Minority women small business owners' leadership styles:
An exploratory case study

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative exploratory case study explored the leadership styles of minority women-owned small businesses in Savannah, Georgia, to show how leadership styles differ in small business survival rates. Leadership styles are factors in the success and sustainability of small businesses. The creation and failure of small businesses happen every day. There are many reasons for the creation of small businesses and the failure of small businesses. This paper addresses poor leadership styles as a determining factor in the failure of small businesses. Despite failures, small businesses are needed to grow the United States' economy. Minority women-owned small businesses are important contributors to the economy's growth because the minority women small business owners' growth rates are higher than other segments of small businesses. A purposive sampling of six minority women-owned small business owners answered 14 semi-structured open-ended questions for the exploration of leadership styles and determination of a dominant leadership style among the group. The various leadership approaches were underpinned by the conceptual frameworks of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles from the Full Range Leadership Model and the Situational Leadership Model. The overarching research question that guided this study was 'What leadership styles contributed to minority women-owned small businesses' growth and sustainability beyond five years of existence?' The participants' responses determined that the minority women's leadership styles fit the definitions of transformational, situational, and laissez-faire leadership styles. Additionally, there was no detection of a dominant leadership style in the group.

Keywords: Minority women-owned, small businesses, leadership styles, qualitative, exploratory case study.

INTRODUCTION

Although small businesses are crucial to the economy's expansion, 50% failed within the first five years of operation (United States Small Business Administration, 2020). While there are numerous reasons for the failures, the overarching reason is poor leadership practices (Axe, 2022; Mintz, 2018). Despite failures, small businesses are needed to grow the United States' economy. Minority women-owned small businesses are important contributors to the economy's growth because their growth rates are higher than other segments of small businesses. Minority women-owned small businesses grew four and one-half times the national growth rate for businesses in 2019 (American Express, 2019; United States Census Bureau, 2020).

Despite the new small business failures, small businesses are needed to grow the United States' economy. Small businesses account for 99.9% of United States businesses (United States Small Business Administration, 2020). In 2017, an estimated 31.7 million small businesses were operating in the United States, employing 61 million employees and accounting for 44% of the gross domestic product (United States Census Bureau, 2020).

Minority women-owned small businesses may or may not have employees, offer products and/or services, and may have income as high as $40 million. The company, however, must be 51% owned by a woman of color. The United States Census Bureau classifies the ownership of minority women-owned small businesses as American Indian; Asian; Black or African American; Hispanic; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders; and some other races, such as multiracial.

There is a good deal to learn about the leadership styles of minority women-owned small business owners. They are the leaders of their companies. The buck stops with them. The leadership styles of minority women-owned small business owners are a determining factor in the extraordinary growth and sustainability of minority women-owned small business owners (Eagly, 2020). Understanding how minority women-owned small business owners lead to success will help business leaders understand how leadership styles influence business success.

Leadership styles have a significant impact on business survival rates (Okyere, 2017; Sheshi & Kërçini, 2017). Business owners lead their companies. During the startup and growth phases of business, small business owners face financial and operational challenges that include access to finance and a lack of managerial staff, equipment, and technology (Okyere, 2017). The financial and operational challenges faced by small business owners resulted in limited growth and survival rates (Okyere, 2017). Okyere asserted, however, to overcome challenges faced by small businesses, the owners should adopt various leadership styles.

The small business owner's leadership style influences the employees' behavior toward accomplishing the company's goals (Kowo & AKinbola, 2019). The adoption of employees' leadership roles might not be an easy task for small business owners. The variations in leadership styles are abundant. No one leadership style will work for all businesses and situations. Small business owners must determine what leadership style works best for the employees and the company. The overarching research question, 'What leadership styles contributed to minority women-owned small businesses' growth and sustainability beyond five years of existence?' guided this study in determining the leadership styles of minority women-owned small business owners and whether there was a dominant leadership style among the women who participated in the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem is the lack of understanding of what the specific leadership styles are that led to minority women-owned small businesses' success and sustainability in the United States (Barnes, 2019). The understanding of how the leadership styles of minority women-owned small business owners contribute to the success and sustainability of their companies beyond five years with a business growth of four and one-half times higher than the national growth rate for all other segments of small businesses (American Express, 2019; United States Census Bureau, 2020) is an important aspect of this study. Therefore, an understanding of leadership styles to reduce small business failures is worthwhile to business owners.

