Survival strategies as a Panacea to the Reduction of Small Business Mortality in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study was carried out to examine the influence of survival strategies on the reduction of small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Survey research design was employed for the study. Population for the study was 9,483 registered small business in the 3 senatorial district headquarters of Uyo, Ikot Ekepene and Eket. Sample size was gotten as 384 using Taro Yamene's formula for sample size determination. Primary source of data which was mainly questionnaire was used for the study. Simple random sampling technique was employed in administering the research instrument. Descriptive and Inferential statistical tool were employed. The inferential statistical tool was simple linear regression. Findings showed that there exists a significant and positive effect of managerial skill on business mortality. Also, there exist a significant and positive influence of succession plan on small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State. As such, it was concluded that adopting survival strategies have contributed to the reduction in small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State. As recommendations, small business owners should ensure that they get the required managerial skills from the onset or hire someone that possesses the needed competence to run the business as it grows. Also, Entrepreneurs should identify potential candidates to succeed them in business in case of death and train them to resume responsibility in case of emergency.

Keywords: *Survival strategies, Managerial skills, Succession plans, Business Mortality*

Introduction

Small enterprises occupy a crucial role in the development and stability of a nation's economy. They are globally recognised as catalysts for economic growth and development (Ifekwem and Adedamola 2016). Consequently, governments have exerted significant efforts and implemented policies to foster the growth and viability of small enterprises. Countries such as Germany, Japan, Taiwan, China, and Sweden provide training possibilities for individuals interested in launching their own enterprises. They also offer concessional loans to assist in financing their enterprises. In Nigeria, Ekpenyong (2002) asserted that the government has periodically made diverse contributions to the growth and development of small enterprises by establishing agencies and programs that offer consulting, information, and guidance to Nigerian entrepreneurs. Programs include the Small and Medium Enterprise Equity Investment Scheme (SMEEIS), created in 2001, and the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), established in 2003. Additional institutions established include the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), skills acquisition centres, and industrial development centres (Ifekwem, 2016). Mandah (2010) contends that the operational conditions do not foster a favourable climate for small enterprises in Nigeria.

The mortality rate of small enterprises in Nigeria is exceedingly elevated. Study by Toyin et al. (2014) reveals that the majority of enterprises do not commemorate their fifth anniversary. Their mortality is associated with factors such as ineffective management, inefficient accounting systems, inadequate financial oversight, insufficient marketing and research, inappropriate location, dependence on a single business partner, government policies, unforeseen competition, natural disasters, economic conditions, and inadequate planning. SMEDAN (2013) identified insufficient information, inexperience, and a lack of commitment among operators. These elements appear to be both distinctive and universal among all small enterprises. The proficiency and expertise of business proprietors and management might determine the success or failure of the enterprise. It is estimated that two-thirds of small business failures result from the incompetence of the owners or managers (Graham, 2003). The primary cause of small business failures is frequently attributed to management's indifferent approach to strategic matters, and many individuals believe that managerial skills and knowledge are not essential for entrepreneurial endeavours. They also presume that sufficient capital enables any individual to initiate and manage a profitable enterprise without challenges. In Akwa Ibom State, numerous small-scale enterprises have flourished thanks to government programs such as financial partnerships for small business owners and the organisation of domestic trade fairs, as well as the methods implemented by these businesses.

