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# FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ADAPTION OF SUCCESSION PLANNING IN MANUFACTURING SMALL TO MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE

AIDHA KAMUPINI<sup>1</sup>, COLLEN KAJONGWE<sup>2</sup> AND NOTHANDO MSIPAH<sup>3</sup>

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## Abstract

The study seeks to assess the factors that influence the adoption of succession planning decisions in manufacturing small to medium enterprises (SMEs) in Harare Metropolitan Province. The study used the mixed method research method. Pragmatism research philosophy was used in this study as it incorporates the use of mixed methods. The study was underpinned by the Leadership Model Succession Theory. The study sample size was 53 respondents taken from a population of 60. The Raosoft sample size calculator was used to come up with sample size with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level. Structured questionnaires and an interview guide were used to solicit data. Quantitative data were uploaded on SPSS Version 21 and analysed using inferential statistics. Qualitative data were also analysed thematically and graphically presented in cloud format using NVIVO version 29. Major findings of the study identify the relationship between succession planning and the performance of manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe. Major findings of the study identify owner's age, education, structure and size. The availability of financial resources exerts discernible influence on the trajectory of succession planning for SMEs in Zimbabwe. Management succession planning is critical for manufacturing SMEs to enhance performance. Longitudinal study is needed for effective leadership constructs on governance of SMEs to achieve needed performance in Zimbabwe.

**Keywords:** SMEs, succession planning, investment, strategic orientation

## INTRODUCTION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), defined by their number of employees, play a significant role in most economies around the world,

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constituting an important driving force behind economic activities (Ayyagari *et al.*, 2007). However, there is limited literature on factors influencing the adaptation of succession planning in manufacturing SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province that this study seeks to dress.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

SMEs are taken as one of the engines of economic development. They are credited for nurturing entrepreneurial talent, a sense of loyalty to business success, long-term strategic commitment and corporate sustainability (Ali and Mehreen, 2020). Past research indicates that the area of SMEs has received various attention from an unusually diverse group of researchers and practitioners. However, in contrast to the proliferation of SMEs, the small business sector is characterised by alarmingly deteriorating survival rates. In light of this scenario, this study focuses on the influence of succession planning decisions on the survival of manufacturing SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province.

Most research assumes that SMEs pursue sustainability through carefully planned and executed strategies to enhance their performance (Gumbo, 2017; Wanjohi and Mugure, 2018; Kraus, 2019; Lewis, 2019). Succession planning, as a business strategy concept, is researched by various scholars for sustainability of large corporations, yet there remains a lacuna on the small enterprises (Druckman, 2017). Of the studies conducted in various global settings, Crutzen and Fishbein (2017) research findings in Canadian SMEs discovered that the integration of planned succession planning and emergent strategy making can enable small firms to align core business objectives with sustainability goals, while building community relationships to access new resources. Abdullah (2018) analysed succession planning in Malaysia and found out that there is a positive relationship among succession planning, successor attitudes and succession dilemma. In a study conducted in Asia, Wanjohi and Mugure (2018) note that the willingness of a potential successor to step into the lead management role, or become the new owner, of the family business, could have an effect on the positive business transition. In Africa, Gumbo *et al* (2017) investigated the role of succession planning on survival of SMEs in Kenya, Egypt, Cameroon after retirement or death of the first generation entrepreneurs and found out that the capability of the successor had the greatest effect on the survival of SMEs after retirement or death of first generation entrepreneur.



However, many early researchers on succession planning concerned themselves primarily with senior management and chief executive officer succession (Druckman *et al.*, 2017). Most of these studies were limited to a particular sector and were general case studies. It is of interest to observe that there is a dearth of studies on the influence of succession planning to enhance sustainability of manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe that this study seeks to ascertain to contribute to existing body of knowledge since it is novel.

