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Strategies for Small Business Sustainability for Restaurants

James Harold Jones
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

James H. Jones

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.

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

Strategies for Small Business Sustainability for Restaurants

by

James H. Jones

MBA, Walden University 2013

BA, Philander Smith College, 1995

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

Many small restaurant business owners in the United States industry lack effective leadership strategies to sustain their business operations. For small restaurant businesses, the survival rate from 1994-2018 was 15 years. One-third of all small businesses are sustainable to 10 years without successful business sustainable leadership strategies. Grounded in authentic leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore sustainable leadership strategies five small restaurant business owners use to sustain their business for 5 years and longer. The participants were five small business restaurant owners in Arkansas and Tennessee. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews, member checking, and business brochures and websites. The following themes emerged from the thematic analysis: leading with passion, purpose, honest communication, integrity and trust, self-discipline, and positive values. The key recommendation for small restaurant business owners is to develop sustainability leadership strategies for a positive working environment and support workers' well-being, develop high daily moral principles and professionalism for their employees, have positive convictions with passionate leadership, and develop positive values and meaningful working relationships with employees for business sustainability. The implications for social change are additional investment operations, such as job creation and opportunities for families and community citizens, increased local government tax revenues for schools, and better roads and business longevity in the community.

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Dedication

Wow!! Dedications: First, I need to give thanks for the spiritual walk with my higher power that does not reside on this earthly planet. Next, my wife for her enduring and inspiring support in this DBA journey, as well as the recurring health issues I endured and faced along the way. I also have two other people to whom I must dedicate this DBA journey accomplishment, but they are no longer with us on this planet. First, my mom I lost when I was in my MBA program in 2013. Secondly, my mother-in-law lost this year in November 2023. These women were very inspirational and supported my wife and me as we stayed steadfast for this moment.

Lastly, just as important are our children and grandchildren supporting me throughout this DBA journey and my sickness, which sometimes was incredibly challenging for my wife and me, to say the least. So, I know I could not have made this DBA journey without each one of them encouraging me when I was down as I continued this battle of sickness that is improving daily. I cannot express in words how each of you touched me in learning to live and cherish the journey.

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I endured several bouts with serious health issues while completing this DBA journey. Also, not to mention having different chairs along the way. My second first chair committee, Dr. Janet Booker, when she began working with me, her statement was, “We are going to get you through this DBA journey,” which was so inspirational for my psychological well-being. Dr. Janet always made me feel that she was with me 110% through her leadership with a positive purpose from her heart, showing her positive values, self-discipline, and building an enduring relationship of connectedness with me expressing in words will not do her genuine acknowledgment in her compassion and the passionate relationship we have established (My wife and I thank you from the bottom of our heart!!!!).

To Dr. Peter Anthony, my second the second chair committee, it was a pleasure to meet someone who was all about getting me to the next phase of this DBA journey with the sincere belief that we can (Thank You!!). Dr. Gail Miles, Associate Dean, thank you for your support in another significant role in completing my doctoral and Mrs. Pamm Kemp, student success advisor.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Restaurant business owners are vital for the U.S. economy for the middle class and local communities (National Restaurant Association [NRA], 2019). They provide jobs and help increase tax revenues to help their local community and can lower failure rates of small restaurant operations (Munck & Tomiotto, 2019). Business owners must develop additional leadership skills to sustain their business operation longevity in that niche market. Business owners' and leaders' decision-making processes may determine how their leadership values system might maximize their organization's longevity for their future and sustainable business operation (Munck & Tomiotto, 2019). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies small business restaurant owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Specifically, business leaders who incorporate authentic leadership strategies may improve the organization's engaged work environment and sustain their business operations beyond 5 years. Authentic leadership theory is a tool that may help leaders evaluate their leadership behaviors and strategies used in their business operations (Jordan, 2018). Authentic leadership practices can help support meaningfulness that helps support employees' and followers' work engagement and well-being (Chaudhary, 2021). Section 1 outlines why there was a need to explore why small restaurant business owners are vital for the local communities and succeed in sustaining their businesses beyond 5 years in their local community.

Background of the Problem

Small business restaurant owners provide jobs and employment to an economy that helps its citizens, local community, and government. Small business restaurant owners are an essential asset for the U.S. economy, employing 6 in 10 adults (NRA, 2019). Yet their survival rate from 1994 to 2018 for 15 years was 25.7% (U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy [SBAOA], 2020).

Authentic leadership in the 21st century is critical for businesses to employ. Leaders developing an authentic leadership strategy can effectively increase the positive influence on subordinates and significantly affect their daily small business restaurant operations. Authentic leadership has emerged as significant in addressing unethical business practices (Johnson, 2018; Rost, 1991). It also provides strategies, such as effective communication, passion, and consumer connectedness, essential for a positive business work environment (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007). Purpose, shared value, employee working relationship, and leaders developing self-discipline with the heart are essential for business leaders in leadership daily practices. In addition, leaders' transparency helps influence followers to seek the same goals, objectives, and outcomes and share ideas and opinions in an organization (Chughtai, 2018). Therefore, authentic leadership strategies could promote continued success for the organization's future (Williams et al., 2021).

In this research study, I applied authentic leadership theory to find insights into successful strategies for restaurant business owners to evaluate their leadership behavior strategies in their local niche market. Restaurant business owners may enhance

employment opportunities that improve the business, extend the economic outlook for their business in that community, and help improve families' financial and living conditions in the local community.

Problem and Purpose

For small businesses started in 2017, about 20.6% failed within the first year of opening (U.S. SBAOA, 2019). Only approximately one-third of small businesses are sustainable beyond 10 years (U.S. SBAOA, 2020). The general business problem is that multiple small business owners lack effective leadership strategies for sustainability beyond 5 years. The specific business problem is that a large percentage of small business restaurant owners lack leadership strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies small business restaurant owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The population for the study was owners of five small restaurants in Arkansas and the southern United States who employ successful leadership strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The results of this study might have implications for positive social change in low socioeconomic communities through job creation and increased tax revenues for communities. In addition, enhanced employment opportunities may improve the economic outlook for individuals and their families, which could strengthen their living conditions.

Population and Sampling

The data collected were from five purposefully selected small restaurant

business owners in Arkansas and the southern United States. I used face-to-face semistructured interviews to gather information on what strategies sustained their restaurant business for 5 years and beyond without disruption. Then I followed up with participants for a second interview in 2 weeks to begin member checking for themes, views, and statements and address assertions and concerns to validate the data I collected.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are the three research methods available to researchers (Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers explore given phenomena on what, how, or why the phenomenon exists through real-world perspectives and personal experiences by asking participants interview questions (Bronnimann, 2022; Mondal et al., 2022; Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2018). I selected the qualitative method for this study to collect detailed information from participants about leadership strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Collecting nonnumerical data is appropriate for the research study using interview questions and participants' observations (Taherdoost, 2021; Yin, 2018). The quantitative research method was not suitable for this study because I did not examine the variables' characteristics or relationships (see Pilcher & Cortazzi, 2023; Sincere et al., 2018). Further researchers use the mixed method by combining quantitative and qualitative methods (Park & Park, 2016). I did not use the mixed method, because the quantitative component was not required.

Ethnography, phenomenology, and case studies were the three research designs considered for this study. In an ethnography research study, researchers study groups and

communities through observation of behaviors, culture, ideologies, beliefs, and language within groups, which in the 21st century encompass smartphone and digital recording in real-time during the interviews (Escudero-Mancebo et al., 2023; Mol et al., 2017; Murphy et al., 2021). The ethnography design was inappropriate for this study because I did not observe interactions or community cultural behaviors for this research study.

Phenomenological research observes a phenomenon without obstructing participants' natural behaviors and without prejudgments of them in the study. Researchers use a phenomenological research design to explore the personal meanings of participants' lived experiences related to a phenomenon without disturbing the natural way behaviors can be descriptive (Sachez et al., 2022) and in the research study and without prejudging consumed presumptions (Bartholomew, 2021; Sortino & Pomona, 2018). In this research study, I did not explore the personal meanings of the participants' views; as a result, the phenomenological approach was inappropriate for this study.

A case study is designed by time and place to understand a real-world phenomenon instead of a new or emerging phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Multiple case studies in the same research will increase the researcher's reliability and validity or may predict contrasting views from the researcher's data collection from the different case studies. Researchers use multiple case study designs to collect data from multiple cases to increase the richness and comparisons of data to support validity (Yin, 2018). For example, a qualitative multiple case study by

the researcher compares results and also provides how the researcher designed the theory and practice (Cash et al., 2022; Yin, 2018). Also, it provides overall support for each case included in the research study that may predict similar or contrasting results (Yin, 2018). A researcher may use a single case study to justify and analyze a single case phenomenon's actual nature and revelatory situation that expands longitudinally at different points in time in defining the real case (Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2018). Finally, researchers collect data from a single case study approach to address the phenomenon for one case (Saunders et al., 2016). I chose the multiple case study design and gathered and compared several data resources, producing a more robust and comprehensive study.

Research Question

What leadership strategies did small business restaurant owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

The open-ended interview questions I addressed from the central research question were as follows:

1. What leadership strategies did you use to sustain your small business beyond 5 years?
2. How did you measure the effectiveness of the leadership strategies used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
3. What were the key barriers to implementing your leadership strategies to sustain your business beyond 5 years?

4. How did you address the key barriers to implementing your leadership strategies in your business for sustainability?
5. How do you instill purpose for yourself and in your employees?
6. What shared values have you emphasized in your business with your employees?
7. What relationship strategies have you established to improve a positive workplace with your employees?
8. What, if any, heartfelt self-disciplines strategies do you demonstrate to your employees to inspire integrity and trust?
9. What additional information can you share about your strategies for sustaining your business beyond 5 years?

Conceptual Framework

Authentic leadership was the conceptual framework for this study.

Authentic is from the Greek word *authento*, meaning to have full power” (Trilling, 1972) and appeared in the academic leadership literature in the 1960s (Novicevic et al., 2006). George’s (2003) and George and Sims (2007) substantial contributions to authentic leadership theory involve leaders’ personalities and core values of honesty and how authenticity plays a significant role in leadership and employee development in the organization. For that reason, a leader’s authenticity to “know thyself” in an organization promotes commitment, knowledge sharing, job satisfaction, greater work engagement, and higher job performance and productivity (George, 2003). The five constructs for authentic

leader leadership are (a) purpose: a leader should pursue their goals with passion in understanding themselves and their motivation to lead; (b) the heart: a leader needs to lead from their heart for a deeper purpose that promotes a positive working environment for their employees and customers; (c) values of leaders personal beliefs and of individuals that should encompass integrity and trust; (d) self-discipline: a leader should demonstrate consistency in their actions from their hearts and with their people they lead; and (e) relationships: a leader should develop enduring relationships with their employees, which requires openness, trust, and commitment (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007). Authentic leadership has many concepts that business leaders can use to help their organization's culture and support positive relationships with all stakeholders in or outside the organization.

Authentic leadership by leaders contributes to effective business practices in the organization that promotes positive outcomes between the leader and their followers to attain the same goals and objective for the organization. Leaders' authentic leadership for business practices contributes to and connects leaders and followers to the same goals and objectives for influencing their organizational performance outcomes (Wong & Cummings, 2009). Organizational value systems should identify critical factors in adapting to a new purpose and strategies in the organization's sustainability and implementation processes (Munck & Tomiotto, 2019) as well as supply chain management (SCM)—a system that adds value to supply chain trust to help organizational performances (Alshurideh, 2022). Authentic leadership theory may provide small business restaurant owners the needed support in evaluating their

leadership behavior strategies for change. Additionally, authentic leadership theory was a suitable choice for this study to identify and explore how small restaurant business leaders can incorporate high moral principles, speaking, and standing for fairness in their organization.

Operational Definitions

Authentic leadership: Authentic leadership is a leader's working relationship and engagement in a work environment with followers (Gill et al., 2018), such as purpose, shared values, relationships, self-discipline, and the heart and how others perceive it in organizational culture (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007).

Leaders' honest communication: Leaders' honest communication is effective communication within a business organization that will increase trust between business owners, supervisors, and the leadership management team (Oswald & Mascarenhas, 2019). It could also negatively or positively affect employees' perception of the organizational culture (Sadia et al., 2016).

Leaders' integrity and trust: Leaders' integrity and trust are characteristics capable of motivating and inspiring a positive organizational culture, removing barriers, and breaking down leaders' boundaries from their followers and subordinates (Oswald & Mascarenhas, 2019). Leadership in crafting employee trust comprises authenticity and transparency in communication that engages employees and how employees view leaders' leadership success or failure (Jiang & Luo, 2018).

Leaders' passion: Leaders' passion is leaders' emotions toward employees that consist of atmosphere and passion in an organization between the leader and employees' interactions and can inspire a positive or negative working relationship (Bhansing et al., 2018).

Leaders' purpose: Leaders' purpose is influential when impacting organizational culture (Phillips & Phillips, 2020). A business leader that fosters a positive psychological and ethical climate will promote a positive relationship and engagement with followers (Sendjaya et al., 2019).

Leaders' relationship and connectedness: Leaders' relationship and connectedness to consumers is a kind of staff, professionalism, speed of service, quality of services offered, ambiance, and comfort (Stranjancevic & Bulatovic, 2015).

Leaders' shared values: Leaders' shared values represent a leader's demonstration of high working standards with their employees and followers, which is an effective leadership strategy that will help create a positive working relationship (Weiss et al., 2018). Also, it supports coworkers' and followers' creativity and innovation in a business environment's successful daily operation (Zaitouni & Ouakouak, 2018).

Small business: Small business is an independent business with 500 or fewer employees. (U.S. SBAOA, 2020).

Sustainability: Sustainability by management is a philosophy that contributes to leadership that acknowledges how their followers can contribute to their future success (Lakshmi & Kennedy, 2017). Leaders' sustainability requirements in the company's strategic decision-making processes and sustainable actions are essential for lasting

organizational results (Munck & Tomiotto, 2019).

Sustainable leadership strategies: Sustainable leadership strategies are planned innovations and practices of products, services, and technologies; sustainability is critical in implementing business decisions in their daily business operations for longevity (Batista & Francisco, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The researcher's study's assumptions, limitations, and delimitations must show how they affect the researcher's study process and the objectives to be covered. The researcher's study's assumptions are the beliefs accepted as facts or truths (Waldkirch, 2020). The limitations are the potential weaknesses or the influences out of the researcher's control (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher's delimitations are the study's scope and boundaries (Marshall & Roman, 2016). Therefore, it relates to a researcher's study objectives, whether to undertake a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approach (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher must share their research study assumptions, limitations, and delimitations in their research study, which will explain each process to their readers.

Assumptions

As noted, assumptions are beliefs and ideas of a researcher when conducting a research study and are out of a researcher's control (Grant et al., 2018). The researcher's views and opinions from those assumptions will need additional investigations to be proven or disproven through a researcher's

evidence study (Mamman et al., 2018). Therefore, my first assumption was that the qualitative research method is appropriate for the study. The second assumption was that the participants would have the expertise to answer the research questions from their small niche market in Arkansas and the southern United States. Finally, the third assumption was that participants would answer all questions as truthfully and honestly as possible.

Limitations

Researchers must share and explain their limitations and weaknesses in the study for their respected readers, who will represent the study, how many became participants, and where the research took place. Researchers have limitations and restrictions out of their control in a research study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Additionally, a researcher needs to share and explain the weaknesses that may influence and affect the study results (Greener, 2018). The first limitation is exploring the sustainability and leadership experiences of only five small business restaurant owners in Arkansas and the southern United States whose business operation is beyond 5 years in their niche market in the United States. The second limitation was the views and data collected from selected participants from selected business owners in this southern region of the United States may not reflect other small business owners from other different areas in the United States. The third limitation was locating five small business owners to participate in the study. Finally, the fourth limitation was the participants' allotted time for one interview, or did I have to schedule a second interview because of external influences and factors they must attend during our meeting time?

Delimitations

The researcher must set boundaries, design the scope and objectives they plan to use in the research and with participants in the study, and explain those chosen and why a particular leadership is essential and sustainable in their business operation. Delimitations in a case study represent characteristics of how a researcher constructed and designed the scope as far as investigation in the research study objectives (Simon & Goes, 2013) and includes how a researcher must set boundaries during the development phase of the research plan study objective (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The interviews were from five small restaurant owners' perspectives, which may limit data saturation. Further, I only explored business restaurant owners' sustainable leadership success strategies regarding their purpose, shared value, employees' working relationships, self-discipline, and the heart. The geographic location I limited to Arkansas and the southern United States.

Significance of the Study

Leaders have many benefits in increasing their organizational leadership capabilities and capacity. Business owners need to typically gain specific leadership skills in business practices and become familiar with leadership approaches, leadership behaviors, and leadership characteristics for performance improvement (Oswald & Mascarenhas, 2019). Business owners' communication strategies might positively influence their followers to provide sustainability in their niche markets (Bush, 2019). Small business owners could use the findings of

this study to identify new strategies to support long-term sustainability, which can benefit communities' citizens through sustainable employment opportunities.

Contribution to Business Practice

The results of this study may help business owners deliver a new vision and positive organizational influence and motivation to improve small restaurant business owners' essential business practices for long-term business sustainability. Leaders who communicate and show authentic leadership behaviors and positive relationships with their employees and subordinates truthfully, honestly, and with transparency (Rukh et al., 2018). These behaviors also help confirm employee satisfaction as well as build positive relations with their superiors (Ayca, 2023). Small business owners who commit to becoming authentic leaders in their organization might get the best out of themselves and their followers by catalyzing employees' interest in taking responsibility for their work performance to achieve organizations' long-term sustainable endeavors (Gill et al., 2018). In addition, small restaurant business owners may want to understand how authentic leadership can enhance their relationships when engaging with their followers to gain their confidence in leadership.

Implications for Social Change

This study's findings may have positive social change implications through job creation and employment opportunities for individuals and families in local communities. Business leaders' sustainable business strategies of purpose, shared value, integrity, trust, and communications are can impact their organization's followers and potentially support social change by improving business retention and success in local communities (Jiang &

Luo, 2018). Leaders' corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication may influence employees' values, attitudes, and behavioral practices (Jiang & Luo, 2020). Increased numbers of successful small restaurant business owners may impact positive social change in the low socioeconomic community by increasing tax revenues for communities, enabling school improvements, and creating additional revenues for benefiting citizens.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The researcher must utilize and familiarize themselves with academic literature before beginning their research study to show their knowledge in a specific field. For example, researchers for a business study use a vast amount of previous literature, peer-reviewed articles, seminal works, and some academic books for a research study to review if discrepancies may demonstrate gaps in prior research questions or produce conflicts with an earlier research study (Bodolica & Spraggon, 2018). In addition, researchers' review of the academic literature will illustrate researchers' knowledge in the field of research relevant to that particular field of study (Randolph, 2009; Snyder, 2019). On that account, the researcher's ability to synthesize their research study findings is evidence that additional research was required to address the research questions proposed in the study's conceptual or theoretical framework (Snyder, 2019). For this qualitative multiple case study, I cover various academic literature sources related to what authentic leadership strategies small restaurant business owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years for continued success.

