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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Gender Equity and Succession in Family Business Leadership; Evidence from Selected Family Businesses in Agbani, Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined gender equity and succession in family business leadership in selected family-owned businesses in Agbani, Enugu. The specific objectives were to evaluate the influence of gender-inclusive succession policy on the female leadership succession, assess the effect of access to leadership development and mentorship on the smoothness of succession transition, and examine the influence of cultural and family gender norms on post-succession business sustainability. The study used a survey research approach using a standardized five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The population comprised 120 key individuals drawn from selected family businesses in Agbani, including founders, successors, and senior family members involved in succession decisions. Using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula at a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 92 respondents was determined. Data were analyzed using Simple Linear Regression analysis. Findings revealed that gender-inclusive succession policy does not have a significant effect on female leadership succession. However, access to leadership development and mentorship has a beneficial and significant effect on succession smoothness, while cultural and family gender norms significantly influence post-succession business sustainability. The study concludes that although female succession remains restricted, mentorship and progressive norms enhance sustainable leadership transition. The study recommends that family businesses should develop and implement formal gender-inclusive succession policies that emphasize competence rather than gender preference.

Keywords: Gender Equity, Succession, Family Business, Leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

Family businesses are popular and recognized as a dominant force in both global and Nigerian economies, contributing significantly to employment, economic growth, and intergenerational wealth transfer (Orole et al., 2026). However, succession planning is the process by which leadership and ownership are strategically transferred from one generation to the next remains a critical challenge for many family firms, especially where ownership traditions and cultural norms are deeply entrenched (Orole et al., 2026). Nevertheless, planning strategically enhances business performance by providing organizations with a clear roadmap, aligning their internal resources with external opportunities, and improving financial outcomes (Omale & Abdulahi, 2021).

In many Nigerian contexts, including Enugu State, patriarchal values continue to shape leadership dynamics, making the formal inclusion of women in succession discussions infrequent despite their competence and potential to lead. This cultural backdrop underscores the necessity of empirical inquiry into gender equity in succession, particularly in the localized context of Agbani, Enugu.

Gender equity in leadership succession has attracted scholarly interest due to its implications for business sustainability and fairness. A major global quantitative study by Van der Laan Smith et al. (2024) found that daughters' intentions to succeed in family firms are influenced by support from parents and prior exposure to the business, and that national gender inequality moderates these intentions. Such findings highlight that gender is not merely a personal attribute but interacts with socio-cultural norms and value that shape opportunities for women to emerge as viable successors in family business hierarchies (Van der Laan Smith et al., 2024; Omale, 2016). In the Nigerian setting, where traditional succession patterns often favor male heirs, such insights call attention to how gender norms might limit female participation in leadership transitions. In the specific context of Nigerian family businesses, Olabode, Patrick, Maryam, and Adeyinka (2023) examined succession planning practices and gender conflicts, reporting cultural and social acceptance issues as key determinants of how leadership positions are assigned. Their work revealed that sociocultural hierarchy can overshadow merit, affecting employees' motivation negatively (Omale et al., 2022) and reinforcing biases that undervalue women's leadership roles even where they possess the required skills and experience (Olabode et al., 2023). The study therefore suggests that effective succession planning must deliberately address gendered social norms if family businesses are to enhance sustainability and leadership continuity.

Statement of the problem

In an ideal business environment, leadership succession in family-owned enterprises should be based on competence, preparedness, vision, and commitment rather than gender. Family businesses are expected to adopt structured succession planning processes that provide equal opportunities for both male and female family members to prepare for leadership roles. Family businesses in Agbani, Enugu, should reflect modern governance practices where fairness, inclusiveness, and merit guide decisions about leadership transitions.

However, the reality in many family businesses, particularly within traditional communities such as Agbani in Enugu State, appears to differ from this ideal. Succession decisions Cultural norms, patriarchal values, and inheritance traditions often influence succession decisions, favoring by cultural norms, patriarchal values, and inheritance traditions that favor male heirs over female counterparts, regardless of competence or interest. In some cases, daughters who actively contribute to the growth and management of the business are overlooked during succession planning, while leadership roles are reserved for sons or male relatives. Additionally, many family businesses operate without formal succession plans, relying instead on informal agreements and family hierarchy. This lack of structured processes may unintentionally reinforce gender bias and limit women's participation in top leadership positions. Consequently, gender equity in succession remains more theoretical than practical in several local family enterprises.

