



SMALL BUSINESS MORTALITY AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN NIGERIA

Etim Osim Etim¹, Akpan James Williams², Augustine Brendan Inyang³
and Michael Esua EKikor⁴

Department of Accounting, Faculty of Business Administration, University of Uyo, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: E-mails: osimacc@gmail.com; etimosimetim@uniuyo.edu.ng

²*Department of Business Management, Faculty of Business Administration, University of Uyo, Nigeria*

³*Faculty of Management and Social Sciences (MASS), Top Faith University, Mkpatak, Nigeria*

⁴*Department of Accounting, Brainfield Polytechnic, Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria. E-mail: ekikomike@gmail.com*

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Abstract: Small businesses in Nigeria have been characterized by high mortality within their first five years of existence, only about five or ten percent survive, thrive and grow to maturity. Effort was made in this study to assess small business mortality and survival strategies in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Cross Sectional Survey Research design was adopted for the study. Data for the study was obtained through questionnaire administered on 384 respondents who were selected using Systematic Random Sampling technique. Descriptive analytical tools like frequency counts, percentages and means were used to analyze the data. Four hypotheses were formulated and tested using simple linear regression and multiple regression analyses. Results show that there is significant and negative relationship between managerial skill and business mortality. There is significant and negative relationship between marketing strategy and small business mortality. Findings also showed that significant joint influence of managerial skills, succession plan and marketing strategy on small business survival in Akwa Ibom State. Thus, it is concluded from the study that managerial skills, succession plan and marketing strategy at affect the small businesses in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Recommendations from the study are that entrepreneurs should acquire needed managerial skills from the onset or hire people with needed competent for the business. They should have effective marketing strategy that will help them cope with competition and gain strategic advantage that will aid them stay in business.

Keyword: Small business, mortality, survival strategies, succession plan, managerial skills

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1. INTRODUCTION

Small business holds vital position in the growth and stability of nations' economy. They have been accepted worldwide as instruments for economic growth and development (Ifekwem, 2016). Governments therefore have made tremendous efforts and formulated policies to support the growth and sustainability of the sub sections. Countries like Germany, Japan, Taiwan, China, and Sweden give training opportunities to people who are interested in establishing their own businesses. They also provide soft loans to help finance their businesses. In Nigeria, Ekpenyong (2002) opined that the government has, at different times made various contributions to grow and develop small businesses, through the establishment of agencies and programs to provide consultancy, information, and guidelines to Nigerians who establish and own businesses. Some of these programs include: Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Equity Investment Scheme (SMEEIS) established in 2001, Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) established in 2003. Some other agencies established include: the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), skills acquisition center and industrial development centers (Ifekwem, 2016). However, Mandah (2012) asserts that operation conditions do not support conducive operating environment for small business in Nigeria.

The mortality rate among small businesses in Nigeria is very high. Studies including Toyin, Issa and Chima (2014) indicate that most businesses do not celebrate their fifth anniversary. The mortality is linked to factors like ineffective management, inefficient accounting system, inadequate financial management, overflowing insufficient marketing and research, wrong location, relying on business partner government policies, unexpected competition, natural disasters, the state of the economy and inadequate planning. (Etim, SMEDAN (2013) added lack of information, inexperience and lack of commitment on the part of operators. These factors seem to be peculiar and general to all small businesses. The efficiency and experience of business owners and management can make or mar the business. It has been estimated that two thirds of small business failure are due to the incompetence of the owners/manager (Graham, 2003). The core of small business failures almost invariably could often times be due to management's nonchalant attitude towards strategic issues, and a lot of people think that managerial skills and knowledge is unnecessary for entrepreneurial activities. In Akwa Ibom State, for instance, many small scale business have failed after many government initiatives like; partnership with

the bank of industry (BOI) to support small businesses owners financially, micro credit programmes, identification of market opportunities, organizing domestic and international, and encouraging patronage of local enterprises.

There was the need to group mortality factors into three in order to enable proper analysis of their effect on business mortality in Akwa Ibom, Nigeria. These factors are managerial skills, succession planning and marketing strategy. These three factors are also used as survival strategies depending on how they are managed. For the purpose of this research, ineffective management, no knowledge of the concept of the business, inexperience and lack of zeal for the business are grouped into managerial skills. Also grouped into succession planning are inadequate planning, government policies, natural disasters and state of the economy. Equally, insufficient marketing and research, relying on a single business partner and unexpected competition are grouped into marketing strategy.

Managerial skills are basically the way business operations are handled to produce positive result in a business firm. It encompasses human skills which is the capability to work well with people both individually and within a group; technical skills is the ability to interpret and develop ideas and also implement strategies. Also, financial capital management is another factor that is key to the success or failure of small businesses.

Marketing strategy is a combined set of alternatives about how a business will develop and gain value over a prolonged period (John and Alan, 2008). It is the tactics businesses come up with to know, understand and use to satisfy customers' needs. Utam and Rahul (2014) claimed that the strategies of a business organization determines to a great extent the success or failure of the business. For the business to be successful, the owner of manager must find out who the business audience really is and what has meaning to them and the best way to offer it to them. This calls for formulating appropriate marketing strategy that states explicitly the vision for the business future. A unifying and unambiguous strategy can help simplify the business goals and activities. (Utam and Rahal, 2014). A cursory observation of marketing trends of small scale business in Akwa Ibom State revealed that they are lacking in developing a competitive marketing strategy that could guarantee their survival. No business can survive if it cannot market its product or service effectively.

Succession planning is an intentional and organized attempt by an organization to make sure there is uninterrupted flow of leadership in key position, keep and generate mental capital for the future and support individual

improvement (Rothwell, 2007). Thirty percent of failures in businesses can be traced to issues concerning succession planning and about fifty percent of small business lack ample succession plans. Consequently they are helpless in matters of sustainability. Till date, one of the most difficult discussions for any entrepreneur to have with his or her family is succession planning. Most entrepreneurs also do not want to have conversations about mortality or failure of their businesses. Furthermore, Obadan and Ohioyenoye (2013) state that to give adequate attention to succession planning is one of the best fit that a generation can hand on the next.

Managerial skills, marketing strategy and succession planning are probably the key factors needed to guarantee small business survival. Survival strategies can be categorized into avoidance, passive and active survival strategies (Sahles and Carr, 2009). It is proper for organizations to adopt active survival strategy to be actively involved in solving challenging situations can create opportunities that accommodate diverse ideas. Different studies have used different variable to measure survival strategies. These variables include entrepreneurial vision, drive and leadership, cost leadership, differentiation, focus strategy and strategic alliance (Ifekwem and Adedamola, 2016 and Lum, 2017). Again, for the purpose this work, entrepreneurial vision, drive and leadership are grouped into managerial skills; cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategies are grouped into marketing strategy while strategic alliance is grouped under succession plan. It is observed that these variables can lead to business failure if not properly managed or business success if properly managed.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Small businesses in Nigeria have been characterized by high mortality especially within their first five years of existence. This high mortality influences economic growth negatively as the small business sub-sector is part of a nation's economy that contributes to economic expansion. This is evidenced in the high rate of unemployment, poverty and low standard of living. Many of these small businesses close down few years after launch, some remain the same without any growth potential as a result of these, they cannot be said to have made significant contribution, to the national economy. The success of business depends on how they implement certain survival strategies. Giving the high rate of mortality of businesses in Akwa Ibom State, it is imperative to investigate how businesses apply three keys strategies that have impact on survival, namely; managerial skill, succession plan and marketing strategy. This researchers set out to investigate.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assess small business mortality and survival strategies in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The following specific objectives are to guide the study; to:

- i. examine the relationship between managerial skill and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State;
- ii. assess the relationship between succession plan and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State;
- iii. examine the relationship between small business marketing strategy and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State, and to
- iv. examine the joint influence of managerial skills, succession plan and marketing strategy on small business survival in Akwa Ibom State.

