



## The Interplay of Factors Driving Succession Planning in Namibian Commercial Public Enterprises

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Received : June 2, 2023

Revised : October 20, 2023

Accepted : October 23, 2023

Online : October 31, 2023

### Abstract

This paper examined the relationship between employee traits and organizational performance in Namibia's Commercial Public Enterprises (CPEs) succession planning. The study was conducted on a total population of 47 participants drawn from 22 CPEs in Namibia. Primary data were collected using closed-ended research questionnaires and interviews, and qualitative data analyses were employed. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data, while correlation was performed to determine the relationships among the variables. Qualitative data was gathered through interviews to gauge the targeted managers' attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences with executive leadership succession planning. The majority of respondents indicated the following as essential factors to consider in recruitment for succession planning of CPEs: the successor's age, education, experience in commercial PPEs, outside management experience, past performance, knowledge and skills in marketing, finance, strategic planning, interpersonal skill, technical knowledge and skill, decision making ability, experience, compatibility of goals with current CEO/MD, commitment to the business, psychological traits, respect from employees and trust by employees. This study provides further evidence on succession planning challenges, such as the organization's size and failure to retain employees. This study serves as a reference for the management of CPEs in Namibia for effective succession planning.

**Keywords** *Succession planning, Decision-making abilities, Personal relationship, Recruitment practices, Organizational entrenchment, Commercial public enterprises (CPEs), Personal traits*

### INTRODUCTION

Succession planning involves and is not limited to selecting new talent, selection assessments and identifying a new leader (Rothwell, 2011). Succession planning has evolved from being a mitigation measure against losing executive leaders in big organizations to promoting the development of leaders, managing change, retaining talent and building teams to make the organization reach its full potential in its operations (Chattopadhyay, 2012). Finding talent for leadership roles in organizations is not always easy, and this heightens the need for executive leadership succession planning. Human resources management plays a key role in succession planning. Luna (2012) defines succession planning as determining goals, needs and responsibilities within an organization and preparing individuals or employee groups for their roles concerning the work that needs to be done within an organization. To recruit and keep talent, organizations must keep up with people who are becoming more strategic in their career management and job searches (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Furthermore, Ali et al. (2014) found that the existing level of employee's performance can be enhanced by providing more development opportunities to employees to strengthen their skills to work in synergy in the banks to compete with the world's challenges.

Searching for executive leadership is usually expensive (Howard, 2001), making succession planning even more important. Organizations can cut costs and create the necessary synergies to grow in the continuously changing contexts of operations by effectively planning for succession (Rothwell et al., 2015). The Centre for Creative Leadership in England surveyed 756 chief executive

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officers and identified leadership development as an indispensable component of competitive advantage (Stoll & Temperley, 2009). In addition, the survey found that organizations still need to acquire and develop the talent they need to drive the performance of the organizations. However, irrespective of the importance and centrality of leadership, it remains uncertain whether leadership works in organizations. In a later study, Clunies (2007) and Yuan (2011) concluded that effective succession planning increases employee confidence and improves employee buy-in to an organization's culture. In their study, Gonin et al. (2011) discussed different innovations that come with leadership development. Groves (2007) presented a best practice model for developing the leadership pipeline and practical recommendations for organizations that remain vital for forward-looking organizations.

A clear understanding of the relationship between the interaction of factors influencing succession planning is important (Maciel et al., 2015; Molleman et al., 2012). Background information on Commercial Public Enterprises in Namibia remains indispensable in this study. It is important to provide a clear understanding of the study's problem setting under the study's background. This is important in that it provides the rationale for the study. In the context of Namibia's commercial public enterprises, effective succession planning is influenced by a myriad of internal and external factors (Ngalandji - Hakweenda, 2021). This research seeks to address several pivotal questions: How do internal organizational aspects impact the efficacy of succession planning? What influence does government policy, as a potential source of organizational entrenchment, have on these strategies? How are succession planning efforts shaped by gender bias, racial and ethnic discrimination, and other similar barriers? Moreover, finally, how does Namibia's broader socio-political landscape dictate the trajectory and success of succession planning within these entities? These inquiries aim to furnish these enterprises with critical insights to enhance their succession strategies, ensuring organizational continuity and growth.

