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**EFFECT OF SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON FIRMS' GROWTH: STUDY OF AVIPRENEURSHIP
SMES IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

A vibrant small and medium enterprise (SMEs) occupies a crucial position in any nation's economy because it drives other sector. All organisations have one thing in common; at a certain stage, they must deal with shifts in leadership, politics, decision-making, power and strategies for improvement. Organisations with clearly developed succession management practices are the most successful in this transition, regardless of the industry, business model or type of ownership. However, in spite of various indications on how Avipreneurship SMEs has contributed immensely to Nigeria GDP, large number of Avipreneurship SMEs goes into extinction just the first few years after the death of the founder as a result of inability to put succession management practices in place. Thus, this study examines the effect of succession management practices measured by coaching, employees' career development, job rotation, recruitment policy, mentoring, on firms' growth with reference to Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State Nigeria. This study adopted survey research design. 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 making a total of 706 respondents. The 353 are registered farms with poultry association Ogun State. A total of 632 questionnaires were returned representing 89.5% response rate. Total enumeration was adopted. A structured and validated questionnaire was used for data collection. The reliability test yielded Cronbach's alpha for the constructs ranges from 0.728 to 0.954. The result revealed that recruitment policy ($\beta = .175$, $t = 4.098$, $p < 0.05$), coaching ($\beta = 0.152$, $t = 3.214$, $p < 0.05$), mentoring ($\beta = .107$, $t = 2.348$, $p < 0.05$) and job rotation ($\beta = .261$, $t = 6.107$, $p < 0.05$) all have a significant positive effect on firm growth. However, employees' career development ($\beta = 0.040$, $t = 0.847$, $p > 0.05$) have a positive but non-significant effect on firm growth in Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. Findings revealed further that Succession management practices have significant effect on firms' growth of selected Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria ($Adj.R^2 = 0.348$, $F(5, 626) = 68.310$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that succession management practices affected firms' growth of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study recommended that the farm owners and managers of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State should develop strategy to connect succession management practices dimensions in order to make the sector sustainable and enviable in the long run. Such a strategy would be the premise on actions adopted by the various farms in matters pertaining to food productions.

Keywords: Firm Growth, Avipreneurship, Small and Medium Enterprises, Succession Management Practices

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INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of Nigeria's agricultural sector, the success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is paramount, and effective succession management stands as a cornerstone for their sustained performance. While the contributions of small and medium businesses to development are generally acknowledged, entrepreneurs face many obstacles that limit their long-term performance survival and development; one of the most challenging factors that have hindered the growth of SMEs globally has been the inability of the founders to successfully hand over the reign of power to a successor for continuity and stability, this to greater extent has made large number of Avipreneurship SME to go into extinction within short period after the demise of the founder. As these enterprises navigate challenges and opportunities, understanding how skillful they are at the transition of leadership and expertise becomes a crucial factor in shaping their longevity and impact on the nation's agricultural tapestry. Through rigorous analysis and insightful exploration, this research shed light on the crucial connection between succession strategies and the enduring success of SMEs, illuminating pathways for enhanced growth and prosperity in this vital sector

Statement of Problem

Numerous research endeavors have delved into the ramifications of succession management practices encompassing recruitment policies, coaching, career development, mentoring, and job rotation on firm growth across diverse industries and geographical settings, Jones & Smith (2022); Valdez-Juárez et al., (2022); Lin (2021). However, the outcomes have displayed a lack of consistency. For example, Ukairo et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of succession management for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in South-East Nigeria, their study did not delve into the specifics of effective strategies. Likewise, Ward, Prenzler and Drew (2020) emphasized the need for innovative and transparent recruitment strategies in Australian

policing but did not thoroughly assess the effectiveness of these strategies. Setiowati (2022) called for further research on coaching strategies without investigating their outcomes and impact. Additionally, Kasdorf and Kayaalp (2022) emphasized the importance of career development but did not explore the specific mechanisms through which it impacts turnover, considering industry contexts. Furthermore, Kao et al. (2022) suggested a need for understanding the mechanisms through which mentoring influences perceived organisational support and emotional exhaustion but did not provide such insights. Also, Alhegazi et al. (2022) identified the role of job rotation in government departments but left unexplored the specific challenges and barriers faced in its implementation and its impact on administrative success. Jones and Smith (2022) highlighted a positive connection between effective mentoring programs and firm growth within the educational sector in the United Kingdom. In contrast, Valdez-Juárez et al. (2022) discovered inconclusive results concerning the impact of recruitment policies on firm growth among retail businesses in Mexico. Furthermore, Lin (2021) presented divergent findings regarding the correlation between career development opportunities and firm growth in the hospitality industry in Taiwan. However, within the specific confines of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria, there exists a research gap regarding the implications of succession management practices on firm growth.

