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Mapping women's involvement in family firms: A review based on bibliographic coupling analysis

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Abstract

Despite advances in recognizing women's influence in all spheres of life, society has not fully acknowledged women's role and influence in business. To address this gap, this review aims to map research on women's involvement in family firms (WIFF), the most common form of business entity worldwide, which appears to provide an enabling environment for women to act as leaders and entrepreneurs. First, through a systematic process, we select 225 papers identified from the Web of Science database and perform a bibliographic coupling analysis that explores the WIFF dataset with the support of clustering algorithms. The results of the review reveal five thematic clusters: (1) female entrepreneurs and family firms; (2) women in family-firm governance; (3) family-business dynamics; (4) women in business succession; and (5) temporal and spatial dimensions of women's involvement. Second, we supplement the bibliometric analysis with a review of the literature, which enhances understanding of the research topics and theoretical perspectives adopted, helping to develop an integrative framework and formulate new research questions that support the development of this promising field of research. Thus, this review provides a robust roadmap for further investigation of key issues in the field, which can help academics, policymakers and practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

Despite progress in gender equality and women's rights worldwide in recent years, gender inequality in business leadership is widespread. This is despite emphasis on the need to increase the presence of women in gover-

nance and management positions. Family firms appear to provide an enabling environment for female family members with better opportunities to act as leaders and entrepreneurs than non-family firms (e.g. Campopiano et al., 2019). According to the UK Family Business Sector Report 2019–2020 (IFB Research Foundation, 2020),

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family-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are more likely to have female leaders (81.1%) than non-family firms (52.6%). Evidence from the Small Business Survey (BEIS, 2018) shows that 81.3% of family SMEs have at least one woman in a leadership role (owner, partner or director). Although this proportion declines as the size of the family firm increases, it is always greater than the equivalent figure for non-family SMEs, giving women a stronger presence in family firms' leadership. Moreover, 22.6% (14.4%) of family (non-family) SMEs reported in 2018 that over half of their directors, owners or partners were women.

Family firms are organizations controlled and usually managed by several family members with a long-term vision that is potentially sustainable across generations (Chua et al., 1999). Family firms are the most common business entities worldwide, especially among SMEs, and contribute substantially to wealth and employment creation (D'Angelo et al., 2016; De Massis et al., 2018). In such firms, family and firm dimensions are intimately intertwined: family interests and involvement often impact firm behaviour; conversely, involvement in the business tends to influence family dynamics and preferences (Amore et al., 2017). These characteristics of family involvement and emotional bonding make family firms unique (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2021). Despite women having historically played—and continuing to play—an important role in family firms, to date, women's involvement has rarely been incorporated into the family business research agenda (Hamilton, 2006). We still know little about the importance, uniqueness, recognition and contributions of female family members within family firms (Al-Dajani et al., 2014). The lack of attention in the literature is despite the fact that 'the survivability of many family businesses in the future will depend on more awareness of, and more options for, women' (Gersick, 1990, p. 119). As Sharma (2004, p. 14) points out, very little research has been undertaken 'to explore the contextual and individual factors that encourage these women into leadership positions, their performance goals in term of family and business dimension, or the leadership and managerial styles adopted by them, pointing toward an interesting and ripe area for serious study'.

A literature review that integrates research on an emerging topic, such as women's involvement in family firms (WIFF), serves as a reference point to advance knowledge, since a review not only enables integration of knowledge within a subject domain but also stimulates debate on its future development (Post et al., 2020). To quote Nobel Laureate André Gide, 'each wave owes the beauty of its line only to the withdrawal of the preceding one'. His comments help us recognize how a review article can transform existing studies into a new study 'with the

purpose of transforming other authors' published work into a knowledge space that becomes publicly available' (Patriotta, 2020, p. 1275). To date, several literature reviews on WIFF have been conducted to determine what is known about the field (see Table 1).

Although these studies have made significant contributions to the field, two important limitations remain. First, research on WIFF is still fragmented and only occasionally discussed in family-firm literature (Martínez-Jimenez, 2009), with little systematic research (Sharma, 2004). The second limitation concerns a lack of clarity regarding the theoretical perspective adopted by extant research (Campopiano et al., 2017). This fragmentation of the literature is common in relatively new research fields that have yet to reach maturity (Rialti et al., 2019; Vallaster et al., 2019). Moreover, the time factor must be considered. The number of publications on WIFF grew considerably during 2017–2019, and thus a significant number of publications are missing from the earlier analyses. Sharp increases in not only the overall number of research studies but also those within emergent sub-fields means that periodic literature reviews are necessary to keep track of how the field is developing (Feng et al., 2017).

To address these shortcomings and build on generated insights, this review aims to develop an integrative framework of the WIFF field that synthesizes the available research and proposes new research opportunities for the future. To this end, three research questions (RQs) are formulated: (RQ1) what is the current status of the literature on the causes, behaviour and effects of the WIFF? (RQ2) What are the theoretical and methodological approaches that underpin research on the WIFF? (RQ3) What are the implications and opportunities for future research suggested by our findings?

Thus, we conduct a two-tier review consisting of a bibliometric analysis and a literature review. Bibliometric analysis uses quantitative methods to examine the patterns of publication within a field. Bibliometric tools allow us to carry out a systematic, transparent and replicable review on which to conduct an analysis of extant research, and to provide a comprehensive knowledge map of the research field (e.g. Brito-Ochoa et al., 2020; Kraus et al., 2020). Through clustering algorithms, bibliometrics systematizes and automates the selection, ordination and visualization of information, which enables the replication of the process (Cobo et al., 2011). After mapping the WIFF knowledge domain using bibliographic coupling analysis, we complement our review with a traditional literature review, which involves an analysis and interpretation of the bibliometric map. The complementarity of these two methods justifies their suitability for the analysis of emerging research fields (e.g. Rialti et al., 2019; Vallaster et al., 2019), providing a solid foundation for identifying key

TABLE 1 Overview of literature reviews on women's involvement in family firms

Author (year)	Source	Key contributions
Martínez-Jiménez (2009)	<i>Family Business Review</i>	Examines 74 academic contributions published between 1985 and the early 2000s, which summarized the obstacles to and positive aspects of women's involvement in family firms.
Wang (2010)	<i>Journal of Family Economic Issues</i>	Identifies that daughters' exclusion from family firms results from the interaction of macro and micro factors that both stereotype and discriminate against daughters in family-firm succession.
Gupta and Levenburg (2013)	Book chapter	Focuses on the historical invisibility of women in business and their roles in family firms, showing different prototypes of women in family firms across cultures worldwide.
Campopiano et al. (2017)	<i>Journal of Family Business Strategy</i>	This systematic review analyses 87 articles up to 2016, organizing them according to women's entrepreneurial entry, succession, career dynamics and presence in family firms.
Nelson and Constantinidis (2017)	<i>Family Business Review</i>	This literature review analyses 157 articles on family business succession published over 21 years (1995–2015) to determine how the concepts of sex and gender have been used and theorized in family-business succession research.
Kubiček and Machek (2019)	<i>Review of Managerial Science</i>	This systematic literature review of 35 articles on gender-related factors in family-firm succession identifies three categories of factors: environment and context, people and processes.
Sentuti et al. (2019)	Book chapter	This structured literature review of 81 documents published from 2000 to 2017 identifies four main research topics on women in family firms: succession, women-owned family firms, female entrepreneurship and co-preneurial ventures.

aspects of the topic and speculating on new perspectives or directions for the WIFF research.

On this basis, the objectives of this review are: (1) to show the growth and evolution of the topic over time for a useful historical perspective on the presence of the WIFF research in the literature up to the present; (2) to shed light on the field's current areas of interest through bibliographic coupling analysis, which enables identification of clusters representing the latest research themes in the WIFF field; and (3) from this bibliometric approach, to identify research topics and theoretical perspectives that warrant attention, thereby offering insights into avenues for further research through a review of the articles included within each thematic cluster.

This review contributes significantly to building bridges between the literature on gender and that on the family firm. Researchers can better understand the field if they know which topics are currently being investigated, which are under-represented, and what theoretical and methodological perspectives are used. Our study can help formulate new RQs that shape the development of this emerging research field. Moreover, our review is particularly relevant for practitioners and policymakers, who have expressed interest in knowing more about and recognizing the work carried out by women in businesses, including family firms. The process of integrating women into business organizations and leadership roles not only depends on gender equity, but also could be enhanced if institutions focus on encouraging and supporting women

who want to start, run and grow a business. Family firms are good vehicles for supporting these aspirations. Moreover, our review responds to calls for the use of different methods in undertaking literature reviews (Breslin & Bailey, 2020). To the best of our knowledge, no review has explored the WIFF literature by applying a bibliometric analysis, while a literature review has not yet been published.

METHODOLOGY

We adopted a two-level methodological approach that includes a bibliometric analysis and a literature review, as these methods are more appropriate for analysing an emerging research field (Rialti et al., 2019). Furthermore, it enables more effective compliance with the principles of systematic review, which are based on a replicable, systematic and transparent protocol (Kraus et al., 2020).

Bibliometric analysis

Data-collection protocol

We developed our dataset by using a protocol for searching, selecting and uploading bibliographic references that enables other researchers to repeat the review with or without modifications, update it, or replicate the protocol

TABLE 2 Search protocol

WoS database	Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)
Time period	Up to December 2019
Search fields	'Title', 'Author', 'Keywords' and 'Summary'
Search keywords	[("family firm*" OR "family business*" OR "family enterprise*" OR "family owner*" OR "family SME*" OR "family control*" OR "family involvement")) AND ("firm*" OR "business*") AND ["gender" OR "woman" OR "women" OR "female" OR "wife" OR "daughter" OR "sister" OR "spouse"]
Research domain	'Business', 'Business Finance', 'Economics', 'Management', 'Psychology Applied', 'Psychology Developmental', 'Psychology Multidisciplinary' and 'Sociology'
Document type	Article or Review
Language	English

in other reviews. This process comprises several steps (see Table 2 for a summary).

First, we collected bibliographic information by ensuring extensive coverage of women and gender- and family-firm-related research. There are several sources for accessing data, including the Web of Science (WoS), Scopus and Google Scholar, but in this review, we used information provided by journals indexed exclusively in the WoS database of Clarivate Analytics, since the simultaneous use of other databases is unhelpful owing to duplication of records (Harzing & Alakangas, 2016). The WoS database is used in many international rankings, such as the Academic Ranking of World Universities and the Times Higher Education World University Ranking, as it is considered the 'gold standard' database for measuring scholars' performance.