Akwa Ibom State possesses significant potential for overall commercial growth, particularly in small enterprises. The state is experiencing an inflow of individuals and small enterprises due to oil exploration and extraction. The spectrum of small enterprises is virtually boundless, encompassing motor vehicle repair services, dining establishments, hairdressing and barber shops, carpentry, beverage outlets, beer distribution, business centres, retail and wholesale trade, as well as computer sales, repairs, and maintenance. With a heightened focus on entrepreneurial orientation and the creation of entrepreneurial development centres in all higher education institutions within the state, it is anticipated that numerous small business proprietors will be proficiently equipped with strategies to mitigate business failure rates. Numerous survival strategies exist for small-scale enterprises. Key concepts in the literature include low-cost strategy, differentiation, customisation, internalisation, flexible financial strategy, market positioning, and efficient infrastructure (Akinso, 2018). Additional elements include innovation, managerial competencies, marketing strategy, succession planning, and staff training. This researcher was interested in strategies including managerial skills, marketing strategy, and succession planning. These three techniques were selected as they encompass business management, product/service marketing, and business continuity. Notwithstanding the generally recognised high mortality rate of small enterprises in Nigeria, some businesses have successfully endured beyond five years of operation, particularly in Akwa Ibom State. This category of enterprises was the emphasis of this study.

Managerial skills refer to the methods employed in company operations to achieve favourable outcomes inside an organisation. It includes interpersonal skills, which refer to the capacity to collaborate effectively with individuals and groups, and technical skills, which are the specialised knowledge required to execute tasks in technical business professions. Conceptual skills refer to the capacity to interpret and formulate ideas, as well as to execute strategies. Furthermore, the administration of financial resources is an additional aspect that necessitates managerial expertise. This component is crucial as it is fundamental to the success or failure of small enterprises.

A marketing strategy is a comprehensive array of options regarding how a corporation will evolve and accrue worth over an extended duration (John and Alan, 2008). It encompasses the strategies that firms develop to identify, comprehend, and fulfil client wants. Utam and Rahal (2014) asserted that a corporate organization's strategy significantly influence its success or failure. For a firm to succeed, the owner or management must identify the true audience and understand their values, as well as determine the optimal method of delivering offerings to them. This necessitates the development of a suitable marketing plan that clearly articulates the vision for the future of the organisation. A cohesive and clear plan can streamline the organization's objectives and operations. Utam and Rahal (2014). An initial examination of marketing trends among small-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State indicated a deficiency in the formulation of competitive marketing strategies essential for their sustainability. No enterprise can endure without the proper marketing of its products or services.

Succession planning is a deliberate and systematic effort by an organisation to provide a continuous leadership pipeline in critical roles, preserve and cultivate intellectual capital for the future, and foster individual development. Rothwell, 2010. Thirty percent of business failures can be attributed to deficiencies in succession planning, while approximately fifty percent of small enterprises lack adequate succession plans. As a result, they are powerless about sustainability issues. To date, one of the most challenging conversations for any entrepreneur to engage in with their family is succession planning. The majority of entrepreneurs are reluctant to engage in discussions regarding mortality or the potential failure of their enterprises. Basil (2005) asserts that neglecting to address these issues might result in significant financial and emotional repercussions, arguing that it is myopic and egocentric to forgo such planning. Moreover, Obadan and Ohiorenoya (2013) assert that prioritising succession planning is one of the most valuable legacies a generation can bequeath to the next. Halting business mortality in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, would yield benefits such as economic expansion, heightened employment rates, enhanced living standards, and industrial concentration, among others.

Managerial abilities, marketing strategy, and succession planning are likely the essential characteristics required to ensure the longevity of small businesses. These survival methods, if embraced and effectively executed, will result in a successful business operation. WaleOshinowo et al. (2018) assert that firms must formulate strategies to ensure their survival and attain their objectives of becoming successful enterprises that contribute to national development. Survival methods can be classified as avoidance, passive, and active tactics (Sahler and Carr, 2009). Organisations should implement proactive survival strategies to engage in resolving hard situations and foster possibilities that embrace varied perspectives. Various studies have employed distinct variables to assess survival strategies. The determinants encompass entrepreneurial vision, motivation and leadership, cost leadership, differentiation, focus strategy, and strategic partnership (Lum, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Establishing a firm is one endeavour; cultivating it to maturity and managing it to achieve success is an entirely different challenge. This elucidates why numerous newly established businesses do not commemorate their fifth anniversary. Various factors have been proposed or indirectly referenced in the literature regarding the elevated rate of business failure, including inadequate management skills, insufficient capitalisation, ineffective marketing strategies, inability to anticipate or respond to competition, and a lack of planning for business continuity. The failure of businesses results in adverse repercussions for entrepreneurs, employees, and society as a whole. These results could have been averted had an effective survival plan been implemented immediately. The anguish, regret, disgrace, embarrassment, rage, guilt, and culpability linked to the failure of a business can be profoundly painful.

