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Sustainability Strategies for Immigrant Small Business Owners

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Abstract

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

In 2017, the Texas economy grew faster than the U.S. economy; however, the rate of failed immigrant-owned small businesses is an economic problem for the southwestern United States. The objective of this multiple case study was to explore strategies immigrant small business owners practiced in sustaining their businesses for longer than 5 years. The population of the study was 3 immigrant small business owners in the southwestern United States. The conceptual framework for this study was transformational leadership theory. Thematic analysis of interviews, member checking, participant observations, and field notes identified 5 emergent themes: acquired leadership skills (with transformational leadership elements as the ideal style used and the owner's experience noted as a contributing factor); reduction of communication barriers; incorporation of innovation, technology, and social media; establishing community connections and customer relationships; and managing the environmental, social, and economic challenges. The diverse citizens of the Southwest depend on immigrant-owned small businesses for goods and services consistent with their ethnic and multicultural heritage. Exploring the difficulties these immigrant small business owners encounter in sustaining their businesses and identifying strategies for sustainability could influence positive social change by improving the quality of life for citizens of the Southwest and providing strategies for business sustainability to aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs.

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Dedication

I am dedicating this study to my late father, Simeon Amanambu Obika, who struggled through life in a quest to give his children the best, yet never knew that any of his children would be a college graduate. He instilled in me his best gift, the spirit of excellence and dedication. Additionally, to my mother, Felicia Ekenma Obika, for your continued support and encouragement. I also dedicate my study to all first-generation immigrants in the United States and the financially challenged youths of Africa.

Table of Contents

ii

List of Tables

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

An economically advanced country such as the United States encounters a growing number of immigrants seeking significant opportunities and improved standards of living. The migration of immigrants to developed countries creates business opportunities for immigrants to increase their earning potential and attain a higher standard of living (Hernandez, 2014). The U.S. government recognizes the importance of immigrant-owned businesses as an economic advantage (Sonfield, 2014). According to a 2012 Fiscal Policy Institute report, immigrant-owned businesses employ more than 4.7 million employees in the United States (Hayes, 2015); employment is an essential factor for economic development. Various small business owners encounter challenges and need successful strategies for business sustainability and long-term growth (Shields & Shelleman, 2015); recognition of this need triggered this study to explore immigrant small business sustainability and identify possible strategies to achieve it. The results of this immigrant-owned small business study may contribute to the scholarly conversation on immigrant economic growth and increase knowledge of successful strategies for business sustainability (Neville, Orser, Riding, & Jung, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that immigrant small business owners in Texas used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Background of the Problem

Small businesses, including those owned by immigrants, are an element of a progressive country. As reported by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA, 2016), small businesses create approximately 99% of jobs in the United States. A

substantial percentage of factors stimulate the U.S. economy, including job creation by the formation of small businesses (Artinger & Powell, 2015). Immigrant-owned businesses have grown with the increase of immigrants in the United States, and research has revealed that business ownership offers economic progress for immigrants in the host country (Wang & Liu, 2015). A study from the SBA Office of Advocacy released in 2012 indicated that immigrants have a higher percentage of business creation than nonimmigrants - an estimated percentage of 0.62% per month (Hayes, 2015). The creation of small businesses by immigrants is a prominent economic factor in a diverse, multicultural city such as Houston, Texas.

The rate of failed immigrant-owned small businesses is a fiscal problem. SBA (2016) reported that approximately 50% of new businesses fail within the first 5 years. Furthermore, Rocha, Carneiro, and Varum (2015) asserted that immigrant-owned businesses struggle in the first 5 years of establishment. With small businesses, immigrants provide jobs for not only themselves, but also other immigrants and nonimmigrants, as well as contributing indirectly to others through networking and increasing the supply chain (Skandalis & Ghazzawi, 2014). Most multicultural cities depend on immigrant-owned small businesses for goods and services that satisfy their ethnic and multicultural heritage and maintain their residents' desire to feel at home. As the immigrant population grows around the country and specifically in Texas, more in-depth research is essential to identify problems that immigrant small business owners encounter, as well as strategies to allow them to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years.

Problem Statement

Many small business owners have difficulty sustaining their businesses beyond 5 years (SBA, 2016). An alarming 50% of small businesses, including immigrant small businesses, fail within 5 years of establishment (Holloway & Schaefer, 2014). The general business problem was that many small business owners do not adequately prepare for sustainability. The specific business problem was that some immigrant small business owners lack strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that immigrant small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The targeted population encompassed three immigrant small business owners in Texas, who had continued their business for over 5 years. The study may promote positive social change by providing information to help immigrant small business owners be successful and by encouraging immigrants and entrepreneurs to expand or start small businesses, thereby improving the availability of multicultural goods and services. Small business owners could gain increased knowledge of strategies for business sustainability beyond 5 years, which may encourage immigrants to expand businesses in the southwestern United States and other multicultural cities.

Nature of the Study

The qualitative method was the approach and plan for this study to explore immigrant small business sustainability beyond 5 years. Researchers use the qualitative method to explore phenomena for generating new theories, gaining insight into problems,

and creating knowledge for understanding and explaining phenomena (Reinecke, Arnold, & Palazzo, 2016). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study to explore strategies that immigrant small business owners used to sustain their businesses longer than 5 years. With the quantitative method, researchers identify a theory related to the topic of study, develop hypotheses, and then conduct statistical, mathematical, or computational analyses (Barczak, 2015). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because there were no statistical, mathematical, or computational analyses. Finally, researchers use mixed methods of research to combine the attributes of qualitative and quantitative methods (Molina-Azorin, 2016). The mixed method was not appropriate because the qualitative method was applied to explore strategies for business sustainability.

The multiple case study design was applied to this study to explore strategies for immigrant-owned small business sustainability beyond 5 years. Researchers employ multiple case study to understand phenomena by collecting data through interviews, observations, records, reports, patterns, consistencies, repetitions, and manifestations (Park & Park, 2016). Accordingly, the multiple case study design was appropriate for this study; the method of gathering data involved interviews, member checking, and participant observations to explore the phenomenon of immigrant small business sustainability. Although researchers employ phenomenological design to explore phenomena, phenomenological design uses minimal data samples to explore lived experiences (Stovell, Wearden, Morrison, & Hutton, 2016). The phenomenological design was not appropriate because I broadened immigrant small business sustainability

research beyond the lived experiences of the participants. Ethnography draws knowledge about a culture from people in their social settings for the interpretation of findings; observation occurs for an extended period (Morse, 2016), which was not possible in this study.

Research Question

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

Interview Questions

The use of open-ended interview questions applied to this study focused on exploring and gaining an understanding of what strategies were consistent with immigrant-owned small business sustainability.

1. What strategies did you use to sustain your business beyond 5 years?

2. What strategies did you find worked best for sustaining your business beyond 5 years?

3. How did you communicate your sustainability strategies to employees and stakeholders?

4. What major obstacle, if any, have you overcome to sustain your business beyond 5 years?

5. What strategies did you use to overcome obstacles?

6. What additional information would you like to share regarding strategies that immigrant small business owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years?

Conceptual Framework

In 1978, Burns developed and introduced the concept of transformational leadership with an emphasis on followers' development and motivation. Bass (1985) suggested that leaders motivate followers to perform beyond contractual expectations. Transformational leadership is a form of leadership applied to global markets with increased circulation of goods and services of value within social, economic, political, and cultural settings (Ghasabeh, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015). I applied features of transformational leadership theory to explore the leadership characteristics of immigrant small business owners for sustainability beyond 5 years. Transformational theory was a conceptual framework suitable for exploring the leadership skills of immigrant small business owners for business success and sustainability.

Burns (1978) developed transformational leadership theory to demonstrate that leaders can inspire followers to change perceptions and can motivate followers to align their values with a common goal. The constructs underlying transformational leadership theory are (a) idealized attributes, (b) idealized behaviors, (c) intellectual stimulation, (d) inspirational motivation, and (e) individualized consideration (Burns, 1978). The application of transformational leadership theory contributed to this study to explore strategies that immigrant small business owners used for success and sustainability beyond 5 years.

Operational Definitions

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

Business ethics: Business ethics refer to the moral demand for a business structure to maintain trust and confidence between business and society (Goel & Ramesh, 2016).

Entrepreneur: The term *entrepreneur* was synonymous with *small business* or *small business owner* in this qualitative multiple case study, predominantly within the literature review section.

Immigrants: Immigrants are persons born outside the United States who are permanent residents or naturalized citizens of the United States (Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2017).

Immigrant-owned business: An immigrant-owned business is a business wherein at least one of the owners is foreign born and has ownership in the business of over 51% of the equity (Wang & Liu, 2015).

Small business: The SBA defines a small business as an independent business with fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2017).

Small Business Administration (SBA): The SBA is an independent agency of the federal government created in 1953 to aid, counsel, assist, and protect small business interests and concerns. SBA preserves free competitive enterprise and helps start, build, and grow businesses within the United States (SBA, 2017).

Sustainability: The definitions of sustainability vary but are consistent with how organizations adopt the concept. Sustainability involves instituting programs or strategies in day-to-day operations and managing resources efficiently for the long term (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are conditions that may support research but are not controlled or validated by the researcher (Gardner et al., 2014). Accordingly, three assumptions guided this qualitative multiple case study. The first assumption was that the qualitative research method was suitable for this study. The qualitative approach corroborated the data collection process and explored strategies for immigrant small business sustainability. The second assumption was that multiple case research design was appropriate for this study. According to Yin (2014), researchers prefer the application of case study to research participants' experiences and develop strategies for a phenomenon. The third assumption was that the study participants would respond with complete and accurate descriptions of skills and competencies for operating and maintaining a small business beyond 5 years.

Limitations

Limitations of this study were its potential weaknesses and restrictions. Yin (2014) indicated that elements that limit the scope of research and are beyond the control of the researcher are limitations. The constraint of this qualitative multiple case study was the amount of time for data collection and analysis. The validity of qualitative data

collection is dependent on the researcher's ability to produce focused information on the topic of interest within a reasonable time (Hurst et al., 2015). Data collection for this study focused on immigrant small business owners who had maintained business operations for more than 5 years; the sample size was a minimum of three immigrant entrepreneurs. A potential limitation was that I collected information from immigrant business owners who kept data private and resisted sharing information to benefit other immigrant small business owners.

Delimitations

Nelms (2015) stated that delimitations are boundaries that a researcher sets, which are conditional and nonpermanent. The delimitations that guided this qualitative multiple case study were (a) sample size, (b) sample location, and (c) sample population. The sample size was a minimum of three immigrant small business owners who sustained their businesses beyond 5 years. The location of the study was Houston, Texas, which is a diverse multicultural community. The use of Houston as the geographic location of the study may limit the usefulness of the data in other areas. The sample population consisted of immigrant small business owners who were foreign-born individuals with business rights of over 51% of equity who privately started and owned businesses in the United States.

Significance of the Study

The conclusion and results from this study could add value to business practice and social change because of the contribution of immigrant-owned small businesses to the U.S. economy; the developed strategies for sustainability beyond 5 years may

improve quality of life and reduce small business failure among immigrants. Immigrant entrepreneurship and small businesses constitute an important economic phenomenon and a significant aspect of a country's economic development; hence, immigrant entrepreneurship prompts an increase in social science research (Skandalis & Ghazzawi, 2014). Additionally, identified strategies could be useful to immigrants and empower new and aspiring entrepreneurs. The results could influence positive social change because entrepreneurship contributes to economic advancement and social mobility as immigrants transition in their new host country (Skandalis & Ghazzawi, 2014). Entrepreneurship provides income to immigrants, which leads to higher employment rates (Skandalis & Ghazzawi, 2014).

Contribution to Business Practice

The outcome of this study could offer three contributions to efficient business practice. The first contribution is the addition to the research continuum on immigrant-owned small business sustainability. The research continuum is necessary; as Skandalis and Ghazzawi (2014) stated, the growth of immigrants in some locations could lead to the growth of entrepreneurship and small business setup, which reflects an increase in immigrant-owned small business establishment. Second, some immigrant business owners could apply the gained outcome to practical leadership approach, which could lead to economic growth and business success. Third, this study may provide proven strategies for immigrant-owned small business sustainability, which may contribute to economic and business prosperity.

Implications for Social Change

This study has implications for positive social change, in that the findings may be applied to improve quality of life for immigrants. One benefit of self-employment is that it serves as a conduit for cultural assimilation (Nelson, 2016), which leads to positive social change for aspiring immigrant entrepreneurs. Immigrant-owned small businesses have surged with the increase of immigrants in the United States; research has revealed that business ownership provides economic progress for immigrants (Wang & Liu, 2015). The developed strategies from this study could influence positive social change by inspiring immigrants to start small businesses, which could improve the availability of multicultural goods and services. Additionally, other researchers on small business sustainability could use the findings and approach to examine and analyze how gained strategies and conclusions could contribute to the success or failure of immigrant-owned small businesses. Furthermore, this study could provide strategies for immigrant-owned small business sustainability in the southwestern United States and create awareness for possible positive social change in multicultural immigrant communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The sources within the professional and academic literature review section focused on exploring strategies that some immigrant small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The primary emphasis in exploring the phenomenon of immigrant-owned small business sustainability was the use of a leadership lens; the leadership focus was transformational leadership style. The study article selections enabled an exhaustive review of the study's conceptual framework (the

theory of transformational leadership) and strategies for small business sustainability, with extensive up-to-date literature and sources. The purpose of this professional and academic literature review was to summarize, compare, and contrast various references related to the research topic. The review of literature was conducted to gain information and build on existing research based on the research question and formulate strategies for small business sustainability.

