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Leadership Strategies Executives Use to Sustain Small Businesses Beyond 5 Years

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Gai Chol Paul

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Leadership Strategies Executives Use to Sustain Small Businesses Beyond 5 Years

by

Gai Chol Paul

MBA, Cavendish University Uganda, 2017

BSc, Dr John Garang Memorial University, 2013

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2022

Abstract

Although small businesses contribute to the economic growth of many African nations, the rate of small business failure in Africa is high. Small business leaders who lack effective leadership strategies risk business failure through loss of profit. Grounded in transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies leaders of small internet service providers used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The participants were five small internet service provider leaders in Juba, South Sudan, who sustained their companies beyond 5 years. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and a review of company documents available on the companies' websites. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Three themes emerged: teamwork, staff motivation, and effective communication. Key recommendations include providing training programs to teach employees and managers how to use teamwork and communication. The implication for positive social change includes the potential for small business owners to improve the economic wellbeing of employees and their families and increased tax revenue for the South Sudan government to provide essential services to the people.

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Dedication

I dedicated this doctorate to my dear wife Abiar Ajith Lual. Thank you for allowing me to use the family resources to pursue this doctorate. To my sons, Kurwal, Gai, Abe, and Lual, I thank you for your patients and endurance for the time I pursued this doctorate. I know I sometimes have disappointed you by not allowing you to play around me during the study of this doctorate

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I am also thankful to all the five small internet service providers leaders who voluntarily accepted and participated in this doctoral study. I will not forget your valuable contribution of your experiences, strategies, and capabilities that you showed during the interviewing process.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the economies of developed and developing countries (Kato & Charoenrat, 2018). Small businesses contribute to the employment, wealth creation, and economic development for all emerging economies (Hryhorash et al., 2018; Ngota et al., 2019; Rudyk, 2020). Though small businesses contribute to the economic growth of many African nations, the rate of small businesses failure in Africa is high (Abisuga-Oyekunle et al., 2020). Though there are many factors contributing to the failure of small businesses, leadership strategies determine the sustainability of small businesses (Engelbrecht & Samuel, 2019; Knezović & Drkić, 2020; Lee & Ding, 2020; Mañas-Rodríguez et al., 2020).

Background of the Problem

In developed countries, small businesses contribute up to 60% of the GDP, provide up to 70% of employments, and act as an engine for entrepreneurship and innovation development (Hryhorash et al., 2018). However, 50% to 90% of small businesses fail because of the influence of their micro and macroeconomic environments (Martinez et al., 2019). In African nations, business failure is common because the environment is prone to turbulences that impede successes of the small start-up businesses (Boso et al., 2019; Mendy & Hack-Polay, 2018). The scope of business failure ranged from bankruptcy to discontinuance of ownership. Bankruptcy shows poor economic performance and discontinuance shows cessation to operate and identify losses (Sheng & Lan, 2019). Though some small business owners continue operation while experiencing financial difficulties, the resultant reward is always a total financial loss and

legal implications because of a greater destructive effect on resources allocation and utilizations (Sheng & Lan, 2019). Sheng and Lan (2019) asserted that at an individual perspective, business failure involves psychological issues such as disappointments, stresses, and losses of visions.

Business failure is caused by internal and external factors. The internal factors are within the capacity of business system and business management while external factors are environmental factors outside the domain of control of business system and management (Bertrand & Parnaudeau, 2019; Martinez et al., 2019). External factors for firm operating environment such as competitors, suppliers, regulators, customers, economic situation, and media have adverse impacts on the firm if not properly mitigated and impact firm ability to withstand failure (Martinez et al., 2019). Though decisions under the control of the leader influence the internal causes and events that are outside the leader's control influences the external causes, the complex mixture of these factors greatly contribute to the failure of the business (Atsan, 2016; Bertrand & Parnaudeau, 2019; Martinez et al., 2019). Bertrand and Parnaudeau (2019) asserted that business fail because of those factors that cause the drop in sales volume and reduce the ability of a firm to meet its financial obligations. According to resource-based view theory and the upper-echelon theory, the fundamental cause of business failure lies on the top leadership decision, plan, and actions (Sheng & Lan, 2019). According to upper-echelon theory business failure is the result of the top management poor performance, managerial deficiencies, and lack of resources (Sheng & Lan, 2019). Because internal factors greatly affect the small businesses and external factors such as economic downturn, government

policies, competition, and demand affect larger firms, business leaders develop strategies that protect their firms from internal causes (Atsan, 2016; Martinez et al., 2019).

Although many small businesses have been failing in South Sudan, some small businesses have been successful. The availability of successful small businesses in South Sudan encouraged me to conduct a study on the leadership strategies used by small business leaders to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Problem Statement

Although small businesses are considered essential to job creation and poverty reduction in African nations, the rate of small business failure in African nations is high (Abisuga-Oyekunle et al., 2020). In South Sudan, micro and small businesses, as a percentage of total businesses, have declined from 1.6% in 2010 to 1.0% in 2019 (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). The general business problem is that some small business leaders in developing nations are unable to sustain their businesses. The specific business problem is that some leaders of small internet service providers lack leadership strategies to sustain their companies beyond 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies leaders of small internet service providers used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The target population was five leaders of small internet service providers operating in South Sudan who have successfully developed and implemented leadership strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The implications for positive social change include: (a) the potential to facilitate the prosperity of owners of small internet

service providers, (b) improve the economy of the South Sudan, (c) improve the economic wellbeing of the employees of the small businesses and their families, and (d) generate additional tax revenue to enable the South Sudan government to provide services beneficial to the community.

Nature of the Study

Scholars use qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods for their studies (Borrego et al., 2009). Researchers use the qualitative methodology to ask open-ended questions to discover what is happening or has happened (Borrego et al., 2009). Researchers use the qualitative method to interpret phenomenon in a natural setting and explore the complexities of processes and behavior from the experiences of the participants (Atmowardoyo, 2018; Reinecke et al., 2016). The qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study because the purpose of the study was to explore the leadership strategies small internet service providers leaders used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Researchers use the quantitative methodology to measure numerical data from chosen variables and testing hypotheses to examine theories about variables' characteristics or relationships (Atmowardoyo, 2018). I did not test any hypothesis in this study; the quantitative methodology was not appropriate for this study. Researchers use mixed methodology when their focus is on examining and exploring quantitative and qualitative data (Atmowardoyo, 2018). The mixed method was not applicable because addressing my study's purpose did not require the quantitative method.

Researchers use case studies, phenomenology, and ethnography in qualitative business studies (Atmowardoyo, 2018). Researchers use the case study design to clearly understand the event, activity, from exploring individuals or groups experiences (Atmowardoyo, 2018). Multiple case study design is considered more compelling and robust because multiple types and sources data are collected (Yin, 2018). Using a multiple case study design enabled data collection from multiple sources increasing the likelihood of obtaining a diverse selection of strategies for sustaining businesses beyond 5 years. Researchers use the phenomenological design to obtain data to explore the personal meanings of participants' lived experiences (Groenewald, 2018). The phenomenological design was not appropriate because I sought to explore small internet service provider sustainability research beyond the lived personal experiences of the participants. The ethnographical design is used to study the culture of a particular group of people (Giaccardi et al., 2016). Because I did not study the culture of any group, the ethnographical design was not applicable.

Research Question

What leadership strategies do leaders of small internet service providers use to sustain their companies beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

1. What leadership strategies have you used to sustain your business?
2. What strategies did you find worked best for sustaining your business beyond 5 years?
3. How did you communicate your sustainability strategies to employees?

4. What major obstacles, if any, have you overcome to implement the strategies to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
5. How did you overcome the major obstacles?
6. What challenges do you face that were unique to your organization's sustainability?
7. What additional information would you like to share regarding strategies you have used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was transformational leadership theory. Burns introduced transformational leadership theory in 1978 and explained how some leaders were able to inspire, motivate, and induce a vision-driven change in their followers (Burns, 1978; Warrick, 2017). Burns and Bass in 1985 postulated that transformational leaders encourage followers to achieve the desired goals by setting a shared vision, mission, and the company set of ideals (Barbînta et al., 2017). The key constructs in transformational leadership theory include: (a) idealized attributes, (b) idealized behaviors, (c) intellectual stimulation, (d) inspirational motivation, and (e) individualized consideration (Freihat, 2020; Hsu & Chang, 2021; Poghosyan & Bernhardt, 2018). Burns contrasted transformational leaders with transactional leaders who do not seek change within the organization, preferring to operate within the existing organizational culture and structure (Burns, 1978). Burns posited the transformational and transactional leadership styles to be mutually exclusive.

I selected the transformational leadership theory (TLT) as the conceptual framework for this study because transformational leaders motivate some followers to develop new promising innovative products or services that can assist a company in gaining and sustaining a competitive advantage (Azim et al., 2019; Knezović & Drkić, 2020; Zuraik & Kelly, 2019). Additionally, transformational leaders serve as mentors and coaches by attending to the individual needs of the follower, build a strong team for the organization, encourage creativity and innovation, and involves followers in the problem-solving process (Knezović & Drkić, 2020; Zuraik & Kelly, 2019). Finally, transformational leaders encourage their followers to generate new ideas, performance beyond expectations, think independently, and take on more responsibilities (Stock et al., 2017). For this study, TLT assist in identifying and understanding leadership strategies the participants developed and implemented to sustain their small internet service businesses beyond 5 years.

Operational Definitions

The terms defined in this section are relevant to small business sustainability research. The definitions are from peer-reviewed sources or government websites.

Business failure: Business failure is a condition in which business organization fail to meet financial and operational obligation (Bertrand & Parnaudeau, 2019).

Employee motivation: Employee motivation is a condition which encourage employee to engage and increase perceptions of the importance of specific organizational goals (Dartey-Baah & Addo, 2019).

Organizational commitment: Organizational commitment is a situation in which followers involve themselves into the cause of the organization (Rita et al., 2018).

Organizational sustainability: Organizational sustainability is an economic improvement that satisfies organizational current financial and operational objectives and support future desirable long-term conditions without negatively affecting social and environmental needs of its operating environment (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018; Zhang & Chabay, 2020).

Small business: The definition of small business depends on the country business categorization. Small business means registered business entity that employ 3-5 people (NBS, 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations I made in planning this doctoral study are described below.

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts researcher accepts as true, but lack scientific proof and cannot be controlled by researcher (Ellis & Levy, 2009; Simon, 2011). I based this qualitative multiple case study on the following assumptions: (a) that leaders of small internet service providers openly and honestly provided information about their lived experiences related to small business sustainability, (b) qualitative methodology was a proper methodology to explore strategies small internet service providers leaders use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years, and (c) the multiple case study was an

appropriate design to explore strategies small internet service providers leaders use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses or constraints in the research that are beyond control of researcher, but can affect research outcomes (Simon, 2011; Simon & Goes, 2013; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The constraints of this qualitative multiple case study were (a) the geographical choice of Juba, South Sudan which might limit the generalizability of findings; (b) the focus on small internet service providers leaders who have maintained their business operations for more than 5 years might limit the transferability of findings to other small business sectors; and (c) the sample size of five leaders of small internet service providers may not be representative of the study population.

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries that a researcher sets to limit the scope and define the boundaries of the research (Simon, 2011; Simon & Goes, 2013; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The delimitations that guided this qualitative multiple case study were (a) sample location, (b) sample population, and (c) sample size. The sample size was five, small internet service provider leaders who sustained their businesses beyond 5 years. The location of the study was Juba, South Sudan, which is a diverse multicultural community. The use of Juba as the geographic location of the study might have limited the usefulness of the data in other areas. The sample population consist of small internet service providers leaders who have sustained their companies beyond 5 years.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The outcome of this study could offer three contributions to business sustainability. First, the results of this study may assist business leaders in developing appropriate strategies and applying them to improve their efficiently key business process to ensure businesses can gain competitive advantage and be sustained beyond 5 years. Second, the results of this study may also contribute to the literature on business practice and help business leaders address the gaps in strategies for enabling the leaders to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Third, this study's findings may provide proven strategies for small internet service providers to improve their key business processes for improving business' profitability.

Implications for Social Change

Since becoming a nation, South Sudan has experienced widespread poverty, with the ongoing military conflict disrupting the fragile economy (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2021). Long-term challenges in South Sudan include alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment (CIA, 2021). The implications for positive social change include: (a) the potential to facilitate the prosperity of owners of small internet service providers, (b) improve the economy of the South Sudan, (c) improve the economic wellbeing of the employees of the small businesses and their families, and (d) generate additional tax revenue to enable the South Sudan government to provide services beneficial to the community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that small internet service providers leaders used to sustain their companies beyond 5 years. The research question for the study is as follows:

What leadership strategies do small internet service providers leaders use to sustain their companies beyond 5 years?

The aim of this literature review was to analyze, synthesize, summarize, compare, and contrast the various sources of information that address the study topic. Researchers use literature reviews to create knowledge by mapping, analyzing, and synthesizing existing body of research in a topic domain (Patriotta, 2020). Researchers use literature review to identify knowledge gaps, demonstrate an understanding of the subject under study, and enable them to situate their research topics into existing work (Munn et al., 2018).

In the literature review section of the study, I covered the subject areas related to the strategies for sustaining small business at the leadership level including how leadership influence innovation, employees' performances, small businesses successes, and small businesses failures. Most of the materials for this study were obtained from the Research4Life and Walden University Online Library. Out of the 221 references that I cited in this study, 190 (86%) were peer-reviewed journal articles between 2018 and 2021. I used EBSCOhost, ScienceDirect, Business Search Complete, SAGE, Google Scholar, Research4Life, and Academic Search Complete as the database sources. The search key words I used were *leadership*, *leadership in small business*, *leadership in business*, *transformational leadership*, *transformational leadership in small business*,

leadership strategies within small business, leader character and business performance, leadership and business sustainability, small business, small business sustainability, barriers to small businesses, small business leaders, small business success, small business failure, small business strategy, economic growth and small business, roles of small business in economic development, causes of small business failure, and small business competitive advantage. The organization of the literature review is in the following format: (a) transformational leadership theory, (b) definition and importance of small business, (c) small business failure, (d) small business success, and (e) small business sustainability, (f) small internet service providers

Transformational Leadership Theory

Burns (1978) introduced transformational leadership theory and explained the relationship between power, individual purpose, and the leader/follower interaction (Nielsen et al., 2019). Burns differentiated leadership into transformational and transactional types based on the impacts of leadership on followers (Nielsen et al., 2019). Burns explained that unlike transactional leadership which is characterized by use of contingent rewards and sanctions that are linked to employee behaviors, efforts, or results, transformational leadership induce a vision-driven change in followers by improving communication and understanding of business goals and needs (Puni et al., 2021). Bass (1985) extended the work of Burns and added that transformational leadership (TL) takes place in an organization when the followers become aware and motivated by the overall organizational goals, rather than self-interest (Supermane, 2019). Bass and Avolio (1998) extended the previous work of Burns by including four

dimensions of transformational leadership: (a) idealized influence, (b) individualized consideration, (c) inspirational motivation, and (d) intellectual stimulation (Freihat, 2020; Hsu & Chang, 2021; Poghosyan & Bernhardt, 2018). Supermane (2019) asserted that TL transform followers when leaders provide guidance and assistance through coaching, mentoring, and information sharing.

