

Sustainability & Gender - Intricacies in Family Firms

Adelinda RAMOS
Universidade Portucalense Infante D. Henrique, Porto, Portugal
40604@alunos.upt.pt

Shital JAYANTILAL
Universidade Portucalense Infante D. Henrique, Porto, Portugal
shital@upt.pt

Filipe SARDO
Universidade da Beira Interior, Covilhã, Portugal
filipe.sardo@ubi.pt

Abstract

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development seeks to promote social inclusion, environmentally responsible behavior, and economic growth at the horizon of 2030. Gender equality, in particular, has been identified as one of the primary sustainable development goals (SDGs) that nations must achieve. To meet this goal, the gradual inclusion of women in management roles is a critical measure to be taken. Opportunely, gender-related issues have been gaining increased momentum, especially within family firms, where traditional male dominance is being challenged. Known for playing a prevalent role in the global economy, family firms have generally been successful in embracing stakeholder concerns and advocating for greater diversity and inclusivity. However, the study of SDGs in family firms remains underdeveloped, with a paucity of works that systematically incorporate the nexus of gender and sustainability. This paper feeds into this discussion by presenting a systematic literature review on the dynamics of gender and sustainability in family firms, contributing to the development of knowledge in the field and supporting the sustainability of such firms and success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Based on the articles, our analysis reveals that gender and sustainability in family firms has been explored in connection with three main themes: performance, corporate citizenship behaviour, and succession. We call for future research to examine the aforementioned themes through diverse angles and to employ “novel” methodologies to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of gender in the context of family firm sustainability.

Keywords: Family Firms, Sustainability, Gender

Introduction

The impact that family firms have on all key macroeconomic variables from wealth and job creation to social and territorial cohesion is widely recognized. Family firms are the prevalent form of enterprise in the world, representing 80 percent of the total of business enterprises (Delmas and Gergaud, 2014; Hadjielias and Poutziouris, 2015). They are responsible for the creation of an estimated 70-90 percent of annual global Gross Domestic Product (Maloni, Hiatt and Astrachan, 2017). Hence, their significance to the global economy should not be undervalued. Naturally, the sustainability of family firms is a topic of utmost importance, not only to family firms themselves but also to society as a whole.

Society’s growing awareness of the importance of greater social cohesion and of the reality of environmental challenges in the last decades together with the emergence of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has originated pressures for organizations to behave under socially and environmentally responsible molds (Caputo, Veltri and Venturelli, 2017). Thus, sustainability requires the adoption of a systemic approach. Effectively, the literature has revealed that family firms are particularly successful at embracing the concerns of both internal and external stakeholders and are more prone to invest in environmentally friendly practices than their non-family counterparts (Delmas and Gergaud, 2014; Huang, Ding and Kao, 2009). By establishing reciprocal relationships between the family, the business and the environmental systems, and efficiently use available resources (Vollero, Siano and Della Volpe, 2019), family firms promote a sustainable development conduct (Antheaume, Robic and Barbelivien, 2013). Sustainability has indeed become a central and established subject in family business literature.

Societal focus on gender issues, and gender equality has become, also, a central issue in business, and family firms are no exception. Gender equality has indeed been identified as one of the primary sustainable development goals that nations must achieve. The role of gender in family firms is a multifaceted aspect that encompasses various elements, such as ownership, leadership, succession planning, decision-making, and the overall dynamics within the family and the business. Traditionally, family firms have been characterized by male dominance, with men occupying key positions

while women often assume supportive roles. However, there has been a growing recognition of the need for gender diversity and inclusivity in these organizations. Ownership and leadership in family firms have traditionally been passed down through male family members, perpetuating a male-centric power structure. However, societal changes, increased educational opportunities, and shifting norms have led to a more equitable distribution of ownership and leadership roles. Moreover, women are now actively participating as owners and leaders in family firms, bringing diverse perspectives and skill sets to the table.

Despite the growing interest among scholars and practitioners in the study of sustainability issues in the context of family firms, research is still fragmented, with regards to the overlap of those issues with gender. It is essential to delve deeper into the specific that this overlap of gender and sustainability in family firms, poses. This article aims to bridge that gap by presenting lines of inquiry/research which are in course, and therefore, promotes a better understanding of gender and sustainability dynamics within family firms. We contribute by highlighting the directions that future research needs to take to contribute, both to the development of knowledge in the family firm arena, but also, and more importantly, to aid the sustainability and success of such firms. This paper will start by detailing the methodology employed. The next section presents our review findings and finalizes with a reflection on the impact and limitations of the findings, and suggests future avenues of research.