I located the literature from the Walden University Online Library, EBSCO Host Site, Emerald Management Site, Sage Journals, Google Scholar Search Engine, Business Source Complete, ProQuest Central, U.S. Small Business Government Sites, and Academia Books. The keyword search included *authentic leadership*, *leaders' honest communication*, *leaders' integrity and trust*, *leaders passion*, *leaders' purpose*, *leaders' relationship and connectedness*, *leaders' shared values*, *small business*, *sustainability of business*, and *sustainable leadership strategies*. I reviewed and included current and past scholarly literature, seminal works, research articles, and academic books on authentic leadership strategies and sustainability related to business owners. The research consisted of leaders' authentic leadership practices, honest communication, integrity, trust, passion, leadership purpose with followers and employees, leadership relationships, and connectedness with employees and followers. Additionally, leadership shared values, small business operations, leadership sustainability, and sustainable leadership strategies are critical for developmental business strategies needed by leaders (Batista & Francisco, 2018; George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007). When leaders acquire authentic leadership skills in their practices, they build a more positive relationship with the people they lead, and a shared value creation SVC by business leaders is essential to creating innovation and new vision performances (Christianto & Setiawan, 2024; Su et al., 2023). At least 85% of the literature was published within 5 years of his study; the rest included 25% of the additional literature, some books, peer-reviewed articles, and seminal works (see Table 1).

Table 1*Literature Review Sources by Year*

| Literature Type | Beyond 5 Years | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | Total No. |
|-----------------|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Peer-Review | 72 | 28 | 27 | 31 | 35 | 39 | 5 | 237 |
| Non-Peer-review | 4 | | | | | | | 4 |
| Books | 7 | | | | 1 | | | 8 |
| Other | 5 | | | | | | | 5 |
| Total | 88 | 28 | 27 | 31 | 36 | 39 | 5 | 254 |

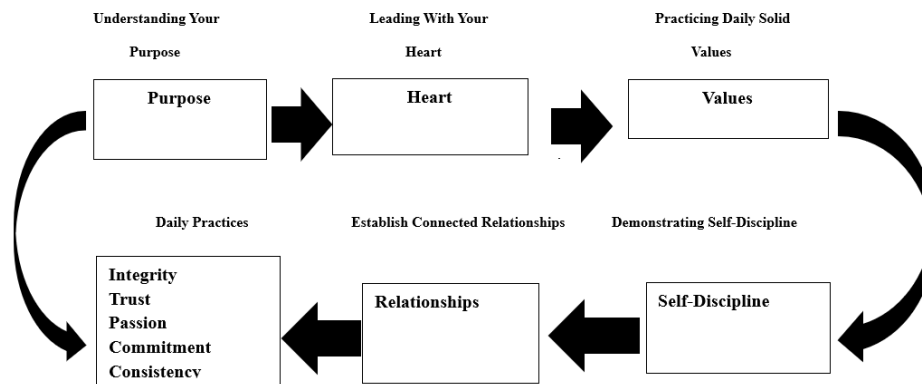
Conceptual Framework

I shaped the research study on authentic leadership theory with the benefit of George's (2003) and George and Sims's (2007) suggestions to leaders' authentic leadership for this study. George's contributions and suggestions to authentic leadership theory have five dimensions: purpose, heart, values, self-discipline, and relationships for leaders. Rost (1991) also found that leaders need to promote commitment and knowledge sharing to stimulate employees' job satisfaction for sustainability. In this study, I applied George and Sims's five required dimensions for business owners' successful business longevity and sustainable leadership strategies for their organization's success. Additionally, the leaders' characteristics are their passion, behaviors, connectedness, consistency, and compassion, which they exemplify to their followers or employees (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007). Businesses' longevity in their respected community depends on leadership characteristics and establishing additional leadership skills for long-term relationships with the employees, subordinates, and followers

through passion and exhibiting positive behaviors that will be consistent and with compassion (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Construct of Authentic Leadership Five Dimensions



Description of concepts included in authentic leadership daily practices are small business owners who daily practices of integrity, trust, passion, commitment, and consistency:

- Integrity: The leaders' ability to demonstrate high moral principles and professional standards in daily practices.
- Trust: The leaders need to display confidence and reliance on speaking and standing for fairness, truth, and honor in daily practices.
- Passion: The leaders' ability to display their desires and emotions, showing purpose and dedication to speaking with heartfelt statements and openness to objections in daily practices.
- Commitment: The leaders' ability to demonstrate responsibility to practice self-discipline is not overreaching or sabotaging other peoples' ideas or

suggestions in their daily practices.

- Consistency: The leaders' ability to continually demonstrate repeated, reasonable, and logical standards in their decisions and daily practices.

Business owners should recognize the leaders' daily practices and evaluate how to perceive their leadership reputations and ethics (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007).

Leaders who demonstrate authentic leadership behaviors foster who they want to become to achieve optimal business performances from their followers' day-to-day business operations and practices (George & Sims, 2007). As a result, their followers, workers, and all shareholders would have positive outcomes working in their environment as part of the organizational culture (George & Sims, 2007). Also, the leader's ability to develop additional leadership characteristics valued and recognized by all organizational stakeholders as positive and ethical is critical to any business culture's success. Leaders, therefore, should employ some of those five authentic leadership practices (integrity, trust, passion, commitment, and consistency) to help develop a more positive organizational culture.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and authentic leadership are strategies for business leaders to employ strategies that are valuable to employees, and all stakeholders for a successful business operation. Corporate Social Responsibility and Authentic Leadership. Businesses should employ corporate social responsibility (CSR) and authenticity in their organization's activities and behaviors for employees, stakeholders, and consumers to observe as valuable assets in the company's operational conduct (Al-Shammari et al., 2021; Hassan et

al., 2022). Business owners' and leaders' leadership with authenticity will promote values of trust and a shared purpose with all stakeholders and reduce organizational barriers. Also, a leader using CSR in a firm will enjoy high-performance levels in terms of economic responsibility, trust, and status in their demographic.

Authentic leadership helps business owners improve business and working relationships with followers and employees. Authentic leadership can address business management skills requirements that contribute to business lack of success or failures (Copeland, 2016; Hoch et al., 2018; Jeyaraj & Gandolfi, 2019; Johnson, 2018; Rost, 1991). Authentic leadership theory may allow small restaurant business owners and leaders to improve their business success, extend their economic outlook and business survival in the community with families, and enhance all shareholders' and their employees' successful working relationships. Leaders' authentic leadership quality to followers and shareholders would serve as a genuine connectedness to address critical organizational barriers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leadership theory can provide leaders with tools that encompass measuring how effective they are in leading with transparency, effective base trust, and balancing organizational processes and how effective they are as leaders in motivating groups' or organizations' performances and commitments that have positive work-related relationship outcomes (Butterworth et al., 2024; Luz et al. 2023).

Authentic leadership by business owners can improve employee relationships and performances, such as effective working relationships and job satisfaction, and achieve overall organizational success. Authentic leadership strategies can also help develop

internal relationships with all subordinates, promoting effective working relationships for a successful business strategy (Chughtai, 2018). For example, followers' care plays a significant role in the overall individual success and supports the organizational success of employees' work engagement, translating into employees achieving job satisfaction and self-confidence in their attitudes (Chughtai, 2018). Also, quality human resources management needs company policies will support employee commitment to the company, which will help the organization's long-term productivity (Sinambela et al. (2022). Management of businesses needs to understand authentic leadership practices can help in developing positive working relationships, positive work engagement, and meaningfulness with subordinates and followers in an organization (Winton et al., 2022).

Authentic leadership (AL) and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) are essential strategies and skills for business leaders to adopt for long-term organizational culture and identity support. Authentic leadership AL and organizational citizenship behaviors OCB have emerged in business organizational studies, revealing that those combined leadership roles in administrative management are essential for business leadership roles in today's media industry and business success (Zubair & Khan, 2018). Followers are more willing to accept OCB as a positive environment within the organizational culture and identity during a crisis (Kovoor-Misra et al., 2021; Zubair & Khan, 2018). Moreover, leaders need to develop the expertise and proficiency skills that can

influence and transfer to their followers or employees' authentic leadership behaviors to sustain the organizational culture to flourish that is well attuned to employees' needs (Lyubovnikova et al., 2017; Zubair & Khan, 2018). However, at the same time, business owners, managers, or leaders of an organization must develop more self-awareness, trust, and honest working relationships with followers and employees' working engagement and meaningfulness.

Open communication by the leader is critical in the organization and will promote a positive cultural work environment that will help employees' and followers' job performance. Furthermore, authentic leadership by a leader will ensure open communication within that work environment that will influence the team's performance (Lyubovnikova et al., 2017), and servant and authentic leadership strategies combined can motivate employees' and followers' morale and well-being in religion organizations if they perceive leadership is value-base and is competent using both styles for achieving sustainability to influence employees' subjective well-being (SWB) Ortiz-Gomez et al. (2022), thereby having a more positive organizational outcome on their organizational performance (Anders, 2021). Wherefore, the benefit for leaders of using authentic leadership theory practices promotes an environment where employees and followers better understand how the organizational culture helps them enhance their self-confidence in their job performance and enables better organizational progressive outcomes. Moreover, employees and followers can build confidence in determining their leader's competence to maximize job performance and job proficiencies that help maximize their people working together to achieve the same goals (Zubair & Khan, 2018). Valsania et al.

(2012) also examined authentic leadership by leaders and its influences on employees' organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). Also, Valsania et al. discovered that the role of the leader in an organization was a key factor in employee belief in the organization's working culture. At the same time, a leader's leadership key behaviors must exhibit trust and integrity to followers and be recognizable among its people as a positive organizational behavior culture.

Leader leadership's most effective strategies are how they view their internal and external belief systems regarding their leadership with their employees. Northouse (2022) provided additional viewpoints on authentic leadership behaviors such as the leader (a) intrapersonal and how the leader views their perceptions, (b) interpersonal and how to perceive how authentic leadership between themselves and followers benefits each other, and (c) developmental aspects how the leader nurtured, oppose to their fix traits. That being so, it is justifiable if the leader and employees' relationship is robust, and an authentic leadership relationship shows that employees have sincere perceptions of an informational acceptable organizational cultural process of communications (Kurian & Nafukho, 2021).

Contrasting Leadership Strategies

Furthermore, leaders' everyday transformational leadership seeks approaches that would motivate employees' positive values and may help produce more accomplishments in achieving organizational goals (Copeland, 2016). Authentic leaders, knowing they-self as value-centered and having a moral

perspective of their strengths and weaknesses, may acknowledge characteristics of other leadership styles of importance (Copeland, 2016; George & Sims, 2007). Kamau (2022) found that credibility and authenticity are leading factors a leader needs to employ and practice with their followers and are seen as positive values in the organization and promote a culture of positive team spirits of shared values that increase organizational productivity. Leaders' leadership self-efficacy is not only about individual traits or values but also shows their employees how truth and humility can benefit the organization's moral culture.

There are various leadership strategies and benefactors when leaders incorporate leadership strategies such as authentic, ethical, transformational, and transactional leadership in their daily business practices with subordinates and followers. Also, leaders' understanding of authentic, ethical, transformational, and transactional leadership methods will help complement their behaviors in how others view their leadership capabilities (Copeland, 2016). For example, Gardiner (2017) found that authentic leadership should not only be about leaders' internal self-in-relation. In contrast, the need to attribute other ethical concerns to other people's different perspectives and norms, whereby authentic leadership allows leaders to focus on being true to themselves and the organization (Gardiner, 2017). Leaders must employ several different leadership methods with their employees, showing their internal and external capabilities that demonstrate how they envision themselves and the organization's culture.

The importance of leaders combining different leadership principles and

behaviors in the organization is essential for the leader's efficiency and accountability to followers. Copeland (2016) also found that prior empirical studies on authentic and ethical leadership are about and combined by the leaders, which are critical for the organization and more effective if only one behavior is observable by their followers. Additionally, an ethical demonstration from the leaders is required to uphold standards, accountability, and principles that followers will adhere to and follow (Copeland, 2016). In contrast, transformational leadership will seek to influence morality and motivate followers to go beyond their original intention and interest for the successful organization's means of operation (Copeland, 2016). On the other hand, transactional leadership is also about motivating and rewarding followers to fulfill their tasks and assignments (Copeland, 2016). Leaders' ability to combine different leadership styles with employees and followers is a more effective way to address different situations or circumstances than trying to fit only one leadership style into every organizational problem.

There are numerous benefits in the three leadership behaviors of ethical, transformational, and authentic leadership values. Copeland (2016) also contended that in the research on the effectiveness of leadership, there were three behaviors: ethical was the most effective, transformational was next, and authentic was the least. Still, each positively affects an organization's leadership capabilities (Copeland, 2016). Copeland's research on failures by leaders who lack authentic, ethical, and transformational leadership in the 21st manifested into

an era of major corporate meltdowns, worldwide terrorism, political upheaval, and the lack of societal support responses to health issues (Copeland, 2016). In addition, it has produced ineffectiveness in leaders' leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1993; Brown et al., 2005). Numerous researchers and research practitioners also advocated that leaders must reestablish and develop a new internal values baseline that incorporates hope, confidence, integrity, and honor to their followers and to benefit society (Copeland, 2016). Leaders who practice positive inner values can help their subordinates achieve their goals and desires and provide ways to help humanity within their market.

All leadership strategies are critical to address different organizational business concerns. Hoch et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis study examined ethical, authentic, and servant leadership related to transformational leadership and the leader's ethical and moral behaviors to specific outcomes. First, Hoch et al. found that all three ethical/moral values-based leadership forms, if performed by the leaders, will be recognized by some employees in how they view the behaviors and attitudes of the leader. Lastly, the research also showed that authentic and ethical leadership correlated when leaders exhibited transformational leadership behaviors (Hoch et al., 2018). Servant leadership was more distinctive working than transformational leadership (Hoch et al., 2018). On behalf of employees' behaviors and attitude perceptions, transformational leadership's moral and ethical dimension may enhance a better understanding of the effects of leadership influencing employee and followers' outcomes in showing accountability and exemplifying those principles (Hoch et al., 2018). Finally, the benefit of each business

leadership strategy affects the organizational culture and employees and how they perceive the leader's integrity.

Leaders' lack of demonstrations of authentic, ethical leadership and positive characteristics will affect their organization and its followers' behaviors. Leaders' authentic leadership encompasses a sense of understanding of their purpose that will exemplify ethical and solid moral values, leading from the heart and building enduring relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Copeland, 2016; George, 2003). Which will help govern their character of self-restraint to practice self-discipline in their actions and decision-making (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Copeland, 2016; George, 2003). At the same time, arguments from other research studies have shown that charismatic, transformational, integrity, and ethical leadership can overlap and have their own distinctions when implemented by a leader's leadership in their actions (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). When followers and subordinates observe ethical leadership by management as trustworthy, there is greater optimism and belief in the organization's future success (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Regarding authentic and ethical leadership, researchers argued that when leaders possess a high mental expansion of both of these characteristics, they are more effective in leading their successful organizational outcomes for the future (Copeland, 2016). Also, Keem et al. (2022) found that regarding the leader's ethical leadership, the need for cognitive closure (NCC) was relevant to team members' identification and supported the teams in achieving creativity and organizational goals. As a result, leaders' or management's

development of positive leadership styles and practices like authentic, ethical leadership will help successfully expand future organizational results and team identity and creativity for future success.

Leadership strategies such as ethical, authentic, and servant leadership are critical as they affect the leader's subordinates and their questions about their effectiveness as a leader. Ethical, authentic, and servant leadership are emerging positive leadership strategies that may significantly relate to and have a variance in transformational leadership practices by leaders within all businesses (Hoch et al., 2018). Whereby a transformational leader, without incorporating ethical, authentic, and servant leader behaviors may abuse their followers by only adhering to their self-interests instead of valuing all stakeholders' and business organizational concerns (Hoch et al., 2018). In addition, if used simultaneously, the three essentials of ethical, authentic, and servant leadership practices can promote solid ethical/moral values-based leadership forms (Hoch et al., 2018). Also, ethical and authentic leadership refers to how the leader conducts his personal and interpersonal actions with subordinates and followers in two-way communication. Leaders' responsive moral and ethical actions toward followers and subordinates during decision-making will support transformational leadership behaviors that influence all organizational outcomes (Copeland, 2016; Hoch et al., 2018). Leaders who benefit and use ethical, servant, and authentic leadership strategies in their daily practices will show all stakeholders authenticity and trust that everyone in the organization values and supports them.

Servant leadership (Servant-First) requires leaders to put followers and

stakeholders above their selfish interests. At the same time, it should help leaders psychologically and build their authenticity of moral characteristics like integrity, humility, and reliability in their organizational climate. It affects employees' trust and attitudes toward leadership (Hoch et al., 2018; Ling et al., 2017). However, servant and authentic leadership have similarities and distinctions (Hoch et al., 2018; Ling et al., 2017). In comparison, in Ling et al.'s (2017) study, servant leadership and authentic leadership had a group climate of trust that influenced individuals' work and attitudes. Unmoving, that influence differed from servant leadership style in the hospitality sector and had a more significant positive effect on group climate and individual attitudes, such as organizational work engagement and organizational commitment, than authentic leadership (Ling et al., 2017). Lastly, Birgisdottir et al. (2023) found that servant leadership is a critical factor if used by leaders to listen and trust employees and can lead to higher levels of employee creativity and self-efficacy, which will help employees develop higher roles of clarity in their organizational performances, plus see the organization visions and take on more responsibility in their actions for growth. Subsequently, the benefit of leaders practicing different leadership styles will affect how employees trust their leadership regarding the organizational culture and their organizational development. Servant leadership can also play a major role in employees' job creativity.

Researchers have shown that the benefits of combining servant leadership and authentic leadership are essential traits that leaders need to employ in their

organizational culture. So, for managers to build a significant climate of trust in the organizations for sustainability, both servant and authentic leadership are necessary to encourage a positive, trusting work environment for all parties to share common goals, values, and beliefs (Jeyaraj & Gandolfi, 2019; Ling et al., 2017). Johnson et al. (2023) argued that authentic leadership is foremost effective physiologically with followers when the leader is learning and leading with other leadership styles, such as ethical and transformational, affecting leadership trustworthiness and identification of followers' belief in the organizational performances. The benefit of servant leadership is that it requires leaders to put employees or followers before self-interests to build an evidence-based base of upholding a high moral standard; this leadership style may only work in some organizations as a single-handed leadership style.

Leadership Honest Communication

Communication by leaders sets the groundwork for followers to understand and follow the leader's direction and goals it wants to undertake within the organization. Decuypere et al. (2022) suggest that leadership needs to develop leader attentive communication (LAC) skills, such as interacting with employees reciprocally, that promote effective listening with empathy. Effective communication from leaders is a procedure to influence and drive employees or followers in the organization that ensures the planning and structure are goal-centered and transparent so that all parties understand the big picture to sustain the business's success (Anders, 2021). Anders (2021) also asserted that effective communication requires leaders and management to acquire five essential functional skills in leadership: (a) planning, (b) organizing, (c) commanding, (d)

coordinating, and (e) controlling. Effective communication will align the company workforce to their proper tasks, each accomplishing their goals and meeting each departmental-specific goal in the organization (Anders, 2021). In addition, Barrett (2006) found that effective communication skills will help leaders guide, direct, and build trust that followers or workers are inspired to follow their leader. Lastly, Men et al. (2021) found through their study that motivational language theory (MLT) is an effective means of leader communication and is essential to maintaining employee trust when a crisis arises in the organization, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tao et al. (2022) provided guidelines for leadership on how to enhance employee engagement using motivational language (ML) and self-determination theory (SDT) when the organization is going through a crisis. Tao et al. (2022) suggested that employees' and workers' psychological needs, such as autonomy, relatedness, and competence, are vital in helping the organization survive crises. Leaders who benefit from utilizing trust and effective communication styles, MLT, and SDT with their workers during a crisis will infer the ethical character of fairness and trustworthiness through attentive leadership listening, communication, and psychological needs, which will enhance their leadership capability inside or outside the organization when a crisis needs correcting in the organization.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented business leaders with new communication challenges from 2019 to 2022 in addressing business disruptions. Mather (2020) also suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic for business leaders'

leadership and governance in today's crisis is paramount. Consequently, they must confront new challenges in their business organization; emphasizing core values, purpose, and open communication will help the organization through the past COVID-19 crisis (Mather, 2020). Lastly, the leader's leadership and governance will gauge how it affects employees' performance and resolve conflicts at a high level in the organization and between team members (Mather, 2020). Therefore, business leaders' communication skills must address the past COVID-19 challenges to minimize disruptions at all organizational levels.

