2023

Business Success Strategies for Military Veteran Small Business Owners

Traci De-Shay Leonard
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Traci De-Shay Leonard

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

Review Committee
Dr. Ronald Black, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Allen Endres, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

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

Walden University
2023

Abstract

Business Success Strategies for Military

Veteran Small Business Owners

by

Traci De-Shay Leonard

MS, University of Phoenix, 2014

BS, Regents, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2023

Abstract

Some military veteran small business owners lack strategies for sustaining their business beyond 5 years. Military veteran small business owners are concerned with survivability as it ensures sustained employment opportunities for veteran small business owners and their employees and increases local community tax revenue for citizens. Grounded in the organizational learning theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies military veteran small business owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The participants comprised three military veteran small business owners in Central Texas who sustained their businesses for over 5 years. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and reviews of related organization documents. Yin's five-stage data analysis process was used to analyze the data. Three themes emerged: obtaining capital, overcoming barriers, and sustainability. A key recommendation is for military veteran small business owners to attend small business sponsor events and conferences. The implication for positive social change includes the potential for military veteran small business owners to provide better opportunities within veteran networks and improvements in the local communities where retired veterans conduct their business.

Business Success Strategies for Military

Veteran Small Business Owners

by

Traci De-Shay Leonard

MS, University of Phoenix, 2014

BS, Regents, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2023

Dedication

I dedicate this research study to my children, Dominique Hilliard and Nicole Henderson, and all of my grandchildren for being my sunshine and my energy drink. Also, to my parents, Weldon and Cleotha Leonard, for their love and support. I am grateful for all the love and support from my siblings, Stacy, Weldon Jr. (Duke), and Macey. May God continue to bless you and your families.

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge my Almighty God for his strength and unconditional love. I would like to acknowledge my chair, Dr. Ronald Black, and all committee members for their support and professional guidance. I would also like to thank all participants for their time and for making this doctoral study possible. Finally, I thank my family and friends for their support and energy.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Veteran-owned small businesses contribute to the U.S. economy by providing employment for 4.2 million workers (U.S. Small Business Administration [SBA], 2018a). There are 379,620 veteran-owned businesses in the United States. Small businesses comprise the majority of these firms, with 99.9% veteran-owned employer businesses classified as small in size due to having fewer than 500 employees. In 2016, 71% of veteran-owned business owners had engaged in active-duty military service. In this study, participating veteran business owners were 65 years of age or older, and 46% of the participating veteran owners had been in business for 16 years or more.

Background of the Problem

A local economy requires innovation and growth; small businesses were a means of providing employment during the pandemic and increased tax revenue. U.S. economy's lifeline is small businesses, which provide two-thirds of the net of new jobs and are drivers of innovation and competitiveness in the United States (SBA, 2019). Between 1998 and 2014, small businesses produced 44% of the economic activity in the United States (SBA, 2019b).

In 2018, Texas small businesses provided 99.8% of all employment (SBA, 2018b). Texas small business owners employed 45.1% of the provider workforce in 2016 (SBA, 2019). However, according to Tunstall et al. (2016), a lack of capital, a lack of access to information, and improper management have obstructed the development of small businesses in the state. One problem is that small businesses often do not have human resources professionals who can document changes in the workplace or workforce policies and standards. Small businesses operate differently from large businesses due to financial arrangements and business size.

Problem Statement

Some military veterans lack knowledge and awareness of the tools and services available for their entrepreneurial visions (SBA, 2016). The SBA (2017) indicated that 2.52 million businesses were majority-owned by veterans, had sales receipts of $1.14 million, provided employment for 5.03 million people, and had an annual payroll of $195 billion. However, new veteran-owned small business ventures tend to failure, and 50% of newly veteran-owned established startups do not remain in business within the first 5 years of operation (Cumberland, 2016). The general business problem is that some veteran small business owners do not effectively manage their businesses, which could result in profit loss. The specific business problem is that some veteran small business owners lack strategies for sustaining their businesses beyond 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that veteran small business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The target population consisted of veteran business owners from three organizations in Central Texas who had successfully operated their small businesses for longer than 5 years. The implications for positive social change included sustained employment opportunities for veteran small business owners and their employees and increased local community tax revenue for citizens.

Nature of the Study

The three research methods considered for this study were qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Because researchers use the qualitative approach to extract in-depth information from the participants (Lyall & King, 2016), it was the appropriate method for this study. Quantitative researchers use statistical and numerical analyses to explain the characteristics of and relationships between the variables (Goertzen, 2017). Therefore, quantitative methodology would have been an inappropriate approach for this study because there were no statistics used to examine the variables' characteristics or relationships. However, this study included supporting documents, including financial records. Mixed methods researchers use both qualitative and quantitative methods (Schrauf, 2017). The mixed methods approach was not appropriate for this study because the there was no need for quantitative methodology to address the study's purpose. Therefore, the qualitative research methodology was appropriate for identifying and exploring the participants' knowledge and firsthand experiences.

The qualitative research designs considered for this study were case study, phenomenology, and ethnography. The multiple case study design was an appropriate approach for this study. According to Pannone (2017), case study researchers explore a phenomenon with a variety of data types and sources. A single case study design is a single set of outcomes evaluated with less certainty of occurrence (Yin, 2018). In contrast, researchers use multiple cases to raise new questions and address what, how, and why outcomes might have occurred for higher certainty. Therefore, the multiple case study design was appropriate for exploring the strategies the veteran business owners used to sustain their small businesses for longer than 5 years. Phenomenological researchers explore how individuals relate a phenomenon to their personal experiences and perspectives (Bastug et al., 2017). The phenomenological design was not an appropriate approach because a phenomenon of personal experience and perspective was not relevant to the purpose of this study. Ethnographic researchers observe and participate in a cultural group's settings and interactions (Ryan, 2017); however, observing and participating in a cultural group's interactions and settings to characterize the cultural environment was not an appropriate approach for this research study. Instead, the goal was to explore the strategies the military veteran business owners used to sustain their small businesses. As a result, exploring the strategies used in veteran-owned small businesses with the multiple qualitative case study design was the most appropriate approach.

Research Question

What strategies do military veteran small business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

1. What business strategies did you use to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
2. What sources did you use to fund your business throughout the first 5 years?
3. What key barriers did you experience that prevented you from implementing strategies for sustaining your business in the long term?
4. How did you address the key barriers to your strategies for business success?

5. What strategies have you used to leverage government funding for the sustainability of your business?
6. What additional information can you provide to about the strategies you found effective for the success of your veteran-owned business during its first 5 years of operation?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the organizational learning theory (OLT) proposed by Argyris and Schön (1978). According to Argyris and Schön, organizational learning includes the prevention, detection, and correction of errors. Researchers have emphasized consistent evaluation and accountability of professional knowledge (including technical knowledge skills) and professional practices to achieve outcomes (Louis & Murphy, 2017). The key to understanding the nature and processes of organizational learning are the concepts of common interest, shared learning, and management of change within an organization (Field, 2017).

Single-loop and double-loop learning are the two processes of organizational learning. Single-loop learning occurs when members of the organization respond to change without altering their action frameworks (Mo, 2017). In single-loop learning, the organizations correct errors without altering the underlying governing processes (Reychav et al., 2016). Double-loop learning occurs when the organizational members correct errors by changing the governing processes to implement corrective action. Metallinou (2017) stated that scholars use the single- and double-loop learning theory to ensure the efficacy of the learning process.

Organizational learning was an appropriate lens for this qualitative case study of military veteran-owned small businesses. Saadat and Saadat (2016) defined organizational learning as the process of improving organization members' ability to look forward to learning and aligning the organization's strategy. According to Aranda et al. (2017), organizational learning consists of capturing the participants' experiences and knowledge of the organization, codified in routines, rules, and procedures (explicit knowledge), and embodied in the mental model, schemata, culture, and individual cognition (tacit knowledge). Veteran business owners who understand organizational learning could increase their profits, improve their businesses' reputations, attract more customers and business partners, influence social change within their communities, and provide insights into strategies for sustaining businesses longer than 5 years

Operational Definitions

Business success: Business success occurs based on the total investment in the venture. Business success is not a phenomenon limited to physical inputs, such as financial capital, but to intangible resources (Baluku et al., 2018).

Organizational learning: Organizational learning is a change in the organization's knowledge base that occurs due to experience (Odor, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

According to Yang et al. (2018), an assumption is something the researcher accepts as sure or takes for granted without proof or facts. There were two assumptions in this study. The first assumption was that the participants provided accurate and trustworthy responses to the interview questions. The second assumption was that the participants responded to all interview questions without personal motives.

Limitations

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), limitations occur based on the study's conceptual framework and design. This study had two limitations. The first limitation was there a potential for bias in some of the participants' responses. The second limitation was the participants may not have responded honestly to my interview questions.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the elements of the research purposely left out by the researcher. A research study should include a discussion of what the researcher intends to do; however, the delimitations indicate what the researcher will not do (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This study occurred with three delimitations: (a) the restricted geographic location, (b) the participants were veterans who owned small businesses in the business industry in Central Texas, and (c) the study included only veteran small business owners who had sustained their business operations for longer than 5 years.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Knowledge sharing is a critical means of building an organization's sustainability (Farooq, 2018). Ouakouak and Ouedraogo (2018) explored the influence of organizational commitment and trust on knowledge sharing. Organization leaders should investigate factors such as ethics and trust to ensure successful business performance and committed employees. This study's findings could provide small business leaders with an understanding of how to use management processes to influence trust, commitment, and knowledge sharing to improve organizational learning strategies and sustain business performance.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Social change requires altering social behaviors in the workplace. The findings of this study showed how market-based organizations address challenges and stimulate transformational processes to advance positive social change (Stephan et al., 2016). This study's findings could enable business leaders to achieve the social transformation of business relationships and values through economic growth and technological innovations. This study's findings could be a catalyst for improving organizational culture, gaining positive business reputations, and ensuring business success and sustainability. Organizational development could enable the owners of small businesses to focus on effectiveness and improve their reputations to contribute to their communities (Bushe & Marshak, 2017). The findings of this study suggest how to increase the sustainability of veteran-owned small businesses, which, in turn, could contribute to sustained employment opportunities for military veterans who own small businesses and their employees for increased tax revenue and benefits for citizens.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies used by military veterans who own small businesses to sustain their businesses longer than 5 years. The reviewed literature consisted of primarily peer-reviewed articles published within 5 years (i.e., 2016–2021). The literature review provides a thorough review of the recent research to address the scope of sustainability and the organizational learning theory (OLT). The discussions in the literature review are based on scholarly peer-reviewed studies and other literature on small businesses, organizational learning, workplace learning, organizational sustainability, and organization-related topics.

I used the following keywords to retrieve information from the Walden University Library and other databases: *organizational learning, competitiveness organizational culture, social learning theory, organizational behavior, transformational leadership, profitability, knowledge management, sustainability, technology sustainability, workplace behavior,* and *learning*. The databases searched were ABI/Inform, Business Source Complete, Emerald Insight, Google Scholar, Political Science Complete, ProQuest, PsycINFO, Sage Journals, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. I used Ulrich's Web global Serial Directory to ensure the articles were peer-reviewed and accessed Crossref.org to find citations and links to journals and books with digital object identifier technology. Table 1 contains a summary of the peer-reviewed sources used in this literature review.

Table 1

Literature Review Sources Summary

Literature type	2016 and newer	2015 and older	Total
Peer-reviewed journals	121	25	146
Percentage (%)	.828	.171	100

Organizational Learning Theory

Organizational learning could have an influence on organizational performance (Betra et al., 2015). Learning occurs by introducing ways of doing and implementing knowledge in an organization. The variation selection retention cycle happens when organizations learn through experiences and gain new knowledge to resolve problems or improve performance (Berta et al., 2015).

One way of understanding performance and its relationship to learning is distinguishing between single-loop and double-loop organizational learning. According to the organizational learning process of Argyris and Schön (1995), organizational learning correlates to the degree of change, commitment, and questioning (Mo, 2017). Mo (2017) argued that single-loop learning and organizational learning loop result when company leaders learn without changing their action frameworks. Most company leaders use the single-loop learning process when managing minor problems with defined goals. The double-loop learning process requires a change in the disagreement between the method used and chosen method. According to Argyris and Schorn, double-loop learning consists of challenging and questioning systems and policies by questioning the extant processes and procedures. Jaaron and Backhouse (2017) used the Vanguard method, a systematic approach for service operations design, to activate double-loop learning in service operations. Jaaron and Backhouse pointed out the connection between double-loop learning and organizational performance, noting that double-loop learning is necessary for organizational survival and growth.

Organizational Learning

Organizational learning and knowledge strategy could have an impact on sustaining a competitive advantage. Employees prefer different organizational learning approaches when striving to improve management practices (Liu & Ren, 2019). Mohammad (2019) administered a quantitative survey questionnaire to approximately 600 corporate respondents and business managers who worked in commercial banking. Mohammad found that organizational learning had a significant effect on the relationship between strategic change and firm performance. Further, the researcher indicated that managers must understand the type of environment and learning needed to implement various strategic changes to improve workplace performance. Also, organization leaders should be proactive with organizational learning and incorporate changes to compete in competitive environments.

Strategic leadership is a way to improve learning opportunities, job performance, and organizational commitment (Lee & Welliver, 2018). Naim and Lenka (2020) argued that organizational learning, competency development, and affective commitment positively correlate to strategic leadership. Milic et al. (2017) stated that leadership is the key to fostering organizational learning that indicates the success or failure of learning organizations. Employees contribute to organizational learning, and their commitment is essential to building a learning organization. Committed employees who work hard perform better when motivated by organization leaders who focus on learning and create a work climate of trust, openness, and transparency.

Asif (2019) explored the role of exploration and exploitation strategies in organizational learning and the impact of strategic leadership on the organizational learning process, focusing on organizational learning at the individual, group, and organizational levels. Transformational leadership had a positive impact on the role of exploration in individual and group learning but a negative impact on the role of exploitation in institutional learning. Transactional leadership had a positive impact on the role of exploitation in institutionalized learning but a negative impact on the role of exploration in individual and group learning. Overall, Asif found leadership styles counterproductive for individual/group and institutionalized learning.

After collecting data from a survey and analyzing their proposed hypotheses, Pham and Hoang (2019) identified a relationship between organizational learning capacity and business performance. The authors found that organizational learning capability had a positive effect on business performance, which consists of management commitment to learning and knowledge transfer and integration. The results suggest that firm leaders could improve business performance by enhancing organizational learning capability.

Calisir et al. (2016) examined the effects of organizational learning market orientation and transformational leadership on the organizational innovation and business performance of Turkish firms. The authors gathered data from 330 employees with the quantitative method, finding that organizational innovation, market orientation, and organizational innovation accounted for 32% of business performance. However, organizational learning had no significant effect on a firm's performance, transformational leadership, and organizational innovation.

