

2016

# Sustainability of Small Businesses in Zimbabwe During the First 5 Years

Barbra Sibanda  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Barbra Sibanda

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2016

Abstract

Sustainability of Small Businesses in Zimbabwe During the First 5 Years

by

Barbra Sibanda

MS, City University, 2002

BS, University of Zimbabwe, 1991

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2016

## Abstract

Small businesses in Zimbabwe make up 94% of the country's business population but only contribute 15% to the country's economy due to a high failure rate during the first 5 years. The purpose of this descriptive multiple case study was to explore strategies and skills that may contribute to the sustainability of small businesses during the first 5 years. The study population consisted of 5 small business owners in Ntepe village in Zimbabwe who had sustained their businesses for the first 5 years of operations. The conceptual framework that grounded this study was management theory. The data collection process involved conducting semistructured interviews with small business owners. Data analysis involved the adoption of methodological triangulation, thematic analysis, and member checking to ensure reliability and credibility of the data collected. The data collected presented two main themes: developing leadership skills and planning for positive performance. Key attributes and skills of a small business leader include trustworthiness, ability to lead resolutions that solve problems, effective communication of quality expectations, development of customer focus, and ability to address the needs of employees. Planning for positive performance includes goal setting, creating policies and procedures, and developing a control system for financial activities. This study may contribute to social change by providing data on proven strategies used by small business managers to sustain their businesses during the first 5 years of operations. The community may benefit from owners being better prepared to sustain their small businesses, given that these businesses may then hire employees and contribute to the local economy.

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## Dedication

I am dedicating this study to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who through faith and prayer gave me the determination to complete my study. I also wish to thank my family for their unwavering support: my father, Reverend Stephen; my mother, Maria; and my siblings, Joyce, Billy G, Gloria, Patricia, Marvis, Miriam, Andrew, and Nokuthula, and their husbands and wives for cheering me on and praying for me. I would also like to thank all my friends for their encouragement and support.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Ntepe, Zimbabwe is a rural village with many small businesses. Family leaders own and manage these small businesses. The family leaders control and perform various operational tasks and make decisions for day-to-day business operations (Jayaram, Dixit, & Motwani, 2013). The business decisions that family leaders make mostly lead to failure. The family leaders have numerous difficulties in sustaining their businesses during the initial 5 years (Jayaram et al., 2013). This qualitative study explored the strategies that small businesses in Zimbabwe need to sustain their businesses during the first 5 years. Sustainability of their businesses is critical to these business leaders. Sustainability is the objective of leadership, management, and business processes.

### **Background of the Problem**

The need to explore the sustainability of small businesses in Zimbabwe emanated from their failure rate. Many small businesses in Ntepe, Zimbabwe are not expanding and do not survive for more than 5 years (Amoah, Samuel, & Richardson, 2014). The people and policy makers of Zimbabwe are concerned about this. There was, therefore, a need to explore ways of sustaining small businesses and explore why only a few of them survive during the first 5 years. Out of 189 world economies, Zimbabwe ranked 180 for ease of doing business (World Bank Group, 2013). Small businesses in Europe are a significant source of employment, employing 85% of the working population, and in Asia, 90% of the businesses operated are small businesses (Amoah-Mensah, 2013).

Small businesses are important for commerce and industry in general (Muchabaiwa, Mazambani, Chigusiwa, Bindu, & Mudavanhu, 2012). Small businesses

play a critical role in entrepreneurship, and they need considerable attention (Chipangura & Kaseke, 2012). Small businesses are becoming more noticeable enterprises in Zimbabwe and hold a pivotal role in the economic and social spheres (Sikomwe, Mhonde, Katazo, Mavhiki, & Mapetere, 2012). Small businesses in Ntepe, Zimbabwe typically employ around 5-10 personnel. However, these small businesses run the risk of limited knowledge, narrow spans of operation, and limited resources, which might have a significant influence on business growth (Jayaram et al., 2013). Leadership and managerial efforts and skills are important for the sustainability of small businesses (Taneja, Pryor, & Hayek, 2016).

### **Problem Statement**

The sustainability of small businesses in Zimbabwe is critical (Fatoki, 2014; Mushongah & Scoones, 2012; Sloan, Klingenberg, & Rider, 2013; United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2015). Small businesses in Zimbabwe make up 94% of the business population but only contribute 15% of the country's business economy (Bukaliya & Aleck, 2012). In a 2012 report on the ease of doing business, Zimbabwe ranked 171 out of 183 countries in how successfully small businesses operate (World Bank Group, 2013). The general business problem for my study was the inability of leaders to sustain businesses during the first 5 years (Liedholm & Mead, 2013; Sikomwe, Kandufa, Giga, & Mudzurandende, 2014). The specific business problem was that small business leaders in Ntepe, a rural village in Zimbabwe, may lack skills for sustaining their small businesses during the first 5 years.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple descriptive case study was to explore how small business leaders in Ntepe, a rural village in Zimbabwe, sustained their small businesses during the first 5 years. Semistructured interviews with open-ended questions were used to collect data from five small business leaders from Ntepe who had operated businesses for more than 5 years. The results of this study may help small business leaders to change their management and leadership styles to foster growth and sustainability. Ultimately, the findings from this study may contribute to social change by providing new insights that will help in sustaining profitable businesses, curbing poverty, and providing employment to rural village inhabitants.

### **Nature of the Study**

I chose a qualitative case study because it allowed for the exploration of complexities of behavior and processes from the viewpoint of participants regarding a contemporary phenomenon (Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2013). The qualitative methodology was selected and was appropriate for this study because qualitative research describes social actions for people involved in a local environment. Qualitative research emphasizes concepts to explicate, provides theoretical knowledge, explains, predicts, and interprets (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). The quantitative methodology was not appropriate for this research study because a quantitative design involves research variables, hypotheses, and relationships between variables (Harrison, 2013). Furthermore, a quantitative study would not have been appropriate because quantitative research focuses on the analysis of statistically quantifiable data (Marshall & Rossman,



2014). Mixed method research was also not fit for this study because mixed method research is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, which would have presented some difficulties during the data collection process (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In qualitative research, the focus is on exploring phenomena in real-life context.

I selected a multiple descriptive case study to explore the sustainability of small businesses during the first 5 years. Phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study are four design options for a qualitative study (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). I chose to use a case study because it allowed me to ask *how* and *why* questions during the interviews. The choice of a descriptive case study was appropriate for this research study. A multiple descriptive case study can be used to focus and present a description of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2014). The primary goal of a descriptive case study is to assess a sample population using data collection tools that may describe possible solutions to the proposed problem and articulate a plausible theory (Yin, 2013). Ethnography was not a good choice for this study because ethnography focuses on what people do and say and may require time spent in the field observing in detail (Van Maanen, 2015). In contrast, case study not only depends on observer data but also uses semistructured interviews and can be conducted using new technology such as Skype or via telephone (Yin, 2014). The use of a case study design allows the researcher to focus on a phenomenon and explore it through data collection processes and particular events with individuals or groups (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The phenomenology research design would not have been a good choice because it entails consideration of time and place in exploring the problem, whereas case study does not (Yin, 2013).

### **Research Question**

The overarching research question for this study was the following: What skills do small business leaders need for sustaining their small business during the first 5 years?

### **Interview Questions**

1. How has your professional and educational background prepared you to run a small business during the first 5 years?
2. How do you describe the planning methods you used in your business operation during the first 5 years?
3. How have you managed to control your business during the first 5 years?
4. What organizational skills have you used during the first 5 years?
5. What challenges have you faced in maintaining your business?
6. What leadership skills have you used to sustain your business?
7. What management skills have you used to sustain your business?
8. What are some of the challenges you have faced in being a small business leader?
9. What types of financial support services were available to you initially?
10. What challenges have you faced in keeping records of your finances?
11. What issues have you had with maintaining cash flow during the first 5 years of business?
12. In conclusion, describe the most important factors that have contributed to your success.

## Conceptual Framework

Drucker invented management theory in 1954 (Drucker, 2014). Drucker's (1954) management theory presents a framework of concepts from the literature that grounded and complemented my research study. Management theory guides managers in implementing goals that may help them to increase productivity (Altindag & Kazdal, 2014). Drucker (2013) addressed management theory as a discipline of modern management that can effectively enhance project success. The following themes may be transformed from this study: ethics, social responsibility, and the need for managers to pay considerable attention to the values of their employees. In inventing and reinventing organizations, managers should search for better ways of managing their businesses. Theorists like Drucker, in his concept of the *liberation of management*, have encouraged individuals to be better managers. Effective managers understand multiculturalism, recognizing and embracing various cultures. Quality managers should think about providing quality to their businesses using concepts such as total quality management. Drucker's strategic management theory provides fundamental concepts that small business leaders in Ntepe, Zimbabwe could use to sustain their small businesses. The Ntepe community may benefit from owners being better prepared to sustain their small businesses, given that these businesses may then hire employees and contribute to the local economy.

Four of Drucker's concepts are (a) objectives evaluation, (b) business processes of implementing the plan, (c) group decision-making techniques, and (d) future goals (Drucker, 2013). The concepts of group decision-making complement transformational leadership, as developed by Burns (1978) and formulated by Bass in 1985 and 1996 (Ayub, Manaf, & Hamzah, 2014; Bass, 1985, 1996; Burns, 1978). The concepts of decision making may complement spiritual leadership, the values of which inspire ethical behaviors and outcomes (Drucker, 2013; Fairholm, 2013).

### **Operational Definitions**

The following seven operational definitions of terms are relevant to this research study.

*Management:* Management in this study is a process that consists of administering an environment in which individuals or teams work efficiently to accomplish goals and objectives (Drucker, 1954).

*Small business:* Small and medium-sized business enterprises are businesses with 300 or fewer employees (Dugguh, 2013).

*Spiritual leadership:* The focus of spiritual leadership is on the values that inspire ethical behaviors and outcomes (Fairholm, 2013).

*Sustainability:* Sustainability in this study involves the ability of small business leaders to plan, organize, lead, control, and maintain their small businesses during the first 5 years of operations (Sloan, Klingenberg, & Rider, 2013).

*Transformational leadership*: Transformational leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend to achieve real change and common goals (Vincent-Höper, Muser, & Janneck, 2012).

*Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT)*: The agency that collects the population census of Zimbabwe (ZIMSTAT, 2013).

*Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF)*: The organization that offers insight into economic and health conditions in Zimbabwe (Kabange, 2013).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Witkowski and Kiba-Janiak (2012), noted that an *assumption* is a fact that is believed to be true but has not been verified. Assumptions in this research study might have been unfounded but are still relevant to the research. During the data collection process, some facts are assumed to be true but cannot be verified (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Assumptions carry risk and pose possible risk factors. The primary assumption made in this study was that small business leaders as decision makers have a responsibility to make the right decisions for their businesses (Jayaram et al., 2013). The second assumption was that there would be total truthfulness and honesty on the part of participants during interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The third assumption was that the participants would be proficient in the English language, given that the study was in English. The fourth assumption was that the qualitative methodology and multiple

descriptive case study design were the best choices for this study (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013).

### **Limitations**

*Limitations* are the potential weaknesses of a study that are out of the control of the researcher (Ragazzi, Crescentini, & Castelli, 2012). The small business leaders of Ntepe represented the scope of the study. The study took place in the rural village of Ntepe in Zimbabwe. In this study, I aimed at focusing on five business leaders who were facing challenges in sustaining their businesses during the first 5 years. The participation study pool was limited to small business leaders in the rural village of Ntepe, Zimbabwe. The current condition of the country might have been a limitation in conducting the study.

### **Delimitations**

A *delimitation* identifies the scope of the study. According to Mitchell and Jolley (2012), researchers use boundaries to narrow the scope of their studies when conducting research. The scope of this qualitative and multiple descriptive case study was the exploration of factors that contributed to the sustainability of businesses for more than 5 years in the rural village of Ntepe in Zimbabwe by exploring management, leadership, and business processes.

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of my research study might be of value to the rural small business owners of Ntepe in Zimbabwe by providing information on strategies that may contribute to the sustainability of their businesses during the first 5 years. The study need not be

generalizable for it to be of value. Furthermore, this study may help to alleviate poverty and provide employment to the rural village population if small business leaders follow sound business practices, management, and leadership skills as indicated in the findings.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The findings of this study provide insights into the way in which the business leaders of Ntepe, a rural village, conduct their businesses. The findings may help small business leaders in this rural village conduct businesses that are profitable and sustainable for much more than 5 years. The results of this study may contribute to business practices by indicating strategies that contribute to the sustainability of small business for longer than 5 years in Ntepe. Improved business plans resulting from this research study may provide opportunities for other individuals in the community.

### **Implications for Social Change**

This study's implications for social change include the possibility that the information provided will help small business owners in Ntepe to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The focus of this qualitative multiple descriptive case study research was the exploration of strategies and skills that may contribute to the success and sustainability of small businesses in the rural village of Ntepe in Zimbabwe during the first 5 years. I took into consideration the culture of the Ntepe people, as well as changes in attitudes, behaviors, and policies that govern the rural village, all while following ethical guidelines. The findings of the research study may be applied to build rural village-based solutions that affect villagers positively. The findings from the study may help policyholders to make significant business decisions for the community. In addition,

the study may benefit the community by creating employment and education on how to operate sustainable, successful small businesses. The new knowledge generated by this study may be used to educate, train, and motivate current and future business owners. The findings may also be beneficial to the rural village's prosperity by promoting the creation of employment, boosting the economy of the rural village, and supporting efforts to curb poverty. When businesses fail, people lose income and jobs. When businesses bloom, customers are happy, and employees are satisfied. The sustaining of small businesses by their owners may be beneficial to the economy of the country.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of the literature review was to analyze critically and synthesize the sources used to explore the sustainability of small businesses during the first 5 years. The themes in the literature review aligned with the intent of the research to explore the sustainability of small businesses during the first 5 years by small business owners. This qualitative descriptive multiple case study explored the skills that the leaders of Ntepe used to sustain profitable businesses during the first 5 years. Management, leadership, and business processes were vital in the exploration of the research question. Rowley (2012) determined that a literature review may add content to a research topic, contribute to research, and expand the conceptual framework of a study. In a literature review, a researcher may look at various sources that support the research study. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive multiple case study was to explore the sustainability of small businesses during the first 5 years with a focus on small business owners' management, leadership, and business skills.



In reviewing the literature, I extensively used the Walden University Online Library's business and management database. Further, the Zimbabwe University Online Library was helpful for most of the African authors, and Google, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, and Business Source Complete were useful. From these search engines, I extracted books, web articles, government databases, various journals, and dissertations. The other research resources used were based on the advice and information I received from friends and professors during the research process.

I based the literature review on sources from journals, books, dissertations, and governmental entities. The percentage of my sources that had been peer reviewed and had been published within the last 5 years was consistent with Walden guidelines. In the literature review, I analyze and synthesize peer-reviewed articles related to the sustainability of small businesses in the rural village of Ntepe. The years covered in the literature review are 1954-2016. Ulrich's Periodical Directory was used to check for peer-reviewed journals; some references that could not be verified by Ulrich were peer-reviewed and were within the database of the library of the University of Zimbabwe.

The following keywords were used to research the peer-reviewed literature relevant to the sustainability of small businesses in Ntepe, Zimbabwe: *management theory, barriers to small businesses, micro business, rural business, small business leaders, small family business owner, entrepreneurship, small business success, small business failure, small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), small business strategy, small business marketing, history of small businesses, and types of small businesses.*

I based the literature review on a broad approach to the strategies contributing to small businesses' success and failure in Ntepe, Zimbabwe. Mazambani, Chigusiwa, Mudavanhu, Bindu, and Muchabaiwa (2012) stated that Zimbabwe and other developing countries were not meeting the goals that they had set initially for 2015 of having sustainable and profitable businesses. The business problem was that small businesses are failing at a high rate and the number of small startup businesses every year equals the number of businesses failing (Sikomwe, Kandufa, Giga, & Mudzurandende, 2014). Hebert, Takupiwa, Honest, and Ephraim (2013) discussed how small businesses in Zimbabwe survived the economic crisis and found that small businesses had difficulty surviving in harsh conditions. Ncube-Phiri, Mudavanhu, and Mucherera (2014) addressed the disasters that rural communities faced and discussed what needed to be done for them to survive amidst these disasters. Ncube-Phiri et al. recommended sustainable utilization of resources and indicated that it was necessary to address the root causes of these disasters to find a sustainable solution.