A transformational leader inspires and leads followers toward achieving the organizational goals, creating a safe team climate, and sharing knowledge with the team members to improve team performance (Anselmann & Mulder, 2020). TL inspires and empowers employees to gain the ability to achieve set goals of the organization and influence team performance (Anselmann & Mulder, 2020). Transformational leaders build strong teams for the organizations and encourage creativity, innovation, and involvement of the followers in the problem-solving process (Mahmood et al., 2019). TL promotes followers' job performance, creativity and innovativeness, decisiveness, teamwork, coaching, and mentoring for the followers (Jia et al., 2018). Jia et al. stated that transformational leaders influence behaviors of the followers since they are at the central position of the organization. TL creates an environment where the leader can openly communicate vision, mission, goals, and the strategies of the organization to the followers such that they can freely participate in decision making and daily operational activities of the organization (Minai et al., 2020). According to Minai et al. (2020), when followers are motivated and inspired, they take the ownership of their work, act innovatively, perform beyond expectation, think independently, and willingly take on more responsibilities.

Comparison of TL With Transactional Leadership

The choice of leadership style use by business leaders between TL and transactional leadership influence the future of the organization in term of profitability and growth. Though TL and transactional leadership influence organizational sustainability performance, many researchers consider TL superior to transactional leadership because TL is a leadership style in which followers get trust and respect from their leaders and motivate them to achieve the goal of the organization, whereas transactional leadership is a traditional leadership style describes by rewards and punishments (Boamah & Tremblay, 2019). Bass (1985) defined transactional leadership as a leadership style in which the leader expect followers to perform services in exchange for reward (as cited by Boamah & Tremblay, 2019). Dartey-Baah and Addo (2019) stated that TL embodies the ideal leadership style that organization and subordinates expect of the leaders. Bass stated that transformational leaders motivate followers through creating perceptions of the importance of specific organizational goals (as cited by Dartey-Baah & Addo, 2019). Dartey-Baah and Addo asserted that transactional leadership relies on exchange between leaders and followers, where leaders provide punishments and rewards in exchange to followers' performance. Jensen et al. (2019) noted that TL focuses on the long-term development of followers and organizational sustainable performance, whereas transactional leadership focuses on short-term achievement of the tasks that leader assigned to followers with attachment of incentives and punishments.

Researchers have been conducting research to ascertain leadership style that make leaders effective in their work. Leaders are effective when they simultaneously explore

and exploit the creativity and innovative capacity of their followers for the benefits of their firms (Sperber & Linder, 2018). TL is a set of adaptive leadership behavior more effective than transactional leadership because inspirational motivation provide meaning, challenge the work of team members, and inculcate organizational future vision (Harb et al., 2020; Sperber & Linder, 2018). Through idealized influence, leaders serve as role models and base their relationship with their followers on personal understanding, contrarily to rewards or punishments (Palalic & Mhamed, 2020; Sperber & Linder, 2018). Transformational leaders show respect for followers, build trust and confidence for followers to go through organizational mission, arose influence over followers, and empower followers to reach their high level of potential rather than offer them with rewards and threat of punishing actions (Palalic & Mhamed, 2020; Sperber & Linder, 2018). Sperber and Linder (2018) revealed that transformational leaders see their followers as having exceptional potential, capabilities, and perseverance.

Though transactional and TL positively impact firm performance, Feranita et al. (2020) found TL is more important for sustaining organizations than transactional leadership because TL influence creativity and innovation. The impact of leadership style on follower behavior is seen in how leadership style influence creativity and innovation (Sperber & Linder, 2018). Sperber and Linder (2018) stated that transformational leaders use intellectual stimulation to reframe problems and approach old situations in new ways, and through individualized consideration, leaders broaden the interests of subordinates and elevate them resulting to increase intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Bass (2008) asserted that transactional leader goal is the continuation of present system through

motivation of followers by offering them rewards or threatening them with punishing actions (as cited by Sperber & Linder, 2018). TL helps strengthen team creativity and innovativeness because idealized influence and individualized consideration has significantly positive correlation with innovation (Sperber & Linder, 2018). Sperber and Linder found that TL encourage followers to think beyond existing system than transactional leadership.

With TL, employees are highly motivated to do more than what is expected because they feel trust, loyalty, warm approval, and respect by the leaders (Palalic & Mhamed, 2020). Palalic and Mhamed (2020) suggested transformational leader trust deeply that the job will be done based on the commitment rather than reward. Through individualized consideration, transformational leaders guide their followers in every activity they do, act as coaches and mentors, and dedicate their time to develop the potential of their followers to attain meaningful objectives (Bednall et al., 2018; Boukamcha, 2019; Ma et al., 2020; Palalic & Mhamed, 2020). Followers attain meaningful objectives through commitment rather than reward and punishment (Rita et al., 2018). Committed followers work hard, they rarely miss any working hour, always satisfy with their jobs, they are highly productive, and they do not easily intend to exit (Al-Yami et al., 2018; Mañas-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Palalic & Mhamed, 2020). Rita et al. (2018) stated that organizational commitment relates to subordinate's involvement into the cause of organizational goal. Palalic and Mhamed asserted that transformational leaders encourage their followers to be committed and prioritize the growth and development of their subordinates. Hassi (2019) found that individualized consideration

of TL impact affective commitment and idealized influence, intellectual stimulation (TL), contingent reward, and management-by-exception do not yield significant results.

According to Keskes et al. (2018), TL is more effective than transactional leadership for enhancing followers' commitment and that committed followers tend to remain in the organization and have emotional attachment to the organizational goal.

Though Puni et al. (2021) found that transactional leadership style improve employee commitment, many researchers have downplayed the strength of the transactional leadership style on employee commitment because contingent reward cannot alone motivate the long-term objective of the firm. Keskes et al. (2018) found that intellectual stimulation led to an increase affective commitment. The Keskes et al. finding agrees with Jain and Duggal (2018) statement that TL provide job autonomy to followers because transformational leaders create conducive environment for creativity and innovation. Jain and Duggal found that job autonomy mediate TL and organizational commitment and organizational commitment, along the leadership plays a significant factor in determining organizational long-term success. One of the tasks of transformational leaders is to build employees' commitment to stick to the mission and objectives of the organization where they work (Islam et al., 2018; Palalic & Mhamed, 2020; Peng et al., 2020). TL influences organizational commitment, impact employees commitment, and positively affects workplace attitude and behaviors of employees (Yadav & Yadav, 2018). Although transactional leadership positively related to work motivation, it is insignificantly correlated with work commitment (Tziner & Shkoler, 2018).

TL and Innovation

Innovation is the business survival engine for withstanding competition and disruptive technologies (Jiang & Chen, 2018; Juhro & Aulia, 2019). Companies that adopt innovative behavior invest resources on creativity, design, prototyping, and implementation (Shah et al., 2020; Zappalà & Toscano, 2019). Many researchers agreed that creativity is a condition for innovation (Gomes et al., 2021; Klaic et al., 2020; Lei et al., 2020; Løvaas et al., 2020). Many factors that help drive creativity and innovation in the organization include leadership style adopted by firm top leaders (Gui et al., 2021; Lei et al., 2020, 2021). Leaders that cultivate creativity and innovation are collaborative, action oriented, confidence, emotional stable, risk tolerance, and open to new ideas (Lei et al., 2020; Rawashdeh et al., 2021). TL creates conducive environment for creativity and innovation (Islam et al., 2018; Jain & Duggal, 2018). Al-edenat (2018) stated that business leaders who practice TL enhances job satisfaction of their employees and job satisfaction empower employees to be innovative to sustain their companies.

Azim et al. (2019) found that TL change the mindset of subordinates to be creative and fully engage themselves on activities that benefit other organizational stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, community, government agencies, and employees themselves. Small and medium enterprises leaders should be supportive enough of their subordinates to create conducive environment that can inspire subordinates to be creative and innovative. Business leaders should empower subordinates to be creative and innovative without fear of being reprimand and fire.

Business leaders should invest resources that can help subordinates gain confidence and self-efficacy.

Mahmood et al. (2019) stated that managers should allow employees to have autonomy in workplace, provide opportunities for growth, motivate them, and create synergies for individuals, unit, and entire organization. Zuraik and Kelly (2019) added that business leaders should focus their attention to factors that create and maintain climate supportive of innovation if they want to increase exploration. Business leaders and owners should develop transformational leaders that are able to lead innovation and sustain business performances. TL plays a significant role in leading, driving, and executing innovation strategies. Transformational leaders inspire followers to be creative and innovative to sustain their businesses. CEOs who adopt a transformational leadership can positively boost innovation performance. TL and supportive climate foster innovation. Phillips et al. (2020) asserted that TL influence followers by broadening and elevating followers' goals and provide them with confidence to perform beyond the expectations. TL stimulate and inspire followers to act in innovative way, increase firm proactiveness, encourage followers to collectively adopt a more proactive approach in work, and influences followers to be more tolerant of potential risks, thereby shaping positive perception toward work related risks.

TL Impact on Organizational Trust

Research have confirmed that leadership style determines the decision of workers to continue or leave the company. Mañas-Rodríguez et al. (2020) found that TL influence affective commitment and effectiveness of employees and it is link to loyalty and

intention to stay in the company. Mañas-Rodríguez et al. advised that large companies wishing to reduce turnover rate should implement TL styles in their companies because transformational leaders motivate, support, inspire, and cultivate trust to employees through information sharing and feedback. Researchers have found that TL has strong relationship with trust because transformational leaders involves subordinates in decision-making process which in turn encourage subordinates to reciprocate faith shown by their leaders by building trust with their works (Engelbrecht & Samuel, 2019; Knezović & Drkić, 2020; Lee et al., 2018). Knezović and Drkić (2020) found that transformational leaders articulate visions, intellectually stimulate employees, inspire innovation, build trust of organizational leadership, and improve employees' attitudes. Palalic and Mhamed (2020) asserted that transformational leader shows respect for others, build trust and confidence for followers to go through the organizational mission, arose influence over followers, and convince followers through reaching their high level of potential.

Definition and Importance of Small Business

The definition of small business differs by country business categorization types because it is determined by number of employees, type of economic activity, net revenue, and sales incomes (Hryhorash et al., 2018). NBS defined small businesses as firms with 3-5 employees (NBS, 2020). US Census Bureau (CB) defined small businesses as firms which employ 100-1,500 employees and with annual revenue ranging from \$1 million to over \$40 million (Hait, 2021). Gilboa et al. (2019) defined small businesses as private-owned enterprises that have small market share and local customer based. European

Union defined small business as an entity with 250 employees and with annual sales of more than €50 million (Sow et al., 2018). In Malaysia, small businesses are businesses employing people with numbers between 5 to 75 (Sow et al., 2018).

Small businesses create jobs for the citizens and promote the sustainable economic growth of the nation (Kato & Charoenrat, 2018). Rudyk (2020) asserted that SMEs are the bases for economy of any country, because they reduce unemployment rate, and alleviate poverty. SMEs help owners realized their entrepreneurial skills and contribute to household and individual incomes for many countries (Rudyk, 2020). Micro and small businesses are the live blood of South Sudan economy accounting for 86.3% of total employment (NBS, 2020). SMEs account for 99.8% of European Union enterprises and generate 66% of employment (Bodlaj & Čater, 2019). Hryhorash et al. (2018) found that small businesses pay taxes and fees to local government, contributes to country GDP, and the welfare of many people in developed and developing nations depends on them because small businesses create job, boost local markets, and provide revenue to the local authorities. In developed countries, small businesses contribute up to 60% of the GDP, provide up to 70% of employments, and act as an engine for entrepreneurship and innovation development (Hryhorash et al., 2018). Ngota et al. (2019) found that small business pays taxes thus adding to the economy of a country, small business contributes to innovation and technology development, small business contributes to country GDP, small businesses reduce an unemployment because of investing in various sectors and create wealth that reduce local dependence on government services. Chege and Wang (2020) found that SMEs contribute to employment creation, export promotion,

entrepreneurship, generate income for lower income family, reduce poverty through employment and empowerment of youth and women, and industrial development.

Researchers have found that small businesses revitalize local economies during financial difficulties, stimulate economic growth, and reduce poverty (Gilboa et al., 2019; Prasastyoga et al., 2021). Abdugapparovich (2020) found that small businesses contribute to the development of an economy, promote employment, and increase incomes of the owners, employees, government taxes, and money circulation as well as production of goods and services. Small businesses require less resources for investment therefore, small businesses are good for startup (Abdugapparovich, 2020). In Uzbekistan, small business contributes to 60% of total GDP and they are the sources of employment, innovation, and financial successes and independences (Abdugapparovich, 2020). Sokolinskaya et al. (2019) asserted that small businesses are integral element of country economy growth, and the overall country economy cannot exist without small businesses because small businesses create and circulate resources for a nation through innovation, employment, production, taxes, sales, and purchases of goods and services. Small businesses establishment and growth help the stabilize and boost the economy of a nation because they create jobs, provide incomes to the owners, and contribute to the government revenue through taxes (Esterhuyzen et al., 2018). Connolly et al. (2021) asserted that small businesses contribute to global economy through innovation, job creation, and supplementing the large enterprises.

Small companies enjoy communication behavior that facilitate TL because business leaders of small companies exploit the use of face-to-face communication to

transform their employees to promote the mission of their firms (Jensen et al., 2018). TL characteristics such as (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration change the mindset of subordinates to be creative and fully engage themselves on activities that benefit other organizational stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, community, government agencies, and employees themselves (Azim et al., 2019). Additionally, transformational leaders of SMEs are always supportive enough of their subordinates to create conducive environment that can inspire subordinates to be creative and innovative (Azim et al., 2019). Furthermore, transformational leaders empower subordinates to be creative and innovative without fear of being reprimand and fire (Azim et al., 2019).

Small Business Failure

Business failure is a common phenomenon affecting both small and large companies worldwide (Sheng & Lan, 2019). A failed business can either be in stage of insolvency, liquidation, or closure (Sheng & Lan, 2019). The scope of business failure ranged from bankruptcy to discontinuance of ownership. Bankruptcy shows poor economic performance and discontinuance shows cessation to operate and identify losses (Sheng & Lan, 2019). Though some business owners continue operation while experiencing financial difficulties, the resultant reward is always total financial loss and legal implications because of a greater destructive effect on resources allocation and utilizations (Sheng & Lan, 2019). Sheng and Lan (2019) asserted that, at an individual perspective, business failure involves psychological issues such as disappointments, stresses, and losses of visions.

