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Entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning among small and medium family-owned enterprises in Kampala Central Business District, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning among small and medium family-owned businesses in Uganda. The study employed a cross-sectional survey and descriptive research designs using a quantitative approach. Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire from 176 small and medium family-owned businesses. The data were analysed using Smart PLS version 4.0. The results show that competitive aggressiveness and risk taking are positively and significantly related to succession planning. In contrast, proactiveness and autonomy showed no relationship with succession planning among small- and medium-sized family-owned businesses in Uganda. The study employed a cross-sectional survey; however, given the evolving nature of entrepreneurial orientation, a longitudinal study is recommended. Future studies should examine other antecedents of entrepreneurial orientation, such as social emotional wealth, innovation orientation among others which are key in family businesses. Family business owners should incorporate calculated risk-taking and competitive drive into their succession planning, while also promoting a collective vision and consensus when exercising autonomy and proactivity. This study uniquely shows how integrating calculated risk-taking and competitive aggressiveness with goal-setting theory enhances succession planning.

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1. Introduction

Family businesses are increasingly becoming the dominant form of enterprise in both developed and developing economies. For example, in the USA, they account for 80% of all firms, while in Africa, for example, in Nigeria, approximately 80% of family-owned businesses are categorized as small to medium or medium to large enterprises (Baassiri, 2018; Nyamwanza et al., 2018). These businesses play a vital socio-economic role by creating employment opportunities and significantly contributing to GDP growth through innovation, international trade, and wealth creation (Palalić et al., 2024). However, many fail to successfully transfer leadership beyond the founder generation (Nonkwelo, 2019). A major reason for this failure is the absence of effective succession planning, which is widely recognised as essential for organisational continuity and stability (Nwuke et al., 2020). Succession planning involves identifying and nurturing potential leaders to fill critical roles through strategies such as mentoring, job rotation, and leadership development (Muhamad Azmi et al., 2025). Although many claim to have succession plans, these are often underdeveloped or poorly executed (Tetteh, 2015), causing many businesses to fail to transition to the next generation. It is not surprising that globally, only 30% of family-owned SMEs pass to the second generation, with an alarming 70% closing after the first generation (Kizito et al., 2025). In Uganda, family-owned SMEs dominate the economy contributing over 70% of GDP and employing over

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70% of Ugandans. These enterprises are characterised by informality, founder dominance and exhibit low rates of survival across generations (Economic Policy Research Centre [EPRC], 2025). The low rates of survival across generations is largely attributed to the failure of business founders to prepare the next generation to proactively and autonomously sustain the business when the founder retires.

Theoretically, succession planning in family businesses has traditionally been examined through Agency Theory (Meckling & Jensen, 1976), the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Habbershon & Williams, 1999), and Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) Theory (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2011). These theoretical perspectives address governance challenges, the importance of family-specific resources, and the preservation of family identity and legacy. However, they offer limited insight into the behavioural processes by which family business actors translate entrepreneurial dispositions into deliberate succession-planning practices. To address this gap, the present study incorporates Goal-Setting Theory as a complementary behavioural framework, without positioning it as superior to existing theories, as recommended by Tan et al. (2022). Goal-Setting Theory posits that goal-directed behaviour, commitment, and purposeful action can facilitate positive organisational outcomes. Within the context of family businesses, entrepreneurial orientations such as risk-taking, proactivity, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness may motivate owners and potential successors to undertake deliberate activities, including successor identification, mentoring, leadership development, and transition preparation. Thus, Goal-Setting Theory provides a behavioural rationale for investigating the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning, complementing the resource-based, governance, and socioemotional explanations offered by RBV, Agency Theory, and SEW Theory. This integrated approach is particularly pertinent for family businesses in Uganda, where succession decisions are influenced by family relationships, founder involvement, cultural expectations, and the imperative for business continuity.

Therefore, orienting the next generation towards entrepreneurial proactivity, risk-taking, and competitive aggressiveness requires a deliberate and strategic approach, often guided by clearly defined goals (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Goal setting enhances succession planning by maintaining and evolving the firm's entrepreneurial orientation during and after transition. Potential successors who socialise into the business through well-structured goal-oriented succession plans are more likely to internalise entrepreneurial values (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2024). The internalisation of entrepreneurial values enables potential successors to take on risks, demonstrate aggressiveness and pursue opportunities that foster proactiveness and innovation (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2024). Consequently, family business owners must focus on goal setting and adopt goal-setting practices not only to ensure continuity but also to strengthen the family business's long-term entrepreneurial orientation.

Previous scholars have scrutinised various dimensions of succession planning in organisational contexts. For instance, Sharma et al. (2001) investigated the dynamics of the succession process in Canadian family firms, while Rothwell (2005) emphasised the strategic implementation of effective succession planning practices in the United States of America, and Sambrook (2005) contributed insights specific to succession planning within small firms in the United Kingdom. In addition, from a gender perspective, Achtenhagen et al. (2017) explored the role of women in succession following the sudden death of key family members in Sweden, while Campopiano et al. (2017) examined the succession of daughters in family businesses in Italy and the United Kingdom. Bokhari et al. (2022) empirically measured the impact of succession planning in Pakistan, whereas Dekom et al. (2024) linked succession planning to overall business performance in Nigeria. Similarly, Olu and Chima (2020) analysed the relationship between succession planning and organisational sustainability, and Olowoyeye (2020) explored the implications of executive succession in Nigeria. In southern Africa, Dzairo and Taft (2024) explored the role of business backgrounds as moderators of family business succession in Zimbabwe. Chagwesha and Nyamwanza (2022) explored intergenerational leadership practices in African family firms, while Owusu-Acheampong et al. (2024) examined the factors affecting succession planning in African family enterprises. Despite the valuable contributions of existing research, the literature on family business succession is predominantly shaped by studies from developed economies, especially North America and Europe; scholarship on African family businesses remains limited (Chagwesha & Nyamwanza, 2022). Although these studies offer crucial insights into succession planning, leadership continuity, and intergenerational business transfer, their findings are grounded in contexts characterised by formal institutional frameworks, stable governance, and individualistic cultural values. These underlying assumptions contrast markedly with those found in many developing economies. As a result, the applicability of such findings to African family businesses is constrained by differences in socio-cultural norms, family structures, entrepreneurial practices, and institutional environments. In Africa, and particularly in Uganda, succession and leadership transition extend beyond

managerial or economic concerns, encompassing family socialisation, preparatory rituals, collective cohesion, and the transmission of family values and identity across generations (Mwansa, 2024). This contextual divergence underscores the need for more localised, context-sensitive scholarship to illuminate how business owners in African settings prepare their children for leadership and business continuity. Therefore, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge by addressing how entrepreneurial actions is undertaken in a culture dominated by different tribes and cultures, where each tribe orients children in their cultural context and family values to prepare them to take over when parents retire.

