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Entrepreneurial Strategies and Family Firm Culture in the Arab World: A Systematic Literature Review

Abstract

Purpose – Family businesses are value-based enterprises, contributing significantly to wealth creation. Although extensive research is conducted on family businesses, there is no study investigating how the cultural traits in the Arab world affect the organizational culture of family businesses. This paper discusses how the cultural characteristics in the Arab world shape family enterprises and explores how the Arab world's organizational culture enables family firms to establish competitive advantage underpinned by founder centrality, the concept of family, and business principles spanning many generations.

Design/methodology/approach – A thorough search of the extant literature was done in Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCO, and ScienceDirect using a combination of keywords such as Arab culture, family businesses, family firm culture, organizational culture, cultural traits, management strategies, and entrepreneurial strategies. Selected articles were classified according to their content, reviewed, and analyzed.

Findings – This study makes a few critical contributions about the nature, and the origins of organizational culture in family firms, entailing the founder's centrality and stewardship theory. Specifically, family firms in the examined region appear to have a stronger firm culture compared to non-family businesses. Also, organizational culture affects family businesses considering the firm-level outcomes, such as hereditary transition success, family inertia, etc.

Originality – This paper adds to the existing theoretical knowledge and underlines the cultural traits and organizational culture in the Arab world. A framework is presented, offering practical recommendations to managers of family firms striving to advance their competitiveness.

Keywords: Family Firms, Family Firm Culture, Cultural Traits, Entrepreneurial Strategies, Arab Region

1. Introduction

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Strategic decision comprehensiveness is vital in family businesses. Because of the necessity to pursue non-economic goals that are important to the family, family business decision-makers have more managerial discretion or leeway in their actions. Because leaders are more inclined to make decisions based on heuristics or intuition, such discretion may lead to less complete decision-making processes (Carr *et al*., 2021). Indeed, research reveals that family business decision-makers are much more likely to use a schema in their decision-making, implying that decision comprehensiveness is more important in family enterprises, particularly as a source of variance in the quality and performance of family firm judgments (Bauweraerts *et al*., 2021).

Another critical factor that managers overlook is the impact of family engagement, which results in different behaviors and outcomes than when there is no family involvement. As a result, a theoretical study in the family firm must take this specific component into account (Deephouse and Jaskiewicz, 2013). Even though entrepreneurial families have been considered “the oxygen that feeds the fire of entrepreneurship” in family businesses (Rogoff and Heck, 2003, p. 559), recent studies argue for the opposite (e.g., Combs *et al.*, 2021; Duran et al., 2016; Block *et al.*, 2013). The performance of a family business can be divided into three categories: financial, social, and entrepreneurial performance. Like any other business, family firms have objectives that balance the needs and interests of existing and potential family owners and major stakeholders (Basco *et al*., 2019). Similarly, Wang *et al*. (2018) showed that exposure to family businesses impacts entrepreneurial intents, as measured by attitudes toward company start-ups, perceived family support, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. When faced with adversity, family businesses appear to ramp up their research and development (R&D) operations and invest the funds they have wisely, but they are less entrepreneurial overall, and their commitment to entrepreneurship fades through generations.

The Arab world’s management has been chastised for being dictatorial, informal, and favoring family members. It is highly prevalent in the Anglo-Saxon population to see the world through a westernized lens, which makes it challenging to comprehend the systems of various religions and cultures. Nonetheless, Arab corporations and family businesses are under increasing pressure to adopt westernized business practices. Consequently, we assert that the distinguishing characteristics of Arab clans are precisely those that would provide

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competitive advantages and protection from competitive pressures, hence ensuring the long-term viability and prosperity of family companies in the region (Alaya *et al.*, 2017; Razzak *et al.*, 2021).

Arab economies are largely weak, and local businesses are ill-equipped to compete with their multinational counterparts globally. Because of technology and innovation constraints, Arab firms lag behind worldwide competitiveness. Despite major exceptions in a few nations, the Arab world's family firms have simple, low-innovative business strategies and a limited global competitive edge (Basco, 2015; Alaya *et al.*, 2017). Many work as subcontractors for foreign companies, while others work in largely stable fields and lack innovation. A serious shortage of resources, particularly for small and medium family enterprises, is another impediment to internationalization. Larger companies are more likely to participate in global competition because they have the personnel, financial resources, and socio-economic networks necessary for internationalization. On the other hand, smaller companies often lack strategic resources (Alaya *et al.*, 2017; Ahmad *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, Vardaman and Montague-Mfuni (2021) claim that in family businesses, the choice may change over generations and over time depending on who has a business sense or an entrepreneurial approach.

In addition, Arab family enterprises can help attract foreign direct investment (FDI). They have typically acted as preferred partners of international and multinational companies who export to these nations or choose to establish operations in these countries. They can continue to act as FDI facilitators as long as they put in place effective control and governance measures and safeguard the interests of foreign investors (Alaya *et al.*, 2017). It is also necessary to attempt to professionalize their management procedures. Undoubtedly, family enterprises may benefit from the region's reservoir of qualified employees. This does not rule out the possibility of family members being excluded from decision-making. A proper balance of decision-making and control functions may be found while allowing the owner's family to oversee and participate in business operations; the interests of other stakeholders (including foreign investors) must be safeguarded (De Massis *et al.*, 2015; Alaya *et al.*, 2017; Mahto *et al*., 2021).

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Despite being a buzz phrase in daily media stories, the Arab world provides a fresh and rich context of the research that has been underutilized. It is rife with managerial and organizational problems that, if well examined, would enlighten practitioners and academics alike. Despite its peculiarity, many scholars claim that the Arab world has received little attention from management researchers (Elbanna *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, according to Brice and Richardson (2009), family-owned businesses are a substantial source of entrepreneurship and dominate most of the world's economies, yet they are under-researched globally. As a result, Kargwell and Inguva (2012) suggest that the United Arab Emirates pays more attention to entrepreneurship's contribution to economic growth. However, experts claim that no research in the field of family business has explicitly articulated the entrepreneurial potential of family business owners or explored the strategic requirements for family business managers to build competitive advantage over generations (De Massis *et al.*, 2015; Howorth *et al.*, 2010). Although some researchers have traced back the scarcity of research to such obstacles that directly limit the quality and variety of research techniques available in the Arab world, this does not alter the fact that management challenges in the Arab world continue to aggravate and necessitate research inquiry, especially in light of the current organizational evolutions (Elbanna *et al.*, 2020).

