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Perceived Best Practices of Small Business Executives in War Zones

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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by

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MDIV, Columbia Theological Seminary, 2012

MPA, Walden University, 2006

MBA, Trident University, 2004

BS, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 2001

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The ability to sustain small businesses operating in war-torn areas is important not only to the business owners, but also to foreign communities receiving United States contract services for recovery from widespread decimation. While all small businesses address a wide range of issues, businesses operating in war-torn areas also face cultural diversity, local regulations, and potential threats to employee safety. The conceptual framework for this exploratory multiple case study was transformational-transactional leadership theory, guiding the research to discover traits and strategies of successful leaders in the population of small businesses that were profitable beyond 5 years while operating in the war-torn area of Afghanistan. In addition to participant questionnaires and review of the businesses' balance sheets, income statements, and tax returns, data were collected from 3 CEO participants in face-to-face, semistructured interviews. Participants' verbatim comments were analyzed via thematic analysis. The coding system evolved from applying preliminary codes to a small sample of data and reiteratively refining the codes as prominent themes emerged. Participants identified unique challenges of working with a multinational workforce. There were 3 primary findings: successful leaders used elements of both transformational and transactional leadership; the most important strategy was gaining knowledge of regional infrastructure and customs; and successful leaders used management assistance. These findings may contribute to social change by prompting small business leaders to re-examine their perspectives on workforce diversity; they will also enable leaders who provide services overseas to realize profitable business goals while contributing to foreign local economies.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my mother, Patricia, and my fellow warriors, both current and former, of the United States Marine Corps. The passion in my life originates from seeds of love and positive self-worth planted in me from an early age by my mother. She is and always will be my inspiration. The Marine Corps instilled a burning desire to serve others and to set the example for my family and my community. To be always faithful to country, to God, and to my fellow Marines is an honor. Semper Fi.

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I would like to thank my family for believing in me as I worked through several years of the doctoral process. As I simultaneously operated dozens of businesses, participated on numerous boards, traveled to war zones, and spent countless hours researching, you never once lost patience. My children William (Cody), Alexis (Lexi), Malinda (Lindie), Jonathan (Jon), and Benjamin (Ben) are the most amazing motivators in my life. To you, I am most grateful for the encouragement and love you give me every day. I could not do what I do without your support.

I am thankful to the members of my committee for their extreme patience, especially my chair, Dr. John House. Your mentorship and support were absolutely necessary for me to complete this long journey. I would also like to thank Dr. Freda Turner for her guidance. She is nothing less than amazing as a person and most importantly as a leader.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small business executives are often not the focus in conversations on contracting in war zones. The focus of the majority of the existing literature has been on the lives and struggles of executives from large businesses in terms of their demographic composition, stresses, career paths, personal opinions, leadership traits, relationships with the community and school boards, and indicators of success (Aziz, Abdullah, Tajudin, & Mahmood, 2013; Klaas, Semadeni, Klimchak, & Ward, 2012). Other foci included the relationship between entrepreneurship and favorable economic outcomes in high-growth settings, but literature has been lacking on entrepreneurship in war-torn countries.

Background of the Problem

Chief executive officers (CEOs) of small businesses face a wide range of issues, including rising health insurance costs (Wade, 2012), the collapse of the housing market, increasingly aggressive global competition, and the lack of good early management (Kennickell, Kwast, & Pogach, 2015). Another problem faced by small business leaders is the inability to innovate (Abdullah, Shamsuddin, & Wahab, 2012). The reasons for failure cited by small business leaders operating in war zones are different from the reasons previously believed to plague small business executives in other areas (Bullough, Renko, & Myatt, 2014). It is unclear whether transformational leadership or transactional leadership works for small business leaders (Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, & Nwankwere, 2011). Therefore, there is a need to understand the leadership styles and behaviors successful executives of small businesses must possess when operating in war-torn

regions. There is also a need for additional research on specific leadership behaviors associated with small business success, particularly in the Middle East.

Problem Statement

Security issues and unethical practices in war-torn areas can make it difficult and costly for entrepreneurs to open and operate a business. Corruption characterizes war-torn states due to their weak government institutions and fragile government infrastructure making business operations difficult (Torjesen, 2014). The isolation of government officials in war-torn economies contributes to the instability of the business environment (Djip, 2014). The general business problem was the lack of information in the literature concerning the experiences of small business leaders in war zones. The specific problem was that CEOs of small businesses operating in Afghanistan lack strategies to be profitable beyond 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory multiple case study was to identify the strategies used by three CEOs of small businesses operating in the war-torn area of Afghanistan whose companies have been profitable beyond 5 years. The findings may lead to more stable businesses in the country that are capable of earning profits beyond 5 years. Stabilizing businesses in areas plagued by war such as the Middle East can help restore some sense of balance and normalcy to area residents (Bullough et al., 2014). Moreover, stable businesses, no matter how small, contribute to the overall economic health of a region or nation (Eurostat, 2012).

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative multiple case study approach because the purpose of this study was to analyze the meaning and description of experiences of circumstances in a particular context (Moustakas, 1994). In the study, I identified the trends, social realities, and themes that surfaced from the synthesis of individuals' recorded perceptions. Using a qualitative research method involved exploring and discovering themes based on the perceptions of small business executives who operate in war-torn regions. Exploring subjective themes from social constructs would not have been possible with a quantitative design that already had potential definite responses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A qualitative design better served this study than a quantitative design or a mixed methods design would have done. The qualitative case study is suitable when the focus is on understanding complex situations that may have a variety of variables (Merriam, 2014), which was the goal of this study. A quantitative approach involves a formal, objective, systematic process in which researchers gather numerical data to carry out statistical analysis for gathering credible information (Pearce, Christian, Smith, & Vance, 2014). A mixed method study involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. There was no a quantitative element in this study, so a quantitative or mixed method study would not have been appropriate. In the current study, there were no definite variables related to the stated problem that would have been able to yield numerical data for quantitative analysis or even mixed method analysis (Creswell, 2014).

I considered ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, and case study designs and decided on the case study design. Ethnography relies on up-close, personal expertise and

individual involvement, not merely distant observation (Lahlou, Le Bellu, & Boesen-Mariani, 2015), which was not the goal of the current research. Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative investigation in which stories describe human action (Polkinghorne, 2013). Narrative research involves discussions arranged chronologically around a plot, which was not the goal of the study. The phenomenological research design is best for analyzing individuals' lived experiences based on their perspectives (Kumar, 2012); this was not the intention for this study.

For the current study, the goal was to understand how certain small business leaders in Afghanistan overcame the challenge of earning profits beyond 5 years; so, my immersion in the said context as a researcher was not appropriate. A case study research design is most appropriate if a researcher seeks to answer a descriptive question (Crowe et al., 2011). Moreover, the case study research design is a method that favors data collected in natural settings rather than using derived data, such as those from survey questionnaires (Crowe et al., 2011). The case study design is most appropriate for researchers who want to conduct evaluations of an event, activity, program, or individual (Yin, 2014). Because the purpose of the proposed study was to assess the experiences of CEOs in the war-torn area of Afghanistan, regarding the best practices linked to being profitable beyond 5 years, I concluded that the case study research design was the most fitting.

Research Questions

The principal research question was this: What are the best leadership practices and strategies of CEOs in the war-torn area of Afghanistan in operating their businesses to earn profits beyond 5 years?

To answer the main research question, the subquestions were as follows:

RQ1: What are the effective leadership practices that small business CEOs operating in a war-torn region can use to earn profits beyond 5 years?

RQ2: What are the best businesses strategies that small business CEOs operating in a war-torn region can engage in to earn profits beyond 5 years?

RQ3: What are the problems that small business CEOs operating in a war-torn region encounter with regard to earning profits beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

The responses to the following interview questions helped to answer the research question:

1. As a leader of a small business, what do you think are the best practices for small business CEOs to become successful when operating in a war-torn region?

2. As a leader of a small business, what do you think are the best methods to resolve problems related to operating a small business in a war-torn economy?

3. As a leader of a small business, what are your greatest strengths in relation to operating a small business in a war-torn economy?

4. As a leader of a small business, what are your greatest weaknesses in relation to operating a small business in a war-torn economy?

Conceptual Framework

As a foundation for data collection and a means to analyze collected data, I employed the transformational–transactional leadership framework to explore which type of leader and the associated leadership practices and strategies would work best in the study's context. Among the several approaches and models to study leadership, Bass's transformational-transactional leadership framework is one of the best known (Lai, 2011). Features of transformational leadership include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. In contrast, transactional leadership depends on a give-and-take relationship between leader and follower (Lai, 2011). Although measures of leadership have not always distinguished between the two types, transformational leadership represents a form or construct different from transactional leadership (Day & Harrison, 2011).

The transformational leadership style depends on the moral and ethical behavior of leaders, as well as their ability to inspire followers to unite toward a common goal (Lai, 2011). Through charisma and vision for the future, a transformational leader can inspire followers to transcend their own self-interests so that they may work for the betterment and profit of their organization (Lai, 2011). Transformational leaders regularly use contingent rewards to make a positive impact that influences their followers. Similarly, leaders take the initiative only if they perceive that events are not progressing as well as desired. In contemporary society, transformational leaders are relevant in the

workplace because their traits include flexibility, originality, and innovativeness. These leaders are effective at creating, developing, and maintaining the competitive edge in their organizations (Lai, 2011). Furthermore, studies have established that transformational leaders are empowering (Jung & Sosik, 2002) and that transformational leadership can lead to cohesion, effectiveness, and greater outputs (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

On the other hand, transactional leaders perceive the relationship between the followers and the leaders as an exchange process (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Transactional leadership includes the two factors of contingent reward and management by exception. Therefore, transactional leaders are likely to use both positive and negative reinforcements to achieve a goal (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). This quid pro quo relationship between the worker and the employer is a hallmark of transactional leadership. Through this study, I endeavored to determine whether transformational leadership practices or transactional leadership practices are most appropriate for small business entrepreneurs operating in war-torn areas to earn profits beyond 5 years.

Definition of Terms

I used the following terms as definitions throughout this study.

Leadership refers to the ability to unify and mobilize individuals and resources toward achieving a goal within a particular context or culture (Prosser, 2014).

Transactional leadership refers to a form of leadership wherein the interaction between leader and follower is contingent upon the output of the follower. Transactional

leaders usually reward achievements by followers and reprimand followers for errors (Lai, 2011).

Transformational leadership refers to a form of leadership wherein a leader is able to inspire followers to share in the same goals because of his or her moral and ethical behavior, as well as his or her inspirational and charismatic character (Lai, 2011).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This section includes a description of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Assumptions are elements of a study that are out of a researcher's control (Simon, 2011). If the assumptions disappear, a study may become irrelevant. A research problem cannot exist without assumptions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Limitations are possible weaknesses of a research study that are out of a researcher's control (Simon, 2011). Delimitations are characteristics that can limit the scope of a research study and put into place the boundaries of the research. Unlike limitations, delimitations are within a researcher's control.

Assumptions

I assumed that all respondents would be as truthful as possible when answering questions regarding their experiences as small business executives in war zones. I also assumed that small business CEOs whose businesses earned profits beyond 5 years would be the experts on the best leadership practices and business strategies in the war-torn area, even though other business experts may have their own insightful views.

Limitations

One limitation of the study was the amount of time allowed to implement the research method and design. Having more time would have enabled delving more deeply into the experiences and opinions of small business leaders in war zones. Another limitation of the study was the geographic location, which is Afghanistan. The respondents in the study may not have been representative of all war-torn regions in the Middle East.

Delimitations

The study included only CEOs with businesses in the war-torn area of Afghanistan. The CEOs must have been personally operating their businesses in those local areas for at least 1 year and have successfully operated businesses with sustainable profits or profits beyond 5 years. I did not include the perceptions of individuals who had worked with these leaders and executives. Furthermore, in the primary interview I only discussed their leadership skills pertinent to running their businesses. Subsequent conversations included their descriptions of supporting business documents they submitted.

<center>**Significance of the Study**</center>

Contribution to Business Practice

This study contributes to the literature on small businesses, with a focus on factors that can affect entrepreneurial success in war-torn economies. The findings indicated how businesses can thrive in dangerous places with constant threats of violence and what leadership behaviors are best for small businesses operating in unstable environments.

Moreover, the results of the study included new knowledge for individuals attempting to start or maintain small businesses in volatile regions such as war zones. Studies on the best leadership style and practices for small businesses have produced inconsistent findings; the findings of this study may contribute to the literature on this matter. The findings of this study will contribute to the discourse regarding leadership behaviors and characteristics specific to small business performance, important to individuals hoping to launch or cultivate a small business endeavor.

Implications for Social Change

This study has implications and contributions to social change. Small businesses are important in war zones because they help restore stability to a community (Bullough et al., 2014). Information on how small businesses in a war-torn region can improve perceptions on the general sense of peace and well-being of the region. This information is beneficial to both the small business and the community in which it operates.

<div align="center">

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

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This qualitative, exploratory, multiple case study research included the assessment of the experiences of CEOs in war-torn areas of Afghanistan to elucidate best practices for being profitable beyond 5 years. Hence, the literature review includes the examination of the current state of business and small business. The review continues with leadership styles, specifically the conceptual framework pillars of transformational and transactional approaches, with emphasis on ethical leadership. Because the theoretical underpinnings of leadership styles become evident in human behavior, applied studies were included. The literature review concludes with research on challenges that

affect small businesses and especially the importance of effective leadership for small businesses. To ensure awareness of cultural and geo-political influences, studies on businesses in war-torn areas were included. The breadth of this review, and its base in contemporary findings, are essential to inform this study.

The mechanics of locating appropriate literature included databases such as Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, and ProQuest. The search terms included *current state of business, current state of small businesses, entrepreneurship, leadership, leadership in business, leadership in small businesses, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, small business, small business in war zones,* and *war zones.* Another means of locating appropriate literature involved using keywords from salient journal articles to find more of the same. I obtained the 140 sources from academic and professional journals, books, government publications, websites, and colloquium proceedings. Among the 140 sources, 87% were peer-reviewed. Regarding the timeliness of the literature, 85% of the sources had publication dates between 2012 and 2016.

Business

Representatives for the European Commission (2013), in an analysis of global businesses and entrepreneurial efforts, acknowledged that there could be no single definition of business or entrepreneurship. The representatives explicitly noted that many different individuals and entities have attempted to define entrepreneurship but failed (Eurostat, 2012). A business is usually an entity established to carry out activities with the sole motivation of acquiring profit (Eurostat, 2012). However, other experts on entrepreneurship extended this definition to include any efforts that involve innovation

and risk taking for creating change (Eurostat, 2012). For example, some experts have

agreed that even leaders of nonprofit organizations engage in entrepreneurial activity

because they use innovation and individuals' risk-taking behaviors to create changes in

specific contexts of interest to them (Eurostat, 2012). Businesses have different sizes and

forms, such as sole proprietorships, partnerships, and corporations. For example, self-

employed individuals engage in entrepreneurial activities (Eurostat, 2012). Businesses

can be either small- or medium-sized enterprises or large global initiatives (Eurostat,

2012).

In developing and sustaining entrepreneurial activities, individuals can help create

or expand existing firms and organizations (Eurostat, 2012). As such, businesses are

important avenues for employment and are important drivers of local and international

economies (European Commission, 2013; Eurostat, 2012). Businesses drive employment

and are an important motivation for creating and cultivating skills among individuals

(European Commission, 2013). One of the measures of business performance is the

number of workers and employees contributing to the efforts of a firm or of an employer

in creating change or acquiring more profit for the products or services of the firm

(Eurostat, 2012).

Some aspects of businesses improved and others declined from 2010 to 2011

(Fairlie, 2013). Given recent circumstances in the United States economy, any assessment

of entrepreneurship should relate to the economic recession of the United States or,

presumably, any other nation in which the entrepreneur operates. For example, based on

Fairlie's (2013) study, business creation fell by 5.9% between 2010 and 2011. However,

this decline was relative to the rates of entrepreneurial activity before the recession began. The rate of entrepreneurship after a recession or even after a decline has remained 5% higher than the rate of entrepreneurship before the recession began (Fairlie, 2013).

Highlighting and analyzing the entrepreneurial activities of several segments of the American population allowed Fairlie (2013) to determine which groups were generating entrepreneurial activity and which experienced struggles to find businesses or entrepreneurial ventures on which they could embark or expand. All residents of the United States, regardless of gender, encountered decreasing rates of entrepreneurial activity (Fairlie, 2013). However, some groups have taken more initiative to start new business ventures. For example, people who immigrated to the United States were more likely to create new businesses than residents who were born there. In fact, immigrants were more than twice as likely to create new businesses as were native-born citizens of the United States (Fairlie, 2013). Members of Latino and Asian communities generated fewer businesses between 2010 and 2011 than they had done before the recession. However, these individuals have increased in entrepreneurial initiatives due to strong immigration and increasing populations since the 1980s. Among different age groups, individuals aged 20 to 34 and those aged 45 to 54 increased their rates of generating entrepreneurial activity in the United States, whereas individuals aged 35 to 44 and those aged 55 to 64 reduced their entrepreneurial efforts (Fairlie, 2013).

