2015). The paragraphs below cover some related articles on the contribution of motivation to entrepreneurial success or failure.

Ep Chedli (2016) examined the role of intrinsic motivation on entrepreneurial decisions and performance of the new firm. Ep Chedli's research compares literature on entrepreneurial motivation and performance and compares predictive to explanatory studies. Ep Chedli used the model of the *Three Fs*, which mean efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness, as the measurement of performance related to motivation. Efficacy is focusing on the personal goals of the entrepreneur and the objectives of the organization. Efficiency refers to the best way to achieve and align with the market using the combination of available resources. Effectiveness means to enhance the satisfaction of the stakeholder of the enterprise. Ep Chedli stated that entrepreneurial motivation is universal and similar, and that motivational factors can be internal or external to the entrepreneur, as well as the surrounding environment of the entrepreneur.

Yasuhiro, Peng, and Deeds (2015) examined the influence of entrepreneurial failure on future ventures. Yasuhiro et al. drew their research from the cognitive literature related to attribution and motivation concerning the reaction of entrepreneurs to failure during the operation of a subsequent business. Yasuhiro et al. obtained their research data on founders of new ventures with failure experiences from a survey database collected in Japan by the National Life Finance Corporation (NLFC), titled *The Survey of*

Entrepreneurs Starting Businesses for the Second Time. Yasuhiro et al. used regression analysis, hierarchical regression model, and Tobit regression to test the hypotheses, control the variables for more effects, and perform robustness checks, respectively.

Yasuhiro et al. (2015) explored the effect that the internal attribution of the cause of failure, intrinsic motivation to start another business after failure, and failure experiences have on the growth of entrepreneur's subsequent business. Yasuhiro et al. posited that entrepreneurs should avoid the blaming game on external environment or luck, but rather learn from failure. Yasuhiro et al. also posited that post-failure attitude is what makes or breaks later ventures.

Entrepreneurial innovativeness, creativity, and leadership style. Innovation and creativity are two words often used interchangeably. While creativity involves producing work for proper ends and bringing novel goals into reality, innovation is the process of promoting ideas and knowledge that supports creativity (Yang, 2016). Entrepreneurs with creative and innovative minds have a greater chance of succeeding and gaining a competitive advantage. Sarooghi, Libaers, and Burkemper (2015) found a strong relationship between creativity and innovation and stated that creativity and innovation are two sequential steps in creating new products, services, or business practices. Lopes, Kissimoto, Salerno, de Carvalho, and Laurindo (2016) defined innovation as the creativity to come up with products or services, penetrate the market, develop products and services, and identify and grasp challenges and opportunities. Kuratko (2016) defined entrepreneurial creativity as a means of discovering and exploiting business opportunities, accepting risks, finding better ways to lead people and staying alert.

The innovation and development of better products enhance market performance (Chatzoudes, Chatzoglou, & Viraimaki, 2015). The challenges for many small business owners include how to develop and apply innovative strategies to sustain long-term growth (Adams, Kauffman, Khoja, & Coy, 2016). Generally, small business owners and leaders focus on production efficiency and sales of products and services at the expense of ongoing innovation after the initial business success (Dunne, Aaron, McDowell, Urban, & Geho, 2016; Flynn, Haynie, & Mazzei, 2016). Flynn et al. (2016) stated that the lack of innovative ideas by the management of a company might result in limited business success and failure in the long-run. Flynn et al. recommended that business leaders should develop a system of high-performance work practice (HPWP) in encouraging innovation within a company without compromising creativity and entrepreneurial actions. The attributes of HPWP include (a) selective hiring, (b) commitment, (c) onboarding, (d) greater autonomy, (e) financial incentives, (f) low status differentials, (g) feedback, (h) personal development plans, and (i) public recognition (Flynn et al., 2016). Pittino, Visintin, Lenger, and Sternad (2016) noted that HPWPs had a positive influence on employee retention in a variety of sectors; settings, including small businesses; and countries.

Derecskei (2016) found leadership style as one of the key factors that could affect creativity. Derecskei's study took place in Hungary through an online survey of more than 600 employees. Derecskei investigated the effect of leadership style on creativity in the labor market. Derecskei found that while the democratic leadership style is stimulating, the authoritarian leadership style is inhibitory. Derecskei also said that leadership style is just one of many factors enhancing creativity.

Bratnicka (2015) explored the impact of leadership on creativity in organizations. Bratnicka applied a meta-theoretical review method to build a multidimensional creativity and leadership theory. Bratnicka identified the following relationships between creativity and leadership: (a) a positive relationship between management style and the creativity of subordinates; (b) a positive relationship between learning orientation and creativity, and between transformational leadership and creativity, are mediated by the sense of self-efficacy; (c) a positive impact of learning orientation on the creativity of employee increases over time; and (d) a positive relationship between empowerment of subordinates and creativity due to the reduction of their dependence on the leader. Other relationships include: (a) a significant positive relationship between the supervisor's focus on promotion and the creativity of employees, (b) a positive relationship between trust in one's superior and personal creativity, (c) a positive relationship between benevolent leadership and employees' creativity, (d) a positive relationship between change-oriented attitude by the leader and creativity, (e) a positive relationship between leaders favorable action towards team's interest and creativity, and (f) a positive relationship between perceived organizational support for creativity and individual creativity. Bratnicka concluded that the drivers of divergences in creative novelty and creative practicality need some clarity to understand the differences in organizational creativity fully.

Jin (2015) applied the creativity typology to explore the relationship between transactional leadership, transformational leadership, empowering leadership, and employee creativity. Jin identified four types of creativity, which are responsive, expected, contributory, and proactive. Responsive creativity occurs with extrinsically motivated employees as they help to generate ideas and solutions to problems found in their departments by their managers. Expected creativity occurs when the same extrinsically motivated employees generate ideas and solutions to problems found by themselves and not their managers. Contributory creativity occurs when intrinsically motivated employees generate creative ideas and solutions to problems already identified by their manager. Proactive creativity occurs when intrinsically motivated employees generate ideas and solutions to problems not identified by their managers but discovered by themselves.

Jin (2015) concluded that transactional leadership enhances only responsive creativity. While transformational leadership enhances both responsive and contributory creativity empowering leadership enhances all types of creativity. Jin used current literature on creativity and leadership to identify and compare leadership behaviors and related employee creativity. Jin noted that the integration of leadership behaviors into employee creativity is not easy but needed for organizations to facilitate employees' motivation and organizational viability.

Risk and the entrepreneur. Risk is to the entrepreneur as exercise is to the athlete. Risk taking is one of the main attributes of a business owner and a key element in the general theory of entrepreneurship (Block, Sandner, & Spiegel, 2013; Martínez, Crespo, & Fernández-Laviada, 2017). An individual cannot venture into entrepreneurship without thinking of the risks involved. Staniewski, Szopiński, and Awruk (2016) stated that starting a new business is risky.

There are many classifications and types of risks that an entrepreneur or a small business owner faces. Lezgovko (2016) stated that the entrepreneur can face the risk of new entrants and fierce competition, and the risk of economic crises and political unrests in the country. Other entrepreneurial risks include inflation, resulting in low buying power; a natural or man-made disaster; and other unforeseen circumstances beyond human control (Lezgovko, 2016). In addition, Lezgovko found other possible risks, including inaccessibility to the business due to its location, low capitalization, weak funding, and fraud.

Martínez et al. (2017) classified entrepreneurial risks into the following categories: economic, social, time, health, and personal. Martínez et al. posited that entrepreneurial economic risk is associated with a potential loss, directly or indirectly, caused by starting a new business. Social risk is associated with the potential loss of prestige or social recognition when a new business fails. Time risk refers to the difficulties in meeting other personal and professional responsibilities within a required period in the process of starting a new business. Health risk is associated with harm to the physical or psychological health of an entrepreneur during the period of starting a new business (Martínez et al., 2017). Finally, Martínez et al. identified personal risk as the potential impact on the individual's personal development.

Block et al. (2013) examined the risk attitudes of entrepreneurs based on their business formation motives. The focus of their study is the motivation of individuals in starting their business and the nonmonetary returns of entrepreneurship. Block et al. found that entrepreneurs forming their businesses due to opportunities were more willing to take risks than entrepreneurs forming their businesses out of necessity. Block et al. also noted that entrepreneurs more motivated toward creativity were more risk tolerant than other entrepreneurs.

Block, Kohn, Miller, and Ullrich (2014) defined opportunity entrepreneurs as those starting their businesses to take advantage of identified business opportunities. Necessity entrepreneurs are those starting their businesses as a last resort to earning a living. The third group of entrepreneurs is those starting their businesses based on both necessity and opportunity. Block et al. stated that entrepreneurs' motivating factor in starting a business, which are necessity or opportunity, and sources of work motivation, which are high or low creativity, affect risk attitudes. A necessity entrepreneur with high creativity may prefer to take more risks than an opportunity entrepreneur with a low level of creativity. In addition, an opportunity entrepreneur with higher creativity can handle more risks than both a necessity entrepreneur with high creativity and an opportunity entrepreneur with a low level of creativity.

It is necessary for entrepreneurs to understand the difference between risk-taking and risk tolerance. Risk-taking relates positively to the creation of an enterprise (Ep Chedli, 2016). Small business owners must understand that, unlike risk-taking, risk tolerance is an avoidable business element to tackle daily.

Education. Researchers found a positive relationship between education and business (Kolstad & Wiig, 2015). For instance, Kolstad and Wiig (2015) examined the role of formal education on entrepreneurial success in a survey conducted in Malawi using an instrument variable approach to address the importance of primary education. Kolstad and Wiig noted that a significant percentage of the population had not completed primary education. However, Kolstad and Wiig saw a significant and substantial effect of an added year of education on entrepreneurial success. Kolstad and Wiig contended that basic skills of literacy are prerequisites to absorbing and making use of business strategies above a minimal level of complexity. Kolstad and Wiig also stated that completing the lowest level of education is more rewarding and profitable than having no education.

The application of Kolstad and Wiig’s (2015) findings is that education is a vital part of entrepreneurial success and has a huge impact on entrepreneurial profitability. Kolstad and Wiig concluded that a country’s educational opportunities determine the educational level that is most applicable to entrepreneurial success and profitability. For example, in a developed economy, the emphasis might shift from primary education to specialized training and knowledge.

Entrepreneurial Orientation and Performance

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is a key part of entrepreneurship theory (Yang, 2016). Entrepreneurial orientation covers the processes, behaviors, and structures of firms with the dimensions of innovativeness, risk-taking, competitive aggressiveness, proactiveness, and autonomy (Buli, 2017). Researchers contended that a firm with a higher EO would have a better performance (Buli, 2017; Khadhraoui, Lakhal, Plaisent, & Bernard, 2016; Omar, Aris, & Nazri, 2016; Yang, 2016). Yang stated that EO is a necessary ingredient for new start-ups because it has a major long-term effect on a business.

Buli (2017) examined the differences in the performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) using EO and market orientation (MO). Buli surveyed 171 SME managers from Dire Dawa city in Ethiopia. Buli found that the combination of both entrepreneurial and market orientations in SMEs contributed to superior performance, resulting in SMEs thriving even in complex and economically unstable economies. Buli found that each dimension of EO and MO has a positive impact on business performance except innovativeness. The limitation of Buli's study is that it took place in a single city with similar environmental factors. However, the vast number of participants in the study enhances reliability and validity.

Khadhraoui et al. (2016) studied the impact of EO from a parent company to spin-offs, which is a firm created from a parent organization. Khadhraoui et al. performed a quantitative study on the impact of EO on spin-offs' performance, customer satisfaction, and the moderator effect of network capabilities on the EO-performance relationship. Khadhraoui et al. surveyed 56 managers of Tunisian firms and found a positive relationship between EO on spin-offs' performance and customer satisfaction. However, Khadhraoui et al. also found that EO does not have a significant impact on knowledge creation.

Omar et al. (2016) presented a study on the predictive effects of EO, innovation capability, and knowledge creation on firm performance. In a cross-sectional quantitative survey of 188 responses from SMEs in Malaysia, Omar et al. tested the goodness of data and hypotheses to assess the inter-item consistency with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The result is that EO has a positive impact on firm performance but does not have a significant impact on knowledge creation. Omar et al. stated that EO is critical to SME performance and that entrepreneurs should adopt EO as one of the strategies of SMEs. In a related study, Onkelinx, Manolova, and Edelman (2015) posited that the national culture and environment affect EO and that EO drives the business performance of a small firm.

Entrepreneurial Competencies and Performance

Entrepreneurial competency comprises of the small business owner's knowledge, skills and abilities, the effectiveness of interpersonal relationships, network effects, and communication skills (Mohamad Radzi, Mohd Nor, & Ali, 2017). Mohamad Radzi et al. (2017) differed in their views on the correlation of entrepreneurial competencies on the performance of SMEs. Abdul Mohsin, Halim, Ahmad, and Farhana (2017) explored the relationships between entrepreneurial competencies and innovative performance within SMEs. Using a step by step SmartPLS approach, Abdul Mohsin et al. found a substantial positive relationship between the two variables. In a survey of 167 registered small business owners and entrepreneurs in Malaysia, Abdul Mohsin et al. stated that both conceptual and strategic competencies relate positively to innovative performance. Conceptual competences involve coping with uncertainty risk, making a cognitive and analytical decision, solving problems, learning, and having innovative skills (Abdul Mohsin et al., 2017). Abdul Mohsin et al. also noted that conceptual competencies deal with business strategy, sustainability, and systematic and strategic planning. Abdul Mohsin et al. stated that both competencies and thinking need the abilities to understand relationships and use key pieces of information to predict trends and outcomes of a complex situation.

Botha, van Vuuren, and Kunene (2015) conducted a study on the importance of functional and enterprising competencies on entrepreneurial performance. Botha et al. specifically explored the importance of these variables on established SMEs and start-ups. Botha et al. argued that the survival and growth of SMEs depend on having the right competencies and being efficient in those competencies. In Botha et al.'s analyses and functional competencies are directly related to business management, general business, and technical skills, while enterprising competencies focus on entrepreneurial and personal skills. Botha et al. used a sample of 570 start-ups and established SMEs, 197 established and 373 start-ups, to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between general management and entrepreneurial skills.

Botha et al. (2015) stated that established SMEs saw functional competencies as more important than the start-ups and that both levels of entrepreneurs considered enterprising competencies as important. Botha et al. concluded that start-up SMEs should focus on functional competencies to become established SMEs and that the established SMEs are more proficient in enterprising competencies.

Small Business Owners and Strategic Management

Nouri and Soltani (2017) noted that organizational managers face many challenges from the dynamic nature of the business environment. Nouri and Soltani noted that the business environment is very complex. In addition, managers face challenges that increase the need for strategic management to not just planning, but also in decision making. Researchers identified two main approaches of strategic management, which are analytical and emergent (Havenvid, Holmen, Linné, & Pedersen, 2017; Neugebauer, Figge, & Hahn, 2016; Sorina-Cristina, 2016). Sorina-Cristina (2016) defined strategic management as long-term activities through a consistent and coherent correlation of all the activities to adapt to the rapid changes occurring in the system and to anticipate and solve them.

The analytical approach to strategic management is similar to the rational approach (Favoreu, Carassus, & Maurel, 2016; Sims, Powell, & Vidgen, 2016; Sorina-Cristina, 2016); deliberate approach (Havenvid et al., 2017); and planned approach (Neugebauer et al., 2016) to strategic management. Favoreu et al. (2016) stated that the rational or analytical strategic management approach is a sequential, structured process that guarantees objectivity and rationality arising from an intellectual methodology of reflection and design.

Emergent strategic management occurs where some strategies implemented by management are not the result of planned or intentional actions. Havenvid et al. (2017) stated that cases exist where strategies emerge from a consistent pattern of choices or actions made over time by the employees without management intentions or strategic plans from leadership. Researchers argue that, due to the dynamic nature of the environment, it is virtually impossible for organizations to survive with rational strategic management alone (Kopmann, Kock, Killen, & Gemünden, 2017; Neugebauer et al., 2016). Rational strategic management must co-exist with the emergent approach (Neugebauer et al., 2016). Neugebauer et al. (2016) noted that deliberate and emergent approaches complement each other and that each approach has some elements of the other embedded in the processes. Kopmann et al. (2017) stated that formal strategy processes are insufficient in shaping strategy especially in turbulent environments and that emergent strategy processes are important for organizational adaptability. The following paragraphs contain studies on the importance of deliberate and emergent strategies for the survival of organizations.

Shu (2017) researched the evolutionary process of strategy formation in the context of an emerging economy concerning an entrepreneurial firm. Using an exploratory research approach in a longitudinal case study, Shu examined how Lenovo's strategic search unfolded in its early formative years. Shu's findings include that the strategic process of Lenovo is progressive and emergent rather than deliberate. Shu concluded that the strategic knowledge of firms and entrepreneurs increase over time and that the entrepreneurial strategy is an emergent process of guiding experiment and learning. Shu noted that firms face resource and environmental constraints in their early formative years. Facing early challenges help the business owner or entrepreneur to identify and explore constraints and opportunities from the external environment and evolve strategy over time.

Zhao, Wang, and Zhu (2017) explored the role of emergent strategy in institutional work using a qualitative study in Come, one of Chinese leading private firms. Zhao et al. found that an emergent strategy influences the normative and cognitive institution unconsciously, offering actors special identities. Zhao et al. also stated that the emergent strategy could construct a proto-type institution unconsciously.

Small Business Success

There is no universal definition of small business success (Mohamad Radzi et al., 2017). Scholars and business personnel often use characteristics, such as the achievement of defined goals and objectives, a firm's ability to create acceptable outcomes and actions, and a firm's performance to define business success (Mohamad Radzi et al., 2017). Small-business owners develop their definitions of success, thereby making success a subjective concept (Le & Raven, 2015). Leković and Marić (2015) noted that scholars in literature and business personnel had attributed success to specific performance aspect, high performance, and growth or profitability. Leković and Marić indicated that the financial indicator alone is not enough pointer of business success because it disregards the alternative success criteria based on the business owners' personal goals. Leković and Marić also noted that while success could be highly subjective to the business owner, performance is the objective dimension of success where individuals make the comparison using qualitative and qualitative expressions with other similar or related firms. A firm could be successful in goal attainment, but with a low level of performance in growth and development (Leković & Marić, 2015).

Jackson and Jackson (2017) stated that a sustainable business is an entity that creates profit and typically benefits the needs of others in services or products. Mohamad Radzi et al. (2017) posited that the following attributes positively influence business success: (a) entrepreneurial competency, (b) marketing capability, (c) financial resources, (d) technological usage, and (e) knowledge sharing. Mohamad Radzi et al. also stated that entrepreneurial competencies are the small business owner's knowledge, skills and abilities, interpersonal relationships, networking abilities, and communication skills.

The display of integrity at all levels by the entrepreneur with the relevant traits, competencies, or characteristics enable the success of small business leaders (Lee, Cheong, Kim, & Yun, 2016). Donnini Maccio (2015) noted that a small business owner's ethical standard affects the decision-making process and, in some cases, can inadvertently affect the organization's success. Helmig, Spraul, and Ingenhoff (2016) stated that small business owners exhibiting socially responsible behaviors might encourage and maintain a positive relationship with stakeholders. Kyser and Hill (2016) concluded that the personal traits of successful small business owners include conscientiousness of success, openness to experience, and agreeability to dissent. Will (2016) added that the leader's style and strategic orientation should align with the volatility and dynamism of the environment. Small business owners familiar with their physical environment can quickly grasp and provide new business concepts and achieve greater business success (Amato, Baron, Barbieri, Bélanger, & Pierro, 2016).

Marketing capability of the leader enhances business sustainability. Marketing is not only an activity but also a process of engaging and communicating (Pai, 2017). A business owner can use marketing activities to assist in increasing the efficiencies of marketing managers’ actions and providing innovation and collaboration to businesses (Galpin, Whitttington, & Bell, 2015).

Every business owner needs financial resources for business operations and sustainability. Acquiring such finances to start, maintain, and expand a business usually has some roadblocks for small business owners. The owner’s equity, savings, loans from friends and family members, banks, private lenders, and the government are some of the ways a small business owner can acquire business funds. The educational background of the business owner has a significant effect on the ability to raise funds through borrowing (Talaia, Pisoni, & Onetti, 2016). Small businesses are at a greater disadvantage compared to large firms in accessing bank financing because of their information opacity, excessively high monitoring costs, and the relative scarcity of collateral assets (Rostamkalaei & Freel, 2016).

Barhatov, Campa, and Pletnev (2018) stated that the internet is an important instrument for small businesses if used correctly. Otherwise, the internet can be a dangerous problem. Bahhatov et al. also stated that internet technologies represented one of the most important and successful instruments that small business owners use to improve their efficiency and profitability. Bahhatov et al. added that the internet has become very static, while the social network has taken over to be the more viable business instrument; therefore, small business leaders must use social networks and continue to restyle their websites to improve their companies’ reputation.

Knowledge management systems help in developing, sharing, and efficiently using organizational knowledge (Rikoon et al., 2016). Digitalization of information does not only enhance efficient knowledge sharing but, according to Rambe and Makhalemele (2015), also promotes faster and cheaper access to knowledge and information. A small business owner may use technology and innovative ideas to facilitate, activate, and efficiently operate smooth knowledge management and performance measurement systems (Rambe & Makhalemele, 2015).

Transition

Section 1 of this study included an introduction to the foundation of the study and the background of the problem. The identification of the strategies that small business owners require for sustainability resulted in the problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, the research question, and interview questions were also included. The conceptual framework grounding the study was entrepreneurship theory. Section 1 also included the definition of important terms; assumptions, limitations, and delimitations; and significance of the study, with a focus on the contribution to the business practice and implication for social change.