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to identify a systematic literature review in family firms based on the current state-of-the-art by examining the impact of organizational culture in family businesses in the Arab world on performance and analyzing cultural traits that can be useful for business development. A systematic literature review on the topic is needed to provide an updated overview of extant research and draw guidelines for future scholarship. Two relevant and unanswered research questions emerge when observing the limited understanding of organizational culture in family businesses in the Arab world and its link to performance:

RQ1: What cultural characteristics in the Arab world shape family enterprises?

RQ2: How and to what extent can the Arab world's organizational culture enable family firms to establish competitive advantages for growth?

For at least two reasons, comprehending the family business phenomena in the Arab Middle East is essential and timely. First, family firms account for up to 90% of all businesses in the

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Arab Middle East, employing 80% of the workers and contributing 60% of the region's GDP. In a setting of expanding economic and geopolitical relevance, these data reflect the capacity of family firms to influence regional development. Second, the Arab Middle East is characterized by a unique set of institutional characteristics, including collectivism, patriarchy, high religiosity among the population, Islam as the dominant, but not exclusive, religion, and deep institutional voids, all of which can have a significant impact on family business behavior and outcomes (Samara, 2020).

The contribution of this paper is that it gives other researchers a state-of-the-art snapshot of the field. As the field of family business and entrepreneurship expands, it may be challenging for academics to conduct an overview of the current literature on specific fields (Bendickson, 2021; Kraus *et al*., 2021). This rapidly expanding body of published research has challenged researchers' ability to keep up with the latest work. A good understanding of the prior literature is required to help researchers raise novelty in their studies, indicate the potential for advancing the discipline, and define various methodological approaches that could advance knowledge in the field. This paper not only synthesizes existing findings at a meta-level to highlight the status quo of the field but also identifies opportunities for future research by developing a theoretical framework.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. The process for the literature review is examined in Section 2, with Section 3 presenting the findings of the paper analysis. Finally, the conclusion and suggestions for future research conclude the paper.

2. Methodology

A structured literature review was applied to synthesize the predictive model to study the existing body of knowledge regarding organizational culture and performance in family firms. Studies were identified using a trifold literature review methodology, as suggested by Webster and Watson (2002) as well as Herrera and de las Heras-Rosas (2020), and has been recently utilized in strategic management, service innovation, and entrepreneurship research (Kitsios and Kamariotou, 2021a; b; 2020; 2019; 2018; 2016a; b; Kitsios *et al*., 2020; Hanson *et al*., 2019). First, a search of the existing literature reviews was done to select the databases and keywords of the initial search. Then, the backward search was implemented to examine

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the references of the selected papers, and finally, the forward search to examine the citations of the selected papers. After the selection of papers, they were classified according to their content.

2.1 Previous literature reviews on family businesses

The existing literature review papers from 2011 to 2021 are presented to place the current literature review to the existing knowledge about family businesses, examine the previous knowledge of this field, and discuss the identified research questions based on the findings of previous studies. Also, previous literature reviews provide an overview of the literature review methodologies used by researchers and highlight their significance and research gaps. Table 1 presents a summary of the existing literature reviews on family businesses.

Previous researchers conducted literature reviews to examine different disciplines in the scientific area of family businesses, such as family business goals and organizational culture behavior (Vallejo-Martos, 2011; Gupta and Levenburg, 2012; Vallejo, 2016; Alaya *et al*., 2017; Litzky *et al*., 2020), familiness and business strategy (Basco, 2015; Basly, 2017; Kumar *et al*., 2021), family business structure (Pucci *et al*., 2017; Fathallah *et al*., 2020; Herrera *et al*., 2020), conflicts in family businesses (Soleimanof *et al*., 2018; Razzak *et al*., 2021), family entrepreneurship and culture (Leal-Rodríguez *et al*., 2017; Randerson *et al*., 2020), and the innovation process in family businesses (Roffia *et al*., 2021; Alves *et al*., 2020).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Although few attempts have been made to present the main perspectives of family businesses, the main questions concerning the cultural traits in the Arab world that shape family firms and the improvement of firms' performance have not been answered yet. It is, therefore, timely to re-examine the current knowledge of this area. As a result, this literature review attempts to answer the following emerging questions: How extensive is the field of family businesses and organizational culture in the Arab world? What issues have been discussed? Which disciplines remain uncovered?

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2.2 Searching strategy

A thorough search of the extant literature was done in EBSCO, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, and Scopus using a combination of keywords such as a family firm or family business, organizational culture, firm performance, the Arab world. These databases support us in obtaining the full texts of relevant scientific papers, providing essential aid in defining the required literature and allowing for systematic approaches (Kraus *et al*., 2021). Papers published in academic journals and conferences proceedings were selected without limiting them in a specific period. Overall, 4201 articles were gathered using keywords in all databases. Based on the limitations of language and the source of publication, articles were reduced to 448. Duplicate articles were deleted, and 298 articles were identified. Then, scanning their titles, 176 articles were relevant to the aim of this paper. Next, examining their abstract, 86 articles were accepted. Several studies were rejected because their full text was not accessible. A prompt investigation was conducted to verify them. This second overview highlights that all of them should be included. So, 59 articles were examined according to their full text (Figure 1).

Additionally, 24 more articles were added implementing the forward search, and thus 83 articles were identified. The search was completed for popular articles from all databases and different combinations of keywords (Mariani *et al*., 2021). Therefore, it was concluded that the most important relevant literature papers were gathered (Webster and Watson, 2002).

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

71 papers were analyzed based on a classification framework. These articles were analyzed on three concepts providing a better understanding of organizational culture and cultural values in the Arab world family company entrepreneurial processes and helping future researchers expand knowledge in this field. Papers were classified based on publication year, journals and publishers, authors, number of citations, research method adopted, the characteristics of family firms in the Arab world, the effects of organizational culture and values on performance in family firms, and the antecedents of organizational culture in family businesses.