According to Martinez et al. (2019), 50% to 90% of businesses fails because of the influence of their micro and macroeconomic environments. In African nations, business failure is common because the environment is prone to turbulences that impede successes of the small start-up businesses (Boso et al., 2019; Mendy & Hack-Polay, 2018). Martinez et al. (2019) asserted that business failure result from financial crisis and firms that survive during financial crisis are those firms that have highest level of R&D and human capital. Business success and failure are related to internal and external factors (Martinez et al., 2019). The internal factors are within the capacity of business system and business management while external factors are environmental factors outside the domain of control of business system and management (Bertrand & Parnaudeau, 2019; Martinez et al., 2019). External factors for firm operating environment such as competitors, suppliers, regulators, customers, and media have adverse impacts on the firm if not properly mitigated and impact firm ability to withstand failure (Martinez et al., 2019). Through vertical alliances with customers and suppliers, business leaders mitigate business failure related to external environment (Martinez et al., 2019). Though decisions under the control of the leader influence the internal causes and events that are outside the leader's control influences the external causes, the complex mixture of these factors greatly contribute to the failure of the business (Atsan, 2016; Bertrand & Parnaudeau, 2019; Martinez et al., 2019). Bertrand and Parnaudeau (2019) asserted that business fail because of those factors that cause the drop in sales volume and reduce the ability of a firm to meet its financial obligations.

Researchers use determinist and voluntarist perspectives to understand business failure (Sheng & Lan, 2019). According to resource-based view theory and the upper-echelon theory, the fundamental cause of business failure lies on the top leadership decision, plan, and actions (Sheng & Lan, 2019). According to upper-echelon theory business failure is the result of the top management poor performance, managerial deficiencies, and lack of resources, while determinist perspective considers business failure as caused by external forces (Sheng & Lan, 2019). Researchers have found that business failure result to social, psychological, and financial losses to business owners (Boso et al., 2019). Martinez et al. asserted that companies that prevent failure in their financial and operational performance invest in capabilities to cope with environmental challenges. Internal innovation efforts and external knowledge are assets of dynamic capabilities that provide firms with sources of competitive advantages that enable them to overcome adverse economic conditions (Martinez et al., 2019). Martinez et al. (2019) defined dynamic capabilities as internal factors that enable firm to achieve high performance, while internal capabilities include organizational capabilities and innovation resources. Innovation resources include knowledge, investment in R&D, and skilled personnel, while organizational capabilities include organizational capital and networking capabilities (Martinez et al., 2019).

Since internal factors greatly affect the small businesses and external factors such as economic downturn, government policies, competition, and demand affect larger firms, business leaders develop strategies that protect their firms from internal causes (Atsan, 2016; Martinez et al., 2019). Atsan (2016) explained further, internal factors related to

managerial incompetence or poor management and poor management is a failure of the manager/leader to identify problems and promptly apply the correct solutions such that the firm exploits the best possible chances for survival, growth, and sustainability.

Businesses failed due to overconfidence and excessive risk-taking tendency by the business leaders (Al-Shami et al., 2019; Atsan, 2016). For business leaders to protect their business from failing due to overconfidence and excessive risk-taking tendency, they must adopt clear strategies that they should follow strictly and implement confidently to avoid unnecessary risk-taking tendency (Al-Shami et al., 2019; Atsan, 2016). Additionally, business failed due to poor financial planning such as unnecessary spending money on the wrong things that do not relate to profitability, growth, and sustainability (Atsan, 2016; Hsu & Chang, 2021). From this discussion, there is a connection between the leaders' decisions, their behavior, the way they conduct the activities of the firm, and the business success or failure.

Small Business Success

Though business success is interpreted in many ways, Lim and Teoh (2021) asserted that business success mean positive growth in size and profits. Though there is no agreement on the measurement of business success, Vilmos (2020) asserted that micro and small business leaders rate their business success with cashflow approach. The higher the income, the successful is the firm and the lower the income, the firm is deemed to be failing (Vilmos, 2020). Using cash flow as the measure of success of firm, business managers have a responsibility of maintaining trend of the business income at the strategic planning level (Vilmos, 2020). Business leaders use tools and methods to

quantify, monitor, analyze, and evaluate business process to help them make an informed decision about the business future performance (Vilmos, 2020). Vilmos asserted that business tools related to controlling, planning, analysis, and information flow help firms to succeed and perform better. Vilmos empathized that business plan and strategic plan guide business operation to succeed. Vilmos also emphasized the importance of cost reduction because business succeeds when business leaders use controlling system for development of cost effectiveness. Vilmos found that proper planning such as financial planning clarify firm future financial goals. Additionally, Vilmos found that business leaders who use effective communication in their organization build investors, creditors, and shareholders confidence in their firms.

Chinyamurindi et al. (2021) found that business strategy and human resource capacity positively influences firm financial performance. Chinyamurindi et al. asserted that human resource practice plays a significant role of mediating strategy and financial performance. Without competent human resource, business leader ability to implement strategies for the success of small business is in vain (Chinyamurindi et al., 2021).

Saseendran and Salman (2019) found that self-sufficiency help business leaders to take charge of their decisions and adjust their businesses to market needs. The implication for self-sufficiency is that business leaders who are self-sufficient predict issues and find solutions before they happened (Saseendran & Salman, 2019). Self-sufficient small business leaders are decisions makers, they depend on themselves rather than waiting for decisions from others (Saseendran & Salman, 2019). Saseendran and Salman asserted that business leaders who are proactive secure high chances of success of their businesses

and customer-derived planning and strategies help business leaders to meet the expectations of customers such as unique products/services. Researchers have found that creativity and innovativeness help business leaders sustain their businesses and satisfies their customers (Saseendran & Salman, 2019). Saseendran and Salman emphasize the importance of networking and collaboration. Business leaders connect with others to increase the chances of survival of their companies because small business survival depends on ability of business leader to establish strong relationship with other businesses operating in the environment as well as other stakeholders.

The success of small business also depends on the leader planning for future. Saseendran and Salman (2019) asserted that businesses that are led by business leaders with plan for future are always successful. Eggers et al. (2020) found that innovation led to company success because firms that innovate increase their revenue and profits. Though Eggers et al. did not find the relationship between networking activities and firm innovation, the combination of the underlying resources leveraging capabilities and strategic orientation enable innovation success. Eggers et al. asserted that small business can successfully benefit from networking and collaboration because small firms are dependent on external knowledge and network. Researchers have found that firms which do not supplement their internal capabilities with external resources and knowledge have low rate of innovation (Eggers et al., 2020). The implication for innovation on small businesses is that it helps them survive the hypercompetitive environment (Eggers et al., 2020). Another factor that led to success of business is strong CSR. Youssef et al. (2018) found that CSR has great impact on small businesses success because CSR impacts

loyalty, purchase intentions, and brand satisfaction. The implication for the use of CSR in SMEs is that, first CSR helps SMEs gain acceptance by the customers, regulators, and suppliers (Youssef et al., 2018). Second, CSR is a fundamental driver of business growth, differentiation, and it allow company to generate revenues for its sustainability and profitability (Youssef et al., 2018).

Another factor for business success is marketing plan, businesses with marketing plan that incorporate sustainable development strategies and consideration of interest of all business stakeholders gain recognition, acceptability, and trust from customers, suppliers, regulators, and other stakeholders such as media and societies (Youssef et al., 2018). Măiță et al. (2021) found that technological factors, environmental factors, and organizational factors directly impact competitiveness of the organization. For SMEs to achieve growth and sustainability, business leaders strategize to reduce cost and improve quality of products/services they sell to their customers (Măiță et al., 2021). For small business to succeed in this hypercompetitive environment, business leaders need to improve in areas of innovation, develop management structures that motivate creativity among the employees, and adopt sustainable technological development (Măiță et al., 2021). Măiță et al. asserted that companies that implement learning strategies develop and implement organizational capabilities which has direct impacts on the performance of the organization. Măiță et al. asserted that success of the SMEs is accredited to training, education, or managerial skills

Mahi and Thani (2020) found that social media marketing of products/services expansion help SMEs sustain their operation during economic crisis. Mahi and Thani

asserted that adequate planning help business succeed in its operation. Mahi and Thani asserted that experience and knowledge of staff determine business growth. Mahi and Thani advice that marketing strategies that are well developed and implemented help small businesses to succeed. Social media help small businesses to succeed because social media reaches many customers at the lower cost. Mahi and Thani also found that excellent customer service create customer loyalty which has a great impact on the firm success and sustainability. Employees that are satisfied with their work are creative and innovative (Mahi & Thani, 2020). Mahi and Thani asserted that small businesses that have business plan remain on the course of their initiated plan, and they have high likelihood of succeeding than those companies run without business plan.

Sharma and Sharma (2020) found that socioeconomic factors such as financial needs, employment opportunities, and government policies affect the decision of people to start a small business. Sharma and Sharma asserted that small businesses have a great significant impact on economy growth and sustainability. Small businesses are the seedbed for entrepreneurial activities and small businesses boost large companies by supplying them with products (Sharma & Sharma, 2020). Sharma and Sharma asserted that people choose to start small business because of the need to have source of income. Saleen (2012) suggested that socioeconomic factors significantly impact the success of a small business and investment opportunities, entrepreneurial experience, culture, and business profile are significant for success and development of a small business (as cited by Sharma & Sharma, 2020). Researchers have found that education, managerial skills, technical skills, and personal skills help business to succeed. Sharma and Sharma advised

that small business failed because internal factors such as work premise, business management strategies, access to finance, and infrastructure and entrepreneurship. Additionally, Sharma and Sharma stated that small business fail because of weakness in marketing, general management, and human resource. Researchers have found that small business fail because of the inability to attract and retain skilled personnel, inability to maintain proper accounting records, and barriers due to weak economy (Sharma & Sharma, 2020). Sharma and Sharma found that small businesses failed because of weak managerial and human resource, government policies, lack of market information, and failure by the leaders to strengthen research development activities. The success of a small business can be measured using financial measures for evaluating business success such as cash flow, growth, sale volume, and market share are used to measure business success (Sharma & Sharma, 2020). The satisfaction by small business owner as being self-employed is a measure for small business success (Sharma & Sharma, 2020).

Chege and Wang (2020) found that use of information technology has impact on competitiveness and access to international markets. The use of technology has numerous benefits to small business because it helps the business to penetrate new market, improve product/service value, and increase profitability (Chege & Wang, 2020). ICT increase firm profitability, improve labor productivity, enable firm to access new market (Chege & Wang, 2020). Another factor for business success is creativity and innovation, Chege and Wang (2020) found that ICT enable site for collaboration that enhance innovation.

Gyimah et al.(2020) found that capital, economic timing, and marketing skills predict small business failure and success. Gyimah et al. asserted that knowledge

management, availability of capital, marketing skills, and entrepreneurial innovativeness help small business succeed. According to Gyimah et al., financial information is not a reliable source for predicting failure or success of small business because financial data is easily manipulated using accounting policies. According to Lussier model, non-financial variables can accurately predict success or failure of small business particularly the small startup firms (Gyimah et al., 2020). Gyimah et al. advised that there is no universally accepted model to predict success or failure of the small businesses. Gyimah et al. found that businesses that start with good capital, marketing skills, proper staffing, business plan, proper financial record and control, educated employees, good products/services, and economic timing help small business to succeed.

Indrawati et al.(2020) found that government support, economic condition, competition, quality of human resource, and funding of technological innovation both inhibit and promote SMEs innovation development. Indrawati et al. asserted that SMEs leaders should invest in technological innovation to keep the firm to survive in a competitive environment. Indrawati et al. asserted business leaders need to develop business strategies that incorporate innovation to improve services to customers because innovation improve competitiveness of small business in the market. Indrawati et al. asserted that SMEs innovation is a key for profitability, high performance, and sustainability. SMEs leaders focus on improvement of innovation to gain and sustain competitive advantage that support business strategies for improving operations and services (Indrawati et al., 2020). The success of small business is attributed to ease of

accessibility to funds, recruitment of skills staff, business network, and support from government (Indrawati et al., 2020).

Small Business Sustainability

Sustainability is an economic development that satisfies current societal needs and support future desirable long-term conditions (Warren & Szostek, 2017). Though sustainability has grown to the extent of its own field, it remains context-specific, and its understanding by different specialists differ with specific field (Gaziulusoy & Öztekin, 2019). How environmentalists perceived sustainability has slide different from the perception of the economists and the socioculturalists (Gaziulusoy & Öztekin, 2019). With this varying understanding of sustainability concept, small business leaders should plan and implement sustainable strategies that meet three dimensions of sustainability (economic, environmental, and social) while considering the interest of all stakeholders without compromising business performance (Abdelrazaq et al., 2021). Properly planed and implemented sustainability strategy is important for a growth, acceptance, compliance, and continuity of a business organization (Abdelrazaq et al., 2021). Maniora (2018) advised that business leaders should choose business strategies that facilitate the achievement of their intended goals and should not only focus on financial benefits of the firms but should also consider legal requirements of the environment on which their business operate if they want to gain and sustain legitimacy.

For a company to meet sustainable development, its leadership must plan and implement strategy that target the three dimensions of sustainability. First, business should offer products that are highly demanded and have the value that can contribute to

the sustainable development (Abdulla et al., 2020). Second, business institution should invest in corporate social responsibility (CSR), that mean business institution need to disclose their commitment to CSR activities to improve their reputation which in turn will increase finance performance (Schreiber et al., 2020). Maniora (2018) advised that small business leaders who managed their businesses beyond regulatory requirements not only gain and sustain legitimacy in the eyes of the community in which they operate but also increase their finance performance through the sale of products/services. Third, business institution should cut down cost by implementing activities which enhance corporate image and fulfil their environmental responsibility (Schreiber et al., 2020). Ray and Chaudhuri (2018) asserted that if business leaders want their firms to be environmentally and socially conscious, then they should cut down cost by grouping their businesses and develop strategies for managing the group with focus on ethic and conformity to the environmental and legal norms of their countries. Fourth, business institution should invest in advanced technology that improve efficiency and cut down cost associated to production, sale, and maintenance (Măiță et al., 2021). Finally, business institution should focus on today benefits as well as future long-term desirable conditions without compromising the needs of all stakeholders (Ray & Chaudhuri, 2018). Rezaee (2018) advised that business leaders should balance the interest of shareholders with the interests of other stakeholders of the firm if they want to sustain their firms. Torelli et al. (2020) found that companies that engage stakeholders easily reached higher level of implementation of the materiality principle.

