

Family businesses in the Arab Middle East: What do we know and where should we go?

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ABSTRACT

This article takes stock of family business research in the Arab Middle East by systematically reviewing 70 articles published between 2000 and 2018. Results show that prevalent cultural traits of patriarchy and collectivism have led to a high commitment to the family business workforce, to the ceremonial appointment of women in leadership positions, to prioritizing family harmony over any other goal, to the pursuit of male dynastic succession that sustains the vision of the founder, and to informal human resources practices. Furthermore, the presence of institutional voids has facilitated the adoption of informal governance structures and has led controlling owners to adopt conservative financial strategies. These practices translate into various firm economic and societal outcomes, depending on the business legal structure, the generational ownership stage, and the family relationship dynamics. Despite these insights, much of prior research on family businesses in the Arab Middle East remains exploratory and unfocused, which emphasizes an evident need for contextualized, theoretically rich, and methodologically rigorous studies. In conclusion, the article proposes an agenda to advance future research on family businesses in the Arab Middle East.

1. Introduction

Within a gradually growing discussion on how laws, norms, and values embedded within indigenous contexts shape the way firms are managed and directed (Bruton, Zahra, & Cai, 2018; Soleimanof, Ruth-erford, & Webb, 2018), Zahra (2011) accentuated the Arab Middle East as a particular institutional setting that offers exciting opportunities to advance the management field. Specifically, understanding the family business phenomenon in the Arab Middle East is relevant and timely for at least two reasons. First, family businesses in the Arab Middle East constitute up to 90 % of all companies, employ 80 % of the workforce, and contribute to 60 % of the region's GDP (PWC report, 2016). These facts mirror the potential of family businesses to impact regional development (Basco, 2015) in a landscape of growing economic and geopolitical importance (The Arab World Competitiveness Report, 2018). Second, the Arab Middle East is characterized by a combination of institutional peculiarities, such as collectivism (Samara & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2018), patriarchy (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010), strong religiosity of the population (Jamali & Sdiani, 2013), Islam being the dominant, but not the only, religion (Basco, 2017a), and deep institutional voids (McLellan & Moustafa, 2013), which can have

distinctive ramifications on family business behavior and outcomes.

Due to the reasons mentioned above, the last two decades have witnessed the proliferation of research efforts aimed at exploring the behavior, governance, growth, and prosperity of family businesses in the Arab Middle East (e.g., Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010; Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian, 2006; Samara & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2018; Welsh & Raven, 2006; Welsh, Memili, Kaciak, & Al Sadoon, 2014). Despite this burgeoning interest, research around family businesses in the Arab Middle East is still fragmented, sometimes unfocused (Basco, 2017a), and scattered across a variety of academic journals, without any previous systematic effort to synthesize past work. As a result, two critical questions remain unanswered: What do we know about family business in the Arab Middle East? And where should research go from here?

To address this research gap, I systematically reviewed 70 published papers addressing family businesses in the Arab Middle East from 2000, the year when the first publication has appeared, to 2018. Using narrative analysis, I relied on Yu, Lumpkin, Sorenson, and Brigham's (2012) classification of the most prominent themes that make the family business domain unique to organize the scattered literature on family businesses in the Arab Middle East, critically assess the current state of extant research, and provide avenues to advance future scholarship in

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this distinctive context. Critical analysis of the literature indicates that research on family businesses in the Arab Middle East is still in its infancy, with much of prior scholarship remaining decontextualized, exploratory in its nature, and unfocused. Future research needs to move towards more depth in accounting for the contextual peculiarities of the Arab Middle East and towards more theoretical and methodological rigor, therefore reaching a nuanced understanding of family business behavior across contexts.

Doing so, this systematic review offers three contributions to the literature. First, this article provides researchers with a comprehensive and organized account of family business research in the Arab Middle East, points out research gaps stemming from theoretical and methodological shortcomings, and suggests a corresponding agenda to advance future scholarship. Second, this review echoes the growing calls to account for how context shapes family business heterogeneity and distinctiveness (Wright, Chrisman, Chua, & Steier, 2014), by shedding light on how embeddedness in the Arab Middle East affects family business goal priorities (Debicki, Kellermanns, Chrisman, Pearson, & Spencer, 2016; Williams, Pieper, Kellermanns, & Astrachan, 2018) and influences the interplay between family-centric goals and economic goals (Vazquez & Rocha, 2018). Third, this article contributes to practice by suggesting that family business advisors and policymakers need to adapt their recommendations toward more relevant applications, which consider the contextual peculiarities of the Arab Middle East combined with the firm legal structure, the generational ownership stage, and the family relationship dynamics.

2. Background and geographical scope

During the last two decades, family business research has gradually gained legitimacy as an independent field of study, and it is now considered as an established and prestigious area in management research. Despite the commendable strides that research has made so far, the understanding of family business behavior across contexts remains relatively nascent (Wright et al., 2014). Hence, a review of family business behavior across contexts provides an essential point of demarcation to build new theory and to test and refine existing theoretical frameworks. While several geographical regions are still understudied, I focus on the Arab Middle East, given its distinctive institutional attributes and given my ethnographic knowledge of the region.

Following prominent contributions to the management field (e.g., Basco, 2017a; Zahra, 2011), I used membership to the Arab league as criterion for inclusion of countries as part of the Arab Middle East. Members of the Arab league include Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Yemen. These countries share a common official language, i.e., Arabic, and they are tied by agreements of economic and political partnerships (Zahra, 2011).

3. Method

To identify relevant literature, I used a systematic approach following the five stages of the selection process adopted by David and Han (2004), as used by Pukall and Calabrò (2014), but with some adaptations, which were made to fit the scope and the context of the current study. In terms of scope, this review includes published peer-reviewed journal articles up to 2018, with no lower boundary for the timeframe (Campopiano, De Massis, Rinaldi, & Sciascia, 2017). This process allowed documenting all family business literature from the year when the first publication has appeared.

Second, the databases used to search for relevant articles were ABI/Inform, Proquest, Business Source Complete (EBSCO), and EconLit (EBSCO). To ensure the relevance of the articles extracted, I used the combination of the following keywords in the title or the abstract to

search for potential papers that fit the study:

“family business(es)” OR “family firm(s)” OR “family-owned business(es)/firm(s)” OR “family enterprise(s)” OR “family owner(s)” OR “family ownership” OR “family management” OR “ownership structure” OR “governance structure” OR “corporate governance”; AND *“Country” (specifying each country that is member of the Arab League) OR “(Arab) Middle East” OR “Emerging country(ies)/economy(ies)” OR “Developing country(ies)/economy(ies)”*

Third, I conducted a residual search by double-checking in the mainstream management journals,¹ the top journals dedicated to entrepreneurship and family business research,² and the key literature reviews in the field³ to ensure that all relevant literature was captured.

Fourth, I limited the review to peer reviewed articles published in impact factored journals indexed in Scopus. Subsequently, I retained articles published in the English language only and where family business was the primary focus of research (i.e., appeared in the title or in the abstract), or has appeared in at least one of the hypotheses examined (Soleimanof et al., 2018). This process allowed this systematic review to be inclusive without sacrificing the quality and scientific rigor of the articles analyzed. After excluding 59 articles that did not meet the criteria mentioned above, the search yielded a population of 70 papers published in 46 Journals.

To organize and categorize family business research in the Arab Middle East, I used Yu et al.'s (2012) classification to identify and group the main themes discussed in the literature. Categorizing extant research around pre-classified topics is considered as an effective way to organize the literature and bring coherence to scattered data (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). After an exhaustive literature review and consultations with family business experts, Yu et al. (2012) unpacked the most prominent domains of analysis in the family business literature and those that deserve more attention. These domains of analysis are broadly grouped around *family business roles, family dynamics, succession, strategy, governance, performance, and social and economic impact* (Yu et al., 2012). While in the work of Yu et al. (2012) human resources was grouped together with governance, I included it as a separate theme given its distinctive roots and the momentum that studies on family business human resources have gained in the last seven years (e.g., Dawson, Sharma, Irving, Marcus, & Chirico, 2015; Samara & Paul, 2019; Samara, Jamali, & Parada, 2019).

To ensure reliability in the coding process, I shared the 70 papers that were reviewed with a junior family business scholar, asking her to code the articles independently, extract from each article the theoretical framework and methodological approach, and categorize the key findings into the theme(s) mentioned above. Subsequently, we compared our results and extensively discussed any inconsistencies in the coding, which were minimal, given the precise categorization provided by Yu et al. (2012).

4. Descriptive results

As this review indicates, research on family businesses in the Arab Middle East that started in 2000 (one article), has gradually increased and expanded from 2007 until 2012 (24 articles), and has exponentially grown from 2013 to 2018 (70 articles). The list of journals that published papers addressing family businesses in the Arab Middle East and

¹ Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Administrative Science Quarterly, Journal of Management, Journal of Management Studies, Organization Science, Strategic Management Journal.

² Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice; Family Business Review; Journal of Family Business Strategy; Journal of Small Business Management; Journal of Business Venturing; Small Business Economics; Journal of Family Business Management.