Methodology

In order to disclose the state-of-the-art regarding the relationship between family firms, sustainability and gender, a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology was employed, similar to the study conducted by Campopiano, Gabaldón and Gimenez-Jimenez (2022) on women directors and corporate social performance. The SLR methodology adopted is based on the three-step procedure suggested by Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003): planning, execution, and dissemination of results. Precisely because it is systematic, this approach guarantees transparency and is subject to replicability. Moreover, the systematic approach reduces the low level of formality and unstructured planning processes of the traditional literature reviews in social sciences (Tranfield et al., 2003). Thusly, in the planning phase, the research objective was defined, and the database was selected. In the execution phase, the criteria and expression of research were established and articles with little to no relevance to the subject in question were eliminated. The terms defined as key terms for obtaining relevant articles were the truncated form of sustainability – sustainab* – and multiple expressions equivalent to family business. Their combination with the Boolean operators AND and OR ensured their presence in the title, abstract and keywords of the articles, resulting in the following search expression: (((sustainab*) AND ("family business*") OR ("family firm*") OR ("family enterprise*") OR ("family influence*") OR ("family involvement") OR ("family control*") OR ("family owner*")))).

The research was carried out on November 20th, 2022 in the ISI Web of Science database and was filtered according to: document types = (Article OR Review) AND Research Areas = (Business Economics OR Environmental Sciences Ecology OR Social Sciences Other Topics) AND Languages = (English). Consequently, 486 scientific articles were obtained. Subsequently, these results were duly exported to EndNote X9, where they were subjected to the filtration process. Given the aim of this paper, the study then focused on those with reference to Gender, resulting in a final sample of 21 studies.

Findings & Discussion

For each relevant article, the following dimensions were extracted, which, as a whole, gave rise to the systematic literature review table (see Table 1): author(s), title, study focus, theoretical approach, methodology, and sample. That said, the abstracts were compiled and the articles were organized by topics. In the third and last phase, main emerging themes and key points were reported and discussed. The outcomes of this last stage are disclosed in the next sections of the present document.

Table 1: Overview of the final sample.

Author(s)	Title	Study Focus	Theoretical Approach	Methodology	Sample
Danes, Stafford, Haynes, & Amarapurkar (2009)	Family Capital of Family Firms –Bridging Human, Social, and Financial Capital	To present a family capital typology and to document its relative contribution to short-term firm achievements and long-term sustainability	Sustainable Family Business Theory (SFBT) II	Quantitative – National Family Business Survey (panel data from 1997 and 2000)	673 family firms from the 1997 sample and 311 family firms from the 2000 sample

Lee, Fitzgerald, & Bartkus (2017)	Adjustment Strategy Use in Minority Family Businesses: Differences Across Gender	To explore the adjustment strategies employed by minority female owners of small family firms and to compare their use of adjustment strategies with those of their male counterparts	SFBT	Quantitative – National Minority Business Owners Surveys (2003 and 2005)	593 minority family firm owners, with sub-samples consisting of 198 African-Americans, 200 Korean-Americans, and 200 Mexican-Americans who ran small family firms
Ramadani, Dana, Sadiku-Dushi, Ratten, & Welsh (2017)	Decision-Making Challenges of Women Entrepreneurship in Family Business Succession Process	To explore the succession decision-making process in women-owned small family businesses	-	Qualitative – Multiple case study	6 women-owned small family businesses in Kosovo
Giraldez-Puig & Berenguer (2018)	Family Female Executives and Firm Financial Performance	To analyze the relationship of family executive women with firm performance in family firms	Stewardship theory	Quantitative – System for Analysis of Iberian Balances database (2000-2011)	269 Spanish family and non-family firms (comprising 3073 firm/year observations)
Campopiano, Rinaldi, Sciascia, & De Massis (2019)	Family and non-family women on the board of directors: Effects on corporate citizenship behavior in family-controlled fashion firms	To investigate the effects of women on boards of directors on corporate citizenship behavior	Self-construal theory	Quantitative – Orbis database (2014-2015)	63 family-controlled firms in the global ranking of the top-100 fashion firms
Hoxha & Hoti (2019)	Impact of Gender, Age and Management Style on the Success of Family Business in Kosovo	To investigate the impact of gender, age and management style on the success of family business in Kosovo	-	Quantitative – Survey	379 family firms in Kosovo
Li & Marshall (2019)	Gender and business owner satisfaction The case of farm and non-farm family businesses in the Midwest	To investigate how role satisfaction is different for male and female farm family business owners	SFBT	Quantitative – 2012 Intergenerational Farm and Non-Farm Family Business Survey	736 small and medium size farms from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio
Agarwal (2020)	Labouring for Livelihoods: Gender, Productivity and Collectivity	To compare all-women group farms with largely male-managed small family farms in the same state, in terms of productivity and profits and to examine the impact on women's skill capabilities and status, which state is more effective and why, and the lessons these experiences hold for replication elsewhere	--	Quantitative – Survey (2012-2014)	Two samples: the Kerala sample consisting of 250 farms (69 all-women groups and 181 individual family farms) in two districts – Alappuzha which is dominated by paddy and Thrissur which is dominated by commercial crops, especially banana – and the Telangana sample consisting of 763 farms of which 70 were all-women group farms and 693 were individual farms owning 2 ha or less in three semi-arid districts: Mahbubnagar, Medak and Karimnagar
Cordeiro, Profumo, & Tutore (2020)	Board gender diversity and corporate environmental performance: The moderating role of	To study the relationship between ownership control and female board diversity	Resource dependency theory	Quantitative – CSRHub database (2010-2015)	751 large U.S. firms