1.3. Research Questions

- i. What is relationship between managerial skill and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. What is relationship between succession plan and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. What is the relationship between small business marketing strategy and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State?
- iv. What is the joint influence of managerial skills, succession plan and marketing strategy no small business survival in Akwa Ibom State?

1.4. Hypotheses of the Study

- H_{0_1} : There is no significant relationship between managerial skill and business mortality in Akwa Ibom State
- H_{0_2} : There is not significant relationship between succession plan and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State.
- H_{0_3} : There is no significant relationship between small business marketing strategies and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State.
- H_{0_4} : Managerial skills, succession plan and marketing strategy have no joint influence on small business survival in Akwa Ibom State.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The study shall be significant to. Managers and entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State enabling them to know peculiar factors associated with business mortality and strategies they could adopt to reduce business mortality and increase sustainability and growth. The result of the study shall show relevant survival strategy for businesses operating in the state. The study will indicate to government and policy makers the areas they need to focus of improve on that will enhance small business survival and reduce mortality. It shall also serve as a reference material for future research work, by the academia.

1.6. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The focus of the study is on small business mortality and survival strategies in Nigeria with Akwa Ibom State on the case study. Geographically, the study involves businesses situated in the urban centres of commercial activities in Akwa Ibom State by the State Ministry of Investment, Commerce and Industry. (State Ministry of Investment, Commerce and Industry, 2011). Contextually, the study is in entrepreneurial development discipline. In terms of content, the study focused on managerial skill, market strategy, succession plan as small business mortality and small business survival strategies.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1. An Overview of small business development in Nigeria

Before the emergence of the colonial administration, greater number of Nigerians were mainly involved in small businesses and most concentrated in agriculture. Through that time, the primary source of wealth came from agricultural products like palm oil, cocoa, groundnut and rubber. In addition to agriculture, wood carving, weaving, basket marking, pottery, raffia making, wine tapping and blacksmithing were other forms of small businesses engaged in, usually combined with agriculture or in rare cases alone. Most of these units did not employ paid workers. In many cases, they were carried out by the head of the family assisted by other members of the family. Hence, small businesses received great support and attention from the government as they were the main source of the country's wealth then. (Adisa, Adbulraheem and Mordi, 2014).

These traditional businesses transformed into modern small-scale businesses as Nigeria advanced in its developmental stage. Today, these traditional

businesses are known as small scale business operating modern types of small scale business like carpentry, tailoring, shoe-making, palm oil processing, cassava processing, fruit juice making, beverages, cosmetics, dyeing, hair dressing, soap making and among others. Considerable evidence show that practically all of the multinational big corporations started as business activities carried out in people's home and expanded as their industry expanded. Internationally, Japan's economy was controlled by cottage firms, conventional industries and a huge number of small scale firms in her early stages of industrialization. These business got their strength from labour and supply not from large quantities of capital (Ogechukwu, 2011).

2.1.2. Small Business

The desire to have fixed point of reference to recognize small businesses stirred scholars to describe it using different criteria's like number of employees, Capital outlay, Asset base, and market size (Ajide, Hameed, and Oyetade, 2014). Different countries define small business differently, but they are usually centered on No. of employees, size of first investments and turnover rate (Kusi, Opata & Marhh, 2015). The phrase "Small business" embeds different firms.

In some countries, a business is defined as small because of a certain number of employees say five or ten. In some others, a small business is one that operates only in the area where it is located. Some other categories of business as small enterprise like road side shoemakers, local stores or dress shops.

The above opinions initiated arguments as to where to set a limit between big and small businesses. In this light, Mandah (2010) defines small scale business as "a business that is owned and operated by one or two persons, has one organizational structure, has an insignificant share in the market, has an employee based of less than fifty people.

2.1.3. Characteristics of Small Scale Business in Nigeria

Recently in Nigeria, the increase in the number of small businesses is as a result of high rate of unemployment. The number of graduates are increasing without an equivalent level of increase in job opportunities which is gradually moving the society to the point where an average graduate is prepared to start a business while haunting for white collar jobs.

One of the basic characteristics of small business is its ownership structure which is usually sole proprietorship or partnership where the manager of the

business is the owner or in some cases relatives of the owner. The owner is responsible for planning, organizing, directing and controlling the activities that produce business value. Another characteristics of small businesses is their source of funds are mainly from owner's savings, loans from friends and relatives. Raising funds from external sources like finance houses are usually difficult because of the conditions required by finance houses for business owners so they are faced with raising their capital/funds personally which limits them from getting adequate fund for their business to operate swiftly.

Features that differentiate small businesses from large businesses. Okoya (2002 cited by Mandah, 2010) stated that the characteristic of small businesses was gathered after assessing a financing report of small businesses in Nigeria). The following features were identified by Mandah (2010): Small scale businesses are more than large scale businesses because it requires lesser amount of start up; in most cases, the owner handles every aspect of the business alone. No place for specialization; management is independent; all employees know the owner of the business; small businesses are majorly operated as sole proprietorship; small business focus on providing consumer oriented goods; small business do not have substantial accounting records; their scale of operation, no of employees, investment is relatively small.

According to a survey of Adisa, Abdulraheem and Mordi (2014) about 16% of small business owners had tertiary education while about 84% had primary and secondary education. This indicates that most small businesses is characterized by owners with little educational background which would be a hindrance to the smooth running of the business. A lot of them also lack prior experience in business before starting their present business activity.

Many small businesses in Nigeria is characterized by higher rate of discontinuity because most business owners do not consider plans for successful handover of ownership to the upcoming generation. Thus the death of the owner brings about the death of the business. Successful handing over of ownership is therefore vital to the progress and success of small businesses. The incapability of small business owners to handover the business successfully to the next person in lien way result in the death of the business.

2.1.5. Managerial Skill

Ake (2017) defines management simply as the arrangement or regulation of business activity. Gaurav (2011) sees management as a demanding job that needs special expertise to achieve success. The vital skill every business

owner/manager requires for performing effectively are called management skills (Gaurav, 2011). Management skill are defined differently by different authors; business dictionary defines management skill as the aptness to make decisions and assist subordinates. As stated by Gaurav (2011), managerial skill is the understanding and capability that individuals in managerial possess that enables them to carry out specified management tasks; Management skill can be defined as possessing the ability to operate a business, make the best decisions for the business while handling effectively the overall output of the business.

Management skills are techniques a business owner/manager employs to ensure the business attain its goals. It is the tool box required by a manager to be effective in carrying out his functions. These definitions point to one thing, that management skill is the ability to effectively run a business to achieve success. It is important for business owners/managers to equip themselves with adequate managerial knowledge and competences to successfully run their enterprise. Sanusi (2008) states that the level of management skills required to run an enterprise to another, depending on the sector, size or other considerations.

The inability of small business owners to realize the relevance of managerial skills and the necessity to improve their managerial skills is an easy ways of allowing the business to die. Kusi *et. al.*, (2015) noted that the competence of a business owner/manager is a deciding factor in the success or failure of business. In line with this, Agwu and Emeti (2018) stated that 90 percent of small business failure is as a result of the inexperience of business owners/managers Graham (2013) also stated that two thirds of small business failures are due to the incompetence of the owner/manager.