Literature Search

The article selections for the review of the literature included more than 60 peer-reviewed sources of information, which investigated and developed points and counterpoints based on documentation on business problems related to immigrant-owned small business sustainability. The sources for the literature review included dissertations, federal government publications and websites, peer-reviewed journal articles, and books. The literature review encompassed scholarly articles retrieved from the Walden University and Houston Public Library databases, including ProQuest Central, Business Source Complete, and Google Scholar. Additionally, this study encompassed a search of multidisciplinary, management and business, and human services databases for literature relevant to the conceptual framework using the following keywords*: transformational leadership theory*, *transformational leadership*, *transactional leadership*, and *servant leadership*. The total references for this study included 176 sources: 164 scholarly peer-reviewed articles (93% of the total references), no non-peer-reviewed articles, nine government websites (5.1% of the total references), and three books (1.7% of the total references). The total number of references published within the past 5 years was 168,

which represented 95.4% of all references. The literature review contained 106

references, with 102 from scholarly peer-reviewed sources, represented 96.2% and 99

references, represented 93.40% published within 5 years of the chief academic officer

(CAO)-estimated approval date of July 2018.

Applications to the Applied Business Problem

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that

immigrant small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The

study goal lead to the central research question: What strategies do immigrant small

business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years? The research question

was appropriate to explore and accumulate information for the sustainability of small

businesses. The method was a qualitative approach with multiple case study design to

research, investigate, and document the process of events or activities of immigrant small

businesses in Texas. The application of the qualitative method provided a strategic

exploration of phenomena and permitted a multipronged data-collection effort, which

included personal interviews (Singh, 2015) with immigrant small business owners in

Texas.

Conceptual Framework: Transformational Leadership Theory

The conceptual model for this qualitative study on immigrant-owned small

business sustainability encompassed transformational leadership theory.

Transformational leadership theory, created by Burns in 1978, was suitable and

complemented this research. Burns developed the transformational leadership theory to

demonstrate that leaders can inspire followers to change perception and motivate

members to align their values with a common goal. Transformational leadership is a form of leadership applied to global markets with increased circulation of valuable goods and services within social, economic, political, and cultural settings (Ghasabeh et al., 2015). Transformational leadership theory focuses on the transformation of an organization or business and its followers from current conditions to an innovative purpose aligned with the organizational or business vision (Top, Akdere, & Tarcan, 2015). The transformational leadership style is best to manage business and employee diversity and transformation (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Turner and Endres (2017) indicated that the transformational leadership style supports small business success because of small business owners' contagious passion for their employees. Transformational leaders motivate and influence followers to perform at the highest level (Brahim, Ridic, & Jukic, 2015). I applied transformational leadership theory to this study to explore strategies, experiences, and ideas from immigrant small business owners regarding the leadership style they used, as well as how their leadership characteristics contributed to business success and sustainability beyond 5 years.

Researchers, over decades, focused on attributes underlying transformational leadership, as developed in part by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985). Burns underlined the characteristics of transformational leadership theory as idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration. Bass (1985) and Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991) expanded the theory by adding four attributes of transformational leadership: idealized influence or charismatic influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and

individualized consideration. The presumption that transformational leadership comprises

four dimensions or components is one of the characteristics that distinguishes

transformational leadership from traditional leadership styles (Caillier, 2014).

Alatawi (2017) and Lee (2014) reexamined and challenged the addictive effect of

the four factors or dimensions of transformational leadership, known as the *four Is* or *four*

dimensions. Researchers revisited the concept that the four dimensions of

transformational leadership theory (i.e., idealized influence, inspirational motivation,

intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) are the addictive variables of the

theory (Alatawi, 2017; Lee, 2014). Alatawi reexamined the addictive components and

myths the four dimensions are exclusive to the transformational leadership style. Alatawi

suggested that the four dimensions did not produce a high addictive effect of the

transformational leadership theory and highlighted the need for a new theory to justify

the four dimensions. Lee challenged the clarity of the transformational leadership model,

asserting that the four dimensions are not distinctly delimited. According to Lee, the four

aspects are not unique to transformational leadership theory and can be elements of other

leadership styles, specifically the transactional leadership style (Lee, 2014). Alatawi and

Lee concluded that the four attributes are not a representation or addictive characteristics

of the transformational leadership style.

The outcome of the studies by Alatawi (2017) and Lee (2014) indicated that the

four Is of transformational leadership theory do not highlight the addictive and unique

aspects of transformational leadership, which contradicts the extensive and compelling

literature supporting the four dimensions. Some researchers reinforced the concept of the

four dimensions as exceptional to transformational leadership theory (Allen et al., 2016; Moon, 2017). Allen et al. (2016) listed the four fundamental behavior components that transformational leaders use to motivate followers as charismatic leadership or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Moon (2017) documented the four essential dimensions of transformational leadership as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration; the dimensions moderate the negativity between diversity and organizational citizenship behavior. Allen et al. and Moon recognized the four core dimensions as the fundamental concept and practice components of a transformational leader, which are the necessary, essential, and primary elements of transformational leadership theory. Allen et al. and Moon established the four attributes as essential and concluded that the qualities are the primary behaviors of transformational leadership and are vital to the concept of a transformational leader.

Kim, Liden, Kim, and Lee (2015) discovered that the primary and central tenet of the transformational leadership dimensions has a positive influence on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Transformational leaders have a positive impact on followers with an increase in organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2015). Top et al. (2015) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational trust, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The authors concluded that organizational trust and job satisfaction directly influence organizational commitments (Top et al., 2015). Malik, Javed, and Hassan (2017) conducted a study to investigate the impact of the transformational leadership

components on organizational commitment and employee satisfaction in the Islamic

banking sector and discovered a significant positive influence on both. Top et al. claimed

that the transformational leadership dimensions empower leaders to hold a unique

emotional connection with their followers. Top et al. concluded that transformational

leaders influence employees and provide the right environment, resources, and

opportunities to grow; when this occurs, employees tend to stay satisfied, with a passion

for their job and organization.

Numerous studies have supported a positive relationship between

transformational leadership and staff, team, and job performance. The effects of

transformational leadership on employee performance and productivity are significant

(Ra'ed, Bader Yousef, & Ali, 2016; Singh, 2015; Tabassi, Roufechaei, Abu Baker, &

Yusof, 2017; Trmal, Ummi Salawa Ahmad, & Mohamed, 2015). Singh (2015) surveyed

413 employees to examine the effect of leadership on employee performance and

productivity. Singh determined that transformational leaders' behaviors improve

employee productivity, with an emphasis on building trust, inspiring a shared vision,

encouraging creativity, emphasizing development, and recognizing accomplishments. In

2015, Trmal et al. conducted a study to determine the effect of transformational

leadership on team performance and achieving a high-performance workforce that

exceeds the expectations of a global organization. Trmal et al. focused on exploring the

attributes and values that Muslim leaders display as transformational leaders, which

influence followers to achieve high-performance expectations. Netshitangani (2016)

stated that transformational leadership style promotes interpersonal connections with

charismatic characteristics, which influences high job performance in followers. The attributes of transformational leadership contribute to the positive effect and outcome for the team, and group commitments are the following: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Trmal et al., 2015).

Transformational leadership characteristics positively influenced job-related outcomes. Ra'ed et al. (2016) investigated the impact of transformational leadership and transactional leadership on employee knowledge sharing and job performance. Ra'ed et al. concluded that both transformational leadership and transactional leadership styles positively influence job performance, but transformational leadership has no impact on knowledge sharing. Tabassi et al. (2017) conducted a study to determine whether transformational leadership behaviors of a team leader could display a mediating role between team condition and team performance; the sample for the study consisted of three various sources of 94 construction crews. Tabassi et al. revealed that leaders' transformational leadership behavior had a positive effect on team performance with augmentation effect. The findings on transformational leadership and team performance supported the proposition that transformational leadership behavior directly stimulates team success.

The transformational leadership style is a central and critical leadership style for fostering innovation. High theoretical studies and empirical support exist regarding the transformational leadership style as an essential driving force of change across an organization and business (Dunne, Aaron, McDowell, Urban, & Geho, 2016; Li, Mitchell, & Boyle, 2016; Nijstad, Berger-Selman, & De Dreu, 2014). Nijstad et al.

(2014) proposed the creation of a psychologically safe team climate that supports radical innovations by transformational leaders. Nijstad et al. determined that with elevated levels of transformational leadership, innovations were radical; the results further indicated that minorities stimulate innovative quality through transformational leadership. Li et al. (2016) investigated the role of transformational leadership in innovation, specifically in the group and individual changes. Li et al. concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between group-level transformational leadership and team innovation; however, there was a negative correlation between individual innovation.

More researchers have addressed the importance of the transformational leadership style of innovation. Bagher Asgarnezhad, Masoume Mir, and Soltani (2016) investigated transformational leadership and knowledge management's consequence of organizational innovation and concluded that transformational leadership influences knowledge management and organizational innovation positively. Transformational leaders influence high levels of self-actualization and self-esteem in followers, which result in employee creativity and innovation (Ilsever & Ilsever, 2016). Dunne et al. (2016) examined the impact of individual entrepreneur and leadership styles in fostering innovation and concluded that leadership style, negotiation style, and organizational efficacy are momentous in new product innovation. Transformational leaders have consistently maintained the enhancement of team innovation, yet related research has generated uncertain findings (Li et al., 2016). Li et al. (2016) concluded that both favorable and adverse effects of individual innovation suggested that the relationship

between transformational leadership and innovation specifically for small businesses could benefit from further insight that moves beyond direct approaches.

Maqbool, Sudong, Manzoor, and Rashid's (2017) examination of the literature and current study yielded noteworthy findings on the relationship between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence. Maqbool et al. examined the impact and relationship of a project manager's emotional intelligence, competencies, and transformational leadership skills in relation to project success. Maqbool et al. demonstrated that emotional intelligence and a manager's skills in combination with the application of the transformational leadership style have a direct and positive influence on project success. Jain and Duggal's (2016) study of 120 respondents analyzed the effect of transformational leadership and emotional intelligence on organizational commitment. Jain and Duggal discovered that transformational leadership and emotional intelligence have a positive influence on organizational commitment, with the charismatic aspect of transformational leadership acting as the crucial factor. The empirical evidence on the connection between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence could influence organizational commitment (Jain & Duggal, 2016).

Bin et al. (2016), Jyoti and Bhau (2016), and Yi-Feng (2014) conducted studies on the transformational leadership style and revealed a positive effect on job satisfaction and trust in a leader or supervisor. Some leaders influence followers' trust because they generate enthusiasm and optimism that constitute increased job commitment and goal achievement (Jyoti & Bhau, 2016). Bin et al. investigated whether trust in a leader is a motivating factor that boosts feedback-seeking behavior in employees and determined

that leaders can develop their transformational leadership comportment to promote

employees' feedback-seeking performance. Yi-Feng evaluated the effect of

transformational leadership on job satisfaction as mediated by the trust of the leader. In a

study of 341 personnel with an average age of 33.5 years, Yi-Feng highlighted the

importance of trust in leadership for job satisfaction. Yi-Feng established an indirect

relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction influenced by

leadership trust. Yi-Feng's conclusion did not support previous studies that examined the

individual effects of transformational leadership trust on job satisfaction.

Transformational Leadership and Other Leadership Theories and Styles

The transformational leadership style remains the preferred and traditional

leadership style in both educational and business contexts (Eliophotou-Menon &

Ioannouz, 2016). Afsar, Badir, Saeed, and Hafeez (2017) specified transformational

leadership as effective in stimulating entrepreneurial behavior by encouraging and

supporting initiatives to explore new opportunities, develop new products, or improve a

process. Blake (2016) indicated leadership is essential when adopting sustainability for

business model strategies; the author confirmed transformational leaders are the

messengers for sustainability strategy. Of all modern conceptions of leadership,

transactional leadership and servant leadership remain close in comparison to the

transformational leadership; however, the transformational leadership is the preferred and

traditional leadership style with a positive impact on sustainability.

Burns (1978) coined the idea leaders are either transformational or transactional;

however, transformational leadership is substantially different from transactional

leadership. Burns introduced transformational and transactional leadership in 1978 with the concept transformational leaders motivate and uplift the morale of followers while transactional leaders provide to the immediate self-interest of their followers (Burns, 1978). Breevaart et al. (2014) stated transactional leadership consists of multiple characteristics with different effectiveness; the first and most useful is the contingent reward element. The transactional leadership style focus is on the exchange, compensation, and benefit (Breevaart et al., 2014). The transactional leadership has three dimensions: contingent reward, active management-by-exception, and passive management-by-exception (Quintana, Park, & Cabrera, 2015), with the concept of exchange for a benefit.

