The effect of Successor Commitment on Corporate Growth Strategy in local family businesses in the manufacturing sector in Nairobi County, Kenya.

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Abstract

Family commitment is at the heart of the family business. Family members' involvement and commitment are critical to the continuity and survival of the family firm. This means that family members' integration into the business, the grooming process that takes place to prepare the offspring for their leadership role in the business, the deeply entrenched community values and family beliefs which allow the family business to have its unique corporate culture and to develop its own governance model through its family council, all contribute significantly to the corporate strategies adopted and hence the continuity and survival of family firms. Successors are an important stakeholder group in the succession process. In the absence of a successor who is managerially and physically capable of taking over the ownership, succession within the family will rarely occur. The successor's willingness to take over depends on three main variables: - commitment to the family; the maturity of the successor, and finally; the degree of responsibility of the successor. The higher these three variables are, the higher the successor's willingness to take over, and consequently the higher the overall satisfaction with the succession process. .A successor may be willing to take over the family business but not fully committed, thus jeopardizing the continuity and growth of the family business and all who depend on it.

Key words: Family business, Succession, Successor commitment, corporate growth strategy, manufacturing, Kenya.

Introduction and Background

A successor is the family member who assumes managerial control and eventual ownership control of the family business after the founder steps down or leaves the family firm. The term “potential successor” describes a family member that has the necessary traits and willingness to potentially take over the family business but has not or did not assume leadership of the business. Though much of the succession research focuses on the role of the founder in the process, or the succession process itself, little attention has been paid to the role of successors.

Past research has examined successor attributes that are good for succession (Chrisman, Chua, & Sharma, 1998). Family business scholars generally agree that successors need to be willing, capable, and committed to taking over the family business (Cabrera-Suarez, 2004; Chrisman Chua & Sharma, 1998; Handler, 1994; Sharma, Chrisman & Chua, 1997). Handler’s research shows that the more a next-generation successor has achieved fulfillment of career interests, psychosocial needs, and life stage needs in the family firm, the more likely the individual will experience a positive succession experience (1994).

Fiegener, Brown, Prince and File (1994) compared successor development in family and non-family businesses and concluded that family firms favour more personal, direct, relationship-centred approaches to successor development, while non-family businesses rely more on formalised, detached, task-centred approaches. Lansberg (1999) suggests that to be effective mentors, seniors must understand the differences between parenting and mentoring. The key to an effective succession is to find an optimal blend of well-timed parenting and mentoring. In the whole succession process, to achieve an effective mentoring, seniors should negotiate the mentoring process with juniors from the very beginning, specifying jobs and competencies that need to be mastered at each stage. Meanwhile, juniors should be assigned real jobs that generate reliable performance data, leading to the final gain in authority.

Lansberg and Astrachan (1994) argue that successor training is mediated by the family’s commitment to the business and the quality of the relationship between owner-manager and successor. They conclude that the family’s commitment to the business is positively associated with the degree of successor training, and that the quality of the relationship between owner-manager and successor is positively associated with the extent of successor training.

Goldberg (1996) study further confirms that business effectiveness is related to successor grooming by providing evidence that effective successors had more years of experience with the business than that of the less effective group. Successor's appropriateness and preparation: The successor's appropriateness and preparation depends on a number of variables that are easily measurable and refer to the knowledge, skills and overall grounding of the successor (Morris, Williams, Allen & Avila., 1997). This critical success factor ensures that the successor is chosen not by gender but rather according to his/her abilities, namely, leadership, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, and preferably a degree of formal education. Additionally, it is important for the owner to involve the successor in the business early in order to gain experience and commitment to the business through on-the-job training.

Though some scholars use willingness and commitment in the same context and assign the same meaning to both terms, in order to further advance and create a rich research agenda, the difference between willingness and commitment should be further highlighted. The word commitment holds a stronger connotation than willingness Sharma and Irving (2005) define successor commitment as characterized by the successor’s frame of mind or psychological state that compels the individual toward the focal behaviour of continuing to profitably operate the family business. The low survival rate of family businesses highlights the fact that many family businesses lack capable and committed successors (Lansberg, 1988).