Uganda is ranked the world's third most entrepreneurial country (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor [GEM], 2023; Mayanja et al., 2024). Yet the country paradoxically faces a persistently high rate of business failure, with only about 20% of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) surviving beyond their first five years of operation (Uganda Investment Authority [UIA], 2020). Notably, most of these struggling enterprises are family-owned. Those family-owned SMEs that do survive beyond five years, and particularly those that manage to transition beyond the founder's tenure, are often characterised by informality, founder dominance, and limited institutionalisation. These features render them especially susceptible to poor intergenerational continuity (Economic Policy Research Centre [EPRC], 2025). The low survival rate across generations is largely attributed to founders' failure to adequately prepare successors with the necessary capabilities, autonomy, and entrepreneurial orientation to sustain and grow the business after the founder's retirement or exit. Studies within the Ugandan context, such as those by Lujja and Katamba (2023) on organisational culture and business failure, Turyatunga (2023) on transgenerational growth, Kwoba and Ebewo (2022) on performance factors in manufacturing, Rwomushana (2022) on HR practices and succession, and most recently, Mayanja et al. (2024) on the mediating role of reorganisation in the relationship between entrepreneurial intentions and intergenerational transfers, highlight key aspects of family business dynamics but largely ignore how entrepreneurial orientation influences succession planning. Although empirical research in Uganda is limited, existing studies indicate that the long-term sustainability of family-owned businesses depends not only on the transfer of ownership and managerial roles, but also on the effective transfer of an entrepreneurial mindset to successors (Cruz & Nordqvist, 2012). Succession planning that fosters entrepreneurial orientation capabilities like proactiveness, risk-taking, dynamic capabilities and autonomy enables successors to identify opportunities, adapt to change, and drive business renewal after the founder's exit (Rosecká & Machek, 2023). In contrast, when successors lack these capabilities, succession often results in leadership continuity without real business growth or sustainability. Thus, entrepreneurial orientation is critical to successors' ability to maintain competitiveness and ensure long-term survival. However, in Uganda, research on succession planning has largely focused on governance and ownership transfer, with limited attention to the development of successors' entrepreneurial capabilities necessary for transgenerational business sustainability. Additionally, despite various Ugandan government initiatives such as SME mentorship, the Women Entrepreneurship Program, and support from the Private Sector Foundation to strengthen small and medium enterprises (SMEs), an estimated 67% of these businesses still fail before their third year, with family firms being especially vulnerable (Mayanja et al., 2024). Out of the surviving family-owned SMEs, only 10% are transferred to the next generation (Economic Policy Research Centre [EPRC], 2025). Many failures occur when businesses are passed down to children who are ill-prepared due to inadequate training by founders (Mayanja et al., 2024). When the founder passes away, these successors often lack the skills, risk appetite, innovative mindset, and proactiveness needed to sustain the enterprise, ultimately leading to business closure and assets being sold to cover debts.

The findings presented in this study provide answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: *What is the Relationship Between Competitive Aggressiveness and Succession Planning in Small and Medium Family-Owned Businesses?*

RQ2: *What is the relationship between risk-taking and Succession Planning in Small and Medium Family-Owned Businesses?*

RQ3: *What is the Relationship Between Proactiveness and Succession Planning in Small and Medium Family-Owned Businesses?*

RQ4: *What is the Relationship Between Autonomy and Succession Planning in Small and Medium Family-Owned Businesses?*

Therefore, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of family business sustainability by exploring how entrepreneurial orientation influences succession planning among family-owned businesses in Uganda, a context where empirical insights remain scarce. Theoretically, this research makes a significant contribution by applying and extending Goal-Setting Theory to the family business succession process. By showing that well-defined succession goals and the intentional cultivation of entrepreneurial orientation can better prepare successors to sustain and rejuvenate the family enterprise, this study brings together the fields of entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning, which have often been studied in isolation. It also enriches the literature by providing much-needed empirical evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa, where succession research has largely focused on governance and ownership transfer, neglecting the entrepreneurial capabilities necessary for lasting success. On a practical level, the findings are expected to benefit a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including founders, successors, business advisors, policymakers, and consultants, by offering actionable guidance for designing succession processes that actively develop entrepreneurial skills before leadership transition. Thus, the study demonstrates that fostering entrepreneurial orientation is crucial for effective succession planning and the long-term viability of family-owned businesses in Uganda. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: the next section introduces the theoretical framework grounded in Goal-Setting Theory and reviews the relevant literature that informs the study's hypotheses. This is followed by a description of the research methodology, presentation of the results, discussion of findings, consideration of both theoretical and practical implications, and finally, the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical underpinnings

In this study, the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and Succession planning was investigated using goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). The theory posits that well-defined goals enhance performance by directing attention, mobilizing effort, increasing persistence, and encouraging the use of relevant strategies and knowledge necessary to achieve well-defined goals (Locke & Latham, 2002). Therefore, this means that in family businesses, succession is not just the transfer of ownership and control to the children, but it is a long-term process involving goal-oriented planning, leadership development of the young generation and imparting continuity and entrepreneurial values. The business owner must be focused on goal setting and adopting goal-setting practices not to ensure continuity but also to potentially strengthen the long-term entrepreneurial orientation of the family and the business. The entrepreneurial orientation is normally characterised by innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking and autonomy, where young family members are deliberately taught how to be competitively aggressive and take autonomous decisions in a turbulent business environment (Corrêa et al., 2022). This exercise supports in the preservation and evolution of the entrepreneurial orientation of the firm during and after the transition. Therefore, potential successors who are socialised into the business through a well-structured goal-oriented succession plan are more likely to internalise entrepreneurial values, engage in strategic risk-taking and be proactive to drive the family business in a competitive business environment (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2024).

2.2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.2.1. The relationship between competitive aggressiveness and succession planning

Competitive aggressiveness refers to a firm's tendency to confront competitors directly and forcefully to gain market entry, increase market share, or improve its competitive position (Mohammed et al., 2024). A study in the United States on how family involvement and traits influence entrepreneurial behaviours, including competitive aggressiveness (Kellermanns et al., 2012), found that family businesses with high levels of competitive aggressiveness often develop strong market strategies, respond quickly to threats, and outperform less aggressive counterparts. Another study focused on the African context and established that, in Africa, where markets are fragmented and institutions are weak, competitive

aggressiveness can serve as a survival and adaptation strategy for family-owned businesses (Bouncken & Kraus, 2025). Therefore, among family firms, competitive aggressiveness is a strategic stance and a key part of entrepreneurial orientation (EO), along with innovativeness, risk-taking, autonomy, and proactiveness (Crick, 2022). This strategic stance is characterised by direct and bold rivalry, greatly improving a firm's ability to innovate and adapt, which are essential for driving change in family businesses and are crucial for effective succession planning (Mohammed et al., 2024).

