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IDENTIFYING ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF  
BLACK BUSINESS OWNERS WHOSE BUSINESSES SURVIVED THE  
TURBULENT PERIOD OF 2005 TO 2009 IN ZIMBABWE

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By

Faith Ntabeni-Bhebe (No 109738Z)

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## Abstract

During the period after 2000 Zimbabwean business owners experienced unprecedented challenges in their operating environment which resulted in the closure of many businesses yet some survived and others even experienced phenomenal profits and growth. This study set out to identify the leadership practices of Black Business Owners (BBOs) whose businesses survived Zimbabwe's turbulent period of 2005 to 2009.

Guided by a social constructivist view and using Grounded Theory (GT) as a methodology, the study established that at the core of the leadership practices of BBOs was a focus on survival which was defined as remaining in business (not necessarily in any specific line of business) in spite of the threatening environmental challenges. This they did by adopting practices that were underpinned by one's spirituality as evidenced by the individual's belief in the existence of a supernatural power or powers that provided guidance. The practices centred on self leadership and self-management which in themselves were guided by one's trueness to themselves (*ukuzazi*) which in fact translated to being true to their being black Africans (*abantu*) and conducting themselves in the manner of black Africans (*pachivanhu* or *ngesintu*). Their practices in tackling the hostile and uncertain operating environment in which the lines between the legal and the illegal blurred found guidance from *ubuntu* principles of emphasizing the common good and good neighbourliness as captured in the expression *ubuntu ebantwini* (being a person among persons).

The practices of BBOs were found to have been contextual in so far as they were informed by principles and values that are consistent with the society in which they were being enacted, and situational as reflected by their focus on survival in business in response to the uncertain economic environment. The study concludes that the practices of BBO did not have a complete fit with anyone of the extant leadership styles but rather represented a blend of leadership typologies. It is the study's submission that the practices in fact represent a specific form of leadership, the Survival Oriented Entrepreneurial Leadership (SOEL).

**Keywords:** entrepreneurial leadership in Zimbabwe; survival oriented leadership; business survival in hyperinflation environment.