



Individual and Family Attributes Related to Succession Planning

Atributos Individuais e Familiares Relacionados ao Planejamento Sucessório

Atributos Individuales y Familiares Relacionados al Planeamiento Sucesorio

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Abstract

Management change is a decisive factor for the longevity of family organizations. In this article, we seek to understand the connections between individual and family attributes and succession planning in family businesses. The literature provided us with support for the elaboration of research hypotheses, which we tested in a sample composed of 264 Brazilian family companies. The analysis of the data, through the Structural Equation Modeling with estimation by the method of Partial Least Squares, allowed us to confirm five of the hypotheses formulated. The results demonstrate that the successor's attributes and training are positively related to the planning of the succession process. As theoretical contributions, we identified that the family's commitment with the business, the family cohesion, the adaptability and quality of the relationships are fundamental for that to happen. In practical terms, the research contributed for the comprehension of the family business interface and the behavioral questions that can impact the success of a succession process and as a consequence, the business' continuity.

Keywords: strategy; strategic decision making; succession planning; family relationship; behavior.



Resumo


A mudança de gestão é um fator decisivo para a longevidade das organizações familiares. Neste artigo buscamos compreender quais as relações entre os atributos individuais e familiares e o planejamento da sucessão em empresas familiares. A literatura nos forneceu suporte para elaboração de hipóteses de pesquisa, as quais testamos em uma amostra composta por 264 empresas familiares brasileiras. A análise dos dados, por meio da Modelagem de Equações Estruturais com estimação pelo método dos Mínimos Quadrados Parciais, nos permitiu confirmar cinco das hipóteses formuladas. Os resultados demonstram que os atributos do sucessor e o treinamento estão positivamente relacionados com o planejamento do processo de sucessão. Como contribuições teóricas, identificamos que o compromisso da família com o negócio, a coesão familiar, a adaptabilidade e a qualidade dos relacionamentos são antecedentes fundamentais para que isso ocorra. Assim, em termos práticos, a pesquisa contribui para a compreensão da interfase família e negócios e das questões comportamentais que podem impactar no sucesso de um processo de sucessão e por consequência na continuidade do negócio.

Palavras-chave: estratégia; tomada de decisão estratégica; planejamento sucessório; relacionamento familiar; comportamento.

Resumen

El cambio de gestión es un factor decisivo para la longevidad de las organizaciones familiares. En este artículo buscamos comprender cuales las relaciones entre los atributos individuales y familiares y el planeamiento de la sucesión en empresas familiares. La literatura nos proporcionó soporte para elaboración de hipótesis de investigación, las cuales testamos en una muestra compuesta por 265 empresas familiares brasileñas. El análisis de los datos por medio del Modelaje de Ecuaciones Estructurales con estimación por el método de los Mínimos Cuadrados Parciales, nos permitió confirmar cinco de las hipótesis formuladas. Los resultados demuestran que los atributos del sucesor y el entrenamiento están positivamente relacionados con el planeamiento del proceso de sucesión.

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Como contribuciones teóricas, identificamos que el compromiso de la familia con el negocio, la cohesión familiar, la adaptabilidad y la cualidad de los relacionamientos son antecedentes fundamentales para que eso ocurra. Así, en términos prácticos, la investigación contribuye para la comprensión de la interfase familiar y negocios y de las cuestiones de comportamiento que pueden impactar en el éxito de un proceso de sucesión y por consecuencia en la continuidad del negocio.

Palabras clave: estrategia; toma de decisión estratégica; planeamiento sucesorio; relacionamiento familiar; comportamiento.

Family businesses play a vital role in economic development, being able to ensure sustainable and integrated growth (Astrachan & Shanker, 2003; Barakat et al., 2020; Leiß & Zehrer, 2018). These organizations have a high capacity to face crises in the most diverse contexts, being more flexible in relation to resource management and in their management systems (Soleimanof et al., 2018). However, throughout their lives, these companies suffer from internal or external influences, unlike other organizational models, family businesses adhere to a set of interferences from the family itself in the business context (Buchweitz et al., 2019). The longevity of a family organization depends on a critical factor, which is succession, it is full of challenges that contemplate two spheres, the business and the family. (Roth et al., 2017; Salim et al., 2012; Von Schlippe & Frank, 2013).