Organizational Performance

The number of employees could have an impact on the performance outcomes of businesses (Pett et al., 2019). Employees' commitment to their organizations could also affect organizational performance (Nikpour, 2017). Organization leaders spend significant money and time on achieving high performance. Organizational performance is the sum of all business accomplishments, including effectiveness, efficiency, productivity, quality, and innovation. Employees can improve their productivity with the performance appraisal style of management and tend to have positive responses to surprise bonuses (Ameer, 2017). Ultimately, employees exhibit improved performance within an excellent organizational culture in which leaders motivate employees to share objectives and goals directly related to organizational goals and missions.

Organizational learning processes could have an impact on organizational performance and trust in management (Oh, 2019). Oh (2019) administered surveys to 515 purposively sampled respondents from a top firm in Korea to collect data. The purpose of this study was to identify the effect of organizational learning procedures on organizational performance and management trust. The PROCESS macro for SPSS was the tool used to analyze the data. Oh found that feedback learning flow (existing knowledge) occurred between learning stock (meaning standard) and organizational performance. Learning flow is the sharing of knowledge within an organization and with the trust established by leaders. Also, organizational justice was a controller of the effect of learnin g stocks on organizational performance through feed-forward learning (new knowledge), whereas trust in managers was a moderator of the effect of learning on organizational performance through feedback learning flow.

Organizational learning is essential for the survival of an organization (Alerasoul et al. 2022). Oh (2019) argued that trust in the organization and leadership are necessary to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from an individual to the organizational level and vice versa. The author found a relationship between learning stocks, the transfer of feedback learning flow, and organizational performance. Also, Oh addressed what motivates people in organizations to share or hoard their knowledge. Trust in the organizational system and management had a role in the relationship with organizational performance.

After conducting telephone surveys with 400 Spanish firms, Obeso et al. (2020) found that knowledge generation (KG) and knowledge flow (KF) contribute to firm performance. The authors also indicated that organizational learning is a mediator of the relationship between KG and performance and KF and performance. Obeso et al. suggested that managers focus their efforts and commitment on promoting shared culture, shared vision, open-mindedness to new ideas, and conversations with employees.

Training Focus

Gopalkrishnan (2017) investigated the link between humor training in workgroups for increased productivity and greater startup business survival, with a startup defined as a venture less than a year old. The author administered questionnaires to a sample of 50 firms to collect data on humor, cognition, perceptiveness, motivation, and communication and used observation and recording devices to document all the startup meetings. The findings showed that humor in groups resulted in improved team performance, and teams with humor training showed reduced stress levels. Humor training also positively correlated with meeting team objectives.

Learning Through Games

Games could have an influence on organizational learning, which includes knowledge, skills, techniques, and practices (Argyis & Schön, 1995). Playing a game allows for understanding complex issues within a complex environment due to systemic character (Vallat et al., 2016). According to Argyis and Schön (1995), learning through serious games aligns with two learning methods: single-loop and double-loop. Double-loop learning is a means to determine what type of behavior is appropriate and the correct course of action to achieve the expected result. In Vallat et al.'s case study, the students on a team in an organizational learning situation faced a problem in the game and looked for solutions on behalf of their teams.

Motivating Organizations to Learn

Motivation could have an effect on the learning process within an organization. Organizations must learn and adapt to succeed in today's business environment in the learning process among individuals, teams, and organizations (Chadwick & Raver, 2012). A relevant approach to OLT study, achievement goal theory focuses on the motivation tendency to pursue different goals based on beliefs. Goal orientation can influence how organizations approach, interpret, and respond to situations and challenges. According to Chadwick and Raver (2012), employees and teams seek learning opportunities to increase their experiences and promote participation. Researchers continue to study and debate the impact of organizational learning factors on employees and job performance.

Innovation Within Organizations

Innovation could result in increased learning in organizations. The most effective firms enhance the level of learning in their organizations (Kreiser, 2011), and innovativeness enables them to develop new organizational routines and discover new approaches, products, technology, and processes. These capabilities enable new levels of innovation (Hoopes & Postrel, 1999), which results in an increase in a firm's learning capabilities through double-loop learning (Aryris & Schön, 1978). Kreiser (2011) pointed out that organizational learning occurs in two firm-level methods: (a) the external acquisition of knowledge-based resources outside of the firm and (b) the internal integration and exploitation of knowledge-based resources to produce new knowledge within the firm. Scholars have argued that future research on the examination of innovativeness, which results in positivity, could contribute to increased learning within organizations and employee engagement.

Organizational Learning Theory (OLT) could contribute to innovation and sustainability strategies. Brix (2020) investigated how organizations sought to build their capacity to create a local balance between exploration and exploitation with a focus on sustainable innovation. The author used multiple research methods, including participant observation, semistructured interviews, and document analysis. From an organizational learning perspective, Brix identified three levels of analysis: individual, group/team, and organizational. The author used the four microprocesses of intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing to explain how knowledge related to exploration and exploitation processes across the three levels.

Organizational learning could have an impact on management innovation. In a study of 544 respondents from 272 firms, Yang et al. (2020) examined the effect of the interaction between market learning and (exploration and exploitation) organizational capabilities (technological capabilities and marketing capabilities) on management innovation. Yang et al. used OLT to explain management innovation, finding that exploratory and exploitative market learning had a positive effect on management innovation. Management innovation required knowledge within the organization, which encouraged the Chinese firm leaders to seek and acquire external sources of knowledge. Two challenges arose when the firm leaders used external knowledge to access valuable knowledge and apply acquired knowledge for innovation. Although management innovation required knowledge within the organization, it enabled the firms to seek and acquire external sources of knowledge.

Tang et al. (2017) examined the underlying procedures through which a high-performance work system influenced employee creativity. The quantitative study consisted of sampling 268 employees and matching supervisors from two pesticide chemical companies in China. After testing the hypotheses with linear regressions, Tang et al. found that the high-performance work system increased perceived organizational support and promoted employee creativity. The results also showed that devoted management was a positive moderator of the relationship between organizational support and employee creativity. This study indicates that employee creativity and management support have an influence on organizational performance.

Open innovation practices are effective means of building an organization, human resources, and organizational capabilities through management intervention (Podmetina et al., 2018). In a quantitative study, Podmetina et al. (2018) focused on competency sets for open innovation and provided recommendations for open innovation competency development in companies linked to open innovation processes. Although they ensured that the senior managers handled the innovation, the authors could not exclude bias in open innovation activities and perceived related competencies. Overall, Podmetina et al. (2018) contributed to the open innovation management of implementation and flexibility needed to tailor the firm's needs. This study indicates that innovation is a necessary means of improving management development and organizational growth.

Simón-Moya and Revuelto-Taboada (2016) analyzed the relationship between business plan quality and the survival rate of new ventures, a topic not yet researched. The authors used the quantitative method for over 3 years to discuss their study findings and recommendations. One finding was that new ventures had a vital role in economic growth, job creation, and innovation. The primary objective of this study was to test whether the business plan was a predictor of venture survival. However, Simón-Moya et al. found that business places are not predictors of the business success of new ventures. The findings also indicated the need to consider other essential factors in survival chances, such as the entrepreneur's background, education, and experience. Another factor was venture characteristics. The authors argued that newness, the inability to develop new roles, and trial-and-error processes could predict the failure of new ventures. Another finding was that a quality business plan contributed to a business's chance of survival.

Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Recruitment and retention strategies could help small businesses achieve sustainability. Campion et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative study to examine if practice tests effectively improved organizational and applicant outcomes during personnel selection. The study entailed extensive research on recruitment, personnel selection, staffing, human capital theory, and signaling theory. Data collection was from a large sample of potential applicants and applicants who eventually applied for jobs who took practice tests. The findings suggest that practice tests could be means of enhancing organizational outcomes, increasing the quality of applicants, reducing the cost of testing unqualified applicants, and reducing adverse impacts (the situation where passing rates form minority candidates on assessment—e.g., Black, Hispanic, and female applicants). The applicant outcomes included increased human capital, greater chances of eventual employment, and reduced disappointment and wasted effort from unsuccessful applications. Campion et al.'s findings aligned with this study by focusing on successful recruitment and retention strategies for small businesses and their employees.

Aggerholm and Andersen (2018) explored the influence of social media recruitment communication strategy and how it added value to and challenged conventional recruitment communication management. The authors provided new approaches for recruiting employees and challenged the employees to focus from work-life to private life. Social media is a strategy for shaping personnel recruitment and selection processes and advancing businesses (Rahman et al., 2020). Social media is the best strategy for searching for talent; therefore, organizations must reexamine their approaches and update their social media policies (Madia, 2011).

Retention and recruitment strategies, such as positive work culture, opportunities for individual growth and development, and salary and benefits packages, are means of supporting retention (Shanker, 2019). Business leaders can use recruitment strategies to attract and retain capable employees of different genders, marital statuses, and ethnicities (Wiley, 1992).

Hawkins and Hoon (2019) used systems theory to examine the impact of customer retention strategies on small businesses' long-term profitability. Data collection came from interviews with leaders with approximately 15 years of experience and between 39 and 48 years of age. Hawkins and Hoon found that emotional factors, satisfaction, trust, and quality assurance had a direct impact on customer retention and contributed to customer engagement and behavior. This study's findings could contribute to this research by providing insight into the importance of customer retention for small business sustainability and the best practices for impacting profitability and maintaining relationships with existing customers.

Employee Engagement

McKeown and Cochrane (2017) examined the links between human resources management innovation and organizational performance by investigating the perspectives of the workforce. The quantitative study consisted of 375 professional independent contractors in an Australian organization who completed an online questionnaire. The authors found that organizational support was a significant predictor of work engagement and affective commitment; self-efficacy, age, and gender were also significant predictors. Work engagement benefits customers and contributes to employees' relationships and work environments. The study showed that engaged employees tended to perform at higher levels and get more involved in their work.

Choo et al. (2013) identified a relationship between organizational practices and employee engagement in a study of 97 respondents in Malaysia. Organizational practices, such as communication, rewards and recognition, and employee development, correlated with increased employee engagement, ultimately enhancing organizational practices and improving employee engagement. Tomlinson (2010) looked at the keys to improving employee engagement, suggesting that company leaders create and sustain a highly engaged workforce through collective engagement. Career opportunities and meaningful work are necessary for employees to fully engage and work for companies with trust and respect (Craig & Silverstone, 2010). Creative process engagement, which consists of receiving support from supervisors, could have an effect on employees' engagement and in-role performance (Du et al., 2016). Highly engaged employees tend to feel satisfied with their careers and a sense of well-being in their lives (Joo & Lee, 2017).

In contrast, employee engagement might correlate with turnover intentions. Leaders should retain performers and build strategies to reduce high turnover (Sandhya & Sulphey, 2020). Fair performance appraisals and employee engagement have a positive effect on employees and managers (Gupta & Kumar, 2012). Because service orientation and leadership style also affect employee engagement, organizational leaders should use the appropriate leadership style and service orientation relationship to boost growth and retrain employees (Popli & Rizvi, 2015). As Chawla (2019) noted, employer branding strategies provide the tools needed to recruit and retain good employees and enhance employee engagement. Organizational support for employee performance and commitment could correlate with increased employment engagement (Nazir & Islam, 2017). In addition to commitment, human resources management practices such as job security, career advancement, performance feedback, and recognition correlate with a significant and direct improvement in employee engagement (Aktar & Pangil, 2018). Managers should reconsider their organizational policies to develop strategies to support employee-level engagement.

Management Oversight

Smith (2016) evaluated the relationship between managerial intentions and the market's purpose, withholding the ethical responsibility of business activity of efficiency. The author discussed Heath's market failure approach, which suggests that the market is a domain of action because it has rules of conduct structured for competition between firms to produce and exchange goods and services. As a result of this study, business managers must take its underlying values as delineating and clarifying ethical business conduct's objectives.

Strömberg et al. (2019) investigated the differences in management approaches at the intersection of an organization's central and local parts. Following interviews with 28 first-line managers in the care of older adults, the authors found that most first-line managers perceived differences in management approaches between local and central management. The difference caused some difficulty because the first-line managers felt the management system did not support their differences, influencing the condition of management. The study results showed the importance of the sustainable management of older adult care, providing new knowledge on handling management struggles and reducing energy waste and low job satisfaction.

Two crucial aspects of decision-making are a commitment to and strategies for legitimizing the decision (Hellman et al., 2019). Hellman et al. (2019) conducted semistructured interviews with 18 Swedish representatives, using a constant comparative method to analyze the data. The study's purpose was to explore the management group's perspectives and motives for using a model for systematic work environment management. The findings suggest the importance of supporting management's work to establish a commitment to the model in the municipal organizations. The study also indicates the need to discuss decisions in a larger group to avoid building organizational initiatives based on one person's expectations. Hellman et al. added to the knowledge of decision-making and the systemic work environment management in organizations.

Leadership and Business Growth

Leaders play a significant role in small businesses, as they must meet performance, growth, and financial goals. Putra and Cho (2019) explored the characteristics of small independent restaurant leaders, addressing the knowledge gap to understand the leadership characteristics of small restaurant owners. The scholars collected data from four focus groups and one interview with employees. Putra and Cho found that poor leadership was an indicator of business failure due to the absence of operation procedures and a shortage of leadership personnel. The findings presented nine themes of the participants' leadership qualities: respectful, compassionate, effective communicator, experienced, effective delegator, gives recognition, sociable, emotionally controlled, and organized.

Hendriks et al. (2020) examined the relationship between leadership and employee well-being. The scholars administered an online survey to approximately 1,237 employees who worked with an immediate supervisor across various industries in the United Kingdom and the United States. Using structural equation modeling to test their hypotheses, Hendriks et al. found that immediate supervisors' leadership had a positive influence on three aspects of work-related well-being: job satisfaction, work-related effect, and work engagement. Further, the authors found that core leader virtues (prudence, temperance, justice, courage, and humanity) positively influenced work-related well-being. Hendriks et al. also discussed the implications of promoting virtuous or good leadership for improving employee well-being to benefit employees and improve organizational performance. Overall, the authors addressed how ethical leadership relates to employee well-being and trust. Small business leaders can maintain sustainability and business ethics by using ethical leadership practices to improve employment, economic sustainability, and business growth.

Small businesses' growth and sustainability are essential drivers of socioeconomic development (Bonsu & Kuofie, 2019). The United States has the best small business growth worldwide due to capitalism, which contributes to entrepreneurship. About 27 million small businesses in the United States account for 50% of the gross domestic product. Small businesses should have certain business practices, such as management knowledge, customer relations, accounting disciplines, diversification, and community involvement.