Small business owners is a common phrase found in the literature. In contrast, small business leaders are not a common phrase found in literature, although business owners do lead their companies. The terms business owners and business leaders will be used synonymously throughout this article.

Current research on small business owners focused on the closing of small businesses in the United States due to the coronavirus (Fairlie, 2020). Although the pandemic's effects challenge small business owners, leadership still influences a small business's performance (Kowo & Akinbola, 2019). Since business owners lead their companies, the success of small businesses is dependent upon the owner's ability to exhibit a leadership style that will inspire the company's employees to accomplish the business objectives and achieve the expected results (Baque Vlllanueva, 2020). Leadership influences the sustainability and performance of small businesses (Kowo & Akinbola, 2019).

The significance of this study is embodied in two research objectives. First, to determine the leadership styles exhibited by successfully minority women-owned small business owners who have grown and sustained their businesses for five years or more. Second, to uncover the implications of a dominant leadership style among minority women-owned small business owners.

Full Range Leadership and Situational Leadership Conceptual Frameworks

Leadership is a crucial element of entrepreneur models for achieving business success and excellence (Jankalová et al., 2018). According to Jankalová and associates, leadership is understood as interactions between followers and leaders. The authors also held that leadership approaches could be seen in the theory and practice of business management. The various leadership styles highlight the success and sustainability of minority women-owned small businesses. The leadership styles of minority women small business owners are underpinned by the conceptual frameworks of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles from the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) (Drew, 2022) and the Situational Leadership Model (The Center for Leadership Studies, 2022).

The FRLM asserted that three types of leaders possess three leadership styles. The first leadership style is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is the most beneficial and desirable form of leadership because of the leader's ability to motivate employees to grow and push for a shared organizational vision (Statistics Solutions, 2020). The second leadership style is transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is the most common leadership style in organizations because leaders use rewards and punishments for individual performance and organizational compliance (Statistics Solutions, 2020). The third leadership style is laissez-faire leadership. Laissez-faire leadership is the worst form because leaders allow employees to make

decisions, and leaders only get involved when things become dilapidated (Statistics Solutions, 2020).

The Full Range Leadership Model is based on the leader's individual leadership style and does not capture the relationship between the leader and the follower. The Situational Leadership Model captures the relationship between the leader and the follower's ability to perform (Rodić & Marić, 2020). Additionally, situational leadership allows the leader to adjust the leadership style in various situations and for their followers to ensure that the leader is leading most successfully. In business, no one leadership style fits all situations since leadership is a function of the employees' characteristics and the business tasks (Rodić & Marić, 2020).

In a business environment, the appropriate leadership style is based on the employee characteristics and the complexity of the assigned task (Rodić & Marić, 2020). Therefore, the leader's leadership style is based on the business scenario. The Situational Leadership Model identifies the leader's leadership styles as supporting, coaching, delegating, and directing (Rodić & Marić, 2020).

Supporting, coaching, delegating, and directing as it applies to the business environment is defined below:

- A supporting leadership style is used when employees lack the confidence to complete tasks, and the leader participates by emphasizing shared ideas and decisions through open-ended questions until the employee regains confidence and completes the business task.
- Coaching is defined as the leader's ability to successfully persuade an unwilling employee, who has the knowledge and ability, to complete the business task.
- Delegating is when the leader delegates business tasks to an employee with the knowledge and propensity to work independently.
- Directing is when the leader directs an employee, who needs supervision, to complete the business task tasks (Rodić & Marić, 2020).

Cummings et al. (2018) stated that a leader's leadership style is how leadership is accomplished and how one acts on achieving their preferred future or how one approaches the work that needs to be done. While styles may differ, one thing leaders have in common is the objective to lead individuals toward shared goals (CHRON, 2021). The success of minority women-owned small businesses is an area that requires exploration that may help other small business owners. This study explored the minority women-owned businesses' leadership styles that resulted in the sustainability of their companies greater than five years.

The increase in the success of minority women-owned small businesses has a positive effect on the United States economy. In contrast, with no change in the documented growth rate of other small businesses, the decrease in the success of minority women-owned small businesses would result in a negative effect on the United States economy. Minority women-owned small businesses' growth rates are four and one-half times the national growth rate for businesses (American Express, 2019). Research showed that strong and intelligent women run a growing list of minority women-owned businesses. Some examples of strong and intelligent minority women are Michelle Obama (former First Lady of the United States), Stacey Abrams (American Politician), and Oprah Winfrey (American Host). Understanding the importance of minority women's leadership styles is critical to the continued success of minority women-owned small businesses success.

