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EXAMINING CROSS-CULTURAL VALIDITY OF THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL WEALTH (SEW) CONSTRUCT: CASE OF MOROCCAN FAMILY FIRMS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Previous studies in the domain of family business had substantial methodological flaws and were mostly descriptive and non-theoretical. However, as the field matured and saturated, several scholars have called for theoretical rigor (Chrisman, Chua, & Sharma, 2005). To do so, they proposed a variety of perspectives examining difficulties unique to family-controlled businesses. These paradigms were excavated from other disciplines, especially financial economics and strategic management, where giant publicly owned businesses with widely dispersed ownership were the dominant focus of attention, including the stewardship theory (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2006), the resource-based view of the firm (Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Habbershon, Williams, & MacMillan, 2003), and the agency theory (Morck & Yeung, 2003; Schulze, Lubatkin, Dino, & Buchholz, 2001).

Despite the fact that extensions and adaptations of these imported theories have yielded crucial insights into the behaviour of family-controlled firms, much

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work remains to be done, and the core issues that are unique to family firms (the majority of which are non-financial in nature) are at best tangential to these theories. We assume that “inadequate” paradigms built for organisations with the proposition of economic instrumentality fall short of precisely addressing the distinctiveness of family businesses. This method has often resulted in contradicting empirical outcomes in family business research. Contradictory terminology, excessive reductionism, insufficient theoretical interpretations, and the obliged use of inadequate logic to explain descriptive data.

In order to solve that issue, Gomez-Mejia, Haynes, (2007); Berrone, Cruz, Gomez-Mejia, and Larraza-Kintana (2010); and Gomez-Mejia, Cruz, Berrone, and De Castro (2011) proposed new born “paradigm” theoretical formulation within the family business field, which we refers to as the socioemotional wealth (SEW) model. This approach is based on previous research on family businesses. At the same time, it is strongly rooted in the management field’s behavioral tradition.

As is typical of novel theoretical approaches, the SEW model has various advantages while is also posing significant obstacles, particularly in terms of methodological implementation. Because of its immaturity in the family business literature, SEW has been often included as a latent explanatory concept in previous studies (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2010). In addition, cross-cultural validity of this new constructs is also questioned, since we do not know if we are facing an dynamic or static concept, to put it in another way whether we have only singular form and type of the SEW or if it varies depending on the context (Khalis Mohammed, 2019).

This article is a significant step on this road. Since we are questioning the cross-cultural validity of the socio emotional wealth constructed by taking the context of Morocco as a mesure. In order to answer this question, we will start by presenting the origin of SEW, its dimensions, advantages, and the available scales measures; secondly, we will test the validity of the SEW fibre model in the context of Morocco.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. The roots of socio-emotional wealth paradigm

There is a consensus in the domain of family business that family firms are not solely a unique epistemological package but are significantly different from capitalist firms, (Gomez-Mejia, Cruz, et al., 2011). This proposition

is supported by a significant body of empirical evidence from several researches done in numerous countries. Zellweger, Kellermanns, (2015) have created a general “socioemotional wealth” model to explain many of these different findings. The axiom of this theory is the idea that organisations make decisions based on the dominant principals’ reference points. These principals will make decisions in a way that protects the firm’s accumulated endowment. The importance of preserving SEW becomes critical in the case of family principals.

As a result, family business owners define issues in terms of determining how actions will affect socio-emotional endowment. When that endowment is threatened, the family is willing to make judgments that are not based on economic reasoning and, in fact, the family would be willing to risk the firm if it meant preserving that endowment. The socio-emotional endowment is conceived in general terms to represent the stock of affect-related value that a family obtains from its controlling position in a particular enterprise. It comprises the unfettered exercise of personal power placed in family members, the capacity of family influence over the business, and tight identification with the enterprise that usually carries the family’s name. Although non-family executives and managers may experience some of this, “the value of socioemotional wealth to the family is more intrinsic, its preservation becomes an end in itself, and it is anchored at a deep psychological level among family owners whose identity is inextricably linked to the organization” according to the study (Berrone et al., 2010).

SEW preservation is the family principals’ primary reference point , and following that strategic choices reducing the firm’s financial risk jeopardise that SEW, the family will opt for the SEW preservation alternative. In accordance with the dialect of behavioural agency theory, given its important utility to family leaders, any risk to SEW implies that the family is in a “loss mode” and, in consequence, will take strategic decisions that will elude these potential SEW losses even if achieving this objective might come at the expense of other leaders (institutional investors) who do not share in these SEW utilities (Zellweger, Kellermanns, 2015).