In this literature review, I discuss the conceptual framework used for my study. The conceptual framework was management theory (Drucker, 1954). Specifically, I used the theory of *management by objectives* (MBO), which addresses specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-based (SMART) objectives (Drucker, 1954). The literature review contains discussion of group decision-making techniques, background on small business, management and leadership assessment, government support, knowledge needed for sustainability, and factors that hinder small business growth.

## **Management Theory and Leadership Theory**

Management theory was the conceptual framework used in this study to guide the research as it focused on the need for sustainability of small businesses (Dean & Bowen, 1994). Using management theory and leadership theory, I discussed small and medium-sized businesses, tackling topics like poverty alleviation and sustainability, and employment creation, as they relate to the barriers experienced by small businesses. Management theory functions as a manager's guide to implementing goals to increase productivity. Drucker founded management theory in 1954. Since 1954, management theory has evolved as various authors have expanded on the original work of Drucker. Good management theory results in real business and forms the foundation of business (Drucker, 1954). The small business leaders of Ntepe need knowledge of good management to run their businesses, which may further help their successors to continue operating profitable businesses (Musa & Semasinghe, 2014). Drucker (2013) addressed management theory as a discipline of modern management that can effectively enhance business success. Drucker, considered the founder of 21st-century management, proposed management by objectives to guide the success of organizations.

Management theory covers a collection of ideas and rules for managing businesses. Kwok (2014) in his study recognized the work of Fayol and Taylor, who created management principles that have since evolved. Drucker (2013) concluded that managing is all about making people capable of performing. The specific constructs of Drucker's theory that were beneficial to this study included those involved in management by objectives (MBO). MBO measures how employees perform compared to

the typical standards of the job to ensure performance. The SMART method was also useful in this study. With the SMART method, one can look at objectives to determine whether they are reachable and valid. Drucker's concept of decentralization of management may help business leaders to be able to delegate tasks to their employees, thereby contributing to employees' empowerment. Management theory is a manager's guide and is critical in effectively implementing goals to increase productivity. Within management theory, there is contingency theory, Theories X and Y, chaos theory, and systems theory. Of these theories, Theory Y was the best fit for this case study. Theory Y fits when workers take responsibility for their actions. Leaders adopting Theory Y encourage participation by employees (Senge, 2014; Zohar, Huang, Lee, & Robertson, 2014). These theories deal with management strategies for workforce motivation.

Good management theory results in real business and forms the foundation of business. Solomon, Frese, Friedrich, and Glaub (2013) stated that Africa has many untapped business resources that need to be tapped. Kwok (2014) discussed Fayol's management theories and stated that managers should be unique, exercise authority, provide unity among their staff, and not attempt to copy others' approaches, as the latter may lead to failure. Altindag and Kazdal (2014) noted that management theories have a critical role with regard to the performance of businesses and the extent of learning concepts for Zimbabwean organizations. Learning entails the right people receiving the right education.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2012) articulated seven perspectives on management. These are:

- Human relations is about motivating people and managing change.
- In decision theory, the key element is optimizing decisions.
- The work activity view of management is about what managers do.
- The competencies view of management is about the skills required for effective performance.
- The critical view of management is about social construction and politics.
- The process view of management is about learning and strategizing.
- The classical view of management is about functional activities.

The above seven perspectives on management emphasize the importance of good management. These are views on what management is and should be as pertaining to my study. These views sum up the roles and skills of the small businesses owners, that will help them succeed especially during the first 5 years. Some of the findings showed that the small business owners sustained their small business by motivating their employees.

**Objectives evaluation.** To evaluate objectives, Drucker's MBO (Drucker, 2012) is discussed. The MBO process begins with defining objectives (Drucker, 2012). The MBO concept defines a strategy for managing people. MBO mainly focuses on large organizations, but small businesses can also benefit from it. Small to medium-sized organizations can benefit in adopting the SMART method of implementation. Small business leaders from Ntepe may identify objectives that are achievable. The objectives of small businesses are to grow and run profitable businesses. Strategic planning, goal setting, and having a set vision are goals that small business leaders strive to achieve (Crossley, Cooper, & Wernsing, 2013).

**Business processes to implement.** Small business leaders must set reasonable objectives that can be applied (Aksoy & Bayazit, 2014). Verbeke and Tung (2013) argued that when stakeholders are managed well, a firm has a good competitive advantage. Adopting the SMART method may be beneficial to Ntepe small businesses. The acronym SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time based. *Specific* means that objectives need to be specific; *measurable* means that the objectives should be clear; *achievable* means that the targets set should be achievable; *realistic* means that objectives should be realistic; and *time based* means that employees should complete the task by a fixed time (Bogue, 2005). Eyster et al. (2014) proposed that objectives should be SMART.

**Limitations of management theory.** Hannaway (2015) noted that there are three limitations to management theory. First, management theory is dependent on the kind of business that is being considered, as well as changes in the organization that might need management. Situations change; management might be effective currently for the organization but might not work in the future. Second, fundamental management practices of monitoring and control when implementing new management theory might not be effective. Finally, management theory in itself might not be appropriate for all organizations. Management theory can be analytic and rational, intuitive, and creative. Management practices in small businesses are critical to their performance. The performance of small businesses has been an issue globally, especially in developing countries. Effective management of small businesses is essential to their success. Small businesses in Zimbabwe face some barriers, particularly limited management skills

(Dumbu, 2014). Transformational leadership entails a significant relationship between leaders and their collaborators, who intend to implement real changes that reflect their mutual purposes (Rost, 1997). Transformational leadership is a process that brings leaders and followers to higher levels of human dignity.

Transformational leadership includes these key propositions: (a) individualized consideration, (b) intellectual stimulation, (c) charisma, and (d) inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Forka (2012) stated that transformational leadership involves idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Vincent-Höper, Muser, and Janneck (2012) agreed that leaders' interaction with their employees is critical and leads to retention of employees. Under transformational leadership, followers are influenced and motivated to strive for better livelihood, and every individual is made to feel important (Zhu, Sosik, Riggio, & Yang, 2012). Rural small business leaders are constantly interacting with their employees. Leaders' communication with their employees is critical and can lead to retention of workers (Vincent-Höper et al., 2012). Herrmann and Felfe (2014) noted that transformational leadership style is effective in improving employee creativity and is hence usable.

Sosik, Chun, Blair, and Fitzgerald (2012) stated that transformational leaders are capable leaders. Effelsberg, Solga, and Gurt (2014) said that employees do well under transformational leadership. However, Effelsberg et al. acknowledged that they were not sure whether transformational leadership is good for society. On the other hand, Grant (2012) stated that transformational leadership may not be enough as a motivation tool.

Finally, Graham, Ziegert, and Capitano (2015) noted that the transformational leadership process uses charisma, as the leader is inspirational and considerate of people.

Charisma, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation are some of the characteristics of a leader who is gifted and able to instill pride, faith, and respect among followers. Using individualized consideration, the leader delegates and coaches while focusing on individualism and intellectual stimulation. The leader stimulates members to think before they can take any action (Bass, 1985). Small business leaders should display these characteristics.

The charismatic theory used in some organizations combines transformational leadership theory and charismatic leadership theory (Moynihan, Pandey, & Wright, 2012). Charismatic and transformational leadership theories have similarities in that they both involve striving for the goal of motivating and empowering people. Charismatic leaders have charisma based on personality and other personal traits (Lussier & Achua, 2015). Transformational and charismatic leadership have some minor differences, and charismatic can be viewed as a component of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985).

Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) criticized and discussed the weaknesses of transformational leadership. These authors stated that in transformational leadership theory, too much emphasis is placed on the leader being a hero. Northouse (2012) postulated that the heroic nature of a transformational leader could be adverse to the business. Van Knippenberg and Sitkin stated that leaders could misuse transformational leadership theory in order to exploit followers. In a 1985 publication, Bass argued that transformational leadership might not be beneficial to leaders. Later, in 1997, Bass



modified his thinking and argued that transformational leadership serves the good of the followers and the organization. In comparison to transformational leadership and transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership is described as nonleadership because it does not involve transactions between a leader and an employee (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012).

Spirituality influences the relationship between leaders and followers and informs a sense of common purpose (Nwankwo, Gbadamosi, & Ojo, 2012). Spiritual core values guide the leadership process and the acceptance of standard values (Roof, 2014).

Spirituality influences the relationship between leaders and followers and informs a sense of common purpose.

The people of Zimbabwe belong to a country that is spiritual. Spiritual core values guide the leadership process, and when accepting stock values, leaders and followers are connected (Roof, 2014). Spiritual leadership values inspire ethical behaviors and outcomes (Fairholm, 2013). Spirituality theory applies to Ntepe because the people of Ntepe are spiritual. Everything they engage in involves some form of spiritualism. Phipps (2012) stated that sometimes spirituality in leadership becomes a personal endeavor enabling expression of spirituality within organizations. Some researchers have reported that spirituality in leadership tends to focus on the interpersonal aspects of leadership, such as motivation, employee satisfaction, and empowerment (Phipps, 2012).

Spirituality plays an important role in Zimbabwe, particularly in the rural village of Ntepe. Maxwell (2014) stated that God is a leader and expects his people to lead and be great leaders. It is critical for leaders to respond well to the spiritual values of their

followers and not just to their skills (Fairholm, 2013). Biberman and Whitty (1997) described leadership as a spiritual, relational process. Theorists have regarded spirituality as a way in which leaders can focus on the needs of others (Northouse, 2012).

In spiritual leadership, leaders use faith to empower, encourage, and motivate employees, helping them to focus positively on their jobs. Leaders' attitudes and behaviors may aid them in showing love and understanding toward their employees, which results in a sense of membership (Bodla, Ali, & Danish, 2013). Spirituality in path-goal theory covers the leader's responsibility of using spirituality to inspire the workers by guiding, training, and instructing them to achieve their targets (Bodla et al., 2013). Chiefs in Zimbabwe have played a spiritual leadership role by fostering democracy, human rights, and peace in Zimbabwe (Makahamadze, Grand, & Tavuyanago, 2013). Fry and Nisiewicz (2013) viewed spirituality as a means to help leaders become more efficient and principled.

There are some limitations to the spiritual theory. Researchers are careful about how they deal with the concept of spirituality as it is a very sensitive topic for organizations to address. Phipps (2012) noted that with spirituality, there is less focus on spirituality and leadership amongst researchers. Leaders do encourage spirituality so that they can boost loyalty and enhance employee morale. Ethics play an important part in spirituality. Fry and Nisiewicz (2013) stated that ethically spirituality is necessary for a solid foundation so that people can gain the confidence in institutions and their leadership. Fry and Nisiewicz (2013) said that there is something missing when

businesses fail and that something is called spirituality. Spirituality has a way of connecting with the people (Fruchter, 2015).

### **Sustainability**

Senge (2014) states that sustainability looks at how to live currently without jeopardizing the future. The need to explore the sustainability of small business in Zimbabwe emanates from their failure rate. It is important for small business leaders to learn how to adopt sustainability for the success of their businesses. For example, they can improve their sustainability by changing their products and processes (Sloan, Klingenberg, & Rider, 2013). It is, therefore, important to explore how these small business leaders manage their business from the point of sustainability. During the crisis, rural small business leaders needed to find ways of surviving. Hind, Smit, and Page (2013) stated that leadership role is critical when addressing sustainability and business leaders should be committed.

Zimbabwe's small businesses face problems and some of which are access to good management and leadership process, finance, and education (Kanyenze, 2011). Some small businesses, however, have survived amid hardships. They have found strategies that have helped them grow (Bamiatzi & Kirchmaier, 2014). Scoones et al. (2012) looked at the land issues that affected small businesses in Zimbabwe.

Machingambi (2014) identified some of the barriers faced by small businesses as limited knowledge of management, leadership, and business processes that are needed to run a profitable business. Machingambi assessed the influence that microfinance had on small

businesses. Machingambi noted that there was a need to educate small business leaders about microfinance.

Berner, Gomez, and Knorringa (2012) studied the failures and successes of small businesses, and noted the contributions that small businesses have made in the economy. Fatoki (2014) discussed the failure of small businesses, and that these small businesses paint a wrong picture about the economy of the country. The failure of small businesses to grow during the first 5 years was a cause for concern among different researchers (Chipangura & Kaseke, 2014). Small entrepreneurs get support because of the contribution they make towards the economy (Berner et al., 2012). Small businesses are the seedbed of the Zimbabwe economy; however, their survival is at risk (Mushongah & Scoones, 2012). Chinomona (2014) discussed the influence that information technology (IT) could have on SME's performance. In his findings, he concluded that IT could have a positive impact on small businesses. United Nations Development Program observed the situation in Zimbabwe and the effect the economic situation was having on the economy of the country (UNDP, 2015).

Small businesses faced barriers in borrowing money from the banks. They were considered as high risk because they were not able to prove that they could pay back the money borrowed. Inflation in Zimbabwe had caused the small businesses not to rely on the banks. The small business owners were afraid to lose their money to inflation. Therefore, they found various ways to keep their money safe. Small businesses, in general, can provide employment and alleviate poverty if managed well (World Bank Group, 2013). South Africa's small businesses play a critical role in the economy and

development of the country (UNDP, 2015). Naidu and Chand (2012) stated that small to medium businesses contributed to the country's gross domestic product and created employment. African small businesses, including Zimbabwe, are experiencing a high rate of failure. Small businesses in Zimbabwe make up 94% of the business population, but the businesses only contribute 15% to the country's economy (Bukaliya & Aleck, 2012). Exploring what small business leaders need to do to survive and grow entails providing the right knowledge to the people who are leaders of their businesses. Chinomona and Dhurup (2014) stated that advocating for quality of work life produces winning results for small businesses, and as such, they need to improve employees' satisfaction. The specific business problem is that the small business leaders of Ntepe rural village in Zimbabwe lack skills for sustaining their small business during the first 5 years. The findings from the interviews showed that the small business struggled to sustain their small businesses during the first 5 years. The participants expressed the different challenges that they encountered in sustain their businesses.

Many small businesses have sprung up especially in rural villages of Zimbabwe, and some of these businesses survive for a short time since their focus is to provide food for one moment at a time (Chipangura & Kaseke, 2012). Some of these small businesses are very small, having one person working alone, and some business owners hire up to 50 workers (Liedholm & Mead, 2013). According to Liedholm and Mead, Africa has many small businesses.

Juliana (2013) stated that the size of small businesses depends on their operations and a number of employees in that company. The owners manage these small businesses,

and they are the ones who make the decisions (Raymond, Marchand, St-Pierre, Cadieux, & Labelle, 2013). Dodo and Dodo (2015) stated that Zimbabwe has a total population of over 12 million people of which over 30% live in the cities and approximately 70% live in rural areas. Zimbabwe has a total of 3.4 million small business, and 71% businesses are small, individually owned with no employees (ZIMSTAT, 2013). Twenty-four percent are operating as small businesses employing 1 to 5 people (ZIMSTAT, 2013). Flowers et al. (2013), established that small businesses encountered barriers, and noted that business leaders did not have the required management skills that they needed to implement and sustain a small business. Most of the small businesses in the rural village of Ntepe have less than five employees and most of them comprise of family members. Raymond et al. (2013) stated that some small businesses consist of few employees. Some of the leaders of the small businesses face particular problems as they are not adequately able to express their vision due to lack of knowledge of good management, leadership, and business processes. Financially, these small business leaders depend on shoestring budgets which do not allow them to thrive.

**Influence of research and business sustainability.** The sample population identified to participate in the study was from the rural village of Ntepe in Zimbabwe with small businesses owned by the families. The owners were leaders of the small businesses who had sustained their small businesses for 5 years and would love to sustain them for more years. Tekere (2012) discussed the main causes of poverty as natural factors and man-made factors. Tekere stated that it was important to promote sustainable economic growth to alleviate poverty. The rural village leaders expressed the need for

change. They agreed that change was long overdue. They wish to learn how to be great small business leaders who can operate sustainable businesses for more than 5 years (Musa & Semasinghe, 2014). Tunberg (2014) discussed rural small business' growth and what they need to do to grow product by focusing on the output, process, and context of rural growth.

A qualitative study allows researchers to explore complexities of behavior and processes from the viewpoint of participants regarding a contemporary phenomenon (Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2013). The qualitative methodology may consist of assumptions, philosophical perspectives, postulates for critical analysis (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). In this study, I used a qualitative descriptive multiple case study design. I collected data from five small business leaders in Zimbabwe who have implemented management, leadership, and business processes and are willing to help the rural village succeed more.

