

Assessing the Factors that Influence Family Business Continuity from the Succession Planning Point of View among the Zambian Small and Medium Enterprises

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ABSTRACT

The study's objective was to assess the factors that influence family business continuity from a succession planning point of view among the Zambian SMEs. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the factors that influence family business continuity from the succession planning perspective and determine the succession planning strategies that can enhance family business continuity. A qualitative research design was employed using purposive and snowball sampling methods to sample 15 family businesses among the SMEs in Chilanga district. Data was collected using one on one interviews using an interview guide. The data was analyzed using a thematic approach. Results of this study show that the factors that influence family business continuity among SMEs include the successor's level of education, limiting succession to family members, successor's interest in the business, Successor's knowledge and skills, mentorship, Successor's discipline and determination, employee motivation, watching the business closely, the closeness of the family and the profitability of the business. The findings also show that the succession planning strategies used by the family business SMEs to enhance business continuity include; early identification of the successor, choosing successors with a passion and interest for the business, learning from other businesses, gradual handover of the business, training of the successor and involving family and employees in succession planning.

Keywords-- Business Continuity, Family Business, SMEs, Succession Planning, Zambia

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the oldest types of business organisations is the family business. Family businesses are an important source of job development for multiple generations and domains (Ghamloush, 2021). They are the most common type of ownership business model in the world, with a considerable impact on the global economy. The entire economic impact of family businesses on global GDP is

estimated to be greater than 70% (Osunde, 2017). They contribute significantly to the generation of wealth (Merchant et al., 2018). According to De Massis et al. (2018), Family Firm Institute's recent data show that family enterprises make up two thirds of all businesses worldwide, contribute between 70 to 90 percent of the world's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and account for between 50 and 80 percent of all jobs in most countries around the world. Shafieyoun et al. (2014) noted that a family business, as a household system, offered the advantages of sustainable economic growth and dependable wealth creation due to its significant influence on the community's economic infrastructures. Nowadays, a family business might include a variety of operations such as retail sales, contract enterprises, small manufacturing organisations, restaurants, and so on (Shafieyoun et al. 2014).

According to Magasi (2016), the majority of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are run as family-based businesses because they are most often owned and controlled by family members. SMEs have over time played a key role in speeding up economic growth in many nations and economic blocs. Large numbers of skilled and unskilled workers are absorbed by SMEs, which boosts overall productivity and lowers crime and anti-social behaviour rates. The World Bank estimated that SMEs make up around 95% of all enterprises worldwide and generate about 40% of the GDP (Mbewe, 2022). In Zambia, SMEs play an important role in production, employment, and income. They represent 97% of all businesses in the country, 70% of GDP and 88% of employment (International Trade Centre, 2020).

The fact that many family businesses fail to be long-term viable is arguably the most frequently mentioned aspect of them. In fact, between two thirds and three quarters of family businesses either fail or are sold by the founder(s) while they are still in operation (Abouzaid, 2018). Further, in accordance with Mazrui (2012), as referenced by Magasi (2016), many family businesses do

not survive long enough following the retirement or passing of the first generation of business owners. Despite their overwhelming numbers, sustaining family businesses generation after generation has always remained a challenge. Unfortunately, little is known about the variables that contribute to such low family business survival rates through generations (Mahto et al. 2014).

The study objective therefore was to assess the factors that influence family business continuity from the succession planning point of view in the Zambian SMEs. Specifically, the study sought to determine the factors that influence family business continuity from the succession planning point of view among SMEs in Chilanga district and determine the succession planning strategies that can enhance family business continuity among SMEs in Chilanga district.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Family Businesses and SMEs

Although few studies have been done concerning family businesses in Zambia, the topic has aroused a lot of interest from many academicians around the world as family businesses are the oldest form of business ownership globally. According to Merchant et al. (2017), before the global corporations existed there were family businesses, before the industrial revolution, there were family businesses, and there existed family businesses before the Greek Enlightenment and the Roman Empire. Most SMEs are run by the business proprietors. Globally, most family businesses are small or medium-sized enterprises, and the definition of SME varies depending on the country's economic growth (Merchant et al., 2017). Further, Tadu (2018) noted that majority of family businesses are SMEs that are privately held. There is therefore a natural tendency to presume that family businesses experience identical obstacles as non-family businesses of comparable size.

