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Socio-Cultural Determinants of Transgenerational Survival of Family Businesses in Nigeria

Funke Saraki, Sunday Ade Bello
Ballsbridge University, Commonwealth of Dominica, West Indies

This study examined the socio-cultural determinants of the transgenerational survival of family businesses in Nigeria. The study adopted a positivist research philosophy, a deductive approach, and a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 324 founders, successors, family executives, and key decision-makers of family-owned businesses using a structured questionnaire and analysed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings revealed that cultural norms and practices significantly and positively influence transgenerational survival ($\beta = 0.341$, $p < 0.001$), whereas inheritance practices ($\beta = -0.228$, $p < 0.001$) and extended family obligations together with gendered succession practices ($\beta = -0.187$, $p < 0.001$) exert significant negative effects on business continuity. The structural model explained 62.4% of the variation in transgenerational survival ($R^2 = 0.624$), indicating satisfactory explanatory power. The study concludes that while supportive socio-cultural values enhance continuity, sustainable transgenerational survival requires inclusive succession practices, effective governance structures, and well-managed inheritance systems.

Keywords: family businesses, institutional theory, socio-cultural dynamics, succession planning, transgenerational survival

Introduction

Family businesses are a large, virtually indispensable feature of both established and emerging economies because they produce jobs, create wealth, and assist in sustaining social and economic equilibrium (Gwakwa, 2024). In Nigeria, the private sector is mostly driven by family-owned businesses that operate across a range of fields, like retail, manufacturing, agriculture, services, and education. These firms matter for economic growth since they keep people employed and also encourage the rise of local enterprises. However, Nigerian family businesses are facing serious challenges, mainly because a lot of them stop operating once the founder dies. Organisations' performance in managing succession processes is influenced by its institution, social culture, and methods of operation (Osunde, 2017). Succession itself, meaning the shift of leadership and also ownership from one generation to another, is often the most critical stage in the family firm life cycle. Here, socio-cultural dynamics sit at the center, shaping whether family enterprises can remain going across generations.

Across the world, evidence often suggests that only about a third of family businesses make it to the second generation, and fewer than 10 percent move on to the third (Kuye, Wale-Oshinowo, & Adeleke, 2023).

Funke Saraki, Doctoral Scholar, Ballsbridge University, Commonwealth of Dominica, West Indies. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8449-5313.
Sunday Ade Bello, Doctor of Finance, Leadership and Entrepreneurship, Ballsbridge University, Commonwealth of Dominica, West Indies. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2671-1586.

Nigeria seems to show a similar trend because many family firms do not reach the third generation, due to weak succession structures and problems with succession planning (Okoh, Worlu, Oyewunmi, & Falola, 2021; Uzochukwu & Ezute, 2023). Because of these succession problems, it becomes important to look closely at the cultural environment where family businesses function. Socio-cultural dynamics influence succession by shaping how social values, traditions, and everyday behavioural expectations interact during the transfer of control. In practice, culture influences choices about authority, inheritance, gender roles, and duties to the wider kin group. Nigerian society, with its many ethnic cultures, often leans on customary practice to decide who takes over leadership in family enterprises; sometimes even merit does not fully come first (Pavlov, Puiu, & Alieva, 2025; do Paço et al., 2021; Ogbechie & Anetor, 2015).

The primogeniture principle gives the firstborn son priority for inheriting leadership and ownership rights, even if he may not be the best manager. Traditional inheritance practices also tend to produce gender bias, pushing daughters and other capable female relatives to the side (Otika, Okocha, & Ejiofor, 2019; Chukwuma-Nwuba, 2019). These habits weaken succession results by narrowing the pool of capable successors and by reducing the flexibility of family businesses as time moves on. Also, day-to-day business life is tied to customary inheritance rules and responsibilities to extended family, which strengthens emotional links in the family unit. Extended family members frequently expect to gain from the business assets, and they may join in making important decisions too, which can then cause ownership fragmentation, governance difficulties, and open conflict. Prior research indicates that unity and long-term strategic direction often drop, especially when cultural expectations go beyond what standard governance arrangements can manage (Okoh et al., 2021).

In Nigeria, studies on succession planning have primarily focused on internal organisational and managerial issues such as leadership development, mentorship, and governance frameworks. Less emphasis is paid to how socio-cultural factors influence succession outcomes. Even when mentoring and training increase successor capability, they do not always change the cultural tendencies that favor the eldest son even when competence is not the highest, or that limit women's ability to take leadership roles (Olubiyi, Lawal, & Adeoye, 2022). In a similar manner, weak governance structures may not have the ability to handle cultural practices that are deeply rooted, yet still influence succession choices.