Nevertheless, although several small-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State have failed during their initial phase, others have successfully endured beyond five years of operation. These enterprises did not endure by mere coincidence. They navigate the challenging tasks of management, marketing, and succession planning. Consequently, management skills, marketing strategy, and succession planning are tactics associated with the mitigation of business mortality.

The rationale for this study is that thriving small enterprises will enhance the employment chain, generate jobs, supply inputs for other companies, yield tax revenue for the government, and offer products and services to consumers. Numerous studies exist on survival methods for small-scale enterprises. To my knowledge, no specific study has quantified the extent to which the identified variables have contributed to the decrease of business morals in Akwa Ibom State. The study centres on such aspect.

Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of the study was to examine survival strategies and its effect on the reduction of business failures in Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives were to:

i. examine the relationship between managerial skill and reduction in small business failure in Akwa Ibom State;
ii. assess the relationship between succession plan and reduction in small business failure in Akwa Ibom State; and to

Hypothesis of the Study

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between managerial skill and reduction in business failure in Akwa Ibom State

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between succession plan and small reduction in business failure in Akwa Ibom State.

Literature Review

Definition of Small Business

The aspiration for a definitive reference point to identify small firms prompted scholars to delineate it using several criteria such as staff count, capital investment, asset base, and market size (Ajide et al., 2014). Various nations characterise small enterprises differently, typically focussing on staff count, initial investment amount, and turnover rate (Kusi, et al., 2015). The term "small business" encompasses several enterprises.

In several nations, a business is classified as tiny based on a specific staff count, such as five or ten. In certain contexts, a small business is defined as one that works exclusively within its local area. Others classify businesses as small based on the type of enterprise, such as roadside shoemakers, neighbourhood retailers, or dress shops. The aforementioned opinion sparked debates over the delineation between large and small enterprises. Mandah (2010) characterises a small-scale business as "a business owned and operated by one or two individuals, possessing a singular organisational structure, holding a negligible market share, and employing fewer than fifty individuals."

The Nigerian Bank of Commerce and Industry (NBCI) defines a small-scale firm as one whose total capital does not exceed Seven Hundred and Fifty Naira, excluding the value of land but including working capital. Certain studies characterise micro-small firms as enterprises with twenty-nine employees engaged in non-primary activities and selling a substantial portion of their output. A significant proportion of enterprises are small businesses; for instance, almost ninety-seven percent of businesses in Mexico and Thailand are classified as micro-small enterprises. Small businesses primarily consist of sole proprietorships, entrepreneurial ventures, family enterprises, and partnerships, and they can be either incorporated or unincorporated. Small enterprises encompass professionals such as architects, accountants, lawyers, doctors, and engineers who operate independently. Others are technicians of various classifications. According to Iorun (2014), Inang and Ukono (1992) asserted that the size of fixed assets, the value of gross output, and the number of employees are the primary criteria in most definitions. The United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom characterise small and medium enterprises by gross output and employee count. In Britain, a small and medium-sized enterprise is defined as one with a gross production of two million pounds or less and less than two hundred paid employees.

The Nigerian conception of small and medium enterprises varies; however, the Central Bank of Nigeria aligns with the definition provided by the Small and Medium Industries and Equity Investment Scheme, categorising small businesses based on asset base and employee count. As per the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Guidelines (2010), the maximum asset base for small firms is not less than Two Hundred Million Naira (about $1.43 Million), excluding land and working capital, with a workforce of no fewer than Ten employees and no more than three hundred. Baumback (1992) asserts that the Small Business Administration has endeavoured to delineate small businesses based on employee count, asset worth, sales income, and owner's equity.