A review of Commercial Public Enterprises in Namibia remains the focus of this research. Public enterprises in Namibia have certain distinctive traits or qualities, including government ownership and control, the primary goal being to provide services, autonomy, and continuity, among others (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Hughes & Rog, 2008; Loomes et al., 2019). The Public Enterprise Governance Act 2019, Act 1 of 2019, presented guidelines for effective public enterprise governance and performance evaluation. Additionally, it established the functions and powers of the Minister of Public Enterprises, as well as the restructuring of public enterprises (PEGA, 2019). The preliminary provision of the Act defines the commercial public enterprise as a public enterprise specified to be a commercial public enterprise under Section 2(2)(a) of the said Act.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Succession planning is a critical process for organizations, particularly commercial public enterprises, to ensure the smooth transition of leadership and the continuation of their operations. It involves identifying and developing future leaders to replace current leaders who may retire, resign or move on to other opportunities. Several factors, including organizational culture, leadership commitment, talent management, human resources planning, and employee development and training, influence succession planning in commercial public enterprises in Namibia. Dyer Jr et al. (2013) said organizational culture significantly impacts succession planning, as it can either support or hinder the development of future leaders. For example, if an organization values diversity and inclusivity, it is more likely to have a strong pipeline of potential leaders from diverse backgrounds.

On the other hand, if the organizational culture does not support succession planning, it may be difficult to identify and develop future leaders. This set of shared values, beliefs, behaviours, and

customs that shape how people behave within an organization is key to business success (Gabriel et al., 2020; Iroulor & Umoh, 2017). Chen and Huang (2011) further mention that leadership commitment is another important factor influencing succession planning in commercial public enterprises. The organization's leadership sets the tone and direction for succession planning efforts, and their commitment to the process is essential for its success. Senior leaders who are committed to succession planning tend to allocate resources and support the development of potential leaders, which can lead to a stronger pipeline of future leaders.

Talent management is another critical aspect of succession planning, as it involves identifying, developing, and retaining employees with high potential. Gallardo-Gallardo and Collings (2021) said a strong talent management program can help organizations identify potential leaders and provide them with the necessary development opportunities to prepare them for future leadership roles. On the other hand, several studies (Beheshtifar & Nekoie-Moghadam, 2011; Johnson, 2020; Kamil & Iqbal, 2017) show that if an organization does not have a strong talent management program, it may struggle to identify potential leaders and may not be able to prepare them for leadership roles effectively. Morris et al., (2011) state that human resources planning is also an important factor influencing succession planning. The process of HR planning involves identifying the current and future workforce needs of the organization and aligning them with the organization's goals and objectives. HR planning must be integrated with succession planning efforts to effectively plan for succession. This will help the organization identify future leaders and ensure they have the necessary skills and competencies to succeed in their future roles.

As alluded to by Gallardo-Gallardo & Collings (2021), employee development and training is another key factor influencing succession planning. Organizations that invest in employee development and training programs are more likely to have a pipeline of potential leaders prepared to step into leadership roles. These programs can provide employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in future leadership roles, as well as help to build their confidence and credibility. On the other hand, organizations that do not invest in employee development and training may struggle to find qualified candidates for leadership positions.

The relationship between factors influencing succession planning in commercial public enterprises in Namibia is complex and multifaceted. Organizations must consider the impact of organizational culture, leadership commitment, talent management, human resources planning, and employee development and training to effectively plan for succession. By considering these factors, commercial public enterprises can ensure a smooth transition of leadership and the continuation of their operations.

