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GENDER DYNAMICS AND SUCCESSION PLANNING IN FAMILY BUSINESSES: EVIDENCE FROM ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Succession in family business is a crucial component for business continuity and most of the family business successors are males which shows that leadership is skewed against females. This study explored gender dynamics and succession planning in family businesses: Evidence from in Ondo State. The study focuses on the perception about the succession process in family businesses related gender issues in Ondo State and why daughters may feel discriminated for succeeding their parents in a family firm. The study analyse the influence of cultural stereotype, trust and management ability on family business succession with focal point among Small And Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Ondo State. Structured questionnaire schedule was delivered and data were acquired from 324 SMEs of family businesses, utilising a cross-sectional survey of descriptive research design, the sampling techniques used was stratified random sampling. Data from the questionnaire were analysed using multiple regression in determining link among the variables. The findings suggested that cultural stereotype and trust has substantial influence on the choice of a successor in family businesses in Ondo State while managerial skill has insignificant influence on the choice of a successor in family businesses in Ondo State. It was proposed that the ability to run family business should be crucial in choosing a successor rather than to stereotype daughters on the basis of culture, since that will determine if the firm would continue.

Keywords*:* Family Business, Gender, Successor, Succession planning
JEL Classification Code: M19

1.0 Introduction

Family businesses represent a critical component of global economic development, serving as the backbone of many economies worldwide. These enterprises are often characterised by strong organizational structures, strategic leadership positions occupied by family members, and a deep commitment to long-term success (Ibitomi & Adeleke, 2020). As noted by Timmons and Spinelli (2017), family businesses have endured for centuries and continue to account for a significant proportion of global economic activity.

Globally, family-owned enterprises constitute the largest form of business ownership, surpassing even multinational corporations in terms of prevalence. It is estimated that 65–80% of all businesses worldwide are either family-owned or family-managed (Foltz & Marshall, 2018). This trend is equally prominent in Africa, where family businesses are expanding rapidly. In Nigeria, family enterprises contribute approximately 46.54% to the nation's Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and represent over 80% of organized private sector businesses (Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), 2017, as cited in Ogbechi & Anetor, 2018). These businesses form one of the oldest and most dominant organizational structures globally (Abouzaid, 2018), exerting significant influence on local and national economies (Shittu & Ibitomi, 2019).

Despite their socioeconomic relevance, succession planning remains a contentious issue in many family businesses, particularly in patriarchal societies like Nigeria. While both male and female offspring may be equally capable, succession tends to favour sons over daughters. This preference is often rooted in cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and societal expectations (Jimenez, 2009; Wang, 2016). The traditional primogeniture system, in which the first-born male inherits leadership, continues to shape succession decisions in many African and Middle Eastern contexts (Llano & Olguin, 2016).

Women in family businesses are frequently marginalized, relegated to less influential roles or excluded entirely from leadership (Byrne & Fattoum, 2015). Even in cases where daughters possess the requisite managerial skills, trustworthiness, and commitment, succession decisions are biased by perceptions of male dominance and concerns about marital status or surname continuity (Allen & Langowits, 2003; Pyromalis et al., 2008).

Recent studies have highlighted the barriers faced by women in attaining leadership positions within family enterprises (Barrett & Moores, 2019; Vera & Dean, 2015; Collins, et al., 2010). These barriers include not only overt gender discrimination but also subtler structural factors that disadvantage women. In patriarchal societies, cultural prescriptions often discourage female leadership, reinforcing the narrative that leadership is a male prerogative (Ayub & Jehn, 2022; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023).

In Nigeria, particularly among the Yoruba ethnic group predominant in Ondo State, cultural factors play a central role in shaping succession decisions. Yoruba traditions often prioritize male heirs, viewing them as the legitimate bearers of the family name and authority (Aina, 2020). This study is thus situated in Ondo State, a region emblematic of gender-based succession biases, and covers the period from 2000 to 2025 capturing both pre- and post-COVID-19 perspectives.

This research focuses on three key variables cultural stereotypes, trust, and managerial aptitude as they relate to gender preference in the succession planning of family businesses. These factors were chosen due to their observable prevalence and influence in the succession practices of family-run enterprises in the region.

