

Unravelling Challenges Hindering Female Successors within Family Passenger Transport Businesses in Mutare District, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: This study unravels the challenges experienced by female successors in family-owned passenger transport businesses in Mutare District in Zimbabwe. A qualitative-interpretivist approach was adopted to understand gender dynamics on family business leadership and succession within the Zimbabwean context. Observations and in-depth interviews were conducted with officeholders and successors both women and males who were planning or had just completed the succession process. The main findings were that gender is considered an obstacle to become an efficient successor by business transport sectors in Mutare District and the findings indicated that there were very few female successors due to lack of education, family norms and values do not support a female figure to lead in a male dominated family. Research findings also showed that culture had a negative impact in support of female successors and the fathers do not see women as having the capacity and experience necessary for running a business. The findings showed that women's ability to enter into new markets is limited because it requires expertise, knowledge and contacts. The study recommends that the Government of Zimbabwe should offer financial support and mentorship programmes to women entrepreneurs and consider gender equity and equality in all forms of developments as entrepreneurs in transport sector.

Keywords: female successor, family business, passenger transport business, succession

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays women empowerment has been increasing so rapidly all over the world and women are starting their own businesses to seek greater control over their personal and professional lives. Studies show that the experience of women in business is different from those of men. There are profound gender differences in both women experiences of business ownership and the performance of women-owned firms (Carter, Anderson & Shaw, 2001). According to Maas and Herrington, (2006) as cited in the International Trade Centre (2004), Canada has experienced a 200% growth in the number of women entrepreneurs over the last 20 years. Women-owned businesses, as reviewed by statistics in the USA, are the fastest growing sector of new business start-ups, with black women's business forming a larger share of black-owned businesses than white-owned women's businesses (Mattis, 2004). Within the African context, taking Cameroon as an example, women entrepreneurs manage 57% of small and microbusinesses. While in Uganda women entrepreneurs form the majority of the country's businesspeople in the areas of farming and small to medium-sized enterprises. Women entrepreneurs in South Africa remain on the side-lines of the national economy. Most women in business in South Africa are concentrating in the areas of crafts, hawking, personal services and the retail sector. Only a few women entrepreneurs are participating in value-adding business opportunities (Maas & Herrington, 2006). However, there is dearth of literature of women successors participating in the transport sector, hence a gap has been created for this study to find the pushing factors that do not attract African women to be entrepreneurs in the family business, particularly in Manicaland province.

Women-owned enterprises have their fair share of challenges and constraints that need to be addressed and specific needs have to be identified to help them perform at par, if not better, than their male counterparts in the transport business sectors as family successors. The challenges that women entrepreneurs face in Zimbabwe have not been adequately studied and developed. This study focuses on the constraints faced by African women business successors.

Another key factor for a successful generational transition is to choose the appropriate candidate, male or female; although, Lansberg (1988), as well as more recent studies, found that male offspring are preferred as successors over female offspring (Ahrens et al., 2015, Constantinidis and Nelson, 2009). This means that any member of the family who is not male, such as wives, daughters or sisters, will not be considered a potential successor unless it is absolutely necessary (Ip & Jacobs, 2006; Constantinidis & Nelson, 2009).

As Higginson (2008) point out, women are now pursuing professional careers by creating their own firms and joining family businesses. It also means that the way to look at the succession process will change because, as Harveston et, al., (1997) point out, women owners tend to focus more carefully on succession planning.

In a study of couples who were co-owners of family firms, Marshack (1994) found that traditional gender stereotypes were clearly reflected in the type of tasks each partner assumed within the family and the firm. The wives mainly did accounting and secretarial work, as well as most household tasks, while the husbands were mainly responsible for equipment maintenance and the negotiation of contracts. Tasks reserved for women, such as secretarial, accounting, HR management and marketing, were considered of less significance, but as García-Álvarez, López-Sintas, and Gonzalvo (2002) point out, some of them now have increasing importance to business growth.

The woman is also the “nurturer of the next generation” because she transmits the values of both family and firm to the children (Dugan et al., 2011). In other words, mothers teach their children to love the company.