³ Pindado and Requejo (2015), Soleimanof et al. (2018), Yu et al. (2012).

the year in which these articles were published is shown in Appendix A. As can be seen in Appendix A, research touching on the Arab Middle East is widely scattered across academic journals, with a moderate presence in mainstream family business journals, entrepreneurship journals, and finance journals.

In terms of the geographical scope (see Table 1), most research was concentrated in Lebanon (21), followed respectively by Kuwait (14), Egypt (11), Tunisia (11) and Jordan (10). However, only a few articles were contextualized in other countries comprising the Arab Middle East (e.g. Oman, Bahrain, Palestine) and there were no studies contextualized in other Arab nations (e.g. Syrian, Sudan, Yemen, Comoros). This suggests the pressing need for research focusing on under-studied countries to provide a more refined understanding of the region. While this fact may bias the review findings to countries where more than half of the research was conducted, this may not constitute a concern for this review, given that the countries where research was concentrated, are dispersed geographically across the Arab Middle East and share similar cultural and institutional attributes as their neighbors (World Bank, 2014).

Concerning the theoretical approaches, Table 2 outlines the theoretical perspectives employed during the past 18 years. Numerous articles use two or more theoretical approaches in the construction of their hypotheses and propositions. Therefore, following Pindado and Requejo (2015), I classified the studies based on the main one or two theor(ies) being employed to construct a more coherent analysis. Agency theory stands out as the dominant theoretical lens (29) followed by stewardship theory (8). However, except for Samara and Berbegal-Mirabent (2018), all articles use agency and stewardship theories as dichotomous theories, favoring one theoretical perspective over the other. This practice contrasts with recent advances in the literature, suggesting that both theoretical threads, while built on different behavioral assumptions, can mutually be applicable to explain family business behavior and performance (Madison, Holt, Kellermanns, & Ranft, 2016; Samara & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2018). Besides, around one-third of the papers have not used any theoretical lens (22), reflecting the exploratory stage of family business research in the Arab Middle East. It is also surprising to see that only one study adopted socioemotional wealth as a theoretical lens (Bataineh, Abuaddous, & Alabood, 2018), despite it being the dominant paradigm in the last decade in the family business literature (Gomez-Mejia, Patel, & Zellweger, 2018). All these findings in relation to theory provide promising avenues for future scholarship.

In terms of research methods, as shown in Table 3, most articles have used a quantitative approach (71.4 %), less than one fifth have used a qualitative approach (14.2 %), a few papers have used mixed methods (10 %), and very few articles were conceptual in nature (4.28 %). The current state of empirical methodologies used in most studies, being mostly exploratory and/or using basic statistics, calls for more methodological rigor in research conducted in the Arab Middle East. In this respect, future researchers can capitalize on the useful guidance that the

Table 1
List of Countries^a.

| List and Count of Arab Middle Eastern Countries Captured in the Literature Review | | | |
|---|----|---|------------|
| Countries | | Countries | |
| Lebanon | 21 | Saudi Arabia | 5 |
| Kuwait | 14 | Oman | 4 |
| Egypt | 11 | Qatar | 3 |
| Tunisia | 11 | Arab Middle East (no country specified) | 3 |
| Jordan | 10 | Bahrain | 2 |
| Morocco | 5 | Palestine | 2 |
| UAE | 5 | Total | 101 |
| Gulf Cooperation Council | 5 | | |

^a (a) no studies found in Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Iraq, Libya, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. (b) Some studies included multiple countries, which explains the discrepancy between the number of articles reviewed (70) and the frequency of countries found in the literature review.

Table 2
Theoretical Perspectives.

| Theory Name | Number of articles |
|---|--------------------|
| Agency Theory ^a | 29 |
| No theoretical perspective used | 22 |
| Stewardship Theory ^a | 8 |
| Stakeholder Theory ^a | 5 |
| Institutional Theory ^a | 4 |
| Legitimacy Theory ^a | 4 |
| Social Capital Theory ^a | 3 |
| Resource Based View ^a | 2 |
| Signaling Theory ^a | 2 |
| Pecking Order Theory | 1 |
| Socioemotional Wealth ^a | 1 |
| Theory of Planned Behavior | 1 |
| Trade-off Theory | 1 |
| Gender Theory | 1 |
| Work-Family Interface Theory ^a | 1 |
| Upper Echelons Theory | 1 |
| Boundary Theory | 1 |
| High-Performance Organization Theory | 1 |

^a Two theoretical lenses in the same paper.

family business literature offers on how to conduct rigorous quantitative (e.g., Sarstedt, Ringle, Smith, Reams, & Hair, 2014) and qualitative research (e.g., De Massis & Kotlar, 2014).

Concerning the family business definition, some articles used an essence approach (28 %), and a few studies used a demographic approach (18 %). Furthermore, given the prevalence of monarchy in Gulf countries, powerful family elites that have political power and/or occupy government seats have held equity ownership in semi-private firms, which have also been considered as family businesses (8%). It is also worthy to note that more than half of the papers reviewed (54 %) do not mention any explicit definition of a family firm. To accommodate all definitions under one umbrella and ensure a thorough review, I defined a family business in the Arab Middle East as *any business where the family holds equity ownership that allows it to have some level of control over the strategic decisions of the firm* (Astrachan, Klein, & Smyrniotis, 2002).

5. Review results

As previously mentioned, I used Yu et al.'s (2012) classification of the most prominent variables that are unique to the family business domain to organize the results of past research in the Arab Middle East.

5.1. Family business roles

Family business roles are defined as the attitude of family and non-family stakeholders towards the business, including their perceptions of women and their roles in the firm (Yu et al., 2012). The embeddedness of family firms in a collectivist culture compels employees to develop a strong sense of commitment to the family business (Welsh & Raven, 2006), as collectivists associate the group success with their own and prioritize the group interest over their self-interest. Family employees are committed to the business because of the intricate relationship between the business name and success on the one hand and their family's name and reputation on the other (Bodolica, Spraggon, & Zaidi, 2015). Similarly, non-family employees are committed to the business because they develop a sense of identity and pride from in-group membership to the family business (Bizri, 2016; Welsh & Raven, 2006).

With respect to the attitude toward having women in leadership roles, research shows that controlling owners often claim that few differences exist in the opportunities provided to men and women in family firms (Davis, Pitts, & Cormier, 2000; Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian, 2006; Gupta, Levenburg, Moore, Motwani, & Schwarz, 2010; Sonfield & Lussier, 2012). Controlling owners often recognize the talent of women and support them, both financially and morally, in their pursuit of education in Western countries (Davis et al., 2000; Welsh, Kaciak, Memili,

Table 3
Summary of Methodologies.

| Years and Level of Analysis | Empirical n (%) | | | Review n (%) | Conceptual n (%) | Total n (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|--------------|------------------|-------------|
| | Quantitative | Qualitative | Mixed | | | |
| Publication Years | | | | | | |
| 2000–2006 | 2 | 1 | – | – | – | 3 (4.3 %) |
| 2007–2012 | 14 | 3 | 2 | – | 2 | 21 (30 %) |
| 2013–2018 | 34 | 6 | 5 | – | 1 | 46 (65.7 %) |
| Total | 50 (71.4 %) | 10 (14.2 %) | 7 (10 %) | – | 3 (4.28 %) | 70 |

& Minialai, 2018). Subsequently, women are encouraged to assume managerial positions in the family business, especially if they are family members (Davis et al., 2000; Kemp & Zhao, 2016; Sonfield & Lussier, 2012; Welsh et al., 2014).

At the same time, research also shows striking differences between what controlling owners claim and what controlling owners do, primarily attributed to the cultural embeddedness of family firms in a patriarchal society (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010; Belwal, Belwal, & Saidi, 2014; Gupta et al., 2010; Welsh et al., 2018). Although the family's social values, beliefs, and norms can be leveraged to having more female family members in managerial positions (Kemp & Zhao, 2016), the CEO position remains exclusively set for male family members (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010; Belwal et al., 2014). Moreover, the presence of women in management teams tends to be ceremonial as they are granted limited managerial discretion beyond what the male patriarch allows (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010; Belwal et al., 2014). Indeed, the ability of women to actively serve in management teams remains contingent on their ability to fulfill their domestic roles, and it is conditioned by explicit permission from influential male members of the family (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010; Belwal et al., 2014; Gupta et al., 2010).

5.2. Family dynamics

This dimension refers to the values that the family holds, reflects the characteristics and outcomes that the family desires from the business, and discusses the sources and remedies for conflict among family employees and between family and non-family employees (Yu et al., 2012). Families in the Arab Middle East have a strong sense of responsibility toward the future of their members insofar that the primary reason driving entrepreneurs to start a business is their desire to provide secure employment for their children (Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian, 2006; Fahed-Sreih, Pistrucci, Huang, & Welsch, 2009; Fahed-Sreih, Pistrucci, Huang, & Welsch, 2010). Similarly, entrepreneurial growth intentions are strongly driven by the desire of entrepreneurs to provide sustainable employment for their extended family that is continuously growing across generations (Fahed-Sreih et al., 2009, 2010; Sonfield, Lussier, & Fahed-Sreih, 2016). The desire for family employment is strong when first and second generations are involved in the business. However, it gradually decreases when the firm is transferred to later generations, as family members become less interested in joining the company (Lussier & Sonfield, 2010).