Ashikali and Groeneveld (2015), Eliophotou-Menon and Ioannouz (2016), and Quintana et al. (2015) detailed comparison between transformational leadership and transactional leadership. A transformational leader enhances the transactional leader's effect on followers; the transformational leader is concerned about the progress and development of followers (Burns, 1978). Quintana et al. concluded idealized attribute of transformational leadership and contingent rewards of transactional leadership affect employees' outcome and job satisfaction. Brahim et al. (2015) revealed transactional leadership is a leadership based on rewards and penalties. Eliophotou-Menon and Ioannouz specified transformational leaders stimulus provide for a change, and transactional leaders seek to maintain the status quo. The difference between transformational leadership and transactional leadership is the leader and follower social exchange relationship (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). A characteristic of a

transformational leadership over transactional leadership was a follower's motivation and empowerment.

The servant leadership as coined by Greenleaf (1997) gave a broad definition that leaders want to serve. Focht and Ponton (2015) and Liden, Wayne, Chenwei, and Meuser (2014) added some characteristics to the definition of servant leadership. The servant leaders model service before leadership as the primary feature and then inspire to lead follows (Focht & Ponton, 2015). The high emphasis on leading by serving followers is an exceptional characteristic of the servant leadership (Liden et al., 2014). Allen et al. (2016) specified the core attribute of servant leadership is a desire to serve; the servant leadership characteristic of serving is ultimate, servant leaders make the needs of consumers, employees, and communities their top priority. Liden et al. investigated the fundamental tenant of servant leadership with 961 employees and discovered servant leaders guide followers to prioritize the needs of others before their needs. The characteristics of servant leadership examined by researchers pointed to Greenleaf's original definition of service as core to a servant leader.

The aspect of service before leadership is the significant difference between servant leadership and transformational leadership. The servant leadership objective is serving the need for others and motivates by providing autonomy and resources; transformational leadership encourages modeling and motivation with charisma for a common goal (Allen et al., 2016). Grisaffe, VanMeter, and Chonko (2016) cited another characteristic of the servant leadership as unconditional love for another without expectation, which is a distinction between servant leadership and transformational

leadership. However, the unconditional love for another without expectation

characteristic of a servant leader will augment a transformational leader (Grisaffe et al.,

2016). Some researchers recognized servant leadership falls short of transformational

leadership in a competitive business environment with rapid changes that require an

attentive balance of organizational and individual goal (Allen et al., 2016). Ljungholm

(2014) cited the transformational leadership style influences achievement of the

organizational mission, builds commitment to an organization or business, and empowers

followers to accomplish set objectives.

Transformational and servant leadership hold many similarities; they are

complementary theories, but their framework of leadership is distinctly different. Allen et

al. (2016) stated servant and transformational leadership are similar because the two

leadership styles provide guidance and inspiration for organizational and business

changes. Transformational leadership and servant leadership demonstrate an independent

and confident relationship with leader effectiveness and follower satisfaction (Scuderi,

2014). Allen et al. further indicated a leader's focus is the primary distinction between

servant leadership and transformational leadership. Servant leadership focuses on

followers, and transformational leadership focuses on the organization and a common

goal (Allen et al., 2016). A servant leader forms a mental model of *I am a leader to serve*

as opposed to *I am a leader to lead*; furthermore, a servant leader serves before leading

(Focht & Ponton, 2015).

The evaluation of the transformational leadership, the transactional leadership,

and the servant leadership styles concluded the transformational leadership style is the

ideal leadership style to influence small business owners to business success and sustainability (Caillier, 2014; Suk Bong, Kihwan, & Seung, 2017). Transformational leadership is the ideal and model leadership style because of the positive effect on the output effectiveness (Suk Bong et al., 2017). Ljungholm (2014) suggested transformational leaders induce employee trust and organizational pride, the practical tools that support positive business performance, promotion, and creativity, which indicate transformational leaders operate as role models. Allen et al. (2016) implied a transformational leader develops and supports followers to achieve shared goals and vision; a transformational leader inspires followers to work for a common goal, which generates business success. Transformational leaders establish clear and challenging mission-related goals that motivate followers to believe firmly in the mission (Caillier, 2014), which contributed to small business success and sustainability.

Small Business

The definition of small business was consistent among researchers. SBA defined small businesses as firms with less than 500 employees (SBA, 2016). Holloway and Schaefer (2014) identified small businesses as enterprises with less than 500 employees. Zeuli and O'Shea (2017) in their study to analyze small business growth in 5 cities within the United States, including Dallas, Texas, defined a small business as a business with up to 500 employees. Schilling, Mazzuchi, and Sarkani (2017) in their study stated some businesses qualify as small businesses with 500 to 1500 employees. Small businesses are independent and not a subsidiary of another company (Adams, Kauffman, Khoja, and Coy, 2016). The vital element of a small business is an owner or team of owners;

whereas, large organizations have a board of directors (Ellis, 2016). The cited definitions

from the authors met the SBA definition of small business; however, for this study, a

small business was a business with less than 100 employees.

The small business startup is increasing in the United States. SBA reported small

businesses comprise about 90% of firms in the United States (SBA, 2016). Additionally,

Holloway and Schaefer (2014) stated small businesses are 95% of all businesses.

Kostovski, Nanevski, and Gjurcevski (2016) on the survey of managers for small and

medium enterprises indicated small and medium businesses encompass approximately

99% of all businesses. Johnson, Faught, and Long (2017) researched successful programs

for small business sustainability and commented rural regions within the United States

depend on the locally owned small businesses for economic growth and stability. In

conclusion, research confirmed small businesses increased at a faster rate than non-small

businesses.

A small business is a source of employment in a country. SBA (2016) reported

small enterprises create approximately 99% of jobs in the United States. Turner and

Endres (2017) indicated small business employs 48% of the private sector workforce and

provide 41.2% of all U.S. private payroll. Small and medium businesses employ more

people than large enterprises (Kostovski et al., 2016). Schilling et al. (2017) on their

survey stated small companies are drivers of the U.S. economy; the importance of small

businesses is critical and essential to economic growth.

Small businesses fail at an alarming rate. As reported by SBA (2016), half of the

small businesses fail after start-up. SBA further indicated an increase in a small business

startup; tragically, 50% percent of new businesses fail within the first 5 years (SBA, 2016). Holloway and Schaefer (2014) explored small enterprise leader's experience for sustainability and discovered small businesses are 95% of all businesses; regrettably, 50% of all small businesses fail in 5 years. Despite all established support, 50% of new businesses fail in the first 5 years (Petković, Jäger, & Sašić, 2016). The assumption of small business failure was within 5 years of start-up.

Immigrant Small Business

For this study, an immigrant small business was a business, the foreign-born individual started and own in the United States. Wang and Liu (2015) defined immigrant-owned business, as a business where at least one of the owners is a foreign-born, with ownership in the business of over 51% of the equity. Hayes (2015) detailed immigrants have a higher creation of business than nonimmigrants, an estimated of 0.62 percent per month; about 50% of immigrant-owned companies produce a combined annual income of $63 billion. Vandor and Franke (2016) revealed immigrants and expatriates influence entrepreneurial activity more than individuals without multicultural experience or nonimmigrants. In a diverse, multi-cultural city, immigrants own most small businesses.

Small businesses influence immigrants to integrate into the host country. Skandalis and Ghazzawi (2014) identified the growth of immigrants in some locations, a conventional notation of an increase in small business set up in those cities. Wang and Liu (2015) established immigrant-owned businesses have grown with the growth of immigrants to the USA; research revealed business ownership provides economic progress for immigrants. Immigrants seek opportunities for small business start-up in

their host country (Nel & Abdullah, 2017). The authors reported links between business ownership and immigrants.

Immigrant small businesses contribute to the economy of a country. Wang and Liu (2015) indicated small businesses contribute to the economy as they significantly promote US export, which encouraged a close examination of immigrant-owned business in the current global context. Nel and Abdullah (2017) revealed immigrant-owned business activities generate employment and are the impetus for economic growth (Nel & Abdullah, 2017). Research demonstrated business ownership provides economic progress for immigrants (Wang & Liu, 2015). Rocha et al. (2015) confirmed most immigrants in the United States turn to small business proprietorship to provide for their families.

Immigrant businesses have a positive influence on the host country. Skandalis and Ghazzawi (2014) discovered immigrant entrepreneurship activities contribute to the economic advancement and social mobility of some immigrants in their new host countries. Hayes (2015) reported immigrant-owned businesses employ more than 4.7 billion employees in the United States, about 20% of immigrant-owned companies invest more than $50,000 in initial capital; proving immigrant-owned businesses as adequately capitalized. Hayes (2015) further added approximately 50% of immigrant-owned enterprises have an annual income of $63 billion, which led to a significant pool of foreign investors in franchises (Hayes, 2015). Immigrant companies, a significant economic phenomenon, a paramount activity, and an aspect of a country's economic development, called for an increase in social science research (Skandalis & Ghazzawi,

2014). The diverse citizens depend on immigrant-owned small businesses for goods and services that satisfy their ethnic and multi-cultural heritage.

Immigrants travel the globe to pursue economic opportunities. Moon (2017) stated diversity is increasing in the United States within the past decades, creating a call for more research on diversity and multiculturalism. Vandor and Franke (2016) added migrations nurture opportunities and business recognition capability, which contribute a positive effect on entrepreneurship. Doz (2016) indicated multinational businesses would set up matrix organizations when both product diversity and global presence become significant. Immigrants operate in a rarer constraint environment; immigrants see opportunities for increased income and social norms and migrate with business proprietorship as a focus (Lo & Teixeira, 2015).

Immigrant business owners are foreign-born individuals that set-up and run businesses outside their home countries (Nel & Abdullah, 2017). The influence of business ownership and population diversity and tolerance is constant (Brown, 2015). Immigrants and return migrants are likely to start a business or engage in entrepreneurial activity than the natives because business among immigrants or persons with multicultural experience is rooted in specific resources and institutional arrangements within their background (Vandor & Franke, 2016). Vandor and Franke (2016) support the idea that cross-cultural expertise increases the ability to recognize business opportunities among immigrants.

A global trend exists regarding individual migration to another country because of opportunity to become a small business owner. The global migration continues to define

and reshape the host country's economy and job force (Nel & Abdullah, 2017). Vandor and Franke (2016) added one of the reasons for the increase of immigrant businesses are individuals willing to relocate to another country with the positive influence of an entrepreneurial mindset and interest. Global change is the benefit of internalization and integration for multinational companies, sharing of knowledge brings integration and outside-in experience (Doz, 2016). Zolfagharian, Saldivar, and Sun (2014) specified longing for native foods, supplies, and services within an ethnic community influence immigrant small business establishment. The ethnic goods and services increase the need for immigrant small business in the individual community.

Analysis of Sustainability

Sustainability is an important topic for organizations and businesses; businesses need to incorporate sustainability practice to manage resources and maintain the day-to-day operations. Sustainability discussion facilitates proactive actions for organizations and companies to start the formulation and development of sustainability strategies (Shields & Shelleman, 2015). Brundtland provided the general definition of business sustainability as the operation that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of the requirements of future generations (WCED, 1987). Otenko (2016) defined sustainable development as the capacity of a business to meet its present needs without compromising their ability to fulfill its future obligations; sustainability development is the capability to sustain, capacity to endure. Bansal and DesJardine (2014) defined sustainability as the development, which meets present needs without compromising the future need; sustainability often requires a trade-off between profit and

capital. The definitions of sustainability vary but are consistent with how organizations and businesses apply the concept.

Brundtland influenced the perception that sustainable development requires the implementation of three pillars, social, environmental, and economic aspects at the same time (Müller & Pfleger, 2014). The three components of sustainability are social, environmental, and economic dimensions; they are complementary, organizations and businesses should not interchange them for durable competitive advantage (Müller & Pfleger, 2014). Business owners should manage changes in the environment, social, technology, economic, industry growth, and sales for competitiveness and sustainability (Appelbaum, Calcagno, Magarelli, & Saliba, 2016). The successful implementation of the social, environmental, and economic aspects of an organization or business strategy will create a sustainable business advantage (Müller & Pfleger, 2014). To stay sustainable, business owners must address economic, environmental, and social issues that influence their business setup.

The speed of change in the economic, environmental, and social issues was challenging to organizations and businesses, control of these changes provided a competitive and sustainable advantage. The social aspect of sustainability is maintaining the well-being of people and communities, both internal and external stakeholders (Siriwut & Thankawin, 2015). Lago, Akinli Kocak, Crnkovic, and Penzenstadler (2015) established economic sustainability as the preservation of capital and value. The environmental aspect of sustainability is to improve human well-being, which is protecting natural resources (Lago et al., 2015). The practice of sustainability encourages

organizations and businesses to organize the economic, environmental, and social issues to influence its operations positively. Businesses that can successfully adapt to its environmental, economic, and social activities will be sustainable.