Competitive aggressiveness and succession planning in family-owned enterprises are related because competitive aggressiveness shapes the orientation of next-generation leaders (Eshima & Anderson, 2017). Next-generation leaders are often trained to challenge existing norms and capture new opportunities, which instils strategic boldness, an essential element for sustainable transitions (Eshima & Anderson, 2017). In African cultures, where family ties are complex, successors' ability to assert competitiveness can define both internal and external legitimacy and market authority (Chagwasha & Nyamwanza, 2022). This enables family firms to challenge entrenched players and navigate volatile conditions, which is significant for succession planning, where young successors must assert their legitimacy and strategic vision (Mwansa, 2024). Evidence suggests that African successors who demonstrate highly competitive aggressiveness, coupled with an orientation towards innovation, are better positioned to drive growth and maintain control post-transition (Nwuke & Adeola, 2023). However, there are circumstances in which competitive aggressiveness does not lead to succession planning in a family enterprise. This is because, in African societies, competitive aggressiveness is most likely to conflict with communal values and inter-family collaboration norms (Umezurike, 2016). Aggressive competition could alienate stakeholders or disrupt familial cohesion, particularly when successors adopt Western-style market assertiveness without cultural adaptation (Nwuke & Adeola, 2023). It should be noted that succession planning and transitions in African family firms are often embedded in respect, relational mentoring, and spiritual legitimacy, and not just entrepreneurial assertiveness (Mwansa, 2024). Theoretically, Goal Setting Theory explains the relationship between competitive aggressiveness and succession planning. The theory posits that organisations set ambitious, long-term goals and put clear plans and systems in place to stay ahead of the competition (Locke & Latham, 2002). This suggests that when family businesses are highly competitive and focused on long-term success, they are more likely to plan carefully for who will lead the business in the future (LeCounte, 2022). This is because a strong drive to outperform others pushes owners to think ahead and put systems in place to keep the business strong over generations. In Africa, where the business environment is particularly challenging, planning for succession is especially important for family businesses to survive, protect their legacy, and stay relevant. As a result, being more competitively aggressive tends to encourage better succession planning in these businesses.

It is thus hypothesised that competitive aggression is positively and significantly related to succession planning when family founders intentionally cultivate entrepreneurial assertiveness in children to continue pursuing the family legacy.

H1: *Competitive aggressiveness is positively and significantly related to succession planning*

2.2.2. The relationship between risk taking and succession planning

Risk-taking refers to a firm's willingness to bind substantial resources to uncertain chances to secure more proceeds (Asbach et al., 2025). In a family business context, family firms adopt risk-taking as a strategy when faced with challenges related to maintaining family prosperity or family affiliation (Kallmuenzer et al., 2018). This therefore risk-taking supports the family and the business to stabilise in a turbulent environment by sustaining its future direction and competitive edge (Rosecká & Machek, 2023). Despite outmoded views that suggest that family firms are more risk-averse relative to non-family enterprises (Zellweger & Sieger, 2012), current discoveries suggest that some family businesses exhibit entrepreneurial mindsets rooted in long-term orientation. The long-term orientation fosters legacy-driven goals which foster risk acceptance under certain conditions and in turn enhance succession planning (Asbach et al., 2025).

The relationship between risk-taking and succession planning has been highlighted by De Massis et al. (2015) and Belda-Ruiz et al. (2022), who argue that Risk-taking shapes how potential successors find the balance between protecting the family's emotional legacy and achieving the business's economic goals. When successors set clear goals for themselves, like preserving the family's legacy, keeping the

business under family control, and ensuring financial health, they become more motivated to take thoughtful risks that drive innovation and growth (Belda-Ruiz et al., 2022). These calculated risks aren't just about expanding the business; they're also about honouring family traditions, supporting employees, and maintaining stability during a generational handover. When social-emotional wealth is honoured and maintained, succession planning can foster both economic stability and social continuity, enabling successors to uphold family values, support employee wellbeing and minimise destabilisation behaviours (Rosecká & Machek, 2023). Such stability provides a foundation for strategic adaptation where successors are better positioned to engage in premeditated risk-taking that drives innovation, organisational renewal and long-term competitiveness.

While risk-taking has always been viewed as a catalyst for succession planning in family firms, there are situations where it does not always translate into succession planning. Previous research suggests that some family businesses may abandon their traditionally conservative posture when confronted with threats to family wealth and social identity which can trigger excessive and unhealthy risk-taking actions (Chrisman & Patel, 2012; Gomez-Mejia et al., 2011). Such reactive choices may undermine the orientation necessary for logical generational transitions when governance structures are destabilised and have a strain on family cohesion (Kallmuenzer et al., 2018).

Theoretically, Goal-Setting Theory provides a useful lens for understanding how risk-taking can support succession planning in family-owned businesses. According to this theory, when individuals and organisations set specific, challenging goals, they are more likely to engage in behaviours that help them achieve those goals (Locke & Latham, 2002; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). In the context of family businesses, it explains that when founders and successors establish clear long-term objectives, such as successful generational transitions, they become more motivated to take the necessary risk-taking steps to achieve the objectives (Asbach et al., 2025). It should be noted that risk-taking is not merely about bold or reckless decisions. Instead, it often involves thoughtful, calculated actions that consider both the legacy of the family business and the aspirations of future generations. For families deeply invested in the business, taking risks might look like investing in leadership development for younger family members, embracing new technologies, or implementing modern governance structures (Belda-Ruiz et al., 2022). These actions can feel daunting, especially when tradition and legacy are at stake, but they are essential for adapting to changing markets and ensuring the long-term attractiveness of customers.

We therefore hypothesise that risk-taking is positively related to succession planning when family business owners agree to take risks by empowering potential successors who support the succession planning process and continue to pursue both the family's social and business goals.

H2: *Risk taking is positively and significantly related to succession planning*

2.2.3. The relationship between proactiveness and succession planning

Proactiveness is defined as a firm's ability to anticipate future needs by addressing potential challenges and seizing emerging market opportunities (Bajwa et al., 2024). It is understood that proactiveness is a key element of entrepreneurial orientation, which fosters a forward-looking mindset among family employees for essential long-term competitiveness through research (Bivona & Cruz, 2021). In the context of family businesses, proactiveness extends beyond market leadership to include the intentional development of new procedures, technologies, and adaptive strategies that ensure business continuity amid changing market dynamics (Dyduch, 2016). The adaptive and anticipatory approach is vital for succession planning in family businesses, as it provides the family and the business with the strategic perspective and operational resilience needed to prepare the next generation for leadership roles, align them with future market demands, and preserve the firm's entrepreneurial spirit for transgenerational longevity (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022). This, therefore, not only helps sustain the competitive advantage but also acts as a strategic enabler for effective succession planning.