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3. Analysis of concepts

3.1 The Characteristics of Family Firms in the Arab world

A family business is described as a company in which the owners or members of their family own the company or occupy important managerial positions (Tsao and Lien, 2013). Ownership, control, direction, family engagement, organizational culture, and tradition are some criteria that researchers typically utilize to characterize family enterprises (Franco and Lucas, 2016). Similarly, Mahto *et al*. (2021) state that advisors play an essential role in family businesses, not only in filling critical business expertise that would otherwise be lacking within the company but also in assisting with the management of complex and challenging issues within a subsystem (e.g., family, business, and ownership) or at the intersection of subsystems. Some scholars study one firm subsystem (e.g., ownership) (e.g., Betancourt *et al.*, 2014; Pieper and Klein, 2007), while others study two (e.g., family and business) (e.g., Barros-Contreras *et al.*, 2020; Handler and Kram, 1988; James *et al.*, 2020) or the entire company (e.g., Barbera and Hasso, 2013; Strike, 2012). Therefore, according to Krueger et al. (2021), three alternative research methodologies can provide context for the family business study. First, developing exploratory and replication studies in various contexts is part of the contextualizing phenomena technique. The context primarily serves as a dividing line for data gathering, allowing for interpreting differences and similarities between similar occurrences occurring in different circumstances. Despite its importance in expanding research across wealthy countries, this technique is a simplified version of context (i.e., context as a setting or a ‘container’). Second, the contextualizing theory strategy is a research endeavor that aims to find and test a theory’s dependability in a given situation and the possibility of disputing, modifying, and expanding the theory altogether. Third, because it measures and proxies context to capture how and when context constrains the phenomena itself, the context theorizing technique represents the highest degree of study.

Family businesses play a significant part in the global economy because they are not limited to a single country or region but can be found worldwide. As a result, understanding what a family business is is essential. Various definitions of family businesses have evolved in recent years, but there has yet to be a clear consensus on what constitutes a family business

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(Razzak *et al.*, 2021). Likewise, McLarty and Holt (2019) consider that family involvement in the firm can have both positive and negative consequences; ironically, family business research has only recently begun to use the 'dark side' metaphor to communicate worries about the negative consequences of family involvement. This attitude is now being mirrored in a determined attempt to investigate the darker aspects of the family business. Although there was no agreement on one definition of family firms, most definitions recognized similar ground. In a real sense, most interpretations emphasized ownership, family involvement, family control, and the intent to pass the business down to the next generation as key elements of what could be classified as family firms (Charbel *et al.*, 2013; Basly, 2017; Aloulou, 2018). Family businesses offer a unique working atmosphere that fosters a family-oriented setting while increasing employee care and loyalty. A flat organizational structure, transaction costs, monitoring and control expenses, more efficient informal decision-making procedures, and a more trustworthy reputation are further characteristics of family enterprises. The decision-making process is consolidated among family firm owners, reducing costs and increasing flexibility in the family business (Franco and Lucas, 2016; Combs *et al*., 2021). According to Siddique and Siddique (2019), most UAE managers use an autocratic and consultative decision-making approach, undermining the importance of employee participation. Because they create specialized methods, some founders believe that Arab family enterprises have a stronger ability for self-analysis, greater dedication to their aims, and fewer management politics. For example, Arab family business owners have an informal code of ethics and are more likely to regulate firm behavior through role modeling (Belkhodja and Daghfous, 2020). Moreover, they concentrate on personal and family values over business values and increase the integrity and commitment to relationships (Brice and Richardson, 2009; Franco and Lucas, 2016; Habbershon *et al.*, 2003; Tsao and Lien, 2013; Vallejo-Martos, 2011; Vallejo, 2016).

Furthermore, in the Arab world, the family firm is essential for family members because they have been formally or informally involved in the family business since its inception. Although not all family members actively participate in a family business, they are aware of their membership as they grow up with the company because they hear stories about the founder's experiences and interact with significant elements of the business, making the company a part of their personal history, name, and identity (Deephouse and Jaskiewicz,

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2013). Not to mention some limitations asserted by Vallejo (2016) on the lack of interest in family firms, which could be due to a variety of factors, including:

a) Even though family firms have played an important role in developed economies, most scientists believe that family ownership of a firm is only temporary and that the business begins to lose power and influence over it.
b) It is difficult for researchers to investigate both the family and the firm at the same time. They are experts in only one of the subjects from an academic standpoint, and they would need to be experts in both to examine this type of firm effectively.
c) There is a belief that family and work are two separate and independent realms. Similarly, neither management researchers nor family researchers are likely to be interested in determining the relationship between the two areas or investigating features of the other field, even when the topic of study is a family enterprise, where the two professions overlap.

Family businesses seem to be the most widely accepted type of business, especially among small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) around the globe. A family firm is defined by Tipu (2018) as a firm in which a family owns a majority of shares, has one or even more members in important managerial roles, and has members from more than one generation participating in the business. As a key source of entrepreneurship, family businesses are seen as a source of economic development and growth (Lwango *et al.*, 2017; Kumar *et al.*, 2021). While definitions differ, it is widely agreed that entrepreneurship is concerned with individuals and groups recognizing, analyzing, and exploiting possibilities. The ongoing identification and pursuit of opportunities that lead to the creation or acquisition of enterprises should be fostered and supported by an entrepreneurial culture. Over time, it has been discovered that family businesses foster entrepreneurial efforts (Cruz *et al*., 2012; James *et al*., 2020). Randerson *et al*. (2020) establish theoretically that at least three loci of entrepreneurial behavior exist in the family entrepreneurship environment – people, families, and family companies – so these three loci impose reciprocal impacts.

Although family businesses confronted major obstacles and strived to survive, they also were adaptable and delivered excellent customer service. Family businesses may be able to reach higher levels of business performance owing to the powers contained in the OC. This

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emphasizes the need to consider OC as a critical feature to investigate in family businesses. Organizational culture is a shared and taught universe of meanings, experiences, understandings, and values that inform people and are communicated, replicated, and conveyed in a partly symbolic form (Franco and Lucas, 2016; Tipu, 2018; Ahmad *et al.*, 2020). According to Cherchem (2017), family organizational culture is a critical strategic resource that family enterprises can employ to obtain a competitive advantage by stimulating entrepreneurship and enhancing the originality of these firms' products, goods, and services. Because family organizational culture grows and changes over generations, its impact on family firm-level entrepreneurship might vary considerably from one generation to many generations.

3.2 Organizational Culture, Values and Performance in Family Firms

Family businesses are thought to be value-based enterprises, with values influencing how management difficulties are addressed. Such a value orientation impacts how success is defined, what is considered ethical, and what corporate aims are prioritized. Family values are important defining characteristics of family enterprises because they provide a common basis for dealing with disagreements, challenges, and new initiatives (Fathallah *et al.*, 2020; Laforet, 2016; Basly, 2017; Alves *et al.*, 2020). According to researchers who investigate the impact of organizational culture on business performance, values influence employees' decisions and promote the decentralization of work performance. They can improve the personal connection between the company and its employees and align corporate objectives with individuals with diverse interests to boost employee support within the team. As a result, values define the firm's main notion (Sánchez-Marn *et al.*, 2015; McLarty and Holt, 2019).