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. A major component of Section 1 was the review of relevant literature on entrepreneurship theory. The primary areas of focus in entrepreneurship theory were entrepreneurial characteristics, education and training, entrepreneurial competencies, entrepreneurial orientation, and small business success. I discussed key aspects of entrepreneurship covering risk tolerance, creativity, innovation, motivation, competencies, and strategic management.

The goal of Section 2 of the study is to discuss the research method and design. In this section, I cover the role of the researcher, discuss the way I selected study participants and conducted semistructured interviews with three participants using the interview questions developed in Section 1. The last subsection of Section 2 contains a discussion on data validity and reliability. In Section 3, I present my findings. Other discussions in Section 3 include applications of the study to professional practice, the implication for social change, recommendations for action and further studies, reflections, summary, and a conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I restate the purpose of the study and then discuss the role of the researcher. This discussion is followed by an overview of the research participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research issues, data collection instruments and techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis procedures. I also discuss the reliability and validity of the study and data saturation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies some small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. The target population for the study consisted of three small home health business owners in Northcentral Texas with successful experience in sustaining their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce the failure rate of home health business owners in Northcentral Texas. The increased success rates of business owners in Northcentral Texas might lead to more tax revenues for communities, resulting in the provision of social amenities and the creation of more jobs for residents.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in a qualitative case study involves collecting, organizing, analyzing, and interpreting data and presenting the findings (McCusker, & Gunaydin, 2015). As the researcher, I designed and conducted interviews, transcribed and analyzed collected data, and presented findings in an organized, ethical, and unbiased format, as recommended by several researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Moon, 2015). I followed the qualitative research process described by Yin (2018) to plan, prepare, and practice interview questions to mitigate the potential for bias or viewing data through a personal lens.

My profession as a small business owner in the entertainment industry in Northcentral Texas for more than 3 years provided me the opportunity to gain access to other small business owners. My occupation as a small business owner allowed me to select an interview setting that allowed participants to feel comfortable, allowing them to share their confidential data and talk about their experiences freely. I carefully selected three small home health business owners in Northcentral Texas with successful experience in sustaining their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation.

I conducted my research by following ethical standards for protecting human participants. Researchers recommend following the ethical guidelines and regulations the Institutional Review Board (IRB) established related to the collection of data and the use of informed consent forms (Nolan, Hendricks, & Towell, 2015; Thorpe et al., 2018). Institutions have established IRBs to guarantee the protection of human subjects from risk through constant review of protocols and the three ethical principles in the *Belmont Report* (Liberale & Kovach, 2017). The three ethical principles in the *Belmont Report* are (a) beneficence, (b) justice, and (c) respect for persons (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The principle of beneficence involves maximizing benefits and minimizing the risk of harm; the principle of justice requires that the participants receive fair and equal treatment; and the principle of respect for persons involves respecting the rights of the research participants (Miracle, 2016). I adhered to the *Belmont Report* guidelines in protecting the rights of human subjects, minimizing potential risks, and showing respect to all participants by giving the participants the right to withdraw from the study at any given time.

The *Belmont Report* includes information on the importance of putting the ethical standards into action through three necessary steps: (a) completing informed consent, (b) selecting participants fairly, and (c) assessing benefits and risks for the participants (Miracle, 2016). The principle of informed consent involves the disclosure of information, the comprehension of such information, and the voluntary nature of participation (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I provided each participant with a copy of the informed consent form through email informing them that the interview was voluntary. I also read aloud and asked the participants to sign the informed consent form before starting the interview. Only participants agreeing to the statements in the informed consent form by signing it were allowed to participate in the study. Researchers must follow ethical principles to protect human participants while conducting research studies (Camille, Nian-Lin Reena, & Ban Leong, 2016; Carolan, Smith, & Forbat, 2016). I conducted my research ethically and adhered to the *Belmont Report's* protocol to respect the rights of the participants and to protect their personal information.

Yin (2018) stated that researchers often bring bias to research that may influence the results of a qualitative case study. To mitigate bias emanating from the researcher's personal experience, the researcher should remain nonjudgmental and impartial and enter into the unknown world of the participants to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives (Bristowe, Selman, & Murtagh, 2015; Morse & Coulehan, 2015). Avoiding bias in the research process is difficult because researchers may be inclined to favor evidence supporting their underlying beliefs (Gill et al., 2016). Researchers have warned other researchers to guard against introducing biases into their research studies. To avoid bias, many researchers include member checking in their research design (Yin, 2018). Using member checking affords participants an opportunity to review the researcher's interpretation of the participant's experiences (Yin, 2018). I conducted member checking by giving participants my interpretations of their responses to interview questions and asking participants to verify that my interpretations of their answers are accurate. Through the careful recording of the assumptions and limitations of this study in Section 1, I also provided readers with information to evaluate the reliability and validity of this study.

In the data collection process, I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with open-ended questions using an interview protocol as a guide (see Appendix). A researcher uses an interview protocol as a procedural guide in the interview process (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Its use helps in reducing confusion on the part of the participants during the interview process and reduces discrepancies in the researcher's data (Rosenthal, 2016). Researchers use semistructured interviews to obtain free and open answers and in-depth information based on participants' experiences and viewpoints (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2018; Yin, 2018). I used the interview protocol to minimize inaccuracies and biases and provide participants with the same information.

Participants

The identification and selection of appropriate study participants form an integral step in the data collection process in qualitative research (Yin, 2018). Setting eligibility criteria for the participants enables the researcher to achieve the maximum result in answering the main research question (Patton, 2015). Maramwidze-Merrison (2016) stated that the successful completion and quality of qualitative research requires the selection of experienced participants willing to share their experiences to assist researchers in answering the overarching research question of a study. As an entrepreneur in the entertainment industry in Northcentral Texas, identifying suitable organizations and participants did not pose a challenge in this research study. An unanticipated challenge, however, was in the area of securing participants agreeing to take part in the study. It is a requirement in qualitative studies for researchers to recruit participants with experience and knowledge in the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2018). To be eligible for this study, a participant must have been a small home health business owner in Northcentral Texas with more than 5 years of experience. I purposively identified participants with knowledge and experience in sustaining their small home health care businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation.

Gaining access to research participants and participating organizations is an arduous task (Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016). The challenge in accessing participants sometimes is a result of researchers’ perceived barriers, which lead to preventing access to rich experiences (Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016). Cuervo-Cazurra, Andersson, Brannen, Nielsen, and Reuber (2016) stated that gaining access to participants provides the researcher with an opportunity for preliminary evaluation against the set criteria for participation, as well as assessing their interest in the study. Meeting and discussing the purpose of the study with owners of small home healthcare businesses provided me with a first-hand opportunity to understand the strategies used to sustain businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation.

Recruiting participants is an essential part of most research studies (Vadeboncoeur, Foster, & Townsend, 2018). I acquired participant contact details from the Chamber of Commerce, company's websites, LinkedIn pages, or referrals. I collected emails of business owners meeting the criteria for my study from these sources. I contacted all selected participants via email informing them of my research study and solicited for their participation in the study with an attached consent letter. Once a potential participant agreed to participate in the study, I scheduled an interview. At the interview site, I provided a copy of the informed consent form to each participant before starting the interview.

It is essential to establish a working relationship with participants and to maintain ethical values in those relationships to enhance honesty, reciprocity, trust, and respect to collect rich data (Guillemin et al., 2016). I regularly interacted with study participants in an open, honest, and respectful way through clear communication to collect rich data, as recommended by Evans and van Beest (2017). I reassured the participants of my ethical responsibilities to keep their personal and business information confidential, as recommended by Morse and Coulehan (2015).

Selecting the appropriate research design helps in the cautious alignment of the research study problem and question with participants (Allen, 2017). The more knowledge and successful experiences the participants have related to the phenomenon under investigation, the greater the probability that the researchers can answer the overarching research question (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015; Marrone, 2016). Obtaining contextually rich data to answer the overarching research question depends on the seniority and level of experience of the research participants (Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016). I selected participants possessing successful experience in the phenomenon under investigation, which in this study is home health business sustainability, to align the participants with the overarching research question.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Researchers can apply three methodologies in conducting research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Bazeley, 2015; Maxwell, 2016). Qualitative researchers focus on understanding a phenomenon and lived experiences of participants through subjectivity and meanings that are socially constructed (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016). Researchers use the qualitative research method to explore the *what*, *why*, and *how* of a phenomenon in its natural setting (Yin, 2018). My research choice was the qualitative research method because I intended to explore the *what*, *why*, and *how* of a phenomenon, which is sustaining small home healthcare businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation.

The quantitative research method was empirical, and researchers use this method to establish clear questions, test hypotheses, and conduct statistical analyses using a variety of designs (He, 2018; Merkisz-Guranowska, Bienczak, Kicinski, & Zmuda-trzebiatowski, 2016). Quantitative researchers also examine the relationship between variables, using controls and measuring techniques to analyze the data collected to ensure validity (Duta & Duta, 2017; Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). The quantitative method was not suitable for the study because I did not examine relationships among variables using statistical analyses through hypotheses testing.

Mixed-methods studies involve the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Brown, Sullivan, & Venkatesh, 2016; Sligo, Nairn, & McGee, 2017). Researchers use mixed-methods to engage in the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, combining both methods to provide concise answers to research questions (Goertzen, 2017; Turner & Endres, 2017). The mixed-methods was not a suitable method for this study because I did not test hypotheses, examine relationships among variables, or evaluate numerical data.

Research Design

I considered four qualitative research designs for the study: narrative, phenomenological, ethnographic, and case study. Researchers use the narrative research to collect personal life stories from participants and to integrate a social context and a critical conclusion to form a clear story, depicting human thought and action (McAlpine, 2016; Shapiro, 2016). The narrative design was not appropriate for the study because I did not collect the personal life stories of the participants. In the phenomenological design, researchers describe the lived experiences of participants of a particular event

(Hailemariam, Fekadu, Prince, & Hanlon, 2017). Researchers use the phenomenological design to explore, describe, and analyze an individual or individuals' lived experiences through their memories and perspectives (Yin, 2018). Researchers using phenomenological design also focus on events for a specific group for a particular occurrence, with prolonged observations (Stovell, Wearden, Morrison, & Hutton, 2016). The phenomenological design was not the best-suited design for the study because I did not focus on studying the lived experiences of participants of a particular event or on a specific group for a particular occurrence, with prolonged observations. Researchers use the ethnographic design when studying individuals or groups of people based on their culture or geographical location (Draper, 2015). Morse (2015a) stated that researchers use the ethnographic design to study behavior in a given cultural context for an extended period. I did not use the ethnographic design because the focus of this study was not on individual or group cultures and will not extend beyond the cultural context for an extended period.

Researchers use the case study design to understand a phenomenon from various viewpoints within its natural context (Cope, 2015; Manley, Martin, Jackson, & Wright, 2016; Virginia, 2016). Researchers using case study design can obtain rich descriptions and investigate new empirical phenomena and trends in-depth, especially when the limitations between the phenomenon and context may be evident (Ridder, 2017; Yin, 2018). Researchers use the case study design to highlight and investigate a phenomenon in real-life settings to answer *what, how,* and *why* questions about a phenomenon under investigation (Manley et al., 2016; Saunders et al., 2016). A case study design was appropriate for this study because I did explore the *what*, *how,* and *why* of a phenomenon in its natural setting, which for this study was sustaining small home healthcare businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation.

Population and Sampling

Researchers select a sampling method that is suitable for the chosen research design to increase the validity of the study (Lucas, 2017; Rafail, 2018). Researchers use purposeful sampling to reduce the size of the pool of participants by selecting only participants meeting the same established eligibility criteria (Kvorning, Hasle, & Christensen, 2015; Soydas & Aleti, 2015). I used the purposive sampling method to identify potential participants meeting the established participation eligibility criteria to obtain participants' experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation, which in this study was home healthcare business sustainability beyond the first 5 years of operation.

I collected data from three business owners in Northcentral Texas, with successful experience in operating a home healthcare business beyond the first 5 years of operation. Qualitative researchers determine sample size based on the purpose and nature of the study, required level of data richness, and intent to generalize results to a larger population (Elo et al., 2014; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Andersson and Evers (2015) recommended two to three participants, with knowledge and experience with the phenomenon under investigation. Boddy (2016) argued that a larger sample size of 10 or more participants might not guarantee richness and thickness of data. Van Rijnsoever (2017) stated that the minimum size of a sample needed to reach data saturation is difficult to estimate. However, Yin (2018) claimed that two to three participants are appropriate for a case study. Data saturation is the point in which additional data collection does not lead to new themes (Yin, 2018). I reached data saturation with three participants and therefore, did not recruit additional participants.

Researchers reach data saturation when no new data emerge as a result of data collection (Constantinou, Georgiou, & Perdikogianni, 2017; Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018). Researchers could reach data saturation with three participants by conducting semistructured interviews (Peck, Olsen, & Devore, 2015; Salterio, Kenno, & McCracken, 2016), using open-ended questions (Shah, Sundmark, Lindstrom, & Andler, 2016). Researchers use open-ended questions in semistructured interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences (Yin, 2018). I collected data using semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to obtain rich and think data related to the phenomenon under investigation that resulted in data saturation. I invited individuals meeting the established criteria for the study by emailing them to secure their acceptance to participate in the study.

Setting up a convenient interview atmosphere enables free dialogue between the participants and the researcher and encourages quality responses to interview questions (Doll, 2017). Convenience is critical to study participants because they feel relaxed to share their experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation (Connelly, 2016; Lub, 2015). Marshall and Rossman (2016) recommended holding the semistructured interviews in a noise-free and private location to make the participants feel comfortable and relaxed. Each of the participants agreed to a convenient, noise-free, and private location to hold the semistructured interviews, ensuring a comfortable and relaxed environment suitable to engage in open dialogue to share their experiences related to business sustainability beyond the first 5 years. I informed the participants that I would audio-record the interviews. I also informed participants that the interview would have a duration of approximately 60 minutes.

Ethical Research

Informed consent is an essential aspect of the research process to ensure compliance with the ethical standard in research work involving human participants (Simpson & Quigley, 2016; Winter & Collins, 2015). In this study, every participant was required to sign the informed consent form before participation. According to Yin (2018), the content of the informed consent form includes the nature of the study, expectations of participants, potential risks and benefits, and the researcher’s contact information. Researchers must inform study participants about the voluntary nature of participation and the option to withdraw at any time during the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2916; Wolf, Clayton, & Lawrenz, 2018). The informed consent form for this study included the (a) nature of the research, (b) participants' expectations, (c) known risks and benefits of the participants in the study, (d) participants’ right to respond or withdraw at any time without prejudice, (e) confidentiality assurances, (f) data collection procedure, (g) securement of data storage for 5 years, (h) IRB approval number, (i) accommodations for signatures of the participants, and (j) my signature and contact information. Researchers are responsible for obtaining copies of the informed consent forms from participants before initiating interviews or other data collection methods involving human subjects (Britton, Pieterse, & Lawrence, 2017). I explained to the participants that they were free to withdraw from participating in the study at any time without providing any reason. Participants signed the informed consent form, as stated in the interview protocol of this study (see Appendix). Providing compensation, incentives, or gifts of any kind to participants may introduce bias into a study (Yin, 2018). There was no compensation for the study participants.

Study participants were over 18 years old and owned a small home health business in Northcentral Texas, with 5 or more years of operation. I contacted the study participants for interviews only after approval from Walden University's IRB. The IRB is responsible for the protection of research participants and guaranteed compliance with ethical research (Caleb, 2015), and demands that participation in research be voluntary and without threats or coercion (Hamilton & Stichler, 2015). I ensured adherence to the IRB guidelines, paying attention to informed consent, and the safety of the participants. Walden University's IRB approval number for this study is 02-20-20-0671817.

The informed consent process provides an opportunity for the researcher to create the informed consent form and explain the purpose of the research, including the risks and benefits of participation (Yin, 2018). The informed consent process fosters the participant's understanding of the research study, enabling an informed decision before engagement (Kraft, Porter, Shah, & Wilfond, 2017; Sugarman, 2017). In the informed consent form, I disclosed all necessary information about the research in simple, plain English to potential participants to enable them to make voluntary decisions, as recommended by Kraft et al. (2017). I provided and explained in detail the items in the informed consent form to study participants as suggested by several authors (Jackson & Larson, 2016; Roulet, Gill, Stenger, & Gill, 2017).

Maintaining the participants' confidentiality was a priority. Ross, Iguchi, and Panicker (2018) stated that it is the researchers' responsibility to ensure that all information participants provide will be confidential. The participant name, contact information, and other data about the organization remained confidential. The need for an ethical standard is essential for researchers to limit participants' exposure (Moore, 2015). I used alphanumeric codes, such as P1, P2, and P3, to identify study participants and C1, C2, and C3, for the participating organizations to ensure confidentiality. I stored all digital information on an external hard drive in a password-protected folder. I will store all printed materials in a locked, fireproof safe in my home office for 5 years following the conclusion of the study. At the end of the 5 years, I will destroy all printed materials and erase all related digital information.

Data Collection Instruments

Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced the concept of the researcher as the primary research instrument. Qualitative researchers agree that the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Damsa & Ugelvik, 2017). Qualitative researchers use several data collection techniques, including semistructured interviews, observations, and document reviews (Brooks & Normore, 2015; Padgett, Gossett, Mayer, Chien, & Turner, 2017).

Qualitative researchers use semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to collect data from study participants (Kozleski, 2017; Teixeira, Gregory, & Austin, 2017). Researchers use semistructured interviews to obtain study participants' experiences with the phenomenon researchers are investigating (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2018; Yin, 2018). In addition to open-ended questions, researchers ask follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon they are investigating (Elsawah, Guillaume, Filatova, Rook, & Jakeman, 2015; Vaughn & Turner, 2016).

To collect data on strategies small home healthcare business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation, I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions with three purposively selected participants from Northcentral Texas. Chawla and Pandey (2016) stated that researchers often use semistructured interviews with open-ended questions as an effective strategy for collecting rich data from participants, which Seierstad and Kirton (2015) claimed that could lead to the emergence of new themes from the data collected. Asking additional interview questions for clarification purposes allows researchers to collect rich data because researchers gain an enhanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Hurst et al., 2015).

Researchers follow an interview protocol to guide the interview process (Buisman-Pijlman & Willison, 2016; Goffnett, Lepisto, & Hayes, 2016). I was the primary research instrument, and, as such, I followed the interview protocol shown in the Appendix to conduct face-to-face semistructured interviews, recorded and transcribed them to direct the interview process, and ensured that I stayed focus on the overarching research question. Researchers use the interview protocol to guide the interview process and to allow all participants an opportunity to share any other information related to the phenomenon under investigation (Akamatsu, Kawasaki, & Kojima, 2016; Lee, Weathers, Sloan, Davis, & Domino, 2017). After each interview, the participants had the opportunity to provide any other relevant information related to strategies they used to sustain operations beyond the first 5 years that might not have emerged from the interviews. Yin (2018) stated that researchers often integrate biases into their research studies. Researchers mitigate biases emanating from personal experiences through the process of reflexivity (Berger, 2015; Park & Park, 2016). Reflexivity is the process of examining biases and conducting critical self-evaluation of several aspects of researchers' personality that might influence the research process and outcomes (Berger, 2015). Researcher reflexivity is important because it helps establish data quality and research credibility (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). To mitigate bias, I followed the reflexivity process by critically self-evaluating my perceptions and any aspects of my personality that might influence the research process and outcome.

Document analysis is another data collection technique researchers use in qualitative studies (Yin, 2018). In document analysis, a researcher evaluates each document directly related to the phenomenon under investigation to establish empirical knowledge and understanding (Bowen, 2009). Bowen (2009) stated that the combination of document analysis and semistructured interviews helps researchers trace the primary sources of documents to infer causal links and corroborate the findings. Researchers combine semistructured interviews and document analysis to conduct methodological triangulation, increasing the rigor of the research study (Daher, Carré, Jaramillo, Olivares, & Tomicic, 2017). Yin (2018) stated that researchers could ask for several organizational documents, such as annual reports and financial statements, to analyze. Yin also stated that by analyzing organizational documents, a researcher could obtain specific and useful information about the case, such as spelling of participant names and details of events. I requested organizational documents from study participants to analyze, including (a) minutes of meetings, (b) formal policy statements, (c) bulletins and announcements, and (d) incident logs related to the sustainability strategies of their businesses. The participants were comfortable with releasing the organizational documents, which I compared with the public records from their websites.

Researchers use member checking as a method to verify that their interpretations of participants' answers to interview questions are accurate (Duan, Wang, & Yu, 2016; Hays, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016). Researchers use member checking to support and validate gathered data and improve trustworthiness and credibility of study results (Birt et al., 2016). Researchers perform member checking by giving participants their interpretation of participants' answers to interview questions and asking them to verify the accuracy of such interpretations (Vance, 2015). I conducted a 15-minute member checking by providing study participants my interpretations of their answers to interview questions and asked participants to verify the accuracy of my interpretations to increase the validity of the study. I also provided the participants with a two-page summary of the interview results.

Data Collection Technique

Researchers collect study participants' experiences regarding the phenomena under investigation by asking participants open-ended questions to obtain rich and thick data (Fusch et al., 2018; Patton, 2015). The study's overarching research question is an essential element researchers use to control the direction of the semistructured interviews with the option to ask supporting interview questions to gain additional relevant information regarding the phenomenon under scrutiny (Leko, 2014; Ranney et al., 2015; Sligo et al., 2017). I conducted semistructured interviews with small home health business owners in Northcentral Texas, to obtain the strategies they used to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. Equally important in case study research design, researchers also analyze organizational documents and artifacts to obtain data related to the phenomenon under scrutiny and triangulate those data with semistructured interview data (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Using several data collection methods allows researchers to conduct methodological triangulation to increase the rigor of the research study and gain an improved understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Bennett & McWhorter, 2016; Padgett et al., 2017). I incorporated methodological triangulation into my study using data that I collected from conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing organizational public documents and artifacts. The use of methodological triangulation helped to increase the rigor of the study and to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, which was small home health business sustainability beyond the first 5 years of operation.