Furthermore, because cultural elements are not being implemented effectively in succession and survival models, there is an urgent need for research into how those social norms function within the institutional environment of Nigerian family-owned enterprises. Most existing studies have not attempted to integrate cultural norms, inheritance systems, extended family obligations, and gendered succession practices into a single cohesive empirical approach. The goal is to clarify how businesses can survive from one generation to the next, rather than presuming it. This gap, therefore, points to a stronger need to study the socio-cultural dynamics as drivers of transgenerational survival in Nigerian family enterprises.

A clearer view of how culture impacts succession is important for building interventions that are not only technically appropriate but also socially accepted. Family businesses need governance frameworks that acknowledge inheritance practices, gender role expectations, and extended family relationships, because these factors strongly shape how ownership is transferred and who becomes the next leader. Therefore, this study looks at how socio-cultural determinants influence the transgenerational survival of family businesses in Nigeria and also offers empirical evidence that can guide more durable succession practices, while improving long-term business continuity.

Statement of the Problem

Family firms account for a sizable proportion of all businesses in Nigeria, and they play an important role in employment generation, domestic commerce development, and total national economic growth. However, many of these family businesses struggle to survive beyond the founder; as a result, only a small number advance to the second generation, and even fewer reach the third (Okoh et al., 2021; Uzochukwu & Ezute, 2023). This continual breakdown in continuity has brought about the slow drain of family wealth, the narrowing of employment options, and the fading of local enterprises, which then bring up severe issues about what defines the ability of family businesses to persist over generations in Nigeria (Uzochukwu & Ezute, 2023).

Studies on family business succession in Nigeria have mostly examined succession from the perspectives of leadership issues, governance, and management arrangements. They refer to aspects like weak succession preparedness, governance frameworks that do not hold well, and minimal leadership grooming as important reasons why organisations do not survive (Olubiyi et al., 2022; Dike et al., 2025). Although these explanations are useful, they fail to capture the more powerful, almost "structural" effects that exist in the socio-cultural setting, which governs family ties, authority lines, inheritance patterns, and what people expect succession to look like.

In many Nigerian family businesses, older norms keep showing up in ownership transfers and leadership handovers. Examples include primogeniture, preference for the male child, inheritance customs, and extended family duties (Chukwuma-Nwuba, 2019; Okoh et al., 2021). In practice, selecting a successor is often influenced by cultural expectations rather than skill, resulting in leadership gaps, dysfunctional governance, increased ownership disagreements, and the organisation eventually ceasing to operate beyond the first generation. Furthermore, gendered inheritance arrangements can exclude qualified female successors from leadership positions. As a result, the pool of potential successors shrinks, reducing the likelihood of long-term stability. Even with the acknowledged importance of these socio-cultural influences, empirical research that explains how they all interact together on transgenerational survival in Nigeria seems scarce.

Because of this, there is not enough evidence on how cultural rules and everyday practices, inheritance methods, obligations to extended family, and gendered succession routines jointly shape whether family businesses continue from one generation to the next in Nigeria. Filling that gap is important for providing a foundation for culturally aware succession strategies that can improve business continuity across generations.

Research Questions

1. How do cultural norms and practices within Nigerian family systems influence the transgenerational survival of family businesses?

2. How do inheritance practices affect succession outcomes and the continuity of family businesses in Nigeria?

3. How do extended family obligations and gendered succession practices influence the transgenerational survival of family businesses in Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the socio-cultural determinants of transgenerational survival of family businesses in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine how cultural norms and practices within Nigerian family systems influence the transgenerational survival of family businesses.

2. Assess the effect of inheritance practices on succession outcomes and the continuity of family businesses in Nigeria.

3. Investigate how extended family obligations and gendered succession practices influence the transgenerational survival of family businesses in Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested:

H_1: Cultural norms and practices within Nigerian family systems have no significant influence on the transgenerational survival of family businesses.

H_2: Inheritance practices have no significant effect on succession outcomes and the continuity of family businesses in Nigeria.

H_3: Extended family obligations and gendered succession practices have no significant influence on the transgenerational survival of family businesses in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Family business and transgenerational survival. Family businesses are unique organisational structures in which one or more families have significant ownership rights and use that power to influence corporate decisions while simultaneously performing managerial duties to hand over the business to the next generations. In practice, they blend ownership arrangements, family ties, and day-to-day business operations in ways that form their own organisational logic and behavioural patterns that basically shape how these enterprises keep going, adjust, and endure over time. This can be seen through dynastic intent, concentrated ownership structures, and the rather tight link between family relationships and governance routines, which then affect strategic decision-making, succession patterns, and also the long-term sustainability of the organisation (Isichei, 2025).

