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Strategies to Decrease Business Failure in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Pantiva Navamarat
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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Pantiva Navamarat

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Strategies to Decrease Business Failure in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

by

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MS, Golden Gate University, 2012

BA, The University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, 2004

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2018

Abstract

In Southeast Asia, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) fail each year; in 2010, SME failure rate exceeded 50%. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies that some SME business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia. The target population consisted of 5 SME business leaders in Southeast Asia who demonstrated success in using strategies to decrease the failure rate of SMEs. The conceptual framework for this study was the Ulrich model, which supports the notion that a human resource manager needs to be involved in overall organizational decision making as a strategic partner, administrative assistant, employee champion, and a change agent for business continuity and sustainability. Data collection sources included semistructured interviews and analysis of company documents. Using Yin's 5-step data analysis approach resulted in 3 themes: governance, marketing and branding, and integration of information technology. The governance theme included employee engagement and leadership strategies, which could help business leaders to create an agile work environment and work commitment to decrease business failure. The marketing and branding theme included social media and networking strategies that could promote the brand and enhance company image. The implication for social change is that business continuation could lead to economic development, employment opportunities, and tax revenue for local governments, leading to an improved standard of living and overall prosperity of local communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my loving and dedicated family. I am thankful to my parents for their encouragement, love, and support.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In 2016, 99.6% of business organizations in Southeast Asia were small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs; Chanin, Phooma, Somsuk, Temprasiri, & Chanin, 2016); however, the changing business environment is causing more uncertainty to SMEs (Chittithaworn, Islam, Keawchana, & Yusuf, 2011). The fact that many SMEs fail in Southeast Asia each year is a significant problem for business leaders of SMEs (Dullayaphut & Untachai, 2013). The failure of SMEs is due to a lack of skills and competency of business leaders (Dullayaphut & Untachai, 2013). Business leaders play a significant role in the long-term sustainability of an organization (Pfeffer & Veiga, 2014). The business professionals' role is to ensure that the employees are effective in increasing the companies' profitability (Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2014). According to Shafeek (2016), there is a positive connection between SMEs' performances and strategic human resource management (HRM) strategies. HRM is the universally applicable management practice to increase organizational performance through human capitals (Department of Business Innovation and Skill, 2015). Strategic HR managers play an essential role in shaping and polishing policies leading to better individual and organizational performance.

Background of the Problem

SMEs play an important role in the economic development of Southeast Asia (Ueasangkomsate, 2015). SMEs in Southeast Asia contribute to more than 37% of the GDP and employ over 75% of the national workforce (Srinuan, 2014). Many SMEs in Southeast Asia struggle to survive each year (Dullayaphut & Untachai, 2013). In a highly

competitive environment, an organization faces many challenges to remain sustainable. According to Damanpour (2010), the potential weakness of SMEs is that business leaders lack HR capabilities to support growth. The challenges include building a business model that allows companies to respond to challenges about human capital management in the workforce. The business professional's role is to ensure that the employees are productive to remain competitive (Wright, McMahan, McCormick, & Sherman, 2014). The traditional human resources (HR) roles of hiring, training, and developing employees are not sufficient to remain sustainable and, as a result, business leaders need to act as strategic formulation partners, administrative experts, employee advocates, and change agents in an organization (Ulrich, 1998). Pfeffer and Veiga (2014) noted that sustainable HR strategies in SMEs in Southeast Asia, could improve employee productivity and ensure continued profitability.

Problem Statement

In Southeast Asia, the survival rate of SMEs is 10%, and SMEs leaders often face a long-term sustainability problem (Nupap, Chakpitak, Neubert, & Tra-Ngarn, 2016). SMEs play an important role in Southeast Asia's economy, as SMEs constitute over 99% of total enterprises and employees about 75% of the labor force (Muenjohn & McMurray, 2016). The general business problem is the high failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia. The specific business problem is that some SMEs' business leaders lack strategies to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies SME business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia. The target population consisted of SME business leaders in Southeast Asia, possessing successful experience in using strategies to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia. The implication for positive social change is that the survival of SMEs could result in continuous employment opportunities for people living in Southeast Asia's local communities. The employment opportunities might result in an improved standard of living and wellbeing of Southeast Asian.

Nature of the Study

The three types of research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). A researcher using the qualitative research method seeks to understand the event from the perspective of those experiencing the phenomenon (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Quantitative researchers use statistical methods to achieve numerical results to provide additional data sets for analysis (Blau, Bach, Scott, & Rubin, 2013; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014; Wolgemuth, 2014). I chose the qualitative method over the quantitative method because there was no statistical analysis of numerical data in this study. Researchers using the mixed-methods research employ both qualitative and quantitative methods (Yin, 2017). Mixed-methods research was not suitable for this study because I did not test hypotheses, but rather researched strategies SME business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia.

Several qualitative research designs exist (O' Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed & Cook, 2014). In ethnographic design, a researcher studies specific groups in a cultural setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In narrative design, a researcher collects data in a storytelling format to find the research outcome (Benson, 2014). The objective of this study was to explore strategies that SMEs' business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia. Both ethnographic and narrative designs were not suitable for this research study because I was not collecting data in a storytelling format or from cultural settings for a prolonged period. The phenomenological design is suitable for a research study in which the researcher plans to explore the lived experiences of the participants in a general setting (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). In this study, I did not plan to capture the lived experience of participants in a general setting and, for this reason; the phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study.

The case study research design is exploratory because researchers integrate multiple data collection techniques and developed common factors or themes inherent in the collected data (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014; Yin, 2017). I used a multiple case study design for this study because I sought in-depth information about a particular phenomenon that would not be likely to obtain from other designs. I used the multiple case study design because I interviewed SME business leaders in Southeast Asia from multiple companies to understand the strategies they have used successfully to decrease the failure rates of SMEs in Southeast Asia.

Research Question

The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do some SME business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have proven successful to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia?
2. Which strategies that you used to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia were the least effective?
3. What are some specific examples of strategies you used to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia?
4. What are the challenges you faced to implement strategies to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia?
5. How did you promote policies and values that align with strategies used to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia?
6. How are strategies used to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia communicated through the organizational ranks and among stakeholders?
7. What role does leadership play in the implementation of successful strategies used to reduce the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia?
8. What are some of the consequences of not implementing successful strategies to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia?
9. What else could you add regarding strategies to decrease the failure rate of

SMEs in Southeast Asia?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the Ulrich model developed by Dave Ulrich in 1998. Ulrich explained the required strategies and practices to remain profitable and sustainable, thereby avoiding business failure. Ulrich stated that a business professional has to play different roles in a business environment. The functions of a business professional include strategic formulation partner, administrative expert, employee advocate, and change agent. The role of the strategic partner in an organization requires business professionals to participate in the organizations' strategic decision making. The administrative expert role requires business professionals to engage in fixing broken processes in an organization's value chain. The employee advocate role means that business professionals represent employees, become their voice, and act in the best interest of employees in the organization. Finally, the role of a change agent requires business professionals to help employees adapt to change and to foster innovation in the workplace. According to Ulrich, business leaders using the Ulrich model will increase organizational performance, resulting in business continuity and long-term sustainability.

Ulrich's (1998) model was suitable for this study, as Ulrich claimed that business professionals must think and behave in a manner that brings out significant changes that include the use of strategies to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia. Applying the Ulrich model may enable business leaders in Bangkok, Southeast Asia, to act as a managing partner, become an employee advocate, acquire knowledge to become an administrative expert, and, most importantly, become the change agent, which may

require challenging the status quo. SME business leaders in Southeast Asia need to ensure that business professionals have the tools, information, and processes to execute assigned tasks.

Operational Definitions

Authentic leaders: Visionary or charismatic business leaders who encourage employees to engage emotionally to achieve desired organizational targets and objectives (Zhang, Avery, Bergsteiner, & More, 2014).

Bracketing: Bracketing is about becoming aware of any preconceived notions that may hinder the reliability of the study (Chan, Fung, & Chen, 2013).

Competency model: Competency model is a set of expectations within organizations for exemplary performance and increased productivity (Wolgemuth, 2014).

Employee champion: Employee champion is about setting employees for success by providing resources (Sayfuddin, 2014).

Human capital: Human capital is the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual and includes education, experience, knowledge, and skills (Wright et al., 2014).

Organizational silo: Organizational silo occurs when the institutional system blindly follows its purpose by favoring some and excluding others (Vakeva, Westerlund, & Ilmola-Sheppard, 2017).

Strategic Partner: In strategic partner role, HR leaders contribute their skills and knowledge to formulate an organizational strategy (Hassan, Manso, Rahman, & Kelana, 2015).

Sustainability: Sustainability is a logical development based on the balance of economic, social, and environmental outcomes to provide benefits to multiple stakeholders (Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 2014).

Toxic leadership: Abusive, unpredictable, and authoritarian leadership behaviors that harm subordinates, and expresses narcissistic self-promotion (Schmidt, 2008).

Transaction cost model: In the transaction cost model, researchers focus on transactions based on economic and finance as a medium in controlling human behaviors (Wright & McMahan, 1992).

Work-life balance: Work life balance is employees being able to meet a family, work, and non-work related commitment (Delecta, 2011).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations set contextual boundaries in the study. Assumptions are the facts that a researcher considers to be true, but not verified (Rouleau-Carroll, 2014). Rouleau-Carroll (2014) defined limitations as potential shortcomings of the study. Zhang and Zhang (2013) defined research delimitations as the boundaries set by a researcher in the study.

Assumptions

According to Gardner et al. (2014), assumptions support the study findings. In this study, I assumed that the participants would be truthful with their answers during the interview process. I also assumed that I would be able to reach data saturation during the interview and participants would share their company documentation as a secondary data

source. During the interview with all participants, I reached data saturation, and participant shared the company documents.

Limitations

Yin (2017) noted that limitations are factors beyond the control of a researcher. Limitations are a potential weakness of the research (Zivkovic, 2012). The first limitation of this study was the sample size. In this study, five participants were enough to gather enough information to have a greater understanding of the research phenomenon under investigation. The second limitation was that the company documents from participants might not be accurate or might not include information relevant to the study. Not all, but some documents that participants shared were relevant to this study. The third limitation was a geographical area. Although the study took place in Bangkok, SME business leaders in other provinces might have the different strategies to avoid business failures.

Delimitations

Rouleau-Carroll (2014) noted that delimitations are within the control of the researcher. The three delimitations in this study were: (a) the research participants and the target population live in Bangkok, (b) I compared and contrasted business strategies with leaders from other industries, and (c) I limited my sample size to five. According to Guetterman (2015), the sample size for a case study is no more than five participants. Large sample size does not guarantee that researchers reach data saturation for a qualitative case study (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study could be of value to business leaders to highlight HR activities within business organizations, both large and small, to remain sustainable. Becker and Huselid (2014) stated that sustainable HR activities could help business leaders to remain profitable. The significance of the study is that the effective strategies to decrease business failure could help SME business leaders to conduct sustainable business practices that have positive social change implications.

Contribution to Business Practice

The business performance is dependent on employee productivity (Ahmad, Kausar, & Azhar 2015; Becker & Huselid, 2014). Leaders that integrate effective strategies are efficient in using human capital and displaying high profits and growth (Huselid et al., 2014; Martina, Hana, & Jiri, 2013). The findings of this study could contribute to effective business practice in three ways. First, SME business leaders could use business strategies to avoid business failure. Second, the study might help businesses to identify business intelligence tools that successful SME business leaders use to remain profitable. The academic scholars could use the findings from this study as a precursor for future research in strategy formulation to avoid business failure.

Implications for Social Change

Effective business strategies could result in job satisfaction and lower employee turnover for the company, leading to a reduced unemployment rate in the society (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014; Wolgemuth, 2014). Employee productivity could increase business profitability (Gamage, 2015). Profitability helps business leaders with

organizational growth, which could result in employment opportunities for local communities. Higher employment could lead to higher tax revenues for local governments, which might translate into more investments in the local communities to increase the welfare of residents of these communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

I reviewed the literature about SMEs' survival strategies in Southeast Asia published in various journals and seminal scholarly books. Google Scholar, linked to the Walden University Library's website, served as the primary source for accessing journal articles. The Walden University Library allows students access to various databases. Databases used to obtain literature for this study included Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, Sage Premier, Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest Central. I also accessed various open journals to obtain literature related to SMEs survival strategies. AOSIS OpenJournals provides open access to peer-reviewed scholarly journals from various academic disciplines. Similarly, ScienceDirect provides both tolled and open access to a full-text scientific database containing journal articles and book chapters. In some instances, I accessed government websites such as the Thai Chamber of Commerce to obtain information about SMEs' survival strategies.

The strategy for searching through existing literature entailed the use of keywords and phrases in the various databases listed above. I applied filters to database searches to narrow down the search results. These filters included specific keywords, a specified period, and specific databases. When using Google Scholar, I gave preference to articles published in or after 2013, ensuring the literature was topical and relevant. Second, I gave

preference to articles that were available in the Walden University Library. The keywords and phrases I used in my search were *Thailand's SMEs*, *human resource (HR)*, *HR development*, *HR Therories*, *HRM technology*, *HR polices*, *UlRich Model*, and *leadership*. Crossref and Ulrich's Periodicals Directory are tools to verify that literature is peer-reviewed. The literature review includes 72 references. The publication date for 64 (89%) of these references is within the 2013-2018 period. In addition, 62 of these 72 references (86%) are peer-reviewed articles and excludes website and non-scholarly articles.

Literature Review Organization

The literature review section has several subsections beginning with an introduction, which includes information about the strategy for searching the literature, the frequencies, and percentages of peer-reviewed articles as well as publication dates. In the next section, I focus on the application of the literature to the research question and included a brief description of the purpose of the study.

I focused on HR strategies to keep Thai SMEs from failing. The themes I discuss in this literature review relate to HR strategies, which include employee engagement and knowledge management, organizational culture and agility, management of toxic leaders, and employee retention. In this literature review, I provide a discussion regarding the way each of these themes affects the failure rate of SMEs.

Throughout the literature review, I compare and contrast different points of view and relationships between previous research and findings with this study. The first theme which is the Ulrich model included a critical analysis and synthesis of the conceptual

framework.. I discussed supporting and contrasting/ rival theories from relevant literature on the topic of business survival strategies. Some of the supporting and contrasting/ rival theories are Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, human capital theory, performance prism theory, and recruitment theory. The second theme, organizational culture and agility included a brief overview of the development of business survival strategies construct over time. I discussed common concerns relating to the construct as well as the various definitions, antecedents, and consequences of business failure.

The third and final theme for discussion is the management of toxic leaders. The theme included a general discussion about leadership and leadership styles, relating to business failure. Leadership styles reviewed included transactional leadership theory, transformational leadership theory, and relational leadership theory.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

My intent for this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies that SME business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Southeast Asia. Developing an understanding of such strategies required a qualitative approach, more specifically an exploratory single case study. The findings from this study might provide insight into business survival strategies from a group of leaders' perspectives.

The findings of the study may assist with the development of appropriate strategies for SMEs in Southeast Asia. Once an understanding of the underlying meaning emerges, appropriate strategies might equip leaders with the skills to improve business survival strategy. The findings from the study might improve business practice by identifying appropriate strategies, leading to increased productivity and organizational

competitiveness. The potential for social change rests in the development of strategies to improve business survival and personal well-being.

Ulrich Model

Business leaders face many challenges in a competitive business environment. These challenges are globalization, growth, technology, intellectual capital, and change (Ulrich, 1998). The global market is expanding, and business leaders are struggling to meet the global demand. The dynamics of companies on the world stage are different, as managers have to deal with trade issues, unfamiliar cultures, and fluctuating exchange rates (Ulrich, 1998). The leaders need to adapt to new ideas, products, and information to remain competitive. As a business grows, business leaders face challenges, as they will be dealing with new customers and new products. Often the challenges require business leaders to be innovative and creative in the way they share information, and how they deal with employees and customers (Ulrich, 1998). The HR professional plays a significant role as a strategic partner in organizational decision making in assisting business leaders to meet business challenges.