Researchers must be aware that data collection methods, such as semistructured interviews and organizational documentation, have advantages and disadvantages (Amade-Escot & Bennour, 2016; Tran, Nguyen, Melewar, & Bodoh, 2015). Regarding semistructured interviews, some of the advantages include observing participants' nonverbal cues when answering open-ended interview questions, obtaining participants' answers to interview questions using participants'own terms, and asking probing and clarifying questions to gain insights into the participants' personal experiences (Chawla & Pandey, 2016). In semistructured interviews, the researcher also has the advantage of requesting more data to gain a complete understanding of the interviewee's perspectives regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Amade-Escot & Bennour, 2016).

The advantages of document analysis include access to comprehensive and relevant organizational data to support, clarify, and verify the participants' answers to interview questions (Gopaldas, 2016), allowing researchers to conduct methodological triangulation (Bennett & McWhorter, 2016) to achieve consistency and robustness of research findings (Padgett et al., 2017). Another advantage of document analysis is that researchers will be able to have the correct spellings of employees' names and details of relevant events in the organization (Yin, 2018). Researchers could also discover new themes by analyzing organizational documentation (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015). I obtained data through semistructured interviews and allowed participants to answer questions in their terms while asking probing and clarifying questions. I conducted methodological triangulation by using several sources of data, such as semistructured interviews and organizational documents and artifacts. I compared the data collected from various sources to gain consistency and robustness of my research findings.

Several disadvantages exist in conducting semistructured interviews and analyzing organizational documents (Jug & Vilar, 2015; Patton, 2015). The semistructured interview technique is more expensive, time-consuming, and may not cover all aspects of data (Yin, 2018). The disadvantages of semistructured interviews also include scheduling difficulty, integrating researcher and participant biases into the research study, requiring much time to complete, and spending many resources (Tran et al., 2015). In semistructured interviews, there is difficulty in managing data and the possibility of participants avoiding providing answers to some sensitive topics (Patton, 2015). Other disadvantages of semistructured interviews include the reluctance of participants to participate in audio-recorded interviews, dependence on the cooperation of the study participants, dependence on the researcher's interpersonal skills, and difficulty in replicating the study (Dikko, 2016; Gopaldas, 2016). In document analysis, the disadvantages include the error of interpretation of the documents due to the researcher's inferred or wrong interpretation of the document arising from personal bias or fixating on unnecessary details (Patton, 2015). Another disadvantage of document analysis is the inability of the researcher to gain access to the relevant documents due to low interpersonal skills (Yin, 2018).

Researchers use member checking to corroborate their study findings by soliciting feedback from their participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Researchers use member checking to reduce the likelihood of bias and misinterpretation of participants' responses, thereby increasing the credibility and validity of the collected data (Harvey, 2014; Morrison, Clement, Nestel, & Brown, 2016). Yin (2018) stated that an advantage of member checking is that, if performed correctly, it will confirm the reliability and validity of the study data. Yin added that member checking would be a disadvantage when performed incorrectly. I conducted a 15- minute member checking with participants by providing them with my interpretation of their answers to interview questions and asking participants to verify the accuracy of my interpretations. I used member checking to enhance the credibility and validity of the study.

Data Organization Technique

In qualitative research, good data organization is necessary before researchers begin the data analysis phase (Yin, 2018). Data organization is essential to conducting rigorous research (Yin, 2018). Researchers use data organization techniques to organize and properly store data collected to quickly access data for analysis (Tripathi, Shukla, & Sonker, 2016). Data organization techniques are essential in qualitative research to ensure the integrity of research, manage large amounts of data, reduce errors, and increase the quality of the research study (Kenno, McCracken, & Salterio, 2017; Skivington, Lifshen, & Mustard, 2016). Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that researchers could view data organization as a means for effective and efficient analysis of data.

I conducted semistructured, face-to-face interviews with study participants using open-ended interview questions (see Appendix). I assigned a participant code to each participant to maintain confidentiality, as recommended by researchers (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2015; Hansen, Mena, & Skipworth, 2017). Maintaining the confidentiality of study participants is essential in a research study (Alami, 2015; Laihonen & Pekkola, 2016). I replaced all participants' names with the letter P and their company's names with the letter C. I differentiated the participants by using numbers to protect their confidentiality. For example, I used P1, P2, and P3 for participants and C1, C2, and C3 for their organizations. I removed all information from each interview transcript that could lead to the identification of the participant's location and identity and wrote the unique participant code on each interview transcript.

I protected participants' data, including interview transcripts, notes, email addresses, and all electronic information in a password-protected external hard drive. I used the unique participant code and reflected this code on all notes for each participant for proper data organization. I protected participants' data and confidentiality by scanning and converting all paper documents into PDF images and stored them in a password-protected external hard drive. I also assigned a unique code to each organizational document. All relevant data obtained from study participants had a unique code to enhance smooth data organization and retrieval.

The storage of electronic data on an external hard drive could enhance data organization. I also imported raw data from the external hard drive directly into a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program. Qualitative researchers use a CAQDAS tool to organize and analyze raw data more efficiently (Furukawa, 2016; Singh, 2015). I used the CAQDAS program as a complementary tool in the process of organizing and analyzing the data. NVivo is an interactive, inexpensive engine for intuitive, efficient, and effective qualitative and mixed methods research. Researchers use NVivo as a qualitative data analysis software to code and analyze data more effectively and efficiently (Zamawe, 2015)

I used a reflective journal to write notes that I obtained from conducting interviews, emerging ideas, bracketing of assumptions, and recording interviews, as recommended by several researchers (Lewis, 2015; Zori, 2016). Researchers use bracketing of assumptions to mitigate possible researcher's bias, increasing the transparency of the research process (Clark & Bower, 2016). Researchers use a reflective journal to enhance their research analysis and demonstrate transparency by capturing specific research details, making decisions on themes and coding, and documenting reactions during the participants' interview process (Rich, 2015; Ward & Coates, 2016). I kept an electronic reflective journal of notes about interviews, emerging ideas, bracketing of assumptions, and decisions about coding and themes to mitigate possible researcher's bias and ensure transparency.

Researchers follow information security practices to retain and dispose of research data correctly (Gupta & Vishvakarma, 2016) to ensure researchers do not keep data longer than needed and to protect the participants' data. Ploem, Essink-Bot, and Stronks (2013) stated that researchers should adopt best practices stated in the research data protection legislation to protect data during and after conducting research. These best practices include (a) stating a clear purpose for collecting data or information, (b) collecting informed consent forms from participants, (c) obtaining only data needed for the study, (d) using the data solely for the research study, (e) retaining the data only as required, and (f) keeping the data secure.

I protected participants' information and maintained their confidentiality by storing both electronic and hard copy data in a locked cabinet in my home where no one else can have access. Several researchers used the same storage method during their research process (Silverman, 2016; Thomson & McLeod, 2015). I will maintain everything related to this study in a locked cabinet for 5 years and, after that, I will physically destroy the external hard drive and shred the hard copies, following Walden University's requirements.

Data Analysis

Triangulation improves the rigor of a study because researchers can increase the richness and thickness of the data collected (Fusch et al., 2018; Wijnhoven & Brinkhuis, 2015). Researchers use methodological triangulation to compare and confirm the data collected from various sources, such as semistructured interviews and organizational documentation and artifacts (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Woodside, 2015). Methodological triangulation is the use of multiple data collection techniques to reduce data uncertainty and enhance data validity and credibility (Baskerville, Kaul, & Storey, 2015; Morse, 2015b). Researchers use methodological triangulation by exploring multiple data collection techniques to obtain various perspectives regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Tibben, 2015). According to Yin (2018), researchers use methodological triangulation to create convergent evidence, which refers to the use of multiple sources of data collection, such as semistructured interviews and organizational documentation and artifacts. Yin added that converging evidence in research enhances the construct validity of a case study. I used methodological triangulation to compare data collected from multiple data sources, such as semistructured interviews and organizational documents and artifacts. I used methodological triangulation to increase the validity and credibility of the data collected in the case study. I conducted member checking procedures with study participants by giving participants my interpretation of their responses to interview questions and asking participants to verify the accuracy of my interpretations. After member checking the data, I compared them with the data I collected from their public organizational documentation and artifacts to determine if data alignment existed.

Qualitative researchers use data analysis to recognize common data patterns from various data collection methods and analyze them critically to achieve the research objectives (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Researchers use various methods of qualitative data analysis, such as thematic, content, and discourse, to uncover rich descriptive data, discover patterns, determine meanings, and make conclusions (Tibben, 2015; Yin, 2018). In thematic analysis, researchers read the interview transcripts several times to gain a better understanding of the text (Arbeit, Hershberg, Rubin, DeSouza, & Lerner, 2016; Vaughn & Turner, 2016).

Several researchers conducting qualitative studies use Yin's (2018) five phases of data analysis, which are (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) clarifying, and (e) concluding. In Phase 1, researchers compile and organize data collected from participants' responses to find themes and patterns in interview transcripts (Becnel et al., 2016). Using NVivo software in the data analysis process to organize, code, categorize, and analyze data collected is helpful (Bitencourt, Oliveira, Teixeira, & Zanardo dos Santos, 2016; Golicic, Flint, & Signori, 2017). In Phase 2, the disassembling phase, researchers assign codes to data collected (Yin, 2018). In Phase 3, reassembling, researchers reassemble, reorganize, and categorize the data into broader themes and patterns (Yazan, 2015). Phase 4 entails thematic analysis to validate the researchers' interpretation of data collected by comparing the data to the interview transcripts

(Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers use thematic analysis to identify themes and patterns in the data to answer their study's overarching research question (Yin, 2018). I used NVivo software to engage in data analyses in this study. I used NVivo to organize data by themes, code data, and interpret data collected. Researchers use member checking to confirm the interpreted interview transcripts with the study participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I conducted member checking to confirm the accuracy of my interpretation of the study participants' responses to interview questions by asking participants to verify the accuracy of my interpretations of their responses to interview questions.

A distinct characteristic of a case study research is the use of multiple sources of data (Yin, 2018). Several researchers (Fusch et al., 2018; Wijnhoven & Brinkhuis, 2015) stated that triangulating data is essential to enhancing the richness and thickness of data collected. Using methodological triangulation, researchers establish the validity of multiple sources of data collected from conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing organizational documents and artifacts (Padgett et al., 2017). Conducting methodological triangulation requires researchers to collect data from various sources; consequently, researchers review organizational documents and artifacts in addition to conducting semistructured interviews (Yin, 2018). Thematic and content analysis are some of the methods researchers use to analyze data collected from reviewing organizational documents and artifacts (Arbeit et al., 2016). Researchers use content analysis to sort and identify emerging themes from organizational data, and to classify key codes into broader themes (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). I used content analysis to analyze documents relevant to this study. The three phases of content analysis, as a data analysis method, are preparation, organization, and reporting (Arbeit et al., 2016; Vaughn & Turner, 2016). I conducted methodological triangulation of data collected from conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing organizational documents and artifacts. Phase 5 is where the researcher summarizes the results of data analyses by providing study conclusions and recommendations to answer the research study's overarching research question (Yin, 2018). I organized and assembled collected data, disassembled the data by codes, reassembled data into broader themes and patterns, interpreted data using thematic analysis, and provided conclusions from the result of the analysis. My goal was to be able to answer the study's overarching research question.

Identifying the key themes in a research study and mapping their relationships is vital, as researchers seek to answer the overarching research question and to correlate the themes with existing current literature and the conceptual framework (Mathras, Cohen, Mandel, & Mick, 2016; Yin, 2018). Researchers use NVivo software to manage, organize, code, and analyze the research data into categories of key themes (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2016). I used the NVivo software to code and map key themes of my sampled data to enhance the research study's trustworthiness. I used the NVivo software to identify key themes and map their relationships to the overarching research question and correlate the themes with the existing current literature and the conceptual framework.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative researchers establish the reliability and validity of their research studies by using four widely accepted evaluative criteria that Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined, which are dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. While qualitative researchers meet these four criteria to establish trustworthiness in their research studies, quantitative researchers address the validity and reliability in their studies (Kelly, Joanne, Jane, & Sue, 2014). Trustworthiness in qualitative research is similar to the quantitative term validity (Burkholder, Cox, & Crawford, 2016). Researchers use the terms reliability and validity to address the accuracy and precision of research (Olsen, McAllister, Grinnell, Walters, & Appunn, 2016).

Reliability

Achieving reliability in qualitative research is a priority for researchers. The essence of reliability is that researchers should use measuring instruments that are reliable and that could produce consistent and reliable results on repetitive trials (Bengtsson, 2016; Noble & Smith, 2015). Qualitative researchers use two or more sources of evidence to establish reliability in case study research (Seawright, 2016). I used semistructured interviews and organizational documentation and artifacts to achieve reliability in the study. Yin (2018) stated that no source of evidence is superior or produces a better result than the other; instead, the sources complement each other.

Dependability refers to the consistency of results under similar conditions (Bengtsson, 2016; Yin, 2018). To enhance dependability, I used home health business owners with successful experience in sustaining their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation, as recommended by several researchers (Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016). I also enhanced dependability of the data collection instrument and trustworthiness of the research data by using the same list of interview questions with all study participants, as recommended by several authors (Silverman, 2017; Teixeira et al., 2017). I also used member checking to enhance dependability, as recommended by several scholars (Duan et al., 2016; Hays et al., 2016). Researchers conduct member checking by giving participants researchers' interpretations of participants' answers to interview questions and asking them to verify the accuracy of such interpretations (Vance, 2015). Researchers also use member checking to enhance dependability by ensuring that personal biases do not interfere with the actual facts (East, 2016; Spiegelman, Rivera-Rodriguez, & Haneuse, 2016). I conducted member checking by giving study participants my interpretation of their answers to interview questions and asking them to verify the accuracy of my interpretations.

Researchers record the interview sessions to enable proper reviewing of, and reflecting upon, the participants' answers, generating reliable transcripts and themes (Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2016). To reduce biases, I provided interview participants the opportunity to explain their answers in detail, decreasing the probability of integrating my own biases into the research study. I also asked study participants to elaborate on their answers to interview questions if I determined that the answers did not provide rich and thick data, as recommended by several authors (Drew, 2014; Hernández-Hernández & Sancho-Gil, 2015). I maintained consistency and increased reliability by following the interview protocol and not introducing any new questions, as recommended by several scholars (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Validity

Maintaining trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, and confirmability is an essential part of the research validation framework (Burkholder et al., 2016; Olsen et al., 2016). In a qualitative case study, researchers ensure credibility by using a process of data collection methods that compare within and across cases for research validity (Rosenthal, 2016; Yin, 2018). The credibility of analyzed data depends on the inclusiveness and representativeness of the entire data collected when only one researcher analyzed the data collected (Olsen et al., 2016; Yin, 2018). Reading the interview transcripts carefully and comprehensively can establish credibility (Harvey, 2014). I carefully and comprehensively reviewed the interview transcripts to obtain every aspect of the participants' experiences related to business sustainability beyond the first 5 years of operation. I compared study participants' experiences within and across cases to establish credibility. I conducted member checking after interpreting the participants' answers to interview questions and before analyzing them to ensure the accuracy and validity of captured data, as recommended by several scholars (Birt et al., 2016; Hays et al., 2016). I conducted member checking by giving participants my interpreted data to verify the accuracy of my interpretations of participants' answers to interview questions.

Transferability is the applicability of the results and findings of a research study to other studies in a similar context (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015; Morse, 2015b). I enhanced the transferability of the study by using study participants with experience in the phenomenon under investigation, obtaining detailed-oriented demographic information, performing comprehensive data analysis, and presenting research results in an intuitive format, as Vaughn and Turner (2016) recommended.

Confirmability occurs after researchers establish dependability, credibility, and transferability (Yin, 2018). Confirmability is the ability of the researcher to show that the data collected are accurate representations of participants' experiences with the phenomenon under investigation without researchers' biases (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I actively listened to each study participant and recorded my insights, thoughts, and biases. To enhance the confirmability of the results, I transcribed the interview data meticulously to establish a connection between the data and results and used existing and relevant literature.

Methodological triangulation improves the validity of a case study (Bennett & McWhorter, 2016; Padgett et al., 2017). In methodological triangulation, researchers establish the validity of the study findings using multiple sources of data by comparing data collected to determine if data alignment exists (Daher et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). I incorporated methodological triangulation in this study by comparing data collected from conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing organizational documents and artifacts to determine if data alignment exists. Several scholars (Fusch et al., 2018; Yin, 2018) claimed that because the foundation of case study design lies in collecting data from multiple sources, researchers use methodological triangulation of data sources as the principal strategy to establish research validity.

I continued to analyze data until I reached data saturation in the study. Researchers reach data saturation when no new information or data emerges as a result of new data collection (Constantinou et al., 2017; Fusch et al., 2018). A researcher cannot achieve research validity without data saturation because lack of data saturation will affect the quality of the research findings (Fusch et al., 2018). The data collected reached data saturation because no new evidence, codes, themes, relationships, or meaningful information emerged after analyzing the participants' responses.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 included the problem statement; purpose statement; nature of the study; research method and design; interview questions; operational definitions; assumptions, limitations, and delimitations; significance of the study; and a review of the professional academic literature. In the literature review, I presented a comprehensive analysis of research relevant to the financial sustainability of small home health business, behavioral theories researchers use to understand financial sustainability, and other themes researchers use to gain an exhaustive understanding of the research topic.

In Section 2, I provided a restatement of the purpose of the study, an explanation of the role of the researcher, a description of the participants, the population and sampling methods, ethical concerns related to this study, a justification of the research method and design, plans for data collection, data organization, data analysis, and reliability and validity. Section 3 includes the following subsections: (a) introduction, (b) presentation of the findings, (c) applications to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendations for further study, (g) reflections, and (h) conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In Section 3, I start with the restatement of the purpose of the study and the research question. I then present my findings and discuss the applications of my research to professional practice and the implications for social change. Section 3 also includes recommendations for action and further research, personal reflections, and a brief conclusion.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies some small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. The eligible criteria for participating in this study were that a participant had to be a small home health business owner in Northcentral Texas and possess strong knowledge and experience in sustaining the business beyond the first 5 years of operation. Consequently, I conducted individual, face-to-face interviews with three small home health business owners in Northcentral Texas, with experience in sustaining their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. Other sources of data were public reports, text messages, and internal emails. The analysis of data resulted in four themes, which are (a) suitable leadership values and skills, (b) effective staff management, (c) effective customer service, and (d) open and effective communication.

Presentation of the Findings

I sought to answer the following central research question for this qualitative multiple case study: What strategies do some small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation? To answer the overarching research question, I used Yin’s (2018) five phases of data analysis, which are (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) clarifying, and (e) concluding. I compiled and organized data collected from participants’ responses to find themes and patterns by using NVivo software to organize, code, categorize, and analyze data. In the disassembling phase, I assigned codes to data collected, then moved to the reassembling phase where I reassembled, reorganized, and categorized the data into broader themes and patterns. In the clarification phase, I used thematic analysis to validate the interpretation of data collected by comparing the data to the interview transcripts and identifying themes and patterns in the data to answer the study’s overarching research question. Finally, I offered my conclusion based on the results of the data analysis process.

Theme 1: Suitable Leadership Values and Skills

The first theme that emerged from the analyses of data collected was suitable leadership values and skills. The three participants (P1, P2, and P3) established that the leader should possess certain skills and values to attract and maintain clients and quality staff. All three participants from the three companies (C1, C2, and C3) maintained that the skills and values or attributes of the leader form a primary strategy used in sustaining a small home health business. I identified three prominent subthemes related to leadership skills and values associated with sustainable strategies. These skills and values of a leader include understanding the business, conducting financial planning and management, and using leaders’ behavior and skills.

Understanding the business. Understanding the business, as a strategy for business sustainability, consists of (a) knowing the state and federal rules and regulations concerning the business; (b) setting standards for implementing the rules and regulations; (c) being current with business updates; and (d) meeting the business financial obligations, including payment of taxes. P1 expressed that "a leader should abide by the federal and state guidelines by setting a standard in leading by example." P2 supported this strategy by saying that the leader should "keep up with the rules and regulations, both state and federal and to meet up all financial obligations, including payment of taxes."

Understanding the business, as a strategy for business sustainability, is in line with the findings of several researchers. For instance, Evers and Gordian (2017) stated that increasing the business aptitude and compliance with the laws and regulations guiding the business prevents business failure. In a similar statement, Hsu, Wiklund, and Cotton (2017) reiterated the importance of understanding and conducting business fairly to avoid collapses. Understanding the business environment and market research increases the competitive power of enterprises (Madura, 2015). According to P1, "as the leader understands the business, he or she can communicate and ensure effective implementation of the organization's strategic plans." In other words, the effective implementation of a small business's strategic plan relies more on how the leader understands the business because a leader's understanding of a business leads to business sustainability. Calopa (2017) stated that business owners could use strategic planning to implement strategies that lead to success and sustainability. The statements of the participants are in line with the work of Frid (2015) in that understanding the administrative and strategic ability of a firm is essential to business sustainability.

