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Transformational Leadership Strategies Small Business Owners and Managers use to Increase Profitability

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Renée Phillip

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Transformational Leadership Strategies Small Business Owners and Managers Use to

Increase Profitability

by

Renée Phillip

MS, University of the West Indies, 2013

BS, University of Tampa, 2006

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

Eighty-two percent of small businesses fail. Small business failure is essential to the Antiguan local community, as small businesses are the pillar of the Antiguan economy with considerable contributions in employment and economic development. Grounded in transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore transformational leadership strategies small business owners and managers use to increase profitability. The participants comprised five small business owners and managers in Antigua, who effectively used transformational leadership strategies to increase profitability. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and reviews of company artifacts. Data were analyzed using Yin's five-step data analysis process and thematic analysis. Three themes emerged: (a) human resource development and training, (b) innovation and creativity, and (c) organizational culture and communication. One key recommendation is for small business owners and managers to work collaboratively to design a comprehensive and innovative training program for employees for effective communication. The implications for positive social change include the potential for small business owners and managers to support economic development and increase profits while advancing business growth that stimulates the local community with job creation.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my two loving children, Déjà and Kian Phillip; my mother, Yolande; and my supportive partner and friend, Derian. The completion of this rigorous academic program would not have been achievable without your immeasurable love, inspiration, and prayers. Your words of encouragement are embedded within me and have been the consistent fuel needed to maintain grit throughout this journey.

Lastly, I dedicate this doctoral study to aspiring entrepreneurs and youth to walk onward and upward.

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To my siblings, Aleta and Lois, I appreciate your perpetual love and support. Thank you for checking in and reassuring me that I embarked upon a great journey in my life. To Chantal Phillip, Desrie Horsford, and Troy Allen, thank you for cheering me on and believing that my transformation will be of great influence to my country.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Leadership styles have substantial effects on business performance (Strukan et al., 2017) and can improve or inhibit business profitability (Chammas & Hernandez, 2019). In developing economies, effective leadership is a principal requirement to increase efficiency and profitability (Delić et al., 2017). Nonetheless, leadership in some small business enterprises (SBEs) remains an unkempt, often poorly implemented, and futile component for small business owners and managers (Ross, 2018). Statistics from the Ken Blanchard Company and the Gallup Institute highlighted that 82% of managers are not good at leading people (Hougaard, 2018). Effective leadership is still a significant challenge for the small business sector, but leadership is crucial to the survival of small businesses, innovation, and increased productivity (Amoah-Mensah & Darkwa, 2018). Furthermore, effective leadership is indicative of business profitability and success (Strukan et al., 2017).

Many novice business owners and managers create SBEs to lessen unemployment, yet they lack practical leadership qualities and strategies to achieve profitability and sustain their businesses. Successful leadership can generate prosperity for all interest groups, most prominently business owners and managers, and can determine an organization's future (Brandt et al., 2016). Transformational leadership has the potential to significantly revolutionize organizational performance (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2018). Transformational leadership can improve the performance of a business, with the business owner and manager playing a vital role in attaining improved

performance and higher profitability (Brandt et al., 2016; Rose & Mamabolo, 2019).

Understanding what leadership styles to exhibit in the workplace can assist small business owners and managers in developing best-fit strategies for employees. In addition, small business owners and managers can discover the typical characteristics of transformational leadership and understand what methods increase productivity, innovation, and profitability (Bambale et al., 2017). Therefore, it is critical to investigate the transformational leadership strategies SBE owners and managers have used to achieve profitability.

Problem Statement

Poor leadership is an absolute risk to SBEs' survival and is associated with lowered productivity, stifled innovation, increased employee turnover, and potential financial losses (Ross, 2018). Ineffective leadership costs organizations up to \$550 billion annually (Hougaard, 2018). The general business problem is the lack of effective leadership that negatively affects business profitability, and business owners and managers lack specific leadership skills that would contribute to bottom line increases. The specific business problem is that some small business owners and managers lack transformational leadership strategies to improve profitability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the transformational leadership strategies small business owners and managers use to improve profitability. The targeted population consisted of five small business owners and managers who have implemented successful transformational leadership strategies in Antigua. The results of

this study may contribute to positive social change because effective transformational leadership strategies among small business owners and managers could create wealth for owners, employment opportunities for citizens, and development of the Antiguan economy.

Nature of the Study

This study was a qualitative multiple case study. Researchers choose between three research approaches appropriate for social science studies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method (Rosenthal, 2016). I decided to conduct qualitative research because qualitative research establishes behaviors, perceptions, and emotional states as well as tests comprehensive understanding, quality, and intricacy of circumstances through a holistic framework (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In qualitative methodology, the researcher can explore the extensive consequences on business profitability. The qualitative methodology was most appropriate for my study because qualitative research is suitable for understanding the advantages associated with implementing transformational leadership strategies in SBEs.

Researchers use quantitative research to evaluate the relationship between variables using scientific, statistical approaches (Bentahar & Cameron, 2015). I did not intend to assess the relationship between variables or use statistical data. The mixed-methods approach amalgamates elements from qualitative and quantitative approaches of collecting and analyzing data to gain an in-depth understanding of a business problem (Buckley, 2015). Mixed-methods studies require proficiency in qualitative and quantitative methods and may generate the need for substantially more required time than

either method alone (Stockman, 2015). The statistical component of the mixed method made this method not a viable option for my study.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) defined several designs appropriate for qualitative studies, such as grounded theory, ethnography, narrative research, historical research, case studies, and phenomenology. Ayar et al. (2015) suggested that researchers concentrate on comprehending and analyzing the culture within an organization in ethnographic research design. I did not opt for this design because the emphasis of this study was not on the cultural issues associated with the small business environment, team, or organization. Yin (2018) outlined that a researcher explores the individual's experiences, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes as impacted by certain phenomena in phenomenological studies. The phenomenological design encompasses accumulating data from several subjects who have encountered the phenomenon to determine a composite illustration of the essence of the experiences (Cairney & St. Denny, 2015). The phenomenological design was not the best choice for this study because I was not focused on the individuals' beliefs or attitudes about the phenomena. In this study, I used a multiple case study design. The case study research approach is one in which the investigator explores a phenomenon using actual real-life data (Yin, 2018). Therefore, I opted to conduct a multiple case study. The case study design is most appropriate for investigating a current circumstance in a real-world context because the researcher gains holistic, comprehensive, and substantive data from the participants (Yin, 2018). In addition, a case study is suitable for addressing *what*, *how*, or *why* research questions (Yin, 2018).

Research Question

What transformational leadership strategies do small business owners and managers use to increase profitability?

Interview Questions

1. What transformational leadership strategies did you use in your business to increase profitability?
2. What results were achieved by implementing transformational leadership strategies?
3. How did your employees respond to your various transformational leadership strategies?
4. What fundamental difficulties did your business encounter as you implemented transformational leadership strategies?
5. How did you address the fundamental challenges to implementing a transformational leadership approach?
6. How does the role(s) of the manager differ from the role of the business owner?
7. What other factors, if any, contributed to the increase in profitability?
8. What additional information would you like to add related to transformational leadership strategies and the effect on the profitability of your business?

Conceptual Framework

James MacGregor developed the transformational leadership concept in 1978, which Bass and Avolio (1994) later developed into transformational leadership theory. Transformational leadership theory asserts that leadership includes inspiring, engaging,

and transforming members to achieve organizational goals (Pongpearchan, 2016). Transformational leadership theory builds on the notion that business owners and managers develop principles, build relationships, stimulate positive employee performance, and act as futurists to improve an establishment (Pongpearchan, 2016). Four main factors support transformational leadership theory: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Pongpearchan, 2016).

Idealized influence describes leaders who display strong role model personalities and have high integrity and reliability in showcasing high ethical conduct (Northouse, 2016). Inspirational motivation enables leaders to communicate high expectations to followers while inspiring team members to demonstrate commitment to the organization's shared vision (Northouse, 2016). Intellectual stimulation concerns leaders stimulating followers to challenge the beliefs of the status quo through innovation and creativity (Northouse, 2016). Individualized consideration involves leaders providing a supportive environment in which they listen intently to the individual needs of their followers (Northouse, 2016). In business, workers anticipate leaders to execute numerous tasks, such as having a vision and providing innovative strategies to meet organizational goals (Jaynes, 2015). Transformational leadership theory aligned with this study wherein I explored transformational leadership strategies small business owners and managers needed to motivate, inspire, and stimulate employees to increase profitability.

Operational Definitions

Business profitability: Creating long-term increased value for shareholders by embracing opportunities and managing risks deriving from economic, environmental, and social developments (Sarfaraz et al., 2015).

Business sustainability: Managing the triple bottom line by focusing on financial, social, and environmental risks, obligations, and opportunities (Alhaddi, 2015).

Human resource development (HRD): Any process or activity that has the potential to develop an adult's work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction whether for personal, group, or team gain or the benefit of an organization, community, nation, or the whole of humanity (Udani et al., 2015).

Organizational change: Changing an organization's systematic way of doing things when accomplishing a societal task (Cumberland et al., 2018).

Transformational leadership: A style of leadership that inspires followers to achieve personal and organizational goals in an enabling environment (Li et al., 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The following components include a discussion of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study. Researchers who identify these concepts may be able to explain to readers the scope of their research. Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations include circumstances that may restrict the methodology and data analysis (Armstrong & Kepler, 2018).

Assumptions

Assumptions are principles researchers consider true without authentication (Armstrong & Kepler, 2018). Bell et al. (2018) suggested that assumptions are things researchers cannot control in a study but are relevant to the research. Therefore, considering study assumptions as well as understanding the associated risk becomes vital to the researcher. In this study, I assumed certain factors to be true. The first assumption was that respondents would answer questions honestly and data gathered from participants were free of personal partiality. The second assumption was the results of the study would be potentially beneficial to small businesses across industries and geographical locations. Another assumption was that transformational leadership strategies used in successful small businesses could improve profitability. Another assumption was that the multiple case study design would be suitable for this study to answer the research question. Yin (2018) outlined that a researcher seeks to understand more about a phenomenon in a multiple case study. The final assumption was that the results could provide valuable data for small business owners and managers intending to use profitable transformational leadership strategies.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses, conditions, or influences of a study that a researcher cannot control (Uri, 2015). Declaring a study's limitations helps define studies' constraints (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The confines of this study included the finite country of Antigua. The limitation to the data collection for the study included small business owners and managers. As a result, the data collected from the sampled

participants might not have adequately represented the views or experiences of all small business owners and managers in Antigua. In addition, the unique locality attributes of Antigua imposed a limitation on the transferability of the findings to other countries in the Caribbean region and across the globe.

Delimitations

Delimitations offer confines to the characteristics of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Yin (2018) suggested that the greater the restrictions, the slimmer the scope of the research. Limiting the study to one country indicates that demographic culture would have a significant and immeasurable effect on the participants' answers. The participants' responses could have provided an element to the findings not relevant to all businesses or demographic locations. Additional boundaries of this study included the varying levels of participants' expertise and time spent working in dispersed trade. Another limitation included independently owned and operated businesses for at least 5 consecutive years. Also included in the boundary were independently owned and operating small businesses in dispersed industries.

Significance of the Study

Failure to implement effective leadership strategies can have devastating financial effects on business owners, managers, employees, and the community. Lack of effective leadership generates negative responses, low profitability, low productivity, and inefficiency in the workplace from employees (Quintana et al., 2015). Lack of productivity from the failure of ineffective leadership associated with subsequent low productivity, stifled innovation, and low profitability can cause businesses to fail

(Amoah-Mensah & Darkwa, 2018). Lack of transformational leadership strategies also contributes to a decline in the employees' emotional, psychological, and physical well-being; family disruptions; and social withdrawal (Wahba, 2016). A potential benefit of conducting this research was to heighten the success probabilities of small business owners and managers. An additional benefit of conducting this research was that it might lead to competitive advantages of increased profits and longevity for small business owners and managers. The results may also contribute to positive social change by increasing the opportunity for smaller business owners and managers to succeed locally, regionally, and possibly internationally. As more small business owners and managers succeed, this may contribute to an improved economy through business expansion and job creation and providing access to unique goods and services.

Contribution to Business Practice

If small business owners and managers use transformational leadership strategies, they could stimulate employee performance, improve business performance, and increase profitability. Employees are more productive and committed to their organizations when managers implement transformational leadership strategies as practical tools (Chammas & Hernandez, 2019). This study may contribute to business practice because when small business owners and managers incorporate transformational leadership strategies, employees feel valued and are more productive (Jia et al., 2017). Transformational leadership can boost productivity, sustainability, and profitability for companies and increase employee retention (Waweru-Gathii & K'Obonyo, 2017).

Implications for Social Change

The implications to positive social change included an opportunity to provide small business owners and managers with a list of appropriate transformational leadership strategies to improve business profitability. Small business owners and managers influence business operations (Rose & Mamabolo, 2019). If small businesses continue to experience low profitability or a decline in business return, investors and entrepreneurs may be unwilling to take the risk to open new business ventures. Small business owners and managers create jobs and help sustain the economy in Antigua. The findings from this study might create social change by motivating more employees to pursue their dreams and improve their economic status by becoming small business owners and enhancing their quality of life. Increased knowledge and skills empower employees, business owners, and managers, promoting a vibrant and stable community that supports the growth of new business opportunities, jobs, and capital investments and increases the standard of living for the community members.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the transformational leadership strategies small business owners and managers use to increase business profitability. Torraco (2016) posited that a researcher presents a comprehensive analysis of preceding research and ascertains gaps in the literature to afford researchers additional research opportunities. This literature review provides an analysis of professional and academic literature, emphasizing transformational leadership in the context of increasing business profitability through effective leadership stratagems. This review is assembled

by theme. This review of proficient and academic literature, using peer-reviewed journal articles, offers an overview of the evolution of small businesses, with a concentration on transformational leadership strategies. I obtained data for this study from books, databases, and websites. The academic research databases included ABI/INFORM Global, Business Source Complete, Google Scholar, Emerald, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and SAGE Premier. These databases provided a full range of information on the subject.

The review of the literature included research derived from peer-reviewed, scholarly periodicals and seminal works, including books. Of the 189 sources in this study, 170 (90%) were peer-reviewed. Of the 189 sources, 154 sources (93%) had publication dates within 5 years of my anticipated graduation date. There were 86 sources in the literature review section, of which 75 sources (87%) were peer-reviewed journal articles published within the past 5 years. Thus, I discovered a surfeit of current peer-reviewed journal articles. Search terms for the study included *leadership styles*, *transformational leadership*, *innovation*, *leadership strategies*, *organizational performance*, *training and development*, and an amalgam of these words and phrases.

Transformational Leadership Theory

The theoretical foundation grounding this research was authentic transformational leadership theory. Downton first invented the term *transformational leadership* in 1973, which later became a central approach to James MacGregor's leadership theory in 1978 (Northouse, 2016). MacGregor attempted to link the roles of leadership and followership in his theory, suggesting that leaders tap into the motives of their followers to better reach the goals of both leaders and followers (Northouse, 2016). Bass and Avolio (1994) later

revised MacGregor's theory, proposing a new approach to leadership by stating that leaders can sometimes dramatically affect their followers and, in turn, the organization by literally transforming them. Thus, transformational leadership theory concentrates on achieving changes within an organization leading to growth and success.

Transformational leadership theory aims at improving employees' performance while developing their full potential. Transformational leadership theory focuses on emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals, allowing for assessing followers' motives, satisfying followers' needs, and treating followers as full human beings (Northouse, 2016). The theory further contributes to subordinates becoming aware of their needs for personal growth, development, and accomplishment (George & Jones, 2012). Transformational leadership theory contributes to the motivating of subordinates by leaders to work for the organization's good rather than exclusively for their own personal gain of profit (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership theory suggests that a leader transforms their followers in fundamental ways to increase subordinates' awareness of the importance of their tasks and the importance of performing such tasks (George & Jones, 2012). Transformational leadership theory integrates charismatic and visionary leadership.