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 usually 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. Most times the 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. 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 to 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 businesses focus on providing consumer oriented goods; small businesses do not have substantial accounting records; their scale of operation, number of employees, investment is relatively small.

Survival Strategies for Small Businesses

I. Managerial Skill

Ake (2017) defines management as the organisation or regulation of corporate activities. Gauray (2011) perceives management as a challenging profession that requires specialised expertise for success. Management skills are the essential competencies that every business owner or manager needs to function effectively (Gauray, 2011). Management skills are variously defined by different writers; the business dictionary characterises management skill as the ability to make decisions and support subordinates. According to Gauray (2011), managerial talent refers to the knowledge and competence that individuals in management possess, allowing them to execute designated management activities. Managerial skill is described as the capacity to manage a firm, make optimal decisions for its success, and effectively oversee its overall performance.

Management skills are strategies utilised by a business owner or manager to achieve organisational objectives. It is the essential toolkit necessary for a manager to effectively perform his duties. These definitions indicate that management talent is the capacity to efficiently operate a business to get success. Business owners and managers must have sufficient managerial knowledge and competencies to effectively operate their enterprises. According to Sanusi (2008), the requisite level of managerial abilities for successfully operating an organisation differs across enterprises, influenced by factors such as sector, size, and other considerations. Sanusi (2008) emphasises that, for business owners to attain their objectives in both the short and long term, it is essential to consistently enhance their management and other competencies to address the challenges posed by an increasingly dynamic operating environment. Iroun (2014) asserted that the lack of qualified human resources and inadequate managerial skills constitutes a significant obstacle to the sustainability of small enterprises. Iorun (2014) asserted that small business owners frequently initiate enterprises without doing a thorough SWOT analysis. The failure of small business owners to acknowledge the importance of managerial abilities and the need for their enhancement is a straightforward path to business demise. Kusi et al. (2015) observed that the proficiency of a business owner or management is a critical determinant of a business's success or failure. Agwu and Emeti (2014) asserted that 90 percent of small business failures stem from the inexperience of owners and management.

2. Marketing Strategy

The three fundamental pillars of small business growth, as articulated by Jenson (2008), are managerial abilities, skilled workforce, and marketing competence or strategy. He characterises marketing as the process of effectively addressing the demands of an organization's stakeholders and providing value for their investments. Stakeholders are the primary target of marketing initiatives, as these individuals or organisations, with whom the business interacts either directly or indirectly, can influence or be influenced by the organization's operations. John and Alan (2008) define marketing strategy as the integrated options via which a business will create and sustain value over an extended duration. Waldman (2016) perceives marketing strategy as a series of adept processes that let an organisation to allocate its resources effectively to optimise available opportunities, hence enhancing sales and gaining a competitive advantage. It encompasses sustainable business practices that provide the organisation with the potential to cultivate robust brand awareness. This concept facilitates the process by which organisations, communities, and individuals fulfil their needs and desires by identifying value, devising methods to achieve it, and effectively communicating and delivering it to others.

A marketing strategy is a comprehensive plan specifically formulated to achieve a business's marketing objectives. It delineates a framework for attaining marketing objectives and is crucial to the efficacy of a marketing plan. It both impacts and is influenced by overarching organisational strategies, primarily concentrating on selecting customers and determining how to fulfil their demands through the business's products and services. The significance of marketing strategy is paramount, since Uttam and Rahal (2014) assert that the success or failure of organisations in a competitive market is mostly dictated by the strategies formulated and executed.

The Theory of Effectuation

The theory of effectuation was introduced by Sarasvathy in 2001. Effectuation is characterised as a reasoning or problem-solving approach that posits the future is predominantly uncertain, however can be influenced by human agency. The theory is founded on the nature of entrepreneurial activities, establishing a distinction and advancing via the diverse processes of learning. The logic of entrepreneurial knowledge is beneficial to both novice and seasoned entrepreneurs throughout the extremely unpredictable initial phase of a venture. It is employed to mitigate failure costs for the entrepreneur (Sarasvathy, 2001). This theory represents a methodology for decision-making and action-taking within the entrepreneurial process, wherein one determines the optimal subsequent step by evaluating available resources to attain objectives, all the while maintaining a continuous equilibrium between these objectives and the resources at hand.