Conducting financial planning and management. All three participants expressed that financial planning and management were vital to small business sustainability. Financial planning and management, as a sustainability strategy of small business owners, consists of competitive pricing and financial and resource management. Price is one of the critical factors that motivate clients to choose a service organization (Kireyev, Kumar, & Ofek, 2017). P1 explained that “as a private agency, we fix our prices for services we render to our clients.” Businesses should consider the most appropriate pricing models for services and products (Razak, Nirwanto, & Triatmanto, 2016; Stoppel & Roth, 2017). Competitive pricing is of utmost importance in fixing prices for services because consumers have access to more information and can compare the prices of multiple vendors in a short amount of time with little effort (Faisal, 2016). P3 shared that small home health care agencies face direct competition from more prominent hospitals. According to P3, “the bigger hospitals now operate home health care facilities.” The participants’ statements were in line with the findings of Malshe (2015) in that small business owners must stay abreast of competitors’ prices to gain and keep a competitive advantage.

Hui and Gerber (2017) argued that in the early stages of business formation, management, finance, marketing, and other business skills are essential to the entrepreneurial process. Similarly, Cassar (2017) stated that financial and resource management was necessary for the success and sustainability of a business. All three participants addressed the issue of sacrificing their time and money to tackle monetary barriers and ensure the survival of their companies. P3 explained having to sometimes "fill-in where necessary and address the agency's monetary barrier by opening a credit line with the bank." P3 also expressed that it is necessary to "keep cash flowing by cutting your suit according to your size and not according to your taste." P3 explained that financial management was essential to ensure "not spending above the company's income strength." P3 stated, "small business owners work more hours than expected, combining the roles of employer and employee." P2 shared that one strategy that has proven successful in sustaining the business is "making sacrifices and managing staff based on the financial strength of the company and reducing the size of the company where necessary." In a related statement, P1 reported sometimes sacrificing "some money and time by working with what is available to keep the agency going." Concerning the importance of good financial strategy and management, P2 noted that "maintaining the staff and client ratio" is vital to small business survival. All three participants shared the importance of making sacrifices and managing staff based on the financial strength of the company.

The statements of all three participants align with the findings of other researchers concerning the relationship between financial management and small business sustainability. Karadag (2015) stated that there is a direct relationship between poor financial management and small business failure. Conversely, there is a direct relationship between effective financial management and small business success. Similarly, Didenko and Morozko (2015) stated that many small businesses do not survive because of the leaders' lack of focus on financial management strategies. Dahmen and Rodríguez (2014) indicated that resource mismanagement is one of the leading causes of business failures. Small business survival requires a strategic focus on cost containment and operational efficacy (McDowell, Harris, & Geho, 2016).

Using leaders' behavior and skills. Leaders' behavior and skills, as a strategy for business sustainability, consists of leader's behavior of care, honesty, integrity, and passion, and leadership skills. The attitudes of small business owners have a critical impact on business operations (Revilla, Pérez-Luño, & Nieto, 2016). P2 addressed the importance of the leader's display of fairness and integrity by saying, "whatever is said should apply to everyone in the organization." P2 explained,

> Actions and words must match. Your staff is watching what you say and what you do. You must be clear, and the duties must be clear too. Demarcate or draw a line between friendship and work (professional track). Do not say what you cannot do.

A leadership strategy based on relationships correlates to a successful small business (Hyder & Lussier, 2016). P1 articulated that a leader's behavior should display "passion, honesty, and care." Jenkins and McKelvie (2016) recognized that a leader's conduct could impact organizational success. Concerning a leader's behavior, P3 pointed out that one good strategy for small business sustainability is for the leader to build a "good employer/employee relationship . . . building trust in the employees and clients."

Turner and Endres (2017) identified effective leadership skills as essential to the survival of small businesses. P3 noted that one strategy for survival is "setting a standard to lead by example." P2 claimed, "a leader should always ensure and maintain operational standards and adjust where necessary." P3 emphasized that for small business owners to be successful, they must have "determination" and "stay focused." P3 added that small business owners should be "versatile" through "diversification" to sustain the business. P3 explained, "I started with Medicare patients and added Medicaid and insurance patients later." Ropega (2016) noted that exploring new business opportunities might be critical to prevent business failure and promote a company's sustainability. The leader's skills include the skill of managing business risks. Understanding the factors of business risk increases the chances of business survival (Revilla et al., 2016). Small business owners can prevent business failures by assessing risk factors (Scholten & Fynes, 2017). In the words of P3, "we are risk-takers."

I used company documentation and artifacts to support the participants' responses to interview questions. In C1, I obtained and reviewed the company's internal and external records, including the owner's journal notes, the agency's website, social media sites, annual reports, and other documents available for public use. P1 was very meticulous concerning the company's financial statements and service records. C1's annual report contains promising financial statements indicating that proper record-keeping was essential for small business sustainability. I found in the company's records a continuous update and modification of policies, procedures, processes, and standards. Dates of major changes in policies and the reasons for the changes were made available for review. The action of P1 aligned with the position of Saminathan et al. (2016) that leaders identify, alter, and craft strategies following any changes in an organization. The updates of policies and related standards also supported P1's position that understanding the business enables the leader to implement the organization's strategic plans effectively. The internal records obtained from C2 included timesheets and documents showing employee lists, rewards, bonuses, vacation pays, overtime pays, and criteria for earning them. I noted from the C2's employee list that 72% of the employees worked with the company for more than 5 years. The timesheet of C2 showed P2 on the schedule as direct support staff on some of the shifts, which supported P2's statement that, sometimes, the leader had to make sacrifices, including working as both an employer and an employee. C3 had similar records as C2 but with different payment plans. I also noted that P3 also worked in the capacities of an employer and an employee, as the necessity arose. I conducted methodological triangulation and found that the organizational documentation of all three participating organizations supported participants' responses to interview questions. Bowen (2009) stated that the combination of document analysis and semistructured interviews helps researchers trace the primary sources of documents to infer causal links and corroborate the findings.

Correlation to the literature. The sustainability strategy of P1, P2, and P3 on suitable leadership skills and values aligned with the work of Mueller and Shepherd (2016). Mueller and Shepherd highlighted the factors that contribute to small business failures, including lack of sufficient information and knowledge about the business environment, lack of time to focus on the critical functions of business activities, lack of entrepreneurial attributes, and business owners' behaviors and attitudes. The display of a leader's behavior of care, honesty, integrity, and passion as a contributory factor to small business sustainability aligned with literature. Turner and Endres (2017) found that business environments, customer service, and community relations contribute to small business sustainability. Small business leaders need to develop and nurture positive relationships within and outside of their organization (Elsetouhi, Hammad, Nagm, & Elbaz, 2018). Researchers agree that leaders are likely to fail if they do not have positive relationships with their clients and staff members (Elsetouhi et al., 2018; Rauch, Rosenbusch, Unger, & Frese, 2016).

The findings in Theme 1 on resource and strategic management aligned with the work of Bendickson and Chandler (2019) in that small business survival correlates with effective strategic management. Researchers (Wong, Holmes, & Schaper, 2018) stated that most small business owners lack solid business plans and resources to achieve business profitability and growth and suggested strategic management for small business success. The need for resource management due to lack of adequate business capital for small businesses aligned with the work of Kersten, Harms, Liket, and Maas (2017) in that 39% of small business owners said limited financial resources are the primary obstacle to business sustainability. Yeboah and Koffie (2016) found business owners acquiring capital or additional financial resources have a higher success rate. Acquiring capital and additional financial resources is not always easy, therefore, small business owners devise other means or strategies for business survival. Working more hours, taking on the roles of employer and employee, and filling in where necessary to curtail cost aligned with the work of McDowell et al. (2016) in that small business survival requires a strategic focus on cost containment and operational efficiency. Also, the leadership skills of understanding business risks and adjusting where necessary, aligned with the work of

Revilla et al. (2016) in that understanding the factors of business risk increases the chances of business survival.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. In Theme 1, I discussed suitable leadership values and skills of the entrepreneurship theory known from the work of Schumpeter (1934). Schumpeter viewed an entrepreneur as an innovator identifying and pursuing new opportunities and overcoming barriers by performing new things. Day (2017) posited that one of the fundamental building blocks of entrepreneurship theory is the allocation and management of resources by entrepreneurs. Kuechle (2013) stated that the first step in entrepreneurship theory is a person developing logical externalities for business sustenance. In the context of this study, leader behaviors, in the areas of care, honesty, fairness, integrity, and passion, influenced trust from both the employees and clients. In the area of resource management, as a concept in entrepreneurship theory, Cantillon (1755) indicated that entrepreneurs aim to allocate resources to maximize their financial return and equilibrate supply and demand in the economy. All three participants in this study took resource management as a major strategy for sustainability.

All three participants sacrificed their time and money to sustain their businesses. The participants combined the roles of employer and employee and sometimes had to “fill-in” to save money and help sustain the organization. Frid (2015) noted that entrepreneurs’ skills, capabilities, and characteristics affect the success and survival of small businesses. P3 realized that risk-taking was an essential element of being a business owner. Risk-taking is a necessary element of any small business in line with the work of Martínez et al. (2017). Entrepreneurs bear risks under uncertain times because they strategically offer services for a known fixed price in an economy where the price could change drastically with policy (Brown & Thornton, 2015). Fernandez, Malatesta, and Smith (2015) added that the entrepreneur possesses managerial skills as a key component to coordinate and combine the factors necessary for production. Fernandez et al. explained that entrepreneurs need effective managerial skills to face uncertainties, new entrants and fierce competition, and the risk of economic crises and political unrests in the country. Martínez et al. (2017) noted that risk-taking is one of the main attributes of a business owner and a key element in the general theory of entrepreneurship. Theme 1 aligned with the conceptual framework in supporting the position of other researchers on the subject. Day (2017) and Frid (2015) stated that the entrepreneur’s ability to acquire, manage, and effectively allocate social, human, and financial capital is essential to creating a sustainable business.

Theme 2: Effective Staff Management

The second theme that emerged during the data analysis was effective staff management, which consists of regular staff meetings and training. Nelissen, Forrier, and Verbruggen (2017) postulated that managers should promote better employee training practices to increase business skills to prevent businesses from collapsing. All three participants expressed that staff training and regular meetings contributed immensely to the survival of their businesses. P2 acknowledged providing “periodic in-service training for members of staff.” P2 explained, “we conduct end-of-year meetings where the staff members come together to discuss the achievement of the year as well as unveiling the goals and plans for the following year.” P1 noted that one major barrier of any small business is having qualified staff members empowered to provide excellent services. To have qualified staff members is the expectation of every small business owner. Barrena, López, and Romero (2018) ascertained that employees are the most significant group of stakeholders because their daily activities represent intangible resources, such as contributing their skills, engaging in business relationships, and providing social strength that contributes to business success. In addressing staff barriers, P1 stated that the agency is “willing to improve the skills of caregivers by taking the time to train them multiple times for them to provide excellent services.” P1 also acknowledged that internal training is not enough and, therefore, encourages more staff training and skill development by “assisting caregivers in obtaining their certifications and covering part of their costs of training.” P1 added that by encouraging staff members to apply and obtain their medical certifications, most of the members see the push as a motivation to further their educational career, resulting in higher staff retention rate. Alrhaimi (2015) noted that small business owners need to possess education and talent and receive continuous training. P1 expanded Alrhaimi’s statement of the need for the leader’s training and education to also include the organizational staff members. P2 and P3 also indicated that having qualified staff members was a main barrier faced on a daily basis in their respective agencies. P3 explained that organizational management tackled the staff barrier by constantly “supervising and educating the staff.” P2 acknowledged that staff barriers are mainly in the area of “how the staff members understand and follow directions.” P2 addressed the staff problem with periodic in-service training and end-of-year meetings.

Lack of role clarity, uncertainty, and the absence of a defined vision are some of the factors that adversely affect a firm's survival (Psychogios & Garev, 2015). P1 stated that staff members receive monthly in-service, which is "used in training the caregivers and constantly reminding them of the vision and mission of the agency." P3 also acknowledged the use of in-service as a strategy for improving staff performance and added that the company provides in-service every quarter. Improving employees' work skills and enhancing their knowledge are two crucial aspects for the development of small businesses (Shafeek, 2016). Conducting regular training and meetings helps to keep the staff members in constant check of their roles in the organization and to be conversant with the organization's mission and vision. Pl stated, "we train our caregivers for them to be competent in their assignments . . . We also let the caregivers know what the company expects from them and to be acquainted with the vision and mission of the agency." To ensure that staff members understand and apply the lessons from the training, P3 applies a step further by monitoring the patients regularly to ensure that the staff members are providing services appropriately.

I obtained organizational documentation and artifacts from all three participants to compare the contents with participants' responses to the interview questions. For internal documentation concerning employee satisfaction, retention, or turnover, I requested and obtained from all three participants, the names of employees and glanced through to see their start and end dates where applicable. I also reviewed minutes of meetings as well as training manuals about the roles and responsibilities of the employees. In C2, management has a suggestion box where employees could express their feelings on any organizational matter. The employees' information was kept anonymous. I requested, obtained, and reviewed the suggestions, complaints, and comments of the employees, patients, and the patients' family members. In some of the notes, I found complaints from employees for not giving them enough hours and being tough when late for work. I also saw comments from patients and employees, such as "you are a great leader," and "I will always recommend you to my friends and family." I also reviewed management's responses to the complaints. Management referred the employees to the employee manual, minutes of meetings addressing late coming and the consequences, and the company's policies on lateness. At C1, five lateness in a year results in termination. Other issues in the notes at C1 included the consequences of sleeping on duty and the need to act professionally at all times while on duty. At C3, I reviewed company notes and letters of the employees praising management for giving special attention to their personal concerns and providing them with the incentives available at the company. At C3, sleeping on duty resulted in a direct termination at the first instance. At C1, I compared the dates and topics in the minutes and trainings with those on the schedules provided and found that both the dates and topics on the past schedules matched those in minutes of meetings and past training conducted at the company. The purpose of document analysis was to confirm reliability and validity of the study data. The confirmation of alignment of the participants' interview responses with the organizational documentation and artifacts was the result of conducting methodological triangulation. Researchers combine semistructured interviews and document analysis to conduct methodological triangulation, increasing the rigor of the research study (Daher et al., 2017).

Correlation to the literature. Mazzei, Flynn, and Haynie (2016) noted that successful business owners could create a high-performance team with selective hiring, encouraging autonomy, and incorporating an onboarding process. However, hiring committed candidates is not always easy; therefore, Mansoor, Shah, and Tayyaba (2015) posited that training and development are essential in small businesses in the 21st century where the business world continues to change rapidly. In a related statement, Omolo (2015) stated that an organization's employees become more efficient and effective through training and development. Albuquerque, Escrivão Filho, Nagano, and Phippsen (2016) indicated that the long-term success of small businesses is dependent on investment in human capital and training. However, most small business owners perceive training as an expense, as opposed to an investment (Mansoor et al., 2015). Viewing staff training as a business expense rather than an investment has prevented some small business owners from promoting any form of training and development in their organizations (Rabie, Cant, & Wiid, 2016). Omolo noted that businesses in which the business owners encourage and incorporate the benefits of enhancing employees' skills and knowledge through training, outperformed their counterparts not providing regular training to the staff members. Rabie et al. (2016) also indicated that training and development are essential tools available for business leaders to sharpen and maintain leadership skills and improve the competencies of employees. Similarly, Alrhaimi (2015) expressed that to be successful, small business owners need to possess education and talent and undertake regular training.

Financial constraints have led most business owners to apply a low-cost approach to staff development (Damoah, Ashie, & Kekesi, 2016). Incorporating regular staff meetings into organizational practices encourages and promotes the exchange of knowledge between the employees and the leadership team. Internally, companies can gain advantages by soliciting ideas and input from staff members on various organizational levels regarding product development and advertising methods (Maheshwari, Gunesh, Lodorfos, & Konstantopoulou, 2017; Salman, Tawfik, Samy, & Artal-Tur, 2017). Regular meetings with staff members keep the management abreast of the clients' needs and demands. An organization must not simply deduce its clients' lifestyles; rather, managers should truly seek to understand the experiences and values of their clients (Panigrahi, Azizan, & Waris, 2018) through their employees. The maintenance of competent employees secures a competitive advantage for the organizations (Shafeek, 2016) and, consequently, to the organization's survival. Regular training of employees, therefore, is vital to the survival of small businesses.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. Under entrepreneurship theory, researchers view the entrepreneur as an innovator of ideas in technology, marketing, supply, demand, and new markets (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014). Casson (2017) noted that entrepreneurs obtain the tools needed to succeed in today's competitive world through a wide variety of real-life cases in starting, developing, and managing organizations. To succeed in the business environment, small business owners incorporate regular training that unleashes strategies for developing and managing organizations. Researchers under entrepreneurship theory provide insights into the small business, the personal characteristics of the entrepreneur, financial and resource management, strategic decision making, and strategies small business owners use to achieve sustainability (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014).

Theme 3: Effective Customer Service

The third theme that emerged from data analysis is effective customer service, as a sustainability strategy for small business owners, which consists of effective patient acquisition, retention, and smooth discharge. P1 stated, “the timely discharge of healthy patients characterizes home healthcare agencies.” P2 claimed that “good customer service motivates the clients to use word-of-mouth in advertising for the agencies.” Sharafizad and Coetzer (2016) stated that having a good relationship with customers helps secure a stable customer base, which produces customer retention and advertises the company through the patients’ word-of-mouth. Miettinen and Stenbacka (2018) expressed that customer acquisition and retention are key tools for small business success. P2 stated that “the discharge, delivery of services, and acquisition of new patients are the life-lines of the business.”

According to P2, the company’s policy promotes “celebrating the clients’ [participants] birthdays with them and listening to and addressing their concerns irrespective of how insignificant the concerns may seem.” P2 also stated that “every patient has the direct management phone-line and undivided attention from staff to the family members.” The reward for the delivery of excellent customer service is that satisfied customers become advertisers of the business' name and the drivers of repeated business transactions (Alagirisamy, 2014). P1 reiterated the importance of customer service to business success by stating that "good customer service enhances word-of-mouth advertisement from the patients and staff alike." P1 added, "word-of-mouth is the main strategy that keeps the agency in business because the company continues to receive referrals from present and former patients." P2 addressed the significance of word-of-mouth as a product of good customer service by stating, "word-of-mouth is the direct result of good customer service and it eliminates the need for costly advertising strategies." P2 also stated that "the agency receives calls regularly from potential patients, a compliment of direct referrals from patients and staff members due to good customer service." In a similar statement, P3 expressed that "providing good customer service creates trust in the patients, which motivates them to use word-of-mouth advertising for the agency." Zaefarian, Thiesbrummel, Henneberg, and Naude (2017) stated that small business owners could strategically attract and maintain customers using trust for optimal business performance and profitability. P3 added that "good customer service forms an effective business sustainability strategy and cheaper way of advertising an agency, as the patients, their families, and staff members use word-of-mouth to promote the agency."

The effective customer service approach of all three participants align with the work of Turner and Endres (2017) in that the local community and customer service are essential springboards in small business success. All three participants explained that having direct interaction with patients provided a better connection with them and their families. The customer service strategy of the three participants also aligns with the work of Galvão, de Carvalho, de Oliveira, and de Medeiros (2018). Galvão et al. stated that small business owners should deliver excellent customer service, possess excellent communication skills, and consider customer input in every aspect of their businesses. The three participants claimed that excellent customer service boosts customer satisfaction and loyalty and leads to business success. Additionally, excellent customer service involved the lowest advertising cost, but a much higher result in business success and sustainability.

I also reviewed the websites and the minutes of meetings of the three participants to check the organizational documentation on the provision of excellent customer service. In C3, the minutes contained detailed discussions on the importance of excellent patient services from every employee. The training manual of C2 detailed the mission and vision of the company, the organizational policy, standards, and specific guidelines to follow in providing excellent services to every patient. Some of the topics in the training schedules in all three participating organizations included: Nursing diagnosis, nursing procedures, nursing practice, nursing interventions and collaborative management, and emergency training and exercise guide. Topics intended to enhance compliance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) were also included by all three participants in their training. The minutes of meetings in C1 emphasized rewards for the best staff of every month, known as *employee of the month*, which came from patients' recommendations for excellent services the employees provided. I also noted that the family members' notes of recommendations were also included in making the decisions of choosing the employee of the month. After the review of the three participants' websites, I found excellent reviews from both past and present patients on the excellent services the organizations delivered. C2's Instagram page contained special *thank you* notes and positive statements from patients and family members related to the excellent services the management and employees delivered to patients and some family members. P1 provided the names of employees with grants assistance to further their education, and I found that 90% of the recipients had worked for the company for more than 5 years and 95% of recipients were still with the company. The leadership strategy of encouraging employees to provide excellent customer service through trainings, meetings, and special reward programs was evident in the positive reviews patients provided on the websites and in the personal notes to management. By conducting methodological triangulation, I found that the alignment of participants' responses to the interview questions with the organizational documents from all three participants was vital to enhance the rigor of this study. According to Bennett and McWhorter (2016), using several data collection methods allows researchers to conduct methodological triangulation to increase the rigor of the research study and gain an improved understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Correlation to the literature. Customer service is a key strategy for organizational leaders of any service industry (Chen, Zhu, & Zhou, 2015). Small business owners use customer service strategies to facilitate customer satisfaction, increase competitive advantage, and improve customer loyalty (Lachiewicz, Marek, Pawel, & Maciej, 2018; Paltayian, Gotzamani, Georgiou, & Andronikidis, 2017). Weber and Elferink (2017) advised that leaders must ensure that their companies deliver a positive experience to customers to boost customer loyalty. In a related statement, Zaefarian et al. (2017) posited that small businesses obtain customer loyalty and repeat business through excellent customer service. Versockiy (2019) added that excellent customer service promotes customer satisfaction and results in repeated customers. Gilboa, Seger-Guttmann, and Mimran (2019) posited that it is essential for emerging entrepreneurs to build their customer service skills continuously. Sharafizad and Coetzer (2016) noted that a stable customer base forms when a leader engages in the right business relationship with customers. The statements of the three participants that excellent customer service positively impacted their businesses' success aligned with literature. Basu and Bhola (2016) expressed that a small business owner's focus on excellent customer service and quality management could improve the firm's performance. Cook and Wolverton (2015) found that a strategic performance indicator for small business owners is an understanding of the importance of excellent customer service. An improved firm's performance, resulting from excellent customer service, could translate into a competitive advantage that leads to business success and survival.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. In entrepreneurship theory, a business owner's characteristics, capabilities, and skills affect business success and survival (Frid, 2015). A business owner applying the strategy of excellent customer service to sustain a business is displaying the entrepreneurial characteristics, capabilities, and skills. Schumpeter (1934) discussed customer service as one of the ingredients in business growth and development. Investing resources in excellent customer service leads to small business owners sustaining businesses and profitability (Paltayian et al., 2017). Small business owners need to devote more time and resources to promote the delivery of excellent customer service because satisfied customers increase the probability of business success (Aspromourgos, 2017). Yoo (2017) noted that amid aggressive competition, excellent customer service effectively enhances business sustainability. La and Yi (2015) noted that in small business organizations, profitability is directly related to excellent customer service and client management and emphasized the need to be consistent but flexible to adjust the customer service strategy to fit the environment. The customer service strategy that the three participants used to manage the patients aligned with Weber and Elferink's (2017) perspective of boosting customer loyalty through positive customer service experience.