The continued marginalization of qualified female family members in leadership succession can have significant consequences for family businesses in Agbani. First, excluding capable women from succession reduces the available talent pool, potentially leading to the selection of less-prepared successors and weakening business performance. Second, perceived gender injustice may create internal family conflicts, resentment, and reduced commitment among female members, thereby affecting unity and organizational stability. Third, failure to promote gender equity may hinder innovation, diversity of thought, and adaptability in an increasingly competitive business environment. Over time, poorly managed succession processes may result in leadership crises, business decline, or even collapse. Therefore, the persistence of gender bias in succession planning presents a critical problem that threatens the sustainability and long-term success of family businesses in Agbani, Enugu, and thereby necessitating empirical investigation.

Objective of the study

The primary goal of the research is to investigate gender equity and succession in family business leadership: evidence from selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

1. To examine the effect of gender-inclusive succession policy on the female leadership succession in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.
2. To determine the effect of access to leadership development and mentorship on the smoothness of succession transition in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.
3. To assess the influence of cultural and family gender norms on post-succession business sustainability in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does gender-inclusive succession policy impact on the female leadership succession in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu?
2. How does access to leadership development and mentorship affect the smoothness of succession transition in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu?
3. To what extent do cultural and family gender norms influence post-succession business sustainability in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu?

Statement of hypotheses

The following alternative hypotheses will lead the study:

H_1: Gender-inclusive succession policy has a significant effect on the female leadership succession in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

H_2: Access to leadership development and mentorship has a significant effect on the smoothness of succession transition in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

H_3: Cultural and family gender norms have a significant influence on post-succession business sustainability in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual review of Gender Equity

Gender equity is a foundational concept in understanding how opportunities, resources, and outcomes are fairly distributed among individuals regardless of gender. Unlike gender equality, which focuses on identical treatment and equal share of resources and opportunities, gender equity acknowledges that different genders may need differentiated support to achieve comparable outcomes due to historical and structural disadvantages (Jabeen et al., 2024). In essence, equity involves fairness and justice in procedure and outcome, ensuring that individuals with different needs receive appropriate support to level the playing field in social, economic, and leadership contexts. For example, gender equity measures might include targeted mentorship for women or preferential access to leadership development to correct historic imbalances in representation and access.

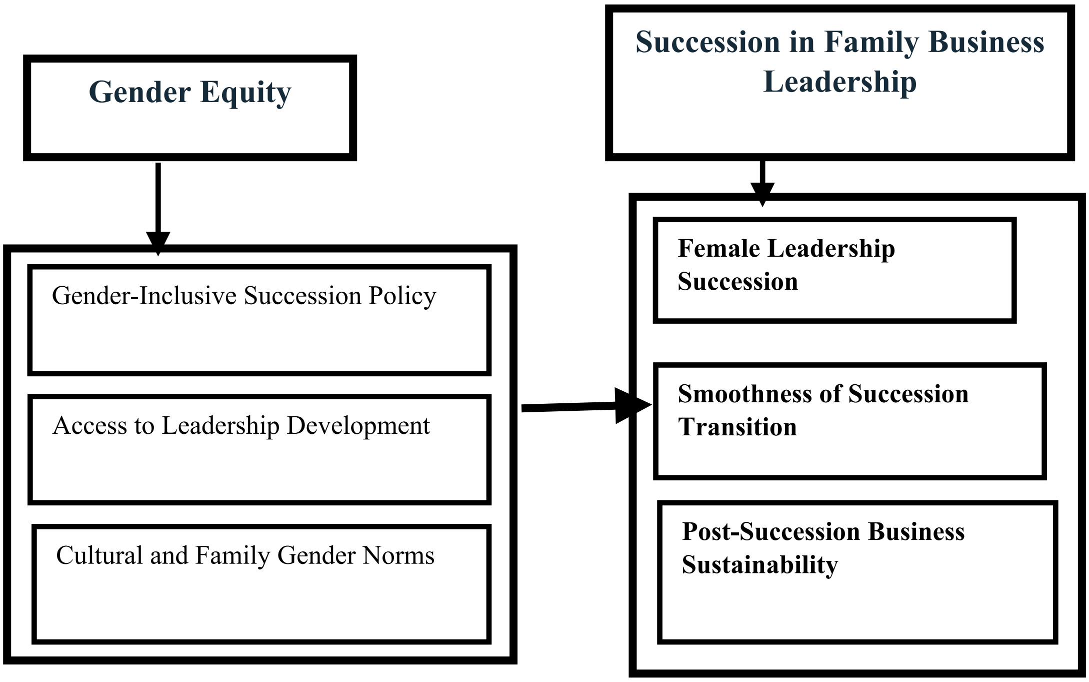
Conceptually, gender equity has shifted from early focuses on access to education and employment into broader structural considerations involving organizational policy, cultural norms, and inclusive practices. Research by Jabeen and colleagues (2024) highlights that in the human resource management sphere, gender equity intersects with diversity and inclusion policies, work-life balance frameworks, recruitment processes, and promotion systems, forming a complex web of interconnected organizational factors that shape equitable outcomes in workplaces globally. These organizational frameworks help to move gender equity beyond simplistic affirmative measures into deeper, systems-level shifts in how institutions think about fairness and inclusion (Jabeen et al., 2024). This broad perspective underscores that achieving equity is not merely a policy target but a holistic transformation of organizational culture and practice.