Family Business Continuity

Business continuity is defined as a company's ability to continue delivering products or services at acceptable levels after a disruptive incident, such as a disaster (Olubiyi et al., 2022). The family business continuity is mainly based on the family's desire to preserve the family's ownership, which appears in control, leadership, and management involvement and led over successive generations (Goel and Jones, 2016). Family relationships and succession difficulties are critical to the survival of family-owned enterprises (Dakoumi and Mnasser, 2013). One of the key causes of success for family business is their emphasis on ensuring business and family continuity. Longevity is often top of mind for family business owners, and unlike many of their non-family business competitors, they consider long-term

viability and continuing family engagement (LeCouvie and Pendergast, 2014).

Factors that Influence Family Business Continuity

There are various factors that influence family business continuity and some of these factors are;

Lack of Succession Planning

One of the most important issues impeding successful intra-family succession is a lack of succession planning (Kaunda and Nkhoma, 2013). Thinking about when they will no longer oversee their companies is unusual for business owners, and it often causes them to put off succession planning. Many family business owners are hesitant to plan for future leadership transitions, which make these transitions less likely to succeed. According to Agarwal et al. (2016), succession is not a fixed phenomenon that occurs at a predetermined point in the lives of the creator of the business and his successor. Yet, it is a dynamic process that can be detailed and mapped from the perspective of the following generation of family members. Agarwal et al. (2016) added that failure to complete the succession process can result in financial losses, as well as the loss of the entire business.

Family Bonds

Family bonds and succession are another aspect influencing family businesses and these challenges are critical to the future of family businesses (Dakoumi and Mnasser, 2013). Molly et al (2010) added that family relationship problems pose a threat to the growth, prosperity, and survival of family enterprises. A family with strong family ties and a successor who appreciates the importance of the business to the family will most likely take the business forward once the founder retires.

Successor's Skills

Most studies contend that the skills of the successors are related to positive succession results. If the anticipated successor does not have the necessary abilities to assume leadership of the business, the succession may fail because the lack of skills may compel the successor to decline the job or other important players to oppose the potential successor (Kaunda and Nkhoma, 2013). If the successor lacks the necessary skills the succession is destined to fail.

Interest for the Business

According to Bizri (2016), "in some cases, the successor may feel compelled to take charge of the family business as a means of sustaining the parents' livelihood. However, due to the lack of genuine interest and passion for the business, they are not likely to grow or expand it, thus leading it to face extinction with the end of the obligation." It is therefore imperative for the successor of the business to be to have genuine interest and passion for the business for it grow after taking over the business.

Reserving Leadership Responsibilities only to Family Members

Fears of non-family employees due to constraints on their leadership responsibilities are another consideration. Non-family employees in SMEs are not offered equitable succession opportunities in family businesses. Family businesses adhere to regulations that favour family members, and leadership positions are reserved for family members without regard for skill, strength, or experience (Bhargav and Srinivasa, 2018). The challenge when it comes to family business succession is that the founder (and the family) would want a family member to take over the business when they retire but sometimes this poses a challenge because some employees who might have been loyal, more qualified and have been in the business for a long time may be demoralised and feel left out.

Succession Planning Strategies for Business Continuity

According to Rajapalase and Kiran (2017), good succession strategies can lead to the continuing expansion of sustainable family businesses, higher employee loyalty and retention, better business credibility and improved sustainability. The following are some of the succession planning strategies that have been documented in literature:

Selecting the Successor Leader Based on Interest and Commitment

Rajapalase and Kiran (2017) noted that the primary strategies used by family business leaders to successfully transition from one generation to the next are selecting the successor leader based on interest and commitment, emphasizing the importance of the designated successor adopting the organization's culture and family values, and transferring knowledge and experience from the initial leader to the successor. Ghamloush (2021) added that Succession does not come by force, and an uninterested successor will not be committed and will not be able to excel in their job.