Globally, family firms account for a sizable proportion of all businesses; they also play an important role in job creation and contribute significantly to national GDP. According to Calabrò, Frank, Minichilli, and Suess-Reyes (2021) and Yilmaz, Raetze, de Groote, and Kammerlander (2024), organisational resilience and sustainability are often linked to stewardship mindsets, reputation protection, long-term orientation, and a strong desire for continuity between generations. Transgenerational survival refers to how successfully a family business can maintain its ownership position, leadership continuity, organisational identity, and basic values over consecutive generations. Despite these apparent advantages, many family businesses face continuity issues when one generation replaces the next, and some research indicates that many enterprises collapse beyond the third generation (Prasad & Roy, 2026).

In Nigeria, especially, inheritance disputes that never get resolved, governance systems that are weak or informal, succession disagreements, and the lack of formal succession planning remain some major reasons behind organisational decline during those intergenerational handovers (Dike et al., 2025). Therefore, the sustainability of family businesses depends not only on how well they perform financially, but also on whether succession processes actually work, and the governance mechanisms can hold continuity steady across generations.

Socio-cultural dynamics and family business survival. Socio-cultural dynamics refer to how shared norms, traditions, kinship ties, beliefs, and informal institutions mix and then end up shaping governance

structures, the way decisions are made, and even how succession plays out in family firms (Yang & McDonnell, 2024; Nnajiubah, 2024). Therefore, it is not only about economic or managerial pulls. Instead, these socio-cultural elements are embedded in daily social relationships and strongly steer how legitimacy, trust, and leadership authority are built and kept from one generation to the next. According to Nnajiubah (2024), in family enterprises, these dynamics show up as operational behaviour that reflects collectivist values, patriarchal systems, respect for elders, lineage expectations, and communal duties.

Over time, many family businesses end up with a distinct organisational culture that grows from family traditions, values, and past practices, where loyalty to kin, protection of family standing, reverence for older members, and group-based decision-making become more or less "institutionalised". This culture does not just materialize; it evolves when the founding family values meet the broader culture in which the firm operates (E. H. Schein & P. A. Schein, 2016; Denison, Lief, & Ward, 2004). In Nigeria, these socio-cultural aspects have a significant impact on leadership legitimacy, governance structures, succession options, and overall organisational continuity, making them crucial determinants of whether family businesses endure between generations.

Cultural norms and practices. Cultural norms and practices are basically the common values, beliefs, traditions, and behavioural expectations that guide how people relate to each other and how decisions are made in family businesses. In family firms, these cultural values affect governance systems, leadership patterns, succession routines, and organisational continuity, as they help decide how authority is used and handed over between generations (Olaore, Olakunle, & Ajayi, 2019). Family businesses "read" succession, inheritance, and ownership responsibilities through those cultural lenses, and that reading frames what counts as legitimacy, what people see as trust, and who is treated as having leadership authority (Orole, McKenna, & Härtel, 2026; Okoh et al., 2021; Sallay, Wieszt, Varga, & Martos, 2024). The founder's personal values and leadership style matter a lot for the culture itself, since they can encourage loyalty, trust, family togetherness, and the long-term keeping of family interests, which then support socioemotional wealth and business continuity (Zellweger, Kellermanns, Chrisman, & Chua, 2012). However, a founder-centered culture can also drive things in the opposite direction, such as centralizing decision-making, discouraging fresh ideas, and discreetly establishing resistance to professionalization.

In many Nigerian family businesses, hierarchical and patriarchal cultural setups tend to stress obedience to senior family members, so younger folks, and especially women successors, may face limits when it comes to strategic adjustment and the chances to lead (Makama, 2013; Olabode, Patrick, Maryam, & Adeyinka, 2023; Adisa, Mordi, Simpson, & Iwowo, 2021; Mensah, 2023; Owoo, 2022). Therefore, cultural norms and practices can strengthen business continuity through shared identity and cohesion, but they can also weaken transgenerational survival when tradition basically overrides competence and effective governance, even if the skills are there.

Inheritance practices. Inheritance practices point to wider cultural assumptions about bloodline continuity, gender roles, family duties, and authority arrangements. Within family businesses, they shape how ownership rights, leadership authority, and business control move from one generation to the next, in practice. One of the more widespread inheritance patterns in many Nigerian communities is primogeniture, which gives inheritance rights and leadership authority mostly to the firstborn male child, and the stated goal is to preserve family wealth and continuity in the patrilineal line (Okoh et al., 2021). However, this setup can bring big succession problems because it leaves out younger siblings and female relatives, even when they may have

stronger managerial capability or clearer leadership capacity. Other inheritance systems emphasize equal sharing of assets among heirs. Even though those arrangements look fair on the surface, they can still fragment the ownership base, weaken governance systems and trigger disputes around strategic direction and leadership authority (Otika et al., 2019; Uzochukwu & Ezute, 2023).

Therefore, inheritance practices end up shaping succession legitimacy by influencing whether leadership appointments are justified via customary tradition or via managerial competence. In the end, the kind of inheritance system that family businesses choose has a strong impact on governance quality, succession results, and the transgenerational survival of family firms in Nigeria.