	family and dual-class majority ownership structures	in influencing corporate environmental performance jointly in the context of majority ownership in family-controlled and dualclass firms whose motives and influence are theoretically different from that of the firm's minority shareholders	Secondary agency theory Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) theory		
Nadeem, Gyapong, & Ahmed (2020)	Board gender diversity and environmental, social, and economic value creation: Does family ownership matter?	To empirically investigate whether board gender diversity (BGD) improves the multidimensional measure of value	Agency theory Gender socialization theory Stakeholder theory	Quantitative – ASSET4 database (2007–2017)	399 U.K.-listed firms
Gódány & Mura (2021)	Success from the perspective of female entrepreneurs	To define how female entrepreneurs in Slovakia interpret the concept of success, as well as explore the relationship between subjective and objective success factors	-	Mixed – Survey and in-depth interview	270 respondents from Slovakia 16 interviews with female entrepreneurs
Gunawan, Essers, & van Riel (2021)	The adoption of ecopreneurship practices in Indonesian craft SMEs: value-based motivations and intersections of identities	To explore value-based motivations to adopt ecological entrepreneurship (ecopreneurship) practices and to investigate how intersections of social identities such as gender, religion and ethnicity influence these motivations	Gender socialization theory Schwartz's value theory	Qualitative - Interview	16 owner-managers of SMEs in the Indonesia craft sector
Oware, Iddrisu, Worae, & Adaletey (2021)	Female and environmental disclosure of family and non-family firms. Evidence from India	To examine the female gender and environmental disclosure of family and non-family-controlled firms in India	Gender socialization theory Critical mass theory Legitimacy theory	Quantitative – BRR and Sustainability Report Tracker for Listed Companies (2009-2020)	80 Indian firms with 960 firm-year observations, covering 783 firm-year observations for family managed firms and 177 firm-year observations for non-family managed firms
Oware & Mallikarjunappa (2021)	Financial performance and gender diversity. The effect of family management after a decade attempt	To investigate family management, financial performance and gender diversity of listed firms	Social role theory	Quantitative – Descriptive statistics and panel regression with random effect assumptions (2010-2019)	80 listed firms on the Bombay Stock Exchange that practise sustainability reporting
Rumanko, Kozáková, Urbánová, & Hudáková (2021)	Family Business as a Bearer of Social Sustainability in Multinationals-Case of Slovakia	To identify significant differences in applying social aspects of entrepreneurship by family and nonfamily multinational enterprises operating in Slovakia and those of diverse predominant gender of executives and employees, with an	Institutional economic approach	Quantitative – Google docs online questionnaire	201 Slovak subsidiaries of foreign multinationals (out of which 62% were of family and 38% of nonfamily nature)

		assumption that there is a difference in ownerships structure and formal processing of social activities			
Theeuwien, Duplat, Wickert, & Tjemkes (2021)	How Do Women Overcome Gender Inequality by Forming Small-Scale Cooperatives? The Case of the Agricultural Sector in Uganda	To investigate how gendering influences the development of business relationships in the Ugandan agricultural sector	-	Qualitative – Interview (2017)	<p>4 interviews in the region Bugiri, 1 of which with a farmer, 2 with input dealers and one with a manager; 2 interviews in the region Oyam with an input dealer and 1 with a researcher; 1 interview with an entrepreneur in Kampala</p> <p>2 interviews in the region Bugiri with members of the district office; 1 interview in the region Oyam with district officer</p> <p>6 interviews in the region Bugiri; 7 interviews in the region Oyam</p> <p>Observational and field notes were small notes written down during interviews; observational notes were made during 4 interviews; field notes were made during every interview</p>
Wang, Gao, & Feng (2021)	Owner offspring gender and long-term resource allocation in Chinese family firms	To examine the influence of owner offspring gender on family firms' long-term resource allocation	Upper Echelons Theory	Quantitative – Shanghai and Shenzhen Stock Exchanges (2000-2018)	187 Chinese family firms, among which 61 owners raise female descendants only, 102 owners raise male descendants only, and 24 owners raise both female and male descendants
Amin, Ali, Rehman, & Elamer (2022)	Gender diversity in the board room and sustainable growth rate: the moderating role of family ownership	To examine the impact of gender diversity on sustainability growth, and moderating role of family ownership	Agency theory Resource dependence theory Social identity theory	Quantitative – Pakistan Stock Exchange (2008-2020)	3730 firm-year observations, comprising of 307 non-financial firms listed on Pakistan Stock Exchange
Anggadwita, Permatasari, Alamanda, & Profityo (2022)	Exploring women's initiatives for family business resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic	To explore women's initiatives and propose a framework for family business resilience during the COVID19 pandemic	Resource-Based View Strategic management approach	Qualitative – Case study	5 women successors of family businesses in Indonesia

