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ENTREPRENEURIAL NETWORKS AND FAMILY START-UP DEVELOPMENT IN WUSE MARKET, ABUJA

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ABSTRACT

Family start-up development in Wuse market, Abuja is characterised by resource constraints. Nevertheless, today, firms are generally beginning to employ entrepreneurial networks as intangible resources in business development. Based on the mitigating effects of family members "care syndrome" and supports from friends, this study examined the effects of family and social networks on family start-up development in Wuse market, Abuja. The study adopted survey design. The sample size of the respondents was drawn from the population using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size formula. Criterion and systematic sampling techniques were employed to select the elements that completed the questionnaire. The data collected from 211 founder/CEOs and descendant/CEOs were subjected to linear regression analysis. It was found that the effects of family and social networks on family start-up development are significant and positive. The study concludes that family and social networks exert influence on family start-up development respectively at the initial stage and subsequently after the business has commenced operations. As such, founder/CEOs and descendant/CEOs should be educated on the role of family and social networks in family start-up development. The study recommends replication of similar study in other markets and geopolitical zones of Nigeria or other parts of the world to ensure the generalisation of the results.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial networks, Family network, Social network, Family business, Family start-up development

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship researchers have recently started to look at entrepreneurial networks such as family network and social network as sources of entrepreneurial resources. This assertion is supported by the resource-based view (RBV) and the resource dependence theory (RDT) that suggests that firms should first obtain the tangible and intangible resources they require from their internal environment before resorting to their external environment. Owing to the inadequacies associated with tangible resources supporting the development of family start-ups (Ichrakie, 2013), the focus of entrepreneurs and researchers is gradually shifting to intangible resources. Entrepreneurial network is one of the intangible resources that make family businesses unique. Family start-ups are new family businesses that are established

by one or more members of a family (Agbim & Oyekan, 2021). They are generally affected by resource constraint, which is one of the biggest trickle-down effects of the turbulence in today's business environment (Ichrakie, 2013; Onuoha, 2012). However, they are still sources of employment opportunities, tax revenues to the government, business competition, creativity, innovation, foreign exchange, savings and gross domestic product (Onuoha, 2012).

Some of the world's largest family businesses that leveraged their family and social networks are Olivetti, Foxconn and Sun. Olivetti of Italy achieved enhanced workers commitment and performance through Adriano Olivetti's principle of maintaining close relationship among family members, between the family and the company, and with other companies in the environment. Foxconn of Taiwan was founded by Terry Gou. Through the relationship developed with other firms, Foxconn manufactures electronics for companies such as Apple, Dell, Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard. Sun pharmaceutical company was founded in 1983 by Dilip Shanghvi. Dilip started the company with $160 he borrowed from his father. Today, it is the biggest drug company in India and the fifth largest generic pharmaceutical company in the world (Brennan, 2021; Ramachandran & Ramesh, 2020; Wang & Jiang, 2021). Some of the family businesses in Nigeria that developed through the support of family and social networks are Dantata Group, Dangote Group, Doyin Group, Ibeto Group and Innoson Group.

Family start-up development is characterised by different entrepreneurial networks. In spite of the contributions of entrepreneurial networks to its development, family start-ups in Nigeria are still bedeviled by start-up challenges that hamper their development. Challenges such as start-up capital constraint and high cost of doing business are hampering the development of family start-ups in Wuse market, Abuja. As such, some of the start-ups are either dwindling or stunted in their development. Thus, the questions which this study seeks to answer are: firstly, does family network facilitate the development of family start-ups in Wuse market, Abuja? Secondly, does social network contribute to the development of family start-ups in Wuse market, Abuja?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial Networks

Entrepreneurial networks are the ties or linkages entrepreneurs create and maintain with family members, friends, other entrepreneurs and organisations for the purpose of acquiring and sharing resources for family business development (Agbim, 2018; Kaluma, & Agbim, 2023).

Entrepreneurs use diverse networks; such as family and social networks, because the value of the networks to them and their businesses varies (Agbim, 2018; Aladejebi, 2020; Flores, 2021; Iyke & Onuoha, 2023; Stephens, 2021).