Regarding family leaders, risk aversion to socio-emotional endowment takes priority over risk aversion to financial losses. In contradiction, agency narratives indicate that family leaders should elude strategic decisions that carry a significant risk of financial losses because the family’s patrimony is largely tied to one firm. Hence, SEW preservation in a behavioural agency context contradicts a basic agency fundamental axiom: Insofar as SEW conservation is the essential reference point of family leaders, and that

strategic choices reducing the firm's financial risk jeopardise that SEW the family will opt for the SEW preservation alternative.

Although SEW conservation is the "higher priority" reference point for the family principal, weak performance acts as an informational clue that threatens the family owners' loss framing. Weak performance raises the spectre of a dual risk: the prospect of severe financial difficulties to the family's standard of living (because the family has most of its patrimony deposited in one organisation) and the probability of SEW annihilation. Empirical evidence is compatible with a changing reference point in family-controlled firms but only when the family is forced to reconsider SEW as the primary reference point. Nevertheless, the SEW conservation concept does not banish the main claim of the agency, which points out that family leaders can sometimes behave opportunistically. SEW suggests, however, that they do so to protect their socio-emotional endowment even when this has a financial cost. (Schulze, Lubatkin, & Dino, 2003).

2.2. SEW dimensions

As previously stated, SEW is an all-embracing perspective that takes into consideration the family's "affective endowment," which includes the willingness to exercise authority, enjoyment of family influence, longevity of clan membership within the firm, appointment of trusted family members to important posts, preservation of a strong family identity, and continuation of the family dynasty. (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007). As a result, the concept of SEW is multidimensional.

Because most previous SEW studies depended on stocked data, secondary univariate variables (such as ownership distribution, percentage of family members on the board, and CEO family status) have been commonly utilised as proxies for the putative impact of SEW. As a result, previous studies have not gone into great detail into the SEW concept dimensions. Our next aim is to untangle and detangle the different components of SEW using the family business literature and basic social science disciplines that support it. In order to do so we will use five major dimensions extracted from previous studies. We present them below:

2.2.1. Family control and influence

The first variable reflects the control and influence of family members. One major criterion that differentiates family firms is that family members exert control over strategic decisions (Chua et al., 1999; Schulze, Lubatkin,

& Dino, 2003). The control can be used directly, for instance by being a chief executive officer (CEO) or chief operating officer (COO), or more subtly by, for instance, doing recruitment or appointing teams. The control can be exercised by the original founder or by a dominant family clan. A strong ownership position, an ascribed status, or personal charisma can all contribute to family members' ability to wield authority. As a strategy of exerting official and informal control, it is not uncommon to see family owners take on several positions in their businesses (Mustakallio, Autio, & Zahra, 2002).

Control and influence are, in all cases, an important element of SEW and are highly wanted by family members. To put it another way, the family members' goal of maintaining SEW necessitates continuous control of the company. As a result, regardless of financial concerns, family businesses are more likely to maintain their owners' direct or indirect control and influence over the company's affairs (Zellweger, Kellermanns, et al., 2011).

2.2.2. Family members' identification with the firm

The second variable deals with the family's strong ties to the business. According to many family business researchers, the intertwining of family and business creates an intrinsically distinct identity inside family businesses (Dyer & Whetten, 2006). The identity of the proprietor of a family business is closely linked to the company that bears the family's name.

As a result, the company is considered to be an extension of the family by both internal and external stakeholders. Internally, this is likely to have a substantial impact on attitudes towards not only personnel but also other internal processes and the quality of the services and goods they deliver (Carrigan & Buckley, 2008).

Externally, this makes family members extremely aware of the reputation they represent to the different stakeholders (Micelotta & Raynard, 2011). There is currently consistent empirical evidence that implies that because of the firm's significant association with the firm's name and because public condemnation could be emotionally devastating for family members (Westhead, Cowling, & Howorth, 2001), family businesses have higher degrees of corporate social responsibility and citizenship in their communities (Craig & Dibrell, 2006) and take particular care to perpetuate a positive family image and reputation (P. Sharma & Manikuti, 2005; Westhead et al, 2001).

2.2.3. Binding social ties

The social links of family businesses is the third dimension. According to Cruz, Justo, and De Castro (2012), SEW provides family links with some of the same collective benefits as closed networks, such as collective social capital and relational trust, and interpersonal solidarity, as well as feelings of closeness.

The reciprocal relationships seen in family businesses are likely to be extended to a wide range of constituencies, not only family members (Miller, Jangwoo, Sooduck, & Le Breton-Miller, 2009). For example, family businesses frequently have long-standing vendors and suppliers who are seen as, or are truly, family members (Uhlener, 2006). Non-family employees as well share a sense of belonging, and identity with family enterprises, providing a sense of stability and loyalty to the company (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2005).

