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Article

Qualitative Study of Gender Approach in Ecuadoran Family-Owned Businesses

Estudio cualitativo sobre el enfoque de género en la empresa familiar ecuatoriana

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ABSTRACT

Aim: to implement a gender approach to the study of relationships taking place in Ecuadoran family-owned businesses, which is essential to understand the influence of domination patterns, particularly in working relationships, including class and racism-mediated relationships. Although gender approach is the concern of many, no palpable improvements have been made in this area through scientific research.

Methods: Methodological-qualitative method (case study), using abductive logics, through exploratory and descriptive research. Eight cases from the great Ecuadoran family-owned business, representing seven sectors of the economy, were studied. The data collection technique used was semi-structured interviews and analysis of secondary information.

Results: The outcome of this research provides understanding on the origin of motivations and commitments by successors, their training to run businesses, and their links to former leaders, as a way to acquire unwritten knowledge based on the confidence seen in the successor's business expertise.

Conclusions: The effects of gender on succession planning were presented. It shows the quality of the relation between the former and the new executives, which affects transfer of knowledge and other aspects.
Key words: Qualitative research; gender approach; family-owned business.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: aplicar el enfoque de género, al estudio de las relaciones que se dan en la empresa familiar ecuatoriana, lo que es fundamental para entender la influencia de los patrones de dominación, principalmente en el ámbito laboral, sin dejar de lado las relaciones de clase y las mediadas por el racismo. El enfoque de género es un tema que si bien ocupa a muchos, no se ha logrado sacar a luz en temas de investigación en función de hacer mejoras en este campo.

Métodos: Enfoque metodológico cualitativo (estudio de casos), con una lógica de investigación abductiva, bajo una investigación de tipo exploratorio y descriptivo. La muestra fueron ocho casos de la gran empresa familiar ecuatoriana, que representan a siete sectores de la economía. Como técnicas de recolección de datos se utilizaron la entrevista semiestructurada y el análisis de información secundaria.

Resultados: Los resultados permiten entender cómo surgieron las motivaciones y el compromiso por parte del sucesor(a), su asociación con la preparación para asumir el mando de la empresa y su relación con la participación del predecesor en la transmisión del conocimiento tácito, que deriva en la generación de confianza basada en la experiencia de negocios del sucesor(a).

Conclusiones: Se explicaron los efectos del género en la planificación de la sucesión. Este refleja la calidad de la relación entre el predecesor y el sucesor, lo cual afecta la transferencia de conocimiento, entre otros aspectos.
Palabras clave: Investigación cualitativa; enfoque de género; empresa familiar.

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INTRODUCTION

Family-owned companies in Ecuador generate approximately 1.6 million jobs, and their contribution to the national economy represents 51% of the Domestic Gross Product. According to data published by the Superintendent's Office of Companies in Ecuador, 90% of Ecuadoran companies are owned by families (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2018). A study done by Espiritu Santo University of Specialties (UEES), 90.5 % of Ecuadoran companies have a family structure. These data contrast a more recent study done by Camino and Bermúdez (2018), which applies a methodology to classify companies according to the size and typology, combined. For instance, a company may be a small family-owned company, a mid-sized family-owned company, or a large family-owned company.

The above-mentioned study explains that 63.2% of family-owned companies (from now on called FC) in Ecuador have a high decision-making indicator. From that total, large family-owned companies have 69.3% of family involvement, whereas micro companies account for 59.8%. Today, there is not a single global definition of a family-owned company due to different classification criteria used by authors. However, there are common factors, such as property, management, and vision. These results coincide with other studies that highlight the concentration of property as something common to Latin American FC, which is manifested through family conglomerates (González, Guzmán, Pombo & Trujillo, 2014).

One of the characteristics of Ecuadoran companies is the limited pool of candidates in the line of succession.

According to Waterhouse Coopers (2018), most FC have a succession plan looking at the third generation. This plan separates the family business plan. It seeks management of business goals and emotional needs of founders and successors. However, a study conducted by Zamora (2017) notes that the number of FC that make it to a third succeeding generation, is low, due to issues taking place among members of the same family.