The measures of results for entrepreneurial activity in different industries have varied (Fairlie, 2013). For example, the construction industry experienced the greatest increase, 1.68%, in entrepreneurial activity from 2010 to 2011 (Fairlie, 2013). The

services industry lagged far behind in second place, with an increase of 0.42% (Fairlie, 2013). In terms of geographic location, residents of Arizona had the highest rates of generating entrepreneurial activity, with 520 out of every 100,000 adults creating new businesses (Fairlie, 2013). Since 2002, the states whose residents demonstrated the highest rates of entrepreneurial activity creation were Nevada, Georgia, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and California (Fairlie, 2013). In contrast, the states that experienced the biggest declines in entrepreneurship were New Mexico and Wyoming (Fairlie, 2013).

An analysis of the United States economic condition led to a conclusion that different problems plagued the national economy following the recession that began in 2008, although some key improvements also took place (Slaughter, 2013). Economic growth has occurred in some segments of the economy since the end of the recession, but growth rates have still been too small to make much improvement in the general economy (Slaughter, 2013). Furthermore, although there have been slightly more jobs available after the recession than were available during the recession, the jobs have been insufficient to satisfy the needs of the United States workforce (Slaughter, 2013). Economic and unemployment situations can improve if United States companies and United States entrepreneurs pay more attention to global markets and international businesses (Slaughter, 2013). Analysis of United States businesses and the United States economy (Slaughter, 2013) indicated that leaders of United States companies were not fully exploiting the opportunities available to them; the leaders needed to increase their engagement in international trade. For example, Slaughter (2013) noted that leaders of

United States companies have largely concentrated their worldwide operations in the United States, instead of in foreign affiliates.

Similar to the economic downturn in the United States, Europe has also experienced heightened economic hardships since 2008 (European Commission, 2013; Eurostat, 2012). More specifically, according to representatives of the European Commission (2013), since 2008, the region has experienced the worst economic crisis in half a century. As of 2013, more than 25 million individuals in the region lacked employment, which was an unprecedented number. Furthermore, leaders of small- and medium-sized businesses have been unable to rehabilitate their organizations fully in response to the difficulties imposed by the economic crisis. This failure to recover has been particularly detrimental to Europe because small- and medium-sized companies generate jobs for approximately 4 million individuals in Europe each year (European Commission, 2013).

In response to this issue, leaders in the European Union created a Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Program for 2007 to 2013 (Eurostat, 2012). According to European Commission data (Eurostat, 2012), one of the largest components of this initiative is the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program. The main goal of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program is to encourage entrepreneurship throughout Europe by providing business leaders better access to funds that may be for other or new business ventures and by allowing nontraditional funding entities to supply capital for burgeoning business ventures (Eurostat, 2012). Moreover, sponsors of this initiative aimed to encourage the leaders of different policy-making bodies across the European

Union to create changes in existing regulations that leaders of small- and medium-sized business enterprises receive greater support to start and maintain their operations (Eurostat, 2012).

The European Union also has a new program for businesses running from 2014 to 2020: the Program for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (Eurostat, 2012). Through this program, owners of small- and medium-sized enterprises will have better access to financial assistance (Eurostat, 2012). The program fosters an environment that supports creating and sustaining different entrepreneurial efforts. The program also supports a culture of entrepreneurship and of creating businesses across the European Union. The aim of the program is to foster the sustainable competitiveness of different entrepreneurial initiatives in the European Union. Through the program, the owners of small- and medium-sized businesses can operate and expand outside their home countries (Eurostat, 2012).

For small- and medium-sized businesses affected by this program throughout the European Union, the expected results are threefold (Eurostat, 2012). First, in keeping with the goals of the initiative, the program may enable owners of these businesses to acquire better access to meet their financial needs. Second, by the end of the program, entrepreneurship in even small- and medium-sized business ventures will become a more important and more significant contributor to the national and international economies. The intent for the initiative is to make these businesses even more prominent in the European Union and to emphasize the important contributions of self-employment (Eurostat, 2012). The European Commission leadership envisions specific goals for

individual countries within the European Union. Leaders of individual countries can become more competitive after the program has run its course (Eurostat, 2012). Moreover, individual countries may have higher employment rates and larger numbers of entrepreneurs among their citizens after the program than before or during the program (Eurostat, 2012).

Small Businesses

Most of the entrepreneurial activities in the world originate from small businesses. Since the mid-1990s, small businesses have been a source of employment and economic strength in developing countries (Kennickell et al., 2015). To generate more small businesses, governments must foster a culture of entrepreneurship in their countries (Kennickell et al., 2015).

In general, the United States government has defined small- and medium-sized businesses as having less than 500 employees (Slaughter, 2013). Defining the size of small and medium businesses in the United States is of particular interest to lawmakers (Diger, 2014). Owners of small businesses are eligible to receive assistance from government agencies, such as the United States Small Business Administration (Diger, 2014). This rule comes from the Small Business Act of 1953, which required that the size of a business enterprise be measurable in one of two ways. First, the government can measure the size of a business by using industry-specific size standards. Second, the government can measure the size of a business by using the maximum tangible net worth and average net income of the business after deducting federal taxes (Diger, 2014).

Entrepreneurs have perceived the United States as fertile ground for small businesses (Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2013). The reputation of the United States government, low taxes, limited government interventions in businesses, and a spirit of entrepreneurship throughout the country all encourage individuals to start more small businesses in the United States than anywhere else in the world (Kim et al., 2013). Politicians throughout the United States have consistently stated that small businesses are the driving forces behind national prosperity and growth. However, the United States is still home to one of the smallest numbers of small businesses in the world. Among rich democracies, the United States had the second smallest number of self-employed individuals as of 2013 (Kim et al., 2013). Some of the challenges that affect small businesses follow.

Leadership Styles

The aspects of an individual's ability to gather people and to make them obey or at least comply with his or her goals are the focus of most traditional forms of leadership (Prosser, 2014). However, leadership has inherent political and contextual aspects that one cannot separate from any working definition of leadership (Prosser, 2014). Leadership is not simply about using traits and behaviors to achieve certain goals. It is also about using individuals and material, economic, and political resources to achieve a certain goal. Leadership depends on a particular context, institution, history, and culture. Moreover, leadership involves creating alliances and coalitions in the effective pursuit of common goals (Prosser, 2014). Leadership involves motivating and mobilizing the people and accumulating resources toward a specific goal through authority, legitimacy,

and power. Effective leaders can build formal and informal coalitions of interests, elites, and organizations (Prosser, 2014).

Over the years, there have been different trends regarding how people defined and categorized different forms of expressing leadership. Furthermore, there have been great discourses regarding which leadership styles are important to a given time and place. A meta-analysis of journal articles and studies published between 1998 and 2011 revealed which leadership styles have been significant in academic and practical discourse and which leadership styles researchers mentioned most frequently and were most prominent in the literature (Iqbal, Inayat, Ijaz, & Zahid, 2012). The findings indicated researchers discussed transformational and transactional leadership styles most frequently and thus they were likely the most significant leadership styles for contemporary academics and scholars of management and leadership (Iqbal et al., 2012).

Although an abundance of research studies have indicated the important effects of leadership behaviors that influence group as well as organizational behavior, literature on how senior leaders can ensure group and organizational members carry out their decisions has been lacking (Ryan & Tipu, 2013). Most organizations have more than one leader, which indicates that a leader cannot be effective when leading in isolation. After assessing how the consistency of leadership effectiveness across different levels of hierarchy affects the manner in which employees of a large health care system implement a strategic initiative, Ryan and Tipu (2013) revealed that taking into account leaders' effectiveness across different levels is necessary for effective performance improvement to take place.

One investigation into the relationship between several kinds of leadership involved surveying 279 employees of various government organizations (De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, & Oostenveld, 2010). The study involved searching for six different communication styles among the employees, and the findings indicated that charismatic leadership has five of the six communication styles. Given its high number of communication styles, it is an advantage to have charisma (De Vries et al., 2010).

Transformational leadership. Transformational leaders have charisma and a vision to inspire others (Shanker & Sayeed, 2012). Transformational leaders are inspirational. They evoke a sense of unity and shared vision among their employees and subordinates (García-Morales, Jiménez-Barrionuevo, & Gutiérrez-Gutiérrez, 2012). Based on findings of various meta-analyses of leadership styles and leadership behaviors, transformational leaders can generate the most positive results and effects among followers compared to other leadership styles (Paracha, Qamar, Mirza, Hassan, & Waqas, 2012; Muterera, 2012). Transformational leadership has five facets (Breevaart et al., 2014). The first facet is the practice of idealized influence. This facet of transformational leadership relates to a leader's ability to be a role model, refers to how moral and ethical a leader is in the eyes of his or her followers, and indicates that this perceived morality serves as encouragement for followers to be moral and ethical. The second facet is behavioral idealized influence. Similar to the first facet of transformational leadership, this facet also relates to the extent of a leader's morality and ethical behavior. However, scholars do not base this facet on the perceptions attributed to the leader by his or her followers; they base it on his or her actions and behaviors.

The third facet is inspirational motivation. This trait of transformational leaders refers to their ability to encourage followers and to maintain optimism and enthusiasm in the workplace. The fourth facet is intellectual stimulation (Breevaart et al., 2014).This characteristic of a transformational leader refers to the leader's ability to draw out new ways of thinking from followers. Transformational leaders are usually quite capable of inspiring creativity, critical thinking, and open-mindedness among their followers (Shanker & Sayeed, 2012). The last facet is individual consideration. One of the defining characteristics of a transformational leader is devotion to the development of followers. Because of this sincere desire to see followers grow and develop, transformational leaders value two-way communication and understanding of the individual and the contextual needs of their followers (Lai, 2011).

Two of the most popular leadership styles mentioned by researchers are transformational and transactional leadership styles (Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, & Sassenberg, 2014). Transformational leaders seek to influence their followers' interests in the workplace, accept change as being a part of life, and motivate their followers to pursue the purpose and mission of the organization above their own egocentricities (Hamstra et al., 2014). Transformational leaders and followers often share the same interests. The relationship between transformational leaders and their followers has four distinct characteristics, which are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Hamstra et al., 2014).

To assess the mediating effects of cognitive and affective trust on transformative leaders related to their behavior relative to their followers' perceptions and performance,

one study involved gathering 318 supervisor–subordinate dyads serving in a manufacturing organization located in mainland China (Zhu, Newman, Miao, & Hooke, 2013). The study involved generating structural equation modeling of their results, which showed that affective trust could facilitate the relationship between transformative leaders and their followers. Affective trust can alter the affective organizational commitment of workers as well as their organizational citizenship behaviors. Ultimately, how employees perform relates to their affective trust of the transformational leaders. However, cognitive trust can only affect the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance. Cognitive trust does not affect followers' affective organizational commitment or organizational citizenship.

A reason for the shortage of research on servant leadership is that the notion of servant as leader can result in the image of a weak leader (Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2014). Servant leaders emphasize developing their followers' personal potential and enabling their personal growth and self-interests. Leadership is about relationships, and the principles of servant leadership are the inherent characteristics for leaders to lead by the heart with humility and honesty. Leaders who can welcome ideas and nurture relationships should lead servant-led organizations.

The performance and success of an organization depend on the leadership style displayed by the leader of the organization (Ruggieri & Abbate, 2013). Leaders of an organization must anticipate and adapt to change by using the leadership style that fits the current situation. For an organization to grow and be successful in a changing environment, leaders must articulate vision, goals, and objectives and make sound

business decisions that will lead the organization to success. Leaders must encourage, reward, motivate, and discipline, mostly through their leadership style, and encourage the development of team relationships inside and outside the group (Ruggieri & Abbate, 2013). Transformational leaders motivate followers to work for inspiring goals that extend beyond their immediate self-interests. An increasing number of companies are moving away from transactional toward transformational leadership styles.

Transformational leadership and servant leadership in organizational settings have progressed in terms of both theory development and empirical research studies (van Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, de Windt, & Alkema, 2014). Study findings indicated transformational leaders are one of the most important factors in motivating others to meet organizational goals (van Dierendonck et al., 2014). Organizations with a culture that promotes an authoritarian hierarchy hinder servant leadership and could be a major cause of organizational decline and failure (van Dierendonck et al., 2014).

The impact of performance management, salary, and remuneration on employee organizational commitment could moderate the effectiveness of transformational leaders (Lin, Lin, & Lin, 2012). Transformational leadership is a popular concept because it overcomes every shortcoming that a hero of yesteryear may have possessed, and even though transformational leaders have flaws, they seem to be better leaders (Bojeun, 2013). Transformational leaders typically seem to tempt their followers with the carrot-and-stick approach, whereby they can control their followers with a positive approach (Bojeun, 2013). Various researchers identified transformational leadership as superior to autocratic or unilateral forms of leadership (Bojeun, 2013).

Transformational leaders are more able to motivate their followers than other leaders because they inspire and earn the admiration, trust, respect, and loyalty of their subordinates (Sadeghi & Lope Pihie, 2012). Transformational leaders can provide a competitive advantage to organizations because they inspire their followers to rally behind them for a collective cause and to work harder, which leads to improved output and performance of the organization as a whole (Moynihan, Pandey, & Wright, 2012). Further, transformational leaders infuse passion and energy into all activities and are able to inspire others with their vision and a view of the future that inspires followers. Transformational leaders must be able to create trust in their followers and inspire them to follow (Moynihan et al., 2012). Such leaders seek to transform and eventually become personally responsible for saving the organization. Transformational leaders are able to recognize as well as exploit a certain need in their followers, analyze the motives of the followers, and engage the total personalities of their followers.

Transformational leaders are able to create and maintain an environment in which employees believe they are able to accept and execute all their duties and responsibilities with ease and confidence (Moynihan et al., 2012). In addition, these leaders are able to communicate what they want from their employees, teach them the vision of the company, and ask for employees' input about how to turn the vision into reality. Furthermore, transformational leaders are able to inspire their followers with a vision, which is the essence of a transformational leader (Moynihan et al., 2012). Visions may be either positive or negative, and when the vision is positive, then it is an idealized design that in turn has an effect on the environment.

Transformational leadership could determine team performance in banking operations (Lee, Cheng, Yeung, & Lai, 2011). The quality service performance of banking teams depends on how leaders lead these teams. Participants of Lee et al.'s (2011) research study included 192 bankers for 15 retail banks located in Macau, China. From this sample, Lee et al. examined whether the five dimensions of transformational leadership could lead to higher levels of team cohesion, job satisfaction, and competence. Also assessed was how this relationship between transformational leadership and team performance can affect the service quality dimensions of the team or the extent of team reliability and responsiveness (Lee et al., 2011). Transformational leadership could lead to higher quality service teams in banks (Lee et al., 2011).

Another study involved assessing whether transformational leaders can be effective if they work in the health care industry, which is a complicated and complex environment (Al-Sawai, 2013; Doody & Doody, 2012; Pickerell, 2014). The health care industry needs leaders who can adapt to changes quickly and easily. Transformational leaders can adapt quickly to changes and are open to changing. Transformational leaders are effective in the health care industry and are therefore valuable to the operations of the industry.

Several researchers have claimed that transformational leaders are effective because of how they positively influence the performance, attitudes, and well-being of their followers on an individual basis (Hill, Kang, Seo, & Taylor, 2012; Nielsen & Daniels, 2012). However, few researchers have proposed how transformational leaders could influence their followers at the group level. Literature on how transformational

leadership would fare as a group phenomenon is lacking. The findings from a study that included surveys completed by 425 followers and 56 leaders indicated that transformational leaders could shape their followers' perceptions at the group level with regard to the working conditions of the individuals (Nielsen & Daniels, 2012). Those perceptions affected the well-being of individuals as a group and performance in the organizations. Transformational leaders can also be effective and capable of influencing followers at the group level (Nielsen & Daniels, 2012).

In addition, transformational leaders are more effective in encouraging employees' affective commitment to change by shaping their perception of change benefits and of expectations fulfillment and by building trust in them (Hill et al., 2012). Transformational leaders can also be influential on the attitude of top management personnel when it comes to setting goals and motivating the personnel to increase their commitment to the change, which can result in their active involvement, support, and management of the change. The high levels of sensitivity and responsiveness of transformational leaders can motivate employees toward a positive change as well (Hill et al., 2012). Weak transformational leadership can lead to employees expressing cynicism toward change (Hill et al., 2012).

Transactional leadership. Compared to transformational leadership, transactional leadership is a less personal approach to managing followers or employees. This type of leadership often involves a give-and-take relationship between leader and follower (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Transactional leaders interact with followers after the followers have produced the necessary output. If the follower has done a suitable job,

the leader may give a reward. A poor showing may merit a form of punishment or reprimand. Two dimensions of transactional leadership are contingent reward and management by exception (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Contingent reward is a facet of transactional leadership that refers to the strength of the exchange system set up between the leader and the follower. Leaders who subscribe to a transactional style often set rigid rules regarding when employees will receive rewards or encouragements. Contingent reward leadership involves an active and positive exchange between leaders and followers. Followers will receive a reward if they achieve agreed-upon goals (Brown & May, 2012). In contrast, some leaders can transact actively or passively with followers by only acting when problems arise (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Management by exception is the facet of transactional leadership that refers to leaders' ability to respond to mistakes or problems that arise among their followers. Transactional leaders' responses may be either active management or passive management. The former occurs when leaders act to prevent a problem from arising or from worsening, and the latter occurs when leaders act to resolve an already serious error among their followers (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013).