Sustainability Theory

Driscoll and Starik (2004) released a view of sustainability regarding human well-being, human-centered sustainability theory. Business sustainability under the human-centered sustainability aligns with Freeman 1984 stakeholder's theory (Rezaee, 2016). Human-centered sustainability focuses on creating sustainable, innovative programs with the participants' empathy and no harm to humans (Sorice & Donlan, 2015). The stakeholder theory supports human-centered sustainability with a focus on internal and external stakeholder interests, including an emphasis on human welfare maximization (Rezaee, 2016).

John Elkington developed the triple bottom line (TBL) theory in 1997 to express the fact that companies and businesses create value in multiple dimensions, economic, social, and environment (Elkington, 2006). The triple-bottom-line concept and the definition of sustainability by Brundtland influenced the perception that sustainable development requires the implementation of the social, environmental, and economic aspects of the business simultaneously (Müller & Pfleger, 2014). Lago et al. (2015) stated economic sustainability issue is the preservation of capital and value. The social dimension of sustainability is maintaining communities; the environment aspect of sustainability is improving human well-being, which is protecting natural resources (Lago et al., 2015).

Economic, environmental, and social issue strategies are essential elements to the study of small business success, growth, competitiveness, and sustainability. Alstete (2014) stated the combination of different approaches to economic, environmental, and social aspects are universal and can influence small businesses sustainability and viability. Appelbaum et al. (2016) added business owners should manage changes in the environment; changes in technology, economic, industry growth, and sales decline, and competition for sustainability. Müller and Pfleger (2014) expressed successful implementation of the social, environmental, and economic aspects of a business could influence a business sustainability advantage. To stay sustainable, business owners must address economic, environmental, and social issues that affect their business setup.

Small Business Sustainability

Recently, businesses increased attention to sustainability, which has become a standard practice for success. Appelbaum et al. (2016) discovered enterprises that seek sustainability would require the development of change strategies, to obtain best practices for sustainability and competitiveness. Petković et al. (2016) referenced business sustainability as strategic changes necessary to serve its community; these changes could be environmental, products, services, or a combination of numerous factors. Organizations and businesses spend time developing strategies for sustainability, considered as change initiatives for sustainability (Appelbaum et al., 2016). Johnson et al. (2017) indicated small businesses experience local economic impact more than large businesses or corporations, creating increased sustainability concerns. Sustainability

influences the overall business operations; therefore, organizations and businesses should be vital to change initiatives that affect sustainability.

Business sustainability is vulnerable when the short and long-term investment of business is disproportion. Small business sustainability is when an entity earns a profit by providing products or services that benefit others (Jackson & Jackson, 2016). Sustainability development is a source of success, innovation, and profitability that companies and businesses can use to influence sustainability challenges (Baumgartner, 2014). Managers and leaders should act and respond to the information and issues regarding their business sustainability. Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, and Figge (2015) indicated sustainability influences managers and leaders to simultaneously address economic, environmental, and social issues and develop a desirable outcome for success. Managers and leaders should scan for information on their business aspect and structure to improve sustainability; however, the information they search should impact their businesses (Hahn et al., 2015). Sustainability influences business operations and management; businesses should communicate their sustainability plans to stakeholders, customers, and communities for successful sustainable practices.

Business sustainability is vulnerable when the short and long-term investment of the business is not adequate to operate and maintain the business. The attention to business sustainability has increased globally because of the aftermath of the 2007 – 2009 global crisis; encouraging business owners to develop a focus to ensure the long-term viability of its activities can sustain the challenges and opportunities (Rezaee, 2016). Kwangseon (2014) stated sustainability is essential in the current system of most

organizations and businesses, with the concern of how to shift the current patterns to meet new challenges. Companies that successfully adapt to the challenges of its environment or operations remained sustainable.

Sustainability influences the whole business operations; therefore, the sustainable practice should bind the overall brand communicated to stakeholders, customers, and communities. Appelbaum et al. (2016) stated sustainability influences organizational change that affects entrepreneurial culture and its society. Siriwut and Thankawin (2015) indicated businesses engage stakeholders, critical reasoning, and efficient utilization of resources to positively influence sustainability. Lago et al. (2015) reported a robust system is required to strategize about sustainability. The recommendation is for all levels in a business setup and its stakeholders to understand and practice sustainable principles.

Sustainability perspective questions whether the competitive advantage is sustainable over an extended period, especially for small businesses. One of the critical activities of small business is to achieve sustainable competitive advantage; social media is a strategy to achieve that goal (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Consumers are more likely to respond to a social media strategy that small business use to penetrate the market. The sustainable business manages intertemporal trade-off in strategic decision-making with the consideration of short and long-term goals (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). Some aspect of business sustainability issues may rely on the owner or manager's interpretation of relevancy to the business.

Strategies for Small Business Success and Sustainability

Businesses that seek competitive advantage and sustainability rely on the environments, relationships, and connections as a driving force. Petković et al. (2016) cited business strategy connects the relationship between a business and its environment and how to engage stakeholders to safeguard overall sustainability. Environment change is a transformative learning area for sustainability (Crawford et al., 2015); businesses are changing behavior within its environments to increase performance. The environment a company operates cultivates enormous influence on the operation and success of the business; the lifespan of the business will grow in a stimulating environment (Petković et al., 2016). The development of a positive business environment and connection is a strategy for sustainability. Business connections and relationships are a crucial factor that could contribute to business success and sustainability (Rahatullah & Raeside, 2015). Businesses manage customer relationships with tailored transactions, which influences connections, profitability, and performance (Braun, Schweidel, & Stein, 2015). Wang and Liu (2015) stated some businesses are likely to engage in transnational economic activities; those business owners rely on the connection of their home country and co-ethnic networks to internationalize their business practice. Wang and Liu agreed small business should establish positive environment and relationships for sustainability.

Leadership skills are significant to small business success. The leadership skills of other successful small business owners are beneficial in understanding the role of leaders in small business success and failure and could affect social change (Holloway & Schaefer, 2014). Doz (2016) highlighted the importance of the role of a leader or a

manager to the success of global business or innovation project, which is critical and infuses positive influence for business success. Holloway and Schaefer (2014) stated small business owners should develop an understanding of leadership from experience and practice to build a bridge to business success and sustainability. The personality and characteristics of a small business owner are significant in achieving business success and sustainability (Petković et al., 2016). Some businesses may rely on the owner or manager's skills and interpretation of relevant matters for business sustainability issues.

The focus on business change could be a strategy for small business success. Merdzanovska (2016) stated businesses or organizations change to accommodate the changes in its environment, employees, and other stakeholders. Mehta, Maheshwari, and Sharma (2014) indicated change is inevitable; change represents a struggle between "what is" and "what is desired," which requires thorough strategic business planning. Cummings and Cummings (2014) cited businesses and organizations achieve successful change and development practice through the process of learning and applying a method because of the failed process and consequences of a failed operation. Sustainability is essential in current systems of most organizations and businesses, with concern about how to shift the current patterns to meet new challenges (Kwangseon, 2014). Businesses that can successfully adapt to the challenges of its environment or operations will be sustainable. Businesses should implement necessary internal changes to accommodate the external change for sustainability.

The speed of change in the economic, environmental, and social issues could be challenging for organizations and businesses. Sustainability involves concern for the

economy, environment, and society; companies should have clear propositions regarding the three aspects (Chun-Juei, Chong-Wen, & Conley, 2015). Business owners should adopt the attitude of managing the challenges of cultural diversity in their business environment (Huang, 2016). Coulson-Thomas (2015) stated businesses or organizations might encounter significant challenges to change the technique they apply in thinking and performing within a diverse community. Appelbaum et al. (2016) cited businesses that seek sustainability would require the development of change strategies, to obtain best practices for sustainability and competitiveness. Appelbaum et al. further mentioned businesses spend time developing strategies for sustainability; it is best to consider these strategies as change initiatives for sustainability. Failure for small businesses to adapt and accommodate its environment could result in business failure; business owners should continuously observe its environment and adjust accordingly (Petković et al., 2016). The control of organizational changes will influence competitive and sustainable advantage for organizations and businesses.

The practices of sustainability encourage businesses to organize its economic, environmental, and social issues with wide-ranging financial stability to influence its operations positively. Siriwut and Thankawin (2015) stated financial and social aspect of sustainability is maintaining the well-being of people and communities, which measures from both internal and external stakeholders. Small and medium business encounter more difficulties in obtaining finance than large firms; usually, small and medium business leaders lack advanced strategy, vision, and attitude to change the business environment (Kostovski et al., 2016). Businesses can take advantage of funding provided by the

United States Department of Agriculture for business transformation and sustainability.
Business transformation and sustainability programs across the globe provide debt
management and credit repair services for small businesses in local areas (Johnson et al.,
2017). Organizations or businesses with financial stability and can successfully adapt to
its environmental, economic, and social activities will be sustainable.

Innovation is critical to the success of small business. Innovation can potentially
define business strategy with new strategic goals and changing existing goals of business;
consequently, it is imperative to manage innovation carefully to ensure all valuable ideas
are identified (Aas, Breunig, Hydle, & Pedersen, 2015). Innovation is where businesses
and organizations introduce new business models to increase competitiveness and
sustainability (Copani & Rosa, 2015). Small business owners use innovative methods of
resourcing, such as bootstrap financing to obtain external funding as a strategy for
success (Malmstrom, 2014; Turner & Endres, 2017). Aas et al. (2015) specified
innovation as a tactical instrument to close the gap of the current challenges that
businesses encounter with its strategic goals. Lago et al. (2015) cited the fourth
dimension of business strategy factor, technical sustainability; technical sustainability is
innovation, the long-term use of a system to achieve sustainability in a changing
environment. Implementing and managing the social, environmental, and economic
dimensions may require innovation.

Social media and innovation are the trends that influence small business success
and sustainability. The increase of mobile devices will add to the significant role of social
media's contribution to today's business success (Jennings, Blount & Weatherly, 2014).

Social media strategies are essential elements in the study of small business success, growth, competitiveness, and sustainability. Taneja and Toombs (2014) presented an article on the impact of social media on small business sustainability and indicated small businesses use social media to market, promote, gain visibility, viability, and stay sustainable and competitive. Dovleac (2015) reported three attributes to measure social influence on sustainability are activity, engagement, and reach; expectedly, Twitter and Facebook are leaders of those three traits. Taneja and Toombs revealed social media as vital for the delivery of information to the community and customers. Social media is a marketing strategy for small business sustainability because of the influence on businesses communication with communities and consumers.

The use of social media is a strategy for small business success; the active practice of social media platforms for business success is essential. In the era and age of information and technology, businesses adopt social media and the right platform to gain visibility, competitiveness, and sustainability (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Networking is critical to small business sustainability, small business owner's gain idea and knowledge through networking interactions with contacts and other business owners (O'Donnell, 2014). The platforms of social media are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and blogs. A combination of different approaches is common and may influence small business sustainability and viability (Alstete, 2014); Facebook is the favorite and traditional channels for small businesses to communicate and market their products with other popular platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter. One of the critical activities of small business is to achieve sustainable competitive advantage; social media

is a strategy to achieve that goal (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Consumers are more likely to respond to a social media strategy that small business use to penetrate the market.

Facebook. Facebook is the most common social media platform. Mochon, Johnson, Schwartz, and Ariely (2017) cited Facebook as the popular social media platform for global promotional communications. Niedermeier, Wang, and Zhang (2016) recently added as of 2015 Facebook is the most popular social media platform with over 1.49 billion monthly active users. Go and You (2016) mentioned users of Facebook post pictures and updates daily, and businesses post products and service updates to attract followers and customers. Fan and Gordon (2014) cited Facebook as less challenging to access with smartphones and other media devices, which added to the popularity of Facebook. Sumathy and Vipin (2016) in a study regarding consumer's attitude towards advertisements on social media referenced Facebook as the comprehensive platform among the social media. Fan and Gordon; Go and You; Sumathy and Vipin agreed Facebook is a popular social media platform.

LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a professional networking platform and social media for small business to connect and build a business network. Paliszkiewicz and Mądra-Sawicka (2016) specified LinkedIn as a social network for professionals with a focus on developing business relationships and interactions. Mas-Bleda, Thelwall, Kousha, and Aguillo (2014) reported businesses use LinkedIn to create awareness and obtain referrals. Chiang and Suen (2015) said companies use LinkedIn to recruit because of its low-cost; moreover, LinkedIn is easy to manage. Businesses use LinkedIn to connect, contact stakeholders and customers, and build networks.

Twitter. Individuals and businesses use Twitter to post updates or tweets about social, exciting, and business topics of interest. Malhotra and Malhotra (2016) documented people use Twitter to post or tweet up-to-the-minute stories, ideas, opinions, and news on topics that interest other users and followers. Azhar and Abeln (2014) demonstrated Twitter could be in the form of email, instant messaging, texting, and blogging. Kinney and Ireland (2015) said tweets could also be links to stories, images, and videos; businesses also use direct message tweets to interact with consumers. López, Sicilia, and Moyeda-Carabaza (2017) indicated Twitter is becoming a popular social media network for businesses to create community branding and marketing. López, Sicilia, and Moyeda-Carabaza greed that Twitter is a social network platform for small businesses.