Previous research established a relationship between proactiveness and succession planning (Suder et al., 2024). The relationship was identified in Poland through research on printing family businesses and showed that proactiveness plays a role within family businesses by fostering a culture of ongoing self-renewal and future-oriented leadership development (Suder et al., 2024). As families face challenges

related to generational transitions, a proactive approach ensures that succession is not reactive or driven by crisis, but a deliberate strategic goal aligned with the constantly changing market conditions (Cruz & Nordqvist, 2012). When family firms anticipate industry trends and potential obstacles for successors, proactive families can systematically prepare successors by exposing them to innovation, decision-making, and adaptive learning processes (Debicki et al., 2020). This forward-thinking approach enhances the successors' ability to navigate complex business environments and ensures they are well equipped to sustain, grow, and protect the family legacy (Bivona & Cruz, 2021). Additionally, Proactiveness reinforces the alignment between the firm's entrepreneurial orientation and its succession strategies, facilitating the seamless transfer of leadership while preserving the firm's competitive edge and transgenerational vision (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022; Bivona & Cruz, 2021).

While proactiveness is a major contributor to succession planning, driving strategic initiatives, innovation, and long-term orientation, it does not always guarantee successful succession. Empirical studies show that even when family-owned businesses take proactive steps, succession planning can still fail if all family members are not fully committed or actively involved in the process (Soelistyawati et al., 2024). In the African context, succession is often hindered by informal governance systems, founder dominance, weak institutionalisation, and inadequate preparation of successors. These factors limit the ability of proactive intentions to translate into successful generational continuity (Khosa, 2024). Likewise, family enterprises may struggle to achieve sustainable succession when proactive strategies are not supported by formal governance structures, aligned succession goals, and structured successor development processes that bridge the gap between intention and outcome (Chen et al., 2025).

Theoretically, Goal-Setting Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the relationship between proactiveness in succession planning within family-owned businesses. According to this theory, organisations that set clear, future-oriented goals are more likely to take initiative and engage in behaviours that support the achievement of those goals. In the context of family businesses, having the explicit goal of ensuring continuity across generations motivates owners and potential successors to proactively address succession planning (Bivona & Cruz, 2021). This includes anticipating future challenges, identifying growth opportunities, and preparing for leadership transitions well before any crisis arises. We therefore hypothesise that proactiveness leads to succession planning when there is a match between the expressed desire for succession and the reality, especially when internal family governance and formal processes are strong.

H3: *Proactiveness is positively and significantly related to Succession Planning*

2.2.4. The relationship between autonomy and succession planning

Autonomy refers to the degree of independence and discretion granted to individuals and teams to initiate and pursue entrepreneurial activities without much oversight (Lumpkin et al., 2010; Yu et al., 2019). It is known that autonomy embodies the freedom to experiment, take initiative, and champion novel ideas, which is particularly vital in fostering an entrepreneurial culture within organizations (Yu et al., 2019). In this context family-owned business often provide a conducive environment for autonomy to thrive due to the high levels of trust, shared values, and relational embeddedness that typically characterise the familiar structure of family-run firms (Neckebrouck et al., 2018; Pittino et al., 2016). The familial structure inherent in family businesses often fosters an environment of loyalty and psychological safety among family members (Neckebrouck et al., 2018). This environment enables individuals to exercise independent judgment and make decisions with minimal interference from the business founders (Pittino et al., 2016). Such autonomy creates a fertile ground for effective succession planning to take root and flourish (Lumpkin et al., 2010). Succession planning refers to a deliberate and systematic process through which an organisation identifies, develops, and retains individuals with the potential to assume key leadership roles in the future (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2024; Rothwell, 2005). It is known that Succession planning involves the strategic alignment of talent with organisational goals, ensuring that individuals with the right skills and competencies are positioned to contribute to the long-term sustainability of the family business. Additionally, effective succession planning thus requires both strategic vision and a relational sensitivity that considers not only business performance but also family dynamics and intergenerational cohesion (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2024).

Previous research has already identified the relationship between autonomy and succession planning (Neckebrouck et al., 2018). They established that autonomy in family businesses is not merely an operational convenience but a critical driver of long-term strategic effectiveness (Pittino et al., 2016). Therefore, autonomy encourages innovation, adaptability and proactive opportunity recognition which are essential for sustaining entrepreneurial thrust across generations (Burgelman, 2001). Additionally, autonomy influences succession planning as it nurtures leadership capabilities and decision-making among potential successors (Lumpkin et al., 2010). This is so because when potential successors are allowed to explore, they make independent choices where they engage in meaningful business activities where they develop the skills and confidence necessary for assuming future leadership roles (Cater et al., 2021; Lumpkin et al., 2010). This depicts a mechanism for ensuring continuity and renewal within the family enterprise where trust, successor selection and mentorship is given ground for socially identified young members of the next generation (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2021).

Much as autonomy is considered as key in succession planning in family-owned enterprises, their circumstances where it may not lead to succession planning. This is so because of majorly contextual or structural barriers that undermine its potential, like family interference, lack of interest of the potential successors in running a family enterprise and lack of family business vision by the young generation members. In many African family enterprises, the strong influence of founders, the prevalence of kinship control, and a founder's reluctance to fully hand over authority can undermine the autonomy that successors are meant to have (Ntari & Deliwe, 2024). Even when successors are given managerial roles in name, founders frequently continue to oversee, override, or modify their decisions, making it difficult for successors to act independently. This kind of oversight creates a sense of dependency, erodes confidence, and can dampen the motivation of would-be successors, ultimately weakening their commitment to the succession process.

Theoretically, Goal setting provides lenses through which we can view the relationship between autonomy and succession planning in family-owned small and medium businesses. This elucidates that individuals demonstrate greater commitment to organisational objectives when they are given autonomy and responsibility in pursuing those goals. Within family businesses, the collective aim of generational continuity drives owners to foster environments where successors are empowered to make independent decisions and develop leadership capabilities. This autonomy not only enhances successor preparedness but also strengthens their engagement with the succession process, ultimately supporting a smoother leadership transition. We therefore hypothesise that autonomy influences succession planning, where the next-generation family business members are given the freedom to make their own decisions and carry out family business responsibilities without frequent interference from senior members.