The capability of a leader to effectively communicate with their employees and followers is an essential strategy. Yue et al. (2021) semistructured focus group discussions expanded and examined the effects of internal communication and emotional culture on employees' organizational identification and used two internal communication types: leadership motivating language (LML) and organizational-level symmetrical internal communication (LSIC). Whereas motivating language LML in the organization is a (a) meaning-making language that will connect employees to understanding the overall organizational cultural viewpoints like values, the mission, and vision, (b) empathic language leaders must incorporate in their messages showing support and compassion that respects employees, (c) effective language from leaders that will help direct organizational achievable goals that help employees under their roles and their task assignments with transparency, and employees able to get feedback from their work performances when completed (Yue et al., 2021). The benefit of leaders in establishing more effective transparent communication methods with their employees and followers is

vital, helping the organization achieve its goals and allowing employees and followers to complete their tasks and assignments more effectively.

Leaders' effective communication in the organization will help their workers believe in the organizational culture and give them a shared sense of belonging. In addition, symmetrical internal communication involves how well the leader exemplifies more openness to employees, the leader's ability to interchange meaningfully with positive conviction, and the leader's effective negotiation skills with employees (Yue et al., 2021). Furthermore, this displays tolerance by the leader for disagreements and also when decisions are made for the organization for all parties involved (Yue et al., 2021). Additionally, Yue et al.'s (2021) research study on LML and LSIC revealed a positive link between positive emotional culture and Furthermore, Yue et al. (2021) study showed that organizations' and leaders' effective communication strategies could provide a cultural environment that will help give employees an energetic lift and a real sense of belonging to the organization and its vision to ascertain its purpose beyond themselves (Yue et al., 2021). Walker (2021) also found that influential leaders' communication leadership in the organization is essential for organizational culture and identification. As a result, effective leadership communication represents a social construct of practices beneficial in creating and maintaining organizational changes in today's communication perspectives between organizational culture and organizational identification (Walker, 2021). In their study, Mohd Sharip et al. (2022) also revealed that management's

meaning-making language (MML) is effective with employees and critically influences when employees rely on leadership behaviors instead of just their words to produce positive outcomes in the organization. The leader's ability to communicate effectively in MML and administer a new vision for the organization is paramount for creating an efficient transition during change and its organizational cultural identifications and norms.

Adaptive leadership strategies are critical for leaders to understand and cultivate if leaders want to create a working environment for transitional change that connects to successful team members' organizational transformations. Doyle (2017) posited that adaptive leadership requires a leader to create an environment for successful organizational changes for team members that need solving problems like adversity, ambiguity, and intricacy in the organization's new development processes. McKimm et al. (2022) suggested that leadership encompasses leaders communicating the organization's vision and ability to drive their teams and motivate their followers in the organization's activities. Thereby helping all team members adapt and understand the strategic learning change processes needed at the individual and organizational levels for a successful transition (Doyle, 2017). Madi Odeh et al. (2023) research showed that the transformational leadership role during adaptive processes needs leaders with a high-quality organizational vision to communicate and nurture their people's ability to cultivate resiliency while adapting to organizational change. Martinez et al. (2023) suggested that leadership communicating openness and trust with subordinates is critical when responding to organizational crises to minimize ambiguity during development.

Successful organizational change in an organization may happen internally or externally during a crisis and may hinder the effectiveness of trust in the organization as a whole among all team members during each step of the transition. In business owners' leadership or organizations, leaders and owners must help cultivate their people to adapt to a new vision of change.

Leadership Integrity and Trust

As a result of the pandemic crisis of COVID-19, many businesses and organizations have had to develop new business portfolio strategies for sustainability in their niche market. Developing a positive organizational culture is significant for leaders to build trust with their subordinates and followers, creating a positive working relationship (Baquero, 2023). Ethical leadership promotes employee job satisfaction and trust with the transparency they get from the leaders and promotes subordinates' belief in their leader's ethical values (Hashim, 2023). Kähkönen (2021) also noted that past COVID-19 pandemic crises, businesses and organizational changes such as downsizing, internal crises, and external societal crises raised many questions about team leaders' effectiveness and that of other team members. Therefore, questions about repairing the needed organizational trust may harm the organization's operation and impact the team's overall performance (Kähkönen, 2021). Kähkönen's (2021) work centered around the multilevel-level approach of Costa et al. (2017) related to the dynamic nature of trust repair between teams in the organization. The multilevel system is essential for the leader's trust-repair in the organization;

therefore, it involves both individuals and group team level that shows the compelling nature of the team's development in a collaborative organizational communication that evokes positive ethical behaviors (Kähkönen, 2021). Therefore, leaders and team members working together on trust-repair, integrity-based, and benevolence-based, as it relates to the competence base of trust violation, may affect the team level and help restore all team members' attitudes during organizational change.

There are numerous benefits that leaders' behaviors require when the time comes to rebuild trust through effective communication with the people in their organization. Kähkönen's (2021) finding on trust repair at the team level provided insights into how trust violations of leaders affect managers' lack of effective communication. Also, leaders' incompetence is related to team members, thereby contributing to a lack of ethical and emotional behaviors and collaboration that will affect team members' positive outcomes (Kähkönen, 2021). Leaders' leadership in repairing trust related to competence-base provides that if leaders acquire the knowledge of how to conduct organizational change, they can repair trust among all team members (Kähkönen, 2021). Also, managers need to ensure a benevolence base related to trustworthiness and examples of their integrity in the leadership of leaders and managers in the organization (Kähkönen, 2021).

Leaders need to employ integrity and trust in their organization, which will also benefit their team members and followers at all levels of the organization. Adaptive challenges in an organization require the leader to change to a different direction for a successful transition with their people. Doyle's (2017) research on adaptive challenges in organizational changes posits that leaders must simultaneously adapt to organizational

changes. Adaptive leadership involves understanding organizational situational problems, such as technical and adaptive ones. Thereby, the leaders' action in helping their people deal with current challenges through listening and effective communication, as well as adaptive measures and responsiveness to a new way of achieving success through the challenges and changes (Doyle, 2017). Uy et al. (2023) found in their study that in adaptive crisis management theory (ACMT), when leadership is in crisis in the organization, leadership must employ collectiveness, team innovations, and shared purpose that will address challenges effectively and develop new opportunities. In an organizational adaptation process, leaders' leadership toward a new framework and shared purpose will lead to a successful transition when business challenges arise that affect people and the organization.

Integrity and trust exemplified by a leader's ethical behaviors are essential to a business's success and operational goals to motivate people at all organizational levels. In their research, Mohi Ud Din and Zhang (2023) found that integrity shapes ethical leadership behaviors so that followers can trust and follow the actions of their leader's goals and directions. Moorman et al. (2018) argued that using multidimensional measures of the leader's integrity and trust in followers' perceptions in their research study may affect the relationship and importance of employees' attitudes toward their job performances. Therefore, followers' psychological motivation by a humble leader will influence employees' behaviors, increase employees' willingness to value the

organizational goals, and enhance job engagement that supports them in performing their tasks beyond themselves (Cho et al., 2020). Furthermore, empirical studies have argued that a trusting relationship with the leader that their followers acknowledge, and their interests preserve will show the sincerity of the followers' perceptions of their leader's integrity (Mohajan, 2018). Leaders who practice integrity and build trust with followers in their organization will have the respect of their followers and employees.

Leaders must incorporate trust, which shows a leader's character and values that subordinates will acknowledge in their behaviors. Moorman et al. (2018) study concluded that followers' trust is affected by the leader's moral character, behavior, and word-deed consistency, which constitutes effective base trust (discloser) and reliance (cognitive trust). Also, integrity exemplified by the leader showed a mediational effect, such as support in followers' and leaders' relationships and positive outcomes in the organization to support organizational goals that promoted more job satisfaction and help forward the leaders' organizational missions and visions objectives (Moorman et al., 2018). On that account, leadership implementing a positive system approach should be orderly and specific to the desired outcomes in the end result (Reimer & Slade, 2023). Lastly, the leader's benefit of learning mindfulness for their workers and subordinates requires effective, competent communication skills of self-compassion and well-being in an organization that will indirectly promote employee job satisfaction (Ramos Salazar, 2022). Positive characteristics of a leader's competence and consistent self-compassionate relationship building in the organization will help build trust with employees and followers to enhance and promote successful job satisfaction for positive

results.

Leadership Passion

Leaders' passion(s) warrant a dual approach that helps employees work to perform their tasks more effectively. Hoa et al. (2017) examined a dualistic system of passion to understand why and when sustainable leadership may impact empowering leaders' effects on a harmonious passion or negative indirect relationship with an obsessive passion for employees' work and creative performance. Which may affect employees' working performances relating to task performances and creative performances and whether there is high or lower role breadth self-efficacy (Hao et al. 2017). In comparison, role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) refers to how individuals view the capabilities of their work performance in a broader sense as it relates to the effects of employees' harmonious passion and obsessive passion (Hoa et al., 2017). Hoa et al. (2017) found that obsessive passion contributed positively to employees' creative performance, and harmonious passion was positively associated with task performance (Hoa et al., 2017). In addition, Hoa et al.'s research concluded that sustainable leaders' empowering leadership practice had different results on individual employees relating to work performance, task performance, and creative performance. Also, role breadth self-efficacy RBSE showed that leadership that employed RBSE working relationships with employees was more favorable to work performance (Hoa et al., 2017). Shen et al. (2023) argued that when leaders become harmonious leaders through benevolence to their

employees, employees' job performance is driven, and organizational citizenship behaviors promote positive follower outcomes. Consequently, the leaders will benefit from incorporating the different forms of leadership passion(s), which is critical in understanding how it affects employees' or followers' work-related attitudes toward their leaders when performing their work tasks.

Leaders must simultaneously address their internal and external environments to understand the dual process of passion(s) and be proactive. Gaan and Mohanty (2019) also argued that business leaders in today's organizations need to recognize the vulnerabilities and uncertainties in their organizational environment to overcome poor passion leadership and unsustainability practices. Also, qualitatively, that consists of harmonious passion (HP), thereby providing an intense psychological approach they internalized within their working environment (Gaan & Mohanty, 2019). In comparison, obsessive passion (OP) involves individuals having an intense work activity through internal and external working environmental pressures (Gaan & Mohanty, 2019). At the same time, leaders' leadership sustainability OP and HP in an organizational environment are critical in mitigating poor leadership practices, such as sustainable trust and detachment in the workplace (Gaan & Mohanty, 2019). However, that may create cynicism and ambiguity between employees and leaders, intervening in employee turnover (Gaan & Mohanty, 2019). Lastly, Ahadiat and Dacko-Pikiewicz (2020) found that leaders' ethical leadership practices confirm employees or followers of the organizational environment of trust and the moral compass of leadership. For example, leaders' ethical behaviors will benefit from their commitment, passion, and psychological

safety in their work environment, producing positive work outcomes and employee well-being.

Leadership Purpose

Business leadership orientation must encompass distinctive styles to motivate employees and address their needs more effectively. Losada-Vazquez's (2023) leadership modeling (e.g., principles, values, and purpose) in organizational sustainable social impact and development learning must incorporate ethical behaviors, an honest vision that is open to sustainability, trustworthiness, and effective communication skills to make employees' work meaningful. Knights et al. (2020) examined how transpersonal leadership coach programs for leaders in the 21st require a new paradigm shift on being radical, ethical, and authentic, showing their values, beliefs, and purpose. That encompasses more self-awareness, increasing leaders' emotional intelligence (EI), and understanding different leadership styles such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Knights et al., 2020). As a result, leaders who understand their psychological empowerment can foster and influence innovative behaviors to improve employees' and followers' creativity and innovation in the organizational climate (Groselj et al., 2021; Phillips & Phillips, 2020; Sendjaya et al., 2019). Accordingly, a leader who solidly resolves different organizational situations and enhances organizational performances at all levels of the organization during uncertain times internally and outside of their environment can influence a favorable climate.

Business leaders should develop an ethical organizational culture for sustainability that benefits the organization's success in sustainable development for change. In addition, Knights et al. (2020) noted that business leaders' organizational culture is critical and promotes how it affects sustainable organisational performances and the relationships between leaders and followers. According to Aftab et al. (2021), the leader ethical leadership (EL), if any, of small businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), large corporations, or firms suggests a leader that displays ethical leadership of respect, fulfillment, and trustworthiness is critical in its organizational culture. Therefore, it will affect employees' job performance (JP) and mediate how corporate social responsibility (CSR) may enhance or influence job outcomes on employee behaviors in the organization (Aftab et al., 2021). Leaders, therefore, must address different problems of organizational changes to followers or employees in any business, which requires an organizational culture of ethics and respect from leadership that employees realize trustworthiness.

Every leadership method has many benefits that affect an entrepreneurial business organization when different opinions need addressing. Felix et al. (2019) revealed that every type of leadership could affect how business leaders' entrepreneurial activity in leadership can drive, influence, or hurt their business culture and innovations if not implemented. For example, autonomous leadership can negatively affect entrepreneurial business activities and can moderate through humane practices. So, it includes charismatic and value based factors to inspire and motivate followers to generate high-performance work outcomes, as displayed by their leadership core values (Felix et al.,

2019). In addition, team oriented leaders require building teams that carry out specific, purposeful goals and humane leadership that supports and validate positive leadership paradigms and practices of shared decision making (Felix et al., 2019). Lastly,

autonomous leadership equates to an individualistic approach, and self-protective requires the leader to display face saving behaviors for the group's safety and security (Felix et al., 2019). Saiyed (2019) added that strong leaders, whether individuals, owners, or CEOs, execute the process of their top management teams (TMT) in motivating their teams, and employees' creative ideas could profoundly affect their customers and niche markets. Leadership also includes self-preservation in the organization and incorporating everyone's opinions in the organization's ability to compete in its market.

Leadership Relationship and Connectedness

Leadership requires leaders to exemplify certain traits and behaviors that their subordinates can accept when they get negative feedback from their customers. Stranjancevic and Bulatovic (2015) suggested that the relationship of leaders' connectedness to consumers requires the kind of staff, professionalism, speed, and quality of services, ambiance, and the comfort customers experience in their business operation. Birch-Jensen et al. (2020) also found that digitally connected service (DCS) organizational customer service-initiated feedback is central to quality improvement. Additionally, leaders in today's business service organizations must adapt and improve, creating customer service feedback using

digitally connected services DCS, such as combining socialization, externalization, and internalization in their business strategy. In addition, business product-service solutions will need to meet and support the customers' informal, formal, valid, and reliable complaints that are timely, relevant, and actionable (Birch-Jensen et al., 2020). Birch-Jensen et al. argued that businesses' ability to deliver initiated customer services of DCS feedback using both digital-to-human and human-to-human would enhance customer feedback and improve their quality of service throughout the organization and to their customers. Exceptional customer service requires leadership to establish efficient methods to address customer complaints and initiate reliable actions to correct customer concerns.

Leadership's positive relationships with their people and customers are essential, and technology is needed to integrate into today's business environment and portfolio. Deszcynski and Beresewicz (2021) proposed an empirical study of relationship management (RM) maturity and firm performance practices using relevant papers from 757 and 44 journals over 10 years. At the same time, RM effectiveness of management and leaders require an organizational culture (shared values, norms, artifacts, and behaviors) and its people to work simultaneously, including their strategy and people alignments and value cocreation, customer management engagement, and life cycle, and multiple channels of dialogue with customers using technological tools in their strategy implementation for a competitive advantage (& Deszcynski & Beresewicz, 2021). Furthermore, satisfied and completely satisfied customers are critical for business sustainability (Deszcynski & Beresewicz, 2021). Additionally, the brand and type of

customer service business longevity and tenured employees' belief is how leaders and the organizational management culture and the business co-creation engagement process in the workplace is the climate valued by all parties for positive organizational outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2021). The benefit of the relationship of management in the organization with all their stakeholders, internally or externally, provides an avenue for management to establish value creation in its people and customers.

Management's and small business owners' ability to give employees correct feedback on their job performance will dictate their views if they feel corrective action is warranted. Employees' job performance feedback is the communication from supervisors, management, or team leaders informing employees of past job performance and areas that may need improvement when applicable (Alam & Latham, 2020). In addition, behavioral sciences and practitioners' press reviews advocate that employees' job performance feedback on their job performances is an essential performance management system, thereby helping employees and employers for future references and business sustainability (Alam & Latham, 2020). However, negative feedback on job performance can also be seen negatively by employees and cannot help improve their work performance or enhance their motivation to aspire and improve their job performance (Alam & Latham, 2020). Alam and Latham suggested that management emotions and interaction with subordinates are critical during the delivery of job performance reviews and may additionally need the training to

look at situational factors such as how employees interpret the feedback, therefore, as organizational and interpersonal constraints. When leaders respond to an employee by taking any work corrective action plan fairly to help an employee improve their work performance, it will determine if they feel it is genuine.

Leaders need to develop performance appraisals that can benefit their employees and may have a positive or negative effect if not done fairly. Furthermore, managerial inability to conduct a performance appraisal, how the employees view the business environment, and if the employees view the issues as beyond or out of their control will generate negative feedback (Alam & Latham, 2020). In their research study, Rezn and Posthuma (2021) added that Human Resource (HR) management and the right kind of management development practices are essential for employees to be aligned and feel like owners within the organization. Accordingly, developing training compensation, job design, communication, and performance management understanding will induce positive employee behavioral engagement tied to the organization's culture, vision, mission, and long-term focus. Moreover, it creates valuable outcomes such as perk-up attitude performance and teamwork collaboration (Rezn & Posthuma, 2021). Business leaders' developmental strategies are essential in developing positive management skills and goals that focus on long-term support in helping team members work with each other positively to reach the organization's performance outcomes.

Leadership Shared Values

The business's leaders shared operational functions in their shortcomings or successes in its niche market, and community is essential for employees and customers to

thrive and succeed. For example, the businesses' leaders and managers' shared values are combinations of high standards and company policy practices in the communities where they deliver their services (Fernández et al., 2020; Weiss et al., 2018; Zaitouni & Ouakouak, 2018). Also, creating an effective working relationship that produces positive work outcomes for managers in the organization and supports coworkers and followers' creativity and innovation for business success, daily operational endeavors, and societal needs are required (Umana et al., 2021; Weiss et al., 2018; Zaitouni & Ouakouak, 2018). In addition, Hadi and Chaudhary (2021) found that empirical studies have shown that shared leadership contributes to psychological team behavior performances in an organization when skilled teams and colleagues self-reflection are by team members. As a result, leaders must address and discover organizational shortcomings and issues to understand how to improve business operational performances in combinations of shared leadership and team performance.

Leaders who share their knowledge with their employees within their organization develop a more positive process with all parties to help the business grow. Additionally, Aryee et al. (2019) showed that team-level empowering leadership by leaders could guide how they share power and acknowledge the contributions their employees can achieve through customer service orientation when given opportunities to learn and thrive at work in their decision-making processes. Finally, Vandavasi et al. (2019) also found that knowledge sharing by team members in an organization contributes to shared leadership and innovation

behaviors. This helps reinforce how shared leadership can impact individual and team-level goals, improve the team's decision-making process of new ideas in acquiring new skills, and remove non-innovative behaviors from individuals and all team levels.