Extended-family obligations, resource diversion, and asset fragmentation. Extended-family obligations are basically the responsibilities that family business owners feel they owe to relatives beyond the immediate nuclear household, and well beyond "just" the core members. In Nigeria and in many African contexts, extended families operate like informal social protection systems: they give emotional backing, resource circulation, and communal solidarity. Because of this, family firms are often expected to provide financial help, employment chances, inheritance access, health-related assistance, school funding, and other welfare duties to wider kin groups (Nwanmuoh, Dibua, & Friday, 2024; Evans, Diop, & Kébé, 2023; Okeah, 2024). These duties can actually glue the family together and boost social legitimacy, but at the same time, they may pull money away from retained earnings, weaken the ability to reinvest, and divert managers' attention from what the business is supposed to do strategically (Dekom, Jingak, & Gontur, 2024; Abubakar, Khalifa, Elbasset, & Alkharusi, 2022).

Resource diversion happens when income or assets get redirected from productive, organisational objectives into family or social obligations, often without any clear governance rules or financial controls (Manzi, Netti, Favino, & Sarto, 2024). Therefore, competing ownership demands from extended relatives can lead to asset fragmentation. When that occurs, managerial coordination gets messier, governance becomes unstable, and succession disputes become more likely (Nnaji-Ihedinmah, Okoroji, Cyril-Nwuche, & Onwuchekwa, 2025). If these socio-cultural pressures are not handled through formal governance structures, they can quietly erode organisational sustainability and lower the chance that the business survives into future generations. However, if communal responsibilities are paired with real financial discipline and governance, that can improve both family unity and long-term business continuity.

Family systems, governance and intergenerational decision-making. Family businesses are not only economic entities, but they are also family systems, where feelings, social roles, expectations, authority patterns, and governance arrangements all move together and shape managerial decisions and strategic choices across generations. The family systems idea helps explain how close family relationships and the ways people depend on each other affect succession planning, leadership transfer, governance design, and overall organisational continuity. In Nigeria, where kinship links, collectivist principles, and cultural duties still carry serious weight, family systems strongly influence whether firms stay alive and keep going through multiple generations (Zaidi, Waqas, & Mahmood, 2024).

Governance structures, in turn, provide the formal and informal pathways through which authority, accountability, decision-making, and conflict resolution are actually handled inside family firms. When governance is effective, it can help manage succession processes, lower internal disputes, protect the family legacy, and sustain organisational continuity across the years (Matagi, 2023; Agba, 2024; Inyang, 2019). Common governance mechanisms include family councils, boards of directors, family constitutions, structured

mentorship, phased leadership change, merit-based successor selection, and formal procedures for handling conflict (Adegbite, Amaeshi, & Nakajima, 2013).

Basically, what happens at the intersection of family systems and governance structures determines how well family firms balance emotional bonds with professional management, and not just "intention" or goodwill. Family firms that combine strong family cohesion with formal governance and structured succession planning are more likely to reach sustainable transgenerational survival than those that depend only on informal family arrangements (Okoh et al., 2021).

Theoretical Review

Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) Theory. Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) Theory was first introduced by Gómez-Mejía, Haynes, Núñez-Nickel, Jacobson, and Moyano-Fuentes (2007) as a way to describe the kind of decision-making that family-owned firms do, which often looks different from purely market-driven logic. The basic claim is that family firms do not chase only financial results; they also pursue a mix of non-financial aspirations like keeping the family identity intact, maintaining emotional closeness, holding on to family control, protecting social standing, and ensuring continuity across generations (Gómez-Mejía, Makri, & Kintana, 2010). Those socioemotional aims then filter into strategic choices around things like governance arrangements, succession preparation, leadership picking, and whether the firm stays sustainable over time. The theory points to major SEW dimensions, family control and influence, the degree to which family members identify with the firm, the presence of tight social bonds, emotional attachment, and dynastic succession, all of which come together to steer organisational conduct (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2010).

SEW also helps to explain why many family firms choose a more conservative or risk-avoidant approach. Instead of selecting successors based primarily on cost-benefit calculations, they frequently rely on family loyalty, emotional links, and the endeavour to safeguard the family history (Zellweger et al., 2012; Berrone, Cruz, & Gómez-Mejía, 2012). In Nigeria, where cultural routines, inheritance practices, gender expectations, and wider family obligations really do weigh heavily on business choices, SEW becomes a rather handy perspective. It helps show how socio-cultural values can shape succession outcomes and eventually determine whether family businesses survive from one generation to the next (Nwanmuoh et al., 2024).