In essence, this study aims to investigate the extent to which cultural norms, trust dynamics, and perceived managerial competence influence gendered succession choices in family businesses. By doing so, it seeks to promote gender-inclusive practices that enhance business continuity and inter-generational equity in Nigeria's evolving enterprise landscape.

This paper is organized into five main sections. The first section presents the introduction, followed by a review of relevant literature. The third section outlines the research methodology, while the fourth section discusses the findings of the study. The final section provides the conclusion and recommendations.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Gender Dynamics in Business

Gender dynamics significantly influence leadership structures, decision-making processes, and succession outcomes in business organisations, particularly within family-owned enterprises. Gender is understood as a socially constructed system of roles, expectations, and norms that shapes how individuals are perceived and treated in organisational and economic contexts (Ahl, 2006). These norms often determine access to resources, authority, and leadership opportunities, thereby reinforcing structural inequalities within businesses.

Within the context of business succession, gender has emerged as a critical concern. Despite increasing evidence of women's leadership competence and strategic value, daughters remain underrepresented as successors in many family businesses. This imbalance is largely driven by entrenched patriarchal values, cultural traditions, and gender stereotypes that equate leadership and business continuity with male heirs, particularly in developing economies (Michel & Kammerlander, 2018; Vicente et al., 2017). Practices such as primogeniture and assumptions regarding women's domestic responsibilities further constrain daughters' legitimacy as potential successors, regardless of their qualifications or commitment.

Gender bias in succession has significant implications for business performance and sustainability. Excluding capable women from leadership roles restricts the organisational talent pool, weakens governance mechanisms, and limits strategic adaptability. In contrast, empirical research demonstrates that gender-inclusive leadership and governance structures are associated with improved innovation, enhanced risk oversight, and stronger stakeholder confidence (Post & Byron, 2015; Terjesen et al., 2016). In family businesses specifically, the inclusion of daughters in succession planning has been linked to higher levels of professionalisation, relational governance, and long-term continuity (Bigliardi & Dormio, 2019; Dumas, 1998).

Consequently, contemporary scholarship increasingly advocates for merit-based and gender-neutral succession frameworks that prioritise competence, commitment, and leadership capability rather than gender. Such inclusive approaches not only promote equity but also support strategic business objectives by strengthening human capital and ensuring leadership continuity (Ahrens et al., 2015; Michel & Kammerlander, 2018). As business environments become more competitive and complex, addressing gender dynamics is essential for effective governance, sustainable growth, and intergenerational success.

Succession Planning in Business

Succession planning in business refers to a deliberate, systematic, and forward-looking process through which leadership roles, managerial authority, and often ownership are transferred from incumbent leaders to identified successors to ensure organisational continuity and long-term sustainability. Contemporary literature emphasises that succession planning is not a single event triggered by retirement or exit but a continuous and longitudinal process that begins well before leadership transition occurs (Michel & Kammerlander, 2018; Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2017). It involves identifying potential successors, developing their capabilities, and gradually preparing them to assume strategic leadership responsibilities.

Effective succession planning reduces uncertainty, minimises operational disruption, and preserves organisational knowledge. Scholars conceptualise succession planning as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing leadership development, governance transition, and ownership restructuring (Chittoor & Das, 2017; Daspit et al., 2016). Leadership development focuses on building managerial competence, strategic thinking, and decision-making skills, while governance transition involves redefining authority, accountability, and oversight mechanisms. Ownership restructuring, particularly in family firms, addresses the redistribution of equity and control to support long-term stability.

Succession planning is particularly significant in family-owned enterprises, where family, ownership, and management systems intersect. Leadership transition across generations often results in shifts in decision-making authority, governance structures, and ownership distribution, which may generate conflict if expectations are unclear or processes are perceived as unfair (Handler, 2016; Michel & Kammerlander, 2018). Scholars therefore emphasise the importance of early, transparent, and inclusive succession planning, which allows family members to clarify roles, manage expectations, and reduce intergenerational tensions (Ibrahim et al., 2018).

Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that organisations with well-articulated succession plans are more resilient, inspire greater stakeholder confidence, and achieve superior long-term performance compared to firms that approach succession reactively (Gbande & Paul, 2019; Van der Merwe & Ellis, 2017).