Small Business Organization

A small business's independent operation has 500 or fewer employees. Small companies are independent and employ 500 or fewer employees in their establishment to conduct their day-to-day business operations (U.S. Small Business Administration of Advocacy, [USSBAOA], 2020). Additionally, there were 37.7 million small businesses in the United States between 2000 and 2019; small businesses created 10.5 million jobs and accounted for 65.1% of new jobs startups in the U.S. economy during that time (USSBAOA, 2020). Furthermore, Turner and Endres (2017) noted that new entrepreneurial establishments are essential for the U.S. economy to prosper. Turner and Endres showed that if small business owners incorporate passions in their behaviors as transformational leaders who may influence and control their employees for long-term business sustainability, they will value their employees' goals that support their business successes. Small businesses' leadership practices are essential for a sustainable economy when leaders passionately employ transformational leadership.

Small business owners need to look at working with other small business owners and customers in their niche market to improve their business strategies. Additionally, Turner and Endres (2017) revealed three prevalent themes from interviewing three small business owners in the study (SO1, SO2, and SO3). Turner and Endres found these themes were essential strategies to enhance small-business owners' success rates for

long-term success, including networking with other business owners and customers through networking venues. Furthermore, small business owners' ability to increase their business knowledge base creates a good business plan to deal with subsequent and adverse challenges that may flare up in their day-to-day operations (Turner & Endres, 2017). Lastly, business owners who differentiate their product marketing from competing businesses and customers are essential for long-term business sustainability.

The small business's regular operation by owners was disruptive during COVID-19 and was different for all small business owners, and some will not recover from the impact. There were many small business disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, in the United States, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all businesses by 34.2%, as reported by and surveyed by the Census Bureau Small

Business Pulse Surveyed (USSBAOA, 2020). However, Bartik et al. (2020) discovered that the impact of COVID-19 on small business disruption could have been more effective in that some small business owners closed, and others remained open and switched to remote work. Lastly, their finding showed that many small businesses might fail due to their inability to access financial assistance, and 38% of businesses suggested that they would be unlikely to resume their operation in 2020 (Bartik et al., 2020). Therefore, if the business management team develops its financial and social capital with all stakeholders internally and externally, it will have a long-term positive effect that would

provide a significant business culture advantage in its niche market for sustainability.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the restaurant industry had to adapt and change many old business practices. Using systematic literature review articles, Norris et al. (2021) revealed how the restaurant industry adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it found that many different business models and approaches used during dining restrictions by restaurant business owners were enacted by the country's restaurant industry (Norris et al., 2021). However, simultaneously, the restaurant industry saw more than eight million laid-off and furloughed employees removed from the industry and a revenue loss of \$240 billion by the end of 2020 (NRA, 2019; Norris et al., 2021). Lastly, Norris et al. found three significant innovation themes by business; some were the need for expansion of takeout and delivery operations were essential, the development of new innovative practices such as pop-up markets/grocery, family meals/meal kits that required less prep work in the business operation, and additional revenue streams for flexibility and creativity to survive, and lastly community outreach and more corporate support toward the community and employee effective communication outreach. As a result, restaurant owners should continue to be proactive in all their business endeavors, look for vulnerabilities, and not get complacent during business financial good times.

The country's economy and all business survival are critical for its growth and development in its competitive market. Therefore, for any country's economy to prosper and grow, Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are essential in providing indispensable goods and services throughout its country's markets (Husin & Haron, 2019). In addition, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises' MSMEs will

create jobs and opportunities for their people and the business sectors (Husin & Haron, 2019). Furthermore, Husin and Haron (2019) focused on the Micro and MSMEs that revealed the market and the economy thrive through competition and innovation in their economic business sector and to help with employers' sustainability in their niche markets. When a country's economy is flourishing, all businesses can compete, help its citizens with employment, and have business sustainability.

Small businesses must establish a reputation with a solid value system incorporating internal and external support in their niche markets that may lead to becoming a firm. Runyan and Covin (2019) added that the small business orientation (SBO) of some entrepreneurs started small like startups and then expanded their business operations to become a firm success. Some firms' management wanted to keep that small business value orientation with their customers in supporting their marketing messages (Runyan & Covin, 2019). Runyan and Covin found that SBO's firm reputation is essential to how the public views their past actions, thereby preparing the organization for future activities for success. Small business orientation SBO refers to self-transcendence values with all the organization's stakeholders (employees, customers, etc.) and the internal organization's interests for long-term well-being and sustainability (Runyan & Covin, 2019). At the same time, some of the SBO five dimensions discussed in the study that firms or small businesses need were business integrity, like building social capital and developing their customers' loyalty, representing enduring trust

(Runyan & Covin, 2019). Another SBO dimension was customer responsiveness, leading to positive internal and external competitive advantages in their niche markets (Runyan & Covin, 2019). The business owner and leader's organizational benefit is establishing a good mission and vision statement plan that incorporates internal and external factors that help all stakeholders.

An organization needs leadership to build the business socially and thrive in its community with all its shareholders. Lastly, employee centricism encompasses how the organization forms its social capital that includes employees and all stakeholders; thereby, management exemplifies leadership of goodwill toward their most important asset, their employees, and then to the community it serves (Runyan & Covin, 2019). Runyan and Covin concluded that management identifying qualities in small-sized firms could use SBO what small firms encompass to affect their long-term organizational culture and sustainability and should be a top research priority. The business community and the people they serve should be, first and foremost, in their business strategy.

Sustainability in Business

Leaders in business organizations must develop their ability to establish sustainable leadership strategies to adapt to changing internal and external in their environments. Lakshmi and Kennedy (2017) and Munck and Tomiotto (2019) noted that management sustainability in businesses is the leaders' strategic decision-making processes through sustainable actions that encompass reevaluating approaches like the business objectives and purpose and adapting and changing their value systems. Therefore, economic, environmental, and societal organizational arrangements should be

integrated to balance the products and services offered and transfer them into meaningful sensemaking actions for necessary changes (Munck & Tomiotto, 2019). The benefit of management influencing their followers is that future successes are between leadership and them for longevity and lasting positive organizational results.

Management has many benefits in creating a sustainable business model in their organization. Rudnicka (2016) added that management in organizations needs to prepare and adapt to sustainable business models (SBM) approaches that they understand and not only from their internal sustainable strategic orientation (creating competitive advantages and superior customer services). In addition, management needs to know how to deploy SBMs, such as sharing knowledge and making the right connections with peers for long-term business stability and positive internal results (Rudnicka, 2016). Management should develop organizational values that include environmental responsibility to society, including internal and external stakeholders in their organization presently and in the future.

Leaders and entrepreneurs in leadership positions must humble themselves and develop long-term sustainable environmental strategies, including internal and external achievements, to prevent any adverse impacts, such as greenhouse emissions, for future generations and that community. Thakhathi et al. (2019) also recommended that sustainable organizational leadership requires organizational management and leadership to simultaneously acknowledge the social,

environmental, and economic impact. The entrepreneur's framework conditions (EFC) research study on women and youth suggests they now need strategies that influence their processes toward an organizational change that benefits their social system and the environment in which their business operates (Orobia et al., 2020). For example, utilizing the best energy resource practices to address their greenhouse emissions and economic aspiration as sustainable entrepreneurs for business is critical in today's business environment (Orobia et al., 2020). Those essential strategies in practice are sustainable for themselves and future generations (Orobia et al., 2020; Thakhathi et al., 2019). For leadership to practice sustainability, leadership requires top management or leaders to practice humility and willingness to accept responsibility and include everyone in the organization for a win-win partnership that addresses sustainability concerns (Thakhathi et al., 2019). All leaders and entrepreneurs must humble themselves and understand how their organization can positively or negatively affect their environment. Then, if required, start developing new business strategies that help everyone in the organization strive to address sustainable methods to correct all those negative concerns.

In today's business world of the 21st, business leaders must be able to adapt and change quickly using social media, which is essential. Dossena et al.'s (2020) qualitative research study of 14 managers and restaurant owners in North Italy argued on several fronts regarding restaurants and managing social media needs like organizational capabilities and individual competencies. First, social media (SM) is essential for strategic business capabilities for that new business start-up. Second, social media can help the management team and organizations improve in their niche market by

developing recent trends related to food and services they can offer their customers. Therefore, competing enhances their competencies and adds to their restaurant products' knowledge base (Dossena et al., 2020). Third, innovation capabilities allow management to change the organization's environment when their customers need it (Dossena et al., 2020). The benefits of dynamic capabilities will also help restaurant management promote organizational change using customer comments, and reviews ascertained from customer evaluations of services rendered to address negative feedback.

Sustainable Leadership Strategies

Leaders managing their business operating system at each department level require continual internal and external adaptation and innovations for long-term survival. Batista and Francisco (2018) found that corporate sustainable leadership strategies encompass innovation practices of products, customer relationships with the management and its services offered, technologies, and environmental strategic orientation responsibilities operations at each development stage (Rudnicka, 2016). Additionally, the firm's financial management system is essential for the organization's sustainability for all stakeholders (Batista & Francisco, 2018). Awan and Khan (2021) argued in their empirical data collections from 224 manufacturers that sustainable leadership (SL) from leaders and managers in the organizational buyer-supplier relationship and supply chain is essential to enhance relationships between customers and suppliers. Therefore, the benefit may improve the organization's social

performance for all stakeholders when the time comes to implement a different business strategy at all business levels, internally and externally.

Sustainable, ethical leadership practices by leaders require development at all levels of the organization to effectively engage with their followers and customers. Suriyankietkaew (2016) also revealed in a quantitative research study of 440 business managers in various industries in Thailand that organizational leaders and managers need to adopt sustainable leadership practices (SLP). Also, management needs a solid and shared ethical vision for all stakeholders, systematic innovation, and dimensions of strategies and techniques, including good organizational governance of ethical standards (Suriyankietkaew, 2016). Therefore, effective staff engagement between leaders and followers and high-quality output services will enhance their customers' loyalty for a competitive edge in their demographic (Suriyankietkaew, 2016). Gaining financial was functional independence but not as significant; therefore, it would still help its long-term business success for longevity (Suriyankietkaew, 2016). As a result, small and medium enterprises SMEs' ability to use organizational leadership may need to help develop their leader's and management teams' capacities for sustainable leadership practices, such as good governance and ethics in those niche markets for organizational sustainability for their customers and their business in the future.

Financial or a single strategy is one of many effective strategies businesses must incorporate into their business portfolio for sustainability. For example, Gerard et al. (2017) explored and reviewed existing literature from several authors on sustainable leadership and the relationship between leaders, followers, and stakeholders. However,

reflexive and participative leadership models are now essential in present research studies (Gerard et al., 2017). Furthermore, organizations should employ more than just a traditional or singular focus on their finances (Gerard et al., 2017).

However, to create environmental and social influences such as attributing to their economy, an eco-friendly culture, societal factors, and sustainable development goals as ethical and value-based behaviors and actions to societal and environmental challenges (Muff et al., 2020; Mukherjee, 2020) and focuses on a mutual-interdependency approach between leaders and followers (Gerard et al., 2017). Therefore, leaders, followers, and stakeholders should be at the table when the organization develops its business strategies.

Sustainable business leadership by leaders influences internal and external factors for their goals and long-term business sustainability. Furthermore, for sustainable leadership to flourish in the organizational process for favorable outcomes, employee engagement, whether in informal or formal positions, and its culture are essential to motivating a healthy work performance environment throughout the organization process (Gerard et al., 2017). Additionally, stakeholders' considerations are imperative and need to include a crucial dyadic approach by the leader for all stakeholders, thereby affecting the organization in achieving its goals and interlinking the relationship cohesively in attaining their long-term visions (Gerard et al., 2017).

The 2019 business leaders' global market leadership experience for business was challenged to adapt and change old business practices internally and

externally for sustainability. In 2019's global markets, effective leadership and business sustainability for organizations, leaders must adopt an inclusive set of new focuses that require leading their organization to develop a sustainable competitive environment that includes environmental and societal factors (Mukherjee, 2020). Along with having efficient operational policies within all departments, long-term decision-making processes through observation and awareness will help the organization compete with its competitors in their niche markets of business operations (Mukherjee, 2020). Sustainability in businesses requires leadership to examine how their business portfolio is competitive and works and if there are environmental and societal factors that each department needs to review to stay competitive in the market where it has decided to establish its business operation.

Transition

Section 1: In this qualitative multiple case study, I focused on authentic leadership sustainability strategies for small business restaurants between the first and tenth years of business operations and beyond. I focused on information regarding the background of the problem and abstract, the central research question and interview questions, and the problem statement of why many business owners lack leadership strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. In Section 2, I included the purpose statement and introduced the nature of the study, conceptual framework, and significance of the research study; I also included the value to the business, the contribution to business practices, and implications for social change. Section 3 I included the presentation of the findings and the application to professional practice, along with implications for social

change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2 of this study, I recap the purpose statement. I also provide explanations on the (a) role of the researcher; (b) participant information; (c) the research method; (d) the research design; (e) the chosen population and justification of the sampling size; (f) the ethical research process; (g) the data collection process; (h) the data collection technique, data organization techniques, and data analysis; and (i) reliability and validity. The chapter ends with a transition and summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore leadership strategies small business restaurant owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The population for the study was owners of five small restaurants in Arkansas and the southern United States who employ successful leadership strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The results for this study might have implications for positive social change in low socioeconomic communities through job creation and increased tax revenues for communities. In addition, enhanced employment opportunities may improve the economic outlook for individuals and their families, which could strengthen their living conditions.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary researcher and data collection instrument for this qualitative multiple case study. Researchers have a critical role in collecting individual participants' data, which involves gathering information, organizing the data, and analyzing the data accurately in the research study for justification (Abdalla et al., 2018; DeVaney et al.,

2018). As the researcher, I selected the study's research method and determined the theory that aligned with my overarching research question. I also chose the face-to-face interview technique to confirm information shared by participants. Lastly, I used notetaking, computer audio recordings, digital voice recorder, and transcripts for the semistructured interviews.

As the data collection instrument in this study, I mitigated my biases. Researchers must mitigate their viewing lens, reduce their biases and worldviews during data collection and analysis (Clark & Veale, 2018; Fusch & Ness, 2018). Previously, I have been a manager in fast-food restaurants and small business environments. In addition, I sometimes frequented the small restaurant businesses in the community before the COVID-19 pandemic and have established trusting relationships with business owners. I had also frequently met my insurance clients in several small restaurant businesses before the COVID-19 pandemic. I have experienced and witnessed the businesses and business closures firsthand because of a lack of effective leadership strategies over 20-plus years. Therefore, I engaged the participants in their natural environment, so there may be some subjectivity that is inevitable by the researcher and may be seen as valuable (Clark & Veal, 2018). Participant member checking during the second interview was used to mitigate any biases while transcribing from the audio recordings of participants' responses from the first interviews. Member checking allows researchers to check for transparency, accuracy, validation, and credibility in the data collected by the researcher from the interviewees to reduce any biases and as

many possible biases in the study (Birt et al., 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Shaw & Satalkar, 2018).

The researcher of a research project study must follow the ethical guidelines and principles of the *Belmont Report* that guide human rights of participation in their study (Adashi et al., 2018; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I reviewed the *Belmont Report*, following (a) respect for each person in the study, (b) beneficence not to harm any participant in the study, and (c) justice to check off all of my possible biases when selecting participants for the study and (d) of each ethics group (Adashi et al., 2018). Furthermore, in this research study, I complied with the informed consent, assessing the risk and benefits from the Belmont principles. I also completed the required web-based mandatory training outlined by Walden University Internal Review Board (IRB).

I recorded and accurately identified each selective participant's answers when they provided answers to each interview question. Exploring the participants' meanings accurately through themes, patterns, and observations is critical during the interview data collection process, as it relates to the results and credibility of the research study (Yin, 2018). Additionally, listening, interpreting, and observing the participants' behaviors and reflections correctly when interviewed provides reliable and adequate information in the research study (Abdalla et al., 2018; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Finally, as the researcher in a case study or multiple case studies, it is important to follow the interview protocol for data collection, such as doing methodological triangulation, to ensure the research's credibility. A case or multiple case study interview

protocol contains multiple sources of evidence, such as methodological triangulation from multiple peer reviews and seminal resources, step-by-step methods, and procedural and general rules a researcher must follow (Yin, 2018). The interview protocol is the principal way of increasing the reliability and validity of a case or multiple case study and the guidance a researcher needs in carrying out the data collection process with credibility (Yin, 2014). When the researcher follows the interview protocol, readers can assess the reliability and validity of the research study methods to increase the research's credibility. The protocol method I used was open-ended questions during the face-to-face interviews technique to reduce researcher bias when the participants answered each question. Researchers use open-ended questions as part of the interview technique process, and this protocol will reduce the researcher's biases during the data collection from participants and the analysis process (Clark & Veale, 2018; Fusch et al., 2018).

Participants

In this multiple qualitative case study, I selected qualified participants from Arkansas and the southern United States. Researchers use purposive sampling to select participants with the same experiences and insights to answer the research study questions as the screening process (Etikan et al., 2016; Lewis, 2017). The five small business restaurant owners I interviewed had (a) a restaurant business that has resided in the local community for 5 years and beyond and (b) a restaurant business without any disruption or closing of their business

operation 5 years and beyond. In addition, the five small business restaurant owners I chose to participate in this research study had 15 to 25 employees in their daily business operations. The U.S. SBA (2019) stated that the maximum number of employees for small businesses is 500. The benefit of selecting small business restaurant owners who had sustained their businesses for 5 years and beyond without disruption was that they had the experiences and information they used for their business' long-term sustainability.

A successful rapport among participants is critical in the interviewing process of a qualitative research study (Elmir et al., 2011). I frequented several small restaurant business operations for my job, business work meetings, and breakfasts and lunchtimes in the city for many years and built relationships with managers and owners. Therefore, I was able to enhance access to the interviewee's real-world views of the study phenomenon in question. This can also lead to participants openly sharing comparative information and honestly sharing their real-life experiences in this two-way process (Elmir et al., 2011). Additionally, when I had a business meeting in their operation, I called back and asked for a convenient time. I discussed and provided information on the purpose of the research study objectives and answered any questions or concerns. After establishing solid rapport and meeting times with each participant, I met them in their private business office to ensure comfort after the state's COVID-19 ban was lifted. Finally, I shared information on the nature of the study and each participant's requirements to participate in the research study.

Moreover, as noted, I complied with the ethical tenet principles identified in the

Belmont Report (Adashi et al., 2018; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I had participants sign a consent form, and all participants received a hard copy of the ethical process consideration for participation in the study. This informed the participants that they would be agreeing to share information relevant to the study, their information is kept confidential, their involvement is strictly voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time during the study process.

I selected the participants with similar small restaurant owner experiences of leadership strategies used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The researcher's primary goal is to increase the reliability and validity of qualitative cases or multiple case studies and guide the data collection process to ensure alignment with the research interview's overarching question (Yin, 2014). Researchers' validity in a qualitative case study demonstrates trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to provide a quality assessment of the research in a case study (FitzPatrick, 2019). Researchers must validate the information they collected for their readers as exceptional and reliable information on why the data collected is trustworthy.

Research Method and Design

Researchers can choose qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods in research method and design (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014). A qualitative case or multiple qualitative case study was the most appropriate choice, allowing for semistructured and face-to-face interview questions to

explore meanings, themes, and patterns through open-ended questions (Yin, 2018). In a qualitative research study, researchers seek out the phenomenon that is not numerical methods but focuses on the phenomena by asking semistructured open questions from participants to gain meaningful and insightful information (Fusch et al., 2018).

Research Method

There are rules and methods in a qualitative study design. A qualitative case study method involves up-close and detailed information from participants, the researcher's purpose, and the nature of the study objectives (DeVaney et al., 2018). I conducted face-to-face interviews with participants in this multiple qualitative case study. COVID-19 restrictions were over, but I had a backup plan and used technology such as my phone, computer camera video, and digital voice recorder. I applied *what* and *how* questions through semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to explore insightful restaurant business owners' successful business strategies of purpose, value, and relationships with employees, self-discipline used, and the heart.