Visionary and practical leaders act as change catalysts in an organization. Berkovich (2016) proposed that transformational leadership theory is a part of the *new leadership* model and is the operative form of leadership style that can transmute business owners and managers into influential leaders. Waddock et al. (2015) augmented that transformational leadership theory aids instinctual and proactive investigation to

solving the problem by incorporating employees in the planning process. Moreover, the theory allows managers to aspire, engage, and transform employees to achieve organizational goals (Pongpearchan, 2016). Several distinctive resolutions encompassed employees who could intuitively solve problems, work autonomously and complaisantly, interconnect effectually, acclimatize swiftly to varying situations, and largely escalate performance efficiency and effectiveness. Business owners and managers employing a transformational leadership style establish a substantial positive impact on employees necessary for successful business ventures and corporate returns (Flores, 2017). Therefore, the transformational leadership style may be the most operational leadership style for small business owners and managers.

The notion of transformational leadership theory has become the most frequently researched and supported theory (Chammas & Hernandez, 2019). Bass and Avolio (1994) theorized that transformational leadership creates philanthropic and authentic employees connected to the business's goals. A transformational leader possesses specific qualities that influence significant changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organizational members and that build commitment to the organizational goals and objectives (Abasilim, 2014). Transformational leadership facilitates leader-subordinate trust that promotes interrelationship among subordinates and transmutes into job satisfaction, followed by increased productivity (El Toufaili, 2017). Employees respond better when led by transformational leadership (Orabi, 2016). Transformational leadership supports innovation and employee creativity and allows business owners and

managers to demonstrate four primary characteristics: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration.

Idealized Influence

Idealized influence is inspiring in nature and therefore constructs viewpoints about what is significant in life. Idealized influence, also referred to as *charisma*, is the emotional component of leadership where leaders act as strong role models for followers (Northouse, 2016). This attribute encourages leaders to craft values that inspire, establish sense, and engender a sense of purpose among subordinates (Khan et al., 2016).

Followers identify with leaders who display charisma and, in turn, want to emulate them as such leaders have high standards of moral and ethical conduct (Northouse, 2016). In addition, leaders provide followers with vision and a sense of mission, which constitute high trust and respect among followers (Khan et al., 2016). Leaders with attributes of idealized influence are learning leaders who demonstrate high self-determination, self-esteem, and persuasion and regular communication to transform their followers.

Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation facilitates creativity and innovation. Leaders with inspirational motivation manage challenging workers by encouraging and working with them and providing autonomy to achieve organizational goals and missions (Khan et al., 2016). The process entails leaders' ability to develop a vision and positive expectations for followers to accomplish (Orabi, 2016). Leaders use symbols and emotional appeals, resulting in followers producing more than their usual capabilities (Northouse, 2016). Leaders with the attribute of inspirational motivation provide followers with tools to

make the decisions, set high standards for followers besides communicating their vision, and encourage subordinates to excel beyond the standard limit for their own growth and organizational growth (Khan et al., 2016). Inspirational motivation focuses on developing and aligning followers' consciousness toward the organization's goals and mission.

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation promotes innovation. Intellectual stimulation allows leaders to develop followers' capacity to solve problems through creativity and innovation (Orabi, 2016). Followers have the opportunity to question their values and beliefs and those of the leaders and the organization (Wahba, 2016). Leadership supports followers who try new tactics and develop intuitive ways of dealing with organizational issues (Northouse, 2016). Leaders maintain their emotional balance, deal with complexity rationally, and cultivate similar skills among their subordinates (Khan et al., 2016). Leaders with intellectual stimulation engage in the problem-solving process via coaching and mentoring.

Individualized Consideration

Individualized consideration permits leaders to provide a supportive climate for followers by carefully listening to their individual needs. The attribute of individualized consideration focuses on the notion that followers are fundamental to the workplace (Khan et al., 2016). Leaders recognize and support the contribution of subordinates to organizational goal achievement and success (Orabi, 2016). Leaders use delegation to facilitate followers' growth through personal challenges (Northouse, 2016). Leaders' roles may alternate between participatory and autocratic as they show concern for

workers' needs and boost and coach for best results (Khan et al., 2016). Leaders act as coaches and advisers while assisting subordinates in achieving self-actualization (Northouse, 2016). Leaders who demonstrate individualized consideration give strong affiliation and specific directives with a high level of structure to employees in the workplace.

The theoretical foundation reveals this positive effect of leadership on business performance. Before proposing a specific leadership style for small business owners and managers, investigators must demonstrate such a technique is the operative method. The common assumption is that the lack of transformational leadership strategies in small businesses negatively affects business profitability (Udani et al., 2015). Possible theories relating to leadership can explain this phenomenon. However, one noteworthy trend in literature is integrating transformational leadership in business strategies and emphasizing business performance and innovation.

Leadership Styles

Leadership is a presumption of business success. All leaders affect team members through countless approaches to leadership (Garcia & Russo, 2019). Therefore, different leadership styles satisfy specific circumstances within the organization relating to already established theories of leadership (Northouse, 2016). Pitterson (2016) cited four distinct leadership styles: (a) charismatic, (b) transactional, (c) transformational, and (d) laissez-faire. Transactional and transformational are the leading operative leadership styles in most small businesses (Northouse, 2016). Chammas and Hernandez (2019) suggested transformational leadership as one of the key leadership theories; it has been considered

the primary motivational factor of innovation and creativity in start-up businesses. However, Edison et al. (2018) stated that new emerging challenges in the business industry require new leadership competencies. An organization with effective leadership will outperform a counterpart with a futile leadership approach.

Contemporary managers should know the distinction between management and leadership and how to merge the two roles to accomplish organizational goals. Abasilim (2014) stressed the avoidance of overemphasizing the importance of leadership in achieving optimum organizational performance. Leaders enhance organizational performance and encourage increased profitability of the business (Ersoy et al., 2015). When leaders tailor strategies to the current trends in business, organizations can capitalize on gaining competitive advantage and increased profitability (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015; Megheirkouni, 2016). Brown et al. (2015) outlined that business owners and managers demonstrate leadership by providing strategies to direct the organization, which creates a vision for subordinates to increase performance. Business owners and managers should be cognizant of the leadership behaviors they display as they will affect how subordinates engage in work tasks that may later influence performance (El Toufaily, 2017). Such proactive leadership offers small business owners and managers a feasible way to be operative and efficient while increasing productivity and profitability (Tomal & Jones, 2015). The major problem business owners and managers must tackle is empowering subordinates to acquire skills, which will affect accomplishing goals and objectives and increasing productivity for the business.

Transformational leaders are more likely to choose innovative strategies for change, growth, and success. Ugbomhe et al. (2016) piloted an investigation to uncover the effects of leadership styles on training and development and employee performance in selected banks in Nigeria. The results revealed that administrators with transactional leadership styles have insignificant positive effects on training and development in banks, while administrators with a transformational leadership style positively influence training and development and employee performance in banks (Ugbomhe et al., 2016). Managers with transactional leadership styles are operative in inducing heightened organizational performance, which transmits to firm success (Ugbomhe et al., 2016). Cumberland et al. (2018) and De Clercq et al. (2014) found that leaders who shared common goals with their employees stimulate higher levels of work engagement. Emery and Barker (2007), Yu et al. (2002), and Zacarro and Banks (2001) have shown a positive relationship between transformational leadership and workplace vision. Ineffectual leadership contributes to a reduction in morale when business owners and managers do not motivate employees.

Transformational leadership enhances the overall development and performance of an organization. Pongpearchan (2016) noted that transformational leadership pleases to higher ideals and affords a meaningful work ambiance for subordinates. Chammas and Hernandez (2019) stated that transformational leadership influences employee creativity through psychological empowerment, allowing employees to respond better in the workplace. Transformational leadership facilitates the enhancement of employees' satisfaction, which indirectly triggers organizational achievement of goals and bottom

line increases (Edison et al., 2018). The transformational leadership style of business owners and managers relates positively to the performance and profitability of small businesses (Ugbomhe et al., 2016). Transformational leadership, one of the prevalent forms of leadership, and transformational leadership theory represent a concentration of many academics' views and research (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership emphasizes a leadership style that promotes a vision of changes within organizations.

Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational leadership style tremendously influences effective leadership and attracts various abilities and business methods. A transformational approach to leadership creates unique benefits for the business as it induces amendment in subordinates' value system and supports organizational goals (Soane et al., 2015). Managers applying transformational leadership demonstrate authenticity, integrity and communicate clear organizational objectives to team members (Borgmann et al., 2016). Dartey-Baah (2015) cited transformational leaders affect organizational performance by endorsing organizational learning and innovation through numerous strategies such as communication, organizational culture, HRD, and training. Transformational leaders appeal to subordinates' higher-order needs in the workplace (Marathe et al., 2017). Transformational leadership approaches impact employees' satisfaction, stimulate better employee performance within the workplace, and indirectly trigger organizational bottom line.

Transformational leadership is advantageous to work environments as they influence employees to rally around the organization's vision, ensuring execution.

Pongpearchan (2016) posited transformational leaders have a strong intuitive appeal. Moreover, transformational leaders stress the significance of team members in the work process and affiliate with unselfish ethics and extraordinary moral development (Torraco, 2016). This ability is valuable to the work environment when employees must make sacrifices, extend beyond the scope of their work, and accept more responsibility to ensure the achievement of organizational goals (Banks et al., 2016). Pitterson (2016) stressed the distinctive nature of transformational business leaders: an authentic transformational leader and pseudo-transformational leader. Authentic transformational leaders focus on the corporate goal, while pseudo-transformational leaders focus on enriching their eminence and facilitating employees' reliance (Borgmann et al., 2016). Leaders have the power to influence business success based on the level of control and influence exerted.

Leadership has a significant impact on both the organization and the team's performance. Rupčić (2017) stressed business owners and managers need innovative practices to incorporate sustainable initiatives. Banks et al. (2016) and Hussain et al. (2017) stated that transformational leadership style leads to positive changes in a business. Transformational leadership styles showcase confidence and articulation of a vision designed to inspire employees (Almandeel, 2016). Moreover, transformational leadership practices provide a more profound commitment to profitability while offering performance outcomes to measure strategy adoption (Cumberland et al., 2018; Pongpearchan, 2016). Transformational leadership expands governance to embrace the advancement of followers while providing attention to the desires and trials of both

stakeholders (Northouse, 2016). However, researchers reported the drawbacks of the transformational leadership style as lack of conceptual rationality and the possibility of suffering from epic leadership partiality (Dartey-Baah, 2015). Furthermore, transformational leaders construct a structure that denotes leadership has a trait-like feature (Northouse, 2016) and can be executed negatively by the leader (Borgmann et al., 2016). Therefore, organizational leadership strategies should reflect current trends for sustainability and success.

Transactional Leadership Style

Traditional approaches of leadership do not incorporate innovation and creativity. Transactional leadership style affects a manager and the subordinates both positively and negatively (Almandeel, 2016). Transactional leadership theory stresses the sole exchange between a manager and a subordinate or a leader and a team member without fixating the subordinate's desires or personal development (Basri et al., 2017). Moreover, the approach exemplifies when a leader motivates followers honorably by exchanging rewards for exceptional performance (Franco & Matos, 2015). Transactional leadership has two distinctive fundamental factors: contingent reward and management-by-exception (Northouse, 2016). Contingent reward focuses on compensation for satisfactory performance based on agreed-upon objectives and goals. At the same time, management-by-exception allows for careful monitoring of employees' work and intervention by leaders when considering unacceptable performance (Basri et al., 2017). Transactional leadership hinges on a well-defined system of contracts and rewards.

Transactional leadership style is equally vital as other leadership styles to increase organizational competitiveness. Furthermore, managers who adopt this approach to leadership facilitate the rewarding of employees for the achievement of organizational goals and provide corrective measures when faced with failures (Li et al., 2018; Marathe et al., 2017). In addition, Northouse (2016) stated transactional leadership style enables active observing of performance and implementation of counteractive stratagems. Furthermore, transactional leadership style contributes to the decline of job-related stress, compares institutional practices and organizational results, and accentuates convergent philosophy, proficiency, and continuity (Hussain et al., 2017). Finally, transactional leadership focuses on improving the productivity and efficiency of the organization.

Scholars outline drawbacks for the transactional leadership styles despite the rewards subordinates and management receive. Franco and Matos (2015) reported the weaknesses of the transactional leadership style as passive and did not facilitate intuitive thinking to problem-solving. A transactional approach to leadership is adversely associated with abusive behaviors and promotes an extrinsic drive, which results in nominal submissive employees (Borgmann et al., 2016). Transactional leadership depends on a well-designed system of contracts and rewards where leaders commit to existing procedures and ignore the need for developing ideas that facilitate improvement of efficiency and effectiveness in the organization (Chammas & Hernandez, 2019; Samanta, 2018). Transactional leadership evades concentration on future vision and correlates to the inferior needs of people.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance demonstrates the effectiveness of business owners and managers and their success. Almatrooshi et al. (2016) indicated the potential success of a business relies on its organizational performance. The concept of organizational performance affiliates with the endurance and success of an organization (Ahmed & Shafiq, 2018; Singh et al., 2016). Continuous performance is the focus of any small business because only performance organizations demonstrate growth and progress (Gavrea et al., 2011). Nikpour (2017) specified organizations' success is reflected in their ability to perform. Researchers use organizational performance to determine how a business is doing in terms of profit, market share, and product quality to other organizations in the same or similar industry (Abasilim, 2014). Therefore, organizational performance lies at the heart of small businesses' performance.

Researchers view business performance in several different aspects and connotations depending on the application. Nikpour (2017) suggested that performance refers to applying, performing, and doing regular and committed work. Performance closely relates to work and its outcomes (Waweru-Gathii & K'Obonyo, 2017). The concept expresses the range of measurements of transactional efficiency and input and output efficiency (Shahzad et al., 2012). Yildiz et al. (2014) opined performance demonstrates how individuals or groups conclude to achieve an aim as the concept is displayed by an organization's prominent employees while fulfilling their tasks. Ahmed and Shafiq (2018) suggested that performance is a comprehensive measure that further includes productivity, quality, and consistency. Therefore, performance encompasses

those behaviors or actions regarded as relevant to those goals questionable by a specific organization.

Organizational performance has an important role in the daily lives of individuals. Gavrea et al. (2011) outlined that organizational performance has an essential role in the day-to-day operational activities of successful businesses as it represents a fundamental ingredient for developing nations. Organizational performance not only addresses the definition of a problem but seeks to find solutions to identified problems within a business (Shahzad et al., 2012). Singh et al. (2016) defined organizational performance as a set of financial and non-financial indicators capable of assessing the degree to which businesses accomplished goals and objectives. Researchers view organizational performance as a multi-dimensional construct influenced by a wide assortment of internal and external factors (Mafini, 2015). The concept of organizational performance refers to a tool applied by organizations to assess the business' success and provide assets to internal and external investors (Alhadid, 2016). Nikpour (2017) defined organizational performance as the sum of accomplishments attained by all businesses or departments, which entailed organizational goals within a given period. Organizational performance indicates a business owner and manager's ability to demonstrate flexibility while adapting to environmental and market changes.

Organizational performance reflects business productivity and effectiveness using various resources and strategies. Researchers in the business environment use subjective data collection inclusive of asking managers or key informants to rate their business' overall performance such as market share, profitability, innovative efforts, the

performance of human resource practices, and such other attributes to measure organizational performance (Singh et al., 2016). Managers must choose between financial and financial measures to provide a clear performance target for their businesses (Ahmed & Shafiq, 2018). Researchers scaled organizational performance only by subjective method or objective methods (Yildiz et al., 2014). Al Khajeh (2018), along with Waweru-Gathii and K'Obonyo (2017) proposed three areas associated with the performance of an organization as financial performance (return on investments, return on assets, and profits), shareholder return, and the product or service market performance (sales and market share). Researchers in the business environment measure organizational performance based on subjective data gathered from managers or other key informants.

Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance

A business owner and manager plays a critical role in the achievement of overall success. Leaders must act as a champion with total dedication to the project as such leaders have a significant impact not only on the project but the involvement of the organization, which ultimately affects the team and its performance (Garcia & Russo, 2019). Influential leaders exploit transformational leadership to achieve the highest levels of performance. Such leadership style influences employee creativity through psychological empowerment and promotes the improvement of cohesion, motivation, and goal setting among employees (Chammas & Hernandez, 2019). Transformational leaders influence the organization's success (Lin et al., 2016) and achieve better organizational performance (Chammas & Hernandez, 2019). Edison et al. (2018) postulated that

business leaders adopt a transformational leadership approach because the leadership style facilitates the enhancement of followers' satisfaction, indirectly triggers organizational achievement of goals, and increases the bottom line. Successful transformational leaders create clear and compelling visions for the future (Khan et al., 2016), which prompt growth and expansion that further indicate successful organizational performance (Orabi, 2016). Transformational leaders emit positive influences upon a firm's employees, transcending to successful results.

Managers use transformational leadership to focus mainly on developing the overall value system of the employees, development of moralities, skills, and employees' motivational level. Leaders adopt a transformational leadership style in business to motivate and energize employees, which facilitates the achievement of organizational goals and hence increases performance (Orabi, 2016). Researchers argued that leaders pursue transformational leadership to create a vision of change, provide resources, give individual support, and monitor improvement in the organization (Al Khajeh, 2018). Transformational leadership assists leaders in advancing organizational climate, which results in a positive influence on employee behavior that has direct and unmeasurable outcomes for organizational performance (Orabi, 2016). Rose and Mamabolo (2019) stated transformational leaders encourage risk taking, creativity, and innovation within an organization. Thus, transformational leadership dramatically affects employees' performance and eventually improves business performance.

Transformational leadership is considered the most effective among leadership styles. Leaders who pursue a transformational leadership approach facilitate a more

efficient work routine, incur lower costs, and in turn increase profitability in organizations (Nekhili et al., 2018). Brandt et al. (2016) suggested that transformational leadership radiates many positive influences upon organization members expecting higher profitability and performance in general. Researchers highlighted transformational leadership as the best method to improve organizational performance (Saad & Abbas, 2019). Transformational leadership drives innovation, employee retention, financial performance, improved market share, and customer satisfaction (El Toufaily, 2017; Thomson et al., 2016). Transformational leadership is more correlated to performance.

Business owners and managers should not only focus on their businesses' technical (operations management) aspects. Rose and Mamabolo (2019) suggested that business owners and managers should also focus on developing their transformational leadership attributes contributing to their performance. Leaders who demonstrate transformational behavior tend to change organizational culture, promote employees' intelligence, knowledge, skills, and learning (Nguyen & Luu, 2019). Transformational leaders use innovation, empowerment, staff development through training, and positive organizational culture (Chammas & Hernandez, 2019). A transformational approach enables leaders to engage in the same work as subordinates, focus on intrinsic higher-order needs, and highlight new ways to achieve organizational goals through innovation, which directly influences performance (El Toufaily, 2017). Thus, transformational leadership demonstrated by leaders contributes to greater and improved organizational performance.

Transformational Leadership Strategies

Organizational Culture

Leadership can shape a good culture. Culture is one of the most pertinent features of a business (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015). Culture has contextual properties that can have both supportive and deterrent effects on all areas and activities, including responsiveness to environmental change (Marjani & Sadeghi, 2016). A positive organizational culture improves performance and influences the behavior and attitudes of the employees in the business for the better (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015). Organizational culture is one of the central success factors because culture affects learning, acquisition, sharing, and other related areas of knowledge (Marjani & Sadeghi, 2016). Influential organizational leaders develop progressive organizational cultures, develop employees' motivation, clarify vision and organizational goals, and guide the whole efforts towards high performance and outcomes (Zeb et al., 2018). Thus, good leaders can influence and strengthen organizational culture positively.

Management has a crucial role to play in shaping and refining the organizational culture. Organizational culture plays a critical role in enhancing the performance of employees, which in turn can lead to improved performance of the business (Zafar et al., 2016). Researchers proposed organizational culture as the ethos of a business with characteristics that include both psychological and structural elements, which impact the perceptions and behaviors of the subordinates (Latif & Ullah, 2016). Organizational culture incorporates the characteristics of an organization, which directs its employees' day-to-day working relations and provides a holistic understanding of what and how

goals are interrelated and achieved and how each employee could attain goals (Marjani & Sadeghi, 2016). Idowu (2017) proposed organizational culture encompasses shared values, beliefs, assumptions, actions, artifacts, and language patterns in an organization that helps shape the behavior patterns of employees. Effective leaders act as a catalyst in an organization for change (Zeb et al., 2018). Leaders with transformational behavior tend to change the organizational culture (Idowu, 2017). Thus, a solid organizational culture can change the overall performance of the business.

Organizational culture can exert a significant impact on organizations, particularly in areas such as commitment and performance. A positive organizational culture motivates employees and gives them a sense of belonging to the organization that inspires loyalty and commitment to the business (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015). The right organizational culture promotes effectiveness (Latif & Ullah, 2016) and assists employees in increasing efficiency and understanding of the organization's objectives (Zafar et al., 2016). Sengottuvel and Aktharsha (2016) proposed that organizational culture connects with performance. Consistently motivating employees can eventually affect productivity leading to enhanced organizational performance (Idowu, 2017). Positive organizational culture provides satisfaction, commitment, cohesion, and satisfy implementation in the business (Latif & Ullah, 2016). A solid organizational culture enables employees to feel better about what they do.

Organizational performance is related to the consistency and strengths of the organizational culture. Organizational culture enhances organizational innovation, which connects with performance (Nguyen & Luu, 2019). Leadership with strong leadership

skills can shape a positive culture because leaders inspire trust from subordinates (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015) and create fundamental links between people, processes, and procedures in organizations that lead to better organizational performance (Zeb et al., 2018). Organizational culture positively impacts organizational performance (Idowu, 2017). Organizational cultures lead to superior financial performance (Latif & Ullah, 2016). If the organization's culture support and cooperate with the activities, rules and regulations, and incorporate innovative strategies, then the output of the business will improve (Hussain et al., 2018). Cultural changes have a real influence on financial returns (Sengottuvel & Aktharsha, 2016). Effective leadership can impact the culture and performance of the organization.

Innovation

It is an indispensable need for businesses to innovate to reduce their cost, stay competitive in the market, and boost their productivity. Organizational innovation is considered key to achieving a firm's sustained success and economic growth (Jia et al., 2017). Innovation is the capabilities of creating new products, services, work processes, and management procedures to achieve an organization's competitive advantage (Le & Lei, 2019). Leaders can guide organizations towards becoming more innovative (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Top management must create an innovation-friendly environment where employees can express themselves freely, are independent, experiment with complex tasks, and are simultaneously driven by their coworkers' competitiveness (Retkoceri & Kurteshi, 2018). Transformational leadership enhances organizational innovation through intellectual stimulation and encourages openness among members of the organization

(Prasad & Junni, 2016). Managers who proactively accept transformational leadership encourage employees to build a team identity and a positive environmental climate leading to sustainable innovation and innovative performance.

Innovation is a principal driver of economic development and plays a crucial role in competition at national and firm levels. Top management should maintain their focus on innovation management and encourage a creative mind among employees to develop an innovative culture in the organization (Retkoceri & Kurteshi, 2018). Researchers define organizational innovation as creating or adopting an idea or behavior that is new to the organization and the generation and implementation of new organizational structures, processes, or practices (Jia et al., 2017). Organizational innovation proves critical for a business's competitive advantage and performance (Le & Lei, 2019). Prasad and Junni (2016) posited organizational innovation encompasses changes in organizational processes and practices designed to meet organizational goals better. Business leaders augment organizational innovation through organizational learning, which is an effective strategy for sustaining and improving a firm's competitive edge and performance (Bello & Adeoye, 2018). Leaders facilitate the generation and implementation of organizational innovations by introducing supportive organizational practices that influence subordinates' innovation capabilities and behaviors (Jia et al., 2017). Researchers establish a positive relationship between transformational leadership and innovation (Prasad & Junni, 2016) and a positive relationship between innovation and a firm's performance (Bello & Adeoye, 2018). Transformational leadership supports

organizational innovation by boosting the motivation and ability of subordinates to be creative and innovative through idealized influence and intellectual stimulation.

Transformational leaders motivate followers to be creative, dream big and innovate at all times. Managers and their leadership behavior can influence organizational innovation as leadership is a prime driver of organizational innovation (Dialoke & Ogbu, 2018). Studies indicate leadership proves pertinent in innovation as leadership tends to shake organizational structures, processes, and change management practices, which affect organizational innovation (Jia et al., 2017). Researchers classified innovation capability into two main categories, product innovation and process innovation, which serve as the fundamental types (Le & Lei, 2019). Product innovation denotes an organization's ability to provide differentiated or new products and or services in the market to acquire customers' satisfaction (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Process innovation refers to an organization's capability of providing a better process than a current operation to attain better performance (Le & Lei, 2019). Business owners and managers can motivate and empower subordinates to pursue innovativeness by communicating a compelling shared vision.

Transformational leaders first learn to invent and implement alterations, a process of changing current organizational practices and procedures to increase organizational efficiency (Strukan et al., 2017). Second, transformational leaders influence innovation strategy by focusing on tactics and pushing the strategic direction towards innovation (Sattayaraksa & Boon-itt, 2017). Third, transformational leaders evoke innovativeness among followers by appealing to their values, interests, ideas, empowerment, and

motivation that improve subordinates' capabilities, self-confidence, and ability to contribute to the organizational goals and performance (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Fourth, researchers suggested the transformational leadership style as the best leadership style to support and foster innovation due to its focus on team culture and identification (Retkoceri & Kurteshi, 2018). Finally, transformational leadership facilitates and encourages innovative capabilities leading to increased performances.

Human Resource Development

HRD influences employees' skills and behaviors in an organization. HRD concentrates on the training and development of employees within the workplace (Antony, 2018). The concept encompasses organizational functions that incorporate strategic activities calculated to facilitate learning and development in the workplace that is advantageous to both the firm and the employees (Daley, 2017). Furthermore, HRD contritely to human resource management focuses partly on the effect of training and development on organizational performance (Lyons, 2016). Barharte (2016) posited individuals had discovered ways to gain knowledge and enhance their learning and capabilities within the organization throughout the history of the world. The initiatives provided support for HRD in the workplace as the concept covers essentials such as training, learning, and organizational development derived from the business's social and economic circumstances (Swanson & Holton, 2008). HRD is vital for businesses to gain a competitive advantage.

The concept of HRD originated as far back as the 1950s and 1960s where significant changes transpired to the workforce demographics and the nature of work.

Lyons (2016) posited that focus on efficiency allowed for more substantial investment in research and development to facilitate the innovation of products, processes, and technology. Thus, increased workforce training investments proved necessary to consistently educate employees about such developments (Benton-Short & Cseh, 2015). HRD is often committed to an operative action responding to the immediate pressing needs of present employees of current trends (Daley, 2017). Barharte (2016) augmented that HRD is a comprehensive system of developing individuals in all occupations. Today, HRD connotes a subdivision, function, or profession aiming to advance and solve organizational problems.

Organizational leaders and managers discovered that investing in HRD assists in addressing skills gaps, which will improve performance. Developing employees assist with the preparation for the future use of learned skills and abilities (Lyons, 2016; Nieves & Quintana, 2018). Development adds to human capital, proves central to improving work systems that increase economic growth, and is associated with individual and organizational benefits (Benton-Short & Cseh, 2015). HRD acts as a response unit within the workplace to employees and focuses on organizational performance measures, which positively impacts turnover, sales growth, profitability, productivity, service quality, and product quality (Daley, 2017; Kuchinke, 2015; Lee & Suh, 2016; Nieves & Quintana, 2018). Kuchinke (2015) advocated HRD could prevent social irresponsibility, unsustainability, and mismanagement. Developed employees enable organizations to monitor external knowledge, evaluate the relevance and integrate new strategies into

productive activities to enhance efficiency and improve performance (Ismail et al., 2019). Thus, HRD contributes to a sustainable competitive advantage for SMEs.

Business owners and managers have the responsibility to construct and direct efficacious development programs. Effective leaders ensure HRD activities align with the firm's business stratagems (Ersoy et al., 2015). Development allows small business owners and managers to increase the performance of subordinates to achieve present and future obstacles encountered by firms (Daley, 2017). Developing employees contribute to sustainable and profitable results (Mohrenweiser, 2016). Peng et al. (2016) posited that developing the skills, knowledge, education, and innovative capability of people at every level result in smaller initiatives and individual prosperity. A developing system will boost the efficiency and productivity of the employees and help the organization accomplish its objectives.

HRD ensures the continued improvement of both individuals and organizations. Organizations that incorporated HRD programs experienced an increase in productivity (Jha et al., 2016). Profitable businesses owe their accomplishment partially to apt employee development programs (Kuchinke, 2015; Strauss & Parker, 2015). Development activities benefit employees and business owners, and managers because such activities allow leaders to set the tone for positive collaboration that improves working conditions (Ersoy et al., 2015; Lyons, 2016). Organizations that emphasized profitability and/or sustainability and focused on HRD prosper in a global community (Jo & Park, 2016). Management of firms that aims to develop learning organizations use an HRD approach to achieve positive learning attitudes, empowerment, which results in

highly motivated staff, and committed employees who strive to achieve organizational goals (Dash & Mahapatra, 2017). Lee and Suh (2016) deduced that HRD is imperative for business sustainability and growth. The significance of HRD in establishments is dire for improving performance and profitability.

Incorporating HRD into the business' overall strategy contributes to network building with others, resulting in improved workplace productivity. HRD facilitates social relationships that influence increased cooperation and mutual accountability that affect employee performance positively (Cumberland et al., 2018). HRD enhances organizational performance by expanding employee competencies, productivity, and commitment (Nieves & Quintana, 2018). HRD improves employee efficiency and performance and increases organization performance, allowing the firm to flourish and thrive in its existing market (Ismail et al., 2019). Organizations that focus on incorporating development experience lasting beneficial effects because HRD impacts employees' job performance positively (Cobblah & van der Walt, 2017). Huselid (1995) surveyed HRD professionals in 968 publicly held organizations in the US to examine the relationship between HRD and organizational performance. El-Ghalayini (2017) and Huselid (1995) indicated a positive correlation between HRD practices and the economic profit per employee. Pradhan and Pradhan (2018) stressed the importance of aligning development practices to a firm's strategy as adopting such activities determines the sustainability, development, and growth of a business. Waddock et al. (2015) proposed that organizations that implement HRD interventions reap sustainable benefits. The practices help curb employee turnover and create a pool of highly productive human

resources within the firm. As a result, HRD interventions can enhance performances in SMEs.

Training

Managers consider training as an integral approach to assisting the firm in achieving its mission. Training connotes experiences that seek a relatively permanent change in an individual to improve their ability to complete or perform on the job (Rahim, 2017). Training is a universal term, which includes separate areas of expertise such as appraising learning impacts, supervising learning programs, and knowledge management (Daley, 2017). Researchers reported training as a strategic resource of human capital management that offers unique knowledge, skills, and abilities to empower firms to achieve positive results (Ismail et al., 2019). Training becomes a requirement in employees' work cycle regardless of their positions within the business (Daley, 2017). Training becomes necessary when current or potential employees partially or cannot meet the requirement of specific jobs (Brinia et al., 2018). Thus, training helps to improve the knowledge and skills of employees.

Business environments should have a framework in place that aims at adapting to change. Managers need to integrate training investments into their business strategy to capitalize on the expertise and gain benefits (Dash & Mahapatra, 2017; Jha et al., 2016). Training denotes changing what employees know, how they perform, their attitude towards assigned tasks, or their interactions with other coworkers and supervisors (Rahim, 2017). Business owners and managers would experience benefits from integrating training investments into their business strategy to satisfy the demand as a

society becomes more educated each year (McLean & Akdere, 2015). In addition, business owners and managers would benefit from recognizing that, without appropriate training, employees may misconstrue the written rules concerning conduct or violations of corporate policy (Cumberland et al., 2018; Lyons, 2016). Training people as a part of an overall human resource strategy means the skillful provision and organization of learning experiences that align with the organization's vision and long-term goals.