Kinship links among extended family members are likely to foster significant social links with the community as a whole. Given these reciprocal relationships in family businesses, as Brickson (2007) suggested, one would expect these firms to prioritise the wellbeing of those who surround them, even if there were no evident transactional economic rewards. Berrone et al. (2010) suggested that family businesses are deeply rooted in their communities and frequently support community organizations and activities. They may do so out of altruism, a desire to be recognised for their generosity (Schulze et al., 2003), or a combination of the two.

2.2.4. Emotional attachment

The fourth component addresses the affective aspect of SEW and reflects the role of emotions in the family firm's context. Emotions are an "integral and inseparable aspect of everyday organisational work", according to Ashforth & Humphrey (1998), within organised companies where family relationships dominate. A long history and knowledge of common experiences and past events that converge to impact and determine current activities, decisions, and relationships holds true. In fact, many academics regard the blending of emotional aspects arising from family engagement with business issues as a distinguishing feature of family businesses (Taguiri & Davis, 1996).

Fundamentally, families are marked by a wide variety of emotions, some of them positive, such as solidarity, nepotism, warmth, consolation, and wellbeing, and others that are negative, such as fear, loneliness, anxiety,

hatred, disappointment, and depression (Epstein, Bishop, Ryan, Miller & Keitner, 1993). These emotions result from quotidian events and are dynamic, as they come up and evolve through more or less critical events in each family business system (Shepherd, Wiklund & Haynie, 2009). Because the boundaries between family and firm are often blurred in family businesses (Berrone et al., 2010), emotions pervade the firm, impacting the family business's decision-making process (Baron, 2008). Simultaneously, emotional attachment also touches psychological appropriation of the business by the family to preserve a positive self-concept. Because of the type of social relationship that family members have inside and outside their business, companies become the place where the needs for belonging, affection, and intimacy are satisfied (Kepner, 1983).

Despite the importance of emotions for SEW and their prevalence in the family business setting, emotions and sentiments in family business research have received little attention. Emotions in the context of family firms are frequently mentioned indirectly referring to difficulties that affect enterprises, such as family conflicts, personal relationships, and family culture as Labaki, Michael-Tsabari and Zachary point out.

This dimension is especially relevant with respect to understanding why, under some circumstances, family members choose to be altruistic to one another (Schulze et al., 2003) or are more likely to regard family members as trustworthy (Schulze et al., 2003), (Cruz et al., 2010). However, sentiments can also have a negative effect, making kin relations dysfunctional. Unlike in non-family firms, however, where dysfunctional relationships and persistent conflicts often end with termination of the employment contract of the parties involved, in family firms the emotional attachment is high.

2.2.5. Renewal of family bonds

The purpose of passing the business along to future generations is the fifth and final dimension of SEW. Indeed, according to Zellweger and Astrachan (2008) and Zellweger, Kellermanns, et al. (2011), one of the essential elements of SEW is transgenerational sustainability. This notion of dynasty has significant ramifications for the decision-making process's time horizons. The firm is not just an asset that can be readily sold from the standpoint of a family shareholder, because it represents the family's past and tradition (Casson, 1999; Tagiuri & Davis, 1992). As a result, family members see the company as a long-term family investment that will be passed down to future

generations (Berrone et al., 2010). Evidence demonstrates that keeping the business going for future generations is a common goal for family businesses (Kets de Vries, 1993; Zellweger, Kellermanns et al., 2011), and that many family businesses have longer planning horizons (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2006; Scholnick, 2008; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003).

Although the long-term perspective may have some undesirable consequences, such as managerial entrenchment or succession conflicts, it is well established in the family business literature that the preservation of the family dynasty, the perpetuation of family values through the business, and the transmission of family values through the business are all important.

And the desire to pass the firm on to the next generation encourages a “generational investment strategy that develops patient capital” (Sirmon & Hitt, 2003), the commitment to develop capabilities and learn.

2.3. Extensive approach to SEW

An explanation of how business-owning families might seek SEW while both protecting and promoting the interests of others would be a welcome answer to the current “limited” view of SEW, when the family’s priorities “are strongly family-centric and frequently run opposed to the interests of non-family stakeholders and the enterprise, at least in the long run” (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2014). Examining how business-owning families might assess their self-interested pursuit of SEW with their additional moral responsibilities to non-family stakeholders, a normative perspective to stakeholder management might help move towards an “extended” view of SEW, in which those priorities “encompass benefits that go beyond the family” (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2014).

Nevertheless, Miller and Le Breton (2014) did not create an extended approach of SEW themselves. They did provide some insight into what such approach might entail. They suggest that a long-term perspective on family business decision-making should dictate how families should ensure that “rewards accrue not only to the family, but also to other stakeholders.” Furthermore, the benefits to the business may be more long-term.