Finally, gender may influence all the factors that contribute to attitude. As the literature indicates, males may view themselves as potential successors, which can have an impact on their attitude toward working in the family business. On the contrary, females may not see themselves in this manner and, therefore, may have negative or indifferent attitudes toward joining the family business as an executive. To change this attitude, Williams, Zorn, Russell Crook, and Combs (2013) encourage parents to prepare their daughters and sons to either stay in the family business or follow a different path. They consider this conversation should start when the children (potential heirs) are young so they can see the business in relation to other opportunities. To encourage incumbents to think on their daughters as potential heirs, they give examples of positive results when appointing women.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen, (2004) customarily, a women’s role has been that of mother and wife. But this has changed; women are now represented in large numbers in many business sectors as family business successors. However, this current study is mostly interested in transport sectors to find challenges women experienced when chosen to be heirs in families where there are males. Women entrepreneurs have been the most disadvantaged group because of late they could not pursue a business activity without taking their husband or a male family member along. Both men and women face difficulties in establishing an enterprise, but women are faced with specific challenges that hinder their business growth and survival as chosen successors. The reason why this study is being undertaken is to investigate the specific challenges faced by female successors in family-owned transport businesses in Mutare District in Zimbabwe

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.3.1. What are the forms of family passenger transport businesses found in Mutare District in Zimbabwe?

1.3.2. How are successors chosen in family-owned passenger transport businesses in Mutare District in Zimbabwe?

1.3.3 What are the challenges confronted by female successors in family-owned transport businesses in Mutare District in Zimbabwe?

1.3.4. Why do female successors face more challenges than male successors in family-owned transport businesses in Mutare District in Zimbabwe?

1.3.5. What are the strategies that can be implemented to empower women in transport family business as successors?

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The study used a qualitative paradigm and was guided by an interpretivist philosophy to highlight the real facts on the challenges experienced by female passenger transport business successors. A case study design was selected as the best strategy in which the research explored in-depth events, activities, processes, of one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009). The main aim of this single case study was to provide a thorough explanation on an individual object that may represent a particular domain like women business successors.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The researchers used a small sample of (20) from the targeted population from Mutare District of Manicaland province and evaluated them in detail to understand the views on challenges experienced by women business successors. The data generated produced four themes and the findings of the four major questions were presented thematically and were augmented with relevant literature and direct citations from selected participants.

Theme 1: The forms of family passenger transport businesses found in Mutare District in Zimbabwe

Data to address the forms of family passenger transport businesses found in Mutare District in Zimbabwe were extracted from interviewed Business Founders, Successors, and business Advisors. From the interviewed Founders, results disclosed that the forms of family passenger transport businesses in Zimbabwe relied on roads in most parts of the nation because it is a landlocked country. Data generated with the participants and through observation reviewed that the forms of family passenger transport business in Mutare were commuters, taxis, buses, bicycle rentals and moving vehicle business and these forms of transport were functional. Among the family business, findings showed that 10 (50%) of the transport business were commuter omnibuses, 5(25%) were taxis while 3(15%) were moving vehicle business and only 2(10%) were buses.

When asked why they chose those forms of transport, they all agreed that with the continued improvement of vehicles and road infrastructure, transportation by road was the most adaptable of the four main modes with the least geographical constraints. This attribute of road transport made it the preferred mode for smaller loads over a shorter distances and as such, road is the only mode that performs door-to-door deliveries. These findings support the findings by (Wang2010) who commended that, 'From walking to horses to wagons to bikes to cars to trucks, road transportation has been around longer than any other mode and is operated the most of any form in logistics' (Wang2010).