### **Factors Influencing Effective Succession Planning**

The successor's age is one factor that can influence succession planning in commercial enterprises (Bontis et al., 2002). There are several ways in which the age of the successor can affect succession planning. The successor's age can impact the succession process's timing (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). If the successor is young, the organization may need to plan for a longer lead time to develop its skills and competencies (Bontis et al., 2002). On the other hand, if the successor is older, the organization may need to plan for a more immediate succession to ensure a smooth leadership transition (Mehreen & Ali, 2022). The age of the successor can also impact the development and training opportunities they require (Bontis et al., 2002). Younger successors may need more time and investment in development and training to prepare them for leadership roles, while older successors may have more experience and require less training (Podolsky et al., 2022). The age of the successor can also impact their fit with the organization's culture and values (Bontis et al., 2002). Younger successors may be more open to new ideas and more adaptable to change, while older successors may have established values and ways of doing things that may be more

difficult to change (Mehreen & Ali, 2022). The age of the successor can also impact the risk associated with the succession process (Bontis et al., 2002). Younger successors may bring new ideas and energy to the organization but may also be more prone to making mistakes and lacking experience (Mehreen & Ali, 2022). Older successors may bring more stability and experience to the organization but may also be less adaptable to change and new ideas (Bontis et al., 2002).

Overall, the age of the successor is an important factor that should be considered when planning for succession in commercial enterprises (Bontis et al., 2002). It can impact the timing, development and training opportunities, fit with the organization, and risk associated with the succession process (Mehreen & Ali, 2022). Organizations must weigh the benefits and challenges associated with different ages of successors and make decisions based on their specific circumstances and goals (Bontis et al., 2002).

The gender of the successor can also influence succession planning in commercial enterprises. There are several ways in which the gender of the successor can impact succession planning. Gender roles and stereotypes can play a role in selecting a successor, and in some cases, gender may be a factor in determining whether a person is seen as a suitable candidate for a leadership position (Mans-Kemp & Flanagan, 1970). Research has shown that gender biases and discrimination can impact the selection and promotion of women into leadership positions, and this can influence the gender of the successor (Krings et al., 2023). Promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace has become increasingly important in recent years, and organizations may consider the gender of the successor to achieve a more diverse and inclusive leadership team (Mans-Kemp & Flanagan, 1970). The gender of the successor can also impact their fit with the organization's culture and values.

In some cases, organizations may prefer a male or female successor based on their perceived fit with the organization's culture and values. In general, the gender of the successor is an important factor to consider when planning the succession of a commercial enterprise. Organizations must weigh the benefits and challenges associated with different genders of successors and make decisions based on their specific circumstances and goals. It is important for organizations to strive for diversity and inclusion in their leadership teams and to eliminate any biases or discrimination that may impact the selection of a successor.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

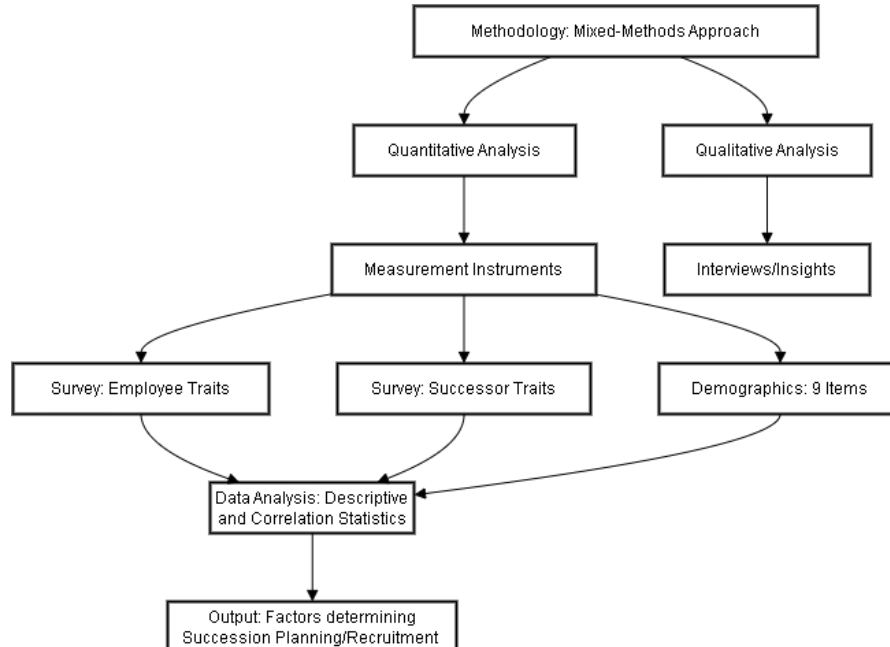
In general, the study employed a phenomenological research methodology. In approaching the subject of succession planning in Namibian commercial public enterprises, the methodology was deemed the most appropriate due to its holistic assessment capabilities, catering to both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the subject matter. By employing this research design, we can deeply explore the intricate dynamics of organizational behaviour, policy influences, and the socio-political landscape while also harnessing empirical data to substantiate our findings. Alternative methodologies might offer a narrower lens, limiting the depth and breadth of the investigation. Our chosen approach ensures comprehensive insights, balancing both the nuanced perspectives and empirical robustness, which is essential for understanding and recommending strategies in the complex environment of succession planning. A mixed method approach was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data gathered through a Likert scale questionnaire survey and formal interviews to get a first-hand understanding of the targeted managers' attitudes, beliefs, values, and experiences with executive leadership succession planning and its execution in Namibian commercial public businesses. Using a combination of content analysis and descriptive statistics, the interviews were examined for recurrent themes across open-ended and Likert scale queries. To learn more about succession planning and how it is implemented, 20 oral interviews were performed. The gathered data was analyzed using qualitatively interpretive techniques in