Ecuadoran companies would rather keep the family assets within their direct family. Although they can run high ranking executive positions, 63% of FC allow their spouses or sentimental partners access such posts. The blood relationship of direct families is strong, and in the event of marital separation between the direct family stockholder and the indirect member, the property could be in the hands of a non-direct family member, which might bring about power dispersion. As different generations assume power, the number of families increase and there are more candidates, so it is important to optimize the mechanisms of management, succession, and protocols within families. However, Price Waterhouse Coopers (2018) noted that 1 out of 7 Ecuadoran companies interviewed, acknowledged having a solid, documented, and known succession plan.

This study focuses on gender influence regarding successor appointment by retired FC executives based on minimum generational change, from the founding stage to a partnership of siblings, and from there to a consortium of cousins, with the potential successor working for the company at the time of the study. Accordingly, a second or further generation is assumed as the children from the founder or founders, and their corresponding offspring, which are potential successors.

Gender approach is fundamental to understand the topic of women and work, since they have historically been in a subordinated more vulnerable position due to such domination patterns in the working environment, without putting aside class relationships and racism-mediated relationships (Andrés, 2015).

This study is a glimpse into understanding the effect of gender on three fields or moments during the succession process: representativeness of the predecessor-founder, new commitment toward the company by the successor, and planning the succession process. The main purpose is to make suggestions that might be contrasted in further quantitative studies.

DEVELOPMENT

Although this paper relies on accepted and recognized theories, its application within the context of gender, more particularly in the Ecuadoran FC, is relatively new.

Therefore, it is convenient to propose an exploratory and descriptive approach where the study of multiple cases is presented as a strategy to focus on the comprehension of current dynamics of research aims to contribute to knowledge in this area.

Exploratory research is useful to get acquainted with relatively unknown phenomena, identify trends, areas, contexts, situations of interest, and potential relations between variables, whereas more flexible and broader methods can be established along with further research priorities (Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista, 2014). Additionally, according to the same author, descriptive studies, seek specification of relevant properties in the phenomenon studied, by measuring or evaluating diverse aspects, dimensions or components. With it, the possible connections between concepts and variables can be uncovered.

Consequently, this research assumes a qualitative approach with an abductive logics of research, which _following state-of-the-art reviewing_ makes a first immersion in the context of the object of study, in order to build hypothesis or preliminary models, based on primary observation that paves the way for more thorough data collection that respond to research questions. The methodological strategy will be based on the case study, and the data collection techniques include semi structured interview, and analysis of secondary information.

According to Martinez (2006), the qualitative approach deals with the study of a comprehensive whole that forms or makes up a unit of analysis, which makes something what it really is, namely, a person, an ethnic, social, entrepreneurial entity, or a given product, though a specific quality could also be studied, provided that the links and ties with the whole that confer self-significance, are taken into account.

Thus, qualitative research intends to identify the deep nature of realities, their dynamic structure giving full grounds for certain behaviors and manifestations. Hence, the qualitative (everything that is integrated) does not oppose the quantitative (only an aspect), but it integrates it, especially where it becomes relevant.

Quintana (2006), stated that quantitative and qualitative research approach differences are related to the type of reality they intend to tackle. The quantitative approach focuses on "... explanation and prediction of a reality considered from its most essential aspects, and seen from an external perspective (objective)...", whereas the qualitative approach centers on "... the comprehension of a reality considered from its particular aspects as the outcome of a historical process of construction seen from the perspective of logics, and the feelings of their key actors; i.e., from an internal perspective (subjective)..." (p. 48). It is about two different types of logics: one highlighting deductive reasoning and hypothesis, and the other emphasizing on observation, inductive reasoning, and the discovery of new concepts.

In that sense, Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista (2014), note that qualitative research is used to discover and polish research questions, first. That is why a researcher begins by examining the social world, and in this process, a theory is formed in relation to the phenomena observed. Therefore, the majority of such queries are not proven by hypotheses; instead, these are generated in the process and tuned with more data, or are the outcome of research. The process of qualitative research is flexible and it ranges between two events, and its interpretation to rebuild reality as observed by the actors of a previously defined social system. It does not intend to generalize the probabilistic results to wider populations.

The qualitative approach, under the abductive logics of this research, will allow for deepening into the succession process of family companies, based on the standpoint of the predecessor-founders and successors, enabling better comprehension with its context.