H4: *Autonomy is positively and significantly related to succession planning*

3. Methods

3.1. Research design, population and sample size determination

This study used a cross-sectional design to collect quantitative data over a defined period (Ripollés & Blesa, 2012). In Kampala City's vibrant business landscape, there are 94,200 registered enterprises across the trade, manufacturing, and service sectors (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2021). The research focused on family-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs), specifically those with more than seven employees. In this study, a family business is considered as an enterprise in which a single family holds a controlling ownership stake, exerts substantial influence over key strategic decisions with explicit intention of transferring both ownership and management responsibilities to future generations (Sharma et al., 2001; Singh et al., 2021). Although the total number of businesses in Kampala is documented, there is no official record of how many are family-owned SMEs. Consequently, the study could not determine the exact size of its target group. To address this challenge, a snowball sampling method was used. This approach is well suited to reaching hidden or hard-to-define populations (Ting et al., 2025). The process began by identifying participants who met the study's criteria; these individuals then connected the researcher with other eligible family-owned SMEs in their business circles. The research was anchored in

the Kampala Central Business District (CBD), Uganda's main commercial centre, which accounts for about 72% of the country's business activity. The final sample comprised 215 family-owned SMEs. Because the total number of these businesses was unknown, the adequacy of the sample was assessed against best practices for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). According to Hair et al. (2010, 2014), SEM studies require a sample size that aligns with the number of measurement items and the model's complexity to ensure robust and reliable findings. With 215 family-owned SMEs participating, the study exceeded the minimum recommended threshold for SEM, making the sample suitable for testing the research model. The sample was drawn from the trade, manufacturing, and service sectors, with 176 businesses responding, representing 82% of the target group. The unit of analysis was the family business entity, and the main respondent was the family business owner or successor. To ensure managerial experience, only businesses with at least five years of operation were included. Lastly, gender inclusivity was maintained to ensure the participation of women-owned family businesses.

3.2. Data collection and sampling procedure

Data for this study were collected from family-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kampala's Central Business District (CBD), Uganda. The focus was on businesses where a single family held the majority ownership, family members were actively involved in management, there was a clear intention to transfer leadership to the next generation, and succession planning activities, such as mentorship, had already begun. Family business owners and successors were purposively selected for this study because they possess direct and substantive knowledge of the strategic, behavioural, and relational processes that shape their firms' entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning practices. Given the absence of an official database of such family-owned SMEs in Uganda, these businesses constitute a hidden population, making probability sampling impractical. Following guidance for studies on hidden populations (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Heckathorn, 1997; Ting et al., 2025), the researchers aimed to survey 215 firms using a snowball sampling technique. They began by contacting businesses through professional networks and trade associations in the Kampala CBD, then asked participants to refer other eligible firms. To reduce bias, referrals were sought from a variety of sectors, and each business was carefully screened against the study's inclusion criteria. The sample size was determined based on methodological recommendations for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), considering statistical power and model complexity to ensure sufficient statistical reliability (Hair et al., 2022). Over eight months, from February to September 2025, the researcher personally distributed 215 structured questionnaires to the targeted respondents. The purpose of the study was explained, instructions for completing the questionnaire were provided, and participants were assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Respondents had the option to complete the questionnaires on the spot or return them at a later date, with follow-up visits conducted as necessary to facilitate retrieval. Of the 215 questionnaires distributed, 176 were fully completed and returned, resulting in a usable response rate of 81.9%. This response rate was considered adequate for the study's quantitative analysis using Smart PLS-SEM.

3.3. Operationalization of variables

Entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning were measured using validated scales adapted from established empirical research, following the recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2012) to ensure construct validity and reliability. Entrepreneurial orientation was assessed across four dimensions: risk-taking, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy. These items were adapted from the widely validated scales of Covin and Slevin (1991) and refined by Lumpkin and Dess (1996). These dimensions were selected to capture the strategic behaviours that enable family firms to pursue opportunities, respond proactively to environmental changes, foster independent decision-making among successors, and maintain competitive advantage, thus supporting long-term continuity. Succession planning was operationalised as the deliberate and systematic process of identifying, preparing, and transitioning leadership to the next generation to ensure business continuity. Measurement items were primarily drawn from the multidimensional scale of Li et al.

(2024), developed specifically for family businesses, with additional items on mentorship and trust adapted from Bizri (2016) and Schoorman et al. (2007). Succession planning was evaluated across four dimensions: successor selection, mentorship, trust and social identity. These dimensions collectively reflect both the structural and relational processes involved in preparing future leaders, making them particularly appropriate for examining succession planning within Ugandan family-owned SMEs. A structured, closed-ended questionnaire anchored on a six-point Likert scale was employed to capture respondents' views with response categories designed to avoid midpoint bias. To reduce response biases, the questionnaire was carefully designed with clear wording and a mix of positive and negative statements. Respondents were encouraged to answer honestly, knowing there were no right or wrong responses. The six-point scale, while eliminating a neutral option, was used to prompt more thoughtful and discriminating answers from knowledgeable participants. Measurement items were adapted from previously validated instruments and refined to align with the study context, ensuring both content validity and conceptual relevance. Each construct was operationalised using reflective items derived from prior theoretical and empirical studies, which were systematically modified to suit the realities of family-owned SMEs under investigation.

3.4. Reliability and validity

The results summarised in Tables 1 and 2 below highlight the strong measurement quality of the entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning constructs. Each indicator showed robust factor loadings, reflecting a solid alignment between the survey items and the theoretical concepts that they were designed to measure. Both Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability scores surpassed the widely accepted threshold of 0.70, signalling high internal consistency. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values also exceeded 0.50, which indicates that all the constructs are convergently valid. Additionally, all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were well below the level of concern, indicating no multicollinearity issues. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the study's measurement models are both reliable and valid, providing a sound foundation for further structural analysis.

Furthermore, it's noted that during the initial data screening, certain items, such as EOCA3 and EOCA4, were excluded from the analysis. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that these items failed to load significantly on any specific dimension, indicating they did not adequately represent the intended constructs. As a result, they were removed before the confirmatory factor analysis to ensure the remaining scale items were appropriate for further statistical analysis.

Table 1. Reliability and validity estimates for entrepreneurial orientation.

<i>Autonomy</i>	Loadings	Cronbach alpha	CR	AVE	VIF
EOAU3	0.838**	0.739	0.852	0.658	1.447
EOAU4	0.727**				
EOAU5	0.862**				
<i>Competitive Aggressiveness</i>					
EOCA1	0.727**	0.826	0.878	0.589	1.672
EOCA2	0.780**				
EOCA5	0.762**				
EOCA6	0.772**				
EOCA7	0.795**				
<i>Pro-Activeness</i>					
EOPR1	0.809**	0.914	0.933	0.698	2.388
EOPR2	0.853**				
EOPR3	0.829**				
EOPR4	0.806**				
EOPR5	0.860**				
EOPR6	0.854**				
<i>Risk Taking</i>					
EORT1	0.742**	0.834	0.883	0.601	1.806
EORT2	0.790**				
EORT5	0.806**				
EORT6	0.776**				
EORT7	0.762**				

** $p < 0.001$, bootstrap with 5000 samples (2-tailed test at 5% level of sig.).

CR - Composite Reliability.

AVE- Average Variance Extracted.

VIF-Variance Inflation Factor.

Source: (s): Primary Data.

