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Performance Management and Succession Planning as Drivers of the Performance of Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Firms in South-East, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This study examined how performance management and succession planning influence the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria. The problem it addressed was that many pharmaceutical firm managers do not know how these two human resource planning practices relate to organisational performance, so that training is not synchronised with performance goals, preparation for leadership change is poor and operational performance suffers. The specific objectives were to investigate the extent to which performance management influences, and to assess the extent to which succession planning influences, the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in the zone. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was anchored on human capital theory and the resource-based view. Twenty pharmaceutical firms certified by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), four from each of the five South-East states, were studied. From a population of 2,176 employees, a sample of 471 was determined, and data were collected with a structured five-point Likert questionnaire validated by experts and having a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.82. A total of 470 copies (99.79%) were returned and analysed using descriptive statistics and simple regression in SPSS Version 23 at the 5% level of significance. Results showed that performance management ($R = 0.921$, $t = 44.738$, $p < 0.001$) and succession planning ($R = 0.963$, $t = 68.043$, $p < 0.001$) each have a significant positive relationship with the performance of the firms, with succession planning explaining 92.8% of the variation in performance. The study concluded that firms which manage performance systematically and prepare successors deliberately perform better. It recommended, among others, that firms adopt behavioural assessment, rating scales, coaching and 360-degree feedback in their performance management systems, and prepare a talent pipeline for critical positions at all levels of the workforce.

Keywords: Performance management, Succession planning, Organisational performance, Human resource planning, Pharmaceutical manufacturing firms

INTRODUCTION

Every organisation depends on people who know what is expected of them and on a leadership line that does not break when key individuals leave. These two requirements are addressed by two distinct but related human resource planning (HRP) practices: performance management, which directs and develops the work of employees and teams, and succession planning, which prepares the people who will occupy critical positions tomorrow. HRP itself is the process of making sure that an organisation

has the right number of skilled employees in the right places at the right time to meet its current and future needs (Mutua, 2019). Its value lies in turning workforce intentions into concrete practices, and in linking those practices to the goals of the firm.

Performance management is a systematic process for improving organisational performance by developing the performance of individuals and teams, and it works by relating each person's objectives to the mission of the organisation (Herman, 2013). Succession planning is the deliberate effort to identify and develop internal candidates for key roles so that business continues without interruption when incumbents retire, are promoted or otherwise leave (Kenton, 2024). Both practices recognise that capability is built inside the firm over time. That understanding runs through recent work from the authors' own research community. Ogwashi, Gbenga and Ngige (2025), for example, studied entrepreneurship training programmes and the performance of SMEs in Delta State, and Nwokedi, Mbah and Williams (2025) examined strategic planning and organisational efficiency in brewing industries in South-East Nigeria. Both studies treat deliberate, planned management action, rather than chance, as the route to better firm-level results.

The issue is pressing in the pharmaceutical industry. Pharmaceutical manufacturing in South-East Nigeria is concentrated in firms located in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States, and it operates under the close oversight of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). In that environment the output of each production, laboratory and quality-assurance employee is tightly linked to compliance, product quality and customer confidence. A firm in which performance expectations are unclear, feedback is rare and there is nobody ready to step into a vacated senior post is exposed to errors, delays and loss of institutional knowledge. Performance here is understood in its operational and non-financial senses, including productivity, product quality, innovation, employee morale and organisational effectiveness.

Although both practices are widely discussed, the evidence linking them to the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturers in the South-East is thin. The present study was designed to supply that evidence for performance management and succession planning, the third and fourth of five HRP practices examined in the parent study.

Statement of the Problem

The specific problem is that many managers of pharmaceutical firms in South-East Nigeria do not know how performance management and succession planning relate to the performance of their firms. Training and development objectives are frequently not aligned with performance goals, performance is often reviewed only once a year and without continuous feedback, and there is commonly little preparation for changes in leadership. These gaps lead to lower productivity, unplanned vacancies in key positions, higher costs, weakened morale and reduced competitiveness. The study therefore sought empirical evidence on the two relationships.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the parent study was to investigate the effect of human resource planning on the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria. The specific objectives addressed in this article were to:

1. Investigate the extent to which performance management influences the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria.
2. Assess the extent to which succession planning influences the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

H01: Performance management has no significant positive relationship with the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria.