accordance with the investigation's multi-methods approach.

Data was descriptively analyzed for signs of theoretical congruence in the case of commercial public enterprises in Namibia for the executive leadership succession planning and execution framework suggested in this study. The framework for executive leadership succession planning and execution was given a more thorough analysis using the logical framework analysis model, followed by data exploration for signs of experience and observation of the outcomes. (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). This matrix-based analytical approach, which encourages careful and transparent qualitative data management, was used to conduct a qualitative and interpretive analysis of the data.

Last, the free-form text was organized using the no-code text analysis utility Sentiment Analysis. Sentiment Analysis is a machine learning method that automatically predicts whether the researcher's evaluation will be positive, neutral, or negative (Yadav & Vishwakarma, 2020). One can autonomously classify vast amounts of Excel data by sentiment using potent Sentiment Analysis tools. According to the highest confidence score the service at the sentence and document level can find, the Sentiment Analysis feature gives sentiment labels. Additionally, this feature provides confidence values for each document's positive, neutral, and negative feelings and sentences inside it, ranging from 0 to 1.

The mood Analysis classifies the mood of a text blob into positive and negative using the Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) algorithms (Yadav & Vishwakarma, 2020). The dataset from the preliminary survey was used to train the model on user-generated material. The open coding method was also used to analyze primary material (Tesch, 1977). The full transcriptions of every interview session had to be read and reread to get a feel of the bigger picture. Themes, sub-themes, and field notes were all categorized, given numbers, and organized into groups.



**Figure 1.** Flowchart of the Mixed-Methods Research Design Process used in the Study.

Figure 1 presents the methodological progression used in the study, starting with the identification of objectives, and illustrating the mixed-methods approach. This design offers a systematic overview of the research strategy, highlighting the interplay between qualitative and quantitative components, thereby clarifying the methodologies employed.

### Population and Sampling

The research applied a simple random sampling technique in determining the sample for the study, in which the purposive sampling technique was adopted. [Creswell \(2014\)](#) argued that in qualitative research, the goal is to carefully choose volunteers who would best aid the researcher in comprehending the issue and the study topic.

All 22 CPEs in Namibia made up the study's population. The unit of analysis was the board of directors, the nomination committee, incumbent chief executive officers and previous CEOs that separated from the commercialized public entities in the last ten years. It also included the senior management and supervisors of the CPEs. This study used a purposive sample approach since it makes it easier for the researcher to comprehend the issue and the research topic. Hence, only commercialized public enterprises were selected. The total population of the study was 210 participants derived from the 22 commercial public enterprises and based on the unit of analysis already discussed in this chapter. The sample was calculated at 30% of the study population, which was 47 participants. Conventionally, a response rate of 20% is seen as a good response rate for an online survey, while a response rate of 30% is regarded as adequate for doing research ([Baruch & Holtom, 2008](#)).