Transfer of Knowledge and Expertise from the Initial Leaders to the Successor Leaders

Another crucial approach for succession planning is the transferring of knowledge and acquiring expertise from the initial leader to the succeeding leader. This raises the likelihood of the new leader's success and the succession process (Ghamloush, 2021). Further, while training the successor for their new role, the first leader should lead by example and the initial leader should impart knowledge and experience to the successor leader. This knowledge and skill should be passed on gradually rather than all at once (Ghamloush, 2021). Passing knowledge to employees or family members is necessary for the successor to build abilities in succession planning (West, 2019).

Leadership Development

Employees or family members would be better prepared to learn the necessary skills for succession planning if more emphasis was placed on leadership development (West, 2019). Intentional leadership development in an organization, according to Belasen and Belasen (2016) entails a succession planning strategy for preparing new leaders for leadership roles. Further, West (2019) noted that the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained through such leadership development interventions should enable participants to exercise their skills as a way of reinforcing their learning.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research adopted interpretivism philosophy whose main goal is to create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts (Saunders, 2009) and seeks to learn from experience (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006). A qualitative research design was used in this study. The target population were all managers and/or owners of family-owned SMEs in Chilanga district in Zambia. A single respondent consisted of a manager or owner of a family business SME based in Chilanga district. The sample size included 15 family-owned SMEs in Chilanga district.

The sampling techniques used in this study were purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The sampling method that is more suitable for qualitative research is purposeful or judgmental sampling, especially when it entails choosing participants for special conditions. This sampling technique uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases or the researcher selects cases with a specific purpose in mind (Mohd and Bakar, 2014). On the other hand, snowball sampling involves the recruitment of new units by existing units to make up the sample.

The data was collected using structured interviews with the aid of an interview guide which included open ended questions. Conducting interviews gives a chance to obtain large quantities of data and follow-up for clarification (Ghamloush, 2021). According to Hamrouni and Mnasser (2013), open-ended questions offer individuals the freedom to recall the various stages and events in their lives. The study employed a thematic approach to analyse the data.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

A 100% response rate was attained with the effective participation of 15 respondents in the research. In terms of gender, 40% were female and 60% were male. 33% of the respondents were owners, and 67% were managers. The respondents' nationality consisted of 93% of Zambians while 7% were from other countries. 47% of

the businesses were in the second generation, and 53% were in the first generation. According to the results of the investigations, the companies were run and owned by members of the same family; the second generation of owners had been passed down to them by their parents. This suggests that succession within the nuclear family was passed down from one generation to the next.

Factors that Influence Family Business Continuity from the Succession Planning Point of View

In the process of data analysis, themes were generated as depicted in Table 1 below from the interviewees' responses to identify the factors that influence family business continuity from succession planning point of view.

Table 1: Themes on the Factors that Influence Family Business Continuity

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Level of education	15	100
Interest in the business	15	100
Knowledge and skills	13	87
Mentoring the successor	13	87
Financial discipline and determination	15	100
Family Unity	6	40
Profitability of the business	9	60
Choosing successors within the family	6	40
Employee motivation	9	60
Keeping a close eye on the business	4	27

From the themes generated, the following were identified as factors that influence family business continuity from the succession planning point of view among SMEs.

Successor's Level of Education

The level of education of the successor was one of the factors that was mentioned as one which influences family business continuity from the succession planning point of view. A less educated successor might not have the fundamental knowledge needed to manage the company. According to a former manager of a business that collapsed in the second generation:

"One of the reasons for the failure of the business was the level of education of the successor. The successor only had primary school level of education, therefore even

if he was willing to do the work, he did not know how to run a business which led to its downfall".