Technical Skill: This is a practical ability or capability and specialized understanding required to carry out tasks in technical functions in science, finance, sales, IT or engineering. The skill gives the manager an understanding on how to use specialized software, tools or knowledge to achieve what the business requires at that time. Technical skills are not only machine and equipment related. They are useful in designing ways to increase sales, design a new product/service, and sell the product/service to targeted consumers (Katz, 1974).

Conceptual Skill: It is the capability to see an organization as a whole and the woven relationship between its parts, understand how the organization fits into and affects its overall environment. This skill is about the creative ability of managers, how they can dictate the reason behind a problem and come up with creative and useful solutions. It aids the manager to setup goals of the entire organization and plan for every situation (Katz, 1974).

Human or Interpersonal Skill: It is a skill of knowing how to lead people. It is a skill on how to relate with people. Relating with people is one of the most difficult management tasks. The customers of a business for instance are the essence of the existence of a business enterprise thus treating them well is of great importance, which makes this skill very essential. Human and interpersonal skill assists managers to relate effortlessly with others. Also, it helps managers utilize human potential in the organization and initiate team spirit in the organization (Katz, 1974).

2.1.6. Marketing Strategy

The three cornerstone of small business growth according to Jenson (2008) are: managerial skills, skilled labour, and marketing capability of strategy. He defines marketing as the process of satisfactorily meeting the needs of an organization's stakeholders and giving them value of their investments. Stakeholders are the focus of marketing efforts because these group of people or organizations the business relate with either directly or indirectly, can affect or be affected by the operations of the organization.

John and Alan (2018) defines marketing strategy as combines alternatives of how a business will design and secure value over an extended period of time. Kenneth Waldman (2016) sees marketing strategy marketing strategy as a number of skilled procedures that allows an organization control its resources towards maximizing best available opportunities that will result in increased sales, and obtain in edge over competitors. It involves sustainable business activities that accord the business organization an opportunity to develop an impregnable brand awareness. It is also viewed as an ideology that activates the process through which organizations groups and individuals attain their needs and wants to discovering value, draw up means of achieving it, communicate and deliver it to others.

2.1.7. Succession Plan

Greater number of businesses in Nigeria are small businesses and most of them are sole proprietorship or small scale partnerships. In developing economics like Nigeria, the small business sector experiences turbulence and one clear features of this turbulence according to Monibo (2003) is the scarcity of 2nd and 3rd generation businesses. He further pointed that one vital cause of the sector which is commonly ignored and the reason why there is scarcity of long established businesses is the question of succession. In contract with

big firms, small businesses without concrete succession plans usually fold up to the occurrences of the death, retirement or sickness of the owner or vital partner of the business. Operating a business without planning for succession can drown a business. Despite its potential of giving more insight on the issues of high business mortality and low chance of long life, the subject of succession has remained largely unexplored in the small business literature. The neglect can be linked to the notion about the size and firm of ownership of small businesses in which the life and continuity of the business is interdependent on the owner. These individuals are more focused on seeing their business idea succeed than think about their mortality. This goes on from year to year until they are taken unawares by an unpleasant event that does not permit them to function anymore. That is why industry observers say succession planning is vital though small business literature are silent on succession as being a problem or contributing factor to small business mortality. This study however seeks to highlight its importance to business survival and longevity which is an aspect of success. It is generally accepted that having a succession plan is pivotal to the success and longevity of a business (Etim, 2011).

Rothwell (2007) described succession planning as an intentionally organized attempt by an organization to make sure there is continuity in leadership positions, improve and maintain intellectual capital for the future. Basically, succession planning is a visionary effort to make certain there is hitch free transfer of ownership of a business from the current owner to his successor through effective personnel development. The 2021 state of succession planning report defines succession planning as any attempt made to make sure the productive performance of an organization or work group continues after the exit of the current manager, by creating opportunities for the improvement and substitution of leaders/managers/owners. Akpan and Ukpai (2017) revealed that thirty percent of business are unsuccessful as a result of succession plan related issues and about fifty percent of small businesses lack sufficient successions plans. Therefore, small business are vulnerable to high risk in sustainability as a result of inadequate succession planning.

2.1.8. Small Business Mortality

Small business has great influence on the growth and development of an economy that cannot be overlooked. Therefore, an insight on the cause of their failure is necessary for the wellbeing and strength of an economy. It is generally accepted that the growth of small businesses play an important part in the growth of a nation's economy. Small businesses assist in providing new jobs,

launch new products into the market and make specialized skills available to large firms. Regrettably, most of them close down within a short period of their existence. To reduce the occurrence of this, it is necessary to understand the reason behind their short existence.

In Nigeria, it cannot be said explicitly that most small business owners understand why small businesses fail as a result of which they cannot prevent it from happening. Business mortality occurs when a business stops operating. When a business can no longer carry out the functions for which it was established, it is considered to have failed. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, business mortality will be referred to as business failure.

Business failure is mainly viewed as a business incapability to continue operating as a result of loss of capital or meager return on investments. There are numerous and diverse source of business failure which may originate both from the internal and external environment. In most cases, there is a possibility of the internal sources of business failure to be anticipated in advance, on the flip side, external sources are not that easily predictable most times multiplex combination of causes play a part in business failure, one single factor is rarely involved (FEE Publication 2007).

Some of the internal and external factors that causes business failure are: Bad management, shortfall in accounting, inadequate each flow management, overtrading, inadequate research and marketing, overtrading, deception wrong location, dependence on one customer or suppliers, government policies, unexpected competition, natural disasters, the state of the economy, inadequate planning. Most of the reasons for business failure as attributed by SMEDAN are: No knowledge or understanding of the business' idea as the major factor that causes failure, insufficient data on the business and its environment was also recognized as a major cause of failure. It emphasized that fund is not the most important necessity for business success as believed by most people, but that it is the least factor. SMEDAN, also revealed some cause peculiar to Nigeria to be: Bad management, lack of financial management, no plan for the business, inexperience of the business owner, No passion and enthusiasm for the business. Ishda, Olaleye, Ajayi and Femi (2013) supports the assertion of SMEDAN that effective management and not fund is a major factor that permits death or survival of a business. Mostly, small businesses are managed by owners as they cannot spare the price of a professional manager to control the affairs of the business. Thus, they carry out all the operational tasks and perform all management functions. Most times they are not skilled at these functions; the deficiency would often lead to business failure.

2.1.9. Business Survival

The need for business to survive in a distressed economy brings about survival strategies which must be adopted by owners or managers of these businesses. According to Wale-Osinowo (2018), small businesses are faced with limited access to financial resources, strong managerial capabilities, technology, specialized skills and the basic infrastructures. Thus they have to create many opportunities based on diverse ideas and the available information. This will serve as forms of survival strategies that will help them to accommodate and deal with their challenges. Survival strategies can be classified into three categories which are avoidance-being less emotionally attached to a challenge; passive survival-being partly sensitive to a challenge; and active survival-being totally and emotionally attached to a challenges (Sahler and Carr, 2009).

Going by the perspective of Lum (2017), survival strategies involve defensive and aggressive action taken to gain a position and to make returns on investment. Small business survival is lowest at the beginning phase of a business. Ifekwem and Ademola (2016) see survival strategies as future ability of a business to operated ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quantity of life for its workforce, the local and global community as well as future generations. In the light of Ifekwen and Ademola (2016), there exist three basic strategies: Porters generic strategy, market matrix and Mile and Snows adaptation strategy.