The notion of transactional leadership indicates that leadership involves a wide range of tacit negotiations and trade-offs (Walumbwa & Wernsing, 2012). Transactional leadership represents the fulfillment of contractual obligations; effectively managed over time, these contractual obligations create trust and establish a stable relationship between leaders and followers (Walumbwa & Wernsing, 2012). The negotiations and trade-offs relate to the values inherent in any act. Most leaders and managers have fundamentally

different responsibilities in their organizations (Boateng, 2012). Leaders should have the

organizational vision and managers should take care of daily needs in the company.

Transformational leaders often act as managers who ensure the employees in the

organization work effectively every day (Boateng, 2012). Ineffective leaders can cause

stress (Bass & Riggio, 2005). In particular, self-aggrandizing leaders can cause increased

stress among their followers when they pressure their followers to carry out hasty actions

(Bass & Riggio, 2005, p. 61). In many cases, poor management can result in harm to

employee morale and productivity, and, at some point, everyone ceases being an attribute

and becomes a liability; this generalization would appear to be the case with transactional

leaders who manage by exception. Transactional leaders who manage by exception

usually engage in using reactive corrective actions and threats (Odumeru & Ogbonna,

2013; Sadeghi & Lope Pihie, 2012). As such, they increase the stress of their followers

and undermine followers' self-esteem.

      Many ineffective transactional leaders are domineering and even tyrannical in

their leadership styles, which contributes to worker dissatisfaction, turnover, absenteeism,

and employee sabotage (Bass & Riggio, 2005). Abrasive leaders abuse their power to

coerce their followers and therefore cause stress (Bass & Riggio, 2005). For many

subordinates, immediate supervisors cause them the most stress in the workplace (Bass &

Riggio, 2005, p. 62).

      Transactional leaders tend to use constructive and corrective connections,

depending on contingent rewards and management by exception (Bono, Hooper, & Yoon,

2012). Researchers have associated several terms with transactional leadership. The first

is contingent reward, in which a leader seeks performance and agreement from followers through negotiated exchange, often using positive reinforcement to encourage positive outcomes (Piccolo et al., 2012). Contingent reward refers to leading through constructive transactions and making the necessary behaviors and associated rewards clear to employees. Accomplishments lead to corresponding rewards. Transactional leaders actively monitor employees' progress and offer continuous and supportive feedback (Piccolo et al., 2012). The second is management by exception (active and passive). Management by exception refers to leading by taking corrective actions. In active management by exception, leaders pay close attention to subordinate tasks and make the corrective actions required to attain planned outcomes. Passive leaders do not closely monitor followers' progress but instead waits for a problem in the planned outcome before taking corrective measures (Piccolo et al., 2012).

Passive transactional leaders who practice management by exception set standards but only step in when problems arise. When employees do something wrong, passive transactional leaders draw attention to these activities. Leaders enforce the established rules and do not entertain challenges to the status quo. Employees can expect to hear from passive transactional leaders when they commit an error (Piccolo et al., 2012).

Transactional leadership skills are highly effective in short-term projects and for receiving immediate responses from subordinates, but failing to deliver long-term change in behavior can often lead to a stimulus-driven management style (Breevaart et al., 2014). Helping managers to transform from transactional leadership style to transformational leadership style is another reason to involve leaders in defining the vision of becoming a

more client-driven organization (Breevaart et al., 2014). Transactional leaders who resist change should be aware that transactional leadership styles will take them only so far in their careers (Breevaart et al., 2014).

For employees to become and remain focused on being client driven, a series of change management initiatives, as defined in this analysis, need to become part of the culture of the organization (Breevaart et al., 2014). Any successful change management strategy must involve embedding the changed values and perspectives on client centrism deep within the company to sustain long-term change. Change is also dependent on how a leader defines the opportunities for managers to learn through an experience and not just on extrinsic or intrinsic rewards (Breevaart et al., 2014).

The findings from assessing the roles and effectiveness of transactional leaders and authentic leaders showed that, compared to transactional leaders, authentic leaders are confident, resilient, and optimistic in the decision-making processes (Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2014). Transformational leaders are less effective than authentic leaders because authentic leaders have the right mix of emotion and firmness, and they will listen to others. However, authentic leaders will not compromise their beliefs and position. Nevertheless, authentic leaders, compared to transactional leaders, are more open and transparent, and they discover ways to engage their followers (Peterson, Walumbwa, Avolio, & Hannah, 2012; Rego, Vitória, Magalhães, Ribeiro, & Cunha, 2013).

Individuals' willingness to stay and commit to an organization results from the stability of the workplace and the level of organizational effectiveness (Hamstra et al., 2014). Based on the survey, Hamstra et al. (2014) found that transactional leaders could

reduce the turnover intentions of employees among highly prevention-focused followers. Promotion-focused individuals were less likely to stay and commit to an organization under the tutelage of transactional leaders. Tailoring leadership to employees' self-regulatory preferences might be the key to workforce stability and organizational effectiveness (Hamstra et al., 2014).

Ethical leadership. Being ethical in economic downturns may be difficult for leaders (Schröder-Bäck, Stjernberg, & Borg, 2013). During negative economic conditions, leaders feel pressure to earn the trust of their stakeholders and therefore can forget to be ethical. The economic decline of the United States could have undermined trust in leadership, and the increase in cases of misconduct among employees at all levels was alarming in the poor economic climate (Schröder-Bäck et al., 2013). The concept of ethical leadership should include bias and vagueness because the perception is a Western construct (Eisenbess, 2012). Moreover, there are many critical issues linked to ethical leadership. Four core ethical orientations are humane orientation, justice orientation, responsibility and sustainability orientation, and moderation orientation (Eisenbess, 2012). Those factors define ethical leaders.

The organizational climate with regard to ethics is one of skepticism (Marques, 2013). With regard to a crisis of trust, the majority of people in organizations doubt if ethical leadership is possible. Therefore, lack of trust is the biggest problem in the majority of organizations (Marques, 2013). The characteristics of successful leaders include that they should observe ethical principles and should be honest (Marques, 2013). The majority of leaders are trustworthy people who do not lie or deceive. These leaders

garner their followers' trust and do not destroy that trust deliberately by misleading them.

Such leaders have a long-term vision that they share with their followers (Marques,

2013). If these leaders are competent, then they can transform the vision into reality.

These leaders communicate with their followers regarding their vision, strategies, and

plans and can convince their followers to adopt the same (Marques, 2013).

Ethical decision-making should be a critical characteristic for all leaders. An

ethical leader is a moral individual (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2012). One

study involved assessing whether ethical leadership can lead to positive economic

performance within a firm (Chun, Shin, Choi, & Kim, 2013). Economically oriented

leaders might also be more economically effective (Chun et al., 2013).

Leadership Styles and Behaviors in Businesses

Many scholars have come to the realization that leadership is situational; hence,

there are many realistic settings, such as the environment, employees, and resources that

determine the characteristics needed in a leader, as well as his or her business approach

(Kaifi, Noor, Nguyen, Aslami, & Khanfar, 2014; Webb, Darling, & Alvey, 2014).

Because leadership is situational, it is important to understand the different types of

scenarios that a leader can face and then use those scenarios to understand various

leadership techniques and approaches. Much of the research conducted since the 1980s

has included the idea of leadership being situational. Several researchers have focused on

identifying the leadership approach within different corporations, instead of determining

what the approach should be. This misdirection yielded additional varieties of the

leadership styles and methodologies adapted, including autocratic, democratic,

partnership, and group decision-making (Bhatti, Maitlo, Shaikh, Hashmi, & Shaikh, 2012).

The choice of leadership style or approach depends upon many external factors (Zaccaro, 2012). One of the most important factors is the capability and motivation of the followers. The association between follower and follower, as well as between follower and leader, can affect the choice in leadership style. The nature and extent of a project, as well as its significance, can also affect the leadership style exhibited.

One study included insights into the notions of previous leadership styles and approaches (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012). The overall mock-up consisted of six leadership styles that leaders could use, depending on the situations that they encountered, even though Flamholtz and Randle (2012) emphasized the importance of persisting with one style. The design created by Flamholtz and Randle included the new laissez-faire or armchair methodology that gave leaders the option to analyze the situation and the followers, and then, depending on the leaders' conclusions, they might let the followers self-manage the situation and be accountable for its success or failure.

The leader effectiveness and adaptability profile is a useful model for determining leaders' vital situational approaches (Blanchard & Hersey, 2013). Using this model, Blanchard and Hersey (2013) highlighted four basic options from which leaders could choose in different situations based on the development or willingness of their employees. The options are direction, authenticating and advertising, contribution, and allotment. Direction refers to a leader's capability to determine the approaches necessary to attain or complete a project. Authenticating and advertising refer to a leader's ability to

explain the reason for choosing an approach. Contribution refers to a leader's ability to make the task an encompassing one by increasing the employees' involvement in decision-making, and allotment refers to the leader's ability to trust the employees and encourage them to complete an assignment or attain success in a project (Blanchard & Hersey, 2013).

One investigation involved the effects of transformational and transactional styles of leadership and the behaviors attributed to each, specifically on small-scale business enterprises (Obiwuru et al., 2011). A survey method was appropriate for measuring the effect of the two leadership styles on the performance of small-scale businesses, and the results were noteworthy (Obiwuru et al., 2011). The findings indicated that transactional leadership could lead to a positive effect on the performance of a business enterprise (Obiwuru et al., 2011). Transformational leadership had no significant effects on the performance of a business. A possible explanation for the difference was that CEOs of small businesses usually employ individuals who do not have skills in specific tasks (Obiwuru et al., 2011). Furthermore, professionalism and experiences from working with other organizations do not usually drive these employees. Hence, these kinds of employees need a more transactional leader who gives contingent recognition and applies reward systems, instead of a leader who inspires them through his or her vision and charisma (Obiwuru et al., 2011). As companies grow, transformational leaders who can motivate through inspiration and charisma are increasingly necessary (Obiwuru et al., 2011). Hence, smaller companies should have leaders who use a transactional style of governance, but these companies must also have mechanisms in place to transition into

transformational leadership when they grow and acquire more personnel (Obiwuru et al., 2011).

The results from Obiwuru et al.'s (2011) study were somewhat similar to Abdullah et al.'s (2012) results regarding the influence of transformational leadership on product innovation within small businesses. To understand the multidimensional relationship between transformational leadership and product innovation, Abdullah et al. conducted a cross-sectional survey among 32 participating small businesses. Based on Abdullah et al.'s findings, transformational leadership in itself did not have any significant effects on product innovation among smaller businesses. However, specific facets and behaviors associated with transformational leadership had some tangible effects on the innovation of products among the companies whose leaders participated in the survey. For example, leaders who showed individualized consideration contributed to the incremental development of innovation among the products of a given small business (Abdullah et al., 2012). Similarly, intellectual stimulation, a behavior often exhibited by transformational leaders, could predict if a small business could improve incrementally in terms of product innovation (Abdullah et al., 2012).

Challenges That Affect Small Businesses

A search of the literature on small businesses revealed that their leaders face various concerns from business development to business maintenance costs. The different problems of small business CEOs range from minimal to severe, and the top business problem is the cost of health insurance (Carsrud & Cucculelli, 2014; Gamble, Lorenz, Turnipseed, & Weaver, 2013; Sampaio, Thomas, & Font, 2012). Following this problem

is uncertainty over economic conditions, price of fuel oil and gas, uncertainty over

government action, unreasonable government regulations, high taxes, and tax rules. The

cost of health insurance is a big problem in small businesses (Wade, 2012), and this

concern manifests in 41 out of 50 categories of small businesses. Researchers have shown

that the cost of health insurance has been increasing, and this expense has not allowed

business leaders to cope with inflation and the associated demands for wage hikes (Wade,

2012). From 2002 to 2012, the cost of health insurance increased by 103%, which put

even greater pressure on employers in general and on small businesses in particular to

meet the cost of providing health care for their employees (Magnuson, 2012).

The global recession has had enduring effects on the struggles of small businesses

(Kennickell et al., 2015). Specifically, small business CEOs worry about the decreased

values of homes and real estate following the recession (Kennickell et al., 2015). This

problem has an impact on small business CEOs because many of them have used the

mortgages on their homes to fund their businesses (Kennickell et al., 2015). With the

lowered values of their homes, it has become more difficult for small business CEOs to

find the financial assistance to fund their businesses or to recover from losses sustained

by their businesses because of the recession (Kennickell et al., 2015). Given these

contexts, borrowing credit for businesses has decreased since the recession, and it is in

the best interest of small business CEOs to have greater access to credit and to funds

through banks.

Another problem is specific to the leaders of small businesses that cater to a

global market. Small businesses that cater to foreign clients face large opportunities and

challenges (Kiss, Danis, & Cavusgil, 2012). The global market has expanded because of economic reforms in developing countries (Kiss et al., 2012). This expansion means that more people all over the world have greater capacity to purchase products and services. This increased buying power is a great opportunity for small businesses in the United States (Kiss et al., 2012). Technology has also made it possible for individuals all over the world to go online and purchase products from other countries that perhaps have lower production costs and thus cheaper product prices.

Although this is already a reality for small business CEOs who wish to tap into global markets, Kiss et al. (2012) discussed other concerns of small business CEOs. For instance, according to various small business CEOs, one of the greatest contributors to their reluctance to engage in the global market is receiving payment and shipping their products. Small business CEOs have expressed uncertainty regarding whether they will be able to deliver their products and services properly. Moreover, small business CEOs are apprehensive about the high costs of entering global competitions and about having to compete with larger and more established global companies and brands (Kiss et al., 2012).

The basis of small business CEOs' concerns is essentially a lack of information, because most of these concerns have readily available solutions (Kiss et al., 2012). Banks all over the world have services to solve the problem of payment. For example, one of the safest and surest ways to receive payments from global clients is through bank wires (Kiss et al., 2012). Online programs cover global shipments with insurance and increase

protection and consistency of insurance for small businesses shipping products around the world.

In other countries, despite the enthusiastic support of the local government and numerous programs to foster a culture of entrepreneurship, small businesses have still not been sustainable enterprises (Kennickell et al., 2015). In South Africa, for example, small businesses fail despite the support of their public leaders because of poor business management, especially in the early stages of developing business endeavors. To minimize the costs of running businesses, owners limit hiring new employees and conduct most of the business processes within their company themselves, despite lacking the necessary skills to perform all the tasks successfully (Kennickell et al., 2015). Hence, from this one act stem various problems such as poor record-keeping, stunted creation, poor delivery of services, lack of labor, and mismanaged funds and resources (Kennickell et al., 2015).

An examination of the effects of innovation on small entrepreneurial endeavors revealed innovation is an important aspect of any size business (Abdullah et al., 2012). Innovation is an indicator of positive organizational performance, efficient business processes, and increased productivity for organizations as a whole (Abdullah et al., 2012). However, innovation is of particular importance to smaller businesses because small business CEOs face greater difficulty remaining afloat and improving their sustainability. Failing to innovate the products, services, and processes small businesses provide will negatively affect the attractiveness of their services and products (Abdullah et al., 2012).

A study conducted to assess the structure and delivery of entrepreneurial activities and the effects of the program on participants' learning experiences involved evaluating whether there were transferable lessons that could be useful for assisting the development of small firms in general (Rae, Price, Bosworth, & Parkinson, 2012). New insights into the debate emerged, and the resulting proposal was that a consistent need and demand exists for small business CEOs to learn about owner-manager development (Rae et al., 2012). Leaders of small businesses have their own unique approaches and skill sets with regard to designing, marketing, and delivering effective programs (Rae et al., 2012).

A study carried out to analyze the form of leadership that should be in place in a small business as it matures involved looking at the role of distributive leadership for small businesses (Lumby, 2013). Distributive leadership is a challenge for entrepreneurs regarding whether it will enable a broader distributed process of leading or will lead to leadership practices such as being entrepreneurial, independent, responsive, and driven (Lumby, 2013). This dilemma is resolvable by contextualizing distributed leadership (Lumby, 2013). Interventions should be in context.

Small business CEOs have many things to consider. For instance, they must decide whether to do the business taxes personally or whether to hire someone else to do them (Mironov, 2013). There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. In addition, having an accountant whom the owner can trust to provide good advice is a key to ensuring small business success. Small business CEOs must learn how to do finances but can benefit from someone who specializes in tax processing (Mironov, 2013). Another challenge that plagues small businesses is the economy (Wade, 2012). A survey

of small business CEOs revealed that small business CEOs did not expect any major

improvement in the economy in the immediate future (Wade, 2012). Small business

CEOs are particularly susceptible to changes in the economy, either positive or negative.

Their smaller revenues and profit margins create instability in times of economic turmoil

(Wade, 2012).

Small business CEOs may also encounter difficulties meeting government

regulations (Chittenden & Ambler, 2014). Federal health legislation signed into law in

March 2010 has had a major impact on small businesses (Chittenden & Ambler, 2014). A

new requirement that began in 2014 was that small business CEOs with more than 50

employees must offer health insurance to their workers. Those who do not have 50 or

more employees do not have to offer the coverage, but they will experience an annual fee

of up to $2,000 per full-time worker if any of the employees choose to take advantage of

government-subsidized plans (Chittenden & Ambler, 2014). This annual fee strains the

budgets of small companies. For businesses that are large enough to offer health care

coverage, the impact is not as great. The new health care reform package will have a

negative impact on small businesses if owners are not able to afford health insurance on

their own.