Limiting Succession to Family Members

The respondents noted that selecting a successor from the same family will ensure that the business continues to operate. This is due to the possibility that a non-family member may not share the same attachment and may not recognize the importance of the business to the family as someone from the same family does. As stated by one of the participants:

"The choice of the successor is an important factor because if you choose someone outside the family, that person may not understand the value which the family attaches to the business and will therefore not put in much effort to ensure that it continues and succeeds. If you choose your son or daughter, they will run the business with a passion because they are also trying to grow the legacy of the family"

Successor's Interest in the Business

The interest of the successor in the business was cited by every respondent who was interviewed as a factor influencing family business continuity. One of the interviewees who was a successor said:

"The business will fail if the individual taking over the family business has no interest in it, as they will not give it enough attention but will instead devote all of their time to their own interests. One of the reasons some family businesses have failed after the first generation is the lack of interest in the business by the successors and the failure of the predecessor to take the necessary time to instill that passion in the most likely successor. A successor may sometimes be picked because they are the eldest of the children, even if they may have other interests"

Knowledge and Skills of the Successor

The respondents also noted that the successor should possess the relevant knowledge and skills for the business in order to understand the business and run it in the way it should be run. It is important to understand the nature of the business and train the successor according to the nature of the business. One of the respondents mentioned that:

"One of the major challenges I faced when I took over the business is that I did not have the necessary knowledge and skills required for this business. I may have knowledge about business management but I did not understand much about this particular business because my training was in a different field. The employees depended on me to train them but it was challenging because I had limited knowledge. Additionally, it was difficult to expand the business because I did not understand it fully at that time"

Another respondent mentioned that:

"A correct individual should be chosen to take over the business to ensure that it continues. By correct individual we mean one should have the specific skills required to take up the business and take up the leadership role especially management of that particular type of business"

Mentorship

The second-generation business owners who were interviewed stated that mentorship is a crucial factor and that, in order for them to succeed in assuming control of the business, their parents, or their predecessors, had to begin mentoring them before they could assume full responsibility for it. According to a manager of a second generation family business:

"The founder realised along time ago that he will need to pass on the business to the son someday. Therefore he decided to start mentoring the son by inviting the son to come and work here during school holidays where he could explain the how the business is run and how each department operates. After completing tertiary education, he started working within the business which allowed him to learn more from his father before taking over fully"

Financial Discipline and Determination of the Successor

Financial discipline and determination of the successor were mentioned as factors that influence family business continuity from the succession planning point of view among SMEs. If the the successor lacks discipline and determination, the business is likely to fail or may not grow upto the next generation. As stated by some of the respondents:

"In certain situations, the anticipated successor might not have the financial discipline and determination needed to manage a business, which could lead to the downfall of the business when they take over. Under such circumstances, a successor may be chosen from the extended family or from among the devoted employees who have the determination and discipline to continue managing the business"

"My hope is that the leader of the next generation will be responsible and will have the discipline required to run the business, otherwise the business will collapse"

Employee Motivation

The respondents mentioned that when you have a motivated work force, they are persuaded to stay loyal to the business and even help the successor when they take over the business. One of the managers who had been with the business from inception said:

"When we first started our business, the founder would constantly look for ways to encourage and motivate us and ask how he could help so that we could focus on our work. He would give us soft loans in order to help us better our lives. We felt rewarded for our hardwork and this motivated us to stay in the company such that even

when he retired, we stayed in the company to help the son when he took over the business"

Watching the Business Closely

Another factor that was cited as having an influence on family business continuity from the perspective of succession planning among SMEs is keeping a close eye on the company. The day-to-day operations of a business should be overseen by the owner, especially when it is still growing. This is so because the business's owner is the one with the vision. According to some of the first-generation business owners interviewed:

"Most family businesses perform well because the motivation for family businesses is perpetuity or continuity of the business hence they pay more attention to the business than when they are just employees. The motivation for employees is instant money making but a family member would want to see the business continue for generations to come therefore they pay particular attention to the business leading to its success"

Another respondent said:

"At first, I had a restaurant and a farm, but I focused more on the restaurant which was in town, leaving the farm's employees to manage it. The farm business began to go down until I shut down the restaurant to keep a close eye on the farm business"

Family Unity and Bonds

According to the respondents, a close and united family is not likely to have succession conflicts. A close and united family will most likely support the successor as they take over the business to ensure that the business continues growing:

"Being a close and united family helped me to take over the business without any challenges or conflicts because we all knew who would take over and it was agreed as a family that I would take over the business"

Another one mentioned that:

"It is important to be united and work together as a family. Some family members are not usually supportive of the business at the beginning but when they see that it has grown and has become profitable, they want to be part of it or even take over, this causes conflicts which can lead to the fall of the business"

Profitability of the Business

The respondents mentioned the profitability of the business is a factor which influences family business continuity from the succession planning point of view among SMEs. If a business is not profitable, fewer people would want to continue with it, making it very difficult for continuity:

"If the owner of the business wants the business to continue even after the first generation, they have to ensure that it is profitable enough before they pass it on to the next generation. No one would want to inherit and take over a business that is not making profits"

Succession Planning Strategies that can Enhance Family Business Continuity

As part of the data analysis process, themes were developed and the frequencies of these themes from the interviewees' responses, as shown in Table 2 below, to determine the succession planning strategies that can enhance family business continuity from the succession planning point of view among SMEs.

Table 2: Themes of the Succession planning Strategies that Enhance Business Continuity

Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Identifying the successors early	7	47
Interest/passion for the business	9	60
Learning from other businesses	4	27
Gradual handover of the business	11	73
Training of the successor	6	40
Involving family and members of staff in succession planning	15	100

Early Successor Identification

The respondents revealed that early successor identification is one of the succession planning strategies that the respondents suggested. When a successor is identified early enough, the business owner has plenty of time to train him or her and impart to them the knowledge and expertise they have accumulated over the years.

"The strategy which the founder of the business used to enhance business continuity was to identify the one who would succeed him early enough. This helped him to pass on the knowledge and experience to the successor before he could retire"

Choosing Successors with a Passion and Interest for the Business

The respondents also recommended selecting a successor based on their passion and level of interest in the company. This is what has been observed to work in other family-owned businesses that have prospered since the founder's death or retirement.

"Choosing a successor on the basis of being older in the family is not a good idea. Instead, the successor needs to be passionate and interested in order to run the business well"

"The strategies we have used in selecting a successor involve selecting an individual who has a genuine interest in the business, because forcing someone to take over without interest will lead to the collapse of the business."

Learning from Other Businesses

Studying other businesses that have effectively transitioned their businesses from one generation to the next is another way to improve succession planning for family businesses. This makes it easier to learn from companies with more experience. As stated by one of the participants:

"After taking over the business, I have deliberately made efforts network and learn from other nearby family business owners to learn how they have successfully expanded their business after the founder of the business was no longer there"

Gradual Hand Over of the Business

Gradual handover of the business to the successor is another strategy which the respondents suggested as this allows the successor to stay longer in the business and get the required experience before taking over the business fully.

"The fact that the successor began as an employee of the company in order to gain experience was one of the reasons for the smooth transfer of leadership. After seeing that the successor had acquired the necessary confidence and experience to manage the company, the predecessor thereafter began to gradually transfer the running of the business to the successor"

Training the Successor

Training of the successor in managing the business is another useful strategy that can enhance family business continuity. A successor who has received training in the relevant discipline is likely to continue running the business smoothly after taking over the business.

"A leader with the necessary training is more capable of managing the company."

Involving Family and Employees in Succession Planning

It was also suggested that family business continuity for SMEs can be enhanced by involving employees and family members in succession planning. In addition to lessening conflict, this aids in reaching a collective agreement that cannot be later refuted. One business manager said:

"Another strategy for business continuity is involving the family, along with some management members of staff in the decision-making process over who should take over the company. Therefore, when it comes to transfer of ownership of the company, everyone will be in agreement"

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Factors that Influence Family Business Continuity

The first objective of this study was to determine the factors that influence family business continuity from the succession planning point of view among SMEs and the findings revealed a number of factors.

The findings revealed that the successor's level of education influences family business continuity from the succession planning point of view as a less educated successor may not have the basic knowledge of business management. A successor with higher level of education is likely to be capable of closing business deals, do basic market research, planning and budgeting as well as providing excellent customer service to guarantee a high customer turnover rate. The findings are consistent with the research conducted by Kaunda and Nkhoma (2013) which found that a greater proportion of family members in the businesses that survived in succession had post-secondary education or tertiary education compared to those in the enterprises that failed.