Table 2. Reliability and validity estimates for succession planning.

<i>Mentorship</i>	Loadings	<i>Cronbach alpha</i>	CR	AVE	VIF
SPME1	0.785**	0.890	0.914	0.604	2.031
SPME2	0.760**				
SPME3	0.767**				
SPME4	0.861**				
SPME5	0.772**				
SPME7	0.758**				
SPME8	0.732**				
<i>Social Identity</i>					
SPSI3	0.879**	0.829	0.887	0.668	1.991
SPSI4	0.909**				
SPSI5	0.889**				
<i>Successor Selection</i>		0.944	0.953	0.692	1.879
SPSS1	0.715**				
SPSS2	0.857**				
SPSS3	0.900**				
SPSS4	0.845**				
SPSS5	0.781**				
SPSS6	0.827**				
SPSS7	0.848**				
SPSS8	0.871**				
SPSS9	0.829**				
<i>Trust</i>		0.766	0.848	0.584	1.509
SPTR1	0.726**				
SPTR2	0.870**				
SPTR3	0.824**				

** $p < 0.001$, bootstrap with 5000 samples (2-tailed test at 5% level of sig.).

CR - Composite Reliability.

AVE- Average Variance Extracted.

VIF-Variance Inflation Factor.

Source: (s): Primary Data.

Table 3 below shows that discriminant validity was assessed using Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios, and the results indicate that the latent constructs in the model were empirically distinct from each other.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive results

Descriptive statistics indicate that, regarding respondents' characteristics, the majority of participants by gender were male (94), accounting for 53.4%, while females numbered 82, representing 46.6%. Most respondents were aged between 26 and 35 years (38.1%), with the fewest being over 46 years (42.2%). In terms of education, the largest group held a degree or higher (81), making up 46%, whereas the smallest had up to primary 5 education (2.8%). The majority in terms of religion were identified as Muslim (48), representing 27.3% while the minimum participants in terms of religion were orthodox with (1) representing 0.6. Regarding business roles, most respondents were business owners (96), accounting for 54.5%, while successors numbered (80), representing 45.5%. In terms of dependants, most respondents had between 1 and 5 dependents (48), accounting for 83%, while the fewest respondents who had 11 and above dependents were only 4 respondents representing 2.3%. For biological children, 147 respondents had between 1 and 5 children (83%), and 9 had 11 or more (5.1%). In terms of business experience, 106(60.2%) respondents had 5-10 years, 28 (15.9%) respondents had 15 or more years. Most businesses, 85 (48.3%) belonged to the trade sector, while the fewest were in services, 64(36.4%). Businesses operational for 5 to 10 years constituted the largest group, whereas 41 businesses (23.3%) had been in operation for over 15 years. Regarding ownership structure, most, 74 (42%) were sole proprietors, and the fewest were private limited companies, 64(3.4%). Businesses with 5-10 non-family employees numbered 88 (50%), while those with 40 or more employees numbered 3 (1.7%). Most businesses employed 1-2 family members, with the fewest employing over 7 family members (0.6%).

4.2. Structural model results

In this study, hypothesis testing was conducted using three parameters: the p-value, the T-value, and the bias-corrected confidence intervals (BCI) at the 95% level, as recommended by Hair et al. (2019).

Table 3. Discriminant validity using the (HTMT) ratio for entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning.

	<i>Autonomy</i>	<i>Competitive aggressiveness</i>	<i>Pro-Activeness</i>	<i>Risk taking</i>
Autonomy				
Competitive Aggressiveness	0.776			
Pro-Activeness	0.654	0.695		
Risk Taking	0.661	0.599	0.728	
	<i>Mentorship</i>	<i>Social Identity</i>	<i>Successor Selection</i>	<i>Trust</i>
Mentorship				
Social Identity	0.557			
Successor Selection	0.544	0.473		
Trust	0.543	0.585	0.502	

Source: (s): Primary Data.

Table 4. Structural model results linking entrepreneurial orientation to succession planning.

Hypothesis	Direct effects	β	Std. Error	T values	p values	95% bcci	Decision
H ₁	Competitive Aggressiveness → Succession Planning	0.266	0.104	2.558	0.011	0.046,0.448	Supported
H ₂	Risk Taking → Succession Planning	0.381	0.093	4.115	0.000	0.174,0.540	Supported
H ₃	Pro-Activeness → Succession Planning	0.038	0.139	0.269	0.788	−0.268,0.289	Not supported
H ₄	Autonomy → Succession Planning	0.130	0.093	1.396	0.163	−0.050,0.318	Not supported

Source: (s): Primary Data.

Table 5. Effect sizes for the structural model.

	Succession planning	R-square	Adjusted R ²	SRMR	Q ² predictive relevance
Autonomy	0.015	0.398	0.383	0.073	0.327
Competitive Aggressiveness	0.059				
Pro-Activeness	0.001				
Risk Taking	0.129				
Succession planning	f-square values	Prediction Estimates		Model Fit Quality	

Source: (s): Primary Data.

Accordingly, a hypothesis is supported if the probability value is less than 0.05, the T-value is at least 1.96 and the (BCI) does not include zero within its lower and upper bounds. Therefore, the results in Table 4 below indicate that two of the direct hypotheses were supported, while two were not. Specifically, a positive and significant relationship was found between competitive aggressiveness and succession planning ($\beta=0.266$, $T=2.558$, $p<0.05$, $BCI = 0.046 - 0.448$). Similarly, risk-taking demonstrated a positive and significant effect on succession planning ($\beta = 0.381$, $T=4.115$, $p<0.05$, $BCI = 0.174 - 0.540$). Conversely, autonomy did not exhibit a significant relationship with succession planning ($\beta=0.038$, $T=0.269$, $p=0.788$, $BCI=-0.268 - 0.289$). Finally, no significant relationship was established between proactiveness and succession planning ($\beta=0.130$, $T=1.396$, $p=0.163$, $BCI=-0.050 - 0.318$).

4.3. Structural Equation Modelling

In examining the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning, Hair et al. (2019) recommend the application of structural model analysis to elucidate and interpret the underlying associations. To be specific, within Partial Least Modelling (PLSM), scholars emphasise the importance of evaluating factor loadings, the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (F^2), and the predictive relevance (Q^2), as these indicators collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the structural model's explanatory power. According to Hair et al. (2019) factor loadings should attain a minimum threshold of 0.708 and demonstrate statistical significance to ensure construct validity. Similarly, (R^2) values are expected to exceed 0.10 to indicate acceptable explanatory power. Concerning effect size (F^2), values of 0.02,0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium and large effects, respectively as shown in Table 5 below.