Significant changes in family enterprises' culture and values have been reported so far in various studies when they interact with the external environment and become immersed in a wider and more complicated set of systems, such as the industry. This process entails a significant 'transformation of existing values and the definition of new ones,' as well as a developing tension between different, often opposing values (Raitis *et al*., 2021). Raitis *et al*. (2021) also pointed out that community values may clash with the general ideals of newly hired professional managers who reside outside the community where they work and may

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have different values and aims than indigenous personnel, resulting in an 'us versus them' mentality.

Furthermore, religious values are a set of ideals that many family firms consider while making decisions. Parents can teach their children about shared values through religion. Because repeated deeds are witnessed over generations, families can sustain moral practices among family members. Religious values influence how family members act and think when navigating daily business operations when a family strongly identifies with a particular religion (Fathallah *et al.*, 2020; Herrera and de las Heras-Rosas, 2020). Values important to family members become organizational cultural values in a family firm. The family firm's organizational behavior, leadership style, processes, strategy formulation, and working climate are all defined by its organizational culture (Laforet, 2016; Alves *et al.*, 2020). On a particular cultural typology, Leal-Rodríguez *et al*. (2017) illustrate the term entrepreneurial culture (EC). This culture comprises a number of subjective and internal elements connected to the entrepreneurial orientation of businesses and managers. EC has an impact on the behavior of managers and employees who are in charge of selecting appropriate methods for innovation and high performance. Risk-taking, failure tolerance, coping with uncertain circumstances, thriving in complicated settings, seeking possibilities, embracing adaptability, and building an environment that supports innovation are all examples of EC. As a result, firms place a high value on their culture because it may be a key source of competitive advantage (Leal-Rodríguez *et al*., 2017).

Vallejo (2016) found that organizational culture has an impact on financial performance, strategic success, and internal growth. Evidence on the impact of family ownership on performance, in this opinion, is equivocal. Some studies show that family ownership has a favorable impact on firm performance, while others show that it has no such effect. The majority of studies found little evidence of a link between family ownership and firm success (Bachiller *et al.*, 2015; Dow and McGuire, 2016). Organizational culture is a feature that distinguishes the family enterprise from other similar businesses. Furthermore, as long as family firms are concerned with reviewing it to see if it is a source of weakness or strength, it might be a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Franco and Lucas, 2016; Kassem et al., 2017; Kumar *et al.*, 2021; Arz, 2021).

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Evidence suggests that the family business generation is an important component in the influence of conflict in family businesses in the Arab world. The generation of the family business, on the other hand, has no direct bearing on conflict. Family members in subsequent-generation enterprises are more likely to have an equal decision-making role than family members in first-generation businesses. As a result, the family firm’s generation may impact the relationship between conflict and performance (Jawabri and Obeidat, 2018; McLarty and Holt, 2019). While this part of research is valuable, it has not looked into the notion that, despite their less formal management procedures, family businesses constitute a unique contextual environment with competing implications (McLarty and Holt, 2019). When a family business has only one founder, the controlling owner usually controls the company’s leadership. This frequently has a detrimental impact on family members’ participation in decision-making, limiting the profitability of their businesses. Controlling owners who delegate decision-making to others are likely to benefit the firm because they reduce the firm’s reliance on them. As a result, family businesses with minimal generational ownership dispersion experience more friction, affecting superior performance (Kellermanns and Eddleston, 2007; O’Boyle *et al.*, 2012; Tsao and Lien, 2013). The trust covers all family firms without distinguishing between family and non-family members. According to academics who examine this topic in-depth, conflicts between family and non-family members are so common in a family that it is impossible to prevent them. Non-family members of family businesses have been shown to be attracted to conflict (Stewart, 2020).

Another important topic in organizational culture research is the involvement of employees who are not family members and how they affect company success. A strong family culture, according to evidence, clearly expresses what is expected of employees and leads to good behavior in the workplace. Non-family personnel may not understand a family firm’s values, aims, goals, or beliefs if the firm’s culture is weak. Because owners are often concerned about their employees, family businesses in the Arab world have a more intense and flexible work arrangement. As a result, the adoption of a firm’s principles by non-family employees is a significant determinant for success or failure in family businesses. (Franco and Lucas, 2016; Gabriel and Bitsch, 2019; Bauweraerts *et al*., 2021). Because non-financial goals are crucial to family business owners, there is a considerable difference in behavior and performance between family and non-family businesses (Mahto *et al*., 2021; Ingram *et al*.,

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2020). The term 'family-member exchange' refers to a reciprocal interaction between family members. This indicates the family owner's perspective of their family's eagerness to share ideas, thoughts, and expectations with one another, and it expresses a level of reciprocity. Because it compares family ties to the 'building blocks of organizational structure' and explains when conflict is most advantageous to firm performance, a family-member exchange may be a distinct family business aspect. Because family members are willing to communicate their expectations and job needs, stronger family-member interchange may ensure that cognitive dissonance and process conflict strengthen the effectiveness of the decision-making process and promote business performance. Family members are more sensitive to each other's job problems and requirements when a family business is characterized by robust family-member exchange (Chrisman *et al.*, 2016; Kellermanns and Eddleston, 2007; Kim and Gao, 2013; Vallejo, 2016).

Family founders establish lasting enterprises and assist the development of strong relationships with external stakeholders in order to sustain personal business networks since they often share similar values and have long-held positions in the top hierarchical levels than non-family owners. As a result, it is critical to establish a family firm's collective organizational culture and to encourage the establishment of strong relationships with family members outside the firm (Bozer *et al.*, 2017; Alves *et al.*, 2020). Further, Figure 2 presents the theoretical model that describes the relationship between organizational culture and competitive advantage in family firms, based on the previous analysis of the literature review. Family values and business subsystem characteristics make up the organizational culture of family businesses. Family values include the trust and harmony that characterize family connections, the degree of motivation and participation of family members, and the knowledge, experiences, and peculiarities of owners. The business subsystem contains components such as goal and resource identification, business plan formulation, management style selection, and organizational structure. The national culture influences both family values and business subsystems, and their combination leads to the development of organizational culture in family firms. These values are used to develop decision-making functions, reduce conflicts, share ideas and information, and entrepreneurial activities. The outcomes of these functions positively affect the firm's competitive advantage, including financial benefits and non-financial outcomes.