Furthermore, research has emphasized the importance that the family accords to having harmonious family relations in the workplace (Bodolica et al., 2015; Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian, 2006; Mani & Lakhali, 2015). Notably, the strengths of relationships between family members involved in the business can create strong bonds of reciprocity between employees, therefore contributing to increased knowledge sharing and improved decision-making processes (Bodolica et al., 2015; Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian, 2006; Mani & Lakhali, 2015). In this context, the involvement of the founder and the presence of women in the business are argued to reduce conflict and reinforce harmony between family members (Lussier & Sonfield, 2009; Sonfield & Lussier, 2012). When third and later generations become involved in the business, the risk of having disagreements between family members who have conflicting goals can increase (Bodolica et al., 2015). When

conflicts between family members arise, the family may become ready to dilute partially and sometimes completely its influence and control over the business by significantly increasing the involvement of outsiders in ownership, in the management team, and on the board of directors. Families do so because non-family executives can provide an objective point of view that can help resolve potential conflicts between cousins and siblings. These factors suggest that family firms have a propensity to dilute their control over the business whenever they feel that excessive family control is leading to power struggles that can eventually threaten family cohesion (Bodolica et al., 2015; Fahed-Sreih & El-Kassar, 2017; Mani & Lakhali, 2015; Sonfield & Lussier, 2009b).

5.3. Succession

The succession dimension discusses passing the baton to the next generation and encompasses issues such as succession plans, succession events, and processes (Yu et al., 2012). Research shows that the controlling owners, especially the founders (Lussier & Sonfield, 2009), consider succession planning as an essential determinant of family business prosperity across generations (Bizri, 2016; Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian, 2006; Oudah, Jabeen, & Dixon, 2018; Sonfield & Lussier, 2009a; Sonfield, Lussier, & Fahed-Sreih, 2015). The primary objective behind succession plans is to ensure that family control will not be diluted and that a family member will exclusively succeed his/her predecessor (Bodolica et al., 2015; Sonfield et al., 2015). Succession plans are also used to bolster balance between the family and the business systems, which mitigates possible intra-family conflicts at the time of succession (Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian, 2006).

In terms of the succession process, research has tilted towards exploring the antecedents that determine the choice of successors (Bizri, 2016; Bodolica et al., 2015; Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian, 2006). Although controlling owners acknowledge that meritocratic considerations should be the primary principle for choosing a successor (Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian, 2006), patriarchal and collectivist societal traits combine to mandate particularistic norms for designating a successor (Bizri, 2016). Indeed, the first pre-requisite for the selection of successors is to be a member of the nuclear family of the incumbent, with a strong preference for male successors (Bizri, 2016). Once this criterion is met, other relational considerations will determine the choice of the successor, but not necessarily related to birth order. Precisely, next-generation family members that build a relational capital, based on trust, an obligation to serve family needs, and most importantly, a shared vision with the incumbent have higher chances to access the CEO suite (Bizri, 2016).

At the same time, in some countries in the Arab Middle East, the ability of family firms to sustain transgenerational succession is constrained by the prevalence of institutional voids, particularly by the level of corruption and political instability at the country level. For example, in Lebanon, successors feel compelled to leave the family business and venture abroad in their pursuit of a safe environment where they encounter fewer business constraints that stem from weak protective state institutions and political corruption (Fahed-Sreih et al., 2010).

5.4. Strategy

The strategy dimension discusses the policies and plans enacted by family businesses, which include their investment horizons and internationalization prospects (Yu et al., 2012). Studies show that, at the start-up stage, Arab Middle Eastern family businesses are reluctant to rely on external finances, whether conventional or Islamic, to fund their entrepreneurial endeavors (e.g., Bizri, 2016; Bizri, Jardali, & Bizri, 2018; Fahed-Sreih et al., 2009, 2010; Mcllellan & Moustafa, 2013; Sultan, de Waal, & Goedegebuure, 2017). Instead, family firms prefer to use family finances and savings as a start-up capital (Bizri et al., 2018; Lussier & Sonfield, 2009), since family finances are considered as a safe source of funding that retains the family's financial independence (Bizri et al., 2018; Fahed-Sreih et al., 2009). What bolsters this conservative attitude is that financial institutions perceive more risk associated with family ownership and, consequently, the cost of debt increases for family firms compared to non-family firms, especially at the start-up stage (Guidara, Achek, & Dammak, 2016).

Once the business is established, family businesses become compelled to rely on external financing to fund their growth aspirations, as family funds are a finite source. In this regard, the ability of family firms to obtain external finances becomes contingent on their historical managerial efficiency in leading the business (Gupta et al., 2010), on sustaining corporate entrepreneurship (Chowdhury & Maung, 2013), and on the presence of control structures in their governance system (Chahine & Safieddine, 2008; Hashim & Amrah, 2016; Piesse, Strange, & Toonsi, 2012). For example, the presence of independent directors and an active audit committee on the board of family firms will signal a professional climate that leads family firms to be better perceived by financial institutions, hence facilitating their access to external finances (Hashim & Amrah, 2016; Piesse et al., 2012).

Concerning internationalization strategies, controlling owners are aware of the challenges associated with globalization, such as aggressive foreign competition and progressive technological development (Davis et al., 2000; Zain & Kassim, 2012). However, family businesses in the Arab Middle East are facing internationalization constraints that arise from their lack of understanding of foreign markets and from outdated managerial systems, therefore limiting their mode of entry to international markets to acquisitions of foreign companies (Davis et al., 2000). In this context, the family business network, particularly the personal relationships that the family has with individuals and entities in the host country (Gupta et al., 2010), positively affects their willingness to expand their operations to foreign markets (Zain & Kassim, 2012).

5.5. Human resources

In the Arab Middle East, resource boundaries between the family and the business systems are almost absent, which often leads to informal human resources practices that translate into unregulated compensation schemes and the absence of explicit and transparent policies for hiring family members (Gupta et al., 2010). Research has also highlighted the prevalent practice of nepotism in Arab Middle Eastern family businesses (Bodolica et al., 2015; Sidani & Thornberry, 2013; Sonfield et al., 2016). Nepotism, defined as the owner's predisposition for hiring and granting preferential treatment to family members, is not necessarily linked to non-meritocratic employment practices (Sidani & Thornberry, 2013; Sonfield et al., 2016). Rather, nepotism in the Arab Middle East can be good or bad, depending on the specific circumstances of its practice (Bodolica et al., 2015; Sidani & Thornberry, 2013). For example, in the case of family employees being qualified and committed to the business, nepotism can create a strong network of trusted family members who act as business stewards. However, when nepotism is based purely on family biases, it can reduce the productivity of the family business human capital (Sidani & Thornberry, 2013; Sonfield et al., 2016), especially when family firms are embedded in dynamic environments that require the presence of a highly qualified and specialized workforce that cannot

be exclusively filled by family members (Bodolica et al., 2015; Sidani & Thornberry, 2013). As family firms move to the cousins' consortium stage, nepotism becomes more problematic, primarily when more members of the extended family are employed in the business (Lussier & Sonfield, 2015). In this case, the longest enduring family businesses create formalized human resources practices by having formal procedures for selecting, recruiting, and appraising family members and by appointing non-family professionals to the management team (Bodolica et al., 2015; Lussier & Sonfield, 2010).

5.6. Governance

Governance describes the ownership and managerial structure of family firms (Yu et al., 2012). In the Arab Middle East, families own the majority of shares in both private and public companies and, as previously discussed, family members predominantly occupy managerial positions, especially in first and second-generation family businesses (Al-Saidi & Al-Shammari, 2014; Baydoun, Maguire, Ryan, & Willett, 2012; Khanchel El Mehdi, 2007; Mnasri & Ellouze, 2015; Piesse et al., 2012; Yosra & Ben Ouda Sioud, 2011). Although state ownership is prevalent in some countries, such as in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, ruling families, members of the extended family of the monarch, predominantly hold this form of ownership (Al-Ajmi, Abo Hussain, & Al-Saleh, 2009; Mcllellan & Moustafa, 2013). Such high levels of ownership make the family the most salient and influential stakeholder that holds decision-making power, and that determines the structure and composition of the board of directors.