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The methodology applied in this study was qualitative. Using qualitative research methods to bring diverse perspectives to the forefront helped to identify leadership styles that contributed to the success and sustainability of minority women-owned small businesses. The value of diverse perspectives is essential for business owners to incorporate into their decision-making process (Bhandari, 2020). Each minority woman interviewed in this study was different, and the interviews highlighted the various leadership styles of minority women small business owners. Understanding businesses from the perspective of the individuals within the businesses is vital for understanding leadership (Bhandari, 2020). Qualitative research was appropriate for exploring the leadership styles of minority women-owned small businesses' growth and sustainability beyond five years of existence.

The case study design provided real-life data about the leadership styles of successful minority women small business owners. A study conducted by Lipkins (2019) deemed the qualitative exploratory case study design method appropriate because Lipkins's study focused on how African American women small business leaders used leadership styles to sustain their business longer than five years through open-ended interview questions. This case study provided a deeper understanding of minority women's leadership styles through their shared experiences via open-ended questions about their time in business.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Limitations

As with any research design, there may be strengths, weaknesses, and limitations that need to be addressed. This study was no different. Strengths, weaknesses, and limitations were revealed in this qualitative exploratory case study.

One strength of this study was that it was conducted economically. The initial contact and signing of the consent forms were conducted via email at no cost to the participants and the researcher. Second, the surveys were conducted via SurveyMonkey with no cost to the participants and minimal cost to the researcher. Third, the interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform. There were no costs for traveling or reproduction of documents.

The weakness of this study is that it is focused on only minority women-owned small businesses. The study did not consider men small business owners or non-minority women small business owners. There was no comparison or contrast made between the various leadership styles to determine if the leadership styles of successful small businesses were the dominant factor for the success of small businesses.

The limitation of this study was transferability. The study was conducted in Savannah, Georgia. The results obtained from the minority women-owned small businesses may not apply to minority women small business owners outside the Savannah, Georgia, geographical area.

SETTING, POPULATION, AND SAMPLE

This qualitative exploratory case study explored the leadership styles of minority women-owned small businesses in the Savannah, Georgia, metropolitan area who had been in business for five years or more to show how they successfully sustained their businesses. The targeted population for this study consisted of minority women-owned small business leaders in the retail and professional service, including consulting, real estate, human resources, and information

technology industries. This population was appropriate for this qualitative exploratory case study because it explored the leadership styles of similar businesses. The criteria for business owners to participate in this study were that the business owner must be a minority woman owning 51% or more of the company (United States Small Business Administration, 2020). The minority women must also have operated the current business in the Savannah, Georgia, metropolitan area for the last five years.

The sample size of six individuals was deemed successful when data saturation was achieved (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The sample population was selected using purposive sampling. The specific reason for using purposive sampling was the better match the sample to the research objectives, thus improving the study's rigor and the trustworthiness of the data and results.

Demographic data of the six minority women-owned small businesses, including the highest level of education or degree and annual sales receipts or income, was collected through a short demographic survey via SurveyMonkey. As indicated in Table 1 (Appendix) illustrates the educational level of the participants. One participant held an undergraduate degree, and the remaining five participants held graduate degrees. Table 2 (Appendix) illustrates the annual income of the participants' businesses. Two participants reported annual income less than $100,000, and four participants reported annual income greater than $100,000 but less than $500,000.

MATERIALS AND INSTRUMENTS

The material and data instruments used in this study consisted of eligibility determinations, willingness to cooperate with the understanding that a person can withdraw anytime without penalty, interviews, and examination of archival records. An introductory e-mail was sent to the potential participants outlining vital facts concerning their decision to participate, such as the eligibility criteria that must be met by the participants, confidentiality, and the right to volunteer or withdraw. The potential participants were asked to indicate their willingness to participate by responding via email or contacting the researcher via phone and providing the requested information in the introductory e-mail: (a) name, (b) phone number, (c) gender, (d) age, (e) race/ethnicity, (f) percentage of ownership of the business, (g) industry, (h) location of the business, and (i) years in business.

