
SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AS A PREDICATE OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES: STUDY OF AVERIPRENURSHIP SMES IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In the dynamic context of entrepreneurship, succession management practices is important in the aspect of long-term planning for small and medium enterprises to ensure business continuity and sustainability to drive innovation, create jobs and foster local development. However, this becomes mirage as a result of shifting market dynamics, technological advancements, and evolving customer needs. Previous research inquiries have explored the interplay between succession management practices and the performance of organisations but the outcomes of these investigations have revealed inconsistencies with limited focus on the impact of succession management practices and competitive advantage of Averiprenurship SMEs which thus create gap for further studies

Survey research design was adopted for this study and the study population comprised 706 owner and manager Poultry farms in Ogun State, Nigeria. A sample size of 632 was determined using census method and data collected through the use of questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The analysis results revealed that SMP dimensions (recruitment policy ($\beta = .085$, $t = 2.119$, $p < 0.05$), coaching ($\beta = 0.243$, $t = 5.456$, $p < 0.05$), mentoring ($\beta = .127$, $t = 2.957$, $p < 0.05$) and job rotation ($\beta = .138$, $t = 3.456$, $p < 0.05$) all have a significant positive effect on competitive advantage. This indicates that recruitment policy, coaching, mentoring, and job rotations were important predictors of competitive advantage of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. However, employees' career development ($\beta = 0.066$, $t = 1.487$, $p > 0.05$) have a positive but non-significant effect on competitive advantage of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The correlation value (R-value) which is 0.571; showed that SMP dimensions have a strong positive relationship with competitive advantage. The Adj. R² (R²= 0.321) implies that 32.1% of the variance in competitive advantage of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria was attributable to the SMP (recruitment policy, coaching, mentoring, and job rotation) while the remaining 62.9% changes that occurs is accounted for by other variables not captured in the model. The study recommended that management of these Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria should create succession management practices that align with the long-term strategic goals of the organisation. This ensures that future leaders are prepared to drive the company's competitive strategies and maintain its market position. They should encourage successors to embrace innovation and adaptability. Equip them with the skills and mindset needed to respond to market

changes, technological advancements, and evolving customer needs, thereby maintaining a competitive edge.

Keywords: Succession, Business Continuity, Competitive Advantage, Small Medium Enterprises.

1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of Avipreneurship SMEs in Nigeria has fallen short of expectations which is attributed to the challenges faced by small businesses, such as shift in market dynamics, technological advancement, change in customer needs and taste which to great extent slow pace of growth, difficulties in enquiring about business continuity and the pressure on the enterprise's leader to stay up to date on new regulations and production provisions (Yushkova et al., 2019). The undeveloped infrastructure of the market has deprived these businesses of opportunities to sell their products at higher prices, making it difficult for them to compete effectively (Nigmatullina et al., 2020).

Small agricultural firms account for a good number of firms in Nigeria yet these firms have not taken good advantage of the substantial opportunity for improvement in terms of expanding these enterprises and boosting their competitiveness (Rozhkova et al, 2020). Much more than the above, the critical challenge is succession management practices. It is the ability to identify and develop future leader within an organization which is crucial for ensuring business continuity and organizational sustainability. This is beyond a mere changing of organizational personnel, it entails the cultivation of leadership, knowledge transfer and embedment of a resilient organizational culture which will help to navigate the complexities of business dynamics, respond to market changes and achieve a growth in a competitive market environment

Statement of Problem

Research endeavors have explored the role of succession management practices, encompassing recruitment policy, coaching, career development, mentoring, and job rotation, influencing the attainment of competitive advantage across diverse industries (Olowoyeye, 2020; Anderson & Clark, 2022; Mitchell et al., 2019; Ogunlade, 2018). However, the outcomes of these studies have demonstrated discrepancies regarding the extent of their impact. Within the specific context of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun state, Nigeria, there exists a gap in comprehensive research regarding the relationship between job rotation and the achievement of competitive advantage in Avipreneurship SMEs. While some existing studies (Olowoyeye, 2019; Akaa et al., 2018) have emphasized the importance of coaching and career development in enhancing competitive advantage for avipreneurship enterprises, others (Afolayan & Babalola, 2020) have suggested that recruitment policy and mentoring might not significantly contribute to securing a competitive edge. Poor growth, as well as a lack of business continuity, erodes the competitive edge of Nigerian Avipreneurship SMEs. They frequently struggle to survive and keep skilled employees who can drive innovation and growth in the organisation (Akaa et al., 2024). These SMEs are unable to develop a solid manpower procedure without a rigorous recruitment strategy that focuses on locating competent and experienced workers (Olajide & Obialo, 2020). Employees frequently have limited opportunities to learn from experienced leaders, and SMEs' capacity to develop future leaders and maintain a competitive edge, gain new abilities, and improve their careers (Bilderback