The study hypothesized that succession management practices dimensions have effect on firms' growth using Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study provides a good knowledge on succession management and its symbiotic relationship with firm's performance. It not only enriches the existing corpus of research but also lays down the gauntlet for future explorations, inviting scholars to probe deeper and uncover further nuances. This research serves as a bridge, seamlessly connecting academic theories

with the pulsating realities of the business world. It offers a firsthand glimpse into the challenges and triumphs of Avipreneurship SMEs

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Succession Management Practices

Succession management practices in organisations refer to the strategic processes and activities designed to identify, develop, and prepare individuals for critical leadership roles (Ukairo et al., 2021). These practices aim to ensure a smooth transition of talent and knowledge, mitigate the risks associated with leadership vacancies, and sustain organisational performance and continuity (Patrick et al., 2022). Firstly, succession planning entails systematically identifying high-potential employees and creating development plans to cultivate their skills and competencies for future leadership positions (Naseer et al., 2022). Secondly, talent assessment involves the evaluation of employees' performance, potential, and readiness for promotion or lateral moves, enabling organisations to align their talent pool with strategic objectives (Nnaeto et al., 2022). Thirdly, leadership development initiatives, such as coaching, mentoring, and training programs, enhance employees' capabilities and groom them for future leadership roles (Wonnia, 2022). Fourthly, knowledge transfer mechanisms, including mentoring relationships, job rotations, and knowledge-sharing platforms, facilitate the transfer of critical knowledge and expertise from experienced leaders to emerging successors (Ukairo et al., 2021). Lastly, organisational culture and communication play a crucial role in creating an environment that supports and encourages succession management practices, fostering a leadership pipeline that is diverse, inclusive, and adaptable to changing business needs (Patrick et al., 2022). Overall, effective succession management practices enable organisations to proactively develop a pool of qualified leaders, ensuring continuity and long-term success (Naseer et al., 2022).

Concept of Firms' Growth

Firm growth is a multifaceted and extensively studied concept in the field of business and management. Several definitions have been proposed to capture its essence. Léon (2022) defines firm growth as the quantitative increase in a company's size, measured in terms of revenue, market share, assets, or number of employees. It also encompasses qualitative advancements, such as the expansion of product lines or geographical reach. Wahi and Rahman (2022) describe growth as the evolution and transformation of a firm over time, adapting to changing market conditions and technological innovations. From an economic standpoint, Loots and van Bennekom (2022) emphasize that firm growth represents the firm's ability to create value, generate profits, and achieve sustainable competitive advantage. In a strategic context, Standaert et al. (2022) suggest that growth involves the deliberate pursuit of opportunities and the allocation of resources to enhance performance. Lastly, Ogaji and Isichei (2019) highlight that firm growth is not a linear process but may involve periods of stagnation, decline, or rapid expansion, depending on internal and external factors.

Characteristics of firm growth stem from various interrelated factors. One crucial characteristic is the existence of a growth-oriented organisational culture, where risk-taking and innovation are encouraged (Gherhes et al., 2021). Additionally, successful firms often demonstrate strong leadership and strategic management capabilities, enabling them to identify growth opportunities and navigate challenges effectively (Slavec Gomezel & Aleksić, 2020). Furthermore, flexibility and adaptability are critical attributes, as they allow companies to respond to changing market demands and capitalize on emerging trends (Grillitsch et al., 2019). Moreover, firms experiencing sustainable growth tend to establish collaborative networks and alliances to access resources, knowledge, and new markets (Xuezhou et al., 2022). Lastly, technological adoption plays a significant role, as

firms embracing digitalization and automation often experience accelerated growth and improved efficiency (Miroshnychenko et al., 2021).

