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Succession Planning Practices and Sustainability of Family Businesses in North Central, Nigeria

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***Abstract**: This study looked at the effect of succession planning practices on sustainability of family businesses in North Central Nigeria. The precise goals were to ascertain the impact of mentoring, job rotation and coaching on sustainability of family businesses in North Central Nigeria. For this study, a survey research design was adopted. The Corporate Affairs Commission (2020) identified 2,100 management personnel from the family businesses in North Central Nigeria that were included in the study. The accessible population, however, is made up of five management personnel from each of the 420 family businesses that have been identified as operating in North Central Nigeria; from this group, a scientific sample size of 336 was produced using Yamene's Formula. The study found that the overall reliability was 0.824 and the validity index was 0.857.The research employed a basic random sampling methodology. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the study's data, which were then analyzed using descriptive statistical tools like tables and straightforward percentages. Multiple regressions were also employed for additional analysis and hypothesis testing. The study's conclusions showed that coaching, job rotation, and mentoring have a big impact on family businesses' ability to survive. The results of the study showed that job rotation had β=.136, t=2.904, P=0.004; coaching had β=.229, t=4.398, P=0.000; and mentoring had β=.222, t=4.388, P=0.000. Effective succession planning has a positive effect on the sustainability of family businesses in North-Central Nigeria, according to research findings. Research shows time and time again that companies with strong succession planning policies will see long-term benefits in their operations. The study suggested, among other things, that family-run businesses in North Central Nigeria set up mentorship programs to learn about business mentoring and the value of knowledge transfer to improve the viability, growth, and sustainability of their companies.*

***Keywords:** Succession planning, sustainability, family businesses, innovativeness, competitiveness.*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

One of the buzzwords that is most frequently used in management meetings of different organizations that have gained worldwide traction is succession planning (Bruce, 2013). As key players within an organization leave their positions for various reasons, such as retirement, advancement, or attrition, succession planning is the process of identifying and preparing suitable employees through mentoring, training, and job rotation (Redrigo 2013). According to Donnelly (2010), succession planning is the process of locating and fostering internal candidates who have the capacity to occupy important leadership roles within the organization. As a result, succession planning is an essential part of running a business. Without adequate succession planning, very few organizations are able to survive (Chima, 2013). According to Shatilwe and Amukugo (2016), succession planning is essential to ensuring that a company will succeed even after the current management team retires. For a business to remain successful and continue operating, succession planning is essential (Ward, 2014; Brockhaus, 2014).

By starting at lower levels of management and working your way up to the top position within an organization, succession planning helps you identify critical management positions (Rothwell, 2010). The only enduring gift that one generation can give to the next is to handle succession planning well (Ayres, 1990). No matter the size of the organization, succession planning is essential to its success; consequently, neglecting to plan for succession can be fatal to a business (Durst & Wilhelm, 2012). A better understanding of business succession can help us better understand how family businesses grow and expand (Maalu, McCorrmick, 2013).One of the most crucial elements in ensuring the sustainability of family-owned businesses has been noted to be succession. Brockhouse (2014) emphasized that succession planning is critical to a company's survival and expansion. According to Nwadukwe (2013), it is an essential tool for organizational development, long-term stability, survival, and sustenance. A well-crafted succession plan facilitates a seamless transfer of ownership and management (Chrisman, Sharma & Yoder, 2019). It is regarded as a "systemic, long-term process of determining goals, needs, and roles within an organization and preparing individuals or employees for responsibilities relative to work needed within an organization" (Luna, 2012, p. 2).

Family-owned businesses' ability to survive has been identified as a critical factor in determining the nation's economy, from the creation of jobs to the delivery of goods and services to final consumers (Nosike, 2022). However, rising employee turnover and other issues pertaining to human capital are the main obstacles facing family-owned businesses in the nation. As per Nosike (2022), most organizations have employees who quit their jobs either voluntarily (by retiring or pursuing new goals) or involuntarily (by being relieved of their appointment or passing away). As a result, organizations must deal with leadership vacancies, insufficiency, or a dearth of qualified candidates to take over. Over time, the idea of family-owned businesses has changed. Family-owned businesses, widely acknowledged as a legitimate economic entity that survives for at least two generations, have prospered in numerous developed and developing economies across the globe. These companies have had a big impact on the socioeconomic development of nations like the United States of America, Italy, and India. They are still mostly relevant for the future based on current trends (Paralisan, 2018). Over 95% of indigenous businesses in Nigeria are family-owned, despite the fact that the majority of owners are unaware that they operate family businesses.