Succession in Family Business Leadership

Succession in family business leadership refers to the structured or unstructured process through which managerial control and ownership are transferred from one generation of a family to another. It is widely regarded as one of the most critical determinants of family business continuity and long-term sustainability. According to Debicki, et al. (2020), succession is not a single event but a multi-stage process involving preparation, selection, transition, and post-succession adjustment. Their perspective emphasises that effective succession planning necessitates early preparation, engender knowledge transfer and the development of predecessors (Omale et al. 2017), and the establishment of clear governance mechanisms. These elements are crucial for minimising uncertainty and conflict during the transfer of leadership. In contemporary scholarship, succession is increasingly viewed as a process that is both strategic and relational in nature.

Miller and Le Breton-Miller (2021) argue that successful leadership transitions depend on balancing family values with professional management practices. They contend that family firms that institutionalise succession planning through formal policies, mentoring systems, and performance evaluation mechanisms tend to experience smoother leadership transitions. This perspective underscores that succession involves more than just inheritance; it encompasses leadership capability, organisational readiness, and the alignment of family and business objectives. From a governance perspective, Nordqvist and Melin (2022) emphasise that succession involves complex social interactions among family members, where power, trust, identity, and legitimacy play significant roles. They explain that successors must gain both managerial competence and relational legitimacy within the family and the business. Without acceptance from key stakeholders such as employees, siblings, and extended family members, the transition process may generate resistance or internal conflict. This conceptualisation broadens succession beyond structural planning to include emotional and social dimensions.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of Gender Equity and Succession in Family Business Leadership



Source: Researchers Conceptualization, 2026

Leadership Development and Mentorship

Effective workplace leadership development and mentoring programs are considered essential for enhancing an organization's ability to adapt and sustain itself (Cameron, Edwards, & Harper, 2024; Omale, Daniel, & Bularafa, 2025). Mentoring, on the other hand, is a natural one-on-one, mutually committed connection created between a mentor and mentee that promotes personal growth beyond any specific institutional aims (Omale, Oguche, Duru, & Idodo, 2017). Leadership development mentorship is becoming increasingly popular among businesses of all sizes. Leadership growth model and study continue to give researchers with a new logical and evidence-based foundation for planning and implementing leadership development and mentoring interventions (Omale et al., 2017; Alerasoul et al., 2022).

While the existing literature makes noteworthy contributions to understanding leadership development by providing tools for improving mentorship, there is still much to learn (Boak, Crabbe, 2019, Omale, & Oriaku, 2017). It is unusual to find practical, usable tools for both practitioners and academics, as well as comprehensive reviews of the effectiveness of development programs. As a result, more research is needed to determine the impact of access to leadership development and mentorship on the smoothness of succession transitions in chosen family firms.