Though the idea of sustainability is for the good of human life, it faces three dilemmas associated with economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainability (Skandrani et al., 2020). Among the dilemmas business leaders face in relation to business sustainability include environmental safety and profit reduction (Skandrani et al., 2020). Businesses incurred costs when they implement environmental safety (Skandrani et al., 2020). These costs associated with implementation of environmental safety measures directly and indirectly reduce the profitability of the firm (Håkansson & Sengers, 2014). This situation always leaves business leaders in dilemma between the fulfillment of interest of shareholders and regulatory requirements to meet the needs of all stakeholders of a business including the safety of the environment in which the business operates (Skandrani et al., 2020). Another dilemma face by business leaders in relation to business sustainability is social orientation and profitability. Organizations which are socially oriented have a duty of care for all stakeholders of a business (Svensson et al., 2016). When business leaders implement social orientation, there is a cost associated to it implementation. This cost does not go well with profitability objective of a firm, and it goes against the interest of shareholders. Failure by business leader to pursue profitability objective create a rift between business management and the shareholders (Schaltegger et al., 2019; Schaltegger & Burritt, 2018). This difference between shareholders and business managers result to agency problem which produce management crisis which has detrimental impact on firm growth and survival (Schaltegger et al., 2019). The last dilemma face by business leaders in relation to business sustainability is reputational management and profitability. Business leaders

whose actions follow the regulatory, social, and legal requirements of the environment in which their business operate build the reputational image on the mind of business stakeholders (Schaltegger et al., 2019; Schaltegger & Burritt, 2018). The management of this reputational image has a direct impact on profitability of firm. Though reputational image management associated with business gaining and sustaining legitimacy in the eyes of all stakeholders, it increases cost and reduces profitability of firm which is against the interest of shareholders (Schaltegger et al., 2019).

Business sustainability is a core element of sustainable development individuals, companies, and nations can pursue to improve the economic, environmental, social, and technological aspects of human lives for a better world (Rezaee, 2018). Small business leaders pursue sustainability strategies in relation to environmental stewardship, a sustainability strategy which help entities to protect land, air, water, ecosystem, and empower them to effectively manage natural resources for the betterment of human life (Placet et al., 2005). Another sustainability strategy is social responsibility, a sustainability strategy which help small business leaders to improve the quality of life of employees and grantee equity for all other stakeholders (Placet et al., 2005). Both social responsibility and environmental stewardship strategies fall under corporate social responsibility (CSR). Companies which disclose CSR activities gain and sustain legitimacy among the communities directly and indirectly affected by their operations (Ray & Chaudhuri, 2018). The last sustainability strategy is economic prosperity, a sustainability strategy which help small business leaders to create economic opportunities for both companies and their stakeholders (Placet et al., 2005). Economic prosperity

strategy help business leaders to pursue competitive advantage, profitability, and market share growth (Placet et al., 2005).

Though it is not easy to develop a single sustainability strategy for a firm, it is imperative that economic prosperity is dependent upon environmental stewardship and social responsibility (Placet et al., 2005). Business cannot economically prosper without adhering to CSR requirements of the environment in which it operate (Ray & Chaudhuri, 2018). For this reason, small business leaders focus attention on CSR activities to help their companies gain and sustain legitimacy as well as to conform to the ethical and legal requirements of their business environments (Ray & Chaudhuri, 2018). Additionally, small business leaders who implement CSR activities help reduces cost related to failure to conform and abide by the norms, regulations, and laws related to environmental and consumer protection (Ray & Chaudhuri, 2018). Moreover, it is a responsibility of small business leader to protect the land, air, water, and natural resources as well as all the stakeholders (consumers, investors, suppliers, competitors, community, regulators, among others) from harm associated with the activities of the firm (Placet et al., 2005). The reason to protect land, air, natural resources, and stakeholders is to maintain business ecosystem from any interruption that may affect its supply chain, operation, and economic sustainability (Placet et al., 2005).

Sustainability of a firm depends on the adoption of all three sustainability strategies (environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic prosperity) because firm cannot economically prosper if it does not apply environmental stewardship and social responsibility. For this reason, business leaders should ensure companies

complies with the laws and regulations of the operating environments and socially fulfill the interests of all stakeholders of a business (Placet et al., 2005). The potential impacts of strategies to address business sustainability dilemmas include protection of land, air, water, ecosystem, and effective management of natural resources for the betterment of human life as well as improvement of quality of life of employees and provision of equity for all other stakeholders (Placet et al., 2005). The adoption of proper strategies related to environmental management, social management, and economic management of a firm results to firm sustainability. Among the strategies and processes the business leaders employ include investing in waste recycling technologies, sensitizing corporate stakeholders on firm's environmental progress statement, encouraging firms to get environmental management standard certification, adopting eco-efficient activities consistent with cost advantage, and encouraging firms to include nonfinancial information in their sustainability reporting (Chen et al., 2018). To ensure business prosper, business leaders focus their attention on social and environmental needs of the stakeholders because business cannot economically prosper without adhering to CSR requirements of the environment in which it operate (Chen et al., 2018). For this reason, business leaders focus attention on CSR activities to help their companies gain and sustain legitimacy as well as to conform to the ethical and legal requirements of their business environments (Măiță et al., 2021). Additionally, business leaders who implement CSR activities help reduces cost related to failure to conform and abide by the norms, regulations, and laws related to environmental and consumer protection (Ray & Chaudhuri, 2018). Moreover, it is a responsibility of business leader to protect the land,

air, water, and natural resources as well as all the stakeholders from harm associated with the activities of the firm (Placet et al., 2005). The reason to protect land, air, natural resources, and stakeholders is to maintain business ecosystem from any interruption that may affect its supply chain, operation, and economic sustainability (Placet et al., 2005).

Previous studies have shown that small business leaders sustain their companies by implementing strategies that include first, developing organizational culture that play role in success of leadership (Chassé & Courrent, 2018). Jardon and Martínez-Cobas (2019) asserted that culture play an important role in the success of the leadership of small business. Jardon and Martínez-Cobas advised small business leaders to aim at building culture that generate business growth, orient themselves toward strategic leadership if they want to improve the competitiveness of the businesses, and prioritize entrepreneurship if they want to sustain their companies. Second, avail resources to ensure competitive advantage over the rival firms. López-López et al.(2020) found that competitive advantage that relies on firm resources is sustainable, and the resource-based view is a source of sustainable competitive advantage in both large and small firm. López-López et al. asserted that managers of business firms should concentrate their efforts on providing the firm with necessary resources to achieve a competitive advantage while choosing a good sector to position themselves. Third, invest resources on research and development (R&D). Park et al. (2019) found that investment in R&D positively influence future performance and growth sustainability of the firm. Fourth, develop entrepreneurial orientation. Roxas et al. (2017) found that entrepreneurial orientation positively related to firm environmental sustainability orientation and entrepreneurial

orientation and environmental sustainability orientation positively contribute to the performance of small businesses. Roxas et al. asserted that small businesses can engage in environmentally sustainable business practice if they have entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial orientation helps small businesses to overcome challenges related to environmental sustainability orientation, and small businesses can beneficially perform highly if their leaders incorporate sustainability in their business practices.

Small Internet Service Providers

South Sudan is among countries in the world with the low internet connectivity and accessibility. The overall percentage of business with internet accessibility in South Sudan is 16% (NBS, 2020). This low percentage of internet connectivity and accessibility directly and indirectly affect learning, online marketing, creativity, and innovativeness among others in term of delayed and reduced effective communications (Buhaljoti, 2019; Namahoot & Jantasri, 2021). Buhaljoti (2019) asserted that internet affect the growth of economic activities in terms of employment, business activities and innovation. Namahoot and Jantasri (2021) asserted that internet makes it easy for people to communicate, find the information they want, provides learning experience and social exchange of ideas, link communication and knowledge, and make users realize usefulness, user-friendliness, and other benefits of services, so that users develop positive attitude. Namahoot and Jantasri advice small internet service providers to develop a system to attract and meet the needs of service users, provide high speed internet with ease of use, expands, and stabilizes internet connection, and increase internet perceived usefulness and ease of use. The availability of internet sources helps business leaders to

meet their business requirements of flexible, adaptive, creative, and economically sustainable businesses. Quach et al. (2016) asserted that (a) the availability of and improvement in internet access for small business creates opportunities for small business leaders to increase productivity and competitiveness of their companies which in turn increase sustainability performance. (b) Small business with well-connected internet communicates on real-time perspective, hence eliminates unintended delay and communication gaps during business processes. (c) Small businesses with strong internet connectivity have opportunities to conduct online transaction and respond to customers queries and demands on time. (d) Internet marketing tools such e-mail marketing, mobile marketing, search engine optimization, event base marketing, and viral marketing provide affordable opportunities for small business leaders to empower their staff to interact with companies with ease. (e) Small business employees and leaders use internet for communication, marketing, and control of the daily operations of the business. Because of cost-effectiveness on sales and marketing, many companies of varying size, types, and geographical locations benefit from availability and accessibility of internet (Quach et al., 2016).

Small internet service providers leaders should be mindful of the reputable brand image of their companies. Brand image has the potential to influence customers choice and an ISP competitive standing (Quach et al., 2016). ISP need to work on building corporate value and consistently delivering the high brand experience (Quach et al., 2016). Buhajoti (2019) found that brand image, information disposed to customers, and risks associated to service providers influence internet users' selection of the ISPs.

Buhaljoti asserted that internet affect the growth of economic activities in terms of employment, business activities and innovation. Buhaljoti claimed that ISP leaders look for more users because the more users ISP has, the lower its average unit cost and the higher its operating performance. Another service quality found by Buhaljoti that influence the number of users of ISP is quality of internet connection. Quality of internet connection is a key driver of the emotional bonds consumers form with access providers. Quach et al. (2016). found that strength of internet connection influence customer loyalty for the ISP and service quality is a key factor determining customer behavioral intentions including complaint and switching behavior.

Transition

In Section 1, I provided the foundation for this study and the background of the problem. I introduced the problem, purpose statement, the nature of the study, and overarching research question and interview questions. I revealed the conceptual framework of the study, discussed operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. I highlighted the significance of the study and provided an extensive review of academic and professional literature related to my research topic. I used transformational leadership theory as a lens to view the business problem and factors that impact small business success. I reviewed the literature in relation to transformational leadership theory, definition and importance of small business, small internet service providers, small business failure, small business success, and small business sustainability. In Section 2, I restated the purpose statement the role of the researcher, process to obtain participants, research design and method, population and

sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, data collection analysis, and reliability and validity.

Section 2: The Project

The focus of Section 2 is to outline purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants' eligibility, the research method and design, and population and sampling method. Section 2 also outlined the informed consent guidelines, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection process, data organization, data analysis, and reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies leaders of small internet service providers use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The target population was five leaders of small internet service providers operating in South Sudan who have successfully developed and implemented leadership strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The implications for positive social change include: (a) the potential to facilitate the prosperity of owners of small internet service providers, (b) improve the economy of the South Sudan, (c) improve the economic wellbeing of the employees of the small businesses and their families, and (d) generate additional tax revenue to enable the South Sudan government to provide services beneficial to the community.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, researchers have roles of reflective practitioners, protectors of participants, and technicians (Cumyn et al., 2019). The role of a researcher includes participant identification, data collection, data analysis, and presentation of emerging themes as well as the development of an interview guide which ensures ethical

conduct of research when using open-ended and follow-up questions (Cumyn et al., 2019). My role included interview guide development, participants identification, data collection, data analysis, and presentation of emerging themes of my research. The study participants consisted of small internet service providers leaders with successful experience using strategies to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years.

Ethical requirements encourage researchers to understand and engage with ethical issues arising from the process of conducting research (Behera et al., 2019). Researchers must accept, adhere to, and maintain an ethical framework when conducting research (Wiles & Boddy, 2013). Researchers should consider how to minimize harm to participants, seek informed consent from participants, and follow-up with the participants on member checking (Cumyn et al., 2019). Researchers consider the following three guidelines for qualitative research: acknowledgement of ethical issues that may arise throughout the research process, evaluation of different ethical approaches and selection of method suitable for the researcher's intellectual and moral guidelines, and flexibility during the research process (Wiles & Boddy, 2013). Researchers should consider how to develop methods for minimizing risk and enhancing ethical thinking (Wiles & Boddy, 2013). The American National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in 1979 developed structured framework method and principles for analyzing ethical research and published them in the Belmont Report (Anabo et al., 2019). The Belmont Report was published with the following principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Anabo et al., 2019).

The Belmont Report revealed that respect for persons implies that individuals should be treated as autonomous and individuals with diminishing autonomy should be provided with additional protection (Anabo et al., 2019). The principle for respect for persons needs researchers to receive informed consent from participants. The Belmont Report identified three informed consents; information, comprehension, and voluntariness (Anabo et al., 2019). The Belmont Report informed consent implies that participants should be presented with relevant information in a comprehensible manner and that participant should agree voluntarily to participate in the research (Anabo et al., 2019). I ethically followed principle of respect for persons, as outlined in the Belmont Report by requiring participants to review and sign the informed consent form before allowing an individual to participate in this study. The informed consent form provided participants with information on the study and measures I took to protect their rights.

Beneficence principle mean having the interest of participants in mind (Anabo et al., 2019). The principle of beneficence implies that researchers should minimize risks to participants and maximize benefits to participants and society by conducting a risk-benefit assessment (Anabo et al., 2019). The risk identified in the Belmont Report include psychological, physical, legal, social, and economic harm that might result from involvement of participant in the research (Anabo et al., 2019). As per Belmont Report guidelines, I prioritized the interest of the participants, assessed and identified possible risks that might had resulted from their involvement in this study, and developed relevant measures to mitigate those risk that might had happened because of the involvement of participants in this study.

According to the Belmont Report, principle of justice addresses the distribution of burdens and benefits of research (Anabo et al., 2019). Justice principle implies that, in a society, one group should not bear the cost of the research while another group enjoy its benefits (Anabo et al., 2019). The American National Research Act of 1974 that set regulations governing protection of human subject coined the term Institutional Review Board (IRB) with the role to review research protocols (Barton et al., 2018). I informed Walden University's IRB the details and steps I will take to identify and reduce potential risk for study participants. I mitigated bias and avoided viewing data through a personal lens by audiotaping the interviews, transcribing the interview, and conducting member checks.