Assuring that the organization has the skills necessary to respond to the rapid shift in business operations and filling top positions through recruitment and retention of the best talent in the organization are the main goals of succession planning (Hill 2019). The significance of ensuring effective succession has been widely acknowledged in the literature. Organizations can fulfill their mandate of being a going concern by developing the right people with the right mindset to take over the leadership, management, or ownership of the business through succession planning (Onuoha, 2016). For there to be a successful transition to the next generation, the successor must learn every facet of the business and not just jump straight into a top position. Before making an employment offer, the company should develop guiding principles that specify the necessary qualifications and experience.

Developed nations like Canada have a high degree of organizational awareness regarding the significance of succession planning. Effective succession planning is essential for guaranteeing the long-term viability and prosperity of businesses, as business leaders and executives understand (Earls & Hall, 2018).It is commonly known that there are possible risks connected to leadership vacancies and that seamless leadership transitions are necessary. Organizations in the USA typically take a methodical and structured approach to succession planning. They set up official procedures and guidelines for locating possible heirs, evaluating their qualifications, and preparing them for leadership positions in the future. According to Harper et al. (2018), using a structured approach helps organizations maintain a clear talent pipeline and prevents unexpected vacancies in leadership positions.

Organizations in African nations are beginning to understand the value of succession planning. A number of sizable companies in African nations have faced leadership issues that are indicative of inadequate succession planning. For example, leadership and ownership conflicts brought on by inadequate succession planning posed serious problems for Zambia's Zambezi Portland Cement, a cement manufacturer. Prolonged legal disputes between shareholders and family members plagued the company, interfering with business operations and negatively impacting its performance. The company's expansion was hampered by instability brought about by the lack of a clear succession plan and the inability to handle leadership changes. Another illustration is the difficulties with leadership succession and power transfer that Sonatrach, the state-owned oil and Gas Company in Algeria, faced. As a result of disruptions and inefficiencies brought about by leadership changes, the company's operational performance declined (Mashikinyi, 2020).

In Nigeria, company closures are common, particularly for family-run enterprises. Kielstra (2019) claims that the issue of family businesses closing in Nigeria is far worse because a large number of vibrant and promising family-owned businesses in the country have failed before their founders passed away. Worldwide, a number of family-owned businesses have failed for a variety of reasons. The reasons include a lack of planning, ignorance of economics, a lack of funds, and careless spending. Significantly, there is no succession planning in these companies. Poor succession planning is a major factor in the failure of many family-owned businesses, claim Goel and Jones (2019). Succession planning is something that small to medium-sized family-owned businesses shouldn't ignore (John, 2019). Succession is a crucial component in family-owned business sustainability. This study was necessitated to examine the effect of succession planning practices on sustainability of family businesses in North Central Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Family members are primarily involved in the administration, operations, and strategic decision-making of family businesses, which are owner-operated and managed enterprises. Due to the current economic climate that is harsh and has affected Nigeria's formal sector in terms of job creation, family businesses are progressively taking over as the most common type of business enterprise in the country, where they play a crucial role in social and economic development. This has encouraged people to become enterprising. These companies, which employ the majority of the labor force, create the greatest number of new jobs, and contribute significantly to the GDP, are primarily family-run businesses that present excellent prospects for economic growth.

However, just like any other kind of business, family businesses faced challenges like increased market and global competition, high taxes, a harsh economy, unstable policies, a lack of capital, pressing family needs and goals, a lackluster leadership in the next generation of owners, and an orderly and affordable succession plan that ensures the company will support the owner's future needs. The complexities of family business dynamics, which include ownership, family harmony, solidarity, and succession that support their survival, add to these difficulties. Family businesses play a significant role in economic development, but compared to non-family firms, their survival rate is significantly lower. Poor coaching techniques, inadequate financial management, inadequate succession planning procedures, and inadequate technical skills are all blamed for this. According to Ogundele (2013), a lack of proper succession planning leads to the closure of many family businesses. Plans for succession assist in preventing the vacuum that could be caused by the founder's sudden and unanticipated departure. Certain organizations fail to make plans for succession; this uneven and poor management of family businesses has an impact on the day-to-day operations of the company. When a business owner or manager passes away, their heir or successor may not have the necessary training or experience to continue running the company. This can lead to low productivity and a low profit margin on sales, and their interactions with the outside world may cause needless friction that ultimately forces the business to close.