Owners of small businesses may face several challenges that can cost their

success. The cost and availability of health insurance is a key challenge because small

businesses often do not have the budget to offer benefits that make it easy to attract and

retain employees (Moutray & Swift, 2013). Small businesses are also at a disadvantage

with regard to globalization. Reducing trade barriers makes it easier for foreign

competitors' products to enter the United States market, which can make United States products seem less competitive. Small businesses can pump similar amounts of money into local economies as large businesses can (Moutray & Swift, 2013). Small businesses are often easier to nurture because they do not require the enormous changes in infrastructure that big corporations do.

One of the strengths of the current economic climate is the export sector. Advances in communication and transportation have provided new opportunities. However, in the past, many small business CEOs were not proactive in finding foreign customers (Moutray & Swift, 2013). Not looking for customers beyond United States borders meant lost opportunities and meant the leaders of these businesses had to rely on a shrinking United States economy. The United States economy has forced many small business CEOs to seek opportunities overseas that they would not have pursued had the economy in the United States been strong.

The demographics of small business CEOs have changed over time. In the era following the 2008 recession, women and minorities are starting more small businesses than in the past. One of the driving forces behind the movement has been an influx of immigrants into the United States. Many of these people work in high-technology entrepreneurship. The leaders of new businesses who employ immigrants and embrace the diversity that they offer can experience more benefits than the leaders of established businesses who do not hire new immigrants (Moutray & Swift, 2013).

Education and training are the most important linkages between entrepreneurs and human capital. Small business CEOs tend to devote significant resources to training their

workforce with the goal of increasing productivity and reducing labor turnover (Moutray & Swift, 2013). Education is a way to improve employee retention, to develop human talent, and to preserve employee morale (Moutray & Swift, 2013). Small business leaders face many of the same challenges as their counterparts in large corporations, but often do not have the resources to address these issues in the same way. Factors such as obtaining health insurance and providing training opportunities can have a significant impact on the ability of the leaders of small businesses to attract and retain employees. Small business CEOs face many challenges in areas that would not have an impact on larger businesses and must continually seek new and innovative ways to meet these challenges to stay solvent and to remain competitive. The issues discussed in this section are only few of the challenges that small business CEOs face.

No business survives without marketing. Several researchers have assessed the issues that small business CEOs face about marketing and advertising endeavors. Social media involve a unique set of challenges and opportunities for small business CEOs (Mukhopadhyay & Oxborrow, 2012). CEOs in small communities already know how to advertise their businesses by word of mouth. Social media are similar to that type of advertising. Making the leap to advertising using social media is similar to what small business CEOs have been doing all along.

Smaller companies can have small budgets (Mukhopadhyay & Oxborrow, 2012). Strategies that would work for large companies often would not work for smaller businesses. The primary challenge is that leaders of small businesses do not have access to the same levels of funding to support big marketing endeavors. In addition, one of the

most important strategies for small businesses is to find a market niche (Bressler, 2012).

Small businesses with limited resources can efficiently serve small niche markets, often

more efficiently than larger corporations can. To satisfy a small niche market efficiently,

business owners must become experts in their chosen field. Business owners cannot be

good at everything and so must carefully choose the products or services provided by

their business. Small companies have several advantages over larger corporations

(Bressler, 2012). The first of these advantages is that small business CEOs have the

ability to respond quickly to their customers' needs, and they have considerably more

flexibility and the ability to offer personalized service. Making a first impression is

important, regardless of whether an individual is at work or out in public. Small business

owners must listen to their customers, be innovative, and work intelligently. Being able to

balance work and play is as important as work (Bressler, 2012). To have the energy to put

into the business, entrepreneurs must be able to find a balance. Finding the balance

between work life and personal life is often the most difficult part of being an

entrepreneur.

Several pitfalls can ruin business plans. Even experienced small business CEOs

can face unexpected pitfalls (Pleshette, n.d.). One of the most common pitfalls is not

meeting sales goals. If small business CEOs cannot meet sales goals, then they will not

be able to meet their obligations and overhead. Small business CEOs often do more than

sell. They may have a product or service that they wish to offer, but they never consider

themselves a salesperson. All small business owners must also be salespeople and, if

small business owners do not know selling techniques, then they should learn them

(Pleshette, n.d.). Cutting prices is a marketing strategy that company leaders sometimes use when their businesses are not achieving sales goals. This strategy can help to attract customers, cover costs, and buy time until the business rebounds. However, cutting prices has a downside (Pleshette, n.d.). Cutting prices can help to increase sales to get through tough times, but it is difficult to increase prices back to the original level. Low pricing may make customers place the company into the cheap category, which can affect the ability to retain a high-end market.

The third suggestion that Pleshette (n.d.) made was to make certain to represent the business and its products well to customers. This point seems to relate back to selling, but many businesses fail because their products are not attractive enough. Customers must know that the products on offer are high quality and represent a good value for the price. Good value does not necessarily mean cheaper. Business owners who charge higher prices must match the higher price with a higher quality that customers expect for the price. Higher prices are effective as a selling point, as long as the product quality matches the price. This concept further supports the cliché but true statement that cheaper prices do not always lead to selling more products and offering bargain prices can lead to business failure (Pleshette, n.d.).

Small business CEOs' marketing plans often fail because of the inability of owners to market their businesses the right way. If a marketing plan is not effective, then it is a waste of time and resources. To control costs, many business owners develop their own marketing campaigns. These campaigns often begin with the best of intentions, but they can fail because they do not deliver the right message, achieve proper market

saturation, or use an improper niche marketing technique (Pleshette, n.d.). To be successful, business owners must deliver a message that is believable and relevant. They must also offer their products at prices that are suitable for their quality and desired market positioning (Pleshette, n.d.).

Many business owners do not consider pricing to be a part of the marketing strategy, but pricing can be an important part of the marketing mix, just as much as brand image, signage, and other strategies can. Buyers are irrational in terms of what they will pay for products, but buyers are predictably irrational (Jensen, 2013). Many entrepreneurs often begin with the idea that lower prices are always better, and they intend to beat the competition by offering lower prices. Offering a discount can be the worst decision that a company owner can make. To understand the three most common pricing techniques, one must understand what customers prefer (Jensen, 2013).

Pricing is an art and a science (Jensen, 2013). Business owners must balance the cash structure and profitability of a business with customer perceptions of value and competitor tactics. Many people think that customers will automatically go for a lower price, but that is often not the case. Business owners who look at the market from a strictly rational perspective will set prices that make sense to them, but these prices will not always make sense to customers. The tactics used to set the right pricing strategy are anchors, bumps, and charms (Jensen, 2013). Anchor prices are the prices that customers have in their minds for a certain product. Owners of major corporations that introduce a product often set the anchor price for that product. Any company owner who deviates

from the price by a certain percentage often loses sales, even if he or she offers the product for a lower price.

Among the top concerns of small business CEOs are economic uncertainty, keeping up with technology, and having access to adequate capital (Bressler, 2012). The majority of small business CEOs accepts Internet use as a key growth strategy, which indicates their awareness that the Internet is a key driver for the growth of small businesses. A majority of small business CEOs surveyed reported using the Internet primarily for e-mail and research (Bressler, 2012). Only 3% of small business CEOs surveyed reported they considered e-commerce as an integral part of doing business. A majority of business owners in the study indicated that they did not conduct e-commerce as part of their business strategy. One of the key pitfalls noted by Bressler (2012) was that business owners tend to use credit cards as a source of financing, and they do not pay off their bills at the end of every month. This form of funding emerged as an inefficient way to use capital because interest rates for credit cards are one of the highest among the various types of financing available (Bressler, 2012). This funding strategy is a major business mistake for small business CEOs who need to concentrate on reducing operating expenses so they can increase their profit margins (Bressler, 2012). Although small business CEOs have specific concerns, small business CEOs in countries emerging from wars also have difficult and unique obstacles to overcome for their business ventures to become successful.

Respondents in a study on the war-torn Republic of Congo revealed their perceptions regarding creating and maintaining small businesses in a war zone such as

theirs (McCartin, 2013). The results of the data and analyses of the study revealed several important obstacles specific to the concerns of the Republic of Congo (McCartin, 2013). Most respondents mentioned violence as an obstacle, but they did not deem this matter as necessarily significant to the development of their businesses (McCartin, 2013). This avoidance of the obvious was a common trend in war zones, with individuals having already internalized the violence to the point that other threats to their productivity and profit were more concerning to them (McCartin, 2013). For example, in the Republic of Congo, most of the respondents mentioned intermittent electricity as the greatest impediment to the success of their business endeavors (McCartin, 2013).

In war zones such as the Republic of Congo, armed groups usually oversee the process of gathering the resources needed by small businesses (McCartin, 2013). This process sometimes means that procuring materials from these armed groups necessitates giving commissions or even bribes (McCartin, 2013). Individuals in the war-torn Republic of Congo seemed to have accepted the threat of violence as a part of their everyday lives; hence, they did not regard the violence as a major threat to their business productivity and profits (McCartin, 2013). Businesses can serve as a way to bring stability back into war zones given that infrastructures improve and that market distortions such as elevated taxes come under control (Bullough et al., 2014).

Importance of Effective Leadership for Small Businesses

A leader's traits and decisions affect whether that leader is effective. Management and leadership are two components of small business CEOs. Effective planning and control as well as organizational skills (Thompson, 2012) are characteristics of good

management. A good manager can intervene when actual system behaviors deviate from the original plan. Management relates to control and organizational skills, whereas leadership refers to the abilities to cope with challenges as well as to motivate the followers.

The role that leaders play in organizational success is important, and leaders are important for enabling the achievement of organizational goals (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). The specific leadership style employed can influence how organizational leaders achieve their goals (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Various leadership styles such as autocratic, bureaucratic, laissez-faire, charismatic, democratic, participative, situational, transactional, and more recently transformational are beneficial to specific types of organizations (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). However, researchers have not reported any conclusive findings regarding what specific style of leadership is the most effective in influencing organizational behavior and success (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014).

Factors such as age, goals, and traits can shape the effectiveness of leadership practices (Mitchell, 2013). These factors can encourage the right leadership behavior and decision-making. The majority of people enter organizations with a goal of achieving certain personal objectives; as such, the extent to which people become active within their organizations depends on how they perceive their membership will be able to contribute to achieving their predetermined objectives.

Since the start of the 20th century, new and different effective leadership traits have emerged, and researchers have studied them. Among the leadership traits,

researchers have focused on six: intelligence, confidence, charisma, determination, sociability, and integrity (Northouse, 2015). An individual cannot just train or study how to become a good leader because leadership characteristics are inherent in some individuals. Instead of studying how to become a good leader, leaders have their leadership characteristics at birth. This notion contrasts with other studies in which the researchers have claimed that leadership characteristics are learnable (Northouse, 2015).

For instance, one claim is an individual must first establish credibility and trust in his or her vision for the future to become an effective leader (Northouse, 2015). After the leader defines and communicates a compelling vision for the future, the leader needs to show how empowering front-line employees with decision-making power might improve the dimensions of the command-and-control manager's professional working world. Further, the leader should seek out managerial insight, intelligence, and opinions in redefining and reorganizing the organization to be more client-focused. The ability to gain support by giving those most affected by a decision greater control over the outcome is a critical aspect of emotional intelligence skills (Northouse, 2015).

Effective leaders are coauthors of the vision of a more responsive organization (Northouse, 2015). Such action may represent the essence of effectiveness in participative management, namely, the ability to bring in even those individuals who would seek to disrupt proposals. Allowing this disruption gives participants a voice in the vision and execution of the plan (Northouse, 2015).

Leadership effectiveness also depends on the different types of intelligence. Leadership intelligence, personality, and emotional intelligence can affect managerial

performance and leadership effectiveness (Cavazotte, Moreno, & Hickmann, 2012).

Analyzing data gathered from 134 midlevel managers in a large Brazilian company in the

energy sector revealed that leadership effectiveness has a direct relationship with leaders'

behaviors and an indirect relationship with their experience, intelligence, and

conscientiousness (Cavazotte et al., 2012). Leadership effectiveness in Cavazotte et al.'s

(2012) study referred to the ability of leaders to influence organizational outcomes.

Neuroticism can have a negative effect on leadership effectiveness. Moreover, although

emotional intelligence seems statistically related to transformational leadership

effectiveness, no such significant effect is observable when both ability and personality

are controlled factors (Cavazotte et al., 2012).

Aside from being intellectually and emotionally intelligent, a leader can only be

effective if he or she can inspire followers (Wiltshire, 2012). An excellent leader is

someone who can inspire subordinates and, at the same time, work toward achieving

organizational goals. The personality trait of being inspirational indicates that the

individual has a high level of appeal among the masses or among the individuals with

whom the leader engages. The magnetic appeal of leaders fosters the advantage of

working with motivated others who wish to work under those leaders' guidance while

respecting the leadership approach (Wiltshire, 2012). Additionally, leaders have the

advantage of being the visionary and displaying the inspiration to stick to a particular

goal or philosophy (Wiltshire, 2012).

Due to personal magnetism, a charismatic leader carries extraordinary

responsibility because followers expect him or her to change the existing conditions in

favor of followers (Weber & Moore, 2013). Further, followers look up to their leaders with the hope that their leaders will work selflessly and creatively. Leaders, in turn, must act boldly and innovatively to earn the respect and favor of their followers (Weber & Moore, 2013).

Effective leadership does not depend on a leader's characteristics and personal abilities; rather, effective leadership depends on the situation and environment surrounding the leader (Peus, Braun, & Frey, 2013). Not everyone can be a leader because, for leaders to exist, there must be followers who follow their lead (Peus et al., 2013). The notion holds true for all formats of groups, irrespective of their size. Therefore, the view becomes one of the main reasons that leaders need to be team players at the same time they are in charge of the major decisions within an organization. More important, leaders have to recognize that they need to transfer authority to their followers and inspire them to feel determined toward submitting their creative and innovative ideas to projects (Peus et al., 2013).

Findings from various studies indicated that leaders needed to be clear and precise in their communication so that everyone within the group understands his or her roles and responsibilities and is able to coordinate and produce effective results (Dunoon & Langer, 2012). The main connection of the person-centered structure with leadership is that when leaders pursue the accomplishment of an objective, they must recognize the followers are going to stay loyal to that objective and are going to perceive and share the leader's need to achieve it (Dai & De Meuse, 2013). A leader should be capable of incorporating the aims and objectives of the group members if those ideas align with the

main objective of the business so that work not only satisfies the employees but also instills a sense of self-worth (Dai & De Meuse, 2013). An effective leader exhibits people, results, mental, and change agility (Exantus, 2012). People agility refers to being aware of and getting along well with others. Results agility refers to thriving under pressure and being able to inspire others. Mental agility refers to having the ability to solve problems, and change agility refers to being curious and open to experiments. With such personal and professional responsibilities, leaders should recognize that power comes with the task of leadership, which they must use appropriately to control and influence followers.

Transition

This section included the general goals of the study, as well as its assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. Section 1 also included a discussion on the significance of the study. All these items related to the theoretical foundations of the study. The review of literature included established insights about small businesses, leadership styles, and war zones in contemporary times. Section 2 will include a discussion of the research methodology and design of the study. The section will also include a description of the population, sample size, research design, and methods for data collection and analysis. Section 3 will include an overview of the study and a presentation of findings from the analysis of the study.

Section 2: The Project

This section includes a more in-depth discussion of the method for conducting this study. In this section, I discuss my role, the research design, the population and sample, the data collection method, and the data analysis method. I also detail the steps I followed to ensure confidentiality, validity, and reliability of the findings of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory multiple case study was to identify the strategies used by three CEOs of small businesses operating in the war-torn area of Afghanistan whose companies have been profitable beyond 5 years. The findings may lead to more stable businesses in the country that are capable of earning profits beyond 5 years. Stabilizing businesses in areas plagued by war such as the Middle East can help restore some sense of balance and normalcy to area residents (Bullough et al., 2014). Moreover, stable businesses, no matter how small, contribute to the overall economic health of a region or nation (Eurostat, 2012).

Role of the Researcher

I contacted known small business CEOs in the war-torn area of Afghanistan and I conducted the interviews with them. I did not have a personal relationship with the small business CEOs. To minimize the potential effects of familiarity on the results of the interview, I recruited only participants who were not members of my immediate social network. I observed the ethical principles and guidelines for research involving human subjects based on the original *Belmont Report,* presented in a training videocast (National Institutes of Health, 2015).

I assured participants that they would receive respect as autonomous agents of the study and as people entitled to protection. I allowed the participants to answer the questions as freely as possible, without repudiating their responses. Moreover, the informed consent form that they signed to express their willingness to be participants detailed everything they could expect from the interview. I did not withhold any information from them. They were aware that no risk would accrue from answering the interview questions. The emphasis on protection from harm was in line with the National Institutes of Health (2015) guidelines with emphasis on beneficence, which stated researchers must not do harm to their study participants. When asking the questions, I gave the participants time to think and answer. The questions were clear so that participants would not have difficulty understanding them. I adjusted my questioning based on the participants' language, rationality, and maturity.

I created a protocol to guide the interviews and to ensure consistency across participants. I used the questions within the interview protocol to elicit participants' responses to the main research questions. The interview questions allowed us to explore effective leadership styles and behaviors needed to stabilize businesses amid volatile surroundings. Researchers should ensure that they clarify and prioritize the information they want from each interview before asking the questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). It is critical for researchers to administer interviews consistently. In general, protocols enable researchers to structure interviews (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012) and to help ensure there was no researcher bias. Researchers use interview protocols to ensure that even though there are different participants with different styles of responding, researchers

would still be able to ask the same questions in the same way. Otherwise, the data would not have been comparable. Moreover, because the interview sessions had a time constraint, the protocol ensured prioritization of the questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Participants signed informed consent letters before arriving at the interview location as agreement to join this study and expression of their willingness to participate. As a refresher, I gave participants another copy of the informed consent letter to read and ask questions before the interviews started. Each participant arranged the face-to-face meeting place, for his comfort.