Purposive sampling is a proper sampling method appropriate for a small rural population. It is quicker and does not cost much, compared to probability sampling (McCabe, Stern, & Dacko, 2013). Purposive sampling focuses on a studied phenomenon on participants who may provide the data needed for the study (Malterud, 2012). The sample population was of business leaders of the rural village of Ntepe in Gwanda, Zimbabwe. Purposive sampling used in this study represented the chosen population and served a particular fact-gathering need for the rural village. I used the data collected from the participants during interviews to analyze and interpret the participant's shared experiences.

Interviews can be semistructured consisting of open-ended questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I used interviews as the primary data collection method. The leaders interviewed responded to questions about the sustainability of their small businesses. The telephone can be another alternative for conducting interviews, however I did not use it in this study. Some studies have used telephone to conduct their research. Block and Erskine (2012) on using telephones for interviews, noted that telephone interviews reduce costs and increase the research data. They noted that some studies confirmed that data quality between face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews were comparable. In their findings, Block and Erskine concluded that telephone interviews are as effective as a face-to-face interview. Glassmeyer and Dibbs (2012) addressed the new technology for conducting interviews. Glassmeyer and Dibbs analyzed and examined live video conferencing software to carry out interviews with participants separated geographically. Video conferencing was a viable data collection method that had challenges but was worth exploring. The other alternative, which does not cost much, was Skype. I used Skype for conducting interviews. Tessier (2012) alluded to the idea that field notes, transcripts, or tape recordings in data collection had evolved, particularly on reliability, time, and data loss. Englander (2012) covered the interview process by looking at the required participants, and the interview questions needed. Interviews were carried out by using a series of questions.

The Informed consent form was given to the volunteering participants before the interviews as per the Institutional Research Board (IRB) guidelines. Corbin and Straus, (2014) noted that volunteering entails the means to make choices freely without any



coercion. I scheduled the Skype meetings for the five participating small business rural village leaders via e-mails. The flexibility of the methodology in qualitative research allows for a focus on the research problem rather than on the initial design protocol (Denscombe, 2013). A qualitative method leads to theory, describes, explains, and evaluates. The quantitative method leads to a hypothesis or theory (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). In a quantitative design, the research process covered the known variables and known or hypothesized relationship between the variables (Harrison, 2013). The quantitative methodology was therefore not an appropriate choice for this study. The method counts, measures, processes data collected, focuses on incidences of X in texts, the data is statistical, explains, and predicts (Barnham, 2015). Simba, Nyandoro, Munyoro, and Chimhande (2015) qualitative case study explains strategy processes employed by Zimbabwean female small business leaders. The case study is one of the important ways of presenting and collecting data (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012). In qualitative research, a special relationship exists between the researcher and the researched, and the situational constraints that shape reality (Yin, 2014).

The methodology should meet its promises (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). Zhou (2012) stated that the purpose of a qualitative method is to investigate a real-life phenomenon in depth that involves contextual conditions pertinent to the phenomenon studied. Zhou's study used the phenomenological concepts to capture the phenomenon of cross-cultural encounters of the minorities of Zimbabwe. The research incorporated the

use of in-depth, audiotaped interviews using open-ended questions to produce descriptive narratives focusing on personal experiences encountered (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Unger, Keith, Hilling, Gielnik, and Frese (2009) examined antecedents and outcomes of deliberate practice activities for South African small businesses. They looked at ways to improve the performance levels of the business leaders by conducting interviews and providing questionnaires for 90 South African business leaders. They concluded that there was a need for continuous learning efforts to aid small businesses, and these findings may be helpful to the policy makers. Wright (2012) conducted a qualitative research study that examined the challenges of entrepreneurs in Jamaica who were trying to establish, grow, and maintain their small businesses. These small businesses are vital because they drive economies by responding to the business environment and fostering competitive advantage, growth, innovation, and profitability.

**Leading change and a new future for Zimbabwe.** Leroy, Palanski, and Simons (2012) stated that good leadership drives good integrity and hence results in the followers performing better. Blanchard and Miler (2014) conducted a study on strategies for leading change successfully. Blanchard and Miler said change is good, people and leaders want to change, and if people cannot see the need for change, they may go out of their way to avoid change. They may even sabotage it. Blanchard and Miller discussed: (a) diagnosis, (b) flexibility, and (c) partnering for performance, as strategies necessary for change.

Maslow physiological needs include biological needs like oxygen, food, and water, and these are these are crucial needs that the rural people of Zimbabwe need.

People of the rural village of Ntepe in Gwanda, Zimbabwe are suffering from poverty and ill health. Zimbabwe's economy has been declining significantly resulting in poverty, unemployment, inequality, and drop in savings and a drop in gross national income per capita of \$460 from \$1080 (Sikwila, 2013). The creation of jobs is a major attraction for governments in the short term (Zindiye, Chiliva, & Masocha, 2012). Therefore, small businesses should be encouraged and supported. The intent of my research study was to identify the sustaining of small business' during the first 5 years for small businesses in rural Zimbabwe. Sarasvathy, Menon, and Kuechle, (2013) stated that start up small businesses' failure was at a significantly high rate compared to larger corporations. Small business leaders with failing businesses often invest personal assets, borrow from friends and relatives to keep their businesses functioning. However, still, these businesses face failure (Campbell, Heriot, Jauregui, & Mitchell, 2012). Lussier (1995) created a model that studied small business failure. Teng, Bhatia, and Anwar (2011) agreed with Lussier's model and stated that it was comprehensive and appropriate for predicting the failure or success of small businesses.

Teng et al. (2011) developed and tested a business failure prediction model comprising of 26 factors: (a) industry experience, (b) capital, (c) partners, (d) education level, (e) age of the owner, (f) planning, (g) management experience, (h) record keeping and financial controls, (i) economic timing, (j) business experience, (k) staffing, (l) marketing skills, (m) minority-owned, (n) use of professional advisors, (o) product/service timing, (p) customer service, (q) cost of running business, (r) niche service or product, (s) local market knowledge, (t) organizational skills, (u) government

policies, (v) leadership processes, (w) competition, (x) technology edge, (y) team environment, and (z) access to resources. After the test, Teng et al. (2011) acknowledged that Lussier's model was far better and accurate in predicting business failures. Teng et al. (2011), informed that Lussier's model left out external factors: (a) variance between industries, (b) the economy, (c) market changes, and (d) evolving technology, which are all important in a global business environment. Barriers that contribute to small business success could be a positive contribution to decision making by small business leaders (Sarasvathy et al., 2013).

Huber and Rothstein (2013) noted that small businesses focus on short-term solutions and do not create long-term strategies, and this leads to business failure. Agriculture suffers from low productivity. Agriculture is the primary source of income in Zimbabwe contributing 20% of the gross national product of the country (Chingwaru, 2015). Oyeku, Oluseyi, Olalekan, and Margaret (2014) looked at how small businesses succeed. In their findings, they proposed financial and non-financial measures of success.

Looking at access to the market, Zimbabwe has the bad infrastructure to meet the various needs of the country especially, the agriculture infrastructure. Lack of agriculture infrastructure has a deterring factor in the agriculture finance, which in turn has contributed to the decimation of the agri-based infrastructure, and the question is how does one sustain a business with no finance? Zimbabwe has 80% unemployment compared to South Africa, which has 25%. The percentages show the gravity of the situation affecting Zimbabwe. There is a need to address poverty alleviation and

unemployment. Chingwaru (2015) stated that small businesses are the engine of economic growth.

Dahles and Susilowati (2015) noted that small businesses could thrive amidst crises and can still find ways to respond positively. Krejci, Strielkowski, and Cabelková (2015) concluded that the Czech SMEs, just like other small businesses face difficulties in being successful. Simba et al. (2015) case study explained strategy processes employed by Zimbabwean female small business leaders. Simba et al. used qualitative research method. Qualitative research method gives a sense of a personal relationship between the researcher, the participants, and the situational constraints that shape reality (Yin, 2014). According to Zhou (2012), the purpose of the qualitative method is to investigate a real-life phenomenon in depth that involved contextual conditions pertinent to the phenomenon studied. Zhou's study used the phenomenological concepts to capture the phenomenon of cross-cultural encounters of the minorities of Zimbabwe.

Chokera, Ngwenya, and Njovo (2014) discussed the marketing skills that business leaders can use to promote their products. Chokera et al. noted that rural small businesses should form their marketing boards to monitor the marketing of their products. Nyahunzvi and Njerekai (2013) discussed tour guide small business and the barriers they encountered. Sikomwe, Mhonde, Katazo, Mavhiki, and Mapetere (2012) reviewed the small businesses in Zimbabwe. The authors discussed how the transportation sector had survived in a bad economy. Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier (2014) discussed the strategies that small and medium businesses can pursue to continue growing amidst bad economy. These small businesses are vital because they drive economies by responding to the

business environment and fostering competitive advantage, growth, innovation, and profitability. Bowale and Ilesanmi (2014) analyzed the effect that small businesses have in the economy of Nigeria and found that small business employing less than ten people have the highest percentage of failure. Danford, John, and Lazaro (2014) stated that small businesses are important for economic development.

Naidu and Chand (2012) conducted a study addressing the importance of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) globally. Naidu and Chand noted the role that MSMEs play in the economic development of countries. Bowale and Ilesanmi (2014) identified finance, operational, and administrative, as barriers faced by MSME globally. Klonowski (2012) conducted a study in Poland about the financing of small businesses and noted that SMEs experienced significant challenges in Poland. The availability of capital was a problem for SMEs in Poland (Steinerowska-Streb & Steiner, 2014).

Africa has business potential and has the resources for business, but the efforts made to help small businesses in Africa are not enough (Frese, Friedrich, & Glaub, 2013). Mukorera and Mahadea (2014) described the effects of the meltdown of the economy and how it had affected small businesses. Ntepe has great resources for business, but some leaders lack management, leadership, and business processes to conduct sustainable business. Haselip, Desgain, and Mackenzie (2014) carried out a study of establishing and growing SMEs in Ghana. Haselip et al. addressed the importance of contribution by small and medium enterprises to a country's economy. They also discussed the struggles SMEs encountered to reach the desired goals. SMEs have shown their capabilities in the developed countries. Policy makers recognize SMEs as important

entities for growth. Scoones et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative study documenting the nature of the political and economic radical transformations that have affected agricultural production and livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

Boden and Paul (2014) conducted a study evaluating and considering the elimination of risks for trade credit to SMEs in the UK. Boden and Paul discussed prospects for improved management of trade credit risks. Munanga (2013) looked at the financial challenges faced by small businesses. Boden and Yassia (2014) suggested that importance should be placed on the improvement of business credit management, policies, processes, and practices for SMEs. Looking at the economic situation of the country, women face hindrances, especially in access to microfinance to alleviate poverty. Mutengezanwa, Gombarume, Njanike, and Charikinya (2011) found that in most cases the financial aid meant for rural small businesses does not reach them due to corruption. They found that financial aid got diverted to other uses unrelated to small businesses.

Zimbabwe faces inflation and has had a terrible time bouncing back (Larochelle, Alwang, & Taruvinga, 2014). Availability of funds is very critical to small businesses. However, as critical as they are, small businesses have found some nonconventional ways of survival amidst challenges. Zimbabwe has faced inflation to the point that policymakers have replaced their local currency by US dollar, Botswana pula, and South African rand to revive the country's economy. Mufudza, Jengeta, and Hove (2013) observed that the measures introduced in Zimbabwe to curb inflation had created more problems for businesses in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe's economy is still in a volatile stage with high debt. Pindiriri (2012) addressed the effect of inflation on Zimbabwe's economy. Dollarization policy led to the freedom of choice in currency in Zimbabwe to help reduce the inflation rate significantly. Larochelle et al. (2014) provided a detailed historical account of the economic crisis, and the authors compared it to other past hyperinflations, for example, the hyperinflation in Germany during 1920-1923. The study provided a detailed documented historical description of the cause of the economic crisis. An explanation of the economic crisis by recording and observing the causes of the economic crisis may explain the phenomena.

When Zimbabwe faced hyperinflation, it affected the whole country. Due to the poor conditions in Zimbabwe, many Zimbabweans fled the country looking for a better livelihood. Zimbabwean citizens moved to neighboring countries to find jobs. Sibanda and Dubihlela (2013) assessed the viability of fixed income securities market for the hyperinflationary economy in Zimbabwe since 1997. The results showed that inflation had contributed to the steep rise in interest rates, and this had adversely affected small business leaders. Mishi and Kapingura (2012) noted that microfinance is crucial in funding small businesses for women so they can reduce poverty. Zimbabwe's unemployment rate is 80%, pointing out that job creation and poverty alleviation are the two pressing challenges facing the government (Chingwaru, 2015).

Manjengwa, Hanlon, and Smart (2012) noted that Poverty Income Consumption Expenditure Survey of 2011–12 found that 76% of rural households were under the Total Consumption Poverty Line and classified as very poor. Zimbabwe's poverty statistics in 2011 was 81.6%, with the majority of the population living in rural areas. Rural



Zimbabwe covers two-thirds of the population, and 77% of the poor people found in the rural areas accounted for 90% of the poor population (Kinsey, 2010). Rural areas had a high percentage of poor people as compared to the urban areas in Zimbabwe. Manjengwa et al. discussed the poverty levels, comparing urban and rural Zimbabwe showing that the country needed to find ways of alleviating poverty. Jacobs and Makaudze (2012) explored ways of alleviating poverty and sustaining the livelihoods of the people in sub-Saharan Africa. Murisa and Chikweche (2013) believed that Zimbabwe could find ways to reduce poverty.

Kevany et al. (2012) conducted a study examining household responses to the food security and HIV/AIDS crisis affecting Zimbabwe. Notably, the intent of their research study was to understand how rural households made their decisions to sell their cattle in response to food shortages. Mufudza et al. (2013) assessed the viability of strategic planning in times of weak economic conditions in Zimbabwe. In their findings, Mufudza et al. noted that it was challenging to carry out strategic planning process during turbulent economic conditions.

Allen and Lachapelle (2012) addressed the relationship between poverty and leadership. They contended that further research was needed on leadership initiatives that can help curb rural poverty. Research by Allen and Lachapelle showed that minor investments could help the rural villager's capacity to identify and address problems. Verpoorten, Arora, Stoop and Swinnen (2013) in their analysis of the self-reported food insecurity data, indicated that the data reported needed further evaluation.

**Management and leadership in sustaining business.** Leaders need to be good managers. Boiral, Baron, and Gunnlaugson (2014) focused on what leaders can do to help an organization. Northhouse (2012) analyzed small businesses' performance in third world countries and identified managerial skills, relationship between leaders and followers, and market structures as determinants of productivity for a small business. There are different management processes and styles that organizations could follow. Rural small businesses can develop a management process that caters to their small businesses (Haslam, Reicher & Platow, 2013).

Burns (1978) states that great leaders are sensitive to the important and critical needs and values of others. Burns discussed the mediocrity or irresponsibility of men and women in power. Maxwell (2014) followed this up by noting that a lot depends on leadership. Maxwell pointed out that leaders must overcome natural tendencies to engage in individualism and materialism that influences decision making and leads to unethical behaviors and leads to crisis. Businesses benefit from how individual leaders inspire and create a collaborative and entrepreneurial spirit in the team (Parmer, 2014). Leaders and followers are part of the leadership process, and they provide direction, set goals, and motivate their members (Bodla et al., 2013). Crossan, Mazutis, Seijts, and Gandz (2013) noted that leadership behavior is a set of teachable skills. Past studies on small businesses failed to show that lack of leadership and experience were the main reasons for a small business failure.

Laidler's (1972) production theory (PT) postulates that small firms are inefficient because they do not operate at an efficiency level required for businesses to thrive.

Laidler noted that production theory further asserts that if companies do not find a way of increasing their economies of scale, then they remain competitive and hence have a high likelihood of failing. Small businesses in Zimbabwe do not enjoy economies of scale (Muchabaiwa, Mazambani, Chigusiwa, Bindu, and Mudavanhu, 2012).

**Government support for sustainability.** Lack of land reform, government support, and knowledge needed for sustainability represent three perceived reasons for the failure of small businesses in Zimbabwe (Mutanda, 2013). Lack of land reform has affected Zimbabwe's economy a lot which has further affected small businesses in rural areas (Manjegwa et al., 2014). The rural small business leaders depend on the land for their daily livelihood. Land reform can help reduce poverty because when people have land they can use the land to grow food to eat and sell (Manjegwa et al., 2014). Mutanda (2013) discussed Zimbabwe's land reform program and explained how the land issue had brought about violence and disarray in Zimbabwe. Mutanda provided unique insights into how political motives had affected Zimbabwe's land reform program.