The issue of who is committed to keeping the business in the family is probably one of the most important questions facing the individual family members (Carlock& Ward, 2001). The senior generation family member owner-managers will therefore need to involve family members of the younger generation who are committed to the vision of the family business as a legacy for future generations (Jaffe, 1991).The survival of family firms requires commitment and proper grooming of family members and Schein (1983), and Hollander and Ellman (1988), suggest that family members’ commitment to the family business is determined by the degree of involvement in the business and the way they were integrated into the business. The low level of interest and commitment of family members may in fact hinder the growth of the family firm (Ibrahim & Ellis, 2004). Hollander and Ellman (1988), contend that the founder should develop the appropriate culture that integrates the family into the business effectively. Without the commitment of the family to business continuity, there can be no parallel planning process.

If the family cannot develop a shared commitment, then it is time to sell or liquidate the family business. Carlock and Ward (2001) further state that assessing the family's commitment to the business and its willingness to work together is necessary for family harmony and individual satisfaction. The development and implementation of a continuity plan require many types of commitment from every imaginable constituent in a family business (Cohn 1992). Future successors need to commit to investing huge amounts of time, energy and passion in the family business. Owners and successors need to commit to a mutually agreeable strategic vision and business plan to implement common goals (Ward, 2004).

A distinction needs to be made between the commitment of the senior generation family members (parents) and the commitment of the younger generation family members (children) to family business continuity. The commitment literature distinguishes between similar bases of commitment: affective, normative and continuance commitment (Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001). These three bases not only differ in their characteristics, but also in their consequences for organizations (Snape& Redman, 2003).Affective commitment is based on an individual's emotional attachment, to identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991).When family members join the company because they believe they have the ability to contribute something to it and they genuinely want to is emotional attachment (Moore, Petty, Palich & Longenecker, 2010) This is characterized by feelings like affection, warmth, belonging, loyalty, fondness and pleasure (Jaros, 1997).

Such feelings are expressed in connection with the family and family business itself. The normative commitment is based on an individual's feeling of obligation to pursue a course of action of relevance to one or more targets (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).The obligation based commitment drives individuals who feel they ought to pursue a career in the family business and hence results from a sense of duty and expectation. Family members with higher levels of emotional and obligation based commitments to the business are more likely to support efforts to promote change which is important to their performance and survival (Moore et al., 2010).This sense for obligation mainly emerges by family members as obligation toward the family. Finally the continuance commitment is based on an individual's awareness of the costs associated with leaving on organization (Ko; Price & Mueller, 1997). This type of commitment is based on a cost-avoidance mind set.

It is based on the belief that the opportunity for gain is too great to pass up hence decision is based on a calculation. This cost based commitment may motivate a person to go beyond the call of duty to protect or extend their financial interests in the company (Moore et al., 2010).

Objective of the study

The objective of the study was to investigate the effect of successor commitment on corporate growth strategy in local family businesses in the manufacturing sector in Nairobi County

Hypothesis of the Study

The study tested the following hypothesis.

H_1. *There is no relationship between successor commitment and corporate growth strategy in local family businesses in the manufacturing sector in Nairobi County.*

Importance of the study

The role of entrepreneurs is important in development and therefore their ability to resolve the succession problem in their organization has significant implications for the growth of both the organization and the country. Management that is passed on to a family member who is of mediocre caliber and whose outlook of the business is a contrast to that of the founder, affects the kind of strategies the business embarks on.This study should contribute valuable knowledge to the field of family business in general. The study should also add knowledge on the subject of successor commitment form a useful material for reference to other researchers and readers in general.

Methodology

Research Design

This study was conducted through descriptive census survey. In general a descriptive design is commonly used to describe a phenomenon or characteristic associated with a subject, estimate proportions of a population that have these characteristics and discover associations among different variables (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007).

The design was selected for this study because it would allow the researcher to do an in depth analysis of how successor commitment affects corporate growth strategy among the local family businesses in the manufacturing sector in Nairobi. The design also gave information that could be generalized.

Target Population

The target population consisted of 97 local manufacturing family businesses. This population was identified through a preliminary survey done from a list provided by Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) in the Kenya Manufacturers and Exporters directory 2013.

Sample

A census study was conducted since the population was relatively small.

Data Collection

A questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. The selection of this tool was guided by the nature of data to be collected and by the objective of the study. The researcher was mainly concerned with views, opinions, feelings, attitudes and perceptions and such information can be best collected through the use of questionnaires.