It was concluded that commuter minibuses were found to be the main source of transport for a large percentage of people in Mutare District. However, some women successors echoed some challenges they faced in managing the commuters minibuses. It was a problematic activity to follow them up and down because of poor roads maintenance. Most of the women business successors had a common understanding on the challenges they were facing in supervising those forms of transport. To confirm the findings one among the participants urged that:

Woman 3: *There is not enough space in the commuter as compared to buses. Therefore, women face challenges suppose one wants to do inspection along the route to see how they deliver people to and from work safely to their destination. There is need to do ticket checking randomly.*

It was interesting to note that one among the family passenger transport business successor had a combination of taxis and about twenty bicycles for rentals. Bicycle rental services are growing in demand in Mutare District. When asked to whom the bicycles were rented to, it was informed by the business successor that before her father died, she used to assist him to make a register to show the borrower, the period and amount to be collected. To confirm the results she went further and educated that:

Women, 5. *I was pleased when the President slashed the import duty for bicycles. This was the period I imported about 25 bicycles for hire from South Africa. Apart from adult, hiring is extended to school children mostly boys from one of the High schools near my rural home*

From the observation done, it was noted that about 2(10%) among the women successors only two women were managing their parents' bus company. One of the challenges they echoed was that of ordering spare parts from abroad in large quantities, since they were denied access to huge amounts of money from the bank. In order to resolve this challenge, they would beg their brothers to be the second signatory to meet the requirements of the bank.

One other form of family passenger transport was what was called Moving Vehicle Business. The business successors said she inherited this form of transport from her late husband. The study revealed that people were constantly moving. Hence, there was constant demand for moving companies. This was one form of family passenger business operating in Mutare District. Their main aim was to ensure their clients moved, went smoothly and efficiently. They also offered well-trained staff that aimed to meet their clients every need, particularly transporting teachers and school children from town to their work places and ferried them back home. One of the challenges women successors met in running such a family business was failure to win trustworthy drivers.

Theme 2: Criteria of choosing successors in family-owned passenger transport businesses in Mutare District in Zimbabwe

Identifying the right person is a process that requires careful thought and planning. From the interview carried with the family Advisors, the Founders and the successors, studies presented that in order to select the best successor, the authorities needed to be objective in assessing the candidate's abilities, attitude, ability, and willingness to take on the new role, regardless of gender and cultural issues to be considered. The participant came up with a general common ground and came up with the following criteria in choosing a suitable successor to run the family passenger transport businesses. The considerations are as summarised below.

- Identify prospective candidates
- Determine the attentiveness level of those candidates you consider suitable
- Establish quantifiable criteria for assessing possible successors
- Evaluate the candidates to identify gaps in their skills and experience
- Create and implement leadership development plans for the top candidates
- Monitor the candidates' progress on these plans

This showed that identifying a successor's strengths, weaknesses, and abilities was a key element. Therefore, there is need to make sure the successors are prepared to run the business to ensure continued success of the family company and try to minimise challenges faced by women family passenger transport business successors. In support of (Daspite, Holt, Chrisman Long, 2016) who concludes that developing ownership transition and succession plans are key elements of successful internal transitions; they will not only provide you with the roadmap you need to achieve your own goals, but will provide a concrete plan for business continuity with the next generation of company leaders (Rothwell, 2001)

When women successors were asked of challenges they might experience during the selection criteria, results showed that the issue of multi-generational success in a family business required higher levels of commitment and unity of purpose than other estate plans. The focus needed to be on identifying ways to perpetuate the family business and therefore, the dynamics of family relationships needed to be considered. In most family passenger transport, the male figures do not feel comfortable to be led by women, these issues were attributed by the dynamics of cultures. The point is, conditions are fluid and the plan needed to be flexible enough to address the changing needs of the business and shareholders (Ward, 2011).

Theme 3: The challenges experienced by women in transport business continuity in Manicaland province

Data that was generated from in-depth interviews to show the challenges experienced by women successors in transport business operating in Manicaland province were extracted from the women successors, founders and male business successors. The study findings were that business failure was caused by failure to plan for succession, cultural norms and values and that succession planning in

polygamous families is sympathetic, haphazard and a source of conflicts within the family. The findings showed that most women successors agreed that they were looked down upon by other members of the family and they were the first people to pull them down. To support the findings this was what other women successors echoed.