H02: Succession planning has no significant positive relationship with the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Performance Management

Performance management is a continuous process of identifying, measuring and developing performance by linking the work of individuals to the objectives of the organisation (Herman, 2013). Lebas (1995) describes it as the process of deploying and managing the key components of the organisation so that stated goals are reached on time, while Fletcher (2001) emphasises that it creates a shared vision of purpose and helps each employee understand his or her role. Kandula (2006) points out that an effective system must specify what good performance looks like and how it will be measured, and that its effectiveness increases when training, feedback and behaviour-based measures are used to set goals.

Lalwani (2020) presents the performance management cycle as five steps: planning, in which goals are set and communicated; monitoring of progress; developing the employee using what monitoring reveals; rating and feedback, including 360-degree feedback from peers and managers; and rewarding good performance. The concept has also shifted from an annual appraisal towards continuous performance management, in which managers and employees communicate regularly so that problems are addressed as they arise rather than at year end. Employee perceptions matter, however: Lalwani (2020) notes that many workers find performance management confusing, subjective and infrequent, a reminder that the design of the system and the quality of its operation decide whether it helps.

Succession Planning

Succession planning is a strategic process in which an organisation identifies and develops internal candidates to fill key roles, so that continuity is protected when positions fall vacant through retirement, promotion or other causes (Kenton, 2024). Plans may be long-term, preparing the firm for anticipated changes, or emergency plans that respond to an unexpected exit. The literature treats it as preparation rather than pre-selection: the firm equips a pool of people with the skills and knowledge future roles require instead of naming a successor in advance. Its components include proper hiring, training and job rotation, performance management, mentoring and coaching, and a formal written plan.

Kenton (2024) lists several benefits for employers and employees alike: a pipeline of talent that reduces disruption, better morale and retention because staff can see a future in the firm, lower recruitment costs because vacancies are filled internally, smoother transitions and a wider sharing of the firm's values and vision. The same source warns of common mistakes, namely failing to communicate the plan, having no formal agreement, assuming that staff already have the skills to advance, applying the plan to only a few employees and neglecting to diversify the talent pool.

Organisational Performance

Organisational performance indicates how well an enterprise is achieving its purposes, covering profitability, relationship with stakeholders and goal attainment (Williamson, 2008). In this study it is taken to mean operational and non-financial performance, which includes productivity, cost reduction, quality, waste reduction, innovation, competitiveness and employee morale. Williams and Okeke (2025), in their

study of economic factors of corporate sustainability and performance of foam manufacturing firms, show that the performance of a manufacturing firm is shaped by internal factors that management can act upon. That premise underlies this study, which asks whether two management practices, performance management and succession planning, are among those factors in pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory, traceable to Schultz (1961; 1981) and Becker (1993), regards the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees as a form of capital that can be increased by appropriate investment. Succession planning is a direct application of this idea, since it invests in the growth of internal talent so that the firm holds capable people for future positions. Performance management applies it too, because goal setting, coaching and feedback are the means by which the skills of employees are converted into results.

Resource-Based View

The resource-based view (RBV), presented by Grunert and Hildebrandt (2004) and Jones and Hill (2009), argues that competitive advantage rests on valuable, rare and hard-to-imitate resources and on the capabilities through which they are used. Capabilities reside in the rules, routines and procedures of an organisation, and they are difficult for rivals to copy because they depend on internal management processes. Performance management systems and succession plans are exactly such routines. Through them a firm coordinates its people and secures its leadership continuity in a way competitors cannot readily duplicate.

Empirical Review

Performance Management and Performance

Studies of performance management generally report a positive link with employee and organisational results. Zhang (2012), using the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey, found that performance management, in the form of continuous communication between employer and employee, affects performance significantly and positively. Kipsegerwo, Kimutai and Kimani (2016), studying commercial banks in Turkana County, Kenya, established that the performance appraisal system, training and development, and the reward system each have a significant positive influence on employee productivity. Ndakanwa, Ndayitwayeko, Manirakiza and Nzohabonayo (2024) found a positive and significant relationship between performance management and productivity at the National Institute for Social Security in Burundi, although the average effect on productivity was generally low. Wachiuri (2018) reported that objective-based appraisal accounted for most of the variance in performance at KPMG Kenya, and Denadi (2021) concluded from a review of the literature that elements of performance management, including appraisal and employee participation, enhance organisational effectiveness and efficiency.