Zindiye et al., (2012) discussed how there was a lack of support from the government for SMEs. From their findings, Zindiye et al. reported that drawback system and skills training were necessary initiatives for the growth of SMEs in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe. Jayaram et al. (2013) noted that SMEs were owned and managed by families. Nyambi and Maynard (2012) conducted a qualitative study examining the current state of institutional repositories in Zimbabwe. Nyambi and Maynard had looked at the challenges for institutional growth while evaluating the operational issues that might be affecting the setting up of institutional repositories.

Nyambi and Maynard had found how country's poverty conditions had changed the status of bank deposits.

Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF) (2012) was strategically designed to provide the Government of Zimbabwe, United Nations, and the United Nations Country Team with a flexible and easy way to understand a framework that covers the principles of recovery and development. Chadamoyo and Dumbu (2012) conducted a qualitative study investigating the competitive strategy and business environment influencing the Zimbabwean small to medium businesses in the Mucheke light industry. Mupanduki (2012) examined the solutions for addressing corruption in Zimbabwe by linking the origins of corruption to the country's colonization. Mupanduki did a review of the literature to analyze the main causes and remedies for corruption.

**Knowledge needed for sustainability.** Bruwer and Watkins (2010) noted that sustainability of small businesses gets affected by macroeconomic factors and psychological factors. Zimbabwe's economic situation had played a very critical role in the sustainability of the small businesses. Small business leaders were having a very difficult time in these volatile financial conditions, adverse market condition, and lack of management knowledge to sustain their business (Bruwer & Watkins, 2010). Samujh (2011) emphasized the need for sustainability of small businesses. Small businesses leaders need to find ways to sustain their business for longer times. Kiron, Kruschwitz, Haanaes, and Von Streng Velken (2012) stated that sustainability could contribute to the

organization's profitability. Horisch (2015) stated that start-up businesses need sustainability transitions.

Gwandu et al. (2014) evaluated the land issue by looking at how small rural farmers managed their businesses and what was needed to support and strengthen their business. Rural communities can use agriculture to alleviate poverty. Munongo and Shallone (2013) concurred that 90% of the rural population in Zimbabwe rely on agriculture for their livelihood and must adopt new technologies for their farming practices. Agriculture includes livestock farming, and there are benefits in livestock farming (Twine, 2013). Rural villages need to understand the importance of cattle farming. In Zimbabwe, livestock can survive in spite of severe climatic changes. Climatic changes affect agriculture and therefore it is critical that the people of rural villages find sustainable ways of dealing with these climatic changes. Simbarashe (2013) discussed the importance of sustainability of agricultural products and suggested that people of rural villages should focus on products that can sustain even during difficult economic times. Coria and Calfucura (2012) discussed how ecotourism was a viable business for rural communities' livelihood. Ncube (2012) discussed how the lack of proper training, management, and marketing skills coupled with limited access to credit were affecting the livelihood of people in rural villages. Tawodzera (2012) explored the strategies needed to enhance resilience from food insecurities.

**Factors hindering business sustainability.** Small businesses face a variety of issues that hinder their growth and development and affect the small business leaders.

The principal areas of concern affecting the development of the small business sector identified include the following:

- Limited access and cost of finance
- Lack of leadership skills
- Lack of marketing skills and market knowledge
- Inadequate management and entrepreneurial skills
- Lack of access to infrastructure
- Lack of access to land
- Lack of information
- A hostile environment.
- A lack of marketing skills and lack of knowledge of the market critically affects the operations of rural small businesses.
- A country's economic situation.
- HIV/AIDS epidemic has been one of the worst outbreaks that have affected the people of Zimbabwe leading to increasing unemployment rate in the country (Kevany et al., 2012). O'Brien and Broom (2013) stated that understanding the effects of HIV/AIDs by all the people of Zimbabwe can help to reduce its ill effects.

**Determinants of small business success and growth.** When a business succeeds, the success is evident in the economic growth and size of the business (Insah, Mumuni, & Bangiyel, 2013). The determinants of small business success include cash flow, good business acumen, good management of the products, appropriate leadership, market

accessibility, and local community support (Ployhart, Nyberg, Reilly, & Maltarich, 2014). Small businesses in Ntepe rely on human capital to survive (Ployhart et al., 2014). However, Ployhart et al. (2014) state that as much as the human capital is critical to small business success, the necessary skills are also needed. Other factors like political stability, access to the market, and infrastructure are also critical to the sustainability of any business (Armstrong, 2013).

### **Transition**

In Section 1 I discussed the research question and aligned it to the study by focusing on applied business research, the problem statement, purpose statement, conceptual framework, and literature review. In the literature review, I discussed the sustainability of small businesses. I also covered the qualitative methodology and multiple descriptive case study design. Small business leaders can help to boost the economy, create employment, and alleviate poverty. The purpose of the study was the main discussion of section 1 and is also discussed in Section 2. In section 2 I have presented the research methodology in detail.

## Section 2: The Project

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple descriptive case study was to explore how small business leaders of Ntepe, a rural village in Zimbabwe, sustained their small businesses during the first 5 years. Semistructured interviews with open-ended questions were used to collect data from five small business leaders from the rural village of Ntepe who had operated their businesses for more than 5 years. The results of this study may help small business leaders to change their management and leadership styles to foster growth and sustainability. This study may ultimately contribute to social change by providing new insights that help in sustaining profitable businesses, curbing poverty, and providing employment to the people of a rural village.

### **Role of the Researcher**

#### **Role and Relationship with the Topic**

Several studies have specified the role of a researcher during the data collection process (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012; Rudestom & Newton, 2014). Accordingly, I guided the data collection process in planning the schedule and preparing the research method procedure. I assessed the risk for the participants during the research process and no risk was found. I had an advantage concerning the area and population of the research because I grew up in the rural village of Ntepe. I had witnessed businesses start and end or become stagnant within the first year. I selected the participants based on my knowledge and understanding of them. I had familiarity with the small business leaders, and this was important because of the influence they had in the rural village. My



responsibility was to make sure that the participants understood and freely consented to the study and that the recruitment was noncoercive. I followed the IRB guidelines.

### **Mitigate Bias**

The researcher can mitigate bias during the data collection process (National Institutes of Health, 2014). It is important for the researcher to match the sample demographics to the population. Therefore, I mitigated bias by adjusting the participants' demography by including both men and women participants so that the sample represented the Ntepe population. In selecting the participants, I further mitigated bias by explicitly defining the participants who fit the research study and my desired goals.

### **Interview Protocol**

The data collection technique was semistructured interviews using Skype to collect data. In semistructured interviews with open-ended questions, participants get the opportunity to expand on their responses (Yin, 2013). I followed the guidelines of the Belmont Report related to data collection procedure. Participants' agreement to participate in research constitutes a valid consent free of coercion (Tessier, 2012; Tufford & Newman, 2012; Yin, 2014). Thus, I selected the participants who met the following criteria: (a) having proficiency in English, (b) 18 years or older, (c) owner of a small business that had survived for more than 5 years, and (d) owner of a small business located in Ntepe in Zimbabwe. I followed the Walden IRB guidelines. I was aware of all relevant regulations, and I took measures to remain compliant with them.

I have protected the participants' privacy by following IRB ethics guidelines. A researcher is obliged to embed ethics in the research processes (Aluwihare, 2012).

Participants and researchers add equal weight and value to the transparency of the ethical process and build methodological and ethical rigor to the research study. I used the following steps in my study: planning and designing the study, obtaining permission from the rural village chief, and identifying participants for the village chief's approval.

### **Belmont Report Protocol**

After I had selected the participants, I conducted interviews through Skype. I considered the boundaries given by the chief and followed the guidelines, rules, and orders given by the village chief and other leaders of Ntepe. Assessment of risk was critical as I conducted the study. Risk can be of a physical nature, which includes any bodily harm; psychological, which involves any emotional discomfort causing shame or anxiety; and social or economic, which may involve stigmatization and/or financial problems because of participation in a research study. Following the ethical principles and guidelines of the Belmont Report on the protection of human subjects is therefore important. The Belmont Report covers basic ethical guidelines of respect for persons.

An informed consent form that informed the participants of the research proceedings was presented to the participants to make them aware of the study guidelines (see Appendix A). I considered the guidelines of the Belmont Report during the data collection process. To assess the risk involved, I adhered to appropriate guidelines in the selection of participants and followed the informed consent procedure throughout the research. I used these guidelines in conducting the study. I followed the IRB guidelines while selecting participants. In planning and designing the study, I followed Walden University's IRB guidelines for collecting data, including informed consent. I followed

the ethical principles and guidelines of the Belmont Report regarding protection of and respect for the human subjects of the study.

### **Participants**

The participants were five small business leaders. Eligible participants were from the rural village of Ntepe in the district of Gwanda in Zimbabwe. The participants were small business leaders who had managed and owned small businesses with between one and 10 employees and had sustained their small businesses during the first 5 years. The participants were fluent in English. They had a minimum education of Ordinary (O) level, which is equivalent to high school in the United States. Therefore, I did not require an interpreter. English is the main language taught and spoken in schools beginning in preschool in Ntepe. The local language is secondary to English. Purposive sampling for choosing participants and a member checking process during interviews ensure that the data collected support the study (Walker, 2012). The participants' deep roots in Ntepe, having been born there and living there, made them eligible for selection for this study.

The strategy for gaining access to the participants involved communication by e-mail and Skype. Communication back and forth with the participants occurred through e-mail. I used Skype as the means for collecting data from the five small business owners from Ntepe in Zimbabwe. The participants were required to have access to Skype. Participants received informed consent forms via e-mail explaining the nature and intent of the study, and their response was "I consent." I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions via Skype to allow participants to complete the interview in a convenient location.

The working relationships that I established with the participants involved honesty and trust that the information given would be accurate. The trustworthiness of a researcher in a qualitative study is essential for the research study's credibility (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Rubin and Rubin (2014) recommended that researchers and participants establish trust. The selected participants were five business leaders who owned and operated small businesses. They were all adults above 18 years of age. Their ability to speak and understand English was also a determining factor. To establish a working relationship with these participants, I was in constant contact with them via e-mail. In my communication, I followed the ethics guidelines. I also developed a plan for sharing the research study results with the participants for their information.

### **Sampling Method**

The sampling method used was purposive sampling. The reason to use purposive sampling is to select participants who have knowledge about the overarching research question of the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). The purposive sampling in this study focused on Ntepe small business leaders who had operated their small businesses for more than 5 years.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

The research method and design included qualitative method and descriptive case study. The descriptive case study is analogous to multiple experiments, and the test conditions justify the multiple case studies (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013; Yin, 2014). Qualitative multiple descriptive case study was an appropriate design

for this study. I did not select mixed methodology because of its complexity. I did not use the quantitative or mixed method in my study because the objective here was to explore the barriers that the small businesses of Ntepe encountered. Quantitative research does not allow for full participant input and interpretation (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014).

The research method used was qualitative. The qualitative methodology was the best fit for my study because it helped in gaining unbiased insight into the culture of the rural village and the way in which participants perceived their business success.

According to Stake (2013), the attributes of a qualitative study are that it is holistic, experiential, and situational. A qualitative study allows a researcher to look at human affairs from different views and is carried out using human senses in the field. The qualitative research method is used to explore the uniqueness of the moment, the place, and spoken words, works, and individual perceptions. Quantitative research calls for measurement of objective facts to prove or disprove a hypothesis (Yin, 2014).

Quantitative research does not allow for full participant input and interpretation (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). A quantitative study involves the examination of statistical relationships. Accordingly, a quantitative method was not the best choice for this descriptive study.

### **Research Design**

A descriptive multiple case study is an examination of current events or situations (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the research design selected for my study was a descriptive multiple case study. Small businesses of Ntepe were having a difficult time sustaining

their operations beyond 5 years. A case study design may contribute to knowledge of related phenomena (Yin, 2014). The results of qualitative and multiple descriptive case study research may provide deeper understanding (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). In my study, the focus was on finding a solution to the barriers that inhibit the progress of small businesses in Ntepe, Zimbabwe. I focused on exploring strategies to sustain a profitable business during the first 5 years. Zimbabwe has had many unfortunate circumstances such as HIV/AIDS, political instability, economic slump, and drought that have hampered business progress and have resulted in poverty and sickness (O'Brien & Broom, 2013).

A descriptive case study is flexible, evolving, emergent, and appropriate for a small sample (Merriam, 2014). The research design is critical in exploring the research question and being able to draw conclusions from the data collected (Leedy & Ormond, 2013). Therefore, I chose to use a descriptive multiple case study to draw conclusions from the data collected. Data saturation is an important factor when considering sample size in a descriptive case study (Dworkin, 2012). I achieved data saturation when there was no new information coming from the participants.

Other designs were not a fit for this study, such as phenomenological research design and ethnography. Anosike, Ehrich, and Ahmed (2012) defined phenomenology as a method of exploring management practices and explained that phenomenology has roots in psychology. I did not use phenomenology study. Phenomenology involves developing an understanding of a phenomenon as seen through the eyes of the people that experience it (Sousa, 2014). Research using phenomenology aims at uncovering the

meanings of everyday existence, and the ultimate goal is understanding of human nature (Patton, 2012). Ethnography was not a good choice for this study because ethnography focuses on what people do and say and may require time spent in the field observing in detail (Van Maanen, 2015).

Simons (2014) noted that case study design can be used to explore the uniqueness of a particular case. Yin (2013) described a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within real-life context. Case study was an appropriate design for my study. A multiple experiment condition justifies the use of multiple case studies (Yin, 2013). Yin stated that such understanding encompasses the essential contextual conditions relevant to the phenomenon of the research. I chose multiple case study to get rich data to answer the research question.

Descriptive studies may answer questions such as *what is* or *what was* (Nassaji, 2015). In an exploratory case study, the researcher explores situations that require intervention that is evaluated results in more than one outcome (Yin, 2014). My study was a descriptive multiple case study that involved interviews with a few people. Ntepe rural village leaders have faced barriers to sustaining their small business such as lack of business, management, and leadership skills.

**Data saturation.** During interviews, information was collected until I reached a data saturation point. Data saturation is reached when there is no new information coming from participants (Dworkin, 2012). During the research process, the selection of participants can be a factor for data saturation, especially in relation to how homogeneous

or heterogeneous the population studied is (Dworkin, 2012). When there is no new information, it can be said that data saturation has been reached (Corbin & Straus, 2014).

### **Population and Sampling**

The population in the study was from the rural village of Ntepe, district of Gwanda, in Zimbabwe. Ntepe is a rural village of small businesses run by rural village leaders. Having more participants helps to identify perspectives that may be overlooked (Sargeant, 2012). I used purposive sampling to select five participants who agreed to be part of the research study.

Purposive sampling was used in this study because its design serves a fact-gathering need. Purposive sampling was the right sampling method for a small rural population. It was quicker and less expensive than alternatives would have been (McCabe et al., 2013). Purposive sampling focuses on identified and selected participants who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest and therefore can provide the data needed for the study (Malterud, 2012). These participants were the small business leaders of Ntepe in Zimbabwe who had sustained their business growth during the first 5 years. These business leaders helped to explore management, leadership, and business processes to sustain a profitable business during the first 5 years. The data was collected from the five participants who represented Ntepe in Zimbabwe. The participants were household leaders, both male and female. I decided to use five participants in order to get a better understanding of the rural village small business. The participants' overall gender consisted of both women and men.



Vaismoradi et al. (2013) stated that a researcher can conduct research until the point of data saturation is reached, regardless of the sample size. The sample in my study was a small one, and data saturation was determined to occur when no new information was received from the participants. To be eligible to participate in the research study, individuals were required to be able to read and write English. Additionally, participants needed to be 18 years of age or older and leaders of their small business. Participants voluntarily agreed to sign the informed consent form. I conducted the interviews using Skype for communication.

## **Ethical Research**

### **The Informed Consent Process**

Respect for the participants' rights is necessary during a research study. Ethical guidelines help researchers when interacting with participants. Such guidelines also help to inform researchers of the ethical judgments they need to make. I adhered to Walden IRB guidelines in full, and one of the requirements was that participants be given a consent form (see Appendix A). In preparation for the IRB, I completed National Institutes of Health training on protecting human research participants.