To minimize personal bias before interviewing participants and during the subsequent analysis of the collected data, I listed my perceptions, personal interpretations, and expectations of the findings the collected data might reveal. The protective measure of setting aside bias helped me be aware of my expected findings and mindful of my interpretations (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013).

Participants

The participants were three American CEOs who operated small businesses in the war-torn area of Afghanistan, and whose companies had been profitable beyond 5 years. The sampling frame included participants employed for at least 5 years as a CEO. These individuals, who had experienced firsthand and overcome the difficulties of cultivating a business that earned profits beyond 5 years, had insights on the most useful, and the most detrimental, behaviors and characteristics when leading profitable small businesses in these war zones. I used census sampling (Jupp, 2006) and interviewed three participants identified as having developed strategies for their companies operating in Afghanistan to

be profitable beyond 5 years. By scoping the problem to qualified CEOs, I was able to limit the number of organizations eligible to participate. Member checking and probing questions afforded me the opportunity to continue to inquire until there was no new information, indicating that data saturation had occurred.

Procedures for study sample recruitment included accessing owners of businesses in the war zone of interest and inviting them to participate. I presented them with an e-mail invitation to participate, including the inclusion criteria. For potential participants who identified themselves as meeting those criteria and who were interested in participating, I followed with an informed consent letter sent through e-mail . The informed consent form included an explanation of the rights of individuals as participants of the study, with particular focus on the importance of me keeping their identity confidential and maintaining all data in secured storage in my private office. The informed consent form included information on the voluntary aspect of individuals' participation. The form also stated measures taken to ensure that the study did not violate any ethical guidelines. Potential participants signed the informed consent form to ensure they understood their role in the study (Ritchie et al., 2013).

Research Method and Design

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory case study was to assess the experiences of CEOs in the war-torn area of Afghanistan regarding the best practices linked to operating their small businesses. In line with the purpose of this research, I conducted a qualitative, exploratory case study utilizing the appropriate design and

method to obtain information to address the overriding research questions. The next sections include the details of the method and research design.

Research Method

I chose a qualitative approach for this study. A qualitative approach is appropriate because in shaping a worldview, individuals perceive culture, history, personal experiences, socioeconomic status, and family dynamics differently (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Qualitative research refers to putting an observer within the world to focus on a specific activity (White, 2012). In essence, placing an observer within the world shapes his or her perspective or worldview of any given phenomenon. Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative studies allow researchers to explore or investigate a particular phenomenon in depth within the uncontrolled environment of the phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Moreover, qualitative researchers can collect and present rich data, especially when they perform data collection through interviews (Seidman, 2012, pp. 9-11). Researchers have found qualitative designs to be beneficial when existing research in an area has limits. Qualitative research is also appropriate when a researcher seeks to understand a phenomenon, as is the case in this study (Seidman, 2012, pp. 9-11).

Qualitative studies are valuable in helping researchers to understand the social dynamics of societies and business alike as they focus on their traditions, principles, ethics, values, and philosophies, as well as behavioral patterns (Bloor, Sampson, Baker, & Dahlgren, 2013). The qualitative format helps practitioners to identify the unofficial yet universal associations between the different elements that influence structure and

activities (Corley, 2011). Furthermore, the qualitative research format also allows practitioners to identify the fundamentals of all the choices, approaches, viewpoints, and logics of their target audience (Corley, 2011).

Qualitative research has received a sufficient amount of support from numerous practitioners. With qualitative research, practitioners can simultaneously gather and modify all the collected data (Bloor et al., 2013). In this format, researchers have many more face-to-face and intimate interactions with the sample, which allows them to see more angles of the situation and understand the phenomenon investigated a lot more clearly (Bloor et al., 2013). This format also allows researchers to add unperceived dimensions that emerge from the close contact with the interviewees (Bloor et al., 2013). The importance of qualitative format is more within the social dynamics of research than the quantitative or statistical format because it helps researchers to point out the new and generalized tactics, methodologies, preferences, and choices of the administrators and member of the business (Yin, 2014).

Quantitative research involves looking for the meanings, concepts, characteristics, metaphors, and symbols of various phenomena (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Quantitative research is a scientific approach for conducting social science research. Quantitative methods entail a researcher focusing on using specific definitions and operationalizing what particular concepts and variables mean, which was not the purpose of this study. Quantitative approaches involve formal, objective, and systematic processes in which researchers gather numerical data to carry out statistical analysis to gather credible information (Pearce et al., 2014). Quantitative studies can lead to quantifiable and

generalizable conclusions from numerical data (de Casterlé, Gastmans, Bryon, & Denier, 2012), which would not be appropriate to answer the current question. Because the focus here was on the perceptions of the unique experiences of small business CEOs in Afghanistan, the quantitative and the mixed methods approach with both qualitative and quantitative data were not suitable.

Research Design

I used a qualitative case study design approach because this research involved analyzing the meaning and description of experiences of circumstances in a particular context (Moustakas, 1994). Integral to the research, I identified the trends, social realities, and themes that surfaced from the synthesis of individuals' recorded perceptions. Using a qualitative research methodology allowed for the exploration and discovery of themes based on the perceptions of small business executives who operate in war-torn regions (Seidman, 2012, pp. 9-11). The qualitative design, rather than a quantitative or mixed design, better served this study.

Among various qualitative designs, I chose the case study. Although ethnography is a valid research method for the social sciences, it relies on up-close, personal expertise and individual involvement, not merely distant observation (Lahlou et al., 2015), which is not the goal of the current research. The method also entails fostering social relationship with the participants. Long-term involvement and observation are necessary to understand the complexity of people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Zaharlick, 1992), which was not the goal of the current research.

Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative investigation in which stories describe human action (Polkinghorne, 2013). Narrative research involves discussions arranged chronologically around a plot. Even though the phenomenological research design is helpful for uncovering individuals' perceptions and experiences based on their perspectives (Kumar, 2012), this was not the intention for this study. The case study was the most appropriate research design because the method allows data collection in natural settings rather than using the derived data available from survey questionnaires (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

A case study design is an empirical enquiry conducted to explore a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context (Yin, 2014). The method is the most appropriate for researchers who want to conduct evaluations of an event, activity, program, or individual (Yin, 2014). The case study allows for naturalistic generalizations from personal or vicarious experience such that researchers can understand participants' social experience (Stewart, 2012). Because the study involved exploring the perceptions and experiences of CEOs in war-torn regions regarding best practices for operating a small business, the case study research design was the most fitting design.

Qualitative case study is suitable when the focus is on understanding complex situations that may have a variety of variables (Merriam, 2014). The qualitative research design for this study was a case study design. The modern case study is a derivation of the work anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists used in the past to help explain why an event occurred (Crowe et al., 2011). Researchers use the case study research design to identify the real-life decisions made in the context of a chosen phenomenon

(Yin, 2014). A case study may provide more details about a specific phenomenon. The design may include narrative and a description about a specific activity, personal relationship, or group interpretation, which in this case was operating a profitable small business in a war-torn area. The strength in using an exploratory case study lies in the narrative description within the methodology (Stewart, 2012). The power behind this research design is that the design allows researchers to view the actions within a given situation and collect a multitude of responses to help support the reasons behind the phenomenon as well as ensure data saturation. Using an exploratory case study provided insights into the leadership practices and business strategies of small business leaders in war-torn areas to have profitable entrepreneurial activities.

Population and Sampling

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory multiple case study was to identify the strategies used by three CEOs of small businesses operating in the war-torn area of Afghanistan whose companies have been profitable beyond 5 years. These individuals, having experienced firsthand the difficulties of cultivating a business and leading employees in these circumstances, were to have the best insights regarding the most useful and the most detrimental behaviors and characteristics when leading small businesses in war zones in the Middle East. Three leaders were sufficient to carry out multiple interviews that led to comprehensive and persuasive results, as suggested in the literature (Yin, 2014). I conducted multiple interviews and member checking with each participant until I reached data saturation, which is the point where no more new or relevant data can emerge (Chenail, 2012). There is a higher chance of achieving data

saturation if the data collected are from a qualified sample (de Casterlé et al., 2012). The more precise a question, the faster data saturation will occur. Progressive refinement of a synthesis question can lead to data saturation (de Casterlé et al., 2012).

The goal for participant selection in a specific study is to engage individuals who will yield the most relevant and plentiful data in consideration of the topic; hence, people who are most likely to be knowledgeable in the topic of interest must be the ones selected for the study (Yin, 2014). To recruit the sample, I contacted CEOs of small businesses in the war-torn area of Afghanistan. Then, I interviewed three CEOs who volunteered to participate in the study. The sampling frame included participants employed for at least 5 years as CEO who would have developed strategies to be profitable for 5 years. No specific number of participants is necessary for a qualitative case study sample (Crowe et al., 2011). My guide to identifying the number of participants was the objective of collecting the most data possible while reducing redundancy. Participants had different choices of time and place, according to their convenience.

Qualitative research sample sizes should not be too small or too large because an error in sample size in either direction will make it difficult to achieve data saturation or to undertake a deep analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Qualitative research designs tend to work with a relatively small sample (Seidman, 2012, pp. 52-58). Because there is no statistical support or guidance, the sample size usually serves as a function of the purpose of the study in light of its sampling frames and of practical constraints (Punch, 2016). Therefore, I focused on a smaller restricted sample. A sample size of three participants was appropriate.

Ethical Research

Only individuals who were willing to participate could be part of the study. To ensure that participants were willing to participate and that the study did not violate any ethical guidelines, I first asked potential participants to sign informed consent forms to ensure they understood their role in the study. I presented all potential participants with the informed consent material, and obtained signed consent forms from all participants, before I began collecting responses to the interview questions. A participant who signed the consent form was indicating that he (all participants were male) had read the explanation of the study, agreed that his participation was voluntary, and understood that a coding system would be used to ensure confidentiality. They understood that individuals who declined to participate would not be subject to negative consequences. Participants who might wish to withdraw from engaging in the study after agreeing to participate could do so without repercussions. I ensured that participants understood that they only needed to contact me by phone or e-mail to express their desire to withdraw.

As part of the informed consent process, I explained to the participants that there were no incentives for joining the study other than the satisfaction of contributing to a worthwhile project (Ritchie et al., 2013). I offered participants the option to receive a copy of the findings of the study so they could take advantage of the insights gained from the research. To maintain confidentiality during response collection, I created pseudonyms (Morse & Coulehan, 2015). All interviews and notes included these pseudonyms to protect the participants' identity throughout the study. I will store interview data in a locked and secure location for 5 years. Afterward, I will destroy both

hard and soft copies permanently. The Walden Institutional Review Board approval

number for this study is 09-30-15-0095095.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument as the interviewer. In addition, I used

open-ended interview questions to collect data (see Appendix A). Interviews are an

effective technique for addressing the research questions for a case study (Yin, 2014).

Yin explained that the main benefit of the interview format is that it facilitates a healthy

and interactive communication between the interviewer and the interviewee, which as a

result allows the interviewer to pay the highest attention to the topics and concerns of the

goal and not digress. Furthermore, the interviews allow the practitioner or interviewer to

get more in tune or familiar with the history and life of the interviewee, which allows the

interviewer to make observations with much more awareness and greater perception. This

in turn helps the interviewer make much more solid and authenticated deductions about

the choices of the interviewee, which is something that is rarely ever achieved in other

forms of surveys or studies (Yin, 2014).

In particular, I chose to do semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews

involve a process formulated for attaining an objective while at the same time designed to

include the fundamental history of the subject instead of just gathering numeric proof

(Lloyd & Bergum, 2014). These forms of interviews allow the reality, irrespective of how

brutal it is, to surface, along with the opinions of those affected by it (Yin, 2014). It is

appropriate to use semi-structured interviews if researchers know enough of the topic to

frame the needed discussion in advance (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Researchers should define

a number of interview questions in advance for semi-structured interviews and the

prepared questions are to be sufficiently open for further questioning (Qu & Dumay,

2011).

Semi-structured interviews include a series of open-ended questions based on the

topic areas a researcher wants to cover (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Open-ended questions

define the topic under investigation but allow interviewers and interviewees to talk about

some of the topics in more detail (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Semi-structured interviews are

beneficial when collecting a large amount of attitudinal information or if there is a dearth

on information about the subject area (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013).

The open-ended questions supported the research questions of the study and

assisted in determining what small business CEOs in a war-torn area consider as best

practices in operating their businesses in dire conditions. The questions I posed in the

interviews aligned with the research questions. I formed probing questions to gain

additional in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions on operating small

businesses in a war-torn area.

To ensure reliability and validity of the questions, I field-tested the interview

questions to ensure that participants would understand them correctly. Conducting field-

tests can show limitations with regard to the interview instrument, the questions'

wording, and the appropriateness (Oluwatayo, 2012). For the current study, I conducted

field interviews with two CEOs of small businesses in Afghanistan who are not part of

the main study. After the interview, I asked each field participant if I needed to restate

any phrases for clarity, and then noted their comments. The results from the field-test interview questions indicated that the interview questions were sufficient.

I also engaged in member checking. Member checking involves re-interviewing a participant and sharing the interpretation of the participant's comments in order to confirm my interpretation of the responses given to me. Member checking enhances reliability and validity. I also used member checking to achieve data saturation. The follow-up interviews provided an opportunity to ask probing questions to ensure that there was no new information. In all cases, the participants approved the transcription and confirmed that they had nothing more to add. For the current study, I furthered the analysis of the interview responses with documents such as the small businesses' profit/ loss statements, strategy documents, vision statements, and business plans among others that provide evidence of the successful small business practices and leadership practices, even if not on war-torn areas, to see if there are differences and similarities.

Data Collection Technique

I used interviews and document analysis as the primary data sources. Before I began the interview process, I obtained a signed informed consent letter from willing participants. In the letters, I asked the participants to set the interview location and time. The interviews took place in the United States in English. All participants were native English speakers. I informed participants that I would be using a digital recording device to capture the interview dialogue exactly as it transpired and so that I could accurately document their responses.

After examining all the qualitative data collection methods, I chose to collect data through individual interviews. The interview process helps researchers attain three goals. First, it helps in personalizing the structure (i.e., the interactive and face-to-face setup of interviews) allowing the practitioner to engage all the individuals in the sample completely and truthfully so that the practitioner can acquire all the information needed to structure a thorough study. This also brings forward conclusions and theories that include the traditions, philosophies, and choices of the sample from a personal and up-close angle (Tuckman & Harper, 2012). Secondly, it enables the researchers to authenticate or refute all prior notions while highlighting newer or developed ideas and theories with the changing times. Lastly, it enables the researcher to identify new angles to an already recognized theory (Kerlinger, 1970).

Interviews are beneficial for a researcher to acquire the story behind a participant's experiences (Roth, 2013; Rowley, 2012). In addition, interviews allow a researcher to pursue in-depth information (Roth, 2013; Rowley, 2012). The interview data-collection technique also has limitations. Interviews involve personal interaction, and cooperation from the participants is important. However, interviewees may feel uncomfortable answering and sharing (Trost, 2014). To respond to these limitations, I did my best, as the interviewer, to demonstrate superb listening skills and probe for elaboration without making the participants uncomfortable. Interviews also take time to analyze. Moreover, because they want to establish rapport and trust in the interview, researchers can unintentionally use them thoughtlessly and in an undertheorized manner and think they are providing a view into psychological or social realities (Qu & Dumay,

2011).

For the current study, I first formed an interview protocol with open-ended questions (see Appendix A). A researcher should have a comprehensive, accurate, and reliable system to collect and record data to obtain credible and reliable findings, which interviews offer (Seidman, 2012, pp. 117-118). I used a digital voice recorder to capture each participant's individual interview. The information gathered during these interviews served as the main data for analysis.

There were no time limitations set for the interviews, but I expected each session to last approximately 1 hour. The data I gathered was in the form of sentences and phrases that represented the verbatim answers of the participants to the questions in the interview. I used these data to create or confirm patterns or themes within the case study.

During the interviews, I utilized member checking. Member checking is important to establishing the accuracy and reliability of qualitative research (Houghton et al., 2013). Through member checking, researchers provide participants with the opportunity to guide interpretations of any statements during the interview, as well as the succeeding interpretations of the transcribed data (Seidman, 2012, p. 130). I also shared with the participants the transcription of their interview responses, and asked if it was accurate. In all cases, the participants approved the transcription and confirmed that they had nothing more to add.

For the current study, I supplemented the analysis of the interview responses with documents such as the small businesses' profit and loss statements, strategy documents, vision statements, and business plans among others that could provide evidence of the

successful small business practices and leadership practices, even if not on war-torn areas, to see if there are differences and similarities. My analytical and sense-making process were informed by all the conclusions made corresponding to the notions and theories used in previous studies. I was careful to notice where discussions shifted from the focus of the study, based upon the original objectives and the interview session (Corley, 2011). Using the semi-structured interview responses that I collected, in conjunction with the literature review, I was able to conduct a constant comparative method and thereby gather data that would answer the research questions.