Family Business

A family business is generally defined as an enterprise in which ownership, control, and strategic decision-making are significantly influenced by one family, with the intention of transferring the business across generations (Bigliardi & Dormio, 2019; Villalonga & Amit, 2016). Central to this definition is the notion of transgenerational continuity, which distinguishes family firms from other organisational forms (Leach, 2017).

Family businesses dominate the global economic landscape, accounting for a substantial proportion of private-sector enterprises and employment generation (Foltz & Marshall, 2018). In developing economies such as Nigeria, family-owned enterprises form the backbone of small and medium-sized businesses and contribute significantly to economic development and wealth creation (Ogbechi & Anetor, 2018). Their prevalence is often attributed to strong family ties, flexible governance structures, and a long-term strategic orientation.

The distinctive feature of family businesses lies in the intersection of family, ownership, and management systems. This overlap can create competitive advantages, including trust, commitment, and stewardship behaviour, but it may also generate challenges such as role ambiguity, succession disputes, and governance inefficiencies (Henry et al., 2015; Wang, 2016). These dynamics make family firms fundamentally different from non-family enterprises.

Gender inequality remains a persistent challenge within family businesses. Studies consistently show that sons are more likely than daughters to be chosen as successors, often due to patriarchal norms and traditions such as primogeniture (Byrne & Fattoum, 2015; Llano & Olguin, 2016). Even when daughters possess equal or superior qualifications, they are frequently marginalised in leadership succession. However, recent research indicates a gradual shift toward recognising women’s strategic contributions, particularly in professionally managed family firms (Bigliardi & Dormio, 2019).

Cultural Stereotype

Stereotypes reflect a society's collective understanding of customs, values, beliefs, and social structures. These generalized assumptions are shaped by cultural, religious, and institutional influences (Macrae, et al., 2015). According to social cognition theories, stereotypes form a crucial part of an individual's social knowledge and directly influence interpersonal behavior (Hibbard & Buhrmester, 2011; Witt, 2018).

Stereotyping is defined as the cognitive process through which individuals perceive and judge others, particularly outgroup members, based on generalized beliefs. Gender stereotypes, in particular, are linked to cognitive schemas that drive expectations men are often perceived as independent, assertive, and task-oriented, while women are viewed as nurturing, emotional, and people-oriented (Burr, 2000; Tavris, 2012).

Family, a fundamental cultural unit, significantly influences organizational outcomes yet remains underexplored from a management standpoint. As a core socializing agent, the family not only shapes gender norms but also directly affects succession patterns and stakeholder expectations in family-owned enterprises (Chrisman, et al., 2016).

Trust

Trust is defined as the willingness of an individual to be vulnerable to another, based on the expectation that the latter will act in a reliable and non-opportunistic manner (Mayer, et al., 2015). Trust plays a pivotal role in family firms, where personal and professional relationships are deeply intertwined (Corbetta & Salvato, 2014).

Research shows that trust is a critical psychological construct influenced by emotion, past behavior, and social context (Baron, 2013; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2015; Weick, 2018). In family businesses, trust is not just a by-product of kinship ties but a strategic asset that enhances cooperation and reduces the need for formal control mechanisms.

Chrisman et al., (2017) argue that long-term relational ties in family businesses foster unique trust dynamics, allowing for reduced agency costs and increased organizational commitment. Furthermore, the form and function of trust may vary depending on the stage of business development, leadership structure, and family involvement (Karra et al., 2016). Trust in family businesses may lead to stewardship behaviors, where leaders act in the interest of the firm rather than themselves, aligning with the family's long-term goals and values (Chrisman et al., 2017).

Managerial Aptitudes

Managerial aptitude refers to a leader's ability to make strategic decisions, motivate others, and implement ideas effectively. It encompasses conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills vital for both short-term performance and long-term sustainability (Daft, 2019). Davis (2014) emphasizes that execution delivering projects on time and within budget is a cornerstone of family business success. In the context of succession, managerial aptitude is a major determinant of who is seen as "fit to lead." Family size, business complexity, and perceived leadership competence often influence whether a male or female successor is chosen (Arieu, 2016).

