



The drivers of family business succession intentions of daughters and the moderating effects of national gender inequality

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the drivers of succession intentions among daughters of family business owners. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour and using a dataset of 7,798 daughters from 44 countries, we find that parental instrumental support and family business work experience positively influence the family business succession intentions of daughters. Moreover, subjective norms moderate these relationships, demonstrating the role that social groups play in the formation of succession intentions. Our results also point to a systemic national gender gap effect on the succession intentions of daughters.

1. Introduction

Family firms are the dominant organisational type globally (Debellis, Rondi, Plakoyiannaki, & De Massis, 2021; Hennart, Majocchi, & Forlani, 2019; Neufeld & Lam, 2023). A central tenet of many family firms is the desire for transgenerational continuity (Clinton et al., 2021; Haag et al., 2023). The succession process – the passing of ownership and control from one generation to the next – is a critical event in the life-course of a family firm, and is fundamental to attaining transgenerational continuity (McMullen & Warnick, 2015). However, due to the reluctance of next-generation family members to join the family business, intergenerational transmission rates in family firms are low globally, leading to a discontinuity in governance, lower performance, and even firm failure (Garcia et al., 2019; Gimenez-Jimenez et al., 2021).

While scholars have conducted much research on incumbents’ unwillingness to relinquish power in the family business (e.g., De Massi et al., 2016), there has been scant attention paid to successors’ willingness (or not) to assume control, particularly among female successors (Vardaman & Montague-Mfuni, 2021). Indeed, despite the increasing female presence in the global labour market, family business succession remains a male-dominated domain (Feldmann et al., 2022). In seeking to advance diversity research in family business, Bannò et al. (2024) call for “research considering the family perspective on gender and how this affects succession planning” (2024, p.5). In particular, they emphasise the need to “promote gender diversity and equity within family

businesses, particularly in leadership positions” (Bannò et al., 2024, p.5).

Drawing upon the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), we examine the succession intentions, as indicated by the intention to take over the family business, of daughters of family business owners across 44 countries. The influence of social interactions which a daughter encounters in childhood and early adolescence is often internalised and can form an integral part of the subjective perception of the successor role, which may ultimately affect their intentions and behaviour (Gimenez-Jimenez et al., 2022; Koellinger et al., 2013). In their systematic review of women in family business succession, Boukhabza and Ouhadi (2023) suggest that prior research on female succession “focus more on women’s invisibility and other negative aspects of female succession (e.g., challenges, unrecognised contribution, informal role...) rather than women’s contributions” (2023, p.24). Empirically, females are commonly found to have lower entrepreneurial and family business succession intentions than their male counterparts (Gupta, Turban, Wasti, & Sikdar, 2009; Kennedy & Drennan, 2002; Zellweger, Sieger, & Englisch, 2015). However, there is a significant dearth in our understanding of the factors (e.g., emotions, beliefs) that shape female succession intentions (Kubíček & Machek, 2019), and how societal expectations and gender norms shape female successors’ behaviours, beliefs, and decisions (Bannò et al., 2024; Boukhabza & Ouhadi, 2023).

We explore the effects of both perceived parental instrumental support and family business experience on female succession intentions.

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Families, and more specifically parental behaviours, play an integral part in cognitive development (Bandura, 1999). Parents serve as powerful social influencers who convey information and provoke emotional reactions via modelling, instruction, and persuasion (Lyons et al., 2024). The children of family business owners who were raised in concurrence to the running of a family business are subject to many forces that affect their perceived norms, attitudes, and developed identities as successors, yet many of these factors are still under-explored both theoretically and empirically, particularly for daughters (McAdam et al., 2020). Regarding family business experience, when an individual feels competent at carrying out certain behaviours (attained through work experience), they tend to exhibit more positive attitudes and more perceived control over the outcome of their efforts (Wilson et al., 2007); however, despite this, there are mixed results regarding whether this work experience results in greater succession intentions among the next generation.

This study also considers the moderating effect of the contextual and social structures of subjective norms and gender gaps on the daughters of family business owners, drawing from the TPB and social role theory. Gender inequality continues to be a pervasive issue internationally (Woetzel et al., 2015) due to an array of perceived, institutional, and societal barriers (Dheer, Mingxiang, & Treviño, 2019; Westhead & Solesvik, 2016). Our study examines the effect of national gender gaps on the intentions of daughters as potential family business successors using the gender gap index, which measures the deviation between males and females in the domains of economic participation and opportunity (Zahidi et al., 2018). We argue that in countries with wider gender gaps, the positive effects that parental instrumental support and family business work experience have on the succession intentions of next-generation female members will be dampened. In particular, we investigate the effect of national gender gaps on the succession intentions of pre- and early-career daughters (7,798) of family business owners from 44 countries. In doing so, we address the following research question: *To what extent do intra-familial and contextual cues on perceptions affect the succession intentions of family business daughters?*

Our study makes several important contributions. First, we are among the first to examine the determinants of the succession intentions of family business daughters internationally. In doing so, we extend the theorising of Garcia et al. (2019) and Gimenez-Jimenez et al. (2022) on the effect of family support on next-generation succession intentions by focusing our hypotheses on daughters of family business owners specifically. We add to the growing body of literature on the significance of parental support (Edelman et al., 2016; Garcia et al., 2019; Lyons et al., 2024; Powell & Eddleston, 2013) and family business work experience (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; McAdam et al., 2020) on the daughters of family business owners. Our findings establish that the succession intentions of daughters with regard to their parents' business are positively influenced by access to parental resources, such as parental instrumental support, and the acquisition of human capital through work experience in the family business.

Second, we contribute to the literature on intra-family succession by demonstrating the moderating role of subjective norms on succession intentions. While prior literature has highlighted the importance of family process variables (such as parents' expectations and encouragement) on children's career aspirations (Gimenez-Jimenez et al., 2022; Sawitri, Creed, & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2014) and career development (Whiston & Keller, 2004; Zellweger et al., 2011), we show that subjective norms are an important normative trigger, reinforcing the positive relationships between parental support behaviours and succession intentions. Third, we contribute to the international business literature by demonstrating the moderating role of national gender gaps on succession intentions. In countries displaying greater inequalities in opportunities between males and females, these inequalities are found to attenuate the positive relationship between family business work experience and the succession intentions of females.