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Transition

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The goal of section 1 was to introduce the foundation of the study and background of immigrant small business failure. The focus was to explore strategies some immigrant small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The review of academic literature included the conceptual framework of this study, which supported the focus to explore strategies for immigrant small business success. The documented articles supported the examination of leadership theories, small businesses, immigrant's small business, and success strategies for small business sustainability. The increase in immigrant populations and citizens influenced the need for broader and focused research that enhanced the exploration of strategies for sustainability. In section 2, I will discuss

the project, and in section 3 I will discuss the findings, application to professional

practice and implication for change.

Section 2: The Project

The project was a qualitative research study with a multiple case approach, which explored strategies that immigrant small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years in Houston, Texas. The discussion in this section includes the study's purpose, my role as the researcher, the participants, and the research method and design. In this section, I also discuss ethical concerns, the data collection process, and study reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that immigrant small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The targeted population encompassed three immigrant small business owners in Texas, who had continued their businesses for over 5 years. The study's implications for positive social change include the potential for successful immigrant small business owners to encourage immigrants and entrepreneurs to expand or start small businesses, thereby improving the availability of multicultural goods and services. Small business owners could gain increased knowledge of strategies for business sustainability beyond 5 years, which could encourage immigrants to expand businesses in the southwestern United States and other multicultural cities.

Role of the Researcher

My interest in conducting this study derived from experiences as a first-generation immigrant and the difficulties I witnessed some immigrant small businesses encounter while providing goods and services that enhanced immigrants' ability to feel at

home in their host country. My role as the researcher involved gathering, organizing, and interpreting data and presenting findings from the research (Warwick-Booth, 2014). This role included creating interview questions, choosing participants, conducting interviews, member checking, and conducting observations. The researcher is the instrument for data collection in a qualitative study (Collins & Cooper, 2014). As the researcher, I performed all required research that supported my study's conclusion. I was the data collector and used open-ended interview questions in one-on-one, face-to-face interview sessions with three immigrant small business owners at their place of businesses. To ensure accuracy and minimize challenges, I asked the participants for a private room for the interviews, which I audio recorded and transcribed. The interview questions are in Appendix A. I conducted observations at participants' places of businesses during their regular, routine, and business activities. My role encompassed analyzing and converting collected data into meaningful insights, which required layers of interpretation, knowledge, and skills (Moon, 2015). To ensure the validity of the interviews, I conducted member checking. I typed my interpretations of the participants' answers to my interview questions and returned to the participants for accuracy and validation.

Qualitative research and inquiry require emotional maturity and strong interpersonal skills to collect useful data describing a phenomenon (Collins & Cooper, 2014). I conducted the study with an appropriate protocol and communication. All participants spoke and understood English. Qualitative data collection requires communication competence; sociolinguistic competence is essential (Hurst et al., 2015). A researcher conducts a research study by adhering to strict ethical standards of justice,

beneficence, and respect for the participants (Ruch, 2014). I conducted my research following all ethical standards by adhering to the protocols outlined in the Belmont Report (1979), which summarizes fundamental ethical principles for conducting research. My role as the researcher in this qualitative multiple case study was to select an appropriate research method and design; recruit participants; and collect, organize, and analyze data without bias. I did not have any personal or professional relationship with the study participants, which minimized bias and cultural viewpoint.

Participants

The participants were first-generation immigrant small business owners in Houston who had used strategies for small business sustainability beyond 5 years. Wang and Liu (2015) stated that immigrant-owned businesses have grown with the increase of immigrants to the United States. Access to study participants was gained through purposeful sampling and through trade affiliations with the Houston immigrant-owned small business pool, as well as personal visits to locations known for immigrant-owned businesses. Purposeful sampling is appropriate to gather information-rich and in-depth data from a targeted population with experience and knowledge regarding the study problem (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016). Furthermore, Soydas and Aleti (2015) indicated that purposeful sample access of targeted participants is ultimate for a research study. There was no focus on any industry; all participants were legal residents or citizens of the United States, were at least 18 years old, and had owned a small business for more than 5 years.

The study participants' selection was not random, but resolute; I used social media, the local Chamber of Commerce, and personal visits to known locations of immigrant-owned small businesses to gain access to the participants, recruit participants, and deliver study participation request letters. The initial introductory letter that I drafted to convey the scope of the research and request formal participation targeted up to 10 immigrant small business owners in Houston. The purposeful sampling of targeted participants is essential until data saturation occurs (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling is appropriate to collect pertinent data and lived experiences from a population of interest to gain information to meet a research goal (Eriksson, Nummela, & Saarenketo, 2014; Kvorning, Hasle, & Christensen, 2015). The strategies that I used to establish a working relationship with the participants involved the use of contacts and visits to participants' businesses, which assisted me in building interview protocols. The process started when I sought the voluntary participation of successful immigrant entrepreneurs with the introductory letter. SBA (2016) reported that small businesses comprise approximately 90% of businesses in the United States; therefore, there was an adequate sample size of successful small business owners. The sample size in qualitative research is useful and may influence data saturation (Boddy, 2016). The minimum sample size for this study was three successful immigrant business owners; this sample size was necessary to explore successful strategies for immigrant-owned business sustainability beyond 5 years.

The study's research question guided the interview format. The careful alignment of the research study problem to the design and research question is a vital factor in

qualitative research (Allen, 2017). The participant interview questions aligned with the central research question concerning the strategies that immigrant small business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. In qualitative research data collection, the process of in-depth interviews influences participants to provide detailed answers (Hurst et al., 2015). The open-ended interview questions focused on exploring and gaining an understanding of what strategies were consistent with immigrant-owned small business sustainability. Researchers apply the qualitative method for the strategic exploration of relationships through multipronged data collection (Singh, 2015); in this study, data collection included personal interviews with immigrant small business owners in Houston.

Research Method and Design

Conducting research requires the appropriate application of a suitable research method with a convincing rationale linking the method to the problem (Razali, Anwar, Rahman, & Ismail, 2016). Research is a systematic approach that follows a hierarchy and sequence of steps to explore or resolve a research question (Gog, 2015). The researcher must select an appropriate research method and research design; this study used a qualitative method and a multiple case study design. The case study design approach involves in-depth exploration of a problem, issue, program, event, or process for understanding; researchers apply case study to explore and understand complex phenomena (Dresch, Lacerda, & Cauchick Miguel, 2015).

Research Method

  Researchers can apply three methods to conduct research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. To explore the topic of sustainability strategies used by small business owners in Houston, Texas, the best-fit method was qualitative research. The qualitative research method entails the exploration and documentation of an event or activity to provide strategies for solving a problem (Mayer, 2015). Tumele (2015) described the increasing popularity and acceptance of the qualitative method in the academic community. The conventional concept of qualitative research involves researchers who are in contact with participants and interact with them; researchers using this method are not external observers (Hlady-Rispal & Jouison-Laffitte, 2014). The use of the qualitative method addressed the small business sustainability problem and provided strategies for small business owners sustaining their businesses beyond 5 years.

  Other research methods that I considered for this study were mixed and quantitative methods. The mixed method uses both qualitative and quantitative methods and can involve a lengthy process (Garside, 2014), which would not have been suitable for this study. The mixed method requires additional resources and expenses because of the combination of qualitative and quantitative method attributes (Molina-Azorin, 2016). Another research method is the quantitative method; researchers apply statistical analysis with the quantitative method (Barczak, 2015), which would not have supported this study. The use of the quantitative method requires statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques to examine a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The application of mixed or quantitative methods would not have provided the desired understanding of

lived experiences and strategies for immigrant small business sustainability and was not

suitable for this study.

The qualitative method was appropriate for in-depth data collection through

interviews on lived experiences; the qualitative method addressed the research question.

Park and Park (2016) described the qualitative method as involving the application of

findings and discoveries from research questions conducted using fieldwork in the natural

state; the qualitative method is an excellent means of exploring phenomena. The

qualitative method is ideal for theory expansion and data collection (Mukhopadhyay &

Gupta, 2014). Qualitative research often starts with a perceived problem or unsatisfactory

phenomenon that the researcher wants to explore (Collins & Cooper, 2014).

Research Design

Researchers may apply phenomenological or ethnographic design in a qualitative

study; I applied the multiple case study design to investigate the phenomena of immigrant

small business sustainability. Researchers apply phenomenological design to describe the

lived experiences of participants regarding a particular event (Hailemariam, Fekadu,

Prince, & Hanlon, 2017); this study research was beyond the participants' lived

experiences. Additionally, researchers use phenomenological design to focus on events

for a specific group for a particular occurrence, with prolonged observations (Stovell et

al., 2016). Another qualitative design that I considered was ethnography. Researchers use

ethnographic design to study behavior in a given cultural context for an extended period

(Morse, 2016); this study did not extend beyond cultural context and needed to be

conducted in a limited time. The application of phenomenology or ethnography would

either have encumbered the study process or prolonged data collection; the case study design had the utmost alignment to explore strategies for immigrant small business sustainability.

Researchers can use case study to understand complex phenomena related to an improved practice of business or process and to provide multilayered useful information (Yin, 2014). The use of case study helps in gaining a holistic real-world perspective; conducting case study research involves following specific steps, which can be linear or iterative; case study findings target a group (Gog, 2015). The application of the case study method provides specific strategies that link data to research questions (Aczel, 2015). Researchers use case study design to answer research questions and explain the "how" or "why" of phenomena (Yin, 2014). Tumele (2015) indicated that case study involves the application of planned and strategic steps to link data to research questions and applied data analysis and interpretation. Gog (2015) further stated that multiple case study can strengthen derived findings without direct replication. The use of multiple case study design provided the best avenue for data collection and interpretation for this study; therefore, I used multiple case study to conduct an in-depth exploration of success strategies for immigrant small business sustainability.

Ensuring data saturation validated my study data. The selection and recruitment of participants and interviewees are essential and active components of a research process in a qualitative study (Kristensen & Ravn, 2015) that ensure that participants have direct knowledge that contributes to the research. To ensure data saturation for this study, I incorporated multiple data collection methods: semistructured interviews, member

checking, and participant observations. The study interview questions guided participants in providing valuable details that ensured saturation. I began with interviewing three immigrant small business owners, member checking for validation, and conducting observations at participants' places of businesses. I interviewed until there was no new information. After the interviews, I typed and returned the interview results, which represented my interpretations, to the participants for review and validation; additionally, I conducted observations at the participants' places of businesses. Fusch and Ness (2015) indicated that researchers ask questions until there is no additional information, themes, and coding to achieve data saturation. Appropriate sample size may ensure data saturation to the point where new data could not provide more useful information on the topic (Lohle & Terrell, 2014). A minimum sample size of three immigrant small business owners with the application of triangulation was appropriate to reach saturation for this study.

Population and Sampling

Defining the Population

The population for this qualitative multiple case study was a selection of immigrant small business owners in Houston who had maintained a successful business operation for over 5 years. The population of Houston was approximately 2.3 million people as of July 2016; 28.5% of the Houston population is foreign born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Foreign-born individuals are not U.S. citizens at birth, but some immigrants become U.S. citizens through naturalization (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Native-born individuals are U.S. citizens at birth; U.S. citizens include people born in the

United States, Puerto Rico, or other U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), or abroad to a U.S. citizen parent or parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). The Houston population was appropriate for this study because the target was foreign-born and immigrant business owners in Houston, Texas.

The eligibility criteria for this study encompassed first-generation immigrant small business owners in Houston who had maintained business operations for at least 5 consecutive years with fewer than 100 employees. The business owners had experience and successful strategies for small business sustainability beyond 5 years. The population for sampling did not target any specific industry. Access to the population was attained through local business listings that targeted immigrant communities. I made a personal visit to the targeted identified businesses for the initial attempt to engage the business owners.

Sampling Method

The sampling method for this study was purposeful sampling. Researchers use a purposeful sampling method in qualitative research to target a specific population based on set criteria for the research and information-rich cases of phenomena (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling assisted in ensuring that the population and selected sample produced the most useful, productive, and profound information for research (Robinson, 2014). The use of the purposeful sampling approach may enable a researcher to gather comprehensive information on a phenomenon from the targeted population (Duan,

Bhaumik, Palinkas, & Hoagwood, 2015). Purposeful sampling applied in this study to target successful immigrant small business owners in Houston, Texas.

The research design was a multiple case study with a focus on immigrant small business owners in Houston, Texas, which influenced the sample size. Fahie (2014) indicated a researcher should propose participants that will be adequate to ensure profound discovery of a phenomenon. The purposeful sample approach targeted the population based on set eligibility criteria of successful immigrant small business owners; the selection criteria contributed in achieving in-depth responses from participants regarding strategies for small business sustainability beyond 5 years. The lowest recommended sample size for multiple case studies is two to three (Andersson & Evers, 2015). The sample size for this study was a minimum of three immigrant small business owners.