The succession process is a critical moment that needs planning and monitoring due to the specificities involved (Dou et al., 2020; Leiß & Zehrer, 2018; Zata Poutziouris et al., 2004). One of the goals of family businesses is continuity for future generations, however, succession planning is not carried out effectively (Umans et al., 2020). Several factors may be related to a greater or lesser level of existing planning, among them: the relationships between family members (Lansberg, 1988); and the family's relationship with the business (Bammens et al., 2011). In these organizations, regardless of their size, different objectives of the family and the company can coexist. Thus, succession is not just the transition of management and equity, but involves a power game that impacts relationships within the family (Volta et al., 2022).

Relating these factors to the succession process becomes emergent, since studies that explore the theme focus, in large part, on research on the governance structure and its impact on succession. (Cançado et al., 2013; Patel & Chrisman, 2014; Roth et al., 2017); professionalization of management for succession (Santos et al., 2017); establishing rules and structuring roles (Bisogno & Vaia, 2017); reduction of existing conflicts (Cançado et al., 2013); formalizing and channeling the interests of the company and the family (Oliveira et al., 2011); risk reduction, increased stability and strengthening the company with the generation of competitive advantage (Belmonte & Freitas, 2013). For Rovelli et al. (2021) research on family businesses has advanced and is at a more advanced stage in terms of institutionalization, in this sense, research that explores the field of individuals, family and businesses is opportune.

Seeking to deepen the knowledge about the complex dynamics that involve family and business, in this article we seek to understand the connections between individual and family attributes and succession planning in family businesses. For this, we carried out a quantitative survey with 264 family businesses, all connected to two Brazilian associative business networks. Data was collected between the years 2017 and 2018, being analyzed using Structural Equation Models (SEM), with estimation of "Partial Least Squares" (Partial Least Square - Path modeling - PLS-PM).

The results provide important clues about the factors that are related to succession planning, allowing a better understanding of this field of research. We initially observed the importance of the successor's attributes for succession planning; then we verify that the knowledge of the business, through training of the possible successor, is a key factor for carrying out succession planning.

Literature review and formulation of research hypotheses

Individual attributes (characteristics) can influence in several different decisions and behaviors, including in the business succession process (Le Breton-Miller et al., 2004; Long & Chrisman, 2014). Some individual demographic attributes and family attributes can be important antecedents for determining a choice (Paes et al., 2019). As the owner has a central role in the selection of the successor, in this section we explore two attributes that we believe are central to a better understanding of their relationship with the succession process planning.

Individual attributes

According to Bernhoeft and Gallo (2003), in the case of founders, two characteristics deserve to be highlighted: daring to take risks and intuition to deal with adversities. The founder also tends to be a person who needs control and power (Brockhaus, 2004; Kets de Vries, 1993; McClelland, 1961); has a desire for business indispensability (Becker, 1973; Huselid & Becker, 1996); presents difficulties with issues of submission and domination and is concerned with changes in the environment, aspects that are reflected in the company's management (Kets de Vries, 1985). These points may explain, in part, the difficulty for many family organizations to consider succession planning (Kets de Vries, 1993).

Founders and owners, with older age, tend to have a lower level of formal education, with less theoretical knowledge about business management. However, this does not prevent them from having the ability to conduct their business, even if based on their own instincts and experiences. (Bernhoeft & Gallo, 2003). For Werner (2004) these managers have a high work capacity, as they continuously seek the organization's progress with a vision for the market and a good network.

Family management has a paternalistic aspect, the company is seen as an extension of the family's well-being (Anderson & Reeb, 2004). However, even with the high dedication and practical knowledge, the lack of formal planning can compromise future generations in charge of the business (Werner, 2004). The succession is often only thought of with the lack of the current manager, Magasi (2016) suggests that owners tend not to worry about succession while they are still active, especially if they have a lower degree of formal education.

Among the demographic attributes, age is an important variable, managers may be more concerned with the transition as age advances. Parent-child succession is one of the most common forms in the context of family businesses (Ramadani et al., 2017, 2019), so older parents will be more likely to prepare their children to take over the business.