In a quantitative study, researchers examine variables' relationships through percentages, analysis tools, and representations through data analysis (Sincora et al., 2018). I did not explore variables' relationships through percentages, analysis tools, and representations through data analysis from participants for this study. I did not conduct a survey, test hypotheses to address the overall research question, or use the semistructured interview technique gathered from selected participants for this study's statistical test results. I had nine semistructured, open-ended questions using a semistructured interview technique for the five small business owner participants.

Finally, researchers use a mixed methods approach in combining quantitative and qualitative data to address the research purpose and open-ended questions and hypotheses for statistical results—both research methods used in a study context (Ivankova & Clark, 2018). However, the mixed-methods quantitative and qualitative case study design uses questions and hypotheses for statistical results to analyze data collection for the research study objectives that also include numerical methods as another focus (Bastable et al., 2019; Fusch et al., 2018). Additionally, in this multiple qualitative case study, I did not include numerical methods as another focus of the research study to address the overall research question. The mixed method was not appropriate for this multiple qualitative case study.

Research Design

There are five groups of research designs for a research study. The five groups of research designs are (a) case study, (b) ethnography, (c) narrative, (d) phenomenological, and (e) ground theory (DeVaney et al., 2018). In this section, I shared information and expanded on each research design and why I chose the multiple qualitative case design as the appropriate choice to explore the how and what questions of the participants' experiences. The information I shared assesses the phenomenon and why I chose the qualitative multiple case study design instead of the other research designs.

Ethnography qualitative design has specific processes. Ethnography qualitative research design requires the researcher to observe a particular social

setting of a group of people over a certain period (Silverman, 2013). Ethnography researcher's study approach is through fieldwork study gathered from selected participants in their social world to solicit information, write a narrative, and collect data from people on how they act, think, and talk with each other in their environments (Crewe, 2018). Ethnography research allows researchers to observe and select participants during a specific period in their study, and the researcher may also share their experiences in understanding and empathizing with participants' worldviews (O'Connor & Baker, 2017). For these reasons, the ethnographic design was inappropriate for this qualitative multiple case study interview questions. Therefore, as the investigator in this qualitative multiple-case study, I did not focus on the participant's practical daily engagement activities in their social world.

Narrative research design has specific processes. Researchers use a narrative design that requires field observations, data collection, participant interviews, and the acknowledgment of behavior patterns during the study process (Schaumann et al., 2018). Researchers also construct a narrative design as the primary focus when investigating human experiences and understanding others' actions in their life terms (Lamsa et al., 2018). Lastly, the researcher uses a narrative research design to get selected interviewees to expound on their past or present human experiences through their real-world stories (Kichuk et al., 2019). However, the narrative design was not appropriate for this study. So, instead, I applied a qualitative multiple-case study design. I interviewed 5 to 7 participants, using nine open-ended questions and the semistructured interview technique, of qualified restaurant business owners who had sustained their business operations

without disruption beyond 5 years of service.

Phenomenology research design has specific processes. In the phenomenology research design, a researcher presents the participant's experiences and is as free from their interpretation and cultural context as possible (Nicholls, 2019). The phenomenology design was not appropriate for this research study. Instead, I used a multiple case study design, the best design that addressed the 5 to 7 interview participants using the semistructured interviews technique and the nine open-ended interview questions from pre-qualified restaurant business owners' perspectives and experiences. Therefore, this research study was not on participants' philosophical roots.

Ground theory research design has specific processes. Researchers use a grounded theory design for theory-building in a qualitative research study (Sato, 2019) of constant comparative and continual movement between the data analysis to develop a conceptual theory model (DeVaney et al., 2018). However, a researcher's validated categories may broaden a researcher's types of assumptions (Silverman, 2013). Wherefore, the grounded theory approach is not appropriate for a multiple qualitative case study to build conceptual categories (DeVaney et al., 2018). Consequently, I only conducted 5 to 7 semistructured interviews with participants that consisted of nine open ended questions from qualified restaurant business owners who had sustained their business operation beyond 5 years of service and did not build on the initial conceptual framework for this study. Consequently, I chose the multiple qualitative case study design instead of a

single qualitative case study design.

Single or multiple research designs have specific processes. Researchers use a single qualitative case study design representation of one specific case study (Silverman, 2013) instead of multiple qualitative case study designs that will conduct more than one case study in the same research (Silverman, 2013). Both may have specific purposes and research questions (Silverman, 2013). The investigator's answers from the participants' responses are to collect data to ensure reliability and validity for a research study conclusion (Alpi & Evans, 2019). A qualitative case or multiple case study presented by a researcher involves choices and assumptions in framing, emphasis, content, and delivery through the introduction, methods, findings, discussion, and the interview process. (Bekker & Clark, 2018). I selected the qualitative multiple case study to achieve data saturation. I gained IRB my approval number 04-13-23-0375566 from Walden University Internal Review Board, then, I started contacting participants for their first interview for the research study.

The researcher conducts multiple interviews with participants until no new themes emerge. The researcher conducts multiple interviews with participants until no new themes emerge, and producing repetitive answers from participants will help validate the research study (Yin, 2018). Researchers use multiple data collection methods in qualitative and multiple case studies (Yin, 2018). Qualitative research is open ended research questions and semistructured interview technique with participants to explore the meaning, themes, and patterns through interviews and observations until the researcher gains no new data. (Yin, 2014). Researcher member-checking adds to

validating the participant's interview responses, providing transparency, and enhancing the reliability and credibility of the research study phenomena (Birt et al., 2016). Then, I scheduled the second interview to follow up for data saturation from the participants' answers using member-checking.

Population and Sampling

Researchers in determining the sample size in a research study is essential to guide the population and get the expertise of the participants and the study's length and scope. Researchers determining sample size in a qualitative research study is relatively small, supporting the case study objectives and the specific inquiry (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The researcher's population and sampling size are essential in a qualitative research study and contribute to the number of people for the data collection process and the specific group the researcher has chosen (Mwita, 2022; Obilor, 2023). It guides researchers' overall research interview questions and is the conceptual framework developed in a research method (Farrugia, 2019). The participants' expertise, population, and sampling size in the research study represent the organizations or people representing the area of focus that may be unstructured or semistructured or focus group that will yield rich data on the study phenomenon (Hennink et al., 2019; Molinari & Villiers, 2021). Participants and populations of the study exhibited their expertise when answering the researcher's questions, providing exceptional data inference for the study.

Researchers' data saturation and type of sample size in a research study are imperative and will enhance the researchers' study reliability and validity.

Researcher sampling size and conceptual framework in a qualitative research study determine data saturation during the design phase (Guest et al., 2020). Researcher data saturation and sampling size plus data analysis address the overall research question that may or may not produce additional information for the study's objective (Guest et al., 2020). I utilized purposeful sampling for this qualitative multiple case study to answer the nine questions and the semistructured interview techniques to guide the study's conceptual framework. Researchers use a purposeful sampling approach to add depth and richness from the data analysis and participants' responses while exploring a case study (Farrugia, 2019). The selected participants were 5 to 7 successful small restaurant business owners and leaders with real-world leadership strategies and knowledge principles in their business operations industry.

The research question and semistructured interview technique are from participants' experiences sustaining their business operation beyond 5 years without disruptions. The participants' criteria for participating in a qualitative research study should be expertise and holding key positions in understanding a particular area in question (Rowley, 2012). I interviewed five small restaurant business owners' successful strategies they implemented as a requirement for them to participate in this case study. The participants answered nine semistructured questions from the semistructured interview techniques to ensure data saturation for in-depth and rich descriptions of their successful business longevity beyond 5 years in their restaurant industry.

Data saturation is imperative for the researcher to attain no new findings or information from the selected participants' answers. Saunders et al. (2018) state that data

saturation is the number of interviews needed in the study that will not result in any new data information or the information received is redundant. Data saturation occurs if the selected research documents reviewed by the researcher and participants in the interview process continue providing no new themes and give the same responses to the interview questions (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Therefore, I conducted face-to-face interviews with participants until no new themes emerged, and participant responses from the interview technique yielded no additional data.

Selecting the appropriate setting you and the participants agree on provides that comfortable atmosphere. The participant's interview setting is critical for the interview's onset and builds rapport (Arsel, 2017). Accordingly, I met with each participant in their private business office to ensure comfort; the COVID-19 ban laws for restaurant owners were lifted and yielded no restrictions in each state. When I was in their business operation after one of my job business meetings, I mailed and left information for their review. I scheduled a convenient time for the participants and discussed the purpose of the research study requirements and objectives. In addition, I provided answers to any questions or concerns they had. Also, the participant's interview schedule times should be available and convenient (Arsel, 2017). The participants and I agreed on the times to meet at their business, and that set the comfortable atmosphere during the interview sessions and questionings, as I was recording the process, and it was the key buy-in for the interviewees and getting trustworthy answers.

Ethical Research

I got my IRB approval number 04-13-23-0375566 from Walden University Internal Review Board; after approval, I commenced collecting data from selected participants. Al Demour et al. (2019) stated that researchers in a medical research study must follow the specific guidelines of informed consent proposed by the Research Ethics Committee (REC). The participants will sign an informed consent to safeguard their dignity, rights, safety, and well-being as human participants in the study (Al Demour et al., 2019). Participants signed document consent forms before each interview (see Appendix B). Researchers must also comply with the ethical tenet principles identified in The Belmont Report suggested by (Adashi et al., 2018). I shared with participants their protection rights from The Belmont Report.

There are essential principles when conducting human research you must follow. Those essential principles were (a) to ensure the compliance principle to respect the person's autonomy; (b) beneficence is the well-being of participants' appropriate risk-benefit ratio; and (c) the principle of moral justice for all ethnic groups (Adashi et al., 2018). In addition, researchers must abide by the ethical principles and guidelines for protecting human subjects of the research by The Belmont Report (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). Finally, I completed the required web-based mandatory training—the collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. My record ID is 35986590 on the appendix page (see Appendix C). The Walden University Internal Review Board (IRB) number is 04-13-23-0375566.

Before I began the interview process with each participant, I again advised all

participants that they could withdraw at any time and any point in this research study attempt. I also reinstated to each participant that there was no incentive. I also reiterated and asked permission from the participants during our face-to-face interviewing process. Did I still have their consent to record the interview for later analysis, and did I provide a copy for their review? Finally, I summarized each participant's findings for approval or disapproval and any questions that needed clarification. Protecting participants' privacy and confidentiality is essential to not put them in an undesirable position (Yin, 2018). I advised each participant of their rights beginning at each meeting, which helped maintain trust with each participant regarding the summarized findings in the research, to which I did get their approval.

I protected each participant's identity in the study using pseudonyms like SRBO1, SRBO2, SRBO3, etc., as business owners' names. The information I gathered from participants in the study, such as interview transcripts, data collection notes, and other research study documents, I will store all documents for 5 years. Then, I will destroy all information regarding the research study information. I am the only person with access to the computer password and the digital voice recorder. The file storage on the computer flash drive with the research study information is in a locked file cabinet with a home security system.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher must check as many of their biases as possible in all research studies. Researchers must also check their personal preferences and

assumptions, values, and reasoning when conducting the chosen research topic (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Also, researchers using five to fifty cases in multiple studies is considered appropriate regarding literature recommendations (Sarfo et al., 2021). I collected data that involved face-to-face interview questions and observed five small business restaurant owners' participants. In a single qualitative case study or multiple case study, the data collection encompasses (a) interviewing selective participants, (b) establishing documents, (c) observation of participants during the interviewing process, (d) maybe some artifacts, and (e) focus groups are also relevant (Yin, 2018). A case study and multiple qualitative case studies can help answer a researcher's questions that have been prepared to collect data through interviews face-to-face (Mwita, 2022) and gain detailed information that may provide a more in-depth insight from the semistructured interview technique and the researcher's transcribed notes from participants' answers (Alpi & Evans, 2019). When conducting multiple face-to-face interviews, the researcher gets more reliable information from selected participants' responses in the research study.

Each participant had nine semistructured, open-ended interview questions they reviewed and answered (see Appendix A). Before the participants started each hour or 45-minute interview session, I reviewed the consent forms using a computer-protected camera interview FaceTime Video recording on my iPhone sessions. Participants agreed and approved all document requirements before starting the initial interview.

Additionally, suppose the states are under the COVID-19 pandemic. I will not go to their business. The state's COVID-19 pandemic was not in place. I delivered the consent for their business and the consent forms to participants for their signatures to respond within

seven days. Participants signed the consent forms once we had a scheduled time for their participation, which I required to participate in my study.

I also reaffirmed to participants that recording the conversation would ensure the accuracy of their responses to the interview questions in the study. In addition, the transcriptions I used from the recordings and the notetaking I completed from participants' first interviews, I met some sessions within 14 days and other sessions within the next month. Finally, I conducted the next 25-30 min follow-up interview session at their businesses with participants and reviewed the interview transcripts for their approval. During that time, each participant had the chance to revise any of their answers as they deemed necessary for corrections and clarity; it was their option if they wanted me to record the last session. I asked participants if they had reviewed the transcript and if there were any concerns in the document transcriptions that we needed to address, and all participants said it was as they stated. Then, we signed the member checking document form I prepared.

I formed member checking from participants' themes, statements, and assertions gathered to validate the collected data analysis. Researchers use member checking from participants, themes, views, and information gathered to validate the collected data analysis (Birt et al., 2016). Researchers also use member checking, allowing participants to review the data collected from the first interview transcribed by the researcher (Erdmann & Potthoff. 2023). Therefore, the interviewees can account for the researchers' accuracy and interpretations in

the research study report (Birt et al., 2016; Brear, 2019; Candela, 2019). Reliability and validity achievement in the research process as a researcher's role is crucial to the research case study phenomenon (Farquhar et al., 2020; Fusch & Ness, 2015) and helps determine the study framework and objective of collecting the data (Burnard, 2023). Methodological data triangulation and pattern matching determine evidence from other researchers' study phenomena and conclusions in their study (Yin, 2014). Researchers' data collected through methodological triangulation predict patterns and similarities in the case study and strengthen its internal validity Abdalla et al., (2018); therefore, the additional data resources in the study may help collaborate answers from each participant's interview answers and observations (Yin, 2014; Zelcane & Pipere, 2023). In addition, methodological data triangulation and member checking in a research study allow the researcher to go back to participants and assess the accuracy of their answers in the participant's first interview session (Ashour, (2018). Member checking, methodological triangulation, and triangulation by the researcher in the study guide Reacher's conclusion for transparency.

Data Collection Technique

Researchers' data collection techniques in a qualitative case study predominately use face-to-face, semistructured interview techniques that may include some focus groups. Therefore, researchers conduct face-to-face and in-depth semistructured interview techniques with participants and possible focus groups to ensure credibility and reliability discussions in qualitative research (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Also, it needs to be a highly quantifiable date when the elected participants value the knowledge they

share with the researcher (Beock et al., 2023). As a result, the interviewer must understand the participants' meaning and central themes from how they answer questions. Whereas, when researchers use an interpretive paradigm view, they must practice adaptability and use sensitivity of participants' responses to lived experiences (Miller et al., 2023). The study's overall research objectives will provide more credibility and reliability when conducting the participant's interview question process (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, a researcher's face-to-face in-depth interviews may understand selected participants' experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings when describing their real-world experiences (Mohajan, 2018). Additionally, sampling in a research study is described as a specific population or group with lived experiences and has the expertise of the phenomenon the investigator is exploring (Cash et al., 2022). With that exclaim researchers in the sample can gather raw data from the participants as freely as possible from their own lived experiences using different software similar to NVivo (Alam, 2020). This multiple qualitative case study included nine open ended questions and a semistructured interview technique that participants had an opportunity to answer and provided their knowledge and in-depth insights into this research study of sustainable business strategies beyond 5 years. (See Appendix A).

There are several advantages to qualitative research and semistructured interview techniques with participants in a selected demographic. For example, evaluation from face-to-face interviews with participants will help participants

feel more comfortable and safer during the interview (Saarijarvi & Bratt, 2021). In addition, the smaller group of participants will save cost and time, provide more observation, and the data collected from participants attributed to their human experiences and provide more convincing results of the study phenomenon conclusion (Mohajan, 2018; Mwita, 2022). The researcher sharing advantages should be explained why in the research study.

There are several disadvantages to a qualitative research study. For example, the researcher's influence on participants or biases on data collected, a smaller group of individuals than a larger group on data collected on the study findings for the case validity and data saturation, and replication of results may be challenging to produce (Mohajan, 2018). The researcher sharing disadvantages should be explained why in the research study.

The researchers must have a system showing how they plan to conduct the interview and how they will protect the participant's privacy. Researchers' semistructured interview technique with participants focuses directly on the case study's overarching research question and the evaluation of the case study phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The computer-camera video and digital voice recording interviews with the participants would last one hour or 45 minutes. Then, 25 to 30 minutes in follow-up interviews using a tape recorder and secure computer-protected camera and Video recording on my iPhone at my home office residency for privacy if COVID-19 pandemic enforced required. The COVID-19 pandemic enforcement was over in each state. Additionally, my computer camera video and the digital voice recorder I used for the first

interview from participants' and my research field notetaking represented member checking during the second interview. I transcribed each participant's answers and reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy using Microsoft Excel Software for coding and themes. Researchers need valid confirmation from participants' interview responses, which are critical for credibility in a research study (Birt et al., 2016). The researcher, therefore, must develop a system along with ascertaining the necessary software to protect the participants' rights and help to ensure and confirm the study's credibility of the participants' answers.

Validity and reliability in a research study need to exist. Additionally, data triangulation provides document analysis that will help strengthen the case study's validity and reliability (Krichanchai & MacCarthy, 2017). Methodological triangulation provides multiple peer-reviewed resources of evidence and additional data collection, such as data interviews, observations, and documents of the case phenomenon (Natow, 2020; Yin, 2018). With the COVID-19 restrictions of 2021 and beyond 2022 over, the participants set the most comfortable stage for their interviews in their business operation. Lastly, I did not conduct a pilot study for this study. The researcher setting an appropriate and comfortable setting for the participant's interview process will help the participant be more at ease, and methodological data and triangulation data methods will add additional credibility to the research.

Data Organization Technique

The researcher must demonstrate how they collect their data from various

sources in the research study. The six sources of data collection a researcher must show in their research study encompass four data principles (Yin, 2018). First, using multiple sources of evidence, developing a case study database in organizing and documenting the data collections, showing and maintaining the evidence change for validation, and lastly, using caution from data collection of all resources, particularly from social media sources (Yin, 2018). The researchers must provide many essential processes using a data system of evidence on how they organize and collect the data to validate a research study.

Next, I reviewed the consent forms participants received and signed to participate in this research study. Also, all document requirements that each participant agreed to before we began the initial interview process. Then, the audiotape interviews with participants lasted one hour or 45 minutes, using a tape recorder and a secure computer-protected camera and video recording or my iPhone.

Specialized software used by the researcher helps to transcribe their notes and the answers from participants more easily. For example, Foster and Jewell (2017) added that the NVivo11 specialized software tool allows the researcher to identify the codes and themes from the transcripts of participants' interviews. In addition, Micro Soft Excel Software is also recommended as a software that researchers can use to identify codes and themes from participants' answers. I also transcribed the themes from participants' answers to identify codes and note-taking each participant's interview responses from the interview questions, reflective journal dairy, and field notes. Lastly, I utilized my research logs book to track supporting evidence from participants' interview questions. Therefore, the research logs and field notes from the interview with the participants

should give the data analysis full context (Phillipi & Lauderdale, 2017; Yin, 2018). Additionally, the researcher's use of specialized software, like Nvivo11 or Microsoft Office Excel, will help the researcher systematically understand all the data they collected from participants.