Wale-Oshinowo et al. (2018) assert that entrepreneurs test this idea by exploring multiple options where possible losses in the worst-case scenario are manageable. According to effectuation theory, entrepreneurs employ survival strategies of recommitment and strategic alliances to manage an uncertain future. Another survival strategy suggested by effectuation theory is the adaptability to shifting environmental circumstances. The theory encompasses the concept of affordable losses, which refers to an entrepreneur's capacity to accurately assess potential profits in relation to adverse scenarios, utilising contingencies and fostering robust partnerships through networking. This indicates that, in the presence of persistent mortality concerns or possible losses, specific survival techniques such as leverage may be utilised. The approach facilitates envisioning outcomes from the outset, optimising anticipated returns, executing business planning, and doing competitive analysis to forecast an unpredictable future while leveraging existing knowledge. These four basic techniques ensure the survival of small enterprises. Wale-Oshionowo et al. (2018) emphasise the necessity for enterprises to commence operations utilising available resources rather than awaiting optimal conditions.

Empirical Review

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 retrieved were examined using mean and standard deviation. Hypothesis of the study were examined 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, *et al.* (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' advice that those responsible for formulating polices 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.

Methodology

The cross-sectional survey research design was use in this study. The choice of this design was influenced by the nature of the research problem and the objectives of the study. The population for this study included 9,483 registered small businesses, (reviewed in 2023) 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 Investment, Commerce and Industry, 2024).

The population was summarized thus:

LGA	**Population**
Uyo	5,161
Ikot Ekpene	2002
Eket	2,320
Total	**9,483**

Source: Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Investment, Commerce and Industry (2024).

3.5 Sample Size

To determine the sample size for the study, Taro Yamene's formular 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

Thus;

$$\frac{9483}{1+9483(0.05)^2}$$

$$\frac{9483}{1+9483(0.0025)}$$

$$\frac{9483}{1+23.7075} = \frac{9483}{24.7075} = 384 \text{ respondents}$$

To determine the sample size for each Local government, a sample proportion formula by chebyshev was applied, thus;

Where K = sample proportion, N = total population, w = population of each stratum, n = total sample size.

For Uyo $= \frac{5161 \times 384}{9483} = \frac{1981824}{9483} = 209$

For Ikot Ekpene $= \frac{2002 \times 384}{9483} = \frac{768768}{9483} = 81$

For Eket $= \frac{2320 \times 384}{9483} = \frac{890880}{9483} = 94$

Hence, in Uyo 209 small businesses were sampled; in Ikot Ekpene 81 small businesses were sampled and in Eket 94 small businesses were sampled.

The sampling technique used in the study was simple random sampling technique. This method was chosen because it gives the subjects in the population equal chance of being selected. Data used in this study were obtained from primary sources. The Primary source of Data for this study was the responses from SMEs operators. This was obtained through the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was a structured five-point Likert scale rating ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was adopted. These are; Strongly Agree (SA)-5, Agree (A)-4, Undecided (UN)-3, Disagree (D)-2, Strongly Disagree (SD) 1. The descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the study. The descriptive statistics were percentage and frequency distribution tables which were used to capture respondents' demographic characteristics and frequency distribution of the responses on the study variables. Inferential statistics was simple linear regression statistical tool which was used to test the hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 was used to aid the analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Questionnaire administration

Branch	Copies of Questionnaire Administered	Copies Returned	Percentage (%)
Uyo	209	178	85.2
IkotEkpene	81	73	90.1
Eket	94	82	87.2
Total	384	333	86.7

Source: Field Study (2025)

Table 1 showed that a total of 384 copies of questionnaire were distributed to respondents in the three LGAs covered in this study with a return rate of 333 representing 86.7 percent. The breakdown showed that 209 copies were distributed in Uyo and 178 copies which represent 85.2% response rate were returned, 94 copies were distributed in Eket and 82 copies representing 87.2% were returned, 81 copies were distributed in Ikot Ekpene and 73 copies representing 90.1% were returned.