Finally, unresolved family discords and indifferences arising from inability to manage the complex process of ownership and management succession from one generation to the next cause low market shares and patronage from the customers. All this necessitates the importance of succession planning in family business to ensure sustainability to second and third generation. However, none of the empirically reviewed studies has researched on succession planning practices and sustainability of family businesses in North Central Nigeria using the same analytical/methodological approaches. This is the knowledge gap that needs to be filled. Despite the numerous benefits that abound from succession planning, there is still a growing shortage of capable managers within these family businesses. It is important to improve the skill level of all managers and employees as this will contribute to improving their output. It against this background that the study seeks to examine the effect of succession planning practices on sustainability of family businesses in North Central Nigeria. The present study is an attempt, therefore, aimed at filling this knowledge gap as well as providing materials for further research and reference.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to determine the effect of succession planning practices on sustainability of family businesses in North-Central Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

i. examine the effect of mentoring on sustainability of family businesses in North-Central Nigeria.
ii. investigate the effect of job rotation on sustainability of family businesses in North-Central Nigeria.
iii. assess the effect of coaching on sustainability of family businesses in North-Central Nigeria.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Government officials and legislators will find great use for the study's conclusions when crafting legislation aimed at resolving and averting family business conflicts brought on by a lack of succession planning procedures. The study's conclusions will be important to several parties, as will be covered in this article. The owners and managers of family businesses who will use the results to determine the best course of action for planning their succession in order to ensure the sustainability of their companies after they pass away. Additionally, the study will include more varied data and information on succession planning strategies and the viability of family businesses. Other organizations, including NGOs and state corporations, will find value in the study's conclusions as they apply them to determine the necessity of succession planning procedures and the long-term viability of the businesses. The results will be used by the general public as well as other researchers and academics as a crucial source of reference in their writing and for identifying gaps in their knowledge that need to be filled, among other things.

This study is divided into five major parts. Having addressed the first part, part two focuses on review of related literature covering the theoretical, conceptual and related empirical studies. The third part is on methodology employed in carrying out the study. Part four is on analysis of data collected and the part five provides the conclusion, recommendations and limitations and suggestions for further studies accordingly.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section looks at the theoretical framework, conceptual framework and reviews of related empirical studies on the subject of the study.

2.1 Theoretical Review

There are different theories on succession planning, each identifying own paradigm and concept on family owned businesses. The theories that were of interest to this study are the leadership model succession theory and the theory of life cycle.

2.1.1 Leadership model succession theory.

According to the leadership model succession theory, the organization should prepare for retiring executives by appointing a successor before the current leader leaves, groom selected internal candidates by allowing them to shadow the current leaders, maintain redundancy in the management structure to maximize coverage, and finally, prevent conflict by making leadership changes quickly (Ibrahim, Soufani and Lam, 2001). The theory is applied in the business sector, where organizations retain control over organizational direction and business strategies by promoting from within their current leadership structure. Businesses that are successful may outlive their founders. Companies with corporate, non-profit, or cooperative organizational structures have histories that are connected to, but distinct from, the individuals who founded them.

The leadership model succession theory creates room for examination of the other vital source of a successor, which is the current pool of staff or personnel, while the life cycle theory concentrates on family members. The attempt by owners to look only inward to their children or family members rather than widening the net to existing pool of staff is one of the reasons why some family businesses failed to successfully transit to a successor in the past. In contrast to the life cycle theory, which solely considers family members, the leadership model succession takes a closer look at current employees within the company. In addition to mentoring, training, and coaching a feature associated with the theory of life cycle it also possesses talent management.

The primary theories that underpin this research project are the leadership model succession theory and the theory of life cycle, both of which were covered in the theoretical review section. This study is in line with the methods proposed by the two theories: the succession process in a family firm between a father and son (family members) (theory of life cycle); the appointment of a successor from among internal candidates prior to the departure of the current leader; the training of chosen internal candidates through shadowing the current leaders; and, lastly, the prevention of conflict through prompt leadership changes (leadership model succession theory). The popular life cycle theory, however, seems to overlook the female gender in succession, concentrating instead on the passing of the family business from father to son. "Where is the girl?" is the query posed by the authors. The theory is undermined by this gap in gender equity.

2.2 Conceptual Review

This section discusses the concepts of succession planning and sustainability of family businesses and their corresponding dimensions and measures.