The SMEs sector encounters countless varied challenges which, besides limiting their important role, also threaten their survival and growth (Brink *et al.*, 2018). It is estimated that the SMEs' failure rate in developing nations falls between 70% and 80% in the first five years of establishment (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2021). In effectively functioning market economies, compared with big businesses, SMEs experience numerous constraints and problems in areas ranging from technology, financial resources, human resources, capital inadequacy and skills shortages to lack of marketing (Chang and Cho, 2019; Klewitz and Hansen, 2019; Madell and Adam, 2019; Lewis *et al.*, 2020; Stone *et al.*, 2021; Stubblefield, 2021 and Loucks *et al.*, 2022). Some of the constraints include legalities associated with registration and the regulatory compliance process (Du Plessis 2016; Lewis *et al.*, 2020; Stone *et al.*, 2021; Stubblefield, 2021 and Loucks *et al.*, 2022).). Their problems also include limited access to information and infrastructure (Zaayman, 2017). Lack of financial records and the collateral to secure funding from banking institutions (Jackson, 2018) have been reported as other constraints. Lack of training in management and business skills is cited as the major contributing factor to SME failure (Beck, Demirguc-Kunt and Maksimovic, 2021). SMEs also must deal with limited resources in the form of personnel, finance, knowledge and equipment (Mcgregor, 2017; Pavic *et al.*, 2017). According to Chirico (2018), a new business encounters several barriers to success throughout the start-up period and during its first year of operation. There might be a lack of motivation, government controls and a lack of skilled labour (*ibid.*).

Finscope SMEs Survey (2020) propounds that in Zimbabwe, most of the current multi-million dollar enterprises have their origins in SMEs, but their management is controlled by their owners. Various reasons contribute to the failure of SMEs in Zimbabwe and chief among them are poor management, poor internal control strategies and financial liabilities (Chipunza, 2019).

Finscope (2020) opines that about 60% of SMEs in Zimbabwe fail in the first year of establishment, 25% fail within the first three years and the remaining 15% are unlikely to survive due to poor management among other important reasons. However, the outcomes of the research done by diverse researchers shows that SMEs in Zimbabwe lack experience in business conduct (Chipunza, 2020; Mudavanhu *et al.* 2020; Majoni, 2020; Manuere, 2020; Muranda, 2020, Nyamwanza, 2020;). Results of the studies show that lack of general knowledge on business management is a major source of SMEs failure in Zimbabwe (Mudavanhu *et al.*, 2020). A management void is left in most of the studies on SMEs in the country. Management practices exhibited by the entrepreneurs in the SMEs have a strong influence on the general performance of the firm concerning improved financial inflows, staff motivation and public relations (Krueger, 2018). Management skills are critical to the success of an enterprise.

However, the Zimbabwean economy and its trade environment present great opportunities for start-up businesses. Therefore, learning and understanding the small-business market is essential for small-business owners as entrepreneurs (Bekker and Staude, 2022). Knowledge of the market is considered a source of encouragement and energy for growing the business through understanding of business continuity and sustainability through management strategies.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Manufacturing SMEs represent relatively stable systems so long as the founding entrepreneur is in place. They subsequently become destabilised as a function of such “triggering events” as the decision to bring a family member into a senior position or the founder’s decision to disengage. The result can be ambiguity, confusion and conflict among the family members and professionals employed by the firm. The subsequent adaptation process in most situations is chaotic, incomplete and not strategically. Successful adaptation of succession is influenced both by the conditions within the firm (e.g. state of maturity, economic health) and family dynamics (e.g. closeness of family, interdependencies among family members, sibling rivalries, financial condition of family members). However, manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe are not pursuing sustainability strategic orientation objectives through carefully planned and executed plans and such suffer a heavy blow in survival (Ministry of Women Affairs, Community Development, Small to Medium Enterprises, 2022). Lack of adapting and managing succession