Theme 4: Open and Effective Communication

All three participants emphasized the importance of open and effective communication as a strategy for small business sustainability. The three participants explained that open and effective communication consists of the ease of communication strategy among stakeholders and the efficient use of communication channels. The ease of communication means the easy flow of communication between management and employees, management and patients, employees and patients, and among the employees. The lack of clear communication between patients and employees may contribute to the deterioration of the business structure (Stephan & Pathak, 2016). P2 noted that the strategies to sustain the agency are the day-to-day operations where "the company management and employees give special attention to each patient and family members." P2 stated, "open and effective communication was one strategy applied for business sustainability." P1, P2, and P3 stated that "open communication" was a major strategy used to address the key barriers of their agencies. For business success and survival, small business owners should influence individuals and communicate meaningfully with customers, employees, competitors, and other stakeholders (Rezaeizadeh, Hogan, O'Reilly, Cunningham, & Murphy, 2016). The availability of efficient and sufficient communication channels is essential for small business sustainability. In addition to the staff management tools given at regular staff meetings, monthly in-service, yearly meetings, and regular training provided by all three participants, the three participants also made use of other communication channels. For instance, P1 stated,

> A phone number is always available for direct access to the management. The company also has a group chat where caregivers can ask questions and communicate with one another of any situation that arises in the course of rendering services to the clients.

The ability to communicate in a variety of ways is essential for building relationships with stakeholders (Letonja, Jeraj, & Marič, 2016). P1 stated that an "effective communication strategy contributed to making informed decisions concerning the matters of the agency." P1 also expressed that "with open communication, management addressed the personal needs of the employees whose personal circumstances could have affected the company negatively." In addressing the communication strategy in the organization, P2 stated, "every patient has a direct management line operating 24/7." Similarly, P3 said, "a general phone line and email are available for employees, patients, and management at all times for smooth and effective communication." P3 indicated that "the employees communicate among themselves for scheduling and other administrative needs to provide excellent services for the patients, using the company's phones and general email." P3 also indicated that "the agency has an emergency number, also known as the on-call number, which is available 24 hours a day." All three participants emphasized the importance of keeping the communication lines open by providing 24-hour phone service under different names, including emergency line, direct line, on-call number, and direct access line. The phone lines were available to both the patients and employees to provide a communication link with management and among employees in emergency and non-emergency situations. The three participants encouraged active employee communication through the staff management strategy and other techniques discussed in Theme 2. The communication strategies of the three participants aligned with the work of Miloloza (2018) in that effective communication promotes mutual understanding between the various stakeholders of an organization.

The organizational documentation and artifacts of all three participants aligned with their responses to the interview questions in the area of open communication strategy. The minutes of meetings, information from websites and social media platforms, and organizational documentation proved that open communication was a key strategy that contributed to business success and survival. P1 provided minutes of regular, monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings for my review. I noted that there were times when emergency meetings were called at C1 to address urgent medical or patient needs. P2 emphasized that in addition to a central phone at the reception desk, an on-call employee had a dedicated phone number where management, employees, and patients could call at any time of the day and night. P3 had weekly schedules of on-call employees on the notice board at the nursing station. The on-call schedule facilitated an effective and efficient communication channel amongst all stakeholders of the agency. For instance, P3 stated that employees could call into the main agency line and demand for the on-call personnel during emergencies, and the on-call employee would rectify the situation, irrespective of the time of the day or night. The emergency meetings held to address the urgent medical needs of patients, on-call phone lines and schedules, and employee schedules supported all three participants' answers to interview questions. Conducting methodological triangulation allowed me to determine that organizational documentation and responses from interview participants aligned, enhancing the validity of the study. Fusch et al. (2018) and Wijnhoven and Brinkhuis (2015) noted that triangulating data is essential to enhancing the richness and thickness of data collected.

Correlation to the literature. Purnama and Subroto (2016) posited that communication and coordination increase the flow of information, improve the decision-making processes, and allow efficient allocation of resources. Goldman and Bounds (2015) advised that small business owners should maintain a free flow of communication with all stakeholders. Suphattanakul (2017) noted that communication is a powerful tool that links employees with managers and is fundamental in positive and enduring relationships. Building trust among organizational stakeholders occurs over time, and open communication is a critical component of trust-building relationships (Sharafizad & Coetzer, 2016). The position of all three participants regarding open communication as a sustainability strategy aligned with the literature.

Fought and Misawa (2016) noted that group effort is needed to build a vision; therefore, leaders need excellent communication to achieve their vision. Jena, Pradhan, and Panigrahy (2018) noted that the lack of open communication could result in misunderstandings among the organization's stakeholders, including the leaders being unaware of the needs of employees and patients. With open communication, P1 was able to understand and to address the personal needs of the employees, thereby maintaining quality, retaining excellent employees, and keeping the agency in business through superior services. Donnelly (2017) stated that leaders' clear communication strategy should encourage regular feedback and maintain an open-door policy to measure its effectiveness. Similarly, Oppong, Chan, and Dansoh **(**2017) opined that an open-door communication system improves communication in an organization. Kang and Busser (2018) posited that excellent communication was one of the mitigating factors of high employee turnover. A leader incorporating individual consideration ensures that communication lines are open (Bhaskar & Junni, 2016).

Correlation to the conceptual framework. Entrepreneurs need business skills, experiences, and strategies to compete and sustain their businesses (Abdul Mohsin et al., 2017). Open communication is one strategy the three participants used to adapt a service that enabled business success and survival. Customers and employees feel valued and accepted with open and effective communication (Reynoso & Cabrera, 2019). Entrepreneurs must use the proper communication channels to disseminate information to the stakeholders (Bogers, Chesbrough, Heaton, & Teece, 2019). Small business owners communicate the vision and goals to employees and stakeholders of their organizations (Mezhouda, 2019). Entrepreneurs ensure effective communication strategy by demonstrating their commitment to supporting and valuing the opinions of the stakeholders (Çemberci & Civelek, 2018). The three participants applied the open communication strategy for business sustainability.

Applications to Professional Practice

Small home healthcare business owners may use the results of this qualitative multiple case study to succeed financially and sustain their business operations beyond the first 5 years. Small home healthcare business owners may use the results of this study to create sustainable business practices, model positive leader characteristics, and foster beneficial relationships. According to Cant and Wild (2016), small business owners developing and adhering to business practices relevant to their organization will possess a high level of performance and profitability. Business owners applying some of the strategies that emerged from this study might achieve improved organizational performance, profitability, and sustainability. When small business owners are adaptable, motivated, and hardworking, their organizations are not stagnant, their products and services remain relevant, and they have high employee morale (Muenjohn & McMurray, 2016; Warren & Szostek, 2017). Other researchers (Elsetouhi et al., 2018; Rauch et al., 2016) demonstrated that positive relationships are bedrocks to small business success.

Small home healthcare business owners applying the findings from this study may develop a guide for employee skills development, thereby increasing employee morale for leadership roles and the resultant business continuity, as Mokhber et al. (2017)

recommended. Small home healthcare business owners using the findings from this study may nurture and form meaningful relationships with the stakeholders to achieve a better understanding of the small home healthcare industry. Government agencies may also use the findings of this study to develop training programs that would help to sustain small businesses. NGOs, policymakers, politicians, and any other individual in a position to assist others in the United States in general, and local communities in particular, may use the results of this study to develop small business training programs for leadership development and small business sustainability.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change include the potential for small business owners to use the results of this study to provide strategies that may promote business growth, increase revenues, stimulate job creation for local community residents, and help provide local and national economic stability. Ruskin, Seymour, and Webster (2016) posited that small businesses usually generate income for the local community. Neagu (2016) stated that small businesses are valuable to economic growth and development. Small business owners may use the results of this study to become profitable, highly competitive, and expand their ventures. When small businesses become profitable and expand their ventures, the local community thrives as well, thereby bringing social change to society. As businesses thrive, they pay more taxes, resulting in an increased tax base for local governments, which may lead to more developments that benefit the local community.

The themes that emerged from analyses of data collected in this study could have a profound impact on social change. As businesses survive, they hire more employees.

The hiring of employees enhances social change in the community, as the employees feel better about themselves and have something to provide or offer to the community and beyond. The employees might have the potential to spend more, resulting in more tax payments that could be used to benefit the local community.

Government and private entities might use the results of this study to develop policies that enable the success and survival of small businesses. The sustainability of small businesses means continuous job availability for the employees and the expansion of the provision of social amenities within the community. According to Fellnhofer (2017), the sustainability of small businesses drives innovation and competition. Nelissen et al. (2017) noted that employing and developing local community members within small retail businesses would lend credence to social change. According to Singh and Ogbolu (2015), an increase in small business survival leads to increased wealth, tax revenue, and employment opportunities. Failing to maintain small businesses can hurt community resources and jobs (Singh & Ogbolu, 2015).

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore strategies some small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. Kegel (2016) stated that small business owners could use several tenets of entrepreneurship theory as a guide to achieving economic growth through profit-driven strategies. According to Northouse (2018), leadership style usually has an impact on organizations. Several researchers (Bocconcelli et al., 2018; Cant & Wild, 2016) stated that small business owners must use the most effective and up-to-date financial strategies to allocate funds appropriately to avoid the loss of business resources. The findings in this study are consistent with the entrepreneurship theory strategies. Based on the findings of this study, small business owners can sustain their business operations with suitable leadership values and skills that promote effective staff management, effective customer service, and open and effective communication.

The first recommendation is for leaders to acquire suitable leadership values and skills, which are the cornerstone of all other strategies. Suitable leadership values and skills involve working hard and sacrificing time and money for the survival of the business. Freeman (2015) stated that being a small business owner requires hard work and commitment. All three participants in this study sacrificed and worked hard to sustain their companies financially. Muenjohn and McMurray (2016) noted that small business owners working hard have lower levels of employee turnover and higher levels of customer satisfaction. A leader possessing suitable leadership values and skills should work hard, make sacrifices, focus on optimizing available resources to keep the business functional, and seek available strategies for business sustainability. Several small business owners' failures are due to a lack of focus on business sustainability strategies (Didenko & Morozko, 2015).

The second recommendation is that leaders must manage their staff effectively for the survival of their businesses. Small business owners should manage their employees through regular training and meetings. Proper staff training and meetings keep the employees updated on their roles and responsibilities and with government regulations affecting their organization's practices. Psychogios and Garev (2015) noted that a lack of role clarity, uncertainty, and the absence of a defined vision are some of the factors that adversely affect a firm’s survival. Nelissen et al. (2017) advised that managers should promote better employee training practices to increase employees’ business skills to prevent businesses from collapsing. Improving employees’ work skills and enhancing their knowledge are two crucial aspects of the development of small businesses (Shafeek, 2016). Developing employees entails equipping them with the skills and knowledge required for the job through regular training and meetings to deliver improved services, thereby promoting the image of the company for business sustainability.

The third recommendation is that a small business owner should promote excellent customer service and foster family-like relationships with customers. A small business owner should create and maintain business practices that promote the company’s reputation and encourage excellent customer service. Dutot (2017) posited that a small business owner’s reputation and the level of customer service have a direct relationship to an organization’s long-term success. Similarly, Gatzert (2015) expressed that small business owners can gain excellent customer loyalty and boost profits using strategies that focus on the company’s reputation and the delivery of excellent customer service.

The fourth recommendation is that small business owners should promote open and effective communication amongst all stakeholders. Open communication builds trust through interactions that occur over time (Sharafizad & Coetzer, 2016). Galvão et al. (2018) advised that small business owners should deliver excellent customer service, use open and effective communication skills, and consider customer input in every aspect of their businesses. In summary, Gilboa et al. (2019) stated that small business owners using business strategies based on forming excellent relationships with customers and fostering open and effective communication would have an increased likelihood of success.

Recommendations for Further Research

My recommendation for further research is to increase the size of participants to fill any gap that may arise from using a few participants. For generalizability of the research, I recommend further research in the same industry but in different locations within the United States and other countries. I also recommend further research on other small businesses both inside and outside the healthcare business. Researchers conducting further research could expand the geographic locations to enable comparison of findings. Yin (2018) noted that geographic location can impact the validity and scope of a study. Researchers could use other methodologies and designs to explore and investigate the strategies that small home health business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation.

Reflections

At the thought of starting a doctoral program, I was excited, on the one hand, but scared, on the other hand. I was excited because conducting research using books and the internet was not a problem; however, I was scared of conducting face-to-face research where I would have to travel and interview individuals. My main concerns and questions were as follows: What will be my area of concentration? Who will agree to participate in an interview on my topic? What methodology and research design will be the most appropriate for my business problem? How much will it cost to conduct interviews for the study? What if I did not meet data saturation from my chosen participants? What if people do not want to participate in my study?

In considering the above questions and as a small business owner, I decided to focus on the strategies small business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. After seeing many businesses around me closing, coupled with my struggle to achieve financial sustainability in my small business, I crafted the business problem related to business sustainability. I selected the qualitative methodology with a multiple case study design and was able to recruit three participants. As I approached the interview phase of my study, I emailed and called small business owners meeting the participant eligibility criteria. At first, I was excited because everyone I called agreed to participate. When the interview time arrived, I sent the invitation email together with an informed consent form and, unfortunately, many of the potential participants backed out. The shocking part was that some participants texted and called me to ask me to never call their number again. An appalling disappointment came from a medical doctor because I was confident that, as a doctor, she must have done some research studies and would be happy to participate. However, better news arrived, following the initial shock of rejection, and I finally recruited three qualified participants amid the lockdown the COVID-19 outbreak caused. The last interview took place on the phone because of the lockdown. The member checking process was another tricky part due to COVID-19. I emailed my interpretations of participants’ responses to interview questions and asked all three participants to verify that my interpretations of their answers were accurate. Finally, all three participants responded positively, and I started my analysis.

I am grateful for the experiences gathered during the interview process with business leaders. I realized the importance of identifying and having more potential participants meeting the established participation eligibility criteria during the interview phase, just in case any of the original participants would cease participating in the study. Promises from potential participants are encouraging; however, a researcher should not stop recruiting because unexpected situations can prevent some potential participants from participating at the expected time.

Conclusion

All three participants recognized and adopted suitable leadership values and skills fostering employee satisfaction, excellent customer service, and open communication. Satisfied employees and customers were the leading advertisers of the organizations through word-of-mouth advertising. Open communication was a critical measure the participants identified as a necessary means of promoting mutual understanding between the various stakeholders of an organization. In this study, I found that small business owners can sustain their business operations beyond 5 years with suitable leadership values and skills that promote effective staff management, effective customer service, and open and effective communication.

References

Abdul Mohsin, A. B., Halim, H. A., Ahmad, N. H., & Farhana, N. (2017). Assessing the role of entrepreneurial competencies on innovation performance: A Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach. *Journal of Business Inquiry*, *16*, 88-101. Retrieved from http://journals.uvu.edu/index.php/jbi/index

Adams, J., Kauffman, R. G., Khoja, F. M., & Coy, S. (2016). Looking at purchasing development through the lens of small business. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 28,* 145–170. Retrieved https://www.pittstate.edu/business/journals/journal-of-managerial-issues.html

Ahlstrom, D., & Ding, Z. (2014). Entrepreneurship in China: An overview. *International Small Business Journal, 32,* 610-618. doi:10.1177/0266242613517913

Akamatsu, R., Kawasaki, Y., & Kojima, Y. (2016). Barriers to accurately measuring patients' dietary intake in hospitals using the visual estimation method: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance, 29*, 835-845. doi:10.1108/IJHCQA-04-2016-0042

Alagirisamy, K. S. (2014). Business success versus failure neural network model for small and medium enterprises in Southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship, 9,* 123-133. Retrieved from http://cesmaa.eu/journals/jaes/

Alami, S. A. (2015). Research within the field of applied linguistics: Points to consider. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 5,* 1330-1337. doi:10.17507/tpls.0507.03

Albuquerque, A. F., Filho, E. E., Nagano, M. S., & Phippsen, L. A. (2016). A change in the importance of mortality factors throughout the life cycle stages of small businesses. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research, 6*(8), 1-18. doi:10.1186/s40497-016-0051

Allen, J. K. (2017). Exploring the role teacher perceptions play in the underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in gifted programming. *Gifted Child Today, 40*, 77-86. doi:10.1177/1076217517690188

Alrhaimi, S. A. (2015). Achieving competitive advantage in economic crisis. *International Journal of Economics and Finance, 7*, 287-292. doi:10.5539/ijef.v7n9p287

Amade-Escot, C., & Bennour, N. (2016). Productivity disciplinary engagement within didactical transactions: A case study of student learning in gymnastics. *European Physical Education Review, 23*(3), 1-18. doi:10.1177/1356336X16633072

Amato, C. A., Baron, R., Barbieri, B., Bélanger, J. J., & Pierro, A. (2016). Regulatory modes and entrepreneurship: The mediational role of alertness in small business success. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *55*(S1), 27-42. doi:10.1111/jsbm.12255

Andersson, S., & Evers, N. (2015). International opportunity recognition in international new venture: A dynamic managerial capabilities perspective. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship, 13*, 260-276. doi:10.1007/s10843-015-0149-5

Arbeit, M. R., Hershberg, R. M., Rubin, R. O., DeSouza, L. S., & Lerner, J. V. (2016). “I’m hoping that I can have better relationships”: Exploring interpersonal connection for young men. *Qualitative Psychology, 3*, 79-97.

doi:10.1037/qup0000042

Artinger, S., & Powell, T. C. (2015). Entrepreneurial failure: Statistical and psychological explanations. *Strategic Management Journal*, *37*, 1047–1064. doi:10.1002/smj.2378.