Ethical Leadership and Social Learning Theory

Employees value ethical behavior demonstrated by leaders who promote integrity and trustworthiness and encourage employees to accept and follow their vision. Sun (2018) argued that ethical leadership has an influence on subordinates' knowledge sharing. This quantitative study focused on 183 supervisor-subordinate pairs, with the results showing the positive influence of perceptions of coworkers as trustworthy on subordinates' knowledge sharing and self-efficacy.

Newman et al. (2015) examined the relationship between ethical leadership and subordinate work behavior. The study was an investigation of whether the subordinate's perception of role clarity influenced the relationship between ethical leadership and subordinate work behaviors. Social exchange and social learning theories were the contexts of the study. Using a selected sample of 239 participants from the Chinese public sector, Newman et al. administered surveys and conducted a confirmatory factor analysis and hierarchical regressions to analyze the data. The results showed more substantial relationships between ethical leadership and helping behavior when the subordinates perceived higher levels of role clarity. The authors also found a negative relationship between stronger ethical leadership and deviant behavior. According to Newman et al., there is a positive relationship between ethical leadership and helping behavior and a significant negative relationship between ethical leadership and deviant behavior. The authors suggested that organizations provide proper training as part of their leadership development programs and present employees with clear expectations for job roles and goal achievement.

Abraham (2020) used the social exchange theory to explore the impact of employee fidelity on the survival of microbusinesses and small businesses in Nigeria. One hundred owners of small businesses completed questionnaires. The purpose of the interviews was to identify the successful and failed businesses in the last 5 years before questionnaire administration. Abraham found that capital inadequacy and employee theft accounted for the failure of small businesses in Nigeria. Additionally, the researcher noted that employees relied on how well the employers represented their interests even while absent from work; however, the employees often deliberately abused and violated trust. The study’s findings showed the significance of trust in maintaining the work environment, survival, growth, and profitability of an organization.

Eva et al. (2019) investigated whether ethical leaders fostered community citizenship behaviors (CCBs) at work and after leaving the office by enhancing their prosocial motivation. One hundred and sixty employees from 48 small and medium-sized enterprises in China participated in the study. Multilevel modeling was the means used to analyze the data collected, with the data tested using the Monte Carlo method with 20,000 replications. The authors found that although ethical leadership correlated with increased prosocial motivation for employees, there were higher levels of CCBs when employees were at work but not after leaving the office. Eva et al. suggested that ethical leaders influence employees to engage in CCBs. There is a need to understand how to use social learning theory to understand how people learn to become socially responsible. This study focused on the ethical behaviors that small business owners could use to gain loyal customers, avoid legal issues, and retain talented employees.

Ethical leadership can have an impact on small businesses in competitive environments. Based on social learning theory and interactional perspective, Feng et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative study focused on the separate and joint moderating effects of ethical leadership and competitive intensity. The authors tested the hypotheses by distributing surveys to 264 Chinese firms. The study results showed that good leadership and moderation leadership enabled the firms to better leverage customer orientation to enhance their performance. Customer orientation has an essential and transparent relationship with firm performance.

Management Strategies

Marshall and Schrank (2020) used systems theory to examine the impact of small business owners' management strategies on their ability to recover from Hurricane Katrina. The researchers mailed questionnaires to and interviewed 499 business owners in 10 counties in Mississippi affected by Hurricane Katrina. Marshall and Schrank identified business management approaches such as location, household strategies, and financial strategies during the recovery process. Their examination included businesses' recoveries from natural disasters that had received SBA loans and special considerations, such as delays from creditors, for increased sustainability.

Diversity in Small Business

Sequeira et al. (2018) used the intellectual capital theory and combined with Cox and Blake's (1991) seminal work on valuing diversity to examine racial diversity and strategies for recruiting, selecting, retaining, and benefiting a racially diverse small business workforce. This study's findings could contribute to the research by focusing on a diverse workforce, creativity, innovation, and problem-solving.

Ahmad et al. (2020) examined the impact of owner-family involvement in business on the sustainable survival of family small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to empirically validate the intervening role of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The authors conducted partial least squares structural equation modeling on data from 489 owner and nonowner executives of 150 family SMEs, finding that family involvement in business had a positive impact on family SMEs' sustainable survival; CSR partially mediated this relation. The results showed that family-owned businesses require competitive strategies, commitment, and social responsibility for sustained business survival.

Survival by Social Media

Adeyeye and Ohunyowon (2019) administered a questionnaire to a target population of 10 registered media firms in Minna, Nigeria, including five radio stations, two television stations, and three integrated marketing communication firms. The authors found that social media influenced the growth of the Minna metropolis. Another finding was that three social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter) correlated with the increased sales growth of media firms in Minna. Based on these findings, Adeyeye and Ohunyowon recommended that media firms provide small business owners with a knowledge base for developing communication and organizational productivity and growth.

Tax Planning

Matarirano et al. (2019) used the survival index value model to investigate the significant effects of tax compliance costs on small business performance. Eighty-three contractors registered in Classes 3 and 4 of the Construction Industry Development Board responded to questionnaires via email, with the data analyzed using a paired-samples *t* test, Pearson correlation coefficient tests, regression tests, and structural equation modeling. Tax compliance costs had a significant impact on performance and posed a heavy burden for small businesses. Matarirano et al. suggested tax planning strategies for small businesses.

Onu et al. (2019) assessed the tax avoidance and tax evasions of self-employed and small business owners. The researchers posed scenario questions about tax avoidance and tax evasion to assess U.K. respondents' compliance. The respondents focused on legal activities and what would enable them to pay fewer taxes. There are many advantages of tax compliance for small businesses, such as improved access to business opportunities and legal standing. However, tax compliance issues for small businesses are troublesome and time-consuming (Naicker & Rajaram, 2018).

Small business tax behavior drives tax management and compliance. Tax compliance behavior includes the small business owner's experience, capability, and understanding of the tax system (Battisti & Deakins, 2018). Overall, small business owners' shortcomings in managing taxes and compliance could indicate the success of their businesses. Small business owners' tax compliance behaviors include their intentions to file their taxes, report complete and accurate information, and pay taxes on time. Battisti and Deakins (2018) found the political perspective that fiscal policy, tax laws, and tax systems had an impact on tax compliance behavior. However, a lack of awareness and understanding of the processes and systems could affect business progression and survival if business owners do not properly file and pay taxes on time.

Financial difficulties and a lack of tax education could explain why small business owners avoid paying tax penalties in the United States. Small business owners should comply voluntarily with their tax obligations and improve their communication with tax authorities (Bornman & Ramutumbu, 2019). Factors such as age, gender, and tax morale can influence small business owners' tax compliant behaviors. Most small business owners could not take advantage of the rate reduction of the low corporate tax rate of a flat 21%; therefore, Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) in December 2017.

Although the TCJA included changes beneficial for individuals and small businesses, the Act will expire in 2025. Lawmakers implemented tax cuts to encourage the operations of small businesses in the United States. Many company leaders promised to use the tax savings to hire more employees, increase bonuses, increase profits, and invest in new technology (Briegel, 2019). Overall, tax breaks could enable small business owners to stay competitive with large businesses.

Business Planning

Yuan et al. (2018) examined the relationship between a firm's business strategy and corporate social responsibility performance. The authors used the comprehensive measure of business strategy of Miles and Snow (1978, 2003) and the resource-based theory and administered surveys to U.S. firms. The results suggested that business strategy is an essential determinant of corporate social responsibility performance. Yuan et al. presented small businesses with business strategies for increasing nonfinancial performance, such as corporate social responsibility performance, in conjunction with tax planning and financial reporting.

Improving business processes practices could correlate with increased success. Vo Scheel et al. (2014) defined a business process as a collection of tasks and activities consisting of employees, materials, machines, and systems and methods that are…structured in such a way as to design, create, and deliver a product or service to the consumer. Burd (2019) found that developing, managing, processing, staying on budget, and meeting milestones could refine business processes significantly. The author emphasized that pinpointing changes where needed is a way to increase success.

Another business strategy is to increase small businesses' performance or growth sustainability. Park et al. (2019) used Miles and Snow's (1978) business strategy to research small businesses' increases in future performance or growth sustainability among unlisted SMEs in Korea. Park et al. measured the variable of the business strategy factors influencing unlisted SMEs: small, financially challenged, shorter lifespan of survival, and faster growth rates. The authors found that investing in research and developing new products had an influence on both performance and growth sustainability.

In contrast, Thompson Agyapong et al. (2017) argued that education, access to external finances, competition, inflation, and government policies predict SME growth. The authors examined the factors affecting SME growth in Ghana by focusing on entrepreneurs (owners/managers). Thompson Agyapong et al. collected data through interviews with 75 owners of agriculture, manufacturing, and services businesses in Ghana. The study's findings suggested that highly skilled owners/managers, competency, and experience contribute to business growth and influence government policies, such as corporate tax, customs, and excise duty.

Transition

Section 1 presented the background of this multiple case qualitative research study. The section also showed how local economies require the innovation and growth of small businesses for increased employment opportunities and increased tax revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, there was a discussion of the general and specific business problems of how veteran small business owners lack strategies for sustaining their businesses for longer than 5 years. Section 1 included the purpose of the study, which was to explore the survival strategies that small business owners used to sustain their businesses for longer than 5 years. A qualitative research method was the approach chosen for this study because it was the appropriate methodology for answering the research question and gaining the participants' perspectives on their real-time business experiences. The literature review provided the relevant research on small businesses, organizational performance, learning processes, motivation, innovation, recruitment and retention, management oversight, and leadership practices for increased growth.

The literature review showed that a lack of business strategies threatens the survival of veteran-owned small businesses. Additionally, bad leadership practices can result in a damaged reputation. The review of the literature presented several barriers and essential aspects experienced by many small business owners, including recruitment and retention, organizational learning process, leadership practices for business growth, and employee engagement. Finally, the review addressed the essential aspects of the research question and the chosen conceptual framework. Section 2 presents the role of the researcher, data collection, and data analysis process and procedures. Section 3 will include the findings, a summary, the study’s implications for social change, and recommendations and reflections.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that military veteran small business owners used to sustain their businesses for longer than 5 years. The target population consisted of military veteran business owners from three Texas organizations who had successfully operated their small businesses for longer than 5 years. The implications for positive social change included sustained employment opportunities for military veteran small business owners and their employees for increased tax revenue and benefits for citizens in local communities.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role is to pose and ask the right questions during the data collection process (Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers collect data and take responsibility for handling interpretation errors, coding, and reporting the participants' perceptions (Booton, 2018). In this study, I was the primary instrument for collecting data, interviewing participants, and identifying themes. Qualitative researchers validate participants by telling them that what they say in interviews is essential (Saldaña, 2018). Qualitative researchers present the truth to the world rather than the world's interpretation by analyzing the respondents' experiences, observations, and emotions (Hordge-Freeman, 2018).. The participant recruitment and reporting of the data occurred in an unbiased manner. Also, any ethical issues that occurred during the study process were addressed per the university's ethical guidelines.

I am a military veteran, and I reside in Texas. I do not own, nor do I work for, a veteran small business. I developed an interest in military veteran-owned small businesses while observing my best friend, who started her small business approximately 8 years ago. I found my best friend's vetting and discussions of struggling during her formation and first 5 years of her business fascinating, and I wanted to learn and help her but did not know how. As a contract specialist, I encountered large and small contractors with minimum federal government contracting expertise with professional backgrounds. Because of my tenure at my contracting office, former contractors, including veteran small business owners, were not participants in this study. As a contracting specialist, I observed and witnessed a lack of respect for standards.

The Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) has three basic principles for protecting the rights of all research subjects and participants: (a) respect for persons, in which subjects can decide whether to participate; (b) beneficence, which consists of maximizing benefits and minimizing risk; and (c) justice, which is the equitable distribution of research costs and risk. The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research's Belmont Report served as an ethical framework for this research. The objective of The Belmont Report was to provide an analytical framework that guided the resolution of ethical problems arising from research involving human subject. I followed all the guidelines for assessing the risks and benefits, selecting the participants, and applying consent. Sutton and Austin (2015) pointed out that there is no need for further reading on the subject to understand how to access people's thoughts and feelings to tell the participants' stories.

Qualitative researchers must interact with the participants with trust and transparency (Baily, 2018). As members of their populations, qualitative researchers can investigate and understand what is said about their communities (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Researchers must maintain consent with the participants throughout the research process and gain access to participants (Vaswani, 2018). A qualitative researcher's starting point is to connect with and get to know the participants before the interviews and prepare for the interview questions (Oxtoby, 2017). In this study, building relationships with the participants included making the interview sessions relaxing and nonthreatening. The participants indicated their readiness to start the interviews. Additionally, I remained encouraging, avoided judgment, and took the time to know each participant before their interview session.

Researchers must continuously reflect to avoid bias and remain aware of the risk of prejudgments and assumptions that could influence the analysis (Fleet et al., 2016). Mitigating bias and prejudgment in this study occurred using open-ended questions to avoid suggesting responses to the participants. Qualitative researchers use open-ended questions during interviews to improve the data-gathering depth and guide the responses (Hasan & Tumah, 2018). Open-ended questions reduce the risk of bias, which is more likely with closed-ended questions due to the limited answers (Wagner et al., 2018). The use of open-ended questions during the interview process was a way to mitigate bias.

As the researcher of this study, I mitigated my bias and prejudgment throughout the research process. First, the study included understandable, clear, and concise interview questions. Second, I used a well-defined target population to avoid interviewing the wrong people. Also, the interviews occurred without leading questions, eliciting detailed responses from the participants. Lastly, the study included multiple participants and member checking to verify the data, maintain objectivity, and avoid bias. Member checking was also a way to engage with the participants to ensure their agreement and understanding of the accounts discussed (Caretta & Perez, 2019). As the researcher, I avoided including data irrelevant to the research study. A researcher must be able to recognize or identify potential bias and take appropriate preventative measures. Preventative measures include (a) asking simple questions before moving to specific questions, (b) analyzing all the data with a clear and unbiased mindset while excluding preexisting assumptions, and (c) avoiding leading questions and words that could present bias.The interviews occurred per the interview protocol. The interview protocol contained a list of interview questions, including a script of what I said (see Appendix A). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), the interviewer’s approach conveys valuable and useful participants’ views. Interviews provide detailed qualitative data to understand the participants’ experiences, their descriptions of those experiences, and the meaning they made of those experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Researchers can use direct observation to collect data (Marjanovic et al., 2015) and verify the participants’ interview responses. Direct observation provides the opportunity to experience reality as an insider rather than an external observer (Kpamma et al., 2017).