The board of directors can range from small to large, and sometimes it can exceed 16 members (Jamali, Hallal, & Abdallah, 2010; Piesse et al., 2012). CEO duality, a situation where the chairman of the board also occupies the CEO suite, is also commonly encountered in Arab Middle Eastern family firms (Al-Saidi & Al-Shammari, 2014; Chahine & Tohmé, 2009; Khanchel El Mehdi, 2007; Piesse et al., 2012; Salloum, Bourri, & Schmitt, 2013; Salloum, Azoury, & Azzi, 2013). Board members in the first and second-generation family businesses are predominantly family members or family friends, with little presence of independent outside directors, despite some governmental laws that mandate firms to establish internal control mechanisms (Baydoun et al., 2012; Piesse et al., 2012; Shehata, 2015). The presence of deep institutional voids in some parts of the Arab Middle East translates into weak state institutions that are struggling in enforcing corporate governance regulations (Al-Saidi & Al-Shammari, 2014). As a result, state laws and reforms, such as those aimed at improving governance structures (Guidara et al., 2016), remain outdated (Mcllellan & Moustafa, 2013) and ceremonially implemented (Eulaiwi, Al-Hadi, Taylor, Al-Yahyaee, & Evans, 2016) by, for example, appointing family friends to the board and considering them as outside independent directors (Al-Saidi & Al-Shammari, 2014; Bishara, 2011; Khanchel El Mehdi, 2007; Mnasri & Ellouze, 2015).

Although the dominant presence of family members and other insiders on the board may compromise the board's independence, it is not necessarily considered as an inefficient governance mechanism in the Arab Middle East (Al-Saidi & Al-Shammari, 2013; Chahine & Safieddine, 2008; Samara & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2018). Boards dominated by family members and insiders can facilitate efficient decision making by reducing board faultlines. What bolsters the preference of having family members on the board is that the family usually does not trust outsiders, especially when they hold multiple directorships (Alfraih & Almutawa, 2017; Eulaiwi et al., 2016). However, as family firms enter to the cousin consortium stage, family members become less concerned with achieving absolute control over the board (Gharbi & Jarboui, 2017; Khlif, Karoui, Ingle, & El Manaa, 2016) and the appointment of outside independent directors becomes necessary for proper business functioning (Chahine & Safieddine, 2008; Gaaya, Lakkhal, & Lakkhal, 2017). When ownership becomes dispersed among cousins and later generations, the risk of intra-family conflict increases as nuclear families start to pursue divergent and self-serving goals at the expense of other nuclear

families and/or at the expense of minority shareholders and business interests (Al-Saidi & Al-Shammari, 2014; Khlif et al., 2016; Salloum & Azoury, 2012).

5.7. Performance

Performance reflects the ability of family businesses to meet their economic and non-economic goals (Yu et al., 2012). Economic goals refer to a desire to create firm financial value through cost efficiencies (Chua, Chrisman, De Massis, & Wang, 2018). Non-economic goals represent family-centric priorities such as sustaining transgenerational succession, providing employment to family members, maintaining family harmony and functionality, and increasing family influence and control over decision making (Chua et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2012).

Family business economic and non-economic goals are shown to be intricately related, with salient differences between private and public companies (Wagner, Block, Miller, Schwens, & Xi, 2015). In private family businesses, economic and non-economic goals are pulling in the same direction. It has been shown that achieving the non-economic goal of high family involvement in management and on the board of directors leads to an automatic alignment of interest between owners and family managers (Aloulou, 2018; Samara & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2018). Subsequently, monitoring costs are mitigated, and stewardship attitudes among managers prevail, therefore leading to economic advantages for family businesses (Aloulou, 2018; Salloum, Bouri et al., 2013; Salloum, Azoury et al., 2013; Samara & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2018), especially those that are in the first and second generation (Salloum, Bouri, Salloum, & Mercier-Suissa, 2016; Samara & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2018). As third and later generations become involved in the business, there is an increased risk of conflict arising between cousins who can have divergent views on how to run the business. In this case, economic performance becomes contingent on maintaining harmonious relationships between family members coming from different family factions (Mani & Lakhali, 2015), therefore allowing firms to take full advantage of the growing and diverse family resources without bearing the financial and emotional burdens associated with family conflict (Salloum et al., 2016; Samara & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2018).

In the case of public companies, however, family business economic and non-economic goals can pull in opposite directions. When family firms are primarily concerned with retaining managerial control within family hands almost exclusively, they subsequently become prone to lack of transparency, to more secrecy, and to expropriate the rights of minority shareholders (Khanchel El Mehdi, 2007). Additionally, family firms become risk-averse and begin to adopt a conservative attitude in their investment decisions, which limits their growth capacities and obstructs their financial performance (Hearn, 2011; Khanchel El Mehdi, 2007; Makhlouf, Laili, Ramlil, Al-Sufy, & Basah, 2018; Mnasri & Ellouze, 2015; Sultan et al., 2017). Nevertheless, when family members begin to dilute their control of the business partially, by recruiting non-family executives and appointing independent directors on the board, this practice signals to investors that the family adopts efficient governance mechanisms. Consequently, family firms become at lower risk of underpricing at the initial public offering stage (Chahine & Tohmé, 2009; Gharbi & Jarboui, 2017; Hearn, 2011), and send positive signals to investors that the business is seriously concerned with financial value creation, rather than merely satisfying the family's self-serving needs (Azoury & Bouri, 2015; Chahine & Tohmé, 2009; Yosra & Ben Ouda Sioud, 2011). In these circumstances, a trade-off therefore invariably exists between economic and non-economic goals, where the family must sacrifice some levels of influence and control to attract outside investors and raise more capital, thus maintaining/preserving the necessary resources to grow and to remain competitive.

5.8. Social and economic impact

The social and economic impact refers to studies discussing the interaction between the family business and its environment, tracing the contributions of family businesses to society (Yu et al., 2012). Within this dimension, research has examined the family business Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and the family business Corporate Social Irresponsibility (CSIR), providing mixed results in both categories. As for CSR, most research shows that high family involvement in management and control is associated with a greater affinity to CSR (Barakatg, Pérez, & Ariza, 2015; Elbaz & Laguir, 2014). Family members are driven to increase their CSR investments because they believe that the company is an extension of themselves and their family values (Gupta et al., 2010). As such, family managers and directors develop a sense of obligation to contribute to the society in which they operate (ElGammal, El-Kassar, & Cnaan Messarra, 2018; El-Kassar, ElGammal, & Fahed-Sreih, 2018) and consider CSR investments as a means to gain a good family reputation (Elbaz & Laguir, 2014). At the same time, one study shows that family firms are mainly concerned with their family's financial interest, which leads them to invest less in CSR activities and to focus more on the accumulation of wealth (Elbaz, Laguir, Marais, & Stagliano, 2016).

Concerning CSIR, some studies show that family firms avoid disclosing their financial and corporate social and environmental information (Haddad, AlShattarat, AbuGhazaleh, & Nobanee, 2015; Jamali et al., 2010), and engage in corporate tax avoidance (Alfraih & Almutawa, 2017; Gaaya et al., 2017). Also, publicly traded family firms are prone to engage in the practice of earnings management (Bataineh et al., 2018; Idris, Siam, & Nassar, 2018), defined as manipulating accounting rules in a way that inflates earnings, revenue, or total assets (Healy & Wahlen, 1999). These orientations are typically led by entrenched family CEOs (Alqatamin, Aribi, & Arun, 2017) who desire to preserve family control over the firm by providing a distorted positive view of firm leadership to outside investors (Bataineh et al., 2018; Idris et al., 2018). At the same time, other studies show that high family involvement in the top management team leads to a decrease in earnings management, due to the family's concern with preserving a good reputation (Lassoued, Ben Rejeb Attia, & Sassi, 2017; Saleem Salem Alzoubi, 2016).

Fig. 1 maps the results of past research on family businesses in the Arab Middle East. As shown in Fig. 1, contextual embeddedness in the Arab Middle East affects family businesses across various dimensions. More specifically, Fig. 1 shows how collectivism, patriarchy, and the prevalence of institutional voids shape family roles, family dynamics, succession processes, business strategies, human resources practices, and governance structures, all of which collectively impact the family business performance and societal outcomes.

6. Avenues for future research

In this section, I build on the limitations of past research to provide non-exhaustive suggestions that can advance future research on family businesses in the Arab Middle East. Tables 4–11 summarize the reviewed literature and the corresponding future research avenues suggested within each theme.

Family business roles. Research on family business roles indicates that employees show a high commitment to Arab Middle Eastern family businesses. In parallel, the broader management literature has highlighted the importance of differentiating between various commitment types (i.e., affective, normative, calculative or imperative) to better understand the antecedents and consequences of family employees (Dawson et al., 2015; Sharma & Irving, 2005) and non-family employees' commitment to family firms. Whereas affective commitment reflects congruence between firm goals and employees' goals, imperative commitment indicates that employees will be committed to the business because they believe that they are not qualified or trained enough to hold a position in other businesses (Sharma & Irving, 2005).