Upon receiving the response to the introductory e-mail, the participants were e-mailed an informed consent form for review and signature. The participants noted their agreement by printing and signing the informed consent form. The purpose of the informed consent form was to outline information such as the estimated time required for the interviews, the purpose of the study, potential risks posed by the study, benefits to the participant and society, and the confidentiality of the participant. The participants returned the signed copy by scanning and emailing it.

After receiving the signed informed consent form, the participants were e-mailed a link to the demographic questionnaire in SurveyMonkey. The participants had to complete the survey before scheduling the interview. Demographic data, including the highest level of education or degree and annual sales receipts or income, was collected through a short demographic survey via SurveyMonkey.

Once the survey was completed, the participant was asked to suggest a convenient day and time for a Zoom video interview. This reduced the likelihood of researcher bias infringing upon the participants' responses as the participants had the opportunity to choose circumstances

most comfortable to them. The participants conducted agreed-upon Zoom video interviews with the researcher. The interviews were audio-recorded via Zoom. The researcher sought the permission of the participants in advance to allow the recording of the interviews using Zoom.

This qualitative exploratory case study used semi-structured open-ended questions to unearth rich data from the participants. Interviews using open-ended questions captured the strategies used by the participants as indicated in the interview question guide (Appendix). The semi-structured open-ended interview questions provided an understanding of the individual viewpoints of each participant. The interview protocol (Appendix) was developed for asking for and recording responses. The interview protocol underpinned the data collection process.

The interviews were then transcribed using the Otter.ai software. The transcripts were reviewed against the audio recordings to check for accuracy of the transcriptions. The researcher corrected the speech-to-text issues. Issues were possibly due to background noises, volume, clarity, and dialects.

The corrected transcripts were e-mailed to the participants to review the transcription from their interview and to confirm the accuracy of the transcription. The purpose of participants checking the transcriptions was to ensure that the meaning of their statements and wordings of the interview was accurate. Member checking also helped to reduce the probability of researcher bias. The participants e-mailed the researcher their satisfaction and approval of the transcripts for use in the researcher's study.

After receiving approval from the participants, the transcriptions were analyzed using the QSR NVivo 12 software. The QSR NVivo 12 coding focused on language-determining themes and sub-themes for data analysis. The participants' responses were analyzed, but their names were not disclosed. The participants were identified by the pseudonym of P1 to P6.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The data collection process started after receiving approval from the University of Phoenix Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the written confirmation of the six participants to agree to participate in this study. This study's findings were supported by using data triangulation. Data triangulation was achieved by: (a) interviews, (b) archival records, and (c) document analysis.

Interviews using open-ended questions captured the strategies used by the participants (Appendix). The semi-structured open-ended interview questions provided an understanding of the individual viewpoints of each participant. The interview protocol (Appendix) was developed for asking for and recording responses.

Archival records for this qualitative exploratory study included numerical data and national statistics, which had been collected already by other agencies. The United States Census Bureau website provided statistics on the United States population regarding small businesses, minority women-owned small businesses, the labor force, and the gross domestic product. The Savannah Economic Development Authority provided data on the minority women's business certification program. Other online government websites, such as the United States Small Business Administration and the United States Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, provided useful data that assisted with that data. The numerical data and national statistics were integrated as a part of the data analysis process. The data collected from the archival records were compared with the length of time the minority women small business owners were in business, annual income, educational level, and reasons for starting a business.

The minority women small business owners' demographic survey and interview responses were in sync with the data collected from the archival records.

Documents were used for information that was also compared with responses from the participants. A review was conducted of the participants' websites, social media platforms, and local newspapers. A review was also completed concerning articles, documents, websites, and online publications with information relevant to the topic. The research studies via the University of Phoenix Library also served as a source of information for triangulation.

The information shared by the participants, in addition to the archival records and documentation, was of paramount importance. There were some encountered challenges during the analysis, which brought forth discrepancies in the recorded transcriptions. When the recorded transcriptions were uploaded to the Otter.ai software, there were speech-to-text issues that needed corrections. The issues were possibly due to background noises, volume, clarity, and dialects. The issues resulted in numerous reviewing of the audio recordings, the written transcripts produced by Otter.ai software, and handwritten notes by the researcher. The corrected transcripts were e-mailed to the participants for review to confirm the accuracy of the transcription. The participants e-mailed their satisfaction and approval of the transcript for use in the study.