planning is the cause of 60% mortality rate of SMEs in Zimbabwe (*ibid.*). It is established that about 60% of SMEs in Zimbabwe fail in the first year of establishment, 25% fail within the first three years and the remaining 15% are unlikely to survive due to poor management among other important reasons (Finscope, 2020). SMEs in Zimbabwe are not pursuing succession planning strategic orientation objectives through carefully planned and executed plans and such suffer a heavy blow in survival. There is need to fill this knowledge gap in the literature by focusing on factors influencing the adaptation of succession planning strategies by manufacturing SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Factors influencing the adaption of succession planning in manufacturing small to medium enterprises in Harare Metropolitan Province, Zimbabwe.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study is underpinned by the Leadership Model Succession Theory (Hollenbeck, 2015). The theory postulates that the impact of leadership on current outcomes can be fully appreciated only by complementing the understanding of the current leader's behaviours and style with the behaviours and styles of his or her predecessor. According to the Leadership Model the leadership should be continuously filled to avoid a shortage of managerial talent in case there are managerial posts that need to be filled within the organisation (*ibid.*). The theory is relevant in guiding this study. The creation of a network of multi-skilled mentors shall benefit a leader in the long run, acquiring a broad range of knowledge from the mentors. The survival of businesses is dependent largely on the existence of good succession planning programmes that ensure that businesses have a sufficient pool of skilled and talented employees who can take over leadership positions in the organisations once the founders retire or passes on. However, most leaders tend to deviate from the mentors as their career progresses. As a result, risky decisions are undertaken and individual authority reigns. In order to prevent such cases from occurring, it is best for succession planning strategies for SMEs to include continuous mentorship for leaders at all levels to enhance business sustainability. The leadership succession model encourages a company to achieve redundancy in its management structure.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Internal talent mobility and business sustainability influence the adaption and implementation of succession planning by SMEs (Lefebvre and Lefebvre 2016; Le Breton-Miller *et al.* 2018; Bennedsen *et al.* 2020; Hešková and Vojtko, 2018). Employees do not expect to spend a lifetime with an employer, leaving when a better opportunity arises and returning again if situations are right to do so. With visibility in the marketplace, individuals that possess “in demand” skills and knowledge have ready access to employment opportunities, creating the need to make internal opportunities appealing. (Pinsider, 2020). Sherman (2021) posits that candidates brought in from outside tend to cost more because they often give up existing career options, which may include equity positions, bonuses and more. They also have a long learning curve, even if they come from the same industry, because they do not know how their new company works. Internal candidates, on the other hand, having a background at the firm, typically do not require as much additional compensation and are more stable. This position aligns with findings made by Njigua (2022) that a majority of SMEs have directors who are founding members or where new appointments had to be made, majority also made appointments and promotions from the senior management teams.

Stakeholder engagement and business sustainability is also pointed out as influencing succession planning by SMEs (Kowalewski, Moretti and McGee, 2022). Rosenthal *et al.* (2018) conclude study that most companies either avoid succession planning altogether or are take a dispassionate, process-oriented approach that minimises, or even fail to address the impact of human behaviour on the succession planning process nor consider stakeholder engagement. Further suggestions are made to support the stance that succession planning is most effective when it takes a “centred” approach that focuses on people first, while maintaining objectivity and procedural discipline. By approaching succession planning in this way, an organisation can likely make it not only an effective part of its growth strategy, but also a signature feature of its corporate culture (Rosenthal *et al.*, 2018).

Similarly, other studies identified mentoring, entrepreneurial orientation, level of education, training, coupled with relevant training and work experience and capability of the successor as influencing succession planning adoption and implementation among SMEs (Rosenthal *et al.*, 2018;

Sherman, 2021; Kowalewski, Moretti and McGee, 2022; Njigua, 2022 ). Similarly, Magasi (2020) conducted a study on factors influencing business succession planning among SMEs in Tanzania and discovered that increase in the level of education of SMEs owners has a positive influence on preparing the successors. This finding corroborates Gumbo *et al.*, (2022) who found out that the role of succession planning in the survival of small and medium family ventures after the retirement/death of the founding entrepreneurs is influenced by four variables comprising: mentoring, entrepreneurial orientation, level of education/training and capability of the successor.

Hambrick and Mason (2020) provide further support for their inclusion, arguing that managerial succession planning in SMEs is influenced by the demographic composition of organisational leaders. As Lansberg (2018) notes, the family's approach to succession planning is often highly related to the founder's age. Research indicates that older executives tend to have a stronger commitment to the organisation (Becker, 2019) and to be more risk averse (Carlsson and Karlsson, 2016). Preparations for succession may be a means by which the owner can demonstrate commitment to the organisation and its future, while controlling risk. As the owner ages, his or her awareness of the need to prepare for the inevitable transition of ownership and control increases and along with it, the need for succession planning.