Technology affects how people do their work. Technology breakthrough requires business leaders to adapt to new technology that drives results. The business leaders must make use of current technology in process enhancement, product development, communication, training, and development. Because HR professionals are part of the organizational leadership team, they need to act as an administrative expert to assist business leaders to implement technological innovation in the organization. Yusuf, Fiyawana, Wekke, and Ekonomi (2017) studied the HR practices of Indonesian SMEs

and found a significant positive correlation between organizational performances and HR roles as a strategic partner and administrative expert.

The biggest challenge for business leaders is adapting to change (Ulrich, 1998). HR business leaders must lead the way in regard to change. HR leaders are the ones managing change by identifying a shared need, shaping the vision, mobilizing the commitment, modifying the systems, monitoring the progress, and making the change last (Ulrich, 1998). Change management is a core responsibility of HR professionals as change agents.

To meet the business challenges, business leaders need to manage and use their intellectual capital effectively. Intellectual capital, such as knowledge, brings a competitive advantage to the business (Menkhoff, Wah, & Loh, 2016). HR leaders need to recruit, train, and develop talent to differentiate themselves from the competition by conducting business in a manner that serves customers better than their competitors (Babu, Sathyanarayana, Ketharam, Kar, & Detels, 2015). HR leaders need to act as employee champions when managing intellectual capital.

Business leaders need core competencies to succeed. The core competencies of any organization are organizational capabilities to use the human capital of an organization effectively (Barney & Wright, 1998). Human capital is an organization's greatest assets (Karimidizboni, 2013) and HR professionals must build and develop human capital (Ulrich, Schiemann, & Sartain, 2015). Sikyr (2013) noted that HR leaders play important roles in increasing organizational value through human capital. HR professionals use several theories found in the literature to mobilize human capital. Most

of these theories focus on traditional HR practices. Traditional HR function includes performance appraisal, discussing company rewards and benefits with employees, and selecting, recruiting, and training of employees (Boon, Eckardt, Lepak, & Boselie, 2018). The traditional HR functions are not enough for business sustainability. In traditional HR practices, human resources managers are not part of the overall organizational decision making (Long, 2013). In the Ulrich model (1998), HR professionals assume multiple roles and are part of corporate decision making.

The HR professional must assume different roles to ensure the organization remains competitive and sustainable in a business environment (Ulrich, 1998). Ulrich defined HR roles and functions to make organizations efficient and employees friendly. Ulrich identified four roles of HR professionals: strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion, and change agent. As a strategic partner, HR professionals align HR and business strategy (Sayfuddin, 2014). The administrative tasks require HR professionals to re-engineer organization processes (Sayfuddin, 2014). Being an employee champion is about setting employees up for success by providing resources (Sayfuddin, 2014). The change agent role requires an HR professional to manage transformation (Sayfuddin, 2014). Paul, Wight, and Chris (2010) supported the notion that leaders must fulfill all four roles as highlighted in the Ulrich model to add the most value to the organization.

In a strategic partner role, the HR leaders partner with corporate leaders in organizational strategy formulation. HR leaders need to recognize if the company has the right culture; required knowledge, skills, and abilities; appropriate measures, incentives,

and rewards; communication systems and policies; capacity for change; and the necessary leadership to achieve goals (Ulrich, 1998). HR professionals help business leaders to identify the gap between current practices and best practices. HR professionals as a strategic partner shift away from focusing on operational matters and become strategic decision makers in an organization (Phillips & Phillips, 2016). The strategic partner role requires HR professionals to diagnose and re-engineer organizational processes and manage cultural transformation to enhance performance (Loshali & Krishnan, 2013). Leaders align HR strategies and practices with the organizational strategy (Panagiotakopoulos, 2011). Hassan, Manso, Rahman, and Kelana (2015) noted that, as a strategic partner, HR leaders contribute their skills and knowledge to formulate an organizational strategy. Mitchell, Obeidat, and Bray (2013) studied 118 companies from Jordan to understand the relationship between strategic HR management practices and organizational performance. Mitchell et al. found that HR practices, as a strategic partner, strengthen HR initiatives and the implementation of such initiatives. Fairbarin (2005) conducted a case study in which an author found that American Express business leaders strengthen a company's culture and corporate value through the implementation of the Ulrich model in their HRM practices.

The HR function is to ensure the organization is efficient in process management. The role of HR is to find the broken process and help to fix it. The HR professional needs to show business leaders how to do the work in the organization by becoming an administrative expert (Ulrich, 1998). In the administrative expert role, HR leaders ensure that employee management and training activities are productive and conducted

efficiently (Yusuf et al., 2017). To assume the role of an administrative expert, the HR professional needs to have a thorough understanding of labor laws, trade union, changing legislation, and work safety. HR leaders need to be familiar with the strategic objective of various departments within the organization. The HR professional is more equipped to serve as an administrative expert if exposed to different aspects of the organizational functions.

Employees play an important role in business success. The HR professionals must take the responsibility of recruiting and training employees to ensure employees have the required skills to achieve organizational growth (Babu et al., 2015). Engaged employees drive change and bring results (Moreland, 2013). The HR professionals must ensure that the employees commit to the organization. Many business leaders ask employees to do more work, but provide fewer benefits (Ulrich, 1998). The HR professionals should be the voice of the employees and protect their interests. The HR professionals are the liaison between employees and managers in conflict resolution. The HR professionals' role is to educate managers about company policies regarding employee treatment and labor laws.

Employees play a significant role in companies' sustainability. Hassan et al. (2015) stated that in an employee champion role, the HR professionals advocate employees' rights and support and promote the interest of the employees. Reilly and Williams (2006) stated that in some businesses, line managers take HR responsibilities and act as an employee advocate. Saleh, Yaacob, and Rosli (2015) stated that acting as an employee advocate by line managers improves employees' performance in an

organization. Besides being an employee advocate, business leaders can use the Ulrich Model (1998) to act as a change agent to remain profitable and productive.

The business environment is changing because of competition, globalization, and technology. The difference between a winner and a loser in business is the ability of business leaders to embrace change (Ulrich, 1998). Hassan et al. (2015) noted that business leaders should embrace organizational change based on organizational needs. The role of the HR professionals is to help the organization transition during a change. During the organizational change, HR helps employees adjust to such change through job design, coaching, and training sessions (Ulrich, 1998). When an organization welcomes the change, the HR professionals' role is to communicate the change to employees and to ensure that employees have the right skills and tools to remain profitable and productive during the organizational change.

In a few studies in the literature, the authors focused on HRM practices of Thai companies, but none of these authors applied the Ulrich (1998) model for HRM practices. Koonmee, Signhapakdi, Virakul, and Lee (2010) studied quality of work life on productivity in Southeast Asia. Tangthong, Trimetsoontorn, and Rojnirtikul (2014) explored the HRM practices and employee retention in Southeast Asia. Ariyabuddhiphongs and Kahn (2017) studied the mediating effects of trust and job performance on café employees in Southeast Asia. Thanyawatpornkul, Siengthai, and Johri (2016) studied the HR practices in the context of the facility management business. Pongpearchan (2016) investigated the effect of transformational leadership on the strategic HR management practices and the success of Toyota's dealer in Southeast Asia.

Siengthai (2015) explored the HRM practices in the training and development of employees in the Ministry of Interior. Suriyankietkaew and Avery (2016) added that Thailand is the largest growing economies in Southeast Asia, and exploring the HRM strategies to decrease the business failure would further contribute to the GDP growth in Thailand. Suriyankietkaew and Avery (2016) noted the need for further investigation into the HRM role in business sustainability in Thailand's SMEs. In this study, I contributed to filling the literature gap by incorporating the Ulrich model to study SMEs sustainability in Thailand.

The need for further study of the HRM practice relies on that fact that many researchers from the various countries found a positive relationship between HR practices and organizational performance. For example, Boselie, Paauwe, and Jansen (2001) and Hoque (1999) did the study on the impact of the HR practices in the United States and Europeans companies; Masum, Azad, and Beh (2016) studied Asian companies; and Ogunyomi and Bruning (2016) explored the HRM practices of African companies. Karin, Lawter, Brokerhoff, and Rutigliano (2014) focused on the HRM practices of 48 countries. In these studies, the researcher focused on general HRM practices and was not specific to the Ulrich model.

The literature review revealed a few articles in which scholars have discussed the Ulrich (1998) model in their studies. In these studies, the researchers showed positive outcomes. Yusuf et al. (2017) examined the practices of 40 HR professionals of companies based in Indonesia. The purpose of using the Ulrich (1998) model for this study is that traditionally, business leaders focused the HR practices on individual

employees' jobs, but the Ulrich (1998) model takes a holistic approach and views the HR practices regarding organizational performance (Yusuf et al., 2017). In the Ulrich (1998) model approach, the business leaders view the HR professionals' practices relating to their roles as a strategic partner, change agents, administrative experts, and employees champion. Yusuf et al. (2017) found that the strategic partner and the administrative expert role are the most dominant roles in an organization. Yusuf et al.'s (2017) findings were similar to the findings of the prior study conducted by Conner and Ulrich (1996). The authors found that there is a significant correlation among four roles of the HR professionals as stated in the Ulrich (1998) model. The respondents for this study included 265 HR professionals from medium to large companies. Yusuf et al. (2017) showed that the HR professional's contribution was significant to the success of the organization. According to Yusuf et al. (2017), the Ulrich (1998) model assists business leaders to achieve core competency. The Ulrich model (1998) is strategic and in this model, the business leaders consider the role of HR practices on all aspects of the organization to solve business problems rather than simply focusing on the individual practices.

Various scholars used the Ulrich model (1998) in HRM context. Sayfuddin (2014) used the Ulrich (1998) model for understanding how globalization affects the HRM practices in an organization. The study included the study of previous literature. The study highlighted the implication of Ulrich's HR roles along the dimension of local and national culture. Sayfuddin (2014) noted HR as the most valuable assets to the company. According to Sayfuddin, a strategic partner and an administrative expert role of the

Ulrich (1998) model have significant positive impacts on the organization. Verbrigghe and Buyens (2015) conducted studies regarding the importance of the evidence-based HR practices. The evidence-based HR practices are about combining research evidence, contextual information, and individual judgment (Verbrigghe & Buyens, 2015). Verbrigghe and Buyens mentioned applying the Ulrich model as a framework for the evidence-based HR practices for organizational performances.

In some businesses, line managers carry out HR function. Hassan et al. (2015) discussed the importance of line managers in executing the HR initiatives. In the study, the authors linked the relationship between line managers and the HR professionals. The authors linked line managers to the HR roles as strategic partners, administrative experts, employee champions, and change agents. Stritesky and Quigley (2014) conducted a mixed research method study of 97 Czech companies. The research objective was to understand the perception of the HR roles in the organizations. In the study, the Stritesky and Quigley found that companies that have successfully transformed the HR departments had HR managers who carried out the multiple roles as stated in the Ulrich model. De Bruyn and Roodt (2009) studied a U.S mining company using the Ulrich model. De Bruyn and Roodt discovered that the HR professionals establish credibility when they exhibit business knowledge, professionalism, service to stakeholders, and customized practices. Ahmad et al. (2015) studied the HR professionals in the banking sector from Pakistan to understand the HR professional competencies in social, technical, and willingness using the Ulrich Model. Ahmad et al. (2015) found that there is a strong correlation between the HR professional competencies and the HR professionals'

effectiveness. The social competence appeared to be more significant than the other two competencies. Venegas and Thill (2015) used the Ulrich model (1997) to understand a correlation between different HR roles in the DACH region. Based on the findings, the author proposed the HR competency model that includes the HR technical competencies and behavioral competency. According to the authors, technical competencies reflect knowledge-based requirement and behavioral competencies describe specific behaviors associated with job performance. Cowan and Fox (2015) used the Ulrich model (1997) to clarify and understand HR professionals' role in bullying situations (Cowan & Fox, 2015). The authors stated that HR professionals needed to balance the expectations of company management, bullying targets, and the expectations they hold for themselves. The authors suggested using the Ulrich model (1997) to carve out new HR roles to meet the expectation of senior management and bullying targets. Nadiv, Raz, and Kuna (2016) used the Ulrich model (1997) to understand strategic partner roles of Israeli HR managers. Nadiv, Raz, and Kuna (2016) found that volatile organizational environment correlates with the strategic role among HR professionals. The authors discovered that strategic partner role is positively related to key indicators of performance.

Organizational silo can be a problem for businesses. Astikainen, Laukkanen, Lamsa, Heilmann, and Hyrkas (2017) used the Ulrich model (1997) to deter or minimize organizational silo that has a negative effect on the Finnish company's productivity. In the article, the authors stated that the roles highlighted in the Ulrich model provide the HR professional competency and courage to break out organizational silos through an application of communities of practices.

Critics of the Ulrich model believe that the four roles stated in the Ulrich model miss mirror showing to top management (Khan & Mushtaq, 2015). According to Gerpott (2015), the HR professionals deal with identity, learning, performing, and organizing tensions in the workplace. Gerpott added that the strategic partner role highlighted in the Ulrich model resolve these tensions only in the short run by focusing on opposing forces separately. Business leaders could overcome these shortcomings by adopting a multifaceted aspect of the HRM (Gerpott, 2015). Sheehan, De Cieri, Cooper, and Shea (2016) applied the Ulrich model (1997) to study the effect of HR role overload and conflict in companies' strategic decision making. The authors found that the HR roles overload and HR roles conflict could detract HR strategic contributions. Caldwell (2003) study found that the HR roles in the Ulrich model are multifaceted and complex and the HR professionals were unable to capture the demands of each of the roles. Lemmergaard (2009) noted that the Ulrich model (1997) is simplistic and yet problematic because the HR professionals find it difficult to conceptualize all the roles within the Ulrich model while attempting to enact the roles.

Other HRM Theories

Various factors contribute to employee's productivity at work, but this research is seeking strategies to decrease business failure in HRcontext. The Ulrich model is the conceptual framework for this study. I chose the Ulrich model because it provides more leverage over other theories or models. The Ulrich model requires the HR professionals to think and behave in a manner to bring out the necessary change to make an

organization competitive and sustainable. The other theories the researchers have used in HR context are behavioral model, cybernetic model, and transaction cost model.

The behavioral perspective model focuses on human behaviors to achieve desired organizational performances. Schuler and Jackson (1987) stated that the HR philosophies, policies, and process shape human behaviors. According to the cybernetic system model, an organization system constitutes inputs, throughputs, and outputs (Von Bertalanfy, 1950). The inputs are HR abilities, throughputs are HR practices, and outputs are organizational productivity. The system theory is rooted in the cybernetic system model. In system theory, researchers suggest looking at the organizational structure as a system which interconnects with various components responsible for the functioning of an organization. The HR professional who applies the system theory based on the cybernetic model use HR inputs, throughputs, and outputs throughout the whole system (Wright & McMahan, 1992). Wright and McMahan (1992) cautioned that the HR inputs, throughputs, and outputs have to align with the organizational strategy.

In the transaction cost model, researchers focus on transactions based on economic and finance as a medium in controlling human behaviors (Wright & McMahan, 1992). The model focuses on human behaviors and environmental factors in minimizing the transaction cost. The transaction costs related to negotiation, evaluation, enforcement, and exchanges between various parties. In the transaction cost model, the human behaviors can minimize the transaction cost internally. In the transactional cost model, HR professionals design the HR practices based on the unique contribution of employees in reducing transaction cost (Wright & McMahan, 1992).