Another relevant variable is education, Parker (2016) highlighted the importance of formal education in the individual's decision-making process. Even though there is no consensus on its role in organizational management, formal education can influence the behavior of managers (Farashah & Blomquist, 2020), being a variable that still needs investigation in the context of family succession.

Hypothesis 1a: the age of the owner has a positive relation with the level of succession planning for family businesses.

Hypothesis 1b: the formal education of the owner has a positive relation with the level of succession planning for family businesses.

A potential successor is any family member who can assume the management of the company when the owner leaves his activities (De Massis, Chua, & Chrisman, 2008). Some attributes or characteristics of the potential successor can influence the succession planning decision and affect the smoothness and effectiveness of the process (Sharma et al., 1997). Basque and Calabrò (2017) propose that these attributes can be classified into two groups: related to the family, such as the importance of birth order, age, blood relationship, gender and current property of the successor; and related to the business, such as management skills, financial skills, among others.

The literature also highlights as attributes favorable to the successor: sensitivity to the needs of the founder (Lansberg, 1988); patience and diplomacy (Jonovic, 1989); understanding of the complexities and culture of the organization (Horton, 1982); congruence between the successor's power in the family and in business (Holland & Boulton, 1984); continuous search for progress, charisma, intuition, honesty, perseverance and vision (Papa & Luz, 2008); management autonomy (Handler, 1994); innovative spirit (Litz & Kleysen, 2001); willingness to take risks and work hard (Tatoglu et al., 2008); tactical knowledge (Manchala & Sayf, 2021), among others.

When observing favorable attributes for succession, Andersson, Gabriellsson and Victor (2004) argue that, due to the ease of identifying and seizing opportunities, younger individuals could be more likely to take over the family business. However, the literature indicates that older individuals are more likely to be successors, because in addition to the hierarchy in the family, they tend to have more knowledge and experience (Soleimanof et al., 2018; Westhead et al., 2001). These arguments allow the formulation of the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The identification of desired attributes in the successor is positively associated with the level of succession planning for family businesses.

Family attributes

Family cohesion is the degree of connection in which members consider themselves to be distant or close to each other (Holt et al., 2016). Björnberg and Nicholson (2007) explain that it is related to two central aspects: emotional cohesion and cognitive cohesion, the emotional refers to the affective attachment and the cognitive to the views shared by the family group. The distinction between the two can be important, considering that multi-generational family businesses can share visions, however, have weaker emotional ties.

Families can have different levels of cohesion, ranging from low to high (Olson, 1988). When there is low cohesion, there is a greater likelihood of destructive conflicts, putting family relationships at risk (Holt et al., 2016). This can cause fragmentation of the family and negatively impact the business (Björnberg & Nicholson, 2012). High family cohesion contributes to the union around common goals, of the company and the family, allowing a balance between the needs of professional and personal achievements (Neske et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2011). Thus, promoting family cohesion is fundamental, a high level of cohesion will allow effective communication with high levels of trust, mutual support and appreciation (Astrachan et al., 2021).

Hypothesis 3: Family cohesion is positively related to the quality of the relationship between owner and successor. Higher levels of cohesion can generate positive results for the company, as it allows the reduction of agency costs (Holt et al., 2016). In cohesive families there is a collectivist orientation, where family values, strong family

commitment and altruistic attitudes among family members become a fundamental force for business (Canovi et al., 2022; Dutta, 1996).

In families where cohesion is high, there is discussion about future expectations (Olson, 1988). In these cases, from an early age family member feel involved in the business and play a role in family decisions. The group's high cohesion also implies a low desire to leave the organization, motivating members to continue the family business (Astracha et al., 2021; Lansberg & Astrachan, 1994). These arguments allow the formulation of the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Family cohesion relates positively to the family's commitment to the business.

Recognizing existing relationship patterns helps the family business to face past and current problems (Strike, 2012). Among the variables that can negatively impact family relationships are: rivalry between members for control of the company; the family's lack of preparation to understand the succession process; lack of distinction between business and family interests; conflicts over the choice of successor (Pimentel, 2011). Relationship problems between family members can hinder management, making it difficult to plan the organization's future (Goldberg, 1996; Malone, 1989; Marshall et al., 2006; Morris et al., 1997; Seymour, 1993).