According to Pierce (1970), all deduction basically consists in the application of general rules to particular cases. In induction, the case is the starting point, and the conclusion is the rule; it is obtained by observing a result, but if in the presence of certain observable elements of a phenomenon manifested in all its dimension, it is concluded that they belong to a particular class of objects, then another type of reasoning takes place: abduction, which is presented as the inference of a case from the rule and the results. In other words, the inferred case responds to a certain rule, and in consequence, that supposition is adopted. Although abduction is presented as a weak argument that inclines the author's judgment to some conclusion, it also is true that it operates as an adequate scheme to present insufficiently explained situations or facts.

As to the case study method, Yin (2013), refers to its pertinence in the social sciences, when "whys" and "hows" are asked, when a researcher has little or no control over events, and when the attention is focused on a current phenomenon within its real context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly visible. Such is the situation of this study, which tries to know the deep link between gender and the phenomenon of succession, and the practical implications of management in women within Ecuadoran family companies. Semi structured interviews, visits to company facilities, and analysis of secondary information, enabled triangulation of data sources to endure internal validity of the research and global interpretation, not necessarily causal, of the object of study.

The various stages of research

According to the abductive logics of this study, from the perception of the problem to the final adjustment of proposals, the review of the theory was a constant object of motion within an interpretative frame, as information is collected and organized, and to help re-build the empirical representation of the phenomenon.

The empirical research was conducted in two moments:

Field phase I

The Ecuadoran FC has been little studied, so there is not enough information (qualitative and quantitative). Hence, in this first approach phase to Case 1, it was possible to analyze the viability of the preliminary proposal, delimit the study sample, and calibrate the final instrument of data recollection.

Field phase II

This phase included semi structured interviews to the nine cases in the study, as well as triangulation with secondary information, and confrontation of the theories that support research, in order to build an explanation of the phenomenon, namely, the influence of gender in succession processes in Ecuadoran family companies.

Case selection

A multi case study was done to near theoretical representativeness, variety, balance, and the potential of discovery, as suggested by Hlady (2002), incorporating the criterion of Bulgerman (1983) on the number of minimum cases between six and ten, for this type of studies.

Section VI: Unpublished data collection. This section deals with theoretical representativeness of the study cases, detailing the technique used for data collection, and it explains how the information gathered was organized through codes, categories, and networks.

The recognition of the existence of goals and objectives, of FC, by predecessors and successors is key to conduct a more thorough study, and widen the horizons of the company's vision. Sharma & Irving (2005), deal with this vision through a strategic planning process, identifying the influence of families on choosing targets, and they add that the company should include what the family demands to adjust its plans and actions to achieve the former.

Theoretical representativeness of the study cases. Theoretical representativeness implies homogeneity of cases from the standpoint of the entity studied, as in the family company. The variety means searching for different case samples. For instance, sectors of development states; the balance encourages the search for samples from cases that offer a proportionate variety of different situations. The discovery potential means selecting cases with large amounts of data on the phenomenon studied, or where the actors involved permit in-depth research. Finally, a logical criterion: the consideration of research aims (Hlady, 2002).

In that sense, the research is supported on the analysis of predecessors linked to eight Ecuadoran FC, which had been selected according to the following inclusion criteria:

1. The companies had to be in the sibling partnership or cousin consortium stage (implied criteria: theoretical representativeness, discovery potential, and consideration of research aims).
2. The companies were supposed to have undergone one succession, at least (implied criteria: theoretical representativeness, discovery potential, and consideration of research aims).
3. The companies had to belong to different industrial and business sectors (implied criteria: variety and balance).
4. The companies had to have stock control of the family, or if they had sold part of their stocks, at least one member of the family had to stay in the company as a decision maker (implied criteria: theoretical representativeness, consideration of research aims).

5. The companies should at least have one or two members of the family working for it full time (implied criterion: theoretical representativeness, consideration of research aims).

6. The companies should be large (implied criterion: balance).

The selection of the eight cases was based on lists from the Superintendency of Companies, Values, and Insurance of Ecuador, Company Directory 2017 (INEC), as well as from several sources that include the websites from the family companies. To maintain confidentiality, the identification of the study cases was done through alpha numeric codes, the letters represent the initials of the sector/industry that the company belongs to, and the numbers refer to age.