The theories that seemed applicable to this study come under the behavioral model. The major theme of this study finding was employee engagement that falls into the realm of human capital contexts such as employee motivation, work performance, and incentives. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, human capital theory, and recruitment theory are suitable to the study phenomenon related to human capital. However, I found Ulrich Model more fit to address the issues relating to SMEs failure.

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory

Herzberg (1987) investigated the factors that motivate employees' at work. In the motivational aspect of the motivation-hygiene theory, researchers to focus on intrinsic factors such as achievements, rewards, and recognition (Herzberg, 1987). According to Herzberg (1987), the motivational factors that drive employees to work are (a) reduced work hours, (b) wages, (c) fringe benefits, (d) training, (e) communication, and (f) short-term counseling. Herzberg (1987) elaborated the motivational theory and developed motivation-hygiene theory. In the hygiene aspect of the motivation-hygiene theory, the researcher focus on extrinsic factors such as company policies, procedures, supervisions, and interpersonal relationships (Herzberg, 1987). The interplay between the intrinsic factors and the extrinsic factors play a major role in the level of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction among company employees.

Few scholars used Herzberg's two-factor theory in their studies. Derby-Davis (2014) used Herzberg's two-factor theory to study job satisfaction, and nurses desire to stay on the job finding that motivation and Hygiene factors play a major role in job satisfaction and employee retention. Ghazi, Shahzada, and Khan (2013) found that

hygiene factors influence employees' motivation at work. Islam and Ali's (2013) applied the Herzberg's two-factor theory to explore job satisfaction among university teachers. In the study, the researchers found that reward, recognition, advancements, and work quality lead to job satisfaction. Locke (1978) criticized the Herzberg theory by stating that the theory fails to connect employees' motivation to goal settings.

Human Capital Theory

Human capital is essential for organizational productivity. Human capital is employee skill sets, knowledge, and experience needed to support organizational productivity (Becker, 1962). The human capital theory provides the tool for employees to gain skills and knowledge through training, education, and experience in the workplace (Becker, 1962). The cost-benefit analysis reveals that the benefits from the investment in training and developing employees worth more in the long run than the cost involved in training and developing human capital (Becker, 1962). Krackel (2016) made a contrary statement where he indicated that the cost of investment in employees outweighs the benefits. Krackle noted that despite the investment in human capital, employees often leave a company for better compensation and benefits. Khanna, Jones, and Boivie (2014) in their study of 5700 directors from 650 companies found a significant correlation between firm performance and high level of human capital. Koroglu and Eceral (2015) studied 104 employees in the aviation industry. Koroglu and Eceral found a positive correlation between human capital and innovation.

Recruitment Theory

Inability of SME's owners to fill the job vacancies could lead SMEs to survive beyond five years of operation (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011). Guion (1976) stated that the key to avoiding business failure is to hire the right employees. Abraham (2015) noted that there is a lack of skilled workers in the workforce leading to high unemployment rates. The recruitment developed by Dunnette (1976) focus on hiring highly qualified employees from the vast pool of participants. The HR professionals often face challenges in recruiting highly skilled workers (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014). Effective recruitment strategy improves the standard of small businesses, increases productivity, enhances sustainability, and reduces turnover (Yücel, 2012). The HR professional who applies the Recruitment theory to hire highly skilled workers can promote efficiency, reduce costs, and increase organizational productivity (Babu et al., 2015). Harrell and Berglass (2012) interviewed 60 company business leaders to explore strategies to hire veterans. In the study, Harrell and Berglass (2012) used recruitment theory guidelines and found effective recruitment strategies which include marketing the organization, business collaboration, and visiting a military base for recruitment.

SMEs in Thailand

The World Bank ranked Thailand as the top 10 economies in the world regarding ease of doing business (Chandler & Folarin, 2018). The Thai economy is attracting many SMEs, and currently, there are close to three million registered SMEs in Thailand. (Srinuan, 2014). Bangkok has the highest number of SMEs, over 30% of the total SMEs in Thailand (Srinuan, 2014). In Thailand, the three categories of SMEs are production sector, service sector, and trading sector (Srinuan, 2014). Production sector includes

agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. The service sector includes restaurants and hotels, entertainment businesses, and so forth. The trading sector includes retail and wholesale businesses. Each category of SMEs has fixed assets not more than U.S. 1.5 million dollars (Srinuan, 2014). In Thailand, over 99% of enterprises are small businesses and employs over 77% of the national workforce (Suranattakul, 2018). In general, SMEs in Thailand has less than 200 employees. Below are the specific characteristics of Thai SMEs (Intrapairot & Srivihok, 2003):

1. Thai SMEs are flexible and can quickly adapt to meet customers' requirement by changing its product lines and production processes.
2. SMEs start-up cost is low, and SME owners have a minimal relationship with commercial banks.
3. SMEs use manual skill and technology on hand to produce various products and provide services to meet the community demand.
4. SME business owners rely on domestic or local materials to make their products.
5. SMEs business owners specialize in products. They produce goods to meet individual requirements and focus on quality rather than mass production.
6. SMEs business owners are active in their community regarding employment and providing goods and services.

SMEs play an important role in the economic development of the country and Thailand is no exception (Ueasangkomsate, 2015). Throughout the time, the Thai government has implemented various programs and policies to support SMEs. In 1964,

the Council of Ministers approved financing schemes and advisory through multiple banks (Srinuan, 2014). In 1991, the government established the Small Industry Finance Corporation Act to assist SMEs business owners in attaining capitals to remain sustainable (Srinuan, 2014). In 2002, the Thai Ministry of Finance enacted the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Bank of Thailand Act (Srinuan, 2014). According to Srinuan, in 2014, the Thai Credit Guarantee Corporation under the Minister of the Financial decided to guarantee loans up to 40 million Baht to each qualifying SMEs entrepreneurs. The purpose was to mandate banks to conduct business with the aim of assisting SMEs business owners during startup and help them to expand by providing loans, guarantees, and counseling.

Human Resource Development

The literature review revealed that very few authors explored the HR development in the context of SMEs (Pajo, Coetzer, & Guenole, 2010). Many studies relating to HR development revolve around large organizations (Illes & Yolles, 2004). Lately, HR development in SMEs is getting popular in the press (O'Connell & O'Sullivan, 2014) as studies showed that the HR development has a positive effect on organizational performance (Melton & Meier, 2017; Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2016). Despite the popularity in the press, there is a lack of research regarding content areas relating to the human research development in different national and cultural context (Nolan & Garavan, 2016). Nolan and Garavan (2016) investigated 117 articles in 31 journals. Thirty-one journals belonged to four categories, and those were Small Business Journals, HR Development Journals, HR Management Journals, and General

Management/Strategic Management/Organizational study Journals. The authors of these articles were from 21 countries, and 91% of the authors were from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Netherlands. The remainders were from Asia and Africa. Almost all authors in the literature that discussed the HR development were not from Thailand. The authors focused on the human resource development practices in their corresponding countries. Limited research in the HR development in developing countries indicates that significant opportunities exist for further research in the HR development in Thailand's SMEs.

HRM and Organizational Agility

In a competitive environment, an organization faces many challenges related to the HR management. The challenges include building a business model that allows companies to respond to challenges about human capital management in the workforce. The business leaders can meet the HR related challenges through organizational agility. The organizational agility is to understand the business operating environment and incorporate acquired knowledge and resources to remain sustainable and productive (Worley, Williams, & Lawler, 2014). The factors that promote organizational agility are strategic awareness, reconfigurable organization, organizational learning, excellence in execution, and agile workforce (Worley et al., 2014). Strategic awareness is about understanding a company's strength, weakness, and threat; identifying the resources and knowledge to develop both tactical and strategic avenues to remain competitive. Strategic awareness requires business leaders to communicate, interpret, and analyze information based on internal priorities through formal dialogue processes (Worley et al., 2014). The

reconfigurable organization is about how quickly a company leader can adapt to both internal, external environment that is changing. Such adaptation requires business leaders to remain open and flexible in redesigning, recycling, realigning, redeploying processes and business models, and may require challenging the status quo (Worley et al., 2014). Organizational learning is about understanding what is working and what is not functioning in a business model. Organizational learning will lead to training and development of the workforce to make the right changes at the right moment. Excellence in execution is about a flawless execution of the task on hand. According to Worley et al. (2014), excellence in execution is obtaining a desired result in the first attempt. Finally, agile workforce refers to employees' ability to deliver the results as expected by the management (Muduli, 2013). Building an agile workforce depends on employees' behaviors, competencies, and knowledge.

Effective HRM practice builds organizational agility. The HR leaders need to part of the strategic decision-making team, not just limit to workforce agility. The HR leaders can contribute their expertise and knowledge relating to the HRM practices in building agile corporate strategies through organizational adaptation, flawless execution, and training and development. Workforce agility is a single most significant contributor in an organizational adaptation and in bringing out the excellence in execution. Muduli (2013) noted that the HR managers are responsible for developing a flexible workforce. The activities to promote agile workforce includes job design, recruiting, training and developing, job enhancement, job enrichment, information sharing, rewards, recognition, and performance management practices (Muduli, 2013). The job design is putting duties

and responsibilities together to complete the task. Recruiting refer to hiring employees who are capable of functioning well to accomplish tasks. Training and development lead to job enhancement and enrichment, which is about sharpening the skill sets and providing new knowledge to employees for growth. Rewards regarding bonuses and recognition through promotion are motivational factors for employees. The performance management is promoting drive, accountability, and discipline.

Strategic Human Resource Management Framework

Organizational performance is a significant factor that contributes to long-term business sustainability (Shahid & Azhar, 2013). The organization's performance reflects a company's profitability, productivity, customer satisfaction, and business growth (Shaid & Azhar, 2013). The primary duty of business leaders is to yield the highest level of performance from employees so that organization can achieve its social and financial objectives (Azar & Shafighi, 2013). Strategic HR managers play an essential role in shaping and polishing policies leading to better individual and organizational performance.

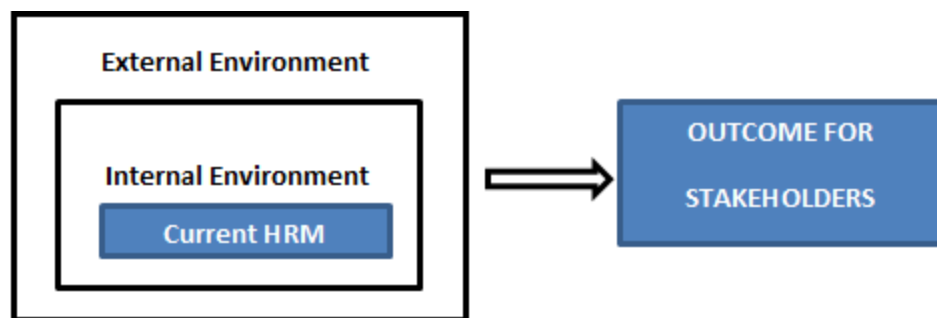


Figure 1: Strategic human resource management framework

In the strategic HR management framework, business leaders study the current HR practices at an organization and their relationship in the context of an internal and external environment to bring out the results as desired by the organization's stakeholders (Jackson, Schuler, & Jiang, 2014). The current HR practices are rooted in organization philosophies, policies, and process. The strategic HR managers explore how organizations philosophy, procedures, and practices align within its internal environment regarding diversification, growth, innovation, and cost control, leadership, and values (Jackson et al., 2014). Then the strategic HR management provides the framework for business leaders to integrate external environmental factors such as laws and regulations, labor markets, emerging technologies, and so forth in designing the HR practices for financial and social performance as desired by company stakeholders (Jackson et al., 2014). Den, Boon, Verburg, and Croon (2013) noted that there is a positive relationship between the strategic HR management practices and organizational performance. Den et al. (2013) added that the strategic HRmanagement practices leverage human capital by acquiring, developing, and motivating them so that they improve their job performance. When each employee in the organization performs at an optimal level, it will collectively affect organizational performance. Posthuma, Campion, Masimova, and Campion (2013) supported the notion that the corporate performance has a direct correlation with the strategic HRmanagement practices.

Information Technology in HRM

Information technology plays a significant role in every aspect of the business. Information technology has a significant impact on business processes, including HR

management (Stone & Deadrick, 2015). Information technology has transformed the way companies recruit, train, and retain human capital. Traditionally, companies advertise in newspapers, visit campuses, and use word of mouths to hire talents. Companies use various technologies, including web-based career sections, virtual job fairs, and LinkedIn to recruit employees with specialized skills from all over the world (Aguinis & Lawal, 2013).

Business leaders from SMEs should adapt to new technologies to remain competitive in changing business environments (Banerji, 2013). According to Amornkitvikai and Harvie (2018), technological innovation could help small businesses to penetrate new markets. The HR technologies should be agile and flexible to adjust to the new paradigm shift (Banerji, 2013). SMEs leaders should train themselves and train employees in technology so that everyone in the organization is familiar with the tools available to them. Business leaders have access to various business intelligence and technology tools for employee orientation, work culture, and training and development. Some popular technologies related tools are IBM Kenexa, SAP Success Factor, Gusto, and so forth. These software can be used for e-learning to teach employees about the company's, policies and procedures. Business leaders can use HRM Software to meet a specific business need such as building work culture, security, compliance, compensation structure, benefits, and performance management, and cross-cultural training to enhance diversity.

The technology has some limitations. According to Stone and Deadrick (2015), technologies can create an artificial distance between people and can be impersonal and

inflexible. Stone and Deadrick further noted that the technology in training can be less engaging than face-to-face training and may not provide opportunities to ask questions and obtain immediate feedback. Stone and Deadrick (2015) added that despite the above limitations, information technology would often make work easier for HR professionals, increase efficiency, and help to make strategic decisions. The future technology would influence the way HR personnel does business and information technology will remain an integral part of a business (Stone, Deadrick, Lukaszewski, & Johnson, 2015)

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management is an important task of HR professionals. Knowledge management (KM) is a task to develop and exploit the tangible and intangible knowledge resources of an organization (Menkhoff, Wah, & Loh, 2016). Tangible knowledge resources are the information about companies' customers, products, and competitors. Companies acquire tangible asset through its experience (Menkhoff et al., 2016). Intangible knowledge resources are competencies and knowledge of people within the organization. In general, knowledge management involves applying both tangible and intangible knowledge resources to develop new knowledge to enhance productivity.

Many factors come into play in knowledge management, such as company size, needs, market position, and its strategic outlook (Menkhoff et al., 2016). Business leaders should conduct a SWOTT analysis to identify capacity at which a company should apply its knowledge management to remain competitive (Menkhoff et al., 2016). The SWOTT stands for the company's strength, weakness, opportunity, threat, and trend. Many

business leaders apply knowledge management to minimize risk and operational effectiveness.

On a similar note, knowledge management can be beneficial in developing the HRM strategy. Business leaders can locate, capture, and share the knowledge of its people to identify the potential HR strategies to strengthen its HR policies. Such HR policies could increase employee productivity and could lead to profitable products and service innovations. Many SMEs business leaders are not familiar with the conceptual model of knowledge management (Menkhoff et al., 2016). Those who are familiar often neglect to apply knowledge management tools such as data mining, knowledge audits, knowledge mapping, and so forth (Menkhoff et al., 2016). Menkhoff et al. (2016) further noted that the company culture and leadership plays an important role in conceptualizing and applying the KM tools in business.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is not a new topic in the literature. Many scholars studied the benefits of employee engagement at the workplace (Caniëls, Semeijn, & Renders, 2018). Employees are the most valuable asset of an organization Employee engagement is a predictor of organizational success (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Employee engagement could result in financial profitability and competitive advantage (Albrecht, Breidahl, & Marty, 2018). The HRM function is to engage employees in a manner that lead to optimal productivity at work.