Family network

Family network is the inter-linkage or interconnection among nuclear and extended family members for the purpose of accessing tangible and intangible resources. These family members network electronically via the internet and traditionally through physical contact during family meetings (Agbim & Oyekan, 2021). Family network can be created by birth, around sons and daughters. It can also be created by marriage, around wives and in-laws (Agbim & Oyekan, 2021; Cheng et al., 2022).

Social network

Social network is the tie, relationship or linkage among friends in a social club or social association through face-to-face contact and/or new media platforms for mutual interest. These ties, relationships and linkages facilitate resource sharing and exchange among participating actors that are defined by their status, challenge or frequency of interaction (Agbim, 2019; Agbim & Oyekan, 2021). Today, the advances in information and communication technology have made it possible for firms to combine the traditional and new media (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram) with an additional element that was missing in the earlier markets: real-time interactivity (Agbim, 2019; AlKhudari, 2023; Gong et al., 2023).

Family Start-up Development

The term "family" refers to a group of people related to each other by blood or marriage (Belenzon et al., 2015). In family entrepreneurship, all newly-established firms irrespective of their form or classification are family start-ups. Family start-ups are new businesses that are owned, managed and controlled by families with inter-generational transfer intentions. In family start-up development, the family member conceives a business idea, identifies business opportunities, evaluates the opportunities, conducts a feasibility study, develops a business plan, mobilises the needed resources, and launches the business (Agbim & Oyekan, 2021).

Underpinning Theories

The underpinning theories for this study are the resource-based view (RBV) and the resource dependence theory (RDT). The RBV was first theorised by Birger Wernerfelt in 1984. It holds that firms should first harness the resources they require from their internal environment (Ferreira et al., 2011; Wernerfelt, 1984). However, since no firm has all the resources it

requires, firms sometimes; if not most often obtain additional resources they need from their external environment (Premaratne, 2002). Corroborating this view, the RDT as propounded by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik in 1978 states that firms create interdependent relationships with their external environment owing to the uncertainties from their uncoordinated social units and external environment. Subsequently, these interdependent relationships are transformed into linkages for the purpose of acquiring and sharing resources with which to form and/or improve their businesses (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Sengenberger & Pyke, 1992).

Hypotheses Development

Entrepreneurs rely on strong family network ties for business development and operation. Family network better enhance the development of such businesses when the members are well-educated and innovative (Bagwell, 2007). This network affects the key processes involved in business venture creation (Kalafatoglu, 2016). Specifically, family network support family start-up activities in the form of family social capital and through family cohesiveness (Edelman et al., 2016). Nurlaily et al. (2018) empirically affirmed that family cohesiveness significantly affects start-up activities. This is because in start-up businesses, the entrepreneurs are strongly influenced by family support in the form of togetherness and family closeness. Further and more recently, Rusmiati and Khan (2022) concluded that family moral support contributes to business creation among female entrepreneurs. Omar (2015) argued that personal networks (i.e., spouse, family, close relatives and close friends) are vital in the start-up stage and developing stages of family businesses. Agbim and Oyekan (2021) added that family network matters in family start-up development. Consequently, we propose that:

H_{01}: Family network has significant effect on family start-up development in Wuse market, Abuja

Social network that comprises family, friends and other actors can contribute to business growth (Oke, 2013). Corroborating Oke's assertion, Wachira et al. (2023) noted that social networks arguments the growth of entrepreneurship. Gender wise, social networks influence the performance of women entrepreneurs (Ademola et al., 2020). Like men, these women rely on their social network for support, guidance and encouragement that can trigger entrepreneurial intention and for resources that can facilitate the creation of start-ups (Emami et al., 2023). Social support can as well motivate students to take up careers in entrepreneurship and by extension establish start-ups (Sahban et al., 2016). More recently, Abane et al. (2024) affirmed that the growth of new enterprises can be fostered through the cohesiveness and social

relationships within a social network. These ties emanate from the social capital's structural, relational and cognitive elements. Accordingly, we hypothesise that:

H_{02}: Social network has significant effect on family start-up development in Wuse market, Abuja

RESEARCH METHODS

Survey design and sampling technique

Survey research design and criterion sampling technique were employed to select the study sample from the population of all the family start-ups in Wuse market. The list of the target population of 2632 was collected from the market union's register and screened based on predetermined criteria. The criteria are that: (i) one or more of the founder/CEO's family member works in the family start-up; (ii) the family start-up was established between 1990 and 2022. This period was chosen to ensure that all the respondents who participated in the study have operated their businesses for a long period of time; and (iii) the family start-up is not moribund. At the end of the screening, 523 family start-ups were selected. The sample size of 221 was computed using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination method. To ensure that all the family start-ups that met the predetermined criteria were given equal and independent chance of being selected, systematic sampling technique was employed to administer the questionnaire.

Measures

The measures of family network were adapted from Edelman et al. (2016) and Nurlaily et al. (2018). The measures of social network were adapted from Hazeleger (2019), while the measures of start-up development were adapted from Edelman et al. (2016) and Nurlaily et al. (2018). The variables in the questionnaire were measured on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by lecturers in the Department of Entrepreneurial Studies, Veritas University, Abuja. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.79.

Model Specification

$$FSD = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FNK + e \quad \text{---------- (i)}$$

Where

FSD = family start-up development
β_0 = the intercept of the line with Y - axis
β_1 = the slope. It estimates the rate of change in Y for a unit change in X
FNK = family network
e = random error

The apriori expectation was that family network is expected to positively affect family start-up development, while the absence of family network was expected to negatively affect family start-up development.

$$FSD = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SNK + e \quad \text{---------- (ii)}$$

Where

FSD = family start-up development
β_0 = the intercept of the line with Y - axis
β_1 = the slope. It estimates the rate of change in Y for a unit change in X
SNK = social network
e = random error

The apriori expectation was that social network is expected to positively affect family start-up development, while the absence of social network was expected to negatively affect family start-up development.

The data on the founder/CEO or descendant/CEO's demographics were analysed using descriptive statistics - frequency counts and simple percentages. Variance inflation factor (VIF) and Tolerance (reciprocal of the VIF) were used to test the collinearity of the dimensions of entrepreneurial networks (i.e., family network and social network). The two research hypotheses were tested using linear regression analysis with the aid of SPSS (Version 25.0 for Windows).

RESULTS

Respondents' demographics

Two hundred and eleven (211) of the 221 copies of the administered questionnaire were retrieved, and were properly completed and useable. This implied a response rate of 95.5%. The distribution of the traders by gender showed that majority (64.9%) of them were males. This implies that more male than female traders participated in the study. Further, the distribution of the traders by age revealed that majority (74.9%) of them were aged 45-49. This connote that most of the respondents were above 45 years old.

Test of hypothesis

H_{01}: Family network has significant effect on family start-up development in Wuse market, Abuja

The results of the goodness-of-fit and the significance of the regression of family start-up development on family network are presented in Tables 1(a) and 1(b).

Table 1(a): Goodness-of-fit of the Regression of FSD on FNK

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.789	.623	.623	.451	1.873

Predictors: (Constant), FNK
Dependent Variable: FSD
Note: FNK = family network, FSD = family start-up development
Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 1(b): Significance of the Regression of FSD on FNK

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**T**	**Sig.**	**Tolerance**	**VIF**
1(Constant)	2.075	.211		10.047	.000		
FNK	1.524	.153	1.512	7.614	.002	.650	1.143

Predictors: (Constant), FNK
Dependent Variable: FSD
Note: FNK = family network, FSD = family start-up development
Source: SPSS Output, 2024

The result of the goodness-of-fit of the regression of family start-up development on family network in Table 1(a) showed that: family network can influence family start-up development (R = .789); family network made a significant contribution to family start-up development (R^2 = .623); business characteristics explained 62.3% (Adj. R^2 = .623) of the total variation in family start-up development; family network is significant in explaining the variation in family start-up development (standard error = .451); and there is no autocorrelation in the errors of the regression model (Durbin-Watson is approximately 2.000). Therefore, family network is important in facilitating family start-up development. Table 1(b) showed that the data has no collinearity problem (tolerance = .650 and VIF = 1.143) and the effect of family network on family start-up development is significant and positive ($\beta = 1.512$, $t = 7.614$, $P < .05$). Therefore, H_{01} is not rejected. We concluded that family network has significant and positive effect on family start-up development in Wuse market, Abuja.