Data Organization Technique

I employed a professional transcriptionist to capture the entire interview, from audio file to Word document. Review of these transcripts included member checking (Harvey, 2015). During member checking, I asked participants probing questions to get all the needed information until no new information was available. In particular, participants read the transcript and listened to my interpretations, as an opportunity to prompt additional thoughts for them to share. This process is valid and enhances the richness of the data (Houghton et al., 2013).

I used a database to aid in organizing data. I organized the artifacts, including data type (document or interview), data identification (document name or interviewee number), document file name, date of collection, location of collection, and research notes (Seidman, 2012, p. 115). These tracking procedures minimized the potential for human error to occur. I was careful to avoid preparing each transcript as a stand-alone word-processing product. Rather, I approached the transcript as an element that had

common standardized features, with other elements within the qualitative database (Smith & Firth, 2011).

I organized the checked data and transcripts and loaded those data into QSR International's NVivo 10 data analysis software. This software can help to organize data into categories for subsequent coding and thematic analysis (Bergin, 2011; Gilbert, Jackson, & di Gregorio, 2014). Using interviewee pseudonyms for each participant allowed me to protect participants' identities throughout the study. I will store interview data in a locked and secure location until 5 years after the study's acceptance date and then permanently destroy them. Soft copies or the audio files of the interviews will also remain in a password-locked folder for 5 years after study's acceptance date and then I will destroy them.

Data Analysis

In the current study, I conducted method triangulation, identified the correct connections between patterns and explanations to minimize the possibility of drawing incorrect conclusions, and used a priori coding to create a strong internal validation of collected responses. The triangulation procedure involves gathering and analyzing data more than one way (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). To triangulate, researchers can collect data from different people, times, and different places (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Researchers can also collect data in different ways such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, and archival data (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). For the current study, I supported the analysis of the interview responses with documents such as the small businesses' profit and loss statements, strategy documents, vision statements,

and business plans among others that would provide evidence of the successful small

business practices and leadership practices, even if not on war-torn areas, to see if there

are differences and similarities. The premise is that if researchers can substantiate various

data sets with each other, the interpretations and conclusions drawn from them are likely

to be credible and reliable. I analyzed all the information against the context of the entire

spectrum of possible notions or strategies, within the phenomenon of successful small

business management, on track for my original objectives.

I used thematic analysis to help me interpret the collected data. Research has

shown thematic analysis is effective for analyzing case studies (Bell-Booth, Staton, &

Thorpe, 2014; Daya, Dhillon, Taylor, & Yildiran, 2011). I primarily followed guidelines

regarding thematic analysis as delineated by Braun, Clarke, and Terry (2014). Thematic

analysis begins with developing codes and a coding scheme (Braun et al., 2014;

Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). I developed a coding scheme by applying codes

to a small sample of the data to generate the general coding system consistent with the

purpose and the problem of the study. Then, I coded all texts and assessed them for

coding consistency (Braun et al., 2014). After coding all the data, I grouped, combined,

and collapsed categories to facilitate the development of emergent themes.

I sorted and categorized the codes that emerged from each interview response

regarding the similar ideas, phrases, or relevant information they provide. These

categories became the themes. Themes are recurring highlights in interview responses,

including repetitions, original typographies and categories, metaphors and analogies,

transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and theory-

related material (Karpf, 2012). I also used NVivo 10 to help with thematic analysis. The software can help to organize data into categories for subsequent coding and thematic analysis (Bergin, 2011). I drew further conclusions from the results of these analyses. Furthermore, I examined the literature for links to the themes and subthemes identified through the responses of participants, to examine whether the main themes developed through this study support further theoretical development (Braun et al., 2014; Daya et al., 2011).

Reliability and Validity

I carried out several measures to ensure the reliability and validity of the research. This section includes a discussion on the methods selected, such as member checking and triangulation, to ensure dependability, transferability, credibility, and confirmability. Ensuring reliability and validity is crucial for the research study.

Reliability

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research, I was cautious to protect data dependability. Dependability refers to how coherent the internal process is and how a researcher manages changing conditions in phenomena (Bradley, 1993, p. 437). To ensure dependability, the study included member checking and field-testing the interview protocol (Harvey, 2015). By conducting member checking, I was able to determine the accuracy of my initial interpretations with the participants (Harvey, 2015). Field-testing the interview protocol ensured that questions were understandable and appropriate for the information that I wanted to acquire from the participants. By using targeted sampling to

identify and approach participants, I was able achieve data saturation at the completion of the three interviews (Marres & Weltevrede, 2013).

Validity

To observe validity, I ensured credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the research. Credibility refers to the adequate representation of the constructs in a study (Bradley, 1993, p. 436). To improve the credibility of results, researchers can engage in various methods such as prolonged engagement in the field, consistent observation, triangulation, negative case analysis, validating interpretations against raw data, peer debriefing, and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

To ensure validity, I was vigilant to achieve data saturation. Data saturation is the point when participants' responses reveal no more new themes and when a researcher does not need to collect more data (Chenail, 2012). Without data saturation, any theory or finding may be weak or incomplete. With three interview participants, there was clear data saturation.

Transferability refers to the extent to which researchers can use the findings in another context. Researchers should use a rich and elaborate description of responses collected to support transferability (Crowe et al., 2011). Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research are generalizable or transferable into another context of setting, for instance, another war-torn area. To enhance transferability, researchers should thoroughly describe the research context and the research assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). The person who wishes to transfer the results to a different context will be the judge of how sensible the transfer is (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). A

researcher cannot be responsible for all replications of a study. By using vivid language, I attempted to create a foundation for others to refer to when comparing themes of the identified phenomena.

Confirmability refers to how well others can confirm the characteristics of data, especially those who will look at the findings (Bradley, 1993, p. 437). To ensure confirmability, I was diligent with ensuring the credibility, transferability, and dependability of the findings. In this sense, data confirmability is a positive result of having attended to the other requisite characteristics of the data.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory, multiple case study was to identify the strategies three participants, who were CEOs operating small businesses in the war-torn area of Afghanistan, used to be profitable beyond 5 years. The overarching question for the study was as follows: What are the best leadership practices and strategies of CEOs in the war-torn area of Afghanistan in operating their businesses to earn profits beyond 5 years? Several themes emerged from CEO interviews, primarily organized around the three supporting research questions.

For the first question regarding effective leadership practices, the themes included influences on personal leadership style, identifying one's own leadership style in terms of interactions with others, and the unanimous agreement that a best practice for CEO success is to expand knowledge. In answering the second research question about best business strategies implemented by CEOs in a war-torn region, the themes included building resources, managing cultural differences, and understanding business, financial and physical risks. For the third question about unique challenges in a war-torn area, the strongest theme was maintaining human resources infrastructure with United States and local national employees. Additional subthemes of unique challenges were observing formal and informal rules of the region, and commanding a 24-hour workday.

Presentation of Research Findings

The findings of this study derived from interactions with the participants and examination of documents and records. Participants provided background information

about themselves and their businesses via a questionnaire. Secondly, the three CEO participants engaged in extensive interviews via open-ended questions and conversation, without time limits. Thirdly, I examined business documents and records, namely balance sheets, income statements, and tax returns. These multiple sources provided triangulation of data, as stated in the study's research design and method.

Findings from the reviews of documents confirmed that the businesses were indeed profitable for longer than 5 years. While the document reviews provided veracity of the participant selection criteria, there were no discernible patterns of success or failure, nor obvious relationships between leadership styles and financial measures of business health. Having acknowledged the insight gathered from documents reviews, the remainders of the presentation of research findings focus on summaries of the rich data provided by CEOs operating successful small businesses in war-torn areas.

The first research question centered on effective leadership practices: What are the effective leadership practices that small business CEOs operating in a war-torn region can use to earn profits beyond 5 years? Participants described effective leadership styles, while focusing on influential leaders and mentors and/or coaches who had contributed to their leadership styles. Additionally, participants discussed changes to their leadership during and after their time overseas and offered effective practices for CEOs.

A major theme was recognition of others' influence on one's own leadership style, with subthemes of famous leaders and personal acquaintances who were influential. A second theme was having awareness of one's own leadership style, with subthemes of noting how those styles changed in response to various situations and knowing one's

particular strengths and weaknesses. Finally, a third theme surfaced as the most effective

practice for CEO success. The unanimous opinion was that expanding one's knowledge

was vital, especially related to knowing the region in which they were operating. The

tables accompanying this section summarize primary themes and subthemes. A summary

of the findings on effective leadership practices follows in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Findings for Research Question 1: Effective Leadership Practices

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme
Influences on personal leadership style	Personal acquaintances Mentor Coach Relative	Famous leaders Presidents Military leaders Business leaders
Identifying one's own leadership style in terms of interactions with others	Knowing one's strengths and weakness	Changes with situation
Best practice for CEO success is to expand knowledge	Knowledge of the rules	Knowledge of the region

Note. All participants discussed these issues.

Influences on Personal Leadership Style

All participants named great leaders as being influential in their style of

leadership. One participant referred to highly recognized business leaders; two

participants mentioned presidents and military leaders as being an example of effective

decision-making and of leading people. Participants also related stories of mentors,

coaches, and relatives who had influenced them. In some cases, these mentors demonstrated qualities that participants admired and tried to emulate themselves.

Influential famous people. Participant 1 pointed to two successful leaders of business, Warren Buffet and the former CEO of a billion dollar, publicly traded company. Although Participant 1 may not have agreed with those peoples' politics, he admired their business acumen. Looking at these exemplary leaders, this CEO concluded that understanding risk management was foundational to running his business.

Participant 2 named two presidents as influential on his leadership style, Abraham Lincoln and George W. Bush. He admired their morality and taking stances on difficult issues. Lincoln's "try and try again" leadership and Bush's "standing up and doing something for the people" resonated with Participant 2 and his leadership approach.

Participant 3 also pointed to various famous leaders for the characteristics each possessed within their leadership. For a spiritual leadership approach, Participant 3 referred to Jesus Christ. This CEO's summary of Jesus Christ as a leader was that he did everything right, he led by example, his convictions were solid, and he did not deviate from his principles. Participant 3 also admired leaders such as George Patton, Winston Churchill, and Abraham Lincoln, and claimed that their examples were influential to his leadership style.

Influential personal acquaintances. Participant 1 related his experience with three former supervisors and the lessons he learned about differing communication styles. Participant 1 shared that each had leadership qualities of charisma and presence, both of which he admired, and deemed those people influential toward his own leadership style.

One supervisor in particular "saw the big picture," which impressed Participant 1 as a necessary leadership trait. Learning from these mentors led this CEO to adopt the value that it is wrong to force a subordinate to choose between loyalty and integrity.

Participant 2 described his grandfather as the most influential mentor who shaped his own leadership style, especially in terms of instilling a good work ethic. This CEO described his grandfather's leadership qualities as being a hard worker, relentless in trying to strive toward success and trying to do the right thing most of the time. Participant 2 summarized that this grandfatherly influence led him to value integrity.

Participant 3 likewise credited family members, two uncles, he admired for the combination of leadership traits they demonstrated. He also referred to a childhood teacher and commanding officers during his military career, all being influences on his present day leadership style. Participant 3 remembered nearly everything they said, both on the right things to do and the wrong things not to do.

Identifying One's Own Leadership Style

The CEO participants identified the approach and manner in which they led others. All of the participants reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of their leadership styles. While identifying their own leadership, much of the participants' discussion referred to interacting with others. They noted that their leadership style changed according to the situation at hand. Additionally, the participants described how circumstances and people were factors in changing their leadership behaviors, based on the given situation. They all conveyed that their leadership styles changed as they adjusted to being overseas.

Participant 1 shared that his leadership style was one that evolved through interaction with others. His leadership approaches developed through talking to his people, learning what staff understood or found confusing, and how staff motivation levels were holding up. This CEO reflected that any leadership style is imperfect. The reality is that not all staff may understand decisions implemented by the leader.

Participant 2 described his leadership style in terms of problem solving and processes. He perceived himself as an "adjustment kind of leader," solving problems through information processing that included issues at hand. Participant 2 believed another quality of his leadership style was leading by example. He put himself in any situation that he asked of others, including getting in an armored vehicle to go from one site to another.

Participant 3 discussed the type of leader he knew he was and the type that he was not. He knew he was not a "macro leader" who controlled each and all projects at once. This CEO prided himself on possessing a combination of spiritual and transformation leadership traits. Participant 3 shared that his greatest ability was to evaluate peoples' capabilities and use those talents to get the job done.

Changes in leadership by situation. Participant 1 described adjusting his concept and requirements of loyalty. He learned that some of his employees interpreted loyalty as an opportunity to receive additional pay. Participant 1 revealed that he had to work to change workers' impressions, as well as his own opinion, to a concept of *mutual loyalty*. He claimed that mutual loyalty was paramount, especially in an environment where people's lives are at stake.

Participant 2 perceived that his leadership style had adapted between having been a leader in the United States and his experiences of leading overseas. He conveyed that he based much of the adaptation and adjustments, in his leadership style, on the people and the circumstances. Participant 2 noticed that the focus differed based on the situation and location. If the circumstances warranted, he was fine dictating by checklist exactly what the job entailed. This CEO believed that in Afghanistan his leadership role was that of education and showing employees how he wanted things done to accomplish a mission. On the other hand, he would allow some employees to have the time to learn from trial and error. In the United States, people who were more educated saw themselves as members of the same team, yet they were still looking to him, the leader, for support of the mission. Altogether, Participant 2 concluded that working overseas with differing cultures requires patience, as well as attunement to culture and educational capacities.

Participant 3 noted that while his leadership was always evolving, some of the basic theories he valued were unchanged. He described leadership techniques such as learning when to implement spiritual leadership traits and when to be more of a "get-it-done type of leader". He summarized that the most important factor was to know when to adapt leadership.

Knowing ones' strengths and weaknesses. A common strength among the participants was the ability to create and maintain relationships with people. Participants' leadership involved successful interactions with others. These CEOs further specified loyalty to others, including their staff, as a strength.

Participant 1 described his concern for team members as one of his strengths, specifically loyalty, self-sacrifice, and worrying about the details, almost to a fault. He called himself a steward of his employees' futures, taking himself out of the equation, looking through the eyes of others during decision-making processes. Participant 1 aspired to control positively what happened to others, to be responsible for subordinates.

Participant 2 identified maintaining relationships as a strength not only with the people he was working with in Afghanistan, but also maintaining his relationships with the local foreign ministries. He described building relationships with the local people and subcontractors with whom he worked with in country. Participant 2 surmised that his ability to develop relationships helped to make his mission better.

Participant 3 claimed that his years of active duty in the Marines was a strength. This CEO's military experience enabled him to understand the structure and basic rules of the military, and in turn to deal more effectively with the Afghanistan military machine. Another personal strength the CEO identified was his ability to build and maintain relationships with subordinates, based on leading by example.

Determination to succeed was also a strength that all participants named. However, they varied in how they expressed determination. Participants' determination depended on what they believed would make their business successful. Participant 1 described that his determination toward success included instilling certain values into his leadership and those around him. He wanted all employees to be aware and proud of the quality of service they were offering. Participant 2 shared that part of his determination for success derived from his desire to grow to larger scale contractor status. This meant

having a willingness to be where the work was available, traveling, and stepping outside

of his comfort zone while getting into an area that would drive success. For Participant 3,

determination to succeed encompassed staying focused on goals, as well as an ability to

adapt when needed in order to accomplish those goals.

In reflecting on their weaknesses, or opportunities for improvement, all

participants named communication. The specifics of communication varied among

participants. CEO participants described issues such as charismatic motivation, business

reporting, and keeping lines of communication open within work teams. Although issues

differed among participants, none hesitated in sharing their greatest weakness.

Participant 1 shared his perceived weakness in charismatic motivation and the

way he utilized the talents of coleaders to support his own shortcoming, describing

himself as "not a natural leader." However, Participant 1 thought self-awareness was a

big part of working with one's weaknesses. His solution was to rely on key people who

could motivate and talk to workers, providing an approach that was not natural to the

CEO.

Participant 2 admitted that he struggled with timely and thorough reporting. It was

a challenge for him to commit time to outlining the details of his multiple projects. He

also shared his perceived weakness in keeping lines of communication open with both his

team onsite in a war-torn area and the stateside support team. He utilized a second in-

charge staff member to support his communication shortcoming. This second other

person was helpful for communication and helped visualize a project from different

perspectives.

Participant 3 shared his perceived weakness in gaining a macro view of all that he was managing. As a remedy, this CEO utilized others to support his shortcoming. By acknowledging his weakness, Participant 3 had the opportunity to find somebody who was great at the organizing aspect of leadership.

Best Practice for CEO Success is to Expand Knowledge

All participants described knowledge as a key practice toward their successes in operating a small business in a war-torn area. Participants most often emphasized knowledge of the region. In more detail, they enumerated that knowing the region, knowing the right people for the given work, knowing people who can put you in the right direction for subcontractors, and knowing what is involved in operating in the specific war-torn region. All participants concluded that prior to arriving in a foreign country, obtaining knowledge in these areas is important to effective leadership.

Participant 1 emphasized the need for knowledge of local policies in the host country, as well as being well versed in United States government contract requirements. Participant 1 underscored that compliance was paramount, and therefore having a compliance officer on staff was one of his best strategies as a CEO. This staff member was a person with the experience to navigate through all the laws, written and unwritten, and to be a part of every conversation.