HR leaders are looking for strategies to engage employees in the workplace. Engaged employees are passionate about their work and show commitment toward

organizational success (Sekhar, Patwardhan, & Vyas, 2018). Engaged employees are enthusiastic about their task and are willing to take challenging assignments (Agarwal, 2018). A solid commitment requires an employee to engage emotionally, cognitively, and physically (Jose & Mampilly, 2014). Emotional engagement comes from employees' passion toward the work. Cognitive engagement is about employees using the skills and knowledge to accomplish a task. Physical engagement refers to employees giving 100% at work.

When employees do not engage, it will affect the functioning of an organization. Various factors contribute to employee disengagements such as stress, family, poor working environment, and a bad supervisor (Shuck & Rose, 2013). Stress can come from work, family, and other lifestyles. Often stressed employees fail to focus on work leading to a decline in workplace engagement. Poor working environment affects employees' morale, and thereby they are less engaged at work. Supervisor's toxic behavior could hamper the working relationship with employees leading to employees losing interest at work. When employees are not interested in their work, they will fail to engage in achieving organizational goals.

The HRM practices are to make sure that employees receive attention, benefits, and are treated fairly to foster organizational engagement. Employees who receive unfair treatment are more likely to disconnect with the organizational goals and objectives (Baron, 2013). If an employee perceives that leaders are incompetent and are making the wrong decisions, they are less likely to step up to help (Malinen et al., 2013). Moreland (2013) found that the operating profit of the business decreases by 32% in an

organization with low employee engagement. According to Gupta and Shukla (2018), disengaged employees tend to work fewer hours.

Employees engage in two levels: transactional engagement and emotional engagement (Baron, 2013). Transactional engagement is getting involved in work intensively to meet short-term goals. The driver of transactional engagement is a bonus, recognition, time constraint, and so forth. Transactional engagement is brief and performance declines over time (Baron, 2013). Emotionally engaged employees take ownership of the work and engage in a deeper level (Baron, 2013). The drivers of emotional engagement are company value and personal pride. When HRM leaders enforce company mission and value statement within the organization, employees are emotionally engaged (Cattermole, Johnson, & Jackson, 2014).

Management actions and behaviors drive employee engagement. Employee engagement depends on the work environment (Huertas-Valdivia, Llorens-Montes, & RuizMoreno, 2018). Leaders have responsibilities to create an environment where employees believe that they can express ideas without the fear of getting negative feedback from the supervisors (Allen & Rogelberg, 2013). Managing a workforce can be challenging, and business leaders can engage an employee by building trust (Huertas-Valdivia, Llorens-Montes, & Ruiz Moreno, 2018). Besides trust, business leaders can increase employee engagement through motivation, mentoring, and working relationships.

Understanding the employee's perspective on the work environment can be beneficial to HR leaders for employee engagement. Bishop (2013) stated that one HR

function is to take a survey to understand the issues that affect employees. Merry (2013) commented that employee surveys allow the HR leaders to make adjustments in the workplace to achieve desired results. Various authors supported the notion that the feedback from employees assists HR managers to revise existing policies and develop strategies to engage employees for optimal productivity (Brown & Reilly, 2013; Mosley, 2013). The factors that drive employee engagement are work-life balance (Wasay, 2013), maternity leave for part-time employees (Subramoniam, 2013), job design (Tims, Bakker, Derks, & Van Rhenen, 2013), fair compensation (Farmer, Brown, Reilly, & Bevan, 2013), quality of work environment (Markey & Townsend, 2013) and performance-based rewards (Brown & Reilly, 2013). Bishop (2013) stated that one HR function is to take a survey to understand the issues that affect employees. Merry (2013) commented that employee surveys allow the HR leaders to make adjustments in the workplace to achieve desired results. A direct correlation exists between employee engagement and employee's outlook toward the job.

The work-life balance is giving employees some work flexibility, such as an ability to work remotely and flexible work schedule. Some companies do not have maternity leave benefit for part-time employees. Such benefit would encourage female employees to commit to work thinking they will be taken care of during pregnancy. Another means to engage employees is through job design (Tims et al., 2013). When employees participate with business leaders in job design, they take the ownership in their roles and shows commitment. Competitive compensation plays an important role in employee engagement (Smith, 2012). Ellig (2013) supported the notion that

compensation is a key driver in employee engagement. Good compensations make employees believe their worth and such feeling push employees to do more at work. The other contributing factor in employee engagement is the work environment. Tews, Michel, and Stafford (2013) noted that work needs to be fun and rewarding. Dale (2014) stated that fun associated with daily work is an intrinsic reward whereas financial rewards are extrinsic. Intrinsic reward is a powerful motivator for employees as it provides job satisfaction (Giancola, 2014). Job enhancement, job enrichment, flexibility, and work-life balance makes work both fun and rewarding.

Employee incentives such as compensation and company benefits help companies to recruit talent. More than 70% of employees would consider the good employee benefit is more important than an initial salary (Smith, 2012). Employees prefer job flexibility, growth, and paid time off over monetary rewards (Custers, 2013). Once the employees start working, they expect a salary increase and other monetary compensation such as bonuses. The company leaders should communicate to employees that salary increase and a bonus is contingent upon individual performance (Mosley, 2013). Both salary increase and company bonus can be a driving factor for employee engagement.

HRM Role in Employee Engagement

The HR managers as experts in human relations should hold employees and managers accountable if they do not follow policies and procedures. Often the HR leaders need to deal with different leadership at work who are not necessarily complying with the HR policies. The HR leaders need to put checks and balances on managers' behavior. Some leaders are toxic, and their behaviors could create a hostile and abusive work

environment. Some toxic leaders lack care or concern for employees (Hollis, 2015). According to Mikkelsen, York, and Arritola (2015), leaders' behavior influence to establish a productive and efficient work environment. Hollis (2015) and Oswick (2015) posited that caring leaders are successful in engaging employees. HR people need to communicate any concerns about business leaders' behaviors detrimental to employee morale and work environment (Mikkelsen et al., 2015). The organization needs to have policies and procedures that enable HRM people to identify and mitigate toxic leadership behaviors. The HR professionals often deal with classical and authentic types of leadership style at work (Zhang et al., 2014). Classical leadership requires little engagement from employees, and employees are not emotionally connected in achieving organizations' goals (Zhang et al., 2014). Authentic leaders are visionary or charismatic that encourages employees to engage emotionally to achieve desired organizational targets and objectives (Zhang et al., 2014). Authentic leaders require employee engagement for superior results (Anitha, 2014). According to Anitha employee engagement depends on employees' commitment toward organizational goals. Authentic leaders use various tactics in achieving their objectives such as open and transparent communication, empowering and giving freedom to employees to make individual decisions, less micro-management, and so forth (Jiang & Men, 2015). Open and transparent communication labels expectation, avoid misunderstanding and build trust. Employee empowerment allows people to make decisions without dependency on supervisors. Less micromanagement means letting an employee do the job with less interference.

The organizational culture and trust between the leaders and the followers are important for employee engagement. Zhang et al. (2014) noted the importance of trust in gaining the support of employees in an organization. Zhang et al. (2014) added that the mutual respect between a leader and employees build trust. Trust is something that people acquire over time. Business leaders gain the trust of employees in the course of time through a series of events. Patience and perseverance are essential in obtaining a trust. The HRM professionals are responsible for creating an environment at a workplace where there is a positive connection between company culture and financial results (Chen & Manning, 2015). Business leader's job is to enforce such an environment. Kaltcheva, Patino, Laric, Pitta, and Imparato (2014) noted that a caring work environment is a foundation for a relationship among people in the workplace. Lack of caring work environment will lead to low morale and less well-being of employees (Merry, 2013). The HRM function is to harness trust by being a liaison between a leader and employees. The HR leaders need to be fair to both sides and not show any bias to one over the others. Fairness requires communicating, listening, understanding, and recommending both parties views and ideas.

Employee Retention

In a competitive environment, a company can quickly lose an employee to competitors. Employee retention is an HR practice to prevent employees from leaving the company. Employee retention practices aim to retain productive employees at work and are not readily available in the employment market (Jackson, 2013). Employees leave the

company for various reasons such as being under-compensated, underappreciated, no growth, and toxic leadership.

The first step to retain talents is to understand how employees are contributing to the success of the organization. Understanding the employees' importance will lead to treating employees as the most valuable assets (Uma Narang, 2013). Tangthong (2014) noted that when productive employees leave, there could be negative implications for productivity. The second step for retaining employees is to implement policies that provide growth opportunities, recognition and rewards, work-life balances, and good working environment (Kadiresan, Kamil, Mazlan, Musah, & Selamat, 2016). The growth opportunity encourages employees to engage in the work which could lead to work productivity and increased sale and reduce the chances of business failure. The growth opportunities depend on employees' interest and capabilities. Growth opportunity can be an employee step up into a higher position with additional responsibilities or in a managerial capacity or transitioning into similar level position with different title and responsibilities. The HRM goal is to develop employees' capabilities through training and development so that employees have the skills and knowledge for lateral or horizontal growth.

Good compensation help retain employees. Compensation is the total amount of monetary and non-monetary benefits that a company provides to employees in exchange for their work (Kadiresan et al., 2016). Monetary compensations are salary, wages, bonuses, and stock options. Non- monetary compensations are company benefits such as vacation and sick days, retirement plans, medical insurance, work-life balance, travel

discounts, childcare, and so forth. Rewards such as company bonuses and stock options are the drivers of organizational performance. According to Chand (2015), monetary compensation based on the productivity of an employee is the single strongest predictor of organization performance.

The HR practice such as employee engagement is necessary for employee growth and development. Employee engagement refers to the highest level of emotional, personal, and cognitive involvement of employees in their task to meet organizational goals and objectives (Das & Mishra, 2014). Many factors affect employee engagement such as job design, the nature of the job, employees' interest level in the job, and the work environment. The HR managers' function in employees' engagement starts by taking surveys to understand what is working and what is not working and building strategies to encourage employees to take ownership in their current roles. The HR managers must consider that employee engagement is dependent on the level of trust, expectation, and enthusiasm portrayed by the leaders in the organization. The HR role includes building an environment at work where respect, appreciation, and praise trickles down from the top throughout the organization.

Role of HRM in Organizational Culture

Companies are recruiting talents from a wide spectrum, making it more diverse regarding age, race, sexual orientation, gender, and ethnicity (Robbins & Judge, 2014). A company culture that supports diversity may foster shared organizational belief to attain the common organizational goal (Harris, Mayo, Price, & Tooley, 2013). According to Fusch and Fusch (2015), a company culture plays an essential role in business success.

The primary functions of HRM professional are to build a work culture that value diversity, empower employees, and share the common organization goal.

Many HR professionals often face challenges while dealing with people from diverse background to achieve organizational goals. HR leaders must adapt his or her management style to build a coherent workforce culture (Seah, Hsieh & Huang, 2014). Management personnel adaptability to employee personality requires an understanding of employees' identity, ritual, value system, their cultural background, and so forth. The leader must balance the cultural differences without compromising an organization's policies and procedures. Many leaders lack the vision to understand the issues relating to the diverse workforce or lack skill sets to implement policies to address such issues (Bolman & Deal, 2013). To remain efficient dealing with the HR related issues, leaders need to analyze what is working in their business culture and what need improvements to foster best practices (Fusch & Fusch, 2015). This requires the HR leaders to become more flexible and fluid to adapt to the ever-changing business environment (Dominici & Palumbo, 2013). Lee and Kramer (2016) posited that legal requirement requires companies to comply by increasing the level of diversity in the workforce. HR leaders need to have a strategic approach to diversity and inclusion of diversity in the workplace is more likely to develop a unique and novel organizational culture.

Leadership Theories

Leadership plays an important role in organizational success (Milosevic, 2018). The literature review revealed many studies relating to leadership, and the theories that apply to HRM, including transactional leadership theory, transformational leadership

theory, and relational model theory. The transactional leadership theory helps business leaders to focus on addressing people's need (Popper & Lipshitz, 1993). The transactional leadership theory assists business leaders to emphasize on setting standards at work and make people follow the leaders by satisfying their needs. The leaders who support the transactional leadership theory are more likely to balance employees' work-life balance and are lenient toward employees' needs. These types of leaders are strict on compliance (Groves & Larocca, 2011). Transactional leadership theory as applied to SMEs will focus on meeting employees' needs for them to remain productive.

A transformational leader theory allows business leaders to focus on motivating people to meet an organization's objectives. Leaders who follow the transformational theory connect with people through emotion. People follow the leaders because they relate to their message. Leaders who follow the transformational leadership theory have higher ethical and moral standards (Bono & Judge, 2004). These leaders encourage innovation, motivate people through rewards, and stimulate enthusiasm to boost confidence in people. The transformational leadership theory as applied to SMEs allows business leaders to promote the HRM policies based on recognition and rewards.

Productivity is a function of how an employee feels about the job. An employee who looks at the work or the work environment favorable, engage in their work which could lead to business profitability and business survival. A relational model theory helps business leaders to establish a positive relationship with employees and motivate an employee to perform well. There are four different types of relationship between a leader and followers under the relationship model, and those are communal sharing, authority

ranking, equality matching, and market pricing (Giessner & Quaquebeke, 2011).

Communal sharing is about relating to each other through common characteristics.

People in a group share some common identities with the leader to achieve a common

goal. These identities could be a belief system, certain norms, and so forth. Authority

ranking is classifying people based on certain characteristics such as seniority. People

who have seniority in the company have an advantage over others regarding work

schedule and so forth. The inequality matching relationship allows reciprocity and

fairness. The example of inequality matching is when a leader does a favor to employees in

exchange for similar favors from the employees. The market price relationship relies on

creating value; for instance, employees with a higher degree of productivity gets better

benefits from the leader. The relational model theory as applied to SMEs allows business

leaders to focus on all four types of relationships that exist between a leader and its

people while designing and implementing the HRM policies.

HRM Role in Managing Toxic Leaders

HR managers have a challenging role in an organization. They have to act as a

liaison between employees and the organization. At the same time, they have to display

loyalty to the leader who hired them and toward the team. The job becomes difficult

when the HR managers have to deal with the toxic leaders whom they report directly. The

challenge for the HR managers is to balance their job responsibility adequately, so there

is no conflict of interest. When employees complain about the leadership, the HR

manager has to investigate the claim to find out the legitimacy of the allegation and

develop solutions to rectify the problem.

In the literature, various authors argued that toxic leadership is not good for the health of the organization (Boddy, 2014; Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013). The toxic leaders are abusive, unpredictable, and authoritarian, possess behaviors that harm subordinates, and expresses narcissistic self-promotion (Schmidt, 2008). Mehta and Maheshwari (2013) posited that toxic leaders are abusive and harmful to its followers. Mehta and Maheshwari (2013) further noted that the more senior the toxic leader in the organization, the more widespread is the impact. The toxic leaders deplete organization resources and also contribute to high levels of employee burnout and turnovers (Bendersky & Parikh, 2013). Often employees leave the company because of the toxic leader. The HR manager needs to act swiftly and diligently to address toxic leadership because toxic leadership has negative implications for members both inside and outside the organization (Krasikova, Green, & LeBreton, 2013). The HR manager can identify toxic leaders from multiple perspectives (Boddy, 2014). HR managers can monitor and track toxic leader behaviors over time to see if leader's actions are subject to complaints from employees, creating unproductive work atmosphere for the subordinates, or create chaos (Bendersky & Parikh, 2013; Krasikova et al., 2013; Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013). If the HR manager has sufficient evidence to identify the toxic behaviors, it becomes a solemn duty of the HR manager to act according to the company policy and procedures. If the organization is big, this task is easy because resources are available to HR managers to lean on to address the issues. In a close cell small business environment where the toxic leader happens to be the boss of the HR manager, the task becomes difficult.