Participants

The participants in this study were veteran small business owners from three Central Texas organizations. I determined the participants' eligibility standards, strategies for gaining access, and strategies for establishing working relationships. I used recruitment services, social networking, and word of mouth to find local business owners willing to participate in the study. The goal of the recruitment process was to locate small business owners who cared and were willing to share their strategies, opinions and techniques for improving the sustainability of small, veteran-owned businesses in Central Texas. Researchers must ensure they provide an adequate representation of their participants' views and perceptions (Rosenberg-Yunger & Bayoumi, 2017). The participants in this study were veterans who had owned successful small businesses for longer than 5 years. They were military veteran business owners with the issuance of a Department of Defense DD214 and had not received dishonorable discharges. To confirm their eligibility, the participants provided copies of their Department of Veteran Affairs and small business certification.

This study focused on military veteran small business owners of three organizations. In the introduction portion of the interview, the participants received a consent form and personal information data sheet to fill out and retain. Researchers allow participants to voluntarily participate in a qualitative study after providing their consent (Saravanakumar et al., 2018). The participants in this study received a clear explanation of this study's purpose and signed the consent form before their interviews. Email was the primary mean of communication with the participants. The participants returned the completed consent forms via email.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Researchers use qualitative research to collect data, explore matters in depth via interviews, and gain insight into how participants perceive and experience different phenomena of interest (McGrath et al., 2018). Quantitative research frequently occurs with representation and correspondence (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). Researchers tend to use the quantitative approach for technical-related studies. In addition, most organizational studies occur with the qualitative approach (Kusumawardhani et al., 2017). A quantitative approach was not an appropriate fit for this study because it would not have provided a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.

Mixed methods research includes the specific answers to research questions that include clearly interconnected qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, positions, and standpoints (Lanka et al., 2021). Mixed methods research provides the opportunity to develop novel theoretical perspectives by combining the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods (Venkatesh et al., 2016). However, the mixed methods approach was not a fit for this study because it includes quantitative analysis.

Qualitative methodology was an appropriate choice for exploring the experiences of successful veteran small business owners in the service industry. The qualitative method was the approach chosen for this study because it provided the opportunity to conduct thorough interviews to understand the participants' experiences of sustaining and supporting successful small businesses for longer than 5 years. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe a process or experience and make meaning of experiences or phenomena by following the emerging data (Cruz & Tantia, 2016). Qualitative researchers strive to understand a situation or how individuals have experienced something in a deep and meaningful way. Therefore, qualitative research methods are not variations of experiments; instead, they occur with a very different philosophical perspective that provides credence to different ways of knowing. Accordingly, a quantitative or mixed methods research design would not have been an appropriate means of addressing the objective of this study.

Research Design

The rationale for conducting multiple case study research was to address the potential strategies, sustainability, and financial needs of operating and maintaining a small business. Qualitative data collection was the best fit for engaging in individual interview sessions with veteran business owners. The data sources were semistructured interviews with open-ended questions and research documentation. I researched how the businesses shaped, what indicated the demanded service, and the reasons for the business’s survival for longer than 5 years.

Phenomenological researchers strive to provide detailed, smooth descriptions of lived experiences or the way things appear through an individual’s experience (Jackson et al., 2018). The case study design was a means to take a complicated and broad topic or phenomenon and narrow it down into manageable research questions (Heale & Twycross, 2017). In this study, the phenomenological approach was not appropriate to focus on small business owners' experiences within the small business circle.

Population and Sampling

The goal of sampling was to attain saturation with a small number of participants. This study included a small rather than a large sample of participants because the purpose was not to conduct quantitative research to test a hypothesis. Veteran owners of small businesses were the target population for this research. The sample included the owners of three small businesses who had sustained their businesses for at least 5 years, had their home offices in Central Texas, and met the qualifications of a small business indicated by the Federal Acquisition Regulation and Small Business Association.

Purposeful sampling is an appropriate technique for qualitative research (Sharafizad, 2018). In this study, purposeful sampling was appropriate to answer the research question, with snowballing sampling, or chain referral, used to recruit additional participants. Social networking was another way to recruit potential participants (Biernake & Waldorf, 1981; Sharafizad, 2018). Purposeful interviewing was occurred with the eligible participants.

The teleconferencing interviews were closed-door sessions at the participants' chosen dates, times, and locations, with the interviewer and interviewee. The interviews occurred Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Central Standard Time. I used note-taking and two recording devices (one primary, one backup) to record the interview sessions. Minimizing distractions, such as air conditioners and background talk, occurred to eliminate extra sounds and comments during the interviews. To reinforce the session's specific purpose, the participants received an interview outline showing my consideration and ensuring confidence and fairness during the interviews. According to Rabie and Burger (2019), interviews are means of capturing the participants' real-time experiences and gaining responses beneficial to the study. Each participant engaged in an individual interview to deter deceptive responses and uphold the expectation of truthfulness (Deeb et al., 2017). Data saturation occurs when further data collection produces the same replies to questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). When used in the broader context, saturation refers to the point in data collection when no additional issues or insights are identified and data begin to repeat so that further data collection is redundant, signifying that an adequate sample size is reached (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

Ethical Research

The participants and their rights to participate in this research study aligned with the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) which assigned the 0723893 approval number. Each participant received the consent form and could express any concerns or request clarification before signing. The consent form included the following pertinent information:

- Purpose of the study
- Date and time of the scheduled interview
- Location of the interview
- Disclosure of the interview as voluntary with no incentives or other benefits offered
- The rationale for selecting the participant

- The option to stop the interview at any time

The participants could accept or withdraw from their interviews via email or letter and were proof of receipt by the interviewer.

The study occurred in line with the highest ethical standards. Ethics contribute to transparency and meaningful research outcomes (Amundsen & Msoroka, 2019). If they desired, the participants could access a summary of the ethical research procedures of the Belmont Report, the Walden University IRB application, and any other training completed for this study for review and discussion. Along with the informed consent and study outline, these documents provided the participants with proper notification of the protection procedures of this study.

I maintained all supporting documentation and correspondence in a password-protected account to maintain confidentiality in this study. I assigned each participant an identification code annotated on the informed consent forms to maintain privacy in recordings and document reviews. The data will remain secure on a USB drive, and I will store all physical data records in a locked safe for 5 years before destroying them with a shredder. The study occurred per the Belmont Report protocol for protecting the participants' identities when releasing raw data for further research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

Data Collection Instruments

As the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument in this qualitative study. Clark and Veale (2018) stated that researchers should strive to remain objective and understand that their biases could have an influence on the outcomes of their research. As the researcher, I developed and used my interviewing skills to enhance the depth and quality of the data produced (Xu & Storr, 2015). I gathered data from two sources, semistructured interviews and documents.

Interviews

The data collection tool used in this study was semistructured interviews that followed in interview protocol. All the participants received the same questions in the same order and could answer them as they wished (Tutak et al., 2020). The purpose of the semistructured interviews was to obtain information to learn from the answers to the questions and the meaning behind the answers. Semistructured interviews were a suitable approach for the interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). An informed consent form provided a summary of the research and other information needed for the participants to decide whether to volunteer for the study. Additionally, I explained the purpose and the rules of the interview process to the interviewees to establish trust and ease any discomfort before the interviews (Hamilton et al., 2017). I also assured the reliability of the interview protocol and increased the quality of the data obtained from the interviews (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). See the interview protocol in Appendix A.

Documentation Analysis

Another data collection tool used in this study was document analysis, which occurred by gathering background information in a qualitative document review (Mukumbang et al., 2019). Mukumbang et al. (2019) emphasized the need for comprehensive and transparent document analysis. The documents analyzed were the participants' employee handbooks, training records, capability statements, and business models. I used all the provided data to corroborate evidence and identify themes and perspectives (Seigner et al., 2018). Siegner et al. (2018) used triangulation in their research.

The use and availability of additional data sources provided transparency and clarity in this study. The documents included written training schedules, emails, or written correspondence from the business leaders to their employees about knowledge management, organizational learning, and leadership skills. The primary documents were directly related to the businesses, including interview questions, photographs, or other data sources that provided firsthand organization accounts. The primary documents were those to which the participants referred during the interviews that provided firsthand experience and support for their viewpoints.

Member Checking

Member checking is a quality control process in qualitative research (Harper & Cole, 2015). Researchers use member checking, or participant validation, to reduce bias and involve the participants in checking and confirming the results (Birt et al., 2016). In this study, the participants received a summary of their interview via email for feedback and corrections.

Data Collection Technique

The participant recruitment and the data collection process occurred after receiving IRB approval. All the eligible participants received the recruitment email (see Appendix A). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, contact with and recruitment of the participants occurred based on their timely responses to the request for video- and audio-recorded interviews. Zoom and Microsoft Teams were the telecommunication programs used for the teleconferenced interviews. Because in-person interviews were not possible, videoconferencing allowed me to connect with the participants while practicing social distancing. I used a spreadsheet to document each participant's information, including name, business address, email address, telephone number, date, time, and type. Each participant received and signed an informed consent form for video and audio communication, which they returned before scheduling the interviews based on their availability. To protect the participants, I used codes instead of names and stored the codes on a separate, password-protected spreadsheet. Data saturation occurred when information began to repeat in further interviews and no new coding was needed.

Researchers can use several data collection techniques to collect data for their studies. The data collection technique used in this study was a remote semistructured interview with open-ended questions, which I recorded. Recording and transcribing the interviews was a vital step in evaluating the quality of the research. I electronically recorded all the interviews and took notes to document situations and observations, such as reactions and feelings, that attracted my attention during the interviews to analyze and collect the data. Data collection in qualitative research can include various data types, such as field notes, audio, video recordings, images, and documents (Noble & Smith, 2015). Researchers should transcribe the data entirely or focus on selected sections. Qualitative researchers can use strategies to enhance the credibility of the study by establishing reliability and validity (Noble & Smith, 2013). Reliability is sound judgment, trustworthiness, and transparency during and after the interviews; validity indicates data integrity via clearly presenting the participants' perspectives.

After the interviews, the participants received a thank you email for their participation (see Appendix C). If they chose to engage in member checking (see Appendix B), they received a summary of their interview via email and provided any comments.

Face-to-face interviews are the most common collection technique because of their transparent and cost-effective nature; however, this technique has disadvantages and advantages. Face-to-face interviews provide a more robust connection, trust, transparency, and energized interviews. Often conducted teleconference, semistructured interviews enable the participants to engage in close and repeated involvement so the researcher can explore the essence of the topic under study (Barnett & Maarman, 2020). Teleconference interviews also provide the opportunity to observe the participants' body language to ensure they feel comfortable and not offended. Another benefit is that teleconference interviews are a cost-effective strategy for productive discussion.

However, teleconference interviews can also be disadvantageous. For example, they might be an unsuitable approach for people who feel nervous or have poor communication skills. Another disadvantage of teleconference interviews is that the interviewer might not have enough data to ask the right questions to support the research question. Lastly, teleconference interviews can be costly for the researcher and time-consuming for the participants.

In addition to teleconference interviews, this study included a review of documents, such as employee handbooks and policy and procedure manuals. I reviewed each document to determine if it supported the research question and provided information on the strategies that other small business owners could use. I stored the participant-provided documents in a secure location.

Document analysis is an effective way to gather data from participants, with documents serving as accessible and reliable sources. However, there are three disadvantages of document analysis. The first is that the information obtained may not provide all the information needed to answer the research question. Second, the documents might not include incomplete or inconsistent data. The third disadvantage is the documents could be inaccurate, resulting in gaps and the need of additional research.

Data Organization Technique

Qualitative researchers use data organization techniques to support their findings and protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality. I used a research journal to take notes during the teleconference interviews, document emotions, and deal with ethical issues. Research journals are also a strategy for improving the transparency and quality of interviews and data collection (Annink, 2017). The coding process occurred by color-coding. Researchers use coding for assistance in the decision-making process and to understand the data (Elliott, 2018). I stored the digital data on a USB thumb drive in a locked safe. I will destroy all original data, including digital files, transcripts, and emails, after 5 years.

Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers should provide a clear narrative of the data analysis process (Sadam et al., 2019), presenting how they evaluated their data or assumptions to the readers (Nowell et al., 2017). The data analysis occurred with Yin's (2018) five-phase cycle of data analysis: compiling, dissembling, resembling, interpreting, and concluding. The transparency of the process facilitates assuring the reliability of the findings (Sadam et al., 2019). Qualitative researchers can use software, such as NVivo, and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) programs, such as Microsoft Excel and Word, to manage and code data. CAQDAS required significant time, but NVivo was user-friendly software. I used the NVivo software.

Qualitative researchers can increase the credibility of their research findings and interpretations through triangulation (Nowell et al., 2017). Moon (2019) defined method triangulation as using multiple research methods to collect data. This study occurred with methodological triangulation of the strategies participants used to sustain their small businesses for longer than 5 years in Central Texas. The data came from semistructured interviews, literature searches, document reviews, and other sources.

Compiling the data was the first step in answering the research question (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). First, I defined the research question to gain a clear understanding of what I needed to accomplish in this study. Then, I looked at what data I needed to collect in order to answer the research question. Transcription of all recordings occurred after the interviews, providing reviewable text for me to become aware of any themes and trends. I collected, interpreted, sorted, and formatted the participant-provided documents, including employee handbooks, brochures, policies, procedure manuals, training records and research journals, to improve the data quality. A filing and storing system allowed me to prevent duplicating the same information. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) was the strategy used to ensure consistency and save time.

After organizing the data in a log with additional notes, the next step was disassembling the data. First, I reviewed the transcripts for codes and repeated themes, then used NVivo to identify additional codes. I returned to NVivo after transcribing the interviews, identifying themes, and organizing the document reviews (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Researchers can conduct multiple data analyses to enhance data saturation (Sechelski & Onwuegbuzie, 2019). Oliveira et al. (2015) noted that qualitative data analysis software enables researchers to shorten to process and provide different perspectives to develop thematic content. The coded transcripts were stored in secure, encrypted files. In this study, I presented the literature review content, identified the different codes, and noted the conceptual framework and strategies used to sustain veteran-owned small businesses for longer than 5 years.

The reassembling phase occurred to create themes after coding and analysis. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) indicated that the purpose of thematic analysis is to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the collected data. According to Perannagari and Chakrabarti (2019), thematic analysis is a means to identify patterns in the data set to arrange themes. Therefore, researchers can use thematic analysis to address the research questions and enable flexibility in data interpretation with consideration of transparency and accuracy (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The steps of thematic analysis are: (a) familiarizing oneself with the data, (b) assigning codes to the data collected to describe the subject, (c) searching for patterns or themes within the codes, (d) assessing the results of the themes, and (e) identifying and labeling the themes. Thematic analysis enables the researcher to use the data collected in a range of different qualitative methods and analyze them in similar ways (Johnson et al., 2017).