### Measurement Instruments

To further clarify the measurement instruments employed, the scales developed by [Giannetti et al. \(2023\)](#) that were integrated into our study are rooted in structured survey questions, aiming for a quantitative evaluation of the outlined variables. Both the employee traits and their relationship, as well as the successor traits, were gauged using Watson's self-report survey items. For the demographic background, our study evaluated respondents using a set of nine structured survey questions. Given that our research merges qualitative insights and quantitative survey-based measures, it can be posited that the study aligns with a mixed-methods approach. This incorporation ensures a comprehensive understanding, merging both statistical robustness and nuanced contextual insights.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographics

The case study population included 22 CPE personnel, of which 63 participants were sampled for the study. Participants were current and former executive leaders. Interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes. Participant feedback was helpful, and it was based on personal experiences. Interviews were recorded to verify the information.

Table 1 shows participants' profiles: gender, educational qualifications, designation, work experience, economic sector, and years of service in an organization. A sample size of 47 was chosen to address the research questions appropriately. The research protocol (see [Appendix A](#)) guided the interview process.

**Table 1.** Demographics of respondents

Parameter	N	Category	n	%
Gender	47	Female	22	47
		Male	25	53
Age	47	30 - 40 years	23	49
		41 - 45 years	15	32
		46 - 50 years	7	15
		51 - 55 years	1	2
		above 60 years	1	2



Education qualifications	47	Bachelor's degree	19	40
		Diploma	6	13
		Doctorate	2	4
		Master's degree	20	43
Total work experience in years	47	5 - 10	19	40
		16 - 20	7	15
		less than 5	20	43
		more than 20	1	2
Years in the organization	47	1 - 5 years	13	28
		10 - 15 years	6	13
		15 - 20 years	3	6
		5 - 10 years	23	49
		less than 1 year	2	4

The results show that 53.2% of participants were males, while 46.8% were females. The range of participants was between the ages of 30 and 40 years, which is 49%. The results also show that the participants had been part of the organization for 5 – 10 years; this constitutes 49% (Table 1).

### Factors and influence on succession planning in Commercial Public Enterprises

As observed from Table 2, the majority of the respondents indicated the following as important factors or variables to consider in recruitment when planning for succession in CPEs: the age of the successor, education, experience in CPEs, outside management experience, past performance, knowledge and skills in marketing, finance, strategic planning, interpersonal skills, technical knowledge and skills, decision-making abilities and experience, compatibility of goals with current CEO/MD, commitment to the business, psychological traits and respect from employees trust by employees.

**Table 2.** Summary results for significant factors influencing succession planning and recruitment

Factor	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Age of successor	47	1	5	3.6	1.080
Gender of successor	47	1	5	2.6	1.363
Education	47	1	5	4.3	0.783
Experience in PEs	47	1	5	4.4	0.853
Outside management experience	47	2	5	3.9	0.787
Past performance	47	3	5	4.4	0.577
Knowledge and skills in marketing, finance, and strategic planning	47	3	5	4.4	0.677
Interpersonal skills	47	3	5	4.3	0.548
Technical knowledge and skills	47	2	5	4.5	0.776
Decision-making abilities and experience	47	3	5	4.4	0.673
Compatibility of goals with current CEO/MD	47	1	5	3.5	0.906
Commitment to business	47	2	5	4.4	0.681
Psychological traits	47	3	5	3.9	0.567
Personal relationship with	47	1	5	2.2	1.070

CEO/MD					
Respect from employees	47	1	5	3.4	0.735
Trust by employees	47	1	5	3.8	0.770