Regression Model of the Study

The following regression models was developed for the study.

Objective.	**Hypothesis.**	**Analytical Model**
Investigate the effect of successor commitment on corporate growth strategies in local family businesses in the manufacturing sector in	There is no relationship between successor commitment and corporate growth strategy in local family businesses	$Y=\beta_0+\beta_3\chi_3+\varepsilon$ Where Y=Corporate growth strategy(Dependent Variable) β_0=Constant

Nairobi County.	in the manufacturing sector in Nairobi County.	β_3=Regression Coefficient χ_3=Successor Commitment(Independent Variable) ε=error

Results and Discussion

Response rate

The target population was ninety seven family owned businesses in the manufacturing industry in Nairobi County. The study was a census and therefore 97 (100%) questionnaires were administered to the family owned businesses in the manufacturing industry in Nairobi. A total of 65 completed questionnaires were returned and hence the response rate was 67.0%. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), and Saunders, Lewis &Thornhill., (2007) have argued that a response rate of 50 per cent is adequate, a response rate of 60 per cent is good, and a response rate of 70 per cent is very good. Sixty seven per cent response rate was therefore appropriate for drawing conclusion of this study.

Successor Commitment

Successor commitment was assessed using a set of fifteen measures and the relevant findings are highlighted in Table 1. Measures on family and successor commitment had relatively high mean scores. Specifically, family commitment to the growth of the organization had the highest mean score of 4.44, closely followed by commitment of successor with responsibility (mean score = 4.31). However, the cost of leaving the organization compelled the family members to be commitment to the business to a very small extent (mean score = 1.97). Overall, the extent of successor commitment in the manufacturing family businesses was moderate (mean score = 3.82). The performance ratings of the seven items used to measure successor commitment are presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Degree of Successor Commitment in the Family Businesses

Successor Commitment Measures	N	Mean Difference	Std. Error	t	Sig. (2-tailed)

			Mean		
Organization has willing and capable family successors	64	3.969	.146	27.185	.000
Family members feel obligated to remain in the organization	64	3.422	.182	18.798	.000
Emotional attachment compels the family employees to remain in the organization	64	3.281	.180	18.208	.000
Family employees like being identified with the organization	64	3.609	.183	19.708	.000
The cost of leaving the organization compels the family employees to remain in the organisation	64	1.969	.137	14.346	.000
The organization grooms family members to be appointed as successors	64	3.438	.177	19.465	.000
Future successors are committed to the growth of the organization	64	3.641	.166	21.968	.000
The family is committed to the growth of the organization	64	4.438	.113	39.169	.000
Family successors are committed to the growth of the organization	64	4.281	.138	30.993	.000
Mature family successors are committed to the organization	64	4.156	.136	30.589	.000
Family successors with responsibility are committed to the organization	64	4.313	.130	33.269	.000
Skillful and knowledgeable family successors are committed to the business	64	4.266	.126	33.730	.000
The organization trains successors on the job	64	3.938	.141	27.997	.000
The family successors is interested in the business	64	4.281	.131	32.742	.000
The family successor invests time and energy in the business	64	4.250	.122	34.840	.000
Overall mean score= 3.817 T-test for equality of means: test value=0 (Ho: there is no difference expected between the means, at α=0.05 (2-tailed); Reject Ho if p-value $\leq \alpha$, otherwise fail to reject Ho if p-value $> \alpha$					

Source: Research Data (2014)

One sample t-test with a theoretical test value of zero (no significant difference expected in the mean scores) was conducted to establish whether successor commitment varied from one family business in the manufacturing sector to another. The results in Table 1 suggest that mean scores of all the fifteen measures differed significantly from one family business to the other. The highest difference was noted in the commitment of the family members to the growth of the organization (t-value = 39.17, $p < 0.05$), followed by family successor investing time and energy in the business (t-value = 34.84, p-value < 0.05). The lowest difference in the mean score was observed on the cost of leaving the organization compelling the family members to remain in the business (t-value = 14.35, $p < 0.05$), followed by the belief that family members remain in the organisation as an obligation and because they have emotional attachment to the organisation (t-value 18.2, $p < 0.05$) respectively.