Institutional Theory. Institutional Theory traces its roots to Meyer and Rowan (1977) and was later built on by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), who focused on how organisations adjust their structures and routines so they align with social, cultural, and regulatory expectations. Put simply, the theory contends that organisational actions are shaped not only by economic efficiency but also by legitimacy concerns, meaning firms tend to adopt practices that make them "acceptable" inside their institutional setting. Family businesses sit right at that complicated intersection of business realities, family dynamics, culture, and society. Because of that, they often feel the squeeze from institutional forces, such as tradition, customary norms, religious views, and extended-family networks.

One key idea is institutional isomorphism, meaning organisations start resembling one another due to coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The theory also stresses legitimacy more broadly, since organisations may choose culturally "approved" approaches to securing social recognition and stability in the long run. In the Nigerian family business environment, institutional pressure can be seen through customary inheritance systems, patriarchal norms, obligations to extended family members, and community expectations, all of which affect how governance is organised, who gets to

lead, and how continuity decisions are made. Institutional Theory therefore offers a suitable lens for explaining how socio-cultural expectations influence organisational behaviour and how that, in turn, affects the transgenerational survival of family businesses, even when those routines might not deliver the strongest economic payoff (Agba, 2024).

Empirical Review

Isichei (2025) investigated how succession planning affects the long-term continuity of family enterprises in Nigeria, with a focus on first-born primogeniture rights as a type of "divider/moderator" that alters the overall effect. The research used a quantitative approach and pulled data from 268 family-owned small and medium-sized enterprises. For analysis, the author used Hayes' PROCESS Macro on SPSS version 27 to check both direct and moderating relationships. Results showed that succession planning significantly boosts transgenerational orientation, but also that first-born primogeniture rights significantly moderate the relationship between succession planning and business continuity. In the end, the study concluded that formal succession planning is still crucial for keeping family firms going, even if local inheritance customs keep shaping the final succession results. It recommended that family business owners mix structured succession planning with culturally appropriate governance mechanisms, so long-term organisational survival can actually be improved.

Orole et al. (2026) also explored succession practices and personal experiences in Nigerian family businesses, basically to see how institutional, organisational, and family-level factors influence leadership transition. They used an interpretive qualitative design and did semi-structured interviews with 55 founder-CEOs, successors, and senior managers chosen through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis. The findings pointed out that patriarchal traditions, multiple legal systems, weak governance structures, and a loyalty-based approach to choosing successors all tend to limit good succession planning. The study also showed that when mentoring is inadequate and successors are not properly prepared, continuity across generations gets weaker. The authors suggested culturally sensitive succession frameworks, backed by formal governance structures, and early leadership development and reforms that push merit-based and more inclusive succession practices, to support long-run sustainability.

Dike et al. (2025) investigated the succession planning and sustainability of family businesses in South-East Nigeria, concentrating on what happens when family organisations attempt to plan ahead. The study used a descriptive survey design with 203 respondents, drawn from a population of 1,060 family business operators. Primary data were analysed with descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation to test whether the relationships were statistically meaningful. The findings suggested that mentoring, financing decisions, and successor job rotation all had significant positive effects on business sustainability. The study concluded that structured succession planning can improve leadership competence and strengthen organisational continuity. The study therefore recommended that family businesses institutionalise mentoring programmes, offer deliberate financial support for successor development, and apply rotational assignments, so managerial competence increases and long-term business survival becomes more likely.

Ezenekwe and Nnabugwu (2025) examined how succession planning relates to family business sustainability in Anambra State, Nigeria. In the survey research design, the study collected data from 368

respondents via structured questionnaires, and hypothesis testing used Pearson product-moment correlation. Findings indicated that business mentoring, leadership style, and effective communication significantly improved sustainability dimensions, including marketing, product, and environmental sustainability. The study concluded that structured succession planning contributes to organisational continuity. Finally, the authors recommended that family firms institutionalise mentoring systems, strengthen leadership development, and promote transparent communication to improve succession outcomes and long-term survival.

Zaidi et al. (2024) carried out a qualitative study on the challenges that affect family business sustainability and growth. The study gathered data using in-depth interviews with family business owners, then analysed it thematically. The findings identified succession planning difficulties, governance weaknesses, financial management challenges, communication breakdowns, conflict resolution issues, and human resource management problems as major barriers to long-term sustainability. The study concluded that these connected family and organisational challenges strongly influence both business continuity and family harmony. It recommended context-specific governance structures and support mechanisms that strengthen leadership effectiveness, improve conflict management, and enhance organisational resilience across generations, so the businesses can endure rather than just survive briefly.