Then, a search was executed for all articles and reviews published up to December 2019 that contained search keywords related to WIFF. Search keywords were identified based on previous relevant reviews (e.g. Campopiano et al., 2017). The search process resulted in a dataset of 279 documents. The search was completed on 2 September 2020. Finally, we refined the dataset by excluding those that did not belong to the WIFF field. The main exclusion criterion was the use of the words 'women' and 'family' with some business terms but without any relationship to the family-firm research domain. This procedure led to a final dataset of 225 articles.

Selection of bibliometric techniques

Science mapping techniques are one of the main pillars of bibliometrics. They explore relational aspects that identify document–document similarities. Bibliographic coupling and co-citation analyses are the most widely used citation-based techniques (Belussi et al., 2019), because each on its own can successfully cluster over 92% of the scien-

tific corpus (Boyack & Klavans, 2010). While bibliographic coupling analyses citing documents, co-citation analysis focuses on cited documents (Cobo et al., 2011). On the one hand, co-citation analysis associates papers that have been co-cited in the reference list of previous papers, so that the information used to establish the similarity relationship between documents is retrospective. This technique is widely used to identify key papers in a research field, capturing the origins of that field (Kovacs et al., 2015). On the other hand, bibliographic coupling links documents that reference the same set of cited documents and is used to assess the similarity between citing articles. This technique is forward-looking and is more appropriate for studying emergent literature fields and capturing current research trends within a field (e.g. Boyack & Klavans, 2010; Vogel & Güttel, 2013).

Since method selection depends on the questions the literature review sets out to answer, in this review we used bibliographic coupling to provide a prospective approach in the emerging field of WIFF. Bibliographic coupling associates papers that have similarities in their reference lists, indicating the probability of a shared related topic. The VOSviewer software tool (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010) was used to perform the bibliographic coupling analysis, using normalization of associations and the full counting algorithm (Prashar & Sunder, 2020).

Review of thematic clusters

Once the thematic clusters were identified, all articles included in each cluster were read with the aim of identifying their most outstanding contributions, as well as the main research methods and theoretical perspectives employed. As Alayo et al. (2020) point out, the results of bibliometric analysis should be interpreted and complemented by extensive reading, as a literature review enables us to deepen the main findings of the bibliometrics by

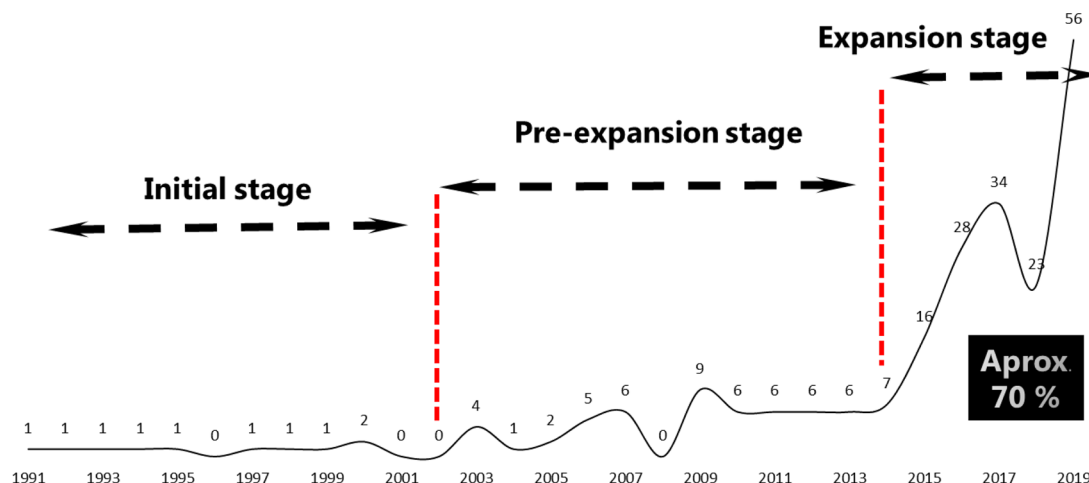


FIGURE 1 Evolution of 225 publications on women's involvement in family firms by year [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ijmr.12278)]

providing valuable information about key dimensions of the research, to identify research gaps and to speculate about future development of the field.

EVOLUTION OVER TIME

Analysis of our dataset by publication year allows us to illustrate the evolution of articles available in the WoS on WIFF research (Figure 1). The first article in the WoS was published in 1991 and, since then, the field has attracted growing interest in the literature, particularly since 2015. We identified three stages in the evolution of WIFF literature: an *initial stage* (1991–2002) with only 10 articles; a *pre-expansion stage* (2003–2014) with 58 publications and growth in the number of articles published each year, except 2008; and an *expansion stage* (2015–2019) showing significant growth in publications, with 157 published articles representing approximately 70% of the dataset. The significant growth in the number of publications on WIFF may be due to a number of reasons. These include increasing awareness of the need to make advances in the field by researchers, an increase in the number of journals in the fields of both gender and family-firm research, and greater openness by journals to contributions on this subject.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC COUPLING ANALYSIS

Bibliographic coupling analysis groups articles in accordance with the similarities between citing documents that reference the same set of cited documents. The larger the number of references cited in common in two publications, the stronger the bibliographic coupling relationship between these documents (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Fol-

lowing this criterion, VOSviewer algorithmically classified the WIFF dataset into five clusters based on assigning citing papers to clusters when they cite one or more documents in common. The results of the bibliographic coupling analysis are presented visually in Figure 2 by means of a map indicating thematic clusters. The nodes (circles) represent the articles that were labelled with the surname of the first author. The location of each node and its colour are used to group the articles from the same cluster, while the size of each node depends on the weight of the articles (citations of each article).

We identified the most popular keywords (word count) used by the authors of the articles in each cluster, excluding those used as 'search keywords', since these keywords are a good approximation to reveal their content (Bengoa et al., 2021). The subsequent reading of the titles and abstracts allowed us to assign a definitive heading to each cluster.¹ These are: (1) female entrepreneurs and family firms; (2) women in family-firm governance; (3) family-business dynamics; (4) women in business succession; and (5) temporal and spatial dimensions of women's involvement. Figure 2 presents the heading assigned to each cluster. Table 3 presents the distribution of the 225 WIFF articles in each thematic cluster.

REVIEW OF THEMATIC CLUSTERS

To confirm the coherence of the five thematic clusters obtained from the bibliographic coupling analysis and to provide an overview of current WIFF research, we undertook a comprehensive reading and analysis of the articles in each cluster. Each cluster is discussed in the subsections below,² accompanied by graphical illustrations capturing the main topics, which

TABLE 3 Distribution of articles in each thematic cluster based on bibliographic coupling analysis^a

Cluster 1: Female entrepreneurs and family firms (55 articles)	Cluster 2: Women in family firm governance (57 articles)	Cluster 3: Family–business dynamics (54 articles)	Cluster 4: Women in business succession (33 articles)	Cluster 5: Temporal and spatial dimensions of women's involvement (26 articles)
Acheampong (2018); Alkhaled and Berglund (2018); Aterido and Hallward-Driemeter (2011); Au and Kwan (2009); Banchik (2019); Bau et al. (2017); Bijedic and Piper (2019); Block et al. (2015); Bolzani et al. (2019); Bruce (1999); Carter et al. (2017); Cetindamar et al. (2012); Chien (2014); Cicek et al. (2017); Cteslik and van Stel (2017); Constantiniadis et al. (2019); Fairlie and Robb (2009); Fernandes and Moia-Ribeiro (2017); Fox and Wade-Benzoni (2017); Gallego and Rioja (2007); Gather et al. (2016); Gras and Nason (2015); Hoffmann et al. (2015); Igwe et al. (2019); Kay and Schloemer-Laufen (2016); Kilenthong and Rueanthip (2018); Lewis et al. (2016); Liguori et al. (2018); Lim and Suh (2019); Lin et al. (2000); Ljubotina et al. (2019); Lock and Smith (2016); Luo and Chong (2019); MacKenzie et al. (2019); Mehtap et al. (2019); Mills and Pawson (2012); Ng and Fu (2018); Osnes et al. (2017); Ramadani et al. (2019); Schroeder et al. (2011); Sharafizad and Coetzer (2017); Somalingam and Shanthakumari (2015); Tipu (2017); Tognazzo et al. (2016); Ullah and Smith (2015); Urbano et al. (2019); Venugopal (2016); Vershina et al. (2019); Welsh and Kaciak (2018, 2019); Welsh et al. (2014a, b, 2018); Yang and Triana (2019); Ziemianski (2018).	Abdullah and Ismail (2016); Alfraih (2016); Amore et al. (2014); Arzubaga et al. (2018); Bauweraerts and Vandernoot (2019); Bianco et al. (2015); Bjuggren et al. (2018); Boddica et al. (2019); Chadwick and Dawson (2018); Chakraborty et al. (2019); Chauhan and Dey (2017); Cruz et al. (2019); Garg and Singh (2017); Ghafoor et al. (2019); Hernández-Lara and Gonzales-Bustos (2020); Ismail and Manaf (2016); Ismail et al. (2019); Kolsi and Grassa (2017); Lagasio and Cucari (2019); Martin-Ugedo and Minguez-Vera (2014); McGuinness (2018); Minguez-Vera and Martin (2011); Mohammad and Wasiuzzaman (2019); Moreno-Gómez and Calleja-Blanco (2018); Mukarram et al. (2018a, b); Murtakin et al. (2015); Nadeem (2020); Nadeem et al. (2020); Nekhili and Gafsaoui (2013); Nekhili et al. (2018); Nerantzidis and Tsamis (2017); Odehmalova and Pirozek (2018); Poletti-Hughes and Briano-Turrent (2019); Pucheta-Martinez and Bel-Oms (2016); Pucheta-Martinez et al. (2018); Ramdani and van Witeloostuijn (2012); Ramon-Llorens et al. (2017); Rodriguez-Ariza et al. (2017); Rubino et al. (2017); Saeed et al. (2016, 2017, 2019, 2020); Saggat and Singh (2017); Salem et al. (2019); Samara et al. (2019); Sial et al. (2019); Singh et al. (2015); Solakoglu and Demir (2016); Sundarasan et al. (2016); Terjesen et al. (2016); Usman et al. (2019); Vaccari and Beuren (2017); Vandebeek et al. (2016); Vieira (2018); Watkins-Fassler and Rodriguez-Ariza (2019).	Adjei et al. (2019); Aygoren and Nordqvist (2015); Ayranci (2014); Baltes and Heydens-Gahir (2003); Beehr et al. (1997); Block et al. (2015); Chen et al. (2018); Cole and Johnson (2007); Cruz et al. (2012); Danes et al. (2007, 2009); Dyer et al. (2013); Farrington et al. (2011); Fletcher (2010); Franco and Prata (2019); Galbraith (2003); Haberman and Danes (2007); Hamilton (2006); Haynes et al. (2011, 2019); Hedberg and Danes (2012); Hirigoyen and Villegier (2019); Jang and Danes (2013); Jurik et al. (2019); Karambayya and Reilly (1992); Kuschel and Lepeley (2016); Kuzmanovic (2019); Larsen (2006); Lee et al. (2017); McDonald et al. (2017); Marshall et al. (2019); Nason et al. (2019); O'Brien et al. (2018); Olson et al. (2003); Paddy and Rousseau (2011); Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2016); Peake and Marshall (2017); Peake et al. (2017); Ram and Holliday (1993); Rothausen (2009); Sharma and Kota (2019); Sprung and Jex (2017); Stafford et al. (2013); Van Aukun (2006); van der Merwe (2009b); Veider (2016); Werbel and Danes (2010); Wetlaufer (2000); Wicker and Burley (1991); Winter et al. (2004); Woods et al. (2019); Wu et al. (2010); Zhang and Pan (2012).	Ahrens et al. (2015); Barrett and Moores (2009); Bennedsen et al. (2007); Byrne et al. (2021); Campopiano et al. (2017); Cardona and Raffaelli (2016); Deng (2015); di Belmonte et al. (2016); dos Santos et al. (2017); Fahed-Sreih and Djoundourian (2006); Ferrari (2019); Gherardi and Perrotta (2016); Hytti et al. (2017); Jaskiewicz et al. (2016); Karaevli and Yurtoglu (2018); Kubiček and Machek (2019); Lefebvre and Lefebvre (2016); Lušňáková et al. (2019); Mackie (2019); Martinez-Jimenez (2009); Meroño-Cerdan and López-Nicolas (2017); Miller (1998); Mussolino et al. (2019); Mustafa et al. (2019); Nelson and Constantiniadis (2017); Overbeke et al. (2013, 2015); Ramadani et al. (2017a, b); Samei and Feyzbakhsh (2015); van der Merwe (2009a, 2010); Vera and Dean (2005).	Adapa and Sheridan (2021); Andersson and Lundqvist (2016); Du and Zeng (2019); Edvinsson (2016); Entwistle et al. (1995); Gezelius (2014); Hernández and Martínez (2019); Howorth et al. (2010); Jiang et al. (2015); Jorissen et al. (2005); Katila (2010); Khan (2016); Machek (2017); Monkturner and Turner (1994); Muñoz and Perez (2007); Ortega et al. (2015); Parada et al. (2016); Petersen and Charman (2018); Pirakatheswari (2015); Rinaldi and Tagliazucchi (2021); Rutherford et al. (2006); Sampaio et al. (2017); Shaya and Khaif (2017); Smith (2009); Tweedale (2013); Van den Bergh and Carchon (2003).