Cultural, Family Gender Norms and Post-Succession Business Sustainability

In most countries, men engage in more entrepreneurial activities than women (Baughn et al. 2006; Lukeš et al. 2019). Additionally, daughters in households with self-employed parents are less likely than sons to inherit the family business. Entrepreneurship, whether as a founder or family business succession, is not gender neutral (Ahl 2006; Jennings & Brush, 2013) Nelson and Constantinidis (2017), indicate that "entrepreneurship is a gendered issue." Studies suggest that assertive gender behavior is primarily socially constructed rather than biologically determined (Omale & Ojo, 2025). Cultural factors and differences within and across societies also play a significant role (Omale 2016; Kubíček & Machek, 2019). As a result, gender identity may help to explain vocational decisions such as starting one's own business or joining the family enterprise (Greene et al. 2013; Storey and Greene 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Social Role Theory: Social Role Theory, introduced by Alice H. Eagly in 1987, explores how societal expectations regarding gender roles significantly shape individual behaviour, opportunities, and leadership outcomes. The theory explains that societal expectations about gender roles significantly influence individual behaviour, opportunities, and leadership outcomes. It posits that the variations in behaviour between males and females are predominantly influenced by social roles that are culturally constructed, rather than by inherent biological differences. According to the theory, Men are often connected with agentic responsibilities such as leadership, authority, and decision-making, whereas women are frequently tied to communal tasks such as caring, nurturing, and supportive functions. Over time, these socially constructed expectations become deeply embedded in social and organisational systems. They influence workplace structures, leadership selection processes, and succession decisions, often shaping perceptions about who is considered suitable for leadership positions.

Social Role Theory assumes that society assigns different roles to men and women based on cultural norms and historical divisions of labour. These roles shape expectations regarding who is deemed suitable for leadership and their competence. Over time, individuals and organisations internalise these societal expectations, which in turn impact the decisions made regarding promotions and succession planning. Because leadership is traditionally linked with male traits such as power and assertiveness, females could be perceived as less appropriate for leadership roles even when equally qualified. However, the theory also maintains that deliberate institutional reforms and equity practices can gradually reduce gender-based stereotyping and reshape leadership perceptions.

Anchored on Social Role Theory as propounded by Alice H. Eagly (1987), this study explains how gender norms and cultural expectations influence succession decisions in family businesses. In contexts where traditional gender roles are strongly upheld, male successors are more likely to be preferred regardless of competence, while female successors may face structural barriers. The theory therefore provides a useful framework for examining how gender-inclusive succession policies, leadership development opportunities, and cultural gender norms affect female leadership emergence and business sustainability in family businesses.

Empirical Review

Clinton, Ahmed, Lyons, and O'Gorman (2024) conducted a cross-national study titled "The Drivers of Family Business Succession Intentions of Daughters and the Moderating Effects of National Gender Inequality." The study investigated factors influencing daughters' willingness to succeed their parents in family businesses. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 7,798 daughters across 44 countries. The researchers utilized multivariate regression analysis along with interaction modeling as their analytical methods. The findings revealed that parental instrumental support and prior work experience in the family business significantly increased daughters' succession intentions.

Olabode, Patrick, Olusi-Shomoye, and Adeyinka (2023) examined "Succession Planning and Gender Conflicting Issues in Nigerian Family Business Setting." The study adopted a survey research design focusing on female family members involved in business succession processes in Nigeria. Data were collected through structured questionnaires from 56 respondents and analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The findings showed that while gender discrimination did not directly affect overall business performance, structured succession planning significantly improved business sustainability and reduced internal conflicts.

Putri, Dinanti, Hasanah, and Fauziyah (2025) carried out a study on "A Gender-Based Analysis of Family Business Succession." The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using purposive sampling of founders and successor candidates in Indonesian family enterprises. Data were analyzed through thematic content analysis. The findings indicated that most family businesses prioritized education, capability, and commitment over gender in selecting successors. Approximately 67% of respondents reported that gender was not a primary determinant in succession decisions. The study concluded that generational shifts and increased educational exposure are gradually reducing gender bias in leadership transition.

Al Rawaf and Alfalih (2024) investigated "Family Business Sustainability: The Impact of Governance and Women's Empowerment in Saudi Arabia". The study utilised a quantitative design and collected data from 126 family firms. The analytical tool employed was Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Findings revealed that women's empowerment significantly mediated the relationship between corporate governance and family business sustainability. The study demonstrated that inclusive governance structures that promote female participation in leadership positively influence long-term performance and organisational resilience.

Maseda, Iturralde, Aparicio, and Cooper (2025) conducted a systematic study titled "Family Business and the Role of Women: A Systematic Analysis of Their Inclusion." The research adopted a systematic literature review using the PRISMA protocol combined with bibliometric analysis. The findings showed that gender diversity in leadership enhances strategic decision-making quality and succession planning effectiveness. The authors concluded that institutional frameworks and organisational policies are crucial in promoting women's inclusion in family business leadership roles.