Several studies point to the conditions under which the practice works. Money and London (2010) argue that designing performance management to foster employee engagement leads to higher performance, and Santosh (2021) identified behavioural assessment, rating scales and the 360-degree method among the tools organisations use. Rao (2007) found in Indian companies that exposure to the system, discipline, teamwork and good interpersonal relations are needed for effective implementation. Three Nigerian studies relate to these conditions. Remigius, Gbenga and Ngige (2025) examined compensation strategies and the performance of commercial banks in Anambra State, which bears on the rewarding step of the performance management cycle. Anah, Manafa and Okeke (2026) studied organisational climate and organisational citizenship behaviour in

public universities in Enugu and Anambra States, highlighting the role of the working climate in securing employee effort beyond formal duties, which the open communication and feedback of a good system are intended to build. Chidokwe, Mbah and Gbenga (2026), in their study of Zenith Bank Plc, South-East Nigeria, link organisational culture to employee commitment, the attitude on which engagement-oriented performance management relies.

Succession Planning and Performance

The international literature on succession planning is also largely positive. Zhang, Lee and Zhao (2023) report a positive association between succession planning and firm performance, and Hitt, Keats and DeMarie (2018), using survey data from 324 large United States companies, found that well-developed succession plans go with higher financial performance and a competitive advantage over peers. Kim and Park (2016) found that proactive CEO succession planning benefits performance especially in times of crisis or industry turbulence, while Liu and Raghuram (2018) found that successful succession planning strengthens organisational resilience and reduces performance disruption. Al-Harbi and Mohammed (2017) showed that succession planning improves strategic alignment, which in turn improves performance.

A distinct group of studies shows that succession planning acts through employees' attitudes. Zainuddin, Kamal and Ahsan (2020), in Malaysian SMEs, and Song, Nguyen and Nguyen (2019), in Vietnamese firms, found that employee engagement mediates the effect of succession planning on performance, and Zhao, Jiang and Zhang (2019) found that organisational commitment plays a similar mediating role in Chinese firms. The organisational-commitment mechanism is consistent with the focus of Chidokwe, Mbah and Gbenga (2026) on commitment in a South-East Nigerian organisation. Jensen, Danes and Stafford (2017) and Sandada and Mangwandi (2015) report that family-owned firms and SMEs with succession planning practices perform better.

The most directly relevant evidence comes from Nigeria. Agbim, Izedonmi and Ohiokha (2016), studying 120 Nigerian manufacturing firms, found that succession planning practices such as identifying and developing successors were associated with higher financial and overall firm performance. The planning orientation of this evidence agrees with the concern for strategic planning and efficiency among South-East industrial firms reported by Nwokedi, Mbah and Williams (2025).

Gap in the Literature

The studies above were largely conducted in banks, public bodies, family businesses or listed companies, and many outside Nigeria. Few have tested performance management and succession planning together in pharmaceutical manufacturing, where regulation makes both continuity of skilled staff and clarity of individual objectives essential, and fewer have covered the five South-East states. This study fills that gap.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach with a descriptive survey research design was used. The study area was the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. From the 48 pharmaceutical firms in the zone that were inspected and certified by NAFDAC between 2018 and 2021, twenty firms (four per state) were chosen by judgemental sampling. The study population was the 2,176 permanent senior and junior employees of these twenty firms.

A sample of 471 respondents was determined from the population through a finite-population formula at the 95% confidence level and distributed to the firms

in proportion to their staff strength. Respondents were selected purposively from top and middle management, supervisors and junior staff because they have direct knowledge of HRP practices in their firms. Primary data came from a structured questionnaire. Section A collected demographic details and Section B contained close-ended items on the study variables on a five-point Likert scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Secondary data were taken from journals, textbooks, company records and NAFDAC publications.