Dan & Shimizu (2022)	Effective Resources to Mobilize Women Entrepreneurship: A Success Case Study of Family Tourism Businesses in Tioman Island, Malaysia	To provide empirical knowledge on family tourism businesses methods to mobilize women entrepreneurs	-	Qualitative – Case study (2020-2021)	11 women entrepreneurs who have been actively involved in family tourism business operations since the 1980s in Tioman Island
Rachmawati, Suliyanto, & Suroso (2022)	Direct and indirect effect of entrepreneurial orientation, family involvement and gender on family business performance	To determine the direct effect of entrepreneurial orientation on family business performance and to discuss the role of family involvement as a mediating variable and the role of gender as a moderating variable in the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and family business performance	-	Quantitative – Questionnaire (2020)	328 hotels in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Women’s autonomy, particularly, in male-managed rural family enterprises in developing economies, is one of the most difficult issues to address (Agarwal, 2020). Women’s ability to work, earn, and control their earnings independently of the family business is called into question, as they are often embedded as unpaid workers with little autonomy. Aside from a lack of participation in decision-making, women see their bargaining power as practically non-existent, whether in domestic or professional contexts. Women also face extreme hardships when founding and managing family farms in these economies, namely, far greater land constraints than male farmers, as well as gender bias in access to irrigation, credit, technology, information, state subsidies, and markets (FAO, 2011; World Bank, 2009). As a result, women-managed family farms experience lower levels of productivity compared to male-managed family farms. Agarwal (2020) wonders if productivity and profits of women-managed farms would increase if women worked as a group, breaking free from traditional divisions of labour and forging their very own identity as farmers. Notably, in the early 2000s, Kerala and Telangana, two states in India, embraced a model that encouraged women to collectively lease land, pool their labour and capital, and cultivate jointly – a collective of individuals rather than family farms, voluntarily formed, egalitarian, and entirely managed by women. Accordingly, women began to be recognized as full-fledged farmers outside of the family farm domain.

Women are under-represented in a wide range of industries, including manufacturing and agriculture, and are sometimes overlooked within their family businesses, rendering them “invisible” (Dan and Shimizu, 2022). Women are typically in charge of tasks linked with cultural traditions underlying house chores and family social life management, such as customer care. This introduces a “feminine” bias, with the aforementioned jobs being labelled “feminine”. Nonetheless, women play a fundamental role in family-run tourism enterprises. They are seen as critical stakeholders, considering that the tourism industry requires highly labour-intensive work and has a strong demand for the so-called “feminine” tasks (cleaning, bed making, and services). According to Dan and Shimizu (2022), women also face a work-life balance gender prejudice, as family-owned tourism businesses are defined as an extension of feminism and family roles.

The relationship between gender and sustainability in the family business context has been explored from diverse angles. A first line of inquiry focuses on the relationship between gender and performance.

Danes et al. (2009) highlight that certain owner and family traits impact firm income, profitability, and growth. The authors establish that the firm owner’s gender is the sole relevant human capital predictor and ascertain that female business owners perceive higher levels of success than their male counterparts. Higher levels of perceived success are associated with higher business net worth, which is consistent with the study’s gross revenue regression, and with adjustment strategies, in particular, hiring help in hectic times.

Incidentally, Lee et al. (2017) explore the adjustment strategies employed by minority female owners of small family firms and contrast their usage of adjustment strategies with that of their male counterparts. The quantitative analysis reveals that there are notable gender differences in the use of adjustment strategies among minority-owned family firms, with minority female business owners more likely than minority male business owners to reallocate family resources to

assist with business tasks and to intertwine business and household tasks when demands are particularly high for the family or the firm. Furthermore, in comparison with male business owners, a relatively higher proportion of female business owners employ unpaid volunteer help during hectic times. Nonetheless, the results also indicate that, in both minority female and male-owned family firms, running business operations from home is linked to a greater overall rate of adjustment strategy use.