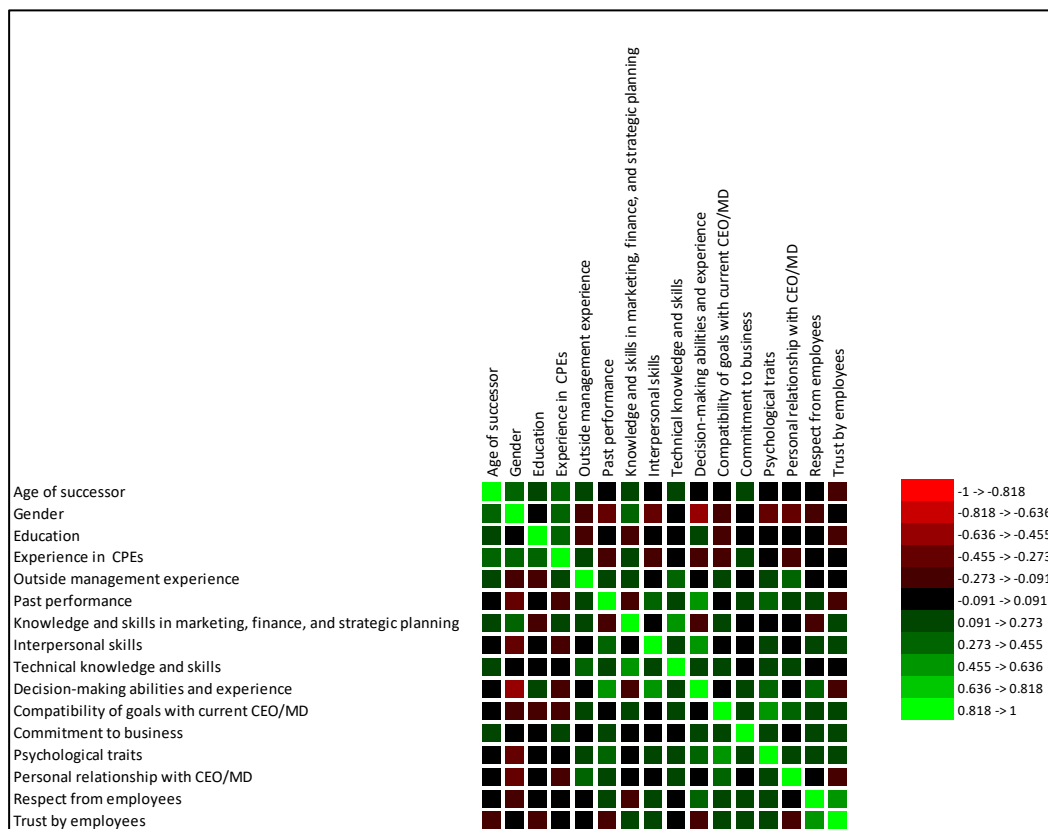
Scale: 1 – less important to 5 – very important.

Source: Survey data

As evidenced by the mean of 2.66 and 2.2, respectively, respondents understood that gender and personal relationship with the CEO/MD are not significant factors in succession planning. The majority of respondents also held the view that procurement was not done according to plan, as evidenced by a mean score of 2.89. Respondents also indicated that procurement planning led to adherence to established procedures, as evidenced by the mean of 3.35.

**Interaction of factors influencing succession planning and recruitment**

According to Figure 2, the study assessed the interaction between the study variables using Pearson's correlation analysis.