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[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Family businesses differ from non-family enterprises in that they have a cultural accord between the organizational culture and the national culture. Even though family enterprises are the most common type of firm in all cultures, cross-cultural research is scarce. CASE (Culturally Sensitive Assessment Systems and Education) has taken a step forward by providing a comparative examination of family firms from around the world. This comparison is based on nine dimensions in the CASE framework, divided into three categories: family system, business system, and joint family and company ownership system (Gupta and Levenburg, 2012; Aloulou, 2018). To understand these family system dimensions, we have described below the three ideologies of the family system.

(1) Bridging relationships: Bridging relationships relates to the ability with which a family firm may break out of its kinship community's dependency on resources and develop new partnerships. In contrast to homogeneous, bonding connections (sometimes stemming from strong cultural communities) that develop within kinship and friendship enclaves, bridging relationships extend to society as a whole. Bridging relationships is a notion that focuses on the outside world. Bridges can be cognitive (common systems of the meaning), structural (social interaction patterns), or relational (based on personal connections) in nature. A family firm's family and organizational bridges allow for knowledge, space, and resource arbitrage, as well as the identification of profitable prospects and favorable negotiations, and installation in positions of influence and power (Gupta and Levenburg, 2012; Obeidat *et al.*, 2012; Al Murawwi *et al.*, 2014).

(2) Regulated boundary: The amount to which the requirements for the family business' access to family resources and the access itself are explicitly regulated is referred to as a regulated boundary. It focuses on the criteria or standards that families use to achieve and grant the required level of access to the family business's information, resources, and space. The boundaries between the family and the business are tightly

regulated or divided in some situations, but they are permeable or interconnected in others (Gupta and Levenburg, 2012; Bodolica *et al.*, 2015).

(3) Business reputation: The rationale of involving family resources is influenced by company reputation; it represents the extent to which family resources are employed when it makes business sense to do so. In some cases, a family business's social interactions are influenced by its reputation in the business community - that is, how everything adheres to the business community's and legal system's codes. In other situations, the family's identity and reputation are essential due to their intergenerational involvement (Gupta and Levenburg, 2012; Zahra, 2018; Basly and Saunier, 2020).

3.3 Is it a blessing or a curse to run a family business in the Arab world?

Because the economic environment in which Arab family businesses operate is diverse, they face various obstacles. Although certain well-known family groups have developed their companies around oil and other natural resource extractions, family firms account for over 85% of non-oil GDP in the Arab world. Arab family businesses are firmly ingrained in their societies and significantly impact their countries' economies (Obeidat *et al.*, 2012; Alaya *et al.*, 2017).

They are crucial to the country's development because they may bring solutions to the existing crisis and political unrest, mostly caused by unemployment and a loss of freedom. While current political turmoil is undoubtedly impeding the growth of family businesses (some firms pertaining to fallen rulers' clans have been intercepted by post-revolutionary authorities, others have lost their clients and markets, and others have mysteriously vanished as a consequence of plundering and destruction), the fact remains that, in the medium and long term, these turbulences will have a positive impact.

Extractive industries provide a guaranteed rent to firms in Arab oil-rich countries, notably in the public sector, even if this rent tends to diminish when oil prices fall. Family-owned enterprises, particularly large ones, are related to these countries' governing classes and control major sections of the economy (Alaya *et al.*, 2017; Ng *et al.*, 2019; Herrera and de las Heras-Rosas, 2020). Despite the winds of development and economic liberalization that have swept across various countries, many of these family groupings continue to benefit from privileged relationships with the countries' rulers.

Primarily, many Arab economies are still unstable, and local businesses are ill-equipped to compete with foreign competitors on a global scale. Because of technology and innovation constraints, Arab firms, particularly family enterprises, lag behind worldwide competitiveness. Despite major exceptions in a few nations, the Arab world's family firms have simple, low-innovative business strategies and a limited global competitive edge. Many work as subcontractors for foreign companies, while others work in largely stable fields and lack innovation. A serious shortage of resources, particularly for small and medium family enterprises, is another impediment to internationalization (Alaya *et al.*, 2017; De Massis *et al.*, 2015; Pucci *et al.*, 2017).

4. Findings and Discussion

Although family businesses vary from one economy to another, they are essential pillars in western countries, and they represent the majority of firms worldwide. However, family businesses have unique and quite complex difficulties stemming from the interdependence between the firm and its founders-successors, with family expectations not always aligned with those of the firm, which causes job problems and conflicts between family members and non-family employees. Furthermore, their differentiation can be translated into a competitive advantage (Franco and Lucas, 2016).

Moreover, organizational culture represents Arabic family values, beliefs, and experiences belonging to the identity of the family members. All of them grow out of owners' thoughts and knowledge that has developed over the years up until today, and they originate from their own experiences, social changes, and managers' values (Sánchez-Marín *et al.*, 2015). However, far from representing a competitive advantage, family management seems to be connected with the organizational cultures of a firm belonging to this field. In this connection, researchers mention that this type of firm was established by people with limited studies and no particular plans but dream of creating their own company (Franco and Lucas, 2016). Values of family organizational culture are cited below: (a) guiding and inspiring employees' decisions, lead to faster and more decentralized work performance; (b) setting up

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a baseline during times of significant changes or crisis; (c) creating a more personal relationship between executives and employees; (d) people with different interests work together having the same goals and creating a team; (e) they share their ideas outwardly of the firm to make known in customers and suppliers the business functions, while values create the main frame based on loyalty (Sánchez-Marín *et al.*, 2015). However, when value conflicts occur, the fundamental family ideals are generally perceived as a burden that prevents family businesses from expanding further. According to research, only a small percentage of family businesses are able to maintain family values while engaging in corporate entrepreneurship and growth throughout time. These findings demonstrate that the coexistence of family and business values can be both a hardship and a benefit for family businesses, particularly as they grow and develop (Raitis *et al*., 2021).

Therefore, the critical role of organizational culture in the success of family businesses is underpinned by founder centrality, the concept of family, and business principles spanning many generations. In a family business, the dominant culture is generally rooted in the family's ideas, values, aspirations, history, and human connections. Understanding these cultural tendencies is crucial for understanding family firm entrepreneurial processes (Tipu, 2018; Gupta and Levenburg, 2012). Given the essential role of organizational culture in family businesses, this paper aims to critically evaluate current research to assess what has been learned so far and set a research agenda for the future.