The question is how the HR manager can deal with a toxic leader in a small organization. If not addressed, the toxic behavior has the potential to spiral into a work environment resulting in subsequent chain reactions which could affect the organization's sustainability (Boddy, 2014). Kets de Vries (2014) suggested an informal coaching technique to assist toxic business leaders. The coaching is only effective when the business leaders acknowledge that their behaviors are causing more harm than good to the business. HR manager's responsibility is to talk to the business leaders diplomatically without offending anyone to meet the HR objectives. The discussion and coaching sessions with the business leaders may provide opportunities to improve their behaviors or exit the company if found beneficial to the company.

Transition

The objective of this study was to identify strategies that the HRbusiness leaders use to avoid business failure. Lack of employee's productivity could significantly reduce business profits. The strategic HRmanagement practices increase job satisfaction, improve employee engagement, reduce employee turnover, and build a sustainable organizational culture. The findings from the study provide the HR professionals with a better understanding of effective strategies to increase the employee productivity to minimize business failure.

In Section 1, I included a foundation of the study, the problem statement, purpose statement, the nature of the study, research question, conceptual framework, the significance of the study, and literature review. The literature review provided an understanding of the processes, social constructs, and motivations that are unique to

HRmanagement practices. In Section 2, I described my role as a researcher, ethical standards, research method and design, study population, and sampling techniques. Section 2 also includes information on data collection, data organization, and data analysis approach. Finally, section 2 highlighted on the role of a researcher, research method and design, population, data collection, data analysis, and study reliability and validity. Section 3 contains the study findings, the importance of the results to business practices, implications for social change, recommendations, and reflections.

Section 2: The Project

In Thailand, SME failure is a significant problem for Thai SMEs business owners (Dullayaphut & Untachai, 2013). The Thailand economy depends on the SME success (Auzzir, Haigh, & Amaratunga, 2018). SMEs make up over 90% of total enterprises (Dullayaphut & Untachai, 2013) and SMEs employed 80% of the total labor force in 2012 (Chanin et al., 2016). In this study, I aimed to identify strategies to help SMEs business leaders to decrease business failure. In Section 2, I will discuss my role as a researcher, the research method and design, data collection approach, and data analysis techniques. The section also includes ethical measures that I considered during the research and described procedures for ensuring validity and reliability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies SME business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand. The target population consisted of SME business leaders in Bangkok, Thailand, possessing successful experience in decreasing the failure rate of SMEs. The implication for positive social change is that the survival of SMEs could result in continuous employment opportunities for people living in Thailand's local communities. These employment opportunities might result in an improved standard of living and the well-being of Thailanders.

Role of the Researcher

A researcher is the primary data collection instrument in a qualitative case study (Yin, 2017). The researcher's role is to collect and analyze data, and draw conclusions

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). My role as a researcher was to ask semistructured interview questions, conduct a literature review, collect data from various sources for methodological triangulation, analyze data to develop themes, and draw conclusions. Methodological triangulation is about collecting data from multiple sources to ensure study reliability (Patton, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) noted that qualitative researchers ask questions, listen to the respondents, and ask probing questions to get an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon.

Although I have never been a small business owner, I decided to research the human resource management practices and its implication for small business productivity. I decided to focus on SMEs because, according to Intapairot and Srivihok (2003), thousands of SMEs have gone out of business in Thailand since the severe economic crisis in 1997. I believe that my decades of experience in working in the HR field provided a good foundation to do the research related to the HR management practices. I had no prior contact with the research participants, and I selected participants based on their knowledge and experience in the research topic.

Researchers apply ethical codes, policies, and principles through the constructivist and positivist models (May & Janne, 2013). Some of the ethical principles applicable to research are integrity, confidentiality, honesty, objectivity, and non-discrimination as stated in the consent form (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I used the Belmont Report protocol (HHS, 2017) as an ethical protocol guideline to ensure justice, respect for individuals, and a sense of welfare or responsibility while dealing with the research participants. While carrying out the research, I maintained participants' confidentiality, maintained

fairness and respect, and treated them as competent human beings able to make free decisions. I maintained beneficence by ensuring that there was no harm done to the participants and avoided acting against their wishes. Although it is important to consider and respect the opinions and views of people toward the research questions, it is important to note that some may have personal motivations to change their views. To avoid bias, I selected participants based on their experience in addressing the central search question. The researcher acts as the intermediary between the participants and the data (Sze & Tan, 2014). A researcher needs to avoid bias while carrying out the research (Masue, Swai, & Anasel, 2013). Bias is a subject of concern because it is possible for the participants or the researcher to consciously or unconsciously skew the information (Masue et al., 2013). Bias can threaten the search validity and reliability (Malone, Nicholl, & Tracey, 2014). Researchers can avoid bias by clarifying respondents' answers, providing neutral questions, and interviewing respondents that represent the population under study (Masue et al., 2013). I mitigated biases by not leading the participants to the research answers, followed up the answers by asking probing questions, and cross examined the answers with other qualitative researchers and records as recommended by Malone et al. (2014). Tufford and Newman (2012) suggested using the bracketing techniques to avoid bias. Bracketing is about becoming aware of any preconceived notions that may hinder the reliability of the study (Chan, Fung, & Chen, 2013). I conducted research at a high ethical standard by avoiding bias, maintaining transparency, and ensuring fairness and respect for participants.

I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A) to ensure that I abided by the same standards and procedures for all participants during the interview. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) noted that the interview protocol serves as a guideline during an interview. The protocol identifies opening and closing scripts, asking semistructured interview questions and follow-up questions, and the amount of time required for each interview, and collecting consent form. According to Yin (2017), the interview protocol allows the researcher to keep track of steps necessary to conduct a successful interview.

Participants

A research protocol includes guidelines depicting who can or cannot participate in the research (Yin, 2017). The guidelines include the eligibility criteria and provide the features that should be the same for all participants. The eligibility criterion for the participant selection includes selecting individuals who have the knowledge and the experience to provide the answers to the central research question. Eligibility requirements are important because they assist researchers in obtaining accurate and reliable data.

One of the most daunting tasks for any researcher applying qualitative methodology is gaining access to the research participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2014). Accessibility includes identifying and getting access to participants who are knowledgeable in the research topic (Shenton & Hayter, 2014). I used purposeful sampling in this study. Purposeful sampling is identifying participants who meet specific criteria (Palinkas et al., 2015). In this research, I used a LinkedIn profile to identify potential participants who matched the criteria. The eligibility criteria were that

participants (a) had experience in the research phenomenon, (b) provided an honest and unbiased responses to interview questions, (c) belonged to SMEs that were successful in decreasing business failure, and (d) served in senior leadership capacity for more than 1 year.

I sent out invitations (see Appendix B) to participate in the research via email and included the consent form. I selected the first five participants who responded to my request. The participants who responded but did not participate in the research received an email notification from me (see Appendix C). I invited the eligible participants for a face-to-face pre-interview meeting to go over the interview protocol and the consent form.

A researcher needs to maintain a working relationship with the participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The face-face preinterview allows a researcher to know participants on a personal level, which is important to establish a working relationship (Bryman & Bell, 2015). By signing the consent form, I confirmed that participants were not under pressure to participate. Meeting with the participants before the formal interview can build trust and a healthy working relationship (Donnelly, Gabriel, & Ozkazanc-Pan, 2013). I interviewed participants who were in Bangkok, Thailand in their offices. I conducted weekly communication with the respondents before and during the research process, and even after the study with those interested in the findings to maintain trust. Integrity and trust are the core elements of credible research leading to honest answers from the respondents (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I communicated with participants

to ensure that there was no conflict in time and place of conducting the interview and made sure that the participants were comfortable with the conditions.

The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do some SMEs' business leaders in Thailand use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs?

Research Method and Design

A researcher chooses a research method and design based on the nature of inquiry (Yin, 2017). The research method I chose was a qualitative multiple case study over a quantitative or mixed method research design. In this section, I will provide the justification for my use of the qualitative method and case study design.

Research Method

The research method for this study was a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a scientific investigative procedure that helps a researcher to find answers to specific questions, gather evidence, and provide findings (Bailey, 2014). The qualitative method is appropriate because it aims at comprehending a particular research problem based on the perception of the people involved. The advantage of qualitative research is that it allows a researcher to obtain composite textual explanations of the individual's experiences in research problem (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014). The technique gives a clue about the human side of an issue by providing opinions, views, and connections between people (Bailey, 2014).

In contrast, quantitative methods are objective and emphatic and engage with statistical or mathematical data using questionnaires, polls, and surveys (Zohrabi, 2103). In a quantitative study, a researcher manipulates existing data through computational

systems such as SPSS with the purpose of getting explanations regarding particular phenomena. The quantitative researcher tries to understand the relationship between variables in a population (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

In qualitative research, a researcher tends to explore situations while in the quantitative research, a researcher tends to confirm the hypothesis of a phenomenon (Kaczynski, Salmona, & Smith, 2013). The analytical goal in qualitative research is to describe variations while quantitative research quantifies variations (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). The qualitative study is open-ended, flexible, and uses textual format to obtain the data and the quantitative technique is close-ended and consists of numerical data (Yin, 2017).

In this study, I am using neither statistical techniques to analyze variable nor using numerical data to explore the research phenomenon. Therefore, a quantitative method is not suitable for this study. The mixed research method utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods (Zohrabi, 2013). Because the quantitative method is not appropriate for this study, the mixed method was also not viable.

I choose a qualitative method because of flexibility. The qualitative method is usually flexible because it enables the researcher to interact with the participants with open-ended questions, making it possible to ask different questions to the participants (Ahrens & Khalifa, 2013). Applying the qualitative method in the form of questionnaires is the most flexible method because it allows the researchers to interact with participants and access their views regarding the topic based on their environment (Blau et al., 2013). When using questionnaires in conducting the research, the researcher asks the same

questions to respondents and in the same manner. The methods are advantageous since it facilitates easier comparison across the respondents and the study areas.

Research Design

In a qualitative method, a researcher can choose from various research designs. The ethnographic design is suitable to collect data in cultural settings (Baskerville & Myers, 2015). In narrative design, a researcher collects data in a storytelling format from the participants (Myers, 2013). In this study, I neither collected data in a cultural setting, nor did I collect data in a storytelling format. Therefore, an ethnographic and narrative design was not suitable for this study. Phenomenological design enables the participants to explain the phenomena from certain experiences or outcomes (Bryman, 2012). The phenomenological design was not applicable to the research because it allows a researcher to identify things that can be done to improve profitability in an organization, not explain why an organization is not profitable.

In this study, I applied a case study design. The strength of a case study is the ability to comprehend a complex problem or situation by adding a researcher's knowledge and experience in the research topic (Yin, 2017). Case studies tend to emphasize the attainment of comprehensive contextual assessment of limited problems and situations, plus their relationships (Yin, 2017). Researchers use case studies across a range of disciplines. A case study is suitable to research on modern real-life circumstances and offer a guideline for applying the opinions derived from the research (Cronin, 2014). Yin (2017) defined a case study method as an empirical inquiry that

investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. A case study allows researchers to work with a small sample size (Yin, 2017).

A single case study design was most suitable for the research because it is the most cost-effective, and yet provides the opportunity of getting detailed data for the research problem (Cronin, 2014). This case study included a single company and did not require the inclusion of diverse research objects and participants. By focusing on a single firm, I was able to relate to the organizational environment and views of the participants in a comprehensive manner leading to substantive findings.

According to Walker (2012), saturation is an element applied to facilitate the collection of quality and adequate data for the success of the study. In this study, I asked all viable questions during the interviews and allowed the respondents to exhaust their opinions concerning specific questions. Each participant had adequate time for the interview so that no information missed. I utilized methodological triangulation to collect data from the multiple sources. The methodological triangulation enabled me to reach data saturation.

Population and Sampling

Purposive sampling helps to identify respondents into pre-determined criteria that are relevant to the research topic (Yin, 2017). Purpose sampling is soliciting participants that have knowledge on the research phenomenon (Barratt, Ferris, & Lenton, 2015). The convenience sampling involves the ease of contact and may not lead to qualified participants (Daniel, 2012). According to Siciliano, Yenigun, and Ertan (2012), the snowball sampling may result in the participant who does not meet the study

requirements. Unlike snowball sampling in which the researcher get participants referral from the people the researcher is in contact with, the purposive sampling enables the researcher to preselect participants based on their experience and knowledge in the research phenomenon.

In a qualitative study, participants size can be 10 and under (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). In a case study, a researcher could achieve data saturation with five participants (Dworkin, 2012). O'Reilly and Parker (2013) stated that increasing sample size does not necessarily result in higher data saturation. In this case study, I limited the sample size to five. In a similar case study involving SMEs, Chijioko (2016) reached data saturation with five sample size.

Theoretically, data saturation occurs when a researcher gets to a point where any additional information does not add any new information to the research (Marshall et al., 2013). I allocated enough interview time for the interview so that I could reach to data saturation point. I utilized methodological triangulation to collect data from the multiple sources to reach data saturation. Collecting data from the multiple sources resulted in detailed, layered, and intricate data to reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I carefully selected participants through purposeful sampling to represent the total population of HRmanagers in public institutions and other related firms. The participants were above 18 years of age and willingly participated in the interview process. The participants were prepared to sign the consent form and provided honest and unbiased answers to the interview questions. The participants worked in the managerial capacity in the HRfield and had a minimum of one-year experience in strategic human resource

management (SHRM) practice. According to Becker and Huselid (2014), HR managers are in a strategic position within an organization to formulate approaches and programs that can decrease business failure. By understanding SHRM, it is possible for the managers to devise strategies that can decrease business failure.

Ethical Research

I aimed to maintain respondent's confidentiality by the provision of an informed consent form. Informed consent is a method used to ensure that the respondents understand the notion of being participants in research and can consciously make the decision whether to participate or not (cite). The informed consent form went through the ethics committee for approval, was binding, and signed by the participants and the researcher. A researcher needs to obtain informed consent from the participants before commencing research to facilitate an acquisition of credible data (Yin, 2017). I sent the consent forms to participants via email with initial research participation invitation letters. I discussed the consent form with participants during the pre-interview to make sure that they had a thorough understanding of the research protocol. The terms of the research and the questions were in simple language for better comprehension and to avoid misinterpretation.

Participants had the freedom to withdraw from the research without giving any explanations. In this study, none of the participants withdrew and provided valuable data during the actual interview and member checking. The researcher informed the participants about their rights during a pre-interview, including their right to refrain from participating in any stage of the process for any reason they deemed reasonable. Time

was crucial for participants, and by taking part in the research, as they had to forgo some of their duties. It was important for the researcher to highlight what was there for participants from participation. There was no monetary compensation for participation. My goal as a researcher was to make participants realize that they were contributing to a study that has implication for social change. I also informed the participants that I would provide the copy of my study findings to them.

Ethics in research allow a researcher to focus on the relationship between the researcher and the participants, and professional ethics are other relevant issues including plagiarism, data fabrication, intellectual property, and mentor associations (Farrimond, 2013). According to Gibson, Benson, and Brand (2013), a researcher must maintain ethical standards during the research. The Institutional Review Board protects the rights of individuals involved in qualitative research. The committee of ethical expert reviews, monitors, and approves research studies that involve human participants. Before collecting data, I obtained the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Walden University's approval number for this study is 03-07-18- 0500615. I followed the National Health Institute guidelines to assure the ethical protection of participants.

A researcher must maintain the privacy and confidentiality of research participants (Pollock, 2012). I assigned each participant a code during data collection and analysis. I coded the participants' name as P1, P2, and so forth. The names of the participants and the corresponding organization's name did not appear in the final report to safeguard the privacy. I stored the data in a password-protected file for 5 years to

protect the confidentiality of the participants. Corti (2012) stated to secure, preserve, and store data for easy access and future audit.