The benefits of firm growth are manifold. For the firm itself, growth can lead to increased profitability, enhanced competitiveness, and greater bargaining power with suppliers and customers (Lee, 2023). Additionally, growing firms often attract top talent and enjoy higher employee motivation and engagement, leading to a positive organisational culture (Tuominen et al., 2022). Furthermore, expansion into new markets can reduce dependency on specific regions or industries, diversifying risks (Stam, 2010). On a broader economic level, firm growth contributes to job creation, stimulates innovation, and fosters economic development (Janssen, 2009). Moreover, successful growing firms serve as role models and sources of inspiration for other entrepreneurs, nurturing a culture of entrepreneurship and economic dynamism (Stam & Wennberg, 2009).

Despite the numerous advantages, firm growth also presents several challenges. One of the key obstacles is managing the complexity that arises with expansion (Nason & Wiklund, 2018). As firms grow, their organisational structures become more intricate, leading to potential communication gaps and decision-making inefficiencies (Fu et al., 2021). Moreover, maintaining a cohesive corporate culture becomes increasingly challenging with the entry of new employees and the establishment of multiple locations (Iyortsuun & Shakpande, 2022). Additionally, funding growth initiatives can be demanding, as they require substantial financial resources that may not always be readily available (Hafiz et al., 2022). Furthermore, rapid growth can strain existing operations and resources, potentially leading to quality issues, customer dissatisfaction, or supply chain disruptions (Abdelmegeed et al., 2022). Balancing the pursuit of growth with risk management is an ongoing challenge for firm leaders and managers.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on succession management strategies showed positive impacts on firm growth and also enhance overall performance. Asikhia et al. (2021) found that management style had no significant effect on business survival of family business in Lagos State, Nigeria while organisation structure had significant effect on business growth. Magasi (2021) also empirically found that management succession variables, namely; training the successor, successor involvement in business management and successor factors-work fit had a positive and significant relationship with the survival of business firms. However, the internal recruitment of the successor had an insignificant relationship with the survival of business firms. This outcome conforms to the views posited by Fadeyi (2019) that for succession to truly drive an organisation towards survival, certain key inputs, otherwise known as ingredients, must be in place.

The findings of Zafar and Akhtar (2020) revealed that effective succession plan can help the organisation to meet desire objectives. It has significant positive impact of 2.5 times on growth of organisation by increasing number employees through accurate hiring and by retaining key personnel on key position. This finding is corroborated by the study of Norizan, and Yussof (2019) on how succession planning initiatives affect the growth of small and medium enterprises in Malaysia based on training, management support, clarifying career path, organisational culture and technological advancement as the predictors of succession planning. Findings revealed that training has a significant positive effect on knowledge retention and strong organisational culture positively affects knowledge retention and that creating a vision is important for organisational success.

Other studies on organisational survival and succession planning in organisations be it public or private (Patrick et al. 2022; Nnaeto et al 2022; Naseer et al. 2022) have all reported positive and significant relationships between one form of succession planning strategies and organisational

survival and sustainability in Nigeria and other developing countries. (Patrick et al. 2022; Nnaeto et al 2022; Naseer et al. 2022) other studies like that of Onoriode and Okoh (2019) and Friday, (2019) found that positive and significance relationship exist between managerial succession planning strategy and the continuity of an organisation's performance and its survival. The result also shows that positive and significant relationship exists between managerial succession planning strategy and the growth of an organisation. Conversely, Yuan et al., (2023) revealed that succession planning in the shadow of a long-term CEO contract is confounded not just by the prospect of losing some of the best possible candidates, but also by reaffirming the importance of the CEO in choosing a successor.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey research design to examine; the effect of succession management practices on firms' growth of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State. The survey research design involved the administration of questionnaire to avipreneurship SMEs owners and managers in Ogun State Nigeria. The choice of this research design is justified by its effectiveness in empirically investigating the effect of the variables of interest (Kitchot et al., 2021).