Content validity was confirmed by management experts, including the research supervisor, whose suggestions were used to refine the questionnaire. A test-retest reliability check on 20 respondents outside the main sample, with two weeks between administrations, produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.82, and a pilot test with Cronbach's alpha applied a threshold of 0.70 (Cooper & Schindler, 2010). Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained and responses were kept confidential. Of 471 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 470 (99.79%) were returned and used. Descriptive statistics were presented in frequencies, percentages and tables, and the two hypotheses were tested with simple regression analysis in SPSS Version 23 at the 5% level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected where the p-value was less than 0.05.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The respondents' views on performance management and succession planning are summarised first, followed by the test of the two hypotheses. In Table 1, the agree column combines strongly agree and agree, and the disagree column combines strongly disagree and disagree.

Table 1: Summary of Respondents' Views on Performance Management and Succession Planning

Variable	Items	Responses	Agree (A + SA)	Disagree (SD + D)	Neutral
Performance management	5	2,350	1,350 (57.45%)	830 (35.32%)	170 (7.23%)
Succession planning	4	1,880	1,310 (69.68%)	520 (27.66%)	50 (2.66%)

Source: Field Survey, 2026 (computed from respondents' item-level responses)

Table 1 shows that a majority of respondents agreed that both practices exist in their firms, but agreement was noticeably higher for succession planning (69.68%) than for performance management (57.45%). Among the performance management items, the highest agreement (63.83%) was for the statement that the annual appraisal exercise allows progress to be tracked and aligned with organisational goals. Continuous feedback between managers and employees drew 59.57% agreement, the management of performance within an agreed framework of goals, standards and competencies drew 57.45%, and both developing the performance of individuals and teams and regular manager-employee communication drew 53.19%, the lowest. About 38% of respondents disagreed with these last two statements. The pattern suggests that firms are stronger in annual appraisal than in continuous, day-to-day performance management.

On succession planning, the statement that succession efforts involve preparation rather

than pre-selection received the highest agreement (80.85%), followed by readiness to promote and advance all employees and not only those at management level (74.47%) and the use of hiring, job rotation, performance management, coaching, training and a formal plan (65.96%). The lowest agreement (57.45%) was for the statement that the firm identifies and develops internal candidates for key roles, with 40.42% disagreeing. Firms therefore appear committed to the idea of preparing people, but the identification of internal talent for critical roles is the weakest link.

Hypothesis One: Performance Management and Performance

H01: Performance management has no significant positive relationship with the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria.

Table 2: Regression Result for Performance Management and Performance

Model	R	R^2	F	Beta	t	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
Performance Management → Performance	0.921	0.848	2001.520	0.921	44.738	0.000	Reject H0

Source: Field Survey, SPSS Output (2026)

Table 2 shows a strong positive relationship between performance management and performance (R = 0.921). The coefficient of determination indicates that performance management explains 84.8% of the variation in performance, and the standard error of the estimate is low (0.38343). The F-statistic of 2001.520 is significant at $p < 0.001$, with the regression sum of squares (294.257) far exceeding the residual sum of squares (52.632). The unstandardised coefficient of 0.843 (standard error 0.019) has a t-value of 44.738 and is significant at the 5% level. The null hypothesis is accordingly rejected, and it is concluded that performance management has a significant positive relationship with the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: Succession Planning and Performance

H02: Succession planning has no significant positive relationship with the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria.

Table 3: Regression Result for Succession Planning and Performance

Model	R	R^2	F	Beta	t	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
Succession Planning → Performance	0.963	0.928	4629.784	0.963	68.043	0.000	Reject H0

Source: Field Survey, SPSS Output (2026)

Table 3 indicates that succession planning has the strongest relationship with performance in this study (R = 0.963) and explains 92.8% of the variation in performance, with a standard error of estimate of 0.23110. The F-statistic of 4629.784 is significant at $p < 0.001$, and the regression sum of squares (247.256) is many times the residual sum of squares (19.119). The unstandardised coefficient of 1.098 (standard error 0.016) carries a t-value of 68.043 and is significant at the 5% level. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected, and it is concluded that succession planning

has a significant positive relationship with the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria.