^aThe complete references of these articles are included in Annex II.

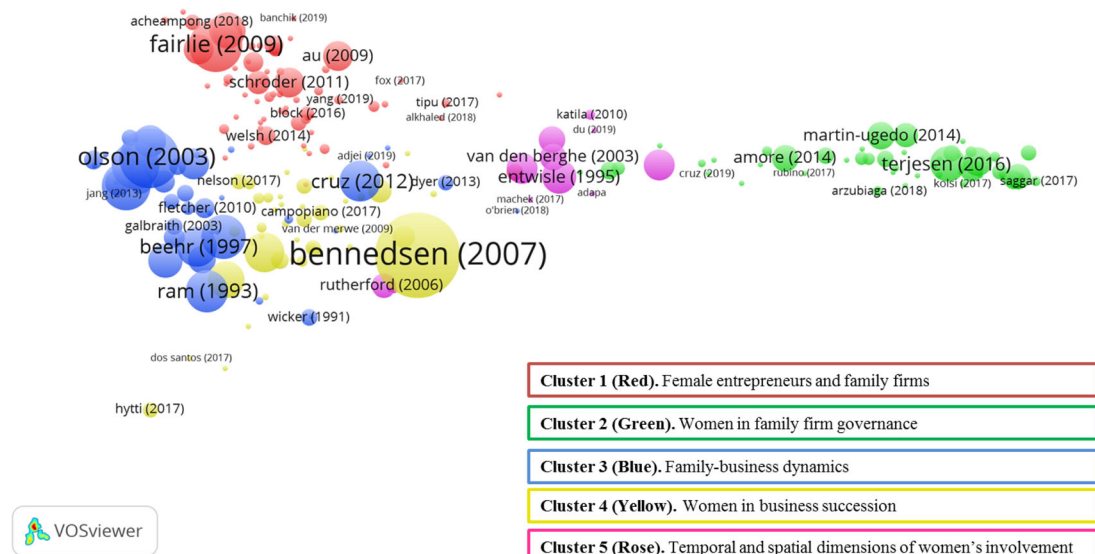


FIGURE 2 Bibliometric WIFF map and clusters based on bibliographic coupling analysis [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jimr.12278)]

provide a general overview of the structure of each cluster and its constituent research. A close reading of the articles allowed us to identify their principal theoretical and methodological approaches.³ Thus, this literature review provides an opportunity to address our three RQs.

Cluster 1: Female entrepreneurs and family firms

Research in cluster 1 focuses on understanding female entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurship in family firms. This is one of the most studied streams of research in the WIFF literature, comprising 55 of 225 articles. Some of these studies focus on different aspects related to the pre-launch and launch stages of a business and could have been excluded from our dataset because these businesses do not yet have a transgenerational dimension. However, as Chrisman et al. (2003) assert, many new ventures are created owing to the financial, human and emotional support of the family, and a high percentage of them display the characteristics of family firms as defined by Chua et al. (1999). A variety of themes have been addressed in this cluster. We categorized them by distinguishing the mode of entry into a new business from the entry decision itself. The decision to engage in a business is generally influenced by a prospective business owner's personal characteristics and personality, motivations and background, the nature of the new business opportunity, economic conditions and the institutional environment, among other factors.

There is a general agreement that a pivotal factor determining women's entrepreneurship is the level of family support, both affective and instrumental. The relationship between business and family, and specifically, between family social capital and family involvement, is perceived as the most important determinant of women's entrepreneurial development (Venugopal, 2016*; Welsh & Kaciak, 2018*, 2019*; Welsh et al., 2014b*). Family firms that are started by a family perform better than do firms launched without family support (Welsh et al., 2018*). Family social capital support usually comes in the form of networks for business contacts, information channels and family values and culture (Somalingam & Shan-thakumari, 2015*). In some socio-cultural environments which develop in a constant dynamic between tradition and modernity, female entrepreneurs' practices depend on family support and other factors, such as education, social class, economic openness and accessibility of information (Constantinidis et al., 2019*; Luo & Chong, 2019*; Welsh et al., 2014a*).

Entrepreneurial households are another decisive determinant of attitudes towards entrepreneurship (Carter et al., 2017*; Cieslik & Van Stel, 2017*; Gras & Nason, 2015*; Tognazzo et al., 2016*). In several studies, the parental role can explain the intention to engage in a business (Hoffmann et al., 2015*; Welsh et al., 2014a*). In other studies, having a spouse in business substantially increases the likelihood of the other spouse (woman) starting her own business or joining the family firm (Bruce, 1999*; Lin et al., 2000*). In general, having a family member doing business with or working in a family firm increases the likelihood of entrepreneurship (Kilenthong & Rueanthip,

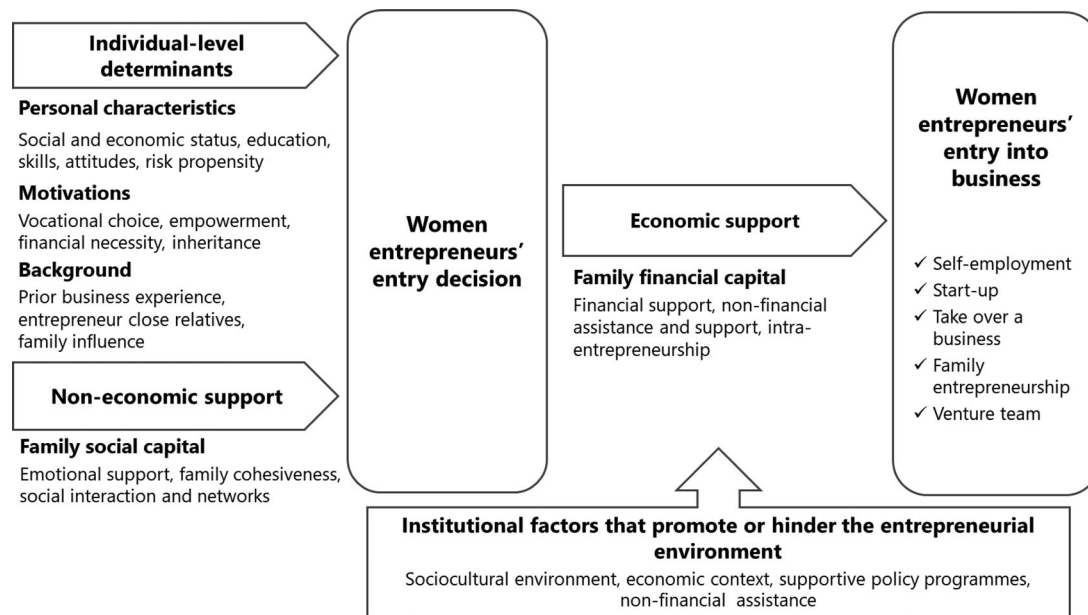


FIGURE 3 Integrative research framework for cluster 1: female entrepreneurs and family firms

2018*). However, sons rather than daughters benefit from having a father who is an entrepreneur or from joining a family firm (Aterido & Hallward-Driemeier, 2011*; Ziemiński, 2018*). There is a general assessment that the entrepreneurial entry decision is not a gender-neutral phenomenon, nor is the mode of business entry.

Prior work and prior entrepreneurship experience are both associated with a higher likelihood of starting and continuing a business or becoming self-employed (Fairlie & Robb, 2009*; Liguori et al., 2018*; Lin et al., 2000*). An early entrepreneurship experience is often viewed as an opportunity to learn by doing and to gain authentic experience; however, women are less likely to start another business following entrepreneurial failure than men are (Bau et al., 2017*). Women are considered to be less self-confident in their entrepreneurial skills than men and to be more risk averse, which in turn can affect their entry or re-integration into the business world (Mills & Pawson, 2012*; Yang & Triana, 2019*). They typically start their businesses with less financial capital and are more reliant on family funding, making use of sources of microcredit if they need external funding (Acheampong, 2018*). Moreover, female entrepreneurs are more likely to found a business alone or with family members than male entrepreneurs, especially when they lack social capital (Lim & Suh, 2019*). Moreover, women are less likely to take over a business than to start one from scratch (Kay & Schloemer-Laufen, 2016*). Traditional gender roles may also lead women to self-restrict their business and entrepreneurship activities to 'feminized' sectors, such as personal and care services, restaurant and tourism industries, design, fashion and the arts (Cicek et al., 2017*).