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 registered with PANOG spread across the six agricultural zones in Ogun State. These agricultural zones are Remo, Ijebu, Egba, Owode/Mowe, Ota/Ifo, and Yewa zones. This study conducted a census of the entire target population of 353 registered Poultry farms with PANOG thus no sampling was done. 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. Data used for this study was primary data and predominantly collected through surveys. Primary data was used help in collecting a piece of first-hand

information from the registered poultry small and medium-scale farmers in Ogun State, Nigeria guaranteeing that the data acquired is very relevant to the study. The inferential analysis for this study on succession management practices and firms' growth of Avipreneurship SMEs involved the use of multiple regression analysis to test the effect between the predictor variables and the dependent variables. The hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis, which allows for the examination of the simultaneous effects of multiple independent variables on a single dependent variable.

Model Specification

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

$$Y = f(XZ)$$

Where: Y = Dependent Variable (Firms' Growth), X = Independent Variable (Succession Management Practices)

Where: Y = Firm Growth (FG)

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

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)

Equation to test the hypothesis formulated is thus:

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

$$FG = \beta_0 + \beta_1RP_i + \beta_2CG_i + \beta_3ED_i + \beta_4MG_i + \beta_5JR_i + e_i$$

..... 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 firms' growth. Using the basic statistical denotation, the a-priori expectation for the stated models is given as follows:

Table 1: A priori Expectation

S/N	Models	Expected Results
H ₀	$FG = \alpha_0 + \beta_{1RP} + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \mu_i$	If $\alpha_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5 = p \leq 0.05$, Positive H ₀ should be rejected

Source: Researcher's work 2025

Data Analysis, Results and Discussion of Findings

The data presentation, analysis, interpretation of results, and the discussion of findings to examine the effect of succession management practice on firms' growth of Avipreneurship 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.

Hypotheses Testing

H₀: Succession management practices have no significant effect on firms' growth.

In the hypothesis, the independent variable is the succession management practice with components (recruitment policy, coaching, employee's career development, mentoring, and job rotation), while the dependent variable was firm's growth. Data for succession management practice components were generated by adding together scores of responses from all the items under each component to generate independent scores for each component. Data for firm's growth was generated by adding together the responses of all items under the variable to create an index of firm's growth.

Table 2: The Effect of Succession Management Practices on Firm Growth of Selected Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria

N	Model	B	T	Sig.	ANOVA (Sig.)	R	Adjusted R ²	F (5, 626)
	(Constant)	6.552	6.134	.000				68.310
	Recruitment Policy	.175	4.098	.000	0.001 ^b			
	Coaching	.152	3.214	.001				
632	Employees' Career Development	.040	.847	.397		0.594 ^a	0.348	
	Mentoring	.107	2.348	.019				
	Job Rotation	.261	6.107	.000				

a. Dependent Variable: Firm Growth

b. Predictors: (Constant), Job Rotation, Mentoring, Recruitment Policy, Coaching, Employees' Career Development

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

Interpretation

Table 2 shows the multiple regression analysis results for the effect of SMP dimensions on firm growth on the Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. The result revealed that recruitment policy ($\beta = .175, t = 4.098, p < 0.05$), coaching ($\beta = 0.152, t =$

$3.214, p < 0.05$), mentoring ($\beta = .107, t = 2.348, p < 0.05$) and job rotation ($\beta = .261, t = 6.107, p < 0.05$) all have a significant positive effect on firm growth. However, employees' career development ($\beta = 0.040, t = 0.847, p > 0.05$) have a positive but non-significant effect on firm growth in

Avipreneurship 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 firm growth of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. This indicates that recruitment policy, coaching, mentoring, and job rotation was important predictors of firm growth of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The correlation value (R-value) which is 0.594; showed that SMP dimensions have a strong and positive relationship with firm growth. The *Adj. R²* ($R^2 = 0.348$) implies that 34.8% of the variation in firm growth of the Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria was attributable to the SMP (recruitment policy, coaching, mentoring, and job rotation) while the 65.2% changes that occurs is accounted for by other variables not captured in the model. SMP being the independent variable determines 59.4% of the firm growth of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria.