When examining how role satisfaction differs for male and female farm family business owners, Li and Marshall (2019) find that gender has a significant impact on the perceived role satisfaction of owners when they face the same profits. Men and women concentrate on very different aspects of the business. For instance, male owners are more concerned with the tension caused by workload allocation, whilst female owners are more concerned with the tension caused by conflicting demands arising from family and business spheres. The results show that male owners' role satisfaction is contingent on the degree to which they make an effort to enact a clear time distribution boundary between work and home and on working alongside their spouses. Contrary to male business owners, female business owners have varying degrees of role satisfaction depending on several features related to the family business. Features such as having a marketing plan or the quantity of managerial work done by female members are correlated with female business owners' role satisfaction. Additionally, it is observed that female business owners who employ family members in the business report higher role satisfaction. In spite of the fact that the study's findings indicate that perceiving the business as successful is positively associated with role satisfaction for the entire sample, the success variable is not statistically significant when male and female business owners are divided into different models.

Gódány and Mura (2021) inquire into the notion of success from the viewpoint of female entrepreneurs in Slovakia, while considering both subjective and objective success factors. The findings confirm that female entrepreneurs value workplace independence, as it gives them the opportunity to have a healthy work-life balance (e.g., performing family responsibilities more flexibly), which leads to satisfaction with their personal lives. Female entrepreneurs also derive satisfaction from successfully meeting the objectives they set for the business they lead – they feel successful when their business is continually evolving. Markedly, the research shows that objective factors do not directly contribute to the entrepreneur's internal satisfaction.

Hoxha and Hoti (2019) investigate the influence of gender on the success variable with Kosovo as the study's background. They reach the conclusion that gender has an impact on firm's performance and profitability and emphasise that this result is not due to the superior management skills of male managers as compared to female managers, but rather due to the mentality of the country, which frequently stands in the way of equal development for both genders and consequently affects the development of the country.

Focusing on the entrepreneurship issues, Dan and Shimizu (2022) provide empirical knowledge on family tourism businesses methods to mobilize women entrepreneurs, whereas Rachmawati et al. (2022) study the direct effect of entrepreneurial orientation on family business performance and to discuss the role of family involvement as a mediating variable and the role of gender as a moderating variable in the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and family business performance.

In their study, Giraldez-Puig and Berenguer (2018) examine the correlation between the presence of women in executive positions within family firms and the performance of these firms. According to the authors, the presence of family ties among executive women has a positive impact on firms' financial performance, particularly, on the return on assets (ROA).

Agarwal (2020) conduct an analysis of value creation and the influence of gender in the primary sector. Specifically, the study compared the productivity and profits of all-women group farms with those of predominantly male-managed small family farms in the same state. Additionally, the research aimed to investigate the impact on women's skill capabilities and status.

Also, Theeuwens et al.'s (2021) investigation centers on the agriculture sector, in Uganda, and show that gender influenced value creation through the development of business relations.

In a broader context, Oware and Mallikarjunappa (2021) conduct a study that explore family management, financial performance, and gender diversity in listed firms. The findings demonstrate that an increase in family-managed firms is associated with a fall in the proportion of women working for listed firms, while an improvement in stock price returns (SPR) is associated with an increase in women employment. The study also shows that a decline in women employment in listed firms is still caused by the interactive variable of financial performance (return on assets and return on equity) of family-managed businesses. The results indicate a marginally significant positive relationship between gender diversity and financial performance (return on equity and SPR) as well as a weak and negative significant correlation between

gender diversity and family management of firms. It is observed that an improvement in SPR is accompanied by an increase in women employment in listed firms.

Taking a multidimensional approach, Nadeem et al. (2020) show that board gender diversity (BGD) improves value creation. BGD specifically improves the creation of social and environmental value in addition to economic returns. The results, however, imply that while gender-diverse boards are linked to stakeholder value creation in family firms, this is only clearly evident for environmental value creation. Although female directors tend to the interests of diverse stakeholder groups, family ownership causes them to prioritize environmental stakeholders.

Additionally, Amin et al. (2022) provide empirical evidence on the impact of BGD on sustainability growth, and the moderating role of family ownership, in the context of an emerging economy, and find that gender diversity results in higher sustainable growth. This relationship is positively moderated by family ownership, due to the existence of a strong identification of family owners with their firms. Moreover, it is reported that family ownership and the presence of female directors lead to higher firm growth and fewer agency conflicts, which are encouraging signs for investors despite a weak corporate governance framework.