However, for this study, the survival strategies do not completely fall into any of those categories because the researcher are interested on strategies peculiar to Akwa Ibom State. Based on this, it is observed that managerial strategy are survival strategies adopted by most business in the area. A study by Palmquist (2014) identifies three other survival strategies which were not taken into consideration in this study. They are keeping cost down, differentiation and customization. Survival in this study were assessed in terms of whether entrepreneurs take full responsibility for the business strategic management, make survival strategies a priority activity performed on regular basis, follow a define set of procedures in strategy process and provide resources for sustenance of the business.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This study explored the theory of Effectuation that explain the concept of small businesses and their survival strategies.

2.2.1. The Theory of Effectuation

The theory of effectuation was propounded by Saravathy in 2001. Effectuation is defined as a form of reasoning or problem solving which assumes that the future is largely unpredictable, but that it can be controlled through human action. The theory is based on what entrepreneurial activities entails, by creating a distinction and forging ahead through the various process of learning. It is logic of entrepreneurial expertise that is useful to both novice and experienced entrepreneurs in highly unpredictable startup phase of a venture. It is used to reduce failure cost for the entrepreneur (Saravathy, 2001). This theory is an approach to making decisions and performance actions in entrepreneurship process, where one identifies the next best step by assessing the resources available in order to achieve goals, while continuously balancing these goals with the resources.

According to Wale-Oshinowo (2018), entrepreneurs experiment with the theory by adopting various alternatives in which potential losses in the worst case scenario are affordable. Under effectuation theory, entrepreneurs adapt survival strategies of recommitment and strategic alliance man attempt to control an unpredictable future. Another survival strategy implied in effectuation theory is that of flexibility to changing environmental contingencies. The theory also carried the notion of affordable losses which is the ability of an entrepreneur to properly measure the upside opportunities against worst cases, leveraging contingencies and building strong partnership through networking. This implies that in the face of lingering mortality issues or potential losses, certain survival strategies like leverage can be applied. The theory helps to vision out the end from the beginning, maximize the expected returns, conduct business planning and competitive analyses to predict an uncertain future and exploit existing knowledge. These four major guiding blocks (strategies) safeguard the survival of small businesses. Wale- Oshionowo(2018) stresses the need for businesses to kick start with the available resources than having to wait for a perfect condition.

2.3. Empirical Review of Literature

Akpan and Ukpai (2017) examined the influence of succession planning on survival of small scale businesses in Makurdi metropolis. The survey design used in the study was descriptive survey design, the sample size was one hundred and twenty (120) small business owners. Data obtained were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Hypothesis of the study were tested using

analysis of variance. Findings showed that succession planning in relation to training successors lead to longevity of small business in Makurdi metropolis. The study concluded that training successors affects the growth and survival of small businesses.

Training potential successors effectively gives small businesses a greater chance of survival after the death or retirement of founding owners/manager.

Kusi, Opata and Narch (2015) conducted a study on factors hindering the growth and survival of small businesses in Ghana using the descriptive research method, the study employed both primary and secondary data to inquire on the factor that prevents growth and survival of small businesses. Founders of micro-small business in Kumasi Metropolis formed the group from which sample was drawn for the study, and a sample size of 125 small business owners was derived using snowball method. Analysis was based on simple tables and percentages. They found that domestic demand ranked 1st as a major problem of small business. Other factors that were identified as contributors to failure of small businesses in Ghana were no working capital, insufficient entrepreneurial skills, inadequate and inappropriate data and technology. On the bases of the findings from the study, the researchers' advise that those responsible for formulating policies and venture capitalist should take into consideration, making credit available to small business owners without the normal rigorous collateral requirement. Also, appropriate technology should be made available, effective human resources with efficient managerial skill should be engaged and properly rewarded to ensure correct valid record keeping.

Arasti (2011) conducted a study to identify the causes of business failure in Iranian context. The design of the study was executed through face-to-face questionnaire administration and a data base of one hundred and fifty (150) former business owners/managers. 80 ex-owners managers were randomly selected and administered questionnaire. Fifty-one (51) valid copies of questionnaire was obtained and ANOVA analysis was run using SPSS software. Result from the study indicated four major factors that cause business failure in Iranian context: Inefficient management, No monetary assistance from banks and financial institutions, deficient government policies and inadequate economic sphere. These outcomes reveal the impact of external factors on the success or failure of business in Iranian context. The study concluded that in contrast to the belief that unsuccessful entrepreneurs link their failure to external factors, the respondents in this research categorized their deficiency in management as the major factor responsible for business failure.

In studying the characteristics and challenges of small business in Africa with focus on Nigerian small business owners, Adisa, Abdulraheem and Mordi (2014) employed qualitative means of collecting data through face to face interview. The semi-structured face-to-face interview focused on 4 main parts of attributes of small businesses in Nigeria, the issues hindering the growth and survival of small businesses in Nigeria and the reasons for short life span in Nigeria. A population of 152 small businesses was selected from the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Findings from the study showed that four factors were the major issues confronting small business in Nigeria which are; inadequate funding, inefficient record keeping and inadequate information management, no financial discipline, lack of adequate basic infrastructural facilities, inadequate business and managerial skills/knowledge. The researchers recommended that the government of Nigeria should take seriously the problems of small businesses in Nigeria with a view to finding solution to the problems. The study also encourages the creation of community banks where small business owners can obtain loans hitch free as compares to high street banks.

Sudi, Dickson, Geogrey, Christopher and Mahmood (2018) in exploring the drivers of business failure among small and medium enterprises in Kampala Uganda used a descriptive and survey design. Primary data for the study were gathered using questionnaire. The population of the study consisted of owners and workers of 50 small businesses in Kampala-Uganda and the sample of the study was derived through purposive and random sampling techniques. From the five divisions in Kampala district, a total number of ten small and medium enterprises and six employees were purposively selected considering the types of business and their location. Results from the study revealed that for small businesses to last longer, business owners and employees are advised to re-invest profits of the business, reduce their tax burden by paying taxes in time, spend funds wisely based on priorities, develop themselves by attending seminars and course on managerial skills. Also, the results indicate the education can influence the abilities of small businesses to survive and grow.

Agwu and Emeti (2014) examined the issues, challenges and prospects of small and medium scale enterprises in Port-Harcourt city, Nigeria. The design adopted by the study was cross sectional survey design, 120 small and medium scale business operators in Port Harcourt were randomly selected and questionnaire administered. The population of the study consisted of the one thousand and two hundred registered small and medium enterprise operators. Shuffling of cards (without replacement) method was used to pick sample respondents for the study. Data were evaluated using non-parametric simple

percentages and Z-test statistical method was used in testing stated hypotheses. Finding showed that inadequate financing, insufficient social amenities necessary for smooth operation of small business, inadequate managerial skills, multiple taxation constitutes major challenges in the accomplishments of small and medium enterprise in Port Harcourt. The researchers came up with a few steps to follow that will address the major problems of small and medium enterprise and propose the government of Rivers State to consider following them. They are: making soft loan available to SMES operators, long-term loans made available to SME operators by government guarantee, create small and medium enterprise financial agencies, encourage capacity building among SMES operators, make tax incentives available to small and medium business operators.