Saputra (2025) explored "Gender Exclusion in Succession of Family Business: A Deeper Look". The study used a bibliometric research design to analyse 74 scholarly articles on gender and succession in family firms. The analytical tools included co-word analysis and citation network mapping**.** The findings identified persistent gender bias themes in succession literature, particularly in patriarchal societies. The study emphasised that despite increasing research attention, practical gender exclusion remains prevalent in leadership transitions within family businesses.

Isichei (2025) examined “Succession Planning and Family Business Transgenerational Orientation". The study employed a quantitative survey design and analysed data using regression analysis to validate systems theory within succession planning. The findings revealed that structured succession planning significantly enhances transgenerational continuity and leadership stability. Although gender was not the primary variable, the study highlighted that inclusive planning processes strengthen leadership preparedness and long-term survival of family enterprises.

Gap in Literature

Despite growing research on family business succession and gender inclusion, important gaps remain, particularly in localised and context-specific studies. Many existing studies focus on developed economies or cross-national datasets, with limited attention to indigenous African communities. While international research provides theoretical insights into gender norms and daughters’ succession intentions, it may not adequately reflect the socio-cultural realities of semi-urban communities such as Agbani in Enugu State. This creates a contextual gap, as few studies examine how Igbo cultural norms and inheritance traditions shape gender equity in succession decisions at the community level.

There is also a conceptual gap in the literature. Several studies examine succession planning without isolating gender as a central variable, while others discuss gender inclusion without linking it to measurable succession outcomes. Limited research integrates gender-inclusive policies, mentorship access, and cultural norms simultaneously with outcomes such as female leadership likelihood, transition smoothness, and post-succession sustainability within a single framework.

Furthermore, a methodological gap exists in Nigeria, where gender issues in succession are often discussed descriptively rather than empirically tested using defined independent and dependent variables. The lived experiences of potential female successors in culturally conservative settings also remain underexplored, creating an experiential gap.

Finally, there is insufficient empirical evidence connecting gender-equitable succession practices with long-term business continuity in small indigenous family firms. This study therefore bridges these gaps by examining gender equity and succession within selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu, contributing to both academic knowledge and practical understanding of inclusive succession planning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods approach, integrating descriptive survey and correlational research techniques. Descriptive survey design is used to obtain firsthand information from respondents regarding gender equity practices and succession processes in family businesses. It allows the researcher to describe existing conditions, perceptions, and practices concerning gender-inclusive succession policies, leadership development access, and cultural gender norms. The combination of these designs is appropriate because the study seeks not only to

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describe gender equity practices but also to determine their influence on succession outcomes in family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises a large number of Agbani based family enterprises. The 120 eligible persons are the actual human participants selected to provide data on behalf of the enterprises which are either preparing for succession, currently undergoing succession or recently undergone succession. The 120 eligible individuals represent a certain accessible population of human beings (such as owners, CEOs, managers, or family successors) who are competent, reachable, and designated to complete surveys or be interviewed. The accessible population was 120 persons, determined by a systematic screening process known as sampling framing. It breaks the population down into a manageable, reachable group through four distinct phases, including identifying all existing family businesses, creating an official registration or directory list, and applying inclusion/exclusion criteria. Founders' eligibility criteria included capital investment and majority decision-making authority. Succession eligibility was merit-based rather than blood-based, and included leadership skills, external professional experience, educational standards and a 2- to 5-year internal development track. The active role of senior family members as shareholders was evaluated by family members.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size is determined using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula: the researcher used Taro Yamane's (1967) Statistical Tool for obtaining the sample size from a given population. It is thus presented as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where

n = Sample size

N = Population

e = Error of Margin (5% i.e 0.05)

Therefore, the sample size

$$n = \frac{120}{1+120(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{120}{1+80(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{120}{1+0.2}$$

$$n = \frac{120}{1.30}$$

$$n = 91.3$$

Approximately, the sample size is 92 respondents.

Instrument for Data Collection

In this study, the researcher created a structured questionnaire as the major data gathering instrument. The questionnaire is organized into two section. Section A includes questions about respondents' demographics such as gender, age, position in the firm, and years of involvement in the family enterprise. Section B consists of questions designed to measure the variables of the study using a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale is structured as follows: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire items are specifically developed to measure gender-inclusive succession policy, access to leadership development and mentorship, cultural and family gender norms, likelihood of female leadership succession, smoothness of succession transition, and post-succession business sustainability.