A good family relationship can help to improve the strategic focus, arousing interest in participating in the company. (Sharma et al., 2003). Specifically, the quality of the relationship between the owner and possible successors is an important variable for the performance of the succession process (Björnberg & Nicholson, 2012; Cabrera-Suárez et al., 2001; Chrisman et al., 1998; Handler, 1990). The relationship of these members must be based on trust and mutual understanding, recognition, support and trust between the parties, thus having a predisposition for the passing of knowledge (Bortoli & Moreira, 2001; Daspit et al., 2016; Pimentel, 2011).

Family relationships play a key role in ensuring the continuity of important family business resources, such as knowledge (Chirico & Salvato, 2016). Thus, it is essential that there are good interactions between family members for the maintenance of knowledge during a critical period that is the succession process (Cabrera-Suárez et al., 2018; Ge & Campopiano, 2021). Good relationships allow individuals to get to know each other better, which allows for greater sharing of information and resources (Sanchez-Famoso et al., 2014).

In addition to specific business knowledge, such as processes and products, the sooner the next generation joins the organization, the more time it will have to familiarize itself with the organization's values, culture and employees, being able to develop skills that are required by the company (Barach & Ganitsky, 1995; Cabrera-Suárez et al., 2001; Mazzola et al., 2008). Thus, trust, open communication, disposition, recognition and mutual support between owners and possible successors are essential elements (Lansberg & Astrachan, 1994). With these arguments our next hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 5: the quality of the relationship between the owner and successor is positively related to the level of training of possible successor.

The family's commitment to the business can ensure alignment between family values and goals, which often go beyond financial returns (Astrachan et al., 2020; Cennamo et al., 2012). The commitment relates to how dedicated the members are in relation to maintaining the business for the next generation, whether in the search for ownership of the organization or in the quality of management (Lansberg & Astrachan, 1994). In highly committed families, parents involve and motivate their children to become involved in the company, instilling in the future owners the traditions, culture and identity of the company, which also represents the principles of the family itself (Parker, 2016; Poza, 1988). In them, the long term and its benefits are glimpsed, and in some situations, personal benefits are given up for the good of the organization. (Dyer, 1994; Ward, 1987).

In families more committed to the organization, the development of people is closely monitored, broadening the vision of the members of the next generation about the need for longevity of the business (Sharma & Irving, 2005). Low levels of management commitment can prevent new members from having "enough space" to demonstrate their business skills (De Massis et al., 2008; Kets de Vries, 1993).

The existence of training programs for succession favors a more natural transition, softens resistance to change and raises awareness to the risks of procrastinating important decisions (Lansberg & Gersick, 2015). Even, Bachkaniwala, Wright and Ram (2001) point out that the founders train their children in order to broaden their perspectives on the labor market, and not just focusing on succession, Barach, Ganitsky, Crson and Donchin (1988) claim that most successors join the company soon after they are trained. From these arguments, the next hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 6: The owner's commitment to the business is positively related to the level of training of possible successor.

Prior business knowledge

Among the essential components for a succession process, there is the need for training the successor (Marshall et al., 2006; Sharma et al., 2003). Adequate preparation of the successor through specific training to perform managerial functions is central to succession planning (Estol & Ferreira, 2006). Even though formal education should be considered in the process, as highlighted by Lansberg and Gersik (2015). To obtain the desirable characteristics of

a successor, training must take place, both outside the company (Barach & Ganitsky, 1995; Ward, 1987), and inside it (Churchill & Hatten, 1987).

Training the potential successor is vital to succession (Morris et al., 1997). Absence of a qualified successor puts the succession process in danger, and it may not even occur because there is no one prepared to assume the new position (De Massis et al., 2008; Murray, 2003). Thus, the leader must have time to pass on the necessary knowledge and ensure that the potential successor is prepared (Royer et al., 2008). Likewise, the successor needs time to assimilate the knowledge and skills required (Seymour, 1993).

Providing training and guidance to the potential successor is critical, regardless of the size of the family business (Motwani et al., 2006). Companies can obtain benefits from the use of practices that promote the training of the future generation, generating greater self-confidence in future leaders (Blumentritt, 2016). In a training design, the inclusion of family-related issues, namely, tradition, stability, loyalty, trust, and interdependence helps to integrate the right mindset and attitude of family members (Burch et al., 2015; Kamarudin et al., 2021).