Research shows that financial indices, such as personal wealth, are tied to entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours (Krueger and Carsrud, 2019). In addition, formalising the succession planning process could provide the individual with a way to ensure the survival of the firm (the resource) on which he or she depends. Cyert and March (2020) support this rationale with behavioural arguments for a positive relation between a manager's ownership in, and consequent commitment to, the organisation. More pertinent for this discussion is Marino and Dollinger's (2017) finding that SMEs owner/manager's financial stake in the organisation has an important influence in succession decisions. Logically, we would expect that as an owner's income and financial stake increase, so too will his or her willingness to engage in succession planning.

Consequently, slack resources, in the form of accessible capital, can facilitate succession planning by allowing the firm to focus attention on external opportunities rather than on internal conflict. Some researchers argue that

family businesses may be at a disadvantage in obtaining access to external capital (Kets de Vries, 2016). Therefore, they may be forced to rely heavily on internal sources of capital, such as that provided by family members. Family businesses that have both family investors and employees are more likely to be concerned with the long-term survival of the firm (Gundry and Welsch, 2018). Having a clear succession process is one way to ensure consistency in achieving the goals of the family and those of the resource providers. Consequently, as the family assumes a greater role as a provider of capital, the organisation exhibits an increased tendency to implement succession-planning processes as part of a broader effort to ensure the business's survival (Bourgeois and Singh, 2020). Current dynamics in the business environment also demand that organisations attract, retain and internally develop potential partners/talent as key to the organisation's future success. Yet, notwithstanding the decision for generational transfer of leadership and, therefore the market dynamics, succession management has for the most part remained on the back burner.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study seeks to assess the factors that influence the adaption of succession planning decisions in manufacturing SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province. The study used the mixed method research method. The Pragmatism Research Philosophy was used in this study as it incorporates the use of mixed methods. The study is underpinned by Leadership Model Succession Theory. The study sample size was 53 respondents taken from a population of 60. Raosoft sample size calculator was used to come up with sample size with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 respondents in this study. Structured questionnaires and an interview guide were used to solicit data. Quantitative data were uploaded on SPSS Version 21 and analysed using inferential statistics. Qualitative data were also analysed thematically and graphically presented in cloud format using NVIVO version 29. The outcomes of the study are communicated via tables, charts and diagrams. Both descriptive, inferential statistical and themes in cloud format outcomes are unveiled in this section.

## **RESULTS**

### **RESPONSE RATE**

In this study, 53 structured questionnaires were administered. However, of the 53 structured questionnaires administered, only 40 were successfully

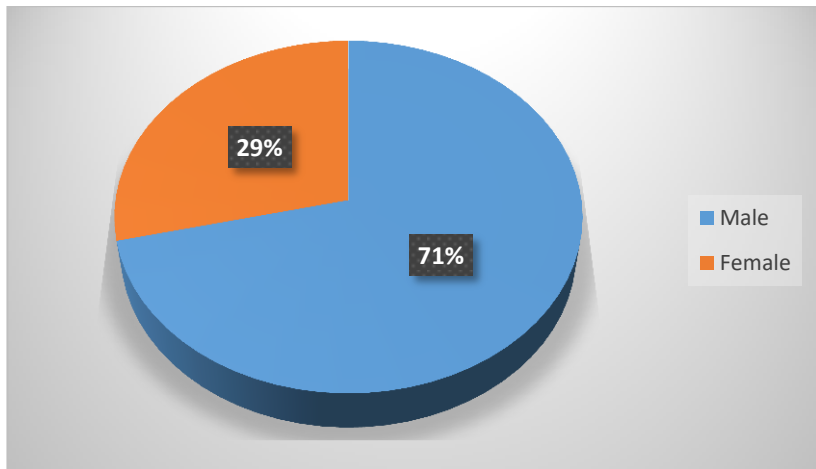
completed, translating to a response rate of 75% for quantitative data. In the same vein, the study purposively selected 10 respondents for conducting and soliciting information through structured interviews. Only six structured interviews were administered successfully, a 60% response rate for qualitative data. This high response rate was attributed to the importance of the matter to the stakeholders in this domain.