Researchers strengthen and enhance the quality of data collected from participants through the use of interview protocols by following four steps: confirm interview questions link to the research question, use an inquiry approach to drive the conversation, obtain interview protocol feedback, and implement a pilot for the defined interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The interview questions align with the overarching research question to understand the strategies small internet service providers leaders use to sustain companies beyond first 5 years of operation. I used an inquiry approach to gain an understanding of strategies small internet service providers leaders used to obtain business success. I obtained interview protocol feedback to increase reliability, trustworthiness, and confirm research questions were not confusing or vague. I conducted pilot interviews for my defined interview protocol.

Participants

The participants for this study were purposively sampled from small internet service providers leaders in Juba who have successfully sustained their companies beyond the first 5 years. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants who are more likely to yield appropriate and useful information and it is a way of identifying and selecting cases that will use limited research resources effectively (Campbell et al., 2020; Palinkas et al., 2015). For this study, I sought participants that met the following eligibility criteria: small internet service providers leaders in Juba, in business for a minimum of 5 years, registered as a legal business, possess successful experience obtaining outside resources designed to increase profitability, and small business leader with less than 50 employees.

Researchers develop strategies to increase participants' awareness of the research information, to seek informed consent from the participants, to gain access to participants, and to fulfil the regulatory needs of protection of research participants (Brownlie, 2019; Wolinetz & Collins, 2020). To gain access to participants, I liaised with South Sudan Chamber of Commerce leadership to obtain a listing of small internet service providers and leaders' contact information to assist me with the identification of participants. After I received approval from Walden University IRB (Approval Number 11-18-21-0756049) I visited many prospective small internet service providers, established relationship with the leaders, shared the significance of the research study, articulated the informed consent process, and asked for approval to interview them. To establish a cordial relationship with participants, the researcher has an obligation of

building a trustworthy relation that respect the participants' privacy (Banner et al., 2021). Researchers establish trustworthy relationship with participants through the identification and mitigation of risks associated with the breach of participants' privacy (Banner et al., 2021). I set trustworthy criteria for protecting the participants' privacy, built trust with the participants, and encouraged them to share their experiences in relationship to leadership strategies for sustaining small business beyond 5 years of operation.

Researchers select participants in accordance with research design and research question (Alavi et al., 2018). Researchers align participants selection, research method, conceptual framework, and set participants eligibility to minimize risk of designing flawed studies (Alavi et al., 2018). I selected participants with the following characteristics: small internet service providers leaders of companies that operate for more than 5 years, and leaders that have used strategies to derive business success and sustainability.

Research Method and Design

Research involves systematic and methodological search for knowledge to describe and predict a phenomenon (Magrath et al., 2019). The aim of this study was to explore the strategies small internet service providers leaders use to sustain business beyond 5 years. Researchers identify and select research methodologies for their intended studies (Atmowardoyo, 2018). The three methodologies researchers use are (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mixed methods (Borrego et al., 2009). Researchers use quantitative methodology when their focus is on measuring numerical data from

chosen variables and testing hypotheses to proof or disproof theories (Atmowardoyo, 2018). Researchers use qualitative study when their focus is on interpreting phenomenon in its natural setting and exploring the complexities of processes and behavior from the experiences of the participants (Atmowardoyo, 2018). Researchers use mixed methodology when their focus is on measuring quantitative and qualitative data (Atmowardoyo, 2018). Faulkner and Trotter (2017) defined data saturation as the point in research process where researcher discover no new information during data collection and analysis. Alam (2020) explained that data saturation is achieved when no new information found during interview and no new emerging theme found during data analysis. Researchers seek saturation to support the conclusion of the research (Lowe et al., 2018). I ensured data saturation free from my personal bias to justify the themes that emerged from the data analysis and the conclusion I made.

Research Method

I used a qualitative methodology to explore strategies small internet service providers leaders use to sustain business beyond 5 years. Yin (2018), as cited by Guy (2019), summarized qualitative research with five features: (a) ability to explore a phenomenon based on real-world situations, (b) obtain direct views from participants, (c) understand the interrelated conditions of participants, (d) explain existing practices to understand participant's human behaviors, and (e) use multiple instruments to obtain multiple sources of evidence. Qualitative researchers use semistructured interviews to gain insight into a phenomenon. Qualitative research does not involve the examination of data variables to determine relationships (Nowell & Albrecht, 2019). I chose qualitative

methodology to explore experiences of small internet service providers leaders in relation to small business sustainability as well as to get the strategies they used to help them sustained their businesses.

Quantitative methodology requires hypothesis testing with arbitrary searching for significant correlation between variables under studies (Dyer & Williams, 2021; Lo et al., 2020; Zyphur & Pierides, 2020a, 2020b). Researchers use quantitative methodology when their focus is on measuring numerical data from chosen variables and testing hypotheses to proof or disproof theories (Atmowardoyo, 2018). I did not select quantitative method because I did not test any hypothesis in this study.

Researchers use mixed methodology when their focus is on measuring both quantitative and qualitative data to examine research problem (Atmowardoyo, 2018). Mixed method help researchers to combine the elements of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to broaden purpose, breadth and depth of understanding of research problem (Alavi et al., 2018; Kansteiner & König, 2020). I did not select the mixed-method research methodology because I did not collect quantitative data. The qualitative research method was suitable to explore strategies small internet service providers leaders used to sustain business beyond 5 years.

Research Design

Research design is a strategy that guide research process and details how a study will be conducted from research purpose to the outcome (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). To explore strategies small internet service providers leaders used to sustain their companies, I used a multiple case study research design. Researchers use case study

design to help them clearly understand the event, activity, and individual or a group (Atmowardoyo, 2018). Multiple case study design was appropriate for this study because multiple case study is considered more compelling, robust, and data is collected from multiple sources (Yin, 2018). The multiple case study design was appropriate for identifying strategies that leaders of multiple internet service provider have used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Although researchers use phenomenological design, phenomenological design uses minimal data samples to explore lived experiences (Groenewald, 2004; Holroyd, 2001). The phenomenological design was appropriate because I broadened small internet service provider sustainability research beyond the lived experience of the participants. The ethnographical design is used to study group observation or the culture of a particular group of people (Giaccardi et al., 2016). Group observations within businesses were not suitable for this study to explore strategies to achieve small business sustainability. For this study, I did not select an ethnographic design because I was not seeking to conduct group observations to identify behavior patterns or use group interaction to understand a phenomenon.

Faulkner and Trotter (2017) defined data saturation as the point in research process where researcher discover no new information during data collection and analysis. Alam (2020) explained that data saturation is achieved when no new information found during interview and no new emerging theme found during data analysis. Researchers seek saturation to support the conclusion of the research (Lowe et al., 2018). For this study, I achieved data saturation by interviewing five small business

internet service providers leaders and conducted member checking to obtain rich data on the research topic. I continued conducting interviews and data analysis until no new themes emerged or the data begin to repeat.

Population and Sampling

I used a purposive sampling method to identify five small internet service providers leaders with sustainable business strategies. Researchers use purposive sampling to better match the sample to the aims and objectives of the research (Campbell et al., 2020). Purposive sampling is used when the target study participants involve key stakeholders with predefined criteria (Denieffe, 2020). Researchers use purposive sampling to achieve the manageability of the amount of data (Ames et al., 2019). I gathered specific data from experienced small internet service providers leaders who have successful strategies that sustained business beyond 5 years in Juba. The population for this study consisted of small internet service providers leaders in Juba. I obtained a sample from the small internet service providers leaders' population to understand what strategies small internet service providers leaders used to sustain business beyond 5 years.

Researchers use sample plan to describe number of observations, interviews, and focus group discussions needs for the research (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Moser and Korstjens (2018) identified four key features for qualitative research namely: participants are always sampled deliberately, sample size differs by study and is always small, sample emerges during the study, and sample is determined by conceptual requirements, not primarily by representativeness. Researchers use four distinctive approaches to determine

sample size namely: rule of thumb, conceptual models, numerical guidelines derived from empirical studies, and statistical formulae (Sim et al., 2018). Researchers use different methods for determining sample size in qualitative research in relation to theme analysis, inductive logic, logic inquiry, and ontological assumptions (Blaikie, 2018). Sample size for open-ended interview relies on thematic saturation (Weller et al., 2018). Researchers use data saturation to estimate sample size in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2020).

Vasileiou et al. (2018) advised qualitative researchers to be transparent about the choice of sample size and how to reach saturation point. Researchers use data saturation in qualitative research as the criteria for discontinuing data collection/analysis (Saunders et al., 2018). Hanson et al. (2011) suggested between three and 15 participants were enough participants for case study exploration. I purposively selected five small internet service provider leaders who have successfully sustain their companies beyond five years among the small internet service providers in Juba, South Sudan. To ensure data saturation, I selected and interviewed five successful small internet service providers leaders and continued the data collection process until no new information or themes identified. Researchers have an obligation to ethically select participants with consideration of Belmont Report principles (Rasmussen, 2019). Rasmussen (2019) affirmed that researchers should not discriminate participants during the selection process. Though I did not intentionally discriminate some members of study population, I targeted participants who met the following criteria: small internet service providers leaders in Juba, in business for a minimum of 5 years, registered as a legal business,

possess successful strategies for increasing business profitability, small business leader with less than 100 employees, and participant was willing to have the interview sessions taped and agreed to the informed consent.

Obtaining access to participants' inner worlds is the strategy to acquiring data (de la Croix et al., 2018). Researchers should request participants to make environments free from distraction such as noise and interruption by others (de la Croix et al., 2018). I requested participants provided interview environments free from distraction. De la Croix et al. (2018) advised researchers to show respect to participants, be curious, and carefully listen to participants. I showed respect to participants during interview to encourage them fully participate in the interview. Researchers develop interview guidelines to address ethics and informed assent and consent (Rogers et al., 2021). I used the established interview protocol and interview questions to create the most suitable interview setting to enhance the data collection process.

Ethical Research

To comply with ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, researchers seek approval for data collection protocols from ethics institutions such as IRB (Pan, 2020). To minimize deliberate fraud, usually categorized as falsification, plagiarism, and fabrication, researchers follow ethical research guidelines by clearly stating data analysis protocols (Pan, 2020). Researchers who adhere to ethical guidelines seek informed consent from participants by requesting them to sign informed consent forms (Thakur et al., 2019). Informed consent forms should have elements of privacy of participants, research purpose and methodology, maintenance of confidentiality, duration

of data collection types, and participants withdrawal processes (Thakur et al., 2019). I strictly adhered to informed consent from participants to minimize bias and maintain data integrity during data collection process. I used informed consent form to obtain participants' written consent (Appendix B) and communicated the benefits of the study. Informed consent provide participants with degree of autonomy and help researchers to get participants to agree and participate in the research (Sandu, 2020; Taylor, 2019; Yarborough, 2020). I used the informed consent form, after IRB approval of my interview protocols, asked participants to read and sign the informed consent form before scheduling interviews. To ensure I fully understood ethical compliance guidelines, I attained the online training course on how to protect human research participants from the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) and receive certificate (certificate number is 45265057).

The principle for respect for persons requires researchers to receive informed consent from participants (Anabo et al., 2019). The Belmont Report identified three informed consents; information, comprehension, and voluntariness (Anabo et al., 2019). The Belmont Report informed consent implies that participants should be presented with relevant information in a comprehensible manner and that participant should agree voluntarily to participate in the research (Anabo et al., 2019). I ethically followed principle of respect for persons, as outlined in the Belmont Report by requiring participants to review and sign the informed consent form before allowing an individual to participate in this study. The informed consent form provided participants with information on the study and measures I took to protect their rights. If participants were

no longer wanted to participate in the research, I allowed them to communicate the decision to withdraw from participating in the research. I did not offer the participants an incentive and their participation were strictly voluntary. Those participants who continued with me to the completion of research received research findings at the end of the research.

Researchers have an obligation to protect participants' privacy and maintain confidentiality when collecting, compiling, analyzing, and disseminating information (Appel, 2019). Researchers must adhere to ethical requirements by concealing participants' identity during the process of collecting and analyzing data to ensure no reader can recognize and identify the research participants (Yin, 2018). I used defined codes such as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 to represent names of participant 1 to 5. I removed any information identifying the names of the participants' companies. I assigned C1, C2, C3, C4, and C5 for the participating companies. I will maintain all research data (audio records and notes) in a secured format for 5 years to protect the participants' confidentiality. After 5 years, I will destroy all written documents and audio recordings. I obtained IRB approval prior to conducting research to ensure full compliance with IRB ethical standards.

Data Collection Instruments

Qualitative researchers use data collection instruments such as documents review, semistructured interviews, archival records, artifacts, informal interviews, phenomenological in-depth interviews, and focus groups (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) explained that the researcher is the primary data collection instrument for qualitative

research. I was the primary data collection instrument for this qualitative study. Moorley and Cathala (2019) asserted that qualitative researchers use data collection instruments to understand phenomenon meanings, perceptions, concepts, thoughts, experiences, or feelings. Qualitative researchers use in-depth interviews, focus groups interviews, documents reviews, among others (Moorley & Cathala, 2019). The interview may be face-to-face, telephone conversation, online interview using online platforms such as MS Team, Skype, Zoom, among others. Interview protocols should be clear to guide the interviewer during the data collection process. I conducted semistructured interviews on Skype with five small internet service providers leaders as detailed by interview protocol (Appendix A) to collect data on the research topic.

Researchers use semistructured in-depth interview, a dialogue between a researcher and a participant guided by interview protocols and supplemented by a follow-up questions, probes, and comments (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Semistructured interview allow the researcher to conduct open-ended data collection and explore participants thoughts, feelings, experiences, and beliefs about the research topic (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) identified skills a researchers needed for a successful conduct of semistructured interview which include purpose and the scope of the research determination, participants identification, ethical issues consideration, planning of research logistical aspects, interview guide development, trust and rapport establishment, conducting the interview, memoing and reflection, data analysis, demonstration of trustworthiness of the research, and presentation of findings in paper or report. DeJonckheere and Vaughn asserted that

researchers conducting semistructured interview should focus on how to create an engaging environment with the participants to obtain quality data. I developed interview protocols and used it for conducting semistructured interviews, but I allowed flexibility for participants to provide more insight of experiences related to small internet service provider sustainability.

Caretta and Pérez (2019) found that transactional validity is built on consensus-oriented research and shared understanding between a researcher and a researched. Caretta and Pérez asserted that transactional validity is attained when researchers consult participants and listened to their feedbacks through member checking and through member checking, researchers engage with participants to ensure mutual understanding and agreement about the account of the research before it is published. Member checking help researchers attain methodological rigor and reliability of the findings (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Researchers conduct member checking to allow repetition, adjustment, and deepening of data gathering and analysis with participants (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Brear (2019) found that member checking has the advantage of enhancing research findings validity, critical understandings of research topic, increasing participants knowledge of the research process, increasing participants control over how their experiences are presented, strengthening researcher-researched relationship, and demonstrating respect between researcher and participants. Brear asserted that member checking balance bias from researcher interpretation of participants words, ensure validity of qualitative research, facilitate participants critical engagement with the research results, and empower participants and encourage them to contribute their knowledge to the research.