The participants read and signed the informed consent form. The informed consent form provided information to participants about the study, what the research was about, and how I planned to collect data. Use of force or coercion to induce individuals to participate in a study is unethical (Corbin & Straus, 2014). The participants were required to complete the consent form to participate. By signing the consent form, the participants agreed to the research guidelines. I assured them of their rights during the research

process. Additionally, the consent form informed the participants about confidentiality. The participants, by signing the consent form, voluntarily agreed to participate in the interviews and be audio recorded. Respect should be accorded to participants, and their permission should be sought before recording interviews (Faber & Kruger, 2013). I promised to use the data collected for my research and nothing else. The trustworthiness of a researcher in a qualitative study is essential for the research study's credibility (Houghton et al., 2013).

### **Participant Procedures for Withdrawing**

Individuals should be able to exercise their right to accept or not accept the opportunity to take part in a study (Corbin & Straus, 2014). Participants were made aware that they could refuse to participate. Participants, in keeping with IRB guidelines and the Belmont Report, had the option to withdraw from the research process at any time during the research journey by contacting me by e-mail or Skype.

### **Incentives for Participating**

There were no incentives for the participants to take part in the study. Participants did not also receive any financial incentives in this study. The interviews were conducted at locations comfortable for the participants via Skype at their convenient place.

### **Ethical Protection of Participants**

The Belmont Report emphasizes observation of the moral principles of protecting and respecting participants' privacy and confidentiality during the research process (Mikesell, Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2013). I undertook appropriate measures to ensure the ethical protection of participants and to keep participants' information confidential.

Jamal et al. (2014) stated that participants should be made to feel safe and need to be assured that the information obtained from them during research will remain private and confidential. I followed these guidelines. I did not share data with the participants' family members or friends, and they did not have access to the data collected. I protected participants' privacy by making sure that I had the correct participants who agreed to be in the study. The informed consent form informed the participants about the topic of research, the interview process, and how data would be collected and stored (Faber & Kruger, 2013). Accordingly, I followed this protocol.

### **Security of Data**

I have kept the data safe in a secure place to ensure participant confidentiality. I made the participants aware that the information gathered was for the purpose of my study only. The data I have collected will be stored in a secure locked safe in my house for 5 years, and then shredded securely. The online software Eraser 6 will be used to delete the documents permanently after 5 years.

### **IRB Approval**

The first step in submission to the IRB was the compliance with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report (Mikesell et al., 2013). After complying with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report, IRB gave permission to conduct the study. Please see Appendix A for IRB approval number. IRB exists to protect human subjects participating in research from potential harm.

### **Protection of Participants' Names**

Researchers should maintain the confidentiality of all the personal information provided by the participants (Mikesell et al., 2013). I have not revealed participant's names. I used pseudonym Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 to identify the participants in my study. I have not used the participant's personal information for any purposes outside of my research project. The study should not reveal the participants' name or any other information that can identify them (Aluwihare, 2012). I ensured adherence to this principle.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

This section covered the instruments used in data collection, the technique used and data organization. The most important instrument was me, the researcher. I was the one involved in guiding the research. Grosseohme (2014) discussed the importance of views during the research process. Collecting proper data is essential to the study, and, some of the primary methods of data collection are interviews and document review (Corbin & Straus, 2014). I made use of interviews and document review methods for data collection in my study. I used Skype to interview the five participants. The interviews were semistructured with open-ended questions (see Appendix B). Hamilton (2014) noted that interviews encourage participants to go beyond answering issues in a qualitative study.

### **Process/Protocol for Interviews**

- I sent the required documents to my participants in Zimbabwe via e-mails.
- I contacted the participants via e-mail and obtained their Skype ID.

- I obtained the e-mails from a public database directory of small business owners.
- I arranged with the participants for mutually agreeable date and time for Skype interviews.
- All participants were made aware before the interviews that I will be audio recording the interviews, and I also mentioned this in the consent form.
- The participants were required to have access to Skype

I will keep the data collected in a secure place for 5 years as required by Walden IRB guidelines.

### **Member Checking**

I used member checking. Member checking is a way of making sure that the researcher's data interpretation is in line with the information provided by the participants (Harper & Cole, 2012). Transcript preparation involves writing verbatim what the participants say (Walker, 2012). In member checking, researchers share the interpretation of the interview with the participants for validation (Harvey, 2015). These steps help to improve the rigor of the qualitative study. Accordingly, I followed the above steps. The participants should be given the opportunity to review the member checking reports after the interviews (Mikesell et al., 2013). I provided the participants with this opportunity.

### **Data Collection Technique**

#### **Technique**

Skype was the technique used as a method for interviews in gathering data. Szolnoki and Hoffmann (2013) state that Skype opens new possibilities for research. E-

mails were used to send required documents, especially the form that was required to be signed, and any other necessary communication. Recording the Skype interviews using a digital audio recorder and then analyzing the interviews is inexpensive and reliable (Hanna, 2012). I followed this technique for my interviews. The other alternative is the use of call recorder software, which can record video and audio interviews efficiently while screening out unwanted noise (Gronn, Romeo, McNamara, & Teo, 2013). The call recorder software integrates into Skype and can record in both audio and video mode. In transcribing the interviews, I used NCH software that offers free downloadable transcription software that provides variable speed playback and it works with Microsoft Word. There are other options to use like Quick Time, which is inexpensive. However, I did not utilize Quick Time for my study.

### **Advantages of Data Collection Techniques**

There is very little amount of money needed to conduct interviews via Skype (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014). The main advantage of using Skype for collecting data was that it was affordable. The main disadvantage is that the participant had to be technologically equipped to facilitate Skype interviews. Skype interviews are an inexpensive technique for gaining an understanding of the topic researched. The disadvantage is that information collected may not be readily applicable or outdated. Information may be inaccurate, and can be time-consuming, and some participants might find it intrusive (Hamilton, 2014). Data is collected right then and there during the research. One can see the participants and the advantage are people perform better when observed (Hamilton, 2014).

## **Member Checking**

It was critical to do member checking, which involves the analysis, synthesis, and interpretation of the member checking report. Once the interpretations were complete, the five participants had the opportunity to review the member checking report. This is to confirm that their perspectives and responses were acknowledged and described accurately. Member checking is a way of making sure that the data interpretation is in line with the participants' responses during the interviews (Morse, 2015). Member checking helps to enhance the credibility of the study. I did member checking. The initial interview gives maximum benefit for reliability and validity, and more interviews help reach data saturation. In transcript preparation, I conducted the interview first and then wrote word for word what the participant said. I then used the transcripts to prepare the member checking report.

## **Data Organization Technique**

### **Systems Used for Keeping Track of Data**

I used research logs and reflective journals to keep track of data. The use of journals and logs for tracking data helps in identifying what was most relevant to the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Organizing data by typing field notes and analyzing recordings is important (Tessier, 2012). Condensing data into themes by sorting, segmenting, developing categories, and codes using NVivo software (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). NVivo software allowed me to collect, organize, and analyze the interview transcripts. NVivo software expedites thematic coding in data analysis (Castleberry, 2014). NVivo software costs less and saves time. Also, NVivo software

helped in developing codes, identify themes, and patterns during the data analysis process.

### **Raw Data Storage**

Faber and Kruger (2013) recommend that research data be kept in a secure locked up place. I have kept the non-electronic data securely locked in a filing cabinet in my house. I have saved the electronic data on my computer, by using unique ids and passwords, which will be changed every 3 months for security reasons. My computer has the most current antivirus software. For backup, in case my computer crashes, I have used an external drive to store data, and this also has been kept in the securely locked filing cabinet. After 5 years from the date of graduation, I will shred the documents and erase the electronic data using Eraser 6. The data collected will not be used or sold to any researcher or organization. I assured the participants that the data collected would not be shared with other researchers.

### **Data Analysis**

In data analysis, I sorted, integrated, and synthesized the data collected using Thematic Analysis (TA). Thematic Analysis (TA) is an approach used to identify, analyze and interpret themes in a qualitative data (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Thematic Analysis (TA) approach in qualitative descriptive is suitable for researchers who wish to employ a relatively low level of interpretation, and it centers on developing themes by identifying which themes are important (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). I also used methodological triangulation to improve credibility. Methodological triangulation was the right data analysis process for this study. There are



four forms of triangulation (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theoretical triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation (Black et al., 2013). Methodological triangulation of data involved analysis of all primary data from the semistructured interview questions. Methodological triangulation and member checking were the appropriate method to improve reliability and credibility of the data.

To explore the sustenance of small business in Ntepe, Zimbabwe during the first 5 years the overarching research question was: What skills do small business leaders need to sustain their business during the first 5 years? Following are some of the questions asked during the interviews:

1. How has your professional and educational background prepared you to run a small business during the first 5 years?
2. How do you describe the planning methods you used in your business operation during the first 5 years?
3. How have you managed to control your business during the first 5 years?
4. What organizational skills have you used during the first 5 years?
5. What challenges have you faced in maintaining your business?
6. What leadership skills have you used to sustain your business?
7. What management skills have you used to sustain your business?
8. What are some of the challenges you have faced in being a small business leader?

Member checking is used after interviews and data collection (Yin, 2014). During data collection, I did not conduct any pilot study. I used call recorder software to record

the Skype interviews. Call recorder is inexpensive and records video and audio interviews while screening out unwanted noise (Gronn et al., 2013). I used Nvivo 11 software for my study to identify themes. Nvivo 11 is suitable because it helps to keep the data in one location and allows for continuous coding (Azeem, Salfi, & Dogar, 2012). In my multiple descriptive case study, a conceptual framework was used.

### **Data Analysis Process**

Methodological triangulation involves different methods of data collection such as interviews and documentation which help strengthen the validity of a qualitative research study (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). My case study relied on multiple sources of evidence, through method triangulation. The advantage I had of being from Ntepe and knowing some of the leaders of small business helped in methodological triangulation, bracketing, and reflexivity to improve the credibility of my study and mitigate bias. A researcher should be careful and aware of his/her reactions and reflections through bracketing and reflexivity (Tufford & Newman 2012). I was cautious in exerting my role as a researcher.

### **Structural Analysis**

Structural analysis is critical to a research study. It helps prevent erroneous perception by examining different elements that make up a rural village of business leaders. The structural analysis reflects on the experiences of the participants, by using a combination of the inductive approach (Miles et al., 2013).

- Quality: The quality of the data was of critical importance because it represented Ntepe rural village.

- Consistency: There were consistency and uniformity in the data collected.
- Continuity: There was continuity in the data collected and report of findings.

I have kept the data collected and compiled by me during the study in a safe place and it shall remain in safe place for 5 years from the date of my graduation. The participants were made aware that the data was for the sole purpose of my research and nothing else. According to Yin (2013), there are four types of triangulation. These are multiple data sources, multiple researchers, use of multiple theories, and multiple data collection methods (Yin, 2013). In my study, the data sources were semistructured interviews, archival data, and government records. The various data collection methods will entail the qualitative research method only. The use of in-depth, audiotaped, semistructured interviews using open-ended questions aids in producing descriptive narratives focusing on personal experiences encountered (Singh, 2014). I too have incorporated the use of in-depth, audiotaped, semistructured interviews using open-ended questions to gain rich insights into the barriers faced by small business owners in the first 5 years of their business in Zimbabwe.

Management theory was the conceptual framework for my study. Peter Drucker founded the management theory and throughout the years, other authors expanded on his theory. I used management theory to understand the strategies and skills needed to sustain the small businesses during the first 5 years.

### **Reliability and Validity**

A great way to judge a qualitative study is by focusing on its reliability, internal and external validity, and objectivity (Ali & Yusof, 2014). The first step I took in

ensuring reliability and validity of my research study was to ensure that the participants got an opportunity to voluntarily decide to participate in my study. The participant's acceptance ensured that the data collection process included only the participants who were willing and offered data freely and frankly. The validity of the qualitative study involves trustworthiness, credibility, and authenticity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Grosseohme (2014) stated that keeping a journal of the research journey helps in improving the rigor of the study. The following are critical standards that map into validity and reliability of the study:

### **Reliability**

**Dependability.** Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) noted that ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. Vaismoradi et al. (2013) stated that appropriate TA needs reflexivity, coding, and analyzing data in certain proper ways. Lincoln et al. addressed the close ties between credibility and dependability, stating that, in practice, a demonstration of the credibility goes some distance in ensuring the dependability. Methods such as focus groups and individual interviews help in achieving this closeness (Lincoln et al., 2011). Data collected was analyzed and interpreted and reviewed with the participants to ensure accuracy. Honesty on the part of participants was crucial for the study.

### **Validity**

**Credibility.** Houghton et al. (2013) stated that the trustworthiness of the findings would be relevant to credibility. Qualitative research participants have the right to privacy and the right to request anonymity (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2014).

Though the interviews conducted were not face-to-face, I conveyed the security of the participants' data to them. Skype does encrypt messages. Microsoft's stated policy for Skype is: Skype uses well-known standards-based encryption algorithms to protect Skype users' communications from falling into the hands of hackers and criminals (Hanna, 2012). Researchers should give participants an option to correct any misinformation and misrepresentations. This process protects the researcher and the participants (Saunders et al., 2014).

In methodological triangulation, the procedure may entail gathering, analyzing data from multiple sources (Finfgeld-Connett, 2014). Triangulation of data may be beneficial to improve the credibility of the research (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Denzin, 2012). The approach I have used is the methodological triangulation by collecting data through interviews, documents, and public records. I achieved methodological triangulation by collecting data from 5 participants through interviews, using archival data, and public records. The number of participants makes it easier for the interview process to connect the participant's experiences, and emotions and check their responses to others (Seidman, 2013).

**Transferability.** Merriam (2014) noted that external validity focuses on the extent to which the findings get applied to other situations. Marshall and Rossman (2014) stated that for transferability, the findings of the case study should be of use to others in similar situations and problems faced during the research. Transferability can help in determining if the findings are applicable and transferable. The results of this research study might help other rural communities that are facing small business sustainability

issues. To improve the transferability of my study I have provided rich and thick descriptions while discussing the research findings.

**Confirmability.** I used open-ended questions to collect data. According to Stake (2013), the validity of the study is to make sure that the analysis supports the overall objective of the study. Black, Palombaro, and Dole (2013) stated that triangulation and reflexivity might be used to detail confirmability. For confirmation of the findings, data should be collected and compared from different sources (Houghton et al., 2013). I too followed this procedure. I checked and rechecked the participants' responses to interview questions, and shared the findings with the participants for their confirmation.

**Data saturation.** During the research process, the selection of the participants can be a factor in data saturation and homogeneous or heterogeneous in the population studied a significant factor (Dworkin, 2012). Data saturation is reached when there is no new data shared by the participants during the interview. Data saturation helps to improve the rigor of a qualitative research study (Walker, 2012). Goffin, Raja, Claes, Szwajczewski, and Martinez, (2012) stated that data saturation helps to improve the rigor and validity of the research. Researchers reach data saturation point when there is no new information, there is no new coding, and no new themes to explore (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Member checking helps to achieve data saturation.

### **Transition and Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple descriptive case study was to explore how small business leaders of Ntepe rural village in Zimbabwe sustained their small business during the first 5 years. In section 2, I discussed the study population and data collection

technique. I also discussed the topic of data analysis and looked at the role I had in the research process. I also touched upon the validity of the data collected and the research method used to gather data. Moving on to section 3, findings of this research study are discussed in detail. Application to professional practice and application for social change are also addressed in detail in Section 3. Section 3 is the final section of this study. I have concluded section 3 with reflections and recommendations for the overall study.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive multiple case study was to explore how small business leaders of Ntepe, a rural village in Zimbabwe, sustained their small businesses during the first 5 years. The overarching research question was the following: What skills do small business leaders need to sustain their businesses during the first 5 years? The interviewed participants were five small business owners who had been in business for more than 5 years. The eligible participants were from the rural village of Ntepe in the district of Gwanda in Zimbabwe. The participants were small business leaders who managed and owned small businesses with between one and 10 employees. These owners had sustained their small businesses for more than 5 years. This section contains an analysis of the findings from the interviews that I conducted. After transcription and coding, four themes emerged from the interviews. The findings of the study show that the small businesses owners of Ntepe faced challenges immediately upon starting their businesses.

Challenges related to availability of funds, education, poor management, leadership, planning, and control of finances were among the difficulties that the participants faced. The participants acknowledged the presence of these challenges, but they did their best to ensure business success. The challenges faced by these business leaders made them more determined to be successful in their businesses.