2.2 Theoretical Review

Liberal feminist theory, formally articulated in the late 18th and early 19th centuries by thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) and later developed by scholars including John Stuart Mill (1869), is grounded in Enlightenment principles of individual rights, equality, and rationality. The theory advocates that women should have the same access as men to education, employment, leadership, and other social and economic opportunities (Bryson, 2003; Tong, 2013). It challenges perspectives that attribute gender disparities to biological or inherent differences, instead emphasizing that inequality arises from social, cultural, legal, and institutional barriers that restrict women's participation and advancement (Lorber, 2010). Liberal feminism supports reform through legislative measures, policy interventions, and organizational restructuring to remove these barriers and ensure that opportunities and advancement are based on competence and capability rather than gender.

In family-owned businesses, liberal feminist theory is particularly relevant for understanding the gendered nature of succession planning. Studies consistently show that daughters are often overlooked as successors or assigned secondary roles due to persistent cultural stereotypes that question women's leadership competence, emotional suitability, and loyalty to the business (Cromie & O'Sullivan, 1999; Dumas, 1998; Lewis & Massey, 2011). Even when women possess qualifications equal to or exceeding those of their male siblings, entrenched patriarchal norms and family traditions frequently disadvantage them in succession decisions (Poza & Messer, 2017). The theory also highlights women's informal or "hidden" power, whereby they may influence strategic decisions, mediate family conflicts, and contribute to governance without holding formal authority. However, without structural and cultural reform, such informal influence rarely translates into formal leadership or ownership positions.

Applying liberal feminist theory to this study provides a critical lens for examining how gender biases, cultural norms, and institutional barriers shape succession decisions in Nigerian family-owned businesses. It enables the exploration of why competent daughters are frequently excluded from leadership roles and how these practices impact governance, leadership continuity, and the strategic use of organizational resources. Moreover, the theory informs strategies for promoting gender equity and inclusive succession planning, linking principles of social justice to organizational performance and long-term sustainability.

2.3 Empirical Review

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that gender dynamics play a critical role in succession planning within family-owned businesses across different cultural and economic contexts. Vicente et al., (2017) examined gender considerations in family business succession in Spain using qualitative interviews with business owners and successors. Their findings revealed a persistent preference for male successors despite claims of gender neutrality, with daughters often excluded due to traditional norms and anticipated gendered constraints. However, the study was limited by its qualitative design and narrow geographic focus, creating a gap in understanding how these dynamics manifest quantitatively across broader samples and in developing economies, such as Nigeria.

In Nigeria, Nwadukwe (2016) investigated the impact of Igbo inheritance culture and primogeniture norms on succession in indigenous enterprises in the South-East region. The study found that patriarchal inheritance practices significantly constrained women's opportunities to assume leadership roles. While this research highlights the influence of cultural norms, it is limited to one ethnic group and does not explore how mediating factors, such as education, governance structures, or formal succession policies, may alter gendered succession patterns. Similarly, Irefin and Hammed (2012) studied John Wax Nigeria Limited and found that cultural beliefs act as structural barriers to women's participation in succession. These findings, however, predate more recent socio-economic and legal reforms, indicating a need for updated investigations that reflect evolving gender norms and policies.

In a large-scale Danish study, Bennedsen et al. (2017) analysed 5,334 family business successions and found that first-born sons were significantly more likely to be appointed as successors than daughters, illustrating that gendered biases persist even in Western contexts. Nevertheless, the study did not consider how institutional or governance mechanisms might mitigate these biases, leaving a gap in understanding the structural factors that can influence equitable succession outcomes. Wang (2016), through a systematic literature review, concluded that daughters are globally marginalized in family business succession due to macro-level societal attitudes and micro-level family preferences. However, as this review predates recent global shifts toward gender inclusivity, it highlights the need for updated research to evaluate contemporary changes in succession practices.

Research examining the role of trust in gendered succession further underscores the nuanced dynamics of leadership transitions. Henry et al., (2015) found that founders were more likely to entrust male heirs with leadership responsibilities, based on perceived competence, despite lacking objective evidence. Similarly, Ibrahim et al. (2015) reported that gendered perceptions often overshadow managerial aptitude in assessing successor effectiveness. Both studies, however, are based on older data from developed economies, leaving gaps in understanding how trust dynamics intersect with formal governance structures in emerging economies.