#### **DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS**

This section is presented based on gender characteristics, marital status, age and level of education. These have an impact in adaptation of succession planning by manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe.

##### ***GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF SMES PARTICIPANTS***

Examining the gender of respondents plays a crucial role as a variable when analysing factors that influence the adaption of succession planning decisions in manufacturing SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province. Figure 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the summary percentages of genders among research participants.



**Figure 1:** Gender Distribution

Figure 1 shows that males accounted for 71% of the research subjects. This indicates that the manufacturing SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province , had a higher number of male employees compared to females. This

observation raises the possibility that the recruitment practices of the SMEs in the province might have been biased towards favouring male candidates over female candidates. According to Haralambos and Holborn (2006), organisations which exhibit such a bias towards male employees are perpetuating a traditional and practical societal norm, where the workplace continues to be predominantly male, despite the growing demand for gender equality in the workforce.

### ***MARITAL STATUS***

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the marital status distribution among the participants from manufacturing SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province. Evaluating the marital status of the SMEs' workforce is considered a crucial factor when examining the factors that influence the adoption of succession planning decisions in manufacturing SMEs.

**Table 1:** Marital status

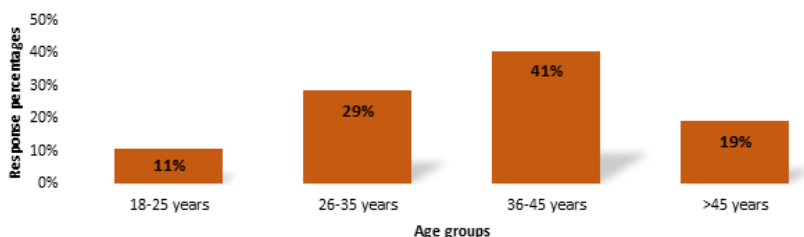
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Married	20	50
Widowed	9	22.5
Divorced	4	10
Single	7	17.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the data presented in Table 1, a substantial majority of the participants in the study were found to be married, accounting for 50% of the total respondents. This demographic insight provides valuable information about the personal and family dynamics of the employees within the SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province. The representation of all marital statuses in the study sample is noteworthy, as it ensures that the research findings can be more widely applicable and generalisable.

### ***AGE DISTRIBUTION***

As shown in Figure 2, participants in this study were categorised into distinct age groups, with the highest proportion of respondents falling within the age brackets of 35-45 years (41%), followed by 26-35 years (29%) and those greater than 45 years





**Figure 2:** Age distribution

The distribution of respondents across all these age groups demonstrates a comprehensive representation of viewpoints and opinions from different age brackets within the SMEs in the province. Having a diverse representation of age groups is crucial for obtaining a well-rounded perspective on the relationship between decent work practices and the performance of SMEs. Each age group may bring distinct experiences, expectations and perspectives to the study, influencing their perceptions of succession planning and SMEs performance.

### ***LEVEL OF EDUCATION***

Indeed, the educational qualifications of the SMEs' participants in the Harare Metropolitan Province play a crucial role in understanding the factors influencing adoption of succession planning by manufacturing SMEs. Table 2 offers a summary of these educational qualifications, providing valuable insights into the participants' expertise and skills.

**Table 2:** Educational qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
O level	15	37.5
First degree	12	30
Master's degree	10	25
Doctorate	3	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on the data presented in Table 2, it is evident that a considerable number of participants possessed highe qualifications of first degrees, masters and doctorates, constituting 63% and held O level certificates (37%).

This indicates that the research involved participants with relatively high levels of education, which could have potential implications for the analysis and interpretation of the data. However, the inclusion of participants with diverse educational qualifications is crucial as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research and ensures that the findings are more representative of the broader population. This diverse educational representation enhances the robustness and applicability of the study's outcomes.

Evident from the insights within Table 3, a notable segment of the participants clearly highlighted that a range of factors, encompassing individual attributes (such as demographics, owner's age and education), organisational characteristics (including structure and size) and environmental conditions (such as the availability of financial resources), exert discernible influence on the trajectory of adoption of succession planning for SMEs in Zimbabwe.