& Miller, 2023). To address these divergences and knowledge gaps, this study explored the association between succession management practices dimension encompassing recruitment policy, coaching, career development, mentoring, and job rotation and the attainment of competitive advantage in Avipreneurship SMEs situated in Ogun state, Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Competitive Advantage

In the context of competitive advantage, scholars have proposed various definitions to encapsulate its multifaceted nature. One such definition posits that competitive advantage is the ability of a firm to outperform its rivals, sustainably, by creating value for customers that exceeds the cost of producing the products or services (Herden, 2020). Another perspective sees it as the unique resource and capability set that enables a firm to create and deliver superior customer value (Muisyo et al., 2022). Additionally, competitive advantage can be seen as the outcome of a firm's distinctive positioning in the market, which enables it to maintain a dominant market share and superior profitability (Gedefaw & Wezel, 2022). It is also described as the ability to adapt swiftly to changing market conditions and leverage opportunities better than competitors (Hang et al., 2022). Moreover, competitive advantage can be perceived as the result of continuous innovation and relentless pursuit of excellence in processes and operations (Nguyen et al., 2021).

These diverse definitions lay the foundation for understanding the characteristics that underpin competitive advantage. Some of the key characteristics that contribute to a firm's competitive edge are; competitive advantage is rooted in the possession of rare and valuable resources or capabilities that are not easily imitable by competitors (Lichtenthaler, 2022). Moreover, it is built on the foundation of inimitability, implying that rivals find it arduous to replicate the distinct competencies and attributes of the leading firm (Games & Roliza, 2019). Also, it thrives on sustainability, ensuring that the competitive edge is not short-lived and can be maintained over the long term (Hussain et al., 2020), competitive advantage is dynamic, requiring organisations to adapt and evolve continuously in response to market changes and emerging opportunities (Yu et al., 2021). It is also customer-centric, emphasizing the creation of superior value for consumers, meeting their needs more effectively than rivals (Barney, 2015). Additionally, competitive advantage involves a clear strategic focus, aligning resources and efforts to create a strong differentiation from competitors (Sharabati, 2021) and it encompasses synergy, where the combined effect of different resources and capabilities generates greater value than the sum of individual parts (Baker et al., 2022).

However, achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage comes with its set of challenges. One significant challenge is the rapid pace of technological advancements and market disruptions, making it increasingly challenging to sustain an edge over competitors (Kaleka & Morgan, 2017). Moreover, firms may face difficulties in accurately identifying their unique resources and capabilities, hindering the development of a compelling value proposition. Additionally, competitive advantage can lead to complacency and resistance to change within an organisation, stifling innovation and hindering further progress (Herden, 2020). Furthermore, imitation by competitors poses a constant threat, necessitating continuous efforts to protect and evolve the competitive advantage (Muisyo et al., 2022). Financial constraints and resource limitations can also impede the development and expansion of competitive advantages (Gedefaw & Wezel, 2022). Moreover, geopolitical factors and regulatory changes can alter the competitive landscape,

introducing uncertainties and strategic challenges (Hang et al., 2022). Lastly, cultural and organisational barriers may hamper the effective utilisation and integration of resources, limiting the potential for creating a sustainable competitive advantage (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Concept of Succession Management Practices

Succession management is the process of identifying and preparing potential candidates for key leadership roles in an organisation. It is a set of procedures an organisation implements to ensure a smooth transition when a key role needs to be filled. However, succession management practices in organisations often need help with their effectiveness. One significant challenge is the lack of comprehensive succession planning strategies, which include identifying and grooming potential successors for key leadership positions (Santhanalaxmi & Chandramohan, 2019). This may result from a narrow focus on short-term goals rather than long-term sustainability, leading to a need for more talent pipelines and limited development opportunities for high-potential employees (Fadeyi et al., 2019). Another challenge is the resistance to change and the reluctance to let go of established leaders, creating a culture of stagnation and hindering the advancement of new talent (Kajwang, 2022). Furthermore, the lack of diversity and inclusivity in succession practices can impede the organisation's ability to tap into a broader range of skills and perspectives (Hee et al., 2019). Overcoming these challenges requires organisations to prioritize succession planning, foster a culture of openness and adaptability, provide clear communication about succession processes, and actively promote diversity and inclusion in leadership development programs.