Business owners and managers must not assume all employees possess the prerequisite skills to complete tasks effectually. Cobblah and van der Walt (2017) cited even the most expert staffs need continuing training to accomplish their duties and take advantage of career development efficiently. Effective business owners and managers provide adequate training for their subordinates (Lyons, 2016). Business owners and managers need four essential skills to provide adequate training to employees (Strauss & Parker, 2015). Managers have the ability to (a) assess the training needs of employees, (b) understand adult learning theory to facilitate training programs, (c) evaluate success/failure of training programs, and (d) understand action-based training techniques (Benton-Short & Cseh, 2015). Firms adopt a team-focused stratagem approach to training by placing team members under the same roof to facilitate the training (Jo & Park, 2016; Sivapragasam & Raya, 2018). More empowered teams contribute to a boost in productivity contritely to less empowered teams.

Business objectives and goals aligned with the firm's mission for staff training confirm strong leadership. Organization leaders in the 20th and 21st century neglected staff training, among other essential organizational issues, which resulted in severe and

inescapable problems (Damij et al., 2015; Kuchinke, 2015). Employees recognize significant training as addressing department and individual needs and specific deficiencies within the workplace (Rahim, 2017). Business owners and managers should implement training as part of the firm's strategic plan (Kuchinke, 2015). The probability of concentrating on long-term sustainability goals within a short-term business enterprise plan should not escape (Jha et al., 2016). Researchers suggested that while training and development do not pacify all business-related disputes, appropriate training could stabilize business procedures (Deery & Jago, 2015). Investments in training improve employees' performance and accountability.

Practical training enhances specific skills and abilities of employees that contribute to increased and improved productivity. Nieves and Quintana (2018) proposed small business owners and managers should incorporate training in the workplace to attract talent, increase productivity, and improve employee satisfaction and retention. Training fosters constructive relationships among managers and subordinates or business owners and employees (Peng et al., 2016). Pitterson (2016) noted that transformational leadership promotes an influential corporate culture that influences employee behavior positively; harnessing an influential corporate culture allows managers to implement efficient and effective training and development programs in the workplace geared towards success (Rahim, 2017). Ismail et al. (2019) suggested small business owners and managers who adopt well-developed training programs in the workplace embrace their roles as coaches and mentors, which convert to business success in the long run. Thus, training equates to the future worth and direction of an organization.

Strategic investments in training can result in the sustainable and competitive positioning of businesses. Training enriches organizational competitiveness as well as increases organizational performance (Dash & Mahapatra, 2017). Moreover, training denaturalizes existing power relations and transcends real power to employees/subordinates within the firm (Jo & Park, 2016). Training enhances organizational performance by expanding employee competencies, productivity, and commitment (Nieves & Quintana, 2018). Training improves employee efficiency and performance and, in return, increases organization performance, allowing the firm to flourish and thrive in its existing market (Ismail et al., 2019). Organizations that focus on incorporating training experience lasting beneficial effects as training impacts employees' job performance positively (Cobblah & van der Walt, 2017) improve morale and capabilities within the business that transmit to higher productivity (Mohrenweiser, 2016). Friedrich et al. (2006) reported entrepreneurs recounted an increase in performance 6 months after engaging proactively in training. Moreover, Glaub et al. (2014) in their study, established an increase in Ugandan entrepreneurs' initiative 4-5 months after proactive training in comparison to a controlled group (Strauss & Parker, 2015). Strategically incorporating training into a firm's operational plan can reap positive results for employees, managers, and business owners.

Training correlates to staff performance as the embedded activities result in more gratified, more devoted, and more developed employees and increased performance. An increase in staff performance contributes to organizational effectiveness and greater output, yielding positive returns (Ugbomhe et al., 2016). Training provides a win-win

situation for businesses and employees alike as the activities enhance employee skills, which creates a feeling of being valued within the firm (Antony, 2018). The increasing sense of value among employees transcends to an increase in excellent performance (Kawani, 2018). Gaining additional certifications and education enables subordinates to stay up to date in their area of focus while providing tech knowledge on performing tasks and allowing for advancement in their jobs (Kim et al., 2017). When businesses offer training for employees, such practices enhance employees' skills and assist with a firm's growth.

Transition

Section 1 commenced with the background of the problem that underlined the magnitude of difficulties experienced by small business owners and managers when attempting to implement transformational leadership strategies and the benefits of incorporating transformational leadership strategies to small business profitability. Then, the section transitioned to the problem statement, which further stressed the acuteness of the problem of transformational leadership strategies and the economic repercussions of lack thereof. Finally, I conferred the validation for undertaking the study and the study's probable positive influence on social change in the purpose statement.

The other subsections included the nature of the study, which contained the research methodology and the case study design, research and interview questions, and the conceptual framework that formed the mainstay of the qualitative research. Six operational definitions of frequently used concepts and the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations preceded the significance of the study that pinpointed the contribution it

could make in the business environment and its implications for social change. The final aspect of Section 1 was the review of professional and academic literature that comprised of past and present definitions of transformational leadership theory, leadership styles, and four prominent transformational leadership strategies: organizational culture, innovation, HRD, and training.

Section 2 commences with a duplicate of the purpose statement and the researcher's vital role during data collection, eligibility and relationship with participants, and validation of the use of qualitative research method and case study design, and purposeful sampling. Also, Section 2 encompasses ethical considerations before, during, and after data collection and the data collection instruments used to gather the data. Section 2 further includes the method of data analysis to be executed and the process that will be assumed to identify emerging themes, improve data saturation, and strengthen the reliability and validity of the study.

Section 3 comprises the study's findings along with recommendations for organizational improvement. Moreover, the section includes examining limitations and ways to address the various limitations in future studies. Additionally, I suggest ways to enhance reliability and validity and document my reflections on possible research biases and ideological changes. Also, I explain how the study could improve small businesses' profitability. Finally, I also examine the implications for social change, recommendations for action, and future research before reflecting and concluding.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the transformational leadership strategies small business owners and managers use to improve profitability. The targeted population consisted of five small business owners and managers who have implemented successful transformational leadership strategies in Antigua. The results of this study have the potential to lead to positive social change because effective transformational leadership strategies among small business owners and managers could create wealth for the owners, employment opportunities for citizens, and development of the Antiguan economy.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the researcher assumes a critical role as a lens for data collection and interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The role of the researcher entails planning, interviewing, and collecting data from participants (Yin, 2018). Central to research administration and, more specifically, qualitative research is the researcher as a research instrument (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I was the prime instrument for data collection in this study. My role in this research included designing the study; recruiting participants; collecting, organizing, and analyzing data; and reporting findings. After receiving approval, I collected data by conducting face-to-face interviews with small business owners and managers. I engaged in gathering data in the field, considering and reviewing the data, and then testing whether my interpretation matched the individual's interpretation.

My experience in small business has been as a manager of a small business where I was involved in managerial events and activities and a teacher of the discipline.

Researchers should make their orientation, inclinations, and relationship with the topic unambiguous to pacify bias (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I recruited participants I had no prior relationship with to adhere to ethical research practice.

Researchers adopt an ethical approach to research to secure the data's reliability and validity (Wiles, 2013). Ferreira et al. (2015) advised that researchers consider ethical issues throughout the research process to ensure validity and reliability. The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research Subjects (1979) created *The Belmont Report* to guide researchers on the ethical considerations of conducting research using human subjects. *The Belmont Report* has three ethical principles to guide researchers: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research Subjects of Research, 1979). I followed the protocols of *The Belmont Report* to guide my research. I made sure to treat participants with respect and equality by asking for their voluntary participation in this study, conducting the research under their consent, scheduling virtual interviews at a time and place convenient for them, showing appreciation for their time dedicated to the study, and asking the same set of questions in the same order to each participant. In addition, I safeguarded the confidentiality of the participants and their businesses.

I completed the National Institutes of Health required training on protecting human research participants before collecting data. My National Institutes of Health

certification will expire in June 2023. As a student at Walden University who conducted international research, I adhered to the university's ethical standards. I consulted the international compilation of regulations provided by the U.S. Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP). Consulting with OHRP ensures that a study complies with the rules and guidelines relevant to human subject research (OHRP, 2016). Before data collection or participant recruiting, I received approval of the Walden University IRB to conduct this international study. An IRB authorizes the overarching need to collect valuable data with respect and ethical treatment of research participants (Bromley et al., 2015). Locke (2019) stated IRBs ensure that researchers conduct human studies research according to federal and state regulations and the institution's policies and procedures to protect the rights and welfare of the participants, minimize risks to the participants, and maximize the quality of the research.

A researcher benefits from creating impeccable relation between the data and interpretation. A researcher must represent the participants' interpretation of the phenomenon, not their elucidation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Katz, 2015). I mitigated bias and avoided viewing data through a personal lens by audio recording the interviews, creating interview transcripts, conducting member checking, and using methodological triangulation. Smith and McGannon (2018) cited member checking as a way for participants to confirm a researcher's analysis of data. I used member checking to confirm that I aptly interpreted the meanings participants provided to events, contexts, and situations. I provided participants with the opportunity to verify my interpretation to avoid any misunderstanding. Abdalla et al. (2018) posited that triangulation of diverse

data sources sanctions researchers to supplement the integrity of the information researched and presented. To control the effects of my personal bias on the investigated topic, I used methodological triangulation. I observed participants and used journals for note taking during the interviews. I used codes to allow themes and patterns to emerge from the data using computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Coding the data helped to identify themes and mitigate any personal bias during the data analysis phase.

Researchers use semistructured interviews to ensure they deliberate the same general issues with all participants (Yin, 2018). In semistructured interviews, a researcher relies on several questions that guide the conversation and ask investigative questions to collect in-depth information until the discussion on a topic fulfills the objective (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). I gathered data using semistructured face-to-face interviews. I asked probing questions to allow greater engagement of participants. I listened intently to participants and avoided assuming or preempting their responses. In addition, I adhered to the interview protocol (see Appendix A). An interview protocol acts as a procedural guide for directing qualitative research through the interview process and provides a form for recording the discussion's critical aspects, including observations and notes (Porter et al., 2017). An interview protocol enables researchers to ensure they collect all the information relevant to the research question from all participants (Porter et al., 2017). The interview protocol's rationale was to gather informed consent and apply a consistent and standardized approach to asking the semistructured interview questions

that addressed the research question. Using an interview protocol helped me to maintain focus and consistency within the interview process.

Participants

Selecting and recruiting participants for qualitative research is vital. Qualitative researchers recruit participants who are likely to produce vivid, distinct, and focused information significant to the research question (Harvey, 2015; Noble & Smith, 2015). Qualitative researchers use their judgment to choose participants according to the study criteria (Leedy & Ormrad, 2015). Participants in this study satisfied the following eligibility criteria: (a) must be more than 18 years old and (b) must have been the owner or manager of a small business located in Antigua for more than 5 years.

Gaining access to participants in an ethical manner is essential to safeguard the integrity of the research (Oltmann, 2016). I obtained access to participants by visiting the Antigua and Barbuda Intellectual Property Office, which records all registered businesses in the country. The Antigua and Barbuda Intellectual Property Office databases are available for the public and include business names, addresses, parishes, date of existence, and phone numbers. These databases are public information, and there are no costs associated with gaining access.

Researchers should build rapport and bond with participants (Harvey, 2015). Building rapport and bonding with participants requires a researcher to present a strong sense of the value of the study and create a safe environment for sharing information (Harvey, 2015). One strategy to build rapport is to gain participants' trust (Leedy & Ormrad, 2015). I used my Antiguan cultural background and social skills to build rapport

and an empathic relationship with the participants. I contacted small business owners and managers by telephone and requested a 30-minute video conferencing meeting. In the meeting, I introduced myself and the research question. I explained the overall context and purpose of the study and the positive implications of the study and invited participants to participate in the study. In this meeting, I also established rapport with participants and fostered a trust-based relationship to ease potential fear of the unknown. I informed the business owners and managers that the business would be privy to a copy of the study's findings because the prime objective was to improve operational strategies in small businesses.

I discussed the ethical issues on the participants' confidentiality and rights. To ensure confidentiality, I established a code system to identify participants instead of using their names. Before scheduled interviews, I provided an informed consent document to ensure discretion and a safe, nonthreatening atmosphere that allowed for each participant's well-being and sharing of information. Researchers should conduct face-to-face interviews in a relaxed and informal setting, enabling the researcher to build rapport with the participant, allowing for sharing experiences relevant to the topic (Rosenthal, 2016). I listened carefully during the interview and showed interest in the participant's feelings, needs, and concerns. Finally, I showed gratitude for the participant's time, effort, and cooperation.

Research Method and Design

The research methodology is essential to the researcher as the process involves using strategic steps to obtain knowledge to predict and describe a phenomenon (Merten,

2015). The research methodology is the tactics used by the researcher to acquire an understanding of the world (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2017). Research methods identify and serve to provide the use of a distinct research approach (Razali et al., 2016). Also, research methods indicate whether a researcher examines and applies quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods; why such a method was selected; and why other methods were not selected (Razali et al., 2016). Researchers need to build profound familiarity with the alternative research traditions before deciding which method to use when undertaking a research study (Lehnert et al., 2016). A researcher could employ one of the three research methods, quantitative, qualitative, or mixed, when researching a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). I evaluated all three research approaches before selecting to conduct a qualitative case study. In the following subsections, I justify the chosen methodology and design.

Research Method

The three research methodologies are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative methodology is an inductive, informative, and representational approach to study people, cases, phenomena, and social situations in their natural settings (Yin, 2018). In the qualitative research methods approach, a researcher gains rich insights on various phenomena that further assist in making more accurate inferences of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and knowledge (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Qualitative research is suitable for exploring a situation that influences people's actions or interactions and the denotation that people assign to their experiences (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). I selected the qualitative method

because it is suitable to discover the prospective precursors of a contemporary business problem scholars have little knowledge about. Using the qualitative method allowed me to obtain extensive data on participants' experiences and capture multiple realities. Quantitative researchers exploit hypothesis testing, mathematical analysis, and statistical examination to measure causation (Bristowe et al., 2015). However, quantitative research neglects the provision of insight into participants' individual or personal experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Thus, the quantitative approach was not appropriate for this study because I did not use numerical data to determine relationships among variables or hypotheses testing to examine a phenomenon. In addition, I did not use statistical methods to establish reliability or examine a phenomenon. Mixed-method research provides researchers with the opportunity to leverage the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Abro et al., 2015; Yin, 2018). The mixed-method researcher uses a combination of empirical and inductive methods (Yin, 2018). Moreover, mixed-method studies enable researchers to test new paradigms supported by previous research (Yin, 2018). Researchers use the mixed-method approach to verify or analyze an existing theory (Mosson et al., 2019). I did not examine hypotheses by analyzing numeric data; therefore, the mixed method was unsuitable for this study.

Research Design

Research design serves as a logical plan for collecting and analyzing data relevant to a research question (Leedy & Ormrad, 2015). The objective of using a case study is to provide a narrative description rather than outline a correlation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). A researcher considers a case study design when the focus of the study is to

answer *what*, *how*, or *why* research questions (Yazan, 2015). Case study design is appropriate when a researcher wants to cover contextual conditions because they believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study (Yazan, 2015). Conducting a case study allowed me to conduct an intensive investigation into the phenomena.

I considered other qualitative methods, such as phenomenology and ethnography. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggested that a phenomenological study is mainly synonymous with an individual's experiences and interpretations of a precise phenomenon. Phenomenological studies are not concentrated on the lived experiences of individuals (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers use phenomenology when there is inadequate information about a phenomenon (Mohajan, 2018). The phenomenological design was not suitable for this study because it does not center on life experiences. Ethnographic investigators focus on the shared beliefs, behaviors, and experiences of a group of people over time (Cincotta, 2015). Ethnographic studies necessitate addressing culturally oriented business problems and focus on cultural norms (Cincotta, 2015; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). I was not interested in exploring cultural norms or beliefs of groups of people over time. Therefore, the ethnographic design was not suitable for this study.