In Nigeria, Ogbechie and Anetor (2015) researched on the topic “An Appraisal of Succession Planning in Family owned Business in Lagos State.” The Study was carried out to identify hindering factors to hitch free success in family owned businesses. The study employed purposive sampling technique to choose eighty participants who were family business owners. The data analysis techniques used in the study were descriptive and factor analysis. Findings revealed that not having a succession plan was not major factor hindering succession in family owned businesses.

Etim, Daferighe and Mmayen (2021) Studied the procedure of succession planning adopted by smaller enterprises of the hotel industry in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Two hotels were sampled and questionnaire used to get data from chief executive and employees of the sampled hotels. Finding from the study revealed that a huge number of business owner were ignorant of the issue of succession planning, while the few who know about it are not consciously planning towards it. It was concluded that effective succession planning is necessary for the stability and growth of the economy as it leads to business continuity. Even though there are hindrances to success planning, Not planning at all for succession threatens the future of the business.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

Cross sectional survey research design was adopted for this study. The choice of this design was necessitated by the need to obtain data directly from the respondents, so as to have accurate data. This method allows the researcher to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data for the study.

3.2. Theoretical Specification of Model

The conceptual framework which was expanded on three variables that can determine business success or failure has provided the basis for adaption of Lussier (1995) model of business success verses failure (S/F). Lussier (1995) explored the literature for better understanding on why some businesses succeed and others fail and then identified 15 variables that can drive success or failure of businesses. To be included in the Lussiers (1995) S/F models, a variable had to have been included in a study that had at least three variables identified as contributing factors to success or failure of small businesses. In this study, three variables of business survival or failure have been identified and hypotheses were developed for each of the variable to explain the relationship between the variables and the dependent variable. These variable are managerial skill, succession plan and marketing strategy, they can lead to business success if properly handled or failure if not properly handled as shown in Figure 1c.

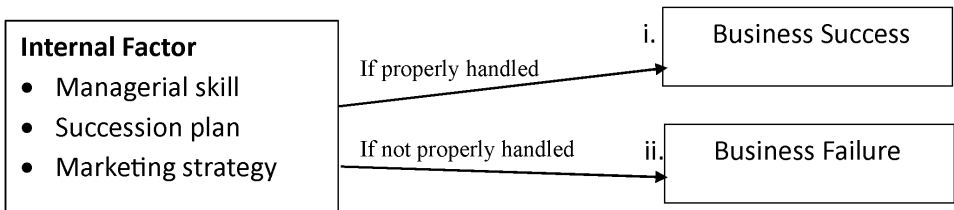


Figure 1: Model of Business Success

Sources: Researchers' compilation (2022)

In this work it is assumed that, managerial skill (MS), succession plan (SP) and marketing strategy (MS) could lead to business failure if not properly handled. The dependent variables are business mortality measured by business failure and business survival. These factors could also lead to business success (survival) in Lussier's model. The reason for adopting Lussier's model was because it was the most extensive model in terms of number of variables and study covered. It is also a non-financial model. This study used non-financial variable in testing business mortality and survival.

3.3. Empirical Specification of Model

Theoretically, a liner relationship exists between internal organizational factors and business success verses mortality. This study was focused on business mortality and survival strategies. As such, unidirectional relationship was

established between the dependent variable and independent variables. This was presented in a functional form as:

$$SBM = f(MGS, SPP, MST) \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad \text{Equation 3.1}$$

Where, SBM = Small Business mortality, MGS = Managerial skills,

SPP = succession plan,

MST = Marketing strategy and SBS = small business survival.

The following functional equations were developed for each of the hypotheses, thus:

$$SBM = f(MGS) \quad \text{hypothesis i}$$

$$SBM = f(SSP) \quad \text{hypothesis ii}$$

$$SBM = f(MST) \quad \text{hypothesis iii}$$

$$SMS = f(MGS, SPP, MST) \quad \text{hypothesis iv}$$

These variables were than substituted in linear regression models and a multiples regression model that has a constant and coefficient.

$$SBM = b_0 + b_1 MGS1 + e_1 \quad - \quad \text{Equation 3.2}$$

$$SBM = b_0 + b_2 SSP1 + e_1 \quad - \quad \text{Equation 3.3}$$

$$SBM = b_0 + b_3 MST1 + e_1 \quad - \quad \text{Equation 3.4}$$

$$SBM = b_0 + b_1 SSP + b_3 MST1 + e_1 \quad - \quad \text{Equation 3.5}$$

Where b_0 = Constant b_1, b_2, b_3 are regression coefficient for each of the independent variables, MGS = managerial skills, SPP = Succession Plan, MST = Marketing Strategy, SMB –Small Business Mortality, SBS = Small Business Survival and e_1, e_2, e_3, e_4 are error terms.

3.4. Population of the Study

The population for the study included 9,483 registered small businesses, (as at December, 2021) in Uyo, Ikot Ekpene and Eket Local Government in Akwa Ibom State. These businesses cut across service, manufacturing, agriculture and marketing sector (State Ministry of Inventory, Commerce and Industry, 2021).

3.5. Sample Size

To determine the sample size for the study, Taro Yamene’s formula for sample size determination was employed at 5% level of tolerable error. This is given as:

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

Where: n = Sample size, N=Population, e=error term.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Thus} \quad &= \frac{9483}{1 + 9483(0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{9483}{1 + 9483(0.0025)} \\ &= \frac{9483}{1 + 23.7075} = \frac{9483}{24.7075} = 384 \text{ respondent} \end{aligned}$$

3.6. Sources and Nature of Data

Primary data were sourced through the administration of copies of questionnaire. Ordinal level of measurement was used in weighting the data obtained. The instrument was scored using modified Likert scale of strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD) and Undecided (UD). Where strongly agreed was equal to 4 point, agreed equal to 3 points, disagreed equal to 2 points, strongly disagreed was equal to 1 point while Undecided was equal to 0.

3.7. Research Instrument

The questionnaire was the research instrument developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections, section A was for data profile of respondents while section B was for question relating to research question and hypotheses. Questions were structured to ensure convenience, reliability and accuracy of data collected.

3.8. Sampling Technique

Systematic random on sampling technique was used selecting respondents for the study. To do this, the sample size was divided by the population to have a sampling interval of 25 businesses. Using the sampling frame, one in every 25 business was chosen from the list. The selection cut across the 31 Local Government Area of the State. Such businesses were those that were easily known and located within the Local Government Area.

3.9. Validity of the Instrument

To ascertain the content and appropriateness of the survey instrument, it was overseen and confirmed by the researchers and other lecturers in the faculty of Business Administration. In this way, the questionnaire was subjected to face validity test by ensuring that all items were included in the scale.

3.10. Reliability of the Instrument

In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire were administered to a sample of 15 randomly selected small business in Uyo L.G.A who were not to be involved in the main study. Having pretested the instruments, the collected data were subjected to the estimation of the reliability coefficient, using Cronbach's Alpha Test. The key variables which needed reliability test were managerial skill, succession plan, marketing strategy and small business mortality. The reliability coefficients were shown in Table 1.

Table 3.1: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability of the Instrument

S/N	Variable	No. of Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha Value
1	Managerial skill	5	30.81	7.00	0.73
2	Succession plan	5	26.57	4.06	0.70
3	Marketing strategy	5	24.74	9.58	0.75
4	Business mortality	5	33.16	3.11	0.68
5	Business survival	5	33.28	4.01	0.71
6		25	148.56	27.76	0.81

Source: Researchers' Computation (2022)

3.12. Statistical Analysis of Data

Descriptive analysis tools like frequency counts, percentages and means was used to analyze data profile. Regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. Simple linear regression was used to test hypotheses I, II, and III while multiple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses IV. The general form of the multiple regression model is presented here:

$$Y = a_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + e_1$$

Where;

Y = Dependent variable (Business Mortality), X1 = Independent variable 1 (managerial skill), X2 = Independent variable 2 (succession plan), X3= independent variable 3 (small business marketing strategy).

4. DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 2. Position of respondent in the business

<i>Options</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Owner	249	74.8
Paid Manager	41	12.3
Family member	20	6.0
Staff	15	4.5
Partner	8	2.4
Total	333	100

Source: Field Data (2022)

From Table 2, 249 respondents representing 74.8% of the total, were owners of the small business. 41 respondent representing 12.3% were paid manager of the business 20 respondent representing 6% were family members 15 respondent representing 4.5% were paid staff, while 8 respondent representing 2.4% were partners in the business. This shows that respondent were mostly owners of the business (74.6%) who had first hand information about the business.

Table 3: Ownership status in the business

<i>Options</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Sole Proprietorship	263	80
Partnership	16	4.8
Family business	34	10.2
Cooperative	20	6.0
Total	333	100

Source: Field data (2022).

Data in Table 3. showed that 263 of the business surveyed were sole proprietorship. This was 80% of the total responses. 16 businesses representing 2.8% were in partnership. 34 representing 10.2% were family owned businesses while 20 businesses representing 6% were cooperative. This shows that majority of the businesses (80%) were sole proprietorships which is known for high mortality rate in the state.

Table 4: Percentage analysis of managerial skill responses

Options	Strongly Agree		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Dis-agreed	
	Fre-quency	%	Fre-quency	%	Fre-quency	%	Fre-quency	%
I have passion and enthusiasm for this business I am doing.	36	10.8	73	21.9	128	38.4	96	28.8
I have necessary machines and tools needed for my business operation	42	12.6	70	21	144	43.2	77	23.1
I am able to plan and set measurable goals for my business	126	37.8	127	38.1	62	18.1	18	5.4
I am able to command my employees loyalty	88	26.4	156	46.8	72	21.6	17	5.1

Source: Researchers’ computation (2022)

From Table 4, 36 respondents representing 10.8% strongly agreed that they have passion and enthusiasm for the business they are doing; 73 respondents representing 21.9% agreed; 128 respondent representing 38.4 disagreed while 96 respondents strongly disagreed. On required experience to run the business, 74 respondents representing 22.2% strongly agreed that they have the required experience to successfully run the business; 98 respondents representing 29.1% strongly disagreed, 42 respondent representing 12.6% strongly agreed that they are able to plan and set measurable goals for their business, 70 representing 21% agreed, 144 representing 43.2 disagreed while 77 representing 23.1% strongly disagreed. Regarding customer service, 126 respondents representing 37.8% strongly agreed, 62 respondent representing 18.1% disagreed, 127 respondent representing 38.1% agreed, while 18 respondents representing 5.4% strongly disagreed, 88 respondent representing 26.4% strongly agreed that they have the necessary machines and tools needed for their business operation, 156 respondents representing 46.8% agreed, 72 respondent representing 21.6 disagreed while 17 respondent representing 5.1 strongly disagreed.

Data in Table 5. showed that 96 respondents representing 28.8% of the total respondents strongly agreed that their product/service is easily recognized in the market, 150 respondents representing 45% agreed, 50 respondents representing 15% disagreed while 37 respondents representing 11.1% strongly disagreed. Also 112 respondents which was 33.6% strongly agreed that the prices of their product/service are affordable, 141 respondents which stood

Table 5: Percentage analysis of marketing strategy questions

Options	Strongly Agree		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Disagreed	
	Fre- quency	%	Fre- quency	%	Fre- quency	%	Fre- quency	%
My product/service ⁴ is easily recognized in the market	96	28.8	150	45	50	15	37	11.1
I think the prices of my product/service are affordable	112	33.6	141	42.3	60	18	20	6
My marketing outlet is accessible to present and potential customers	26	7.8	85	25.5	125	37.5	97	29.1
I create awareness on the use of benefit of my product/service	116	34.8	147	44.1	49	14.7		5.1
I request feedback from my customers about the experience on the use of product	39	11.7	85	25.5	129	38.7	80	24
Total	389	116.7	606	182.4	413	123.9	255	76.5
Average	78	23.4	122	36.5	83	24.8	51	15.3

Source: Researchers' computation (2022)

at 42.3% agreed, 60 respondents representing 18% disagreed whereas 20 respondents representing 6% of the total respondents strongly disagreed. On marketing outlet, 26 respondents representing 7.8% strongly agreed that their marketing outlet is accessible to customers; 85 respondents representing 25.5% agreed; 125 respondents which were 37.5% disagreed while 97 respondents which stood at 29.1% strongly disagreed. 116 respondent representing 34.8% strongly agreed that they create awareness on the use and benefit of their product/service, 147 respondents representing 44.1% agreed, 49 respondents representing 14.7% disagreed while 21 respondents representing 6.3% strongly disagreed. On feedback, from their customer about their experience on the use if the product; 85 respondents representing 25.5% agreed; 129 respondents representing 38.7% disagreed while 80 respondents representing 24% strongly disagreed. On the whole, 76 respondents representing 23.4%

of the total strongly agreed to marketing. Strategy questions; 122 respondent representing 36.5% agreed; 83 respondents representing 24.8% disagreed; whereas, 51 respondents representing 15.3% strongly disagreed to marketing strategy questions.

Table 6: percentage analysis of succession plan questions

<i>Options</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>		<i>Agreed</i>		<i>Disagreed</i>		<i>Strongly Dis-agreed</i>	
	<i>Fre-quency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Fre-quency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Fre-quency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Fre-quency</i>	<i>%</i>
I have identified potential individual(s) to take my place in business in ease of death or any other emergency	31	9.3	106	31.8	117	35.1	79	23.7
I have made arrangement to train the potential individuals to take over	56	16.8	66	19.8	114	34.2	97	29.1
My marketing outlet is accessible to present and potential customers	101	30.3	108	32.4	81	24.3	43	12.9
I give my employees enabling environment to display their talents and strengths useful for the growth of the business	46	13.8	100	30	118	35.4	69	20.7
The resources put in plans are sufficient to run the business in perpetuity	44	13.2	79	23.7	120	36	90	27
Total	278	83.4	459	137.7	550	165	378	113.4
Average	55	167	92	27.6	110	33	76	22.7

Source: Researchers’ Computation (2022)

Table 6 showed that 31 respondents representing 9.3% strongly agreed that they have identified individuals to takeover them in business in case of death or another emergency 106 respondents which was 31.8% agreed, 117

representing 35.1% agreed, 117 representing 35.1% disagreed, whereas 79 respondents which stood at 23.7% strongly agreed that they have made an arrangement to train potential individual(s) to take over, 66 respondents which was 19.8% agreed, 114 respondents representing 34.2% disagreed while 97 respondents representing, 29.1% strongly disagreed similarly, 101 respondents which was 30.3% of the total respondents strongly agreed that they prefer someone from their family to succeed them; 108 respondents representing 32.4% agreed; 81 respondents representing 24.3% disagreed whereas 43 respondents representing 12.9% strongly disagreed. On enabling environment, 46 respondents representing 13.8% strongly believes that they give enabling environment to their employees to display their talents; 100 respondents representing 20.7% strongly disagreed. 120 respondents which stood at 36% disagreed whereas 90 respondents representing 27% strongly disagreed. On average, 55 respondents which was 16.7% of the total strongly agreed to succession plan questions; 92 respondents representing 27.6% agreed; 110 respondents which stood at 33% disagreed while 76 respondents representing 22.7% strongly disagreed to succession plan questions.