According to the study, choosing a family member as a successor will guarantee the company's survival. This is because, unlike someone from the same family, a non-family member might not have the same attachment or understand the value of the company to the family. However, a similar research, by Bharathi and Parikh (2012) contended that confining the succession to family members may contribute to the company's fall. They argued that rules favouring family members are followed by the family businesses, leadership roles are reserved for family members without consideration for ability, strength, or experience, and non-family employees in SMEs are not given fair succession opportunities in family businesses, which does not favour the business. In situations where a company has employees who have greater skills and experience than family members in managing the company, such employees may be assigned the task of managing the company while family members act as overseers.

The research results indicate that family business continuity is also influenced by the successor's level of interest in the business. This is because an uninterested successor might prioritise their personal interests over the company's needs. Some successors assume ownership of the family enterprises out of a sense of duty to preserve the legacy. The study's results are consistent with those of Kaunda and Nkhoma (2013) which revealed that it is critical to choose people who exhibit the most interest in the business and provide them with equal opportunities to perform. Buckner (2021) added that the succession process might be derailed by a successor's lack of interest.

The study also revealed that the knowledge and skills that the successor has in the business also play a role in influencing family business continuity. These findings are in agreement with the findings by Kaunda and Nkhoma (2013) which revealed that if the anticipated successor does not have the necessary abilities to assume leadership of the business, the succession may fail because the lack of skills may compel the successor to decline the job or other important players to oppose the potential successor. When

a successor takes over the business, they are more likely to maintain business continuity if they possess the necessary knowledge and skills than if they do not. This is because possessing the necessary knowledge and skills will enable the successor to meet and overcome the business's challenges.

The results revealed that mentorship influence family business continuity from the succession planning point of view. The results of a study by Samei and Feyzbakhsh (2016) which showed that inadequate successor nurturing prevents many family businesses from managing a successful transition to the next generation, are in line with these findings. A well mentored successor is equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills required to run a business when they take over and this will guarantee business continuity. According to Buckner, 2021, some successors are not interested in taking over the incumbent's role because the incumbents do not provide them with enough mentoring.

The study's findings also demonstrated that financial discipline and determination influence the survival of family businesses. The business may fail or may not develop to the next generation if the successor lacks financial discipline and determination. A successor who lacks financial discipline and enjoys a luxurious lifestyle is likely to fail in business. For business continuity, it is consequently essential that the successor possess both discipline and determination. Research conducted by Kaunda and Nkhoma (2013) revealed that some of the successors in family-owned enterprises that failed not only had a love of luxury once they took over the company, but also had little financial expertise.

Employee motivation is a factor which influences family business continuity from the succession planning point of view. This is because when you have a motivated work force, they are inclined to stay loyal to the business and even help the successor when they take over the business. Employees can be motivated by having employee development programs, giving them loans and other incentives that can motivate them.

The study's findings further reveal that another factor influencing family company continuity is closely monitoring the enterprise. This is consistent with research by Bhargav and Srinivasa (2018) which showed that family-owned firms have a stronger emotional and financial bond with the business than do non-family businesses hence they watch the business closely. Family SMEs benefit from having their owners involved in day-to-day operations, which aids in business continuity after the founders retire. This is because owners typically feel a strong emotional connection to the company and want to see it succeed.

The results further revealed that the closeness and unity that the family has an influence on family business

continuity from the succession planning point of view. This is in agreement with the studies done by Dakoumi and Mnasser (2013) which show that family bonds and succession are another aspect influencing family businesses and these challenges are critical to the future of family businesses. Given their shared objectives, a close and united family is more inclined to cooperate for the benefit of the whole. Moreover, succession disputes are unlikely to arise in such families.

The research findings also show that the profitability of a business influences family business continuity from the succession planning point of view among SMEs. A profitable business is more likely to have a responsible successor who takes over in the running of the business and even expand its operations because it is already at a stage where systems are in place and business can continue running. A family business that is not profitable may not entice anyone to want to take over.

Succession Planning Strategies that can Enhance Family Business Continuity

The second objective of this study was to establish the strategies that enhance family business continuity among SMEs. The study findings revealed six strategies that the family businesses use to enhance family business continuity.