The desire to leave a legacy as both a source of motivation and a source of variation over time for entrepreneurs has also been analysed (Banchik, 2019*; Fox & Wade-Benzoni, 2017*; Ng & Fu, 2018*). In some contexts, a key determinant of the decision to engage in an artisanal business is to follow in parents' footsteps, perpetuate a legacy and take the opportunity to have their own business (Gallego & Rioja, 2007*; Igwe et al., 2019*; Ramadani et al., 2019*). Belonging to a disadvantaged minority within emerging and developing economies, or being a migrant, often results in women resorting to engaging in business activities, both necessity and opportunity driven (Bijedic & Piper, 2019*; Mehtap et al., 2019*). Entrepreneurial activity is regarded as a means for women to break free from particular gendered constraints, with entrepreneurship seen as a vehicle for becoming empowered (Alkhaled & Berglund, 2018*) and to overcome structural gender constraints (Vershinina et al., 2019*). Figure 3 provides a structured overview of the principal topics within cluster 1, which serve as an approximation to determine the knowledge structure of the research area.

Cluster 2: Women in family-firm governance

Board diversity is a topic of growing interest in relation to board processes and decision-making. Among the various attributes and characteristics of directors, which can be visible (e.g. race/ethnicity, age and gender) or not visible (e.g. educational background and professional experience) (Kang et al., 2007), board gender diversity

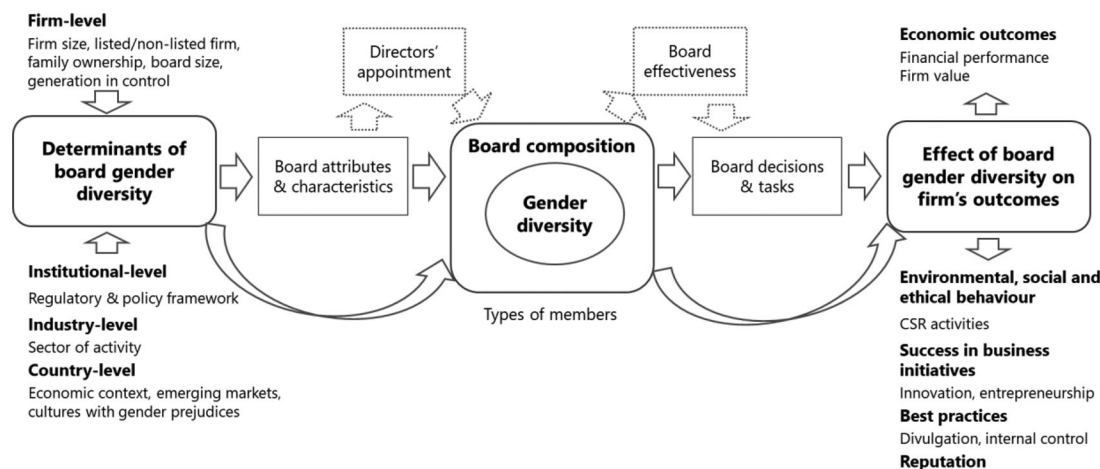


FIGURE 4 Integrative research framework for cluster 2: women in family-firm governance

has been studied in great depth. However, recently, there has been more research interest in women in top-level positions within family firms. Most articles within this cluster were published in the last 3 years based on data collected from large listed firms, even though most family firms are SMEs. It should be noted that most studies analyse board gender diversity relative to the context of the specific country in which the research was conducted.

Of the 225 papers in our dataset, 57 belonged to this cluster. The thematic content of the cluster was organized into the framework presented in Figure 4. We identified two main issues related to the gender diversity of boards: factors determining board gender diversity and the effects of gender diversity on firm outcomes.

The literature on women's participation in boards and their connection to various outcomes is the most important issue in cluster 2. However, the findings do not show a clear picture regarding women. While some studies identify a positive relationship between gender and firm outcomes, others find no significant relationship or even a negative one. Among those which find a positive relationship, Terjesen et al. (2016*) suggest that firms with more female directors perform better based on market indicators (Tobin's Q) and accounting (return on assets) financial indicators. Similar relationships are found by Chauhan and Dey (2017*), Martin-Ugedo and Minguez-Vera (2014*), Mukarram et al. (2018b*) and Nerantzidis and Tsamis (2017*), although Mukarram et al. also indicate that a patriarchal society may reduce the importance of female directors. Pucheta-Martínez and Bel-Oms (2016*) analyse the impact of board gender diversity on dividend policy, showing that an increase in the proportion of female directors (without distinguishing the type of directorship) increases dividend payouts. However, the presence of female directors who are large block-holders, such as family owners, negatively impacts dividend policy. Vieira (2018*) reveals that

family-firm performance is positively related to ownership concentration and gender diversity, while Moreno-Gómez and Calleja-Blanco (2018*) also find a positive relationship between women on boards and firm profitability; however, the results indicate that family firms negatively moderate that relationship. Among studies that find a negative relationship, we highlight the works of Mínguez-Vera and Martín (2011*) and Rubino et al. (2017*), which show that the presence of women on boards has a negative impact on family-firm performance. Saeed et al. (2019*) and Solakoglu and Demir (2016*) find weak evidence that gender diversity positively impacts firm performance.

Several articles focus on the effects of board gender diversity on non-economic outcomes. Some studies suggest that having women on boards exerts a greater influence on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social and ethical issues, highlighting the difference in the relationship between family and non-family businesses (Cruz et al., 2019*; Sial et al., 2019*; Sundarasan et al., 2016*). Thus, some studies explore the relationship between board gender diversity and CSR, assuming that CSR activities are the outcome of boards' decisions. Cruz et al. (2019*) propose that the combined effects of a female director, family affiliation and their insider status drive a firm's CSR agenda, and argue that a family female director can have more legitimacy and power to influence board decisions in favour of CSR activities. By contrast, Rodríguez-Ariza et al. (2017*) find that the degree of CSR is higher in non-family firms with women on the board than in family firms with women on the board, as the latter group of firms tend to be aligned with the family and behave in accordance with family orientation towards CSR. Similarly, Samara et al. (2019*) show that women on corporate boards can be used as a vehicle for the controlling owners of family firms to achieve economic goals and to improve the reputation of both the family and the business.

Studies also suggest that women are more likely to report and avoid fraud and irregularities, and that more ethical behaviour is expected of them. For instance, Ramdani and Van Witteloostuijn (2012*) suggest that an increase in the equity share of the largest shareholder of a firm decreases the likelihood of bribery and that bribery is more likely to occur when the principal owner is male rather than female. Ghafoor et al. (2019*) reveal that, among other factors, the presence of a female on the board provides active monitoring and oversight in reducing fraud. Nadeem et al. (2020*) conclude that women on boards in family firms increase social and environmental value creation in addition to economic returns.

Other studies provide evidence that the appointment of female directors is strongly related to family ownership, firm size and board size (Abdullah & Ismail, 2016*; Bianco et al., 2015; Nekhili & Gatfaoui, 2013*). These boards tend to have at least one woman in the boardroom, who maintains a family connection to the controlling shareholder (Bianco et al., 2015*). Saeed et al. (2016*) examine the determinants of board gender diversity in BRICS⁴ economies, and show that board gender diversity is positively related to firm size and inversely related to corporate risk. However, other studies in emerging markets show a negative impact of family ownership on the proportion of female directors, although this relationship is reversed if the firm operates in international markets (Saeed et al., 2017*) or in the high-tech sector (Saeed et al., 2021*). Watkins-Fassler and Rodríguez-Ariza (2019*) provide evidence that family involvement and the presence of women on boards reduce the odds of internationalization, while according to Hernández-Lara and Gonzales-Bustos (2020*), the proportion of women on boards has a positive influence on innovation.

Other studies suggest the importance of examining intermediate variables, such as board involvement and board tasks, rather than the direct relationship between board gender diversity and financial or non-financial indicators. Arzubiaga et al. (2018*) find that the link between entrepreneurial orientation and performance is stronger in family firms with lower levels of family involvement and higher levels of gender diversity on the board. Other studies analyse board gender diversity in relation to the decision to disclose environmental, social and governance information voluntarily (Lagasio & Cucari, 2019*; Mutakin et al., 2015*), firm risk information (Saggar & Singh, 2017*; Salem et al., 2019*) and intellectual capital information in initial public offerings (Nadeem, 2020*), providing evidence that female directorships are linked to enhanced voluntary corporate disclosure, enhanced transparency and quality of financial reporting (Alfraih, 2016*). Other studies focus on the behaviour and dynamics of boards of directors by analysing, for example, rifts in the

boards of family firms. For example, Vandebeek et al. (2016*) reveal a negative relationship between fault-lines and both board control and service role performance. Odehnalova and Pirozek (2018*) focus on strategic adaptability, showing that gender diversity and the representation of family members on boards positively influence the strategic adaptability of the business, even in times of crisis and recession. The literature also reveals a positive impact of the presence of female directors on family firms' risk-taking behaviour (Mukarram et al., 2018a*; Poletti-Hughes & Briano-Turrent, 2019*), which contrasts with the traditional notion that women are risk averse.

Finally, some studies analyse whether gender interactions at the top of the corporate hierarchy affect corporate performance, and find that female directors significantly improve the operating profitability of female-led firms (Bjuggren et al., 2018*); however, this positive effect is reduced when the firm is located in geographic areas characterized by gender prejudices and when the firm is large (Amore et al., 2014*). In this regard, the findings of Chadwick and Dawson (2018*) indicate that female-led firms outperform male-led firms in terms of non-financial performance across family and non-family firms. However, in financial terms, a positive relationship between female leaders and firm performance is found only in non-family firms. Nekhili et al. (2018*) argue that family firms offer women a more appropriate climate for exercising director functions. By contrast, female CEOs perform better in non-family firms, highlighting the importance of the organization and culture in which leaders operate.

Cluster 3: Family-business dynamics

The family-business literature considers the family firm as a system comprising at least two interconnected spheres, the family and the business, which overlap and interact over time; the word 'familiness' is a construct describing a firm's idiosyncratic bundle of resources and capabilities, resulting from the interactions between the family, its individual members and the business (Habbershon & Williams, 1999). The central insight in cluster 3 is how family dynamics (e.g. norms, attitudes, values and resources) interact with business dynamics, since many business decisions (e.g. investments, resource mobilization and adoption of strategies) and goals and outcomes (e.g. performance, survival and success) are not only influenced by, but also exert an impact on, family-level factors (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003).