Review of nexus of Succession Management Practices and Small and Medium Enterprises Competitive Advantage

Review of previous research work on the succession management and competitive advantage of SMEs shown mixed result. In a study by Mokhber et al. (2017), on succession planning and family business performance, findings show that the two studied factors, preparation level of heirs and the relationship between family and business members, both have a positive impact on the performance of family business in profitability, revenue, and SME growth. In another study conducted by Maguta (2016), on the effects of succession planning on the performance of non-governmental organisations in Kenya, the study found that three core independent variables making up the succession planning concept namely, staff retention, organisational conflict and stakeholder expected outcomes play an obligatory role in stimulating the revenue growth and organisational survival of NGOs in Kenya.

Okeke et al. (2022) established that succession planning should not be left in the hands of businesses alone, seeing that these businesses are major economic players, the government needs to take a lead role in educating and ensuring they have succession plans in place. In a similar study, Rumanko et al. (2021) revealed that succession management had a positive correlation with corporate sustainability amongst SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria. Baba and Edwinah (2018) and Treasa (2022) have, through their findings, identified the importance of succession management on performance. As pointed out by Bokhari et al. (2020), 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, organisational improvisation, and business sustainability. The result shows that organisational improvisation moderates the relationship between succession planning, strategic

flexibility, and sustainable business.

The findings of Dim and Ofordeme (2019) revealed that there is significant effect on the sustainability of private hospitals in Anambra State. In the same vein, Baba and Edwinah (2018) studied succession planning and organisational survival, the results support the position that succession planning through features such as mentoring and management development enhances competitive. Treasa (2022) supported this by showing that talent management practices are more effective and beneficial

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study uses survey research design to capture valuable data, including facts, beliefs, opinions, demographic information, attitudes, motives, and behaviours of the respondents to examine the effect of succession management practices on Competitive Advantage Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State. The survey research design involved the administration of questionnaire to avipreneurship SME owners and managers in Ogun State Nigeria

Study Population

The target population for the study is three hundred and fifty-three (353) registered poultry small and medium scale farms and each of the farms having two respondents; that is, owner and manager. These are registered farms with Poultry Association of Nigeria, Ogun State chapter (PANOG) comprising six agricultural zones in Ogun State: i.e Remo (127), Ijebu (51), Egba (74), Owode/Mowe (29), Ota/Ifo (45), and Yewa (27) zones respectively.

Sample Size Determination

This study conducted a census of the entire target population of 353 registered Poultry farms with PANOG thus no sampling was done (PANOG records, 2022). The justification for using census method was that when the population of a study is small (less than 500), as such there is no need to draw a sample from the population because it was too small to study (Mugo, Kahuthia, & Kinyua, 2019), hence no sampling frame.

Method of Data Collection

This study used primary data collected through the use of questionnaire from the registered poultry small and medium-scale farmers in Ogun State, Nigeria. Primary data provides original research quality and avoids biases or third-party opinions that may be present in secondary data sources (Aljumah et al., 2021) guaranteeing that the data acquired is very relevant to the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The study used descriptive analysis to summarize the data and inferential analysis using multiple regression analysis to test the hypothesis. The multiple regressions help to establish a functional relationship between two or more variables and can be used to predict the value of the dependent variable based on the values of the independent variables

Model Specification

The variables for this study were operationalized with the use of different statistical denotations

and values.

$$Y = f(X)$$

Where: Y = Dependent Variable (Organisational Performance)

X = Independent Variable (Succession Management Practices)

$$X = (x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5)$$

Where:

x_1 = Recruitment Policy (RP)

x_2 = Coaching (CG)

x_3 = Employee's Career Development (ED)

x_4 = Mentoring (MG)

x_5 = Job Rotation (JR)

Equations to test the hypotheses formulated are:

$$CA = f(RP, CG, ED, MG, JR)$$

$$CA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RP_i + \beta_2 CG_i + \beta_3 ED_i + \beta_4 MG_i + \beta_5 JR_i + e_i \dots\dots\dots \text{Regression equation}$$

Where:

α_0 = the constant of the equation

$\beta_1 - \beta_5$ = the coefficient of variables in the equations

e_i = Error term.