A researcher attains data saturation when no new information is reached and adequate information exists to duplicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is the gold standard in qualitative research (Hancock et al., 2016). Achieving the process ensures no new substantive information is acquired, demonstrating efforts made through triangulation with other sources. The data are not limiting the data case study falsely due

to exhaustion of resources. For this study, I achieved data saturation by conducting semistructured interviews with five small business owners and managers and member checks to obtain rich data on the research topic. I continued conducting interviews and analyzed data until no new themes emerged or data began duplicating.

Population and Sampling

Identifying the population in qualitative research assists the researcher in enhancing reliability and endorsing data integrity (Asiamah et al., 2017). The population for this study consisted of small business owners and managers in Antigua and Barbuda. Latiffi et al. (2016) stressed the need to establish selection criteria helpful to selecting participants who have direct knowledge and expertise on the research topic. Therefore, the participant criteria for this study were small business owners and managers located in Antigua and Barbuda and have owned a business for more than 5 years. I selected five small business owners and managers who were over the age of 18 and owned a business in Antigua for more than 5 years, were knowledgeable about transformational leadership strategies, and successfully incorporated and successfully incorporated transformational leadership strategies that enhanced business profitability for more than 5 years.

Selecting an appropriate sampling method is vital to the research process because it abets the researcher in procuring qualified participants and secures research integrity (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Purposeful sampling is used by qualitative researchers when they seek to obtain a significant amount of data on a specific phenomenon (Etikan et al., 2016). Contrasting to random sampling that boosts generalizability and minimizes bias in the selection process, purposive sampling includes the application of criteria resulting in

the selection of participants best suited for the particular study (Taherdoost, 2016). I used purposeful sampling because it expedited the identification and selection of participants best fit with sincere knowledge that contributed to answering the research question.

Researchers administering a qualitative study used semistructured interviews and member checking to reach data saturation (Roy et al., 2015). Researchers achieve data saturation when there is enough information to duplicate the study when there are no more new facts and when further coding is no longer practical (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Failure to reach data saturation harms the validity of the research outcomes (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The study's setting is significant and can affect the execution of the research (Majid, 2018). I allowed participants to determine an appropriate time and setting for the interview to ensure they were comfortable. I conducted videoconference interviews. Furthermore, I used member checking to validate that the data from each interview was an accurate interpretation of participants' responses. Member checking transpires when the researcher transcribes the interviews, writes up a summary of the data, meets with the participants again, allows them to validate the interpretations of the data are correct, and asks participants for additional information (Roy et al., 2015). Researchers use member checking to help confirm the dependability and credibility of the data in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I used member checking to achieve the reliability and credibility of the data in the study. After transcribing the interviews, I wrote up a summary of the data and allowed each participant to validate the interpretations of the information. Participants received an opportunity to ensure that the data interpretations were accurate and provide additional information to improve data accuracy, credibility,

validity, and transferability. I achieved saturation once the interviews stop providing new data and information on the topic. Saturation entails continually bringing in new research participants until there are excesses in the information shared (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Thus, researchers should continue to interview beyond the point of saturation to reach the maximum quality data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers should reflect on information gathered after each interview to determine the data discovered and the saturation level of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Roy et al., 2015). To ensure that I reached data saturation, I collected data from five small business owners and managers, explored past and present literature on transformational leadership strategies, and closely observed the limitations of various studies to avoid a repetition of the same mistakes.

Ethical Research

The questions defining ethical issues have been an area of concern for many researchers in the business sphere. Researchers in management depend on ethics codes established by social researchers in related fields to inform their research topic (Morse & Coulehan, 2015). Researchers conducting a study in fulfillment of the doctoral program should pay keen attention to the ethical issues that may surface during their studies (Bromley et al., 2015). Researchers use ethical precepts to safeguard the participant and validate research results. For the study, I adhered to guidelines outlined by *The Belmont Report* for ethical standards (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The guidelines of *The Belmont Report* include asking participants for their voluntary participation in this study, conduct the research under their consent by delivering, mailing, or emailing

consent forms to each respondent for signature (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research Subjects of Research, 1979).

Researchers use informed consent to provide participants, in writing (a) a full explanation of the purpose of the study, (b) freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, (c) an in-depth assessment of the potential risk participants' face by participating, and (d) how the participants' identities will remain confidential (Bromley et al., 2015). I provided the business owners and managers who agree to participate in my study with a consent form. I ensured all participants understood the purpose of the study, their rights to withdraw from the interview at any time, they were volunteering willingly to participate in the research, and that I will safeguard their confidentiality.

Participants had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point in time by contacting me via phone or email. At the commencement of each interview, I reminded the participant that they could withdraw from the interview at any given point in time without penalty. If a participant elected to withdraw from the study after the initial interview, I would have shredded all the hard copies of the interview notes and delete the electronic files related to the withdrawn participant. In adherence to ethical research practices, I did not offer any incentive to any of the participants.

I stored all the hard copies of interview notes, informed consent forms, and company documents in a secure safe with password combination in my home office. I also encrypted and stored the digital interview files, interview transcripts, and electronic data on a USB drive. I will maintain the data securely for 5 years. After this period, I will shred the hard copies of the data and destroy all data on the USB drive.

Researchers are advised to adhere to ethical requirements by protecting participants' privacy, confidentiality and safeguard private information during the data collection and data analysis process (Yin, 2018). Bearing in mind the ethical concerns relevant to confidentiality, I omitted any information that can identify the participants or their businesses. I protected the participants' identities by assigning specific codes P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. Disguising participants' information and identity ensure no reader can recognize or identify the study participants (Bromley et al., 2015). I obtained IRB approval before conducting the research to comply with IRB ethical standards. The IRB approval number for this study is 02-15-21-0454947.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection process is a series of interrelated activities to gather useful information to answer evolving research questions (Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of the data collection (Yin, 2018). Interviews can generate detailed data rather than surveys and allow researchers to unearth participants' perceptions regarding a phenomenon (Nathan et al., 2018; Paradis et al., 2016; Roulston, 2017). Semistructured interviews can be used to gather comprehensive data on the transformational leadership strategies of small business owners and managers. Researchers use semistructured interviews to keep participants focused and allow participants to respond to essential questions related to the central question (Bell et al., 2018). I was solely responsible for data gathering in this study. I conducted a semistructured interview with each participant through videoconferencing to allow participants to respond individually and systematically to the interview questions (see

Appendix A). I adhered to an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to ensure consistency throughout the process to capture small business owners' and managers' experiences and perceptions of the transformational leadership strategies incorporated in their businesses. Researchers use an interview protocol to increase the reliability of case studies by confirming all participants respond to the same line of inquiry (Yin, 2018). I recorded each interview using an audio recorder and at least two backup recording devices just in case the main audio recorder fails. The time for the interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes.

Reliability and validity are nonnegotiable components of a qualitative research study. Validity focuses on the finding's truthfulness, while reliability equates to thoroughness, honesty, and consistency (Roulston, 2017). I ensured reliability and validity by asking simple-worded questions in the same manner and structure as outlined in the interview protocol and maintain a neutral stance throughout each interview. Individuals can observe nonverbal communication (Bambaeroo & Shokrpour, 2017). I made sure that my body language did not affect the participants' responses. In pursuit of truthfulness, I avoided agreeing or disagreeing with the participants. In qualitative research, trustworthiness ascertains credibility and is considered the bedrock element of outstanding qualitative research (Birt et al., 2016). I performed member checking and triangulation to validate the data collected from the interview. Researchers use member checking to validate a summary of the interview transcript to safeguard the credibility and dependability of data (Yin, 2018). I transcribed each interview from the audio recording of participants' responses and allowed participants to verify the accuracy of my

summary. Data triangulation is a validity process where researchers base their findings on different sources of data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers use organization documents to corroborate interview data (Owen, 2014).

Documentary information is likely relevant to a case study (Yin, 2018).

Reviewing documents assist researchers with discovering substantiating evidence to augment the validity of interview data (Birt et al., 2016). I used company documents such as employee policy handbooks, operational manuals, and employee training manuals to validate data collected from the interview. I compared deductions from interviews to ensure uniformity with findings from observations and business documents.

Data Collection Technique

The interview is a vital component of qualitative research (Yin, 2018). An in-depth interview entails an opening, middle, and end that can be inconsistent if the researcher fails to organize (Trochim et al., 2016). The quality of the data gathered depends on the researcher's preparation and the ability to ask the right questions (Kallio et al., 2016). The preparation process comprises outlining an operative data collection plan that entails researching current information on administering semistructured interviews. I adhered to recommendations from professionals. Researchers should distinguish the preconditions for semistructured interviews, use prior knowledge, and craft an interview protocol (Kallio et al., 2016). The target population received an oral invitation from my initial communication to participate in the study, at which stage I provided an overview of the research and the proceeding steps. Potential participants received an email with the consent form instructing them on the purpose and nature of the

study, the return process before executing the study interview, and their right to withdraw at any time. To avoid jeopardizing the research and acquire accurate responses, I offered or promised no incentives were to the business owners and managers. The business owners and managers had the opportunity to select an appropriate time and place for the interview to be conducted after emailing their responses to the informed consent form.

Researchers use semistructured interviews to examine the phenomena and offer some structure to the discovery process (Nathan et al., 2018). The main appeal of semistructured interviews is that they allowed the researcher some organization in the consultation process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In semistructured interviews, participants received opportunities to discuss any subject explored in the interview (Cridland et al., 2015). Qualitative researchers usually conduct semistructured interviews once (Harvey, 2015). I used semistructured interviews to explore transformational leadership strategies with participants to acquire a rich understanding of the phenomenon. I conducted each interview one time through videoconferencing setting with each participant. Although there are high interviewer biases in video conferencing interviews, researchers receive opportunities to closely observe participants and use nonverbal communication actions (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). In addition, I kept and recorded contextual information during interview sessions.

The interview's length is subject to change based on the participant's responses to the interview questions (Roulston, 2017). I scheduled interviews for 45-60 minutes for the videoconferencing interview at a time and place convenient for each participant. At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself to the participants, stated my student

status with Walden University, and explained the purpose of the study. Moreover, I reminded the participant of the consent procedure, reminded the participant that they could withdraw from the study at any point in time, reminded participants that their response would be confidential, and showed appreciation for the participant's time dedicated to the interview. The interviewer is liable for alleviating any prolonged uncertainties (Saunders et al., 2018). I reminded the participant that the interview will be audio-recorded and reinforced the need to capture their responses accurately and inquire if they approved or disapproved of the recording. The existence of an active recorder may impact the interviewer's behavior. Still, the researcher will gain sufficient time to concentrate on the participants' responses, prompt appropriately, and generate accurate interview transcripts (McGonagle et al., 2015).

Once the participants agreed to the recording of the interview activities, I commenced the interviews. During the interview, I started with warm-up questions. Then, I inquired more about the participants to create a comfortable and interview-friendly environment that allowed them to share information. Participants provide straightforward responses when the interviewer establishes a relationship and make them feel relax (Saunders et al., 2018). I went through the interview questions in the same order with all participants. Participants received adequate time to talk at length as I seized every word uttered as if it was resuscitative data. I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A) to ensure that I asked questions aligned directly with the central research question for the study. I asked probing questions to gather in-depth information and took

notes occasionally of the participants' verbal and nonverbal communication. At the end of the interview, I expressed thanks to the participants for their cooperation.

The disadvantages of semistructured interviews are researcher bias and misinterpretations of data during the interview. Research bias and misconceptions could ruin the credibility of a study and the possibility of inaccuracy based on the interviewers' inattentiveness (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). In addition, the interviewer's presence can influence the interviewee's responses because of their desire to please the interviewer (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Yin (2018) cited a disadvantage of the semistructured interview is the large volume of information could be difficult to transcribe. To verify the accuracy of the transcription, I asked participants to review my interpretations of the recordings shortly after the interview by emailing them the transcripts the same week of the interview. I used member checking to mitigate personal biases, establish the trustworthiness and credibility of the data findings.

Case study researchers should draw data from multiple sources to safeguard construct validity (Yin, 2018). Reliability and validity ensure that the research is replicable in other settings (Dikko, 2016; Yin, 2018). Methodological triangulation increased the credibility of the data collected (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rosenthal, 2016). I used requested company documents that highlight the incorporation of transformational leadership strategies from business owners and managers and the literature on transformational leadership to triangulate the study's findings.

Document review as a data collection source may benefit the researcher and play an explicit role in data collection (Yin, 2018). Document review enables the researcher to

strengthen the evidence discovered in the data, gain access to detailed and unobtrusive data, and develop the ability to validate the interview data (Yin, 2018). However, reviewing company documents as a source of data collection may result in the inaccuracy of the data, difficulty to retrieve, or selectively biased as a result of being incomplete or deliberately withheld (Yin, 2018).

Data Organization Technique

Researchers' techniques for data organization are crucial for data analysis and reporting the research findings (Yin, 2018). Recording participants' interviews with a recorder provide researchers with an efficient method to transcribe, code, and organize data during the analysis phase (Vohra, 2014). I used the audio recording to capture the participants' responses, which I transcribed and evaluated to identify patterns and themes. Researchers use software tools such as spreadsheets for data analysis, storage, data entry, and a scheme to reduce errors (Broman & Woo, 2017). Qualitative researchers use NVivo because of its adeptness, transparency, and aptitude to accommodate a large amount of data (Dollah et al., 2017). Researchers use NVivo 12 Plus software to secure, organize, and assist data analysis (Paulus et al., 2017). NVivo 12 Plus, contrasting to other software, is user-friendly and includes innovative features that facilitate swift coding and easy access when needed. I used NVivo 12 Plus to manage the data collected from the interview, including audio files and research documents. I labeled each interview file in the system in a manner that maintains confidentiality. I coded participants' names as P1, P2, P3, P4, or P5 to protect their identity and limit the risk associated with data breaching. Maher et al. (2018) suggested that researchers seek

assistance and guidance from experienced NVivo users in a case of unfamiliarity. Since I was not familiar with the NVivo software, I ensured that I obtained professional help during the process to curtail errors.

I scanned, labeled, and saved business documents electronically. I also created a reflective journal to record personal thoughts, suspected biases and assisted with the analysis of the study. Researchers should secure all hard data collected in a file cabinet and storing all electronic data gathered in an encrypted password folder (Tang, 2015). I kept all the hard copies of the interview notes, company documents, and informed consent forms in a secure safe with a password combination located in my home office. I also encrypted and stored the digital interview files, interview transcripts, and electronic data on a USB drive. I am the only person who knows the combination of the safe and the decryption key to the encrypted data. I will maintain the data for 5 years, as required by Walden University. After this period, I will shred the hard copies of the data, delete all recordings, and destroy the USB drive.

Data Analysis

The data evaluation process involves arranging, classifying, categorizing data, summarizing data, translating data, synthesizing data, and composing the results of the findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Data analysis is a complicated method, and researchers' principles can influence researchers' interpretations (Maher et al., 2018). Yin (2018) proposed a systematic approach in analyzing qualitative data to include compiling, disassembling, reassembling and arraying, interpreting, and concluding. Costa et al. (2017) stated data analysis begins when researchers transform data into written text. The

data analysis for the study included gathering the data, grouping the data, creating themes, accessing the data, and using the comparison method to understand the transformational leadership strategies of profitability small business owners and managers.

Triangulation increases the acuity of research and helps explore different viewpoints (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Yin (2018) stated qualitative researchers use triangulation to strengthen the validity and reliability of the research study. Korstjens and Moser (2018) noted that researchers commonly use methodological triangulation in case studies for correlating data from multiple sources as the approach assists in mitigating bias during the data analysis process. The use of methodological triangulation will help the researcher reduce the participants' self-serving attribution bias in the study (Yin, 2018). I used methodological triangulation to enhance the quality and confidence of the study's findings by conducting semistructured interviews, member checking, and examining the organizations' documents. The overarching research question for this survey is: what transformational leadership strategies do small business owners and managers use to increase profitability?