The remainder of the manuscript is structured as follows: In Section

2, we review the literature and develop the study hypotheses. Section 3 presents the international dataset and describes the research methods used to test the hypotheses. Section 4 reports our findings. In Section 5, we discuss our findings and contributions, outline the limitations of our study, and suggest avenues for future research. We conclude in Section 6.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. Parental and experience-based influences on succession intentions

The TPB (Ajzen, 1991) is used to understand the succession pathways and intentions of next-generation family business members (Garcia, Sharma, De Massis, Wright, & Scholes, 2019; García-Rodríguez, Gutiérrez-Taño, & Ruiz-Rosa, 2022; Zellweger, Sieger, & Halter, 2011). The theory contends that intentions comprise motivational triggers that influence the behavioural dispositions underpinning action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). These intentions, or commitments to succession, are the result of multiple socialisation processes leading an individual to feel that they can exert their influence in a successor role (perceived behavioural control) and to be attracted to these behaviours (Ajzen, 1991; Wach et al., 2021). Intentionality is also affected by an individual's perception of their context and of the subjective social norms that may surround them (Santos, Roomi, & Liñán, 2016).

Following the TPB, parental instrumental support in the form of encouragement and positive modelling predicts succession intentions (Shen et al., 2017; Whiston & Keller, 2004) by encouraging an individual's positive attitude about, and attraction to, this form of career (Ajzen, 1991; Kautonen et al., 2015). Interactions between parents and their children can shape succession outcomes (Byrne et al., 2019), as the parent occupies multiple roles in the development of the child as an individual and as a successor. Through their work in the family business, daily activities, and even dinner-table conversations about the business, the incumbent acts as a source of knowledge about the family firm, allowing their children to view and sense the lived experience of business ownership (Davidsson, 1995; Dumas, 1989).

Parental instrumental support, which manifests as the offering of advice, encouragement, and coaching, can increase an individual's career-specific intentions (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Dyer, 1992; Edelman et al., 2016) and skill development (Garcia et al., 2019). Family support and social encouragement have also been found to positively influence the next generation's succession intentions (Shen et al., 2017; Whiston & Keller, 2004) and female entrepreneurship (Cetindamar et al., 2012). For family firms, parental instrumental support includes encouragement, training, and the provision of opportunities for skill development (Turner et al., 2003). Such opportunities are critical to enhance the individual's skills and competence to manage the family firm, which is theorised to result in the next generation's intentions to pursue a family business career (Garcia et al., 2019). Supporting this claim, scholarly work focusing on the drivers of career choice intentions of adolescents with a family business background (see for example, Schröder et al., 2011) notes that high openness to new experience and low parental succession preference and preparation can increase the likelihood of next-generation family members founding their own firm or seeking employment outside the family business, rather than engaging in family business succession.

Despite often being sidelined in the dispensation of many of the processes beneficial to a successor (Byrne & Fattoum, 2014), and with reduced availability of external entrepreneurial resources (Cardella et al., 2020), females still reap significant benefits from instrumental family-to-business enrichments or supports (Powell & Eddleston, 2013). The impact of a close relationship between a family business owner and a daughter as successor can create a shared vision for the family business and a sense of belonging and control (Wang, 2010). In fact, father-daughter succession processes are often collaborative, with instrumental support continuing well after family business ownership has

transitioned to the next generation (Hollander & Bukowitz, 1990). Where archaic notions of primogeniture remain in the family unit, however, daughters receive a less comprehensive and less empowering initiation to the family business (Handler, 1994). We propose that daughters of family business owners who have access to parental instrumental support may perceive that family business ownership is a feasible and attractive endeavour, thereby triggering succession intentions. Accordingly, we hypothesise:

Hypothesis 1. *Parental instrumental support positively affects the family business succession intentions of daughters of family business owners.*

Being exposed to experiential learning activities, work experience, or on-the-job training in an organisation greatly assists in fostering an individual's self-perception of efficacy for that role (Naktiyok & Timuröglü, 2009). In a business setting, this equips individuals with added knowledge about the sector, core technologies, and customer needs (Westhead et al., 2001). Reflecting the TPB, Ajzen (2002) suggests that past behaviour can affect behavioural intentions. When an individual feels competent in carrying out a particular behaviour, they will have a more positive attitude and a higher level of perceived control over the action and its subsequent outcome (Wilson et al., 2007), resulting in higher intentionality to pursue that action or role.

Following this rationale, family business work experience often exemplifies industry-specific exposure, which can provide a successor with valuable knowledge, skills, connections, and competencies (Sieger et al., 2011). In turn, it can give the confidence and cognitive support necessary to build self-efficacy through the provision of mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological states (Dempsey & Jennings, 2014; Newman, Obschonka, Schwarz, Cohen, & Nielsen, 2019). Studies have found that children who were actively involved in their parents' business were more likely to pursue careers linked to succession or business creation (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Cieřlik & van Stel, 2017).

For a daughter, participating in the family business can allow her to become familiar with the everyday practices that occur, and by "performing and reproducing traditions" she may feel a heightened sense of belonging as part of the collective identity of the firm (Stead, 2017, p.65). Dumas (1989) suggests that daughters may find it challenging to move away from a father's perception of 'daddy's little girl' at the outset. However, extended time spent working in the family business can allow the incumbent and staff to become more acquainted with the daughter as a potential successor and allow her to establish an identity as the successor (McAdam et al., 2020; Vera & Dean, 2005).