Theme 1: nature of organizational culture in family firms

The nature of organizational culture is primarily concerned with the notion of culture in family businesses, measurement instruments, and various sorts of culture. Therefore, let us look at the conceptualization of organizational culture.

In the literature on family businesses, organizational culture has been conceptualized and analyzed in various ways. Tipu (2018) proposes a family business culture model that incorporates general system theory, neo-institutional theory, transformational leadership theory, field theory, learning theory, and group dynamics theory. The tri-systemic notion of the family firm is built on the foundation of general system theory. The ownership subsystem, the business subsystem, and the family subsystem are the three subsystems of the family

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business. The family subsystem has a significant impact on the family firm's culture (Alhashemi and Weistroffer, 2017; Elbanna *et al.*, 2020).

Future research directions on the nature of organizational culture in family firms:

Compared to non-family enterprises, family firms have a stronger culture because they have higher employee engagement, improved work environment, a long-term orientation, and much more organizational harmony. It is also stated that family businesses have more clan culture traits than non-family businesses (Alhashemi and Weistroffer, 2017; Basly, 2017). Clan culture is characterized by a flat organizational structure, a high level of team focus, flexibility to the external environment, and a low level of bureaucracy. On the other hand, paternalistic culture is seen to be more prominent in family businesses. According to Tipu (2018), family businesses are more likely to have an authoritarian leadership style in which one person makes all of the decisions, culminating in unilateral and arbitrary human resource practices.

Theme 2: antecedents of organizational culture in family businesses

The antecedents of organizational culture in family firms' subject look at organizational culture's drivers or promoters in family businesses. It primarily entails the founder's centrality and stewardship.

Founder centrality: Family business literature frequently mentions the importance of founder prominence in developing organizational culture. According to Tipu (2018), a corporate entity is the manifestation of the founder's personality, which defines the operating style and response to change. The founder's vision is crucial in spreading cultural values that are compatible with the marketplace's culture. Other precursors of organizational culture in family enterprises, beyond founder centrality, have been reported in the literature.

Stewardship theory: This theory emphasizes cultural characteristics, including psychological dedication, trustworthiness, and organizational members' collectivist beliefs. According to stewardship theory, employees are viewed as stewards with interests aligned with those of the firm, who are organically driven and capable of taking on responsibility (Moskovich and Achouch, 2017). According to the stewardship theory, managers and other actors are encouraged to operate in the firm's best interests, repressing self-interest to represent

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collectivist and cooperative behaviors. These are sensible decisions that have a favorable impact on the firm. Executive steward management is characterized by altruistic behavior founded on mutual understanding between managers and their staff (Moskovich and Achouch, 2017; Vardaman and Montague-Mfuni, 2021; Bauweraerts *et al*., 2021).

According to Tipu (2018), stewardship culture may be fostered in family businesses through fostering talented employees, matching family and firm values, and connecting family with the business. They further discovered that, when compared to non-family-owned businesses, family-owned enterprises show better stewardship in terms of staff training and retention, fostering a family working environment, utilizing employees' skills more broadly, and being more flexible and accessible (Soleimanof *et al.*, 2018; Ng *et al.*, 2019). Instead, because the family's fate is inextricably linked to the firm, Bauweraerts *et al*. (2021) stated in their study providing the stewardship approach argues that a family CEO can be especially committed to the business's long-term wealth. Because of the family's concern for future generations' riches, the organization may be nurtured with extra devotion and trustworthiness, as well as the long-term planning and lavish investments required to turn EO into performance. Indeed, concern for the firm's long-term wealth has been known to motivate family leaders to prioritize new initiatives, allocating the firm's existing resources to bring new goods to market while maintaining a strong focus on financial success.

Future research directions on the origins of organizational culture in family businesses

Although numerous antecedents of organizational culture have been discussed in the literature on family businesses, several other elements could be explored in future research. Given the importance of founder centrality in organizational culture research in family businesses, applying cognitive theory to future studies could be beneficial. The investigation of individual perceptions, memory, and reasoning is referred to as cognition. The two most important dimensions of cognitions are cognitive process and cognitive structure. Cognitive processes are heuristics that underline a person's instinctive decision-making method, leading to cognitive biases. Cognitive structures are linked to a schema, which is a collection of organized information on the subject. Assessments, evaluations, and decisions are made using knowledge frameworks (Tipu, 2018; Ng *et al.*, 2019; Basly and Saunier, 2020; Bauweraerts *et al*., 2021).

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Understanding the underlying schemas and heuristics employed by the founder to foster specific cultural patterns in a family enterprise is aided by cognitive theory. Furthermore, several cognitive biases might influence the founder's selections of values and ideas that support a particular culture. Overconfidence and counterfactual reasoning are examples of these biases.

Theme 3: the effects of organizational culture in family businesses

Financial and non-financial performance measurements are reported based on the consequences of organizational culture in family businesses. Other organizational outcomes shown include the impact on successful family firm hereditary transitions, board composition, and board size (Tipu, 2018).

Future research on the effects of organizational culture on family businesses:

Most research on the effects of organizational culture in family businesses focuses on firm-level outcomes such as hereditary transition success, family inertia, radical change, and creativity. The influence on individual employees' organizational commitment and job happiness, on the other hand, is less well understood. Employee-related outcomes may be considered in future studies. If organizational culture is valued, scarce, and imperfectly imitable, it may provide a long-term competitive advantage (Moskovich and Achouch, 2017; Soleimanof *et al.*, 2018; Ng *et al.*, 2019).

5. Conclusion

The paper is a good starting point for researchers who want to study the organizational culture of family businesses, especially in the UAE. The study's main purpose is to examine two research questions: what are the cultural traits in the Arab world that shape family firms, and how and to what extent can the organizational culture in the Arab world help family firms develop competitive advantages for growth. This paper has many theoretical and managerial implications for academics and researchers. However, there are some critical dimensions that managers have ignored or not identified.

5.1 Theoretical and practical contribution

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The paper's theoretical contribution is to define research gaps and develop an agenda for further research. This illustrates the widespread and growing interest in contributions among academics, not only among young but also among experienced scholars, who want to obtain a complete understanding of a rapidly emerging scientific field. The study aims to make significant conceptual contributions by providing a strategic foundation for new research avenues and changing the way family enterprises and entrepreneurship researchers think about research in their fields.