A priori Expectation

In establishing the formulated hypothesis, the expectation is that succession management practices positively affect competitive advantage of SMEs'. Using the basic statistical denotation, the a-priori expectation for the stated models is given as follows:

S/N	Models	Expected Results
H ₀	$y = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + \beta_5 x_5 + \mu_i$	If $\alpha_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5 = p \leq 0.05$, Positive, H ₀ should be rejected

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

The data presentation, analysis, interpretation of results, and the discussion of findings to examine Succession Management Practices as a Predicate of Small and Medium Enterprises Competitive Advantage: Study Averbrenurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria focused on the descriptive statistics analysis of the study variables, hypotheses testing, and summary of the hypothesis findings. The results of the analysis are presented using tables together with the interpretations. The data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) software version 27.0 at 5% significance level.

A total number of 706 copies of questionnaire were administered to owners and managers of registered poultry farms in Ogun State. A total of six hundred and thirty-two (632) which represented approximately 89.5% of the total copies of the questionnaire administered were returned and found usable for the analysis. Seventy-four (74) copies of the questionnaire which represented 10.5% were either not returned, incompletely filled, double filling of options or no responses, and thus were grouped to be invalid and not suitable for the analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

Ho: Succession management practices have no significant effect on competitive advantage of Aviprenurship SMEs

The hypothesis was tested using multiple linear regression analysis. In the analysis, the independent variable was succession management practices while the dependent variable was competitive advantage of Aviprenurship SME. Data for succession management practices dimensions (recruitment policy, coaching, employee's career development, mentoring, and job rotation) were created by adding together responses of all the items under the various dimensions to generate independent scores for each dimension. For competitive advantage, responses of all items of the variable were added together to create an index of competitive advantage. The index of competitive advantage was thereafter regressed on scores of succession management practices. The results of the analysis and parameter estimates obtained are presented in Table 1 below

Table 1

Summary of Analysis Showing the effect of Succession Management Practices on Competitive Advantage of Aviprenurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria

N	Model	B	T	Sig.	ANOVA (Sig.)	R	Adjusted R ²	F (5, 626)
632	(Constant)	9.257	9.231	.000	0.001 ^b	0.571 ^a	0.321	60.702
	Recruitment Policy	.085	2.119	.035				
	Coaching	.243	5.456	.000				
	Employees' Career Development	.066	1.487	.138				
	Mentoring	.127	2.957	.003				
	Job Rotation	.138	3.456	.001				
	a. Dependent Variable: Firm Growth							
	b. Predictors: (Constant), Job Rotation, Mentoring, Recruitment Policy, Coaching, Employees' Career Development							

Source: Researcher's Field Survey

Interpretation

Table 1 shows the analysis results for the effect of SMP dimensions on competitive advantage on the Aviprenurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. The result revealed that recruitment policy ($\beta = .085$, $t = 2.119$, $p < 0.05$), coaching ($\beta = 0.243$, $t = 5.456$, $p < 0.05$), mentoring ($\beta = .127$, $t = 2.957$, $p < 0.05$) and job rotation ($\beta = .138$, $t = 3.456$, $p < 0.05$) all have a significant positive effect on competitive advantage. However, employees' career development ($\beta = 0.066$, $t = 1.487$, $p > 0.05$) have a positive but non-significant effect on competitive advantage on the Aviprenurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. The results of the analysis revealed that four dimensions of SMP (recruitment policy, coaching, mentoring, and job rotation) have positive and significant effect on competitive advantage on the selected Aviprenurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. This indicates

that recruitment policy, coaching, mentoring, and job rotations were important predictors of competitive advantage on the Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The correlation value (R-value) which is 0.571; showed that SMP dimensions have a strong positive relationship with competitive advantage. The *Adj. R²* ($R^2 = 0.321$) implies that 32.1% of the variance in competitive advantage on the Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria was attributable to the SMP (recruitment policy, coaching, mentoring, and job rotation) while the remaining 62.9% changes that occurs is accounted for by other variables not captured in the model. SMP being the independent variable determines 57.1% of the competitive advantage on the Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The predictive and prescriptive multiple regression models are thus expressed:

$CA = 9.257 + .085RP + 0.243CD + .066ED + 0.127MG + 0.138JR + U_i$ -----Eqn i (Predictive Model)

$CA = 9.257 + .085RP + 0.243CD + 0.127MG + 0.138JR + U_i$ ----Eqn i (Prescriptive Model)

Where:

CA = Competitive Advantage

RP = Recruitment Policy

CD = Coaching

ED = Employee's Career Development

MG = Mentoring

JR = Job Rotation

The regression model revealed that if SMP dimensions were held constant at zero, competitive advantage on the Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria was 9.257 indicating that in the absence of SMP, competitive advantage on the Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria was 9.257, indicating a positive competitive advantage response. From the predictive model, four dimensions of the SMP (recruitment policy, coaching, mentoring, and job rotation) have significant positive effect on the competitive advantage while employee's career development have non-significant effect on competitive advantage. This variable was not prescribed for the farmers. From the prescriptive model, a unit change in job rotation, recruitment policy, coaching and mentoring would result in competitive advantage by 0.085, 0.243, 0.127 and 0.138 units respectively. The results suggest that job rotation, recruitment policy, coaching and mentoring are significant predictors of competitive advantage on the Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. Thus, farmers in this region should concentrate on enhancing these dimensions of SMP in their operations to improve overall competitive advantage.

The *F*-statistics ($df = 5, 631$) = 60.702 at $p < 0.05$) indicated that the overall model is significant for predicting the effect of SMP on competitive advantage. This implies that the regression model is a good fit for predicting the effect of SMP on competitive advantage. The results further showed that job rotation, recruitment policy, coaching and mentoring have the most effect on competitive advantage on the Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. Based on these results, the null hypothesis five (H_0) which states that SMP dimensions have no significant effect on competitive advantage was rejected.

3. DISCUSSION

The aggregated regression analysis for hypothesis five revealed that SMP sub variables had a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage of Avipreneurship SMEs in Nigeria ($\text{Adj.}R^2 = 0.321$; $F(5, 631) = 60.702$, $p < 0.05$). The amalgamation of the independent sub variables was significant in predicting competitive advantage of Avipreneurship SMEs in Nigeria. The implication for the farmers in Nigeria is that the effective use of succession management practices (SMP) can positively influence their competitive advantage. The significant effect of the SMP sub-variables on competitive advantage indicates that farmers can improve their competitive advantage and effectiveness by SMP. The finding is in accordance with Muisyo et al., (2022), on succession planning have a positive impact on the performance of SME growth.

The findings from this study are in agreement with Herden, (2020), on the effects of succession planning on the performance of non-governmental organisations which reported that three core independent variables making up the succession planning concept namely, staff retention, organisational conflict and stakeholder expected outcomes play an obligatory role in stimulating the revenue growth and organisational survival. Okeke et al. (2022) established that succession planning should not be left in the hands of businesses alone, seeing that these businesses are major economic players, the government needs to take a lead role in educating and ensuring they have succession plans in place. Rumanko et al. (2021) revealed that succession management had a positive correlation with corporate sustainability amongst SMEs. Succession management through the Lense of scholars such as Gedefaw and Wezel (2022) and Treasa (2022) have, through their findings, identified the importance of succession management on performance.

As pointed out by Bokhari et al. (2020) reported 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, organisational improvisation, and business sustainability. The result shows that organisational improvisation moderates the relationship between succession planning, strategic flexibility, and sustainable business. The findings of Dim and Ofordeme (2019) revealed that there is significant effect on the sustainability. In the same vein, Kajwang, (2022) studied succession planning and organisational survival. The results support the position that succession planning through features such as mentoring and management development enhances competitive. Treasa (2022) supported this by showing that talent management practices are more effective and beneficial.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concluded that Succession management practices dimensions have significant effect on competitive advantage of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that succession management practices have significant effect on competitive advantage of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. Arising from this finding, the study recommended that management of these Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria should create succession management practices that align with the long-term strategic goals of the organisation. This ensures that future leaders are prepared to drive the company's competitive strategies and maintain its market position. They should encourage successors to embrace innovation and adaptability.

Equip them with the skills and mindset needed to respond to market changes, technological advancements, and evolving customer needs, thereby maintaining a competitive edge.

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