Therefore, in this study, the structural model was generated through Smart PLS, and satisfies these methodological benchmarks. All factor loadings exceed the minimum threshold of 0.708, thereby confirming item reliability. Furthermore, the direct effect of the model in the present study indicated that succession planning had an R^2 value of 0.398 implying that the dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation, such

as autonomy, competitive aggressiveness, pro-activeness, and risk-taking explained 39.8% of the change in succession planning. The residue variance of 61.8% in succession planning might be explained by other factors such as entrepreneurial actions, goal setting, psychological contract, among others. Thus, we can suggest that the model exhibited a moderate accuracy, as illustrated in [Figure 1](#) below.

5. Discussion

In this study, which investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning among small and medium enterprises in Kampala Central Business District in Uganda, data were collected between February and September 2025 using structured questionnaires. The collected data are presented, analysed, and discussed as follows.

The results indicate that competitive aggressiveness is positively and significantly related to succession planning. This suggests that in Uganda, where family-owned businesses often face tough competition, unpredictable economic shifts, and limited support from formal institutions, adopting an aggressive competitive approach is likely to help the business grow and sustain operations. The aggressive market approach involves actively seeking new market opportunities, improving their products, and adapting quickly to change, thus increasing the likelihood of survival and long-term success across generations. This proactive mindset helps future family business owners gain actual business skills, understand the market, and develop the confidence to make sound decisions, all of which are crucial for steering a business through Uganda's unique challenges. Given that succession planning in Uganda is usually informal and deeply influenced by family ties and hands-on experience, being competitive in the marketplace becomes even more important for the long-term success of family-owned businesses. This is in line with Mwansa (2024), who asserts that competitive aggressiveness enables family firms to antagonise established competitors and adapt to volatile market conditions in an institutionally constrained environment that allows knowledge transfer to the young business owners. This becomes vital for succession planning as they allow young successors to demonstrate their legitimacy and articulate a clear vision. Through orientation, learning and knowledge transfer occur when successors acquire skills necessary to sustain competitiveness across generations.

The study also established that risk taking is positively related to succession planning. The findings suggest that family business owners who prefer to try novel approaches when learning new things and actively seek out unusual activities are likely to demonstrate a flexible mindset that values adaptability and innovation. Therefore, such flexibility becomes a vital asset for continuity, especially in markets where uncertainty and institutional structures are prevalent, such as in family businesses. When risk-taking is embedded into the organisational culture, current leaders establish an environment in which successors are encouraged to experiment, innovate and embrace uncertainty as part of the business legacy. Correspondingly, the willingness to take bold decisions into uncertain ventures and accept risks for the sake of the family business strengthens the foundation for succession planning. This is in line with Asbach et al. (2025) who assert that risk-taking encourages experimentation, thus cultivating strong entrepreneurial values that empower successors through fostering an environment where learning by trial, adaptation and calculated risks becomes normal, hence supporting continuity across generations.

The study findings revealed that proactiveness is not related to succession planning. This means that in developing economies like Uganda, the way family businesses approach succession is shaped more by social, cultural, and institutional realities than by entrepreneurial strategies alone. This pattern differs from what is often seen in developed economies, where strong institutions and governance frameworks encourage long-term planning and professional succession processes. In Africa and many developing economies, while family business owners may be innovative, quick to spot opportunities, and responsive to market changes, these actions are often focused on day-to-day survival rather than long-term leadership transition. In many cases, immediate business needs and keeping the company afloat take priority over structured plans for passing the business to the next generation, especially in environments marked by economic uncertainty, limited resources, and weak formal support systems. The findings are in line with (Khosa, 2024), who suggests that succession planning in African family businesses is more strongly driven by family ties, cultural expectations, founder authority, and kinship obligations than by market-oriented proactiveness. As a result, even when businesses are proactive in the marketplace, this does not always lead to formal or systematic succession plans.

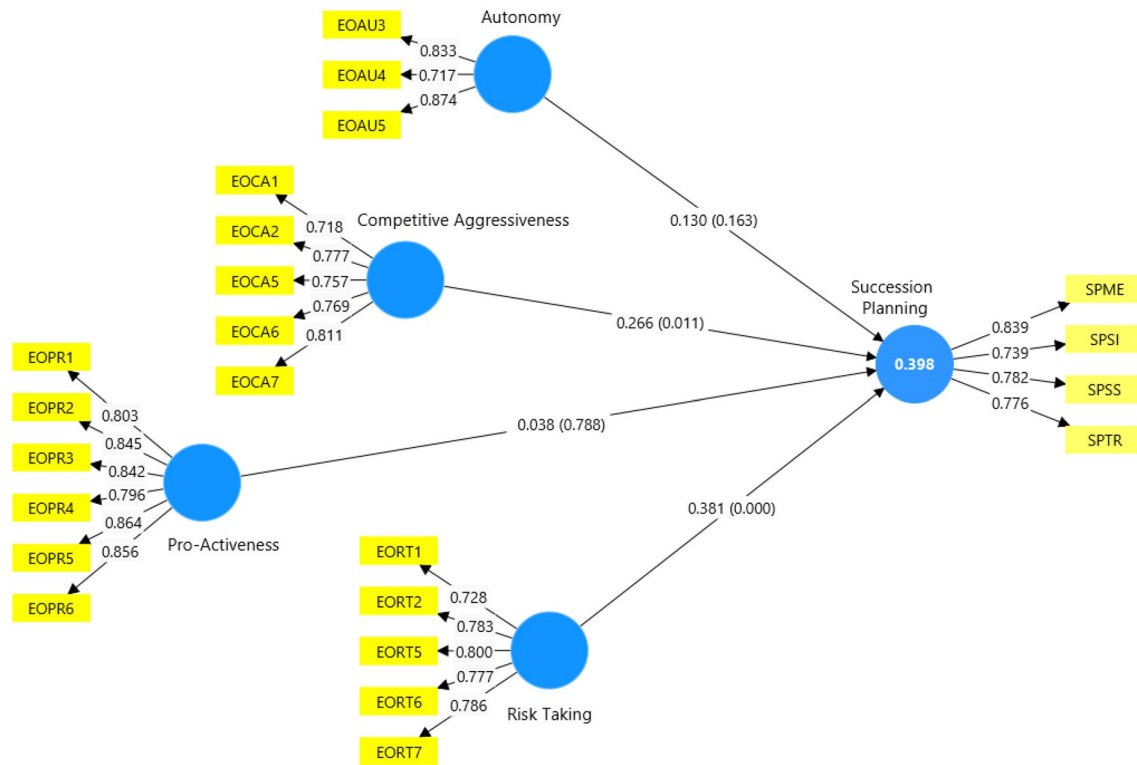


Figure 1. Structural model linking entrepreneurial orientation to succession planning.
Source: (s): Primary Data.