**Table 3:** The influence of succession planning decisions on the survival of manufacturing SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province

Items	Mean	SD
Owner's age	1.788	0.429
Education	1.772	0.420
Structure and size of the organisation	1.736	0.442
Availability of financial resources	1.764	0.435
Human capital expertise	1.696	0.478
Business growth strategy	1.811	0.413
Regulatory mandate	1.763	0.491

The spotlight on "individual attributes" underscores the participants' collective understanding of how the personal demographics and qualifications of key stakeholders, notably the owner's age and education, structure and size of the organisation, availability of financial resources, human capital expertise to execute the transition, business growth strategy and regulatory support, play a significant role in shaping the course of succession planning. These attributes can substantially influence the preferences, capabilities and outlook of those involved in the process, ultimately steering the direction of leadership transitions for succession.

In addition, the quantitative data in this domain correspond with the qualitative data. Based on the available qualitative data, several themes

emerge regarding succession planning in SMEs, including long-term survival and family involvement, the impact of business growth, variability in succession planning practices, leadership and succession failure, human factors and organisational culture and managerial education and innovation.

Participants P1 and P5 emphasize the importance of succession planning for the long-term survival of SMEs, especially those with family involvement. Family businesses often prioritise the firm's continuity across generations, necessitating transparent succession processes to ensure consistency and viability. In light of the above study results, various responses from respondents provided diverse information on the influence of succession planning by manufacturing SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province.

Participant 1 said:

Family businesses that have both family investors and employees are more likely to be concerned with the long-term survival of the firm. Having a clear succession process is one way to ensure consistency in achieving the goals of the SME and those of the resource providers. Consequently, as the family assumes a greater role as a provider of capital, the organisation should exhibit an increased tendency to implement succession-planning processes as part of a broader effort to ensure the business's survival.

Participant P2 highlights the positive influence of SMEs' business growth on succession planning. However, many organisations need to pay attention to succession planning before they face crises, which can lead to reactive and inadequate approaches, risking the practical selection of successors.

Participant 2 alludes that:

Growth in SMEs business size has a positive influence on business succession planning. Most organisations do not give full attention to succession planning until a crisis forces it onto the agenda. This knee-jerking and reactive approach to succession planning is a recipe for doom as it might be too late for the effective selection of a successor.

Participant P3 observes that SMEs of different ages and sizes manage succession planning differently, indicating a need for standardised policies. This variability may hinder consistency and continuity among SMEs, affecting their contributions to employment, GDP and societal development.

Participant 3 comments that:

SMEs of different ages and sizes manage their succession planning differently, indicating the non-existence of standardised policy guidelines regarding

succession planning [and] may not ensure consistency and continuity among the SMEs, that may affect the realisation of the crucial roles played by SMEs such as employment creation, contribution to growth domestic product and development of society at large. In light of the positive relationship between succession planning and the growth of SMEs, business owners, policy-makers and the state should support SMEs in succession planning development.

Participant P5 discuss the consequences of leadership failure in succession planning, emphasizing the negative impact on SMEs' performance and sustainability. Organisations which neglect succession planning or adopt a process-oriented approach without considering human behaviour and stakeholder engagement risk decline and closure.

Participant 5 alludes that:

... most fallen SMEs had chief executive officers and leaders who fail the process of succession planning and, as such, set their companies on a path to decline. Failure to engage in succession planning early on causes organisations to make decisions based on informal judgments that are often problematic with negative results in most cases. This acts as a driver for SMEs to engage in succession planning strategy to overcome a demise in closing shop.

Participant P6 advocates for a people-centric approach to succession planning, emphasizing the importance of addressing human behaviour and fostering stakeholder engagement. Succession planning should be a procedural exercise and a fundamental aspect of organisational culture.

Participant 6 asserted that:

...most SMEs are either avoiding succession planning altogether or are taking a dispassionate, process-oriented approach that minimises or even fails to address the impact of human behaviour on the succession planning process nor consider stakeholder engagement. By approaching succession planning in this way, an organisation can likely make it not only an effective part of its growth strategy, but also a signature feature of its corporate culture.

Participant P6 also highlights the role of top managers' education levels in strategic change and innovation through succession planning. Investment in research and development reflects SMEs' propensity for innovation and strategic decision-making.