Kickul, Wilson, Marlino and Barbosa (2008) found that the positive effect of prior leadership and work experience on entrepreneurial self-efficacy was stronger for females. Similarly, we propose that when daughters are permitted to gain work experience in the family firm, they are provided with essential mastery and vicarious learning opportunities. This allows the nascent successor to feel that succession achievement is more attainable and controllable (perceived behavioural control) and is antecedent to succession intentions. We propose a direct effect of family business work experience on the succession intentions of next-generation female members and develop the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. *Family business work experience positively affects the family business succession intentions of daughters of family business owners.*

2.2. Normative and national influences on succession intentions

Subjective norms, as a dimension of the TPB, correspond to the positive or negative reaction of significant reference groups – including family members, friends, and other relevant individuals – to a specific topic or action (Ajzen, 2002). Individuals are likely to have higher levels of intention if they perceive positive reactions from their reference groups (Ajzen, 2002; Carr & Sequeira, 2007). In fact, when individuals experience strong approval and realistic encouragement from their

significant social reference group, they will become more attracted to the considered behaviour and will exert greater effort (Liñán & Chen, 2009; Maresch et al., 2016; Palmer et al., 2019).

As such, we draw on social role theory to frame our arguments on the effect of subjective norms on daughters as potential family business successors. Social role theory examines expected tendencies and actions that are commensurate with social roles, as predicted by characteristics such as age, race, religion, or gender. The theory contends that there are specific traits and behaviours, such as assertiveness, that society has linked to qualities typically demonstrated by men. As a result, studies note a significant stereotype against females in leadership positions (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). Social expectations, norms, attitudes, and values assigned to women by societies, together with family traditions, can act as obstacles to women's ambitions, expectations, and enterprise activities (Andersson et al., 2007; cited in Danish & Smith, 2012, p.219). Lower female engagement rates in business can be partly attributed to socially prescribed gender roles corresponding to gender-specific stereotyping of careers (Eagly et al., 2000; Shinnar et al., 2018). Because of poorly functioning institutions and the patriarchal values, culture, and norms in many countries, females are more reluctant to opt for self-employment and are less supported to do so (Cetindamar et al., 2012; Estrin & Mickiewicz, 2011; Shinnar et al., 2018; Vita et al., 2014). On a tangible level, this may be attributed, in part, to variations in resource allocation between gender groups, such as unequal distribution of family capital between genders (Cetindamar et al., 2012), difficulties in accessing financial capital (Carter, 2000; Marlow & Patton, 2005), and other related social or institutional barriers that females can encounter (Bannò et al., 2024). In entrepreneurship, female founders grapple to find belonging as they navigate gendered assumptions and stereotypes (Stead, 2017), which, through an intersection of religious and ethnic norms, can often influence their expected conduct and attire (Essers & Benschop, 2009).

The family unit, through its interactions, constructs the role of the successor together, and in many cases ascribes a gendered connotation to the role, which then becomes the expectation for any potential candidates. The intending successor must fit with this constructed successor role, in many cases by being the expected gender or by embodying and displaying the expected gendered demeanour (Byrne et al., 2019). In fact, Hytti et al. (2017) highlight the negotiation that successor daughters undertake in their business operations, at times applying forms of masculinised identities to find belonging in their role and adopting gendered scripts to suit the contexts they find themselves in.

For those considering a business career, next-generation members may be discouraged due to a lack of approval from family and other significant individuals, despite possessing the requisite skills and aptitude (Carr & Sequeira, 2007). Interactions between parents, siblings, and children create (gendered) social norms and structures that generate shared expectations relating to succession (Byrne et al., 2019). Noting that females are more susceptible than males to social norms when deciding on their future vocation (Maes et al., 2014), we consider that this will be a contributing factor within our study sample. Daughters often are inducted to the role of successor in special circumstances, such as a crisis event or unexpected transition (Ahrens et al., 2015; Wang, 2010). As such, their ascension may be less normalised given the shorter lead time, and may be more jarring to adapt to for both the daughter as successor and for those around her. In addition, reference groups may create norms by perceiving wider cultural cues surrounding them, which are then often 'reflected and perpetuated' within the family business context and can be received by the daughter (Bannò et al., 2024; Wang, 2010). We theorise that social role theory can help to explain why reference groups may have normative beliefs which could go on to affect the intentions of a potential successor, thus linking to the subjective norms of the TPB framework. Using the TPB, Liñán, Jaén and Rodríguez (2024) found that gender stereotypes (based on social role theory) influenced individuals' entrepreneurial intentions depending on their gender role orientation.

Prior empirical research has not found consistent support for the effect of subjective norms on intentions (Carsrud & Brannback, 2011; Maes et al., 2014). More commonly found to influence entrepreneurial intentions indirectly (Sancho, Navarro, & Ramos-Rodríguez, 2020), subjective norms are examined as a moderator in our study. While a number of studies have noted the positive effect of the subjective norms of friends and family on intentions (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Palmer et al., 2019), some conclude that subjective norms are not the main precursor to such intentions (Maresch et al., 2016; Ramos-Rodríguez et al., 2019). A possible explanation for these inconclusive findings may be the existence of important contingencies in the relationships between independent and dependent variables (Criaco et al., 2017). Sancho et al. (2020), for example, argue that subjective norms can have an indirect influence on background intentionality conditions. We consider that the underlying effect of these subjective biases will underpin the actions and behaviours exhibited by parental figures. We thus assume a moderating effect of subjective norms in the relationship between our independent and dependent variables, and develop the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. *Perceived positive subjective norms strengthen the relationship between (a) parental instrumental support and (b) family business work experience, and the family business succession intentions of daughters.*

Women engaged in entrepreneurship or a professional career face difficulties stemming from gender inequality in many institutional and structural facets, such as accessing financial capital (Brush et al., 2002; Chowdhury et al., 2018), receiving equal pay (Tyson & Parker, 2019), and securing senior executive positions (Zahidi et al., 2018). Gender disparities are noted to be negatively associated with a wide range of outcomes (Iqbal et al., 2016), while the gender-specific indicators of institutions, such as restrictions on women’s freedom of movement away from home, are shown to weaken their entrepreneurial aspirations (see for example, Estrin & Mickiewicz, 2011). Even females who are confident about performing entrepreneurial activities may perceive the environment as more difficult and less rewarding (Zhang et al., 2014), which in turn may undermine their perceived behavioural control and weaken their intentions to pursue the intended behaviour (Shirokova et al., 2016). Wang (2010) notes that daughters are excluded from many opportunities for succession due to “an interaction of macro (societal/cultural attitudes toward women) and micro (individual and family) factors that both stereotype and discriminate against the daughter and ensures that her capabilities and contributions in the business remain largely invisible” (2010, p.475). Social role theory would contend that this effect is stronger for females than for males in certain countries due to patriarchal values, cultures, and norms (Cetindamar et al., 2012; Critelli, 2010). Cultures characterised by greater gender egalitarianism rely less on biological sex to determine the allocation of roles and focus on minimising gender-role differences (Miska et al., 2018), while in cultures with less gender egalitarianism, women typically are not respected as authority figures to make key decisions. For example, religion in East Asia, social segregation in Middle Eastern countries, and societal legitimisation in sub-Saharan Africa have been noted to affect the career development of women in developing countries (Vita et al., 2014).