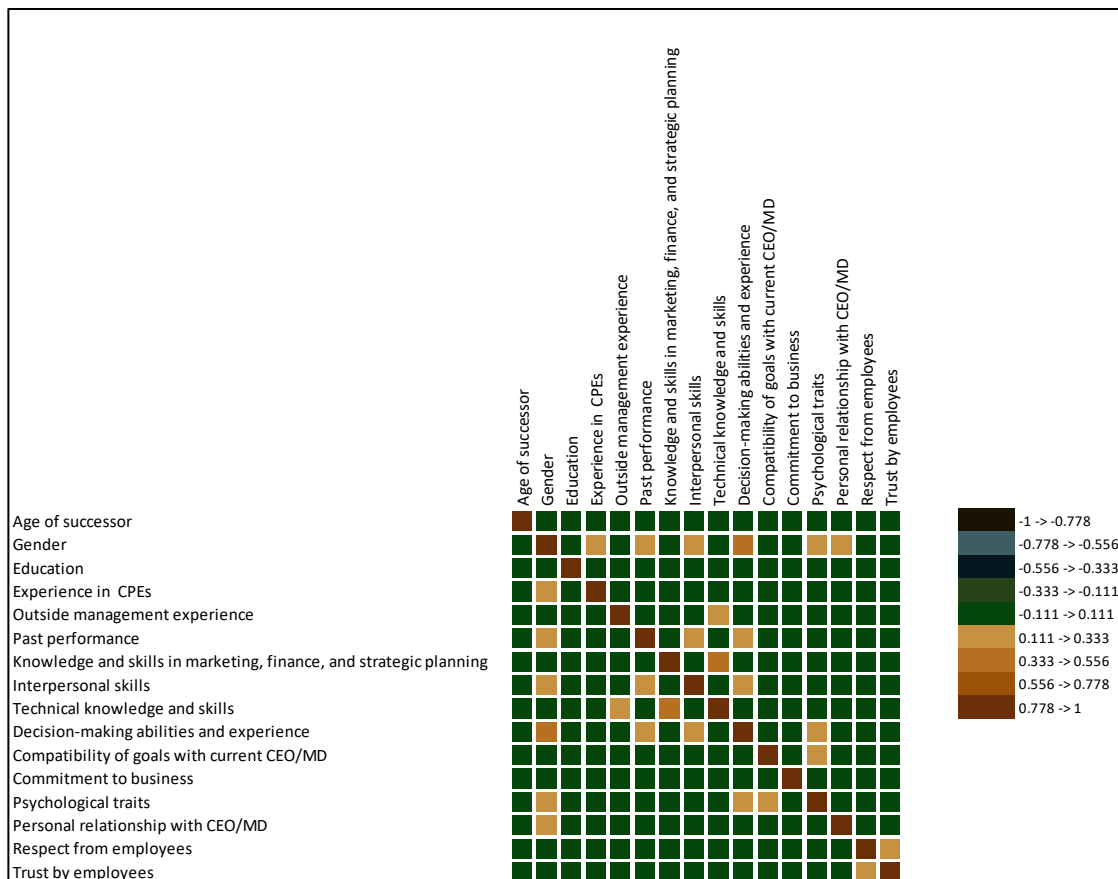
**Figure 2.** Image of the correlation matrix

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) as given in the coded colours

Results of the Pearson correlation, as shown in Figure 2, indicate that there is a significant negative correlation between gender versus past performances, interpersonal skills, decision-making abilities and experience and personal relationship with CEO/MD (p-value <0.05); a significant positive correlation between past performance versus decision-making abilities and



experience ( $r=0.634$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ) and a significant positive correlation between technical knowledge skills and knowledge in skills in marketing, finance and strategic planning ( $r=0.667$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). In general, the findings indicate an inverse correlation between personality traits and organizational performance variables and a positive correlation between personal traits as succession planning constructs in Namibia's CPEs. This is in tandem with the views of [Ahmad and Cheng \(2018\)](#) and [Oduwusi \(2018\)](#), who identified experience and personal traits as some of the factors that had a significant positive impact on succession planning, recruitment and overall organizational performance, while psychological traits of candidates adversely affected succession planning and organizational performance.



**Figure 3.** Image of the matrix of coefficients of determination

The coefficient of determination indicates how much variability is caused by a factor's relationship with another variable (x and y relationship). The correlation analyses performed show that from 33% to 78% of the variation in y can be explained by the x-variables in Figure 3.

According to the study, leadership at all levels is essential for succession management. However, the main difference between the 'best' and the 'rest' is the level of engagement and commitment shown by top managers and next-generation executives. In the research done by [Lamoureux et al. \(2009\)](#), the results show that HR leaders and managers differ on how often they believe that the review of formal talent and actionable development plans takes place. Executives are also more optimistic regarding succession management effectiveness to meet business and strategic challenges than HR leaders ([Lamoureux et al., 2009](#)). For example, 55% of executives (versus 38% of HR leaders) rated their companies' programmes as "effective or very effective".