Participant 2 recommended gaining knowledge of local customs and the culture prior to conducting business operations. This CEO recommended vetting local businesses and subcontractors on which were preferable to use. He noted that he needed to know the territory he was entering, and knowing the people with whom he would be dealing.

Participant 2 elaborated: "Different tribes and different areas of war-torn areas are going to have different culture changes in each area that you're working at." This participant also advised having both an HR and payroll department to handle issues that will inevitably arise.

Participant 3 discussed the importance of having prior knowledge as a strategy to operate a successful small business. He enumerated knowledge of domestic and international regulations, people to hire, and the culture of the war-torn area. This CEO reiterated, "knowledge is power." Participant 3 also revealed that in hindsight he should have learned more about the culture prior to going overseas. Learning more about the culture, skill strengths and weakness, allowed the CEO to prepare for helping the workforce develop some of their skills.

The second research question centered on identifying business strategies and methods: What are the best businesses strategies that small business CEOs operating in a war-torn region can engage in to earn profits beyond 5 years? The three participants discussed their experiences of arriving in a war torn area of the Middle East and establishing a business. All three businesses provided services as delineated in United States government contracts. As the participants described establishing a labor force and obtaining permissions to operate, the main themes were building resources, managing cultural differences, and understanding risk. While start-up experiences were memorable to the participants, they also reflected on the business strategies needed to maintain and grow the company. A summary of the findings on best business strategies in war-torn areas follows in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Findings for Research Question 2: Best Business Strategy in War-Torn Areas

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme
Building resources	Team members	Local nationals
Managing cultural differences		
Understanding risk: business, financial and physical		

Note. All participants discussed these issues.

Building Resources

All participants described having resources, the right people, in place as one of the best business strategies a small business could implement in order to be successful. Participants emphasized team members and the use of local nationals as important resources. CEOs relied on specific people for their knowledge and assistance. Each participant described the talents of those particular people, and shared that the CEOs relied on them in order to help the small business operate successfully.

Team member resources. Participant 1 relied on a trusted confidant, describing the person who could look at the data and inquire further about the process and decision. The team member may even say that current decisions do not make sense, based on the information. The CEO participant realized that his group had expertise, and he did not

have to be the sole decision maker. Additionally, he advised not being afraid to bring in key stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Participant 2 described resources as contract officers and their representatives, and other business owners who their experience with local contractors. He shared there was much to learn, about processes and permits. For this CEO, team member resources were the people who could tell him: where to go, whom to contact, the avenue to get the job done.

Participant 3 emphasized legal counsel for both United States government contracts and issues related to Afghan law as an important resource. This CEO suggested having someone in place from the beginning, to not wait until the last minute and then start looking for legal counsel. Participant 3 also emphasized using contracts and agreements to hold all parties accountable.

Local national resources. Participant 1 lauded the resources available through local nationals' contacts, whom he called trusted partners. These local employees or consultants could help with translating the language and cultural nuances. The CEO noted that trusted partners speak the language; the locals know the intent of what their government is trying to do, even if authorities have not announced such goals.

Participant 2 described resources provided through local nationals, and the inherent pitfalls associated with them. Specifically, the CEO had a single point-of-contact person who gathered information from him, and then the local took the directions back to the workers. This person was the best English speaker, the best educated, and was able to translate and expand upon the message that the CEO wanted to convey. In this situation,

Participant 2 advised that one should have a top-down type of management role. The same type of management is required when moving between sites and having to rely on local nationals for transportation; there is always a chance that the scheduled transport may not occur due to military or governing protocols.

Participant 3 described employing local nationals and subcontractors. He made his selections largely based on the local contractors' skills and their abilities to adapt. However, there were intangible factors of the locals' unstated agenda and orientations toward working with United States government efforts. Employing local nationals and subcontractors means getting visas and understanding the locals' expectations, including the monetary rewards for work completed.

Managing Cultural Differences

Participants recognized the diversity that existed among their employees. They emphasized that managing diversity was an aspect of their relational role as a CEO, ultimately surfacing as a key business strategy to operating a successful small business in a war-torn region. The participants also discussed the significance of understanding the cultural differences among a multinational workforce, as well as learning the local cultural norms.

Participant 1 conveyed the importance of understanding the culture of local nationals. This CEO employed South African workers, and he learned that around Christmas time, their expectations followed tradition. Those workers expected a box, even if the contents were relatively simple. Nevertheless, if the employer did not give this

type of gift, not knowing South African cultural expectation, a leader would inadvertently insult a significant part of his workforce.

Participant 2 shared that when a workforce includes people from multiple nations, the CEO must adapt to an array of cultural differences. He commented that in the workforces that he assembled for his projects, most of the time there were at least three distinct nationals groups. Participant 2 again concluded that a top-down type of management role is appropriate when working with this scope of diversity.

Participant 3 shared that a level of mutual understanding and accountability was necessary in managing diversity among employees. The local laborers may know some English, but there are differences in what they read, see, hear, and perceive. Participant 3 noted that in some cases, the manager is actually dealing with the workers' rules and comfort zones, rather than having difficulties in language translation.

Understanding Risk

All participants shared that understanding risk was a key strategy to successfully operating a small business in a war-torn region. They related that the ability to assess, understand, and judiciously take risks was extremely important to operating a small business in war-torn regions. The CEOs acknowledged that taking risks was necessary to successfully operating any small business. In a war-torn region however, those risks were much more apparent and sometimes with safety consequences.

Participant 1 enumerated business, physical, and financial risks. He also emphasized the importance of reporting risk articulately and honestly. He shared that a major responsibility of the CEO is articulating to the board what the risks are, and why

they have incurred these risks. Participant 1 concluded that the board must be fully aware of risks, whatever those issues may be.

Participant 2 described the need to take risks in order to accomplish business growth. He recognized that the ability to take risks is part of CEO leadership. However, he qualified that the most important factor in taking risks is to research the risk options as thoroughly as possible.

Participant 3 claimed that risk management was a part of everything he did in his overseas small business. He also elaborated the importance of written subcontractor agreements to mitigate risk. Participant 3 noted that contractual agreements were not only necessary, but that the agreements must be 100% legal in the United States, true to regulations in the state of one's business license, and understandable in the host country.

The third research question focused on problems and challenges participants experienced while operating their small business in a war-torn region: What are the problems that small business CEOs operating in a war-torn region encounter with regard to earning profits beyond 5 years? All three participants identified the challenge of human infrastructure. They elaborated that building and maintaining human infrastructure was subject to foreign authorities. Within this topical category, the two subthemes that emerged were managing all personnel, and accommodating local nationals. Furthermore, the participants named challenges unique to small business in a war-torn area, coalescing around the subthemes of regional formal and informal rules, and operating within a 24-hour schedule. A summary of these findings follows in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Findings for Research Question 3: Problems and Challenges for Small Businesses in War-Torn Areas

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme
Human resources infrastructure	Personnel	Local nationals
Challenges unique to small business in a war-torn area	Regional formal and informal rules	24-hour workday

Note. All participants discussed these issues.

Human Resources Infrastructure

A common challenge named by the participants was creating and maintaining the human infrastructure while operating in a war-torn region. They described difficulties with personnel and local nationals that they encountered while striving to operate in a context of multiple authorities. CEOs not only had to manage United States government and military personnel, but also foreign governments and their militaries. Managing a diverse workforce required understanding and acknowledging differing norms and expectations among personnel.

Personnel challenges. The business hired some personnel within the war-torn region itself, and hired others from a variety of third-world countries. Participants described the challenges they experienced when dealing with different people and agencies. Although the CEO participants had listed their own strengths in being able to connect with others, they now described the challenge of being able to connect with personnel from war-torn or other developing countries.

Participant 1 specified that dealing with people's attitudes and expectations was his number one challenge; human resource issues were constant. He also noted the complexities of working with requirements of United States and local authorities. CEOs of United States based businesses operating within a war-torn region must follow United States government law as well as host nation law; often this created a conflict. Participant 1 shared that one has to work with local authorities, although at times, a CEO is scrupulous and the local authorities are not.

Participant 2 explained the challenges of operating a small business in dangerous settings. The local infrastructure, such as ministries and their departments, plus the processes for getting proper permits and licenses all made it seem that business start-up was daunting, if not impossible. Transportation was treacherous, creating complications when transporting supplies or even just scheduling a movement. Participant 2 recommended letting the government and military know of all movements.

Participant 3 shared the challenges of working within the strict adherence to rules put forth by the military. The biggest challenge to him was the turnover of contract officers and contract officer representatives with whom he consulted. Due to the frequent changes in military personnel, perceptions of the way to run a contract often changes, creating delays in projects as well as fostering conflicts between people.

Local nationals challenges. All participants shared working with local nationals as a challenge. The CEO participants described the need to gain an understanding of cultural, religious, and educational norms of local nationals, as well as the norms of hires from other third-world countries. Interacting and connecting with local nationals added a

layer of complexity for leading and managing employees within a small business. Participants described a variety of challenges with local nationals.

Participant 1 emphasized the effort needed to work effectively with local nationals, especially in light of the gravity of his business's mission. He shared that the efforts he made to understand culture included sitting with local nationals, talking about their families, having tea with them, and visiting more than just one time. Participant 1 believed that by learning about and understanding local nationals, CEOs can develop a relationship that benefits both parties. Moreover, Participant 1 described that part of establishing productive relationships involves understanding the nuances of the host country, especially in making life or death decisions. As an American in private security, one wonders if the business will be a target to have its firearms seized. A CEO would not be so blunt to ask that question to an Afghani leader, but a local national can catch the nuance to help to communicate and receive the message. The challenge is for CEOs to vet trustworthy local nationals.

Participant 2 listed the challenges of culture, religion, language, and education that impact both small and large tasks for the business operations. Religious practices such as stopping to pray during the work day was a right for them, and the CEO must understand and accommodate these practices. Participant 2 further described the need to shift his use of spiritual leadership, given that Christianity was not meaningful for Afghanis. Typically, Participant 2 would rely on spiritual leadership for employees who practiced Christianity, but for workers with other religious backgrounds, his usual approach was not productive. Additionally, among the large population in Kabul,

Afghanistan most have never been through an education system, fostering another challenge when working with local nationals.

Participant 3 shared a language and cultural misunderstanding that escalated to poor business relations:

> They speak a different language, and even if they speak good English, perception is everything. I've seen an e-mail one time and the individual sending it was from the U.S. and it went to an Afghan businessman. The individual from the U.S. basically said, he was upset about an issue. And now I'm going to just say what it was. He said, "Bulls***! People, this is wrong." He was talking about some subject. But the Afghan leadership, the minute they saw that, they totally ignored what he was saying, what the problem was and all they saw was "you are bulls*** people." They thought he was calling them, you know, just a bad race, a bad type of people. They could not get over that. So even though they speak English, I'm saying the way they perceived things, is something that is a challenge in itself.

Challenges Unique to Small Business in a War-Torn Area

Participants discussed challenges unique to operating a small business in a war-torn region that other small businesses would not typically encounter. A common challenge, which manifested in various situations, was the need to observe the formal and informal rules of the region. CEOs had to be aware of guidelines and governing rules of the country when making decisions and be available at any time to do so, whether within the war-torn region or as requested by United States government. Another unique

challenge to working in a war-torn region was the necessity to be available on a 24 hours a day and 7 days a week basis.

Regional formal and informal rules. All participants relayed the unique challenge of acclimating to the war-torn region itself and the rules that governed that area**.** These rules included both formally stated policies, as well as informal local customs of protocol and etiquette. Participants shared instances of dealing with issues that differed from those in the States. CEOs had to manage governing rules of both the United States and the war-torn region.

Participant 1 described the scope of his business, largely governed by a contract with the United Nations and United Arabs Emirates. He typically had approximately 1,500 employees at any given time, a daunting management challenge. Participant 1 also conveyed feelings of alienation due to the type of business he operated – private security. There are very few allies in this field and therefore, the business leader is considered an outsider. In order to succeed, he had to observe informal rules and be cognizant of the subtleties of working in private security. Participant 1 shared that while the business is "absolutely necessary and essential to the mission, stability of the government, and protection of people," the business is also looked as the "red-headed stepchild, making it an easy target." Participant 1 further described the need to recognize differences of formal tax guidelines and requirements in both domestic and foreign contexts.

Participant 2 further addressed the differences of formal tax guidelines and requirements in domestic and foreign contexts. Then, this CEO elaborated the importance of observing informal rules of the region. Participant 2 discussed how local nationals

might incur unknown consequences when they join United States businesses. Some

Afghani citizens will actually target local nationals who are working with Department of

Defense (DOD) contractors. This CEO tried to protect them as much as possible, being

vigilant to escort locals while they were on site. There was constant threat of an

improvised explosive device (IED) along the roads between the office in Kabul and the

Bagram base operations site.

Participant 3 described United States legislation that defined aspects of how he

could operate his business. He further explained that business operators in Afghanistan

must observe the requirements of the Afghan First Initiative. Under this policy, small

businesses had to hire a specified percentage of Afghanis and engage an Afghani partner

company. Participant 3 also described dealing with corruption, conveying that the

Foreign Corruption Practices Act addresses many legal and personal risk issues with a

well-defined set of rules.

24-hour workday. The three participants mentioned the challenge of being

available at all times of the day and night. They described the unique challenge of trying

to manage stateside employees who had different hours than staff in the war-torn region

where the small business was operating. CEOs rarely had time off and if they did, their

schedules were not consistent.

Participant 1 stated that an around-the clock schedule is inherent in operating a

business in a war-torn region. He described a nonstop workday that involved managing

his business with little to no opportunity for personal time. This CEO shared that if he

awakened in the middle of the night, he would answer phone messages before going back to bed. He concluded that it was the only way to be successful.

Participant 2 conveyed the necessity of being available for extended periods. He also described acclimating to the regular 14- to 16-hour workdays within the confines of a locked area. Even during down time, the CEO shared housing with staff and they inevitably discussed work matters during socializing and recreation. On a positive note, this CEO remarked that the environment allowed them to bond as a group.

Participant 3 described 24-hour aspect of running a small business in a war-torn region in terms of living in the foreign-based quarters. A CEO's place of work is also the home quarters, and he cannot go anywhere else for the duration of 6 to 12 months. Participant 3 also mentioned that the experience of sharing sleeping quarters, with the same people who had just worked a 12-hour day, changed everyone's tolerance levels.

The approaches each CEO participant used in leading his business were reflective of the backgrounds and experience of those individuals. Military experience was common to all, and all had certifications in the trades that were the mainstays of their small business. Educational backgrounds were more diverse, with one high school graduate, another participant attaining an associate's degrees, and another with a bachelor's degree. Their ages as of the time of the interviews, were 41, 42, and 67. The business and personal background of the three participants follow in Table 4.

Table 4

Participant Characteristics: CEOs of Small Business Profitable in War-Torn Area for 5 Years

Characteristic	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Business Field	Explosive Ordnance Disposal & Security	Logistics & Supply Chain Management	Construction
Length of Profitability	9 years	5 years	6 years
Foreign Headquarters	Kabul, Afghanistan	Bagram, Afghanistan	Sharana, Afghanistan
Previous Management Experience	Risk management supervisor of insurance group, 19 locations	Journeymen pipefitter for local union, managed 45 staff	Aircraft maintenance shop supervisor of 70+ staff
Special Skills	Quality inspector, American Society for Quality, Risk adjuster	Project management professional, Journeymen pipefitter	Quality inspector, Aircraft welding, Nondestructive inspection certification
Military Experience	Air Force, 4 years	Army, 2 years	Marine Corps, 30 years
Rank	Senior Airman	Sergeant	Master Gunnery Sergeant
Age	42	41	67
Education	Bachelors of Science, Insurance Risk Management	High School	Associates Degree, Command and Staff College, Marine Corps

Altogether, the qualitative data gathered in this study coalesced in the three areas of effective leadership practices, best business strategies, and problems of operating a small business in war-torn regions. In terms of effective leadership, the findings of this study align with the conceptual framework of transformational-transactional leadership. Additionally, the outcomes from this study add to the existing literature on leadership practices and business strategies in small businesses. The narratives and insights provided by CEOs in this study also contribute to business literature regarding managing cultural differences and coping with risk in a war-torn region.

Findings Related to Conceptual Framework

The transformational–transactional leadership framework served as a foundation for this study to determine whether transformational or transactional leadership practices and strategies are most appropriate for small business entrepreneurs operating in war-torn areas to earn profits beyond 5 years. As stated by Day and Harrison (2011), measures of leadership do not always distinguish between the two leadership styles. However, transformational leadership represents a form or construct that is different from transactional leadership. Results from this study revealed that CEOs recognize their leadership styles as being a little of both, undistinguishable at times as Day and Harrison (2011) point out. However, when describing their dealings with personnel, projects, and decision-making, CEOs related behaviors that more closely aligned to one or the other leadership style. CEOs described awareness of the changes their leadership approach may take, from transformational to transactional, and vice versa, depending on the situation. In dealing with personnel and local nationals, CEOs described motivating personnel and

assigning them to specific tasks, all toward the common goal of the business. This characteristic is a demonstration of transformational leadership (Lai, 2011). On the other hand, CEOs discussed that part of the business process is learning and understanding local nationals and third-country contractors, which is characteristic of transactional leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993). For example, CEOs described the use of contingent rewards, in part because it was expected by certain hires due to their cultural norms; again, a demonstration of transactional leadership (Lai, 2011). This study found that neither leadership style was a definitive foundation for successfully operating a small business in a war-torn region. Rather, CEOs utilized a combination of the two approaches to survive and become profitable.