As social structures vary across countries, the degree to which resourcing affects female business ownership is dependent upon the national context (Cetindamar et al., 2012). This implies that although there may be a positive association between human and family capital factors and the succession intentions of next-generation female members, the quality of such relationships can be altered by institutional or macro factors. Porfirio et al. (2020) found that women in the southern Slavic countries of North Macedonia and Bulgaria were more motivated towards succession than other career paths, highlighting the influence of context and culture. We therefore argue that the strength of the proposed relationships between parental instrumental support, family business work experience, and the succession intentions of daughters of family business owners may vary across cultures, impacted by gender

disparities. We propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. *Higher national gender inequality weakens the relationship between (a) parental instrumental support and (b) family business work experience, and the family business succession intentions of daughters.*

The overarching logic of our theoretical arguments is portrayed in Fig. 1.

3. Methods

3.1. Respondents and data

The respondents in this study are daughters of family business owners, where either or both parents own and manage a business. The average respondent is early or pre-career (92% were born between 1990s and 2000s, and were 28 years old or younger when they responded to the survey). All participants (N=7,798) are university students studying (at bachelor, master, or PhD level) either science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and related disciplines (47.3%); arts, humanities, and social sciences (43.9%); or business, management, and economics disciplines (8.8%) in one of 44 countries. The data was collected in the 2018 Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students’ Survey (GUESSS). GUESSS collects data biannually on students’ career choice intentions and professional activities. From the data, we excluded females that were nascent or active entrepreneurs, we removed low responding countries, and we screened for incomplete responses. Previous research has used data from the GUESSS project to study the career choice intentions of students (Sieger & Monsen, 2015; Zellweger et al., 2011), the intergenerational transmission of entrepreneurial intentions (Laspita et al., 2012), the influence of the university and regional context on student entrepreneurship (Bergmann et al., 2016), the formation of opportunity beliefs (Bergmann, 2017), and the climate for entrepreneurship at higher education institutions (Bergmann et al., 2018).

The gender gap data is derived from the World Economic Forum’s (2018) measure of gender gap that assesses four broad dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment (Zahidi et al., 2018). The World Economic Forum’s measures were matched by country and year to the GUESSS data used in our study. The World Economic Forum (2018) study suggests that of these four dimensions, the largest gender disparity exists in political empowerment, followed by economic participation and opportunity, which maintain a gender gap of 77.1% and 41.9%, respectively (Zahidi et al., 2018).

3.2. Variables and measurement

3.2.1. Dependent and independent variables and moderators

3.2.1.1. Succession intention. Succession intention (SI), our dependent variable, is the intention of a daughter of a family business owner to

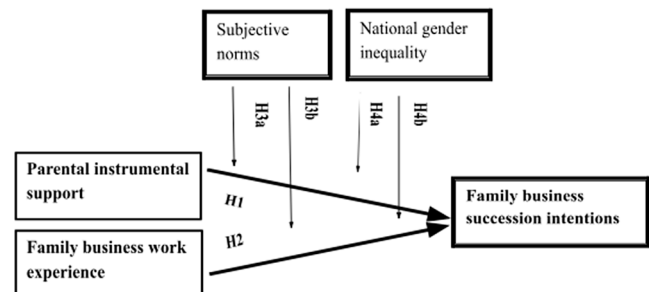


Fig. 1. Summary of moderation model of next-generation female family member succession intentions.

pursue a career in the family business. Succession intention is measured using six items – (1) i am ready to do anything to take over my parents' business; (2) my professional goal is to become a successor in my parents' business; (3) i will make every effort to become a successor in my parents' business; (4) i am determined to become a successor in my parents' business in the future; (5) i have very seriously thought of taking over my parents' business; and (6) i have a very strong intention to become a successor in my parents' business one day – on a seven-point likert scale adapted from Liñán and Chen (2009). The items display good levels of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha for succession intentions of 0.972.

3.2.1.2. Parental instrumental support. Perceptions of parental instrumental support (INSUPRT) are measured using three items derived from Turner et al. (2003): (1) my parents talked to me about how what i am learning will someday be able to help me in their business; (2) my parents taught me things that i will someday be able to use in their business; and (3) my parents gave me chores that taught me skills i can use in my future career in their business. Respondents were asked to specify their level of agreement on a seven-point likert-type scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha for parental instrumental support items is 0.894.

3.2.1.3. Family business work experience. Respondents indicated whether they have had family business work experience (WEXP). Responses are coded as 1 = yes and 0 = no. Results indicated that over half (52.5%) of respondents have had working experience in their family firm.

3.2.1.4. Subjective norms. Subjective norms (SN), one of two moderators, is based on the respondent's perception of how others may react to their decision to pursue a family business career. Derived from Liñán and Chen (2009), four items are employed to measure subjective norms: the reactions of parents, close family members, other family members (e.g., uncles and aunts), and people outside the family (e.g., friends and colleagues). Reactions are measured on a seven-point scale, from 1 = very negative to 7 = very positive. Cronbach's alpha for subjective norms is 0.921.