Many papers included in cluster 3, by putting the family at the heart of the research, reveal the complexities of the dynamics of family firms, developing a deeper understanding of the 'hidden' dimension of the role of women in

businesses (Hamilton, 2006*). Social capital theory is used in this cluster to try to explain the mechanisms that enable the flow between family social capital and firm social capital, as well as the research model of sustainable family businesses, which recognize that work and family life are interconnected spheres with positive and negative bidirectional influences between work conditions and family outcomes, and vice versa (Danes et al., 2009*). These businesses are seen as an important source of flexibility provided by familial ties, but the family also imposes obligations which can contradict economic rationality (Ram & Holliday, 1993*; Zhang & Pan, 2012*). The study of Rothausen (2009*) is key to understanding research on work and non-work life, and its connection with family-firm research and gender research, identifying different themes, such as work-family conflict, work and family roles, work-family benefits and organizational responses to work-family conflict.

Some studies explore the strategies used by families to increase the success of both their business and family (Olson et al., 2003*) and to reduce work-in-family conflict and family-in-work conflict (Baltes & Heydens-Gahir, 2003*; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2016*). Similarly, several articles analyse how the survival of family SMEs partially depends on emotional support and commitment from families (Marshall et al., 2019*) and the family's endowment of resources (Chen et al., 2018*). The decision to launch a business, for instance, depends not only on the analysis of the opportunity, but also on the degree to which a spouse shares a common vision about the goals, risks and rewards associated with the business (Van Auker & Werbel, 2006*; Werbel & Danes, 2010*). Haberman and Danes (2007*) indicate that women in father-son businesses experienced feelings of exclusion, which produced less shared meaning and lower levels of integration among family members. However, women in father-daughter businesses experienced feelings of inclusion, resulting in lower conflict that created higher levels of shared meaning, collaboration and integration among family members. The proponents of the sustainable family business model also seek evidence for the importance of family support in the survival and success of SMEs, for example, in the context of natural disasters (Haynes et al., 2011*, 2019*; Jang & Danes, 2013*; Stafford et al., 2013*). In this regard, Cruz et al. (2012*) highlight how the nature of the employment relationship in family firms enhances the benefits derived from the socio-emotional wealth (SEW) endowment associated with family labour and reduces the opportunity costs of employing relatives. Woods et al. (2019*) assert that family members who feel supported by family in their business decision-making are happier in their home lives in general, while Block et al. (2015*) argue that family employees have higher levels of job satisfaction, even when their wages are lower than those of other employees.

A group of articles focus on investigating the behavioural dynamics of co-preneurial couples, that is, cohabitating couples who share ownership of, responsibility for and commitment to an enterprise (Marshack, 1993). Co-preneurial couples represent the interaction of personal relationships and business partnerships, which can help to understand the boundaries between these spheres and the effects of this interrelation in the family and business (Marshack, 1994). These studies attempt to show the importance of co-preneurial couples and the complexity of their interactions for business success (e.g. Farrington et al., 2011*; Fletcher, 2010*; Hirigoyen & Villeger, 2019*; McDonald et al., 2017*; Wu et al., 2010*). According to Fitzgerald and Muske (2002), one of the reasons for the growth of co-preneurship is the interest of women in starting a business, with gender and the division of labour being among the main research topics of these studies (Cole & Johnson, 2007*). For example, Larsen (2006*) shows that couples organize their work into gendered tasks and workspaces, contributing to the maintenance of vertical segregation in the trainer position. Hamilton (2006*) reveals the 'hidden' dimension of the role of women in family firms, supporting the view of women as 'invisible' (Marshack, 1994). This could be considered a misogynistic attitude related to the distribution of power and resources in household and business roles in family firms (Kuzmanovic, 2019*). Hedberg and Danes (2012*) suggest that co-preneurial businesses, where spouses are seen as equal partners engaging in collaborative power interactions, are likely to result in a more productive business decision-making team that has resilience to solve important business problems creatively. Cole and Johnson (2007*) and Galbraith (2003*) analyse the relationship between marital dissolution and business continuity, showing that the couple's level of commitment to the business and trust in each other in this regard, the degree of synergetic work compartmentalization and positive gender attitudes contribute to the success of the business and working together post-divorce. According to Kuschel and Lepeley (2016*), other factors that can influence this success are workaholic tendencies and high degree of rationality of the couple.

Figure 5 presents a framework of a structured overview of the principal topics identified within the 53 articles included in cluster 3.

Cluster 4: Women in business succession

This cluster is composed of 34 articles focusing on women (daughters in particular) in family-firm succession, a topic that has not been widely explored in the literature. Interest in this topic in recent years has been

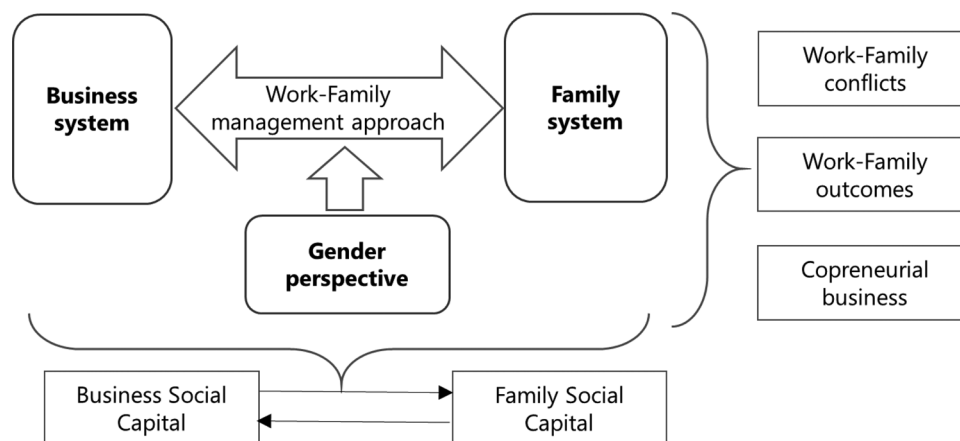


FIGURE 5 Integrative research framework for cluster 3: family-business dynamics

increasing, reflecting the transition from a phase of ‘women’s exclusion’ to a phase of ‘women’s consideration’ in family business succession (Cesaroni & Sentuti, 2018). The cluster includes several literature reviews which deepen our understanding of the role of women and their role in succession within family firms (e.g. Campopiano et al., 2017*; Kubiček & Machek, 2019*; Martínez-Jimenez, 2009*; Nelson & Constantinidis, 2017*). The literature reveals two research issues that have received the most attention: one related to factors influencing the succession process from a gender perspective, and the other focused on factors that facilitate (or hinder) women’s leadership in family firms. Most of these studies are conceptual and adopt a qualitative research approach, based on single or multiple case studies, with the aim of examining people’s experiences in succession processes.

The role of women in these processes is the focus of several articles that highlight the importance of societal attitudes towards women and of family culture and attitudes regarding women’s professional opportunities within the firm (Martínez-Jimenez, 2009*). Some articles present the primogeniture criterion as an historical reason for businesses traditionally being transferred from the father (or other male leader) to the first-born male offspring, mainly in patriarchal societies, a process resulting in the exclusion of women as potential successors. According to Byrne et al. (2021*), through discourse and interactions, family members have socially constructed the role of successors, which determines a hierarchy of potential successors framed by gendered stereotypes. In this socio-cultural context, gender bias selection can influence succession decision-making, including the choice of successor (Deng, 2015*; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2016*; Ramadani et al., 2017a*). Primogeniture rules based on birth order or gender, but not competence, can have large and negative consequences for firm performance (Bennedsen et al., 2007*). Although the primogeniture

criterion seems to be declining, it is still present in parts of the world. Kubiček and Machek (2019*) point out that the probability that an incumbent decides to sell the firm or appoint a non-family CEO rather than transfer leadership to the daughter, even if she is the only child, is still high in certain countries, which limits labour market selectivity (Ahrens et al., 2015*). However, contrary to previous studies on female succession, Deng (2015*) notes that successor selection has become driven by more objective criteria, and that daughters are groomed to run the family business and encouraged to become involved in it at an early stage, even in very traditional cultures, such as China. Fahed-Sreih and Djoundourian (2006*) argue that even in conventional societies, if families have formalized participatory decision-making processes in place, such as family meetings and advisory boards, their succession planning is more likely to be effective; and if they have an open approach, they are more likely to consider female leadership acceptable. Vera and Dean (2005*) and Ramadani et al. (2017b*) argue that family firms can offer more opportunities to overcome the challenges which women face in accessing managerial positions. Parental support and mentoring for leadership are key factors that facilitate daughter succession, as well as sharing the vision of the future of the business (Overbeke et al., 2015*). According to Overbeke et al. (2013*), less hierarchical family structures with more egalitarian culture increase the demand for female successors. Meroño-Cerdan and López-Nicolas (2017*, p. 235) confirm this observation, arguing that family firms ‘are able to break the popularly termed “glass ceiling” that prevents women from reaching top management positions providing greater work-life balance’.

The leadership style of women has also been analysed in various studies. According to Vera and Dean (2005*), when daughters enter family firms, they have to gain respect from both business and family perspectives, and it can be difficult if parents do not view daughters as professionals.