Table 7 : Percentage analysis of business mortality variables

Options	Strongly Agree		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Dis-agreed	
	Fre-quency	%	Fre-quency	%	Fre-quency	%	Fre-quency	%
My business is not currently meeting its expectations to stakeholders	31	33.9	140	42	63	18.9	17	5.1
My business is not making enough profit to cover it expenses	131	39.3	135	40.5	50	15	17	5.1
My business has not fully recovered from the last economic recession	107	32.1	160	48	44	13.2	22	6.6
My business has been recording loss for the last couple of years	55	16.5	112	33.6	17	5.1	149	44.7
My business can no longer compete with other businesses in the industry	47	14.1	125	37.5	14	4.2	147	44.1
Total	453	135.9	627	201.6	188	56.4	353	105.6
Average	90	27.1	134	40.4	38	11.3	70	21.1

Source: Researchers' Computation (2022)

From Table 7, 113 respondents representing 33.9% strongly agreed that their businesses were not currently meeting its expectations to stakeholder; 140 respondents representing 5.1% strongly disagreed. Similarly, 131 respondents representing 39.3% strongly agreed that their business were making enough profit to meet its expense, 135 respondents which was 40.5% agreed; 50 respondents representing 15% disagreed while, 17 representing 5.1% strongly disagreed. 107 respondents which represented 32.1% strongly agreed that their businesses have not recovered fully from the last economic recession, 160 respondents represented 6.6% strongly 44 respondents which stood 13.2% disagreed while 22 respondents represented 6.6% strongly disagreed. On business losses, 55 respondents which was 16.5% strongly agreed that their business have been recording loses for the last couple of years; 112 respondents representing 33.6% agreed; 17 respondents which stood at 51% disagreed while 149 which represented 44.7% strongly disagreed. 47 respondents which was 14.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that their business can no longer compete with other business in the industry, 125 respondents representing 37.5% agreed, 14 respondents which stood at 4.2% disagreed while 147 respondents which represented 44.1% strongly disagreed. Overall, 90 respondents representing 27.1% of the respondents strongly agreed to business mortality question; 134 which was 40.4% agreed; 38 respondents which stood at 11.3% disagreed whereas 70 respondents which represented 21.1% disagreed to business mortality questions.

Table 8: Percentage analysis of business survival

Options	Strongly Agree		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Dis-agreed	
	Fre-quency	%	Fre-quency	%	Fre-quency	%	Fre-quency	%
Formal responsibility for business strategic man-agement	140	42	113	33.9	63	18.9	17	5.1
Survival strategies are top priority activity per-formed on a regular basis	129	38.7	132	39.6	61	18.3	11	3.3
Business follow a defined set of	107	32.1	160	48	44	13.2	22	6.6
My business has been recording loss for the last couple of years	55	16.5	112	33.6	17	5.1	149	44.7

My business can no longer compete with other businesses in the industry	47	14.1	125	37.5	14	4.2	147	44.1
Total	453	135.9	627	201.6	188	56.4	353	105.6
Average	90	27.1	134	40.4	38	11.3	70	21.1

Source: Researchers' Computation (2022)

Table 8, shows that, 140 respondents representing 42% of the respondents strongly agreed that entrepreneurs take formal responsibility for business strategic management; 33.9% agreed, 18.9% disagreed while 5.1% strongly disagreed, 129 respondents representing 38.7% strongly agreed that survival strategies are top priority activity they performed on a regular basis; 39.6% agreed, 18.3% disagreed while 3.3% strongly disagreed, Also 129 respondents representing 38.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that their business follow a defined set of procedures in survival strategy process; 39.3% disagreed whereas 3.3% strongly disagreed. Equally, 127 respondents representing 37.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that they provide resources for sustenance of their businesses; 38.7 agreed 18.6% disagreed while 4.5% strongly disagreed. On average, 131 respondents strongly agreed to business survival questions, 126 agreed, 62 disagreed while 14 strongly disagreed.

4.2. Test of Hypotheses

The null hypotheses that were stated in section one were tested and presented in this section. The analysis was based on data presented in Table 4, 5, 6 and 7. The statistical tool used in the analysis was simple linear regression.

Hypothesis I

Ho_i: There is no significant relationship between managerial skill and business mortality in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4.10: Result of regression analysis for managerial skill and business mortality

Model Summary

Model	R	R square
1	512 ^a	262
A predictors (constant), managerial skill		

ANOVA ^a			
Model	F		Sig
1	Regression 117.722		.0006
	Residual		
a. Dependent variables; business mortality b. Predictors (constant), managerial skill			
Coefficients ^a			
Unstandardized Coefficient			
Model	B	T	Sig
	B		
(constant)	2.130	11.739	.000
Managerial skill	.484	10.850	.000

SPSS Window Output, Version 20
 Source: Researchers' Computation (2022)

From the analysis in Table 9, the model summary showed a R-value of 0.512 which suggested a moderate relationship between managerial sill and business mortality. The coefficient of determination (R^2) off 0.262 showed that 26.2% variation in business mortality was accounted for by variations in managerial skill. The ANOVA Table indicated the regression model predicted the dependent variable significantly. The F-value of 117.722 and it corresponding P-value of 0.000 showed a significant influence of managerial skill and business mortality (here, $P < 0.05$). in the coefficient table, the constant which is the predicted value of business mortality when all other variables were 0 is 2.130 The Coefficient for managerial skill (B_1) was 0.484 which implied that for every unit increase in managerial skill arrangement, a 0.484 unit increase in business mortality was predicted. Since $R = 0.552$ and $P < 0.05$, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between managerial skill and business mortality in Akwa Ibom State was rejected.

Hypotheses II

H_{0ii} : There is no significant relationship between succession plan and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 10: Result of regression analysis for succession plan business mortality.**Model Summary**

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R square</i>	
1	-0.507 ^a	0.257	
a. Predictors (constant), succession plan			
ANOVA^a			
Model	F	Sig	
1	Regression 114.722	.0006	
	Residual Total		
b. Dependent variables; business mortality			
c. Predictors (constant), managerial skill			
Coefficients ^a			
Unstandardized Coefficient			
Model	B	T	Sig
(constant)	2.117	11.452	.000
Managerial skill	-.484	-10.711	.000

a. Dependent variable; business strategy

Source: Researchers' Computation (2022)

Table 10 shows a R-value of 0.507 which suggested a moderate negative relationship between succession plan and small business mortality the R-square value of 0.257 which was the coefficient of determination showed that 25.7% variation in small business mortality was explained by variations in succession plan. The ANOVA table showed F-value of 144.722 and its corresponding P-value of 0.00. This implied that there was a significant influence of succession plan on small business mortality. The predictor value of business mortality as depicted by the constant which is Y intercept was 2.117. The succession plan (B_2) coefficient of -0.480 implied a unit increase in business mortality. The coefficient for succession plan was significantly different from zero because its P-value was smaller than 0105 alpha level. Since $K=0.507$ and $P<0.05$ the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between succession plan and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State was rejected.

Hypothesis III

Ho_{iii}: There is no significant relationship between marketing strategy and small business mortality.