H_{02}: Social network has significant effect on family start-up development in Wuse market, Abuja.

The results of the goodness-of-fit and the significance of the regression of family start-up development on social network are presented in Tables 2(a) and 2(b).

Table 2(a): Goodness-of-fit of the Regression of FSD on SNK

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.742	.551	.551	.457	2.000

Predictors: (Constant), SNK
Dependent Variable: FSD
Note: SNK = social network, FSD = family start-up development
Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 2(b): Significance of the Regression of FSD on SNK

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**T**	**Sig.**	**Tolerance**	**VIF**
1(Constant)	2.734	.1723		10.406	.000		
SNK	.258	.088	.278	5.012	.000	1.000	1.000

Predictors: (Constant), SNK
Dependent Variable: FSD
Note: SNK = social network, FSD = family start-up development
Source: SPSS Output, 2023

The result of the goodness-of-fit of the regression of family start-up development on social network in Table 2(a) revealed that: social network can significantly influence family start-up development (R = .742); social network made a significant contribution to family start-up development (R^2 = .551); social network explained 55.1% of the total variance in family start-up development (Adj. R^2 = .551); social network helps the founder/CEOs and descendant/CEOs to achieve improved family start-up development (standard error = .457); and there is no autocorrelation in the errors of the regression model (Durbin-Watson statistics = 2.000). Therefore, the predictor is truly significant. Table 2(b) revealed that: the data has no collinearity problem (tolerance = 1.000 and VIF = 1.000) and the effect of social network on family start-up development is significant and positive ($\beta = .278$, $t = 5.012$, $P < .05$). Therefore, H_{02} is not rejected. In conclusion, social network has significant and positive effect on family start-up development in Wuse market, Abuja.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The result of the test of hypothesis one shows that the effect of family network on family start-up development is significant and positive. During start-up development, founder/CEOs and descendant/CEOs of family start-ups face challenges that are associated with accessing information, acquiring skills, sourcing for initial business capital, finding a suitable location for the business and hiring the right workers for the business (Anis & Mohamed, 2012; Ottih, 2014). In line with the resource-based view, the emotional tie between family business

founder/CEO and the family members makes the family the most important internal source of initial capital or better still entrepreneurial resources for developing family start-ups (Abou-Moghli & Al Muala, 2012; Bellavitis et al., 2014). Entrepreneurs rely on strong family network ties for start-up development. This is because family network enhances the development of such businesses when the members are well-educated and are innovative (Bagwell, 2007). Family businesses depend on family members for resources such as finance, knowledge and advice to develop (Chuairuang, 2013; Naldi & Nordqvist, 2008).

Lack of initial capital is the most important challenge (Ottih, 2014). This is evident from the difficulties experienced by entrepreneurs when accessing initial capital from external sources. Moreover, their young age and their seemingly lack of business experience, knowledge and collateral compel them to seek internal support, especially from their families. Thus, the most important source of initial capital is the family; the entrepreneur needs family network to obtain start-up capital. The social support from the family is perceived by the entrepreneurs as their families showing them love and care (Abou-Moghli & Al Muala, 2012; Anis & Mohamed, 2012). Further, family network affects the key processes involved in new venture creation (Kalafatoglu, 2016). Family network support family start-up activities in the form of family togetherness, family closeness, family moral support (Agbim & Oyekan, 2021; Rusmiati & Khan, 2022), family social capital and family cohesiveness (Edelman et al., 2016). Nurlaily et al. (2018) empirically affirmed that family cohesiveness significantly affects start-up activities.