2.2.1 Succession Planning

According to Charles (2016), succession planning is the process of identifying the critical need for leadership and intellectual endowment throughout the entire organization over time and preparing people for the jobs that the company will need them to perform both now and in the future. The wide range of tasks that make up succession planning necessitate preparing for significant changes in a company's leadership. According to Rothwell (2020), succession planning is a technique for determining which management positions are essential, beginning with project manager and supervisor roles and progressing to the top position within the company. It defines management positions to allow for maximum flexibility in lateral management moves and to guarantee that, as people advance in seniority, their management expertise will grow and become more broadly applicable to the goals of the entire organization as opposed to just specific departmental goals. According to Mathur (2011), succession planning is a procedure that helps the organization identify and nurture its human resources. These are individuals who could occupy important leadership roles within the business. The availability of skilled and seasoned workers who are ready to take on these positions when they become available is increased through succession planning. This is the procedure by which a company makes sure that candidates are chosen and trained for every important position that needs to be filled within the organization.

2.2.2 Dimensions of Succession Planning

Mentoring, job rotation and coaching are considered in this study as dimensions of succession planning.

i. Mentoring

A less experienced person receives information, counsel, support, and expertise from an experienced person through the transactional process of mentoring (Kunaka & Moos, 2019). Sharing experiences, listening with empathy, gaining understanding via introspection, and forming professional friendships are all components of mentoring (Anekwe, 2019). This indicates that career advancement, professional development, networking establishment and maintenance, competence building, and self-esteem building are all concerns of mentoring. Making sure that the younger generation inherits the proper practices is the ultimate aim of mentoring (Cope, 2011).Both the mentor and the mentee are involved in mentoring. A novice in a particular field or task receiving guidance from an expert is known as a mentee. Another way to define the mentee is as a person in a mentoring relationship who gets advocacy, protection, and career support from their mentor (Masalimova & Sabirova, 2015). Conversely, a mentor is an individual possessing experience and expertise who is dedicated to offering improved guidance and career support to the protégé (Dobrow et al., 2012). According to this study, mentoring is a professional relationship in which a more seasoned individual (the mentor) helps a less seasoned individual (the mentored or mentee) acquire particular knowledge and skills that will further the less seasoned individual's professional and personal development.

ii. Job rotation

Baro (2012) asserts that switching jobs can help employees develop the skills necessary for promotions and can help them learn best practices from a variety of tasks. It can also help them advance their careers.Job rotation is a popular strategy that many workplaces use to increase employee productivity, which is advantageous to the company. According to (Achieng, Ochieng, & Owuor, 2014), job rotation is a strategy to attain the performance requirements among employees, for their skill growth and self-development, which ultimately leads to corporate success. Understanding the significance of job rotation is necessary to comprehend how it affects worker performance in terms of commitment, involvement, and motivation since it suggests the development of a more flexible and notional workforce, which assisted the business in gaining a competitive edge vital to the banking industry's ongoing growth and prosperity in Pakistan. Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the impact of job rotation on a range of variables, including employee performance, commitment, motivation, and stress levels. The goal of these studies is to determine whether or not job rotation benefits both the organization and its workforce. Stanic and Frieling, 2010) came to the conclusion that job rotation is an extremely useful tool for thoroughly understanding banking operations and providing employees with opportunities to learn as much as possible about how businesses operate.

iii. Coaching

By revealing their potential and raising awareness of fresh opportunities, coaches enable their clients to learn on their own and transform their experiences into knowledge in order to help them reach their goals. This process is known as coaching. According to Rosa and Lace (2021) coaching is primarily utilized for a company's needs in the areas of management, leadership, and human resource development. Organizations are constantly looking for ways to improve employee performance and job satisfaction in today's competitive business environment. In order to maximize employee potential, promote professional development, and increase organizational success, coaching has become a very effective tool. It is impossible to overstate the beneficial effects of coaching on worker satisfaction and performance. Through the collaborative and individualized process of coaching, people can develop their abilities, overcome obstacles, and accomplish their goals with the help of a qualified professional. There are many different types of coaching that can be used in the workplace, including performance, leadership, and executive coaching.

2.2.3 Sustainability

According to Nkam, Sena, and Ndamsa (2017), sustainability is the capacity of an organization to endure. A company can withstand disruption and endure if its economy, community, and environment are strong. The ability of a business to compete, endure, and grow in spite of changes in the industry is determined by its sustainability. The sustainability of family-owned businesses can be impacted by a family's capacity to anticipate and adapt to change, manage the company as an independent entity, which necessitates keeping personal assets and accounts separate from business accounts, and make sure the structure is sufficient and not dependent on the family (Ogundele, Idris, & Ahmed-Ogundipe, 2019).