Woman successor 3: *Because of African beliefs, everyone believes a woman cannot lead where there are men. Its taboo to be led by a woman. Therefore, they try by all means to pull you down so that the business does not grow. Therefore, we lack support within the family itself first.*

In addition, one among the interviewed male business successors had this to say.

Male Successor 3. *I won't be very supportive to let the family business be led by a woman. Kutishooraikoko (humiliation). Even in the bible, Eve was never the head of the family as was pronounced by God that men are the heads of the family. Therefore, it's the same thing business successors should not be led by women. They will be married to another family and take the family business to the In-Laws never. We don't support that at all.*

The interviewed women successors had a mutual understanding on the challenges they were experiencing in running the inherited business in Manicaland province. They all agreed that lack of communication with family members was a big challenge since some of the members do not like to share ideas when confronted with a challenge within the family. Some stated that conflicts in the family, jealous, ignorance, lack of unity were other challenges that surrounded succession planning among the women successors in Mutare District of Manicaland province.

To support the findings above this was what other participants noted.

Male Successor 5: *When our father (founder) passed on. It was very difficult to choose a successor because our father had no will prepared. I am the first son of the first wife so I thought culturally business was supposed to be run by me. But I was surprised to be told that the business was going to be succeeded by a woman (first daughter of the 2nd wife). This was because my sister was more educated than me and had Diploma in Business Management. Everyone was disappointed with that approval from the family members, hence, agreed to pull her down and ignored to assist in resolving some of the challenges we were able to resolve as men.*

From the conversation above, the findings reflected those women successors are not supported by various members of the family due to negative connotations regarding gender. The findings were congruent with the research studies carried by Nyamwanzaet., al., (2018) who analysed succession planning in Zimbabwean polygamous family transport businesses and found out that succession planning in polygamous families is full of jealous, evil thoughts leading to planned death and a source of disputes especially when it is led by a woman.

From the interviews carried by the transport business founders on challenges experienced by women successors reflected various issues that had to do with culture from a Zimbabwe African perspective. Some founders found it improper to let a woman be an heir because their culture does not permit that. They found it a taboo in the society. Because of these cultural norms, transport that would be succeeded by a woman will not grow and prosper. To confirm the findings this was resounded by one of the transport business founders.

Business founder 1: *Of course, all are my children. But the fact that a woman shall be married to someone, will be difficult to run the family business from her new home. My In-laws will seem to benefit at the expense of my biological children. I do not support that. In fact a girl child does not have the capabilities to run my business properly as compared to my sons.* From an interpretative perspective, the findings reflected that historically, daughters have not been considered for succession into management positions in the family business as sons have clearly been favoured over girls, sharing the same findings with Wang (2010). From the interview done with the male successors had an explanation for the prevalence of male successors because the fathers do not see women as having the capability and experience necessary for running a business. Therefore, the findings of this study were in agreement with a study conducted in 1988, where 100% of the fathers interviewed did not consider their daughters viable successors (Dumas, 1992, Schenkel, Yoo, & Kim, 2016). This view of daughters tends to persist even after daughters enter the family firm and prove a level of competence over a period of years (Dumas, 1992; Schenkel, Yoo, & Kim, 2016).

In support of the above discussion, the findings showed that most family passenger transport business founders shared the same negative sentiments on challenges experienced by women family business successors.

Business founder 2: *How can a woman become a business successor while men are there? In the instance, where there are all girls in the family, I would rather let my brother or my nephew or a family male friend become my successor. I just believe women can't do it properly. Plusdzinzaharifari (displeases ancestors).*

The findings might imply that gender roles and stereotypes existing in society have contributed to the ongoing discrimination against women. Women have traditionally been responsible for domestic issues and taking care of the family, so a professional career usually took second place. Even if they were directly involved in the family firm, they did not receive recognition for their contribution, either in the shape of a formal position in the company, taking the likes of Salganicoff, (1990) ;Rowe & Hong, (2000).