The first step of the data analysis process involved compiling all the data from all data sources. Compiling of data includes polishing the interview notes (Quick & Hall, 2015). I transcribed interview audio files and saved each file separately. Yin (2018) posited that the researcher uses member checking to derive the true meaning of data during the analysis process. According to Yin, using member checking enables the participant to verify the researcher's interpretation of the data. As suggested by Marshall

and Rossman (2016) and Yin, I used member checking to verify any interpretation of the data. Next, I shared a summary of the study's findings with each participant to ascertain accuracy and honesty. Third, I analyzed the word-for-word scripts and manually identified the various themes of small business owners' and managers' transformational leadership strategies. Fourth, I manually examined the organizations' documents. Finally, I ensured that I listened to each interview audio recording thoroughly and made corrections if the output was inaccurate.

The second step of the data analysis process is disassembling the data to identify commonality, which allows for coding (Maher et al., 2018). Coding the data enables the researcher to assign labels or other indicators to highlight different text segments relevant to the research question (Dasgupta, 2015). Maher et al. (2018) suggested coding strategies allow for the emerging of themes and patterns. I used open coding strategies to allow themes and patterns to emerge from data. I read the interview transcripts, the interview notes, and assigned codes to common keywords and patterns that emerged from the data. Based on the identified codes, I disassembled the data into small segments.

The third step of the analysis process involves reassembling the data to identify themes. I grouped data segments with related codes to identify themes. Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) helps examiners as they gather, record, and handle data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Researchers use NVivo 12 Plus to sanction the incorporating of data from several sources to categorize the information into themes (Maher et al., 2018). CAQDAS facilitates the coding and theming of exploration topics (Zamawe, 2015). Further, researchers use CAQDAS programs, such as NVivo 12

Plus, to organize data efficiently (Maher et al., 2018). Zamawe (2015) suggested that using CAQDAS could assist the researcher in mitigating bias during the data analysis stage. I used the CAQDAS tool NVivo 12 Plus software to complete the thematic analysis.

The fourth step of the analysis is the interpretation stage. I became familiar with the data, coded, searched for, and identified thematic relationships. I further organized and reassembled the data into groups to assist in interpreting and forming a conclusion of the information. Researchers use coding to detect themes from the interview transcription and other collected data to achieve data saturation, which qualifies the study's reliability, validity, and credibility (Yin, 2018). During the interpretation stage, the researcher construes the data to grasp deeper meaning (Hays et al., 2016). Yin (2018) suggested organizing the data into a specific order to create fragments and labels and then reassembling the data into sequences and groups to allow the researcher to form interpretations and conclusions. As common themes develop, I gained a comprehensive understanding of small business owners' and managers' transformational leadership strategies to increase business profitability.

The final step of the analysis process involves developing a conclusion. This stage requires the researcher to draw inferences from the data (Hays et al., 2016). Yazan (2015) outlined that the deductions would encompass the meaning from the data as the process entails reporting and explaining the findings. I presented the results, drew conclusions, and discussed the application to professional practice and implications for social change

in Section 3. After completing the data analysis, I linked the emerging themes to the study's research question, the literature, and the conceptual framework.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

In qualitative research, the reliability and validity of the instrument are paramount for reducing errors that might arise from measurement complications in the research study. Reliability is the accuracy and precision of a measurement procedure (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Establishing quality in qualitative research differs from quantitative and considers creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Walden University, 2019). Further, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability strengthen and validate research findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Reliability can be addressed in qualitative research in several ways and can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes using good-quality recording strategies and transcription (Yin, 2018).

Dependability

Researchers use dependability to showcase and document the consistency within the research findings, enabling them to follow, audit, or critique the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Korstjens and Moser (2018) suggested that researchers use dependability to define the research process from the start to reporting the research findings. Dependability is the audit trail and the stability of research data based on the nature of the study (Connelly, 2016; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Investigators trust reliability and validity to declare replicability of studies.

Detailed and extensive delineation of the research process further suggests consistency in the investigation process sanctioning replicability (Fusch et al., 2018). To increase the dependability of the research, I kept the investigation synopses and notes as I worked through the data analysis process. Further, I scrutinized all interview records for errors, used member checking, and described all information gathering and analysis phases to confirm accuracy. This accumulation of comprehensive information afforded a complete audit trail to corroborate the confirmability of the study.

Validity

Considering the validity of data in research is important to the results. Validity refers to the degree to which a study accurately reveals the concept or construct that the researcher is attempting to evaluate and measure (Yin, 2018). Moreover, validity is associated with integrity, which researchers use to present the data accurately (Noble & Smith, 2015). Validity is associated with eight strategies frequently used by qualitative researchers. It incorporates prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, detailed, thick description, and external audits (Yin, 2018).

Credibility

In qualitative research studies, credibility is comparable to internal validity, while transferability is analogous to external validity (Yin, 2018). Credibility is the method that involves examining data findings to evaluate whether the analysis and results are precise (Birt et al., 2016). Researchers can enhance credibility through different means, including

member checking, interview responses, data triangulation, observation of participants, and adhering to established interview protocol (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2018). In an attempt to strengthen credibility, I treated all participants fairly, listened attentively to their responses, and probed when needed. In addition, I conducted brief notes taking during the interviews and audio-recorded all interviews with the participant's permission. Credibility is a significant attribute of validity, closely correlated to dependability, and includes member checking and method triangulation (Birt et al., 2016). I enhanced credibility through member checking by allowing participants to review notes taken during the interview and to determine if I captured their experiences accurately on paper. Additionally, I shared my interpretations of each participant's responses along with a summary of the study's findings post the interview stage and requested participants' feedback of the document to remove any ambiguity that may persevere. I used member checking to establish credibility, mitigate personal bias, and enhance the research findings. Once I achieved data saturation, I used NVivo 12 Plus to systematize the information into key topics. In addition to member checking and data interpretation, I used methodological triangulation to ascertain research trustworthiness.

Methodological triangulation can result in enhanced reliability and validity of the data gathering process. Researchers use methodological triangulation to establish the reliability and dependability of the study's findings (Joslin & Muller, 2016). Qualitative researchers use methodological triangulation as a validity process and base their conclusions on different sources of information (Fusch et al., 2018). Triangulation may result in a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Noble & Smith,

2015). To confirm the validity, I triangulated the data using the participants' semistructured interviews, peer-reviewed industry articles subjected to training and development, company manuals, and results from the company's profitability assessment.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the relevance of research to supplementary situations or environments (Smith, 2017). Researchers enhance transferability by updating the reader on the characteristics of the population and sharing information about the boundaries (Piskur et al., 2017). Researchers use transferability to determine the exchange of a study's findings links to other similar studies (Noble & Smith, 2015). I thoroughly described the study's setting, sample selection, design, and data collection process to increase transferability. I indicated that the study could be transferable to other settings and compared to other studies on transformational leadership and small business profitability. According to Pratt and Yeziarski (2018) and Smith (2017), precise and profound clarification of the research conditions may allow new researchers to apply the research discoveries to study sustainable and profitable leadership strategies to other situations. Furthermore, Ferreira et al. (2015) stated adhering to applicable ethical processes, such as IRB approval, may guide researchers in achieving the legitimacy of outcomes. The in-depth review of the research settings may allow researchers to transfer this study to consider other geographic locations or specific industry segments.

Confirmability

Researchers use confirmability to demonstrate how the study's findings represent the participants' responses and remove personal biases (Kallio et al., 2016). Researchers

can exhibit confirmability by elucidating research findings, explaining data interpretations, and safeguarding results from the study's data (Hancock et al., 2016). Hancock et al. (2016) suggested that researchers can demonstrate confirmability by certifying research findings are transparent with actual data reinforcing the study is valid, credible, and transferable. To safeguard confirmability, I used methodological triangulation, member checking, and information from the company's documents to alleviate biases and use the participants' experiences to present the study's findings.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is a criterion the researchers use to indicate the quality of qualitative research for its transparency and credibility (Hancock et al., 2016). Researchers achieve data saturation when the data becomes repetitive and reveals no new information (Yin, 2018). Hancock et al. (2016) discovered that reaching data saturation occurs when attaining additional data will not lead to unearthing new information applicable to the research question. I used member checking and methodological triangulation to confirm data saturation. I extended the data collection and analysis process until I could no longer discover new information allied to the research question.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included a detailed description of the study plan. I explained my role as a researcher and how I mitigated bias. I described and justified my decisions regarding the research methodology and design, the sampling strategy, the participants, the instruments for collecting data, strategies to achieve data saturation, data organization and analysis strategies, and strategies to enhance the reliability and validity of the study.

Section 3 begins with the purpose of the study, along with a summary of the research findings. The section also includes a presentation of the study's findings where I outline major themes that answered the overarching research question, aligned with the conceptual framework, and used contemporary literature to validate the results and indicate areas of disputation. The other subheading application to the business practice followed, and I explain how the study could improve small businesses with low profitability. I also discuss the implications for social change, recommendations for action, and future research before reflecting and concluding.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the transformational leadership strategies some small business owners and managers use to increase profitability. The findings of this doctoral study were based on data collected from five virtual, semistructured interviews with various small business owners and managers and documents from the business entity. Other sources of data included newsletters related to increased profitability for small businesses. Three main themes and drivers of increased profitability in SBEs emerged during data analysis: (a) HRD and training, (b) innovation and creativity, and (c) organizational culture and communication.

Presentation of the Findings

The budget statement for Antigua and Barbuda reported the macroeconomic performance for the country according to the analysis completed by the United Nations Economic Commission for the Latin American and the Caribbean. The document outlines the importance of small business economic activities to the country's overall development. Moreover, the data highlighted the need for continuous investment into human capital development and training as well as increasing opportunities for economic growth and expansion. The document supported recommendations proposed in this study for further research on small businesses regarding the use of other leadership styles and business profitability.

The overarching research question was: What transformational leadership strategies do small business owners and managers use to increase profitability? The

interview consisted of eight open-ended questions, but I probed and obtained clarification for vague responses during all sessions. Each interview was conducted virtually in a private office in the organization and my home office and lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. I transcribed the interviews and shared copies of my interpretations and the summarized findings with participants to verify the accuracy of their responses. No participant expressed that there was any misinterpretation. To maintain the confidentiality agreement outlined in the informed consent form, I did not reveal the names or genders of the business owners and managers. Instead, I labeled the leaders as either P1, P2, P3, P4, or P5.

Table 1 displays the themes I identified from the interviews with the small business owners and managers who participated in this study. I used NVivo 12 software to narrow down themes after I manually coded the transcripts. In the subsections that follow, I will discuss each theme resulting from the interviews and compare the themes to the corresponding literature reviewed in this study. The findings aligned with the conceptual framework on transformational leadership, which MacGregor (1978), Bass and Avolio (1994), and Northouse (2016) appropriately illustrated. Because transformational leadership theory is transcendent and universal, I used it to explain the occurrences in the contemporary small business setting. The existing literature on transformational leadership strategies supported the study's findings.

Table 1

Themes Representing Small Business Owners' and Managers' Perspectives

| Nodes/themes | Participants' perspectives (%) |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Human resource development | 100 |
| Innovation and creativity | 100 |
| Organizational culture and communication | 100 |

Theme 1: Human Resource Development and Training

The first theme emerging from the participants' responses was the need to incorporate and facilitate HRD and training activities for employees in the operational components of the business. All participants responded by stating ongoing HRD and training for employees were strategies that enabled small business owners and managers to increase business profitability. After hand coding, I entered the data into the NVivo program to verify this theme, which revealed all five participants shared HRD and training as a transformational strategy used to increase business profitability, as indicated in Table 2. The sources identified in each table represent the responses from participant interviews.

Table 2

Theme 1: Human Resource Development and Training

| Node/theme | Sources |
|------------------|---------|
| HRD and training | 5 |

HRD and training are embedded in transformational leadership strategies. Such strategies are the aptitude to impact employees' abilities and actions through strategic activities geared at advancing knowledge and development to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. Business owners and managers initiate HRD and training collaboratively, which align their transformational leadership style characteristics with the transformational leadership theory of Bass and Avolio (1994). P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 stressed that the small business and entrepreneurial environment necessitate some degree of development and training. P1 shared, "HRD and training are essential as processes are ever-changing, there are always new approaches, trends, business trends change, product trends change, and people are constantly demanding more." Similarly, P5 communicated, "In order for entrepreneurs to get their business off the ground, and be more profitable, they must get employees to do training, workshops, that sort of thing... it is not just hiring just for help's sake." P2 outlined, "Although HRD and training are costly for small businesses, you have to encourage employees to engage in the latest training and development initiatives provided by various sources."

In agreement with the transformational leadership theory that emphasizes the need for business leaders to be visionaries and engaged in the development of followers (Khan et al., 2016), P2 and P4 advocated that HRD and training inspire employees to initiate assigned tasks more efficiently and accept extended responsibilities. P4 disclosed, "HRD and training sessions help employees to be organized, demonstrate increased levels of interest, and assist with activities that took the load from me, which often resulted in stress." P1 and P3 suggested that HRD and training is an ongoing process and not a one-

time spinoff. P1 added that training is relevant in a contemporary business environment to reflect and facilitate the constant changes and disruption. P1 said, “I think it is important to be on a continuous journey of learning to do things better within the business so that you can together work to keep clients happy.”

Incorporation of HRD and training empowered P2, P3, and P5 to align employees with specific tasks within the organization strategically. The delegation of responsibility enhances employees’ engagement because workers can excel beyond their usual capacity (Northouse, 2016). Failure to improve employees’ skills and abilities adversely impacts productivity and profitability, as P1, P3, and P5 indicated. P3, P4, and P5 classified this traditional leadership approach as the least effective profitability strategy, which has resulted in some “financial losses,” according to P5. The individualized consideration skills of transformational leadership are fundamental to HRD and training and involve coaching and mentoring. Coaching and mentoring include maintaining leaders’ demonstrative balance and dealing with complications carefully to cultivate skills among subordinates (Khan et al., 2016). Coaching and mentoring can be used advantageously to accomplish the objectives of the organization. In this case, P3 outlined that sometimes one must be willing to “act as the mother figure.”

The coaching and mentoring skills of P3 assisted in the accomplishment of daily tasks effectively and efficiently. P3 did not allow employees to approach disgruntled customers solely from a position of stress and frustration, especially after the customers had a bad experience with previous providers. P3 shared,

Being a mentor and coach to my employees and showing them how to get their daily tasks accomplished resulted in tasks completing promptly, reducing stress levels among employees, reducing confusion and conflicts among employees, and becoming easier once they are familiar with the procedures.

P5, who also communicated this development and training strategy, proposed that while some employees are not open to learning new skillsets, business owners and managers should consider those who pursue personal growth and development. Furthermore, business owners and managers should consider employees who wish to advance their skills to be more efficient and productive in the workplace. P3 and P5 were steadfast that having an “I am the boss” perception does not increase the bottom line in the small business environment. The study’s conceptual framework on transformational leadership theory underlined the significance of idealized influence that necessitates a supportive climate for employees by carefully demonstrating strong role models (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Idealized influence does not mean that leaders showcase a micromanaging personality among workers to ensure that objectives and goals are satisfied. Idealized influence means that management, such as P4 and P5 stipulated, must be willing to take a hands-off approach, trust the workers’ abilities to complete tasks, and foster communication regularly. The emphasis, according to P5, is on getting the desired tasks completed:

As we grew and as the staff knew what to do, I wanted to step away to do other projects to create new revenue streams.... the team knew how to get things sorted,

and I did not have to go through and say what to do. This is how I wanted to build my business. I did not want to oversee... they did not have to clock in or clock out. They knew what to do, just get the work done.

While individualized consideration is important, it is insufficient for the day-to-day operation for any business to achieve the bottom line effects of profitability comfortably. Individualized consideration complements intellectual stimulation that enables workers to expand their problem-solving capacity through innovation and creativity (Orabi, 2016). Achieving profitability in the business also requires leaders to accommodate innovation and creativity by ensuring a secured foundation through HRD and training conventions.