DeCino and Waalkes (2019) asserted that member checking is an important tool for establishing credibility and credibility helps researcher establish that findings are believable by other people. Member check help researcher select participant(s) quotation(s) to include in research manuscripts (DeCino & Waalkes, 2019). The incorporation of well-defined research protocols and in-depth member checking enhances credibility of qualitative research (Brear, 2019; DeCino & Waalkes, 2019). I engaged the participants through member checking to provide feedback and to confirm accuracy of data I collected from them. I used member checking to enhance reliability and validity of my data collection instruments. I interpreted participants' responses to the interview questions and returned the interpretations to the participants to verify the accuracy of my interpretation within one week of the interview.

Data Collection Technique

Researchers use more than one data source for data collection to achieve quality research outcomes (Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers use techniques such as structured, unstructured, and semistructured interviews as methods for data collection (Yin, 2018). I used the semistructured interview technique to collect data from five study participants. Researchers design and use interview protocol for collecting quality interview data (Yeong et al., 2018). I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) to guide the interview process.

Researchers use semistructured in-depth interview to collect open-ended data and explore participants thoughts, feelings, experiences, and beliefs about the research topic (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). I used seven open-ended interview questions

(Appendix C) to collect data relevant to leadership strategies small internet service providers leaders used to sustain their companies beyond five years. I began the data collection after I receive IRB approval (IRB approval number is 11-18-21-0756049). I contacted potential participants who met the predetermined criteria in the interview protocol (Appendix A). I provided potential participants with informed consent form (Appendix B). I conducted interviews and recorded the audio on Skype at convenient time to the participants. I asked participants to allow me to record interviews which lasted for about 20-60 minutes.

Semistructured interviews have advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of semistructured interview are that it is a productive way for collecting open-ended data from participants (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Researchers use semistructured interviews to maintain focus on the research topic (Brown & Danaher, 2019). It is a preferred method for data collection exploring phenomenon (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). It allows researchers to collect consistent data from participants (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The disadvantage of using semistructured interviews are that not all interviewees are good participants because some people are difficult to engage and may not be willing to share sensitive information (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The success of semistructured interview relies on how the interviewer ask probing or follow-up questions (Brown & Danaher, 2019). Semistructured interviews may not produce quality data if the interviewer cannot actively listen to words from interviewees (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Semistructured interviews also rely on a well-developed interview guide with open-ended questions, which is sometimes difficult to

develop, and can be highly costly in terms of time and money (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

Researchers use member checking to engage participants to ensure mutual understanding and agreement about the account of the research, to attain methodological rigor and reliability of the research findings and to allow repetition, adjustment, and deepen data gathering and analysis with participants (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Member checking has advantages of: (a) enhancing validity of research findings, (b) enhancing critical understandings of research topic, (c) increasing participants knowledge of the research process, (d) increasing participants control over how their experiences are presented, (e) strengthening researcher-researched relationship, and (f) demonstrating respect between researcher and participants (Brear, 2019). The member checking process involves the researcher checking back with participants to confirm if the research is in line with their views (Busetto et al., 2020). Member checking helps researcher create trustworthiness in qualitative research (Candela, 2019). I used member checking by sharing my interpretation with the participants to allow them to verify my interpretation whether is relevant to individual views.

Data Organization Technique

Qualitative researchers follow seven commons practices for conducting thematic analysis which include (a) organizing data, (b) transcribing data, (c) familiarizing oneself with the data, (d) memoing data, (e) coding data, (f) categorizing data into themes, and (g) making data analysis process transparent (Lester et al., 2020). The tools that researchers use for organizing data must be relevant to data analysis and reporting

findings (Yin, 2018). I used voice recorders, research schedule logs, labelling systems, notebooks, word document for transcribing audio records, and reflective journals for keeping track of the data I collected from the participants. I will store collected data in a secured lockable file and destroy it after 5 years as required by Walden University.

Data Analysis

Researchers involve multiple steps in data collection and analysis to gain understanding of phenomenon under study (Yin, 2018). Akinyode and Khan (2018) identified five steps for qualitative data analysis which include data logging (data documentation), anecdote (a summary of explanation of data from interviewee perspectives), vignettes (in-depth interpretation of the words of interviewee to identify the emerging themes), data coding (coding data to form comprehensive themes), and thematic network (exploring the understanding of the idea and establish thematic analysis). Gibbs (2018) and York (2020) defined data analysis as exploratory method use by researchers to transform raw data to identify patterns, themes, and relationships in the data collected. Qualitative data analysis involves data scanning to generate categories of phenomena, seeking relationships between categories, examining working typologies and summaries, analyzing subsequent cases, and deliberately seeking to modify, enlarge or restrict original explanation of theory (York, 2020).

I used methodological triangulation to validate research findings. Triangulation refers to the use of different ways of collecting or analyzing data and the cross-checking of the sources or methods to see if findings from different theories or different reliability checks of sources show similar results (Moorley & Cathala, 2019). Triangulation involve

use of multiple sources and checking transcriptions or analysis with participants to confirm participants views of the research phenomenon (Gibbs, 2018). Qualitative researchers use triangulation to increase validity of the research findings (Kern, 2018). Yin (2018) asserted that qualitative researchers use triangulation to ensure research findings validity. There are four types of triangulations: (a) data triangulation, (b) theory triangulation, (c) investigator triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation (Yin, 2018). Data triangulation is the use of different people or different data sources for data collection (Jentoft & Olsen, 2019). Theoretical triangulation is the use of multiple theoretical lenses to approach the data (Yin, 2018). Investigator triangulation is the use of multiple people in data collection and analysis processes (Yin, 2018). Methodological triangulation is the use of multiple methods for data collection (Yin, 2018). Moorley and Cathala (2019) asserted qualitative researchers use observations, focus groups, field notes, interviews, or member check to ensure triangulation. I obtained methodological triangulation using semistructured interviews and company documents review for this study.

After data collection, I canvased the audio recordings, interview transcripts, and handwritten notes to transcribe and interpret the data. I manually identified and developed a coding scheme. I adopted and used thematic analysis five steps for qualitative data analysis which include data compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpretation, and concluding. Compiling the data mean transcribing the data so that researchers can easily see the data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Disassembling the data involves creating meaningful groups of the data through coding process for further

analysis and regrouping (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Reassembling data involves identification of patterns in the data and regrouping the similar patterns into themes through matrices and hierarchies (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Interpreting data involves researcher making analytical decisions on the themes emerged from data regrouping (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). At concluding stage researchers make conclusions from the decisions taken at the interpreting stage in respect to research question(s) (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

After manual analysis, I used computer-aided/assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to validate manual coded themes, sort and arrange data, confirm themes, and obtain new knowledge. CAQDAS ensure rigor and productivity of the outcomes of the qualitative research, and it provide excellent data management retrieval facilities that support analysis and write-up (Maher et al., 2018). CAQDAS offer a valid tested analysis method in qualitative analysis (Maher et al., 2018). Qualitative researchers demonstrate transparency and trustworthiness within data analysis process if they use CAQDAS (O’Kane et al., 2021). O’Kane et al. (2021) asserted that CAQDAS include capability to retrieve text, search words frequencies, machine learning algorithm identify text in segments, retrieve and display codes, and visual display and statistical outputs. I purchased Dedoose and used to analyze data and validate themes that emerged through manual analysis and to provide a concise interpretation of the research findings.

I connected the key themes to the research question, conceptual framework, and literature for this qualitative research study. Qualitative researchers connect research question, conceptual framework, and literature with the themes emerged from thematic

analysis (Assarroudi et al., 2018). Thematic analysis helps researchers achieve the understanding of patterns and themes meanings from the data on the lived experiences (Sundler et al., 2019). Researchers collect data and transform it into trustworthy, clear, insightful, and recognizable data (Gibbs, 2018). I collected data through semistructured interview and member checking and transformed it to meaningful information through manual coding to establish themes and validate the themes with Dedoose.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative researchers align research designs, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques to ensure reliability and validity of the research findings (Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers use reliability to ensure dependability of the research findings (Facchinetti et al., 2021). Qualitative researchers use validity to ensure credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the research findings (Facchinetti et al., 2021). Reliability and validity are elements of research trustworthiness which is the systematic rigor of the research design, applicability of the research method, credibility of the researcher, and acceptability/believability of the research findings (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Jordan (2018) noted that researchers use reliability and validity to assure good quality research, which is dependable, credible, confirmable, and transferable.

Reliability

Qualitative researchers use reliability to ensure the soundness of the research in relation to research methods chosen and ways the methods were applied during research process (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Researchers use reliability to focus on the reproducibility of the research data produced by the research instrument involved in the

research process (Jordan, 2018). Yin (2018) asserted that the goal of reliability is to minimize errors and biases in the study. Lock and Seele (2018) noticed that reliability of research provides information about the trustworthiness and the absence of errors and biases in the research. Reliability give readers power to question consistency of research methodological processes (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Dependability

Dependability is an audit trail of the research process step by step from start to findings with all steps taken during the research process documented (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Korstjens and Moser (2018) noticed that dependability of the qualitative study signifies the stability of the research findings over time, and it include consistency in the design, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. Forero et al. (2018) asserted that dependability ensures qualitative research findings are repeatable and data collection process and analysis can be audit trailed. Dependability ensures the qualitative research process is described in sufficient detail to facilitate another researcher to repeat the work (Maher et al., 2018). Researchers use dependability to show consistency of processes use during the study (Langtree et al., 2019) .

Researchers use member checking to attain methodological rigor and reliability of the research findings (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Additionally, researchers conduct member checking to allow repetition, adjustment, and deepening of data gathering and analysis with participants (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Brear (2019) asserted that member checking (a) balance bias from researcher interpretation of participants words, (b) ensure validity of qualitative research, (c) facilitate participants critical engagement with the research

results, (d) and empower participants and encourage them to contribute their knowledge to the research. Busetto et al. (2020) defined member checking as the process involving researcher checking back with participants to confirm if the research is in line with their views. To ensure dependability and reliability, I conducted member checking by providing participants a summary of the research findings and request feedback to confirm accuracy. I used member checks to verify the research findings reflected the participant's views on the leadership strategies small internet provider leaders use to sustain their companies beyond 5 years.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research refers to the extent to which a qualitative study accurately reflects study purpose and ensure research findings integrity (Noble & Heale, 2019). The validity of qualitative study depends on questions design, interviewing techniques, and interpretation (Cian, 2021). Additionally, the validity of qualitative study rest upon researchers themselves because the researchers are the primary instruments for data collection in qualitative research (Cian, 2021). Urban and van Eeden-Moorefield (2018) defined validity as a trustworthiness or the extent to which qualitative research findings can be trusted as a true representation of data collected and analyzed. Qualitative researchers use validity to ensure credibility, transferability, and confirmability of research studies (Facchinetti et al., 2021; FitzPatrick, 2019; Urban & van Eeden-Moorefield, 2018). To ensure validity, I established credibility, transferability, and confirmability for this qualitative doctoral study.

Credibility

Researchers use credibility to establish the study findings with reality (Moorley & Cathala, 2019). Credibility demonstrates the believability or truth of the findings, it ascertains whether the study findings are believable based on the participants' original data and participants' views (Moorley & Cathala, 2019). Researchers asserted that credibility of qualitative research ensures the study measures what is intended and is a true reflection of the social reality of the participants (Maher et al., 2018). Langtree et al. (2019) asserted that credibility determines plausibility of the researcher's interpretation and analysis in comparison to original data. To ensure credibility, I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) and conducted member checking to establish research credibility.

Researchers ensure credibility through member checking (Maher et al., 2018). DeCino and Waalkes (2019) asserted that member checking strengthens credibility in qualitative research, helps researchers increase accuracy of their findings, provide participants and researchers opportunities to discuss, clarify, summarize, and elaborate the findings during data analysis. Member checking is an important tool for establishing credibility and credibility helps researcher establish that findings are believable by other people (DeCino & Waalkes, 2019). Member checking is used to help researcher select participant(s) quotation(s) to be included in research manuscripts (DeCino & Waalkes, 2019). Korstjens and Moser (2018) noted that researchers ensure credibility by (a) investing sufficient time to familiarize themselves with the research contexts, (b) engage participants in a long-lasting way to get insights about their experiences and views, and (c) build trust with the participants through member checking. I used member checking to

establish credibility, to remove personal bias, and to enhance credibility of my doctoral study findings.

Researchers use triangulation to involve multiple sources and checking transcriptions or analysis with participants to confirm participants views of the research phenomenon (Gibbs, 2018). Qualitative researchers use triangulation to increase validity of the research findings (Kern, 2018). Yin (2018) asserted that qualitative researchers use triangulation to ensure research findings validity. Triangulation refers to the use of different ways of collecting or analyzing data and the cross-checking of these data to see if findings from different theories or different reliability checks of sources show similar results (Moorley & Cathala, 2019). Moorley and Cathala (2019) asserted that qualitative researchers use observations, focus groups, field notes, interviews, or member check to ensure triangulation. I obtained methodological triangulation using semistructured interviews and member checking to ensure credibility and validity for this study.

Transferability. Transferability determines whether study can be applied in different time, context, or group (Langtree et al., 2019). Smith (2018) asserted that when the readers believe the research overlap with their own situation, it is said the research is transferable. Transferability refers to the level of which the study findings can be transferred to other situations (Moorley & Cathala, 2019). The reader should look at the detail of the study including the methods and rigor applied and compare this to their own situation to determine if the findings can be applied to their own situation (Moorley & Cathala, 2019). Transferability of qualitative study relate to the ability of the findings to be transferred to other contexts or settings (Maher et al., 2018). Researchers guarantee

transferability by enhancing transferability judgement from the readers of their qualitative studies by providing rich account of the context of which the study was conducted, the research population, sample size, data collection methods, data analysis, and interpretation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure transferability, I provided a copy of the interview protocol (Appendix A) and data used to assist future researchers; to apply the findings from this study to other contexts.

Confirmability. Researchers use confirmability to minimize investigator bias by acknowledging researcher predisposition (Maher et al., 2018). O’Kane et al. (2021) asserted that confirmability show consistency and lack of bias in data analysis. Confirmability questions how the study findings are supported by the data and it identifies any bias that may have been present in the research (Moorley & Cathala, 2019). Confirmability is a level to which the findings can be confirmed or corroborated, and it is concern with determining that data and interpretations of the findings are not made up by the imagination, but clearly derived from the data (Moorley & Cathala, 2019). Confirmability show that researcher characteristics, bias, and assumptions do not influence research outcomes (Langtree et al., 2019). To ensure confirmability, I used multiple sources of data to mitigate biases and used the experiences of the participants to present the research findings.