Data interpretation occurs after reading and revisiting all the data, codes, and emergent themes. Researcher interpretation should occur during the compiling, disassembling, and reassembling phases (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). This study included all transcripts in the correct format, including corrected spelling errors and mistakes and the identification of any possible codes. I used NVivo 12 (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2018) to transcribe, analyze, and organize the data. During the assessment of the data, I could have determined that I had the data needed to answer the research question, or that I had to revise my interview questions, or that I may have had to collect more data to achieve data saturuation. I interpreted data sufficiency and saturation by asking and addressing the following questions:

- Do the data provide an answer to the research question?
- Are the data means of substantiating the objective?
- Do the data provide the best course of action?

Ultimately, I found that the assessment and organizing software data tools yielded sufficient data for achieving data saturation during this phase.

After theme interpretation, the final phase consisted of responding to the research question or stating the conclusion. Yin (2018) identified a conclusion as an overarching statement or series of statements used to present the interpretation of the study or lessons learned. In this study, I identified and verified any visible level of consistency in the findings via member checking, which entails allowing participants to check the accuracy of the findings (Brear, 2018). Qualitative researchers can use techniques to improve and present the credibility, validity, and reliability of the study to the reader.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers must ensure the trustworthiness of their studies. They can do this by addressing reliability, validity, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Reliability

Reliability focuses upon the reproducibility of the data produced by the research instruments involved (Jordan, 2018). Reliability is the ability to achieve the same results of a phenomenon and show the accuracy of the findings with objective methods (Cypress, 2017). According to Mohajan (2017), reliability concerns a reader's faith in the data obtained from the use of an instrument—that is, the degree to which any measuring tool controls for random error. In this study, I achieved dependability and reliability by conducting member checking and documenting the interview sessions in a research journal. Member checking was a dependable method because the participants reviewed the data for inaccurate statements and revisions. I achieved dependability with aspects of consistency; for example, I maintained an audit trail of notes during the interviews to show transparency (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

Validity

Validity is the state of being well-grounded or justifiable, relevant, meaningful, logical, confirming to accepted principles of the quality of being sound just and well-founded (Cypress, 2017). Validity is assured by verifying the use of the correct measures (Mohajan, 2017). Member checking is a commonly used validation tool for assuring validity. Researchers must establish the trustworthiness of their studies through demonstrating findings' validity. My study's findings' validity was assured by verifying the participants' met the purposeful sampling requirements as small business owners and utilizing member checking.

Credibility

Credibility is the trustworthiness and believability of the study (Noble & Heale, 2019). Strategies for ensuring credibility include triangulation and member checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Researchers use triangulation to increase the credibility and validity of their findings (Noble & Heale, 2019). In this study, I strove to interpret the participants' data correctly and present only the participants' viewpoints by using member checking and triangulation.

Transferability

Transferability is a process in which the reader judges the transferability of the findings to other settings (Korstjen & Moser, 2017). A researcher must provide evidence of the applicability of the findings to other settings. Member checking is a way to enhance the transferability (external validity) and accuracy of qualitative research findings (Brear, 2018). I have provided detailed descriptions of the context and processes for carrying out the design, data collection, and analysis for my research and provided a database that enables other researchers to make a judgment of this study's findings being transferable to other research domains.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a means of ensuring the findings present the participants' experiences, not the researcher's subjectivity. Researchers can ensure confirmability by describing each research step transparently, from start to finish, including the development of the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Corroboration or confirmation by other researchers indicates the confirmability or confidence of the results or findings (Forero et al., 2018). In this study, I ensured confirmability by maintaining an audit trail and documenting all the research steps.

Data Saturation

I achieved data saturation by determining collecting additional data would not have provided new information. Data saturation occurs when no new themes emerge from the data (Hancock et al., 2016). I analyzed the transcripts from semistructured interviews to identify the point of saturation. I transcribed the participants' responses to the open-ended questions and allowed the participants to verify the summary of their interview before declaring data saturation.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 presented the data collection instrument and techniques used for this study. As the researcher, I was the data collection instrument; therefore, I collected all the data through semistructured interviews and document reviews, allowing the participants to review their transcripts and provide feedback. Section 2 also included the advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face and remote interviews and document analysis. The semistructured interviews were the appropriate instrument for collecting data on the participants' experiences; recording the interviews provided the opportunity to take notes and focus on the participants. The current section also addressed the means used to assure credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability on the study's quality and trustworthiness. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that military veteran small business owners used to sustain their business longer than 5 years. Section 3 will present the purpose statement and research question, the findings and implications for social change, and my reflections and experiences during the research journey.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 includes the summary and analysis of data gathered from interviews with three veterans who own small businesses in Central Texas. This section presents the study's findings, applications to professional practice, implications for positive social change, recommendations for future actions and research, a reflection of my research experience, and a conclusion.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that military veteran small business owners used to sustain their businesses longer than 5 years The collected data included semistructured interviews and organizational documents.

Section 3 covers the three thematic findings for this research study. The first theme pertains to obtaining capital to finance the small business. The second theme focuses on overcoming barriers of a small business with two subthemes: traditional marketing and competition. The third theme identified business sustainability and that the implementation of successful approaches requires education.

In the following subsections, I describe the documentation used for this research study. I discuss the three major themes as well as the ideas that merged into major themes.

Presentation of the Findings

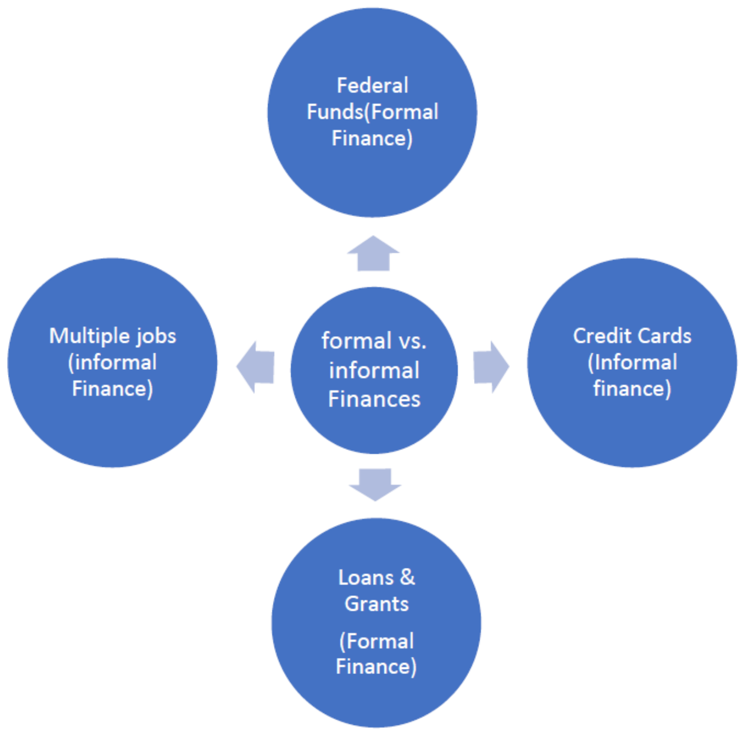
. The research question was, what strategies did military veteran small business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years? Argyris and Schön's organizational learning theory (OLT) was the framework used to address the factors of small business sustainability. Louis and Murphy (2017) pointed out the need to continuously evaluate the accountability of professional knowledge, including technical knowledge skills and professional practices, to achieve outcomes. According to Field (2017), the keys to understanding the nature and processes of organizational learning are the concepts of common interest, shared learning, and change management within an organization. After completing the data collection, including transcription, I compiled the data to identify themes using NVivo 12 software. I identified the participants as P1, P2, and P3. Based on the coding system and triangulation method, three themes and subthemes emerged from my analysis: means for obtaining capital, means for overcoming barriers, and achieving sustainability through education.

Theme 1: Means for Obtaining Capital

All three participants identified obtaining capital as a strategy for the sustainability of a successful business. Obtaining capital was a concern stated by all participants. Figure 1 presents the participant references that resulted in this theme, with the most frequently cited element being finance.

Figure 1

References to Informal and Formal Finances by Participants



According to the participants, obtaining capital for sustainability requires careful management of personal income. All the participants talked about funding their businesses through personal financial resources. All three shared that they deposited a percentage of their military paychecks into business accounts. P3 said, "I saved money to work off the business, and then the money made was put back into the business." P1 and P2 used multiple income streams to finance their businesses to ensure success and sustainability. However, P2 also mentioned using other sources of income, such as the National Accredited Commission Career Arts and Science which provided federal funds. P3 also reported using credit cards to keep the small business operational. The interview transcript, capability statements, staff handbook, company bulletins, and brochures were among the small business documents examined in relation to obtaining capital. P2 provided that a funding plan, including a budget with expected costs for supplies, equipment, and materials, was one of the vital details related to the small business documentation.

All the participants discouraged the practice of taking out bank loans; instead, they encouraged using personal income instead of small business loans to sustain a small business. According to P2, small business loan requests are usually declined due to a “lack of collateral.” P2 stated that banks require collateral as a guarantee of loan repayment. P2 also said that due to the economic changes of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was nearly impossible to obtain loans from local banks in Central Texas.

Banks tend to provide loans to large businesses, which have fewer risk factors, such as bankruptcy. P2 noted that bad credit or a lack of credit history is nearly impossible to overcome when trying to take out loans. P1 and P2 described “using personal income” to fund their small businesses with the help of friends and family members. P3 emphasized, “Getting a bank loan is a near impossibility when starting a small business due to a lack of collateral: No collateral equals no loan. Therefore, credit cards are a way to support business growth and sustainability. This finance strategy provided the participants with the support and stability needed to solve their startup business problems.

The participants described discovering what they needed to do to achieve their business goals. All the participants mentioned “changing their approaches to gaining finances such as paying off debt, managing debt and saving for the future”. In this study, a common root cause was not having an effective financial plan. Some business owners wait too long to start working toward building finances to support their business. A business plan consists of finances. Financial planning helps small business owners address problems, and it could better prepare them to deal with circumstances that require immediate financial assistance. The resolution to the problem consists of controlling spending behavior and being responsible for saving for emergencies. Paying attention to financing helps business owners monitor growth and keeps them on track as their business grows, when crises arise, and challenges occur.

P3 indicated. “Not having financial support provides a potential business owner a lower chance of success.” Also, P3 expressed “Applying for several grants and loans to start and grow the business but did not qualify for any of them.” All participants did not have credit histories but mentioned that having no credit was just as much of a challenge as a poor credit score. The participants reported being denied bank loans due to a lack of collateral and capital. They described these experiences as “eye-opening” and strove to ensure they had everything in place, including their credit and finances.

Elston et al. (2016) noted that most startup business leaders use informal finance of the capital sourced from friends, family members, relatives, or private moneylenders. Ivanoski (2020) found that small business owners tend to rely on different monetary sources, including their own funds, assets from property sales, or retained earnings. Ivanoski indicated that financing from external sources is a particular problem for new small businesses that lack long operational histories and funds for innovation projects.

The conceptual framework of this study was Argyris and Schön's (1993) organizational learning theory (OLT). OLT aligned with Theme 1 focusing on how collaboration with others contributes to the learning process. The collaboration consisted of contacting similar small business owners and asking what their resolution to solve their financial situation. Furthermore, using organizational learning theory (OLT) enables small business owners to understand and change their approaches to reach their goals noted in the literature. Single-loop organizational learning (Methallinou, 2018) consists of deliberate actions to achieve set goals. The participants applied single loop theory to identify, adjust and then correct financial and other problems. The participants focused on improving their financial situation to produce a different outcome. The study's findings aligned with research studies dictating interaction as a way to solve problems within small businesses.

Theme 2: Means for Overcoming Barriers

Traditional v. Non-Traditional Marketing

All the participants in this study used either nontraditional or traditional marketing approaches as a sustainability strategy to overcome barriers and maintain the success of their businesses. The difference between traditional and nontraditional advertising is how to identify and engage with potential customers through marketing messages. While traditional marketing would be placing articles in magazines and newspapers, digital marketing uses social media, such as social websites or media. P1 discussed the marketing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. P1 and P2 stated that social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, were free and surprisingly effective means of marketing their businesses. P1 and P2 felt that the best solution was not to use traditional advertising but instead use nontraditional marketing. P1 and P2 used nontraditional advertising because of the no cost factor. In contrast, P3 used traditional marketing strategies, such as placing business cards and flyers on potential clients' cars, leaving matchbooks with the business logo at local bars, placing advertisements in Thrifty Nickel newspapers, and posting flyers in local military installation welcome center packets. However, all the participants agreed that word of mouth was the most effective marketing strategy.

Daugherty (2021) noted that owners who use marketing strategies to sustain their businesses are more likely to be successful. Small business owners who utilize word-of-mouth, brand awareness, perceived quality, and relationship marketing with their customers can ultimately sustain their businesses (Daugherty, 2021).

Thompson Agyapong et al. (2017) found that the online buying and selling phenomenon was not popular among local customers, who preferred to use the traditional marketing strategy of face-to-face business transactions instead of web technology. Shpresa et al. (2022) emphasized that marketing through traditional channels has a positive effect on creating trust and appreciation towards the brand, even in cases where viewers do not understand the brand.

Competition

All? the participants agreed that it was a challenge to win customers away from rival businesses. Therefore, business owners must take steps to lure these customers. P1 stated, "Business owners must completely know their business, competitors and what customers want and need." P2 stated, "Business owners must understand what their clients want and find the right ways to run their businesses more effectively to decrease risk." All of the participants acknowledged that the owner of your business is the best person to know it inside and out, which helps set their services apart from the competition. The owner should also be the expert who identifies their rivals and set a competitive price.

The interview transcript, capability statements, staff handbook, company bulletins, and brochures were among the small business documents examined in relation to overcoming barriers. A funding plan, including a budget and expected costs for supplies, equipment, and materials, was one of the vital details related to the small business documentation.

Figure 2 presents the participant references that resulted in this theme, with the most frequently cited element being barriers.

Figure 2

Participants' References to Overcoming Barriers

This aligns with this study's three individual themes with a focus on internal and external environments, such as social conditions, competition, technology, and marketing, influence organizations. Furthermore, how external, and internal environments can have a significant influence on small business growth, operations, and long-term sustainability.