The findings of this study support the findings carried in some countries with very traditional culture, as Korea, the likelihood of finding females successors in family business listed on stock exchange is still nearly null (in a sample of 444 family firms only one have female successors, because there were no sons) (Bennedsen et., al., 2007; Schenkel, Yoo, & Kim, 2016). In fact, daughters were not considered as managers, despite the strength of their credentials, unless a crisis created a critical need. In fact, the findings might imply that even if the daughter was the first-born child, she was not considered to run the family business that was why the founder would invite a friend. The findings might also mean that the founder can reach an extent of selling the business, instead of allowing their daughters to lead it. If primogeniture is the criterion to choose the successor, they may not work hard enough for the family business and may not appreciate the benefits of working in the family business (Cabrera & Santana, 2010).

From the interviews carried by women successors they all agreed and sorrowfully explained that they even lack support from the banks whenever they might want to borrow huge amounts of money. They stated that men are given a greater part of share than a woman would be. To back up the findings this was what one among the women successors shared.

Woman Successor 4: *I went to the bank to apply for about \$1000 000, 00 RTGS from a certain bank. I was denied that huge amount of money. The bank stated that they would want a male witness or grantee for them to approve it. Therefore, this segregation will not support the growth of my business and people will say she has failed because women can't do it properly.*

However, facts point out that it is unquestionable that women business owners have been underserved by banks (Coleman, 2000). Moreover, a wider gap exists between the number of women entrepreneurs and the funding available to them, especially those who require large amounts of debt. This can be explained by the fact that most businesses run by women are still small and have only operated for short periods, hence, they lack the collateral and good credit records to allow them to access adequate finance from financial institutions. Evidence from previous studies show that demand for larger sums of finance by women is less as compared to demand by men.

Contrary to the above conversations by the business founders, male business successors and the women business successors, only one business successor had different opinion on business being run by a woman. The findings indicated that some fathers now consider their daughters feasible successors as compared to males. To beef up the findings of this study one among the business founders expressed his views in support of a female successor and alleged that:

Business founder 5: *According to my own view I don't see gender as a big deal in choosing a business successor. In my own business I have chosen my second daughter to run the business while the males are there. I have seen the ability in this child. Therefore, I have been working with her ever since and my business is growing. The other boys are drunkards and steal my money from the business.*

In fact, the findings reflected that they see advantages in women managing companies in general. One of the issues this paper tried to reflect is that there have been some changes in the 20th century, where people view the relevance of gender as either a pushing factor or pulling factor to business

management. However, overlooking the potential of daughters for family business leadership might mean not having the best successor for the business, and therefore it can disturb the continuity and success of the business. So, it is not only an unfair situation for daughters but it can also be prejudicial for the business.

In this regard the findings of this study disregards literature review by Schlepphorst and Moog (2014) who highlight that successors' personal traits are considered the most relevant factors to choose the successor, whereas gender and birth order are among the least important criteria, referring the findings of this study. However, these considerations are not reflected in the way incumbents act because recent studies suggest that gender still plays an important role in choosing successors (Schenkel et al., 2016).

From the data generated through interviews; the findings indicated that one of the hindering factor women faced in business was that they lack exposure to markets. The findings showed that their ability to enter into new markets is limited because it requires expertise, knowledge and contacts. The findings reflected that most interviewed women stated that they were unable to market and provide services strategically, because they often lack access to training and experience on how to participate in transport business activities. In addition, female entrepreneurs, especially transport sectors have often not been exposed to the international market, and therefore lack knowledge about what is internationally acceptable. Therefore, their transport services are provided locally and usually are affected by the economy of their country which becomes a big obstacle for the growth of their transport business.

Women 1: *Lack of spare parts in the country was one of the obstacles women face in providing good service to the public. There is need to import most spare parts from abroad to repair the busses which is quite expensive and needs a big amount of money from the bank, which the banks hesitate to release to women in transport business. It's quite difficult. Usually us women, we lack new technology and skills, so that we can as well import parts needed from abroad, and we are usually assisted by men to cross the bridge.*

From the above sentiments by some interviewed women, it showed that there is need for well-organized management in order to stay competitive in business and the results showed that women are forced to turn to male professionals for assistance. Moreover, a wider gap exists between the number of women entrepreneurs and the funding available to them, especially those who require large amount of debt. This can be explained by the fact that most businesses run by women are still small and have only operated for short periods, hence, they lack the collateral and good credit records to allow them to access adequate finance from financial institutions (Fieldmen and Davison, 2010). The challenge of accessing debt finance for most women successors in transport enterprises is a source of failure to women enterprises.