Ethical Research

Strict compliance with ethical standards guided the successful completion of this qualitative multiple case study. Goel (2016) defined business ethics as the moral demand of a business structure to maintain the trust and confidence between the business and the society. There was an informed consent with the permission from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB); I assured compliance with ethical research process for the completion of this study. Yallop and Mowatt (2016) stated ethics are fundamental to research. Alzola (2015) cited one of the essential normative theories in business ethics is virtue ethics, typically, ethics that require the focus of a person.

In conducting this study, I observed the requirements as noted by the IRB. The IRB consists of staff and faculty members from each of Walden's primary research areas. The IRB is responsible for ensuring Walden University's research complies with the university's ethical standards as well as U.S. federal regulations. There was a record of the approval from IRB before data collection; IRB guidelines indicated approval is valid for one year. The data collection tools were also an essential part of ethical consideration by the IRB. The IRB was interested in researcher documents related to data collection including surveys, interview questions, and permission to use unpublished assessments. Additionally, the IRB required researchers to provide appropriate permissions to use any published and unpublished data collection tools. There is documentation of all IRB requests, approval, and documents.

The treatment of the participants was critical and should be forefront in research. The researcher's emotional intelligence is necessary for connection with participants (Collins & Cooper, 2014). I confirmed the participants understood their participation in this study was voluntary, and they can withdraw anytime by telling me they are withdrawing, declining the invitation to continue, or calling the Research Participant Advocate at Walden University. Researchers need virtue character, an appropriate and integrated outlining capacity, belief, feelings, motivations, and behavioral tendencies (Alzola, 2015). The researcher should be consistent and understand ethical research and standards, the treatment of participants, and eminence interpretation of findings in the qualitative study (Allen, 2015). There was no compensation for the participants; contributors had maximum protection and privacy with no coercion.

Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants was a priority. The participant's contact information and the participation letter remained confidential. The observation of the research ethics included providing the interviewee the information on the purpose and context of the research, with an explicit consent to record the interview. The confidential interview data ensured the privacy of the participants and anyone they referred to in the interview. The transcript did not contain links to interview data, participant or participant's organization. Additionally, the transcript or the interview report did not include or identify demographic information; specifically, personal information and no disclosure of the name of any individual or businesses. Research data will be in a secured and locked cabinet for 5 years; destruction of research document will be after 5 years of the research conclusion. The final doctoral manuscript included the Walden IRB approval number 04-10-18-0647685.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument for this study; additionally, data collection instrument included semistructured interviews, member checking, and participant observations. The researcher is the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research; social skill and the ability to respond and interact are crucial during data collection (Collins & Cooper, 2014). Göttfert (2015) classified systematic research in four phases: research question, research design, data collection, and data analysis and interpretation. Data collection, the third step of research is critical to the validity and reliability of the research; the method used will determine the type of data to collect (Göttfert, 2015). One of the purposes of qualitative data collection is to build an in-depth

understanding of a phenomenon without condensing information; therefore, data collection is the skill that shapes the research stage enhanced by emotional intelligence and social skills of the researcher (Collins & Cooper, 2014).

I conducted open-ended, face-to-face, semistructured interviews with at least three immigrant small business owners; I used an audio recorder and Apple recording device to record the interviews. Mayer (2015) indicated the interview questions and the researcher are the data collection instruments for a research study; interview questions are open-ended, and questions may change during the discussion because of the flexible nature. The choice of data collection can determine the participant's mood, which may influence the participant's response and can result in varying levels of data responses and results; the mode of data collection impacts collected data and data results (Wright & Ogbuehi, 2014). After the interviews, I used member checking to validate data until the participants are comfortable with my interpretation of their interview answers. Member checking is a method of returning interview transcripts or analyzed data to participants for review and validation (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Varpio, Ajjawi, Monrouxe, O'Brien, and Rees (2017) referenced member checking as credibility enhancement where the researcher presents data transcripts or data interpretations to participants for comments. I returned interview summary to the participants for review and clarification; I made all necessary corrections and returned the documents for further review as needed for validation. Researchers referenced member checking as informant feedback, respondent validation, member validation, or dependability checking (Varpio et al., 2017). The purpose of member checking is to confirm the research's interpretation of

the participants' responses and validate data results on whether results were a

reverberation of the participants' experience (Birt et al., 2016). Additionally, I conducted

observations at the participant's place of businesses and gained added information.

Data Collection Technique

Scholars suggested the use of more than one source for data collection, to enhance

the quality of research (Göttfert, 2015). In a conceptual framework, the problem, and the

interview questions will determine the researcher's observation, leading to solving a

defined problem (Mayer, 2015). A researcher can conduct an interview, a one-to-one

conversation using one or more of three formats: standardized, semistructured, and

unstructured interviews (Göttfert, 2015). Data collection strategies for this study started

with semistructured interviews, which is more flexible to allow the rephrasing and

exploration of the questions for more depth, followed by member checking, and

participant observations.

The data collection technique started with a face-to-face semistructured interview

with participants. Face-to-face interaction rests on social genuineness, which influences

immediate connection with participants; the researcher is readily equipped to ask the

most focused question as the data collection progresses in qualitative research (Collins &

Cooper, 2014). Aguirre and Bolton (2014) stated interview questions with a face-to-face,

semistructured interview process is a valuable technique for collecting in-depth research

inquiry. A potential disadvantage of using an interview as the data collection technique

may apply when a participant cannot respond to questions due to lack of experience, or

when an interview question is asked improperly. The probable disadvantage of

interviewing as a data collection is developing wrong questions and the inability to ask

appropriate questions for the participant's experience (Wright & Ogbuehi, 2014).

However, Göttfert (2015) stated the interview process is a data collection technique

advantageous in a qualitative research because of the flexibility to ask and rephrase in-

depth questions, which may enrich collected data. The critical factor to data collection is

the ability to reduce the gathered information and remove repetitive data; the complete

data should be coherent and concise, taking notes and recording memos will enhance

reflections after the interviews (Allen, 2017). I conducted the interviews in a private

office and secluded area at the participant's place of business, which minimized

distractions and to maintained confidentiality. Other data collection technique may not

present suitable advantage for collecting rich data for this study.

Data Organization Technique

The systems I used research schedule logs, notebooks, voice recorders, reflective

journals, labeling systems, word documents, and excel spreadsheets to keep track of

collected data. Yin (2014) suggested research journals are useful data organization

technique. A face-to-face interview was one of the data collection techniques for this

qualitative multiple case study; therefore, interview transcripts and notes were among the

collected data organized in a labeling system. Annink (2017) stated data organization

technique is the process of categorizing and labeling data for consistency. The data

organization technique was my categorizing and labeling of nonverbal communication,

observational notes and journals, and other data documentations from this study. The

initial phase of data included interview transcripts, responses, and observations

transferred into a word document. The organization of research data is vital to assuring the order of materials, efficient recall, and the confidentiality of the participants (Bernard et al., 2014). The interview transcript underwent manual coding and themes identification; all data is electronically stored in a USB drive and locked in a fire resistance safe. The storage and retention of collected data will be 5 years.

Data Analysis

An essential aspect of data collection is data analysis, and the analysis of this study's data began with the examination of collected data after the interviews, member checking, and participant observations. Data analysis is the interpretation of collected data, which starts after data gathering (Graue, 2015). Yin (2014) mentioned researchers use data triangulation to compare, contrast, and confirm collected information from multiple sources that can support or verify a phenomenon. Researchers use data analysis to gain new knowledge by interpreting data and explaining the result (Göttfert, 2015). The data collection and analysis method for the study of small business sustainability was useful, gathered information produced successful strategies from the participants.

The data collection for this study were interviews, member checking, participant observations, and field note documents. Rogers and Carrier (2017) confirmed technique for data analysis begins with an examination of interview data. Data collected with qualitative method consists of field notes, interview transcripts, conversations, recording, observations, and memos (Mayer, 2015). The data collection influenced data analysis to explore human experiences related to the phenomenon of immigrant small business sustainability beyond 5 years. The application of qualitative data analysis enables a

researcher to collect accurate answers and gain insights with an opportunity to further

collect overlooked information (Firouzkouhi & Zargham-Boroujeni, 2015). I examined

the interview transcripts and notes and interpreted meanings related to the research

question and reviewed the transcripts for frequent occurrences of similar phrases that

revealed strategies, experiences, and insights from participants.

My data analysis for this study began with organizing my data, manually reading,

color coding, and arranging similar and repetitive information on the interview

transcripts, notes, and observation documents in a word processor for predetermined

codes that guided the analysis. My data analysis followed Yin's 5-step data analysis: (1)

compiling data, (2) disassembling data, (3) reassembling data, (4) interpreting the

meaning of data, and (5) concluding the data (Yin, 2014). Additionally, analysis of my

collected data involved NVivo software after the initial manual coding and analysis. In

qualitative research, data analysis starts only after the completion of data collection

(Mayer, 2015). The analysis for this study involved my ability to interpret the

participant's responses accurately; all the participants spoke English fluently. In a

qualitative study, researchers use formats and presentations for data analysis, with the

attempt to interpret phenomena with beneficial results (Mayer, 2015). Researchers

implement a qualitative method to highlight the importance of introducing practices

during data analysis, locating recurring ideas in the data set, assigning names to them,

and placing them together (Robinson, 2014). I applied manual coding first, organized,

color-coded, and linked my data from the interview, member checking, and participant

observations, into categories and grouped into essential codes, created themes from the groups. I labeled the themes and connected them to my study problems for results.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity establish the quality of research. Back, Williams, and Lee (2015) mentioned reliability and validity as the criteria that set the quality of a study. Reliability and validity add to the consistency of research; researchers use a qualitative research method to develop an in-depth and context-dependent fact (Collins & Cooper, 2014). Researchers recommend the use of one data collection method; data collection method is critical and enhances research for reliability and validity (Göttfert, 2015).

Reliability

The qualitative research requires the researcher to develop an authentic coding pattern to ensure reliability. The consistency of measurement or coherence in the repeated measurement in research is reliability (Yin, 2014). The data collection in this qualitative multiple case study were interviews, member checking, journals of interactions with participants, and observations. Manual analysis and organization of the interview transcript into different files, categories, and codes was essential to capture the categories of the interview. Qualitative research method often requires the researcher to make spontaneous decisions during data collection, which requires the researcher to have a high-level aptitude and emotional intelligence (Collins & Cooper, 2014). The transcript of the participant's interviews, member checking, and observation notes were primary in coding, which represented essential information for small business sustainability strategies. Trainor and Graue (2014) indicated qualitative research reliability requires

assigning data into groups and subgroups and matching the data against the conceptual

framework to add credibility and reliability to the findings.

Validity

Validity serves as a useful benchmark to measure the strength and weaknesses of

research; high construct validity implies the proposed problem represents the research

constructs, the stronger the business relationship, the higher the factors that will

contribute to the business success and sustainability (Rahatullah & Raeside, 2015). Lohle

and Terrell (2014) cited validity as critical in identifying the foundational structure to

obtain useful answers to interview questions. Validity is the process of ensuring

credibility to a study and what it purports to measure (Back et al., 2015); therefore, a

researcher should select among techniques of triangulation, such as, prolonged

engagement and persistent observation, member checks, and peer debriefing. The validity

technique and strategy for this study was the triangulation scheme through interviews,

member checking, and observation.

Credibility

Credibility for this study established the strategies gathered from lived

experiences of immigrant small business owners for sustainability is believable and may

benefit the targeted audience. The set validity of qualitative research, connecting with

suitable instrument and evaluation may increase its credibility (Lub, 2015), data

triangulation established credibility. Credibility in a qualitative research evaluates the

outcome of research data with other interpretation for a match (Munn, Porritt, Lockwood,

Aromataris, & Pearson, 2014). Researchers use triangulation to measure and compare

findings (Graue, 2015). Cope (2014) stated credibility is enhanced when the shared experience is verifiable by others. Corresponding between the research sources and interpretations enhanced my research results.

Transferability

Transferability is when the research findings are meaningful to others that are not part of the study (Cope, 2014). Transferability of this study involved the transfer of the results and obtained strategies from immigrant small businesses to other small businesses. The research context and assumption of this study enhanced the transferability of the study; small business sustainability was essential to the research. Connelly (2016) specified transferability is the extent conclusions of research is useful to another group and how readers can apply the results to other situations.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the neutrality of research conclusions, and the degree results could reoccur (Connelly, 2016). Cope (2014) indicated confirmability is the absence of bias, the accuracy of data collection and analysis, and neutrality; innovative technology supports qualitative research with the availability of computer-assisted software. The application of NVivo for analysis and triangulation improved the confirmability of this study. Data triangulation is the use of more than one approach, such as interview or observation, to investigate a phenomenon in qualitative research (Mayer, 2015). The interview transcripts of research participant's response to the interview question contributions to qualitative research confirmability (Cope, 2014). The confirmability of

this study may be the collaboration of the collected strategies by other successful immigrant small business owners.