The study findings show that early identification of the is a strategy used to enhance family business continuity. This is done in order to give time to the successor to learn from the predecessor and allow the successor to gain the experience required to run the business. This is in line with the studies done by West (2019) which revealed that employees or family members who have worked in the business for a long time would have acquired the skills which are essential for succeeding. Additionally, successors who have been identified early enough have ample time to understand the vision of the business and will better execute the task ahead of them.

The second strategy that this study revealed was choosing of successors with a passion and interest for the business. This is consistent with observations made by Rajapalase and Kiran (2017) who noted that the primary strategies used by family business leaders to successfully transition from one generation to the next are selecting the successor leaders based on interest and commitment. Additionally, these studies also revealed that one of the primary pillars required to achieve succession planning for business continuity in family businesses is visible commitment that fosters succession planning management. Ghamloush (2021) added that succession does not come by force, and an uninterested successor will not be committed and will not be able to excel in their job.

Learning from other organizations that have effectively transitioned management of the business to the following generation is another strategy this study

revealed. This allows successors to gain knowledge from more seasoned business owners or business successors. Business networking is essential because it provides access to strategies that other companies are employing to successfully manage succession.

The finding of this study also show that the gradual handover of the business to the successor to allow them to be learn and be mentored by the predecessor before they can fully take over the business is a strategy used to enhance family business continuity. These findings are in agreement with the findings by Ghamloush (2021) which show that while training the successor for their new role, the first leader should lead by example and the initial leader should impart knowledge and experience to the successor leader. This knowledge and skill should be passed on gradually rather than all at once. West (2019) added that passing knowledge to employees or family members is necessary for the successor to build abilities in succession planning.

Another strategy which was revealed in this study's findings is the training of the successor in the relevant fields for them to take over the running of the business. In order to enhance succession planning, it is imperative that the successor is trained in the relevant fields for running that particular business. This enables them to understand the nature of the business better, therefore would enhance business continuity. This is consistent with the findings by West (2019) which revealed that employees or family members would be better prepared to learn the necessary skills for succession planning if more emphasis was placed on leadership development. Belasen and Belasen (2016) added that intentional leadership development in an organization entails a succession planning strategy for preparing new leaders for leadership roles.

The study further revealed that involvement of the family members in succession planning is a strategy that enhances family business continuity. By doing this, disagreements within the family are avoided, which could lead to conflicts and disrupt business continuity. According to studies by Visser and Chiloane-Tsoka (2014), family issues and disputes particularly those involving the business's successor are likely to have an impact on the business. Wallace (2010) also mentioned that the family businesses benefited greatly by including members of the next generation in the planning process. Next generation company leaders gain knowledge, skills, and credibility when they participate in succession planning.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess the factors that influence family business continuity from the succession planning point of view in the Zambian Small and Medium Enterprises. The findings of the study show there are several of these factors and they include the level of education of the successor, limiting succession to family members, the successor's interest in the business, knowledge, and skills that the successor has, the mentorship of the successor, financial discipline and determination of the successor, employee motivation, watching the business closely, the unity and bonds shared in the family and planning for succession. The study also identified six strategies that enhance family business continuity and these are; early identification of the successor, choosing a successor with passion and interest for the business, learning from other businesses, training of the successor as well as gradual handover of the business to the successor.

Recommendations

1. Succession plans must to be documented in writing and disclosed periodically in addition to being verbal agreements.
2. The creation of succession plans ought to be a taught skill for business owners. Most family-owned small and medium-sized businesses SMEs are unaware of the need for a succession plan and, consequently, do not know how to draft one. Additionally, as the majority of family SMEs mix up succession plans and wills, it is important to educate them on the distinction.
3. Future studies can be done to employ a quantitative approach to a similar study as well as assess the challenges that SMEs face in succession planning and implementing succession plans.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research utilised a qualitative methodology, which is thought to yield subjective findings. Further, a lack of current research and statistics on family businesses in Zambia was identified by the researcher. The literature referred to on family businesses in this study was from other countries.

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