The information gathered from participants in the study, such as interview transcripts, data collection, field notes, and other research study documents, and forms of participants I stored for 5 years and then will be destroyed. To protect each participant's identity in this study, I could only interview five small restaurant business owners using pseudonyms representing SRBO1, SRBO2, SRBO3, etc., for time constraints as business owners' names to help protect each participant's identity. I am the only person with access to the computer password. I locked the participant's information file storage on my computer flash drive with the research study information in a file cabinet with a home security system in my home.

Data Analysis

In a research study, the researcher must develop a keen understanding of the four types of qualitative data analysis and which one they will use in their research. For example, researchers in a qualitative study may use one or more of the four data types of resources of triangulation techniques, such as investigator triangulation, data triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Nelson, 2017; Yin, 2018). All are essential in the research study, increasing credibility and validity and providing a more prosperous and in-depth

analysis and interpretations of the research study's overarching research question phenomenon (Jentoft & Olsen, 2019). In addition, the data collected from key representatives in the research study and the evaluation process is to enhance the data collection from participants' interviews, specific themes and responses, and observations to provide an in-depth understanding of the research's overarching topic objectives and conclusions (Yin, 2018). The researcher must develop a keen sense of all four types of data analysis resources to validate the research study objectives and show the study's credibility and depths.

Researchers use methodological research to enhance the study's validity and credibility in the study process and conclusion. For example, researchers use methodological triangulation through face-to-face interviews, observations, data collection, document analysis, member checking, coding participants' themes, field notes, and focus groups, to name a few (Busetto et al., 2020). Additionally, the researchers validate trustworthiness through multiple data collection methods, such as member checking from participants and current peer review articles in association with data collected, to help interpret themes and report their research similarities, findings, and limitations (Babchuk, 2019). Finally, in this multiple qualitative case study, I collected the data using the semistructured interviews technique with 5 to 7 small business owners. The benefit of understanding data analysis provides the researcher with a roadmap for collecting specific data that will increase the research's study credibility and validity.

The researcher's data triangulation is imperative in their research study. Data triangulation requires the researcher to compare and use different sources of evidence

(Crick, 2020). Which include primary and secondary sources (e.g., empirical data, interview transcripts, observational notes, archival records, websites, etc.) to show what area of investigation is undertaken in the research study (Crick, 2020). The method of constant comparison of each participant's interviews in a qualitative study data analysis will ensure that the researcher has collected enough data saturation when the themes are re-occurring (Crick, 2020). In this multiple qualitative case method design, I collected the business employee handbooks, if applicable, searched the business websites, and retrieved their business brochures for additional data analysis.

In this multiple qualitative case method design, I reviewed recent researchers' literature results on authentic leadership and leadership strategies and sustainable processes disseminated and compared the results and themes. These data resources on authentic leadership and leadership strategies produce a robust and comprehensive study for credibility and conclusions. Therefore, I applied authentic leadership theory as the conceptual framework to drive this study's research phenomenon. Authentic leadership in the workplace influences a leader's working relationship and engagement with followers (Gill et al., 2018), such as purpose, shared values, relationships, self-discipline, and the heart and how others perceive it in the organization's culture (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007) and authentic leadership behavior of leaders will provide employees feeling of respected and motivated (Groselj et al., 2021). Crawford et al. (2019) posit that authentic leadership influences followers' motivation, which, in turn, helps

demonstrate their sincerity, strengthen their morality, and balance effective processes.

The study's conceptual framework of authentic leadership may allow leaders to develop and engage more with their followers in their work environment.

In addition, I composed the semistructured interview technique and the nine open-ended interview questions received from each participant's interview responses, which was the appropriate beginning of the initial process of transcribing the data. Moreover, it will ensure that participants' core information themes will allow for credible interpretation of their responses to interview questions (Belotto, 2018). Also, before the second interview, I reviewed the computer video recording and digital voice recorder and analyzed and interpreted each participant's interview responses to the research interview questions; once I completed the first interview process, I scheduled the second interview with the participants and did member checking to correct any ambiguity they perceived I recorded wrongly to their responses. Finally, researchers conduct the second interview, which helps confirm and validate and allows participants to assess the information for the accuracy of a researcher's interview process finding and trustworthiness in the research study (Birt et al., 2016). Accordingly, researchers in their research study must ensure to the participants from the beginning of the research that two interview sessions using semistructured interview techniques and nine open-ended questions, and the second interview process was to make sure participants approve of each step and the study's questioning findings.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Researchers' reliability and validity are imperative in a research study to show trustworthy evidence through its data findings. Researchers in qualitative case studies must address two central frameworks, reliability and validity, to demonstrate the accuracy and reproducibility of the study phenomenon as the primary research instrument in data collection (Jordan, 2018). Whereas reliability is how researchers produce methods in the study that support trustworthiness and demonstrate dependability in presenting accurate results of the study phenomena findings (Jordan, 2018). On the other hand, researchers' validity has many viewpoints: credibility, transferability, confirmability, reflexivity, and data saturation, to address the researchers' prolonged engagement with participants through continuous observations (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Additionally, the researcher's triangulation of collecting the data and members checking for participants' feedback will provide a thick and rich description of meaningful participants' behaviors and experiences, providing an audit trail in the researcher's chosen steps (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Lastly, a researcher's diary is imperative to assess one's views, whether explicit or implicit assumptions (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Also, validity validates the study findings and conclusions so that researchers can establish trust and integrity of clear communication in the data and finalize the research study phenomenon in question (FitzPatrick, 2019). Researcher reliability and validity in a research study

are essential to prove how trustworthy the research study has concluded.

Researcher reliability and validity in a research study are critical methods and assets in reaching the results and conclusion. Long and Wang (2022), in their study of quantitative research on dissecting reliability and validity evidence of subjective creativity assessment in education, found that subjective creativity assessments showed a good level of reliability and validity but showed some amounts of unreliability and invalidity in different testing methods and may need more advanced measurement theories and advance methods. Chetwynd et al. (2022) suggest that researchers should inform their readers how the measurement was conducted to provide a reliable and valid conclusion. As a result, the researcher's study must show how they developed transparency and explained the data collection processes that evoke trust to validate their conclusions. However, qualitative and quantitative research may show different results regarding the reliability and validity of the findings in a literature review.

Validity

Credibility and authenticity must accompany a necessary research study process to validate the study objectives. Researchers must provide a validation process in a qualitative case study that confirms the authenticity and credibility of the results (Johnson et al., 2020). Whereas validity in a multiple qualitative case study or a qualitative case study encompasses identifying the purpose of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and ensuring data saturation for validation and trustworthiness in the case study phenomenon of inquiry. Researchers must confirm credibility in their research study; researchers must validate a process in analyzing the data collected across each case and

from participants to ensure readers that the evidence collected is reliable. Also, the researchers' recorded results accurately provide all accounts of the phenomena in question (Johnson et al., 2020). In addition, a researcher's prolonged interview engagement with participants in asserting their opinions in the case study will give a more robust and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Johnson et al., 2020). Credibility and authenticity will legitimize the researchers' case study analysis and findings.

In this research study, I continued to probe each participant's answers to the interview questions by reviewing the computer video recording and digital voice recording, along with the logbook journal I created. Also, I analyzed the interview transcripts, field notes, and observations to enhance and increase data credibility. All are essential in a research study, increasing credibility and validity and providing a more prosperous and in-depth analysis and interpretations of the study's overarching research question phenomenon (Jentoft & Olsen, 2019). Furthermore, member checking allows participants to respond and inquire about their first interview answers (Candela, 2019). On that account, member checking enabled participants and me to review the accuracy of my interpretations of their first interview answers, evaluate the accuracy of my interview transcriptions, and correct any ambiguity and biases I may have interjected.

Researchers must provide transferability in a research study. Which can detail contextual information of relevant results and findings so that readers can trust the conclusion to determine circumstances similar to theirs or other studies

of inferences (Johnson et al., 2020). I explored this method using participants' real-life experiences—collected data from the participants' interview answers and methodological triangulation. Additionally, this process provided a thick, rich description of the setting and detailed accounts. It provided inclusive data analysis of the procedures and the system applied to support the findings and transferability of the similarities of other researchers' studies.

Researchers' confirmability and dependability process is essential in their research study. Researchers must develop a confirmability and dependability process to communicate the study results sufficiently and accurately in detail (Johnson et al., 2020).

Therefore, reflection means only the researcher's opinions and maybe some biases in the study (Yin, 2018). I recorded rich contextual data from the participants' lengthy interviews. I conducted nine semistructured interview techniques in the two interview question sessions with participants using member checking, reflective journaling, and methodological triangulation to achieve final approval for this study's results. I collected the contextual data from the participants' semistructured interview technique. Additionally, I corrected any misinterpretation of the data and ensured confirmability and dependability in this study's research objectives. Lastly, data saturation, defined in a research study, emerges when the researcher discovers that no new data or information from participants provides no new data and new themes; therefore, the data can only replicate the participants' current answers from that point on (Constantinou et al., 2017; Fusch et al., 2018). No new data emerged from the participants, and I closed the interview process.

Transition and Summary

Section 1: First, I shared the background of the problems and abstract. Then, I reviewed and focused on authentic leadership theories and sustainable strategies for small restaurant business owners' operations they use beyond 5 years for business sustainability in their niche markets. The target population was 5 to 7 restaurant business owners in the southern region of the United States of America. I was the primary instrument in collecting and managing the conceptual data for the study. Next, I covered and discussed (a) the problem statement, (b) the purpose statement, (c) the nature of the study, the research question and interview questions, and (d) the conceptual framework and operational definitions. Additionally, I covered and discussed assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the study's significance and contribution to business practices for implications for social change. Finally, in this section, I reviewed past and present professional academic literature related to authentic leadership theory and strategies, behavioral research theories, and themes for the overarching research study phenomenon in question.

In Section 2, I applied a multiple qualitative case study method that includes a face-to-face semistructured interview technique with participants to gather my data and data triangulation. This multiple qualitative case allowed me to analyze the data collected from participants of the nine interview questions in the study. First, I recapped the problem and purpose statement and why it was necessary to explore small restaurant businesses' sustainability beyond 5 years in

the United States economy, the role of small restaurant businesses and owners' leadership, and their impact on families and citizens in the local community. Then I provided explanations and covered (a) the role of the researcher, (b) I shared information on participants' requirements to participate in the study, (c) I designed the research method, (d) the research design; (e) I used population sampling to choose participants and addressed the justification of the sampling size; (f) I followed the guideline for ethical research practice and processes when humans are in the research; (g) I collected all the data collection processes; (h) I laid out the data collection technique, data organization techniques, and data analysis; (i) I was responsible and made sure the study reliability and validity achieved; (j) I positioned both transition and summary to explain all of the components of the research study.

Next, in Section 3, I introduced the purpose statement and summarized themes from the participants' face-to-face data interviews during the study. Then I discussed (a) the findings from the study, (b) the application for professional practice, (c) authentic leadership strategies' implications for social change for small business restaurant sustainability, (d) I discussed recommendations for action, (e) I discussed recommendations for further research, (f) I did reflections and will conclude the research completions objectives of this research study phenomenon in question.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This multiple qualitative case study was conducted to explore leadership strategies small business restaurant owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. I only interviewed five small business owners from Arkansas, Tennessee, and other location in the southern United States due to time constraints. The data came from five small restaurant business owners' interviews using my video camera recording and digital voice recorder for backup. The theory that guided the study was the authentic leadership theory by George (2003) and George and Sims (2007). The overall research question was: What leadership strategies did small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years? The participants answered nine open-ended questions that satisfied the overarching research question.

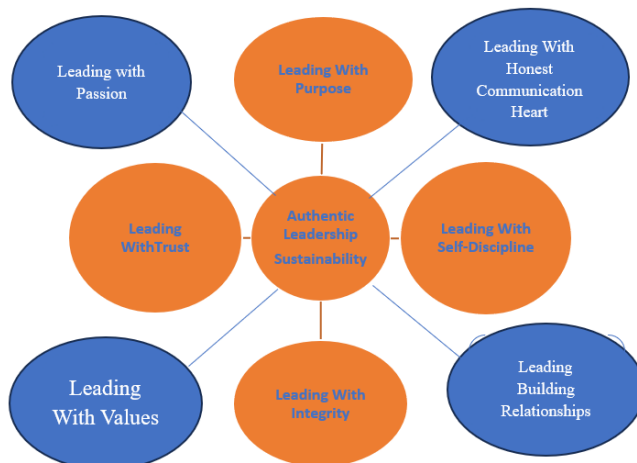
Presentation of the Findings

I used the authentic leadership theory (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007) to find the central themes from the participants' responses and answer the research question: What leadership strategies did small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years? I captured these themes using Microsoft Excel spread sheet documents to create the first cycle descriptive, first cycle concept, memos, and the second pattern coding I made through a Microsoft Word document. The re-occurring themes I gathered from five small restaurant owners on small restaurant business leadership sustainability were authentic leadership, leading with passion, leading with purpose, leading from the heart,

leading with trust, leading with self-discipline, leading with values, leading with integrity, and leading with relationships and connectedness (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Authentic Leadership Sustainability



Theme 1: Leading with Passion

The five daily practices associated with authentic leadership are (a) leadership with integrity, (b) leadership with trust, (c) leadership with passion, (c) leadership with commitment, and (d) leadership with consistency (George, 2003). SBRO1, SBRO2, SBRO3, SBRO4, and SBRO5 all expressed some forms of leadership of passion and compassion that are essential in a business for long-term sustainability. SRBO1 stated, “that leadership is about compassion more than discipline.” SRBO1 also noted showing his people a caring atmosphere: “I believe you can get a lot more out of your people by caring.” SRBO1 suggested that showing love and concern for people’s well-being and fairness to staff and workers shows passion and that the organization cares. SRBO1 stated, “I recommend that leadership is about embracing all peoples; when you lead from

the heart, you get better results.” SBRO1 also expressed sharing responsibility with their staff and team members, which had built staff confidence and improved sustainability. Shared leadership with passion as it relates to team-level outcomes shows a strong connection that is valued in building a team’s identity that fosters a sense of team members working collaboratively with mutual respect that creates positive feelings (Salas-Vallina et al., 2022). Leadership ability to show their staff the importance of working as a team is the way to build team responsibility, respect, and team self-identity.

SRBO2 also expressed that over the years, what works is setting boundaries between leadership and workers and staff but also leading with compassion. SRBO2 suggested building trust, sound morality, and working together with the team, where they should have set more boundaries with staff and workers. SRBO2 voiced, “we are very easy and passionate about helping our employees out if they come to us and they have a valid and genuine reason, and sometimes we did get burnt.”

SRBO3 suggested that leaders should show genuine concern for employees, connect with employees, treat employees with respect, and show passion for employees: “Examples of kindness, integrity, and speaking kindly when problems need to be addressed to your workers or staff passionately.”

SROB4 stated, “I treat people the way I want to be treated; not all the time you get that back, especially from employees, but you still cannot let that change you.” SROB4 shared that a leader’s positive relationships, positive connectedness,

and effective communication with employees exemplify trustworthiness, a positive organizational culture, and firm leadership with a passion for employees. They stated, “In that way, you will gain that respect that can inspire and motivate employees’ belief in the organizational culture.”

SBRO5 stated, “I do not think it was a particular leadership strategy that was used, uhm, but you have to be very flexible when it comes to leadership a lot of times.” Leadership should be about openness, demonstrating different leadership styles, like shared value, mentoring, and encouraging employees with passion. Additionally, leadership openness with employees, mentoring, shared values, effective working relationships, and connectedness that employees can count on from their leader.

All SBROs expressed the need for leaders’ leadership of passion for their workers, which is critical in a small restaurant business or any business operation. Providing a passionate and other leadership style will help employees believe in the business’s organizational culture. For instance, harmonious passion (HP) is an effective means for employees and leadership voicing behaviors that enhance and empower relationships, and obsessive passion is about individuals viewing an intense work activity internally and externally in the organization work environment (Gao & Jiang, 2019; Gaan & Mohanty, 2019). Harmonious passion contributes to employees’ work satisfaction, engagement, and belief in organizational goals (Islam et al., 2023). Shared leadership further builds a passionate work climate in the organization for achieving everyone’s goals and will help improve team performance. Leaders’ ethical leadership practices also confirm the leader’s moral compass in the organization, such as enhancing work

engagement, commitment, passion, and the environment of trust for positive outcomes for employees and followers' well-being (Islam et al., 2023). A leader who understands empowering leadership (e.g., coaching, role modeling, and positive feedback) in an organization will help subordinates and employees develop confident behaviors to achieve their goals more efficiently (Kim & Beehr, 2023), and employee work passion by (e.g., displaying examples of positive leadership behaviors, educating subordinate's needs, and provide self-encouragement) is important for flourishing at work (Peethambaran & Naim, 2023). Leaders must develop sustainable and empowering leadership skills to help the business's internal and external environment, especially involving employee development of followers and subordinates they lead in the 21st.

Five small business restaurant owners shared some of their same experiences during the COVID-19 crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted restaurant business owners (Noh & Liu, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic meant business leaders had to address new business operations, such as reassessing their core values their purpose and establishing methods of clear communication to minimize disruption at all levels of their business operations and in and outside of their environment (Mather, 2020). Additionally, citizenship behaviors of leadership are an important factor that supports internal and external followers during a crisis for organizational identification that shows leader control of the abnormal business situations (Kovoor-Misar & Zhang, 2021). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) also addresses economic operational capacity

performance at high levels for all stakeholders and shareholders (Al-Shammari et al., 2022). In the pandemic, corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the restaurant industry became a more relevant management endeavor due to the lack of disaster preparation and dining inside (Latif & Bashir 2024). The perceived risk that owners had to change their perceptions of CSR and address more of the customers', environment's, and employees' concerns to survive.

The following are statements that were shared and unanimously agreed upon by all SBCOs. SBRO1 stated, Everything was close, and there was the thing we normally would not do like we had to sell things out of our business to stay afloat, we had to furlough a whole bunch of our employees, we were running on the bare minimum crew during the COVID-19 pandemic, but we were able to survive.

SBRO2 states that their catering and pick-up orders for their business increased due to in-house restrictions. SBRO3 stated, "We operated on limited hours as opposed to regular hours and that most of our business was delivery to our customers working through COVID-19 and the labor market and finding qualified workers was a problem." SBRO4 stated "I been in business for 26 years, and then it was closed due to COVID-19, whereas I began my new renovation for the business." SBRO5 stated that "COVID-19 survival was critical, especially working with different cultures, especially having alternative products to sell, and we had to catered more for our customers during the period of COVID-19."

Theme 2: Leading with Purpose

Business owners and leaders must demonstrate positive behaviors to motivate

their workers in their organization. Knights et al. (2020) suggested that business leadership orientation allows leaders to diversify their skills to motivate employees to be more effective at all levels of the business environment for sustainability.

Awareness in the 21st century encompasses leaders shift to strategies such as being more radical, establishing more ethical behaviors, understanding how to employ more authenticity in their leadership behaviors, demonstrating values that show positive leadership behaviors and self-awareness; that it also shows their self-purpose to enhance and motivate innovative behaviors in how their followers view the business organizational climate is employed (Groselj et al., 2021; Phillips & Phillips, 2020; Sendjaya et al., 2019). As a result, Felix et al. (2019) revealed that different leadership styles will affect all aspects of the business environment and activity, which involves leadership drive and influence, which can drive positive or negative outcomes that show a leader's core values. For an organization's long-term success, it is imperative that the leaders of the organization use ethically sound decisions when sharing knowledge for positive creativity with their followers (Goswami & Agrawal, 2023). Wood (2023) suggested that learning leadership involves specific visions that leaders need to employ responsibly, which involves growth in their actions and methods that encourage openness, nurturing their development as leaders, and mediating systems and their people that build trust with each other. Leaders lead learning leadership with ethical purpose, which can help influence employees' attitudes and beliefs in their leadership and the core values of the organizational culture

and climate.