### **Presentation of Findings**

The data collected from interviews conducted via Skype helped in answering the overarching research question of this study: What skills do small business leaders need to sustain their businesses during the first 5 years? I used methodological triangulation to improve credibility and trustworthiness of the data collected. I also used NVivo 11 software for coding the data collected. NVivo software expedites thematic coding in data analysis (Castleberry, 2014). Additionally, data were analyzed using thematic analysis and member checking to ensure reliability and credibility of the data collected. By using NVivo 11 software, I discovered common themes that were related to the sustainability of small businesses during the first 5 years. The findings indicate that the participants were emotionally and physically invested in their small businesses. The findings also reveal that the small business owners had planned to start their businesses and had planned to make sure that their businesses kept running smoothly. The findings further indicated that all the participants cared about their employees and their customers. The five participants whom I interviewed had successfully sustained their small businesses in the first 5 years. All participants answered 12 open-ended questions within a semistructured interview format via Skype.

Participant 1 said that he had worked hard from the start of his business. He said that his education had been a great factor in helping him succeed in business. Participants 2, 3, 4, and 5 informed me that they were personally managing all the issues in their businesses and leading their employees in all stages of business development. They said

that they had worked hard during the first 5 years. The findings show how hard these participants had worked to get their businesses where they were at the time of the study.

The five participants had attained some form of basic education, and they could speak and understand English. I did not have to repeat myself during the interviews. Some of the participants said that they had also obtained a trade certificate. The participants emphasized the need for and importance of further education to sustain their small businesses.

The findings show how hard these participants had worked to get their businesses where they were at the time of the study. (Chipangura & Kaseke, 2012; Muchabaiwa et al., 2012); motivation to be a great business leader (Rowley, 2013); managing people (Drucker, 2013); the importance of setting reasonable objectives that can be achieved (Aksoy & Bayazit, 2014); the influence of spirituality (Bodla et al., 2013; Nwankwo et al., 2012; Roof, 2014); planning and goal setting (Crossley et al., 2013); and small business survival (Chipangura & Kaseke, 2012).

The data collected indicated that the participants were committed to their businesses. The findings were in line with the conceptual framework of management theory. Management theory can guide managers in implementing goals that may help to increase productivity. Altindag and Kazdal (2014) stated that management theory principles could contribute to guiding managers toward success. Drucker (2013) addressed management theory as a discipline of modern management that can effectively enhance project success. Managers should search for better ways of managing their

businesses. Good management helps businesses grow and succeed. The findings from the study showed that good management is necessary for the success of small businesses.

I used a digital audio recorder to record Skype interviews with the participants. I used Skype with all participants for interviews and member checking. After completing the interviews, I manually organized and saved data on my computer and on an external hard drive, and I transcribed the recording into a Word document. I emailed the member checking reports to the participants and scheduled another Skype session for member checking. Member checking sessions lasted for 20 minutes. After member checking, I uploaded the transcribed data to NVivo 11 software for coding. I then reviewed the data for coding and themes. All participant responses to the 12 interview questions were transcribed word for word. The following sections present the interview questions and the responses from the five participants:

### **Interview Question 1: Education**

How has your professional and educational background prepared you to run a small business during the first 5 years?

I wanted to understand the level of education that the participants had and how this education affected their ability to sustain their businesses during the first 5 years of operation. The participants' responses established that although all of them had been educated, they would love to further their education. The participants could understand and respond to the questions asked. Each of the participants had an Ordinary level (O level) education under Cambridge University of England.

Participant 1 said, “I have an O level education. Education is very important, and it has taught me to be a good owner, manager, and a leader in my business. I used the principles I learned and had applied them to start my business.” Participant 2 explained, “I have O level education, and I can read, write, and I can manage my business because of education. Education has enabled me to be diligent, be a good planner, organizer, and people-oriented person.” Participant 3 noted, “I have O level education and a teaching certificate. Trade school has enhanced my business knowledge; however, education gave me the confidence to start a business. I encourage my staff and family members to get further education.” Participant 4 stated, “I like the fact that I can communicate with my employees and customers. Education wise I have some trade school training and have an O level education.” Participant 5 observed, “I think education has taught me how to deal with my employees and customers in a respectable manner. I am determined, hard-working, and persistent and continue educating myself and my community.”

Table 1 shows the levels of education the participants had gained. Eighty percent had O level education; 20% had a teaching certificate and trade school training. It was important to know how much education they had because education helps business owners in communicating with customers and employees, reading policies about business, counting money, and understanding the operation of the business. The participants communicated well in English during the interview sessions.

Table 1

*Participants' Education Levels*

Code	No. of participants	% of participants
O level	4	80
Teaching certificate	1	20
Trade school trained	1	20

**Interview Question 2: Planning**

How do you describe the planning methods you used in your business operation during the first 5 years?

The aim in asking this question was to gain a deeper understanding of the planning done by the participants while starting their small businesses. Lack of planning can be detrimental to any business. I was looking for how much planning the participants had done. The participants said that they had written a plan explaining what they wanted to achieve. The participants also responded that they were committed to their business and were available to their employees and customers. Below are the participants' responses to Interview Question 2:

Participant 1 recalled, "I started by looking at the potential customers and potential competition that was present in my rural village. I then wrote down my business plan and articulated what I wanted to achieve, by whom, and by when. The plan had specific dates of completion of every task. My presence was crucial when I started the business and throughout the 5 years. With that in mind, I started my small business. I used the money I had saved, borrowed some from family and friends and borrowed from established businesses to start my business. I was physically present in my business and made sure that everything was managed as planned." Participant 2 stated, "I planned to

borrow money from friends and family members to start my business because I did not have enough to start a business. I planned to pay them back with the profit from the business and then I looked at employing family members who may have the same passion as me in the business.” Participant 3 explained, “For a business to succeed, I knew I had to be 100% committed or else I will face failure. I was dedicated and committed to seeing my business grow. My plans changed a lot in these 5 years because of the country’s unstable economy. On the positive side, I was available for my business all the time, and I planned to be there for my employees and customers too.” Participant 4 recounted, “First decision I took in planning was to draft a formal business plan, which I presented to my family and friends. This made it easier to ask for money from them because they saw I was serious about starting a business. So, for the startup money I asked my family and friends, part of the money they just gave me, but some of it I had to pay them back when my business turned profitable.” Participant 5 said, “It was hard when I started this business, but I made it. Prayer had worked wonders; before I did anything, I prayed to God to guide me. I prayed, and my family helped me a lot.”

Table 2 displays information about the participants and their planning processes. The participants said that they were committed and dedicated to starting their business.

Table 2

*Planning Process During the First 5 years*

Code	No. of planning processes used by participants	% of planning processes used by participants
Employed family	2	40
Competitor analysis	1	20
Looked for potential customers	1	20
Borrowed money	4	80
Business plan	4	80
Profit to pay back	2	40
Committed and dedicated	2	40
Prayed	1	20

Participant 1 said, “I am committed to my business and I am physically present in my business and make sure that everything is managed as planned.” Participant 3 said, “For a business to succeed, I knew I had to be 100% committed or else I will face failure. I was dedicated and committed to seeing my business grow.” Table 2 identifies the processes that the participants used in planning for their businesses. They focused on getting some startup funding. The participants stated that they got their funding from themselves, friends, family members, and/or established businesses. The participants reported that they drafted a business plan and presented it to their family members and friends before the launch of their businesses. Table 2 also shows that some of the participants employed family members for their businesses during the startup period. Participants set goals that they sought to achieve in the best way they could. Participant 3 stated that he was dedicated and committed to seeing the business grow.

**Interview Question 3: Control**

How have you managed to control your business during the first 5 years?

With this question, I looked at how the participants had kept their small businesses in control during the first 5 years. Being an owner of a small business can be challenging, especially when barriers appear. The participants mentioned putting their customers first. Participants 1 and 5 mentioned that they took good care of their employees. They emphasized the importance of excellent customer service. Participant 1 mentioned that he took good care of his employees and gave them the respect that they deserved. Participant 1 also stated that he worked hard to retain existing customers and to attract new ones. The participants also said that they controlled their business by motivating employees and using spirituality to help ground them. Participants 2 and 3 stated that they took control of their finances by separating business and pleasure and paying back the money that they had borrowed. The participants mentioned that they were controlling their businesses by learning to separate business from pleasure. Spirituality had played an important part in the participants' efforts to control their businesses. For example, Participant 5 said that his spirituality had played a critical role in his business.

Participant 1 noted, "I am a manager who prays. Spiritual guidance is important in my life and to my people. Being a Christian helps me to manage my business well. I controlled my business by focusing on my employees and making them happy so they can be productive. I try to work towards retaining my customers and attract new ones in the process." Participant 2 reflected, "I motivate my employees by giving them presents and allowing some time off to be with their families. Ntepe is a very spiritual community, and spirituality helps my employees stay grounded. I have also been trying to control my



finances by making sure I pay back the amounts I borrowed.” Participant 3 said, “I am learning to separate business money from personal money. Therefore, I took control of my finances and made sure that I do not spend what I do not have. I have also controlled my finances by separating personal and business bookkeeping accounts record.”

Participant 4 explained, “I found that if I control my finances, I will succeed in my business. Put the profit I earn back into the business and not use it for anything else. However, this is challenging because of poverty. I find myself taking a bit of the money to feed my family.” Participant 5 stated, “I take good care of my employees even if some of them are my family members. I give them respect, and I do not take them for granted at all. My spirituality has also played a very critical role in my business. I am a manager and therefore I need to manage my business well.”

Table 3 displays how the participants controlled their businesses during the first 5 years of operations. Twenty percent of the participants controlled their businesses by focusing on retaining customers. Eighty percent focused on taking good care of their employees. This shows that the participants valued their employees and respected their opinions and values. Sixty percent of these participants expressed the importance of spirituality, showing that for their business to succeed, they had to embrace spirituality. Controlling finances was a topic that the participants considered important. Sixty percent of the participants said that they controlled their business by focusing on their finances. They acknowledged the challenges of keeping their profits but made it a priority to pay back what they had borrowed, to separate business and personal finances, and to save their profit. Table 3 also shows that the participants were spiritual people.

Table 3

*How Participants Controlled Their Business During the First 5 years*

Code	No. of participants who had control of business	% of participants who had control of business
By good customer service	1	20
Focused on employees	4	80
Being grounded spiritually	3	60
Controlling finances	3	60

**Interview Question 4: Organizational Skills**

What organizational skills have you used during the first 5 years?

In this question, I wanted to find out, what organizational skills the participants applied during the first 5 years. I was considering identifying if small business leaders needed or understood the need for organizational skills to run a successful business. I also wanted to identify those skills or traits that helped sustain their small businesses during the first 5 years. Organizational skills are important to small business because they can contribute to improving the efficiency of small businesses and increase productivity. The list of skills the business owners had could determine if the business was sustainable for a longer time, and could determine the relationship the owners had with their employees.

Participant 1: “I use my time wisely and continuously search for better ways to run and improve my business. You know learning does not end, every day I learn something about myself as a business owner, manager, and a leader and try to improve so I can better my business.” Participant 2: “I review my plan often to see if I am in line with the original plan I made. Sometimes my plans change. Especially when the economy of the country changes I have to make new plans.” Participant 3: “I try not to do every task and delegate responsibilities. Being physically present does not mean that I should

do everything. So, I involve my employees in some decision making and encourage them to take other roles in the business.” Participant 4: “I concentrated and focused on my work, and made sure there are no mistakes. I learned to prioritize during the beginning of my business.” Participant 5: “I considered the culture, tradition, and values of my employees and customers as I organize my business. For example, some employees do not work on Saturday, and I understand that”.

Table 4

*Refined Organizational Skills*

Code	No. organizational skills used	% of organizational skills used
Prioritized and strived to be better leader	5	100
Often reviewed initial plan	1	20
Delegated tasks	1	20
Considered the cultures and values of the people	1	20

Table 4 indicates how the participants refined their approach to the business by incorporating organizational skills. The participants prioritized and strove to be better leaders by using their time wisely, often reviewing their plans, and consider the culture and values of the employees and customers. The participants also said that they paid attention to their business, and they delegated tasks to their employees. Participant 3 said, “I try not to do every task and delegate responsibilities” Participant 4 on paying attention to detail stated that “I concentrated and focused on my work, and made sure there were no mistakes.”

### **Interview Question 5: Leadership Skills**

What leadership skills have you used to help lead and sustain your business during the first 5 years?

Through this question, I was focusing on leadership, how the leaders lead to the point of sustaining their businesses during the first 5 years. These business owners had managed to sustain their business during the first 5 years. Leadership skills may most likely help the leaders to succeed in running their business. Zimbabwe's small businesses faced some problems among which are access to good management and leadership process, finance, and education (Kanyenze, 2011).

Participant 1: “The first thing I learned in being a good leader is to be humble. Humility is very critical for a business leader. I know I am a good leader who is trustworthy and has integrity. What I say to my employees I follow it through.”

Participant 2: “I am available and manage my business well and expect quality work. I strive for excellence in my business and expect the same from my employees. I am available at the job site, and I interact with my employees and customers daily. I am also trustworthy and dependable, customers respect me, and this has helped me to sustain my business for this long. If people cannot trust you then, no one will do business with you.”

Participant 3: “Respecting my employees and my customers had made me a good leader. My customers expect to be respected and to be provided quality products. That is what I offered them right from the beginning: quality products and good customer service. My employees know that I have their interest at heart.” Participant 4: “I am a positive thinker and motivator to my employees. We are just a small business, but I operate it as a large

organization.” Participant 5: “I love to solve problems. My employees and customers always come to me with their problems, and I always give them good advice. I always do my best to solve their problems. I motivate and encourage my employees to do better.”

In Table 5 I have identified the leadership skills that the participants applied to their small business during the first 5 years. Table 5 indicates that 40% of the participants mentioned the importance of being trustworthy. Participant 1 and 2 stated that they were trustworthy as leaders. Participant 1 mentioned humility and integrity as part of being a good leader. Twenty percent of the participants said that they solved problems of their employees and customers. Forty percent mentioned that they were leaders who expected good quality work and products. Participant 2 stated that he expected good quality work because he strived for excellence. Participant 3 said he offered his customers quality products. The participants also mentioned being dependable, being available, good customer service, being an active thinker, motivator, and being humble. The participants showed how they focused on their employees and customers. One hundred percent of the participant focused on their employees by being available to them, interacting with their employees, respecting the employees, motivating the employees, and encouraging them. Sixty percent of the participants focused on their customers by respecting them, giving excellent customer service, making sure customers got quality products, and interacting with the customers daily.

Table 5

*Participants' Leadership Skills During the First 5 Years*

Code	No. of participants with leadership skills	% of participants with leadership skills
Trustworthy	2	40
Solve problems	1	20
Expects quality	2	40
Customer focus	3	60
Employees focused	5	100

**Interview Question 6: Barriers to Success**

What challenges have you faced in maintaining your business?

I wanted to understand the challenges that these participants faced and wanted to understand the barriers that the small businesses encountered. Every startup business faces challenges. The question focused on the challenges that the small business owners faced in maintaining their businesses during the first 5 years.

The participants' responses to question 6 were as follows: Participant 1:

“Infrastructure challenges, roads are bad hence difficulties in reaching customers. The Zimbabwean economy has made it hard for the availability of finances. Instead of borrowing from the bank we borrow from families and friends and established

businesses, who sometimes charge you more interests than normal.” Participant 2: “I find that lack of funding affects small businesses. I cannot even try to name the number of small businesses that have failed within months because they could not get any financial help. The economy is not doing well, and this is detrimental to the survival of small businesses. Because of this, I keep my profit at home in a safe place, because I never know when the economy will crash, and I will end up losing every penny I have earned.

Some years back we had large sums of money in the banks, and when inflation hit us, we

lost all the money that was in the banks.” Participant 3: “When I started my business I did not have proper means of keeping my financial records. This was because sometimes it was hard to differentiate between business money and personal money. If my child comes and says, there is no food I would take the money from the business and use it for food and was not able to return it.” Participant 4: “If I can get an opportunity to further my education I will take it because education is power. Saving money was a struggle at the beginning of the first 5 years because the banks were not that reliable. After the inflation, I did not want to lose my money, so I kept it at home in a safe.” Participant 5: “My main challenge has been transportation and learning how to cut back on unnecessary spending. I would love to further my education.”