Approximately 40 requests were sent via email to the same number of companies that met the inclusion criteria, only 12 companies responded. The requests were custom-made, where the nature of the study was explained, and confidentiality was guaranteed during the research. On average, two phone calls were made every week to all the companies. At the end, the selected group had to show gender diversity among the candidates of succession. The field work started in August, and ended in December 2018.

a) Description of key reporters

The case study reporters were the predecessor and the successor of the FC.

1) Predecessor: in cases where succession has not taken place, this person is the top managing executive and authority, with a strong influence on decision-making processes. In some cases, this person is the founder of the company, and is the person who is transferring the company to another person.

2) Successor: in cases where no succession has taken place, this person is a member of the business family to take possession of the company. In cases where succession has not taken place, this person is the top managing executive.

Data collection technique Two data collection techniques were used: semi structured interview and analysis of secondary data.

Interview

The essential characteristic of semi structured interview is that questions and their sequences are prepared. It consists of the same basic questions asked in the same order to all the subjects, facilitating answer comparability, and it provides a degree of flexibility to the subject from introduction of topics or new elements that improve information collection, and even, the emergence of other indicators and analysis categories.

The technique was done according to the recommendations of Quintana (2006) and Vargas (2012):

▪ Design of the semi structured script

▪ Design of a sheet with the general characteristics of the person interviewed, place, and time of interview.

In the introduction, there was a presentation, in which the interviewed person was informed about the anonymity and confidentiality of the information discussed during the session.

▪ During the conversation, no opinions or judgment were presented about the topic, only the truth from the subject was important.

▪ The fidelity of the interviews was ensured with the utilization of a voice recorder, then the voices were transcribed by the researcher.

▪ Although the questions were asked in a particular order, the interview was not directed to any particular topic, letting the subjects to be spontaneous in their explanations.

▪ The script favored the emergence of the most general topics at the beginning, and then it was more specific.

▪ The questions related to relationships between the actors of the FC, their contributions, and conflicts during succession were asked at the end.

▪ During the last session, emphasis was made on the academic goals of the interview, protecting the anonymity of the source, and follow up by email, to be able to help with doubts or provide clarifying information.

▪ All the interviews were face to face, by two or three interviewers, in order to take notes, manage technical details of the recording, remind important topics previously untreated, and watch non-verbal language.

▪ The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour.

Interview forms

The initial script applied to case 1 (PAMC25), as the pilot case, evidenced the need to design two interview forms, one for the predecessor, and the other for the successor. These forms were used with a guide each, trying to provide total freedom to the subject for the historical and logical construction of their speech. A total of 9 interviews were made to 6 men and 3 women.

Table 1 and 2 show the details of information gathering through the interviews.

Table 1. Primary documents by reference number and codified nodes

Name of the resource	No. of codifying sequences	No. of nodes codifying
Ent1 SucPAMC25	12	33
Ent2 SucFAPa34	12	39
Ent3 SucMDSQ57	1	37
Ent4 SucFAP649	13	30
Ent5PredDPFM32	12	27
Ent6SucFAEE43	12	44
Ent7(a)SucFACC24	12	46
Ent7(b) SucFACC24	04	20
Ent8Suc FAEC46	12	39

Source: Self-made

Table 2. Summary of interviewed subjects by case

Number	Case	No. of interview	Sex	Position in the company
1	PAMC25	1	Man	Successor
2	FAPa34	1	Man	Successor
3	MDSQ57	1	Man	Successor
4	FAPb49	1	Man	Successor
5	DPFM3	1	Man	Predecessor
6	FAEE43	1	Man	Successor
7	FACC24	2	Woman	Successor (daughter/granddaughter)
8	FAEC46	1	Woman	Successor

Source: Self-made

Analysis of secondary data

The analysis of secondary information on the predecessors, successors, and family companies, was used to design the questions, their contextualization, presentation, analysis, validation, and *a priori* and *posteriori* company control of the cases. These data were collected from newspaper articles, interviews, business journals, photos, conferences, and web sites.

Computer assisted qualitative analysis (ATLAS.ti)

The information gathered was recorded and organized for systematization, in two types of files, for each study case.

▪ Documents: all the information gathered about the predecessor, successor, and the company, from the interviews and secondary data.

▪ Notes: the author's perceptions were annotated in this file, as data collection was progressing, during the research.

The file containing the documents with the interview transcriptions was the main input to conduct the computer-assisted analysis, which also included the annotations.