Aspromourgos, T. (2017). Entrepreneurship, risk and income distribution in Adam Smith. *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, *21*(1), 21-40. doi:10.1080/09672567.2012.683025

Barhatov, V., Campa, A., & Pletnev, D. (2018). The impact of internet-technologies development on small business success in Russia. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 238*, 552–561. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2018.04.035

Barrena, J., López, M., & Romero, P. M. (2018). The link between socially responsible human resource management and intellectual capital. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, 26,* 71-81. doi:10.1002/csr.1658

Baskerville, R. L., Kaul, M., & Storey, V. C. (2015). Genres of inquiry in design-science research: Justification and evaluation of knowledge production. *MIS Quarterly*, *39*, 541-564. doi:10.25300/misq/2015/39.3.02

Basu, R., & Bhola, P. (2016). Impact of quality management practices on performance stimulating growth: Empirical evidence from Indian IT enabled service SMEs. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, *33*, 1179-1201. doi:10.1108/IJQRM-10-2015-0153

Bazeley, P. (2015). Mixed methods in management research: Implications for the field. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods, 13*, 27-35. Retrieved from www.ejbrm.com

Becnel, L. B., Pereira, S., Drummond, J. A., Gingras, M. C., Covington, K. R., Kovar, C. L., & Wheeler, D. A. (2016). An open access pilot freely sharing cancer genomic data from participants in Texas. *Scientific Data, 3*(1), 1-10. doi:10.1038/sdata.2016.10

Bendickson, J. S., & Chandler, T. D. (2019). Operational performance: The mediator between human capital developmental programs and financial performance. *Journal of Business Research, 94*, 162-171. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.10.049

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. *NursingPlus Open, 2*(2), 8-14. doi:10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001

Bennett, E., & McWhorter, R. (2016). Opening the black box and searching for smoking guns: Process causality in qualitative research. *European Journal of Training and Development, 40*, 691-718. doi:10.1108/EJTD-07-2015-0049

Berg, A. V. D., Witteloostuijn, A. V., & Brempt, O. V. D. (2017). Employee workplace representation in Belgium: Effects on firm performance. *International Journal of Manpower, 38*, 130-144. doi:10.1108/IJM-06-2015-0094

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don’t: Researcher’s position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 15*, 219-234. doi:10.1177/1468794112468475

Bhaskar, P., & Junni, P. (2016). CEO transformational and transactional leadership and organizational innovation: The moderating role of environmental dynamism. *Management Decision, 7*, 1542-1560. doi:10.1108/MD-11-2014-0651

Birt, L. L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health Research, 26*, 1802-1811. doi:10.1177/1049732316654870

Bitencourt, C. C., Oliveira, M., Teixeira, E. K., & Zanardo dos Santos, A. C. M. (2016). Thematic content analysis: Is there a difference between the support provided by the maxqda® and NVIVO® software packages? *Brazilian Journal of Management, 9*, 72-82. doi:10.5902/1983465911213

Block, J., Sandner, P., & Spiegel, F. (2013). How do risk attitudes differ within the group of entrepreneurs? The role of motivation and procedural utility. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *53*, 183-206. doi:10.1111/jsbm.12060

Block, J. H., Kohn, K., Miller, D., & Ullrich, K. (2014). Necessity entrepreneurship and competitive strategy. *Small Business Economics, 44*(1), 37-54. doi:10.1007/s11187-014-9589-x

Bocconcelli, R., Cioppi, M., Fortezza, F., Francioni, B., Pagano, A., Savelli, E., & Spendiani, S. (2018). SMEs and marketing: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 20*, 227-254. doi:10.1111/ijmr.12128

Boddy, C. R. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *19*(4), 426–432. doi:10.1108/QMR-06-2016-0053

Bogers, M., Chesbrough, H., Heaton, S., & Teece, D. J. (2019). Strategic management of open innovation: A dynamic capabilities perspective. *California Management Review, 62*, 77–94. doi:10.1177/0008125619885150

Botha, M., van Vuuren, J. J., & Kunene, T. (2015). An integrated entrepreneurial performance model focusing on the importance and proficiency of competencies for start-up and established SMEs. *South African Journal of Business Management*, *46*, 55-65. Retrieved from https://journals.co.za/content/journal/busman

Bowden, C., & Galindo-Gonzalez, S. (2015). Interviewing when you're not face-to-face. The use of email interviews in a phenomenological study. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 10,* 79-92. Retrieved from https://www.informingscience.org/Journals/IJDS/Overview

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*(2), 27-40. doi:10.3316/qrj0902027

Bratnicka, K. (2015). Relationship between leadership styles and organizational creativity. *Management & Business Administration. Central Europe*, *23*, 70-79. doi:10.7206/mba.ce.2084-3356.134

Bristowe, K., Selman, L., & Murtagh, F. E. M. (2015). Qualitative research methods in renal medicine: An introduction. *Nephrology, Dialysis, Transplantation, 30*, 1424-1431. doi:10.1093/ndt/gfu410

Britton, S., Pieterse, T., & Lawrence, H. (2017). The lived experiences of radiographers in Gauteng. *South African Radiographer, 55*(1), 28-32. Retrieved from sar.org.za

Brooks, J. S., & Normore, A. H. (2015). Qualitative research and educational leadership: Essential dynamics to consider when designing and conducting studies. *International Journal of Educational Management, 29*, 798-806.

doi:10.1108/IJEM-06-2015-0083

Brown, C., & Thornton, M. (2015). How entrepreneurship theory created economics. *Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics, 16,* 401-420. Retrieved from https://mises.org/library/quarterly-journal-austrian-economics/0

Brown, S. A., Sullivan, Y. W., & Venkatesh, V. (2016). Guidelines for conducting mixed-methods research: An extension and illustration. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 17*, 435-494. Retrieved from https://aisel.aisnet.org/jais

Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2015). *Business research methods*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Buisman-Pijlman, F., & Willison, J. (2016). PhD prepared: Research skill development across the undergraduate years. *International Journal of Researcher Development, 7,* 63-83. doi:10.1108/IJED-07-2015-0018

Buli, B. M. (2017). Entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, and performance of SMEs in the manufacturing industry: Evidence from Ethiopian enterprises. *Management Research Review, 40*, 292-309. doi:10.1108/MRR-07-2016-0173

Burkholder, G. J., Cox, K. A., & Crawford, L. M. (2016). *The scholar-practitioner's guide to research design*. Baltimore, MD: Laureate Publishing.

Bylund, P. L., & McCaffrey, M. (2017). A theory of entrepreneurship and institutional uncertainty. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *32,* 461-475. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2017.05.006

Caleb, T. C. (2015). Spotlight on ethics: Institutional review boards as systemic bullies. *Journal of Higher Education Policy & Management, 37*(1), 14-29.

doi:10.1080/1360080X.2014.991530

Calopa, M. K. (2017). Business owner and manager's attitudes towards financial decision-making and strategic planning: Evidence from Croatian SMEs. Management: *Journal of Contemporary Management Issues, 22*, 103-116. doi:10.30924/mjcmi/2017.22.1.103

Camille, Y., Nian-Lin Reena, H., & Ban Leong, S. (2016). Legal and ethical issues in research. *Indian Journal of Anaesthesia*, *60,* 76-80. doi:10.4103/0019-5049.190627

Cant, M. C., & Wild, J. A. (2016). The use of traditional marketing tools by SMEs in an emerging economy: A South African perspective. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, *14*(1), 64-70. doi:10.21511/ppm.14(1).2016.07

Cantillon, R. (1755). *Essay on the nature of trade in general*. (Henry Higgs, 1959). London, England: Henry Higgs.

Carolan, C. M., Smith, A., & Forbat, L. (2016). Developing the descarte model: The design of case study research in health care. *Qualitative Health Research, 26*, 626-639. doi:10.1177/1049732315602488

Cassar, G. (2017). Industry and startup experience on entrepreneur forecast performance in new firms. *Journal of Business Venturing, 29*, 137-151. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.10.002

Casson, M. (2017). Entrepreneurship: A personal view. *International Journal of the Economics of Business*, *21*(1), 7-13. doi:10.1080/13571516.2013.864115

Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report, 21*, 811-831. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr

Çemberci, M., & Civelek, M. E. (2018). Effect of organizational support in team working on creativity and personal initiative of employees. *International Journal of Eurasia Social Sciences, 9,* 1144-1155. Retrieved from http://www.ijoess.com/Anasayfa.Aspx

Chatzoudes, D., Chatzoglou, P., & Viraimaki, E. (2015). The central role of knowledge management in business operations: Developing a new conceptual framework. *Business Process Management Journal, 21,* 1117–1139. doi:10.1108/BPMJ-10-2014-0099

Chawla, D., & Pandey, S. (2016). Using qualitative research for establishing content validity of e-lifestyle and website quality constructs. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 19*, 339-356. doi:10.1108/QMR-05-2015-0033

Chen, Z., Zhu, J., & Zhou, M. (2015). How does a servant leader fuel the service fire? A multilevel model of servant leadership, individual self-identity, group competition climate, and customer service performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 100,* 511-521. doi:10.1037/a0038036

Cibangu, S. K. (2013). A memo of qualitative research for information science: Toward theory construction. *Journal of Documentation, 69*, 194-213. doi:10.1108/00220411311300048

Clark, M. E., & Bower, J. D. (2016). Career experiences of women with major financial barriers. *The Career Development Quarterly, 64*, 373-386. doi:10.1002/cdq.12072

Coda, R., de Castro Krakauer, P. V., & de Franca Berne, D. (2017). Are small business owners entrepreneurs? Exploring small business manager behavioral profiles in the São Paulo metropolitan region. *Management Journal, 53*, 152-163. doi:10.1016/j.rausp.2017.05.011

Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing, 25*, 435-436. Retrieved from http://www.medsurgnursing.net/cgi-bin/WebObjects/MSNJournal.woa

Constantinou, C. S., Georgiou, M., & Perdikogianni, M. (2017). A comparative method for themes saturation (CoMeTS) in qualitative interviews. *Qualitative Research, 17*, 571-588. doi:10.1177/1468794116686650

Cook, R. A., & Wolverton, J. B. (2015). A scorecard for small business performance. *Journal of Small Business Strategy, 6*, 1-18. Retrieved from http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journal/jbs

Cope, D. G. (2015). Case study research methodology in nursing research. *Oncology Nursing Forum, 42*, 681-682. doi:10.1188/15.ONF.681-682

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Cuervo-Cazurra, A., Andersson, U., Brannen, M. Y., Nielsen, B. B., & Reuber, A. (2016). From the editors: Can I trust your findings? Ruling out alternative explanations in international business research. *Journal of International Business*

Studies, *47*, 881-897. doi:10.1057/s41267-016-0005-4

Daher, M., Carré, D., Jaramillo, A., Olivares, H., & Tomicic, A. (2017). Experience and meaning in qualitative research: A conceptual review and a methodological device proposal. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *18*, 62-85. doi:10.17169/fgs- 18.3.2696

Dahmen, P., & Rodríguez, E. (2014). Financial literacy and the success of small businesses: An observation from a small business development center. *Numeracy, 7*(1), 1-12. doi:10.5038/1936-4660.7.1.3

Damoah, O. B. O., Ashie, A., & Kekesi, E. K. (2016). The propensity to participate in formal training programmes: Evidence from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana. *World Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management, and Sustainable Development, 12*, 344-358. doi:10.1108/wjemsd-07-2016-0033

Damsa, D., & Ugelvik, T. (2017). A difference that makes a difference? Reflexivity and researcher effects in an all-foreign prison. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*(1), 1-10. doi:10.1177/1609406917713132

Davidsson, P. (2015). Entrepreneurial opportunities and the entrepreneurship nexus: A re-conceptualization. *Journal of Business Venturing, 30*, 674-695. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2015.01.002

Day, G. S. (2017). An outside-in approach to resource-based theories. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 42*(1), 27-28. doi:10.1007/s11747-013-0348-3

Derecskei, A. (2016). How do leadership styles influence the creativity of employees? *Society & Economy*, *38*, 103-118. doi:10.1556/204.2016.38.1.7

Didenko, V., & Morozko, N. (2015). Evaluating the effectiveness of strategic financial management of small businesses. *Economics, Taxes & Law, 11*(2), 94-100. doi:10.26794/1999-849X-2015-0-2-94-100

Dikko, M. (2016). Establishing construct validity and reliability: Pilot testing of a qualitative interview for research in Takaful (Islamic Insurance). *The Qualitative Report*, *21,* 521-528. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr

Doll, J. L. (2017). Structured interviews: Developing interviewing skills in human resource management courses. *Management Teaching Review, 3,* 46-61. doi:10.1177/2379298117722520

Donnelly, L. F. (2017). Aspirational characteristics for effective leadership of improvement teams. *Pediatric Radiology*, *47*(1), 17-21. doi:10.1007/s00247-016-3689-5

Donnini Maccio, D. (2015). Ethics, economics, and power in the Cambridge Apostles internationalism between the two world wars. *European Journal of International Relations*, *22*, 696-721. doi:10.1177/1354066115600506

Draper, J. (2015). Ethnography: Principles, practice, and potential. *Nursing Standard*, *29*, 36-41. doi:10.7748/ns.29.36.36. e8937

Drew, H. (2014). Overcoming barriers: Qualitative interviews with German elites. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods, 12*, 77-86. Retrieved from www.ejbrm.com

Duan, Z., Wang, C., & Yu, L. (2016). From nonprofit organizations to social enterprise. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *28,* 1287-1306.

doi:10.1108/IJCHM-2014-0230

Dunne, T. C., Aaron, J. R., McDowell, W. C., Urban, D. J., & Geho, P. R. (2016). The impact of leadership on small business innovativeness. *Journal of Business Research, 69*, 4876-4881. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.046

Duta, A., & Duta, V. M. (2017). Quantitative methods of research on banking risks. *Finance: Challenges of the Future, 1*, 78-87. Retrieved from www.financejournal.ro/

Dutot, V. (2017). Exploring the double influence of CEOs' management style on the development of SMEs' corporate reputation. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship, 29*, 351-374. doi:10.1080/08276331.2017.1339540

East, R. (2016). Bias in the evaluation of research methods. *Marketing Theory, 16*, 219-231. doi:10.1177/1470593115609797

Elo, S., Kaariainen, M., Kanste, O., Polkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngas, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. *Sage, Open, 4*(1), 1-10. doi:10.1177/2158244014522633

Elsawah, S., Guillaume, J. S. A., Filatova, T., Rook, J., & Jakeman, A. J. (2015). A methodology for eliciting, representing and analyzing stakeholder knowledge for decision making on complex socio-ecological systems: From cognitive maps to agent-based models. *Journal of Environmental Management, 151*, 500-516. doi:10.1016/j.jenvman.2014.11.028

Elsetouhi, A. M., Hammad, A. A., Nagm, A.-E. A., & Elbaz, A. M. (2018). Perceived leader behavioral integrity and employee voice in SMEs travel agents: The mediating role of empowering leader behaviors. *Tourism Management, 65,* 100-115. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2017.09.022

Ep Chedli, M. K. (2016). Entrepreneurial motivation and performance of enterprises. *Economics, Management & Financial Markets, 11*, 175-188. Retrieved from https://addletonacademicpublishers.com/economics-management-and-financial-markets

Evans, A. M., & van Beest, I. (2017). Gain-loss framing effects in dilemmas of trust and reciprocity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 73,* 151-163. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2017.06.012

Evers, J., & Gordian, M. (2017). Reducing the risk of noncompliance. *Pharmaceutical Executive, 37*(2), 30-31. Retrieved from http://www.pharmexec.com/reducing-risk-noncompliance

Faisal, A. (2016). Marketing strategies in online/digital marketing. *Account and Financial Management Journal, 1*, 479-486. doi:10.18535/afmj/v1i8.01

Favoreu, C., Carassus, D., & Maurel, C. (2016). Strategic management in the public sector: A rational, political or collaborative approach? *International Review of Administrative Sciences, 82,* 435-453. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/home/ras

Fellnhofer, K. (2017). Drivers of innovation success in sustainable businesses. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 167,* 1534-1545. doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.08.197

Fernandez, S., Malatesta, D., & Smith, C. R. (2015). Race, gender, and government contracting: Different explanations or new prospects for theory? *Public*

Administration Review, *73*, 109-120. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2012. 02684.x

Flynn, C. B., Haynie, J. J., & Mazzei, M. J. (2016). Moving beyond initial success: Promoting innovation in small businesses through high-performance work practices. *Business Horizons, 59,* 51-60. doi:10.1016.bushor.2015.08.004

Fought, R. L., & Misawa, M. (2016). Effective leadership in academic health sciences libraries: A qualitative phenomenological study. *Journal of Library Administration*, *56*, 974-989. doi:10.1080/01930826.2015.1130548

Frederiksen, L., Wennberg, K., & Balachandran, C. (2016). Mobility and entrepreneurship: Evaluating the scope of knowledge-based theories of entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *40*, 359–380. doi:10.1111/etap.12223

Freeman, D. (2015). Entrepreneurial leadership in the context of company start-up and growth. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, *8*(4), 35-39. doi:10.1002/jls.21351

Frid, C. J. (2015). Acquiring financial resources to form new ventures: The impact of personal characteristics on organizational emergence. *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, 27*, 323-341. doi:10.1080/08276331.2015.1082895

Fuentelsaz, L., Maicas, J. P., & Montero, J. (2018). Entrepreneurs and innovation: The contingent role of institutional factors. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, *36*, 686-711. doi:10.1177/0266242618766235

Furukawa, C. (2016). Dynamics of a critical problem-solving project team and creativity in a multiple-project environment. *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, *22,* 92-110. doi:10.1108/tpm-04-2015-0021

Fusch, P. I., Fusch, G., & Ness, L. R. (2018). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 20,* 1408-1416. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr

Galpin, T., Whitttington, J. L., & Bell, G. (2015). Is your sustainability strategy sustainable? Creating a culture of sustainability. *Corporate Governance, 15*(1), 1-17. doi:10.1108/CG-01-2013-0004

Galvão, M. B., de Carvalho, R. C., de Oliveira, L. A. B., & de Medeiros, D. D. (2018). Customer loyalty approach based on CRM for SMEs. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 33,* 706-716. doi:10.1108/JBIM-07-2017-0166

Gambetti, R. C., & Graffigna, G. (2015). Value co-creation between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of a company: Insights from a brand community failure. *Marketing Theory, 15,* 155-178. doi:10.1177/1470593114545004

Gandy, D. L. (2015). Small business strategies for company profitability and sustainability (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3700959)

Gatzert, N. (2015). The impact of corporate reputation and reputation damaging events on financial performance: *Empirical evidence from the literature. European Management Journal, 33,* 485-499. doi:10.1016/j.emj.2015.10.001

Gilboa, S., Seger-Guttmann, T., & Mimran, O. (2019). The unique role of relationship marketing in small businesses' customer experience. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 51,* 152-164. dio:10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.06.004

Gill, M., Bagshaw, S. M., McKenzie, E., Oxland, P., Oswell, D., Boulton, D., . . . Stelfox,

H. T. (2016). Patient and family member-led research in the intensive care unit: A novel approach to patient-centered research. *Plos ONE, 11*(8), 1-16. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0160947

Glaeser, E. L., Kerr, S. P., & Kerr, W. R. (2015). Entrepreneurship and urban growth: An empirical assessment with historical mines. *Review of Economics and Statistics, 97*, 498-520. doi:10.1162/REST_a_00456

Goertzen, M. J. (2017). Introduction to quantitative research and data. *Library Technology Reports, 53*(4), 12-18. Retrieved from https://librarytechnology.org

Goffnett, S. P., Lepisto, L., & Hayes, R. (2016). Using the socio-economic approach to management to augment lean six sigma. *International Journal of Productivity & Performance Management, 65*, 80-97. doi:10.1108/IJPPM-02-2014-0028

Goldman, G., & Bounds, M. (2015). Ethical conduct in business organizations: The opinion of management students in Gauteng. *Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review, 3*(1), 9–27. doi:10.15678/EBER.2015.030102

Golicic, S. L., Flint, D. J., & Signori, P. (2017). Building business sustainability through resilience in the wine industry. *International Journal of Wine Business Research, 29*, 74-97. doi:10.1108/IJWBR-02-2016-0005

Gopaldas, A. (2016). A front-to-back guide to writing a qualitative research article. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, *19*, 115-121. doi:10.1108/qmr-08-2015-0074

Guillemin, M., Gillam, L., Barnard, E., Stewart, P., Walker, H., & Rosenthal, D. (2016). We're checking them out: Indigenous and non-Indigenous research participants' accounts of deciding to be involved in research. *International Journal for Equity in Health, 15*(1), 1-10. doi:10.1186/s12939-016-0301-4

Gupta, D., & Vishvakarma, S. K. (2016). Improved short-channel characteristics with long data retention time in extreme short-channel flash memory devices. *IEEE Transactions on Electron Devices, 63*, 668-674. doi:10.1109/TED.2015.2510018

Gurses, K., & Ozcan, P. (2015). Entrepreneurship in regulated markets: Framing contests and collective action to introduce pay TV in the U.S. *Academy of Management Journal, 58*, 1709-1739. doi:10.5465/amj.2013.0775

Hailemariam, M., Fekadu, A., Prince, M., & Hanlon, C. (2017). Engaging and staying engaged: A phenomenological study of barriers to equitable access to mental healthcare for people with severe mental disorders in a rural African setting. *International Journal for Equity in Health, 16*(1), 1-12. doi:10.1186/s12939-017-0657-0

Hamilton, D. K., & Stichler, J. F. (2015). Institutional review boards and peer-reviewed publication. *Health Environments Research & Design Journal (HERD)*, *8*, 81-84. doi:10.1177/1937586714567647

Hansen, C., Mena, C., & Skipworth, H. (2017). Exploring political risk in offshoring engagements. *International Journal of Production Research, 55,* 2051-2067. doi:10.1080/00207543.2016.1268278

Harvey, L. (2014). Beyond member-checking: A dialogic approach to the research interview. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 38*(1), 23-38. doi:10.1080/1743727X.2014.914487

Havenvid, M. I., Holmen, E., Linné, Å., & Pedersen, A. C. (2017). Creating relationship continuity across projects in the construction industry. *IMP Journal*, *11*, 207-229. doi:10.1108/IMP-07-2016-0015

Hays, D. G., Wood, C., Dahl, H., & Kirk-Jenkins, A. (2016). Methodological rigor in journal of counseling & development, qualitative research articles: A 15-year review. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 94*, 172-183. doi:10.1002/jcad.12074

He, Q. (2018). Quantitative research in systemic functional linguistics. *English Language Teaching, 11*, 110-119. doi:10.5539/elt.v11n1p110

Helmig, B., Spraul, K., & Ingenhoff, D. (2016). Under positive pressure: How stakeholder pressure affects corporate social responsibility implementation. *Business & Society, 55*, 151-187. doi:10.1177/0007650313477841

Hernández-Hernández, F., & Sancho-Gil, J. M. (2015). A learning process within an education research group: An approach to learning qualitative research methods. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *18*, 651-667. doi:10.1080/13645579.2015.1049468

Houghton, C., Murphy, K., Shaw, D., & Casey, D. (2015). Qualitative case study data analysis: An example from practice. *Nurse Researcher, 22*(5), 8-12. doi:10.7748/nr.22.5.8.e1307

Hsu, D. K., Wiklund, J., & Cotton, R. D. (2017). Success, failure, and entrepreneurial reentry: An experimental assessment of the veracity of self-efficacity and prospect theory. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 41*(1), 19-47.

doi:10.1111/etap.12166

Hui, J. S., & Gerber, E. M. (2017). Developing makerspaces as sites of entrepreneurship. *CSCW '17*, 2023-2038. doi:10.1145/2998181.2998264

Hurst, S., Arulogun, O. S., Owolabi, M. O., Akinyemi, R., Uvere, E., Warth, S., & Ovbiagele, B. (2015). Pretesting qualitative data collection procedures to facilitate methodological adherence and team building in Nigeria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 14,* 53-64. doi:10.1177/160940691501400106

Huu, L., & Kock, S. (2011). Managing SMEs' survival from financial crisis in a transition economy: A chaos theory approach. *Journal of General Management, 37*(1), 31–45. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/home/gem

Hyder, S., & Lussier, R. N. (2016). Why businesses succeed or fail: A study on small businesses in Pakistan. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies, 8,* 82-100. doi:10.1108/JEEE-03-2015-0020

Jackson, E. A., & Jackson, H. F. (2017). The role of corporate social responsibility in improving firms' business in directions of sustainable development, accountability and transparency. *African Journal of Economic and Sustainable Development, 6,* 105–118. doi:10.1504/AJESD.2017.10010992

Jackson, J. L., & Larson, E. (2016). Prevalence and commonalities of informed consent templates for biomedical research. *Research Ethics, 12*, 167-175. doi:10.1177/1747016116649995

Jena, L. K., Pradhan, S., & Panigrahy, N. P. (2018). Pursuit of organizational trust: Role of employee engagement, psychological well-being and transformational leadership. *Asia Pacific Management Review*, *23*, 227-234. doi:10.1016/j.apmrv.2017.11.001

Jenkins, A., & McKelvie, A. (2016). What is entrepreneurial failure? Implications for future research. *International Small Business Journal*, *34*, 176-188. doi:10.1177/0266242615574011

Jin, S. (2015). Leading employee creativity: The relationship between leadership styles and employee creativity. *Review of General Management*, *21*(1), 17-28. Retrieved from www.managementgeneral.ro/

Johnston, J. (2018). Strategies for new small businesses to be successful beyond 5 years. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 10826212)

Jug, T., & Vilar, P. (2015). Focus group interview through storytelling researching preschool children's attitude towards books and reading. *Journal of Documentation*, *71,* 1300-1316. doi:10.1108/JD-01-2015-0008

Kang, H., & Busser, J. A. (2018). Impact of service climate and psychological capital on employee engagement: The role of organizational hierarchy. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *75*(1), 1-9. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.03.003

Karadag, H. (2015). Financial management challenges in small and medium-sized enterprises: A strategic management approach. *Emerging Markets Journal*, *5*(1), 26-40. doi:10.5195/emaj.2015.67

Kegel, P. (2016). A comparison of startup entrepreneurial activity between the United States and Japan. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice, 17*(1), 18-26.