The findings of the articles integrated in this line of inquiry seem to support that women participation in family firms has a positive influence on firm's commitment, value alignment and results.

A second line of inquiry explores the effects of women on corporate citizenship behavior. Campopiano et al. (2019) make two important distinctions: (1) between CSR and philanthropy, and (2) between family and non-family women on the Board of Directors. They show that women do have a positive impact on CSR and philanthropy, due to a leadership style that favours human relations, namely, an attitude of care towards stakeholders and the community in which the business operates. Based on self-construal theory, the authors find support for the hypotheses that: (1) female directors are beneficial to family business CSR engagement only if they are not members of the controlling family, whereas (2) they are beneficial to philanthropic commitment only if they are members of the controlling family. A quest for family reputation spurs female directors who belong to the controlling family, while female directors who do not belong to the controlling family prioritize firm interests, that is, they initiate social initiatives related to the core of the business.

At the intersection of corporate governance, family business, and corporate engagement on sustainability we also encounter the study conducted by Cordeiro et al. (2020). First, the authors discover a strong positive correlation between the proportion of women directors on the board and the level of environmental CSR. Second, they demonstrate that board gender diversity's effect on environmental performance is higher in family firms. The observation that firms with three or more women directors have superior environmental performance supports the idea that homophily contributes to intraboard networks of women directors.

Oware et al. (2021) seek to elucidate the relationship between women and environmental disclosure of both family and non-family controlled businesses using data from an economy in development, India. The authors determine that female CEOs and female CEO duality are positively and statistically associated with environmental disclosure in family-controlled businesses but not in non-family controlled ones. For independent female directors, however, there is no evidence of a significant link with environmental disclosure of neither family nor non-family businesses. Furthermore, based on the critical mass theory, the study confirms the absence of a significant impact of female directors on the environmental disclosure of family and non-family firms, which suggests that women are not well represented on boards in order to be effective in influencing environmental disclosure. Therefore, companies in the Indian setting are encouraged to hire more female directors than the current limit of one to three, as the maximum of three is insufficient. An increase beyond three can ensure effective female director oversight of environmental accountability, which will have the impact of giving the company more credibility to operate in the eyes of stakeholders.

In terms of entrepreneurship, Rumanko, Kozáková, Urbánová, and Hudáková (2021) identify significant differences in applying social aspects of entrepreneurship by family and nonfamily multinational enterprises operating in Slovakia and those of diverse predominant gender of executives and employees, with an assumption that there is a difference in ownerships structure and formal processing of social activities.

Gunawan, Essers and, van Riel (2021) explore the value-based motivations in the adoption of ecological entrepreneurship (ecopreneurship) practices and investigated how intersections of social identities such as gender, religion and ethnicity influence these motivations. Their results indicate that gender plays a significant role in this adoption, as it influences the motivations to embrace ecopreneurship practices among female and male entrepreneurs.

In summary, the articles, in this second line of inquiry, show that family businesses do better environmentally as a result of board gender diversity (Cordeiro et al., 2020). Family firms based on longstanding traditions are generally cautioned

in strategic decisions not to tarnish family names. This may account for why female CEOs significantly affect environmental disclosure in family firms than nonfamily firms.

A third line of inquiry links gender with succession. Ramadani et al. (2017) delved into the succession decision-making challenges faced by women business owners in a transition economy. These consist mainly in keeping their children close and involved in the business, acting as their role models, and teaching them to love the family business. During the succession process, it was found that one of the greatest concerns of female business owners is to maintain the balance between family and business, trying to foster harmony among family members. Despite the absence of formal planning, succession proceeded smoothly. The process followed corresponded to the general succession process steps reported in the literature, except for the fact that women business owners do not choose the successor(s), since the same opportunity is given to all children, regardless of age, gender or birth order. This is a refreshing finding as, in spite of the growing interest in gender equality in the workforce, the tendency is still to favour male successors.

When examining the influence of owner offspring gender on Chinese family firms' long-term resource allocation, a process which is primarily driven by the desire for intergenerational inheritance, Wang et al. (2021) verified that this tendency is notably the case for owners who were brought up in patriarchal regions where men are the controlling or governing figures of the social system. The authors observed a much more significant "son effect" in these circumstances, i.e., in contrast to those with female offspring, family firm owners with male offspring are more predisposed to engage in long-term resource allocation investments, such as R&D innovation, charitable donations, and/or fixed assets.

Family firm succession is a critical phase for family firms, and articles in this line of inquiry show that although the norm was a father to son process, this has been changing.