3.2.1.5. The gender gap index. The gender gap index (GGI), our second moderator, is a country-level score of the gender gap between men and women on measures of economic participation and opportunity. The score measures: Female labour force participation; wage equality for similar work; relative estimated earned incomes; and relative numbers of female legislators, senior officials, managers, and professional and technical workers (Zahidi et al., 2018). The rank for the countries in our study ranged from a low (gender gap) of 15 (Slovenia) to a high (gender gap) of 146 (Pakistan).

3.2.2. Control variables

3.2.2.1. Age of respondents. We control for the age of respondents (RAGE) because succession intentions vary by age (Porfirio et al., 2020; Suhartanto, 2023). The extant literature notes that younger respondents may show a higher proclivity towards succession intentions (Birley, 1986; Porfirio et al., 2019; Stavrou, 1999). Responses were coded as: 1 = born in 2000 or after; 2 = born between 1990 and 1999; 3 = born between 1980 and 1989; and 4 = born prior to 1980.

3.2.2.2. Field of education. As career intentions vary across educational specialisms (Brenzitz & Zhang, 2020; Souitaris et al., 2007), we control for the respondents' field of education (FEDU) using a dummy variable, with a value of 1 used for those within business, management, or economics disciplines (Laskovaia et al., 2017).

3.2.2.3. Firm sector. Consistent with prior research, we control for the effects of a firm's sector of activity (Sieger & Minola, 2017) (FTYPE). As some industries are male-dominated – for example, STEM sectors (World Economic Forum, 2017); electricity; gas and water; transport; construction; manufacturing; finance; and agriculture (Bowen & Hisrich, 1986; Eurofound, 2020) – we used respondents' classification of the sector of activity of their parents' family business to create a dummy variable, with a value of 1 used for sectors outside of STEM, construction, manufacturing, financial services, and transportation.

3.2.2.4. Firm performance. In a high-performing firm, the relevance of filial duty may be lower, as next-generation sons and daughters may feel a lower need to safeguard their parents' financial well-being (Zellweger et al., 2016). We thus controlled for family firm performance (FBPER), which is measured on a seven-point likert scale across five dimensions: sales growth, market share, profit growth, job creation, and innovations (e.g., Dess & Robinson, 1984; Eddleston et al., 2008). Respondents rated the performance of their parents' business compared to competitors over the previous three-year period. Cronbach's alpha for family firm performance items is 0.901. Subjective ratings of performance are closely related to objective performance measures and can be used when there is no objective data available (Smolka et al., 2018).

3.2.2.5. Global competitiveness index. As entrepreneurial intentions differ across countries and cultures (Paul et al., 2017), we control for country effects (GCI). We do this using the World Economic Forum's 2018 global competitiveness index country-level score. The global competitiveness index incorporates factors that drive productivity, growth, and human development (Schwab, 2019). Data on the global competitiveness index was matched by country and year to the GUESSS data used in our study.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics and multicollinearity

Table 1 reports means, standard deviations, and the correlation coefficients for all variables. We report a normal distribution of our indicators of latent factors and for all other variables in terms of skewness. We observed mild kurtosis for the age of respondents (5.39), though this value is within the thresholds recommended in Curran et al. (1996). In terms of common method bias, results from Harman's single-factor test indicate that all scale items were within acceptable thresholds of common method bias (<0.50). Since the correlation coefficient values are small to moderate (between -0.005 and 0.527), we conclude that multicollinearity is not of concern. We also check multicollinearity through variance inflation factors. We report a variance inflation factor of not greater than 2 for the variables used in the regression analysis (which is considerably lower than the critical threshold of 10; see Pallant, 2020), which suggests no multicollinearity issues (Smolka et al., 2018).

4.2. Findings

To test our hypotheses, we ran hierarchical regression for the succession intentions of daughters (Table 2). Model 1, the baseline model, includes all controls; Model 2 includes the two predictor variables, parental instrumental support and family business work experience; Model 3 includes the respective interaction effects for subjective norms and country-level gender gap index; and Model 4 includes all variables. Table 2 reports the results of our hypotheses. Regarding the effects of our controls, the age of respondents is found to have a significant negative impact on succession intentions in all our models. This implies that younger and early-career daughters of family business owners have higher succession intentions compared to older daughters of family

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. SI	16.332	10.785	1									
2. RAGE	1.997	0.480	-0.082***	1								
3. FEDU(business management)	1.9650.09	0.9540.283	-0.010	-0.006	1							
4. FTYPE(dummy)	9.530.67	3.7210.4693	0.419***	-0.014	0.018	1						
5. FBPER	21.911	7.043	-0.214***	-0.105***	0.018	-0.017	1					
6. GCI	68.443	7.821	0.527***	0.026**	0.043***	-0.048***	-0.123***	1				
7. INSUPRT	12.091	5.816	0.167***	0.039***	0.007	0.045***	0.109***	0.423***	1			
8. WEXP	0.53	0.499	0.448***	-0.059***	0.030**	0.111***	0.384***	0.098***	0.261***	1		
9. SN	19.919	6.566	0.012	0.025*	0.010	-0.005	0.011	-0.091***	0.421***	0.154***	1	
10. GGI	77.269	30.192	0.012	0.025*	0.010	0.016	0.011	-0.341***	0.030**	-0.112***	-0.021*	1

N=7,798; * p < 0.05 (two-tailed test); ** p < 0.01 (two-tailed test); *** p < 0.001 (two-tailed test).

SI: succession intention; RAGE: age of respondents; FEDU: field of education; FTYPE: firm sector; FBPER: firm performance; GCI: country competitiveness (global competitiveness index); INSUPRT: parental instrumental support; WEXP: family business work experience; SN: subjective norms; GGI: gender gap index.

Table 2

Hierarchical regression results: effects of parental instrumental support and family business work experience on the succession intentions of daughters.