The result of the test on the effect of social network on family start-up development is significant and positive. Research has shown that family businesses are externally controlled; relate with actors in their networks, and acquire and share resources in their external environment (Chuairuang, 2013; Naldi & Nordqvist, 2008). However, based on the resource dependence theory, the limited capacity of families to provide business resources creates the need for affiliation to social networks in the external environment (Abou-Moghli & Al Muala, 2012; Bellavitis et al., 2014). This is the contribution of this study to knowledge. Social network facilitates entrepreneurial activities that are associated with developing a new venture that the family network may no longer provide for or may carter for but with a whole lot of challenges (Edelman et al., 2016; Powell & Eddleston, 2017). In addition, social network offer care and love to all actors in the network (Edelman et al., 2016). Social network is helpful in

resource acquisition, foreign investment, internationalisation, venture creation and reducing transaction costs - all the costs associated with the transfer of goods and services from one point to another (Agbim, 2019; Ogunnaike & Kehinde, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

Entrepreneurial networks (i.e., family and social works) respectively exert influence on family start-up development. For a family start-up to be influenced by these networks, the founder/CEO or descendant/CEO must firstly be actively involved in the family network, and subsequently and secondly in the social network. The two networks are associated with relationships that encourages and facilitates resource acquisition and sharing. However, involvement in family network is easier because membership is by birth or marriage, while an entrepreneur becomes a member of a social network by leveraging someone's (e.g., family member, good friend) social (or business) status or through the entrepreneur's own acquired social or business status. Involvement in these relationships has become more important now than ever before owing to the turbulence and uncertainties in today's business environment. Moreover, the unpredictability of business environmental factors has been linked to resource constraint, particularly intangible resources. Nevertheless, extant literature revealed that entrepreneurial networks are forms of intangible resources.

The implications of the results are that entrepreneurs of family start-ups should begin to get involved in their family network for accessing initial entrepreneurial resources and to become members of social networks for the purpose of acquiring and sharing resources that their family network cannot or may not easily provide for them. Again, family network is internal, while social network is external to the entrepreneur. As such, the two networks should respectively be treated as internal and external sources of entrepreneurial resources by family start-up entrepreneurs.

The results of this study were interpreted in the light of some limitations. The first limitation is associated with the use of founder/CEOs as single respondents from the families studied. The empirical measurement of variables on the basis of the perceptions of founder/CEOs only can be subjective and a source of bias. This bias was overcome by adopting criterion sampling technique. The second limitation is associated with examining the effect of entrepreneurial networks (which are intangible resources) on family start-ups, excluding tangible resources like machines and human resources. This limitation was taken care of by including both family

tangible and intangible resources as item statements under the "family network" in the questionnaire. The third limitation is the narrow demographic scope: the study was limited to Wuse market, Abuja. Since this affects the generalisability of the results for the whole of Nigeria, it was overcome by restricting the discussion of the results to only Wuse market.

Based on the limitations of the study, we suggest that further studies be carried out to make up for the inherent gaps. First, the bias associated with generating data from only insiders to the family business (i.e., founder/CEOs and descendant/CEOs) can be minimised in further studies by including other family members, customers and/or suppliers as respondents. Second, researchers conducting further studies in this area can investigate how family human resources and family physical capital influence family start-up development. Further studies in this area can be carried out in other markets and geopolitical zones of Nigeria or other parts of the world to ensure the generalisation of the results. Owing to the findings and the conclusion it is recommended that family start-up founder/CEOs and descendant/CEOs should be educated on the role of family network in family start-up development. The knowledge garnered from such orientation will help the founder/CEOs and descendant/CEOs to foster a more cordial tie with family members. Further, family start-up founder/CEOs and descendant/CEOs should be sensitised on the need to belong to both national and international social associations. This social relationship has the potential of: fostering in them the use of social network tools for communication; helping them to acquire international business knowledge/experience; enabling them to seal foreign partnership and investment deals; and ensuring that they access funds, facilities and/or markets.

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