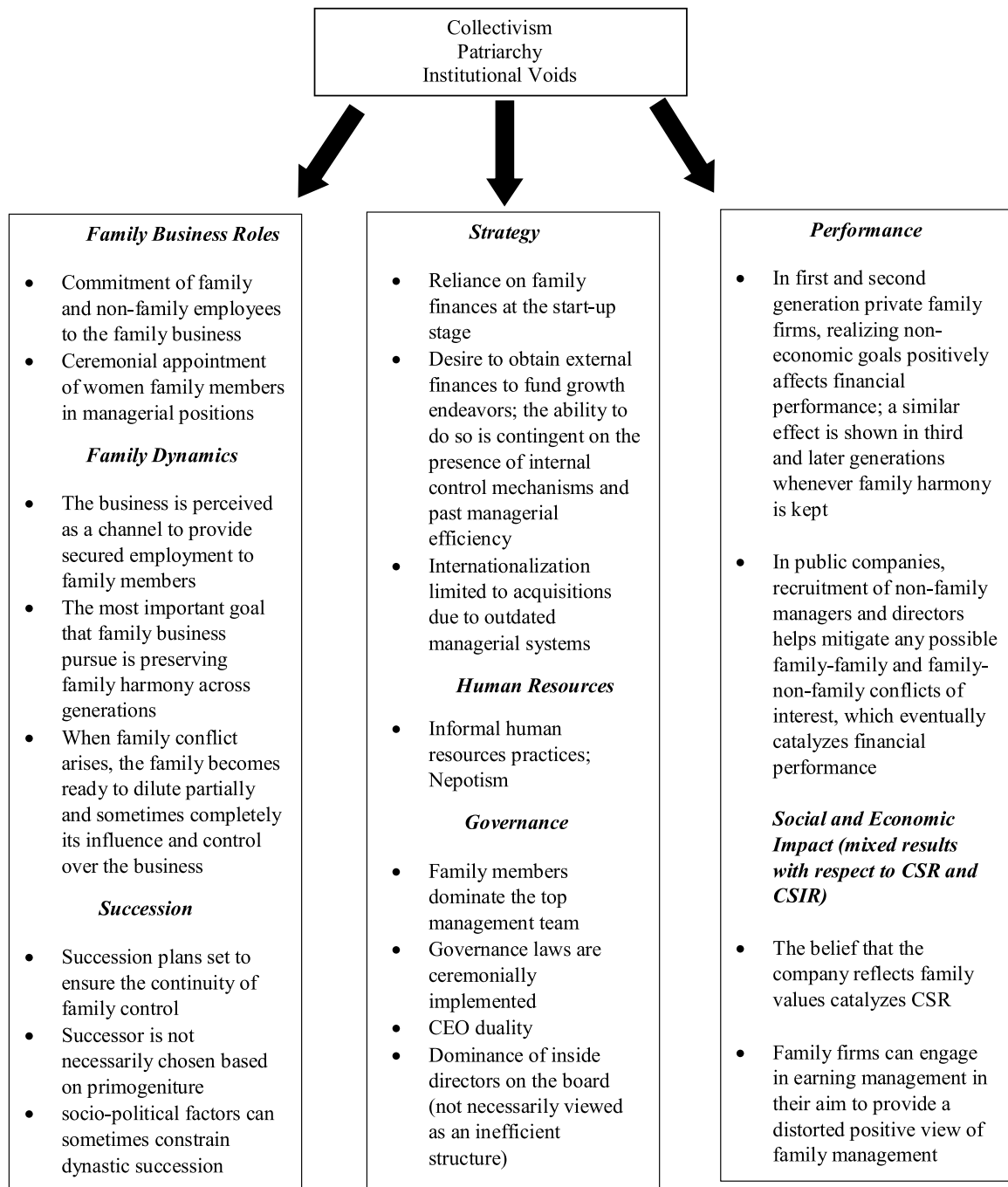


Fig. 1. Past Research on Family Business in the Arab Middle East.

Hence, while affective commitment can reveal a bright side of the family business workforce, through increased business contributions and knowledge sharing, imperative commitment can lead to the exact opposite, resulting in less productivity of the workforce and paving the way for shirking and free riding. As this review showed, family employees expect to be provided with employment opportunities regardless of adequate education or training, therefore running the risk of developing imperative commitment (Gupta et al., 2010). This in turn makes employee commitment not necessarily desirable in family firms, especially if it was normative or calculative. Hence, the question arises as to how do prevalent cultural traits combine with other family variables, such as the degree to which the family considers meritocracy in their employment decisions (Samara & Arenas, 2017), in shaping the type of commitment developed by family employees?

Concomitantly, it is essential to explore the antecedents and consequences of the commitment of non-family employees to family businesses. In this context, “wasta,” which translates into employees being hired and promoted based on their connections to influential people or entities, is prevalent in the Arab Middle East (e.g., Hutchings & Weir, 2006). Hence, the commitment reported by non-family members may not necessarily be affective but can also be calculative or imperative depending on the degree to which their connection to influential family members played a role in their employment (Jaskiewicz, Combs, Shanine, & Kacmar, 2017; Samara, Jamali, Parada et al., 2019). Hence, a relevant question to ask here relates to how “wasta” interacts with different individual-level attitudes of non-family employees to affect the different types of commitment that they will develop?

Concerning the perception of women and their role, research has

Table 4
Summary of Past Research on Family Business Roles and Directions for Future Research.

| Dimensions | Findings | Sample questions for future research |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Family Business Roles</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High commitment of family employees because of the intricate relationship between the business reputation and their family name and reputation - High commitment of non-family employees to the business due to a sense of identity and pride in belonging to the family business - Controlling owners claim to have positive attitudes toward having women in leadership positions - The CEO position is exclusively set for male family members - Ceremonial presence of women in management teams - Women managerial discretion constrained by the approval of influential male family members and by their ability to fulfill domestic roles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is high (family and non-family) employee commitment always beneficial for Arab Middle Eastern family firms? - How do collectivism and the degree to which the family considers meritocracy in their employment decisions affect the type of commitment being developed by family employees? - How does “wasta” interact with individual-level attitudes to affect the type of commitment being developed by non-family employees? - How does the spouse level of education and family tradition interact with the institutional milieu to affect the situation of wives and daughters in Arab Middle Eastern family firms? - How does the level of experience and education of women affect the managerial discretion they have in family businesses? - How does the presence of female role models affect the managerial discretion of women? - How does the quality of the relationship between women and patriarchs or other male figures affect women’s access to managerial seats and decision-making power? - How do different forms of family blood or non-blood relations affect women’s situation in family firms? - How are women non-family members treated in Arab Middle Eastern family businesses? - How do attitudes towards women change over time and across generations? |

emphasized the ceremonial appointment of women family members, who are granted little managerial discretion beyond what the male patriarch allows. In this dimension, the values, family tradition, and the educational and social background of the spouse can be important factors affecting the situation of women in family firms (Campopiano et al., 2017). Accordingly, future research can investigate how the spouse’s level of education, values, and family tradition interact with their institutional milieu to affect the situation of wives and daughters in Arab Middle Eastern family firms.

Moreover, it is crucial to investigate the antecedents leading to the involvement of women family members in top management teams for a better understanding of their ability to have effective decision-making power. If women family members are granted access to managerial positions regardless of adequate experience and education, then this may contribute to their invisibility in the business (Campopiano et al., 2017). However, if women have an adequate education level and experience inside and outside the business, then this may empower them when they enter the family business, especially if they have interacted

Table 5
Summary of Past Research on Family Business Dynamics and Directions for Future Research.

| Dimensions | Findings | Sample questions for future research |
|------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Family Dynamics</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurial activity is strongly driven by the desire to provide secure employment to the extended family - The desire for family employment decreases in third and later generations as family members become less interested in joining the business - Family harmony is the most important goal that family businesses pursue - Quality relationships among family members are associated with strong bonds of reciprocity between employees - Risk of conflict between family members increases when third, and later generations become involved in the business | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the various family structures and parenting styles in the Arab Middle East? And how do they shape family members’ values, personalities, emotions, and interactions? - How do different levels and types of conflict develop in Arab Middle Eastern family firms? - How do polygamous marriages affect the sources of conflict between family members, and what are the possible solutions to these conflicts? - How does the level of religiosity affect relationships among family members and between family and non-family members of the extended family, at different ownership stages? - How does Wasta affect the relationship between family and non-family members in the workplace? - How do emotions mold the way family business employees interact with each other? |

Table 6
Summary of Past Research on Succession and Directions for Future Research.

| Dimensions | Findings | Sample questions for future research |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <i>Succession</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The primary objective behind the use of succession plans is to ensure that a family member will exclusively succeed the predecessor - Succession plans are used to bolster balance between the family and business systems - Particularistic norms are used for choosing successors: 1-male membership to the nuclear family of the incumbent and 2-develop a shared vision with the incumbent - High levels of corruption at the country level sometimes constrain the ability to sustain a transgenerational succession | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the most important factors affecting intra-family succession in different Arab Middle Eastern countries? - What are the necessary skills and capacities that successors need to develop to ensure their leadership development and success as future leaders? - How do internal and external stakeholders affect the succession process? - How do birth order and personality types of offspring affect the succession process? - How do dyadic interactions between the patriarch and his offspring affect pre and post succession scenarios? - How do future generation successors’ assumptions and expectations about their family, their business, and their role within them shape their intention to join the family business? |

with other female role models, such as their mothers or aunts, who also have decision-making power in the company (Samara, Jamali, & Lapeira, 2019). Hence, some relevant questions to keep in mind for