Predictors	Model 1 (baseline)	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
RAGE	-0.036***	-0.041***	-0.032***	-0.038***
FEDU	0.038***	0.027**	0.033**	0.024**
FTYPE	0.011	-0.036***	-0.007	-0.030***
FBPER	0.395***	0.227***	0.336***	0.200***
GCI	-0.162***	-0.117***	-0.164***	-0.122***
INSUPRT		0.393***		0.362***
WEXP		0.056***		0.051***
SN*INSUPRT			0.070***	0.079***
SN*WEXP			0.232***	0.164***
GGI*INSUPRT			0.023*	0.016
GGI*WEXP			-0.040***	-0.035***
R	0.454	0.585	0.513	0.612
R ²	0.206***	0.342***	0.264***	0.374***
Adjusted R ²	0.205	0.341	0.263	0.374
R ² change	0.206***	0.136***	0.058***	0.033***

N=7,798; * p < 0.05 (two-tailed test); ** p < 0.01 (two-tailed test); *** p < 0.001 (two-tailed test).

RAGE: age of respondents; FEDU: field of education; FTYPE: firm sector, FBPER: firm performance; GCI: country competitiveness (global competitiveness index); INSUPRT: parental instrumental support; WEXP: family business work experience; SN: subjective norms; GGI: gender gap index.

business owners, as suggested in the family business succession literature (Birley, 1986). Field of education has a positive and significant impact across all regression models, providing support to research that reported the positive influence of business, management, and economics education (Criaco et al., 2017; Souitaris et al., 2007).

Of interest and unexpected is the effect of firm sector, which is negative and significant in Model 2 ($\beta = -0.036$, $p < 0.001$) and Model 4 ($\beta = -0.030$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that the succession intentions of daughters are higher in sectors such as STEM, construction, manufacturing, financial services, and transportation. As expected, firm performance is positive and significant across all regression models consistent with results from prior research (Criaco et al., 2017).

The effect of country competitiveness is negative and significant across all regression models, suggesting that in countries with higher country competitiveness scores (often more developed economies), family business succession intentions are lower, perhaps reflecting more, or better, alternative career choices.

In the next step of the analysis (Model 2), we test Hypothesis 1 which proposes that higher levels of parental instrumental support will be positively related to succession intentions, and Hypothesis 2, which proposes that family business work experience will be positively related to succession intentions. Regarding these main effects, parental instrumental support is found to have a positive impact on succession intentions ($\beta = 0.393$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, family business work experience is found to positively affect succession intentions ($\beta = 0.056$, $p < 0.001$). In Table 2, the change in R² from Model 1 (R² = 0.206) to Model 2 (R² = 0.342) shows that parental instrumental support and family business work experience account for 13.6% of additional variance in succession intentions over and above the effects of our control variables. The effects of these variables are also found to be significant in Model 4, thereby providing strong support for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2.

In Hypothesis 3, we propose that subjective norms – the respondent’s perception of how others, including parents, close family, and friends and others, might react to their decision to pursue a family business career – moderate the effect of parental instrumental support (Hypothesis 3a) and family business work experience (Hypothesis 3b) on their succession intentions. As far as the effects of interaction terms are concerned in Model 3, the positive relationships between parental instrumental support and succession intentions ($\beta = 0.070$, $p < 0.001$), and

between family business work experience and succession intentions ($\beta = 0.232, p < 0.001$) are strengthened by the respondent's subjective norms. The effects of these interaction terms are also found to be statistically significant in Model 4, thereby providing strong support for both Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b. Where respondents perceive that others will think positively of their succession choice, the positive support of parents and the positive effects of family business work experience on the intentions of daughters are strengthened.

In Hypothesis 4, we propose that gender equality gaps in a country (measured by the GGI) moderate the effect of parental instrumental support (Hypothesis 4a) and family business work experience (Hypothesis 4b) on the succession intentions of daughters. The effect of the country-level gender gap index in the relationship between parental instrumental support and succession intentions is found to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.023, p < 0.05$) in Model 3, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 4a. In countries with greater gender inequality (wider gender equality gaps), the positive effect of parental instrumental support on the succession intentions of daughters is strengthened.

As expected, a wider gender gap in a country weakens the positive linkage between family business work experience and succession intentions ($\beta = -0.040, p < 0.001$). This relationship is found to be negative and significant in Model 4 also, thereby providing strong support for Hypothesis 4b. This implies that the effect of family business work experience on the family business succession intentions of daughters is dampened by a wider gender equality gap in a country. Model 3 includes the respective interaction effects. The change in R^2 from Model 1 ($R^2 = 0.206$) to Model 3 ($R^2 = 0.264$) shows that our interaction products account for approximately 6% of additional variance in the succession intentions of daughters over and above the effects of our control variables.

Finally, Model 4 ($R^2 = 0.374$), which includes both predictors and interaction effects, explains an additional variance of 3.3% over Model 2. All models are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

4.3. Post-hoc analysis: Sons of family business owners

We repeat our analysis but use only male participants ($N=7,225$) to check if our findings hold for sons of family business owners. The results are reported in Table 3. In summary, the effects of controls, our predictor variables, and one of our moderators (subjective norms) hold for the

sons of family business owners; however, we report weaker and different effects for our second moderator, the country-level gender gap index.

In Table 3, the effects of our controls: age of respondents, field of education, firm sector, firm performance and country competitiveness, remain the same for sons as they were for daughters (see Table 2). However, it should be noted that country-level competitiveness is not significant in Model 2, Model 3, or Model 4 (Table 3).

Regarding the main effects, both parental instrumental support ($\beta = 0.376, p < 0.001$) and family business work experience ($\beta = 0.055, p < 0.001$) are positively associated with the succession intentions of sons. These findings are stable across Model 2 and Model 4 (Table 3), thereby providing strong support that our results for daughters for Hypothesis 1 (parental instrumental support) and Hypothesis 2 (family business work experience) also hold for sons. The change in R^2 from Model 1 ($R^2 = 0.301$) to Model 2 ($R^2 = 0.409$) shows that for males, parental instrumental support and family business work experience account for 10.8% of additional variance in succession intentions over and above the effects of our control variables at $p < 0.001$.

The effects of our first moderator, subjective norms, on the relationships between parental instrumental support and succession intentions ($\beta = 0.030, p < 0.01$) and between family business work experience and succession intentions ($\beta = 0.224, p < 0.001$) are both positive and significant (Model 3). These findings are also statistically significant in Model 4, providing strong support that our results for the influence of subjective norms for daughters (Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b) also hold for sons of family business owners.