The QSR NVivo 12 software assisted in identifying the themes and patterns from the data collected. The data analysis encompassed the core steps of identifying themes and patterns, which emerged after the six minority women-owned small business leaders completed the interview process and shared their successful leadership styles. The core steps of identifying themes and patterns were accomplished in three steps. The participants' responses were analyzed to write the findings and discussion components of this study.

FINDINGS

This case study was designed to discover the leadership styles of minority women-owned small businesses in Savannah, Georgia, to explore how leadership styles differ in small business survival rates. The businesses targeted consisted primarily of minority women-owned small business owners in the retail and professional services, including consulting, real estate, human resources, and information technology industries. Minority women-owned small businesses are important contributors to the economy's growth because their growth rates are higher than other segments of small businesses. Minority women-owned small businesses grew four and one-half times the national growth rate for businesses in 2019 (American Express, 2019; United States Census Bureau, 2020). The increase in the success of minority women-owned small businesses has a positive effect on the United States economy (American Express, 2019). The understanding of how the leadership styles of minority women-owned small business owners contribute to the success and sustainability of their companies beyond five years with a business growth of four and one-half times higher than the national growth rate for all other segments of small businesses (American Express, 2019; United States Census Bureau, 2020) is an important aspect of this article.

Leadership Styles for Sustainability

The overarching research question, 'What leadership styles contributed to minority women-owned small businesses' growth and sustainability beyond five years of existence?' guided this study in determining the leadership styles of minority women-owned small business

owners and whether there was a dominant leadership style among the women who participated in the study. The findings revealed that the leadership styles of minority women small business owners were transformational, situational, and laissez-faire. There were no dominant leadership styles among minority women small business owners.

DISCUSSION

The findings described the leadership styles needed for minority women small business owners to become successful. The participants were asked to describe their current leadership styles and explain whether or not this has always been their leadership style. Their responses consisted of transformational, some form of situational, and laissez-faire leadership styles. They became aware of their employees' weaknesses and strengths and applied a leadership style appropriate for the employee, the situation, and the company. The participants' leadership styles evolved over time, and they believed the evolution allowed for the sustainability and success of their businesses.

Participant one (P1) used a laissez-faire leadership style because she wanted everyone to be successful. She believed she created a level playing field for all employees to be successful regardless of position, education, and learning style. Participant five (P5) used a laissez-faire leadership style because it gave employees a voice, sort of like the buy-in approach. P5 stated, "I believe simply because it's when you give other people that buy-in, that's when they feel that they are valued, needed, and have a voice."

A laissez-faire leader allows employees to make the right decisions for the company (Statistics Solutions, 2020). As a result, employees feel valued and confident in their work). In contrast, if something goes wrong, employees may try to pass accountability back to the leadership due to a lack of structure and support (i.e., no set plans, lack of meetings, and group organization). A laissez-faire leader only gets involved when things worsen (Statistics Solutions, 2020). Therefore, it is important for leaders to balance employees' wisdom and knowledge to achieve the company's goals while ensuring that each employee feels their contributions are noticed and valued (Northwest Executive Education, 2021).

Participant two (P2) commented that she used a situational leadership style because of her business environment. P2 stated, "in my environment of customers, I have to be the one to tell my employees what to do and to keep things running smoothly. When they begin to go above and beyond, then I will begin delegating." Situational leadership allows the leader to adjust his leadership style in various situations and for his followers to ensure that the business owner leads in the most successful way (Rodić & Marić, 2020). Rodić and Marić cited that the Situational Leadership Model defined the leadership styles for situations as supporting, coaching, delegating, and directing.

- A supporting leadership style is used when employees lack the confidence to complete tasks, and the leader participates by emphasizing shared ideas and decisions through open-ended questions until the employee regains confidence and completes the business task.
- Coaching is defined as the leader's ability to successfully persuade an unwilling employee, who has the knowledge and ability, to complete the business task.
- Delegating is when the leader delegates business tasks to an employee with the knowledge and propensity to work independently.

- Directing is when the leader directs an employee, who needs supervision, to complete the business task (Rodić & Marić, 2020).

  In business, no one leadership style fits all situations since leadership is a function of the employees' characteristics and the business tasks (Rodić & Marić, 2020). Therefore, in a business environment, the appropriate leadership style is based on the employee characteristics and the complexity of the assigned task (Rodić & Marić, 2020). Additionally, the leader's leadership style is based on the business scenario.