Table 6 displays the challenges that the participants encountered during the beginning of their businesses. The table shows that all the five participants faced some challenges in their businesses. Eighty percent of the participants felt that bad economy and lack of finance had been a great obstacle in sustaining their business during the first 5 years. The economy of Zimbabwe had experienced a lot of ups and downs to the point where the participants were not comfortable using the banks to save their money. Zimbabwe faced inflation and had a tough time bouncing back (Larochelle et al., 2014). Mufudza et al. (2013) observed that the measures introduced to curb inflation created more problems for businesses in Zimbabwe. Forty percent expressed the desire to further their education. Participant 4 believed that having more education gave power, and Participant 5 stated that he would love to further his education. Chinomona and Dhurup (2014) said that advocating for quality of work life produces winning results for small

businesses, and as such, they need to improve employees' satisfaction. Participant 1 mentioned infrastructure as a challenge and Participant 5 said transportation had been an issue.

Table 6

*Startup Challenges*

Code	No. of participants who had challenges	% of participants who had challenges
Transportation	2	40
Lack of funding	4	80
Unreliable economy	4	80
Poor financial record keeping	3	60
Trusting banks	3	60
Lack of education	2	40

**Interview Question 7: Management Skills**

What management skills have you used to sustain your business?

Through this question, I was looking for management skills that the participants had in starting their small businesses. I wanted to identify the effect of applying management skills during the start of business. Small businesses in Zimbabwe face some barriers, especially limited management skills (Dumbu, 2014).

Participant 1: "I communicate very well with my employees and customers. Communication is very critical to succeed in business, and people love it when they are aware of what is going on. Being a good manager you have to realize good employees and encourage good performances and discourage bad ones. I have noticed that the some businesses fail because of poor management." Participant 2: "I keep reviewing and adjusting my plans to suit current political and economic situations. I focus on the goals



that I want to achieve and go full force. Full force means being able to make sure that the business is running smoothly, and the customers are satisfied.” Participant 3: “As I plan I also forecast about next year and the following year. Every manager should have a definite plan for their business to succeed and keep your business for a long time. I pay considerable attention to my employees and my business. There is nothing that goes on that I am not aware of with my employees and my business.” Participant 4: “To be a good manager I have to be a good organizer. I make sure that my finances are well organized. I have had challenges in the beginning and have learned from them to be a better manager and leader. I control how my business is run.” Participant 5: “I plan and coordinate everything about my business and delegate some responsibilities to my staff. I also motivate my staff to work well, and this has helped boost my business. Most importantly I am concerned about my employees and customers.”

Table 7

*How Participants Used Management Skills*

Code	No. who refined management skills	% who refined management skills
Satisfy customers	1	20
Employee satisfaction	3	60
Goal oriented	1	20
Review and adjust plans	4	80
Organize finances	1	20
Coordinate	1	20
Delegate	1	20
Motivate	1	20
Good communication	1	20

Table 7 indicates the management skills that the participants used to sustain their businesses during the first 5 years. Customer relations, employee satisfaction, good communication, goal oriented, review and adjusting of plans, organizing finances,

coordinate, and motivate were some management skills that the participants used.

Participant 1 said that he communicated well with his employees and stated that it was critical to the success of the business.

### **Interview Question 8: Barriers to Success**

What are some of the challenges you have faced in being a small business leader?

This question looks at the leader of the business and the challenges that the leader had encountered in leading and running the business. In this question, I was looking at the challenges that the participants faced in leading their small businesses. Leader and follower relationship is important to small businesses. To be a good leader, the leader should lead and guide the employees to a successful sustainable business.

Participant 1: “To be an effective leader I realized that I needed to make sure my employees were happy, and this was a challenge because I had to make some sacrifices here and there. For example, one of my employees had a lot of problems. One day he needed money for his sick mom, and another day he needed to stay home to take care of his family. This went on for a while. I had a hard time firing him because I understood the situation he was facing. However, his situation was not helping my business.”

Participant 2: “Being a leader I faced the challenge of keeping a good record of the business finances, it is a challenge to keep good financial records when the country’s economy is not stable, and we in the rural areas do not have the right technology to keep and record our finances. A book and a pen are what I have.” Participant 3: “At the beginning of my business I did not separate bank account from personal accounts. I just used the same account for everything. I almost lost my business after one year, because I

had no money to continue. I also had challenges in retaining my customers during the early stages of my business. I worked tirelessly to retain them. Some customers did not come back, while some did come back.” Participant 4: “Poverty and lack of funding were barriers that have challenged my leadership capabilities. Poverty has made it hard to conduct a successful business because I cannot sit and watch my people go without food and shelter. I had something that I could give them. In the end, I took money and products from my business to support them. I had the challenge of trying to separate business expenditure and nonbusiness expenditure, especially during the first and second year. Kids were going to secondary school, and they needed money to pay fees. I took the business money and paid fees.” Participant 5: “Ntepe rural village has a lot of startup businesses, and a great percentage of them do not survive for long because they will sell their product very cheap and get money to buy food for that moment. They do not think about sustainability and making a profit. So, I have to come up with ways of attracting and retaining my customers.”

Table 8 shows the challenges that the leaders faced in their business. The participants’ relationship with the employees was important and was a challenge if the relationship was not good. During the first 5 years, the leaders had challenges in separating business and nonbusiness expenditure. All 5 participants had challenges with separating business and nonbusiness expenditure. However, they had a good relationship with their customers and employees and focused on making sure that the employees received excellent care. The participants had difficulties in firing the employee because

most of them were hiring family members who kept on coming back with problems that affected business.

Table 8

*Participants' Challenges as Leader/Manager/Owner*

Code	No. of type of challenges faced by participant	% of type of challenges faced by participant
Separate business income and nonbusiness income	3	60
Make employees happy	1	20
Keeping customers	3	60
Firing employees	1	20
Keeping good financial records	2	40
No money to continue	1	20
Poverty and lack	1	20
No right technology	1	20

**Interview Question 9: Startup Finance**

What type of financial support services were available to you initially?

Table 9 displays the financial support services that were available for the participants at the beginning of the business. Having the right amount of capital during the start of business was important. All the participants had to borrow from family and friends. The economy of the country was such that the participants could not borrow from banks. They mainly relied on friends and family members. According to Frishberg (2013), it is important for business owners to know about the available funding sources. With this question, I sought to find out how and where the participants got their startup funding.

Participant 1: "I used personal funds to start my business. I also borrowed money from established businesses and friends and family. The government has no money to

give us.” Participant 2: “My cousin who works in South Africa gave me money to start my business because he knows the situation here. He said I should not pay back. All he wants is to see me succeed.” Participant 3: “I borrowed from friends and family and used savings from my previous teaching job.” Participant 4: “I took a job in Johannesburg, South Africa, for a year and saved enough money to come back and start my business. There are a bunch of people who migrated to South Africa in the last 15 years looking for a job and a better lifestyle. The country’s economic and political situation drove our people away.” Participant 5: “I worked in the gold mines to raise money for starting my business. Friends and families also pitched in to help me. We are a community, and we help each other. We believe that if we help one person, we have helped the whole community.”

Table 9

*How Participants Financed the Small Businesses*

Code	No. of participants	% of participants
Borrowed from family and friends	5	100
Personal funds	4	80
Borrowed from established businesses	1	20
Worked in South Africa	1	20
Worked in gold mines	1	20

Table 9 shows that 100% of the participants borrowed money from friends and family members to start their business. Eighty percent of the participants also had savings from their previous jobs. Twenty percent of the participants got some startup money from established businesses, worked in South Africa and worked in the gold mines to raise

money to start a business. Local banks are not able to lend them money because of the financial condition of the country.

### **Interview Question 10: Record Keeping**

What challenges have you faced in keeping records of your finances?

I asked this question to understand the means used for financial record keeping. Table 10 lists the challenges participants were facing in record keeping of accounts. They expressed that it was hard to keep the financial records bearing in mind the country's economic situation.

Participant 1: "Again the condition of the country has made it hard to keep good financial records. We have an unreliable record keeping system. Banks are not reliable. Currently, there are days when there is no money in the bank. When you go to the bank, they will tell you to come back another day because today there is no money, or they will tell you to take for example less than \$1000 even if you want to take more." Participant 2: "I will not keep money in the banks as it is not safe. I will not take that gamble. In 2008, I had money in the bank and due to inflation, I lost all that money. I had to start afresh when the government introduced US dollar as the primary currency." Participant 3: "Coming from a country whose economy has gone down I face challenges of separating business and pleasure. I find myself using business money to cover the needs at home. However, third and fourth years were better years. Better sales during the third and fourth years helped the business to grow. Some businesses have crumbled under pressure and because they are focused on money for the present moment and do not think about tomorrow." Participant 4: "There are many challenges that I have faced in keeping the

financial records. First, the Zimbabwean currencies keep changing and right now they are talking about changing again. Currently, we are using the US dollar. However, the government is talking about getting rid of the US dollar and replace it with bonds. So, while all this is going on, it is hard to keep financial records. Secondly, it is a challenge to separate home and business finances. There is poverty that is affecting approximately 80% of our people. In the end, the profit we make ends up being channeled to feed the people at home.” Participant 5: “Transportation to take money safely to the bank is a challenge for me. Keeping the money in a safe at home is also very risky. I am one of those who have decided to keep money in the bank. However, the process of taking money to the bank is cumbersome and not safe.”

Table 10

*Challenges Faced by Participants in Keeping Financial Records*

Code	No. of participants who had challenges	% of participants who had challenges
Unreliable record keeping system	2	40
Country's economy condition	2	40
Separating personal and business records	2	40
Banks not reliable	2	40
Poverty	1	20
Transportation challenge	1	20

Table 10 indicates the challenges faced by participants in financial record keeping. The participants said that they used the money from the business to cover personal expenses. The unreliable banking system has been a significant challenge when it came to saving money. This was because of the condition of the country's economy. Participant 2 said that the state of the country's economy had caused some of the

participants to keep money away from the banks. Forty percent of the participants stated that they faced challenges trying to do record keeping. Poverty, transportation challenges, and bad economy also posed challenges.

### **Interview Question 11: Cash Flow Maintenance**

What issues have you had with maintaining cash flow during the first 5 years of business?

I posed this question to identify the challenges that the participants had with maintaining cash flow during the first 5 years. Maintenance of cash flow will entail discipline for the participants. It was important that the participants keep a steady cash flow. Following are the responses from the participants to question 11:

Participant 1: "Poverty is very prevalent in Zimbabwe and our people are struggling with poverty. As such it takes a lot of discipline not to use the business money for food." Participant 2: "I used the profit I earned for other things instead of business. I needed to find a way to budget my money." Participant 3: The banks are far away from the rural village, and transportation is not good at all as such I have to keep money in a safe at home and not use it for nonbusiness purposes." Participant 4: "In the first few months, I tried not spending the profit I got. However, I found myself spending it on personal stuff." Participant 5: "This is a rural area which has infrastructure problems. Sometimes we have problems getting the supplies to our customers."

Table 11 identifies the challenges faced in maintaining cash flow. The economy had caused a sense of fear on the business owners to the point where they kept their money at home and not use banks. Table 11 indicates poor cash flow management. For example,



the profit earned was sometimes channeled for personal use. Participant 1 said poverty has been prevalent in Zimbabwe, and people were struggling with poverty. The participants said that they channeled the profits to cover personal needs. Participant 5 stated that “This is a rural area which has infrastructure problems; sometimes we have problems getting the supplies to our customers.”

Table 11

*How Participants Managed Cash Flow*

Code	No. of participants who managed cash flow	% of participants who managed cash flow
Used cash to feed family	1	20
Channeled profit to personal stuff	2	40
Transportation of money to banks	2	40
Getting supplies to customers	1	20
Banks far away	1	20

**Interview Question 12: Important Success Factor**

In conclusion, describe the most important factors that have contributed to your success?

The final question was important because it summed up how the participants started and sustained their businesses. The following four concepts by Drucker are critical to this study: (a) objectives evaluation, (b) business processes for implementing the plan, (c) group decision-making techniques, and (d) future goals (Drucker, 2013). The interviews opened a window for the small businesses in Ntepe to learn and improve.

Participant 1: “In conclusion, I want to say that it is important to have a vision. I had a vision of my business, and that made me work hard to make it come true. I am looking forward to the next 5 years.” Participant 2: “The most important factor that has contributed to my success is evaluating my objectives and setting reasonable goals for my business. The initial planning and organizing that I did carried me through these 5 years.” Participant 3: “I need to set realistic goals, especially looking at the ever-changing economy of the country.” Participant 4: “I should always employ people who have a good heart for the business and are willing to work with me.” Participant 5: “I should be alert in my business to keep looking for better business practices and processes to continue being successful amid challenges.”

Table 12 indicates the overall response to question 12. The participants summed up how they managed to sustain their small businesses during the first 5 years. They concluded by giving their overall success factor views on how they sustained their businesses during the first 5 years. The participants’ responses ranged from having a vision, setting realistic goals, and evaluating objectives.

Table 12

<i>Participants’ Success Factors</i>		
Code	No. success factor	% of success factor
Vision	1	20
Evaluate objectives	1	20
Set realistic goals	2	40
Employ willing staff	1	20
Better business practices	1	20

### **Emergent Themes**

The five participants were successful business owners who managed to sustain their small business during the first 5 years of operations. The participants informed that they did face some challenges. Some of the challenges they faced were: in planning, because they had to constantly review the initial plans because of the changes in the economy of Zimbabwe; in being committed to the business, whereby they had to be available most of the time in the business; in financial control, where the participants had to struggle with finding ways of managing their finances and also take control of the business as a whole. The overarching research question was the foundation for the interviews. The participants spoke of the experiences that they had in starting a business and sustaining it during the first 5 years. Many authors have written about the importance of small businesses to any economy (Amoah-Mensah, 2013; Muchabaiwa et al., 2012; Chipangura & Kaseke, 2012). In the literature review of my study, I identified literature about the survival of small businesses. In the literature review, I also discussed the challenges that small businesses encountered. In my research, I have identified a gap in knowledge about factors required for small business sustainability in Zimbabwe. The four themes that emerged after data analysis were:

- Planning
- Commitment
- Control
- Leadership

**Theme 1: Planning**

Planning is important for starting a business. It helps small businesses to perform better. Karedza and Sikwila (2016) stated that the core of business was the ability of managers and leaders to develop effective strategies that foster positive performance. Managerial and leadership efforts and skills are essential for the sustainability of small businesses. Small businesses face a variety of factors that hinder their growth and development.

Starting a business entails planning about how business leaders will operate the business, who will be the customers, and what kind of employees are needed. A successful leader needs to have a clear vision for the employees and customers. Small business leaders strive to achieve success by having set goals (Crossley et al., 2013). Mufudza et al. (2013) assessed the viability of strategic planning in times of weak economic conditions in Zimbabwe. Teng et al. (2011) developed and tested a business failure versus success prediction model. Some of the factors that contributed to the success of the business included planning, management experience, leadership processes, record keeping, and financial controls. The participants confirmed the importance of these factors in sustaining the small businesses during the first 5 years.

**Theme 2: Commitment**

The participants, during the interview, informed that they were committed to their business during the first 5 years. Managers were attentive to their employees and customers. Managers often interacted with the employees and customers within their small businesses. Managers were paying close attention to the ethics and values of their

employees and the people from the rural village of Ntepe. Managers constantly searched for ways to motivate their employees. The participants stated that being committed as an owner was critical to the success and sustainability of their business. The findings from the interview data showed how committed the participants were to their business goals and objectives. Some of the factors for commitment that were expressed were being present, spirituality, prioritizing, good communication, dedicated, available, and motivated employees. Participant 3 said, “For a business to succeed I knew I had to be 100% committed or else I will face failure.” Managers can enable the growth and survival of business through commitment (Armstrong, 2013). The findings indicated that being committed to their business, the small business owners focused on making sure that their business succeeds. Participant 5 said, “I motivate and encourage my employees to do better.” Participant 2 said, “I am available and manage my business well and expect quality work from my employees.” Participant 4 said “I concentrated and focused on my work, and made sure there were no mistakes. I learned to prioritize during the initial phase of my business.”