HRD and training help to discover novelty and ingenuity among employees within the organization. P1 stated that while some workers enjoy being told what to do, others “love to explore” when provided with the opportunities and an environment that fosters exploration. In such a situation, P1 exploits new strategies and intuitive approaches aligned with HRD and training until employees are comfortable exploring on their own. P4 and P5 described employees who enjoy being innovative and creative because of successful HRD and training initiatives as “entrepreneurs.” According to P1, P4, and P5, entrepreneurial employees were more involved than employees who just wanted to be employed because entrepreneurs recognized the need to develop a company brand that provides value and satisfies customers’ demands to obtain profitable returns. HRD and training do not mean that everyone will become entrepreneurs; nonetheless, in the quest for increase profitability, P1 and P5 expressed the need for innovation, continuous motivation and recognition, and communication.

The conceptual framework and literature review alluded to leaders demonstrating idealized influence by facilitating employee empowerment and exchanging leadership roles during HRD and training engagements (Barharte, 2016). P3 suggested that separating the roles of the manager and business owner in the workplace is important to increasing profitability. Despite being the business owner, P3 discovered that employees were enthusiastic about performing daily tasks and would “go the extra mile” in the absence of the business owner in the workplace. The presence of the business owner, according to P3, creates fear and causes some employees to “go into a shell.” The business owner’s presence creates a “bottle-neck” effect according to P5. Employees rely solely on the business owner for continuous instructions when approaching day-to-day assignments. The presence of the manager, on the other hand, provides an environment for collaboration and inspiration. P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 capitalized on the manager’s role and assigned responsibilities to employees to bolster productivity and boost profitability. P4 summed up the value of HRD and training by stating,

We work together to make the business successful.... they may be able to help you take the business forward if you just listen and not always want to be the boss.... they are more enthusiastic.... I love getting the help.... I feel good in that I am being helped.

This strategy aligns with the conceptual framework and the literature. Managers use collaborative efforts to inspire and motivate workers providing autonomy for achieving organizational goals and objectives (Khan et al., 2016). Consequential engagement and enhancement of morale emerge when employees collaborate and feel

inspired to tackle their tasks in new ways (Khan et al., 2016). P2, P3, and P4 shared that collaboration motivates workers to accept more responsibilities and yearn for new ways of getting tasks accomplished and striving for expansion and growth. Thus, P2, P3, and P4 inculcated workers' awareness of ownership for their work. That sense of ownership corresponds to autonomy, which Bass and Avolio (1994) described in inspirational motivation, and also forms part of this study's conceptual framework. Autonomy is a distinctive need to exercise control over one's actions (Wang et al., 2019) and a chief characteristic of transformational leaders is their aptitude to promote autonomy.

When business owners and managers provide employees with autonomy, intrinsic motivation and engagement develop. Such actions are divergent to circumstances where micromanagement and authoritarianism prevailed. P4 and P5 discussed that micromanagement disrupts an increase in profitability and increases stress. P4 and P5 considered micromanaging and the "I am the owner-manager" mentality to be an antiliberal approach; they were able to preserve the team through a leadership strategy and style that aligns with autonomy and a sense of trust, which resulted in a more significant workspace for employees. The business owners and managers also enhance profitability by constantly communicating organizational goals and objectives from the onset and motivating and rewarding employees' contributions throughout the various financial periods. P3 and P5 pinpointed communication as the most effective strategy for bottom line effect in business profitability; P1 suggested its importance to motivation and development of organizational culture. P2 and P4 use motivational and rewarding

strategies, which allow for engagement and the development of relationships with employees that echo the value of their contribution to the business.

P1, P4, and P5 used a collaborative approach to increase productivity and profitability to avoid a hierarchical divide. Collaboration is beneficial because workers tend to have more autonomy when the direct control point diverts from management to employees (El Toufaily, 2017). Collaboration also inspires motivation and strengthens group identification (Flores, 2017). Inspirational motivation is interwoven into the transformational leadership strategy (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Inspirational motivation empowers leaders to correspond to the high expectancies of employees while encouraging team members to display allegiance to the organization's shared values (Northouse, 2016). Inspirational motivation satisfies personal, psychological, and social needs and allows workers to make meaningful contributions and co-exist amicably (Khan et al., 2016). P4 and P5 compared the team's collaboration to "the heart." P4 added that the employees' work operated as a family unit and demonstrated close bonding as they planned and performed operational activities, which resulted in job satisfaction, job loyalty, and increased profitability.

Small business ownership and management is an entrepreneurial industry, and P1 and P5 emphasized that workers are provided opportunities to express themselves professionally and the freedom to explore. P5 mentioned that if the business owners and managers tried to suppress employees, the business would experience huge financial setbacks that will adversely affect profitability. P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 created a workspace that fosters open communication and exploration directly and indirectly by

employees. Visionary leadership is pertinent since it can increase the bottom line and competitive advantage (Waddock et al., 2015). Leaders who adopt new approaches to leadership are explorers and creators and influential, stimulating, considerate, and motivating (Orabi, 2016). The findings of this study confirmed the findings in the literature on HRD and training. The results interrelate with several of the leadership styles such as: transformational, situational, and participative.

Theme 2: Innovation and Creativity

The second emergent theme was the need for business owners and managers to explore innovation and creativity during all business cycle stages. All the participants explained the innovative and creative support that helped and enabled their small businesses to achieve increased profitability over the years. After hand coding the participants' responses, I entered the data into NVivo to authenticate this theme. Table 3 represents Theme 2 and shows the coding analysis from the five sources for innovation and creativity.

Table 3

Theme 2: Innovation and Creativity

| Node/theme | Sources |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Innovation and creativity | 5 |

Innovation and creativity are a problem-solving approach used by most small business owners and managers in Antigua to achieve successful organizational results. P1, P4, and P5 revealed that they encouraged employees to explore and attempt tasks in

their unique way. P1 shared, “I am always of the opinion that there isn’t always one best way of doing something.... allow room for creativity and for people to do things the way they see it fit.” P1 and P5 further explained that some workers feel comfortable completing tasks in a monotonous approach rather than exploring new and intuitive ways. Because achieving sustained success and economic growth depends on a firm’s ability to innovate and create, business owners and managers should create environments that facilitate innovation and creativity (Jia et al., 2017). Innovation contributes to a business’ economic development and competitive advantage (Le & Lei, 2019). The literature review also denoted that innovation is an essential need for businesses to experience increased productivity, which will further affect bottom line results (Bello & Adeoye, 2018). As the conceptual framework emphasized, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation are three attributes of transformational leadership (Northouse, 2016). Business organizations cannot truly experience transformation if leaders lack the desired characteristics that would make them ingenious.

Some participants used innovative and creative strategies to indicate flexibility in contemporary business environments. For instance, P1 revealed that allowing for innovation and creativity should be incorporated in business owners’ and managers’ quest for profitability given the dynamics of the contemporary business environment. P1 further shared that provision for intuitiveness among employees opens new and exciting ways to accomplish set tasks and facilitates shared learning that increases motivation and productivity, boosting profitability. P1 also disclosed, “I get it all the time from an

employee who works with me, that it is easier to do it their way.... I remember a particular theory states that if persons are willing and able to get the work done. You should allow them the opportunity to work on their own more.” Thus, innovation is a driver for proactive intellectual stimulation among workers, boosting innovative performances and organizational profitability (Retkoceri & Kurteshi, 2018). P5 stressed the necessity of providing an innovative and creative environment within SBEs as the survival of small businesses highly depends on achieving uniqueness in product and service offerings in competitive industries.

P5 highlighted that successful innovation operating within the small business industry proves almost impossible and requires persistence and “fire in the belly.” Other than being highly selective during the recruiting process, P5 communicated the organizational vision and objectives to workers, which hinges on creating and disrupting the traditional approaches to problem-solving. P4 and P5 divulged that employees enjoyed the opportunity to innovate and create. P4 disclosed “workers thoroughly immerse themselves into projects that allow for innovation as well as display high levels of motivation and devotion to the success of such ventures.” At the same time, P5 said, “innovated ventures create a level of excitement and ownership among employees as they exhibit signs of joy before and during the completion of the activities.”

The literature on transformational leadership strategies revealed that innovation and creativity could be important for small business owners and managers because these types of activities typically contribute to the increase of bottom line performance. For example, some business studies have indicated a significant association between

innovation and organizational profitability (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Furthermore, fostering innovation among creative workers can evoke changes in organizational structures and processes that affect their capabilities, self-confidence, and abilities to impact overall organizational performance and profitability (Sattayaraksa & Boon-itt, 2017). In addition, innovation contributes to increased empowerment of workers leading to positive team culture, identification, and performances (Retkoceri & Kurteshi, 2018). Thus, existing literature indicated that innovation is critical for small business owners and managers to maintain and enhance profitability.

Business owners and managers used innovation as a strategy to boost employees' morale and motivation. P3 expressed, "employees were included in the decision-making processes as well as given an open-door communication channel to use in cases where they identified leadership approaches needed changing or enhancing." Open-door communication, according to P3, was not a window to display signs of equality with management but to display employees' responsibility and abilities to be great team players. The organization engaged in innovation through various public relations and marketing, fundraisers, and expansion projects. P3 indicated that a small proportion of the workers were reluctant to explore in the initial phase because they were afraid of failures and possibly terminated from their responsibilities. P2 expressed, "If employees are not aware of how it affects them, they will be reluctant. However, after explaining the procedures and after trial and error, there was general acceptance." P3 further averred, "allowing innovation and creativity unearth passive workers' skills that appeared

unnoticed when using customary approaches to complete tasks, but once workers were provided with autonomy, they paraded their talents comfortably.” Lastly, P3 shared,

Employees are allowed to approach tasks in their creative way. Such approaches allowed employees to be more productive, and the clientele increases because the staff help to market the business in their creative way without me doing it by myself.

According to the transformational leadership conceptual framework, one innate driver of innovation is idealized influence, equivalent to self-determination and self-esteem. Boosting employees’ self-esteem and self-determination impacts their intrinsic motivational level and psychological well-being. Innovative activities can reinforce the enhancement of employees’ self-esteem (Northouse, 2016). The findings of this study align with the existing literature on innovation and creativity. Innovation influences the proficiencies and behaviors of workers (Jia et al., 2017) and similarly empowers employees to explore and discover skills and talents to achieve self-actualization. However, as the transformational leadership conceptual framework implied, workers cannot achieve self-actualization unless provided with an environment where leaders are influential, considerate, motivating, and stimulating (Northouse, 2016). Furthermore, innovation influences organizational culture and employees’ confidence to innovate and positively disrupt the normal work processes (Bello & Adeoye, 2018). Therefore, innovation should be an adopted strategy by all small business owners and managers.

Enthusiastic stories regarding employees’ innovativeness corresponded with shifting business owners’ and managers’ leadership styles and strategies. Workers must

not only gain access to an environment in which they can operate but have the provision of the appropriate tools and opportunities to explore and create freely. Information from the business owners and managers unveil those opportunities for innovation and creativity were developed and exploited. At the same time, some employees capitalized on the prospects, and a few were not responsive in their actions. Innovative projects were proposed and supported by creative workers within the various organizations who further shared with customers and other stakeholders in the business environment.

All participants for this study stressed a strategy for innovation and creativity with employees. The review of the literature revealed that the support of innovation by stakeholders could boost a business's economic position and profitability in the long run (Le & Lei, 2019). In addition, innovation improves a business' brand and position in its focus industry (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Many employees initially refuted innovation because they were accustomed to working in dependent environments and old work administrative procedures. However, within several years, workers became comfortable and welcoming to new approaches and processes to freely discover and invent products and services. Exploring new methods and procedures for creating goods and services provided a competitive advantage and position in the focus market for participants.

Theme 3: Organizational Culture and Communication

As some participants provided their strategies for increasing business profitability, they revealed the importance of building an organizational culture with distinct communication. Successful small business owners and managers cultivate a sound organizational culture that motivates employees and enhances organizational

performance and effectiveness (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015; Idowu, 2017). After hand coding, I entered the data into the NVivo program to verify this theme, which revealed 5 data sources as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4

Theme 3: Organizational Culture and Communication

| Node/theme | Sources |
|--|---------|
| Organizational culture and communication | 5 |

Developing an organizational culture with clear communication is crucial for SBEs in Antigua. P3 and P5 reported that distinguishing and communicating the culture of the business from the onset to employees helped in recruiting best-fit employees who shared a common goal and vision as the organization. P5 stated,

“As I became more focused in the business and where I wanted it to go, I knew that I needed to hire more people that saw what I saw in the company.... in fact, I went through a few reiterations because when you hire someone, you don’t know if they will adopt your vision. You don’t know if they are with you for the long haul or if their personalities tie in how you want the company to look.”

P3, similarly, stated that some employees struggled initially with adapting to the culture of open communication with the business because of their previous work experiences. Because organizational culture influences employees’ learning behaviors, sharing, and other areas of knowledge (Marjani & Sadeghi, 2016), business owners and managers should craft a rich culture that echoes their vision and mission.

Organizational culture and communication are imperative for increased employee productivity and commitment. The review of literature highlighted that organizational culture is a prime, global strategy used by organizational leaders to align both psychological and structural elements, which affects the acuties and actions of workers (Latif & Ullah, 2016; Zeb et al., 2018). In alignment with the attributes of the transformational leadership that emphasizes the need for leaders to craft an organizational vision and a sense of mission (Khan et al., 2016), P3, P4, and P5 explained that communicating the culture within the organization facilitated an easy recruitment process and assisted in positioning workers. P5 explained that communicating the organizational culture is not to deter prospective applicants from the business but to prepare employees for the journey ahead since this equally affects the business' brand and investment. P3 and P4 revealed that building and communicating the organization's culture requires a dynamic leader with idealized influence who can implement positive change.

The idealized influence nature of P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 allowed them to display charisma and act as positive role models for employees to emulate, resulting in increased trust and respect within the organizations. The inspiring nature of leaders can evoke a sense of purpose among employees (Northouse, 2016) because workers trust and respect business owners and managers who they idealized. On the other hand, traditional approaches by leaders can negatively affect the relationship between management and employees (Almandeel, 2016), as shared by P1, P3, and P4. P3 and P4 identified this passive approach to leadership as the least effective for a contemporary work environment as it can hinder intuitive thinking among workers.

Transformational leaders demonstrate the individualized consideration attribute to develop an organizational culture within a small business setting. Individualized consideration enables leaders to acknowledge and encourage employees' contribution to the business (Orabi, 2016), leading to increased profitability. P1 revealed,

I am concerned about my employees and the growth of the business. I am continuously ensuring that the business is getting better and customers remain happy. I am also ensuring that employees are coming along with me on that journey of growth and finding new ways of doing things, better ways of doing things.

In this case, P3 and P4 shared that the organizations demonstrate the value of the employees through various methods such as social gatherings pre-COVID-19, the celebration of birthdays, start-up saving plans, sharing of emotional down moments, and incorporation of ideas and techniques in the decision-making and planning processes. In addition, P3 communicated, "We develop a family-oriented culture and approach to team building within the workplace via different activities (birthday celebrations and recognitions, staff appreciation, employee compensation packaging and assistance, fringe benefits, etc.)."

The individualized consideration attribute of P2 allowed employees to welcome and invite customers' ideas on best-fit stratagems that proved fruitful and resulted in profitable gains for the business. P5 also mentioned that this level of relationship between the business, employees, and customers add value to the product and service offering, which creates a win-win outcome for all parties. P5 was steadfast that building an

organizational culture without factoring in the main stakeholders would not apply in contemporary small business environments. Marjani and Sadeghi (2016) underscored the importance of an organization's culture to the sustainability and success of a business, including stakeholders' interrelatedness.

Business owners and managers established an organizational culture within the business to improve employees' performances. P4 stated that sole responsibility of leadership was assigned to the different employees monthly, which became the fundamental determinant for evaluation. Evaluations and task giving, according to P4, were not used as a means to scrutinize employees but for in-house discussions and sharing of ideas for improvement going forward as a team. The leadership delegation activities focused on measuring employees' ability to demonstrate responsibility, collaborate as a team, and be positive change agents. P4 declared that employees displayed delight in assuming leadership roles as it provided a learning experience for both the business owner and manager and the workers. The leadership delegation activities contributed to increased motivation and enthusiasm throughout the establishment.