SBRO1 stated: “My purpose comes from my faith and that I’m not going to ask anybody to do anything that I have not done myself.” Also, SBRO1 articulated that leading by example and commitment shows workers the essential need to work as a team. SBRO2 echoed some of the similar statements as SBRO1, in that SBRO2 believes in setting examples for workers and showing employees how to perform their jobs with pride: “These are the guidelines, these are the boundaries we have set forth, our expectations and our expectations of you and expectations of myself, I expect you to do the same thing.” Felix et al. (2019) suggested that leaders’ leadership core values need to display positive charismatic behaviors that have value-based factors to inspire as well as motivation for a shared decision-making process to followers to achieve high leadership performances in their work and followers. Additionally, Claudia et al. (2022) discovered in their study that leaders in their organizational environments may need to develop more creativity with their workforce by fostering more team focus that achieves not only inclusiveness but also how their followers acknowledge their value in diversity. Lastly, senior leadership values enhance the organisation’s requirements so that followers believe in the organization’s missions and vision in developing the strategic process for organizational change (Deb et al., 2023). Leaders’ leadership core values and inclusions in an organization are critical in setting the ethical tone that followers view and follow as a positive mission and vision statement they can believe.

SBRO3: articulated that as far as what a leader’s passion offered, “I think it’s about setting a high standard and quality of our food.” Also, I believe in setting high

ethics, demonstrating positive values and self-awareness, and building employee teamwork to build positive relationships with staff and workers and gain their trust. Leaders who create a team-oriented process exemplify purposeful goals with their workers or followers that will validate and support their daily leadership capabilities in an organization.

SRBO4: stated that “Treat people the way you want to be treated, don’t give anyone what you don’t want, and I treat people the way I want to be treated, not all the time you get that back, especially from employees, but you still can’t let that change you.” Also, a leader’s leadership purpose and passion for your employees will demonstrate respect and inspire and motivate your employees for positive outcomes in the organization.” SRBO5: added similarities such as leading by example and addressing employees’ needs; a leader should have an openness that employees can feel, motivate employees, and reward employees, along with building positive relationships with employees that encompass a positive organizational culture.

Emotional intelligence is a critical asset that a leader needs to possess. In their study, Deb et al. (2023) posited that emotional intelligence (EI) is about the leader’s quality of relationship with coworkers and supervisors, who are essential in the work environment and will also predict job satisfaction with everyone in the organization. Deb et al. (2023) Also found that if small business owners want to decrease individual stress and negative emotions, EI can help employees and management handle complex business situations more positively, creating a more

positive work environment for their workforce (Abdulla et al., 2022). Leaders' capability to employ EI within themselves may become more connected with the people they lead, and followers in building trusting relationships that may strengthen a positive mindset in everyone's work achievements in the organization during challenging times (Alharbi, 2022). Romi et al. (2020) research study found that when organizational behaviors are committed to EI, it will positively affect workers' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors that foster everyone achieving the organizational goals. Business owners and management learning to implement emotional intelligence can develop a means to control their emotions and act responsively under challenging situations that can promote positive workers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment and a positive citizenship behavior environment in the organization for everyone.

All SBROs articulated in some form or fashion that leaders leadership should be purpose-driven in that they lead by example and commitment, setting examples for inclusiveness for workers and showing employees how to perform their jobs with pride, setting high ethics, along with demonstrating positive values and self-awareness, and lastly, having an openness that employees can feel in the business organizational culture, which will set the standards for employees to try to follow in the business.

Theme 3: Leading With Honest Communication (The Heart)

Leadership honest communication from the heart will influence workers' desire to follow the leader's ambition and goals in the organization for positive outcomes. That entails the leader exemplifying effective communication skills with transparency (Barrett,

2006). Son and Lee (2023) added that a leader's humility builds trusting relationships and is essential in crafting two-way communication interactions with employees. Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic allows businesses and leaders to address disruptions and crises and show workers positive behaviors of trust, repair, core values of purpose, and ethical characteristics (Kahkonen,2021; Mather, 2020). Which will inspire workers to believe in the fairness of the leader's characteristics in the business organizational culture (Yue et al., 2021). Leaders' honest communication, fairness, trust, and humble relationships will show followers transparency to their workers' leadership values and characteristics.

SBRO1: believed that leadership sustainability in a business requires distribution of work responsibility, a leader's positive involvement in supporting staff and workers' development in the business and building relationships by embracing workers through trust and effective communication and "showing them that I care, I get a lot more results out of my people, and that creates a more positive work environment." Hurtienne and Hurtienne (2023) found in their research that leaders who do not listen and do not understand issues with individuals in the organization, and consequently, do not build personal relationships with employees cannot assess their workers' needs, and job performances will not produce positive outcomes for the organization. Silva et al. (2023) suggested authentic leadership is essential for leaders to exhibit to their subordinates and followers that shows transparency, maintains an effective and

genuine relationship, and influences how individuals view their leadership style. Gong et al. (2023) discovered in their study that leaders should employ inclusive leadership strategies, work meaningfulness for follower resilience in their job tasks, and have the capacity to achieve their organizational goals. Subsequently, employees need to feel that they are part of the organization. At the same time, the leader's communication skills are imperative and will support and influence meaningfulness for everyone in all departments of the organization.

SBRO2: shared the leadership strategies of honest communication that have sustained my business with employees to lead with integrity and respect and by example, to be ethically sound, show your leadership conviction, and share my values. "I motivate my employees to be proud of their work and customer relationship to prevent employee turnovers." Hurtienne et al. (2022) new introduction of equity leadership theory (EL) is a new way of cultivating and influencing a relationship between leaders and employees that will provide a means to be more one-on-one engaged with their workers for better organizational outcomes as it relates to personal and professional needs. Also, SBRO1 and SBRO2 believed in establishing an organizational culture of trust, leadership with integrity, and sharing their values with the workers and staff.

SBRO3 stated: "When we are very present every day as the owner operators and communicate to our expectations," our staff performs to a level that is also more expected of us." I believe that you should give staff autonomy, and I believe in staff performing at a higher level; "The SBRO stated that "my leadership with passion and high work engagement with staff shows that we are not absent owners."

SBRO4 believed in a team strategy and effective communication, how “I want to be treated like you want to be treated,” and showing my workers my faith and treating people fairly. Additionally, “I show my staff a positive work atmosphere, a positive work attitude, and my appreciation to customers.”

SBRO5 also believed in establishing effective communications and setting effective job standards with my workers, letting them know where I stand in my business, building positive relationships with employees, and having a positive organizational culture. “I lead by example, showing employees my values for the business and developing a positive work influence through my positive work behaviors with my teams.” Malamateniou (2022) advocates that leaders leading from the heart do not make you weak; on the contrary, leaders leading from the heart develop compassionate relationships with their workers, develop organizational trust with attentive listening skills, and trust within themselves and their workers, and consistently lead by example to name a few that will help drive the organization success. Entrepreneurs and managers of organizations must build heartfelt, long-term, and shared trusting relationships with employees that will help shape innovation to build shared goals for a sustainable future (Suriyankietkaew, 2021). Leaders’ effective communication and leadership from the heart build trusting relationships with the organization’s employees.

Authentic leadership and effective communication by the leader are valuable assets in the organization that build positive relationships with everyone. Krishna (2022) stated that authentic leadership combined with asymmetrical

communication may provide avenues leaders can use to foster subordinates' or followers' positive work engagements and motivation in an organization. Men and Sung (2022) also agreed that leaders can positively influence employees and build better employee organizational relationships and characteristics such as warmth, empathy, and integrity through symmetrical communication. Leaders who set positive standards and values, like treating everyone with respect and effective communication like motivating language (ML) on the cultural viewpoints of values and showing leadership support for their followers in the organization, are paramount (Yue et al., 2021). Leaders' positive communication, such as authentic and symmetrical alone or combined values, will build a leader's effective work engagement and relationship so that employees will adapt to and follow organizational sustainable goals for the organization's future and extend their existence.

All SBOs believed that leaders must acquire skills to effectively communicate and demonstrate positive values with their workers in motivating a positive work environment engagement to build a positive organizational culture. Additionally, leaders need to use the correct motivational language to inspire and develop positive working relationships with employees for long-term benefit for the organization's future success.

Theme 4: Leadership With Integrity and Trust

During the pandemic crisis of COVID-19 small restaurant businesses in the U.S. had to address many adversities for business sustainability in their niche market. The business had to develop organizational changes like downsizing and redeveloping their business models; the internal and external portfolios are in operational strategy and how they would create a more comprehensive plan of trustworthiness at all levels of the

organization (Kahkonen, 2021). Additionally, leaders need to show team leadership effectiveness, such as organizational trust and integrity; they need to advance among all team members in the organization (Kahkonen, 2021). Ete et al. (2020), in their study, stated that organizational leadership should practice consistent behavioral integrity (BI) practices with their staff, managers, and employees because each subordinate is examining their BI consistency to ensure the organization's values are in accordance with the stated organizational mission statements and policies rules. Business owners and managers must establish effective communication skills with staff to build trusting relationships that show their concern for subordinates' well-being and support them by recognizing their job tasks, accomplishments, and job satisfaction to build motivation (Elkomy et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the regular business operations of small restaurant businesses in the U.S. at all levels. Restructuring their business portfolios by leaders was essential during that period for sustainability, and BI form leadership is now more important than ever.

SBRO1 stated: "I am here if I am needed to be here. If we are short on the weekend, I come in to help; if we are short on my time off, I come in to help." Employees' belief in the leader's support and caring for how they feel working in the organization is critical, whereas the employees view the leader leadership commitment in the organization of openness, so, now the workers can trust the leader's responses given to them when they need some guidance and support. Adding moral leadership plus constructive working employee engagement is

imperative and will affect whether employees share the organizational values as the leader in the organization (Godbless, 2021). Song et al. (2022) suggested that servant leadership and employee voice are ways to increase employees' work engagement through meaningfulness, vision, and purpose that will promote teamwork to increase job engagement. Cengiz Ucar et al. (2021) found in their study that employees' creativity behaviors in an organization were significant when leadership employs servant and transformational leadership with authentic leadership behaviors that will create a psychological environment of safety in the organization for creativity for employees and the leader positive approach to employees is received, that will generate new ethical ideas in the organization. Meuser and Smallfield (2023) stated that servant leadership in an organization is a critical asset in running an organization, supports a positive organizational climate, can benefit employees' well-being internally and externally, and can promote good community awareness for customers. Business leadership's ability to establish organizational safety for their employees and generate ethical practices that address followers' concerns will show how their employees view the organizational culture and steps for their well-being.

SBRO2: "articulated that we will go against the boundaries we set, but if someone needs help, we are very easy to help employees out if they come to us and they have a valid, genuine reason." The SBRO leader mentions that a positive working relationship and positive working climate of engagement with staff, employees, and customers are essential, and building employee trust is paramount in the organization for business sustainability.

SBRO3 stated: “Trying to maintain decorum and peaceability, and they have seen me fail, au, but I will almost immediately apologize.” SBRO3 also mentions that being aware of your tone of voice with employees, maintaining your self-discipline, and making amends quickly with employees is critical. Lastly, respecting workers’ feelings will build trust with workers, communicate effectively, and then lead with passion.

SBRO4 added: Keep personal stuff aside; it is not about my personal beliefs but about doing things for the business, and I am doing it in a special way, like respecting the business. The owner believed the leader sets the integrity performance, building trust and values.

SBRO5: stated: “By doing as I say, u know if I request, even behavioral thing, if I have already addressed you on that, I am going to call you out.” SBRO5 believed in holding her staff and workers accountable for discussing and addressing things that are not appropriate for the business. So, “I walk the walk.” All SRBOs shared that integrity and trust in the leaders are essential for workers’ perception of the organizational culture demonstrated by leadership. As a result, leaders will need to gain skills and undertake training to apply trust and integrity first with themselves and then display it to their employees and staff in their daily leadership practices. Gatling et al. (2020) suggested that when a leader demonstrates a consistently high level of behavioral integrity, their followers’ gender base may still have a different perception of trust in the leader’s working relationship in leadership. Usman et al. (2021) suggested that participative

leadership has two factors that leaders need to consider in the organization to sustain employees' job performances: employees' ability to thrive, which will boost behaviors to help support workplace sustainability. The leader in an organization must demonstrate the behaviors that they want their employees of all genders to inspire and believe in and then develop those behaviors for themselves that can benefit the organizational culture in the present and the future.

Leadership requires leaders to build trust in the organization with employees emotionally that they can observe. Fisher et al. (2020) researched the effect of employee effectiveness and cognitive trust in leadership in relation to organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and organizational commitment (OC), and they found that each has a different relationship form. Fisher et al. (2020) found that the meta-analysis of 11 studies provided different results and were not all the same in their finding of the organizational outcome they explored and showed that trust is a multidimensional construct relationship by leaders with people in an organization. Romi et al. (2021) found that emotional intelligence positively affected OCB and OC and is an essential component that leaders can use to create daily positive organizational commitment and job satisfaction from their employees. McAllister (1995) concluded in his study that a leader's affect-base trust in a relationship between managers and professionals dictates how their peers view them and are inspired to accomplish their work tasks. Whereas affective trust deals with employees' emotions in relationships, cognitive trust revolves around employees' observations of the leader's behaviors.

Theme 5: Leading With Self-Discipline

All SRBOs believe leaders must employ self-discipline that promotes openness, commitment, and trust with their employees and build a positive working relationship with all their workers. In their study, Knots et al. (2022) suggested that leadership without influence cannot exist and added that self-leadership is essential in businesses and need to focus on less top-down leadership strategies. Their research was on self-leadership and self-cognitive and individual outcomes. The focus was on more cognitive-focused self-leadership strategies and behavioral-only in individual leadership, which using both did show a more enhanced influence on an individual's behavioral outcomes and helped influence workers' attitudes when used simultaneously and strong task performances but not as strongly as relationship and creativity for workers. In their research study, Inam et al. (2021) found that self-leadership is about certain moral principles the leader needs to help employees improve their focus and build confidence in their job performances and work engagement. Also, Mayfield et al. (2021) found that self-leadership and leaders' motivating language (ML) help improve both individuals' organizational behavior regarding working relationships, job satisfaction, and work performance. Finally, self-leadership by individuals is not separate from the organizational culture or organization goals but can influence all subordinates to accomplish the same goals as team members (Sjogblom et al., 2022). Self-discipline practices by leaders promote certain cognitive moral principles and help improve their job performances, job satisfaction, and engagement with their

workers. They can also influence behavior that can help everyone build trusting relationships within the organization's culture.

SRBO1 stated: "I feel that they know that I am here to support them; yeah, I got their back: whatever happens, I am just a phone call away." SRBO1 believes in being accessible to workers and maintaining self-discipline. SBRO2 believes in making amends quickly, supporting them if needed, and leading by example. SBRO3 stated: "I will almost immediately apologize, and please forgive me that came out sharp."

SBRO4 believed that the leader sets the values in the organization and should listen to their employees with care, as leadership should show positive characteristics, effective communication, and humility. SBRO5 voiced that you have to hold your workers accountable. My behavioral practice is what I want my workers to follow. That is, "I walk the talk and talk the walk"; "that is what I want them to do, too." Small restaurant business owners equate self-discipline strategy affords the leader to recognize their shortcomings in their leadership and the ability to correct them quickly.

Leaders self-cultivation has processes to help their workers internalize the leader's cultural behaviors and moral consciousness. In their research, Duan et al. (2020) found that the self-cultivation theory, based on Confucianism, requires leaders to acquire a deeper conscious meaning in their personal lives through self-reflection, self-discipline, and self-improvement to influence others. At the same time, self-cultivation is the leader's ability to practice self-discipline, self-consciousness, and self-lessness (Duan et al., 2020). Self-cultivation helps leaders internalize their moral consciousness and the cultural behaviors they must display to their workers (Duan et al., 2020). Kubatova and

Krocil (2021), in their study using Ruben's leadership competency framework, suggest that conscious leadership competency evolves through individual adjustment by leaders getting training in personal competencies (e.g., personal values, ethics, their cognitive ability), communication competencies (e.g., credibility, influence, and persuasion), organizational competencies (e.g., vision-setting), and positional competencies (e.g., educational, experiences, and expertise). Self-cultivation theory and competency leadership training by leaders promote their sense of responsibility regarding how employees are treated and how employees view the organizational culture.

Taking care of your people is essential in a business that promotes an organization of caring. Guedes et al. (2022) proposed the four kinds of harmful leadership behaviors in an organization that can harm subordinates with low or high intensity were leadership, intimidation, leadership lack of care, leadership self-centeredness, and leadership excessive pressure for results that can affect employee job satisfaction, leadership engagement, how subordinates view their safety, how knowledge sharing is viewed, just to share a few. Jakubik (2021) argues that Practical Wisdom (PW) in an organization suggests that companies must care for their people. PW Leadership processes encompass five paradigms guidelines the leader needs to recognize, which are envisioning a future and purpose in setting the organization's objectives (i.e., internal communication, effective planning strategies, ability to inspire goals that are essential for living a good life), enabling's means like (i.e., stakeholders desires, assessing the well-

being of their employees, and creating a well-balanced work life for themselves and their employees that promote the direction for a good life), energizing their people and themselves by (i.e., motivation, caring, building a nurturing relationship, attributes of authenticity and influential role model, guiding their emotions and building an avenue that ascribes to social intelligence), engaging (i.e., inspiring, empowering, employee involvement, purpose that are accepted), lastly, executing (i.e., walk the talk, practice authenticity, making wise choices when needed, and caring and looking at the bigger picture). All SBROs alluded to most PW and how they avoid harmful behaviors to their workers in their business operation. Leaders in small businesses or large corporations may want to review some of the factors related to PW, understand forms of harmful leadership behaviors toward their workers, and find ways to incorporate some of those strategies for long-term sustainability presently and in the future.

Theme 6: Leading With Values

Employee empowerment is essential for work performance and for the organization to accomplish its organizational goals. Kirkman et al. (2020) state that improving employees' performance is about employee empowerment, which equates to how employees view their autonomy in carrying out their specific tasks, how employees feel that their work makes an impact on the company's desired goals, whether employees have the confidence needed to achieve their job successfully and last, how they think about the work they are instructed to carry out for the business organizational success. Zheng et al. (2022) study concluded that ethical and integrity leadership confirmed how the leadership code of ethics gives cues to followers on how they communicate their

values, which provides how followers believe leadership ethical voice for their self-internalization concept in the organization; also, leadership and human resources decision-making processes and policies they create are vital in the business for its workforce (Valecha, 2022). Business leaders and human resources in the organization must find a way to improve employees' work performances for organizational success and establish a belief system for followers to follow that helps build employee confidence in their leadership capabilities.

SBRO1 stated: "Yeah, right, I have had numerous conversations about my staff; they all know where I come from and what I stand for." "So, sharing that with them allows me to plant seeds, which I take great pride in." SBRO1 believes that when you have to criticize your employees, you still have to share with them at what they are good at.

SBRO2 stated: "If you lead by example, that's going to trickle down to your staff and your customers." And "upfront is that you always have to treat people with kindness. SRBO2 believes in having a work atmosphere that shows their customers that management and employees are happy working at the business and demonstrating positive behaviors that lead to confidence in their job performance. Additionally, SRBO2 said that kindness and smiles go an extremely long way when you show compassion and be human.