Data Collection Instruments

In this section, I described the process of collecting data during the research process. I was the primary data collection instrument. I used the semistructured interviews as the secondary data collection tool as suggested by McIntosh and Morse (2015). I ranked the interview questions according to its importance. The list of questions served as the interview guide (Raheim, 2016). The participants answered the questions exhaustively after which I went to the next question. Depending on how the participants responded to the interview questions, I asked follow up questions.

I used the interview protocol as an interview guide to assure commonality, consistency, and reliability of data. According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012), when using the interview protocol, the researcher discusses the consent form and other critical detail about the research with the participants. For example, in this study, I went over the consent form to assure the participants about the confidentiality and privacy of their information. The interview protocol included opening and closing scripts, audio recording, interview questions, follow-up questions, and a statement about the member checking.

A researcher utilizes all the necessary methods and procedures to ensure the study quality. According to Prion and Adamson (2014), validity means the study is credible, valid, and reliable. Reliability of research means that the future study will result in similar findings (Yin, 2017). To maintain the credibility of the study, I utilized methodological

triangulation by collecting data from other sources such as company documents. Methodological triangulation enhances study validity (Denzin, 2012). After data analysis, I conducted a member checking. The member checking will allow a researcher to add new information and ensure that data analysis is accurate (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). The member checking ensured the validity of the study.

Data Collection Technique

In this study, I used the semistructured interviews as a primary means to collect data. Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller (2012) stated that the semistructured interviews are efficient ways to collect credible data. The interview protocol directed the interviewer throughout the interview process so that all participants had an equal response time, and answered the interview questions in a certain order (see Appendix D). The semistructured interviews allow the interviewer to get a comprehensive opinion on a certain topic by asking open-ended questions (Cooper, Fleischer, & Cotton, 2012).

In this research, I selected participants who met research criteria by reviewing their LinkedIn profile. Premium membership allowed me access to participants' email information. I sent invitation emails (see Appendix B) with the consent forms. The purpose of attaching the consent form to an invitation email was to provide information on research background, research procedures, and benefits of being in the study, and privacy so that participants could decide whether or not to participate in the research. I selected the first five participants who responded to my request. The participants who responded, but not chosen for the research received an email notification (see Appendix C) from me. I scheduled the pre-interview meeting at the participant's office in Bangkok,

Thailand. In Thailand, senior officers can use their office for the interview. During the pre-interview meeting, I went over the consent form, requested to provide company documents relating to research phenomenon, and set a time and date for the actual interview. Participants were asked to share documents for which they have the appropriate authority during the actual interview. Participants signed the consent form without any reservation during the pre-interview meeting.

I used the interview protocol (see Appendix A) as a guide during the actual interviews. Following the interview protocol help a researcher to make the study more reliable (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The interview protocol included steps and procedures to follow during the interview. I used a digital recording device during the interview with the participant's consent. I used Philip Voice Tracer recorder (model: DVT2710), which is compatible with Dragon Naturally Speaking software. The Dragon Naturally Speaking software allowed me to transcribe audio files to Microsoft Word. Each interview did not exceed over 60 minutes, and I was able to reach data saturation during the interview time.

Advantages of the semi-structured interviews are: (a) the researcher has adequate time to prepare and list the questions in a manner to provide insight into the research phenomenon; (b) the researcher prepares the interview questions ahead of time and get a chance to review its pros and cons which will help the interviewer to gain confidence during the interviewing process; (c) interviews enable a two-way communication between the interviewer and the interviewee and as such, both parties can ask questions for clarification making the collected data more valid; (d) open-ended questions allow the participants to give views in their terms and understanding without feeling pressurized to

answer in a particular manner and; (e) by openly expressing one's view, a researcher can capture different dimensions of the question from the various respondents and get conclusive answers. Disadvantages of semistructured interviews are that interviews are time-consuming, costly, and require the researcher to undergo various procedures to commence on the study. This study did not require any research site permission, a letter of cooperation, or data agreement. The selected potential participants of this study choose a convenient date and time for conducting the interview research which took place at their office.

Yin (2017) suggested collecting data from the multiple sources for a qualitative case study. Besides interviews, I collected documents relating to the research topic which included the company's sustainability reports, internal memos, and some charts from various participants. Participants knew that sharing of company documents was voluntary and I did not offer incentives besides providing a two-page summary after study completion. The advantage of company documents is that such materials could provide insight into the research phenomenon from different perspectives. Some of the documents participants provided were applicable to the research inquiry. A researcher should maintain an audit trail to eliminate bias in the study (Anney, 2014). I kept the reflective journal which included an audit trail to minimize bias. In the reflective journal, I documented the research process and my self-reflection on the process. The reflected journal contains outcomes, timelines, and my opinions providing transparency in each research process.

After data analysis, I met with participants for member checking at their office. During member checking, I presented my data analysis transcripts to participants. I allocated 45-60 minutes for member checking as stated in the consent form. The member checking helps a researcher to control research quality by giving participants an opportunity to review the outcome of the data analysis (Reilly, 2013). Participants review the transcripts to ensure that data interpretation is accurate and add new information if necessary (Morse, 2015). During member checking, participants did not add any new information and participants found data interpretation accurate. Member checking allows a researcher to make the study more credible (Tong, Chapman, Israni, Gordon, & Craig, 2013). In this research, a pilot study was not necessary.

Data Organization Technique

Throughout the research, I maintained a journal to capture the relevant information that aided me in the data analysis. I labeled the information in the journal with codes for confidentiality, and only I had access to the journal. I labeled the participant's name as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. Applebaum (2014) suggested keeping a reflective journal in a qualitative case study to capture a thought, the research experience, and future activities. I kept the reflective journals to reflect on my practices during a various phase of the research.

I used MS Excel, MS Word, and Nvivo 11 to organize data. The MS Excel helped me to organize literature review references according to type, date of publication, and peer-reviewed. I used MS word for interview transcripts and a reflective journal. The NVivo software helps a qualitative researcher to organize data for analysis and to find the

common themes (Zamawe, 2015). I used Nvivo for thematic analysis. Using Nvivo, I did keywords search through queries and grouped them to develop themes. I sequentially organized all the information for easier retrieval.

The IRB requires the researcher to protect the data for ease of access and future audit (Wiles & Boddy, 2013). I stored the data in a password protected hard drive and a portable flash drive as a backup for 5 years after completion of the study. Password protected encrypted electronic, hard drives are credible since it allows the storage of large quantities of data from the research process (Stake, 2010). After five years of completion of my study, I will delete all electronic files and shred the paper data.

Data Analysis

In this study, I sought to investigate the strategies that HR managers use to decrease business failure. The key constructs of the Ulrich theory helped me understand the context of this research. Thematic analysis is suitable for a qualitative study because it enables the researcher to interpret complex data sets using codes (Glaser & Laudel, 2013). I used Yin's (2017) five-step data analysis approach which included compiling data, disassembling data, reassembling data, interpreting data, and coming up with the findings.

Upon review of the reflective journal, I found few challenges and risk during the research process, but I was able to overcome them without difficulties. The challenges were identifying the participants, time constraint, and meeting the rigor of doctoral study. The risk was participants withdrawing from the study, and not be able to reach data saturation with my sample size. I identified participants in LinkedIn with purposeful

sampling techniques. I managed the time constraint and met the rigor of doctoral study through proper time management. The participants did not withdraw from the study, and I was able to reach data saturation with my sample size. I also listed data analysis sequence in my reflective journals, and data analysis sequence was:

1. After the interview, I used the Nuance Dragon voice recognition software to translate audio recording into MS word.
2. I manually entered any phrase, words, or dialogues that were not recognized by the software.
3. I broke down the data to a manageable size by reducing redundant information. Sarpong and Arthur (2013) noted that the data cleansing process reduces errors and inconsistency, thereby enhancing a quality of information collected.
4. Next, I used the NVivo 11 software to transfer data from MS Word and Excel for content analysis. The content analysis approach will help to discover emerging themes and patterns (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013).

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2011) recommended using NVivo software to organize qualitative data and to develop themes. The NVivo will allow a researcher to obtain implicit and explicit information from the raw data and understand the relationships between different themes, recurrence of the ideas, and frequencies (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The NVivo resulted in emerging themes that I compared and contrasted with the literature review to understand the similarities and difference of my findings with existing literature.

I applied a triangulation model that used different formats to interpret data. The triangulation model is essential to facilitate the provision of credible data after crosschecking from various sources (Denzin, 2012). I compared and contrasted the data collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data for this study was the semistructured interview. The secondary source was company documents provided by the participants. I requested participants to provide secondary data during pre-interview. The participants provided me with many company documents, and upon review, I found only a few documents were relevant to the research inquiry. The relevant document contained facts to support the participants' claims in regards to financial and company activities.

I did crosschecking of identified key themes with the new studies published in the literature. The crossing checking between the data sources made my study current. The advantage of continuous crosschecking is that it increases understating of a research topic. During the data analysis process, I correlated the identified themes with the conceptual framework of the Ulrich model provided in Section 1 of this study.

Reliability and Validity

Reliable data should be consistent and have the ability to generate similar results if the process is repeated (Yin, 2017). Validity refers to the honesty and genuineness of research data (Anderson, 2010). To maintain reliability and validity, I kept the integrity of data during data collection and data analysis

Reliability

The reliability also refers to the dependability of the study. In this study, I took various approaches to maintain the dependability. The dependability depends on the quality of instruments used for the study (Houghton et al., 2013). As a primary data collection instrument, I avoided any bias during data collection and interpretation. Malone et al. (2014) stated that bias could threaten the research reliability and credibility. Bias in the research is difficult to avoid (Malone et al., 2014). I mitigated bias through a self-reflexive process known as bracketing during data collection and analysis process as recommended by Chan, Fung, and Chen (2013). Bracketing is about becoming aware of any preconceived notions that may hinder the reliability of the study (Chan et al., 2013). Dependability also means consistency during data collection (Wahyuni, 2012). I used the interview protocol as a guide during the interview. The interview protocol was the same for all participants to confirm uniformity and consistency.

Validity

Validity refers to the study trustworthiness (Zohrabi, 2013). The trustworthiness of the study depends on its credibility, transferability, and confirmability. I ensured the credibility of this research by triangulating of data and member checking. Marshall and Rossman (2014) noted that the triangulation of data and member checking enhances the validity of the research, making it more credible. Denzin (2012) recommended collecting data from the multiple sources such as interviews, archival documents, observations, field notes, and the company information provided by the participants for methodological triangulation. I collected data from the interviews and company documents. After the data

analysis, I conducted member checking to make sure that the data analysis and interpretation were accurate as intended by the participant's response.

The essence of any research is to allow for transferability of research findings in similar or related contexts (Polit & Beck, 2012). Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen, and Kyngas (2014) stated that transferability refers to what degree research findings apply to the general population. To maintain transferability, I carefully articulated interview questions, collected data from multiple sources, and provided robust and detailed descriptions of finding that could help future researchers or firms to decrease business failure.

Confirmability refers to the accuracy of data (Houghton et al., 2013). I ensured confirmability by creating an audit trail, data saturation, and member checking. I kept a reflective journal and organized data for future use and audit. I allocated 45-60 minutes for the interview because Folta, Seguin, Ackerman, and Nelson's (2012) reached data saturation within 45-60 minutes in their studies. I interviewed each participant for less than 60 minutes and reached data saturation. In a qualitative case study, a researcher can reach data saturation with five or fewer participants (Dworkin, 2012). In this study, my sample size was five. Harvey (2016) noted that member checking strengthens the study's confirmability. After data analysis, I conducted member checking to ensure study confirmability.

Transition and Summary

This qualitative single case study explored the strategies that HR managers used to decrease business failure. Five HR managers formed the sample size, and I used the

semi-structured interviews to get the opinions on the research subject. I assured confidentiality by signing the consent forms. I identified research participants through their LinkedIn profiles. Participants were free to withdraw from the research for any reason. The sampling method for this study was the purposive sampling. The participant's selection criteria involved identifying the managers who were knowledgeable about the strategic HR management, who had worked in the HR management capacity for more than a year and understood the cultural and structural environment of the company. The five sample size was enough to get data saturation. I analyzed the data using the NVivo software. I ensured the reliability and validity of the study and stored the data in a password-protected hard drive for five years after the completion of the study.

Section 3 will included the presentation and the findings. The section highlighted the application of study to professional practices and its implication for social change. Moreover, section 3 included recommendations for actions and helpful information for future research on the research topic. Finally, section 3 contained the researcher's experience while conducting the study, the summary of the study, and conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The objective of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies SME business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand. Five managers located in Bangkok who are knowledgeable in decreasing SME failure provided answers to semistructured interview questions. In this section, I used data from the interviews, company documents, and reviewed articles in literature since the writing of the proposal for methodological triangulation. Section 3 includes the presentation of findings, contribution to business practices, social change implications, recommendations for action and future research, and the conclusion.

Presentation of Findings

The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do some SME business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand? Using the Ulrich model as a conceptual framework, I analyzed the data using Yin's five-step data analysis approach which resulted in three themes. The three themes were: (a) governance, (b) marketing and branding, and (c) information technology integration. These three themes represent strategies to decrease business failures. The implication for positive social change is that the survival of SMEs could result in continuous employment opportunities for people living in Thailand's local communities leading to an improved standard of living and overall wellbeing of Thailanders.

Theme 1: Governance

Under this theme, I will discuss the participants' views on effective governance to decrease SME failure. P4 said that their companies do not have a separate HR department, and the company executives are responsible for HR functions. P1, P2, P3, and P5 have a HR department, and the participants noted that HR managers are part of the overall organization strategy formulation and implementation. In both cases, it appeared that HR managers from participating companies involve in governance as strategic partners as stated in the Ulrich model (1998). Below is a discussion about Theme 1 regarding governance.

Governance is an activity of engaging employees through leadership to meet the company's objectives (Khanna, 2016). According to Palmrose (2015), weak corporate governance contributes to business failures. The subthemes under governance are employee engagement and leadership. All participants stated that employee engagement is essential for an agile workforce and business success. P5 described employee engagement as an amalgamation of taking ownership of work and showing commitment toward productivity. Moreland (2013) found an operating profit of the business could decrease by 32% in an organization with low employee engagement. P5 recommended five strategies to engage employees at work. Those strategies are placing recognition and reward system in place at work, aligning efforts with strategy, empowering employees, encouraging teamwork and collaboration, and supporting employees' growth at work. These strategies are outside the norm of traditional HR practices, but fall within the boundary of the Ulrich model (1998) principals because according to the Ulrich model

(1998), HR professionals assume multiple roles as strategic partners in corporate decision-making.

When asked to provide specific examples of governance strategies P5 added that employees could voice opinions without any reservation, able to walk into the office of company executives with feedback, use of social media for business productivity, and have access to the Internet at work to check personal email. Hassan et al. (2015) said that in an employee champion role, the HR professionals advocate employees' rights and promote the interest of the employees (Hassan et al., 2015). All participants indicated that each employee has a growth plan as to career advancement.

P5 showed me the employee handbook. The handbooks were comprehensive; well-written; and included company benefits, incentives, work guidelines. According to P5, the handbooks not only set expectations and minimize disputes, but also provide legal protection which is necessary for business survival. Well-drafted employee handbooks could ease the boarding process of employees, help the employee understand company expectations, and minimize disputes (Goncharsky & Iverson, 2018). P5 said, "We follow RAPTER concept at work." According to P5, RAPTER stands for recognition, appreciation, praise, and treating employees respectfully. Islam and Ali (2013) found that reward, recognition, advancements, and work quality lead to job satisfaction. All participants indicated that their company has a competitive salary and a better benefits package than the competitors. According to Smith (2012), 76% of employees would say that an excellent employee benefit is more important than an initial salary. Custers (2013) supported the notion that employees prefer job flexibility, growth, and paid time off over

monetary rewards. However, according to P5, both financial and non-financial incentives play a vital role to engage employees to remain productive.