Table 2: Successor Commitment Frequency Distribution

Successor Commitment	**Very great extent %**	**Great extent %**	**Moderate extent %**	**Small extent %**	**Not at all %**	**Total %**
Organization has willing and capable family successors	42.2	29.7	17.1	4.7	6.3	100
Family members feel obligated to remain in the organization	28.1	29.7	18.8	3.1	20.3	100
Emotional attachment compels the family employees remain in the organization	25	28.1	14.1	15.6	17.2	100
Family employees like being identified with the organization	37.5	25	15.6	4.7	17.2	100
The cost of leaving the organization compels the family employees	3.1	7.8	15.6	29.7	43.8	100
The organization grooms family members to be appointed as successors	26.6	32.8	15.6	7.8	17.2	100
Future successors are committed to the growth of the organization	31.3	32.8	17.2	6.3	12.4	100
The family is committed to the growth of the organization	60.9	29.7	4.7	1.6	3.1	100
Family successors are committed to the growth of the organization	57.8	26.6	7.7	1.6	6.3	100
Mature family successors are committed to the organization	46.9	35.9	9.4	1.5	6.3	100
Family successors with responsibility are committed to the organization	56.3	31.3	4.7	3.1	4.6	100

Skilful and knowledgeable family successors are committed to the business	53.1	29.7	12.5	0	4.7	100
The organization trains successors on the job	37.5	34.4	18.7	3.1	6.3	100
The family successors is interested in the business	56.3	26.6	10.8	1.6	4.7	100
The family successor invests time and energy in the business	51.6	29.7	14.1	1.5	3.1	100
Average	**40.9**	**28.7**	**13.1**	**5.7**	**11.6**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data (2014)

Drivers of Successor Commitment

All the 15 items measuring successor commitment were subjected to factor analysis after confirming the factorability. The Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.70, above the recommended 0.5 as shown in Table 3 A.

Table 3. A: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.700
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	687.685
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

Source: Research Data (2014)

Results presented in Tables 3 B and C shows three extracted factors and respective loadings. The three extracted factors accounted for 69.84% of the variance in the underlying construct. Factor 1 had six dominant loadings (Organisation has willing and capable family successors; The family successor invests time and energy in the business; The organisation trains successors on the job; Future successors are committed to the growth of the organization; The family successors is interested in the business; Future successors are committed to the growth of the organisation).

The six loadings accounted for 47.05% of the variance in the underlying construct, and was thus labelled successor capability. Factor 2 had six dominant loadings which accounted for 13.67 of the variance in the underlying construct (Family successors with responsibility are committed to the organization; Mature family successors are committed to the organization; The family is committed to the growth of the organization; Skilful and knowledgeable family successors are committed to the business; The family successors is interested in the business; Family successors are committed to the growth of the organization), and was thus labelled family support. Factor 3 had three key loadings which together accounted for 9.12% of the variance in the underlying construct (Emotional attachment compels the family employees remain in the organization; Family members feel obligated to remain in the organization; the cost of leaving the organization compels the family employees) and was thus labelled family attachment.

Table 3 B: Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.057	47.045	47.045	7.057	47.045	47.045	4.265	28.430	28.430
2	2.051	13.674	60.720	2.051	13.674	60.720	3.820	25.466	53.896
3	1.368	9.119	69.839	1.368	9.119	69.839	2.391	15.942	69.839
4	.914	6.092	75.931						
5	.667	4.444	80.376						
6	.607	4.046	84.421						
7	.468	3.122	87.544						
8	.388	2.585	90.129						
9	.343	2.286	92.415						
10	.321	2.138	94.553						
11	.289	1.926	96.479						
12	.242	1.615	98.095						
13	.154	1.026	99.121						
14	.090	.597	99.718						
15	.042	.282	100.000						

Source: Research Data (2014)

Table 3.C: Rotated Component Matrix

	Component		
	1	2	3
Organisation has willing and capable family successors	.763	.360	
Family members feel obligated to remain in the organisation		.307	.784
Emotional attachment compels the family employees to remain in the organisation			.803
Family employees like being identified with the organisation	.479		.484
The cost of leaving the organisation compels the family employees to remain in the organisation	-.306		.626
The organisation grooms family members to be appointed as successors	.612		.351
Future successors are committed to the growth of the organisation	.728		.427
The family is committed to the growth of the organisation	.441	.710	
Family successors are committed to the growth of the organisation	.578	.607	
Mature family successors are committed to the organisation		.848	
Family successors with responsibility are committed to the organisation		.874	
Skilful and knowledgeable family successors are committed to the business	.521	.673	
The organisation trains successors on the job	.756	.340	
The family successors is interested in the business	.639	.648	
The family successor invests time and energy in the business	.763	.336	