Conclusion

Family firms play a vital role in the global economy, representing a significant portion of business enterprises and contributing to wealth creation, job opportunities, and social cohesion. The sustainability of family firms is crucial, not only for the firms themselves but also for society as a whole.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on sustainability and the adoption of socially and environmentally responsible practices by organizations. Family firms have shown a particular propensity for embracing these concerns and investing in environmentally friendly practices compared to non-family firms. By establishing reciprocal relationships between the family, the business, and the environment, family firms promote sustainable development.

Gender equality has also become a central issue in business, including family firms. Despite the growing interest in sustainability issues within family firms, research on the overlap between sustainability and gender in these contexts is still fragmented. In this article we have structured, in three major lines of inquiry, the work which has been done. This is essentially a solid starting point to further the understanding of the dynamics of gender and sustainability within family firms. To contribute to further the research we suggest some avenues for future research with regards to the three lines of inquiry presented in the paper.

Future researchers studying sustainability in family firms, with regards to the relationship between gender and performance should adopt a micro perspective within unique family firm ecosystems, such as those associated with ethnic groups. By examining specific values, beliefs, and practices within these contexts, researchers can better understand the influence they have on value creation (Lee et al. 2017). This approach should also be applied across different industry and cultural settings, as well as over various time spans, recognizing that gender norms are not static nor uniform over time and place (Oware and Mallikarjunappa, 2021). Further research should focus on the professionalization of executive management in family firms, particularly studying non-family women executives (Giraldez-Puig and Berenguer, 2018).

To examine the effects of gender on corporate citizenship behaviour, in the context of family firm sustainability, future studies should employ longitudinal research designs to establish causal relationships. These studies can compare CSR and philanthropic engagement between female directors who are family members and those who are not (Campopiano et al., 2019). Gender diversity and environmental disclosure in family and non-family firms within developed economies should be investigated in single-country studies. Family firms can be examined as moderating and mediating variables in the association between female gender and environmental disclosure (Oware et al., 2021).

Additional research is needed to understand the relationship between gender and succession, when studying sustainability in family firms. Comparing the succession process between male-owned and female-owned family businesses in diverse contexts would be valuable. Questions to explore include: What factors contribute to the success of second-generation business owners? Does this success vary based on whether the business was inherited from a male or female owner? What concerns do the children have during this process? Do women business owners receive more financial and emotional

support from successors compared to male business owners? (Ramadani et al., 2017). Moreover, it is worth investigating whether raising sons reduces firm owners' self-interest and private consumption (Wang et al., 2021).

Last but certainly not least, is the added value that 'novel' methodologies can bring such as using simulation, game theory and experimental economics. The latter can provide information regarding decision making which influence sustainability endeavors in the family firm and the interconnection, and interdependence such decisions may have related to gender. The study of the intricacies between suitability and gender, in family firms, needs to be deepened to contribute to longevity and success of those firms, and of society in general.

Acknowledgment

This work was supported by the UIDB/05105/2020 Program Contract, funded by national funds through the FCT I.P.

References

- Agarwal, B. (2020) 'Labouring for Livelihoods: Gender, Productivity and Collectivity,' *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 63 (1), 21-37.
- Amin, A., Ali, R., Rehman, R. U. and Elamer, A. A. (2022), 'Gender diversity in the board room and sustainable growth rate: the moderating role of family ownership,' *Journal of Sustainable Finance & Investment*, 23.
- Anggadwita, G., Permatasari, A., Alamanda, D. T. and Profityo, W. B. (2022), 'Exploring women's initiatives for family business resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic,' *Journal of Family Business Management*, 23.
- Antheaume, N., Robic, P. and Barbelivien, D. (2013), 'French family business and longevity: Have they been conducting sustainable development policies before it became a fashion?,' *Business History*, 55 (6), 942-962.
- Campopiano, G., Rinaldi, F. R., Sciascia, S. and De Massis, A. (2019), 'Family and non-family women on the board of directors: Effects on corporate citizenship behavior in family-controlled fashion firms,' *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 214, 41-51.
- Campopiano, G., Gabaldón, P. and Gimenez-Jimenez, D. (2022), 'Women Directors and Corporate Social Performance: An Integrative Review of the Literature and a Future Research Agenda,' *Journal of Business Ethics*, 30.
- Caputo, F., Veltri, S., and Venturelli, A. (2017), 'Sustainability Strategy and Management Control Systems in Family Firms. Evidence from a Case Study,' *Sustainability*, 9 (6).
- Cordeiro, J. J., Profumo, G. and Tutore, I. (2020), 'Board gender diversity and corporate environmental performance: The moderating role of family and dual-class majority ownership structures,' *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 29 (3), 1127-1144.
- Dan, N. and Shimizu, T. (2022), 'Effective Resources to Mobilize Women Entrepreneurship: A Success Case Study of Family Tourism Businesses in Tioman Island, Malaysia,' *Sustainability*, 14 (15), 14.
- Danes, S. M., Stafford, K., Haynes, G. and Amarapurkar, S. S. (2009), 'Family Capital of Family Firms Bridging Human, Social, and Financial Capital,' *Family Business Review*, 22 (3), 199-215.
- Delmas, M. A. and Gergaud, O. (2014), 'Sustainable Certification for Future Generations: The Case of Family Business,' *Family Business Review*, 27 (3), 228-243.
- FAO. (2011), *The State of Food and Agriculture Report. Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development*, Rome: UN FAO.
- Giraldez-Puig, P. and Berenguer, E. (2018), 'Family Female Executives and Firm Financial Performance,' *Sustainability*, 10 (11), 15.
- Gódány, Z. and Mura, L. (2021), 'Success from the Perspective of Female Entrepreneurs,' *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 9 (2), 521-534.