Nnajiubah (2024) looked at how family dynamics can shape entrepreneurial choices in Nigerian family businesses. The work used a qualitative design with in-depth interviews, case studies, and some observational methods to understand how owners actually experience things. The study found that family cohesion, cultural values, succession planning, conflict handling, and those intergenerational ties really do affect strategic decision making and whether the business can last. The study also found that extended family involvement brings both opportunities and problems for continuity in Nigerian family enterprises. Overall, the study suggested culturally responsive governance and decision strategies that acknowledge family links while also improving organisational effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

Pittino, Henssen, and Visintin (2025) studied the “why” behind collective psychological ownership in family firms, using a multilevel configurational angle. Data were gathered from 162 people across 33 privately owned family businesses in Belgium, then analysed with fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). The results suggested that organisational socialisation, identification, and signalling routines work together to strengthen collective psychological ownership among family and also non-family members. The paper argued that higher psychological ownership tends to boost organisational commitment, togetherness, and continuity from one generation to the next. It recommended that family firms purposely build inclusive organisational cultures, so that commitment grows and long-term succession results become more likely.

Gwakwa (2024) examined family businesses in Africa from an ontological and contextual view, focusing on what enables sustainability across generations. The approach combined a broad literature scan with 11 in-depth interviews, involving next-generation members in family enterprises across a number of African countries. The findings suggested that even if family firms support economic development a lot, they often get slowed down by governance weaknesses, succession planning breakdowns, ownership disagreements, leadership selection biases, and the constant overlap between family roles and business roles. The study also found that emotional attachment can blur objective decisions, which then weakens professionalism and long-term continuity. The study concluded that sustainable family businesses need a balance between preserving cultural values and adopting professional governance practices. Therefore, the work recommended

merit-based leadership choice, improved governance arrangements, and formal succession planning to enhance transgenerational survival.

S. O. Oluwatukesi, Balogun, T. E. Oluwatukesi, and Jaiyesimi (2023) investigated how succession planning affects continuity for family-owned businesses in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study used a cross-sectional survey design with 368 owners and senior staff drawn from the Nigerian Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME). Structured questionnaires were used, and the data went through SPSS version 25 and Smart PLS version 4.0 for analysis. The findings showed that succession planning makes a meaningful contribution to business continuity, accounting for 30.2% of the change in organisational continuity, even though other environmental pressures still matter for survival. The study concluded that when succession planning is structured, it improves continuity and stability in family-owned firms. For that reason, it suggested that family firms institutionalise formal succession arrangements to support smoother leadership changeovers and keep long-term organisational sustainability across generations.

Okeah (2024) examined succession difficulties tied to Nigerian family-owned businesses, especially the recurring issue where enterprises collapse after the founders pass on. Guided by Institutional Theory and Innovation Theory, the study leaned on secondary data to uncover why entrepreneurial transferability is often weak across generations. The findings indicated that inadequate succession planning, weak mentoring systems, underdeveloped governance structures, and institutional gaps seriously reduce business continuity. It also observed that Nigeria's socio-cultural variety, together with a weak institutional environment, makes succession processes harder and lowers the chances of successful transfer between generations. The conclusion was that business continuity depends on intentional succession planning and methodical leadership development. Accordingly, the study recommended earlier succession preparation, structured mentoring programmes, entrepreneurial coaching for successors, and supportive legal and policy environments, all to strengthen the sustainability of family-owned businesses.

Methodology

This study takes a positivist philosophical approach and employs a deductive research style, in the sense that it attempts to investigate how socio-cultural forces interact with the transgenerational staying power of family businesses using data that can be seen and quantified. The positivist worldview provides a solid foundation for testing theories, owing to its emphasis on empirical evidence. Meanwhile, the deductive approach allows the researchers to test the assumptions derived from Socioemotional Wealth Theory and Institutional Theory.

The study uses a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, which is usually seen as handy for gathering uniform information from people at one moment in time. With this setup, the researchers can track which socio-cultural routines are already in place and how they may shape the continuity of family businesses, and it also fits the use of multivariate analytical tools that are a bit more advanced than basic techniques.

The population is made up of family-owned businesses in Nigeria that have gone through at least one generational transfer, or are still being run by the second generation, or even later. Because socio-cultural differences are important, the study is conducted in selected states that represent the country's major ethnic and cultural zones. The study used a multi-stage sampling approach. First, purposive sampling was utilized to identify qualified family companies. Following that, stratified sampling was used based on both geographical area and industrial category, ensuring that the sample remained broadly representative. In the spirit of Partial

Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the study considers a baseline of 300 respondents sufficient, although in actuality, 400 structured questionnaires were distributed to account for non-response.

Information was gathered with a structured questionnaire, built from existing family business works, and it was rated on a five-point Likert scale, from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Before the main field work, the tool went through content validity checks via expert appraisal, and construct validity through convergent and discriminant validity work. For reliability, Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were used. Also, a pilot run, involving 30 respondents, was done to tune up the instrument before the full survey started. The collection process involved direct administration, electronic sending, and cooperation with relevant business associations, with participation remaining voluntary and confidentiality assured.