However, the effect of our second moderator, the country-level gender gap index, on the relationship between parental instrumental support and succession intentions ($\beta = -0.010, p > 0.05$) is not significant in Model 3. This finding is not statistically significant in Model 4 either. Therefore, we find no significant interaction effect for males. The influence of the country-level gender gap index on the relationship between family business work experience and succession intentions ($\beta = 0.031, p < 0.01$) is significant and positive in Model 3 but not significant in Model 4. For daughters, the effects were significant and negative (Hypothesis 4b), suggesting that in the case of sons, there is weaker support for the effect of the country-level gender gap index on succession intentions. The combined effect of the two moderators, Model 3, explains an additional variance of approximately 5% over and above the effects of Model 1. Finally, Model 4 explains an additional variance of approximately 3% over Model 3. All four models in Table 3 are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

5. Discussion

An established body of theory suggests that familial supports, work experience, and perceptions of peer support play an integral role in shaping career intentions (Paloş & Drobot, 2010; Sieger & Monsen, 2015; Whiston & Keller, 2004), with recent theoretical arguments in family business literature suggesting that these factors influence the succession intentions of next-generation family members (Garcia et al., 2019). Despite the importance of intergenerational transfer in family firms (Clinton et al., 2021; Laspita et al., 2012), there is little empirical evidence that tests the theoretically informed drivers of succession intentions in the context of daughters of family business owners (Garcia et al., 2019; Gimenez-Jimenez et al., 2022; McAdam et al., 2020; Nelson & Constantinidis, 2017). In this paper, we develop predictions about the succession intentions of daughters using the TPB and social role theory, and drawing on an international dataset, we explore if these relationships are moderated by national levels of gender inequality.

With respect to the drivers of succession intentions, we find that the perception of parental instrumental support (e.g., parenting relating the education and work experience of daughters to future roles in the family business) (Edelman et al., 2016) and the experience of working in the family business (Cieřlik & van Stel, 2017) positively influence the succession intentions of daughters of family business owners. Furthermore,

Table 3
Regression results: effects of parental instrumental support and family business work experience on the succession intentions of sons.

Predictors	Model 1 (baseline)	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
RAGE	-0.057***	-0.060***	-0.057***	-0.060***
FEDU	0.100***	0.078***	0.090***	0.073***
FTYPE	-0.063***	-0.059***	-0.056***	-0.055
FBPER	0.517***	0.305***	0.445***	0.271***
GCI	-0.030**	-0.007	-0.010	0.002
INSUPRT		0.376***		0.346***
WEXP		0.055***		0.059***
SN*INSUPRT			0.030**	0.065***
SN*WEXP			0.224***	0.160***
GGI*INSUPRT			-0.010	-0.005
GGI*WEXP			0.031**	0.014
R	0.549	0.639	0.589	0.659
R ²	0.301	0.409	0.347	0.435
Adjusted R ²	0.301	0.408	0.346	0.434
R ² change	0.301***	0.108***	0.046***	0.026***

$N=7,225$; * $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test); ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed test).

RAGE: age of respondents; FEDU: field of education; FTYPE: firm sector, FBPER: firm performance; GCI: country competitiveness (global competitiveness index); INSUPRT: parental instrumental support; WEXP: family business work experience; SN: subjective norms; GGI: gender gap index.

favourable normative institutions such as parents and social groups play a pivotal role in the formation of succession intentions, as evidenced by the positive moderating effect of subjective norms on the relationships between parental instrumental support and family business work experience and the succession intentions of daughters.

We show that the moderating effect of the gender gap index on the relationship between parental instrumental support and the succession intentions of daughters suggests that a wider gender gap reinforces this relationship. This implies that parental instrumental support is most influential in countries where there are wider gender gaps, negating the stereotyping of roles as proposed by social role theory. We show that a larger national gender gap dampens the positive relationship between family business work experience and the succession intentions of daughters, meaning that in the case of daughters, the effect of family business work experience is a stronger predictor of succession intentions in countries with lower levels of gender inequality.

Our post-hoc analysis shows that the drivers of succession intentions are similar for both daughters and sons, though we report no moderating effects on the relationship between parental instrumental support and succession intentions for sons. It may be that sons with family business work experience are in an advantageous position compared to daughters in countries with higher levels of gender inequality. We also show that in contrast to daughters, for sons, the positive relationship between family business work experience and succession intentions is reinforced by a wider gender gap.

The findings described in Section 4 make several important contributions to the family business and international business literature. Our first contribution is to the literature on the determinants of succession intentions of daughters at an international level. Following the theorising of Garcia et al. (2019) and Gimenez-Jimenez et al. (2022) on the effect of family support on next-generation succession intentions, we find that parental instrumental support, a form of social support deriving from the family (Edelman et al., 2016), is critical to the formation of succession intentions (Nelson & Constantinidis, 2017). We show the mechanisms through which family capital, notably parental instrumental support, spurs daughters' succession intentions in a family business context. In addition, while prior research highlights some (mixed) effects of work experience in the development of attitudes and intentions towards entrepreneurial actions (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Cieřliik & Stel, 2017; Dyer & Handler, 1994), little is known about how family business exposure affects next-generation female members' succession intentions (Boukhabza & Ouhadi, 2023; Garcia et al., 2019). Our findings demonstrate that prior family business work experience stimulates the succession intentions of daughters of family business owners. We suggest that family business work experience provides daughters with domain-specific know-how which influences their intention to pursue a family business vocation. In turn, we support the idea that family business work experience helps daughters feel a heightened sense of belonging (Dumas, 1989; Stead, 2017) and added agency to test and shape their successor identity (McAdam et al., 2020; Vera & Dean, 2005).