Software ATLAS.ti was used as a tool for the qualitative analysis, which is no replacement of the researcher's deductive activity, the software provides assistance during the instrumental phases of the analysis, to perform operations like associations of codes or labels with text fragments, sound, images, drawings, videos, and other digital formats, as well as pattern code search, and pattern classification.

This software is used to facilitate analysis processes during qualitative research, which is a research methodology in areas such as health care, public administration, sociology, anthropology, and the human sciences as a whole (Mayorga, Pulido, and Rodríguez, 2014).

The theoretical rationale of ATLAS.ti is based on the Grounded Theory, suggested in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, and cited in Varguillas (2006). An inductive methodology that intends to generate theories that explain a phenomenon of social reality in its natural context; that is, to theorize on very concrete problems, by accessing human comprehension, and being more interpretative than descriptive, since the scholar designs concepts depending on what people do and say, trying to start using the data from the scenario. Coding (open, selective, and axial), and constant comparison are two of the best tools of this method.

ATLAS.ti processed information input as follows:

- It facilitates a set of tools to interweave relations among the most varied elements of the data collected, to explain interpretations, and know all the elements that might support one or another argument or conclusion at some point.

Organization of information: codes, categories, and networks

▪ Creation of the hermeneutic unit: the primary documents (interview transcriptions)

▪ Codification: the answers given in the interviews were codified, through open, axial, and selective codification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The information was codified and categorized, based on the identification of one or more text passages (quotes) with a topic, and it was given a code, which was assigned a name that described the reference concept as faithful as possible. It is an inductive process, by means of which categories and codes emerge from data through continuous and meticulous reviews, and from constant comparison that enable the selection of the main categories.

i. Open codification is an analytical process to identify concepts and discover properties and dimensions in the data.
ii. Axial codification allows for interconnections among categories and subcategories; that is, the analysis circulates around an axis or category to which subcategories are assigned in a hierarchical manner.
iii. Selective codification is a theoretical integrated and refining process, by means of which, deeper systematization is carried out, which implies re-reading, codification, review, and re-codification of the data in broader theme categories called families.

Creation of networks: to render interconnections among categories and subcategories, seven relation types were used with their respective symbol offered by the computer program, allowing for the construction of relations or links among concepts or topics to view structuring more graphically.

Created categories and subcategories

Now, the categories and subcategories created, according to the state-of-the-art, and their emergence during the analysis of primary documents. This process gave way to three large categories or super codes, whose operational definitions may be resumed as follows:

▪ Representativeness figure: image of the predecessor as the leader and top authority body in the FC, as a result of having the power to make decisions for a long time.

Fig. 1 shows that representativeness is based on the predecessor's attributes, the personal, managerial, cultural, features and values that oriented the creation of the family company, determining its history. The current role of the predecessor is part of those attributes, In other words, the activities that the predecessor does inside the company, and the meaning of its continuity, whether this actor is active or retired.

▪ The commitment of the successor: motivations related to the participation of possible successors in the FC, constituting a force that encourages individuals to enroll the company and stay in the business.

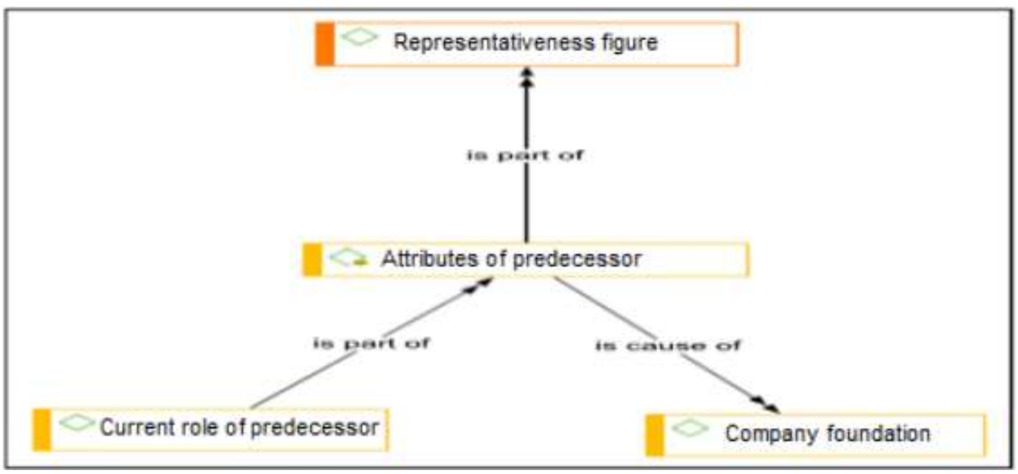

Fig.1. Relations network of super code representativeness figure

Source: compiled internally.