2.2.4 Measures of Sustainability

This study measures sustainability in terms of innovativeness and competitive advantage due to their widespread across a variety of industry.

i. Competitiveness

A company is considered competitive if it can manufacture and market goods and services of higher caliber while charging less than its national and foreign rivals. Competitiveness is defined as a company's ability to generate superior returns for its owners while also compensating its staff over the long term. Family businesses play a significant role in the global economy. As they employ half to three-quarters of the world's workforce and account for eighty to ninety-eight percent of all businesses (Poza and Daugherthy, 2014), there is a growing interest in this field of study (Chrisman et al., 2005). The interaction, overlap, and ties between the family and the business that produce a distinct structure, culture, and environment that is not found in other firms is perhaps one of the more fascinating aspects of family businesses (Chrisman and Chua, 2005). Moreover, there is an increased curiosity about the ways family businesses respond to industry developments, especially concerning the strategies these companies employ to deal with drastic changes in their competitive environments (Benavides-Velasco, Quintana-García, and Guzmán-Parra, 2013).

ii. Responsiveness

Like humans, companies are living things that must be fed properly to avoid dying young or becoming sick and needing daily pills to survive until the next day. Businesses now have higher expectations of how quickly they must adapt to changing market conditions in order to maintain their competitive edge. Research indicates that family businesses are vital to economies (World's top family businesses, 2021). Because of the size of family businesses in these economies, researchers have focused on efficiency factors like ownership, management, control, proficiency, and generational transition. Technological advancements and the business climate necessitate an effective family business (Liu, 2017). Companies are expected to respond to changing demands in order to enhance their competitiveness with both established and emerging firms, as a result of the business environment's rapid change (Rahnama, 2022).

Family businesses

According to Singh and Bhar (2016), a family-owned business is managed by at least two family members. Therefore, a company qualifies as a family business if its performance, productivity, survival, and growth are substantially impacted by family members who are related to the company through blood, adoption, or marriage. According to Agbim (2019), family businesses are owned by a single family, have non-family workers, and an impartial board. Family businesses hire members of the family. In order to realize the family's vision over several generations, a family corporation is owned and motivated by family ties (Agbim, 2019). Family-owned companies are among the most established in the annals of business. If a business can function in the face of obstacles, it is sustainable.

According to Banker, Mashruwala, and Tripathy (2014), sustainable firm leadership can also minimize operating expenses, boost talent, improve stakeholder benefits, and decrease staff turnover. According to De Alwis (2018), family-owned companies are the most established and prevalent in the world. Few of them survive for more than one generation, despite being the largest and oldest economic producers. According to Ogundele, Idris, and Ahmed-Ogundipe (2019), family-owned businesses, particularly in Nigeria, have a poor survival rate after the founder's generation. According to Ifekwem, Oghojafor, and Kuye (2017), only 30% of family-owned businesses are expected to endure past the first generation and into the second, 12% are expected to last through the third generation, and only 3% survive past the fourth generation. Less than one-third of family enterprises survive into the second generation, and just 13% survive into the third.

2.3 Empirical Studies

Cho et al. (2018) examined the effects of succession planning on family businesses in Cameroon so as to be able to advise stakeholders involved in family businesses on how to carry out succession planning issues. The researchers found that, even though, family businesses are at the centre of economic wealth and job creation of most economies including that of Cameroon, unfortunately, most of these businesses always collapse especially when the founder dies. The exploratory study employed the case study approach using both the qualitative and quantitative methods through observation, interview and questionnaire. The study used a sample of 100 respondents from ten renowned family businesses in Cameroon to gather data for the research. Using descriptive statistics and logistic regression analysis, the study found that succession planning has a significant effect on the sustainability of family businesses in Cameroon and that the readiness of the successors to take over the businesses from the founders has a significant effect on the succession planning process and subsequently on the sustainability of family businesses in Cameroon.

Onyeukwu and Jekelle (2019), investigated leadership succession and sustainability of small family-owned businesses in Anambra, South East Nigeria. The study employed the survey research design, carried out in Onitsha and Nnewi, two commercial and industrial hubs in Anambra State. The simple random sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 298 registered small businesses. A ve-point Likert structured six-item questionnaire was adopted for data collection. The study employed Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Also, the Paired Sample t-test was employed to verify the existence of statistical evidence proving that the mean difference between the paired observations in the hypothesis is significantly different from zero. The findings reveal that, mentoring and human capital development have significant influence on sustainability of small family owned businesses. The study therefore recommended that, family business owners should identify the successors early enough and adopt mentorship as a process to equip the successors. This finding agrees with the leadership model succession theory.