Stakeholder, stewardship, and sustainability views, according to Miller and Le Breton-Miller, may provide useful theoretical lenses through which one can analyse how business-owning families could balance self- and others-regarding interests. They supported these theories; nonetheless, they argued that

various efforts are needed to investigate decision-making in family businesses (Mitchell, Agle, Chrisman, & Spence, 2011; Neubaum, Thomas, Dibrell, & Craig, 2017). Regardless of these additions to the literature, we are struck by how the dual character of demands on family enterprises is compatible with social economists' principal concern. These scholars have long argued that these ends can and should be seen as complementary (i.e. a positive-sum game). Etzioni (1988) continues by claiming that self- and others-centered motives interact to "codetermine" action. Individuals may be able to satisfy their self-interested urges if a proper balance is struck among different motives. Without jeopardising the interests of other company stakeholders or their relationships with them.

According to Miller and Le Bertone (2014), it also makes a significant distinction. Stakeholder theorists argue that companies have non-owner stakeholders to whom they are morally responsible (Freeman, 1994), whereas social contract theorists argue that managers have a moral obligation to avoid serving their own interests at the expense of others (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999). As a result, we see a chance for the work of Etzioni and other scholars to change the thinking of researchers interested in moving towards an extended view of SEW.

2.4. Fiber dimensions of SEW validity

As previously stated by several authors, SEW is the most essential differentiator of the family business as a distinct entity, and as such, it can assist in explaining why family firms act differently. However, despite the SEW value, prior research left out important elements for ambiguity, namely the absence of instruments to measure different fiber dimensions either explicitly or implicitly (Anderson & Reeb, 2003) and cultural adaptation of the SEW model in various contexts.

Thus, this paper represents an attempt to evaluate the cross-cultural validity of the fiber dimensions (family control and influence, family members' identification with the firm, binding social ties, emotional attachment, renewal of family bonds) (Berrone, 2010). With the purpose of doing so, we have chosen the context of Morocco as place to examine multiple case studies (Yin 1994). We have picked that country because of the cultural richness and mixture between the amazing Islamic Arab backgrounds. The details of this empirical research will be presented and upcoming section.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is based on interpretivist epistemology (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Case study approach of Yin (1994) was used. Face-to-face interviews with 15 managers from three family firms were conducted as part of the data collection process (five managers per company).

The semi-structured interview included three sections: firstly, we started with basic interrogations to understand interviewees position and roles inside their organisation, as well as to make them comfortable; the second section contained questions related to the nature of the SEW in the context of Morocco; the last one consisted of questions linked to testing the validity of the SEW fiber model. Each section was structured around 15 questions. This research is part of a larger study, which deals with the impact of family firms SEW on their organisational capacity for change. The participants came from various levels of hierarchy and services (human resources [HR], strategy, finance, etc.). On average, the time span of each interlocution was over 45 minutes. The data were gathered overtly, using systematic qualitative interviewing, direct observation, and document analysis. Research confidentiality and interviewee anonymity were guaranteed. Interviews were taped with the permission of the respondents, and subsequently they were adequately transcribed. The study deliberately focuses only on family businesses managers/owners located in the area of Casablanca. Arguably, the number and type of cases have their limitation. Additional data would be provided by more cases from diverse industries. However, the case study approach seeks theory building through 'analytic generalisation', not 'statistical generalisation' (Yin, 1994) and this study had the same goal. Three types of organisations were investigated in order to gain a better understanding of the context.

In order to have generalisable results using multiple cases method, Hlady-Rispal (2002) proposes a number of criteria that need to be respected. The table below provides the set of criteria that we have adopted to select the family firms.

In the sections to follow, we will present each theoretical sampling criterion. The first criterion that conditioned our choice of cases in this research is theoretical representativeness. The selected cases have enough elements in common, since we have taken precautions so that each organisation does not present a fundamental difference compared to the other cases studied. The second criterion for the selection is variety. The objective of this criterion is to increase understanding and to take into account the complexity of the phenomenon. Therefore, the cases chosen are not antinomic but

complementary to each other. The third criterion consists of balance; we have tried to have the same number of respondents from each company as well as companies that have different levels of SEW.

Tabel 1

Cases selection criteria

Criteria	Explanation
Theoretical representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial sector • Exceeds five years of activity • Family business
Variety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family type • Core Activity
Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five Participants per company • Different level of SEW

Source: Yin (1994).

3.1. Case Description

All three organisations are based in Morocco, Casablanca region and operate internationally. The following descriptions provide an overview of the companies during the fieldwork period. Acronyms are used for privacy purposes.