Participants viewed talent attraction positively. Organizations want talent. It is important to remember that an organization cannot give service without the necessary skills. Rothwell (2011) states that it is not always apparent who, where and when to call. Recruitment techniques may need to be reimagined to attract more high-potential employees. Most government agencies recruit in the same way, using forms to help a government department choose a person for an announced post (Pila et al., 2016). Overall, most companies use LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter for e-recruitment. Organizations also improve their websites so that people can apply online. Online is better because it attracts the educated and web-literate, given that jobs are advertised worldwide, on the local market or in niche markets (Pila et al., 2016).

The study has shown the strategic importance of managing executive leadership succession planning. Therefore, one of the top management's focus points would be to fulfil and develop potential employees' expectations through continuous learning, whether on-the-job or off-the-job training or opportunities for career development (Sessa & London, 2015). Managers must show strong leadership skills and provide training and development initiatives to build employees' skills and personal skills. This would encourage employees to strive to achieve their best possible results (Pila et al., 2016). The results show that different respondents expressed different views on top managers' commitment to succession planning. Others saw the importance of the participation of top managers from different points of view. According to them, successful succession planning relies heavily on top management's commitment, which in turn encourages top management engagement and dedication.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Succession planning is commonly associated with large profitable companies where the idea is to find and train the third generation to take over management and continue the business. This study argues that succession planning encounters challenges such as the organization's size and failure to retain employees. Public service and community organizations are typically relatively small, so supporting secondary leadership can add too much weight and expense. Managers in large companies can avoid succession planning for fear of compromising their competence. The named successors may renounce and leave the organization for various reasons, taking the organization back to re-establishing another potential candidate. This study provides further evidence that the success of CPEs depends on leadership development, and leadership depends on special competencies and skills, the potential and capacities of leaders and the expected work outcome and responsibilities.

There is a correlation between good succession planning and business success, and this key finding is well in line with past studies, for example, by Lamoureaux et al. (2009), which indicate that leadership succession can be disruptive and ineffective if the new leader is not integrated and appreciated. Therefore, this study also confirms that succession affects authority and communication, power and decision-making structures and interrupts routine business operations. In contrast, disruption can improve an organization's performance. The traits and characteristics of executive successors can significantly impact succession planning. Key traits include leadership skills, technical expertise, adaptability, communication skills, strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and cultural fit. Companies must consider these traits when selecting and grooming successors to ensure a smooth transition and the business's continued success.

## **Recommendation**

Based on the findings, several recommendations emerge for both policymakers and management within Namibian commercial public enterprises. Firstly, it is essential to prioritize comprehensive succession planning processes that factor in both quantitative metrics and

qualitative insights. This balance ensures that the selection of successors aligns with organizational goals and the broader socio-political context. Furthermore, training programs should be instituted, aiming at equipping potential successors with the necessary skills and knowledge tailored to the unique challenges of public enterprises in Namibia. Collaborations with international entities can also be explored to benefit from global best practices. Lastly, continuous monitoring and evaluation of succession plans are crucial. These endeavours should engage diverse stakeholders, facilitating an inclusive and forward-thinking approach to leadership transitions in the ever-evolving landscape of Namibian public enterprises.

### LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study, while comprehensive, has certain limitations that need to be addressed. Firstly, the primary focus on Namibian commercial public enterprises might curtail the generalizability of the findings to other geographical or enterprise contexts. Methodologically, the adopted mixed-methods approach, despite its holistic nature, possesses inherent drawbacks. The survey data might overlook nuances, and the qualitative interviews are potentially susceptible to interviewer or respondent biases. Additionally, the sample size, though providing depth, may not adequately represent the wider stakeholder population in Namibian public enterprises. Looking ahead, there are promising avenues for future research. Expanding the geographical scope to encompass other African nations or juxtaposing the Namibian context against global counterparts could yield richer insights. Moreover, embracing diverse methodological tools, such as alternative qualitative techniques or experimental designs, can further refine our understanding. A deeper exploration of factors like organizationally induced entrenchment or biases rooted in gender, race, and ethnicity might also unravel intricate details of succession planning in the region.

### APPENDIX A. Ethics Approval

The questionnaire and methodology for this study was approved by the Human Research Ethics committee of the University of Namibia (Ethics approval number: DEC FOC/ 09/03).

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