For a woman to be a successful entrepreneur in transport business she must have the following characteristics: thorough understanding of the industry; good leadership skills, and foresight on demand and supply changes and the willingness to act on such risky foresights (Danes, Haberman, McTavish, 2005). This mirrored that most women entrepreneurs in developing nations fail because they lack these characteristics. Thus, it becomes a challenge for them to be successful successors in transport business entrepreneurs in Mutare District.

Theme 4: Reasons why female successors face more challenges than male successors in family-owned passenger transport businesses in Mutare District in Zimbabwe

Data to address the reasons why female successors face more challenges than male successors in family-owned passenger transport businesses in Mutare District in Zimbabwe were revealed from in-depth interviews and FGD with the founders and both women and male successors. Research findings noted that, due to the fact that the number of women in leading positions from family owned passenger transport businesses is increasing globally, continentally and nationally, with more women willing to footstep into principal positions and the number of female entrepreneurs increase significantly, critics were now querying such questions as *'Do women administer in a different way than men do? 'How do they lead? ', 'Are they anticipated to be leaders? or What has hindered them from assuming a leading position before and why?*

From the statistical data, research findings indicated that the majority of the family owned passenger transport in Mutare were males, with only 20% being females. The above statistics have led the author to assume that women from the families of business owners were willing to take on management positions, but the system dynamics of the family business unit are resulting in the next generation of women leaders being unprepared, sharing the same sentiments with Wiesner-Landerl, (2007). The female successor has to confront herself with a series of potential personal challenges in order to meet her individual expectations and to prove herself capable of managing the family owned transport successfully. Despite the fact that they are visible in Mutare District, results exposes that the female successors were not often considered as potential successors and this was one of the main challenges faced by the next generation of female family owned transport business in Mutare District as compared to male successors.

From the FGD the author had with all participants, the results concluded that daughters of family owned passenger transport business owners often felt that they were not really considered to be feasible successors for business continuity and growth. It was also noted that female successors were not very visible because of the challenges that goes hand in hand with the challenge of handling gender stereotyping and discrimination as a female successor as compared to a male successor, due to gender stereotypes and biases surrounding female leaders that still remain. From the discussion the researcher had with the female family successors, findings also reviewed that judgment of women was not only done by men but also by other women. To confirm the findings this was what most family founders disclosed:

Founders 2, 3& 4: *Usually some female successors have weakness to put aside one's own interests and concerns and usually they keep grudges when there is a misunderstanding among the family members. They forget that the success and survival of the business is an essential part of their own livelihood. Therefore, male successors are rewarded since they quickly resolve conflicts for the betterment of the continuity and growth of the family owned passenger business.*

From the above comments from interviewed business founders, it can be deduced that, it was crucial that all family members put his or her own interests and concerns aside to focus on the well-being of the company. Therefore, male successors were considered better than women on this scenario. As a result, female successors had a low performance as compared to male counterparts in business succession. The findings were in agreement with studies carried by Weismann (2014) who noted that successful family businesses have given over their own individual resources, abilities, and skills to the family business for generations in order to secure the company's existence.

Interviewed female business successors in the passenger transport sector in Mutare District shared the same sentiments that, *'they had to fight their way to the top from the very bottom within the family business structure'*. Research findings showed that they could only get there by *'aggressive: and 'proving' themselves capable*. This implied that most female successors in Mutare District were quite visible but they were sat on shoulders by the male figures from their particular family, mostly influenced by cultural values on gender disparity.

Theme 5: Strategies that can be implemented to empower women in transport family business as successors.