Validity and reliability of Instruments

The researchers validated the questionnaire using multi-item constructs and Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency and content validity. Experts evaluated the items to ensure they sufficiently represent the construct, leading to a strong reliability score of 0.82.

Method of Data Analyses

Data collected from the field are coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The following statistical tools are employed:

1. Descriptive Statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer research questions.
2. Simple Regression analysis to test the hypotheses and determine the effect of gender equity variables on succession outcomes.

All hypotheses are tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDING

This section presents the data gathered from the field and the analyses of the same for a meaningful conclusion on gender equity and succession in family business leadership.

Data Presentation

Table 4.1: Distribution and Return of Questionnaire

S/N	Firms	Number Distributed	Number Returned	Percentage (%) Returned	Number not Returned	Percentage (%) not Returned
1	Chibest Ventures	20	18	19.6	2	2.2
2	Ugochukwu & Sons Enterprises	18	17	18.5	1	1.1
3	Nkem Agro Allied Services	22	20	21.7	2	2.2

4	Ifunanya Trading Company	16	15	16.3	1	1.1
5	Obinna Family Manufacturing	16	16	17.4	0	0.0
	Total	92	86	93.5	6	6.5

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 4.1 above presents the distribution and return rate of questionnaires administered to selected family-owned businesses in Agbani, Enugu State. A total of 92 questionnaires were distributed to the selected firms. Out of the 20 questionnaires administered to Chibest Ventures, 18 (19.6%) were returned, while 2 (2.2%) were not returned. A total of 18 questionnaires were distributed to Ugochukwu & Sons Enterprises, of which 17 (18.5%) were returned and 1 (1.1%) was not returned. Similarly, 22 questionnaires were administered to Nkem Agro Allied Services, out of which 20 (21.7%) were returned and 2 (2.2%) were not returned. Furthermore, 16 questionnaires were distributed to Ifunanya Trading Company, and 15 (16.3%) were returned, while 1 (1.1%) was not returned. Finally, 16 questionnaires were administered to Obinna Family Manufacturing, and all 16 (17.4%) were returned with no unreturned copies. In total, 86 questionnaires representing 93.5% of the distributed copies were properly completed and returned, while 6 questionnaires representing 6.5% were not returned. The researcher therefore used the returned 86 copies of the questionnaire for the analysis in this study.

Descriptive Statistics

Research Question One: What is the effect of gender-inclusive succession policy on female leadership succession in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu?

Table 4.2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Responses on Gender-Inclusive Succession Policy and Female Leadership Succession

S/N	Gender-Inclusive Succession Policy Items	n	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	The business has a formal succession policy that does not discriminate based on gender.	86	1.00	5.00	2.1047	1.01254
2	Female family members are given equal consideration as male members in succession planning.	86	1.00	5.00	2.0233	1.08461
3	Succession decisions are based on competence rather than gender.	86	1.00	5.00	2.1860	0.97345
4	The family business encourages daughters to participate in leadership development programs.	86	1.00	5.00	2.2674	1.10138
5	Transparent succession guidelines increase the	86	1.00	5.00	2.1512	1.05892

	chances of female leadership emergence.					
	Valid N (listwise)	86				

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Data presented in Table 4.2 show means and standard deviations analysis on the relationship between gender-inclusive succession policy and female leadership succession in selected family businesses in Agbani: mean scores of 2.1047 (sd = 1.01254) for "The business has a formal succession policy that does not discriminate based on gender"; 2.0233 (sd = 1.08461) for "Female family members are given equal consideration as male members in succession planning"; 2.1860 (sd = 0.97345) for "Succession decisions are based on competence rather than gender"; 2.2674 (sd = 1.10138) for "The family business encourages daughters to participate in leadership development programs"; 2.1512 (sd = 1.05892) for "Transparent succession guidelines increase the chances of female leadership emergence."

All the mean values are below the benchmark mean of 3.00, indicating that the respondents generally disagreed with the statements. This shows that gender-inclusive succession policies are not commonly practiced in the studied family businesses. The findings therefore suggest that there is low consideration for female leadership succession in family businesses in Agbani, as leadership transitions appear to be influenced by gender preference rather than competence or structured policy frameworks.

Research Question Two: How does access to leadership development and mentorship affect the smoothness of succession transition in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu?