Fig.2 shows the three main components of the successor's commitment, according to the striving spirit of the individual to integrate to the family business, and assume the company's leadership.

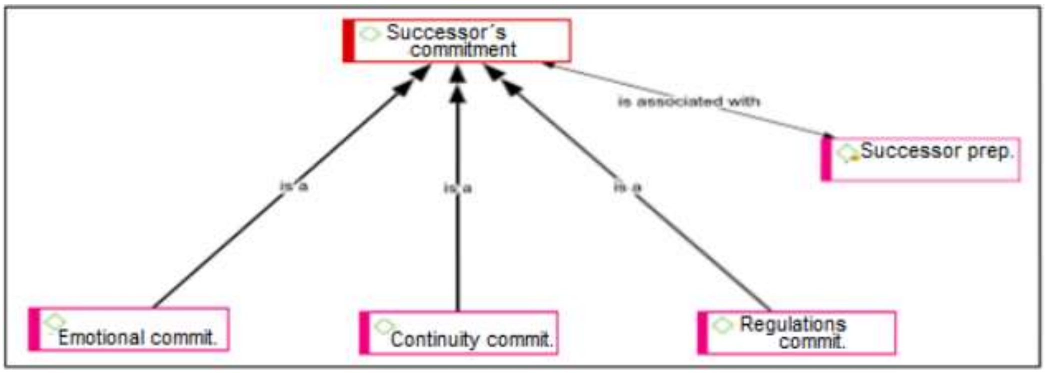

Fig.2. Relations network of super code successor‘s commitment

Source: compiled internally.

▪ Emotional commitment defined by the affective relation, which may be expressed as a passion, a desire to join the company, to be part of its development, goals, and objectives, and due to the feeling of belonging for the organization.

▪ Commitment of continuity, referred to the feeling of need, more than a desire to be in the company, linked to the perception that the individual does not have better options or that quitting will mean a waste of time and money, or the loss of future benefits.

▪ Regulations commitment, defined as a feeling of obligation to others, a feeling of reciprocity, resulting from internalization of standards or appropriate conducts, of the perception of activities which are socially acceptable, and generate a feeling of duty toward the family, its traditions, and standards.

It may be considered that, closely related to commitment development, is the desire of preparing the successor to take the steering wheel of the business, which includes academic formation and the accumulation of experience to perform such posts in the company, usually with the support of the predecessor, and early engagement in different business areas. Obviously, as preparation advances, and knowledge and experience become deeper, the commitment with the family company is reinforced.

▪ Planning of succession: aspects involved in decision making concerning the appointment of a successor, especially those within the very structure of the family.

Fig. 3 shows the main factors that can influence succession planning, particularly when the gender effect is considered for decision making. First, it is associated to family composition; i.e., the characteristics of the family group in terms of number of children, first-born child, etc. In other words, the birth order through which the oldest male heir has the advantage. Secondly, it is associated to the role of women, the profile they have within the company, even in the same family. Gender influence is part of the definition of this role, which might also be associated to the number of children in the household, and the composition of the family protocol, especially in terms of succession. Moreover, the development of this protocol, as an organizational scheme of stakeholder participation and succession, is an inherent part of the planning process, which may also be influenced by gender, and besides, its constitution is a potential source of succeeding conflicts.