Retrieved from http://jmppnet.com

Kelly, C., Joanne, B., Jane, F., & Sue, B. (2014). The impact of physical activity on psychosocial outcomes in men receiving androgen deprivation therapy for prostate cancer: A systematic review. *Health Psychology, 33*, 1288-1297. doi:10.1037/hea0000006

Kenno, S. A., McCracken, S. A., & Salterio, S. E. (2017). Financial reporting interview-based research: A field research primer with an illustrative example. *Behavioral Research in Accounting, 29,* 77-102. doi:10.2308/bria-51648

Kersten, R., Harms, J., Liket, K., & Maas, K. (2017). Small Firms, large Impact? A systematic review of the SME finance literature. *World Development, 97*, 330 348. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.04.012

Khadhraoui, M., Lakhal, L., Plaisent, M., & Bernard, P. (2016). The impact of entrepreneurial orientation on performance and customer satisfaction: The moderator effect of network capabilities. *Journal of Economic Development, Management, IT, Finance & Marketing*, *8*, 66-76. Retrieved from https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/9085879

Khelil, N. (2016). The many faces of entrepreneurial failure: Insights from an empirical taxonomy. *Journal of Business Venturing, 31,* 72-94. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2015.08.001

Khosa, R. M., & Kalitanyi, V. (2015). Migration reasons, traits and entrepreneurial motivation of African immigrant entrepreneurs: Towards an entrepreneurial migration progression. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places* *in the Global Economy*, *9*, 132-155. doi:10.1108/JEC-07-2014-0011

Kihn, L. A., & Ihantola, E. M. (2015). Approaches to validation and evaluation in qualitative studies of management accounting. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, *12*, 230-255. doi:10.1108/QRAM-03-2013-0012

Kireyev, P., Kumar, V., & Ofek, E. (2017). Match your own price? Self-matching as a retailer's multichannel pricing strategy. *Marketing Science*, *36*, 908-930. doi:10.1287/mksc.2017.1035

Kirzner, I. M. (1973). *Competition and entrepreneurship*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Klein, P. G. (2016). ThinkBox: Why entrepreneurs need firms, and the theory of the firm needs entrepreneurship theory. *Revista de Administração*, *51*, 323–326. doi:10.1016/j.rausp.2016.06.007

Knight, F. G. (1985). *Risk, uncertainty and profit*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kolstad, I., & Wiig, A. (2015). Education and entrepreneurial success. *Small Business Economics*, *44*, 783-796. doi:10.1007/s11187-014-9621-1

Kopmann, J., Kock, A., Killen, C. P., & Gemünden, H. G. (2017). The role of project portfolio management in fostering both deliberate and emergent strategy. *International Journal of Project Management*, *35*, 557-570. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2017.02.011

Kozleski, B. E. (2017). The uses of qualitative research: Powerful methods to inform evidence-based practice in education. *Research and Practice for Persons with*

Severe Disabilities, *42*(1), 19-32. doi:10.1177/1540796916683710

Kraft, S. A., Porter, K. M., Shah, S. K., & Wilfond, B. S. (2017). Comprehension and choice under the revised common rule: Improving informed consent by offering reasons why some enroll in research and others do not. *The American Journal of Bioethics, 17,* 53-55. doi:10.1080/15265161.2017.13285

Kuechle, G. (2013). The determinants of effective entrepreneurial behavior: An evolutionary game theory critique. *International Journal of Management, 30*, 507-521. Retrieved from http://www.ijm-apm.com/

Kuratko, D. F. (2016). *Entrepreneurship: Theory, process, and practice*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Kvorning, L. V., Hasle, P., & Christensen, U. (2015). Motivational factors influencing small construction and auto repair enterprises to participate in occupational health and safety programmes. *Safety Science*, *71*, 253-263. doi:10.1016/j.ssci.2014.06.003

Kyser, D. C., & Hill, T. (2016). *Through the looking glass: Company culture as a reflection of founder personality in entrepreneurial organizations*. Paper No. 17-006 presented at the Sixth International Engaged Management Scholarship Conference, Philadelphia, PA. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2869658

La, S., & Yi, Y. (2015). A critical review of customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, relationship marketing, and customer relationship management. *Korean Marketing Review, 30*(1), 53-53. doi:10.15830/kmr.2015.30.1.53

Lachiewicz, S., Marek, M., Pawel, P., & Maciej, S. (2018). Servitization as a concept for managing the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. *Management, 22*(2), 80-94. doi:10.2478/manment-2018-0024

Laihonen, H., & Pekkola, S. (2016). Impacts of using a performance measurement system in supply chain management: A case study. *International Journal of Production Research, 54,* 5607-5617. doi:10.1080/00207543.2016.1181810

Le, A. V., & Raven, P. V. (2015). Woman entrepreneurship in rural Vietnam: Success and motivational factors. *Journal of Developing Areas*, *49,* 57–76. doi:10.1353/jda.2015.0024

Lee, D. J., Weathers, F. W., Sloan, D. M., Davis, M. T., & Domino, J. L. (2017). Development and initial psychometric evaluation of the semi-structured emotion regulation interview. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 99*, 56-66. doi:10.1080/00223891.2016.1215992

Lee, S., Cheong, M., Kim, M., & Yun, S. (2016). Never too much? The curvilinear relationship between empowering leadership and task performance. *Group & Organization Management, 41*(2), 1-28. doi:10.1177/1059601116646474

Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2016). *Practical research: Planning and design* (11th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Leko, M. M. (2014). The value of qualitative methods in social validity research. *Remedial and Special Education, 35*, 275-286. doi:10.1177/0741932514524002

Leković, B., & Marić, S. (2015). Measures of small business success/performance: Importance, reliability and usability. *Industrija*, *43*(2), 7-26.

doi:10.5937/industrija43-7209

Letonja, M., Jeraj, M., & Marič, M. (2016). An empirical study of the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and innovativeness of successors in family SMEs. *Organizacija, 49,* 225-239. doi:10.1515/orga-2016-0020

Lewis, S. (2015). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. *Health Promotion Practice*, *16,* 473-475. doi:10.1177/1524839915580941

Lezgovko, A. (2016). Theoretical aspects and development of the mechanism for risk management in small- and medium-sized business. *Economics and Culture, 13,* 104-113. doi:10.1515/jec-2016-0013

Liberale, A. P., & Kovach, J. V. (2017). Reducing the time for IRB reviews: A case study. *Journal of Research Administration, 48,* 37-50. Retrieved from https://journal.srainternational.org/

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lopes, A. P. V. B. V., Kissimoto, K. O., Salerno, M. S., de Carvalho, M. M., & Laurindo, F. J. B. (2016). Innovation management: A systematic literature analysis of the innovation management evolution. *Brazilian Journal of Operations & Production Management*, *13*(1), 16-30. doi:10.14488/BJOPM. 2016.v13.n1.a2

Lub, V. (2015). Validity in qualitative evaluation: Linking purposes, paradigms, and perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 14*(5), 1-8. doi:10.1177/1609406915621406

Lucas, S. R. (2017). Where the rubber meets the road: Probability and nonprobability moments in experiment, interview, archival, administrative, and ethnographic data collection. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, 2*(1), 1-24. doi:10.1177/2378023116634709

Lussier, R. N., & Corman, J. (1995). There are few differences between successful and failed small businesses. *Journal of Small Business Strategy, 6*(1), 21-34. Retrieved from http://www.jsbs.org/

Madura, J. (2015). *International financial management* (12th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning

Maheshwari, V., Gunesh, P., Lodorfos, G., & Konstantopoulou, A. (2017). Exploring HR practitioners' perspective on employer branding and its role in organizational attractiveness and talent management. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 25*, 742-761. doi:10.1108/ijoa-03-2017-113

Makinen, E. I. (2018). Complexity leadership theory and the leaders of transdisciplinary science. *Informing Science: The International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline*, *21*, 133-155. doi:10.28945/4009

Malshe, A. (2015). From finance to marketing: The impact of financial leverage on customer satisfaction. *Journal of Marketing, 79*, 21-38. doi:10.1509/jm.13.0312

Manley, K., Martin, A., Jackson, C., & Wright, T. (2016). Using systems thinking to identify workforce enablers for a whole systems approach to urgent and emergency care delivery: A multiple case study. *BMC Health Services Research, 16*(368), 1-10. doi:10.1186/s12913-016-1616-y

Mansoor, S., Shah, F. T., & Tayyaba, A. (2015). Impact of training and development on organization performance with mediating role of intention to quit as human resource quality cost. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences, 4,* 787-797. Retrieved from http://european-science.com/eojn

Maramwidze-Merrison, E. (2016). Innovative methodologies in qualitative research: Social media window for accessing organizational elites for interviews. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, *14*, 157–167. Retrieved from www.ejbrm.com/

Marrone, S. R. (2016). Informed consent examined within the context of cultural congruent care: An interprofessional perspective. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 7,* 342-348. doi:10.1177/1043659615569537

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Martínez, K. R. G., Crespo, Á. H., & Fernández-Laviada, A. (2017). Influence of perceived risk on entrepreneurial desirability and feasibility: Multidimensional approach for nascent entrepreneurs. *Journal of Risk Research*, *20*, 218–236. doi:10.1080/13669877.2015.1042506

Mathras, D., Cohen, A. B., Mandel, N., & Mick, D. G. (2016). The effects of religion on consumer behavior: A conceptual framework and research agenda. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *26*, 298-311. doi:10.1016/j.jcps.2015.08.001

Mavhandu-Mudzusi, A. H. (2018). The couple interview as a method of collecting data in interpretative phenomenological analysis studies. *International Journal of*

Qualitative Methods, 17(1), 1-9. doi:10.1177/1609406917750994

Maxwell, J. A. (2016). Expanding the history and range of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 10*(1), 12-27. doi:10.1177/1558689815571132

Mazzei, M. J., Flynn, C. B., & Haynie, J. J. (2016). Moving beyond initial success: Promoting innovation in small businesses through high-performance work practices. *Business Horizons, 59*, 51-60. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2015.08.004

McAlpine, L. (2016). Why might you use narrative methodology? A story about narrative. *Estonian Journal of Education, 4*(1), 32-57. doi:10.12697/eha.2016.4.1.02b

McCusker, K., & Gunaydin, S. (2015). Research using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods and choice based on the research. *Perfusion, 30*, 537-542. doi:10.1186/s40814-015-0026-y

McDowell, W. C., Harris, M. L., & Geho, P. R. (2016). Longevity in small business: The effect of maturity on strategic focus and business performance. *Journal of Business Research, 69*, 1904-1908. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.10.077

Merkisz-Guranowska, A., Bienczak, M., Kicinski, M., & Zmuda-trzebiatowski, P. (2016). Location of Airports: Selected quantitative methods. *Scientific Journal of Logistics, 12*, 283-295. doi:10.17270/J.LOG.2016.3.8

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Mezhouda, A. (2019). Strategic planning of scientific research activities: What is the added value for Algerian research institutions? *International Journal of Technology Management & Sustainable Development, 18,* 261-277. doi:10.1386/tmsd_00009_1

Miettinen, T., & Stenbacka, R. (2018). Strategic short-termism: Implications for the management and acquisition of customer relationships. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 153,* 200-222. doi:10.1016/j.jebo.2018.07.006

Mikolajek-Gocejna, M. (2016). The relationship between corporate social responsibility and corporate financial performance: Evidence from empirical studies. *Comparative Economic Research, 19,* 67-84. doi:10.1515/cer-2016-0030

Miloloza, I. (2018). Analysis of the leadership style in relation to the characteristics of Croatian enterprises. *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems, 16,* 249-264. doi:10.7906/indecs.16.2.5

Miracle, V. A. (2016). The Belmont report: The triple crown of research ethics. *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing, 35,* 223-228. doi:10.1097/DCC.0000000000000186

Mishra, C. S., & Zachary, R. K. (2015). The theory of entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal, 5,* 251-268. doi:10.1515/erj-2015-0042

Mohamad Radzi, K., Mohd Nor, M. N., & Ali, S. M. (2017). The impact of internal factors on small business success: A case of small enterprises under the Felda scheme. *Asian Academy of Management Journal, 22*(1), 27–55. doi:10.21315/aamj2017.22.1.2

Mokhber, M., Gi Gi, T., Abdul Rasid, S. Z., Vakilbashi, A., Mohd Zamil, N., & Woon

Seng, Y. (2017). Succession planning and family business performance in SMEs. *Journal of Management Development, 36*, 330-347. doi:10.1108/JMD-12-2015-0171

Moon, C. (2015). The (un)changing role of the researcher. *International Journal of Market Research, 57*(1), 15-16. doi:10.2501/IJMR-2015-002

Moore, G. (2015). Virtue in business: Conversations with Aristotle. *Business Ethics Quarterly, 25*, 587-589. doi:10.1017/beq.2015.27

Morrison, J., Clement, T., Nestel, D., & Brown, J. (2016). Underdiscussed, underused and underreported: Pilot work in team-based qualitative research. *Qualitative Research Journal, 16*, 314-330. doi:10.1108/QRJ-07-2015-0053

Morse, J. M. (2015a). "Data were saturated..." *Qualitative Health Research, 25*, 587-588. doi:10.1177/1049732315576699

Morse, J. M. (2015b). Underlying ethnography. *Qualitative Health Research, 26*, 875-876. doi:10.1177/1049732316645320

Morse, J. M., & Coulehan, J. (2015). Maintaining confidentiality in qualitative publications. *Qualitative Health Research, 25*, 151-152. doi:10.1177/1049732314563489

Mueller, B. A., & Shepherd, D. A. (2016). Making the most of failure experiences: Exploring the relationship between business failure and the identification of business opportunities. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 40*, 457-487. doi:10.10.1111/etap.12116

Muenjohn, N., & McMurray, A. (2016). The impact of leadership on workplace innovation in Thai and Vietnamese SMEs. *The Journal of Developing Areas, 50*, 479-486. doi:10.1353/jda.2016.0045

Neagu, C. (2016). The importance and role of small and medium-sized businesses. *Theoretical & Applied Economics, 23*, 331-338. Retrieved from http://www.ectap.ro/

Nelissen, J., Forrier, A., & Verbruggen, M. (2017). Employee development and voluntary turnover: Testing the employability paradox. *Human Resource Management Journal, 27*, 152-168. doi:10.1111/1748/8583.12136

Neugebauer, F., Figge, F., & Hahn, T. (2016). Planned or emergent strategy making? Exploring the formation of corporate sustainability strategies. *Business Strategy & The Environment*, *25*, 323-336. doi:10.1002/bse.1875

Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, *18*(2), 34-35. doi:10.1136/eb-2015-102054

Nolan, S., Hendricks, J., & Towell, A. (2015). Social networking sites (SNS): Exploring their uses and associated value for adolescent mothers in Western Australia in terms of social support provision and building social capital. *Midwifery*, *31*, 912-919. doi:10.1016/j.midw.2015.05.002

Northouse, P. G. (2018). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nouri, B. A., & Soltani, M. (2017). Analyzing the use of strategic management tools and techniques between Iranian firms. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, *16*(1), 1-18. Retrieved from https://ores.su/en/journals/academy-of-strategic-management-journal/

Nunes, L. B. (2015). Schumpeter's entrepreneurs in the 20th century: The Tucker automobile. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 102*(1), 14-20. doi:10.1016/j.techfore.2015.02.021

Olsen, J. D., McAllister, C., Grinnell, L. D., Walters, K. G., & Appunn, F. (2016). Applying constant comparative method with multiple investigators and inter-coder reliability. *The Qualitative Report, 21*, 26-42. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr

Omar, N. A., Aris, H. M., & Nazri, M. A. (2016). The effect of entrepreneurial orientation, innovation capability and knowledge creation on firm performance: A perspective on small scale entrepreneurs. *Jurnal Pengurusan*, *48,* 187-200. Retrieved from http://ejournal.ukm.my/pengurusan

Omolo, J. W. (2015). Training and development on performance of small and medium enterprises in Kisumu County, Kenya. *International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management*, *2*(8), 26-31. Retrieved from http://www.ijrbsm.org/

Onkelinx, J., Manolova, T. S., & Edelman, L. F. (2015). Human capital and SME internationalization: Empirical evidence from Belgium. *International Small Business Journal, 34,* 818–837. doi:10.1177/0266242615591856

Oppong, G. D., Chan, A. P. C., & Dansoh, A. (2017). A review of stakeholder management performance attributes in construction projects. *International Journal of Project Management, 35,* 1037-1051. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2017.04.015

Oyson, M., & Whittaker, H. (2015). Entrepreneurial cognition and behavior in the discovery and creation of international opportunities. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship, 13*, 303-336. doi:10.1007/s10843-015-0156-6

Packard, M. D. (2017). Where did interpretivism go in the theory of entrepreneurship? *Journal of Business Venturing, 32*, 536-549. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2017.05.004

Padgett, J., Gossett, K., Mayer, R., Chien, W. W., & Turner, F. (2017). Improving patient safety through high reliability organizations. *The Qualitative Report, 22*, 410-425. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr

Pai, S. (2017). *Small business marketing strategies for the first 5 years* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses database. (UMI No.10617309)

Paltayian, G., Gotzamani, K. D., Georgiou, A. C., & Andronikidis, A. (2017). Aligning customer requirements and organizational constraints to service processes and strategies. *Business Process Management Journal, 23*, 1018-1042. doi:10.1108/BPMJ-10-2015-0140

Panigrahi, S., Azizan, N., & Waris, M. (2018). Investigating the empirical relationship between service quality, trust, satisfaction, and intention of customers purchasing life insurance products. *Indian Journal of Marketing, 48*(1), 28-46. doi:10.17010/ijom/2018/v48/i1/120734

Park, J., & Park, M. (2016). Qualitative versus quantitative research methods: Discovery or justification? *Journal of Marketing Thought, 3*(1), 1-7. doi:10.15577/jmt.2016.03.01.1

Patton, M. (2015). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Peck, R., Olsen, C., & Devore, J. (2015). *Introduction to statistics and data analysis*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Petricca, K., Bekele, A., Berta, W., Gibson, J., & Pain, C. (2018). Advancing methods for health priority setting practice through the contribution of systems theory: Lessons from a case study in Ethiopia. *Social Science & Medicine*, *198,* 165-174. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.12.009

Pittino, D., Visintin, F., Lenger, T., & Sternad, D. (2016). Are high performance work practices necessary in family SMEs? An analysis of the impact on employee retention. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, *7*, 75–89. doi:10.1016/j.jfbs.2016.04.002

Ploem, M. C., Essink-Bot, M. L., & Stronks, K. (2013). Proposed EU data protection regulation is a threat to medical research. *British Medical Journal, 346,* 3534-3535. doi:10.1136/bmj.f3534

Psychogios, A. G., & Garev, S. (2015). Understanding complexity leadership behavior in SMEs: Lessons from a turbulent business environment. *Emergence: Complexity & Organization, 14*(3), 1-22. doi:10.emerg/10.17357.98eea28e4d77a95776a55842dd839d46

Purnama, C., & Subroto, W. T. (2016). Competition intensity, uncertainty environmental on the use of information technology and its impact on business performance small and medium enterprises (SMEs). *International Review of Management and*

Marketing, 6(4) Retrieved from https://www.econjournals.com/index.php/irmm/issue/archive

Rabie, C., Cant, M. C., & Wiid, J. A. (2016). Training and development in SMEs: South Africa's key to survival and success? *Journal of Applied Business Research (JABR), 32*, 1009-1024. doi:10.19030/jabr.v32i4.9717