Data saturation. Faulkner and Trotter (2017) defined data saturation as the point in research process where researcher discover no new information during data collection and analysis. Alam (2020) explained that data saturation is achieved when no new information found during interview and no new emerging theme found during data

analysis. Researchers seek saturation to support the conclusion of the research (Lowe et al., 2018). For this study, I achieved data saturation by interviewing five small business internet service providers leaders and member checked them to obtain rich data on the research topic. I continued conducting interviews and data analysis until no new themes emerged or the data began to repeat.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I included a summary of purpose statement, my role as the researcher, process to obtain study participants, and research method and design. I further included population, sampling, data saturation, acknowledgment of ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, and data analysis. I also included information about reliability, validity, and steps to ensure this research study has credibility, confirmability, and transferability. In Section 3, I will provide the (a) presentation of findings, (b) application to professional practice, (c) implications for social change, (d) recommendations for action, (e) recommendations for further research, (f) summarization of my experience during the DBA process, and (g) conclusion

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies leaders of small internet service providers used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The data were collected from semistructured interview of five leaders of small internet service providers operating in Juba, South Sudan who have successfully developed and implemented leadership strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The interview participants were asked seven questions (Appendix B) to answer the overarching research question:

What leadership strategies do leaders of small internet service providers use to sustain their companies beyond 5 years?

I reviewed related documents on the websites of the five companies to triangulate and validate the data from the interview. Three themes emerged from my analysis: teamwork, staff motivation, and effective communication. The findings from this study include the strategies business leaders could use to sustain their companies beyond 5 years of their establishment.

Presentation of the Findings

I conducted semistructured interview with five leaders of small internet service providers in Juba, South Sudan who have sustained their companies beyond 5 years and reviewed companies' websites to gain an in-depth understanding of strategies small internet service providers leaders used to sustain their companies. Upon data saturation, I conducted data analysis using thematic analysis. Three themes emerged from my

analysis: teamwork, staff motivation, and effective communication. Table 1 show the occurrence of frequency of the three themes

Table 1

Frequency of the Strategies Small Internet Service Providers Leaders Used to Sustain Their Businesses Beyond 5 Years

Theme	Frequency
Teamwork	14
Staff motivation	6
Effective communication	13

The study findings revealed that teamwork, staff motivation, and effective communication are strategies that business leaders used to sustain their companies beyond five years of establishment. The review of companies' documents validated the themes that emerged from analysis of the transcripts from the interviews

Theme 1: Teamwork

Teamwork emerged from the analysis of the data as an effective strategy for sustaining business beyond 5 years. All five participants mentioned teamwork as a strategy for sustaining their businesses. Teamwork is a process whereby a group of people come together and work collaboratively to achieve a set objective (Piljan et al., 2020). According to the five participants, working in a team helps business leaders overcome business related challenges, distribute power within a company, offer best services to the clients, keep their staff closer to them, lead staff in project implementation as leaders and not owner, and sustain their companies. This study findings revealed that the success of a small company depends on team coordination and collaboration, mutual respect, excellent decision-making, endurance, and efficient communication.

Additionally, this study revealed that for a team to succeed, business leaders define responsibilities and roles of team members, give every team member freedom to execute their functions, accept diverse opinions of team members, develop strong two-way communication among team members, and ensure each team member is held accountable for every deeds.

According to P1, teamwork helped them sustain their company despite the team diversity. “Teamwork helps us sustain the business despite our company having people from different cultural and religious background.” P1 also asserted the importance of bringing the diverse team together to pursue a common objective “if the manager brings these groups together, they will work as one body and you will see the success of the company.” P3 attributed success of their small business to power distribution and self-autonomy among team members because each team leader is responsible to pursue the company objective. “We distributed power and responsibilities to managers, each manager and his team are 100% responsible for what they are doing in their department whether technical or financial or department of sale and marketing.”

P4 and P5 emphasized the importance of business leaders working in conjunction with their employees without relying on boss-subordinate relationship. According to P4, creating a convenience working environment where employees and leaders mutually work closely for the benefit of a company help business leaders to understand challenges, weaknesses, and strengths of the employees and devised possible supports to make them achieve business sustainability. “I try to understand their mentality, I try to understand their mind, I try to read their mind exactly, who wants what, how do they feel to do this

work.” According to P5, working in collaboration with staff is a business strength that help business leaders to bring up good solutions to tackle day-to-day business problems.

We work together like there is no boss, there is no employee or something like that. So, we gather ideas from our staff, and we give chances to our employees to bring up good solutions for us to tackle our problems, how they are going to implement a project and we do it like in a teamwork.

According to P2, teamwork ensures employees collaboration, creativity, effectiveness, and company sustainability. “Through teamwork our employees were able to collaborate, they were effective to work, they were able to communicate effectively, and they added more creativity in their work therefore sustaining our company beyond five years.”

Evidence From Literature

Since success of a company is the responsibility of all stakeholders including managers, owners, and employees, teamwork is very important for a company’s sustainability (Piljan et al., 2020). The participants all agreed that team spirit positively impacts company sustainability. According to Piljan et al. (2020), lack of team spirit has negative impacts on company reputation, growth, efficiency, and sustainability. Business leaders use teamwork to pursue common goals, increase staff motivation, improve communication, and consolidate strengths of team members to achieve a common objective (Piljan et al., 2020). P1 uses teamwork to manage the diverse team with different cultural and religious backgrounds, this strategy helps them sustain their company beyond 5 years. All five participants believe that teamwork ensures synergy of

knowledge and skills, increase team commitment and dedication, and improve team mutual purpose. This belief is supported by Plijan et al. (2020) findings that complementarity of knowledge and skills, commitment, dedication, mutual purpose, and team identity help business leaders to sustain their companies.

P2 acknowledged that employees use teamwork to collaborate, communicate effectively, obtain more creative in their work, and ensure interpersonal interaction between a leader and staff. Delmas and Pekovic (2018) asserted that interpersonal interaction increases employee engagement, knowledge transfer, job satisfaction, motivation, and communication between a leader and subordinates, thereby improving employees' productivity. All participants agreed that success of a company is due to the collective efforts by staff and their leaders. Yap et al. (2020) found that teamwork can solve problems associated with communication breakdown, lack of complementarity, skills and knowledge gaps, and lack of trust in a company.

Evidence From the Conceptual Framework

I explored the phenomenon through the lens of transformational leadership theory. Burns introduced transformational leadership theory in 1978 and explained how some leaders were able to inspire, motivate, and induce a vision-driven change in their followers (Burns, 1978; Warrick, 2017). All the participants agreed that success of a small company depends on team coordination and collaboration, mutual respect, excellent decision-making, endurance, and efficient communication. A transformational leader inspires and leads followers toward achieving the organizational goals, creating a safe team climate, and sharing knowledge with the team members to improve team

performance (Anselmann & Mulder, 2020). TL inspires and empowers employees to gain the ability to achieve set goals of the organization and influence team performance (Anselmann & Mulder, 2020). Transformational leaders build strong teams for the organizations and encourage creativity, innovation, and involvement of the followers in the problem-solving process (Mahmood et al., 2019). TL promotes teamwork, challenges the work of team members, and inculcates the future organizational vision (Harb et al., 2020; Jia et al., 2018; Sperber & Linder, 2018). TL helps strengthen team creativity and innovativeness because idealized influence and individualized consideration is positively correlated to innovation (Sperber & Linder, 2018).

Theme 2: Staff Motivation

Staff motivation is a condition which encourages employees to engage and increases perceptions of the importance of specific organizational goals (Dartey-Baah & Addo, 2019). All five participants agreed that success of a small business depends on efforts of the employees and when employees are motivated, they contribute to the organizational growth and success. This theme revealed that staff motivation improves communication between the leader and the staff. Staff motivation increases commitment of the staff toward company goals. Staff motivation increases job satisfaction. Staff motivation improves work efficiency and facilitates individual staff development.

According to this finding, staff motivation is also important because motivated staff work hard, dedicate themselves to the business's goal, and remain more loyal to the business. All five participants agreed that motivation boosts staff morale, making them feel valued and appreciated. According to this finding, small business leaders should

facilitate employee motivation, find out what employees need, and devise strategies to motivate them because the success of a business depends on the efforts of the employees.

P1, P4, and P5 revealed that they motivate their staff through training and workshops to develop staff skills to execute tasks related to customer service and support. P1 stated, “motivation involves training the staff, conducting workshops for them, giving them finance motivation, and word-of-mouth appreciation.” P4 noted,

Whenever any employees join my company, I try to understand his best skill. So, I try to find out and read about that employee’s best skill, and based on this, I try to develop that skill even more and that helps my company to grow up. So, all employees having the different skill I try to push them even more to develop their skill and that helps me develop them and the company.

P5 stated, “We communicate through training. We train them on how they are going to handle a customer, how to do installation and everything. But give them continuous training and continuous team cooperation between the management and normal staff.”

P1 and P3 revealed that they motivate their staff through incentives, promotions, finances, and word-of-mouth appreciation. P1 stated, “the motivation involves training the staff, conducting workshops for them, giving them finance motivation, and the word-of-mouth appreciation.” P3 indicated, “I motivate staff through promotion and incentives.” P2 adopted a strategy of creating a working environment with teamwork spirit for boosting staff morale to work best for the company. According to P2, “teamwork spirit motivate staff to work best for the company.”

Evidence From Literature

Though many business leaders focus their attention on financial motivation, all the participants agreed that effective staff motivation includes recognition, capacity building, conducive working environment, and a word-of-mouth appreciation. Pererva et al. (2018) asserted that staff motivation creates and maintains mutual relationship between the leader and the staff, ensures high productivity, profitability, growth, and sustainability. According to Pererva et al., motivated staff work hard for a company to realize high productivity, profitability, growth, and sustainability. According to Minai et al. (2020), when followers are motivated and inspired, they take the ownership of their work, act innovatively, perform beyond expectation, think independently, and willingly take on more responsibilities.

All participants agreed that managers have the role of motivating employees to improve their efficiency and commitment toward a company goal. Zaharova (2021) asserted that the importance of motivation is to improve employee commitment, loyalty, and performance. According to Zaharova, motivated staff assume full responsibility of pursuant of company goal, they work hard to realize organizational common objective, they are always patient and perseverance, and effective in their work. The participants agreed that when staff are not motivated, they always live under stressful condition and more likely to leave a company. Kariuki (2021) found that staff motivation increases staff retention, self-efficacy, organizational commitment, and organizational performance. Mayende and Musenze (2018) asserted that motivated staff stay longer in a company, thereby improving company productivity, profitability, growth, and sustainability. The

participants agreed that staff motivation encourage them to work for the success of the company. According to Lees and Dhanpat (2021), employee motivation is an important aspect of organizational effectiveness, productivity, growth, and sustainability.

Evidence From the Conceptual Framework

I explored the phenomenon with the lens of transformational leadership theory. Burns introduced transformational leadership theory in 1978 and explained how some leaders were able to inspire, motivate, and induce a vision-driven change in their followers (Burns, 1978; Warrick, 2017). All five participants agreed that staff motivation improves communication, increases commitment, increases job satisfaction, improves work efficiency, and facilitates individual staff development. Through transformational leadership theory individualized consideration construct, leaders act as coaches and mentors and dedicate their time to develop the potential of followers to become intrinsically and extrinsically motivated (Sperber & Linder, 2018). According to Bass (1985), TL takes place in an organization when the followers become aware and motivated by the overall organizational goals. Supermane (2019) asserted that TL transform followers when leaders provide guidance and assistance through coaching, mentoring, and information sharing. TL is a leadership style in which followers gain trust and respect from their leaders and motivate them to achieve the goal of the organization (Boamah & Tremblay, 2019). With TL, employees are highly motivated to do more than what is expected because they experience trust, loyalty, warm approval, and respect from their leaders (Palalic & Mhamed, 2020).

Through individualized consideration, transformational leaders guide their followers in every activity they do, act as coaches and mentors, and dedicate their time to develop the potential of their followers to attain meaningful objectives (Bednall et al., 2018; Boukamcha, 2019; Ma et al., 2020; Palalic & Mhamed, 2020). Followers attain meaningful objectives through commitment (Rita et al., 2018). Committed followers work hard, rarely miss working hours, are satisfied with their jobs, highly productive, and do not easily intend to exit the company (Al-Yami et al., 2018; Mañas-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Palalic & Mhamed, 2020). Rita et al. (2018) stated that organizational commitment relates to subordinate's involvement into the cause of organizational goals. Palalic and Mhamed (2020) asserted that transformational leaders encourage their followers to be committed and prioritize the growth and development of their subordinates. Hassi (2019) found that individualized consideration of TL impacts affective commitment. According to Keskes et al. (2018), TL enhances followers' commitment and those committed followers tend to remain in the organization and have an emotional attachment to the organizational goal.

Keskes et al. (2018) found that intellectual stimulation led to an increase in affective commitment. Keskes et al. agreed with Jain and Duggal (2018) that TL provides job autonomy to followers because transformational leaders create an environment conducive for creativity and innovation. Jain and Duggal determined job autonomy and TL increase organizational commitment, which plays a significant factor in determining organizational long-term success. One of the tasks of transformational leaders is to build employees' commitment to stick to the mission and objectives of the organization where

they work (Islam et al., 2018; Palalic & Mhamed, 2020; Peng et al., 2020). TL influences organizational commitment impacts employee's commitment, and positively affects workplace attitudes and behaviors of employees (Yadav & Yadav, 2018).

Theme 3: Effective Communication

All five participants agreed that business leaders use effective communication to overcome challenges, retain subscribers, and know the available opportunities in the market. Additionally, business leaders use effective communication to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their companies. The findings revealed that effective communication ensures strong relationships among staff and helps a company to sustain itself. According to the five participants, effective communication improves team interaction, coordination, collaboration, cohesion, and performance. All five participants agreed that effective communication keeps the team energized and helps the team members to focus on organizational success.

P1 communicates business strategies to the staff and identifies problems and challenges facing each department, clients, and the company through meetings.

I communicate my strategies through regular meeting with the team. When you bring your staff together you will hear any problem facing every department of the company. You will hear also all challenges facing clients and other challenges facing the company.

P1 assigned staff with communication skills to interact with the subscribers. This strategy helps the company to retain subscribers. P1 noted that

Sometimes you need to give those with better communication skills to interact

with the clients because the sustainability of the company is through the clients. If you don't have clients or subscribers, you don't have finance, when you don't have finance the sustainability of the company will not be possible.

P1 asserted that better communication, endurance, and good management skills are important for sustaining a company. P1 stated, "the additional information I will add is that sustaining a business need endurance, better communication, and deployment of good management skills."