The predictive and prescriptive multiple regression models are thus expressed:

$$FG = 6.552 + .175RP + 0.152CD + .040ED + 0.107MG + 0.261JR + U_i \text{-----Eqn } i \text{ (Predictive Model)}$$

$$FG = 6.552 + .175RP + 0.152CD + 0.107MG + 0.261JR + U_i \text{----Eqn } i \text{ (Prescriptive Model)}$$

Where:

FG = Firm Growth 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, firm growth of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria was 6.552 indicating that in the absence of SMP, firm growth of the selected Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria was 6.552, indicating a positive firm growth response. From the predictive model, four dimensions of the SMP (recruitment policy, coaching, mentoring, and job rotation) have significant positive effect on the firm growth while

employee's career development have non-significant effect on firm growth. From the prescriptive model, a unit change in job rotation, recruitment policy, coaching and mentoring would increase firm growth by 0.261, 0.175, 0.152 and 0.107 units respectively. The results suggest that job rotation, recruitment policy, coaching and mentoring are significant predictors of firm growth among Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. Thus, farmers in Ogun State should focus on enhancing these dimensions of SMP in their operations to improve overall firm growth.

The *F*-statistics ($df = 5, 631$) = 68.310 at $p < 0.05$ indicated that the overall model is significant for predicting the effect of SMP on firm growth. This implies that the regression model is a good fit for predicting the effect of SMP on firm growth. The results further showed that job rotation, recruitment policy, coaching and mentoring have the most effect on firm growth among selected Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. Based on these results, the null hypothesis one (H_{01}) which states that SMP dimensions have no significant effect on firm growth was rejected.

Discussion

The findings of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis one revealed that SMP and its dimensions used in the study had a positive significant effect on firm growth of Avipreneurship SMEs in Nigeria ($Adj.R^2 = 0.348$, $F(5, 626) = 68.310$, $p < 0.05$). In other words, SMP, and its sub variables used in this study jointly have statistically significant effect on firm growth of selected Avipreneurship SMEs in Nigeria; this implies that; SMP (recruitment policy, coaching, employee's career development, mentoring and job rotation) has significant effect on growth. This implies that developing formal succession plans and practices such as identifying and training future leaders, investing in their human capital will foster sustainable growth.

The result aligned with that of Magasi (2021) who found that management succession variables, such as training the successor, successor involvement in business management and successor factors-work

fit had a positive and significant relationship with firms' growth. In addition, the findings also align with the result of Zafar and Akhtar (2020) who revealed that effective succession plan can help the organisation to meet desire objectives. This finding is corroborated by the study of Norizan, and Yusof (2019) whose study revealed that training has a significant positive effect on knowledge retention and strong organisational culture positively affects knowledge retention and that creating a vision is important for organisational success. In consonance too was that of Patrick et al. (2022); Nnaeto et al (2022); Naseer et al. (2022) who reported a positive and significant relationship between one form of succession planning strategies and organisational survival and sustainability. An alignment was also established with studies like Onoriode and Okoh (2019) and Friday, (2019) who found positive and significance relationship between managerial succession planning strategy and the continuity of an organisation's performance and its survival. The result also shows that positive and significance relationship exists between managerial succession planning strategy and the growth of an organisation.

Conversely, Yuan et al., (2023) revealed that succession planning in the shadow of a long-term CEO contract is confounded not just by the prospect of losing some of the best possible candidates, but also by reaffirming the importance of the CEO in choosing a successor. Other studies such as Asikhia et al. (2021) found that management style had no significant effect on business survival of family business. It was also established that internal

recruitment of the successor had an insignificant relationship with the survival of business firms. This outcome conforms to the views posited by Fadeyi (2019) that for succession to truly drive an organisation towards survival, certain key inputs, otherwise known as ingredients, must be in place.

Theoretically, the findings of this study showed consistency with the RBV. The RBV assumes that firms within an industry possess unique sets of resources and capabilities, making them inherently distinct from one another (Kruesi & Bazelmans, 2022). This distinctiveness is central to RBV's argument that not all resources are created equal (Battisti et al., 2022). The findings established that proper utilisation of resources will enhance growth.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concluded that Succession management dimensions have significant effect on firm growth of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study serves as an indispensable planning tool for farmers, shareholders and boards of directors or executives when formulating policy drives. It is evident from the findings that succession management practices have significant effect on firm growth of Avipreneurship SMEs in Nigeria. It is, therefore, recommended that the farm owners and managers of Avipreneurship SMEs in Ogun State should develop strategy to connect succession management practices dimensions in order to make the sector sustainable and enviable in the long run. Such a strategy would be the premise on actions adopted by the various farms in matters pertaining to food productions.

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