Dependability

Dependability is like confirmability; they establish research trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016). Munn et al. (2014) stated reliability and internal validity in quantitative research are the same as dependability and credibility in qualitative research. The dependability of this study involved the contribution to the strategies of small business sustainability beyond 5 years. Dependability is aligned with reliability in a qualitative study (Munn et al., 2014).

Transition and Summary

The key topics in section 2 included restatement of the purpose of the study, discussion of the research method and design, the role of the researcher and the participants. Sections 2 also included the data collection processes using semi-structured interviews of a minimum of three immigrant small business owners in Houston, Texas, to explore sustainability strategies beyond 5 years. Section 2 concluded with the discussion of methods and techniques to assure study reliability and validity. Section 3 will begin with an introduction and brief purpose statement for this study and the central research question. Additionally, section 3 includes the presentation of findings, application of professional practice, and implications of social change. Section 3 will conclude with recommendations for action and future studies, my reflection, and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore strategies that immigrant small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The data came from semistructured interviews, member checking, field note documents, and observations at places of business for three immigrant small business owners. The business documents that I observed included daily goals was visibly displayed in the breakroom, employees' time clock with messaging, point of sale systems, and Facebook "Live" schedule. The findings showed strategies that immigrant small business owners used for small business sustainability beyond 5 years.

The central research question that guided this study was the following: What strategies do immigrant small business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years? The themes that emerged from the data analysis were (a) acquired leadership skills; (b) reduction of communication barriers; (c) incorporation of innovation, technology, and social media; (d) establishment of community connections and customer relationships; and (e) management of environment, social, and economic challenges. The five themes that emerged from my data analysis were significant because they addressed the research question and the findings aligned with my study's conceptual framework and literature review.

Theme 1: Acquired Leadership Skills

The three participants' leadership skills were evident in their business operations and success. Aligned with the literature review and as a strategy for business success and

sustainability, the participants described the importance of acquired leadership skills for the implementation of guidelines and strong motivation of staff to meet set goals and satisfy customers. P2 shared, "my management and leadership skill assisted with my business success … I motivate my employees to use an alternate work schedule to align with their family needs." P1 stated, "quality leadership skill is key and important to small business success." Data analysis further revealed that the three participants encouraged, inspired, and motivated employees and customers, encouraged change, and drove goal-oriented businesses. Furthermore, my observations revealed the participants set daily goals with benchmarks and visibly interacted with customers, which influenced customer retention and regularity. I observed visible daily goals displayed in employee breakrooms and on a time clock messaging display.

  Transformational leadership style. The leadership behaviors and experiences that the participants described and displayed were consistent and aligned with the conceptual framework of this study, transformational leadership theory and technique. Transformational leadership is useful because it promotes active communication by encouraging strong interpersonal connections based on the leader's charisma and consideration of others (Netshitangani, 2016). The participants cited their leadership skills as determinants of the positive morale of their employees, which supported a positive impact of transformational leadership on followers. P3 recommended that leaders "apply authentic leadership skills by showing compassion to employees and customers, they are your business … they have to know you care." The data analysis further revealed that employees' encouragement, adaptation, and empowerment are

essential to employee improvement and performance, which was apparent during my observations. My observation of P1, P2, and P3 also revealed that participants' leadership behavior inspired employees' morale and influenced them to perform at higher levels. I observed the participants' interactions with customers and employees; charisma was evident in the participants' demeanor. The application of charisma in leadership, specifically, transformational leadership, instilled admiration, respect, loyalty, and emphasis on a mission (Ilsever & Ilsever, 2016).

The three participants further revealed that the components of the transformational leadership theory as stated by Burns (1978) resulted in their business success because they could change the perceptions of their employees, customers, and the community and motivate them toward a common goal. P1 offered, "you have to be liked and listened to … come up with great ideas or take ideas and make it work for your set-up." P2 said, "employees' and customers' satisfaction is necessary for business success. I set my goals and achieve them with employees' and customers' support." P3 said, "the way you empower your employees and positive influence of your customers will benefit your business … how the owner connects with both is critical." Transformational leadership style is of central importance, with business culture, to facilitate employee creativity and innovation, which leads to business success (Ilsever & Ilsever, 2016). I observed the participants displaying empathy and allure when interacting with employees and customers. Additionally, my observations of P1, P2, and P3 revealed customers' trust and satisfaction with their products, services, and businesses; the participants displayed good leadership behaviors, ability to innovate, and involvement within the community.

Netshitangani (2016) noted that transformational leaders foster relationships and motivate employees to perform at their highest level; transformational leaders build trust. My study findings suggested that small business owners' leadership skills and experiences, specifically transformational leadership skills, are critical to managing communication barriers, business success, and sustainability.

Owner's experience. The theme regarding owner's experience was common among the three participants. My inquiring was a direct discussion on whether potential owners need experience in managing business operations. The three participants agreed that business management skills are essential to business success; however, I sought the relevance of experience in business operations to business success as raised by the three participants. P2 said, "you need the experience to run your business or hire a manager." P3 said, "you will have new daily problems ... you have to be able to know what to do to make situations better and still run your business." P1 stated, "persistence is key, as a business owner you have to be able to manage all the trouble that comes daily, making sure your business stays open." The participants revealed that to stay successful, owners should possess the necessary experience for business operations, or they can hire a manager. Table 1 depicts the inductively developed thematic categories and participant responses.

Table 1

Acquired Leadership Skills Theme and Participant Responses

Theme	Participant response
Acquired leadership skills	P1: Management and leadership skills will add to business success; it will also reflect on your interactions with people.
	P2: Leadership is critical to your success, you are your business, your skill as a leader matters.
	P2: You have to be a good leader, if not born leader, you need to learn the leadership skill appropriate for your business; leadership is essential.
	P3: As a business owner, you need excellent leadership skills to succeed; I acquired leadership skill for my business through past experiences.
	P3: The owner should possess a leadership skill that will support the management of cultural differences and diversity.
Transformational leadership	P1: I work to maintain loyalty and trust; my goal is to empower my employees by instilling confidence. Customers and employees need to trust you as the business owner.
	P1: I create a vision for my business and motivate my employees to commit to it.
	P2: I am aware of leadership styles, I find the application of transformational leadership appropriate for my business. I am honest, which created trust.
	P3: I collaborate teamwork with my community, customers, and employees. I instill trust in them, which grew my reputation for my business.
Owner's experience	P1: Everything falls on your lap, you have to know what you are doing and make it work, or your business will fold.
	P2: Do not get into any business unless you have some experience operating it … added experience will lead to success and survival.
	P3: You need business experience to operate a business, I got most of my experience as an employee and a manager of a business.

Theme 2: Reduction of Communication Barriers

The theme regarding communication barriers was communal among the three participants. The three participants added that communication barriers represent a factor because of cultural differences. P1 said, "you will encounter communication barriers because of customers and sometimes employees' cultural differences … it comes down to how you manage the communication issues." P2 stated, "effective communication is important to business success because most of the customers are foreigners." P3 stated, "you need great communication skills with added patience to deal with foreign or immigrant customers." Lack of communication skills may prevent a business from functioning effectively, in that a person who cannot think clearly of what to communicate often experiences difficulties (Netshitangani, 2016). During my observations, I noticed the interaction between the owners and employees and how the participants positively encouraged employees to interact and communicate in English; the participants explained that active communication was a mutual gain among coworkers. A manager must be able to give and receive feedback or may have difficulties running and succeeding in business (Netshitangani, 2016). Diverse employees with different cultural backgrounds may require leaders to apply tailored communication strategies

During my observation of P2, it was also apparent that some of the employees were immigrants with communication barriers, which limited the employees' effective communication and interaction; I observed the participants applying great leadership skills to encourage communication, which influenced and boosted confidence and comfort for the employees. P2 shared, "leadership skill assisted with my communication

success … I encourage my customers and employees to interact in English, which is great

for team-work and business." Communication barriers can improve if leaders are in a

transformation leadership mode, in which they can best adapt to barriers (Netshitangani,

2016). Leaders and managers may enhance employee commitment by minimizing

uncertainty, listening, and understanding employees, which builds trust (Rahatullah &

Raeside, 2015). P3 said, "I motivate my employees through their language barrier by

encouraging them to interact in English, which developed their communication

efficiency." Cultural habits and traditions may be significant and impact or shape

communication; effective leadership skills can enhance communication.

Table 2

Reduction of Communication Barriers and Participant Responses

Theme	Participant response
Reduction of communication barriers	P1: You have to be able to communicate with your customers and employees, most of them are new to this country.
	P2: As an immigrant business owner you will encounter communication barriers, you must handle it for business success.
	P3: I encounter communication barriers, so I know the importance of managing communication so everyone can be on the same page…ask questions and make sure you have a clear understanding.

Theme 3: Incorporation of Innovation, Technology, and Social Media

The emergent theme regarding innovation, technology, and social media was

consistent with the literature reviewed for this study. Jennings et al. (2014) attributed the

increase in small business success to social media and mobile devices. Taneja and Toombs (2014) added that small businesses should engage in social media activities for success and sustainability. As identified in the literature review section and expressed by the participants, the incorporation of innovation, technology, and social media is vital to business success.

Innovation. The three participants expressed excitement in discussing innovative processes, technology, and social media strategy for business success and sustainability. The three participants described business advantage and cash control with the implementation of new point-of-sale systems. Innovation is essential for a business to create sustainable competitive advantage; leadership is a crucial factor that affects innovation (Ilsever & Ilsever, 2016). P2 said, "I changed my business operating systems to a computerized system, which aided cash control, sales, and inventory tracking." P3 said, "I am consistently implementing new processes for sales, customer satisfaction, and cash control." Innovation and technology play a significant role in business competitiveness and sustainability; businesses can create marketing opportunities by being innovative (Aas et al., 2015). P1 stated, "you almost will have problems down the line if you wait too long to innovate and implement technology for sales, revenue tracking, and running your business."

Technology. The participants indicated that technology and social media should be core elements that are integrated into business sustainability strategies. Technology can increase business performance; businesses with technology strategies will stay sustainable (Ilsever & Ilsever, 2016). As cited by the participants, staying current with

technology played a significant role in their small business success. P1 recommended, "make use of technologies, point of sales (POS) system, text messaging, clock in and clock out with messaging system … use technology to send group messages." P2 said, "technology is a great business success strategy." P3 stated, "implement the right processes and system for your business and don't wait too long because times are changing." The three participants added that their ability to adapt to the pace of technology and social media opened an avenue for strong business competitiveness that led to success.

Social media. The three participants agreed that business survival in the 21st century could be dependent on innovative strategies and a social media presence. Individuals and businesses engage in social media activities to stay connected, voice concerns, and remain engaged (Go & You, 2016). The participants mentioned how they went 'live' on Facebook at least once a week to offer specials and sales, which had increased their sales volume. P2 said, "I use social media, especially Facebook, the use of Facebook help bring in sales …. I regularly go 'live' on Facebook." P3 said, "Facebook 'live' is popular for me; sales have increased tremendously because of my regular 'live' Facebook sales." Taneja and Toombs (2014) indicated that social media influence businesses to stay competitive. The participants indicated that customers stayed engaged with them through social media and anticipated their 'live' sales events on Facebook; P3 said, "business sales doubled with social media presence, specifically Facebook." P1 added, "I have a regular schedule to go 'live' on Facebook, and my customers expect it." P1, P2, and P3 reported that they gained visibility and promoted their daily specials via

Facebook. Social media influence businesses' presence and positive communication with

customers (Mochon et al., 2017). P1 added, "Facebook is popular now, so use it to stay

connected, hire a consultant if necessary to train you on the use of social media and

technology." The participants revealed that they gained visibility by posting pictures and

promoting specials on social media.

Table 3

Incorporation of Innovation, Technology, and Social Media and Participant Responses

Theme	Participant response
Innovation	P1: Stay up to date with business processes and equipment for efficiency, stay innovative to save money.
	P2: Use all marketing opportunities available for businesses in this 21st century, innovation is high for success.
	P3: Get point of sales (POS) and computerize your business operations as much as you can.
Technology	P1: You should communicate regularly with the right channel. I use display messaging on the time clock because employees clock in and out and can read displayed and important messages for the business.
	P2: You will not succeed in the 21st century without staying up to date on technology.
	P3: Implement and use the right technology for your business, get consultants if you are not familiar with what will work for your business.
Social media	P1: I use Facebook to communicate my new arrivals and weekly specials.
	P2: Know the right social media for your business, Facebook works best for me, and I see results.
	P3: Engage your employees in the social media strategies, employees' social media contribution will increase your success.

Theme 4: Establishing Community Connections and Customer Relationships

The emergent theme of community connections and customer relationship was evident among the participants for immigrant small business success and as cited by Rahatullah and Raeside (2015) among other authors in the literature review section. Businesses with healthy and positive connections and relationships will succeed (Rahatullah & Raeside, 2015). The human-centered sustainability as discussed in the literature review by Sorice and Donlan (2015) aligned with community connection and customer relationships theme.