Entity one: It is a Moroccan company with over 5 decades of experience, more than 10 types of product speciality, and a presence in more than 10 countries across Africa and Europe, devoted to demonstrating leadership in the plastic field by directing all its efforts towards the satisfaction of its customers and providing a sense of accomplishment and making substantial contributions to thier achievement. This entity is run by a board of trustees who seek to provide quality & efficiency and bring the most up-to-date technologies to the table to foster family connections, cultivate talent, teamwork, professionalism, and personal participation.

Entity two: Entity two is a company headquartered in Casablanca. They established a long heritage of excellence in manufacturing by diversifying from their traditional business in the mid-90s and venturing into plastic industry and engineering. For more than one decade, the owning family has been dedicated to serving the market by continuous investments in R&D providing innovative solutions, as well as a part of their mission to

decrease unemployment and to support the industries by providing skilled and trained manpower.

Entity three: This family firm is a Casablanca-based most known plastics, chemicals, and refining company. It has done more than 50 projects in the region. Its mission focuses on providing good quality services and contributing to talents and local industries development since all of the firm's partners and employees are from the same region.

4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Managers were interviewed about many aspects of SEW, such as what it means on a personal level as well as in terms of organisational policies and practices. These two factors are highlighted throughout the data presentation. Table 2 summarises the findings, which are divided into four groups:

4.1. SEW definition

Multiple SEW definitions and understanding were found in the literature review. This section looks at how managers define SEW as a behavior, as well as values and specialisms. The result of the literature review verification is presented in the table below.

Table 2

Empirical validity of SEW definition

SEW Definitions	Source	Level of validity
Based on family name, family values, family control, ethical and long-term employment	Berrone et al. (2010)	9 (15)
A close-knit culture, strong dedication to sustaining the social capital of the family business	Cruz et al. (2012)	10 (15)
Desire for dynastic wealth assignment	Leitterstorf and Rau (2014)	13 (15)
Blood ties, family dedication, and family members' selflessness in putting in effort for the business	Sciascia & Mazzola (2014)	11 (15)

Source: Németh (2018).

4.2. Validity of the fiber model

4.2.1. Family control “over control”

“Sacrifice opportunities of expansion for control preservation”

As previously mentioned, all family businesses are driven to keep full control over their organisations. This aspect of socio-emotional wealth is a bit particular in the context of Morocco because of the cultural specificities of this country. For instance, the concept of firms’ control on itself is different. Moroccan family business leaders tend to exercise their control strategy by controlling information in the first place, because information often has potential strategic importance, and by controlling it, managers control the future of the organisation itself.

“Controlling the organisation is primarily controlling the information inside it. I precisely mean by that to control how the data is being created, collected, aligned, and integrated in order to keep track of daily operations and overall organisational performance. Because “who got the information got the power.” Basically, firms organise their information functions in a variety of ways, reflecting the nature of their management, leadership style, and their overall structure and strategy, their history, and how they want to deliver information to their business units. In our company we have a very formal and informal information system; the first is related to software that we use daily, and the second one is reflected by our transparency in discussion between family members and other employees.”

The second aspect of control is related directly to making all the employees replaceable, especially those with some deviant behaviour like a bad history of information devaluation, being rebellious, extremely ambitious, because those types of employees often tend to disturb that status quo, and the normal course of things. Since they always put their own interest before the organisation of the firm as a whole.

“As a family firm owner, I personally prefer not to be dependent on one employee of mine, because that way I feel like my firm no longer belongs to me. That way always my goal is to reduce my dependency on my personnel by always training all of them and giving them the opportunity to grow and that way I make none of them indispensable for the organisation. I’m sure that when you hear this type of idea for the first time, you will think that it’s kind of devilish, and I completely understand that, but trust me, this is how business works, and this is the part that a manager never exposes to the media; every one of my workers should be replaceable so my business can not fall apart after one of them quit his occupation.”

Prioritising family recruitment

The second feature of Morocco's family firms' control is that they frequently prefer family recruitment to external one even if the latter ensures higher level of competence and skills. The reason behind this idea is the fact that having as many family members as they can in different services will help the managers to control the firms better since communicating with family members is generally more efficient in comparison to communicating with outsiders. Moreover, family members have an emotional interest, which often pushes them to work harder for the firm's longevity.

“If I had the chance, I would love to recruit family members only, since they have the same values and principles that run through family generations, and they have an emotional interest in the firms as well. On the other hand, outsider-employees need an extra effort to introduce them to the family values, principles. Also regarding communication and availability in difficult times, family personnel have a great advantage since we can communicate formally or informally and they are always available to the firms. But it might cross your mind that sometimes an outsider has better skills or abilities that might be able to deliver it to the organisation, and I will tell you it is true, but keep in mind all skills and competence can be taught to family members by training. On the contrary, what is hard to teach is family culture and values.”