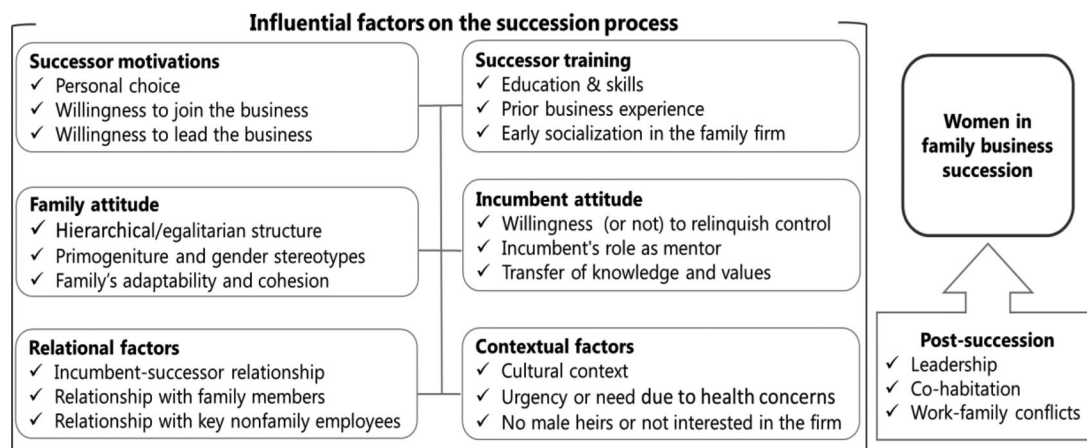


FIGURE 6 Integrative research framework for cluster 4: women in business succession

Previous professional experience outside the family business, maintaining a close relationship with incumbents, garnering their support and mentoring for leadership, fostering open communication with other family members and early socialization within the family firm can facilitate the pathway to leadership and control of the firm (Kubiček & Machek, 2019*; Martínez-Jimenez, 2009*; Vera & Dean, 2005*). Several authors also argue that many factors related to psychology and sociology allow women to offer their firms the humaneness needed in the business world (Martínez-Jimenez, 2009*), an increasingly important aspect of work in years to come. For instance, Mussolino et al. (2019*) identify different pathways by which daughters construct their routes to self-positioning in family firms, strengthening the idea of gender as a process embedded in social relationships. Byrne et al. (2021*) show how female CEOs enact relational femininity to garner stakeholders' support and build alliances to manage change initiatives. Similarly, Hytti et al. (2017*) suggest that daughters construct and negotiate their gender and leadership identities in their interactions with others by using the gendered scripts available to them. Since feminine leadership is more open and empathetic, and less competitive, 'these traits can efficiently reduce the conflict between the business and family spheres' (Kubiček & Machek, 2019*, p. 992). Figure 6 provides a structured summary of the main issues discussed within the articles in this cluster.

Cluster 5: Temporal and spatial dimensions of women's involvement

Research in cluster 5 focuses on the development and diversity of the family-firm field in the broader context of place and time, with the addition of the gender perspective.

Several articles focus on identifying family firms in comparison with their non-family counterparts. The authors

acknowledge that this task is not easy, as family firms are not homogeneous and pursue different objectives, both economic and non-economic, some of which are highly likely to coincide with those of non-family firms. Jorissen et al. (2005*), who consider demographic control variables, provide evidence that family and non-family firms of a certain size, age and in the same industry are not that different with regard to their number of actions. The real differences between family and non-family firms are that the former export less, are less engaged in formal short-term planning and variable reward systems, and generate lower levels of profitability. Furthermore, CEOs of family firms hold lower-level educational degrees than do CEOs of non-family firms, enjoy longer tenures and are more often female than male. Rutherford et al. (2006*) identify key groups of variables that can help explain the development of family firms, but gender of the owner and the co-preneur ownership variables have no significant impact on firms' development. Machek's (2017*) findings suggest that family firms tend to be older, less profitable and compensate their employees less, but offer greater job security than non-family firms. Moreover, female-led family firms do not remunerate and dismiss employees differently from male-led firms. Howorth et al. (2010*) argue that the key to differentiating family and non-family businesses lies in the overlapping culture of family and business, highlighting the importance of considering the roles played by all family-firm members, including their 'invisible' members. Similarly, Van den Berghe and Carchon (2003*) argue that each family-firm type is characterized by a set of agency relations within and between the family, the ownership (non-family owners) and the business, and three interconnected social systems whereby strategy and firm outcomes depend on their interactions.

The literature has also made significant efforts to understand the evolutionary process of family firms over time and to recognize the prominent role of some women who

were far ahead of their time (Sampaio et al., 2017*). For instance, Tweedale (2013*) explores the development of cutlery firms in the late 19th century and provide evidence of the crucial role of women in most successful and wealthy entrepreneurs' careers. During the same period, in France, Khan (2016*) suggests that middle-class women were engaged extensively in entrepreneurship and innovation, and their efforts were significantly enhanced by association with family firms. Edvinsson (2016*) investigates the role of wives in the Swedish business elite in the early 1900s, showing how wives could be involved in family businesses as informal advisers. Muñoz and Perez (2007*) analyse women's participation in the Spanish economy from the early 19th century to the 20th century, and women's roles as managers, collaborative partners and self-employed business owners. Hernández and Martínez (2019*) analyse the role of widows in the early 1900s in Spanish businesses after the male firm owner passed away. The findings show that some widows controlled the company to preserve the inheritance to bequeath to their heirs. Rinaldi and Tagliacuzzi (2021*) show that family is the only institution in which Italian female entrepreneurs seem to have found a space. Kinship and family ties have often been of paramount importance in allowing women to become entrepreneurial leaders, a route often barred within other corporate institutions.

The literature also analyses the characteristics and development of family firms in different cultures and environments in which they are embedded. Parada et al. (2016*) highlight the importance of understanding the characteristics and behaviour of family firms in Ibero-America, an emerging regional economy with a specific collectivist culture in which close relationships are important. Several studies have focused on how gender, ethnicity, religion and business are actively interrelated in overseas Chinese family businesses (Du & Zeng, 2019*; Entwisle et al., 1995*; Jiang et al., 2015*; Katila, 2010*). Adapa and Sheridan (2021*) reveal how women's careers in Malaysia are impacted by the interaction of gendered work practices, competitive pressures, stereotypical beliefs, ethnic influences and family business, recognizing that these normative processes and practices affecting gender are shaped by the religious and cultural context. Pirakatheeswari (2015*) shows how Indian society is male-dominated and women have lower status, which acts as a barrier to the development of women's entrepreneurship. Shaya and Khait (2017*) identify some of the social and cultural factors inducing the success of women in the United Arab Emirates, including changing institutional attitudes towards women around work-life balance and family support for leadership, by analysing the experiences of an elite group of Emirati women considered leaders in their fields. Smith (2009*) explores the definition of family and the cul-

tural and legal-based rights of the extended family in East African countries, where women are not allowed to inherit property. The article also highlights the actions of business owners who take steps to protect their families and firms against free-riding relatives.

In summary, as Howorth et al. (2010*) point out, women play a key role in shaping the formation and development of many family firms, but the gender and stereotypical assumptions about their participation in family firms—and our lack of knowledge about women and family firms in different cultural and social contexts—limit our understanding of familial and entrepreneurial behaviour in diverse environments and types of family firms. Figure 7 presents the thematic content of the 26 articles included in this cluster.

AN INTEGRATIVE VIEW AND A WAY FORWARD

This review has been developed from three RQs that have guided the development of this study. The bibliometric analysis generated five thematic clusters, from which we delineated the coverage and extent of the WIFF research and its main connections. Based on these thematic clusters, we have developed an integrative framework of the WIFF research (Figure 8) that shows how each cluster fits together, and provides an overview of our main suggestions for future research. In addition, Table 4 summarizes the main characteristics and findings identified in each cluster, as well as the theoretical and methodological approaches followed by the researchers (for detailed information, see Appendix S2).

Based on our integrative view of the WIFF research (Figure 8), we also propose new questions that may lead to new research opportunities, which are summarized in Table 5.

Our main theoretical and methodological suggestions for future research and the relevance of the framework for scholars and practitioners are discussed in detail below.

Women's entry into the family business. Following an individual-level approach, much of the literature on women's entrepreneurship has focused on examining the supportive environment that women have and its influence on their entrepreneurial intentions. Social cognitive theory and the theory of planned behaviour are among the theoretical lenses most commonly used to understand women's entrepreneurial motivation and intention, and their subsequent entrepreneurial actions. In studies that analyse family dynamics in entrepreneurial processes, social capital, resource-based and identity theories are adopted to examine the influence of family social capital on female entrepreneurs, focusing on financial and

TABLE 4 Overview of the main features of the five thematic clusters*

CI	TP	Main sources	Top cited papers	Main theoretical perspectives	Main methodological perspectives
1	55	<i>Small Business Economics</i> (8) <i>International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship</i> (5) <i>Family Business Review</i> (3) <i>International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal</i> (3) <i>International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research</i> (3)	Au and Kwan (2009), Cetindamar et al. (2012), Fairlie and Robb (2009), Lin et al. (2000), Schroeder et al. (2011)	Social cognitive theory Theory of planned behaviour Identity theory Resource-based theory Social capital theory Human capital theory	Empirical quantitative logistic regressions (15) Empirical quantitative OLS regressions (11) Empirical qualitative case study-based research (7) Empirical qualitative phenomenological (5) Empirical qualitative ethnographic (5)
2	57	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i> (6) <i>Corporate Governance – The International Journal of Business In Society</i> (4) <i>Journal of Management & Governance</i> (2) <i>Corporate Governance – An International Review</i> (2) <i>International Business Review</i> (2)	Amore et al. (2014), Bianco et al. (2015), Minguez-Vera and Martin (2011), Nekhill and Gafsaoui (2013), Terjesen et al. (2016)	Agency theory Resource dependence theory Resource-based theory Socioemotional wealth perspective Stewardship theory Institutional theory Stakeholder theory Upper echelons theory Contingency theory of leadership	Empirical quantitative OLS regressions (27) Empirical quantitative GMM (14) Empirical quantitative Tobit regression analysis (4) Empirical quantitative probit (3) Empirical quantitative logistic regressions (2)
3	53	<i>Family Business Review</i> (4) <i>Journal of Business Venturing</i> (3) <i>Journal of Family Business Strategy</i> (3) <i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i> (2) <i>International Small Business Journal</i> (2)	Baltes and Heydens-Gahir (2003), Cruz et al. (2012), Danes et al. (2009), Hamilton (2006), Olson et al. (2003)	Sustainable family business (SFB) theory Agency theory Socioemotional wealth perspective (SEW) Social cognition theory Family FIRO (fundamental interpersonal relationship orientation) theory Social capital theory	Empirical quantitative OLS regressions (17) Empirical quantitative SEM (4) Empirical quantitative logistic regressions (4) Empirical qualitative case study-based research (4) Theoretical conceptual (4)
4	34	<i>Family Business Review</i> (4) <i>Journal of Family Business Strategy</i> (4) <i>Journal of Management & Organization</i> (2) <i>Journal of Family Business Management</i> (2) <i>International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship</i> (2) <i>Business History</i> (3) <i>Family Business Review</i> (2) <i>American Sociological Review</i> (1) <i>Journal of Corporate Finance</i> (1) <i>Corporate Governance – An International Review</i> (1)	Ahrens et al. (2015), Fahed-Sreih and Djoundourian (2006), Martinez-Jimenez (2009) Overbeke et al. (2013), Vera and Dean (2005)	Gender role theory Social constructionist approach Social role theory Theory of planned behaviour Role congruity theory	Empirical qualitative case study-based research (9) Empirical qualitative phenomenological (4) Empirical quantitative OLS regressions (3) Empirical qualitative biographical (2) Empirical qualitative ethnographic (2)
5	26	<i>Business History</i> (3) <i>Family Business Review</i> (2) <i>American Sociological Review</i> (1) <i>Journal of Corporate Finance</i> (1) <i>Corporate Governance – An International Review</i> (1)	Howorth et al. (2010), Jorissen et al. (2005), Rutherford et al. (2006), Smith (2009), Van den Bergh and Carchon (2003)	Agency theory Social role theory Institutional theory Social capital theory Upper echelon theory	Empirical qualitative phenomenological (5) Empirical quantitative descriptive (4) Empirical quantitative logistic regressions (3) Theoretical conceptual (3) Empirical quantitative OLS regressions (2)

CI = clusters; TP = total papers.