Table 4.3: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Effect of Access to Leadership Development and Mentorship on the Smoothness of Succession Transition

S/N	Leadership Development and Mentorship Items	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Potential successors are provided with structured leadership training before succession.	86	1.00	5.00	4.2093	0.86541
2	Mentorship from founders improves the preparedness of successors.	86	1.00	5.00	4.3488	0.79216
3	Early exposure to managerial responsibilities enhances smooth leadership transition.	86	1.00	5.00	4.2674	0.84352
4	Equal access to mentorship opportunities reduces succession conflict.	86	1.00	5.00	4.1512	0.92438
5	Continuous leadership development programs contribute to post-transition stability.	86	1.00	5.00	4.3023	0.80174
	Valid N (listwise)	86				

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Data presented in Table 4.3 show the mean and standard deviation analysis on the effect of access to leadership development and mentorship on the smoothness of succession transition in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

The mean score of 4.2093 (SD = 0.86541) indicates agreement that potential successors are provided with structured leadership training before succession. A mean score of 4.3488 (SD = 0.79216) shows strong agreement that mentorship from founders improves successor preparedness.

Similarly, a mean score of 4.2674 (SD = 0.84352) suggests that early exposure to managerial responsibilities enhances smooth leadership transition. The mean score of 4.1512 (SD = 0.92438) reflects agreement that equal access to mentorship opportunities reduces succession conflict. Furthermore, a mean score of 4.3023 (SD = 0.80174) indicates that continuous leadership development programs contribute to post-transition stability.

Since all mean values are above the decision benchmark of 3.00, the items are accepted. This implies that access to leadership development and mentorship significantly enhances the smoothness of succession transition in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

Research Question Three: To what extent do cultural and family gender norms influence post-succession business sustainability in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu?

Table 4.4: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Cultural and Family Gender Norms on Post-Succession Business Sustainability

S/N	Cultural and Family Gender Norms Items	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Traditional beliefs influence leadership succession decisions in family businesses.	86	1.00	5.00	4.1744	0.90327
2	Preference for male successors affects long-term business continuity.	86	1.00	5.00	4.0930	0.95681
3	Gender bias in succession decisions can limit business growth potential.	86	1.00	5.00	4.2442	0.82164
4	Inclusive family values enhance business sustainability after succession.	86	1.00	5.00	4.3023	0.78935
5	Cultural acceptance of female leadership improves organizational stability.	86	1.00	5.00	4.2326	0.84890
	Valid N (listwise)	86				

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Data presented in Table 4.4 show the mean and standard deviation analysis on the influence of cultural and family gender norms on post-succession business sustainability in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu. The mean score of 4.1744 (SD = 0.90327) indicates agreement

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that traditional beliefs influence leadership succession decisions in family businesses. A mean score of 4.0930 (SD = 0.95681) suggests that preference for male successors affects long-term business continuity. Furthermore, a mean score of 4.2442 (SD = 0.82164) shows agreement that gender bias in succession decisions can limit business growth potential. The mean score of 4.3023 (SD = 0.78935) reflects strong agreement that inclusive family values enhance business sustainability after succession. Similarly, a mean score of 4.2326 (SD = 0.84890) indicates that cultural acceptance of female leadership improves organizational stability. Since all mean values are above the benchmark mean of 3.00, the items are accepted. This implies that cultural and family gender norms significantly influence post-succession business sustainability in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H_1: Gender-inclusive succession policy has a significant effect on female leadership succession in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

Table 4.5: Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.184	.193		11.316	.000
Gender-inclusive succession policy	-.214	.118	-.162	-1.814	.073

a. Dependent Variable: Likelihood of Female Leadership Succession
Source: SPSS Output Version 25.

Decision

From the analysis, t-calculated = -1.814 and p-value = 0.073 which is greater than 0.05.

Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

This implies that gender-inclusive succession policy does not have a significant positive effect on female leadership succession in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

This suggests that family businesses in Agbani do not operate gender-inclusive succession systems, thereby limiting female leadership emergence.

Hypothesis Two

H_2: Access to leadership development and mentorship has a significant effect on the smoothness of succession transition in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

Table 4.6: Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.584	.149		3.919	.000
Leadership development & mentorship	.842	.036	.889	23.389	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Smoothness of Succession Transition
Source: SPSS Output Version 25.

Student's T-Test

The two-tail test was used to determine the significance of the independent variable.

Decision Rule

If p-value < 0.05, accept the alternative hypothesis.