Bokhari et al. (2020), studied the impact of succession planning (cognitive, structural, and relational ties), strategic flexibility and organizational improvisation towards business sustainability considering the triple bottom line as underpinning theory. The survey method was adopted for the data collection and structural modelling technique was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study show that cognitive, structural, and relational ties indicate a positive and significant relationship with business sustainability. Furthermore, the findings indicate a positive and significant association between succession planning, strategic flexibility, organizational improvisation, and business sustainability. The result shows that organizational improvisation moderates the relationship between succession planning, strategic flexibility, and sustainable business.

Arinze (2022), established the effect of succession planning on sustainability of family businesses in Anambra and Lagos States of Southern Nigeria. The broad objectives of the study were to examine the effect of succession planning on sustainability of family business in Anambra and Lagos States. Survey Research Design was adopted for the study and Taro Yamane's formula (1964) was used in determining the sample size. A total of 354 respondents drawn from SMEs in Anambra and Lagos States participated in the study. To ensure the soundness of the research instrument, the Content Validity was used to test for the validity of instrument, while the Split-Halves Method was used in testing for the reliability of the instrument. Four-hundred (400) questionnaires were distributed, while three hundred and fifty-four were correctly filled, returned and used for the analysis. Ordinary Least Square multiple regression was used for the analysis. In testing the research hypotheses formulated in line with the specific objectives, the F-test statistical tool was applied. The findings indicate the following: First, that there is a significant adverse linear relationship between delayed-retirement of family business owner-managers and the business perpetuity. Second, that significant linear relationship exists between mentoring and successful management transference in family businesses. Third, that there is a significant linear relationship between the appointment of non-family member Chief Executive Officers as successors in family businesses in the absence of competent family member CEOs and the business continuous viability. The researcher recommended that owner-managers of family businesses in Southern Nigeria should embrace the retirement age in the nation's civil service and the multinational companies and discards their work-for-life attitude so as to prevent age-related challenges from hampering the fortunes and perpetuity of the businesses.

Jideofor et al. (2023), examined the succession planning and family business sustainability in medium and large scale enterprise in Anambra state. This study adopted the survey design which allows for the collection, analysis and interpretation of original data from the respondents, survey design describes the present situation and problems in their natural setting and allows a sample representing the population to be drawn. The area of this study is Anambra state which is a state in south-eastern part of Nigeria. The total population for the study is one hundred and fifteen enterprises (115) that are registered with Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (Nnewi, Onitsha and Awka) Anambra state, Nigeria. The sources of data include primary and secondary data. The study employed structure questionnaire as a method of data collection. Meanwhile percentage table, correlation and regression analysis will be used to analyze the collected data from the sample respondents. In view of the findings, the study found that explicit education has positive relationship on recruitment in family business in Anambra state, Nigeria (r2-0.132, p-0.016), there is a positive relationship between hierarchical coaching and innovation in family business in Anambra state Nigeria (t-4.922, p-0.000), dynamic successor has positive significant effect on work efficiency in family business in Anambra state, Nigeria (t-3.262, p-0.001). The study recommends that: The founder should give the successor opportunity to be independent to act and willingly develop love to manage the business through learning the business operations by doing; Coaching the successor in all-round the departmental activities, method of operation, organizational value and vision will help in sustaining the business upon retirement or exit of the founder.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed the survey research design. It was chosen because it provides researchers with reliable, usable primary data to inform credible decision making. The area covered by this study is in Succession Planning Practices (SPP) and the Sustainability of Family Businesses in North Central Nigeria. Based on 2020 updated records of registered family businesses in the North Central states of Nigeria and Abuja the FCT, ascaptured by Corporate Affairs Commission (2020), there are four hundred and twenty registered familybusinesses in the region. The population of this study consists of five management staff of all the 420 identified family businesses existing in North Central Nigeria see (Appendix II). The population of the study is therefore, 2100 management staff of the identified family businesses. The selection of firms cut across all business sectors such as manufacturing, trading, hospitality, services and others with family ownership identified through ownership structure. A sample of 336 was generated scientifically using Yamene's formula and the study made use of simple random sampling. The survey questionnaire is the main research instrument that will be used in collecting the appropriate data that are needed to achieve the objective of the study. The validity of the instrument stood at .857 with reliability index of .824 respectively. Primary and secondary sources of data collection were adopted.

In line with the research objectives, research questions and hypotheses, the model that was used in this research is stated using both implicit and explicit functions.