*The complete references of these articles are included in Annex II.

TABLE 5 Women's involvement in family firms: drivers and future research directions

Research questions	
Women's entry into business	Cluster 1: Female entrepreneurs and family firms
	a. What impact do institutional changes have on women's entry into family firms? b. What are the components of family and business culture that act as influential mechanisms on female entrepreneurial intention and behaviour? c. How do family and social dynamics affect the entrepreneurial orientation of female entrepreneurs and women in family firms?
	Cluster 4: Women in business succession
	a. Do succession decisions reflect the gender stereotype present in its socio-cultural environment? b. Does the gender of the incumbent and the successor influence the succession process and the transfer of the family firm's leadership? c. Does family ownership influence the access of women to leadership positions? d. What are the expectations that different stakeholders have of the succession process?
Women's involvement in family firms and business families	Cluster 2: Women in family firm governance
	a. Does women's presence on the board influence decision-making processes? b. Does women's presence in leadership positions affect the firm's reputation and influence other measures of performance? c. Do women bring a different style of leadership to the family firm?
	Cluster 3: Family–business dynamics
	a. Does the involvement of women in family firms help generate familiness? b. Does the involvement of women in family firms influence the socio-emotional wealth dimensions of the firms? c. Under which circumstances can gender diversity act as a stewardship mechanism in family firms?
Temporal and spatial dimensions of women's involvement in family firms	Cluster 5: Temporal and spatial dimensions of women's involvement
	a. How have the 'invisible' members of families, women and spouses or partners, helped to shape the development of family firms over time? b. What contextual factors have influenced women's entrepreneurship and leadership over the years? c. How have contextual factors shaped contemporary family firms and women's involvement? d. What socio-cultural and economic factors influence women's entrepreneurship and leadership in countries and regional areas outside of Western countries?

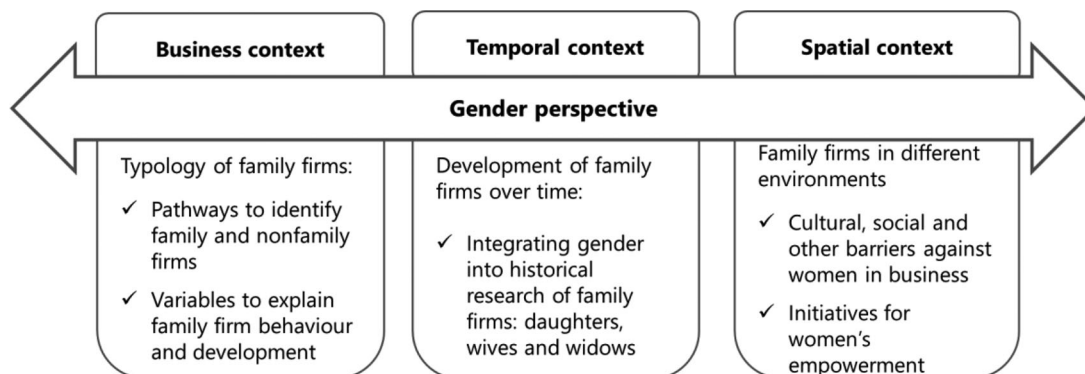


FIGURE 7 Integrative research framework for cluster 5: temporal and spatial dimensions of women's involvement

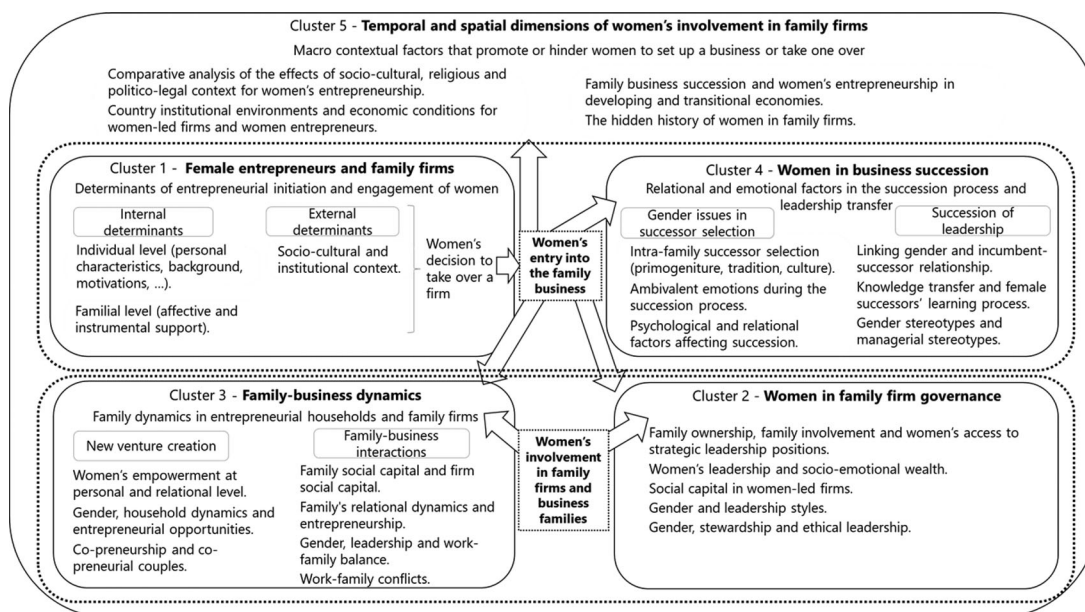


FIGURE 8 An integrative view of the WIFF research

emotional support and networks. We highlight a shortage of studies that examine family dimensions and their influence on women's entrepreneurial experiences from a holistic perspective, despite numerous calls to broaden the family perspective in entrepreneurship research (e.g. Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). To understand the complexities of these dimensions and determine causal relationships, future research could explore further family influence on women's entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour, using family dimensions as moderator variables. Studies could investigate how relationships among family members affect the behaviour of female entrepreneurs. Given that social exchange theory is based on social exchange, this approach could be an appropriate theoretical framework for examining relational processes in family firms and for studying the development of social capital (Long, 2011). Personal behaviour is formed by a complex interaction

of social, interpersonal and psychological boundaries and norms (Marshack, 1993). Similarly, the nature of family ties—based on blood ties or legal/cohabiting ties—has an important personal and affective component (Brannon et al., 2013). The integration of theories of stewardship and social exchange can help to explain reciprocity and stewardship behaviour and exchange-level contributions to social capital (Discua-Cruz, 2020; Long, 2011; McLarty et al., 2019). Based on the social capital framework, research could investigate the relevance of moral structure, family norms and social interactions as mechanisms influencing women's entrepreneurship.

Our review detects shortcomings in the contextual orientation of works. The individualistic rather than collective focus on female entrepreneurs predominates, which limits our understanding of contextual factors that might influence female entrepreneurship. This suggests the need

for more detailed consideration of how socio-cultural background influences women's motivations and decisions to start a business and how institutional and cultural factors promote or hinder such entry. The study of perceptions and gender stereotypes and whether (and how) these factors can undermine women's capacity to lead a business is another promising topic of research. Given that gender stereotypes often align with managerial stereotypes, it would be interesting to analyse whether some particular cognitive traits can influence women's entrepreneurial behaviour. In addition, studies should consider different socio-cultural and family contexts that may act as potential barriers or drivers of behavioural change.

It would be valuable to broaden our understanding of the factors shaping entrepreneurial attitudes from a psychological perspective, analysing the moderating role of such aspects as psychological and moral support or level of self-efficacy and self-confidence, among others. In line with recent calls for research (e.g. Sharma et al., 2020), we suggest incorporating variables from the psychology field to explain the behaviour of WIFF. Furthermore, given that entrepreneurship must be understood as a process over time, studies should go beyond the initial intention of starting a business. Longitudinal studies should examine whether the challenges and barriers that women face in later stages of the venture process change and, if so, how, in what ways and why. This methodological approach could provide vital evidence of changes over time, and changes among groups of female entrepreneurs.

Studies on succession have revealed that primogeniture and gender bias emerge as determinants of family business succession. Leadership succession and gender-related issues, therefore, represent a promising research stream. The antecedents that determine the choice of successor are diverse and rich in nuance, and thus continue to be of great interest. Tradition and the desire to preserve the family legacy or avoid emotionally complex situations are among factors determining the choice of successor (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2011). To this should be added gender-related factors. Little is known about the influence of gender bias on intra-family succession and the incumbent-successor relationship. Our understanding of how successor identity is constructed during succession is also limited. As McAdam et al. (2020) assert, establishing legitimacy can be particularly challenging for daughter successors as they construct their role with male stereotypes. The social exchange perspective might help explain what factors determine incumbent-successor interactions, and family-successor relations (Daspit et al., 2016). Related to this issue is the need for further research on the transfer of knowledge from incumbents to successors, as it is considered key for a successful succession (Cabrera-Suárez et al., 2018). Thus, future research could delve into the interplay of knowl-

edge management and succession, which could show different aspects of female successors' learning process and their influence on the success (or otherwise) of the succession. An interesting avenue of research on succession could explore both rational and emotional forces that influence these processes from a gender perspective.

Moreover, emotions can play a significant role when succession approaches, since it is arguably the most critical issue faced by family firms. Although ambivalent emotions are likely to arise during succession, little is known about the management of such emotions. We consider that in addition to the incumbent and successor, the expectations, feelings and perceptions of different stakeholders (e.g. family and non-family members) should be examined to incorporate the gender perspective. These emotions could be embedded in the atmosphere of the business and thus influence relationships, aspects which remain largely unexplored. Studies might be based on theories of emotions, since many failed successions have a psychological and cognitive component. These theoretical lenses would help to understand the factors that influence the satisfaction of family-firm stakeholders with the succession process, helping with the identification and design of strategies to make succession more successful.

Another area of study, identified by Kubiček and Machek (2019), is how the transition of managerial style affects the business, and whether the gender of the incumbent and the successor influences the transfer of leadership. Viewing the leadership transition through a micro-foundational lens may offer an opportunity to explore further the underlying mechanisms of family-firm succession. Micro-foundations of succession could contribute to the discussion of how the characteristics, actions and interactions of incumbents and successors determine firm-level behaviour and characteristics, or what is the goal of family business succession (De Massis & Foss, 2018).