Table 7
Summary of Past Research on Strategy and Directions for Future Research.

| Dimensions | Findings | Sample questions for future research |
|-----------------|--|---|
| <i>Strategy</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preference for using family finances and savings as a source of funding at the start-up stage - Reliance on external financing once the business is mature; ability to obtain external finances is conditional upon historical managerial efficiency, sustaining corporate entrepreneurship and the presence of internal control structures - Family firms internationalization is restricted to acquisitions due to a lack of understanding of foreign markets and outdated managerial structures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How is the strategic plan formed, and how does it unfold in Arab Middle Eastern family firms? - How do different growth intentions and aspiration levels affect the willingness and ability of family firms to obtain external funding? - How does the family social network affect the ability of the business to obtain external finances? - What is the impact of family firms' reliance on either Islamic or conventional finance on the business strategic plans and growth prospects? - How do economic downturns impact the willingness of family firms to rely on external finances? - During economic downturns, under which circumstances will family firms be considered a more attractive investment to financial institutions? - How do environmental uncertainty and socio-political instability affect family firms' investment decisions and internationalization prospects? - How do Arab Middle Eastern family firms enact different internationalization decisions? (internationalization speed, the extent to which the firm's activities depend on foreign markets, the geographical reach, and the structural agreements they use when venturing abroad) |

Table 8
Summary of Past Research on Human Resources and Directions for Future Research.

| Dimensions | Findings | Sample questions for future research |
|------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Human Resources</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal human resources practices in family businesses - Prevalence of nepotism in Arab Middle Eastern family businesses - Nepotism is not necessarily linked to non-meritocratic human resources practices - Formalized human resource practices when family firms grow in size and complexity and move to the cousins' consortium stage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent does the presence of formal and professionalized human resources practices help attract qualified family employees while repelling unqualified family members? - How do collectivist or other affective considerations impact the decisions of qualified family members to stay or to leave the family firm? - How is the family business brand perceived in the Arab Middle East? And under which circumstances can it be leveraged to attract qualified non-family employees? - How do religion and religiosity affect human resources practices in the Arab Middle East? |

Table 9
Summary of Past Research on Governance and Directions for Future Research.

| Dimensions | Findings | Sample questions for future research |
|-------------------|---|--|
| <i>Governance</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family members dominate the management team and the board of directors especially in first and second generations; which reduces board faultlines - Prevalence of CEO duality - State laws and reforms aimed at improving governance structure are not necessarily implemented due to a weak law enforcement climate - Appointment of outside independent directors is common in third and later generations and public companies due to the risk of intra-family and family-non-family conflict | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does cultural embeddedness in different countries of the Arab Middle East affect firm governance configurations and operating sectors? - What role do political connections play in shaping the corporate governance structure of family firms? - What role do informal institutions (e.g., in-group collectivism, Wasta) play in substituting the board's monitoring function and in curbing opportunistic behavior in family firms? - How do different governance structures unfold in multi-family businesses? - What role do family offices play in the Arab Middle East? - Under which circumstances will family firms accept independent directors to sit on their board? |

Table 10
Summary of Past Research on Performance and Directions for Future Research.

| Dimensions | Findings | Sample questions for future research |
|--------------------|---|--|
| <i>Performance</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In private companies, achieving the non-economic goal of increased family control over the business leads to an alignment of interest between owners and family managers and leads to increased financial performance - In third and later generations led private businesses; financial performance becomes contingent on maintaining harmonious family relations - In public companies, when family members dilute their absolute control over the business by gradually involving non-family members in the management team, they send positive signals to investors, and they are subsequently able to increase their financial performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do goals in Arab Middle Eastern family firms develop? And how do goals change over time and across generations? - What can be the idiosyncratic family business goals that are typically found in the Arab Middle East? - Are family business economic and non-economic goals explicitly stated and communicated to different family firm stakeholders? - How does the achievement of a socio-emotional goal (e.g., preserving family harmony or influence and control) shift the priorities of the family to other non-economic or economic goals in a sequential attention logic? - Under which circumstances will family firms show resilience in first and later generations and in different countries? |

future research include: how does the level of experience and education of women and the presence of female role models affect women's decision-making power and managerial discretion in family firms? How do different forms of family blood or non-blood relations (e.g., daughter/niece on the one hand and wife/in-laws on the other) affect the decision-making power of women?

Furthermore, the broader family business literature has so far granted scant attention to the situation of women non-family members in family businesses (Campopiano et al., 2017; Campopiano, Rinaldi, Sciascia, & De Massis, 2019; Samara, Jamali, Lapeira et al., 2019).

Table 11
Summary of Past Research on Social and Economic Impact and Directions for Future Research.

| Dimensions | Findings | Sample questions for future research |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Social and Economic Impact</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High family involvement in ownership management and direction is associated with higher affinity to CSR (as a means to gain good family reputation); One study shows the opposite effect by family firms being self-interested and focused on the accumulation of wealth - Family firms sometimes engage in fraudulent behavior, such as corporate tax avoidance - Family firms practice earnings management to provide a distorted positive view of family leadership to outside investors; - One study shows a decrease in earning management in family firms due to their long-term orientation and the respective negative reputational consequences of earning management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do different levels of family involvement in ownership management and board composition affect family firms' social (ir) responsibility? - Under which circumstances will socioemotional wealth reveal its bright or dark side in Arab Middle Eastern family firms? - How does national context shape how family firms perceive their responsibilities towards their various internal and external stakeholders across countries? - How does religiosity affect the family firm's socially responsible and irresponsible practices? - What are the motives, practices, and outcomes (family-related or business-related) of family and corporate philanthropy? - What are the possible consequences of engaging in philanthropy in the business sphere and the family sphere? - Is philanthropy only practiced in the home country, or does it expand to other less developed countries in the region? - Do Arab Middle Eastern family firms understand the difference between philanthropy and social responsibility? |

Women non-family members can face more significant challenges in not only accessing managerial seats but also in entering a family business, especially given the prevalence of patriarchy that sets stringent traditional expectations for the role of women in society. It is equally important to explore how attitudes towards women employment change over time, especially as potential future successors and family managers are educated in Western societies and as increased awareness is developed around the benefits that women bring to the family business management team and the boardroom (Campopiano et al., 2019; Samara, Jamali, Lapeira et al., 2019).

6.1. Family dynamics

In this dimension, there is a need to understand better how values and identities (Parada, Samara, Dawson, & Bonet, 2019) develop in families embedded in the Arab Middle East and the concomitant effects they have on family relationships. We still know little about the antecedents leading to harmonious and cohesive relationships to develop in family firms, especially when the family business moves to the cousin consortium stage. Delving deep into this issue is not trivial since, as this review shows, maintaining family harmony across generations is the most important goal that Arab Middle Eastern family firms pursue. Hence, what are the different prevalent family structures (Nordqvist, Sharma, & Chirico, 2014) and prevalent parenting styles (e.g., authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative) in the Arab Middle East (Jaskiewicz et al., 2017)? How do they shape family members' identities,

values, personalities, and emotions (Labaki, Michael-Tsabari, & Zachary, 2013)? And what are the possible consequences of these traits for family relationships and communication patterns?

Furthermore, the prevalence of Islam as an institution granting the right to polygamous marriages may result in different family dynamics being developed in the Arab Middle East, dynamics not traditionally encountered in Western family businesses. For instance, polygamous marriages may result in new dynamics between siblings sharing the same father but different mothers. Hence, understanding the interaction between marriage types and relationships between family members in the workplace can provide nuanced insights on the sources and potential solutions to different kinds of conflict (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2004) that may develop in Arab Middle Eastern family businesses.

6.2. Succession

Research shows that intergenerational succession in the Arab Middle East is not always guaranteed, especially when weak institutional structures lead potential successors to venture abroad in their pursuit of a stable environment where they encounter less corruption. In this regard, it is worthy to note striking differences among Arab Middle Eastern countries with respect to the presence of institutional voids and corruption, making factors preventing succession not necessarily homogeneous across countries. Indeed, the level of corruption and political instability varies significantly between countries that are economically developed and where political institutions are strong and active, such as the UAE, and Qatar, and other settings hurdled with corruption, and economic and political instability (World Bank, 2014). In each of these settings, factors preventing intra-family succession may be different. They can be more related to micro factors such as the willingness, motivation and aspirations of potential successors to gain access to the CEO suite, or the willingness of incumbents, usually family patriarchs, to relinquish control of the business (De Massis, Chua, & Chrisman, 2008). They can also be related to relational factors associated with the interaction within the broader family unit and conflict between siblings or can come from non-family employees resisting intra-family succession (De Massis et al., 2008). Hence, what are the most critical factors affecting intra-family succession in different Arab Middle Eastern countries? How do future generations' assumptions and expectations about their family, their business, and their role within them shape their intention to become successors? Also, what are the necessary skills and capacities that successors need to develop to ensure their leadership development and future success as business leaders (Kandade, Samara, Parada, & Dawson, 2020)?