P2 uses effective communication with the aim of managing the diverse team, sharing the knowledge with the staff, and identifying opportunities in the market. P2 stated, "effective communication helps us know the available opportunities in the market. Effective communication brought us together though we come from difference cultural and religious background. Effective communication makes it easy for us to share knowledge." P3 uses motivation as the effective communication tool for communicating sustainability strategies to the staff "Through motivation in term of promotion and incentives, we communicate sustainability strategies to the staff."

P4 adopted negotiation techniques as the effective communication tool for addressing challenges facing the company. P4 stated, "It is about the negotiation truly speaking, any challenge is all about the negotiation. So, whenever the challenge come, I have to negotiated it accordingly as per the nature of the challenges." P5 uses training as the effective communication tool to transfer knowledge to the staff. P5 stated, "We communicate through training. We train them on how they are going to handle a

customer, how to do installation and everything. But give them continuous training and continuous team cooperation between the management and normal staff.”

Evidence From Literature

All five participants agreed that effective communication led to greater team efficiency, commitment, and higher performance. Vilmos (2020) found that business leaders who use effective communication in their organization build investors, creditors, and shareholders confidence in their firms. All participants agreed that leader effective communication positively impact staff performance, thereby increase company performance. Minai et al. (2020) found that leader inspirational communication influences employees’ desire for a meaningful sense of responsibility, competence, self-determination, and impactful actions aimed at improving firm performance.

All participants agreed that effective communication is the best leadership strategy used by small business leaders to interact with their staff. Though Eisenberg et al. (2019) found that TL is weaker when the geographical location of the team members is highly dispersed, many researchers agreed effective communication as a tool for improving company productivity and growth (Jensen et al., 2018). All participants agreed with Kapoor et al. (2021) finding that lack of effective communication causes conflict among team members, delays communication, and distorts messages.

Evidence From the Conceptual Framework

I explored the phenomenon through the lens of transformational leadership theory. Burns introduced transformational leadership theory in 1978 and explained how some leaders were able to inspire, motivate, and induce a vision-driven change in their

followers (Burns, 1978; Warrick, 2017). All participants agreed effective communication as the leadership strategy for improving staff cohesion, coordination, and understanding of company goal. Puni et al. (2021) asserted that TL induces a vision-driven change in followers by improving communication and understanding of business goals and needs. Jensen et al. (2018) recommended the importance of TL in managing small companies because face-to-face communication transform employees to promote the mission of their firms. Palalic and Mhamed (2020) found inspirational motivation a distinctive element of TL style that focuses on communication as the core to inspire staff motivation because transformational leaders communicate high expectations, use symbols, and express important purposes in simple terms. The participants agreed with Knezović and Drkić (2020) that transformational leaders improve employees attitudes because employees tend to associate organization's core values through the leaders. The participants agreed that through training, business leaders communicate effectively with their staff. This finding is relevant to Cohrs et al. (2019) finding that business leaders transform the behavior of their employees through training.

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings from this research are potentially important for business leaders to sustain their businesses. Small business leaders face challenges related to sustainability; however, the adoption of effective leadership strategies determine the sustainability of small businesses (Engelbrecht & Samuel, 2019; Knezović & Drkić, 2020; Lee & Ding, 2020; Mañas-Rodríguez et al., 2020). The findings from this research indicated that small business leaders use teamwork, staff motivation, and effective communication as

leadership strategies to sustain their companies beyond 5 years of establishment. The study findings can help small business leaders in Juba, South Sudan to establish leadership strategies for sustaining small business beyond 5 years. The current and future leaders of small businesses can adopt the findings from this research to help them sustain their companies. The findings of this research can act as a guide for small business stakeholders such as regulators, scholars, and consultants to support the society.

The findings revealed that teamwork helps business leaders to pursue common goals, increase staff motivation, improve communication, and consolidate strengths of team members to achieve a common objective (Piljan et al., 2020). Small business leaders use teamwork to increase employee engagement, knowledge transfer, job satisfaction, motivation, and communication thereby improving employee's productivity (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018). Yap et al. (2020) found that teamwork can solve problems associated with a communication breakdown, lack of complementarity, skills and knowledge gaps, and lack of trust in a company.

Business leaders with motivated staff experience improved communication between leader and staff. Motivated employees demonstrate increased commitment toward company goals, increased job satisfaction, improved work efficiency, and individual staff development. This finding is supported by Pererva et al. (2018) who asserted that staff motivation creates and maintains mutual relationship between the leader and the staff, ensures high productivity, profitability, growth, and sustainability. Small business leaders motivate and inspire their followers to take ownership of their work, act innovatively, perform beyond expectation, think independently, and willingly

take on more responsibilities (Minai et al.,2020). The findings agreed with Zaharova (2021) who asserted that motivation improve employee commitment, loyalty, and performance. Small business leaders should motivate their staff to assume full responsibility of pursuing company goal (Zaharova, 2021).

The findings of this study agreed with Kariuki (2021) who found that staff motivation increases staff retention, self-efficacy, organizational commitment, and organizational performance. Small business leaders should focus their attention on staff motivation because motivated staff stay longer in a company, thereby improving company productivity, profitability, growth, and sustainability (Mayende & Musenze, 2018). The findings revealed employee motivation as an important aspect of organizational effectiveness, productivity, growth, and sustainability (Lees & Dhanpat, 2021)

Finally, the findings indicated effective communication as the leadership strategy for sustaining small business. Business leaders who use effective communication are better able to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their companies. Business leaders can use effective communication improves team interaction, coordination, collaboration, cohesion, and performance. This finding is supported by Vilmos (2020) who stated small business leaders who use effective communication increase investor, creditor, and shareholder confidence in their firms (Vilmos, 2020). The findings are supported by Minai et al. (2020) who found that leader inspirational communication influenced employees to desire meaningful sense of responsibility, competence, self-determination, and impactful actions aim at improving firm performance.

Implications for Social Change

The findings for this research suggest potential implications for social change that includes facilitating the prosperity of owners of small businesses. Business owners have potential to increase their incomes if their business continues to generate more profits. The findings have also availed potential strategies small businesses leaders can use to improve productivity, profitability, growth, and sustainability to reduce business failure. The findings have also offer potential to improve the economic wellbeing of the employees of the small businesses and their families through income generated from employment. Leaders who apply the strategies identified in this study may enable the South Sudan government to provide services beneficial to the community through revenue generated from taxes. The findings of this study may provide small business leaders in Juba and its neighborhood opportunities for improving their leadership strategies for sustaining small business beyond 5 years.

Recommendations for Action

Although 50% to 90% of small businesses fail because of the influence of their micro and macroeconomic environments (Martinez et al., 2019), small business contributes up to 60% of the GDP and provide up to 70% of employment (Hryhorash et al., 2018). In African nations, business failure is common because the environment is prone to volatility that impede successes of the small start-up businesses (Boso et al., 2019; Mendy & Hack-Polay, 2018). Though many factors contribute to the failure of small businesses, lack of effective leadership strategies plays a great role in company failure (Lee & Ding, 2020). The findings of this study demonstrate that small business

sustainability beyond 5 years depends on three leadership strategies: teamwork, staff motivation, and effective communication. Based on the findings of this research first, I recommend that business leaders adopt teamwork as a leadership strategy for achieving business sustainability. By implementing teamwork, business leaders must define responsibilities and roles of team members, give every team member freedom to execute their functions, encourage the acceptance of diverse opinions of team members, develop strong two-way communication among team members, and ensure each team member is held accountable for every deeds.

Second, I recommend business leaders adopt staff motivation as a leadership strategy for sustaining business beyond 5 years. By adopting staff motivation, business leaders can increase commitment of staff toward company goal, increase staff job satisfaction, improve staff work efficiency, and facilitate individual staff development. Based on these findings, business leaders should facilitate employee motivation, find out what employees need, and devise strategies to motivate them because the success of a business depends on the efforts of the employees.

Third, I recommend that business leaders adopt effective communication as a leadership strategy for sustaining business beyond 5 years. Effective communication helps business leaders overcome challenges, retain subscribers, know the available opportunities in the market, and ensures strong relationship among staff. Based on the findings, business leaders use effective communication to improve team interaction, coordination, collaboration, cohesion, and performance.

This study findings could be useful to small business leaders, business consultants, and scholars. Small business leaders could use teamwork, staff motivation, and effective communication as leadership strategies to sustain their companies. Business consultants could use findings to assist their clients on leadership strategy for sustaining a business. Scholars could review the findings, determine the literature gaps, and conduct further research. I intend to disseminate the results of this research to small business leaders and other interested groups through ProQuest Publication, journal publication, and small business seminars and conferences.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study had some limitations. The first limitation is the generalizability of the study findings to different location other than Juba, South Sudan. Future researchers could conduct the research in the other cities in South Sudan to improve the generalizability of the study finding. The second limitation is transferability of study findings outside of the study population. Future researchers could conduct a similar study for sectors other than internet service provision. A further recommendation is to expand the scope of the research beyond internet service provision to transferability. The third limitation is the choice of sample size of five participants. Doing similar research with a large sample size could provide rich additional insights into the study topic.

Reflections

This doctoral study took much longer time than I anticipated. Throughout this doctoral study I faced many challenges including sickness, lack of finance, and stresses of obtaining an American visa. However, through God's mercy, self-commitment,

perseverance, and determination, I was able to successfully complete this doctoral study. This doctoral study has expanded my knowledge of business leadership, management, and sustainability. My interaction with five small business leaders during the interviews and the literature review has helped me learned leadership strategies for sustaining small company beyond 5 years.

Conclusion

In South Sudan, micro and small businesses, as a percentage of total businesses have declined from 1.6% in 2010 to 1.0% in 2019 (NBS, 2020). Although there are many factors contributing to the failure of small businesses, lack of effective leadership strategies plays a significant role in company failure (Lee & Ding, 2020). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies leaders of small internet service providers used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

The study findings revealed that teamwork, staff motivation, and effective communication as strategies that business leaders used to sustain their companies beyond 5 years of establishment. According to the participants, working in a team helps business leaders overcome business related challenges, distribute power within a company, offer the best services to clients, build relationship with staff, lead staff in project implementation as leaders and not owners, and sustain their companies. The study findings revealed that success of a small company depends on team coordination and collaboration, mutual respect, excellent decision-making, endurance, and efficient communication.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

After obtaining the names and contacts of small internet service providers leaders who have successfully sustain their companies beyond 5 years, I will email a request for an interview with each leader. The email request follows:

Dear <Participant>,

As a leader for small internet service provider who has successfully sustained a small internet service provider beyond 5 years, I am requesting your participation in my doctoral study regarding strategies you used to sustain your company beyond 5 years.

I choose to invite you to participate in my doctoral study because of your experiences, successes, and knowledge relating to leadership strategies for sustaining small internet service provider beyond 5 years. I am inviting you to voluntarily participate in this study.

If you accept to participate in my study, allow me to interview you for a duration of one hour with 30 minutes of follow-up questions. I will audio record and transcribe your participation. I will hold the interview with you online at your appropriate time. After the interviews, I will ask you to review, verify, and provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the information I collected from you to ensure the validity of my analysis.

The purpose of this qualitative doctoral study is to explore leadership strategies small internet service providers leaders use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years in South Sudan. I have attached the consent form that outlines the procedures I will follow for this study as well as the interview questions for your review.

You are free to contact me directly by email if you have any questions.

Yours in Service,

Gai Chol Paul

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study about Leadership Strategies Executives Use to Sustain Small Businesses Beyond 5 Years. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study seeks at least five volunteers who are:

- small internet service provider leaders in Juba, who have successfully sustained their small internet service provider companies beyond 5 years

This study is being conducted by a researcher Gai Chol Paul, who is a doctoral student at Walden University under the supervision of Dr. Christopher Beehner. You might already know me as Executive Director for Charity and Empowerment Foundation, but this study is not related to that position

Study Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore leadership strategies small internet service providers leaders used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Procedures:

This study will involve you completing the following steps:

- Participate in online interview for a maximum of one hour and follow-up questions for 30 minutes about your experiences, successes, and knowledge relating to leadership strategies for sustaining small internet service provider beyond 5 years.
- Agree to have the interview audio taped.

- Validate the result of the analysis by checking the accuracy of analyzed data via email for 30 minutes

Here are some sample questions:

1. What leadership strategies have you used to sustain your business?
2. What strategies did you find worked best for sustaining your business beyond 5 years?
3. How did you communicate your sustainability strategies to employees?
4. What major obstacles, if any, have you overcome to implement the strategies to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
5. How did you overcome the major obstacles?
6. What challenges do you face that were unique to your organization's sustainability?
7. What additional information would you like to share regarding strategies you have used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not.

If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. I am inviting you to voluntarily participate in this doctoral study. If you accept to participate now and decide not to later, you can voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time you choose. You have absolute rights to refuse to answer any questions you

think you cannot answer during the interview. You can also request the interview to be stopped when you are stressed or feel uncomfortable.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this study could involve some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life such as sharing sensitive information. With the protections in place, this study would pose minimal risk to your wellbeing during your participation in this study include fatigue due to lengthy of interview and unwanted memories of your experiences for last the 5 years.

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. The aim of this study is to benefit society by benefiting business leaders to develop appropriate strategies and apply them to improve key business process to ensure businesses gain competitive advantage and be sustained beyond 5 years. The results of this doctoral study will contribute to the literature on business practice and help business leaders address the gaps in strategies for enabling the leaders to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The findings for this study may provide proven strategies for small internet service providers to improve business processes for improving business' profitability. Once the analysis is complete, the researcher will share the overall results by emailing you a summary of finding and link to study.

Payment:

No financial payment to participants of this doctoral study.

Privacy:

The researcher is required to protect your privacy. Your identity will be kept confidential, any other identifying markers will not be included in this study within the limits of the law. The researcher will use codes instead of names and other identifiable markers to conceal your identity. The researcher will not use your personal information for any

purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by storing and keeping it in a lockable cabinet where nobody has access to and store all audio record in a password secured computer which I will decommission from use. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You can ask questions of the researcher by +21923536261, or email, gai.paul@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 001-612-312-1210 or irb@mail.waldenu.edu. Walden University's approval number for this study is **11-18-21-0756049**. It expires on **November 17, 2022**.

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words "I consent."

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. What leadership strategies have you used to sustain your business?
2. What strategies did you find worked best for sustaining your business beyond 5 years?
3. How did you communicate your sustainability strategies to employees?
4. What major obstacles, if any, have you overcome to implement the strategies to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
5. How did you overcome the major obstacles?
6. What challenges do you face that were unique to your organization's sustainability?
7. What additional information would you like to share regarding strategies you have used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?