The study identified the levels of perception of women entrepreneurs and their relations with business performance in Mutare District. Having revealed some of the encounters experienced by women as business successors in family business in the transport sectors, the question was how then can women be empowered in order to minimise the pushing factors to successful management of the business? Data that was generated from the participants shared the following views.

The results expressed that whether they are in the formal or informal sector, government must give women the support they need to increase inter-African trade. The support included financial provision for start-ups and skills training or mentorships to help them negotiate their way through border controls. The interviewed women in transport business shared the same opinions that the Zimbabwean government through the Ministry of women affairs have tried to support women as a strategy to minimise pushing factors experienced, but the Ministry has seen a lot of gray areas that needs to be addressed in order to fulfill its mandate.

The role of African women in family transport business or cross-border trading when they want to buy spare parts has long been recognized. The interviewed women business successors said that they continue to face abuse and harassment at border posts and these have to be addressed so that they grow and become effective businesswomen in the transport sector as family successors. These barriers imply that women business transport successors are pushed to producers into the informal economy where a lack of access to finance, information, and networks jeopardizes their capacity to grow and develop businesses. Therefore, transport sectors successors will be dominated by the male figures, implying that women are not efficient and has less skills to run family business passenger transport. The findings were congruent with studies by Bennedsen, Nielsen, González & Wolfenzon(2007)that violence against women is a growing phenomenon and holds back individual progress both at work and at home. Personal security must be stepped up urgently in order to support the female figure.

Among the interviewed business owners, they shared the same views that there is need to prioritize access to loans to women especially when there is talk of equity and equality in today's business. These findings were in support with the strategies suggested by Fieldman and Davison, (2010) who agree to the fact that women often have limited opportunities than men in accessing credit for various reasons. Some of the reasons include lack of collateral, unwillingness to accept household assets as collateral, negative perceptions about female entrepreneurs among other reasons. The society at large, different stakeholders and family transport business owners should give an evenhandedness when choosing the successors in the business.

Among the business owners, it was reflected that forging ahead also requires society at large to confront the ugly reality of physical and emotional violence that women are too-often confronted with, whenever they are selected as business successors from the global world. To augment the findings stated this was what one of the successful businesswoman expressed.

Woman successor 3: *Also worrying is the growing digital that divides us. We are being left behind in the period of the industrial revolution. We have no knowledge of what it is and how important it is in running business in the transport sector as a successor because we are always left behind, in order to pull us down.*

The views raised by one of the women successors implied that more efforts are needed to find and scale innovative solutions in Zimbabwe to match the African counterparts and especially now as the world has been brought to a standstill by the Covid 19 pandemic. It infers that the only way to survive as a family business successor is to go digital

The findings reflect that failure to implement the above strategy, concludes that it might not bode well for the continent's future if its potential entrepreneurs are locked out of the digital economy locally, regionally and globally. There should be additional initiatives specifically designed to bridge the digital gender gap, including the Africa smart women and girl initiative in family businesses, particularly in Mutare district in Manicaland province, Zimbabwe.

Responses from participants reverberated that:

Business owner 1: *Zimbabwe currently has quite a large gap, which needs to be addressed by the political society. This will empower women politically and ensure that their businesses are politically powerful and protected. Supporting women entrepreneurs as successors can help promote gender equality and offshoot economic growth. The African culture is the root cause of this segregation or looking down upon women. The Zimbabwe constitution should keep on including gender equity, in support of women.*

In accumulation to the above strategy, it was raised by one of women business family successors that:

Woman Successor 7: *The African culture is an offshoot of gender capabilities. They think us women cannot do it, because they view us having less intelligence than the males. We are very capable, remember, mushamukadzi. Development at homestead is done alongside with the woman because women are successful managers, hence, my selection as a family successor in my father's transport business where there is an elder brother who cannot challenge me educationally.*

Furthermore, to the above interpretation, one other business successor concluded that,

Woman successor 5: *African culture is pushing us down. Many cultural customs and traditions infringe on rights of women and children by subjecting us to abuse. We are also excluded in political issues and told to stay at home and nurture children. Eradicating such customs in order to give girls a better future has been the desire of most women in family business in Zimbabwe. Gone are the days when we have to receive manna from heaven, we need to compete with them (males) and they would see how efficient women are in running family business as successors.*