P2 mentioned that the company leaders support work-life balance and minimize work-life stress. Work-related stress can lead to physical and psychological disorders which in turn result in absenteeism and loss of productivity (Shoss & Penney, 2012). P2 stated that the company leaders have streamlined employees' work with the proper job design and make sure that job requirement align with employee skill sets. According to Tims et al. (2013), when employees participate with business leaders in job design, they take the ownership in their roles and shows commitment. P2 added that each employee at work knows the efficient way to accomplish the task which comes through training and the use of proper tools. According to Babu et al. (2015), equipping employees with training and adequate tools helps a business achieve organizational growth.

P4 added that the company culture supports employee empowerment and less micromanagement. According to P4, each employee has authority to make an individual business decision without involving an immediate supervisor, and this kind of leniency at work encourage employees to take ownership at work. All participants indicated that company culture is important as an employee wants to work in a company that provides meaning to the work. P4 stated that the company has excellent work-life balance culture, and depending on the nature of work, the company supports work flexibility. For instance, employees can work remotely from home if the job allows doing so, can engage in job rotation to avoid boredom, and can bring pets to work once a month. Chen and

Manning (2015) stated that there is a positive connection between company culture and financial results.

P4 has added that the company is successful in creating a fun and rewarding work environment where doing a task comes naturally. When asked to expand upon the response, P4 said that the company has a robust culture that readily allows for advocacy, sense of community, and willingness to put extra efforts to contribute to business success. The participants' responses showed that the leaders from participating companies extend their roles beyond traditional HR functions as strategic partners. Hassan et al. (2015) noted that as a strategic partner, HR leaders contribute their skills and knowledge to formulate a productive work environment culture.

All participants stated that employee engagement starts from the first day on the job. Employees receive effective orientation on company mission, vision, goals, job expectations, and teamwork. When it comes to employee training and recruiting, P3 said that the Thai government had put forward Thailand 4.0 version program to encourage employees to remain productive through a technology-driven economy. P3 added that HR leaders encourage employees to engage with the Department of Skills Development for technology-related training, retraining, and skill upgrading. P3's company documents showed that the company leaders partner with the Department of Vocational Education and Training to provide job seekers with on-site training. After the completion of training, the HR leaders recruit employees whom they believe will remain productive. Mitchell et al. (2013) recommended HR leaders to act as a strategic partner to strengthen training program and skill development.

P1 and P5 stated that their company practices include following The Sufficiency Economy, Philosophy (SEP) program of the Thai government. The SEP program highlights the principle of sustainability. According to P1, embracing SEP and engaging employees shows that the company is taking social and environmental consideration in business practices. P1 mentioned that employees' engagement in SEP is a means to build reputation and brand loyalty among stakeholders, which in return will enhance the financial performance of the company. In an employee champion role, HR leaders engage employees in sustainable practices to drive positive financial results (Yusuf et al., 2017). The participants showed me the sustainability report that listed how employees use statistical process control (SPC) tool to improve quality, teamwork, and process ownership as total quality management (TQM) strategies. The sustainability report included information on how the company continually participates in business process redesign (BPR) to improve productivity. P1 added that employee engagement is crucial for both TQM and BPR strategies implementation. Participants rooted employee engagement to job satisfaction.

P4 showed me survey documents to measure employees' job satisfaction. P4 stated that the company does an annual five-point survey with "5" being extremely satisfied and "1" being extremely dissatisfied. According to P4, the survey is a useful tool to discover any employee cynicism that could hinder business productivity. When asked to expand upon employee cynicism, P4 described employee cynicism as work frustration, contempt toward supervisors, disillusionment, and distrust. According to P4, "The survey results provide us insight on the Gross Happiness Index (GHI), which is our way of

measuring employee work satisfaction.” The P4 uses GHI results to develop company wide incentive programs to strengthen employees’ morale. In an employee champion role, leaders build employee morale through incentives and communication so that they remain engaged and productive at work. Upon review of the GHI survey document, I noticed survey questionnaires included work-life balance, leadership, work environment, benefits, feedback, and employee growth.

When asked about the leadership role in employee engagement, all participants agreed that leaders’ negative attitudes and toxic behaviors toward employees could hamper employees’ morale and work productivity. In the literature, various authors mentioned that toxic leadership is not good for the health of the organization (Boddy, 2014; Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013). The toxic leaders deplete organization resources and contribute to high levels of employee burnout and turnovers. The role of a change agent of the Ulrich model (1998) is about adaptive leadership which is to adjust one's personality to build employees trust and respect. According to P4, “If the relationship with employees is fractured, no employees will perform at work.” P4 emphasized the company’s executive communication skills. P4’s company document showed that a company has the highest retention rate, showing employee job satisfaction. P2 discussed leaders’ feedback-giving skills and relationship-building skills. P4 mentioned that when there is a misalignment between company policies and practices, employee disengagement takes place in the workplace. P3 stated that management incompetency by not engaging employees during change implementation hinders business productivity.

All participating companies' leadership involves performance management and corrective action. P3 showed me the company's performance management and corrective action documents. Both reports contained action, process, and measurement relating to nonconformity and compliance. The report also included developmental activities within a reasonable time frame to achieve desirable results. According to P3, performance management and corrective actions are accountability tools. P3 said that performance management is to increase employee productivity, whereas corrective action is to correct human behavior to meet company's expectation. The execution of performance management and corrective action shows that HR leader is functioning as an administrative expert role of the Ulrich model (1998).

The participating company leaders showed authenticity, confidence, trust, and a desire to put the needs of the organization above their own needs, which aligned with the employee champion role of the Ulrich model (1998). Based on the participants' responses, the employees have a sense of purpose to work, sense of goodness and efficacy, and self-worth. The participants reported that the leaders in their perspective companies display behaviors that are congruent with company vision and mission statement.

Theme 2: Marketing and Branding

Theme 2 includes marketing and branding. Marketing and branding knowledge are essential to minimizing business failure (Fillis, 2015). All participants reported having a comprehensive marketing plan. Marketing and brand themes align with the Ulrich model (1998). Under marketing and branding themes, participants discussed

various strategies to minimize business failures. These strategies apply to SME business leaders in Thailand because, according to Pfeffer and Veiga (2014), sustainable marketing strategies could ensure continuous business profitability. P4 brought 2017 marketing plan documents to the interview. P4 stated the marketing plan includes timelines, budgets, customer profiles, following market trends, product research, competitors watch, product modification, social and environmental responsibility, sales force training, and advertising materials. P4 said, “No matter how strategic we are, there are always possibilities of things not working our ways, so it is important to be tactical to handle situations and have an alternate plan to accomplish the objectives.”

P5 stated that small Thai business leaders need to follow strategies, techniques, and working processes of large SME companies and apply them to their businesses. P5 added that HR leaders could be a great resource as a strategic partner in assisting marketing managers in identifying strategies of other SMEs. P2 noted benchmarking the strategy of a successful business but suggested to establish brand identity. According to P5, “Others can easily replicate the products, but the unique brand is irreplaceable and sells to the customers.” P3 said that the brand itself does not sell, but the story behind the brand sells, and the business leaders need to promote the brand through effective marketing campaigns. According to P3, marketing can be expensive, but company leaders minimize the cost through an effective marketing campaign by thinking outside the box to promote companies’ brand by involving in social issues. Keegan, Rowley, and Tonge (2017) stated that well planned and defined marketing plan help markets to penetrate and develop markets for long sustainability. P3 said,

For example, recently, the company reached out to local artists in Bangkok to exhibit the artworks that represent gender equality and female empowerment in Thai culture. The company sponsored the event, and the local press was there to cover the event. That was a cost-effective and wonderful means to promote our brand.

P1 said that the Thai government had implemented ‘One Tambon One Product’ (OTOP) program to stimulate entrepreneurship in Thailand. The idea behind the program is that each district (Tambon) must produce one quality product that represents Thai identity. P1 stated that the Government Public Relation Department mandate that products under OTOPT must meet standard and quality for export. According to P1, “Companies develop quality products, but many Thai entrepreneurs fail to create short and catchy brand names to direct their products to international customers by using the English language that reflects Thai identity.” Marketing through branding differentiate one from competitors and help companies to build up customers over time (Davcik & Sharma, 2015). P1 said that the company leaders should use the English language in their products naming to establish a Thai identify and to show that the products belong to the modern global culture. P1 said, “For example, the tea bags labeled as ‘Chai Tea’ are well understood by both Thai consumers and the international community as ‘Cha’ means tea in the Thai language.” The Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) supports the notion the effective communication relies on ‘optical relevance’ which is in the case of product naming choosing with optimal consumer relevance.

P3 provided a different concept on product labeling while exporting goods to foreign countries. According to P3, “Most fertilizers in this region are made from the carcass, animal waste, grass, and dried tries. When exporting to countries like Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, where products are similar, the company leaders must be creative to distinguish their products to create a unique brand identity. One example of doing that by labeling the product in the native language of exporting countries and including a comparison chart that highlights the benefit of using their product over competitors.” P3 added, “Creating value is what matters in branding. People want to know the benefits of using the products.” P3 presented a document relating to international marketing. The document listed marketing team traveling overseas to conduct a marketing test so that the company products are desirable to people. The international marketing document contained statistics in demographic, regulatory compliance, and detailed marketing plan.

All participants stated that most of their marketing is online. Online marketing communication improves consumers' buying decisions resulting in increased sales and brand enhancement (Wu et al., 2015). P3 stated working with online bloggers and YouTube reviewers to expose the products on the online platform. P3 and P5 noted that the leaders use Facebook, Line Ad, YouTube, and search engine advertisements to promote the products. P1 and P5 stated that their company utilizes marketing firms to do market research and advertising for them. Market research helps identify prospective buyers for particular products and services (Salavou, 2015). P1 and P5 recommended researching the marketing company's background, years in business, and making sure that the companies are tech savvy and subject matter experts.

In the literature, various authors stated social media engagement could result in business profitability (Feinzig & Raisbeck, 2017; Nduhura & Prieler, 2017). When asked about marketing expenses relating to social media uses, P1 said, “Social media and pay per click may work for one company, but may not give expected results to other companies. It depends on the business type, market, and so forth. Social media and pay per click can be beneficial up to a certain point to companies, but as a business grows, it is better to have professionals handle the business marketing needs. If the company cannot afford marketing firms' expenses, then I suggest to stick to Facebook pages and Survey Monkeys for market research, and Google Alerts.” As an administrative expert role under, HR managers need to provide support to administer social media platform at work. P1 company did a survey to streamline online buying and selling process. The survey included identifying the buyer and preferred method of purchase. The company document showed that more buyers purchase through Facebook pages than Facebook groups or Instagram. The buyer preferred communication through online messenger than a mobile phone, and preferred method of payment was credit cards.

P2 said that the company uses the 360-degree marketing which is about using website, social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), grassroots marketing (word of mouth marketing), event and road show, co-branding, network marketing, and TV advertising. P2 noted that the company leaders encourage employees to use external social media to build networks, recruitment, and drive sales. P2 continued that the company participates in trade shows throughout the year to promote products. When asked about the use of social media, P4 said, “Facebook advertising policy requires to

meet certain advertising guidelines. I am a Gen X; I am not familiar with using online social media like Facebook, Line Ad, and YouTube. I took an online marketing course. Wu et al. (2015) suggested using online marketing to improve brand and to drive sales. P4 stated, “I invested a lot of money on Facebook advertising, but the cost exceeded the benefits.”

P2 noted the importance of networking. According to P2, “If JQ company sells seafood online, and PR company sales Thai salad, then both companies can set up a new promotion to together to save the cost of advertising.” P1 provided a unique perspective on how the company promotes the brand. According to P1, the company leaders promote the brand through storytelling strategies. P1 said, “When we put our products in front of our customers, we present the story behind that product. Moreover, we do not highlight on products’ features, but the benefits attached to that features.”

All participants said that the company does niche marketing. According to P4, “We cannot meet the needs of all customers, neither can we make all customers happy. So, we focus on a target market and maintain good relations with our loyal customers with incentives. Our loyal customers are our brand advocates.” When asked about developing products for a niche market P4 said, “If you need a suit that perfectly fits the body, then it is better to have a tailor-made it for you. Similarly, by targeting a niche market, we can offer the products that meet their need and preferences.”

P5 said that the company using data mining to track customers purchase history and behaviors. Based on the information collected, P5’s company sends out emails and letters to customers with promotion materials geared toward the products of their interest.

P5 stated, “We understand our customers’ need. We observe customers’ behavior and keep a record of their purchase orders. We also survey customers about the products likes and dislikes, and we compare that with our sales trend. It will help to improve our products, understand the customers’ preference, and provide us with an opportunity to improve.”

All participants stated that their companies have sustainable business practices. P1 provided me a sustainability report. P1 said, “We minimize our waste to reduce environmental footprints.” P3 added, “We use less packaging and recycle material in product packaging.” When asked the importance of sustainable practices, P2 said, “We convey our sustainable practices in our message to customers to enhance our reputation. Our reputation is our brand.” Sustainable business practices may require businesses to re-engineer processes and adopt new technology. As a change agent, HR leaders could act as change agents (Ulrich Model, 1998) to help employees adjust while adopting new technologies or during engineering processes.

Theme 3: Information Technology Integration

The interview questions 1, 2, and 4 showed a connection between the use of technology and the success rate of small businesses. Stone, Deadrick, Lukaszewski, and Johnson (2015) mentioned that information technology influences the way managers do business and information technology will remain an integral part of a business. According to Stone et al. information technology would often make work easier for business professionals, increase efficiency, and help to make strategic decisions. The interview resulted in discovering various strategies related to technology in reducing the

business failure. For example, all participants noted the use of e-commerce assisted them in reaching to their customers. All participants pointed out that a decision to implement e-commerce include HR consideration. The Ulrich model (1998), which is the conceptual framework for this study supports the notion that all business leaders should consider HR professionals as strategic partners and administrative experts in corporate decision making.

P1 stated that they export goods to customers outside of Bangkok and e-commerce is one of the strategic management tools to reach global customers. P2 supported the notion of using e-commerce by stating that e-commerce helps the company leaders create value and expand the business. According to P3, e-commerce is an effective means to grab the market share. P3 posited that e-commerce to enhance communication with their customers. P3 showed me the company's e-commerce platform, the business intelligence tools integrated within the platform, and its uses in business dealings.

P4 acknowledged that the company is still not implementing the full functionality of e-commerce. When asked to expand upon the functionality of e-commerce, P4 said that the company leaders use e-commerce for sales, invoicing, and collecting payment. P4 added that the company is now using the website considering the scale of the business, but planning to expand the technology to improve an operational aspect of the business. P5's company is still in the early stage of e-commerce as the company is using a company website for order processing and order fulfillment in the domestic market. Mesut, Ahmet, and Safer, (2014) supported the notion that SMEs can foster growth by

expanding global market, create value, add new services, enhance business model, and reach competitive advantages through e-commerce. The participants that are in the retail business noted that most of the business customers are locals, and since the company is new, it does not have the financial resources for rapid growth in the broad market. P4 and P5 noted that they issue credit for businesses for some local transactions. The participants indicated that they use a robust credit scoring system to minimize the risk.

P2 stated that e-commerce value to SMEs in Thailand has been on a steady rise since 2014. When asked to expand upon the integration of e-commerce in a business platform, participants stated that they work with big data analytics firms. According to P3, it takes specific knowledge and skill set in big data and data mining in efficiently implementing e-commerce platform in the business. P2 noted that much smaller company does not have that kind of resources and according to the participant, if e-commerce integration not done correctly, it can be expensive and less effective for the business. P2 said, “Nowadays, data is the king. It helps to develop and penetrate markets.” P1, P2, and P3 stated the big data analytics firms helped them link their businesses to Alibaba and Tencent platform for e-marketplace. The participants added that the big data analytics firms enabled them with digital marketing, setting up e-commerce technology platform, and also provided e-commerce strategy consulting. P2 provided me a document that shows some statistic that they used in e-commerce marketing. The document showed that Internet use is high among teens followed by the people under 30 years of age. Online sale in Thailand is going up in the last five years and TV advertising followed by social media advertising is an effective means to reach the target audience. P2 stated that based

on statistical facts, the company introduced the right product categories to maximize sales.