Source: Research Data (2014)

Relationship between Successor Commitment and Corporate Growth Strategy

The study set out to evaluate the relationship between successor commitment and the growth strategies adopted by the family businesses in the manufacturing sector in Nairobi County. The proposed null hypothesis was stated as follows;

H_{03}: There is no relationship between successor commitment and corporate growth strategy in local family businesses in the manufacturing sector in Nairobi County.

The aggregate mean score of the growth strategies measures was regressed against the aggregate mean score of the successor commitment.

The hypothesized relationship was presented by a simple linear regression equation as follows;

Growth strategies = $\beta_0 + \beta_3$ (successor commitment) + *e*

Where;

β_0 = Model equation intercept

β_3 = Correlation coefficient for the successor commitment

e = Error term

Table 4.A Goodness-of-fit of Regression of Growth Strategies on Successor Commitment

Sample size	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.201	.040	.024	.55316

Predictors: (Constant), Aggregate Mean of Successor Commitment
Dependent Variable: Aggregate Mean of Growth Strategies

Source: Research Data (2014)

Table 4.B: Overall Significance of Regression of Growth Strategies on Successor Commitment

	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean square	F	Significance (p-value)
Regression	.760	1	.760	2.484	.120
Residual	18.053	59	.306		
Total	18.813	60			

Predictors: (Constant), Aggregate Mean of Successor Commitment
Dependent Variable: Aggregate Mean of Growth Strategies

Source: Research Data (2014)

Table 4.C: Individual significance of Regression of Growth Strategies on Successor Commitment

	Unstandardized Coefficients		t-value	Significance (p-value)	Collinearity Statistics	
	Beta	Standard Error			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.050	.364	5.626	.000		
Aggregate mean of Successor Commitment	.148	.094	1.576	.120	1.000	1.000

Predictors: (Constant), Aggregate Mean of Successor Commitment
Dependent Variable: Aggregate Mean of Growth Strategies

Source: Research Data (2014)

The results presented in table 4.B indicate that the overall effect of the successor commitment on the growth strategies was not statistically significant ($F_{(1,59)}$ = 2.484, *p*-value = 0.120) . Likewise the Table 4.C reveals a statistically non-significant positive linear relationship between successor commitment and the corporate growth strategies ((β = 0.148, *p*-value = 0.120). The adjusted R-square statistic indicates that only 2.4 % of the variance in the growth strategies adopted by family businesses in the manufacturing sector was explained by the successor commitment.

These findings support failure to reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between successor commitment and corporate growth strategies in local family businesses in the manufacturing sector in Nairobi, County. This disagrees with Cabrera-Suarez (2004) who proposes that successors need to be committed to taking over the business and Lansberg (1998) who further argues that low survival rate of family businesses highlights the fact that many family businesses lack committed successors. The findings are also contrary to those of Ibrahim and Ellis (2004) that low level of commitment of family members may hinder the growth of the family firm.

Conclusion

The overall effect of successor commitment on corporate growth strategy was not statistically significant hence a non-significant positive linear relationship between successor commitment and corporate growth strategy. Consequently the null hypothesis that successor commitment does not significantly affect corporate growth strategies in local family businesses in the manufacturing sector in Nairobi County was adopted and the alternative hypothesis that successor commitment significantly affects corporate growth strategies in local family businesses in the manufacturing sector in Nairobi County was rejected.

Recommendations

Family businesses need to choose their successors based on abilities rather than gender and the successors should not only be committed but also willing and capable.They should also ensure the successors are well trained, have the experience and competence required to grow the business. Possible successors should also be coached and mentored. They should also consider having non family employees in the top management.

Direction for further research.

The researcher offers the following direction to future researchers. Since the study operationalized commitment using the variables of Affective, Continuance and Normative commitment a study operationalizing the variables differently could be done.

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