Moreover, a promising area for future research is to delve deeper into birth order effects on personality types of offspring and the consequential impact these have on the succession process. Research shows that families are complex entities and that birth order can affect the personality of offspring (Jaskiewicz et al., 2017). In the Arab Middle East, the eldest male child who is charged with more responsibility than the rest is called "the man of the house" (Alavi & Shaikhullin, 2015). While this child is more likely to develop leadership skills and to have a sense of authority over other children, he may also develop a sense of independence and a desire to challenge or change the practices of the incumbent, the patriarch. The youngest child is often absolved from the responsibility of being the man of the house (Samara & Paul, 2019). Hence, the first-born male may be less agreeable and more autocratic than younger children, which may create clashes between him and the incumbent. Thus, some relevant questions here pertain to how does the dyadic interaction between the patriarch and his offspring play out in both the family and business spheres, and how does it affect pre and post succession scenarios?

6.3. Strategy

In this dimension, the individual and firm-level variables that can

affect family firms' willingness to rely on external finances have received scant attention. The reluctance of family businesses to use Islamic or conventional finance can hint at owners being highly concerned with reputational consequences associated with bankruptcy (Gallo & Vilaseca, 1996). Moreover, different future growth plans and aspiration levels can affect the willingness of family firms to rely on external finances at the start-up stage. Indeed, little attention has been granted to how the strategic plan is formed and unfolds in the Arab Middle East, which is an essential starting point to understand the strategic decisions of family firms and the respective consequences on their growth plans (Mazzola, Marchisio, & Astrachan, 2008).

Furthermore, it would also be interesting to explore how economic downturns can determine the willingness and ability of family firms to access external finances. For example, the broader literature shows that, during economic recessions, family firms have easier and cheaper access to external financial resources due to the perception that family firms are more resilient than non-family firms (Crespi & Martín-Oliver, 2015). Hence, given the prevalence of heterogeneous forms of family firms in the Arab Middle East (Samara & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2018), it would be interesting to understand, during economic downturns, the circumstances under which family firms can be considered as more attractive investments to financial institutions.

Concerning internationalization, research has shown that the strong desire of Arab Middle Eastern family firms to maintain family influence and control and to sustain financial independence may result in a reluctance to internationalize as these decisions involve a significant amount of investment and uncertainty. At the same time, many Arab Middle Eastern countries face harsh situations in the home country, stemming from weak state institutional structures and some countries being hindered with terrorism, war, and corruption (Zahra, 2011). Under such circumstances, the priorities of family firms may shift from preserving influence and control and maintaining social ties in the home country to securing family wealth and, in some extreme cases, securing family lives by moving their primary operations abroad. Hence, how do environmental uncertainty and socio-political instability affect family firms' internationalization prospects?

More broadly, there is a need to explore in more detail different internationalization paths that family firms can take (Pukall & Calabrò, 2014). For example, understanding the speed of family firms internationalization (process), the extent to which the firm's activities depend on foreign markets (scale), the geographical reach (scope), and a fresh look into the structural agreements that family firms use when venturing abroad (entry modes) can provide nuanced insights into how Arab Middle Eastern family businesses internationalize (De Massis, Frattini, Majocchi, & Piscitello, 2018).

6.4. Human resources

In terms of human resources management, scant attention has been granted to human resources topics in the Arab Middle East, such as those related to employee attraction, training and development, compensation packages, maintaining morale, and performance appraisals (Carlson, Upton, & Seaman, 2006). The main focus of past research has been on the prevalent practice of nepotism, calling into question the capacity of family businesses to attract a qualified workforce. A promising line for future research is to investigate how family firms can attract and recruit qualified family employees. Indeed, Khanin (2013) discusses how the privileged treatment of unqualified family members can catalyze unfairness perceptions among their qualified siblings, leading them to form turnover intentions and to search for alternative career paths. Hence, it would be interesting to investigate how family firms manage to balance collectivist considerations (e.g., a desire for providing security to all family members) on the one hand, and to attract and retain a qualified family workforce on the other hand. Future research can investigate the extent to which formal and professionalized human resources practices can help attract qualified family employees while repelling unqualified

family members. Other relevant questions can touch on how collectivist or other affective considerations affect the decisions of qualified family members to stay or to leave the family firm?

Furthermore, the Quran and the Bible both emphasize the importance of courtesy and fairness in employment relationships (Branine & Pollard, 2010). In Islam and in Christianity, the two dominant religions in the Arab Middle East, people are expected to ensure justice to stakeholders and welfare to humankind. Future research can investigate how religiosity might affect employment relationships in the Arab Middle East. While religiosity can reveal a bright side of family business employment, through promoting justice and fairness, it can also show a dark side in countries where religious diversity exists. Relevant research questions here include: Do family firms only recruit people that are from the same religion of the family? How does religious diversity within a family business influence human resources practices when some non-family employees share the same religion of family members, and others come from different religious backgrounds (Fathallah, Sidani, & Khalil, 2019)?

6.5. Governance

In this dimension, scant attention has been granted to the role of political connections shaping the corporate governance structure of family firms. Future research in the Arab Middle East can investigate how family businesses work around institutional voids to access scarce resources. For example, when dominant political parties hold absolute power in the government, family firms may resort to appointing current or former politicians on the board of directors and/or to allocate business profit to fund political parties and electoral campaigns in order to facilitate future business operations and access to resources. Hence, what role do political connections play in shaping the corporate governance structure of family firms?

Moreover, as shown in this review, board independence cannot always be attained due to weak law enforcement capabilities of governments in some countries and due to the reluctance of powerful families to accept the interference of strangers in their family and business affairs (Samara & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2018). Therefore, it becomes essential to tap into the role of informal institutions in substituting the board's monitoring function and curbing opportunistic behavior (Parada, Gimeno, Samara, & Saris, 2020). As previously shown, "wasta" indicates that people who have strong connections with powerful entities can access top managerial positions. While "wasta" can create a group of entrenched family and non-family managers pursuing their own self-serving needs, it can also lead employees to develop moral imperatives derived from a feeling of obligation to serve the business family that has hired them. Hence, a relevant question to explore relates to the circumstances where "wasta" can substitute the need for formal governance structures in Arab Middle Eastern family firms (Pindado & Requejo, 2015).

Furthermore, research has highlighted the risks associated with family firms expropriating minority shareholder wealth, while paying scant attention to a particular family business form: the multifamily business. A multifamily business is defined as "an organization that was founded by at least two nonrelated families who shared ownership and strategic control" (Pieper, Smith, Kudlats, & Astrachan, 2015, p. 1313). In this context, the risk of conflict exists between the multi unrelated family shareholders. Hence, it becomes essential to explore how corporate governance structures unfold in the latter case, given the presence of two unrelated patriarchs, both trying to serve their families through the business. Does a multifamily business adopt more informal practices, or does the presence of multiple family forces induce family firms to more professionalization and adoption of formal governance principles? For example, in the presence of two family patriarchs, it would be interesting to investigate who will be elected as the CEO and whether the CEO duality will persist, how the board will be structured, along with the resultant dynamics in the management team and the

board of directors.

6.6. Performance

In the Arab Middle East, research shows that the family's pursuit of non-economic goals is intricately related to business financial performance. However, even though they have been implicitly alluded to, non-economic goals are yet to be explicitly investigated in the Arab Middle East. This is unfortunate since a single focus on economic goals paints an incomplete picture of family business performance (Chua et al., 2018; Samara & Paul, 2019; Samara, 2017)

Economic goals and non-economic goals are diverse, can either be business-related or family-related, and they are affected by various temporal orientations and underlying logics (Basco, 2017b; Pieper, Williams, Manley, & Matthews, 2019). Future research can investigate the interaction between the Arab Middle East context and events, conditions, ownership stages, and family variables that might affect how family firms develop their economic and non-economic objectives (Basco, 2017b; Williams et al., 2018). Future research can explore the extent to which family business goals are unique to the Arab Middle East (Williams et al., 2018)? And the extent to which economic and non-economic goals are explicitly stated and communicated to different family firm stakeholders across the family firm (Samara & Paul, 2019)?

In this vein, socioemotional wealth (Gomez-Mejía, Haynes, Núñez-Nickel, Jacobson, & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007; Fehre & Weber, 2019) can provide a valuable lens to investigate the interplay between economic and non-economic goals (Samara, Jamali, Sierra, & Parada, 2018; Williams et al., 2018). For example, future research can investigate how the achievement of a socioemotional goal (e.g., preserving family harmony or influence and control) shifts the priorities of the family to other non-economic or economic goals in a sequential attention logic (Williams et al., 2018). Furthermore, given that some countries in the Arab Middle East are hurdled with war and political instability, tapping into the literature of resilience (Chrisman, Chua, & Steier, 2011) can provide a useful lens to understand under which circumstances family firms will be able to bounce back from harsh situations encountered in the home country, survive, and thrive across generations. This form of investigation is particularly important as this review finds no research in countries experiencing war and social disorder such as in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, and Libya.