Descriptive statistics are the first step in the analysis process, followed by Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for the hypothesis tests. The structural stage examines path coefficients after the measurement stage verifies indicator reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, and discriminant validity. Coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples, and other model fit style characteristics are also included. Ethical commitments, such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for cultural considerations related to inheritance and succession, were strictly upheld throughout the procedure.

Results and Discussions

A total of 400 structured questionnaires were administered to founders, successors, family executives, and key decision-makers of family-owned businesses across selected states in Nigeria. Of these, 347 questionnaires were returned, representing an 86.8% response rate. Following data screening for completeness and consistency, 23 questionnaires were discarded because of substantial missing responses. Consequently, 324 valid questionnaires, representing 81.0% of the distributed instruments, were retained for analysis (see Table 1). The final sample exceeded the minimum sample requirement for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), thereby providing adequate statistical power for estimating the measurement and structural models.

Table 1

Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires distributed	400	100.0
Questionnaires returned	347	86.8
Questionnaires rejected	23	5.8
Valid questionnaires used	324	81.0

Note. Source: Field Survey (2026).

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated to establish the reliability and validity of the latent constructs. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability, while convergent validity was evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted. The results indicate that all constructs exceeded the recommended thresholds of 0.70 for Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability and 0.50 for

AVE (see Table 2). These findings demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity, confirming that the measurement items adequately represented their respective constructs.

Table 2

Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Cultural norms and practices	0.861	0.900	0.643
Inheritance practices	0.842	0.888	0.614
Extended family obligations and gendered succession practices	0.867	0.904	0.653
Transgenerational survival	0.876	0.910	0.669

Note. Source: SmartPLS Output (2026).

The results provide evidence that the measurement model possesses adequate psychometric properties for subsequent structural model estimation.

Structural Model Assessment

The explanatory power of the structural model was examined using the coefficient of determination (R^2), while predictive relevance was assessed using the Stone-Geisser's Q^2 statistic. The model explained 62.4% of the variance in transgenerational survival, indicating moderate to substantial explanatory power. The Q^2 value further confirmed that the model possesses satisfactory predictive capability (see Table 3).

Table 3

Structural Model Assessment

Endogenous construct	R^2	Q^2
Transgenerational survival	0.624	0.418

Note. Source: SmartPLS Output (2026).

The findings suggest that socio-cultural variables collectively account for a substantial proportion of the variation in the continuity of family businesses across generations.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypothesized relationships were tested using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. Path coefficients, t-values, and p-values were used to determine statistical significance at the 5% significance level.

Table 4

Structural Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H_1	Cultural norms and practices → Transgenerational survival	0.341	6.782	0.000	Supported
H_2	Inheritance practices → Transgenerational survival	-0.228	4.964	0.000	Supported
H_3	Extended family obligations and gendered succession practices → Transgenerational survival	-0.187	3.917	0.000	Supported

Note. Source: SmartPLS Bootstrapping Output (2026).

The results reveal that cultural norms and practices exert a significant positive influence on transgenerational survival ($\beta = 0.341$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that adherence to family traditions, kinship values, and culturally accepted leadership practices enhances business continuity across generations. Conversely, inheritance

practices exhibit a significant negative relationship with transgenerational survival ($\beta = -0.228$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that rigid inheritance systems, ownership fragmentation, and succession disputes reduce the likelihood of sustaining family businesses over time. Similarly, extended family obligations and gendered succession practices negatively influence transgenerational survival ($\beta = -0.187$, $p < 0.001$), implying that excessive family demands and discriminatory succession norms may hinder effective leadership transitions and organisational continuity (see Table 4).

Discussion of Findings

The findings show that socio-cultural dynamics matter a lot when it comes to whether family businesses in Nigeria can survive from one generation to the next. In particular, the study found that cultural norms and practices positively shape business continuity, meaning shared family principles, old traditions, kinship bonds, and accepted leadership patterns help the succession process work better and support long-term survival. This result fits with Institutional Theory, which suggests that organisational actions are influenced by the social and cultural systems in place that give legitimacy to organisational choices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In the Nigerian family business setting, culturally approved succession steps and family customs help bring stability and strengthen the willingness to protect the family enterprise across generations. The outcome also aligns with the main idea of Socioemotional Wealth Theory, where family firms seem to value keeping family identity, legacy, and continuity, so decision-making goes beyond just economic calculations (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007; Gómez-Mejía et al., 2010). Overall, this matches what Olaore et al. (2019), Kuye et al. (2023), and Ojelade, Yinus, Ishola, and Opaleye (2022) reported, too, that strong family values and cultural traditions really do support succession success and business sustainability over time.