Participant 6 confirms that:

... top managers' education levels have also been empirically linked with the propensity to deviate from the status quo and implement strategic change through implementing succession planning. Investment in research and development by firms is characterised as a strategic decision, indicating SMEs propensity and desire for innovation...

Therefore, themes of qualitative responses in cloud format are presented in the Figure 1.3.



**Figure 3:** The influence of succession planning decisions on the survival of SMEs in Zimbabwe

In summary, the themes extracted from the qualitative data underscore the significance of succession planning in SMEs for long-term viability, growth, organisational culture and innovation.

**Table 4:** Reliability results for succession planning decision

Cronbach's Alpha		Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items		N of Items	
0.888		0.889		3	
Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Individual attributes (e.g., demographics; owner's age and education)	8.2400	2.949	0.822	0.686	0.807
Organisational characteristics (e.g., structure, size)	8.2800	2.998	0.731	0.537	0.884
Environmental factors (e.g., the availability of financial resources)	8.2436	2.783	0.795	0.658	0.829

The results of a reliability test show robust internal consistency, with a notable Cronbach's alpha value of 0.948. This value not only surpasses the suggested threshold of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2011) but also highlights high reliability. The corrected item-total correlations, ranging from 0.731 to 0.822, consistently surpass the acceptable threshold of 0.30, indicating that these items effectively measure the same construct. This aligns with Pallant's (2016) observations. Moreover, squared multiple correlations, varying from 0.537 to 0.686, further support the construct's validity. In addition, the quantitative data in this domain correspond with the qualitative data. Based on the available qualitative data, several themes emerge regarding succession planning in SMEs, including long-term survival and family involvement, the impact of business growth, variability in succession planning practices, leadership and succession failure, human factors and organisational culture and managerial education and innovation (Figure 3).

## DISCUSSION

The study results are in line with literature. One of the problems faced by SMEs globally is planned succession by way of purposeful transfer of operational, management and ownership controls to the next generation from the proprietors (Filser *et al.* 2018; Gagnè *et al.* 2019). At the same time, there is a growing chorus on the need for older professionals to develop, groom and integrate younger professionals into additional responsibilities to increasingly take over the business practices to ensure continuity (Barnes and Hershon 2019). The importance of ensuring effective succession is widely recognised in literature. With succession planning, organisations develop the right people with the right mentality to take over the leadership, management or ownership of the business so that the organisation fulfils its mandate of being a going concern. Efforts are made by leaders of organisations to recruit, develop and retain individuals with a range of leadership competencies capable of implementing current and future organisational goals (Leibman *et al.*, 2018). Several studies have also ascribed most proprietors' hesitancy to make succession plans to factors such as the proprietor's strong passion and emotional attachment to the enterprise, retirement, incapacitation or death phobia, financial insecurity and absence of interest (Christensen, 2015; Ward, 2015, 2016; Abdullah *et al.*, 2017; Brockhaus, 2018; Maalu *et al.*, 2021). It is, therefore not unexpected that most small business owners rarely retire from their own businesses, but prefer dying while still managing the business (Barnes and Hershon 2019).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Major findings of the study identify owner's age, education, structure and size, the availability of financial resources exert discernible influence on the trajectory of succession planning for manufacturing SMEs in Harare Metropolitan Province in Zimbabwe. The results strongly highlight intricate connections among factors and SME sustainability in Zimbabwe. These results emphasize effective succession planning, recognising value, strategic thinking, planning strategies and improved performance as crucial for sustaining these enterprises in a dynamic business environment.

However, to enhance the possibility of intergenerational success and continuity of SMEs, this study makes the following recommendations, based on the findings made from the study that are aimed at manufacturing SMEs in Zimbabwe. Training programmes could also be provided by non-governmental organisations, business associations, training institutions, financial institutions (which could make the development of succession plans and continuity, among others, a requirement for accessing loans). Comprehensive and regular training on development of plans for key business functions would enable businesses and their owners to take a more strategic and long-term view of their businesses and thus also adequately and effectively plan for succession and business continuity beyond the first generation. Longitudinal study is needed for effective leadership constructs on governance of SMEs to achieve needed performance in Zimbabwe.

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