6.7. Social and economic impact

The fact that mixed results have largely dominated the family business-CSR interface literature over two decades suggests that the social and economic impact of family businesses in the Arab Middle East deserves revisiting through a more nuanced lens.

From a structural perspective, the diversity of family business forms in the Arab Middle East calls for exploring the circumstances under which family firms will show high levels of social responsibility. For example, Samara et al. (2018) show that the interplay between the degree of family involvement in ownership, management, and board composition, and the institutional context combine into specific configurations to affect family businesses' affinity to CSR. Indeed, the assumption that governance structures in family businesses in the Arab Middle East are similar to other family businesses worldwide can instill a distorted homogenous view of family firms, especially in light of the institutional and governance idiosyncrasies present in the Arab Middle East, as highlighted in the review above. Hence, future research can explore in more depth how different governance contingencies combine into specific configurations that shape in turn the practice of CSR and CSIR.

Furthermore, Cruz, Larraza-Kintana, Garcés-Galdeano, and Berrone (2014) show that family firms can be socially responsible to external stakeholders and socially irresponsible toward their internal stakeholders simultaneously. In this context, the Arab Middle East constitutes

a distinctive institutional context where CSR challenges remain quite diverse. For example, some countries in the Gulf region, such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, have the highest human development indexes, leading to the conclusion that internal CSR challenges (Jamali, Samara, Zollo, & Ciappei, 2019) may not necessarily constitute the most pressing social challenge for family firms. At the same time, these countries have the highest oil production rates in the world and face a multitude of environmental CSR challenges. Other countries, such as Comoros, Djibouti, Yemen, and Sudan, have the lowest human development indexes in the world, indicating a pressing need to investigate how family firms can contribute directly or indirectly to human development in these countries (World Bank, 2014). Hence, an interesting question here pertains to how context shapes how family firms perceive their responsibilities towards their various internal and external stakeholders across countries.

Moreover, given the prevalence of Islam in the Arab Middle East and that religiosity in the region is high (Jamali & Sdiani, 2013), family firms' philanthropy becomes an area that warrants an in-depth investigation. Depending on the national context in which they are embedded, firms might be compelled either religiously and/or by law to "Zakat," an amount of savings (usually 2.5 %) that needs to be paid to the less fortunate members of society. Future research can investigate the different motives (religious or otherwise), practices, and outcomes (family-related or business-related) of family and corporate philanthropy and the interplay between them (Feliu & Botero, 2016). Furthermore, philanthropic contributions can show a dark side by leading to a false belief that the firm has paid its debt to society and no longer needs to engage in socially responsible behaviors. Indeed, corporate social responsibility and philanthropy are two different concepts (Samara et al., 2018); hence, investigating whether Arab Middle Eastern family firms understand the differences and interplay between them provides another important avenue for future research.

7. Concluding remarks

This review suffers from limitations. First, this review is restricted to scholarship published in the English language and did not capture other published scholarship written in Arabic and/or French that are typical languages used in some parts of the Arab Middle East. Second, this review has considered the Arab Middle East as a homogenous institutional context. However, recent research highlights the variegated nature of institutions operating within the Arab Middle East and stresses on the importance of accounting for country-specific institutional forces affecting business behavior (Jamali, Jain, Samara, & Zoghbi, 2020).

Family businesses in the Arab Middle East have historically been, and continue to be, the main engine driving the socio-economic development of the region. In this vein, providing a comprehensive account of what we know about family businesses in the Arab Middle East becomes an important and timely step forward to advance our understanding of family business behavior across contexts (Soleimanof et al., 2018; Wright et al., 2014), thus contributing to the maturity and legitimacy of the family business field (Pérez Rodríguez & Basco, 2011; Payne, 2018) and supporting policymakers in defining the role that business families and family businesses can take in local and regional development programs (Basco, 2015).

This review contributes to the broader family business literature in significant ways. First, the results of this review add to the conversation corroborating that socioemotional priorities do not always have equal weight (e.g., Debicki et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2018). Notably, results show that the combination of patriarchy and collectivism make preserving family harmony across generations the most important goal that Arab Middle Eastern family businesses pursue insofar that they are ready to sacrifice influence and control whenever they feel that family harmony is threatened by the dominant presence of family members in the management team. Furthermore, the succession process is molded in a way that the future family business successor is not necessarily chosen

based on his managerial skills or even on the primogeniture rule; instead, he is selected based on his perceived capacity to sustain the vision of the patriarch and his perceived ability to fulfill the family's affective and financial needs.

Second, this review contributes to the conversation discussing the interplay between non-economic goals and economic goals in family firms (e.g., Basco, 2017b; Chrisman & Patel, 2012; Vazquez & Rocha, 2018; Williams et al., 2018). Results show that in the Arab Middle East, the dominant trade-off logic between economic and non-economic goals in family firms does not always hold, suggesting that economic and non-economic goals are sometimes harmonious and positively related (Vazquez & Rocha, 2018). Results in fact show that the pursuit of non-economic goals can bring many benefits to first and second-generation private firms, in terms of mitigating conflict of interest and having a qualified and affectively committed workforce; and that these benefits will continue to accrue in third and later generations private firms if family harmony is preserved across generations. However, the benefits of pursuing non-economic goals significantly weaken and eventually become burdens for firm financial performance when the family fails to get along and/or when the firm is publicly traded. As ownership becomes dispersed among cousins that fail to get along and/or when non-family members hold business shares, the ability of family firms to achieve financial value becomes contingent on involving more non-family executives in the top management team and on the adoption of internal control mechanisms in their governance system.

To conclude, this review takes the first necessary step towards

organizing what we know about family businesses in the Arab Middle East and highlights important avenues that deserve more attention in future research. Scholars interested in investigating family businesses in the Arab Middle East are encouraged to pursue collaborations that are international in scope and to strive for more theoretical depth and methodological rigor, therefore contributing to a more refined understanding of family business behavior and outcomes across contexts (Samara et al., 2018; Soleimanof et al., 2018; Wright et al., 2014).

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Georges Samara: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Visualization, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing.

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Appendix A. Journal, Impact Factor, Year

| Journal | Scopus Impact Factor (2018) | 2000–2006 | 2007–2012 | 2013–2018 | Total | Percentage of Sample |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|----------------------|
| International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research | 3.23 | | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5.6 |
| Journal of Family Business Management | 1.28 | | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5.6 |
| Managerial Auditing Journal | 1.63 | | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5.6 |
| Corporate Governance: The International Journal of Business in Society | 2.26 | | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4.1 |
| Family Business Review | 6.05 | 3 | | | 3 | 4.1 |
| International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal | 4.01 | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4.1 |
| Journal of African Business | 2.44 | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4.1 |
| Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies Journal | 0.26 | | | 2 | 2 | 2.7 |
| Corporate Governance: An International Review | 3.91 | | 2 | | 2 | 2.7 |
| International Journal of Accounting and Information Management | 1.52 | | | 2 | 2 | 2.7 |
| International Journal of Business Performance Management | 0.6 | | | 2 | 2 | 2.7 |
| Journal of Business Research | 5.32 | | | 2 | 2 | 2.7 |
| Journal of Management & Governance | 1.63 | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2.7 |
| Management Decision | 2.74 | | | 2 | 2 | 2.7 |
| American Business Law Journal | 0.36 | | 1 | | 1 | 1.4 |
| Business Ethics Quarterly | 2.12 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Cogent Economics & Finance | 0.76 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Emerging Markets Review | 2.63 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Eurasian Business Review | 2.23 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Journal of Business and Globalisation | 0.75 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics | 0.68 | | 1 | | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Journal of Disclosure and Governance | 1.09 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Journal of Emerging Markets | 2.16 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management | 0.49 | | 1 | | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship | 1.51 | | 1 | | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Journal of Innovation Management | 1.32 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Journal of Law and Management | 0.74 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Journal of Managerial Finance | 1.12 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Journal of Organizational Analysis | 1.22 | | 1 | | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Review of Financial Analysis | 2.25 | | 1 | | 1 | 1.4 |
| International Small Business Journal | 5.48 | | 1 | | 1 | 1.4 |
| Journal of Applied Business Research | 0.42 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Journal of Business Ethics | 4.46 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Journal of Small Business Strategy | 1.81 | | 1 | | 1 | 1.4 |
| Management and Marketing | 0.7 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Managerial Finance | 0.73 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Personnel Review | 1.95 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |

(continued on next page)

(continued)

| Journal | Scopus Impact Factor (2018) | 2000–2006 | 2007–2012 | 2013–2018 | Total | Percentage of Sample |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|----------------------|
| Review of Managerial Science | 2.7 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Studies in Economics and Finance | 0.92 | | 1 | | 1 | 1.4 |
| Sustainability | 3.01 | | | 1 | 1 | 1.4 |
| The Journal of Risk Finance | 0.96 | | 1 | | 1 | 1.4 |
| Total | | 3 | 21 | 46 | 70 | 100 |

Appendix B. Supplementary data

Supplementary material related to this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2020.100359>.

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