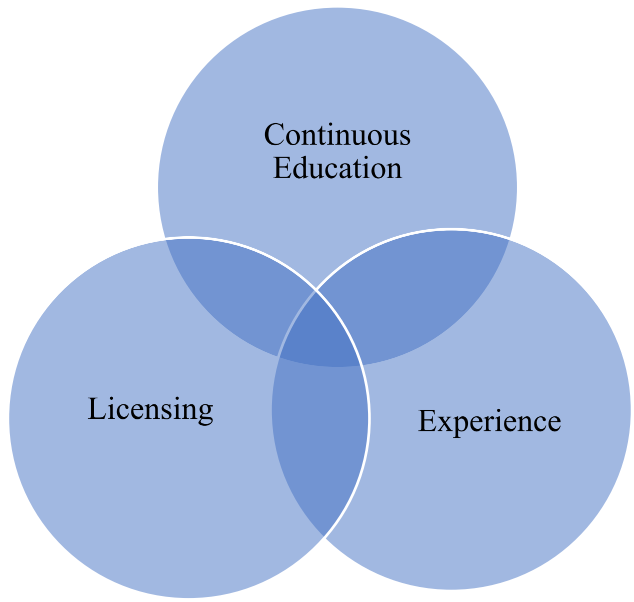
Theme 3: Achieving Sustainability Through Education?

All participants stated that business sustainability and the implementation of successful approaches require education. All the participants reported that continuous education enables business owners to improve their businesses and gain the necessary expertise and licensing required in their fields. All the participants education background is higher than high school diploma. P1 stated, "Professional communication such as being considerate and listening to the other person and incremental improvements like purchasing software to assist with payroll within businesses enable owners to move forward on their journeys toward business sustainability." P2 expressed, "Continuous education is a must to sustain your business and reach the outcome that one desires."

In addition to the interview transcript documents from the small business pertaining to education material and included employee bullets, flyers, mission and vision statement, capability statements, student handbooks, and newsletter. As shown in Figure 3, there were references to the theme sustainability.

Figure 3

Participants' References to Means for Achieving Sustainability



Thompson Agyapong et al. (2017) addressed the influence of owners' level of education and formal qualifications on the growth of their businesses. The authors found that participants' education level had a significant effect on their entrepreneurial activities. Another of the authors finding was that managerial competency, as measured by the level of education, among other elements, influenced daily business operations. Lastly, the OLT was a means of improving small business owners' progress, allowing them to increase creation or innovation by taking time to learn from failure. Also, using the OLT theory could enable future veteran small business owners of all levels to continue their education regularly. Veteran entrepreneurs' reactions to fixing issues indicated their organizational learning for their business concerns. Chao (2018) defined organizational learning as how firm leaders encode inferences from experience to create knowledge and routines for future behavior.

In line with the organizational learning theory, entrepreneurs can recognize and address mistakes inside their businesses with the cycle of developing reactions through further learning. The OLT framework supports the knowledge-based view by addressing how organization leaders integrate new knowledge into their already existing knowledge base (García-García et al., 2017). Contingent upon the kind of business or calling of the veteran entrepreneur should decide the method used to address the mistake or wrong business choice. (García-García et al., 2017).

Argyris and Schön (1993) presented two learning structures, single-loop and double-loop. Single-loop learning occurs when a business owner finds an action's results were not as expected. To achieve goals, business owners might change their conduct under existing business strategies, norms, and value systems (Chuen & Shih, 2011). Double-loop learning enables people to detect action errors and change the strategies and standards to guide actions. Individuals can achieve objectives by prioritizing double-loop learning to strengthen and reinforce the policies and assumptions in need of correction. In addition, the study showed that the participating small business owners focused on learning new learning processes.

Applications to Professional Practice

This study's findings contributed to current organizational learning strategies and provided practical information on enhancing small business practices in the military veteran small business community. The conceptual framework and literature review aligned with the study's findings, providing strategies for the survival of small, veteran-owned businesses. Veteran small business owners could use the three themes in this study to improve their professional development and strategies and reduce the chances of business failure. The themes could be the groundwork for further studies, as they provided an awareness of the barriers encountered by veteran small business owners and their strategies of change and development in their daily operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the themes could apply to veteran-owned small businesses across Central Texas, other areas in Texas, and other states.

In this study, the military veteran business owners reported that dependable income sources, effective marketing strategies, professional communication, knowledge of the competition, and continuous education in the field were effective strategies for preventing small business failures. The themes emerged from the strategies and measures the participants used to positively influence sustainability and implement successful business practices. All the participants said that new knowledge, social media, and word-of-mouth advertising enabled them to improve the growth and profitability of their business and ensure its survival.

Implications for Social Change

This study's findings could contribute to effecting positive social change because identifying the strategies entrepreneurs can use for manageability systems that could affect the neighborhood, giving business visionaries the best arrangement and preparation. The participants of this study indicated that thought, correspondence, and collaboration with the local area helped their communities. The findings indicate the need to understand what customers need. The findings identified that the use of social media provides ways for potential customers an opportunity to review customer service comments and share feedback.

Recommendations for Action

This study focused on the strategies military veteran small business owners used to mitigate business disappointment and failures. The issues identified the lack of agencies to support military veteran small businesses over 5 years. The following suggestions could provide veterans who own small businesses with procedures for mitigating disappointments. This study was limited to Central Texas; however, the participants' responses indicate the need for independent venture intervention measures which can apply elsewhere. While conducting this study, I focused on the participants' reactions and analysis reports and different barriers to their small business. A suggestion is that veteran small business owners focus on steady operational systems, administration and remain current with industry demand and needs. The findings identified how veteran entrepreneurs can address and avoid issues that could diminish the likelihood of success.

This study's findings suggest that veteran small business owners could increase their business growth and development with technology and process improvements by using the internet and other resources as efficient means for reaching potential customers and future investors. In addition, the study's findings indicate that small business owners must focus on creating new processes and strategies for learning to address any barriers to learning in their organizations. To accomplish this task, the small business owners would need to practice giving back to the community, renew the business and financial plans, measure what works, and make updates or adjustments during the process.

This study's findings also suggest that business owners should implement and practice policies and standard operating procedures to avoid unnecessarily repeating events. The key recommendation is for veterans who own small businesses to adopt methods to reduce challenges by attending small business sponsor events, conferences and implementing improvement measures such as internal peer reviews to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Furthermore, the SBA should introduce programs and methodologies that enable veteran small business owners to sustain their businesses.

Recommendations for Further Research

This qualitative multiple case study aimed to explore the strategies that military veteran small business owners used to sustain their businesses longer than 5 years. The case population comprised three veteran small business owners who used strategies to sustain their organizations for longer than 5 years. This study provided an understanding of veteran small business owners' strategies, processes, and techniques for business continuity.

This study focused on a measure of changing military veteran small business owners in Central Texas. Future scholars could research veteran small business owners in areas and businesses different from this study.

Reflections

My dream of acquiring my doctorate led me to enter the Walden University Doctor of Business Administration program. I found the process challenging, fulfilling, and energizing. I set out on my endeavors when I spoke with the Walden University counselor.

Sustaining local economies require successful small businesses, which are essential for empowering and enabling individuals during the pandemic and increment charge incomes. In 2018, Texas small businesses provided 99.8% of all employment in the state (SBA, 2018b). Texas small businesses employed 45.1% of the supplier workforce in 2016 (SBA, 2019). Military veteran small business owners are a fundamental component of the developing U.S. economy. However, not all veterans who begin small businesses can sustain them. The specific business problem was that some military veteran small business owners lack strategies for sustaining their businesses longer than 5 years. In this study, semistructured interviews with open-ended questions were asked to three veterans. The three themes and subthemes that emerged from my analysis were strategies the participating veterans used for means for maintaining capital, means for overcoming barriers, and achieving sustainability through education.

The findings showed that the participants started and sustained their small business journeys by developing and implementing successful strategies for addressing revenue, individual pay, multiple sources of income, or personal savings. The participants did not apply for small business loans or assistance. The findings also showed that the participants used informal, word-of-mouth advertising, and traditional advertising. These strategies could be crucial for achieving business success for veterans who own small businesses.

References

Abraham, E. O. (2020). Employee fidelity and the survival of micro and small scale businesses in Nigeria. *Studia Commercialia Bratislavensia*, *13*(44), 87–101. https://doi.org/10.2478/stcb-2020-0005

Adeyeye, M. M., & Ohunyowon, E. O. (2019). Social media tools and entrepreneurial media firms' growth in Minna Metropolis. *Global Journal of Social Sciences*, *18*(1), Article 83. https://doi.org/10.4314/gjss.v18i1.7

Aggerholm, H. K., & Andersen, S. E. (2018). Social media recruitment 3.0. *Journal of Communication Management*, *22*(2), 122–137. https://doi.org/10.1108/jcom-11-2017-0131

Ahmad, S., Siddiqui, K. A., & AboAlsamh, H. M. (2020). Family SMES' survival: The role of owner family and corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, *27*(2), 281–297. https://doi.org/10.1108/jsbed-12-2019-0406

Aktar, A., & Pangil, F. (2018). Mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between human resource management practices and employee engagement. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *38*(7–8), 606–636. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijssp-08-2017-0097

Alerasoul, S. A., Afeltra, G., Hakala, H., Minelli, E., & Strozzi, F. (2022). Organisational learning, learning organisation, and learning orientation: An integrative review and framework. *Human Resource Management Review*, *32*(3). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2021.100854

Ameer, N. (2017). Impact of organizational culture on employee performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). *International Journal of Business and Administrative Studies*. *3(1)*, 1-15 https://doi.org/10.20469/ijbas.3.10004-5

Amundsen, D., & Msoroka, M. (2019). Responsive ethics: Navigating the fluid research space between HREC ethics, researcher ethics and participant ethics. *Educational Review*, *73*(5), 563–579. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1655392

Annink, A. (2017). Using the research journal during qualitative data collection in a cross-cultural context. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal*, *7*(1). https://doi.org/10.1515/erj-2015-0063

Aranda, C., Arellano, J., & Davila, A. (2017). Organizational learning in target setting. *Academy of Management Journal*, *60*(3), 1189–1211. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2014.0897

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1993). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Addison-Wesley.

Asif, M. (2019). Exploring the role of exploration/exploitation and strategic leadership in organizational learning. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, *11*(3), 409–423. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijqss-04-2018-0038

Baily, S. (2018). Appraising the ingredients of the interpreter/researcher relationship. *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *2*(4), 53–69. https://doi.org/10.7577/njcie.2762

Baluku, M. M., Kikooma, J. F., Bantu, E., & Otto, K. (2018). Psychological capital and entrepreneurial outcomes: The moderating role of social competences of owners of micro-enterprises in East Africa. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, *8*(1), Article 26. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40497-018-0113-7

Barnett, E. P., & Maarman, R. (2020). Principals' views on the implementation of the no-fee policy through the lens of capability theory. *South African Journal of Education*, *40*(3), Article 1673. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v40n3a1673

Bastug, M., Ertem, I. S., & Keskin, H. K. (2017). A phenomenological research study on writer's block: Causes, processes, and results. *Education + Training*, *59*(6), 605–618. https://doi.org/10.1108/et-11-2016-0169

Battisti, M., & Deakins, D. (2018). Microfoundations of small business tax behaviour: A capability perspective. *British Journal of Management*, *29*(3), 497–513. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12244

Berta, W., Cranley, L., Dearing, J. W., Dogherty, E. J., Squires, J. E., & Estabrooks, C. A. (2015). Why (we think) facilitation works: Insights from organizational learning theory. *Implementation Science*, *10(1)*. 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1186/S13012-015-0323-0

Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 10(2), 141–163. https://doi.org/10.1177/004912418101000205

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking. *Qualitative Health Research*, *26*(13), 1802–1811. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870

Bonsu, S., & Kuofie, M. (2019). Small Business Survival. *Journal of Marketing & Management,* 10(1), 51–63. https://gsmi-ijgb.com/wp-content/uploads/JMM-V10-N1-P03-Samuel-Bonsa-Business-Survival.pdf

Booton, C. (2018). Using rich pictures to verify, contradict, or enhance verbal data. *The Qualitative Report*, *23*(11), 2835–2849. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3279

Bornman, M., & Ramutumbu, P. (2019). A tax compliance risk profile of guesthouse owners in Soweto, South Africa. *The Southern African Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management*, *11*(1), Article a181. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajesbm.v11i1.181

Brear, M. (2018). Process and outcomes of a recursive, dialogic member checking approach: A project ethnography. *Qualitative Health Research*, *29*(7), 944–957. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732318812448

Briegel, J. (2019). The effects of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act on small businesses. *Journal of Financial Services Professionals*, *73*(1), 48–55.

Brix, J. (2020). Building capacity for sustainable innovation: A field study of the transition from exploitation to exploration and back again. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *268*, Article 122381. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.122381

Burd, M. B. (2019). Build and improve business processes for evaluation consulting. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2019(164), 69–80. https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20385

Bushe, G. R., & Marshak, R. J. (2016). The dialogic mindset: Leading emergent change in a complex world. *Organization Development Journal, 34*(1), 37–65.

Calisir, F., Gumussoy, C. A., Basak, E., & Gurel, G. (2016). Effect of organizational learning, transformational leadership, and market orientation on firm performance. *International Journal of Innovation and Technology Management*, *13*(3), Article 1640001. https://doi.org/10.1142/s0219877016400010

Campion, M. C., Campion, E. D., & Campion, M. A. (2019). Using practice employment tests to improve recruitment and personnel selection outcomes for organizations and job seekers. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *104*(9), 1089–1102. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000401

Caretta, M. A., & Pérez, M. A. (2019). When participants do not agree: Member checking and challenges to epistemic authority in participatory research. *Field Methods*, *31*(4), 359–374. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X19866578

Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report*, *21*(5), 811–831. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2337

Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, *10*(6), 807–815. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2018.03.019

Chadwick, I. C., & Raver, J. L. (2012). Motivating organizations to learn. *Journal of Management*, 41(3), 957–986. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206312443558

Chao, Y.-C. (2018). Organizational learning and acquirer performance: How do serial acquirers learn from acquisition experience? *Asia Pacific Management Review*, *23*(3), 161–168. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmrv.2017.07.001

Chawla, P. (2019). Impact of employer branding on employee engagement in business process outsourcing (BPO) sector in India: Mediating effect of person–organization fit. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, *52*(1), 35–49. https://doi.org/10.1108/ict-06-2019-0063

Choo, L. S., Mat, N., & Al-Omari, M. (2013). Organizational practices and employee engagement: A case of Malaysia electronics manufacturing firms. *Business Strategy Series*, *14*(1), 3–10. https://doi.org/10.1108/17515631311295659

Clark, K. R., & Veale, B. L. (2018). Strategies to enhance data collection and analysis in qualitative research. *Radiologic Technology*, *89*(5), 482CT–485CT.