Recent studies have continued to examine gender and succession in Nigerian contexts. Abiri-Franklin and Olugasa (2022, 2024) reported that women are often excluded from succession planning due to cultural and patriarchal biases, and recommended inclusive strategies to enhance business sustainability and performance. While informative, the cross-sectional design limits understanding of the long-term impact of governance mechanisms on gendered succession. Olabode et al. (2023) found that while gender discrimination did not directly affect firm performance, succession planning positively influenced outcomes, highlighting a gap in how gender interacts with performance metrics during succession. Furthermore, a 2025 master's thesis noted that gender bias significantly affects family business survival and recommended gender-neutral successor preparation and mentorship programs (Landmark University Repository, 2025).

International evidence also underscores persistent but evolving gender dynamics. A 2022 Spanish study found that although women occasionally emerge as unexpected successors, extrinsic and intrinsic factors constrain their access to leadership, indicating that gender parity progress is uneven and highly context-dependent (Journal of Family and Economic Issues, 2022). Similarly, a 2025 study in Indonesia reported that while most family business owners now prioritize capabilities over gender in successor selection, sociocultural norms continue to influence decisions (Putri et al., 2025).

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative survey research design, which is appropriate for investigating relationships among variables using primary data collected via structured questionnaires. The design was chosen to enable the collection of standardized responses from a broad cross-section of respondents and to examine the causal relationship between gender preference and succession planning in family-owned businesses with minimal researcher interference (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The target population comprised all registered Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) with the Ondo State Ministry of Commerce and Industry. According to official data, there were 39,627 SMEs registered in Ondo State as of March 2025, encompassing family-owned businesses operating in Ondo Central, Ondo North, and Ondo South senatorial districts (Ondo State Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 2025).

A representative sample was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for sample size calculation. Therefore, a sample size of 399 respondents was drawn from the population to ensure statistical reliability. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation from the three senatorial districts. The SMEs population was divided into strata based on geographic location (Ondo Central, Ondo North, and Ondo South), and samples were drawn proportionally from each stratum.

Table 1: Stratified Distribution of Sample

S/n	Region	SMEs population	Sample Size
1	Ondo Central	26,345	265
2	Ondo North	7213	72
3	Ondo South	6069	62
	Total	39,27	399

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to elicit responses on cultural stereotypes, trust, managerial aptitude, and gender preference in succession planning. The instrument was pre-tested in a pilot study involving 40 respondents to assess its validity and reliability. The internal consistency of the measurement items was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability (CR) metrics. All constructs exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable levels of reliability .

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Statistics

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
SFB (Succession in Family Business)	0.87	0.85	0.93
CSGP (Cultural Stereotype & Gender Preference)	0.92	0.76	0.78
TRGP (Trust & Gender Preference)	0.81	0.77	0.89
MAGP (Managerial Aptitude & Gender Preference)	0.79	0.82	0.92

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistical methods with the aid of SPSS version 31. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and standard deviation) were used to summarize demographic data and respondent perceptions. To test the study's hypotheses and evaluate the strength and direction of relationships between variables, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis were employed.

4.0 Data Analysis and Discussion

A total of 414 questionnaire were distributed to respondents across the three senatorial districts of Ondo State. Out of these, 355 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 85.7%, which is considered high and satisfactory for survey-based research (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Following a thorough screening process for completeness and consistency, 324 questionnaires were deemed valid for analysis, representing 80% of the total questionnaire administered. The remaining 31 questionnaire were excluded due to incomplete or inconsistent responses, ensuring the integrity of the dataset.

The high proportion of valid responses provides a strong empirical foundation for statistical analysis, improving both the reliability and generalizability of the study findings. According to Dillman et al (2014), response rates exceeding 70% are generally sufficient to minimize non-response bias and yield a representative sample of the target population. Consequently, the 324 valid responses were considered robust for examining the factors influencing succession planning in family-owned businesses in Ondo State, providing confidence in the study's analytical results.