Uses only family resources

The third particularity related to family firm control in Morocco is that those types of organisations prefer to use their own resources solely because, according to them, using external resources will make their control over the firm very weak. Even if that puts them in a situation where they lose some business opportunities for expansion. We can directly say that Moroccan family organisations value control over financial resources, and this state of mind is culturally ingrained because following Moroccan traditions, credits and using someone else's money is viewed negatively by the society as a whole.

“I would rather keep one hundred percent control over my business rather than make it bigger and share it with someone else. For that reason, I use only the available resources and I refuse to get involved in so much credit with financial institutions or other companies. Because personally I know some pairs that they have followed this strategy of expansion and they are just partners in the company that they have built from scratch, and I can't allow this scenario to happen to me; you can say that this firm – it's like a baby for me, and no one wants to share his/her son with other parents unless he's out of his mind.”

4.2.2. Identification

Visibile family identity

The consensus is already established among specialists about the fact that there is an overlap between family and business identities inside family firms (Wielsma & Brunninge, 2019; Sundamurthy & Kreiner, 2008). In other words, family values and traditions become the company values and traditions. Yet, the particularity of that idea in Morocco is the personification of family business identity, that is to say, that stakeholders attach family identity to the owner identity. The company's profile is generally shaped by its leaders' reputation. This implies that leaders' integrity and authenticity have an impact on the identity of the whole organisation.

“Generally our clients or suppliers know only me. What I mean by that is when there's an issue regarding the payment or merchandise delivery or any sort of problems they refer to me personally; in fact, to be more accurate, the majority of our stakeholders have long business relationships with the organisation because they know me personally, they know the level of my integrity, honesty and I'm a man of my word.”

The second particularity of family firm identity in Morocco is that the affective identity of the firm matters more than the cognitive one. To put it another way, what people surrounding the firm feel about it (good value system, ethical mission, democratic management style, empathic leadership etc.) matters more than the economic and social facts about the organisation (economic indicators such as financial performance, social performance, charity etc.).

“It really doesn't matter if our organisation is the biggest in the region or the best in terms of management practices, innovation, and leadership. People in our country are extremely emotional, so in consequence, they value how they feel about us more than what we concretely do for them. I will give you an example, and you will understand my point of view completely: Imagine I have the best managerial practices and I established training for my employees to help them get better with their daily tasks. Meanwhile, if during that training, I kept looking over their shoulders, that certainly will create a sense of incomfort and the firm will have a very negative environment and by extension negative reputation and identity, on the other hand, if I did not invest in a formal training session, yet I allowed my employees to make mistakes and learn from them, and maybe give them the chance to get involved in collective exchanges, surely that will help them feel good about the firms. And if you compare the first and the second scenario you will understand that Moroccan employees value affections more than cognition.”

Identity speculative aspect

In addition, Moroccan family firms' identity depends firmly on their history and past actions. The internal and external shareholders (employees, suppliers, clients, public authorities) build their opinion about the organisation regarding the assessment of its full history. For instance, if the company has a stable relationship and has already been involved in charity work or social and societal activities. The different environmental actors are more likely to perceive the organisational identity positively and vice versa.

“Our organisation identity is the result of lifetime work. People don't trust us out of nowhere; they trust us because they believe that we are trustworthy, and their opinion is built upon facts and long-term win-win relationships. And this idea is valid the other way around as well, that is to say, that our partners are also selected based on their past actions as well.”

4.2.3. Renewal of the family bond

Family heritage continuity over freedom of choice!

Theoretically speaking, family firms are all long-term driven entities; they constantly seek the renewal of their bonds (Martínez-Romero et al., 2020). However in Morocco this variable is subject to several specificities. Primarily, there is a generational clash over the continuity and the future of the firm. The founder is always oriented to the continuity of the business, but he doubts the skills and the will of the upcoming generation to take the lead over the organisation. On the other hand, the new generation has its own goals, aspirations, and passions. Sometimes they are driven by their parents' heritage, and sometimes they have their own roads in mind. This idea appears to be cross-culturally normal, and scholars refer to it as a “succession problem”, but the Moroccan particularity is the fact that there are some family business founders who do not want their sons to take the lead over the firm because they think that they are not worthy or they lack vision.

“I would love to see my son leading this company by himself and I will be the proudest person on earth. But meanwhile, I do not want to oblige my son to do something that he doesn't want to, as well as I don't want my son to destroy this heritage that I've fought tooth and nail to create, because, if I want to be realistic, not all people are born with the necessary skills and abilities to lead or to be entrepreneurs. And I don't know if my son has these abilities or not. In case he doesn't, I do not want him around, of course, I'm here for him. He is my son and I will help him but he has to make his own choices.”