The above opinions from women successors showed eagerness and bitterness against the cultural values and norms of some families. The suggestion was in support of the NGOs, like the Girl Child Network that say, “What and other civic organizations, have been in the forefront in advocating for Women’s rights”. Sharma, Chrisman, and Chua, (2003) studied 118 family businesses to identify the most important succession issue, using the theory of planned behavior. It was determined that the presence of a trusted successor who is willing to take over the leadership of a business was the critical component that controls the succession planning process. As a result, there is a need to engage next generation family members in succession planning because their careers and livelihoods that are involved in this decision regardless of gender (Sharma & Chrisman, 2004).

From the interpretivist perspective, it might suggest that by increasing women’s and girls’ education, contributions are made to higher economic growth, family and personal development. These findings are in sustenance of the studies in Sub-Saharan Africa showing that, on average, economic issues for lives of women were quite negative, usually, human rights violations- the female figure is disempowered and often abused (Francis, 1999). The research studies suggest that, these issues usually hinder both the personal development and economic empowerment of women as business successors in Manicaland province. This finding agrees with, the UN’s sustainable development goals to uphold the human rights of women and girls by 2030 by eradicating the practice (Sharma, et. al., 2003). Therefore, eradicating the human rights violations, for instance, early girl child marriages is very crucial in women empowerment, there is need to delay marriage and give room to education, imparting business surviving skills before marriage.

Business owner 5: *A good business owner should practice succession planning to all his/her children regardless of gender. You might find that girls are more powerful to business management than boys. Therefore, business succession planning must be introduced to every child since this will give him a wide selection of the best successor of the family business not tilting towards the demands of cultural values but considering capabilities among the children.*

From the generated strategies it showed that businesses are better off by planning a smooth and orderly management and ownership transition and benefit from making such efforts clear. Some other strategies that can be used to minimise challenges experienced by women business successors in transport sectors is the ability of a family business owner to internally transfer management of the business to another family member involves “conscious and deliberate action, as well as unconscious and unintended action, regardless of gender” (Goffee, 1996). After, this section on strategies, the study came up with the following recommendations from the participants in Manicaland province.

6. CONCLUSION

Conclusively, there are various different potential challenges for female successor in the takeover process today. Focusing on internal succession within the family on female successors. The findings reflected that historically, daughters have not been considered for succession into management positions in the family passenger transport businesses as sons have clearly been favoured over girls. It was concluded that the challenges female successors in Mutare District face today in taking over the family business were categorised into three main aspects: the business aspect, the family aspect and the personal aspect. Despite the different behaviour male and female leaders demonstrate, the successor should be seen as central to the succession process, because the success of the succession lies with her abilities, behaviour, skills, leadership characteristics and self-confidence. The number of women in leadership positions through family succession in Mutare District was an issue in which there is still room for perfection. From this current study it was concluded that the absence of females in family leadership positions was often seen as a driver of cultural concerns and it was necessary to have a balance between female and male leaders, the study noted that having more women as family

successors reduce discrimination, demonstrate the power of legitimacy, improve the quality of decision-making processes, increase the level of innovations, achieve greater productivity and influence the ethical behaviour of a company. Women have to be proud of who they are and they need to figure out how to build on and promote their unique abilities and qualities as traits that give them a competitive advantage over men.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that governments should offer financial support and mentorship programmes to women entrepreneurs. Furthermore, measures to improve access to finance by women entrepreneurs need to be undertaken, for example, government intervention in reducing discrimination from the financial institutions and help them gain access to international markets. The society at large to confront the ugly reality of physical and emotional violence that women are confronting, whenever they are selected as business successors from the global world. Women should have support from the family, the government, and the society at large, to pull them to better management skills, particularly in the transport sector. The study recommends eradicating discriminatory cultural values, norms and customs in order to give females a better future has been the desire of most women in family passenger transport business in Zimbabwe

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