Table 3: Gender Distribution of Respondents Across Ondo State Senatorial Districts

Gender	Ondo North	%	Ondo South	%	Ondo Central	%	Total	%
Male	92	71.3	69	62.7	76	56.3	157	70.1
Female	37	28.7	41	37.3	59	43.7	67	29.9

Total	129	100	110	100	135	100	324	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 presents the gender distribution of respondents across the three senatorial districts in Ondo State. A total of 324 valid responses were collected. In Ondo North, out of 129 respondents, 92 (71.3%) were male and 37 (28.7%) were female. In Ondo South, 69 respondents (62.7%) were male while 41 (37.3%) were female. For Ondo Central, 76 respondents (56.3%) were male and 59 (43.7%) were female. Overall, 157 respondents (70.1%) were male and 67 respondents (29.9%) were female across all districts.

The data indicate a male predominance among respondents in the study, suggesting that men are more actively involved or represented in the surveyed family-owned businesses in Ondo State. This pattern may reflect broader socio-cultural norms that favour male participation in business leadership and succession roles. The distribution also highlights regional variations, with Ondo Central having a relatively higher proportion of female respondents (43.7%) compared to Ondo North (28.7%) and Ondo South (37.3%), which may indicate localized differences in gender inclusion or access within family enterprises.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error
Succession in Family Business (SFB)	324	1	3	1.42	0.395	1.282	0.172
Cultural Stereotype (CS)	324	1	3	1.49	0.454	0.578	0.172
Trust (TR)	324	1	3	1.46	0.433	1.585	0.172
Managerial Aptitude (MA)	324	1	3	2.41	0.554	0.094	0.172

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for the main variables used in the study: Succession in Family Business (SFB), Cultural Stereotype (CS), Trust (TR), and Managerial Aptitude (MA). The mean scores indicate the average responses of participants on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The mean for SFB is 1.42 (SD = 0.395), indicating general disagreement with items representing succession challenges. CS recorded a mean of 1.49 (SD = 0.454), suggesting that cultural stereotypes were modestly acknowledged by respondents.

TR had a mean of 1.46 (SD = 0.433), reflecting low levels of perceived trust as a barrier to succession. MA stood out with a mean of 2.41 (SD = 0.554), indicating a relatively higher perception of managerial aptitude as an important factor in succession planning. Skewness values for SFB and TR show positive skew, indicating that a majority of responses clustered toward lower values (i.e., disagreement), especially in trust-related items. In contrast, MA had the lowest skewness, suggesting more balanced responses. These insights form the basis for further inferential analysis in the subsequent section.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.823	.705	.610	.305	1.756

a. Predictors: (Constant), Cultural Stereotype (CS), Trust (TR), Managerial Aptitude (MA)
b. Dependent Variable: Succession in Family Business (SFB)

The model summary in Table 5 shows a strong correlation coefficient (R) of 0.823, indicating a robust positive relationship between the independent variables (CS, TR, MA) and the dependent variable (SFB). The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.705, suggesting that approximately 70.5% of the variance in family business succession can be explained by the combined influence of cultural stereotypes, trust, and managerial aptitude. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.756 falls within an acceptable range, indicating that there is no significant autocorrelation among the residuals. This supports the reliability of the regression model for predictive and explanatory purposes.

Table 6: ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	18.013	3	6.004	72.014	0.000
Residual	15.157	321	0.047	-	-
Total	33.170	324	-	-	-

a. Dependent Variable: Succession in Family Business (SFB)
b. Predictors: (Constant), CS, TR, MA

The results of the ANOVA test indicate that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 72.014$; $p < 0.001$), confirming that at least one of the predictors significantly contributes to explaining changes in family business succession. This validates the model's overall fitness and rejects the null hypothesis that managerial aptitude, trust, and cultural stereotypes have no significant impact on family business succession.

Table 7: Coefficient Estimates

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients (B)**	**Std. Error**	**Standardized Coefficients (Beta)**	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.829	0.128	-	6.611	0.000
Cultural Stereotype (CS)	0.555	0.047	0.638	12.380	0.000
Trust (TR)	0.173	0.048	0.188	3.820	0.000
Managerial Aptitude (MA)	-0.061	0.036	-0.082	-1.673	0.096

Cultural Stereotypes and Family Business Succession

The regression results show that cultural stereotypes significantly influence succession planning in family businesses ($B = 0.555$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that a unit increase in cultural stereotype perception leads to a 0.555 increase in succession outcomes. The high standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.638$) underscores its strong explanatory power. This supports the hypothesis that cultural perceptions significantly shape leadership transitions in family enterprises.