### **Theme 3: Financial Control**

Response for financial control originated from most of the interview questions. Financial control covers planning on where and how to get money to start a business and control profits. The participants expressed that they had difficulties in accessing finance to start their businesses. Lyee and Cowling (2015) said that the survival of a small business and its success depends on its profitability and cash flow. This theme referred to the finance needed to start a business and how to control those finances. It also referred to

cash flow and the need for cash to start a business. This theme sums up how critical it was for small business owners to find capital to start their business and be able to sustain it. Participants had different opinions concerning getting startup cash. Participant 1 asked money from family and friends. All participants mentioned the need for capital in their business. They mentioned that there was a need to use profits for the growth of business instead of using it for personal needs. Zimbabwe's unstable economic situation had led to small business owners being cautious about making long-term decisions. The small business owners focused on short-term financial goals to protect their money from inflation. The unstable economy affected the decisions that small business owners made. Doi, McKenzie, and Zia (2014) stated that poor financial skills and no fiscal prudence were the causes of cash management problems. Ogala (2012) stated that there are various financial programs which the business owners are not aware of for use in their small businesses. Small business owners may need to take financial planning studies to help educate themselves about financial management. Zimbabwe's small businesses face some problems among which are access to good management and leadership process, finance, and education (Kanyenze, 2011). Machingambi (2014) assessed the influence that microfinance had on small businesses. Machingambi noted that there was a need to educate the small business leaders about microfinance. Oyeku et al. (2014) proposed financial and nonfinancial measures for business success. The nonfinancial measures are business experience, business knowledge, quality of products, and good services. Bowale and Ilesanmi (2014) identified finance, operational, and administration as barriers faced by micro, small, and medium enterprises globally. Klonowski (2012) expressed that small

business owners face challenges toward financing their business. Baptista, Karaöz, and Mendonça (2014) talked about the importance of human capital in starting a business and controlling it during the initial years.

#### **Theme 4: Leadership**

Leadership is a theme in management theory. Leaders are supposed to have certain traits and personality characteristics to succeed in their businesses like having a good relationship with employees. All participants expressed that they strived to be better leaders. Participants informed that they often reviewed their plans and delegated tasks to the employees. Small business leaders considered the culture and values of their employees and customers. Participant 1 stated that “I use my time wisely and constantly search for better ways to manage and improve my business.” Participant 2 said “I review my plan often to see if I am in line with the original plan I made. Sometimes my plans change because of the change in Zimbabwe’s economy.” Participant 2 also said, “I try not to do every task and delegate responsibilities.”

Successful business owners take leadership very seriously. Being a good leader makes the employees value the business, and employees may work hard to improve business. Leadership is a process that can bring leaders and followers to higher levels of human dignity (Hutchinson & Jackson, 2013). Followers are influenced and motivated to strive for better livelihood, and they are made to feel important (Zhu et al., 2012). The findings from the interview show that the leaders were committed to the daily operation of their business. Rural small business leaders were constantly in interaction with their employees. Leaders enable the growth of their business by being committed (Armstrong,

2013). Leaders' communication with their employees is critical and leads to retention of workers (Vincent-Höper et al., 2012). The participants showed that they were good leaders and were able to instill pride, faith, and respect among the employees.

Participants claimed that being a good leader helps control the employees. Spirituality influences the relationship between leaders and followers and informs a sense of common purpose (Nwankwo et al., 2012). Leroy et al. (2012) stated that good leadership drives integrity and thus results in the followers performing better. Participants stated that they delegate tasks to their employees and effectively and constantly communicate with their employees to make them feel happy.

### **Tying Findings to Conceptual Framework**

Management theory was the basis of the conceptual framework for my study. Drucker was the founder of management theory. The following themes were morphed from the interviews and tie to the conceptual framework: planning, effective commitment, control, and leadership. The following themes may be morphed from this study: ethics and social responsibility, the need for managers to pay considerable attention to the values of their employees. *Inventing and reinventing organizations*: managers should search for better ways of managing their businesses. Peter Drucker in his concept of *liberation of management* encourages managers to be better managers by recognizing and embracing various cultures. Managers should think about providing quality to their businesses.

The need to explore the sustainability of small business in Zimbabwe emanated from their high failure rate. Small businesses in Ntepe, Zimbabwe were not expanding



and might not survive for more than 5 years (Amoah, Samuel, & Richardson, 2014). Small businesses are the lifeblood of commerce and industry in general (Muchabaiwa et al., 2012). Small businesses play a critical role in entrepreneurship, and they need considerable attention (Chipangura & Kaseke, 2012). Small businesses have become more noticeable enterprises in Zimbabwe and hold a pivotal role in the economic and social spheres (Sikomwe et al., 2012). However, these small businesses run the risk of limited knowledge, narrow spans of operations, and limited resources, which might have a significant influence on business growth (Jayaram et al., 2013). The interviews of my qualitative case study were semistructured with open-ended questions. I interviewed five participants of Ntepe rural village in Zimbabwe who have operated their small businesses for more than 5 years. The findings of my study may be beneficial to the small business owners. Some of the key areas of the findings that can benefit the small businesses are in obtaining funding, good record keeping practices, good management, and leadership practices.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

These findings are relevant to improved business professional practice because small businesses are critical to improving any economy. Zimbabwe has suffered economically and thus improved business practices may aid in economic recovery. Small businesses fail in Zimbabwe within the first 5 years. In this qualitative case study, five participants were interviewed from Ntepe rural village of Zimbabwe, who had operated their business for more than 5 years. The aim of this qualitative descriptive case study was to identify the factors required for small business' sustainability beyond 5 years. The

findings from the study may be helpful to the future small business owners who may be struggling to sustain their businesses. The recommendations and findings of this study may help the small startup businesses face the challenges that my participants encountered. A mix of policies may be necessary for sustaining small businesses and create employment for the rural village people. In Zimbabwe, small businesses are important, and they contribute significantly to the economy of the country. Compared to other world economies, Zimbabwe ranks at 180 out of 189 in the ease of doing business (World Bank Group, 2013). Conducting this study was necessary because small businesses are the seedbed of the economy. The focus of this qualitative multiple descriptive case study research was to explore the need for small business owners to sustain their businesses during the first 5 years.

The conclusion of these findings may provide knowledge for both new and old small businesses in sustaining their businesses during and beyond 5 years. The study might also affect business practices by contributing to small business owners of Ntepe rural village to be better prepared to deal with the challenges others have faced when operating their business during the first 5 years. These findings may help small business owners to be great managers who may lead their employees and sustain their business during the first 5 years of operation in the midst of bad economy, lack of funding, and poverty. Thus, these findings might help reduce unemployment and may alleviate poverty within the rural village. The findings might also benefit the community by providing jobs that may help people sustain themselves. Ahmad (2013) mentioned that small business in developing countries faced more barriers than small businesses in developed countries.

These small businesses play a very critical role in helping improve the country's economy. Zimbabwe suffers from poverty, constant currency changes and this is detrimental to policy making. When a business fails, it affects the whole economy and thus it is important to address ways of sustaining a small business during the first 5 years. The study may contribute to the body of knowledge that is already there and contribute to better business practices for small businesses. These practices can help small businesses to be more business minded so that they can be more productive and efficient. Poor planning can result in bad business policies, but small business owners find themselves making poor choices due to the country situation. The focus on proper planning, organization, leading, and control can help small businesses to grow and succeed. The four emergent themes described the planning of small businesses, effective commitment, control, and leadership of small business during the first 5 years. The findings might also be beneficial to the rural village's prosperity, create employment, and boost the economy of the rural village. The determinants of small business success included cash flow, good business acumen, sound management practices, correct leadership, market accessibility, and local community support (Ployhart et al., 2014). Ployhart et al. (2014) mentioned the importance of human capital for the success of small businesses. Other factors like political stability, access to the market, and infrastructure is key to the sustainability of any business (Armstrong, 2013). Exploring the challenges that the small businesses owners encountered and their abilities to conduct business successfully for 5 years may provide useful information to the government, small business organizations, and policymakers of Zimbabwe in pursuit of developing the country.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The implication for social change is the likelihood of introducing strategies that may be beneficial to small businesses' sustainability through effective business practices. This qualitative research study can improve the lives of villagers in Ntepe. Small businesses are valuable to Zimbabwean people's livelihood. The social change's value to the rural village is new knowledge that might be used to educate, train, and motivate current and future business owners. The study might also affect social change by highlighting the need for small business owners to change and be current with the ever-changing trends in the economy. When the economy is not doing well, and businesses fail, families suffer (Miles, 2013). These small businesses have room for improvement, and this can be achieved by tangible changes to the rural communities and the small businesses by taking into consideration their culture and values. Spirituality plays a very critical part in Zimbabwe, so spirituality can be a tool that can help ground employees because it gives them a sense of belonging and responsibility. The concepts of decision making may compliment spiritual leadership whose values inspire ethical behaviors and outcomes (Drucker, 2013; Fairholm, 2013). Spirituality positively influences the relationship between leaders and followers and leads to a sense of common purpose (Nwankwo et al., 2012). Spirituality relates to positive social improvement. Taking into consideration the culture of the people of Ntepe, changes in attitudes, behaviors, and policies that govern the rural village were critical to social change implications. The study might also benefit the community by creating employment. The findings might also be beneficial to the rural village's prosperity, curb poverty, create employment, and boost

the economy of the rural village. Tekere (2012) stated that it was important to promote sustainable economic growth to alleviate poverty.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The findings of this study may contribute to the sustainability of emerging new small businesses in rural villages of Zimbabwe. Themes morphed from the interviews might be helpful to the future and current business owners of Ntepe. Based on these themes I recommend that the current and emerging new small business owners review and evaluate data in this study for their benefit. The findings identified the challenges that the owners faced when they started their small businesses and understanding how these rural village small business owners dealt with challenges during the first 5 years of operation was critical for the current small business owners as they move on beyond 5 years. The small business owners had challenges of getting startup funding. Some of the participants expressed that they asked for startup funding from family and friends. Participants also said that they had to deal with the ever-changing bad economy, which affected their cash flow.

Based on the findings I recommend that the small business owners in rural villages continue being involved in the business and look for better ways to improve their businesses. They should aim at planning, organizing, controlling, and leading their business to the point where they employ more people than just family members. The other recommendation is about learning ways of keeping good financial records. Most of the participants responded that their financial record keeping was not good enough. There

are institutes or nonprofit organizations that can help small business leaders learn simple ways of keeping financial records.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In this qualitative descriptive case study, I explored the sustainability of small businesses during the first 5 years. The research conducted by Lussier (1995), Lussier and Halabi (2010) which was about small business sustainability and failure are critical in understating why small businesses fail and have a difficult time growing during the first years. Further research might be beneficial and may contribute to the sustainability of small businesses. The small business owners can benefit greatly from further studies, especially considering the changes that are happening to the economy of Zimbabwe. The country's economic situation is very unstable. Currently, Zimbabwe is using US dollars as their primary currency because the local currency had become very devalued.

Researchers should conduct further studies in other rural areas of Zimbabwe. More research may help empower the small business owners. Sharing of sustainable solutions with the small business owners may assist other rural villages. As the economy of Zimbabwe improves, I also recommend that the small businesses should be a priority for loan guarantee schemes by the policy makers. I hope the government takes rural small businesses very seriously because these can help boost the ailing economy. The small business owners need encouragement and financial help in operating their businesses. There are limited studies conducted on small business in Zimbabwe and as such their struggles have not been completely understood. Some of the studies that were done are

about small businesses in developed countries, and there are very few studies about developing countries.

### **Reflections**

Qualitative multiple descriptive case study was the best choice for this research study. I explored the sustainability of the small businesses of Ntepe in Zimbabwe during the first 5 years. The five participants I interviewed were from the rural village of Ntepe in Zimbabwe. The participants were very respectful and they responded to all the interview questions that I asked. The interviews were via Skype. Reflecting back, I have a few regrets especially concerning the use of Skype as a means of collecting data. I would have loved to be on the ground collecting data face to face. The participants were cooperative and willing to answer the questions asked. It was not a surprise that all the participants had financial challenges when they started their small businesses. The findings from the interviews were in line with the literature review. I did my best to overcome the biases during the interview process. I followed the Walden IRB guidelines while interacting with the participants. The five participants willingly answered all the questions that I asked. I followed the same protocol with all the five participants to avoid bias.

### **Conclusion**

The overarching research question was: What skills do small business leaders need to sustain their business during the first 5 years? Through this qualitative descriptive case study, I explored the skills that small business leaders used to sustain business during the first 5 years. The interview questions emanated from the overarching research

question. I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions for all the five small business owners. The interview findings identified some issues that future business owners can refer to. One of the major problems was the lack of business startup funding.

The foundation of the research study in Section 1 addressed the research question and aligned it to the study by focusing on applied business research. In the literature review, I covered the subject of sustainability of small businesses. In section 2, I covered the research methodology in detail, data analysis method and the role I had in the research process. Validity and reliability of the data collected were also discussed. In section 3, I presented the findings. Application to professional practice and application for social change were also discussed. The final section brought the document to completion and concluded with reflections and recommendations for the overall study. Four themes emerged from the study, namely planning, effective commitment, control, and leadership. These themes are important for the sustainability of small businesses during the first 5 years.



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## Appendix A: Letter of Consent

You are invited to take part in a research study of sustaining of small business in Ntepe Zimbabwe during the first 5 years. The small businesses will have employees of fewer than 10 employees. I am inviting small businesses leaders who have been in business for at least 5 years. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part or not.

This study is being conducted by Barbra Sibanda, who is a Doctoral DBA student from Walden University.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore how small business leaders of Ntepe rural village in Zimbabwe can sustain their small business during the first 5 years. The study will focus on small business that have survived during the first 5 years and the challenges that they faced during the first 5 years.

### **Procedures:**

I will use Skype for the interview, and the interview will be audio recorded. You will be contacted via e-mail. I will arrange with you for a mutual date and time for Skype interview, and I will use your time zone since we are in different time zones. The interview will occur in a more convenient condition for you giving you the flexibility in participation.

If you agree to be in this study:

- You will be required to have access to Skype and provide your Skype name

- Participate in a Skype interview that may last for 40 to 60 minutes that will be audio recorded
- You will be required to speak English fluently and have a minimum of O'level education
- You will participate in member checking as part of the interview process which will take 20-40 minutes. Member checking is a way of making sure that the data analysis is in line with your responses, this will be done after the interview to enhance study credibility through your feedback. You will have the opportunity to be certain that the responses you gave are described accurately. Audio recordings are transcribed and returned to you for your review and approval for validation. This can give you an opportunity to correct errors and challenge what you perceive as wrong interpretations. This can provide you the opportunity to volunteer additional information which may be stimulated by the playing back process.

Here are some sample interview questions:

1. How has your professional and educational background prepared you to own a small business?
2. How do you describe the planning methods you used in your business operation during the first 5 years?
3. How have you managed to control your business during the first 5 years?
4. What organizational skills have you used during the first 5 years?
5. Describe the role you have in leading the business successfully?

6. What challenges have you faced in maintaining your business?
7. What leadership skills have you used to sustain your business?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone can respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at all will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study**

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this research study

The study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as:

- Fatigue
- Some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable or upset.
- Time management can be a discomfort because you may have to sit and be on skype for the interview.
- A chance that confidentiality could be breached

I will address this by:

- Offering a 5-minute break in between interview to minimize fatigue.
- If some interview questions make you uncomfortable, you are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to, or to stop participating at any time
- Time management risk will be minimized by mentioning the approximate duration of the Interview before the interview.

- Breach of confidentiality will be minimized by assuring you that your name and other personally, identifiable information will not be used, and data will be stored in a secure place

The findings from the study will be beneficial to the Ntepe rural village and might help with better business practices, curb poverty and provide employment to the rural village people.

**Payment:**

There will be no compensation or thank you gifts given for participating in the research study.

**Rights:**

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate, to answer any particular question, or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you.

**Privacy:**

The information you provide will be kept confidential and will not be used for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by me in a safely locked place. Data will be kept for at least 5 years, as required by the University. The audio recording will be destroyed immediately after transcription.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact me via e-mail at xxxxxx.xxxxxx@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. xxxxxx xxxxxx. Her phone number is 001-xxx-xxx-xxxx. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. You may also write to Walden IRB department at xxx@waldenu.edu . Walden university's IRB approval number for my study is 04-04-16-0078929 and it expires on April 3, 2017.

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By replying to this e-mail with the words, "I consent."

I understand that I agree to the terms described above.

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How has your professional and educational background prepared you to run a small business during the first 5 years?
2. How do you describe the planning methods you used in your business operation during the first 5 years?
3. How have you managed to control your business during the first 5 years?
4. What organizational skills have you used during the first 5 years?
5. What challenges have you faced in maintaining your business?
6. What leadership skills have you used to sustain your business?
7. What management skills have you used to sustain your business?
8. What are some of the challenges you have faced in being a small business leader?
9. What type of financial support services were available to you initially?
10. What challenges have you faced in keeping records of your finances?
11. What issues have you had with maintaining cash flow during the first 5 years of business?
12. In conclusion, describe the most important factors that have contributed to your success?