Community connections. P1, P2, and P3 addressed their strong community presence as a driving force of their success. I observed the owners connected with their community, which helped engage their customers. Wang and Liu (2015) cited positive business connections and relationships foster business success. The owners described how they got involved in community activities and participated in cultural activities, which improved community well-being and developed trust within their community. P1 said "I attend community events and sponsor what I can, sometimes, I donate goods to the community non-profit organizations or churches...The community will say, what can you do for us before we can patronize you." Businesses engage stakeholders and rely on community relationships and connections for business success and sustainability (Petković et al., 2016). P2 added: "community connection and relationship should be a priority for business growth; immigrant business owners need their communities for growth and sustainability." Rahatullah and Raeside (2015) cited business connections and relationship is vital to business success and sustainability. P3 said, "it is important to

connect with the local community." The three participants agreed on the importance of community relations and connection as a strategy for business success and sustainability.

Customer relationships. As stated by the three participants, community relationships and connections are essential for business growth and success. P3 said, "value customers, employees, and community, appreciate them steadily." Increased business performance and success link to valuing consumer and customer service personnel (Braun et al., 2015). P2 said, "customer relationship is important for small businesses, especially immigrant businesses." Business sustainability aligns with meeting consumer expectations, listening to customer ideas, while motivating employees to provide and influence the atmospheres where consumers are heard (Chun-Juei et al., 2015). Multinational businesses increase connections and relationships within their business environments for sustainability (Wang & Liu, 2015). P1 said, "I subscribe and increase membership to various cultural and community groups, which resulted in increased presence and patronage." P3 indicated "the community leaders often look within their members for the patronage of culturally tailored goods and services." The three participants posited the need for immigrant small business owners to align their goals with the community. I observed the relationships and connections between the owners and their customers, customer appreciations, excellence in business operations, and superior services, goods, and products may aid customer and employee retention and loyalty.

Table 4

Establishing Community Connections and Customer Relationships and Participant Responses

Theme	Participant response
Community connections	P1: Community connection aspect of your business is vital.
	P2: My community believe in connections to support your business; you must get involved in the community to stay successful.
	P3: I participate and contribute to my community events, most times, I deliver food and water to local activities.
Customer relationships	P1: Your goal is satisfied customers, connect with them and make money.
	P2: If your customers feel comfortable with you, they will go out of their way to patronize your business.
	P3: If you have a good relationship with your customers, they will keep coming back and will bring more people with them.

Theme 5: Managing Business Environment, Social, and Economic Challenges

Emergent Theme 5 identified managing the environment, social, and economic

challenges, aligned with the literature review section, as strategies for business success

and sustainability. The literature review section cited Appelbaum et al. (2016), Müller

and Pfleger (2014), and Petković et al. (2016); the authors connected business success to

positive environmental, social, and economic factors. The strategy to accommodate

business challenges may require environmental, economic, or social changes

(Merdzanovska, 2016). Analysis of the participant's data collection revealed expressed concerned regarding the environment, economic and social challenges.

Environment challenges. P1, P2, and P3 stated businesses should endeavor to adapt to their environment and stay flexible to change. P1 said, "know your business environment…change to accommodate your environment." P2 stated, "know your business environment and change as often as necessary; it is important for success." P3 said, "know your environment will influence your ability to manage cultural differences." The strategy to accommodate business challenges may require environmental, economic, or social changes (Merdzanovska, 2016). Businesses invest time in developing policies as change initiatives for competitive advantage, success, and sustainability (Appelbaum et al., 2016).

Social challenges. The three participants described their social challenges as the business location and how they impact the community. The participants' businesses are in the Houston area popularly known for the immigrant community. P2 said "activities that improve the lives of my business community is important. I regularly host social hours where the community gathers and get to know each other." P3 stated, "business location is essential for immigrant business success. Immigrant business location is a social gathering place; my customers usually go out of their way to find me." P1 said "know the things that are happening around you and your business....you need to cater to your customers need and contribute to safety activities." The three participants indicated that social challenges are common with business operations and the ability to manage the challenges may require operational changes. P3 emphasized, "my business location is

essential for immigrants, which is great for business; however, you have to be able to manage expectations and make sure the needs of your customers are met." P2 said, "my business environment is known for immigrants, which makes it easier for my customers to locate my business, my location support work and life balance for the immigrant community."

Economic challenges. The participants mentioned their business economic challenges included adaptability, monetary and financial instability. Immigrant business owners make significant effort to adapt to the government regulations in their host community and maintain financial stability. P1 stated, "I strive to maintain adequate financial stability; it takes money to make money." P2 said, "sound finance is important for business success." P3 said, "funding your business through small business loan is challenging…you need finance to sustain your business, it is usually self-funded." A sustainable business should maintain adequate capital to manage economic challenges (Lago et al., 2015).

Table 5

Managing the Environment, Social, and Economic Challenges and Participant Responses

Theme	Participant response
Environment	P1: I stay up to date and active on what is happening in my business environment. Make sure you are connected to your business environment.
	P2: Ensure you have control of your business environment, and implement what your customer need. Timely change to what is needed is critical.
	P3: I regularly monitor my business environment and implement change strategies to accommodate the needs.
Social	P1: I host events and encourage members of the community to participate, the events improve networking and community well-being.
	P2: I get involved in the cultural activities within my community and implement necessary processes to accommodate activities within my community.
	P3: We participate in cultural and international holidays and celebrations. I expand my presence by sponsoring some of the activities.
	P3: My location had become a social gathering place for some immigrant community.
Economic challenges	P1: You need adequate capital and resources to meet unexpected business demands.
	P2: Monitor your economy and take cost reduction measure as necessary. Operating at a profit level will sustain your business.
	P3: I maintain good capital and financial health, I recently expanded my business because I maintained positive financial stability.

Applications to Professional Practice

The application to the professional practice will connect my study findings and relevance to understand why some immigrant small businesses stay profitable and sustainable beyond 5 years; the outcome of this study aimed to explore strategies for immigrant small business sustainability beyond 5 years. The application of my research may aid business owners in solving business failure problems.

Current and prospective small business owners could apply the findings from this study for the development of leadership skills, through training and seminars, which is critical to small business success. The practical application of leadership skills is advantageous and will enhance the implementation of other identified strategies for small business sustainability. Small business owners may apply gained approach and recommendations to sustain their businesses by practicing increased positive leadership strategies and avoiding the negative consequences when operating their businesses. Moreover, small business owners could enhance their leadership skills as consistent with transformational leadership to solve business challenges they encounter within 5 years of business establishment.

Local communities could benefit from the findings of this study with the increased body of knowledge regarding the benefits of small businesses, specifically, immigrant small businesses. The immigrant small business owners could work, donate and partner with their respective communities, local associations, and charities, which could benefit both the community and the business owners. Small business trainers may

also apply the results of this study to enhance the existing body of knowledge and provide an academic argument for immigrant small business success.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change may include the influence of immigrant small business establishment and direct business owners to engage in active community relationship for employment and goodwill opportunities for other immigrants; additionally, the social change implications could influence strong social media participation for immigrant small businesses. Moreover, immigrant small businesses employ other immigrants; which could encourage and improve interaction within the community and could potentially provide safe work environment. Social change implication may contribute and influence cultural awareness and improve immigrant small business owner's social activities and community involvement.

Recommendations for Action

The recommendations for action include for trainers to apply gained strategies in publications of training materials for current and aspiring small business owners interested in the small business establishment, success, and sustainability. Additionally, aspiring small business entrepreneurs should review the recommended strategies for application and consideration before embarking on new business operations. Immigrant small business owners could review outlined strategies, findings, and pertaining information outlined in this study to include in their business plans for easy access. Another recommendation for action includes the application of the strategies for conferences and presentations, prompting aspiring business owners to address and

improve leadership skills as a strategy for business sustainability. To improve small business sustainability, the office of small business associations could add recommended strategies in their publications or assimilate to other small business owners as it pertains to their business set-up through conferences, seminars, or training programs.

Recommendations for Further Research

The primary limitation of this study is the demographic location of the participants. Recommendations for further studies include the expansion of the study to non-immigrants small businesses; also, expand the geographic location of the study to other cities and states. The expansion of the geographic location of the study, other than Houston, Texas, may present a different outcome. Further, I recommend conducting this study in a non-diverse city with a broader demographic sample. Additionally, research recommendation could include a focus on other leadership theory, such as transactional or servant leadership, as a strategy for small business sustainability beyond 5 years.

Reflections

The Walden University Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program is a rewarding experience. My doctoral study journey was an opportunity for scholarly exploration of a problem, immigrant small business failure. The DBA process gave me the prospect to conduct research and gain a more in-depth understanding of immigrant small business and the strategies these businesses apply for success while operating in their host country. My opinion regarding immigrant small businesses was set aside during my research; however, I discovered that my experience as a first-generation immigrant assisted with my in-depth research and data collection. The participants felt comfortable

during data collection and freely shared strategies for their small business success and sustainability.

I realized early in my research process the benefit of my value as a first-generation immigrant with a comprehensive understanding of how to obtain, gain information, and resources from the immigrant participants to support the reliability of this study. My experience provided the insight of how to approach and relate to my participants. During the interview processes with the immigrant small business owners, I focused on minimizing inaccuracies and biases by following the interview protocols but made sure the participants spoke freely and comfortably. The doctoral study process, as strategically mapped within the Walden University, with focus on the rubric, residencies, and the assistance of mentors and committees were valuable experiences that increased the worthiness of my DBA journey. The increased understanding and knowledge reinforced my research skills and my growth as a scholar.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies for immigrant small business sustainability beyond 5 years. Immigrant small business sustainability is critical to a nation's economic growth. The process of my study was to explore a minimum of three immigrant small business owners, with business operations of more than 5 years, I discovered apt strategies for small business sustainability and narrowed the strategies to themes. The selected immigrant small business owners participated in semistructured interview sessions, member checking, and they allowed for observation at their place of businesses. The participants demonstrated appropriate

knowledge and shared sufficient strategies they applied to their businesses for sustainability beyond 5 years.

The identified strategies included the strong suggestion that small business owners possess leadership skills comparable to a transformational leader, which may influence small business sustainability. Additionally, technology, innovation, and social media ranked high as a strategy for immigrant small business sustainability. As discovered during the interview of immigrant small business owners, community connections and customer relationships influence immigrant business success and sustainability; community connections and customer relationships were evident and common trends among the participants. In conclusion, I accomplished the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study with suitable findings and strategies that could influence small business sustainability beyond 5 years.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Questions

I.   Introduce self to the participant(s).

II.   Present consent form, go over contents, answer questions and concerns of participant(s).

III. Give participant copy of consent form.

IV.   Turn on the recording device.

V.   Follow the procedure to introduce participant(s) with pseudonym/coded identification; note the date and time.

VI.   Begin interview with question #1; follow through to the final question.

VII. Follow up with additional questions.

VIII. End interview sequence; discuss member-checking with the participant(s).

IX.   Thank the participant(s) for their part in the study. Reiterate contact numbers of participants for follow up questions and concerns.

X.   End protocol.

Interview Questions

1.   What strategies did you use to sustain your business beyond 5 years?

2.   What strategies did you find worked best for sustaining your business beyond 5 years?

3.   How did you communicate your sustainability strategies to employees and stakeholders?

4.   What major obstacle, if any, have you overcome to sustain your business beyond 5 years?

5.   What strategies did you use to overcome obstacles?

6.   What additional information would you like to share regarding strategies that immigrant small business owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years?

Appendix B: Introductory/Recruitment Letter

April 6, 2018

Participant's Name:

Re: Strategies for Immigrant Small Business Sustainability beyond 5 Years

Dear Sir/Madam:

My name is Hope Obika Waobikeze; I am currently a doctoral degree candidate – Leadership at Walden University. I am researching successful strategies immigrant small business owners applied for sustainability beyond 5 years. As part of my doctoral study research at Walden University, I would like to invite you to participate in a research study to explore the strategies and experiences for sustainability of small business owners who have been in business for more than 5 years.

I contacted you to participate because you are an immigrant small business owner in Houston, Texas and have been in business for more than 5 years, which is the necessary factor for my study. My interest in this study is to explore successful strategies you applied for your business success and sustainability.

I am seeking a face-to-face interview that will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes and will include about six questions that will target your sustainability and successful strategies and experiences as an immigrant small business owner. I will record the interview; you will have the opportunity to review the transcribed interview for accuracy before inclusion in my study. I will also conduct observation at your place of business for approximately 30 mins. The observation will assist to capture views, interactions, possible business experiences, and any displayed leadership, problem solving, and experience with small business operation. The data collected, your name and business will remain confidential; participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.

If you agree to participate in the study, please review the enclosed consent form carefully and ask any question. Part of my role as a researcher is to ensure all aspects of the research are clear to each participant before the participant consent.

Your participation is valuable to the success of the study. Thank you for your time, consideration, and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Hope Obika Waobikeze
DBA Candidate
Walden University