From a practical viewpoint, managers overlook the effect of family involvement, leading to different behaviors and outcomes from what would occur without family involvement. Similarly, another gap exists when scholars review the organizational culture in family firms, but their relationship with performance is not clear. Another limitation is that the family dimension has not been studied in depth by previous researchers. Within the context of a family firm, both the company and the family deserve recognition by academics. The impact of family on the firm and vice versa can be conceptualized with this study supporting that there are significant mutual effects between these concepts. Researchers have also discussed the low survival rates of family firms. This is caused because managers ignore the impact of organizational culture in family firms which is one of the main dimensions to success (Gupta and Levenburg, 2012; Vallejo-Martos, 2016; Tipu, 2018; Fathallah *et al.*, 2020). They argue that family firm failures to involve family members in strategic planning and their weakness to reduce conflicts regarding the use of resources and recruit a professional manager when an experienced intra-family manager is not available are the main obstacles to their success.

Moreover, as an innovation-driven economy, it is noticed that individual entrepreneurial activity is crucial in the UAE, leading to more dynamics and new combinations of markets and products. They argue that innovative products will gain better revenues and prosperity for these firms. In these recent years, a better understanding of business has been carried out in the Arab context, which is claimed profitable for the business by Berger *et al.* (2015), further leading to better relationships, harmony, social networks, group orientation.

5.2 Limitations and future research

There are many areas examined for future research. One of the critical questions that arose is whether organizational culture enhances or predicts firm performance? Future researchers can

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empirically examine this question. Although some scholars have analyzed organizational culture and ethnicity dimensions in family firms, while others have investigated organizational values that vary by ethnicity, researchers have not studied the influence of ethnicity on organizational culture in family firms. They have not provided empirical or theoretical findings yet, which would be an interesting area for future research.

Also, future family business studies should investigate this area to learn more about family businesses in Arab countries and their unique characteristics. This could help us better understand the contrasts and similarities between Arab family businesses and their counterparts in other nations or regions. Future comparative research efforts could concentrate on examining how family firms start behaving (e.g., decision-making), organize (e.g., corporate governance), compete (e.g., strategy), and perform (e.g., financial and non-financial measures) in Arab contexts and their counterparts out beyond Arab countries.

Future research could further examine the causes of the variances and commonalities by considering family emotions, entrepreneurial attitudes, and family business objectives in different circumstances. To determine how family firm dimensions and relationships change across settings and characterize family firm heterogeneity due to context, exploratory, replicative, or theory-building research methodologies are required. Further, the future family business study should focus on the contextual factors that influence or modify family businesses, as well as the Arab context's unique characteristics.

Knowing and evaluating the specific Arab contextual characteristics could help researchers better understand what limits or enhances family involvement associated with family emotions, entrepreneurial attitude, and family business goals, and, as a result, family company behavior and performance. To understand how setting characteristics affect the dimensions of family firms and the interaction between family and business across contexts, exploratory, replicative, or theory-building research methodologies are required. While some of these characteristics, such as entrepreneurial orientation, performance, and goals, can be studied using standard measurement scales, others, such as emotions, require a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches from a variety of sources.

Our work complements existing efforts to create a theory of the family firm by moving the investigation from a context-less to a context-sensitive perspective. While family firm

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researchers have primarily focused on trying to explain the family effect on firm behaviors and actions (i.e., the unique characteristics that arise as a consequence of family involvement in ownership, governance, and management) and its heterogeneity, less attention has been paid to revealing the context effect on business families and family firms. With the use of a table (Table 2), the three fundamental elements of organizational culture and family businesses are depicted. Themes>Principal Findings>Future Research Directions are listed in the table.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Context-sensitive research may become more important as we learn more about family businesses because it can help us recognize behavioral and evolutionary patterns that can help us move away from widespread preconceptions and toward more complex and subtle assumptions about family firm heterogeneity based on the relevant adaptation (Krueger et al., 2021). Lastly, the future considerations can be about the effects that institutional environments (various elements and levels) have on entrepreneurial traits, such as growth and development, family firm start-up, social capital, innovation, and corporate entrepreneurship.

Scholars must expand the theoretical framework and combine two aspects in their analysis: family and business. The model also needs to be empirically evaluated by academics and practitioners using variables related to the family such as firm size, organizational structure, composition, type of company, functionality, management style, outcomes and so forth, and business. Also, recommendations for family founders and managers should be provided. Other issues that should be studied as they are considered important regarding organizational culture and performance in family firms are how culture is best transmitted through generations, how culture gets stronger over time, and how culture is translated into strategy and business performance. It is equally important that whether the family business in stronger cultures formulates more distinct strategies should be identified and how leaders increase the competitive advantage of organizational culture within a family business.

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Another issue that must be studied is whether the organizational culture has different effects on management style in terms of family and non-family or other different types of family businesses. Family involvement also needs to be measured as the role and responsibilities of each manager in the family. This area must be examined, and finally, future researchers should investigate whether the process used to assess the performance of family managers differ from family to non-family firms. It is essential to study in-depth the dimensions emphasized here, such as the degree of explicitness and openness of the organizational culture providing theoretical and practical implications. An additional avenue of research to pursue is family dynamics as a factor influencing cultural transformation processes in family businesses. Scholars could, for example, explore questions such as how and to what extent do familial and organizational cultures of family firms change during and after succession? How and to what extent is the family firm's dominating coalition supporting the transfer from one generation to the following through family commitment and a multitemporal (the ability to attain durable success while overcoming short- and long-term obstacles) perspective?

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Tables and Figures

Table 1: Previous literature reviews

Authors	Year	Methodology	Results
Vallejo-Martos	2011	The authors used author co-citation analysis to analyze several papers published in the same journal.	Authors studied management and analysis of the organizational culture of family firms based on the arguments of different theories related to neo-institutional and leadership.
Gupta and Levenburg	2012	The search was based on the family business's CASE framework (nine cultural dimensions) to form a conceptual analysis.	The authors discussed the cultural values and tendencies crucial for better understanding the family entrepreneurial process.
Basly	2017	The search was based on the work done by 17 researchers in the global networks of family business scholars.	The articles were grouped on the succession planning in familiness and family SMEs in the Arab world.
Alaya et al.	2017	-	The results focused on the main economic factors plus some challenges shaping the economic context of family firms in the Arab world.
Pucci et al.	2017	The authors proposed a model using a sample size of about 411 small- and medium-sized family enterprises.	Authors displayed different business models and their outcomes, firm capabilities, and adoption in the family firms.
Leal-Rodríguez et al.	2017	The search was based on family businesses entrepreneurial behaviors of business families and family business groups.	Authors illustrated the scope for the future based on how legal and economic systems and culture influence entrepreneurial behaviors in family businesses.