  Participant four (P4) used a transformational leadership style because of the current state of her business. P4 stated, "It has resulted in me being able to empower people to get to that point where they can perform in ways that they didn't even think that they could." Transformational leadership is a desirable form of leadership because of the leader's ability to motivate employees to grow and push for a shared organizational vision (Statistics Solutions, 2020). For businesses to succeed, the companies' leaders must exhibit a leadership style that will inspire employees to meet the business objectives and achieve the expected results (Baque Vlllanueva, 2020). As a result, an organization under a transformational leadership style has desirable organizational outcomes, lower turnover rates, higher productivity, higher job satisfaction, and less stress (Islami & Mulolli, 2020).

Recommendations

  The participants were asked what leadership style they recommend for current and future minority women small business owners to sustain their businesses for five years or more. Participant one (P1) recommended an elastic leadership style for current and future minority women small business owners. P1 stated, "I would probably tell them to go with an elastic style, that you pull a little from here and there until you create what you want." Participant two (P2) recommended a situational leadership style for current and future minority women small business owners. P2 stated, "Until there's nothing going to always be the same every day for every decision for everything that pops up, you're going to have to be situational."

  The elastic leadership style, as mentioned by P1, has similar characteristics to the situational leadership style, as mentioned by P2. In business, no one leadership style fits all situations since leadership is a function of the employees' characteristics and the business tasks (Rodić & Marić, 2020). Therefore, Rodić and Marić believed the appropriate leadership style should be based on the employees' ability to accomplish the assigned tasks.

  Participant five (P5) recommended both the laissez-faire and transformational leadership styles for current and future minority women small business owners. P5 stated, "I would suggest the laissez-faire business style to them, as well as the transformational so they can help motivate their workers, as well as help them grow and contribute to the growth and development of the company." The assumption from P5's response is that the leader exhibits both laissez-faire and transformational leadership styles. However, P5 did not explain how the two leadership styles could co-exist simultaneously. The laissez-faire leadership style is considered a hands-off approach, thereby producing ineffective leadership, whereas the transformational leadership style is a hands-on approach, thereby producing effective leadership (Vadvilavičius & Stelmokienė, 2019).

  Participant six (P6) recommended that current and future minority women small business owners develop leadership styles that incorporate diversity, and internal and external networking

skills, deliver quality products, and be profitable. The development of leadership styles to incorporate diversity, networking skills, quality products, and be profitable is a form of transformational leadership. The transformational leader is versatile and capable of producing positive changes in the company (Baque Vlllanueva, 2020).

Participant three (P3) did not recommend any particular leadership style but recommended that current and future minority women small business owners believe in themselves and their abilities. Although P3 did not recommend any leadership style, one may assume that leaders who believe in themselves and their abilities are comfortable with change. The desired outcome for successful leaders is changing and evolving (Kailani, 2017).

Leadership style plays a significant role in enhancing employees' interest and commitment to the organization (Sheshi & Kërçini, 2017). The variations in leadership styles are abundant. Small business owners must determine what leadership style works best for the employees and the company. Employees are driven to attain the organization's goals if the employees believe the organization will allow them to achieve their predetermined objectives (Sheshi & Kërçini, 2017). According to the authors, if employees believe the organization will not allow them to achieve their predetermined objectives, employees' interest in the organization will decline.

Implications

This qualitative exploratory case study's research objectives were two-fold. First, to determine the leadership styles exhibited in minority women-owned small business owners who have grown and sustained their businesses for five years or more. Second, to uncover the implications of a dominant leadership style among minority women-owned small business owners. The objectives were achieved.

With the objectives in consideration, business owners and practitioners should recognize and understand that one leadership style does not work for all employees or situations. Business owners and practitioners should also become aware of their employees' weaknesses and strengths and apply a leadership style appropriate for the employee, the situation, and the company. The choice of leadership style is a strategic approach to business growth and success.

Limitations

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the business environment and, as a result, could have resulted in a limitation of the depth of data collected. The interviews were conducted via Zoom. However, the participant's primary work environment and interactions with clients, customers, and employees were via virtual platforms such as Zoom. With so many individuals vying for the participants' attention, their time was valuable and limited.

Another limitation of this study was not expanding the recruitment process to social media platforms. Participants were recruited by word of mouth via email. The local databases for minorities or women did not specify minority women. Therefore, it was difficult to determine minority women business owners. Expanding the recruitment process to social media platforms may have increased participation.