Cox, T. H., & Blake, S. (1991). Managing cultural diversity. Implications for organizational competitiveness. Academy of Management Science, 5(3), 45-56. https://doi.org/10.5465/AME.1991.4274465

Craig, E., & Silverstone, Y. (2010). Tapping the power of collective engagement. *Strategic HR Review*, *9*(3), 5–10. https://doi.org/10.1108/14754391011040019

Cruz, R. F., & Tantia, J. F. (2016). Reading and understanding qualitative research. *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, *39*(1), 79–92. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10465-016-9219-z

Cumberland, D. M. (2016). Training and educational development for "vetrepreneurs." *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *19*(1), 88–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316682948

Cypress, B. S. (2017). Rigor or reliability and validity in qualitative research. *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing*, *36*(4), 253–263. https://doi.org/10.1097/dcc.0000000000000253

Deeb, H., Vrij, A., Hope, L., Mann, S., Leal, S., Granhag, P. A., & Strömwall, L. A. (2017). The devil's advocate approach: An interview technique for assessing consistency among deceptive and truth-telling pairs of suspects. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, *23*(1), 37–52. https://doi.org/10.1111/lcrp.12114

Du, Y., Zhang, L., & Chen, Y. (2016). From creative process engagement to performance: Bidirectional support. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *37*(7), 966–982. https://doi.org/10.1108/lodj-03-2015-0046

Elliott, V. (2018). Thinking about the coding process in qualitative data analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, *23*(1), 2850–2861. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3560

Elston, J. A., Chen, S., & Weidinger, A. (2016). The role of informal capital on new venture formation and growth in China. *Small Business Economics*, *46*(1), 79–91. https://doi.org/10.1007/S11187-015-9674-9

Eva, N., Newman, A., Zhou, A. J., & Zhou, S. S. (2019). The relationship between ethical leadership and employees' internal and external community citizenship behaviors. *Personnel Review*, *49*(2), 636–652. https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-01-2019-0019

Farooq, R. (2018). A conceptual model of knowledge sharing. *International Journal of Innovation Science*, *10*(2), 238–260. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijis-09-2017-0087

Feng, T., Wang, D., Lawton, A., & Luo, B. N. (2019). Customer orientation and firm performance: The joint moderating effects of ethical leadership and competitive intensity. *Journal of Business Research*, *100*(1), 111–121. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.03.021

Field, L. (2017). Interest differences and organizational learning. *Administrative Sciences*, *7*(3), Article 26. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci7030026

Fleet, D., Burton, A., Reeves, A., & DasGupta, M. P. (2016). A case for taking the dual role of counsellor-researcher in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *13*(4), 328–346. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2016.1205694

Forero, R., Nahidi, S., De Costa, J., Mohsin, M., Fitzgerald, G., Gibson, N., McCarthy, S., & Aboagye-Sarfo, P. (2018). Application of four-dimension criteria to assess rigour of qualitative research in emergency medicine. *BMC Health Services Research*, *18*(120), Article 120. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-018-2915-2

García-García, R., García-Canal, E., & Guillén, M. F. (2017). Rapid internationalization and long-term performance: The knowledge link. *Journal of World Business*, *52*(1), 97–110. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2016.09.005

Goertzen, M. J. (2017). Introduction to quantitative research and data. *Library Technology Reports*, *53*(1), 12–18. https://doi.org/10.5860/ltr

Gopalkrishnan, S. S. (2017). The role of humor in startup success: The mediating role of team performance. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, *17*(3), 9–23.

Guetterman, T. C. (2016). What distinguishes a novice from an expert mixed methods researcher? *Quality & Quantity*, *51*(1), 377–398. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-016-0310-9

Gupta, V., & Kumar, S. (2012). Impact of performance appraisal justice on employee engagement: A study of Indian professionals. *Employee Relations*, *35*(1), 61–78. https://doi.org/10.1108/01425451311279410

Hamilton, G., Powell, M. B., & Brubacher, S. P. (2017). Professionals' perceptions regarding the suitability of investigative interview protocols with Aboriginal children. *Australian Psychologist*, *52*(3), 174–183. https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12196

Hancock, M., Amankwaa, L., Revell, M., & Mueller, D. (2016). Focus group data saturation: A new approach to data analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, *21*(11), 2124–2130. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2330

Harper, M., & Cole, P. (2015). Member checking: Can benefits be gained similar to group therapy? *The Qualitative Report*, *17*(1), 510–517. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.2139

Hasan, A., & Tumah, H. (2018). Primary caregivers of people with severe mental illness experience of anti-psychotic medication: Findings from the semistructured interviews. *Global Journal of Health Science*, *10*(3), 20–32. https://doi.org/10.5539/gjhs.v10n3p20

Hawkins, L., & Hoon, S. (2019). The impact of customer retention strategies and the survival of small service-based businesses. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, *19*(2), 7–34. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3445173

Heale, R., & Twycross, A. (2017). What is a case study? *Evidence Based Nursing*, *21*(1), 7–8. https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2017-102845

Hellman, T., Molin, F., Eriksson, T., & Svartengren, M. (2019). How management groups' reason when deciding to use a model focusing on systematic work environment management. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, *12*(6), 441–456. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijwhm-09-2018-0124

Hendriks, M., Burger, M., Rijsenbilt, A., Pleeging, E., & Commandeur, H. (2020). Virtuous leadership: A source of employee well-being and trust. *Management Research Review*, *43*(8), 951–970. https://doi.org/10.1108/mrr-07-2019-0326

Hoopes, D.G. & Postrel, S. (1999). Shared knowledge, "glitches" and product development performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, *20* (9), 837–865. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199909)20:9%3C837::AID-SMJ54%3E3.0.CO;2-I

Hordge-Freeman, E. (2018). Bringing your whole self to research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1). Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918808862

Huang, Y. C., & Shih, H. C. (2011). A new mode of learning organization. *International Journal of Manpower*, *32*(5/6), 623–644. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437721111158233

Ivanoski, F. (2020). Needs capital for small and medium enterprises. *New Knowledge Journal of Science / Novo Znanie*, 9(4), 49–56.

Jaaron, A. A. M. & Backhouse, C. J. (2017). Operationalizing "Double-Loop" learning in service organizations: A systems approach for creating knowledge. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 30(4)*, 317–337. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-016-9397-0

Jackson, C., Vaughan, D. R., & Brown, L. (2018). Discovering lived experiences through descriptive phenomenology. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *30*(11), 3309-3325. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-10-2017-0707

Johnson, M., O'Hara, R., Hirst, E., Weyman, A., Turner, J., Mason, S., Quinn, T., Shewan, J., & Siriwardena, A. N. (2017). Multiple triangulation and collaborative research using qualitative methods to explore decision making in pre-hospital emergency care. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *17*(1), Article 11. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-017-0290-z

Joo, B.-K., & Lee, I. (2017). Workplace happiness: Work engagement, career satisfaction, and subjective well-being. *Evidence-Based HRM*, *5*(2), 206–221. https://doi.org/10.1108/ebhrm-04-2015-0011

Jordan, K. (2018). Validity, reliability, and the case for participant-centered research: Reflections on a multi-platform social media study. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*, *34*(10), 913–921. https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2018.1471570

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, *24*(1), 120–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Kpamma, Z. E., Adjei-Kumi, T., Ayarkwa, J., & Adinyira, E. (2017). Participatory design, wicked problems, choosing by advantages. *Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management*, *24*(2), 289–307. https://doi.org/10.1108/ecam-06-2015-0085

Kreiser, P. M. (2011). Entrepreneurial orientation and organizational learning: The impact of network range and network closure. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *35*(5), 1025–1050. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2011.00449.x

Kusumawardhani, M., Gundersen, S., & Tore, M. (2017). Mapping the research approach of asset management studies in the petroleum industry. *Journal of Quality in Maintenance Engineering*, *23*(1), 57–70. https://doi.org/10.1108/jqme-07-2015-0031

Lanka, E., Lanka, S., Rostron, A., & Singh, P. (2021). Why we need qualitative research in management studies. *RAC - Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 25(2), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-7849rac2021200297.en

Lee, J. Y., & Welliver, M. C. (2018). The role of strategic leadership for learning on the relationship between training opportunities and salesperson job performance and commitment. *European Journal of Training and Development, 42(9)*, 558–576. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-08-2017-0068

Linneberg, M. S., & Korsgaard, S. (2019). Coding qualitative data: A synthesis guiding the novice. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *19*(3), 259–270. https://doi.org/10.1108/qrj-12-2018-0012

Liu, G., & Ren, H. (2019). Organizational learning and job satisfaction of trainee auditors: A case study of Chinese CPA firms. *Accounting Research Journal, 32(2)*, 70–87. https://doi.org/10.1108/ARJ-04-2016-0049

Louis, K. S., & Murphy, J. (2017). Trust, caring and organizational learning: The leader's role. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *55*(1), 103–126. https://doi.org/10.1108/jea-07-2016-0077

Lyall, C., & King, E. (2016). Using qualitative research methods in biomedical innovation: The case of cultured red blood cells for transfusion. *BMC Research Notes*, *9*(1), 267–268. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13104-016-2077-4

Madia, S. A. (2011). Best practices for using social media as a recruitment strategy. *Strategic HR Review*, *10*(6), 19–24. https://doi.org/10.1108/14754391111172788

Marjanovic, U., Delić, M., & Lalic, B. (2015). Developing a model to assess the success of e-learning systems: Evidence from a manufacturing company in transitional economy. *Information Systems and e-Business Management*, *14*(2), 253–272. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10257-015-0282-7

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Marshall, M. I., & Schrank, H. L. (2020). Sink or swim? Impacts of management strategies on small business survival and recovery. *Sustainability*, *12*(15), Article 6229. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12156229

Matarirano, O., Chiloane-Tsoka, G. E., & Makina, D. (2019). Tax compliance costs and small business performance: Evidence from the South African construction industry. *South African Journal of Business Management*, *50*(1), Article a336. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajbm.v50i1.336

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J., & Liljedahl, M. (2018). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, *41*(9), 1002–1006. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159x.2018.1497149

McKeown, T., & Cochrane, R. (2017). Independent professionals and the potential for HRM innovation. *Personnel Review*, *46*(7), 1414–1433. https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-09-2016-0256

Metallinou, M. M. (2017). Single- and double-loop organizational learning through a series of pipeline emergency exercises. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, *26*(4), 530–543. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12214

Metallinou, M. M. (2018). Single- and double-loop organizational learning through a series of pipeline emergency exercises. Journal of Contingencies & Crisis Management, 26(4), 530–543. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12214

Miles, R. E., Snow, C. C., & DMayer A. (1978). Organizational strategy, structure, and process. *Academy of Management Review*, 3*(3),* 546-562. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1978.4305755

Milić, B., Grubić-Nešić, L., Kuzmanović, B., & Delić, M. (2017). The influence of authentic leadership on the learning organization at the organizational level: The mediating role of employees' affective commitment. *Journal of East European Management Studies, 22*(1), 9–38. https://doi.org/10.5771/0949-6181-2017-1-9

Mo, S. (2017). Organizational learning process in single, double and triple loop companies in a post-crisis situation in the textile sector in Tunisia. *Journal of Entrepreneurship & Organization Management*, *6*(2), 216–219. https://doi.org/10.4172/2169-026x.1000219

Mohajan, H. K. (2017). Two criteria for good measurements in research: Validity and reliability. *Annals of Spiru Haret University. Economic Series*, *17*(4), 59–82. https://doi.org/10.26458/1746

Mohammad, H. I. (2019). Mediating effect of organizational learning and moderating role of environmental dynamism on the relationship between strategic change and firm performance. *Journal of Strategy and Management, 12*(2), 275–297. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSMA-07-2018-0064

Moon, M. D. (2019). Triangulation: A method to increase validity, reliability, and legitimation in clinical research. *Journal of Emergency Nursing*, *45*(1), 103–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jen.2018.11.004

Mukumbang, F. C., Orth, Z., & van Wyk, B. (2019). What do the implementation outcome variables tell us about the scaling-up of the antiretroviral treatment adherence clubs in South Africa? A document review. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, *17*(1), Article 28. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-019-0428-z

Naicker, Y., & Rajaram, R. (2018). Factors that influence tax compliance of SMEs in South Africa. *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Administratio*, *10*(2), 94–111.

Naim, M. F., & Lenka, U. (2020). Organizational learning and Gen Y employees' affective commitment: The mediating role of competency development and moderating role of strategic leadership. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 26*(5),*815 - 831. https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2018.19

National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1979). *The Belmont Report.* U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html

Nazir, O., & Islam, J. U. (2017). Enhancing organizational commitment and employee performance through employee engagement. *South Asian Journal of Business Studies*, *6*(1), 98–114. https://doi.org/10.1108/sajbs-04-2016-0036

Newman, A., Allen, B., & Miao, Q. (2015). I can see clearly now. *Personnel Review*, *44*(4), 611–628. https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-11-2013-0200

Nikpour, A. (2017). The impact of organizational culture on organizational performance: The mediating role of employee's organizational commitment. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, *6(1)*, 65–72.

http://doi.org/10.33844/ijol.2017.60432

Noble, H., & Heale, R. (2019). Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence Based Nursing*, *22*(3), 67–68. https://doi.org/10.1136/ebnurs-2019-103145

Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2013). Qualitative data analysis: A practical example. *Evidence Based Nursing*, *17*(1), 2–3. https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2013-101603

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

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1), https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Obeso, M., Hernández-Linares, R., López-Fernández, M. C., & Serrano-Bedia, A. M. (2020). Knowledge management processes and organizational performance: The mediating role of organizational learning. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *24*(8), 1859–1880. https://doi.org/10.1108/jkm-10-2019-0553

Odor, H. O. (2018). A literature review on organizational learning and learning organizations. *International Journal of Economics & Management Sciences*, *7*(1), Article 494. https://doi.org/10.4172/2162-6359.1000494

Oh, Seok-Young. (2019). Effects of organizational learning on performance: the moderating roles of trust in leaders and organizational justice. *Journal of Knowledge Management. 23*(2), 313-331. https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-02-2018-0087

Oliveira, M., Bitencourt, C. C., Santos, A. C., & Teixeira, E. K. (2015). Thematic content analysis: Is there a difference between the support provided by the MAXQDA and NVivo software packages? *Revista De Administração Da UFSM*, *9*(1), 72–82. https://doi.org/10.5902/1983465911213

Onu, D., Oats, L., Kirchler, E., & Hartmann, A. J. (2019). Gaming the system: An investigation of small business owners' attitudes to tax avoidance, tax planning, and tax evasion. *Games*, *10*(4), Article 46. https://doi.org/10.3390/g10040046

Ouakouak, M. L., & Ouedraogo, N. (2018). Fostering knowledge sharing and knowledge utilization. *Business Process Management Journal*, *25*(4), 757–779. https://doi.org/10.1108/bpmj-05-2017-0107

Oxtoby, K. (2017). Common consultant interview questions and how to answer them. *BMJ*, *2017*(356), Article j455. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.j455