Table 2: Educational qualification

Qualification	Responses	Percentages
FSLC	23	6.9
SSCE	109	32.7
ND/NCE	90	27
HND/B.Sc	66	19.8
Msc/Ph.D	45	13.5
Total	333	100

Source: Field Data (2025).

Table 2 showed that 23 respondents representing 6.9% were FSLC holder, 109 respondents representing 32.7% were SSCE holders, 90 respondents representing 27% were ND/NCE holders, 66 respondents representing 19.8%were HND/BSc holders while 45 respondents representing 13.5% percent were MSc/PhD holders. This implies that the respondents were literate and could write and understand questions on the instrument.

Table 3: Position of respondent in the business

Options	Responses	Percentages
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 (2025).

From Table 3, 249 respondents representing 74.8% of the total, were owners of the small businesses. 41 respondents representing 12.3% were paid managers of the businesses. 20

respondents representing 6% were family members. 15 respondents representing 4.5% were paid staff, while 8 respondents representing 2.4% were partners in the business. This shows that respondents were mostly owners of the businesses (74.8%) who had firsthand information about the business.

Table 4: Ownership status in the businesses

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

Source: Field Data (2025).

Data in Table 4 showed that 263 of the businesses surveyed were sole proprietorship. This was 80% of the total responses. 16 businesses representing 4.8% were in partnerships. 34 representing 10.2% were family-owned businesses while 20 businesses representing 6% were cooperatives. This shows that majority of the businesses (80%) were sole proprietorships which is known for high mortality rate in the state.

Table 5: Business Sectors

Options	Responses	Percentage
Manufacturing	14	42
Services	106	31.8
Agriculture	37	11.1
Processing	20	6.0
Eateries	10	30
Marketing	146	43.8
Total	333	100

Sources: Field Data (2025).

Table 5 shows that 14 of the businesses surveyed were manufacturing sector representing 4.2% of the total number of businesses. Services sector has 106 businesses representing 31.8%. In agricultural sector, 37 businesses representing 11.1% were surveyed. Also, 20 of the businesses representing 6% were in to processing. Eatery businesses were 10 representing 3% of the total. Whereas, 146 business representing 43.8% were marketing business. In all 333 businesses were surveyed.

Table 6: Percentage analysis of managerial skill responses

Options	Strongly Agree		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Disagreed	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
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 the required experience to run this business	74	22.2	98	29.4	94	28.2	67	20.1
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: Field Data (2025).

From Table 6, 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 respondents 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 29.4% agreed; 94 respondents representing 28.2% disagreed, whereas 67 respondents representing 20.1% strongly disagreed, 42 respondents representing 12.6% strongly agreed that they are able to plan and set measurable goals for their businesses, 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 respondents representing 38.1% agreed, while 18 respondents representing 5.4% strongly disagreed, 88 respondents 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 respondents representing 21.6% disagreed while 17 respondents representing 5.1% strongly disagreed.

Table 7: Percentage analysis of succession plan questions

Options	Strongly Agree		Agreed		Disagreed		Strongly Disagreed	
	Frequency	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
I have identified potential individual(s) to take my place in business in case of death or any other emergency	31	9.3	106	31.8	117	35.1	79	23.7
I have made arrangements to train the potential individual(s) to take over	56	16.8	66	19.8	114	34.2	97	29.1
I prefer someone from my family to take over from me	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**	**16.7**	**92**	**27.6**	**110**	**33**	**76**	**22.7**

Source: Field data (2025).