It is the responsibility of the owner or current family manager to identify the potential successor and train him (Lussier & Sonfield, 2012; Sonfield & Lussier, 2004). For this, external advisors can be hired to assist (Bigliardi & Dormio, 2009). They can guide in the most appropriate professional training process, insertion and progression in the company's activities (Gilding et al., 2013; Mazzola et al., 2008). Training candidates to take on new challenges is essential to unlock future paths (Michael-Tsabari & Weiss, 2015). The identification of the existence of potential trained successors, then, can be a differential to trigger a succession. In this sense, we present our last hypothesis:

Hypothesis 7: The successor's prior knowledge of the business, through internal training, is positively related to the succession planning level

Research method and techniques

This research, in relation to its goals, is characterized as descriptive. The research sought to describe in detail the facts and phenomena of the investigated reality, approaching the characteristics of a group, individual or situation and pointing out the existing relationships (Selltiz et al., 1976).

Regarding the approach to the problem, it is a quantitative research, using structured procedures and a formal instrument for data collection, we emphasize objectivity in the collection, using statistical procedures for data analysis (Creswell, 2014). With this, we seek to understand how it works and identify the relationships between the observed variables (Hair et al., 2014).

Research tool and participants

To measure the constructs: family cohesion; the owner's commitment to the business; relationship between owner and successor; successor training; and level of planning, the instrument used was based on the model proposed by Lansberg and Astrachan (1994). The successor's attributes construct was formed by the variables: age; gender; education level; business experience; external management experience (in other functions or other companies); skills (financial, marketing and sales, interpersonal skills, planning); blood relationship (family proximity); willingness to take risks; and be respected (by family members and employees). For this, a five-point Likert scale was used. The manager's training was measured on a seven-point scale, due to his formal education level, starting with incomplete elementary school until his doctorate. Age was measured using a continuous variable, according to the years of life of the owner.

The field research was carried out in two stages, initially, in the year 2017 including members of a chain of furniture stores, home appliances and the like, this network has 66 associates who have 118 stores, covering the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná and Mato Grosso do Sul - Brazil. Subsequently, in 2018, the survey was also conducted with the main federation of building materials networks, which brings together a group of 19 associative networks, covering 600 points of sale in 12 states in Brazil.

The owners answered the questionnaire, which was applied electronically. Both in the furniture network and in the federation of building materials networks, there was approval in the assembly to conduct the survey with all members. At the end of the collection, we obtained 264 questionnaires answered, which comprised the sample of this research, being: 58 in the furniture store chain and 159 in the federation of building materials networks, 47 of which did not identify themselves.

Data analysis

The relationships presented in the hypotheses were tested using Structural Equation Models (SEM), with estimation of "Partial Least Squares" (Partial Least Square - Path modeling - PLS-PM), using the SmartPLS® software. This technique provides estimates and parameters that maximize the explained variance (R^2 values) of the studied models, making it possible to make broader analysis, observing the relationships between multiple variables - latent or observed - simultaneously (Hair et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2012).

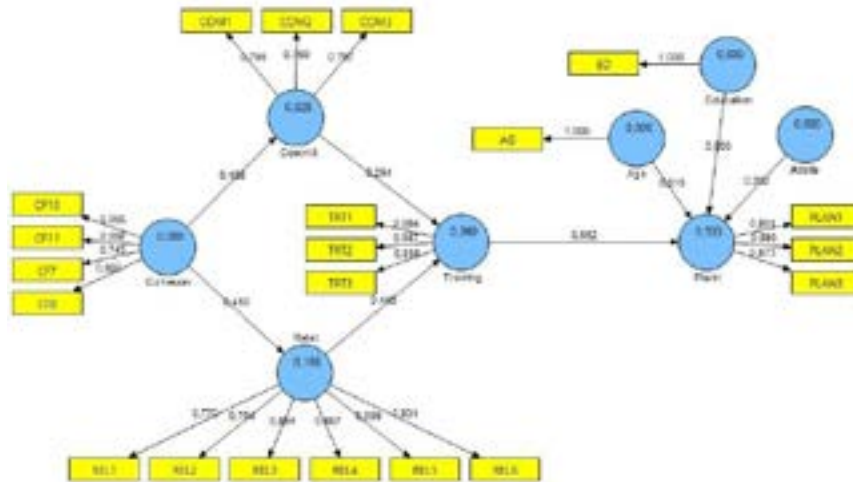
We also performed the “post hoc” sample calculation through the “test power” analysis using G * Power v. 3.1.9.3 (Power = 0.99). Like Cohen (1988) and Hair et al. (2014) recommend the use of values greater than 0.80 the model was robust for analysis.