Trust and Family Business Succession

Trust also emerged as a statistically significant predictor of succession ($B = 0.173$, $p < 0.01$). A unit increase in trust results in a 0.173 improvement in succession outcomes, suggesting that interpersonal trust among stakeholders fosters smoother transitions in family firms.

Managerial Aptitude and Family Business Succession

Interestingly, managerial aptitude recorded a negative and statistically insignificant effect on succession outcomes ($B = -0.061$, $p = 0.096$), indicating that higher managerial capability does not necessarily guarantee a successful succession. These finding challenges conventional assumptions and may point to underlying sociocultural or political dynamics that prioritize lineage or gender over competence in succession planning.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the hypothesis that cultural stereotypes significantly influence the choice of successor in family-owned businesses in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between cultural stereotypes and family business succession, suggesting that deeply ingrained gender norms and expectations shape succession planning processes. This finding is consistent with the work of Vicente et al. (2017), Daspit et al. (2016), Bennedsen et al. (2017), and Wang (2016), all of whom reported that cultural perceptions and gender-based expectations play a key role in shaping succession decisions in family businesses. The results align with Gender Role Theory, which asserts that gender stereotypes influence how leadership potential is perceived. Stereotypical views portray women as nurturing, passive, and cooperative, while men are seen as assertive, decisive, and task-oriented. These social constructs affect how individuals judge their own leadership potential and how they are perceived by others. Consequently, female successors are often viewed as less capable or unsuitable for leadership, reinforcing a gender preference that favours male successors despite actual competence or managerial aptitude.

The study also confirms the positive and significant impact of trust on family business succession, supporting the second hypothesis. Trust between founders and potential successors was found to be a critical determinant of succession outcomes. This is in line with the conclusions of Henry et al. (2015) and Vera and Dean (2015), who emphasized that trust enhances communication, strengthens intergenerational relationships, and facilitates leadership transition in family enterprises. A high degree of trust reduces uncertainty and increases the likelihood of successful succession.

In contrast, managerial aptitude was found to have a negative and statistically insignificant influence on family business succession. This suggests that managerial competence, while important, does not significantly determine who is chosen as a successor in the study context. These findings echo that of Arieu (2016), who argued that succession decisions are often influenced more by social and cultural expectations than by demonstrable leadership or management skills. The perception that women are more risk-averse, less confident, and less assertive than men continue to shape succession decisions, regardless of their actual capabilities or professional experience.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the influence of cultural stereotypes, trust, and managerial aptitude on gender preference in family business succession in Ondo State, Nigeria. Based on empirical findings, it was concluded that gender preference remains largely skewed toward male successors, driven by cultural norms and perceptions rather than objective evaluations of managerial competence.

The study revealed that cultural stereotypes play a dominant role in shaping succession decisions, with the prevailing belief that male children are more suitable successors due to their ability to preserve the family name, uphold traditional values, and maintain control over family resources. This reflects entrenched gender biases, often to the detriment of equally capable female successors.

Furthermore, the study concluded that trust significantly influences succession outcomes, as families tend to express greater confidence in male successors, assuming they are less likely to divert the business outside the family structure. There is a perceived risk that female successors may transfer ownership or influence through marital ties, leading to reluctance in appointing them as successors.

While managerial aptitude was hypothesized to be a key determinant of succession, the findings suggest it plays a less significant role in actual decision-making. Rather than being selected based on skill, competence, or education, successors are often chosen based on gendered assumptions and family trust dynamics. This undermines the principles of merit-based succession planning and may compromise the long-term sustainability of the business.

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Daughters should be considered equally for succession based on their capabilities, commitment, and leadership potential. Cultural stereotypes that limit female participation in business leadership should be actively discouraged through awareness and policy reforms within family enterprises.
ii. Families should build trust through transparency, mentorship, and shared experiences, rather than relying on gender-based assumptions. Trust should be cultivated based on demonstrated loyalty, business acumen, and integrity regardless of the successor's gender.
iii. Succession decisions should be guided by managerial aptitude, educational qualifications, and leadership skills, rather than tradition or family expectations. Objective assessment tools and succession planning frameworks should be employed to identify the most competent successor

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