Table 7 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% disagreed, whereas 79 respondents which stood at 23.7% strongly disagreed. In the same vein, 56 respondents representing 16.8% strongly agreed that they have made an arrangements 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 agreed that they give enabling environment for their employees to display their talents; 100 respondents representing 30% agreed; 118 respondents representing 35.4% disagreed while 69 respondents representing 20.7% strongly disagreed. 44

respondents representing 13.2% strongly agreed that they had put resources in place to run the business in perpetuity, 79 respondents representing 23.7% agreed, 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.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between managerial skill and reduction in business failure in Akwa Ibom State.

Hi_1: There is a significant relationship between managerial skill and reduction in business failure in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 8: Results of Regression analysis for managerial skill and reduction in small business failure

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square
1	.512[a]	.262

a. Predictors: (Constant)

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Sig.
1	Regression	117.722	.000

a. Dependent Variable: business failure

b. Predictors: (Constant), managerial skill

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B		
1	(Constant)	2.130	6.517	.000
	Managerial Skill	.484	11.448	.000

From the analysis in Table 8, the model summary showed a R-value of 0.512 which suggested a moderate relationship between managerial skill and reduction in business failure. The coefficient of determination (R) of 0.262 showed that 26.2% variation in business failure was accounted for by variations in managerial skill. The ANOVA Table indicated that 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 failure (here, P<0.05). In the coefficient table, the constant which is the predicted value of business failure when all other variables were 0 is 2.130. The Coefficient for managerial skill Managerial (B) was 0.484 which implied that for every unit increase in managerial skill, a 0.484 unit reduction in business failure 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 reduction in business failure in Akwa Ibom State was rejected.

Hypotheses II

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between succession plan and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State

Ho_2: There is significant relationship between succession plan and small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State

Table 9: Result of regression analysis for succession plan and business mortality.

Model Summary

Model	R	R square
1	-.507[a]	.257

a. Predictors (constant), succession plan

ANOVA[a]

Model		F	Sig
1	Regression	114.722	.0006

b. Dependent variables; business mortality
c. Predictors (constant), succession plan

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandarized Coefficient B	T	Sig
(Constant)	2.117	11.452	.000
Succession plan	-.481	-10.711	.000

a. Dependent variables; business strategy

Table 9 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 114.722 and its corresponding P-value of 0.000. 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 the 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 0.05 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.

Discussion of Findings

The study found significant and positive relationship between managerial skill and business mortality in Akwa Ibom State. This is so because managerial training program sponsored by the state government has helped many small business owners in the state to have managerial know-how to run their businesses. When business owners have the passion and enthusiasm for what they do and set goals which the outcome will be productive. This finding tally with Lorun (2014) who states that owners of small businesses 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 study also found a significant and positive relationship between succession plan and reduction in small business failure. The result was possible because businesses with succession plans are not exposed to significant risk in sustainability, but ensure smooth transition of business from owner to a successor thereby reducing the incidence of mortality. Entrepreneurs who have not planned for their business succession contribute to the morality of their businesses immediately after their demise. Where a family member or any other preferred individual is trained to take up responsibility of' the business in case of dead of the owner, threat to succession issue is reduced thereby minimizing the incidence of failure. This finding was in agreement with Akpan and Ukpai (2017) who found in their study that succession planning in relation to training successors lead to longevity of small businesses in Makurdi.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of the study, it is revealed that there exist significant relationships between survival strategies and reduction in small business failure in Akwa Ibom State. This simply implies that businesses that survive beyond five years are those businesses that have applied managerial skills and succession planning in their operation. As such, it is concluded that adopting survival strategies have contributed to the reduction in small business mortality in Akwa Ibom State. As recommendations, small business owners should ensure that they get the required managerial skills from the onset or hire someone that possesses the needed competence to run the business as it grows. Also, Entrepreneurs should identify potential candidates to succeed them in business in case of death and train them to resume responsibility in case of emergency. They should have at least one person in their family working for them so that they can replace the current owner in case of death and also resources should be put in place to run the business in perpetuity.

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