Table 11: Result of regression analysis of marketing strategy and small business mortality
Model Summary

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R square</i>	
1	-0.659 ^a	435	
a. Predictors (constant), succession plan			
ANOVA^a			
Model	F	Sig	
1	Regression 254.340.	.000 ^b	
	Residual Total		
b. Dependent variables; business mortality			
c. Predictors (constant), managerial skill			
Coefficients ^a			
Unstandarized Standardized			
Coefficient coefficients			
Model		T	Sig
	B		
(constant)	1.578	9.953	.000
Managerial skill	-.646	-15.948	.000

a. Dependent variable; business mortality

Source: Researchers' computation (2022)

The model summary in Table 11 showed an R-value of -0.659 which indicated a strong negative relationship between marketing strategy and business mortality. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.435 showed that 43.5% variation in small business mortality was explained by variation in marketing strategy. The F-value of 254.340 and its corresponding P-value of 0.000 showed a significant of marketing strategy, on small business mortality. The constant (Y intercept) which was the predicted value of small business mortality was 1.578. The coefficient for marketing strategy was –

0.626 implying that a unit increase in marketing strategy predicted a 0.626 unit decrease in business mortality. Since $R=0.659$ and $P<0.05$, null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between marketing strategy and managerial skill in Akwa Ibom State was rejected.

H_{0iv} : Managerial skills, succession plant and marketing have no individual rate of influence on small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 12: Result of regression analysis for joint influence of managerial skills, succession plan and marketing strategy on business survival.

Model Summary

Model	R	R square	
1	.743 ^a	.552	
ANOVA ^a			
Model	F	Sig	
1	Regression 135.089	.000 ^b	
	Residual Total		
b. Dependent variables; business mortality c. Predictors (constant), managerial skill			
Coefficients ^a			
Unstandardized Standardized			
Coefficient coefficients			
Model	B	T	Sig
(constant)	.585	3.287	.001
Managerial skill	.280	4.380	.000
Marketing Strategy	.069	1.048	.295
Succession plan	.524	14.058	.000

a. Dependent variable; business mortality

Source: Researchers' computation (2022)

From the model summary, the R-value of 0.743 indicate a strong positive relationship between managerial skills, succession plan and marketing strategy and small business survival. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.552

implies that 55.2% variation in business mortality was explained by variations in managerial skill, succession plan and marketing strategy. The F-value of 135.089 and its corresponding P. value of 000 showed a significant influence of these variables on small business survival. The coefficient for managerial skill was 1.28 implying that a unit increase in marketing strategy predicted a 0.28 or 28% increase in small business survival. The coefficient for succession plan was 0.524 meaning that in every unit increase in succession plan, 0.524 or 52.4% increase in small business survival was expected. The coefficient for making strategy was 0.069 implying that a unit increase in marketing strategy predicted a 0.069 unit or 6.9% increase in small business survival. Succession plan has the highest coefficient suggesting it has the strongest influence on business survival. Also, marketing strategy was not significant at 0.05 alpha showing that it does not have significant influence on small business survival when jointly regressed. Since $R=0.743$ and $p<0.05$, the null hypothesis which state that managerial skill, succession plan and marketing strategy have no individual rate of influence on business survival was rejected.

4.3. Discussion of Findings

The study found significant and positive relationship between managerial skill and business mortality in Akwa Ibom State. This is so because most small business owners in the state lack the needed managerial knowledge and competences to run their enterprise successfully.

This findings tallies with Lorun (2014) who states that owner of small business to into business without taking a realistic view of their strengths and weaknesses not to talk about giving careful consideration to the economic trends or business conditions to that particular sector. The findings is also in line with Kusi et al. (2015) who notes that the competence of a business owner/ manager is the ultimate determination of survival of failure of a business. This finding also agreed with Agwu and Emeti (2014) who states 90% of all small business failure result from lack of experience and competence of business owners/managers. The study also found a significant and negative relationship between succession plan and small business mortality. The result was possible because without succession plans are exposed to significant risk in sustainability. But business with succession plans ensure smooth transition of business from owner to a successor thereby reducing of mortality. Entrepreneurs who have not planned for their business succession contribute to the mortality of their business immediately after their demise. The findings was in agreement with Akpan and Ukpai (2007) who found in their study that 30% of business fail

due to lack of succession planning and that 50% of small business do not have adequate succession plans. The result was also in agreement with Kellermans and Eddleston (2006) who claimed that lack of succession planning was a major cause of the high mortality rate in small scale business and the succession planning did not actually take place in most small businesses.

Findings revealed that there was a significant and negative relationship between marketing strategy and small scale business mortality in Akwa Ibom State. Marketing strategy had a negative relationship with business mortality because a small business that develop and maintain appropriate marketing strategy will be able to compete and survive in a competitive environment but business that are not able to adopt a suitable marketing strategy will eventually fade out of market and die. This finding corresponded with Uttam and Rahil (2014) who claimed that success or failure to companies in a market is largely dependent on strategies they evolve and implement. The finding also collaborated with Elk (2012) who stressed that lack of attention and consideration given to marketing strategy resulted to their early death of small businesses.

There was significant negative influence of managerial skills, succession plan and marketing strategy on small business survival in Akwa Ibom State. Individually, succession plan contributed most to the business mortality rate in the state with a positive regression coefficient of 0.524. This is so where is a succession plan, continuity is assured and there is a guarantee that there will always be someone in charge of the business in case of death of the owner. This finding tallies with Lorun (2014) who states that owner of small business to into business without taking a realistic view of their strengths and weaknesses not to talk about giving careful consideration to the economic trends or business conditions to that particular sector. The finding is also in line with Kusi et al., (2015) who notes that the competence of a business owner/manager is the ultimate determination of survival or failure of a business. This finding also agreed with Agwu and Emeti (2014) who states 90% of all small business failure result from lack of experience and competence of business owners/managers.

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

5.1. Summary

This study examined small scale business mortality and survival strategies in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. In order to achieve the broad objectives of the

study, four specific objectives and four hypotheses were formulated. Small business mortality was measured in terms of variables such as managerial skill, succession plan and marketing strategy these same variable were also used as survival strategies. Effort was establish a relationship between each of these variables and business mortality and survival.

- i) These were significant and positive relationship between managerial skill and business mortality in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria.
- ii) There was significant and negative relationship between succession plan and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- iii) There was significant and negative relationship between marketing strategy and business mortality in Akwa Ibom State Nigeria.
- iv) There was significant and positive joint influence of managerial skills and succession plan on business survival no significant individual influence of marketing strategy on business survival.

5.2. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study that there is existing relationship between each of the variables measured and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom Staten the researcher concluded that managerial skills, succession plan and marketing strategy are survival strategies for small business Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It is certain that these factors if not property implemented, can cause business mortality or ensures survival if properly implemented.

5.3. Business Implication of Findings

The findings of the study have implications in entrepreneurs, government and individuals. Business failures in the state have on the economy and employment. For the entrepreneurs, there is need for them to acquire skill that will enable them to stay focus and run their business in perpetuity. Another implication of the findings is that if succession planning is mandated by way of regulatory framework, the rate of business failure due to death of owners will be reduced. Developing and implementing effective marketing strategy will come with its multiplier effect of benefiting the business, individuals and the society. Since businesses are created with will see the businesses operate in perpetuity.

5.4. Contribution to Knowledge

The findings' of this study that there exist significant influence of managerial skills, succession plan and marketing strategy on small business mortality.

Individually, succession plan has the highest influence on survival rate of businesses in Akwa Ibom State.

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