Results

As recommended by Hair et al. (2014), for the analysis of the measurement model, variables that had loads below 0.7 were eliminated, resulting in the final structure as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Measurement model and path analysis.



Source: Research data (2021).

The values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbac Alpha (α), and Composite Reliability (CR) were satisfactory, being: family cohesion (AVE = 0.665, α = 0.831, CR = 0.888); commitment (AVE = 0.612, α = 0.685, CR = 0.825); relationship (AVE = 0.698, α = 0.913, CR = 0.933); training (AVE = 0.786, α = 0.864, CR = 0.917); and planning (AVE = 0.767, α = 0.848, CR = 0.908). Following the recommendations of Fornell and Larcker (1981) the discriminating validity of the constructs was verified, where all the square roots of the AVE’s exceeded the correlations between the constructs, signaling that the reflective constructs are distinct from each other.

The next step consisted of analyzing the structural model, the determination coefficients (R²) were: commitment, 0.028; relationship, 0.168; training, 0.360; and planning, 0.533. Values considered adequate, considering that only the Commitment is considered with weak explanatory power, according to Hair et al., (2014), while the main planning construct, has strong explanatory power and explains 53% of the model. The results of the hypothesis test are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Variables	Path coefficients	t
H1 - Reject	Age → Planning	0.019	0.262
H1a - Reject	Education → Planning	0.003	0.043
H2 - Accepted	Desirable attributes → Planning	0.202 *	2,750
H3 - Accepted	Cohesion → Relationship	0.410 *	4,061
H4 - Reject	Cohesion → Commitment	0.168	1,479
H5 - Accepted	Relationship → Training	0.443 *	5.365
H6 - Accepted	Commitment → Training	0.294 *	3,367
H7 - Accepted	Training → Planning	0.652 *	9,530

Note: * significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Research data (2021).

Discussion

Individual attributes

Regarding individual attributes, the studies by Marshall et al. (2006) and Magasi (2016) point out that the age of the manager can be a variable positively linked with succession planning. However, for Marshall et al. (2006), increasing owner age is directly associated with formal succession plans, but indirectly associated with behavioral and collaborative practices that interfere with succession planning. However, our results do not provide support for this confirmation, this may be linked to the fact that emotional disconnection is a difficulty for managers, even the elderly, who can still envision a productive life (Leiß & Zehrer, 2018), delaying succession planning.

It has also not been confirmed that the formal education of the owner has anything to do with succession planning. These results may be related to the fact that the founders and owners, in large part, conduct their business based on their own instincts and informality (Bernhoeft & Gallo, 2003).

The identification of desirable attributes in the successor was positively related to the succession planning level. These results corroborate the findings of Basque and Calabrò (2017) who describe aspects related to the family, such as: the importance of birth order, age, blood relationship and gender of the successor; experiences, skills and competences, aspects contemplated in our construct, can be factors considered by the owner when identifying the profile of the successor.

Family attributes

We have identified a positive relationship between family cohesion and the relationship of the successor and owner. For Olson (1988) in families with a high level of cohesion, expectations of the future are discussed between parents and children, an aspect that, combined with family loyalty, arouses in the children the desire for continuity in the family business. High levels of family cohesion can improve consensus, reduce conflicts and consequently improve family balance (Björnberg & Nicholson, 2007, 2012; Holt et al., 2016).