Furthermore, as the extant literature on family business succession is based on single or multiple case studies, generalized empirical findings are lacking. Therefore, quantitative research should also be undertaken to draw generalizable conclusions. It would also be interesting to analyse the succession process in different geographical locations because the socio-cultural context and legal requirements could discriminate against the succession of women in some countries.

Women's involvement in family firms and business families. The scant presence of women in decision-making positions is still a widespread phenomenon; hence, there has been significant growth in recent years of studies on women's participation in corporate governance. Many of these studies are based on data collected from listed companies that have gender quotas or follow good governance recommendations. It should also be noted that although

the number of positions occupied by women in family firms seems to be greater than in their non-family counterparts, it is less common to find women as CEOs or chairs of boards. This suggests the need for more studies that explore women's presence in leadership positions, focusing on non-listed family firms across countries, and especially on family SMEs. Given that the principal methodological approach in the literature on women's participation in corporate governance has been quantitative, future research could use a qualitative or mixed-methods approach. This could deepen understanding of the obstacles that impede women's access to the highest decision-making levels.

In this area, future research could analyse whether the family and level of family ownership influence women's access to key leadership positions. Research should seek to interlink the family and the firm from the family perspective by integrating theories related to the family, as Jaskiewicz and Dyer (2017) propose. Given that family science research operates at the family level of analysis, this research perspective might help to explain how relationships, roles and transitions in the family affect the family firm (Combs et al., 2020). These studies may provide additional evidence to identify family members with the firm and facilitate analysis of differences between women and men regarding their emotional attachment to the business. Greater integration of family and business-related dimensions into studies of the family firm, where women play a fundamental role, should permit a more fine-grained analysis of the family's dynamic and emotional connections, bringing the woman's role in the entrepreneurial household and business out of the shadows. Future research on WIFF could be reinforced by integrating new theoretical perspectives, such as social exchange or family systems theories, to offer a more systemic perspective of the family–business interaction, as suggested by Marshack (1993). Such research could provide new perspectives on what kind of family relations affect or are affected by WIFF (e.g. Campopiano et al., 2017).

Regarding theoretical approaches in studies of diversity at different levels of decision-making, our review identifies three business-grounded theories: agency theory, which is directly linked to the presence of diversity on boards and ownership structure; resource dependence theory; and the resource-based view of the firm, which is linked to diversity in top management. We consider it valuable to use other theories that provide alternative arguments to further understand the influence of gender diversity on strategic decision-making through its presence in family firms' governance and management positions. We observe that the WIFF literature has rarely used the dimension of socio-emotional wealth (SEW), which recognizes the existence of emotional attachment factors

that may influence decision-making processes (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2011). As previous studies note (e.g. Chua et al., 2018; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2021), the different characteristics and implications of family firms' members' influence on family firms' goals and on the creation and accumulation of SEW, represent an opportunity for future studies. Given that SEW is a reference point which works with a rational logic of choice for both economic and non-economic goals (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007), a promising area of interest is analysing whether the presence of women in leadership positions of family firms (versus men in such roles) shapes family firms' SEW reference points. If so, how do leaders consider the motivations to preserve and improve SEW when making strategic decisions? In this area, we recommend that researchers focus on delving into the potential moderating influence of women in strategic decision-making. We also encourage researchers to include non-economic outcome variables to increase knowledge about family-firm uniqueness. In line with Chrisman's (2019) proposal, we suggest that future research should examine the integration of the stewardship perspective, since family-firm members can demonstrate high levels of stewardship owing to their emotional attachment to the business. If relational process is regarded as based on trust, commitment and 'norms of reciprocity', we could analyse relationships in family firms, and whether or not these relationships determine stewardship behaviour (Long & Mathews, 2011; Pearson & Marler, 2010). In this regard, we consider that attention should be paid to how gender diversity acts (or not) as a stewardship mechanism for effective governance that creates pro-organizational behaviour in family firms.

Temporal and spatial dimensions of women's involvement in family firms. Business development is embedded in a complex network of social relationships where the barriers and obstacles to women's access to resources or opportunities vary according to the socio-cultural and economic context. Dimensions, such as culture, education and religion, should be considered important contextual factors in understanding women's entrepreneurship, their recruitment and presence in positions of power in businesses. Rules and patterns of kinship differ from culture to culture and define who belongs to the family, which can be fundamental in determining the influence of family support in the establishment of a business. Borrowing anthropological constructs, such as kinship (e.g. Peredo, 2003; Stewart, 2003), could enrich our understanding of how different family contexts influence women's entrepreneurship and WIFF. Based on these premises, we propose a study of contextual determinants of women's entrepreneurship and leadership in a broader international environment. While the literature on female entrepreneurs and leaders in developed countries is extensive and some studies

have been conducted in developing and transitional economies, relatively little attention has been paid to other types of countries or different geographic areas (e.g. Arab and Islamic countries, Ibero-America and Africa), where family firms may act differently owing to cultural, ethnic or religious background. Future research should examine whether the conceptual models and empirical results obtained are validated in other geographical areas. Moreover, there is a strong bias towards single-country studies. This suggests the need for more comparative studies with detailed analysis of their particularities and contextual dynamics, examining the integration of social and country contexts as motivational drivers for WIFF.

Understanding the invisibility of women in family-firm research requires recognition that family firms are influenced by their historical context. Historians have focused on male entrepreneurs or family business owner-managers, often forgetting the presence and contribution of women. Co-preneurship can be considered a suitable context in which women set up a business and form partnerships with their husbands or partners. Therefore, increasing research on entrepreneurial couples could facilitate recognition of women's contributions to businesses in general and family firms in particular. It is necessary to re-analyse and re-write the history of family firms, by showing the participation and roles of women in developing the businesses. There are few studies focusing on women's entrepreneurship and firm ownership over time, and greater knowledge of this temporal dimension might enhance understanding of the evolution of contemporary family firms and the role and relevance of women in their development. Aspects to be considered include how barriers built over the years have influenced horizontal and vertical labour-market gender segregation, traditional patterns of occupational choices, the presence of women in decision-making positions and why women may respond differently to organizational actions. In addition, researchers should pay attention to the challenges female entrepreneurs face in setting up a business in non-traditional sectors for women. Even though the gender gap in entrepreneurship is narrowing, there is still an important level of gender segregation by industry (Micelotta et al., 2018), with women under-represented in leadership positions in almost the entire industrial sector. Despite improvements in career opportunities for women, gender inequality and hidden barriers to women working in some industries remain a reality owing to gender stereotypes, glass ceilings, etc. Future research should study the influence of the industrial sector on women's mode of entry into a new business and what factors are most influential in attracting women to male-dominated sectors. Longitudinal studies would deepen understanding

of the position of women in leadership positions over time and could be replicated in different industrial sectors.

It is also important to highlight that our review identifies a lack of attention to theory in many studies, with a large number operating at an observational and interpretational level. Many authors base their studies on the grounded theory approach to discover the nature of the RQs from interviews, observations, etc., following an inductive methodology. This is evidenced in cluster 4, which is related to succession, in which most studies are descriptive. It is highly likely that quantitative and qualitative methodologies, mixed approaches and longitudinal studies will be important tools to find answers to some existing and future questions. There should also be greater application of gender theories in the family-firm literature to consider WIFF from a holistic perspective, giving voice to different theoretical approaches, avoiding consideration of gender as a simple binary variable. Thus, there is a need for new theoretical and methodological perspectives in gender and family-business research, following a multidisciplinary approach.

LIMITATIONS

This work has the following research limitations. Some are related to the bibliometric methods applied to undertake the literature review. First, we highlight the importance of bibliometrics as an essential element of literature reviews. However, we acknowledge that bibliometric methods must be complemented with the fine-grained opinions of researchers. The second consideration is the database selected as the information source. The WoS is the most high-quality journal article database, although other databases could enrich the study. Third, although bibliometric analysis helps to significantly reduce subjectivity in literature reviews, it is not completely free of limitations. It requires the intervention of the researcher, who applies his or her expert criteria to define the 'search keywords' and 'search fields'. Although our review is extensive, it is possible that we missed some insightful perspectives on WIFF presented in research domains other than the WoS.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The WIFF field has been opening up for the last decade, leading to many research topics and little agreement on the theoretical and methodological orientations to follow. In this context, this review aims to better understand and assess the WIFF research by analysing its evolution, trends and gaps to develop a comprehensive framework that can guide future research. The field focuses mainly

on women's entry into the family firm, either because they start or run their own business or are successors in the business, women's involvement and dynamics in family and business spheres, and family firms and family status at different times and in different socio-cultural and economic environments and their influence on the WIFF. Studies on female entrepreneurship show that participation rates of women are generally markedly lower than those of men in most countries, and the levels of entrepreneurial and leadership activities by women in family firms are also lower. However, generalizing the findings to multiple contexts—traditional and non-traditional sectors for women—is difficult and there is also a strong bias towards single-country studies, with limited studies in developing and transitional economies.

Given the global prevalence of family firms, this study suggests that the better we understand the factors that both encourage and deter or prevent women from starting or joining a family business, the better women can be supported by policy and practice. The more we appreciate the external and internal influences on women's decisions and subsequent experiences, the better placed we will be to understand the theoretical perspectives and models that frame different ways of thinking about family firms. By understanding the impact of these internal and external factors, academics could engage with policymakers to develop the policies and practices that help shape entrepreneurial actions and behaviour, and appreciate the areas where gender-based aspects might result in different outcomes.

Determining the association between gender literature and family-business literature is a difficult task involving both conceptual and methodological challenges. Our review reveals little systematic usage of theories that underpin the WIFF research—mainly agency, RBV, resource dependence, social capital and identity theories. Moreover, not all studies have used theoretical and methodological approaches to underpin their conclusions. Since a single theory might not always provide an adequate explanation of the phenomenon and the reality might be quite complex, different approaches should be used in the future. Therefore, we advocate the incorporation of theoretical approaches from psychology, family science and SEW as well as mixed methods and longitudinal data to fully explore the WIFF field, given its multidisciplinary nature. This could help formulate new RQs that support the development of this promising field of research. Our review is intended to encourage further WIFF research and to encourage researchers to gain deeper knowledge of this field.

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NOTES

- ¹ Appendix S1 shows the most popular keywords in each cluster based on keyword count.
- ² The bibliographic references that belong to our dataset of 225 articles are identified with an asterisk (*).
- ³ Appendix S2 includes more detailed information on key characteristics in each cluster.
- ⁴ BRICS is the acronym for the association of five major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

References marked with an asterisk indicate articles analysed in the literature review.

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