The study findings further indicated that there was no relationship between autonomy and succession planning. This indicates that in many African family businesses, family business owners' decision-making is constrained by founder dominance, kinship hierarchies and societal norms that prioritise collective family interests over individual independence. Even though a potential successor has been put in charge while the business founder is still alive, the potential successor cannot decide on his or her own without first consulting the business founder. Therefore, as young business managers display autonomy in day-to-day operations, this autonomy rarely extends to succession decisions. It will have to be subjected to scrutiny by the family owner or the family elders to be an authentic decision, binding the whole family and the business. It should therefore be noted that in the African context, where families are socially embedded and where families are not strategically rational, succession is influenced by tradition and kinship commitments, where autonomy is a managerial decision which does not necessarily shape leadership and business continuity. This is in line with Nwuke and Adeola (2023) who assert that in an African context, family influence and cultural expectations override administrative autonomy in succession matters within family business because of the dominance of informal and unstructured processes. Therefore, autonomy is disassociated from succession planning not because it lacks value but because succession is largely determined by cultural legitimacy and family cohesion rather than entrepreneurial independence.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study provide insight into the complex nature of succession planning in Ugandan family businesses and show that the dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation are not uniformly associated with succession planning. Competitive aggressiveness and risk-taking had positive and statistically significant relationships with succession planning, suggesting that these orientations are important for succession-related practices. In contrast, proactiveness and autonomy were not significantly related to succession planning. This pattern suggests that succession planning should be understood within a broader context in which entrepreneurial orientation interacts with social, cultural, and institutional

factors. Elements such as founder authority, family obligations, informal governance, collective decision-making, and immediate business survival may shape succession practices. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of considering both entrepreneurial orientations and the socio-cultural and institutional context when examining succession planning in Ugandan family businesses. They also underscore the value of strengthening governance structures, preparing successors, building family consensus, and formalising succession practices alongside entrepreneurial capabilities.

7. Study Implications and recommendations

7.1. Theoretical implications

The findings extend Goal-Setting Theory by demonstrating its relevance in explaining how entrepreneurial orientations translate into succession planning practices within Ugandan family businesses. Risk-taking and competitive aggressiveness were positively associated with succession planning, indicating that goal commitment and purposeful action are particularly activated by competitive and uncertain business conditions. However, the non-significant relationships between autonomy, proactiveness, and succession planning suggest that goal-directed behaviour may depend on contextual factors such as collectivist decision-making, founder influence, and cultural expectations. Rather than superseding Agency Theory, the Resource-Based View, or Socioemotional Wealth Theory, Goal-Setting Theory complements these perspectives by providing a behavioural explanation of how entrepreneurial dispositions contribute to deliberate succession planning. This study thus advances a multi-theoretical understanding by highlighting the importance of contextualising goal-directed entrepreneurial behaviour within Ugandan family businesses.

7.2. Practical implications

Family business owners and successors should leverage entrepreneurial orientation to strengthen succession planning in their family businesses. Specifically, family business owners and successors should embrace the dimensions of risk taking and competitive aggressiveness as strategic tools for securing business continuity. When they cultivate a calculated risk-taking culture, family business owners and successors should set ambitious succession goals under uncertain competitive environments. Additionally, family business owners and successors should foster competitive aggressiveness to motivate both incumbents and the next generation to develop concrete succession strategies aimed at sustaining the family's market position. On the other hand, the absence of the relationship between autonomy and proactivity warns family business owners and successors to always seek a collective vision and family consensus while undertaking autonomous and proactive decision making.

7.3. Policy implications

Although Uganda has policies in place for supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), the specific challenges that family-owned businesses face, especially around succession planning, are often overlooked. This study suggests that policies should go beyond general SME support and focus more on helping family businesses plan for long-term survival, since they make up a large part of the country's private sector. Because competitive aggressiveness and risk-taking have been found to improve succession planning, the government should create an environment where family firms are encouraged to pursue growth, innovation, and invest in their futures, while also preparing the next generation to take over.

Government, through the Ministry of Trade, should introduce targeted programmes to help family businesses with formal succession planning and professional governance. This support should come in the form of tax breaks, affordable business advisory services, low-interest loans, special financing linked to succession plans, and priority access to government-backed entrepreneurship programmes for those firms that show they are preparing for smooth leadership transitions. Additionally, public institutions should partner with universities, business associations, and private groups to offer training on succession

management, governance, conflict resolution, and developing future leaders, all tailored to the unique needs of family-owned businesses.

Since proactiveness and autonomy do not significantly impact succession planning in Ugandan family businesses, Government should understand that entrepreneurial behaviour on its own isn't enough to ensure these businesses last from one generation to the next. Instead, effective policies should also consider the social, cultural, and governance factors that influence how family firms make decisions in Africa. By addressing these broader realities, the government should help build a more supportive environment where family businesses are better equipped to manage leadership transitions, protect jobs, and continue contributing to Uganda's economic growth for years to come.

8. Limitations and areas for future research

This study explored how different aspects of entrepreneurial orientation such as competitive aggressiveness, risk-taking, autonomy, and proactiveness relate to succession planning in Ugandan family businesses. However, there are several important limitations to keep in mind. First, because the research relied on a cross-sectional approach, capturing data at only one point in time, it couldn't track how entrepreneurial orientation and succession planning might change or develop over the years. Second, the study focused only on family businesses in Kampala's Central Business District, which means the findings might not fully apply to businesses in other parts of Uganda or in similar economies. Third, all information was gathered from a single person in each business, which could have led to bias or subjective reporting, especially since succession planning is a sensitive topic for many families. Participants may have been inclined to present their businesses in a more positive light. Additionally, using snowball sampling may have limited the diversity of the sample, as respondents were likely connected through similar networks. To address these limitations, future research should consider following businesses over time, expanding to different regions, involving multiple people from each business, and using a mix of research methods to provide a fuller and more reliable picture.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethical approval

This study, part of my PhD research on "Succession Planning in Family Businesses in Uganda" for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Makerere University, was vetted and received ethical approval from Makerere University's Directorate of Research and Graduate Training, Uganda, under Reg No: 2019/HD10/30793U, dated 21st October 2024, which enabled data collection. Additionally, the researchers obtained verbal informed consent from the respondents

who participated in the study. This approach was chosen instead of written consent because, in Uganda, there is a strong culture of informal business operations. Business owners are often reluctant to sign documents and worry about the disclosure of sensitive information related to their business activities. In such an environment, signing a document is frequently associated with legal obligations, taxation, or government scrutiny. Even when assured of confidentiality and that the information would be used solely for research purposes, many entrepreneurs prefer verbal agreements over formal documentation and feel uncomfortable signing written consent forms for research. The researchers therefore explained the purpose and objectives of the study to the respondents before collecting data. The respondents verbally agreed, which allowed the researchers to proceed and administer the questionnaire. Before this, the researchers designed a questionnaire in straightforward language that all respondents could understand to prevent misinterpretation.

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [Reuben David Kizito], upon reasonable request.

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