Decision

The result shows t-calculated = 23.389 and p-value = 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

This indicates that access to leadership development and mentorship has a positive and significant effect on the smoothness of succession transition in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

Hypothesis Three

H_3: Cultural and family gender norms have a significant influence on post-succession business sustainability in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

Table 4.7: Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.601	.167		3.599	.001
Cultural & family gender norms	.776	.044	.861	17.636	.000

a. *Dependent Variable: Post-Succession Business Sustainability*
Source: SPSS Output Version 25.

Student's T-Test

A two-tail test was conducted to determine the significance of the explanatory variable.

Decision Rule

If p-value < 0.05, accept the alternative hypothesis.

Decision

The result shows t-calculated = 17.636 and p-value = 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

This indicates that cultural and family gender norms have a significant influence on post-succession business sustainability in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Hypothesis One revealed a probability value of $p = 0.073 > 0.05$; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This indicates that gender-inclusive succession policy does not significantly influence female leadership succession in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu. The finding suggests that most family businesses in the area do not operate formal, gender-neutral succession frameworks, and leadership decisions remain largely influenced by traditional patriarchal norms. This result is consistent with the findings of Eddleston and Powell (2020), who reported that in contexts where succession criteria are informally structured and culturally biased, female family members are less likely to emerge as successors.

Hypothesis Two showed a probability value of $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that access to leadership development and mentorship has a significant effect on the smoothness of succession transition. This finding aligns with the empirical study of Cabrera-Suárez, De Saá-Pérez, and García-Almeida (2021), who found that structured mentoring, early involvement in management, and systematic leadership grooming significantly enhance succession effectiveness and reduce transition conflicts.

Hypothesis Three also produced a probability value of $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, indicating that cultural and family gender norms significantly influence post-succession business sustainability. This aligns with the findings of Campopiano, De Massis, and Chirico (2020), which showed that socio-cultural expectations influence successor legitimacy and the long-term performance of firms. The study indicated that inclusive cultural norms promote business continuity, whereas rigid gender expectations can weaken leadership stability. Overall, the empirical evidence supports the conclusion that while formal gender-inclusive succession policies are weak in Agbani, leadership development practices and evolving cultural norms play critical roles in shaping succession outcomes and long-term business sustainability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of gender equity on succession in family business leadership in selected family businesses in Agbani, Enugu. The findings reveal that gender equity plays an important but uneven role in succession outcomes within the studied firms. Specifically, gender-inclusive succession policy does not have a significant effect on female leadership succession, indicating that most family businesses in Agbani lack formal, structured, and gender-neutral succession frameworks. Consequently, leadership selection continues to be influenced largely by traditional gender norms, which restrict female participation in succession processes. However, the study found that access to leadership development and mentorship has a positive and significant effect on the smoothness of succession transition, as properly trained and mentored successors experience more organized and less conflict-prone leadership transfers.

The study further established that cultural and family gender norms significantly influence post-succession business sustainability. Inclusive and progressive norms enhance leadership continuity and organizational stability, whereas restrictive gender expectations may limit diversity and weaken long-term growth. Overall, the findings suggest that female leadership succession in Agbani remains constrained by weak gender-inclusive policies and prevailing patriarchal traditions. Nonetheless, structured mentorship and leadership development practices contribute positively to succession success. Therefore, promoting formal succession frameworks, ensuring equal access to mentorship, and encouraging gradual cultural transformation toward inclusivity are essential for achieving meaningful gender equity in family business leadership.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Family businesses should develop and implement formal gender-inclusive succession policies that emphasize competence, experience, and leadership capability rather than gender preference. Clear and documented succession frameworks will enhance fairness, transparency, and equal opportunity for both male and female successors.

2. Business founders and senior family members should institutionalize structured leadership development and mentorship programs for potential successors. Early exposure to managerial responsibilities, formal training, and guided mentorship will reduce succession-related conflict and ensure smoother leadership transitions.

3. Family businesses should actively challenge restrictive cultural and traditional gender norms that limit female participation in leadership. Promoting inclusive family values and encouraging cultural acceptance of female leadership will enhance business sustainability and long-term organizational stability.

Ethical Approval

The management of each of the chosen companies was asked for ethical permission after being fully informed about the goals, procedures, risks, and advantages of the study to safeguard participants through formal review, open communication, and data privacy measures. The researchers do not gather names, contact information, or other personal characteristics, and respondents voluntarily agree to participate in the study without coercion or unjust benefits.

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