Future Studies

One recommendation for future studies is to expand the study to multiple metropolitan areas within the United States to increase the transferability of the results. The leadership styles exhibited by successful minority women small business owners in the south may not be the same for other successful minority women small business owners in other geographical areas of the United States. A second recommendation for future studies is to conduct an appreciative study that may uncover more information on the leadership styles of successful minority women-owned business owners across the United States. The third recommendation for future studies is to conduct a study on available advisory services for minority women small business owners. It would be insightful to do an inquiry study on the importance of advisory services.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to discover the leadership styles of minority women-owned business owners in the Savannah, Georgia, metropolitan area for the past five years or more to show how they successfully sustained their businesses. This qualitative exploratory case study's research objectives were two-fold. First, to determine the leadership styles exhibited in minority women-owned small business owners who have grown and sustained their businesses for five years or more. Second, to uncover the implications of a dominant leadership style among minority women-owned small business owners. The objectives were achieved.

First, the leadership styles of the participants consisted of transformational, some form of situational, and laissez-faire. Second, the participants did not have a dominant leadership style. They recognized their employees' weaknesses and strengths and applied a leadership style appropriate for the employee, the situation, and the sustainability and success of their business.

The minority women small business owners had to overcome challenges while simultaneously leading their businesses to be successful post-pandemic and during the pandemic. They learned how to apply various leadership styles to various situations and employees. Additionally, they mastered the art of adaption during the pandemic by adjusting their business models and being flexible with the federal, state, and local pandemic laws and requirements. Business leaders and practitioners could benefit by learning the differences between leadership styles and how they influence small business success.

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APPENDIX

Education Level	Number of Participants
Less than a high school degree	0
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	0
Some college but no degree	0
Associate degree	0
Bachelor's degree	1
Master's degree	3
Doctoral degree	2
Total Participants	6

Table 1. Summary of Education Level

Annual Income	Number of Participants
$0 0 $99,999	2
$100,000 to $499,000	4
$500,000 to $999,000	0
$1,000,000 to $4,999,999	0
$5,000,000 to $9,999,999	0
$10,000,000 to $14,999,999	0
$15,000,000 to $19,999,999	0
$20,000,000 to $24,999,999	0
$25,000,000 to $29,999,999	0
$30,000,000 to $40,000,000	0
Total Participants	6

Table 2. Summary of Annual Income

Interview Questions Guide

IQ1: What is your definition of leadership?
IQ2: How would you describe your leadership style?
IQ3: Has this always been your leadership style, or did your leadership style evolve or change over time?
IQ4: Why do you use this particular style of leadership?
IQ5: How has your leadership style enabled you to remain in business for five years or longer?
IQ6: Describe the leadership style of any leader that has impacted how you lead.
IQ7: What motivated you to start a business?
IQ8: What barriers have you faced in business, and how did you overcome them?
IQ9: Has the coronavirus pandemic caused you to change your leadership style? If so, how?
IQ10: What impact, if any, has the coronavirus pandemic had on your business?
IQ11: What other additional information can you add concerning your leadership style and its impact on your business success?
IQ12: Based on your experience, what leadership styles would you suggest to other minority women small business owners and why?
IQ13. What values are essential to minority-women small business leaders?

IQ14. What do minority-women small business leaders do to motivate their team?

Interview Protocol

1. Participants must sign the informed consent form and email the signed form to the researcher.
2. Upon receipt of the signed consent form, the researcher will send a link to the participant to complete the demographic survey in SurveyMonkey.
3. The researcher and the participant will jointly establish a date, time, and virtual platform (e.g., Zoom, Skype, Facetime).
4. The interview will commence at the agreed-upon date, time, and platform.
5. The interviewer (researcher) will manage the time for each question.
6. The interview will be audio recorded; the interviewer will also take notes.
7. The researcher will transcribe the interviews.
8. Once the interview has been achieved, the interviewer will thank the participant and remind them of a follow-on session after the data collected is analyzed.
9. For the follow-on session, the researcher will email the participants a rough draft of the interview transcript for the participants to check if the meanings and wordings of their initial interview with the researcher are accurate.
10. The participants will email or call the researcher with concerns, mistakes, and clarification of information in the transcript.
11. The participants will communicate their approval or disapproval of the transcript for use in the study via the researcher's email address or by calling the researcher.