Lack of long-term vision clarity

The second major component of the renewal of the family bond is vision clarity, according to Gomez. In order to plan family firm succession properly the founder needs to have a clear long-term vision, and this vision needs to be well communicated in advance to the different stakeholders and family members. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of this aspect in Morocco is that we prefer not to get involved in the future or hold discussions, and families often avoid them, which is justifiable by the fact that cultural and religious Moroccan people believe that only God knows the future. Thus, talking about these things with certainty is perceived negatively because we can never predict them.

“As I told you previously, I would love to see this organisation continue under the lead of my sons, but having a clear vision or preparation for the future is not always a smart thing to do, because there are some factors and variables that we can’t fully predict. For example, will my son have the intention to stay under my shadow? Does he have the necessary abilities and skills? Will he remain alive after five or ten years from now? Since we can not have certain responses about these questions, I would rather not have a clear plan and communicate it to the different stakeholders; instead of having one that at the end of the day none of it will be true.”

4.2.4. Emotional attachment

Stakeholders’ emotional attachment

Basically, the emotional attachment reflects the attachment of the internal and external stakeholders to the firm itself, and that variable is often viewed as one of the major dimensions of the socio-emotional wealth construct (Berrone et al.,2012). However, scholars refer to emotional attachment as often influenced by external factors such as familial traditions and other internal factors such as loyalty or attachment to the organisation. For example, feelings of responsibility for the occupation can lead to strong feelings of attachment to a company. Yet the Moroccan particularity is that employees’ attachment is not channelled into the firm but it is attached to individuals (founder and family members).

“Personally I don’t think that my employees are attached to the firm itself but they are attached to my family and me, they know how we care about them and they know that we’ve always been there for them and in front of any crisis, we never let them down and for sure we never will. This type of attachment in my sense isn’t a cataclysmic event that

just happens, but it's the results of day-to-day work and a long-term relationship based on trust, loyalty, and mutual benefits. My personnel are aware of the fact that this organisation is for them and it seeks their best interests as well. We train them. We help them improve and have meaningful careers."

In addition, getting attached to individuals while doing business, can certainly cause potential problems and conflicts. This is a significant trend among Moroccan family business employees to get attached to the owners and to mix business with emotions. As a matter of fact the manager knows that they cannot mix these two together and end up with success. So they generally keep their main focus on cultivating the workers to detach their emotions from their working life by getting them involved in coaching sessions and meetings for the sole sake of helping employees develop their emotions management skills.

"Emotions are a natural part of being human, but they can also get you fired if you do not learn how to control them. If things go bad at work people sometimes think they can take it out on someone else or by expecting that the family will back them up in all situations. But this is not true, and not the best way to behave, and it often makes the situation worse. This is why we think that it is important to teach employees to be able to control themselves in all situations and we organise some meetings and coaching sessions. The ability of workers to regulate their own emotions is important and very useful. It will help them in life and in their work. If they cannot control their emotions it may be time for us to consider new recruitment. For sure we love that our workers get attached to us but everything has limits since so much attachment creates over-expectations and conflicts."

4.2.5. Bonding social ties

Regarding the fifth dimension of SEW: "bonding social ties", we found out that Moroccan society is known to be a family-oriented society since it gets a high score on collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede 1992) as well as it has a unique set of values and traditions inspired by the Islamic and Amazigh background that put families before individuality. That implies that the bonds of the Moroccan family business are stronger compared to other societies.

"Family for us is everything. I can tell you that it matters more than my business. I don't think that it's only the case of our family but it's common for family business owners. That, in my opinion, is determined by our background, I mean traditions, religion, value system The strength of our bonds is the result of our parenting and childhood education because since childhood we learn to prioritise the collective over the individual."

5. DISCUSSION

Through this study, we have proven that Moroccan family firms are weird towards control preservation. Their control strategy has three aspects. It starts by controlling information, because they believe that information has the potential to be strategic, and those who control it have control over the organisation's future. The second facet of control is reflected in making all employees replaceable, particularly those who have displayed some aberrant behaviour, because those workers are prone to upsetting the status quo and disrupting the normal flow of events, since they always prioritise their own interests over the organisation. The third aspect of Moroccan family businesses' control is the tendency to use their resources only because they believe that using external resources will weaken their control over the company even if that puts them in a situation where they sacrifice some opportunities. All these deductions have already proven to be true in previous studies (Berrone *et al.*, 2012; Xi *et al.*, 2015; Daspit *et al.*, 2017; Santulli *et al.*, 2019).

In addition, According to the literature, the second component of family business SEW is identification (Schulze and Kellermanns, 2015). Inside Moroccan family organisations identification has two dimensions: the first one is the personification of family business identity, i.e. instead of identification by the firm itself, we have identification by the owning family. The company's profile is generally shaped by leaders' reputation. The second dimension is that the effective identity of the firm matters more than the cognitive one. To put it another way, what people surrounding the firm feel about it (good value system, ethical mission, democratic management style, empathic leadership etc.) matters more than the economic and social facts about the organisation (economic indicators such as financial performance, social performances, and charity).