The study also reveals that inheritance practices have a significant negative effect on transgenerational survival. This implies that when inheritance arrangements are too rigid, or ownership is unevenly shared, or when primogeniture becomes the rule, and succession-related conflicts appear, then organisational stability drops, and continuity weakens across generations. Institutional Theory explains it pretty well, because it argues that organisations may end up following socially accepted norms even when those norms harm organisational efficiency. In many Nigerian family businesses, customary inheritance systems are so embedded in the institutional environment that they often drive succession choices, even if managerial skills or business needs might suggest a different path. As a result, once inheritance practices become institutionalised, they can cause ownership fragmentation, governance disputes, and poor leadership handover, which then threaten long-term survival. This finding also supports earlier work by Ogbechie and Anetor (2015), Chukwuma-Nwuba (2019), Okeah (2024), and Uzochukwu and Ezute (2023), all of whom saw poorly designed inheritance practices as big obstacles to effective succession and business continuity.

The findings further suggest that extended family duties, plus gendered succession practices, affect transgenerational survival negatively and significantly. When there are heavy financial demands coming from extended family members, resources that should be used for productive investment get pulled away. Also, when succession is biased by gender, it becomes harder to choose able successors, and leadership quality tends to fall. Institutional Theory gives a reasonable explanation because it points to how socially constructed norms, patriarchal traditions, and expectations from the wider community influence organisational decisions. The continued presence of accepted gender roles and these extended family obligations may pressure family businesses into succession decisions that meet social expectations, not organisational sustainability. Even

though family firms often try to protect identity and unity (as Socioemotional Wealth Theory describes), those goals can be undermined, especially when cultural expectations limit merit-based leadership selection or force the business to carry excessive obligations, using up business resources. These results are consistent with the evidence from Olufunmilola (2024), Olabode et al. (2023), Adisa et al. (2021), and Evans et al. (2023), who similarly found that gender discrimination, patriarchal norms, and extended family pressure are major hurdles for succession planning and for the long-run sustainability of family businesses.

In conclusion, the study indicates that the transgenerational survival of family businesses in Nigeria depends largely on how socio-cultural institutions shape governance, succession, and leadership choices. Cultural norms that encourage family cohesion and continuity do strengthen survival, but institutionalised inheritance practices along with gendered succession norms can weaken organisational sustainability. So, the study offers empirical backing for Institutional Theory by showing that culturally embedded institutions affect organisational outcomes noticeably. At the same time, Socioemotional Wealth Theory helps explain why family businesses stay committed to protecting family identity, legacy, and continuity even when succession and governance challenges keep showing up. Put together, this blended theoretical view helps clarify the socio-cultural drivers behind the long-term survival of family businesses in Nigeria.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions for Further Studies

Conclusions

The results of this study highlight how important socio-cultural factors are to the survival of family businesses in Nigeria from one generation to the next. The findings also imply that customs and cultural norms support company continuity, primarily because they strengthen family ties, maintain common values, and facilitate leadership transitions across generations. In a sense, these cultural characteristics serve as a foundation for safeguarding and sustaining the company identity across time. The study also shows that some socio-cultural behaviours can actually slow continuity down. For instance, inheritance systems that are built on rigid ownership structures, uneven allocation of assets, and succession disagreements together reduce how well governance works, and it lowers the chances of a clean leadership transition. Likewise, when extended family duties become too much, and when gender biased succession arrangements show up, family businesses feel financial pressure and managerial strain, so sustaining day-to-day operations across generations becomes difficult.

The study concludes by stating that while supportive socio-cultural norms might aid in continuity, traditional behaviours that obstruct sound governance and merit-based succession become actual barriers to transgenerational survival. As a result, it appears that maintaining continuity requires striking a compromise between respecting cultural legacy and treating inclusive succession plans and governance structures as essential rather than optional.

Recommendations

From the findings, the study recommends that family business owners should keep and protect the cultural values that build trust, unity, and a sense of shared duty, but at the same time make sure succession choices are based on competence, not just on tradition alone. Family businesses are also encouraged to put in place formal succession and inheritance plans, so ownership disputes get minimised, asset fragmentation is reduced, and leadership transitions can happen more smoothly.

In addition, business owners should draw clear lines between business resources and extended family obligations, so financial steadiness and long-term growth are not constantly threatened. Family enterprises should also move towards merit-based and gender inclusive succession methods, since this can strengthen leadership quality and improve business continuity from one generation to the next. Lastly, policymakers, family business associations, and entrepreneurship support organisations ought to encourage governance training, succession preparation, and legal reforms that support structured succession systems and discourage discriminatory inheritance approaches.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research should look at other socio-cultural, institutional, and even environmental factors that may affect whether family businesses survive across generations. Comparative work across different regions or countries would also be useful because it can clarify how distinct cultural and institutional settings influence succession routines and continuity.

Longitudinal studies are suggested as well, so researchers can observe how family relations, governance practices, and succession change over time. Future investigations can also consider how economic conditions, government strategies, technological shifts, and market rivalry shape family business sustainability.

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