Pannone, S. J. (2017). The influence of homeschooling on entrepreneurial activities: A collective case study. *Education + Training*, *59*(7/8), 706–719. https://doi.org/10.1108/et-05-2016-0091

Park, W., Sung, C. S., & Byun, C. G. (2019). Impact of unlisted small and medium-sized enterprises' business strategies on future performance and growth sustainability. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, *5*(3), Article 60. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc5030060

Perannagari, K. T., & Chakrabarti, S. (2019). Factors influencing acceptance of augmented reality in retail: Insights from thematic analysis. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, *48*(1), 18–34. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-02-2019-0063

Pett, T. L., Errami, Y., & Sié, L. (2019). How smaller firms can outperform their peers. *Journal of Business Strategy*, *40*(2), 42–49. https://doi.org/10.1108/JBS-12-2017-0178

_Pham, L. T., & Hoang, H. V. (2019). The relationship between oganizational learning capability and business performance. *Journal of Economics and Development*, *21*(2), 259–269. https://doi.org/10.1108/jed-10-2019-0041

Podmetina, D., Soderquist, K. E., Petraite, M., & Teplov, R. (2018). Developing a competency model for open innovation. *Management Decision*, *56*(6), 1306–1335. https://doi.org/10.1108/md-04-2017-0445

Popli, S., & Rizvi, I. A. (2015). Exploring the relationship between service orientation, employee engagement and perceived leadership style: A study of managers in the private service sector organizations in India. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *29*(1), 59–70. https://doi.org/10.1108/jsm-06-2013-0151

Putra, E. D., & Cho, S. (2019). Characteristics of small business leadership from employees' perspective: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *78*(1), 36–46. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.11.011

QSR International Pty Ltd. (2018). NVivo 12 [Software]. https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home

Rabie, B., & Burger, A. (2019). Benefits of transport subsidisation: Comparing findings from a customer perception survey and most significant change technique interviews. *African Evaluation Journal*, *7*(1), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.4102/aej.v7i1.371

Rahman, M., Aydin, E., Haffar, M., & Nwagbara, U. (2020). The role of social media in E-recruitment process: Empirical evidence from developing countries in social network theory. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1108/jeim-12-2019-0382

Reychav, I., Kumi, R., Sabherwal, R., & Azuri, J. (2016). Using tablets in medical consultations: Single loop and double loop learning processes. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *61*(1), 415–426. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.020

Rose, J., & Johnson, C. W. (2020). Contextualizing reliability and validity in qualitative research: Toward more rigorous and trustworthy qualitative social science in leisure research. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *51*(4), 432–451. https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2020.1722042

Rosenberg-Yunger, Z. R. S., & Bayoumi, A. M. (2017). Evaluation criteria of patient and public involvement in resource allocation decisions: A literature review and qualitative study. *International Journal of Technology Assessment in Health Care*, *33*(2), 270–278. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0266462317000307

Ryan, G. S. (2017). An introduction to the origins, history and principles of ethnography. *Nurse Researcher*, *24*(4), 15–21. https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.2017.e1470

Saadat, V., & Saadat, Z. (2016). Organizational learning as a key role of organizational success. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *230*(1), 219–225. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.09.028

Sadam, M., Jõgi, L., & Goodson, I. F. (2019). Improving the transparency of the life history method data analysis process in qualitative biographical research. *Pedagogika*, *134*(2), 5–24. https://doi.org/10.15823/p.2019.134.1

Saldaña, J. (2018). Researcher, analyze thyself. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918801717

Sandhya, S., & Sulphey, M. M. (2020). Influence of empowerment, psychological contract and employee engagement on voluntary turnover intentions. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, *70*(2), 325–349. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijppm-04-2019-0189

Saravanakumar, P., Higgins, I. J., Van Der Riet, P. J., & Sibbritt, D. (2018). Tai Chi and yoga in residential aged care: Perspectives of participants: A qualitative study. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, *27*(23–24), 4390–4399. https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.14590

Schrauf, R. W. (2017). Mixed methods designs for making cross-cultural comparisons. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *12*(4), 477–494. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689817743109

Sechelski, A., & Onwuegbuzie, A. (2019). A call for enhancing saturation at the qualitative data analysis stage via the use of multiple qualitative data analysis approaches. *The Qualitative Report*, *24*(4), 795–821. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3554

Sequeira, J. M., Weeks, K. P., Bell, M. P., & Gibbs, S. R. R. (2018). Making the case for diversity as a strategic business tool in small firm survival and success. *Journal of Small Business Strategy*, *28*(3), Article 31. https://aquila.usm.edu/fac_pubs/15905/

Shanker, M. (2019). Recruitment process and its impact on retention of commercial pilots in Indian aviation industry. *Business Process Management Journal*, *26*(3), 736–751. https://doi.org/10.1108/bpmj-12-2018-0376

Sharafizad, J. (2018). Informal learning of women small business owners. *Education + Training*, *60*(1), 82–103. https://doi.org/10.1108/et-01-2017-0006

Siegner, M., Hagerman, S., & Kozak, R. (2018). Going deeper with documents: A systematic review of the application of extant texts in social research on forests. *Forest Policy and Economics*, *92*(1), 128–135. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2018.05.001

Simón-Moya, V., & Revuelto-Taboada, L. (2016). Revising the predictive capability of business plan quality for new firm survival using qualitative comparative analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, *69*(4), 1351–1356. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.10.106

Smith, J. (2016). Efficiency and ethically responsible management. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *150*(3), 603–618. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3175-x

Stephan, U., Patterson, M., Kelly, C., & Mair, J. (2016). Organizations driving positive social change. *Journal of Management*, *42*(5), 1250–1281. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316633268

Strömberg, A., Engström, M., Hagerman, H., & Skytt, B. (2019). First-line managers dealing with different management approaches. *Leadership in Health Services*, *32*(4), 543–557. https://doi.org/10.1108/lhs-09-2018-0046

Sun, U. Y. (2018). Does ethical leadership influence subordinates¡¯ Knowledge Sharing? A moderated mediation model. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, *2018*(1), Article 18338. https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2018.18338

Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. (2015). Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and Management. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, *68*(3), Article 1456. https://doi.org/10.4212/cjhp.v68i3.1456

Tang, G., Yu, B., Cooke, F. L., & Chen, Y. (2017). High-performance work system and employee creativity. *Personnel Review*, *46*(7), 1318–1334. https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-09-2016-0235

Thompson Agyapong, G., Mmieh, F., & Mordi, C. (2017). Factors influencing the growth of SMEs: The case of Ghana. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, *60*(4), 549–563. https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.21945

Tomlinson, G. (2010). Building a culture of high employee engagement. *Strategic HR Review*, *9*(3), 25–31. https://doi.org/10.1108/14754391011040046

Tunstall, T., Oyakawa, J, Eid, h. & Martize, A, (2016). *Small business and their impact On Texas executive summary*. https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/business/small_business_study_texas_office of_governor.pdf

Tutak, T., Süzen, A. B., & İnan, İ. E. (2020). Determining the mistakes of secondary school mathematics teachers on Operation Priority. *Participatory Educational Research*, *7*(1), 16–29. https://doi.org/10.17275/per.20.2.7.1

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2016, June). *White paper: Operation Boots to Business veteran entrepreneurship assessment*. https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/b2b_vet_entrepreneurship_assessment.pdf

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2017). *Office of the Advocacy: Veteran-owned business and their owners.* http://sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/435-veteran-owned-businesses-report.pdf

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2018a, December). *Office of the Advocacy: Veteran-owned business and their owners*. https://cdn.advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/07100130/Small-Business-Facts-Spotlight-on-Veteran-Owned-Employer-Businesses.pdf

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2018b, November). *Office of the advocacy: Veteran-owned business and their owners.* https://cdn.advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/23101840/2018-Small- Business-Profiles-TX.pdf

U.S. Small Business Administration. (2019, January 30). *Office of the advocacy: Veteran-owned business and their owners.* https://advocacy.sba.gov/2019/01/30/small-businesses-generate-44-percent-of-u-s-economic-activity/

Vallat, D., Bayart, C., & Bertezene, S. (2016). Serious games in favour of knowledge management and double-loop learning? *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 14, 470–477. https://doi.org/10.1057/kmrp.2015.29

Vaswani, N. (2018). Learning from failure: Are practitioner researchers the answer when conducting research on sensitive topics with vulnerable children and young people? *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *21*(4), 499–512. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2018.1434866

Venkatesh, V., Brown, S., & Sullivan, Y. (2016). Guidelines for conducting mixed-methods research: An extension and illustration. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, *17*(7), 435–494. https://doi.org/10.17705/1jais.00433

von Scheel, H., von Rosing, M., Fonseca, M., Hove, M., & Foldager, U. (2014). Phase 1: Process concept evolution. *In M. von Rosing, H. von Scheel, & A.-W. Scheer (Eds.), The complete business process handbook: Body of knowledge from process modeling to BPM, 1*(1), (pp. 116 – 141). https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-799959-3.00001-X

Wagner, M., Thomassey, S., Zeng, X., & Curteza, A. (2018). Qualitative analysis of open-ended questions to define awareness of ethical fashion in Romania. *Journal of Fashion Technology & Textile Engineering*, *6*(1). https://doi.org/10.4172/2329-9568.1000167

Wiley, C. (1992). Recruiting strategies for changing times. *International Journal of Manpower*, *13*(9), 13–22. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437729210020688

Xu, M., & Storr, G. (2015). Learning the concept of researcher as instrument in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, *17*(21), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.1768

Yang, C., Liang, P., & Avgeriou, P. (2018). Assumptions and their management in software development: A systematic mapping study. *Information and Software Technology*, *94*(1), 82–110. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infsof.2017.10.003

Yang, D., Li, L., Jiang, X., & Zhao, J. (2020). The fit between market learning and organizational capabilities for management innovation. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *86*(1), 223–232. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2019.12.007

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Yuan, Y., Lu, L. Y., Tian, G., & Yu, Y. (2018). Business strategy and corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *162*(2), 359–377. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3952-9

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

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Subject: Business Success Strategies for Military Veteran Small Business Owners

Pertinent Information :

Participant Name: ______________________________

Location: _____________________________________

Telephone Number: ____________________________

Email Address: ________________________________

Hours of Availability: __________________________

Participation in the research study is voluntary only, is consensual, and is confidential.

Criteria of the participants. The criteria of the participants must include the following: (a) a military veteran with a DD Form 214, (b) military veteran small business owner for 5 years or more in Texas, and (c) register as a military veteran-owned business by providing a copy of their Department of Veteran Affairs certification.

Email. An email will be sent to all participants to schedule the interview and provide them with the consent form to read before the interview date.

The email will consist of the following:

Subject: Invitation to interview with Traci Leonard, Doctoral Candidate with Walden University

Dear [Name]

I would like to invite you for an interview at your convenience to get to know you and your business strategies. The purpose of my qualitative multiple case study is to explore the strategies military veteran small business owners use to sustain and succeed in small business beyond 5 years. The target population will consist of military veteran business leaders from three organizations in Texas who have successfully operated a small business beyond 5 years. The results of this study could have implications for positive social change by adding sustained employment opportunities for military veteran small business owners and their employees in the local community.

The interview will last about 90 minutes and consist of six questions to learn more about your small business. Attached is a consent form for your review. If you accept the invitation, I will forward you a copy of the interview questions. Would you be available on [date and time]?

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Traci Leonard

The Interview

The interview will be approximately 90 minutes and recorded.

1. Introduction. I will identify myself and greet the participant. Then, I will thank the participant for allowing me to interview them and for their time.

2. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore the strategies military veteran small business owners use to sustain and succeed in small business beyond 5 years. The target population will consist of military veteran business leaders from three organizations in Texas who have successfully operated a small business beyond 5 years. This findings results could have implications for positive social change by adding sustained employment opportunities for military veteran small business owners and their employees in the local community.
3. Research Question: What strategies do military veteran small business owners use to sustain in business beyond 5 years?
4. The participant will read and sign the consent form, with a copy provided to them for their records.
5. I will reemphasize to the participant that I will maintain their privacy and the identity of their small business by assigning a designation code, which will not be trackable to any personally identify in information. I will keep all participants' data secure on a password-protected computer and external thumb drive in a secure building. I will keep the data for 5 years and then destroy it.
6. I will ask the participants to be honest with their answers and detail their business experiences and challenges. I may ask them to clarify any answers later and remind them that what they say during the interview is confidential. Lastly, I will ask for their consent to be recorded. If requested, I will replay the recording for them after the interview.

7. The participant will be asked if they have any questions or concerns before the recording starts.
8. I will announce the date, time, and that the recording has started.
9. The interview questions will last 15 minutes.
10. Interview questions.
11. Probing questions.
12. When the interview is over, I will announce that the recorder is turned off and thank the participant.
13. The participant will review the transcript to ensure the accuracy of the information obtained and make any necessary corrections to confirm member checking.
14. I will thank the participants for allowing me the opportunity to conduct the interview and remind them I will keep their identities and responses confidential.

Interview Questions (face-to-face)

1. What business strategies did you use to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
2. What sources did you use to fund your business throughout the first 5 years?
3. What key barriers have you experienced that may have prevented you from implementing the strategies for sustaining your business in the long term?
4. How did you address the key barriers that threatened the success of your strategies for business success?
5. What strategies have you used to leverage government funding for your business' sustainability?

6. What additional information can you provide to help understand the strategies that were effective for your veteran-owned business success during its first 5 years of operation?

Probing Questions

1. Could you explain your answer?
2. Could you give an example?
3. Could you provide more detail on what you mean?

Appendix B: Member Checking Email

Subject: Member Checking

Dear [PARTICIPANT NAME],

This email requests a review of the initial interpretations of findings from the data collected, including your contributions. I have attached a member checking peer review comment matrix. Once you have completed the matrix and send a copy to me via email, I will be reviewing your comments to assist with completing my study, so your constructive and candid comments are appreciated.

I request that you please return your completed member checking peer review matrix to me no later than August 31, 2021. Please contact me if you have questions.

Thanks for your contribution to this research.

Traci D. Leonard
Candidate, Doctorate in Business Administration
Walden University

Appendix C: Thank You Email to Participants

Subject: Thank You

Dear [PARTICIPANT NAME],

I would like to thank you for taking the time to sit down for an interview and sharing your experiences openly with me. I genuinely appreciate your willingness to support my research and provide your valuable feedback.

I am looking forward to analyzing the interview transcripts and supporting documentation to discover developing themes.

Thanks for your contribution to this research.

Respectfully,

Traci D. Leonard

Appendix D: Participants ID

Participant ID	Interview Date	Gender	Signed Informed Consent
P1	June 2021	Female	Yes
P2	June 2021	Male	Yes
P3	June 2021	Male	Yes