According to the transformational leadership theory conceptual framework, communication as an innate driver of motivation is identical to individualized consideration. Satisfying the individualized consideration attribute empowers leaders to alternate between strategies that contribute to employee engagement to transform the workplace (Orabi, 2016) positively. The findings of this study are in line with the existing literature on organizational culture. Organizational culture integrates the qualities of a

business that guide workers in accomplishing operational activities and provide a general knowledge of the interrelatedness of tasks (Marjani & Sadeghi, 2016), which spurs workers' efficiency and productivity. According to the transformational leadership theory conceptual framework, employees cannot attain self-actualization unless business leaders apply individualized consideration (Northouse, 2016) when shaping organizational cultures. Good organizational culture results in commitment and increase performances (Latif & Ullah, 2016). Shaping an organizational culture should be paramount for SBEs.

Businesses that create and maintain positive and effective organizational culture and communication facilitate healthy and fulfilling work environments. Employees value workspaces that contribute to their holistic development and promote an inclusive culture where their experiences are valued. Information from the SBE leaders disclosed a reshaping and polishing to the organization's culture and communication resulted in enhancement of employees' engagement and morale. Autonomy and increased open communication to solicit feedback and ideas reinforced relationship building and trust. The literature review indicated safeguarding trust and building relationships among management and subordinates is more gainful and profitable (Cumberland et al., 2018). Fostering trust and relationship building are key elements for SBEs to experience economic returns.

Applications to Professional Practice

Transformational leadership is indispensable to small business survival. If business owners' and managers' chief pursuit is to increase profitability, leaders must consider the strategies that promote transformed efforts. Small business owners and

managers need contemporary research findings to implement the transformational strategies some small business owners and managers use to increase profitability. This research may be significant to the survivability of small businesses since the intent of this study was to explore transformational leadership strategies small business owners and managers use to increase profitability.

The findings of this study may prove advantageous to new small business owners and managers who have been futile in detecting best-fit strategies to achieve increased profitability in the organization. Small business owners and managers are prime initiators of economic growth, revolution and must employ effective strategies to survive in a competitive environment (Chammas & Hernandez, 2019). Small business owners and managers should regard the advice of Bass and Avolio (1994), who suggested that a transformational leadership approach is a fundamental strategy for business success. Incorporating transformational leadership strategies is a valuable pursuit for small business owners and managers to flourish in a competitive and transforming marketplace (Lin et al., 2016). The results from this study may be relevant to small business owners and managers across industries because the study included practical solutions to small business owners and managers regarding how they can increase business profitability. Small business owners and managers might integrate the recommendations from this study to develop the transformational strategies needed to increase profitability.

Small business owners and managers may employ the findings regarding the incorporating of HRD and training programs. Since employees devote a considerable amount of time at work (Cumberland et al., 2018), business owners and managers should

contribute to their cognitive and social well-being. Small business owners and managers recognized that the contemporary workplace is constantly changing. Their survival thrives on the need to develop and improve human capital for profitable results. Business owners and managers must not concentrate only on the outcome but similarly on the system of achieving the organization's objectives. Nieves and Quintana (2018) ascertained that lack of HRD and training often result in small business failures. Business owners and managers commit to the development of human capital, profit, business growth, and the environment to improve the profitability of their businesses (Antony, 2018). The findings of this study indicated that small business owners and managers used HRD and training as a transformational strategy to increase profitability within their businesses.

Small business owners and managers might apply the findings to develop an effective, innovative and creative strategy. Innovation and creativity drive sustainability and improve a firm's competitive edge and performance (Bello & Adeoye, 2018). Furthermore, business owners and managers fostering innovation create the most value and trust among employees; influencing and stimulating intuition when relating to human capital is a prerequisite component for improving a firm's profitability (Strukan et al., 2017). The findings of this study revealed that small business owners and managers identified the business value of incorporating an innovative strategy.

Small business owners and managers can apply the findings of this study with a focus on developing an effective organizational culture. Zeb et al. (2018) established that an organizational culture influence employees, organizational processes, and

organizational performances. All participants in this study strategically align their business and cultural practices to achieve their business objectives and increased profitability. Hao and Yazdanifard (2015) postulated that small business owners and managers must know how to align organizational culture with a contemporary business environment to experience increased profits. A subtheme revealed small business owners and managers develop an effective organizational culture, which encompasses various approaches, such as open communication, leadership role exchange, rewards and recognition of employees' efforts, and inclusion of employees' ideas into the decision-making.

The application of the findings of this study could result in profitable businesses. Profitable business owners and managers concentrate on strategies and business survival (Rose & Mamabolo, 2019). Bass and Avolio (1994) presented the transformational leadership theory to substantiate the need for several methods to facilitate business success collectively. Future small business owners and managers pursuing and maintaining a profitable business may use the transformational strategies highlighted in this study. Small business owners and managers can further use the findings of this study by applying these strategies if they are seeking to experience increased profitability. Finally, start-up small business owners and managers who employ the detailed, actionable strategies and recommendations from the findings of this study might improve their leadership style, skills, and knowledge necessary to increase profitability.

Implications for Social Change

The main implications for social change may be accomplished through small business owners and managers applying transformational strategies that improve small business profitability that enable the potential for employment. Positive social change may involve advancing a small business owner's and manager's knowledge of the potential benefits of transformational leadership within the business environment, effective planning, and a business owner's and manager's skills and knowledge that facilitate small business success. The study's findings could bring awareness to small business owners and managers of the potential benefits of skilled employees, personal development, customers, and community relations that promote small business success. With small businesses' increase in profitability, the employees and local communities thrive, the potential of charitable donations increased, and the lessening of unemployment rate. Profitable small business owners and managers also maintain the source of revenue of workers. Communities may benefit economically as a result of lower unemployment rates, enhanced standard of living for citizens, and local economic stability. The transformational leadership approach may also positively impact a country's socioeconomic development (Bambale et al., 2017) because profitable businesses contribute to a nation's gross domestic product (GDP). The implications and recommendations may contribute to the financial stability of SBEs.

Implications for positive social change may include the increasing awareness of transformational leadership strategies for small business owners and managers as well as members of the following organizations: Antigua and Barbuda Association of Small

Business Owners, the Prime Minister's Entrepreneurial Development Programme, and the Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority. These organizations offer free programs and training seminars for potential and existing small business owners and managers, which could improve the proficiency level for existing and potential small business owners and managers. In addition, the findings from the study may support business courses offered and conducted at the local community colleges that may prompt more students to become small business owners and managers.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the findings of this case study, small business owners and managers relied extensively on HRD and training in the achievement of increased profitability. However, not all the business owners and managers had money to cover total expenses for workers' development and training sessions exclusive of those alternate offerings by government agencies. I offer business owners and managers recommendations to adopt an in-house policy that incorporates developmental and training activities for employees to become empowered. Benton-Short and Cseh (2015) found that leaders who invested in workforce development and training also educated employees and boosted employees' efficiency. Such investments by organization leaders can facilitate the innovation of processes, products, and technology (Lyons, 2016). The more business owners and managers facilitate development and training experiences for workers, the more responsive they become to the contemporary business environment. Furthermore, HRD and training act as response units that improve work systems, economic growth, and

business profitability (Daley, 2017; Kuchinke, 2015; Lee & Suh, 2016; Nieves & Quintana, 2018).

If business owners and managers wish to keep increased profitability high on their agenda, they must develop and implement an organizational culture and communication strategy specific to the needs of their employees within the organization. All participants expressed the need for constant communication and culture building to increase profitability within their business. Simple orientations and an employee handbook can no longer be sufficient to stimulate and motivate employees to perform beyond their capabilities. Traditional leaders who only recognize workers based on precise systems of contracts and rewards will stifle intuitive thinking and create trivial submissive employees (Borgmann et al., 2016). Instead, transformational business owners and managers can facilitate a workplace open to employees' input into the decision-making and problem-solving processes to prompt dialoguing among management and subordinates.

Some business owners and managers make the common mistake of accommodating prominent personalities within the workplace. However, business owners and managers should allow passive and conspicuous employees to communicate their ideas and solutions to develop and propel the organization. I recommend that small business owners and managers recognize the value of compelling organizational culture and communication. In alignment with the transformational leadership theory, the findings disclosed that the participants used a robust organizational culture in collaboration with communication to accentuate business profitability.

Small business owners and managers should implement an innovation and creativity strategy to remain profitable in the business arena. The findings for this study indicated that small business increased profitability is not dependent on rigid traditional approaches. I recommend that small business owners and managers seek to provide opportunities for employees to develop their innovative and creative capacity, which allows for exploration and intuitive approaches to problem-solving. Leaders should encourage workers who attempt new procedures and create spontaneous ways of attempting organizational problems (Northouse, 2016). Innovation is not only significant to employees' performance, but it is also crucial to their emotional and psychological development. Based on the findings, some employees did not capitalize on the leaders' innovative opportunities. Leaders should inspire and motivate challenging workers by engaging, encouraging, and providing independence to achieve tasks and objectives (Khan et al., 2016).

Business organizations could share the findings of this study at symposiums aimed at developing and employing the best strategies for increased profitability in small businesses. Business management and entrepreneur students at colleges and universities may also value the findings as they research contemporary business problems. As a business facilitator and manager, I can discuss the results during training seminars with business owners and managers, exploring new approaches to increase profitability. The Small Business Association of Antigua and Barbuda may also appreciate the findings in this study. The data in this research can also be publicized through business and scholarly

journals, ProQuest, and a book to allow for easy access by multitudes of small business owners and managers interested in increasing business profitability.

Recommendations for Further Research

Because of the substantial contributions of small businesses to the Antiguan economy, the study's findings warrant further exploration of transformational leadership strategies used by small business owners and managers to increase profitability. Since small businesses play an important role in society, accounting for most new ventures (Ross, 2018) further research is recommended. Small businesses are significant to the Antigua & Barbuda economy (Browne, 2020). One limitation of this study is the use of small business owners and managers in Antigua. I relied on the knowledge and explanations of five small business owners and managers in Antigua for the credibility of the interview data. The fundamental limitations of this study are the geographic focus and the group size. Uri (2015) proposed that limitations permit researchers to recognize and suggest future research topics. Recommendations for future research include: (a) increasing the sample size, (b) applying a different conceptual framework, (c) enlarging the geographical area, or (d) applying a different methodology. The transferability of this study's findings may escalate with an extension of geographical area and sample size.

With a substantial group of small business owners and managers, researchers may obtain additional transformational leadership strategies that boost small business profitability. Extending the geographical location beyond Antigua may modify the research findings and themes, resulting in novel data. Expanding the sample size may strengthen the transferability of the research findings. Further research exploring small

business profitability could use a different framework, such as Schumpeter's (1934) theory of economic development, to understand how small businesses can increase profitability. Finally, researchers may also conduct quantitative or mixed-method methodologies to investigate transformational leadership strategies small business owners and managers use to increase profitability.

Reflections

My experience at Walden University as a doctoral student has allowed me to obtain extensive knowledge on the transformational leadership strategies small business owners and managers use to increase profitability. The prime factor that motivated me for this study was my interest to learn and understand why most small business owners and managers appear to be thriving but eventually end up facing financial down-turns within a few years after opening. My family members have owned several small businesses that experienced contrasting experiencing relevant to profitability increase. However, I also managed a small business that started experiencing declining profitability within a few years following its start-up.

In reflecting on the circumstantial, predetermined notions, preconceptions, challenges, and benefits of this doctoral pursuit, my primary thoughts before conducting the research were small business owners and managers experience a decrease in profits due to financial constraints, insufficient customers, or inappropriate product/service offerings. Conducting this study extended my knowledge and understanding of the transformational leadership strategies used by small business owners and managers to increase profitability in their respective industries. I encountered the challenges of not

knowing what to expect from participants and uncovering sources aligned with my study. Exploring sources appropriate to complete this study was also a significant challenge. Nevertheless, through research, I discovered that small business owners and managers experience profitability decreases due to the lack of effective leadership strategies such as HRD and training, innovation and creativity, and organizational culture and communication.

Despite the challenges and time-consuming experiences, the doctoral study process provided great gratification. The process was filled with emotions, difficulties, questionable moments of my desire to continue, engaging yet stimulating. I appreciate the continuous encouragement of my partner, my children, my parents, and my students. However, I discovered the art of patience and the value of this attribute during the process. I enjoyed building relationships with my colleagues, mentors, professors, and especially advancing to becoming a scholarly writer.

The study took longer than I anticipated. The primary reason for this was initially lack of response from invited participants in the initial stage. The Walden review procedure was exhaustive, and the triangulation of information received was comprehensive. Nevertheless, over time, I improved my proficiency in summarizing concepts and detect emerging themes to provide a thorough report. My engagement in these processes yielded a greater appreciation for the journey scholars undertake when conducting research. I learned to maximize my time and probe more in-depth into topics that I may not understand and topics of interest. I also learned that change is unavoidable and to develop grit, which is to display tenacity. Despite the various challenges

encountered, the study's findings may prove valuable for small business owners and managers, business experts, and future researchers.

I had the gratifying experience of interviewing five small business owners and managers in Antigua and developing a relationship with successful business owners and managers. The participants in this study supplied the essential information needed to answer the research question. The shared information from participants broadened my knowledge of the subject. I now understand what it takes for small business owners and managers to increase profitability. After building relationships with the participants, they were delighted to assist me in my journey. I am eternally appreciative of their contribution to this study. Albeit challenging, I am inspired to expand and grow my business profitability after graduation because of completing this study.

Conclusion

The successful implementation of business profitability strategies requires strategic business owners and managers who recognize the importance of transformational leadership. While many business owners and managers perceive their approaches as archetypes, the reality remains that the business environment does not operate in a perfect sphere. Transformational leadership strategies are the main component that initiates increase profitability. Despite the nature of the business, transformational leadership prompts effective business owners and managers to create innovative environments that stimulate and correspond to workers' diverse needs and abilities. An accommodating climate will make it possible to align employees' skills with organizational vision and mission.

Transformational leaders strive to incorporate employees in the operational activities of the business because they are knowledgeable of the existing link between engaged and motivated team members and the profitability rate of the business. Business owners and managers who are sincerely interested in exploring a transformational approach to their organizations must adopt simple policies and understand that organizational culture and communication skills are not just a hypothetical suggestion. A transformational approach is also paramount to the business bottom line. The responsibility is on the business owners and managers to explore successful strategies with their employees and provide them with the necessary resources to enhance their skillsets for further personal development. Business owners and managers who refuse to act but constantly echo that their employees are integral to business profitability increase must be mindful that words are fruitless without actions.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Prior to commencing the interview, I will ascertain that I have received a signed consent to participate form from the participant. I will adhere to the following procedures during each interview.

1. Thank the participant for volunteering and reserving time for this study.
2. Remind the participant of the purpose and the significance of the study.
3. Notify the participant that their identity and responses will remain confidential.
4. Remind and inform the participant that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.
5. Notify the participant that the interview will be audio-recorded.
6. Remind and inform the participant that I will not propose any incentives for partaking in this study.
7. Explain to the participant the interview process and the projected extent of the interview.
8. Inform the participant that I will schedule a follow-up interview with them to validate my interpretation of their responses to the interview questions.
9. I will use the following interview questions to uncover profitable transformational leadership strategies that may move leaders beyond reactive methods. I will ask the questions in the following order and ask probing questions to collect in-depth information.
 - a. What transformational leadership strategies did you use in your business to increase profitability?

- b. What results were achieved by implementing transformational leadership strategies?
- c. How did your employees respond to your various transformational leadership strategies?
- d. What fundamental difficulties did your business encounter as you implemented transformational leadership strategies?
- e. How did you address the fundamental challenges to implementing a transformational leadership approach?
- f. How does the role(s) of the manager differ from the role of the business owner?
- g. What other factors, if any, contributed to the increase in profitability?
- h. What additional information would you like to add related to transformational leadership strategies, and the effect on the profitability of your business?

10. Finally, I will conclude the interview by thanking the participant for his or her valuable insights and cooperation.