SBRO3 stated: "We show interest in their life, au, we go out of our way to do anything like pick them up, drop them off, when they have car trouble, we help people get their car from the car shop, we have." Also, SBRO3 believes in sincere

concern for employees' well-being, sharing our values and personal beliefs, and building positive relationships with our employees. Lastly, SBRO3 voices that we always try to treat respectfully, speak kindly, and use integrity in our daily business practices. SBRO4 echoed the same sentiments in its business: You must treat people how you want.

Moreover, support your workers. But you must also set high standards, customer service, and teamwork. SRBO5 also reiterated that I interact with them so they can see that, feed off it, and know what kind of standard they are entering into in my business. As well as showing them openness, my shortcomings, leadership with effective communication, high standards, and positive customer service. All SBROs believe leaders must lead their small restaurant businesses with high standards, treat people how they want to be treated, treat their workers with respect, have a positive work atmosphere, and share with them what they are good at with kindness.

In the organization, leaders need to practice a value-based relationship with all stakeholders. James and Priydarshini (2021) suggested that an organization's responsible relationship (RP) requires a value-based approach by the leader and is a multidimensional construct of many theories in this global business world (i.e., ethical leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, transformational leadership, relational leadership, shared leadership). They refer to employees, clients and customers, business partners, social and natural environment, and shareholders. Leaders' understanding of RP core leadership value-based approaches offers positive organizational development changes incorporating mutual trust and goodwill to all stakeholders.

An organization's leader cultural leadership must exemplify positive core values

with all stakeholders. Blattner et al. (2021) examined why cultural leadership in engagement in business was an essential factor during the pandemic for businesses' sustainability to establish core values. Leaders should practice morality and ethical standards, respecting their workers, setting examples of high standards, and setting high standards with quality services. You and Hon (2021) Word-of-mouth (WOM) of corporations or businesses to their customers is a direct link to how the consumers judge the values of the organization's culture and products they sell and how loyal the community is to the organization. Any business or organization in a community must build a loyal customer base and all stakeholders to sustain their business in the present and future, (WOM) is an example and will help build a loyal customer base.

Theme 7: Leading With Relationships and Connectedness

Relationship management (RM) requires leaders to develop a positive organizational culture that promotes shared values to workers and value creation for its customers for the business's longevity and sustainability (Deszcynski & Beresewicz, 2021). Management behaviors and emotions when interacting with subordinates will determine their feedback (Alam & Latham, 2020). Knowledge sharing by leaders in an organization helps support employees' well-being, promotes psychological ownership, and helps shape positive workplace behaviors (Malik et al., 2023). Gonibeed et al. (2023) advocated that leadership and people drive sustainability in an organization is valuable for success. Relationship management, such as knowledge sharing and value creation, is critical in an

organizational culture with workers and customers.

SRBO1 stated, “We try to involve our people in everything to alleviate the stress on us and have them take more responsibility in the business.” SRBO1 suggests that managers should share all work responsibilities with staff and workers. “We are supporting staff and worker development for business sustainability.” SBRO1 believes in workers and is dedicated to sharing responsibility at all levels with his workers. SBRO2 stated: “It was imperative for any small business owners that you are involved in the day-to-day from the get-go, and you are expected to be here and leadership with conviction.” SBRO1 and SBRO2 suggest that leaders need to share responsibilities with their staff and workers and take responsibility for leading the day-to-day business operations for sustainability.

SBRO3 stated, “We believe in Biblical principles and giving second chances.” What is best for the company and employees’ happiness, and leading with harmony, I believe in developing additional leadership skills and leading with love. Additionally, SBRO3 believes leaders who show leadership integrity, build workers’ self-confidence, and show positive leadership behaviors and attitudes in the organization will encourage positive results and influence workers’ behaviors.

SBRO4 stated: “I always wanted to develop a team to do my mom preserved,” People believed in me, and I planted the seed for the business”. SBRO4 says that your faith, treating people fairly, good products, and positive relationships and connectedness with your teams are required for your businesses to be sustainable and last for the future. Additionally, community trust, ethical behaviors, and business standards are essential

when starting a small business in a community.

SBRO5 stated: "I lead by example; I make sure that they know my background and are familiar with where I come from." SBRO5 believes in creating a positive relationship and connectedness with your teams, rewarding employees, building positive relationships with employees, and creating a positive organizational culture.

Positive organizational leadership by the leader in the organization helps build a culture of employee respect and stimulation that shows the organization cares for employee well-being. Fernando et al. (2021) suggested that employees' organization relationships and connectedness will stimulate employees' respect for the organization's culture and show that the organization cares for employees' well-being. Employees can now trust the organizational culture related to morality and ethics. Minch-Duc and Huu-lam (2019) opinion was that managers must create an organization of high standards that promotes employees' trust and exemplifies competence and a reward system for their employees. Khan et al. (2021) posited that servant leadership supports meaning and that employees need meaningfulness in the organization from their supported leader, which encourages a sense of purpose and trust to achieve their organizational goals. Organizational cultural leadership by the leader is about setting a high standard, building employees' trust, and the leadership competency as moral and ethical.

All SBROs shared several of the same themes on leading with relationships and connectedness. To name a few, business owners need to share

all work responsibilities with staff and workers; small restaurant business owners said that being involved in the business's day-to-day operations is essential; business owners suggest that leadership integrity, building workers' self-confidence will build trust with workers, business owners posited that positive leadership behaviors and attitudes enhance and builds positive relationships with employees, thereby encouraging positive results and influencing workers' behaviors.

Additionally, small restaurant business owners believe you must treat people fairly, develop positive working relationships that connect all their team members, and create a positive organizational culture for long-term sustainability. Thereby, with these recommendations and themes from the research study of the small restaurant business owners (SRBOs), a leader's ability to defeat many barriers in leading authentically is essential for organizational sustainable growth for business survival. Lastly, SRBOs must employ authentic leadership or other leadership skills and continue developing their business leadership skills to help the business in the present and future.

Applications to Professional Practice

The small restaurant business is vital to the U.S. economy and local communities, with employment and jobs for families and its citizens that employ 6 in 10 adults with a job opportunity (National Restaurant Association [NRA], 2019). However, the United States' new small business survival rate from 1994-2018 for 15 years was 25.7% (U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy, ([USSBAOA], 2020, p.2, Figure 4, BED). The current multiple qualitative case study involved five of the 12 business owners who accepted my invitation to participate.

The small restaurant business owners (SRBOs) were five from the southern region of the United States who had sustained their small restaurant businesses beyond 5 years. The theory I used was Authentic Leadership (AL) in association with (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007). The research objectives were to discover how AL strategies can significantly influence SRBO strategies in small restaurants to maintain long-term sustainability and longevity.

Business owners' ability to increase their self-development develops a better understanding of how their supporters view the organization. Additionally, business owners and leaders who know themselves build leadership skills such as leading with purpose-shared values, constructing relationships with their workers or staff, showing workers that they care about their well-being and safety, and leading self-discipline practices (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007). Moreover, business leaders operating from their hearts and leading in building positive working relationships and connectedness with their subordinates will promote enduring relationships with their followers and all shareholders.

Authentic leadership theory (AL) significantly impacted the small restaurant business owners' example of wanting their workers, staff, and customers relationships to view their leadership practices in their business operations. Seven themes emerged significantly, and one emerged that was significant from all SRBOs in this multiple qualitative research analysis: (a) leading with passion, (b) Leading with purpose, (c) leading with honest communication heart, (d) leading with integrity, leading with self-discipline, (e)

leading with values, and (e) leading with relationship and connectedness, the one theme that always came forward from all SRBOs from all of the nine semistructured questions. The SRBOs believe that any business owner, large or small, could apply these findings to build a positive organizational structure that all stakeholders can believe in.

The findings of this current study could potentially benefit small restaurant business owners' leadership strategies and why it is essential to develop additional leadership strategies to improve their business culture and operations for longevity presently and in the future with all stakeholders. The key emerging themes the study uncovered using authentic leadership theory were essential and proved to enhance a business owner or leader's leadership strategies for an organization's survival as recommended by (George, 2003; George & Sim, 2007). Additionally, the professional and academic literature articles' research shared some, if not almost all, of the authentic leadership strategies that small, medium, and large corporations must establish in their business operations and culture to defeat barriers that may prevent them from achieving business sustainability.

The other findings from study and recommendations provides an avenue for small restaurant business owners to acquire additional knowledge and build an application they can apply in their day-to-day business operations and in the culture of their business, which includes (a) leading their workers with passion and caring for their wellbeing, (b) showing their workers and customers the leading purpose of their business that they can accept, (c) develop an open communication line with their subordinates and all shareholders with honesty, (d) practice integrity in their behaviors that everyone in and

out of the organization observed as your leadership belief, (e) develop your self-discipline practices of passion that guide how you will discipline your workers, (f) consistently demonstrate to your workers what values you have and expect of them, and (g) involved yourself in the business day-to-day operations to build of positive working relationship that shows your workers you are connected with them and want to help them also in their personal needs if warranted (George, 2003; George & Sim, 2007). When small restaurant business owners enhance their knowledge in developing additional leadership skills for their businesses, they may discover new strategies and visions that promote an organizational culture all their shareholders can believe in and trust.

This study has contributed to small restaurant business owners' actual experiences that they have used in their businesses and sustained them for five years and beyond in their community. The literature I reviewed for this research study focused on authentic leadership (AL) strategy components and other researchers' leadership contributions; specifically, the guiding source was from (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007). Whereas George, and George and Sim's construct of authentic leadership allows leaders to acquire additional leadership skills to lead the organization more effectively with all stakeholders.

This study may also inspire small restaurant business owners to develop deeper and more connected relationships with their workers and subordinates, which will enhance an optimistic viewpoint with customers in their community for longevity. Additionally, for small restaurant business owners to continue to

stay competitive in their niche market today and in the future, applying some of these recommendations in the study from those small restaurant business owners who have sustained their business for 15 to 25 years could help establish their organizations' vision and mission statements in the future.

Lastly, this qualitative multiple study findings build on the specific knowledge and principles of George (2003) and George & Sims (2007) and other researchers' literature on the components of (AL) that can apply to all countries' small business operations for sustainability that can help drive their country economy and for their community and citizens wellbeing. Small restaurant business owners are vital for the country's local community for sustainability and add immense monetary support for that country. However, small restaurant business owners must also develop additional sustainable competencies described in this study to help their businesses survive.

Implications for Social Change

Small restaurant business survival rates are vital for the U.S. economy. Approximately one-third of small businesses acknowledge the social, environmental, and economic impact simultaneously may contribute to social change because small restaurant business owners provide employment and first jobs for families and their citizens and employ 6 in 10 adults with a job opportunity according to the (National Restaurant Association [NRA], 2019). This study provides small restaurant business owners with leadership strategies that may help their business operations presently and in the future for sustainability. Thereby, small restaurant business owners shared what has sustained their businesses beyond 5 years and their experiences of 15 to 26 years of

restaurant operations.

The study's findings may also help small restaurant business owners who want to survive in their niche market, develop additional leadership skills and strategies such as authentic leadership skills components like leading with passion, leading with purpose, and leading with honest communication (Heart), leading with values, integrity, and trust George, (2003) and George & Sims (2007) recommendations and other leadership skills, to name a few, and what was mentioned by other researchers information in the study. As a result, they can provide a guide to increase their community business operations for sustainability that will help build additional revenues for schools and jobs and increase taxes to help support their local government. Lastly, small restaurant business owners may want to grasp the information for the personal inspiration they need from this study. It also may propel them to take those next steps from the themes I gathered in this research to stay competitive in their niche market for their sustainable future and business culture.

Recommendation for Action

I explored small business restaurant owners' leadership strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years in this research qualitative multiple case study. Authentic leadership theory was the driver in analyzing small restaurant business owners' (SRBO) responses to the data for this study. Several themes emerged as significant as I was analyzing the data: leading with passion, leading with purpose, leading with honest communication (Heart), and leading with

values, integrity, and trust (George, 2003 & George & Sims, 2007). SRBOs understand and educate themselves on authentic leadership; additional leadership strategies in their business operations could improve their organizational culture and followers' belief in their leadership.

Based on the current themes above, I recommend that SRBOs develop additional leadership skills and strategies that will manifest in their staff and workers and provide a positive organization supporting the worker's and staff's well-being. I also recommend that SRBOs re-evaluate a new skill set they believe can promote honesty and lead to effective communications with their workers, staff, and customers that are viewed internally and externally for the business culturally in that community. I recommend that SRBOs do literature research on other leadership styles, such as authentic leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, etc., that may broaden and enhance their leadership skill set. I recommend that SRBO demonstrate high moral principles and professionalism to their staff and workers daily.

Additional recommendations I recommend for SRBOs are to commit to your staff and workers with convictions in your passion with positive emotions that show your heartfelt desire to speak with truth and openness, and also show your workers and staff your consistency in your daily work practices that represent integrity and trust they can believe and can accept. Lastly, I recommend that SRBOs develop meaningful work engagement with their staff and workers, promoting employees' more significant interest in supporting and influencing their leadership and connectedness in the business organization.

Leadership strategies take many forms in an organization, depending on how employees view the leader's leadership. Khan et al. (2021) suggest that leadership meaning and establishing meaningfulness requires leadership engagement with servant leadership that positively helps employees' perception of the leader and how they view their job performance and engagement. For SRBOs who want to begin or who are currently as an SBRO, increasing their intellectual capacity to align with different leadership strategies such as authentic leadership, servant leadership, and transformational leadership, to name a few, research from this study and researchers in other works of literature in leadership strategies that may help SRBOs may need to enhance their leadership skill set that may sustain their business operations longevity and develop a meaningful and positive behavioral connectedness relationship in their small business organizational cultural with their workers and subordinates.

Recommendations for Further Research

To explore sustainable leadership for five small restaurant business owners who have sustained their businesses for 5 years or longer. The goal of this qualitative multiple case study findings extends to existing research on the specific knowledge and principles of George (2003) and George and Sims (2007) research and other researchers' literature on the components of authentic leadership theory (AL) and other leadership theories that co-exist for business leaders leadership strategies for sustainability. In the United States, small restaurant business owners are essential for the economy and provide jobs that

employ 6 in 10 adults with job opportunities (National Restaurant Association [NRA], 2019). Successful small restaurant businesses in local communities provide economic benefits to the local government by increasing tax revenues to support schools and community organizations, allowing citizens and families to provide for their family's living expenses.

My first recommendation is that additional research by future researchers may want to capture more insights by using research methods such as quantitative to examine variables' characteristics or relationships within authentic leadership strategies., or mixed methods by combining quantitative and qualitative methods that may broaden how authentic leadership strategies by the business owners will enhance other research leadership strategies that enhance the organization and provide different measurable results.

The next recommendation is that the region of this research study should be expanded in the U.S. and abroad with small restaurant business owners, which may increase the scope of this study. Finally, future researchers should increase the number of small restaurant businesses from five to more. This may provide additional information about small restaurant business owners' leadership objectives, business experiences, and insights from small restaurant business owners in different regions of the U.S.

Reflections

First, I would like to share what it took to collect the data for this study that made me greatly respect small restaurant business owners'(SRBOs) daily grind to keep their doors open and were with all to run their business operation each day. I now have a

deeper understanding of what sacrifices an SRBO that has sustained their business for 5 years or longer endure, finding time to be with family, helping their workers and staff stay motivated while at work or from work, and ensuring that the community and their customers are happy daily.

Regarding the data collection, I was overwhelmed by the time it took to get five SRBOs to agree to participate in this study. Out of the 12 to 15 visits I made to SRBOs and hand-delivered the participants' information, I could only get five responses, which was sometimes exhausting. However, the five that agreed were very enthusiastic about sharing their information to help existing or new SRBOs develop their vision to start a small restaurant as an owner.

Lastly, all five SRBOs were passionate and responded to each question with some of the information I expected. However, some of their responses surprised me with how sincere and dedicated they were in their perseverance to sustain their business for 5 years or longer through many daily obstacles like going beyond helping their workers or staff outside of work if they seriously needed the help in their personal lives and always providing them with tremendous support and comfort.

Conclusion

This study explored strategies for small restaurant business owners who sustained their business for 5 years and beyond. Small restaurant business owners are vital for the U.S. economy or any country's economy. Small restaurant business owners provide employment and jobs for families and their citizens,

employing 6 in 10 adults with a job opportunity (National Restaurant Association [NRA], 2019). Also, the small restaurant business owner provides additional revenues for the community it serves with increased tax revenues supporting schools, better roads, and additional community services.

The theory that guided this study was authentic leadership. In the semistructured interview technique from five small restaurant business owners, nine semistructured questions emerged themes from the data analysis I gathered were: (a) leadership with passion in their daily business operation, (b) leadership that showed positive purpose with their staff and workers, (c) leadership with honest communication (Heart) with their workers and staff, (e) leadership building integrity and trust, with themselves and their workers and staff (f) leadership with applying self-discipline behaviors when needed with staff and workers, (g) leadership with positive values and caring for their staff and workers, and (h) leadership with building positive relationships and connectedness with their staff and workers were prominent.

As a result of this research findings, small restaurant business owners advocate that authentic leadership strategies are essential for small business restaurant owners to create in their business vision and mission to continue their successful business operation for longevity and success for 5 years and longer. The contribution of this study complemented and extended the research on authentic leadership theory of previous research investigators and offered additional insights into small restaurant business owners' perseverance and strategies that are required to sustain their business success.

Additionally, the results of this study's positive social change proposed

sustainability strategies that small restaurant business owners could use to develop a more positive relationship and connectedness with their workers and staff and a more positive organizational culture for their business's present and future direction for sustainability. Lastly, authentic leadership strategies may incentivize customers to view their business as valuable to their community.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What leadership strategies did you use to sustain your small business beyond 5 years?
2. How did you measure the effectiveness of the leadership strategies used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
3. What were the key barriers to implementing your leadership strategies to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
4. How did you address the key barriers to implementing your leadership strategies in your business for sustainability?
5. How do you instill purpose for yourself and in your employees?
6. What shared values have you emphasized in your business with your employees?
7. What relationship strategies have you established to improve a positive workplace with your employees?
8. What, if any, heartfelt self-disciplines strategies do you demonstrate to your employees to inspire integrity and trust?
9. What additional information can you share about your strategies for sustaining your business beyond 5 years?

Appendix B: Interview Guide

1. Before each interview session, I thank all participants for allowing me to meet with them, introduce myself and give them a brief overview of my research study topic and objectives.
2. Such as reiterating, my name is James H. Jones, and I am a student at Walden University pursuing a Doctoral Business Administration degree with a specialization in “Social Impact Management.” The qualitative multiple case study involved five small business restaurant owners in your area who have used strategies that have sustained their operation beyond five years. The title of this study is “*Strategies for Small Business Sustainability.*”
3. I then presented the information I sent regarding the consent forms they have signed, so any questions they may have thought about, we will have brief answer sessions to clarify questions before we proceed if needed.
4. I remind participants that their coded names, such as SRBO1, SRBO2, SRBO3, etc., are confidential, and they can withdraw at any time.
5. Before I began, I reiterated to the participants that they had the right to choose appropriate times and places as outlined in the consent forms. There are nine semistructured interview questions. The first interview lasted 1 hour or 45 minutes. The second interview, for follow-up in two weeks, is only about 25 to 30 minutes to ensure the data accuracy of their responses.
6. All interviews were computer video and digital voice recording, and I used notetaking to review later before the second meeting. The process of member

- checking requires and uses participants' answers and transcriptions to ensure accuracy and final results.
7. After this brief beginning and overview and answers session, I began the interview session by reaffirming to participate that I am turning on the tape recording to proceed.
 8. During the computer video and digital voice recording sessions, I started by note-taking, actively listening, observing participants' responses, and non-verbal and body language when I elicited a reaction from some participants' answers and watched different posters and gestures. After each participant interview session, I thank them for dedicating this time to meet with me and participate in this research study. I also ask for a time to schedule the second follow-up interview.