Findings Related to Literature on Effective Business Practice

CEOs in this study described their backgrounds, experiences and influences that shaped their leadership styles. As leaders, they had to build resources and manage cultural differences while establishing small businesses in war-torn areas. Participants revealed circumstances that prompted them to adapt their leadership styles. Additionally, the participants addressed the challenges unique to working in war-torn areas. Their summative advice was that a CEO's best practice for success is to expand one's knowledge of the region. Many of these findings corroborate existing business management literature.

Identifying one's own leadership style in terms of interactions with others. The CEOs in this study described having qualities of both transformational and transactional leadership styles. Their leadership would be both relational (i.e.,

transactional) yet inspiring (i.e., transformational). However, the manner in which they would lead others could change at times, dependent on the situation, circumstances, and/or personnel. The relational characteristics that CEOs described in working with their team members, local hires, and authorities of the host country were, for the most part, a transactional style of governance. However, they also had mechanisms in place to transition into transformational leadership when the business grew and acquired more personnel (Obiwuru et al., 2011). As found by Kaifi et al. (2014) and Webb et al. (2014), leadership is situational. There are many settings, such as the environment, employees, and resources that determine the characteristics needed from a leader. Likewise, these situations may determine the business approach.

Participating CEOs described building and maintaining relationships with those working for them and with others in the local region, in order to be effective as a leader and as a business. This finding is a demonstration of existing research that espouses that leaders must encourage, reward, motivate, and discipline, mostly through their leadership style, and encourage the development of team relationships inside and outside the group (Ruggieri & Abbate, 2013). CEO participants described the use of rewards as a motivation, in some cases for cultures where payments, gifts, and bribes were the norm and expected. This finding supports a quality of the transactional leadership style. CEOs demonstrated that they understood this type of motivation, and that they could use such a negotiated exchange to elicit agreement and performance from followers (Piccolo et al., 2012).

CEO participants further described holding personnel accountable, utilizing a transformational practice as described by Wang et al. (2011). Transformational leaders are able to create and maintain an environment in which employees believe they are able to accept and execute all their duties and responsibilities with ease and confidence. Additionally, CEO participants described motivation and individual consideration as necessary leadership practices, especially when working with local nationals and subcontractors from other third-world countries. These practices align with Lai's (2011) definition of transformational leadership.

Building resources. Each CEO participant discussed relying on various personnel in order to operate their small business optimally. Building resources included personnel such as team members, local nationals, and contractors who were valuable resources to a small business in a war-torn area. CEOs referred to having a second in charge person with whom they could informally discuss thoughts and decisions, as well as being a source of help in leading others. As participants discussed their own strengths and weaknesses, each was aware of using a second person to help in connecting with and motivating employees. One CEO in the study admitted he was lacking charisma, but utilized the talent of his second-in-charge to provide that leadership trait. This finding corroborates research on the need for leadership behaviors such as charisma, which is increasingly necessary as companies grow (Obiwuru et al., 2011). Leaders must recognize, as CEOs in this study did, that they need to transfer authority to their followers and inspire them to feel determined toward submitting their creative and innovative ideas to projects (Peus et al., 2013).

Managing cultural differences. As leaders allow others to share authority in decision-making, there is also the need to manage cultural differences of a workforce in a war-torn region. CEOs in this study described having to hire local nationals and others from third-world countries. Their experiences echo research on leaders of new businesses who employ immigrants. CEOs who embrace the diversity of local nationals and new immigrants (to that region) can experience more benefits than the leaders of established businesses who do not hire new immigrants (Moutray & Swift, 2013). Each CEO participant made efforts to be aware of the educational and cultural norms, and expectations of their hires, in order to foster productivity. For many of the people employed by the CEOs in this study, education was not a provision within their home country. Therefore, local nationals and workers from other third-world countries gained employment based on the reputation of specific skills associated with their country or culture. Contrary to some research on the value of training and education of employees (Moutray & Swift, 2013), CEOs employing contractors overseas cannot devote significant resources, such as time and money, to the training and education of employees. Therefore, small businesses operating in a war-torn region need to consider where to seek out hires for their needs, while counterbalancing the lack of education and training, compared to typical small company hires in the States.

Challenges unique to businesses in a war-torn area. All small businesses typically have personnel concerns; however, CEOs in the study highlighted the challenge of working with local nationals and a workforce drawn from third-world countries. Beyond personnel and local hires, a common challenge mentioned in the study was

compliance. CEOs must meet expectations of government, military, internal personnel, and local nationals. This meant having the right people in place to know: what is right, what is wrong, what is vital to carry out tasks effectively, and who to seek out for the answers. One CEO participant described that finding the right person to manage the tax regulations of both the host and home countries meant outsourcing an accountant. This experience corroborates existing research (Mironov, 2013) on the challenges of deciding on the right personnel to hire.

CEO participants in this study described the unique challenges of operating a small business overseas, in terms of knowing the region and its rules in which the business operates. As recognized by Chittenden and Ambler (2014), small business CEOs may encounter difficulties in meeting government regulations; in particular, managing regulations of their home country as well as those in the operating country. As conveyed by participants in this study, laws and regulations may lack formal, written expression. The laws and regulations typically differed from those of the States. Moreover, war-torn regions, such as that of Afghanistan, present the challenge of threats to personnel and transportation. In war zones, small businesses commonly use local military and local nationals to oversee the process of gathering necessary resources (McCartin, 2013). This process sometimes means that procuring materials from armed groups necessitates giving commissions or even bribes (McCartin, 2013). CEOs in this study referred to the use of bribes as a norm in Afghanistan not only for transportation, but as a means to get routine work accomplished. Bribes are an established and known expectation among the people of the region. Additionally, the threat of violence was a part of their everyday lives,

occurring during transportation as well as threats to employed local nationals by other locals of the region. In accordance with research by McCartin (2013), CEOs in this study did not regard violence as a major threat to their business productivity and profits; noting only the need to be aware of this problem on a regular basis.

As Chuang and Lee (2011) stated, a leader can only be effective if he or she can inspire followers. Participating CEOs shared their efforts to learn and understand the cultures and expectations of local nationals. At times, the participants acquired and worked with additional personnel for particular need, such as transportation or regulation needs, thus forming and motivating a team that worked toward the common goal of the business.

Best practice for CEO success is to expand knowledge. The participants, CEOs of small businesses operating in war-torn regions, stated that leadership plays a critical role in their success for earning profits. This finding concurs with Ruggieri and Abbate (2013) in that the performance and success of an organization depend on behavior and characteristics displayed by its leader. Unanimously, the participants mentioned that a best practice for CEO success is to expand one's knowledge. The participants specified expanding knowledge of the cultures in which they worked; cultural knowledge in turn supported their ability to adjust leadership approaches based on situational cues.

Applications to Professional Practice

Findings from this study contribute to literature on leadership and small businesses, with a focus on factors that can affect entrepreneurial success in war-torn economies. Based on the existing research, small businesses have been a source of

employment and economic strength in developing countries since the mid-1990s. These businesses represent a culture of entrepreneurship that governments should foster (Kennickell, 2015). CEOs in this study described working with governments and local nationals of developing countries in order to do so. They listed challenges such as informal rules, formal regulations, and working with local nationals. However, the participating CEOs persevered in operating their small business and were able to engage in profits for more than 5 years. These outcomes suggest that businesses can thrive in developing countries, and specifically in areas known to be unstable environments.

Although leadership is critical in operating any successful small business, CEOs in this study named specifics of working in war-torn regions. The participant CEOs in this study emphasized that having knowledge and conducting research was crucial to operating and maintaining a small business overseas. One participant repeated throughout the interview, "Knowledge is power." As leaders, they needed knowledge of the region in which the small business will be operating, the cultures of personnel and subcontractors, and the rules of the region, all of which can make or break a small business. The results of the study provide knowledge for individuals attempting to start or maintain small businesses in volatile regions such as war zones. The stated leadership practices, behaviors, and characteristics, as well as effective business strategies and methods described by participating CEOs, altogether provide substantial insight into operating a successful small business in a war-torn region.

Implications for Social Change

This study presents findings that have implications for, and contributions to, social change as well as global change. CEO participants in the study described a relational component of leadership that contributed to their personal success, and likewise contributed to the success of their small businesses. The participants detailed that learning about and understanding people of other cultures was foundational to forming relationships. By building and maintaining relationships with United States personnel, foreign hires, and authorities of the host country, the ensuing understanding and communication between diverse people provided a multinational connection among all people involved. From a business perspective, these relationships contributed to improved global markets, as exemplified by CEOs in this study who took their small business overseas. Operating a small business in a war zone can be important in restoring stability to a particular community (Bullough et al., 2014). Although results from this study did not specifically explore whether the host community benefitted, CEOs noted that hiring local nationals in turn provided jobs for the community. The experiences conveyed in this research point to an improved sense of opportunity for both the small businesses, and the communities in which they operated.

Recommendations for Action

This study presents knowledge ideal for the small business owner interested in operating overseas in war-torn areas and third-world countries. Small business leaders who seek, or who do currently employ people with varying cultural backgrounds, can benefit from best business strategies and effective leadership practices named in the

study. The overall theme in this study was having knowledge in multiple areas. Leaders of small businesses seeking to operate in war-torn regions would benefit most from having prior knowledge of the region where they intend to establish their business. Likewise, they need to know the resources available to them within that region and surrounding areas. CEOs in this study described vetting with other small businesses as a business strategy that contributed to their success and the profitability of their small business. Additionally, CEOs led with a combination of transformational and transactional leadership characteristics. Although each participant preferred the relational aspect of transactional leadership, CEOs admitted that the manner in which they led others was typically situational, dependent on personnel and circumstances. Based on study findings, CEOs of current or future small businesses can benefit from using a relational approach to leading and operating their business, especially if they are managing a workforce comprised from differing cultural backgrounds.

This study contributes to existing research on leadership styles and small business. The researcher can disseminate study results via academic, industry and training avenues. In the academic arena, journals, symposiums, and research associations are venues for reaching other academics who have similar interests. Industry associations, small business conferences, global business conferences and meetings, as well as leadership and personnel trainings, are additional avenues for disseminating this study's findings. Similarly, the researcher may share CEO experiences from this study at associations and trainings specific to military and government personnel. Such arenas would provide opportunities for audience members to revisit their business practices and

perspectives on leading others with diverse backgrounds, and to consider providing services in war-torn regions.

Recommendations for Further Research

The present study results derived from a sample of small business CEOs, all with military background and under United States government contracts. One viable extension of the current research would be to conduct the same study with a sample of CEOs of nonmilitary based small businesses. Such a study may provide additional insight to the practices, strategies and challenges of operating a successful small business in a war-torn or developing region. These nonmilitary leaders may provide a description of leadership different from, or possibly similar to, those of a military background.

The present study focused on a single leader, the CEO, of a small business operating in a war-torn region. During interviews, each mentioned having a second in charge person or specific team member as their person to assist with decision-making, vetting, and management of subordinates. Including these staff members in the study could add insights on effective leadership practices or best business strategies. Lastly, conducting the study in other war-torn regions in the Middle East or other third-world countries could add to the findings from the current study.

Three limitations of the study encompass research time, participant background, and location of the focal businesses. One limitation of the study was the amount of time allowed to implement the research method and design. Having more time would mean being able to delve more deeply into the experiences and opinions of small business leaders in war zones. A second limitation concerns the participants chosen for this study

who were all CEOs of small businesses under United States government contracts and

with military background. Their acclimation to the region may have been easier than for

other CEOs with little or no military or government background. CEOs of other types of

small businesses, without military or government contracts experience, may have

provided additional and different insight to the practices, strategies and challenges of

maintaining a successful business in a war-torn area. Lastly, a limitation of the study was

the geographic location of where small businesses operated, being Afghanistan. The

respondents in the study may not be representative of all war-torn regions in the Middle

East.

Reflections

The final learning outcomes of the completed study exceeded my expectations.

The research process, from conception to conducting the field work and delving into

scholarly literature, was demanding beyond my own preconceived notions and the well-

meaning warnings from friends and colleagues. Although my career is devoted to

understanding successful leadership, it was truly a gift to learn first-hand about strategies

affecting small business CEOs operating in the war-torn country of Afghanistan. This

research study will, I trust, help future business leaders to be proactive rather than

reactive in making crucial decisions related to profitability, sustainability, and potentially,

to employee safety.

Because of my prior knowledge of the study topic, I approached the research with

the commitment to trust solely the data to answer the research question. During

interviews, the participants were engaging, knowledgeable, and willing to share in, not

only their personal lived experiences, but also in their business strategies to be profitable beyond 5 years. Using multiple sources provided triangulation of data. Participants confirmed their successful strategies through background information questionnaires, extensive semi-structured interviews, and the examination of documents and records. All greatly added to my own learning and understanding of operating a small business in this environment. Relying on the data, and not personal biases, allowed me to remain neutral and mindful to the role of the researcher.

Each of the participants brought his own experience to life during both the initial and follow-up interviews. We had established a level of relaxed trust that allowed for the optimal environment for data collection. Upon completion of the study, my newly gained knowledge is now invaluable insight into the challenges facing small businesses operating in Afghanistan, and potentially in other war-torn areas. The findings of this study may prove beneficial to current and future small business leaders.

Conclusion

The performance and success of an organization depend on the leadership style displayed by the leader of the organization (Ruggieri & Abbate, 2013). CEOs in this study demonstrated successful performance and operations within their small businesses in war-torn areas, measured by their abilities to engage in profits for more than 5 years. CEOs described effective leadership practices and best business strategies to meet the problems and challenges of operating a small business in a war-torn region. A common theme among participants was that no one leadership style proved to be most effective for maintaining a successful business in the specific region. Each participant described

leading with both a transformational and transactional approach, and that much of his leadership was situational. Using this combination leadership style allowed the CEO participants to assess and use their diverse human resources in the tasks for which they were most appropriate. Likewise, the combination leadership style facilitated a team approach, which in turn supported personnel working toward the common goals of the business.

While all CEO participants listed learning about and understanding culture as the greatest success factor, they also noted those efforts as the greatest challenge. All CEO participants gave examples of the difficulties of building, maintaining, and utilizing the human resource infrastructure comprised of local nationals and United States personnel. Additionally, the region and rules in which the small business was operating presented unique challenges for the CEO participants. All participants stated that having prior knowledge of the target location is the most effective leadership and business practice of all. One CEO named the preparation efforts "knowledge as power." An understanding of war-torn regions was critical for the success of small businesses. Leaders must have proficiency of government and military rules and regulations, and be aware of other small businesses established in the host country to develop a network of contacts. Discernment of local cultural and social norms were vital in order to establish their business that would ultimately provide services for the people and economy of that region. As described by these CEOs of successful businesses in Afghanistan, knowledge of the region and understanding the risks involved with their operations, will greatly benefit CEOs who are considering small business operations in war-torn regions.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Before we get started, please fill out this form to capture a bit of background about your

business. Thank you.

Your Name _____

Business Name _____

Main products/services _____

Number of employees _____ Number of direct reports to you _____

Location _____

What percent of the time are you in Afghanistan? _____

Other information you would like to add _____

_____

Let's get started

Script: You have been selected because you are the leader of a business operating in Afghanistan that has been profitable beyond 5 years and you have been in Afghanistan for one or more years. This study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, we can learn more about leadership in this context, and eventually the research results will contribute to a broad body of knowledge

To facilitate gathering the important information you are contributing today, I would like to audio tape our conversations. You have signed the release form and have a copy. As a reminder, your information is recorded under a pseudonym and only the researcher and transcriptionist will be privy to the tapes which will be eventually destroyed. The document that you signed essentially states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and 3) you may stop at any time without consequence. Again, thank you for agreeing to participate.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than two hours. During this time, we'll cover several topics. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to redirect the conversation in order to accomplish the agenda. Of course, you are welcome to email me with additional thoughts that you have after the interview concludes. Please make yourself comfortable and speak freely.

I am starting the recording now.
Please state your name and date.
You have signed an informed consent form? (answer yes)
You agree to have our conversation recorded? (answer yes)

PROBLEMS FACING SMALL BUSINESS IN WAR-TORN AREA (RQ3)

1. Tell me about the challenges you have encountered operating a business in this

   war-torn area of Afghanistan

2. How are these challenges unique--how do they differ from challenges to any

   small business?

   > Note to interviewer: At appropriate spots, share your interpretation of the participant's comments in order to confirm you interpretation of the responses

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES (RQ1)

3. When you think about effective leadership, who do admire or consider to be a great model? Who are the teachers or coaches who have influenced your leadership style?

4. Tell me about your leadership style.

5. For your current business, has your leadership style changed since the beginning of your venture? In what ways has it changed?

6. As a leader of a small business, what do you think are the best practices for small business CEOs to become successful when operating in a war-torn region?

7. As a leader of a small business, what are your greatest strengths in relation to operating a small business in a war-torn economy?

8. As a leader of a small business, what characteristics or practices do you perceive as your main weaknesses or opportunities for improvement, especially in relation to operating a small business in a war-torn economy?

BEST BUSINESS STRATEGIES (RQ2)

9. As a leader of a small business, what do you think are the best methods to resolve problems related to operating a small business in a war-torn economy?

CONCLUSION

If you think of anything else you would like to add, before our follow-up meeting, please email me.