Our second contribution is to extend our understanding of intra-family succession by exploring the interplay between subjective norms and social role theory. Past research has shown the importance of social norms on career choice (Carr & Sequeira, 2007; Liñan & Chen, 2009; Palmer et al., 2019). Within the context of family business, a growing body of research has provided insights into the nuances of intra-family succession by examining the roles of entrepreneurial legacy (Jaskiewicz et al., 2015), family relationships (Morris et al., 1996; Sharma, Chrisman, & Chua, 2003), family cohesion (Bozer, Levin, & Santora, 2017), family tradition (Zellweger et al., 2012), and perceived parental control (Schröder & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013; Zellweger et al., 2011). Our study extends these works by showing how the positive reactions and approval of family members and close friends positively moderate the influence of parental instrumental support and family business work experience on the succession intentions of daughters. It underscores the

importance of social groups, and the effect of their attitudes around gender roles, in shaping succession intentions. Thus, our work provides important insights to the literature on succession intentions while offering support for the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), and by deepening our understanding of subjective norms using social role theory, in the context of family business succession intentions.

Our third contribution is to extend the international business literature by exploring the role of national gender gaps on the succession intentions of daughters of family business owners. National institutions affect social expectations, norms, attitudes, and values assigned to women by societies, and the roles considered appropriate for them (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Thus, family wealth creation and preservation can be precarious in some countries due to their weak, unstable, and fragile institutions (Fathallah & Carney, 2024). We extend this research by exploring how gender inequality, as measured by the gender gap index, moderates the direct effects of parental instrumental support and family business work experience on the succession intentions of daughters. We find that a wider gender gap affects the succession intentions of daughters, but only in the case of prior family business work experience. We suggest that because the cultural and economic arrangements of institutions act as gatekeepers of resources and power (Danish & Smith, 2012), daughters are discouraged from pursuing a family business career even if they are endowed with industry-specific human capital factors.

5.1. Managerial relevance and policy implications

Understanding the succession intentions of next-generation family members is not only a matter of academic interest, but is also of interest for family business practitioners, especially those planning to transfer a business to their daughter(s) (Garcia et al., 2019; Lyons et al., 2024). Our findings establish the beneficial influence of parental instrumental support and family business work experience on succession intentions. Moreover, of these two drivers, parental instrumental support is most influential in countries where there are significant gender gaps. Noting the effect of subjective norms, we see that positive reactions from family members can reinforce the effects of parental instrumental support and family business work experience provision; thus, parents who understand the role of such positive reactions can seek to nurture and develop wider family endorsement for next-generation female members.

With respect to policy, addressing gender gaps is required to achieve effective and inclusive family firm growth, and to respond to new economic challenges facing family firms (OECD, 2018). Our finding on the detrimental effects of gender gaps represents a challenge to policymakers. Our research points to a greater need to reduce the gender inequalities of those countries with a high gender gap index score in the dimension of economic participation and opportunity (i.e., countries with scores > 100). Of the 44 countries studied, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, India, United Arab Emirates, Türkiye, Korea, Mexico, El Salvador, Chile, Italy, Argentina, Costa Rica, and the Republic of North Macedonia (listed in descending order) have the highest levels of gender inequality in the dimension of economic participation and opportunity. In addition, those countries with moderate to high levels of gender disparities (i.e., countries with scores between 50 and 99), including Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, Czechia, China, Slovakia, Ecuador, Austria, Spain, Uruguay, Hungary, Greece, France, Panama, Albania, and England, should strive to narrow their gender disparities across the dimension of economic participation and opportunity.

5.2. Limitations and future research

Notwithstanding the insights gained, as with all research, there are limitations to our study. With respect to our data, the GUESS data utilised in our study is cross-sectional in nature (Edelman et al., 2016). Future research could devise a longitudinal research design to fully understand the transmission of succession intentions over an

individual's life-course (Laspita et al., 2012). We used biological sex in determining who was included in our sample, namely female family members with a family business background, without including gender-role personality traits. We recognise that there needs to be a growth of more nuanced discussion and empiricism about gender in succession literature, rather than relying on a binary, gender-essentialist lens to discern the differences between men and women (Byrne et al., 2019). With respect to measuring the effect of national levels of gender inequality, our measure involves economic participation and opportunity, which is one of four broad dimensions of the gender gap index. To gain a more in-depth understanding of the influence of national gender gaps, future research could investigate how the dimensions of educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment influence female succession intentions. More generally, we encourage future research to build on our study and explore how other factors may complement or restrict succession intentions, including entrepreneurial or family business education and external work experience (Ahmed & Brennan, 2019; Wiklund & Shepherd, 2008). It is critical to study the symbiosis between gender norms and the longitudinal development of the successor within a family business context, as past studies have limited consideration for how gender is produced and reproduced by incumbents, successors, and other stakeholders as they interact over time (Byrne et al., 2019).

6. Conclusion

Intergenerational survival rates of family firms across the globe are poor (Garcia et al., 2019; Sieger, Fueglistaller, & Zellweger, 2016), leading to a succession crisis in many countries. While prior scholarly enquiry has investigated incumbents' unwillingness to relinquish power in the family business (e.g., De Massi et al., 2016), there is a dearth in our understanding of successors' willingness (or not) to assume control, particularly among female successors (Bang et al., 2023; Boukhabza & Ouhadi, 2023; Vardaman & Montague-Mfuni, 2021). A greater understanding of what drives the succession intentions of next-generation family members, particularly the daughters of family business owners, can help family businesses achieve the intergenerational transfer of ownership and management that so many families seek. Our study explores the drivers of family business succession intentions of 7,798 early and pre-career daughters of family business owners across 44 countries. Our research findings highlight that independent of institutional factors, parents can trigger the succession intentions of their daughters through instrumental support, along with the provision of work experience in the family business. When taking account of institutional influences, our findings suggest that favourable normative institutions can enhance the strength of the relationship between parental support and industry-specific exposure, and the succession intentions of daughters. However, adverse formal and informal institutions characterised by a wider gender gap can attenuate this relationship.

Credit authorship contribution statement

Eric Clinton: Writing – original draft, Supervision, Methodology, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Farhad Uddin Ahmed:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Roisin Lyons:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Colm O’Gorman:** Writing – original draft.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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