The implicit form of the model is stated as follows:

SFB = *f* (MEN, JBR, COA) (i)

Where: SFB= Sustainability of Family Businesses

MEN = Mentoring

JBR = Job rotation

COA = Coaching

Thus, the explicit form of the model is stated as follows:

$SFB = b_0 + b_1MEN + b_2JBR + b_3COA + U_t$ (ii)

Where: b_0=Constant or intercept

b_1-b_3= Parameter estimates or regression coefficients

U_t = Random error term.

A priori expectations of the research model

The following *a priori* expectations were relevant for the multiple regression models:

A priori expectations

$b_1>0, b_2>0, b_3>0$

Multiple regression analysis was used to estimate the effect of the independent variables of the study on the dependent variable. The t-statistics value of the regression estimate was used to test the four hypotheses for the study. Reject the null hypothesis if the t-statistics is greater than the critical value of ± ≥1.96 otherwise, accept the null hypothesis. The data for the study was collated, coded and analyzed using computer-based Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26.0 for Microsoft Windows).

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section chapter both descriptive and inferential analysis were applied to analyze the data. The descriptive analysis on background information and regression analysis assumptions was presented.

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Data collected on the demographic characteristics of the respondents including gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, experience and position in organization.

4.1.2 Presentation of Responses on Research Variables

The study collected data from the respondents on the research variables including mentoring, job rotation and coaching as well as sustainability. The responses were based on a five-point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree and means and standard deviations.

4.1.3 Regression Analysis

The study's model's regression analysis results are shown in this subsection. The degree to which coaching, job rotation, and mentoring influence the dependent variable (sustainability) is explained by the regression model. The model summary, coefficients tables, and analysis of variance all display the outcome. The degree to which the independent variables influence the dependent variable was ascertained using the model summary. To determine whether the model was appropriate for additional statistical analysis, the ANOVA test is employed. The process involved calculating the F statistics and the associated P-values. The calculation of predictor variable coefficients came next. The analysis of multiple regression was carried out with a 95 percent confidence level (α = 0.05).

Table 1: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin Watson
1	.830	.584	.575	.639	1.738

a. Predictors: (Constant), MEN, JBR, COA
b. Dependent Variable: SFB

Source: Researcher's Computation from SPSS Output, 2023.

Table 1's model summary reveals that the R Square = 0.584, meaning that 58.4% of the variation in sustainability was explained by talent management practices, such as coaching, job rotation, and mentoring. Other variables not included in the model explained 41.6% of the remaining data. The findings suggest that succession planning procedures are important sustainability predictors. Additionally, a strong positive correlation between the study's variables is indicated by the value of R= 0.905.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	30.543	3	10.181	25.014	.000
Residual	135.028	331	.407		
Total	165.571	334			

a. Dependent Variable: SFB
b. Predictors: (Constant), MEN, JBR, COA

Source: Researcher's Computation from SPSS Output, 2023.

Table 2 shows the result of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) which indicates that F (4, 331) = 25.014 (which is greater than the critical F value of 2.42) and p-value = 0.000 (which was less than 0.05.) The study therefore shows that the model had goodness of fit. The result further implies that succession planning practices (mentoring, job rotation and coaching) significantly explained changes in sustainability and the model was statistically significant and adequate in predicting changes in sustainability of family businesses in North-Central, Nigeria.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	1.588	.284		5.586	.000
MON	.222	.051	.226	4.388	.000
JBR	.136	.047	.153	2.904	.004
COA	.229	.052	.235	4.388	.000

a. Dependent Variable: SFB

Source: Researcher's Computation from SPSS Output, 2023.

The regression coefficient, which explains how succession planning practices affect the sustainability of family businesses, is displayed in Table 3's result. According to the results, job rotation had β=.136, t=2.904, P=0.004; coaching had β=.229, t=4.398, P=0.000; and mentoring had β=.222, t=4.388, P=0.000. The findings indicate that coaching, job rotation, and mentoring have a big impact on family businesses' ability to survive. The outcome shows that a unit change in mentoring would boost family business sustainability by 22.2% if all other factors remained constant. Additionally, there would be a 13.6% change in the sustainability of family businesses for every unit change in job rotation. Assuming all other factors remain unchanged, an increase of one unit in coaching would lead to a 22.9% rise in the sustainability of family businesses. As a result, the results indicate that coaching, mentorship, and job rotation have the greatest significant effects on the sustainability of family businesses.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses and Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study were presented and discussed in line with the research hypotheses and objectives.