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Soleimanof et al.	2018	The search was based on samples that included 124 articles published in 24 top-level journals.	Authors studied if family firm outcomes or behavior are influenced by institutional contexts.
Tipu	2018	The review search revolved around three primary themes, i.e., nature, antecedents, and outcomes of organizational culture in family firms.	The authors displayed a range of positive outcomes and areas for future research based on these three themes.
Ng et al.	2019	This study's search was related to the five characteristics of family firms used in different studies. Also, the authors empirically tested a model using a sample of 150 U.A.E-based SMEs family businesses.	The authors illustrate the relationship between the emotional attachment of family members and firm performance (i.e., evaluations, assessments, and decisions).
Fathallah et al.	2020	Authors based their search on the fluidity characteristic of the ethical behavior and religious logic among family firms.	The authors studied three concepts of the Muslim and Christian family firms to view religion, business, community, and firm logic.
Herrera et al.	2020	Authors examined empirical papers between 2003 and 2019 used to obtain a sample of 135 docs, indexed in Web of Science (WoS).	The results described the effects related to firm performance and the change of organizational culture adapted to business.
Alves et al.	2020	The search was based on the multidimensional nature of family firm influence.	The authors discussed the mediating effect of stewardship to know the firm performance.
Randerson et al.	2020	Authors examined a link between entrepreneurial culture, business performance, and innovation outcomes.	The findings demonstrated that an entrepreneurial culture within family firms is increasing rapidly.
Kumar et al.	2021	The search was based on 280 articles from the top five journals in the area of SMEs	The results presented the measurement of performance of the family

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		between 1986 and 2020.	firm and future mediators.
Krueger et al.	2021	Authors based their search on the benefits of effectively contextualizing family business research to increase our understanding of heterogeneities.	The results discussed by the authors claim that a context-sensitive instrument is essential for recognizing how context impacts family company behavior and performance.

Table 2: Fundamental Elements of Organizational Culture and Family Businesses

S/N	Themes	Principle Findings	Future Research Directions
1.	Nature of organizational culture in family firms	A family business culture model incorporates general system theory, neo-institutional theory, transformational leadership theory, field theory, learning theory, and group dynamics theory.	Findings suggest that family businesses have more clan culture traits than non-family businesses. Therefore, future research may investigate the flexibility of the external environment and a low level of bureaucracy considering these clan culture traits.
2.	Antecedents of organizational culture in family businesses	Look at organizational culture's drivers or promoters in family businesses, mostly entailing the founder's centrality and stewardship theory.	Given the importance of founder centrality in family businesses, applying cognitive (investigation of individual perceptions, memory, and reasoning) theory to future studies could be beneficial.
3.	The effects of organizational culture in family businesses	Financial and non-financial performance measurements are reported based on the consequences of organizational culture in family businesses.	The influence on individual employees' organizational commitment but job happiness is less understood. So, employee-related outcomes may be considered in future studies.

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Figure 1. Article selection process I

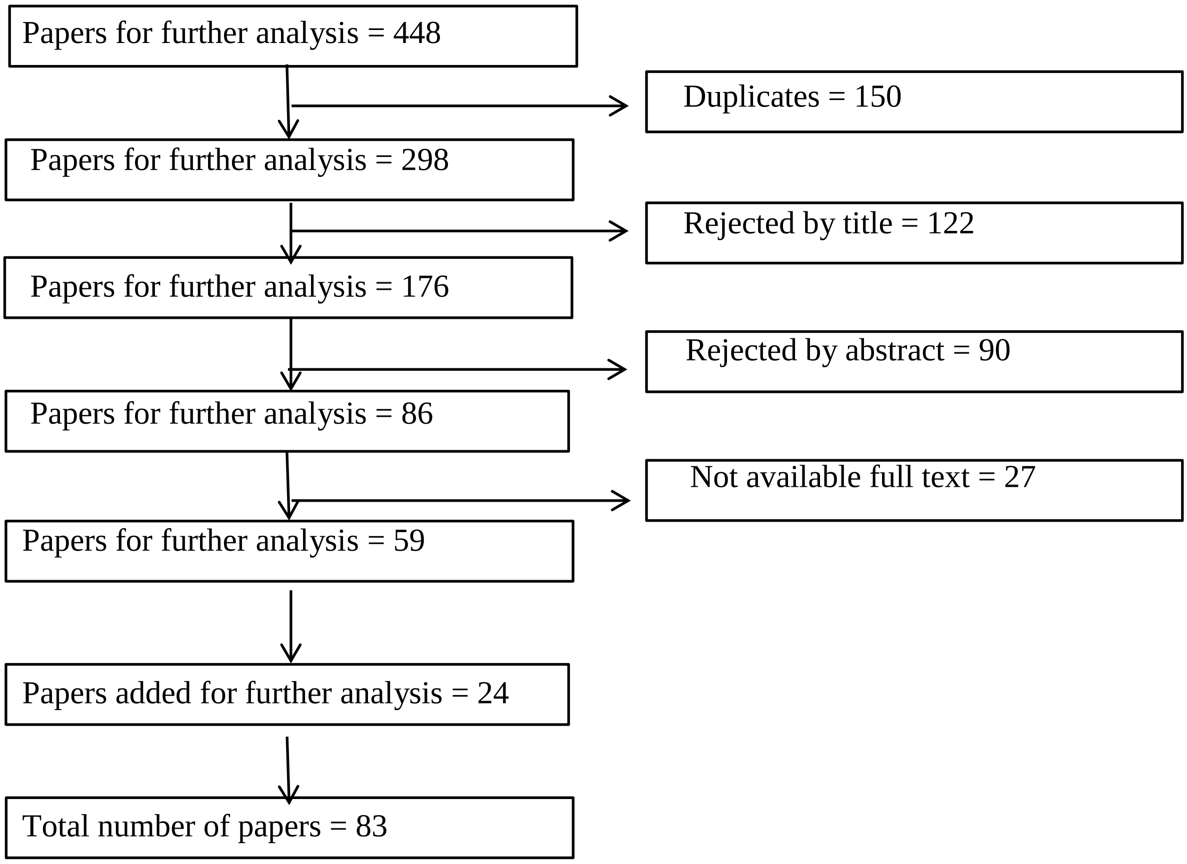

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Figure 2: Theoretical Framework