The interview question 5 help to understand the challenges of integrating and functioning of e-commerce in their perspective businesses. Two participants noted that the company lack organizational components such resources, and business process, and infrastructure to expand outside its local market. However, the same two participants mentioned that the limited uses of e-commerce have been beneficial to the company and have plans to integrate the full function of e-commerce for business to consumer marketing, business to business marketing, product promotion, and sales transactions.

All participants noted that organizations' readiness is the major challenge in building an e-commerce platform. Organizational readiness refers to the availability of financial resources, business processes, and infrastructure. The participants noted that most Thai SMEs face a challenge in bringing the element of trust and discipline among the international community. Therefore, the participant added that their company has an ethical business climate and effective governance policies.

P1 stated that their company faced difficulties in accepting some international debit and credit card through their e-commerce site. The company now takes payment through PayPal and direct bank transfers. P5 is in the retail furniture business. According to P5, the customers prefer seeing and touching the products before they purchase, and it is the main reason why P5 feels that full integration of e-commerce outside of local market may not be effective for the business. P2 stated that some of their international customers neither understand Thai nor English and this creates a language barrier in some

of their e-commerce business. P2 also noted that some of the international customers come from the countries where there is a bandwidth issue. P2 added that in such instances the managers rely on phone transactions.

The other important aspect of technology integration business came in the form of business intelligence. The business intelligence is a set technological tool including data warehousing, analytical processing, reporting, and data mining that business leaders use to make informed business decisions (Sangari & Razmi, 2015). All participants noted that the companies' use business intelligence tools to enhance an operational aspect of the business. The notable business intelligence software discussed by the participants was Cognos, Tableau, and Kissmetrics. According to P2, the business intelligence tool provides 360-degree views of the business. P1 stated that the company implemented business intelligence tool during business inception which was ten years ago during enterprise resource planning. P1 added that business intelligence was not simply buying hardware and software, but rather setting up appropriate infrastructures and resources over a period. P2 mentioned taking precautions while implementing business intelligence making sure that back-end systems and processes are compatible with business intelligence applications, data quality is genuine, and the maintenance process is simple and is in place. From participants' responses, it appeared that business leaders were preparing for organizational readiness to embrace change in BI implementation and also reengineering organizational process during the implementation of the business intelligence system. The business leaders embracing change and re-engineering business process for sustainability is the concept support by the Ulrich model (Sayfuddin, 2014).

Participants noted that commitment of management personnel is vital in the BI system integration. Yeoh and Koronios (2010) stated that business intelligence tools are resources available to business leaders to remain sustainable. P1 and P5 stated that business leaders have to support BI initiatives and it has to be part of an overall business strategy. P5 noted that the company president understood the importance of business intelligence and was able to explain the benefits of BI system across the company ranks to get full support. P5's company documents that showed an 18% steady increase in net profit in the last five years and P5 gave credit to the business intelligence system. According to P5, the business intelligence system helped them to streamline their business, improve logistics, enhance communication, improve processes, and increase relationship with customers. P1 and P5 noted that the business intelligence needs constant modification to meet expectations, timelines, and to meet budget.

P1 and P2 added that the business has change control procedure to monitor and to make an adjustment to the business intelligence system to meet overall organizational objectives. The participant stated the success of business intelligence in critical areas encouraged them to apply it enterprise-wide scale. P4 said that the company uses the business intelligence system for its silo functional needs such as business operation, networking, and financial management. P3 added that the company uses it for business reporting and supply chain management. Information technology capability could help SMEs in Thailand to manage supply chain (Muenwongthep, Rattanawiboonsom, & Pongcharoen, 2018). All participants agreed that the business intelligence cut down the cost and provide other competitive advantages. P1 noted that the uses of analytics and

business intelligence assisted in reducing systematic and business risk. Wu, Chen, and Olson (2014) stated the importance of business intelligence to minimize business risk and systematic risk. P1 and P3 mentioned that they continuously work with their business intelligence vendors by participating in interactive sessions. According to participants, such interactive sessions are helpful in understanding in any software upgrades and to take benefit of the full functionality of the business intelligence software. The participant P4 noted that company purchased the business intelligence tools and managed BI tools themselves to minimize the cost. All participants indicated that there are minimal challenges while implementing the business intelligence tool. One prominent challenge is getting familiar with the functionality of the business tools, but with proper training, participants mentioned that they overcome such problems.

The interview question eight sought to understand the role of leadership in e-commerce and the business intelligence implementation role. All participants stated the importance of leadership when it comes to successful adaptation and integration of e-commerce and the business intelligence tools. Yeah and Koronios mentioned that some critical success factors for implementing the business intelligence tools include management support, business driven and interactive development approach, flexible framework, and data quality and integration. According to P2, the company president is the champion in information technology integration in the company. P2 added that the champion not only knows the functionality of the tools, but also knows how to translate business requirement for information technology to the team. P3 mentioned that business executives in the company collaborate with business units. P3 noted, “How can a

company implement the business intelligence systems without involving with teams after all the teams are the users of such tools.” The business leaders involving the team in business intelligence are acting within the norm of employee champion. According to the Ulrich (1998), business leaders need to act as an employee champion to remain productive by involving employees in business functional decision-making. All participants mentioned the company executives are the digital natives, meaning they are familiar with the recent technology and are quick to adapt current technologies to remain competitive and sustainable.

Applications to Professional Practice

The objective of this study is to identify strategies to minimize SMEs failure in Thailand. The data analysis and interpretation rigor resulted in identifying three themes which are marketing and branding, information technology integration, and governance. Asamoah (2014) and Rollins et al. (2014) stated that many traditional small business owners do not give much attention to marketing and branding. Ibrahim (2015) mentioned marketing and branding as an important business strategy for business sustainability and growth. Identified marketing and branding strategies will enable business leaders to (a) provide superior products, (b) acquire new customers, (c) customer retention, and (d) enhance company image.

According to Soane, Shantz, Truss, Rees, and Gatenby (2013), business will profit when an employee engages in their work. Identified governance strategies include employee engagement. Human capital includes individual knowledge, skills, and employees’ desire to accomplish tasks in a manner expected by managers (Dimov, 2017).

Employment engagement strategies include utilizing human capital to minimize business failure. Another identified strategy under the governance theme is leadership. Postma and Zwart (2015) posited that the leadership is a primary factor for business survival. The contribution of identifying employee engagement and leadership strategies to professional practice includes (a) agile work environment, (b) commitment toward work, (c) and less employee absenteeism.

According to Haned et al. (2014), information technology integration will enable business leaders to increase productivity, reduce revenue loss, and prevent business failure. Kurnia, Choudrie, Mahbubur, and Alzougool, (2015) indicated that e-commerce could foster SMEs growth in both developed and developing countries. According to Boonsiritomachai, McGrath, and Burgess (2016), SMEs lag behind in business intelligence integration in Thailand. Information technology theme includes e-commerce and business intelligence strategies. The application to professional practices include business leaders (a) able to reach a large market, (b) streamline the operational process through business intelligence tools, and (c) and boost productivity.

Implications for Social Change

Marketing, branding, and e-commerce strategies could help SME business leaders to expand markets and increase profit, and thereby reduce the risk of business failure. Integration of information technology could assist business leaders to improve performance, enhance processes, lower cost, and sustain business continuity. Employee engagement and leadership strategies may aid business leaders with resource allocation, promote social responsibility, and provide oversight of regulation and compliance, which

in turn could increase overall organizational effectiveness, increase productivity, and foster business growth. Small business success drives local economics through localized jobs, taxes, and revenues (Ruane, 2014). The implication for social change is that business continuation could lead to economic development, employment opportunities, and tax revenue for local governments leading to an improved standard of living and overall prosperity of local communities.

Recommendations for Action

In Thailand, SMEs failure is making it a significant problem for business leaders (Dullayaphut & Untachai, 2013). The study findings provided valuable insights on governance, marketing, and information technology integration strategies to minimize business failure. I provided detailed information about the research and offered comprehensive findings that can be used by future researchers or firms to decrease business failure. Based on the data triangulation, the study finding applies to other businesses in different geographical locations. The findings of this study can be useful to SMEs business leaders, SMEs owners, government agencies, small business assistance offices, non-governmental organizations and academic community. Based on the information gained from the research findings, I recommend business leaders to (a) avoid broad and generic marketing, (b) utilize online platform and social media to promote brand, (c) conduct marketing research, (d) develop marketing plan, (e) utilize e-commerce and business intelligence software, (f) implement employee incentives and benefits, (g) design robust training and employee development program, (h) build agile work environment, (i) focus on leadership, (j) participate in social responsibility, (k)

network with stakeholders, and (l) embrace accountability measures. I plan to disseminate the study results through ProQuest, Walden University open access journal, trade magazines relating HR, small businesses, and leadership. I am planning to present my study findings at the Global Leadership Summit in Bangkok in March 2019.

Recommendations for Further Research

The sample size for this study was five. Replicating this study with a larger sample could increase the generalization and applicability of data to larger contexts. The participants were from the business located in Bangkok. The participants may not present the perspectives of all SMEs leaders. I recommend expanding the target population to a different geographical location to access the pool of participants. All strategies needed to avoid the business failure are beyond the scope of this study. I would recommend future researchers to focus and identify other strategies not identified in this study. Future researchers could focus on mobile marketing, credit strategies, and working capital management strategies to decrease business failures. The Thai government has created many programs such as ‘One Tambon One Product’ and ‘Thailand 4.0 version’ to help small business succeed. Future research in government programs’ effectiveness and accessibility could be valuable to small business survival. Technology is rapidly changing. According to Pitchayadol, Hoonsopon, Chandrachai, and Triukose (2018), technological innovation is necessary for business sustainability. The further research about technological innovation and its applicability to all business types can be helpful to small businesses.

Reflections

The objective of the reflective journal was to reflect on my practices during the research process. In the reflected journal, I wrote my actions during the research process by being mindful of my conceptual framework. I wrote about the challenges I encountered and how I tackled them. The reflected journal contains the chart for my personal growth during the research process and my opinion on the overall research process. Upon review of my reflected journal, I found that the research process was demanding and yet very rewarding. It provided me with an opportunity for self-discovery. I learned getting a terminal degree requires hard work, perseverance, and patience. The functional knowledge and scholarly accomplishment can help me grow in my professional career as an HR manager. As an HR manager, I am part of corporate decision making. My current role requires me to function beyond the traditional HR roles of hiring, training, and developing employees. I am part of developing operational, marketing, and technological strategies in my company. My current role enabled me to choose the conceptual framework for this study carefully. After careful exploration, I settled with the Ulrich Model. The Ulrich Model allows HR leaders to carry multiple roles as a strategic partner, administrative assistant, employee champion, and change agent. However, I was cautious that my personal bias and perceived nations do not influence my study findings. I carefully listened to what the participants said and did not interject my ideas in the study. I was motivated in the research as I choose the topic in the field in which I have an experience and an interest. Participants exemplified as professional willing to help. They were courteous, informative, and enthusiastic. No participants withdrew from the study. Before this study, I heard the rigor of doctoral

research, and now I experienced it. The thought of me belonging to the group of elite scholars is a great feeling. I am hopeful that with the knowledge and the skills I have acquired, I can act as a change agent to do good for SMEs, its people, and the community at large.

Conclusion

In Thailand, SMEs' failure rate exceeded 50% in 2010, and many SMEs continue to fail each year, making it a significant problem for Thai SMEs (Dullayaphut & Untachai, 2013). The objective of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore the strategies SMEs' business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand. I selected five business leaders in Bangkok, Thailand who have experience in reducing business failure. The Ulrich model is the right conceptual framework for this study because it enables HR managers to function beyond the traditional HR roles by involving in overall strategic decision-making. Yin's five-step data analysis approach resulted in four themes which are (a) governance, (b) marketing and branding, and (c) information technology integration. The governance theme included employee engagement and leadership strategies. Employment engagement strategies include utilizing human capital to minimize business failure. The leadership strategies include the leaders' role in building an agile work environment and employee commitment toward work. Identified marketing and branding strategies will enable business leaders to (a) provide superior products, (b) acquire new customers, (c) customer retention, and (d) enhance company image. Information technology theme includes e-commerce and business intelligence strategies. E-commerce and business intelligence strategies will help business leaders to

increase overall organizational effectiveness, increase productivity, and foster business growth. The implication for social change from this research is that business continuation could lead to economic development, employment opportunities, and tax revenue for local governments leading to an improved standard of living and overall prosperity of local communities.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Methodology

Interviews were implemented with a customized approach, allowing for an in-depth investigation. Follow-up questions were used to stimulate interviewee memory. The interviewer used semistructured question design. Interviews contained a predetermined set of 10 questions and predetermined questions will be the same for respondents.

Interview Guidelines

1. Arrange the interview in participants' office
2. Approximately 45-60 minutes for uninterrupted time for the interview
3. Show genuine care, concern, and interest in participants
4. Use basic counseling skills to help participants feel heard
5. Keep it focused
6. Listen and observe
7. Take notes

Procedures

1. Opening script

Good afternoon. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. This interview involves two parts. The first part is a brief conversation about the research purpose and getting your consent to proceed with the interview. The second part is an actual interview. I will ask a few questions to learn about your human resource

management strategies that resulted in increasing employee productivity. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel.

2. Tape recording permission script

If it is okay with you, I will be tape-recording our conversation. The purpose of doing this is that I can get all details. At the same time, I will be able to carry on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential.

3. Consent script

Before we get started, please take a few minutes to read the consent form. (Hand out the consent form. After participant signs the consent form, then turn tape recorder on).

4. Start the interview

5. Ending Script

Thank you very much for participating in the interview. Your time is very much appreciated and your comments have been very helpful. The information that you have provided will help me better understand human resource management strategies that SMEs business leaders use to increase employee productivity. You will be kept anonymous during all phases of this study. I will be providing you a copy of my study once it is published or not.

Appendix B: Invitation Email

Hello (Potential Participant), my name is Pantiva Navamarat and I am a doctoral student from Walden University. You are invited to participate in a research study because you meet the research criteria which are as follows:

- You belong to SMEs business that are successful in past five years.
- You have served in the human resource manager capacity for more than a year.
- I believe that you possess enough knowledge in addressing strategies SMEs' business leaders use to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand.
- I believe that you will provide honest and unbiased information for the study.

If you are interested to voluntarily participate in this valuable research, please review the attached consent form. The consent form provides information on research background, research procedures, the benefits of being in the study, and privacy. Please send me an email reply with any questions you may have.

Regards,

Pantiva Navamarat

Appendix C: Not selected for the research letter to participants

Dear xxxxx,

Thank you for responding to my invitation to participate in the research. I have met my participants requirement. In the future, if there is a need for additional participant in the research, I will reach out to you. Again, thank you for responding to my invitation email.

Sincerely Yours,

Pantiva Navamarat

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. What strategies have proven successful to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand?
2. Which strategies that you used to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand were the least effective?
3. What are some specific examples of strategies you used to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand?
4. What are the challenges you faced to implement strategies to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand?
5. How did you promote policies and values that align with strategies used to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand?
6. How are strategies used to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand communicated through the organizational ranks and among stakeholders?
7. What role does leadership play in the implementation of successful strategies used to reduce the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand?
8. What are some of the consequences of not implementing successful strategies to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand?
9. What else could you add regarding strategies to decrease the failure rate of SMEs in Thailand?

Appendix E: NIH Certificate