4.2.1 Effect of mentoring on the sustainability of family businesses in North Central-Nigeria

The analysis of the data collected from the respondents and test of hypothesis one revealed that there is a positive and significant effect of mentoring on the sustainability of family businesses in North-Central, Nigeria. Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis at 5 % level of significance and the p-value (0.000) was lower than the significance level. This can be statistically given as P-value $0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$. In line with the findings of Kraiger, Finkelstein, and Varghese's (2018) study, which demonstrated that mentoring serves to advance the mentee's development in particular domains and to enable success in business endeavors. This is corroborated by research by Peretomode (2017), who found that because mentored individuals are more likely to become mentors themselves, effective mentoring can be linked to positive work behaviors, enhance performance, and aid in succession planning.

4.2.2Effect of job rotation on the sustainability of family businesses in North Central-Nigeria

The analysis of the data collected from the respondents and test of hypothesis three revealed that there is a positive and significant effect ofjob rotation on the sustainability of family businesses in North-Central, Nigeria. Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis at 5 % level of significance and the p-value (0.004) was lower than the significance level. This can be statistically given as P-value 0.004< α = 0.05. The findings are consistent with those of Asieh Akbari and Maniei (2017), who discovered a positive and significant relationship between job rotation and employee performance at Dana insurance. Job rotation can enhance employee performance by facilitating the acquisition of new skills and experiences through horizontal transfer, which is less expensive than other training methods, and ultimately boost productivity for both the company and its employees. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Ravikumar et al. (2020), whose research demonstrates the value of job rotation in improving employee performance in the banking sector and fostering stronger employee relationships that enable employers to get more productive work out of their workforce.

4.2.3 Effect of coaching on the sustainability of family businesses in North Central-Nigeria

The analysis of the data collected from the respondents and test of hypothesis four revealed that coaching positively and significantly affects the sustainability of family businesses in North-Central, Nigeria. Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis at 5 % level of significance and the p-value (0.000) was lower than the significance level. This can be statistically given as P-value 0.000< α = 0.05. The outcome is consistent with that of Nuryanti et al. (2018), who found that coaching is classified well and influences employee performance by 60.6%. A study by Rosa and Lace (2021) demonstrates the beneficial relationship between open innovation and coaching.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the conclusion, recommendations, limitations of the study and suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Conclusion

The study explored the effect of succession planning practices on the sustainability of family businesses in North-Central Nigeria. The summary of findings leads to the conclusion that family businesses in North-Central Nigeria can be more sustainable when they have appropriate succession planning in place. Research shows time and time again that companies with strong succession planning policies will see long-term benefits in their operations. The correlation that exists between succession planning strategies and sustainability is contingent upon contextual factors, including but not limited to family involvement, firm size, subsidiary autonomy, and organizational structure. When developing and putting into practice succession planning procedures, it is critical to acknowledge and take these factors into consideration.

5.3 Recommendations

In line with findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made:

i. To learn more about business mentoring and the value of knowledge transfer to improve the viability, growth, and sustainability of their enterprises, family businesses should set up mentorship programs.

ii. ii. Family businesses should take the initiative to train staff members in a variety of subjects so that their full human potential is demonstrated in their assigned jobs, further improving performance that may result in the sustainability of the company.

iii. Family businesses should always provide career development programs and coaching to their staff members in order to improve their skills and knowledge.

5.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The study's scope is one of its main drawbacks. The sustainability of family businesses in North Central Nigeria and their succession planning strategies were the main subjects of the study. The study did not cover other geopolitical zones. The investigator made certain that family-run enterprises operating in various industries within the area took part in the survey with vigor. The study's inability to reach respondents due to the unavailability of the majority of business owners was another drawback. To guarantee the high response rate, the researcher, however, allowed them ample time and closely observed the distribution and retrieval of the instrument with the help of skilled research assistants. Three strategies for succession planning were implemented: job rotation, coaching, and mentoring. Therefore, the study suggests that further studies should focus on other succession planning practices not studied such as leadership development, Integrating talent identification, development, and retention into succession planning processes is crucial for maximizing its impact on firm performance. In addition, the study focused on family businesses in North Central Nigeria and other studies can be done focusing on different organizations and other parts of the country. The study did not use the provision of control variables in the conceptual model and therefore there is an opportunity for other researchers to introduce control variables like the size of companies and establish whether the findings can be generalized. Finally, further studies should consider mediating variables such as succession planning in investigating the relationship between succession planning practices and sustainability.

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