Rafail, P. (2018). Nonprobability sampling and Twitter: Strategies for semibounded and bounded populations. *Social Science Computer Review, 36*, 195-211. doi:10.1177/0894439317709431

Rambe, P., & Makhalemele, N. (2015). Relationship between managerial competencies of owners/managers of emerging technology firms and business performance: A conceptual framework of internet cafe performance in South Africa. *International Business & Economics Research Journal, 14*, 677-690. doi:10.19030/iber.v14i4.9357

Ramoglou, S., & Tsang, E. K. (2017). In defense of common sense in entrepreneurship theory: Beyond philosophical extremities and linguistic abuses. *Academy of Management Review*, *42*, 738-744. doi:10.5465/amr.2017.0169

Ranney, M. L., Meisel, Z. F., Choo, E. K., Garro, A. C., Sasson, C., & Morrow, K. (2015). Interview-based qualitative research in emergency care part II: Data collection, analysis and results reporting. *Official Journal of the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine, 22*, 1103-1112. doi:10.1111/acem.12735

Rauch, A., Rosenbusch, N., Unger, J., & Frese, M. (2016). The effectiveness of cohesive and diversified networks: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Business Research, 69*, 554-568. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.05.011

Razak, I., Nirwanto, N., & Triatmanto, B. (2016). The impact of product quality and price on customer satisfaction with the mediator of customer value. *Journal of Marketing and Consumer Research, 30*, 59-68. Retrieved from https://www.iiste.org/

Revilla, A. J., Pérez-Luño, A., & Nieto, M. J. (2016). Does family involvement in management reduce the risk of business failure? The moderating role of entrepreneurial orientation. *Family Business Review, 29*, 365-379. doi:10.1177/0894486516671075

Reynoso, J., & Cabrera, K. (2019). Managing informal service organizations at the base of the pyramid (BoP). *Journal of Services Marketing, 33*, 112-124. doi:10.1108/JSM-10-2018-0298

Rezaeizadeh, M., Hogan, M., O'Reilly, J., Cunningham, J., & Murphy, E. (2016). Core entrepreneurial competencies and their interdependencies: Insights from a study of Irish and Iranian entrepreneurs, university students, and academics. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal, 13*, 35-73. doi:10.1007/s11365-016-0390-y

Rich, M. (2015). Reflection-in-addition: Using reflective logs to build research into undergraduate projects. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods, 13*, 85-93. Retrieved from www.ejbrm.com/

Ridder, H. (2017). The theory contribution of case study research designs. *Business Research, 10*, 281-305. doi:10.1007/s40685-017-0045-z

Rikoon, H., Brenneman, M., Kim, L. E., Khorramdel, L., MacCann, C., Burrus, J., & Roberts, R. D. (2016). Facets of conscientiousness and their differential relationships with cognitive ability factors. *Journal of Research in Personality, 61*(1), 22-34. doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2016.01.002

Robson, C., & McCartan, K. (2016). *Real world research*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Ropega, J. (2016). Entrepreneurial behavior in periods of deterioration of small firms' condition. *Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review, 4,* 139-156. doi:10.15678/EBER.2016.040211

Rosenbaum, D., More, E., & Steane, P. (2016). A longitudinal qualitative case study of change in nonprofits: Suggesting a new approach to the management of change. *Journal of Management & Organization, 23*, 74-91. doi:10.1017/jmo.2016.6

Rosenthal, M. (2016). Methodology matters: Qualitative research methods: Why, when, and how to conduct interviews and focus groups in pharmacy research. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning, 8,* 509-516. doi:10.1016/j.cptl.2016.03.021

Ross, M. W., Iguchi, M. Y., & Panicker, S. (2018). Ethical aspects of data sharing and research participant protections. *The American Psychologist, 73,* 138-145. doi:10.1037/amp0000240

Rostamkalaei, A., & Freel, M. (2016). The cost of growth: Small firms and the pricing of bank loans. *Small Business Economics, 46,* 255-272. doi:10.1007/s11187-0159681-x

Roulet, T. J., Gill, M. J., Stenger, S., & Gill, D. J. (2017). Reconsidering the value of covert research: The role of ambiguous consent in participant observation. *Organizational Research Methods, 20,* 487-517. doi:10.1177/1094428117698745

Rule, P., & John, V. M. (2015). A necessary dialogue theory in case study research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 14*(4), 1-11. doi:10.1177/1609406915611575

Ruskin, J., Seymour, R. G., & Webster, C. M. (2016). Why create value for others? An exploration of social entrepreneurial motives. *Journal of Small Business Management, 54,* 1015-1037. doi:10.1111/jsbm.12229

Salman, D., Tawfik, Y., Samy, M., & Artal-Tur, A. (2017). A new marketing mix model to rescue the hospitality industry: Evidence from Egypt after the Arab Spring. *Future Business Journal, 3,* 47-69. doi:10.1016/j.fbj.2017.01.004

Salterio, S., Kenno, S., & McCracken, S. A. (2016). Financial reporting qualitative interview-based research: A primer with an illustrative example. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, *1*(1), 1-59. Retrieved from http://ssrn.com/abstract=2792438

Saminathan, M., Rana, R., Ramakrishnan, M. A., Karthik, K., Malik, Y. S., & Dhama, K. (2016). Prevalence, diagnosis, management and control of important diseases of ruminants with special reference to Indian scenario. *Journal of Experimental Biology and Agricultural Sciences*, *4*(3S), 338-367. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.18006/2016.4(3S).338.367

Santos, G., Silva, R., Rodrigues, R. G., Marques, C., & Leal, C. (2017). Nascent entrepreneurs’ motivations in European economies: A gender approach using GEM data. *Journal of Global Marketing*, *30*, 122–137.

doi:10.1080/08911762.2017.1302542

Sarooghi, H., Libaers, D., & Burkemper, A. (2015). Examining the relationship between creativity and innovation: A meta-analysis of organizational, cultural, and environmental factors. *Journal of Business Ventures*, *30*, 714-731. doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2014.12.0030

Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students* (7th ed.). Essex, England: Pearson Education Unlimited.

Schilling, R., Mazzuchi, T. A., & Sarkani, S. (2017). Survey of small business barriers to the department of defense contracts. *Defense Acquisition Research Journal*, *24*(1), 2-29. doi:10.22594/dau.16-752.24.01

Scholten, K., & Fynes, B. (2017). Risk and uncertainty management for sustainable supply chains. *In Sustainable Supply Chains*, *4*, 413-436. doi:10.10.1007/978-3-319-29791-0_19

Schumpeter, J. (1934). *Theory of economic development*. Berlin, Germany: Duncker Humbolt.

Schumpeter, J. A. (1965). *Economic theory and entrepreneurial history*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Seaton, T. S., Waggoner, F. I., & Alexander, J. (2015). The role of hope in small business success: Beyond dreams and wishes. *Academy of Business Research Journal*, *3*, 84-93. Retrieved from https://www.aobronline.com/abrj

Seawright, J. (2016). The case for selecting cases that are deviant or extreme on the independent variable. *Sociological Methods & Research*, *45*, 493-525.

doi:10.1177/0049124116643556

Seierstad, C., & Kirton, G. (2015). Having it all? Women in high commitment careers and work-life balance in Norway. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *22*, 390-404. doi:10.1111/gwao.12099

Shafeek, H. (2016). The impact of human resources management practices in SMES. *Annals of the Faculty of Engineering Hunedoara, 14*(4), 91-102. Retrieved from http://annals.fih.upt.ro

Shah, S. M. A., Sundmark, D., Lindstrom, B., & Andler, S. F. (2016). Robustness testing of embedded software systems: An industrial interview study. *IEEE Access, 4*, 1859-1871. doi:10.1109/ACCESS.2016.2544951

Shapiro, B. B. (2016). Using traditional narratives and other narrative devices to enact humanizing business practices. *Journal of Business Ethics, 139*(1), 1-19. doi:10.1007/s10551-015-2645-x

Sharafizad, J., & Coetzer, A. (2016). Women business owners' start-up motivations and network content. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, *23*, 590-610. doi:10.1108/JSBED-07-2015-0085

Shu, E. (2017). Emergent strategy in an entrepreneurial firm: The case of Lenovo in its formative years. *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, *12*, 625. doi:10.1108/IJoEM-01-2016-0016

Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Silverman, D. (2017). How was it for you? The interview society and the irresistible rise of the (poorly analyzed) interview. *Qualitative Research*, *17*, 144-158.

doi:10.1177/1468794116668231

Simpson, A., & Quigley, C. (2016). Member checking process with adolescent students: Not just reading a transcript. *The Qualitative Report*, *21*, 376-392. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr

Sims, J., Powell, P., & Vidgen, R. (2016). A resource-based view of the build/buy decision: Emergent and rational stepwise models of strategic planning. *Strategic Change*, *25*(1), 7-26. doi:10.1002/jsc.2044

Singh, K. D. (2015). Creating your own qualitative research approach: Selecting, integrating and operationalizing philosophy, methodology and methods. *The Journal of Business Perspective, 19,* 132-146. doi:10.1177/0972262915575657

Singh, R. P., & Ogbolu, M. N. (2015). The need to improve US business dynamism through entrepreneurship: Trends and recommendations. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, *16*(2), 48-60. Retrieved from http://www.na-businesspress.com/jmppopen.html

Sirilarbanan, V. (2017). *Strategies needed for small business sustainability: A case study of Thai restaurants.* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 10256774)

Skivington, K., Lifshen, M., & Mustard, C. (2016). Implementing a collaborative return to-work program: Lessons from a qualitative study in a large Canadian healthcare organization. *Work, 55*(3), 1-12. doi:10.3233/WOR-162437

Sligo, J. L., Nairn, K. M., & McGee, R. O. (2017). Rethinking integration in mixed methods research using data from different eras: Lessons from a project about teenage vocational behavior. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 21*, 63-75. doi:10.1080/13645579.2017.1321868

Sorina-Cristina, M. (2016). Strategic management in public administration. *International Conference Risk in Contemporary Economy, 3,* 187-191. Retrieved from http://www.rce.feaa.ugal.ro/

Soydas, Y., & Aleti, T. (2015). Immigrant and second-generation Turkish entrepreneurs in Melbourne Australia: A qualitative investigation of entrepreneurial motivations. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research, 21,* 154–174. doi:10.1108/IJEBR-11-2013-0185

Spiegelman, D., Rivera-Rodriguez, C. L., & Haneuse, S. (2016). Evaluating public health interventions: The two-stage design for confounding bias reduction-having your cake and eating it too. *American Journal of Public Health, 106*, 1223-1226. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2016.303250

Staniewski, M. W., Szopiński, T., & Awruk, K. (2016). Setting up a business and funding sources. *Journal of Business Research, 69*, 2108-2112. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.12.016

Stephan, U., Patterson, M., Kelly, C., & Mair, J. (2016). Organizations driving positive social change. A review and an integrative framework of change processes. *Journal of Management*, *42*, 1250-1281. doi:10.1177/0149206316633268

Stephan, V., & Pathak, S. (2016). Beyond cultural values? Cultural leadership ideas and entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Venturing, 31*, 505-523.

doi:10.1016/j.jbusvent.2016.07.003

Stoppel, E., & Roth, S. (2017). The conceptualization of pricing schemes: From Product-centric to customer-centric value approaches. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management, 16*, 76-90. doi:10.1057/s41272-016-0053-1

Stovell, D., Wearden, A., Morrison, A. P., & Hutton, P. (2016). Service users' experiences of the treatment decision-making process in psychosis: A phenomenological analysis. *Psychosis, 8*, 311-323. doi:10.1080/17522439.2016.1145730

Sugarman, J. (2017). Examining provisions related to consent in the revised common rule. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, *17*(7), 22-26. doi:10.1080/15265161.2017.1329483

Suphattanakul, O. (2017). Role of transformational leadership in effective strategic implementation with the moderating effect of organizational culture. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies, 3,* 253-262. doi:10.26710/jbsee.v3i2.80

Talaia, M., Pisoni, A., & Onetti, A. (2016). Factors influencing the fund-raising process for innovative new ventures: An empirical study. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 23,* 363-378. doi:10.1108/JSBED-07-2014-011

Teixeira, B., Gregory, P. A., & Austin, Z. (2017). How are pharmacists in Ontario adapting to practice change? Results of a qualitative analysis using Kotter's change management model. *Original Research Peer-Reviewed, 150,* 198-203. doi:10.1177/1715163517701470

Thom, M. (2016). Crucial skills for the entrepreneurial success of fine artists. *Artivate: A Journal of Entrepreneurship in the Arts*, *5*(1), 3-24. Retrieved from http://artivate.org

Thomson, R., & McLeod, J. (2015). New frontiers in qualitative longitudinal research: An agenda for research. *International Journal of Social Research, 18,* 243-250. doi:10.1080/13645579.2015.1017900

Thorpe, R., Hawkes, G., Dune, T., Fileborn, B., Pitts, M., & Minichiello, V. (2018). Hidden boundaries and shared meanings: The roles of researcher characteristics and cultural norms in shaping understandings of sexuality in the unstructured interview setting. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *21*, 205-217. doi:10.1080/13645579.2017.1350016

Tibben, W. J. (2015). Theory building for ict4d: Systemizing case study research using theory triangulation. *Information Technology for Development*, *21*, 628-652. doi:10.1080/02681102.2014.910635

Törnblom, O. (2018). Managing complexity in organizations: Analyzing and discussing a managerial perspective on the nature of organizational leadership. *Behavioral Development Bulletin*, *23,* 51–62. doi:10.1037/bdb0000068

Tran, M. A., Nguyen, B., Melewar, T. C., & Bodoh, J. (2015). Exploring the corporate image formation process. *Qualitative Market Research*, *18,* 86-114. doi:10.1108/QMR-05-2014-0046

Tripathi, M., Shukla, A., & Sonker, S. K. (2016). Research data management practices in university libraries: A study. *Journal of Library & Information Technology, 37,* 417-424. doi:10.14429/djlit.37.11336

Turner, S., & Endres, A. (2017). Strategies for enhancing small-business owners' success rates. *International Journal of Applied Management & Technology*, *16*(1), 34-49. doi:10.5590/IJAMT.2017.16.1.03

Uhl-Bien, M., & Arena, M. (2018). Leadership for organizational adaptability: A theoretical synthesis and integrative framework. *Leadership Quarterly*, *29*, 89-104. doi.10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.12.009

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016). *Entrepreneurship and the U.S. economy.* Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/bdm/entrepreneurship/entrepreneurship.htm

U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). *Startup firms created over 2 million jobs in 2015.* Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2017/business-dynamics.html

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1979). The Belmont report. Retrieved from http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2015). *Advocacy: The voice of small business in government.* Retrieved from https://www.sba.gov/advocacy

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2016). *Frequently asked questions: Advocacy.* Retrieved from https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/SB-FAQ-2016_WEB.pdf

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2017). *Frequently asked questions: Advocacy.* Retrieved from https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/SB-FAQ-2017-WEB.pdf

Vadeboncoeur, C., Foster, C., & Townsend, N. (2018). Challenges of research recruitment in a university setting in England. *Health Promotion International, 33,* 878-886. doi:10.1093/heapro/dax025

Vance, C. D. (2015). Decision-making considerations for mid-career army officers to pursue master's degrees. *Adult Learning, 26,* 109-115. doi:10.1177/1045159515583260

Van Rijnsoever, F. J. (2017). (I can't get no) Saturation: A simulation and guidelines for sample sizes in qualitative research. *PLoS ONE, 12*(7), 1-17. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0181689

Vaughn, P., & Turner, C. (2016). Decoding via coding: Analyzing qualitative text data through thematic coding and survey methodologies. *Journal of Library Administration, 56*(1), 41-51. doi:10.1080/01930826.2015.1105035

Versockiy, R. R. (2019). Foreign Experience in Support of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses and the Possibility of its Application in Modern Russia. *North-West institute of management of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, 7,* 108-114. doi:10.22394/1726-1139-2019-7-108-114

Virginia, W. (2016). Research methods: Design, methods, case study…oh my! *Evidence-Based Library and Information Practice, 6*, 90–91. doi:10.18438/b8h928

Wani, K. C. (2018). *Strategies to sustain small businesses beyond 5 years*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 10746816)

Ward, J., & Coates, N. (2016). Developing a methodology to research the avatar/user relationship. *AMA Winter Educators' Conference Proceedings, 27.* Retrieved from http://www.ama.org

Warren, G. E., & Szostek, L. (2017). Small business strategies for sustainability beyond 10 years. *International Journal of Applied Management and Technology*, *16*, 111-122. doi:10.5590/IJAMT.2017.16.1.07

Weaver, W. (2004). Science and complexity. *Emergence: Complexity & Organization*, *6*, 65–74. Retrieved from https://journal.emergentpublications.com/

Weber, M., & Elferink, A. O. (2017). Cx-Liner: Design and development of a diagnostic tool for customer experience management in SMES. *Acta Technica Corviniensis bulletin of Engineering, 10*(1), 55-62. Retrieved from http://acta.fih.upt.ro/pdf/archive/ACTA-2017-2.pdf

Wijnhoven, F., & Brinkhuis, M. (2015). Internet information triangulation: Design theory and prototype evaluation. *Journal of the Association for Information Science & Technology, 66*, 684-701. doi:10.1002/asi.23203

Will, T. E. (2016). Flock leadership: Understanding and influencing emergent collective behavior. *Leadership Quarterly, 27*, 261-279. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.01.002

Williamson, O. E. (1975). *Markets and hierarchies: Analysis and antitrust implications.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Winter, S., & Collins, D. (2015). Why do we do, what we do? *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 27*(1), 35-51. doi:10.1080/10413200.2014.941511

Wolf, S. M., Clayton, E. W., & Lawrenz, F. (2018). The past, present, and future of informed consent in research and translational medicine. *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics, 46*(1), 7-11. doi:10.1177/1073110518766003

Wong, A., Holmes, S., & Schaper, M. T. (2018). How do small business owners actually make their financial decisions? Understanding SME financial behavior using a case-based approach. *Small Enterprise Research, 25*, 36-51. doi:10.1080/13215906.2018.1428909

Woods, M., Paulus, T., Atkins, D. P., & Macklin, R. (2016). Advancing qualitative research using qualitative data analysis software (QDAS)? Reviewing potential versus practice in published studies using ATLAS.ti and NVivo, 1994-2013. *Social Science Computer Review, 34*, 597-617. doi:10.1177/0894439315596311

Woodside, A. G. (2015). The good practices manifesto: Overcoming bad practices pervasive in current research in business. *Journal of Business Research, 69*, 365-381. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.09.008

Yang, X. X. (2016). *Key success factors of small business in a southern region of California* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3729791)

Yasuhiro, Y., Peng, M. W., & Deeds, D. L. (2015). Rising from the ashes: Cognitive determinants of venture growth after entrepreneurial failure. *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice*, *39*, 209-235. doi:10.1111/etap.12047

Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *The Qualitative Report*, *20*, 134–152. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr

Yeboah, A. M., & Koffie, F. (2016). Does the legal form of small and medium enterprises determine their access to capital? *International Journal of Management, Accounting & Economics, 3*, 520-533. Retrieved from http://www.ijmae.com.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Yoo, J. (2017). Customer power and frontline employee voice behavior: Mediating roles of psychological empowerment. *European Journal of Marketing, 51*, 238-256. doi:10.1108/ejm-07-2017-0477

Zaefarian, G., Thiesbrummel, C., Henneberg, S. C., & Naude, P. (2017). Different recipes for success in business relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management, 63,* 69-81. doi:10.1016/j.indmarman.2016.12.006

Zamawe, F. C. (2015). The implication of using NVivo software in qualitative data analysis: Evidence-based reflections. *Malawi Medical Journal, 27*(1), 13-15. doi:10.4314/mmj. v27i1.4

Zhao, J., Wang, M., & Zhu, L. (2017). How emergent strategy influences institution: A qualitative study of a private firm in China. *Chinese Management Studies*, *11,* 303-321. doi:10.1108/CMS-11-2016.0227

Zori, S. (2016). Teaching critical thinking using reflective journaling in a nursing fellowship program. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, 47*, 321-329. doi:10.3928/00220124-20160616-09

Zyphur, M., & Pierides, D. (2017). Is quantitative research ethical? Tools for ethically practicing, evaluating, and using quantitative research. *Journal of Business Ethics, 143*(1), 1-16. doi:10.1007/s10551-017-3549-8

Appendix: Interview Protocol

Insert name, thank you for choosing to meet with me today and participate in my research on the topic sustainability strategies of small business owners. The purpose of my study is to explore the strategies you use to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years of operations. Please, I will start by giving you this consent form while I read it aloud. If you understand and agree with the consent form, please sign and date the consent form for me. Thank you again for volunteering to participate in this study. As stated to you earlier, I will record this interview as a requirement and your personal information will not be included in any of the documents. If at any time, I ask a question that you do not want to answer, please say “pass,” and I will continue to the next question.

1. What strategies have proven successful to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years of operation?
2. How are strategies to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years effectively communicated throughout the organization?
3. Which strategies that you used to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years were the least effective?
4. What role does leadership play in the implementation of successful strategies to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years?
5. What were the key barriers to implementing your successful strategies to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years?

6. How did you address the key barriers to implementing your strategies to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years?
7. What else do you think is important for you to say that I have not asked you regarding strategies used to sustain your business beyond the first 5 years?

Insert name, thank you for all this excellent information and data. To let you know how the process will work, I will transcribe the interview and write up a synopsis, which will consist of my interpretations of your answers to interview questions. I will then contact you to schedule another meeting (i.e., member checking meeting) for you to review my interpretations of your answers to interview questions for accuracy. Again, thank you very much for participating in this study.