Regarding the third factor of the SEW: renewal of the family bond, its specificity in Morocco is reflected by the fact that there is basically a generational conflict concerning the firm's continuity and future. The founder is always concerned about the business long-term viability, but he frequently doubts the abilities and willingness of the next generation to run the company. The next generation, on the other hand, has its own goals, aspirations, and passions. They are sometimes guided by their parents' ancestry, and sometimes they have their own plans. This belief appears to be cross-culturally common, and scholars refer to it as a "succession dilemma," but the uniqueness in Morocco is that some family business founders do not want their sons to head the company because they believe they are

incompetent or unqualified. Additionally, the second main component of family bond renewal is vision clarity, according to Prugl (2019). In order to successfully prepare succession, the founder must have a clear long-term goal that is adequately articulated to all stakeholders and family members in advance (Debicki et al., 2017; Razzak et al., 2019), Nonetheless, the uniqueness of this aspect in Morocco is that we prefer not to get involved in takeover discussions about the future, and a family often avoids them. This is justified by the Moroccan cultural and religious belief that only God knows the future and that discussing it with certainty is viewed negatively because we can never predict it (Newbert and Craig, 2017) and have these ideas confirmed.

Furthermore, the fourth component of family business SEW is emotional attachment (Gomez Mejia, 2012). Essentially, emotional attachment represents internal and external stakeholders' attachment towards the company. Scholars, on the other hand, believe that emotional connection is influenced by both external and internal variables, such as familial traditions and loyalty (Berrone et al., 2012). Through this study we found out that emotional attachment in Morocco's uniqueness is visible in the fact that it is directed towards individuals rather than the company (founder and family members), and that is found to be true in the works by Carlock and Ward (2001); Hatak et al. (2016); Razzak et al. (2018).

Moreover, in terms of SEW "bond social ties", we have proven that Morocco is a family-oriented society due to its high levels of collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance, and the family bonds are strong in comparison to European or American families (Hofstede, 1992). The strength of these bonds is the result of the interaction between the set of values and traditions derived from the Islamic and Amazigh heritage, which prioritises family above individuality.

Finally, as shown in Table 2, by this study we have affirmed that the concept of SEW is valid in the Moroccan context but it includes some sets of particularities; for instance, instead of emotional attachment to the firms, emotional attachment to the founder and his family, as well as the owning family has a strong bond and it is willing to sacrifice expansion opportunities in order to keep full control over the firm and so forth.

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EXAMINING CROSS-CULTURAL VALIDITY OF THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL WEALTH (SEW) CONSTRUCT: CASE OF MOROCCAN FAMILY FIRMS

Abstract

The concept of socio-emotional wealth (SEW) is gaining popularity among the scientific community as the potential dominant paradigm in the family business domain. However this "new homegrown" theoretical approach still holds several ambiguities that need addressing, for instance, the absence of clear consensual measures, uncertainty regarding the cross-cultural validity of the SEW perspective, and so forth. Nevertheless, this paper represents multiple case study research that seeks to verify the validity of the SEW approach in the context of Morocco. The results obtained reflect various contextual particularities that will contribute to the improvement and the advancement of the socio-emotional wealth paradigm.

Keywords: socio-emotional wealth (SEW), cross-cultural, family business

BADANIE MIĘDZYKULTUROWEJ TRAFNOŚCI KONSTRUKTU BOGACTWA SPOŁECZNO-EMOCJONALNEGO (SEW): MAROKAŃSKIE FIRMY RODZINNE

Streszczenie

Koncepcja bogactwa społeczno-emocjonalnego (SEW) zyskuje coraz większą popularność w środowisku naukowym jako potencjalny dominujący paradygmat w dziedzinie biznesu rodzinnego. Jednak to „nowe, rodzime” podejście teoretyczne nadal zawiera kilka niejasności, którymi należy się zająć, na przykład: brak jasnych, konsensualnych miar, niepewność co do międzykulturowej ważności perspektywy SEW i tak dalej. Niemniej jednak, niniejszy artykuł reprezentuje wiele badań opartych na studium przypadku, które mają na celu zweryfikowanie ważności podejścia SEW w kontekście Maroka, a uzyskane wyniki odzwierciedlają różne cechy kontekstowe, które przyczynią się do poprawy i rozwoju paradygmatu bogactwa społeczno-emocjonalnego.

Słowa kluczowe: bogactwo społeczno-emocjonalne (SEW), międzykulturowy, firmy rodzinne

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