- Gunawan, A. A., Essers, C. and van Riel, A. C. R. (2021), 'The adoption of ecopreneurship practices in Indonesian craft SMEs: value-based motivations and intersections of identities,' *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 27 (3), 730-752.
- Hadjielias, E. and Poutziouris, P. (2015), 'On the conditions for the cooperative relations between family businesses: the role of trust,' *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 21 (6), 867-897.
- Hoxha, R. and Hoti, H. (2019), 'Impact of Gender, Age and Management Style on the Success of Family Business in Kosovo,' *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 8 (5), 153-160.
- Huang, Y. C., Ding, H. B. and Kao, M. R. (2009), 'Salient stakeholder voices: Family business and green innovation adoption,' *Journal of Management & Organization*, 15 (3), 309-326.
- Lee, Y. G., Fitzgerald, M. A. and Bartkus, K. R. (2017), 'Adjustment Strategy Use in Minority Family Businesses: Differences Across Gender,' *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 38 (1), 1-17.
- Li, W. X. and Marshall, M. I. (2019), 'Gender and business owner satisfaction: The case of farm and non-farm family businesses in the Midwest,' *Journal of Family Business Management*, 9 (4), 416-428.
- Maloni, M. J., Hiatt, M. S., and Astrachan, J. H. (2017), 'Supply management and family business: A review and call for research,' *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*, 23 (2), 123-136.
- Nadeem, M., Gyapong, E. and Ahmed, A. (2020), 'Board gender diversity and environmental, social, and economic value creation: Does family ownership matter?,' *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 29 (3), 1268-1284.
- Oware, K. M., Iddrisu, A. A., Worae, T. and Adalety, J. E. (2021), 'Female and environmental disclosure of family and non-family firms. Evidence from India,' *Management Research Review*, 21.
- Oware, K. M. and Mallikarjunappa, T. (2021), 'Financial performance and gender diversity. The effect of family management after a decade attempt,' *Society and Business Review*, 16 (1), 94-112.
- Rachmawati, E., Suliyanto and Suroso, A. (2022), 'Direct and indirect effect of entrepreneurial orientation, family involvement and gender on family business performance,' *Journal of Family Business Management*, 23.
- Ramadani, V., Dana, L. P., Sadiku-Dushi, N., Ratten, V. and Welsh, D. H. B. (2017), 'Decision-Making Challenges of Women Entrepreneurship in Family Business Succession Process,' *Journal of Enterprising Culture*, 25 (4), 411-439.
- Rumanko, B., Kozakova, J., Urbanova, M. and Hudakova, M. (2021), 'Family Business as a Bearer of Social Sustainability in Multinationals-Case of Slovakia,' *Sustainability*, 13 (14), 25.
- Theeuwes, A., Duplat, V., Wickert, C. and Tjemkes, B. (2021), 'How Do Women Overcome Gender Inequality by Forming Small-Scale Cooperatives? The Case of the Agricultural Sector in Uganda,' *Sustainability*, 13 (4), 25.
- Tranfield, D., Denyer, D. and Smart, P. (2003), 'Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review,' *British Journal of Management*, 14, 207-222.
- Vollero, A., Siano, A. and Della Volpe, M. (2019), 'A Systems Perspective for Conceptualizing Sustainability in Long-lived Family Businesses. Research Proposals on Risk Taking and Innovativeness,' *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 36 (1), 111-127.
- Wang, X., Gao, C. C. and Feng, M. M. (2021), 'Owner offspring gender and long-term resource allocation in Chinese family firms,' *International Journal of Finance & Economics*, 16.
- World Bank; Food and Agriculture Organization; International Fund for Agricultural Development. (2009), *Gender in agriculture sourcebook. Agriculture and Rural Development*, Washington, D.C.: World Bank.