The Durbin-Watson statistics for the two models (0.299 and 0.462) are far below 2, which indicates positive serial dependence in the residuals. The coefficients remain large and highly significant, but the very high R^2 values should be interpreted with some caution, and later studies could use specifications that control for this dependence.

Discussion of Findings

The first hypothesis showed that performance management has a significant positive relationship with the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms ($R = 0.921$, $t = 44.738$, $p < 0.001$). The result agrees with Zhang (2012), who found that continuous communication between employer and employee raises performance, and with Kipsegerwo et al. (2016), Ndakanwa et al. (2024) and Wachiuri (2018), who each found that appraisal and related performance management processes were significantly associated with productivity or performance. It also supports Denadi (2021) and Money and London (2010), who linked well-designed systems to organisational effectiveness and engagement. The descriptive findings add a qualification: the firms are stronger in annual appraisal than in continuous feedback and regular communication, and the literature suggests that these are exactly the features that give the system its force. The link with rewards in the cycle also echoes the evidence on compensation strategies and performance in Anambra State (Remigius, Gbenga & Ngige, 2025), and the role of a supportive climate in drawing discretionary effort (Anah, Manafa & Okeke, 2026) is consistent with the importance of open communication in the system.

The second hypothesis showed that succession planning has a significant positive relationship with performance ($R = 0.963$, $t = 68.043$, $p < 0.001$), the strongest relationship in the study. This finding supports Agbim et al. (2016), who found higher firm performance where Nigerian manufacturing firms identify and develop successors, and is consistent with Hitt et al. (2018), Zhang et al. (2023) and Al-Harbi and Mohammed (2017) in other settings. It is also in line with the evidence that succession planning works through employees' attitudes, since engagement and commitment have been found to carry its effects on performance (Zainuddin et al., 2020; Song et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2019), and with the attention to commitment in the South-East Nigerian organisational study of Chidokwe, Mbah and Gbenga (2026). The result agrees with the view, in the work of Nwokedi, Mbah and Williams (2025), that planned management of the firm's internal capability underlies efficiency in the region's industrial firms. In terms of theory, the strong relationship supports human capital theory, which holds that investing in people yields a return, and the resource-based view, which treats leadership continuity as a difficult-to-imitate capability. The relatively low agreement on the identification of internal candidates (57.45%) shows where the firms can still improve.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the two practices are complementary. Performance management generates the information on who is performing and where development is needed, and succession planning uses it to prepare future leaders. A firm that does one without the other forfeits part of the benefit, and the investment in people that Ogwashi, Gbenga and Ngige (2025) associate with stronger firm performance is best protected when it is joined to a clear plan for who will lead next.

Summary of Findings

i. Performance management has a significant positive relationship with the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East

Nigeria ($R = 0.921$, $t = 44.738$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 84.8% of the variation in performance.

ii. Succession planning has a significant positive relationship with the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria ($R = 0.963$, $t = 68.043$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 92.8% of the variation in performance.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that performance management and succession planning each have a significant positive relationship with the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria. Firms that set clear goals, give regular feedback and use appraisal to develop their people, and that deliberately prepare internal candidates for key roles, stand to enjoy higher productivity, stronger continuity and greater competitiveness. Succession planning showed the stronger relationship, but the descriptive results indicate that the firms have more to do in making performance management continuous and in identifying internal talent. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

i. Pharmaceutical firms and their managements should adopt tools such as behavioural assessment, rating scales, development monitoring, coaching and 360-degree feedback, and should move from annual appraisal towards continuous feedback and communication between managers and employees, so as to strengthen the performance management system and improve operational performance.

ii. Top management should ensure that the firm is prepared to promote and advance all employees, and not only those at management or executive level, and should identify and develop internal candidates for critical positions through job rotation, mentoring, training and a formal succession plan, so as to build a talent pipeline, minimise disruption and protect the firm's continued success.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The study covered only pharmaceutical firms in the South-East, so its findings should not be generalised to other sectors or zones without caution. Further studies could replicate it in other geopolitical zones, examine additional practices such as compensation and job security, and compare pharmaceutical firms with other health-sector organisations, while accounting for the autocorrelation noted above.

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