Even though family cohesion can bring positive results for the organization, and may even reduce agency costs (Holt et al., 2016), and provide greater dedication and efficiency (Pimentel, 2011), our results found no relation with the family's commitment to the business. Very high cohesion, even if it is positive, can sometimes make the family system rigid (Björnberg & Nicholson, 2007, 2012). This can lead to excessive consensus in decisions, reducing discussions and task conflicts that are, to a certain extent, advantageous for the organization, as it improves the quality of the decisions made. Thus, greater cohesion may not mean greater commitment to the business, but commitment to the family.

We need to recognize the patterns of relationships that affect both the company and the family (Strike, 2012). We found that the relationship between successor and owner is positively linked to the level of training received by the successor. Prior training is a fundamental factor for the family organization (Marshall et al., 2006). In this sense, a good relationship, with trust between the older and the new generation, is an aspect that favors the development of capacities for business management (Björnberg & Nicholson, 2012; Blumentritt, 2016; Cabrera-Suárez et al., 2001).

We found that the owner's commitment to the business is positively related to the level of training of possible successors. The commitment to the business eases resistance to change, making those involved aware of the risks of procrastinating decisions (Sharma & Irving, 2005). This can trigger a process where the owner seeks, from an early age, to visualize possible successors, training them for future management.

Regarding training, hypothesis 8, we found a positive association with the level of planning, with the highest path coefficient ($b= 0.652$, $p < 0.05$). This reinforces our theoretical assumption, that advance training allows businesses to adequately prepare several aspects inherent to the succession, especially with regard to the identification of potential successors, allowing them to be prepared to take on the challenges ahead. Training and developing according to the wishes of the current manager favors succession planning (Lansberg & Gersick, 2015).

Future studies

Our study has some limitations, whether related to the set of variables used, or by the investigation of the direct relationships we researched. Since it was not the purpose of this study to verify mediation or moderation relationships between the variables studied, future research can verify these effects, investigating the types of conflicts and the role of conflict management in the succession process. When addressing family attributes, a variable to be investigated in future studies is communication. It is important that there is interaction and freedom between the current manager and successor so that they can interact, in addition to sharing important information about the family or business (Lansberg & Astrachan, 1994). Open and effective communication favors receptivity, promoting healthier relationships (Olson, 1988; Walsh, 1998).

In addressing the successor's training, we focus on the degree of prior training, so future research may also include the time (in years) of activity in the organization. The involvement, integration and appreciation of individuals

in the organization is a gradual process (Gilding et al., 2013; Mazzola et al., 2008). Thus, integration into the business, from an early age, may enable a greater possibility for a member to continue the family business (Michael-Tsabari & Weiss, 2015).

The age and training of the owner were treated as variables directly linked to succession planning, however, it is possible that these variables are important moderators of the relationship between training and succession planning, and can be better investigated. Magasi (2016) points out that owners and founders with a higher educational level tend to better prepare successors. Motwani et al. (2006) also highlights that demographic aspects, such as age, can trigger a process to search for and train a new successor.

The study is also limited to an analysis of family businesses with characteristics in common, all associated with corporate networks, which may have particularities of form of management. New research can advance, analyzing the phenomenon of succession planning and the variables presented, in a longitudinal way and through case studies. In this way, it is possible to identify some evidence about the family dynamics involved in the succession process.

Conclusions

Even with the research on the variables associated with the success of succession planning, the topic still remains fragmented and still without consensus in the literature (Gabriel & Bitsch, 2019). In this study, the results indicate that the fact that the owner finds the desired attributes in his possible successor has a positive impact on succession planning. We also found that: family cohesion is related to the quality of the owner's relationship with the successor; and that the quality of this relationship influences the degree of training.

We highlight the investigation of the association between the previous training of the successor with the succession planning, training is widely explored as a variable in the succession process itself, as the training and development practices that are carried out. However, we understand that the existence and identification of these capacities, among the members of the family nuclei, can trigger a succession planning process specific to each individual, as shown by our results. Thus, the early insertion into the family business environment, through the family's commitment to the business, and the good relationship between parents and children or owners and successors can stimulate the planning of the future of the business.

The research contributed, in practical terms, for the comprehension of the family business interface and the behavioral questions that can impact the success of a succession process and as a consequence, the business' continuity. As theoretical contributions, we identified that the family's commitment with the business, the family cohesion, the adaptability and quality of the relationships are fundamental for that to happen.

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