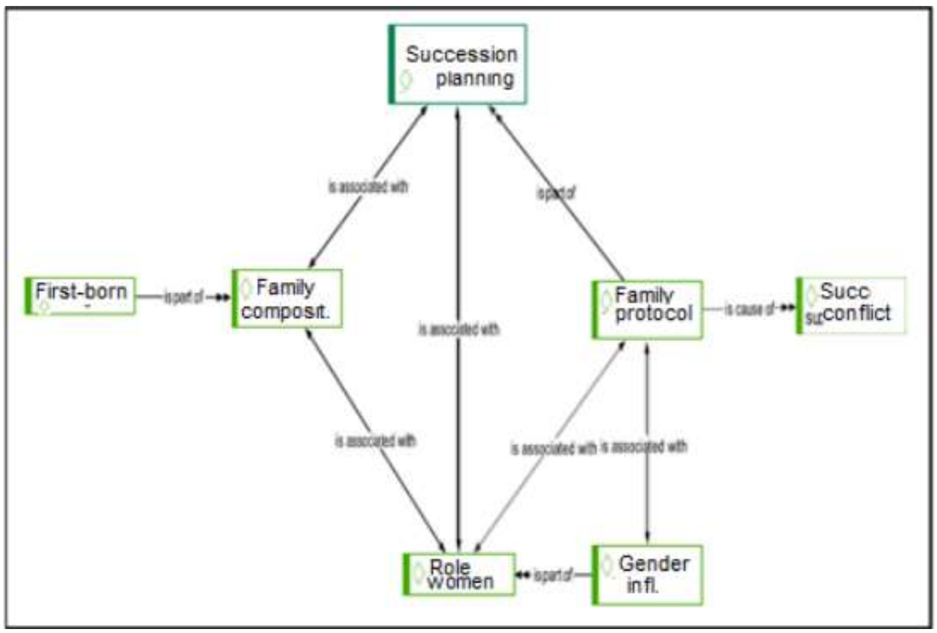

Fig.3. Network of relations of super code succession planning

Source: Self-made

The figure of representativeness is part of the attributes the predecessor has, the person who founded the company, and defines if the succession will be planned depending on the composition of the family, which occasionally, prefers the first-born son as candidate. In other cases, conflicts take place over succession, and a family protocol should be implemented to solve gender problems, and define the role of women. These two elements are associated to the type of commitment the successor has to the company and the family, which will become apparent when succession takes place.

RESULTS

Through this research, the interpretative scope of succession process in these companies was identified.

▪ Concerning the type of reporters interviewed, only one had been the predecessor of his company (case 5: DPFM32), so basically, the perceptions and interpretations are the vision of successors.

▪ Of the nine reporters, six were men and three were women, so many opinions related to gender corresponded to the perception of men about the succession process.

▪ Only one company (case 3: MDSQ57) had undergone two successions, and during the second generational transference, the family was not the main stockholder.

▪ Only one company elected a woman as successor for the post of president (also managing), whereas one of her brothers (a second son) is the General Manager (case 8: FAEC46).

Relevant considerations of the succession process.

▪ Case 1 (PAMC25): in the third generation, there is a first-born daughter, but the brother is within the succession preparation process.

▪ Case 4. (FAPb49): there is a son and a daughter before the successor (third-born son), who lived abroad and were not trained to assume the family business.

▪ Case 5 (DPFM32): the spouses encouraged their three children to prepare for the business, the only daughter (youngest) is working for another company of the consortium.

▪ Case 6 (FAEE43): the spouses encouraged their three children to prepare for the family business, but the first-born son (who was expected to join the main company), was working for another company. Hence, the third son was chosen instead of the daughter (second child), who was working for another company of the consortium.

▪ Case 7 (FACC24): the daughters were encouraged to stay home, did not go to college. Only when succession was in process, one of them was called to the company. However, the founder encouraged his granddaughter to join the business, being the only family member part of the third generation.

▪ Case 8 (FAEC46): the spouses encouraged their 10 children to get ready for the family business, and seven did. The daughter (fourth in succession line) was trained by the founder, and appointed president of the company.

Gender effects on succession The results observed by analyzing the intra and inter cases help specify the theoretical proposal, as shown in Fig. 4. First, there is the figure of the predecessor-founder, who chooses to try to transmit his descendants (intra-family succession), the fruit of a long life of work, a preserving fiber oriented to the generational continuity present in more than half the leaders of FC. It is about transferring power to a member of the family who takes control of FC when the top executive decides to retire. This study found that predecessors have a set of personal traits (ambition, patterns to follow, austerity, responsibility), as well as entrepreneurial traits (hard-working, administrator who fosters trust teams, and delegates powers, with a business vision). These allowed this person to found, consolidate, and transmit the business to his heirs, who see their predecessors as a symbol of family union.

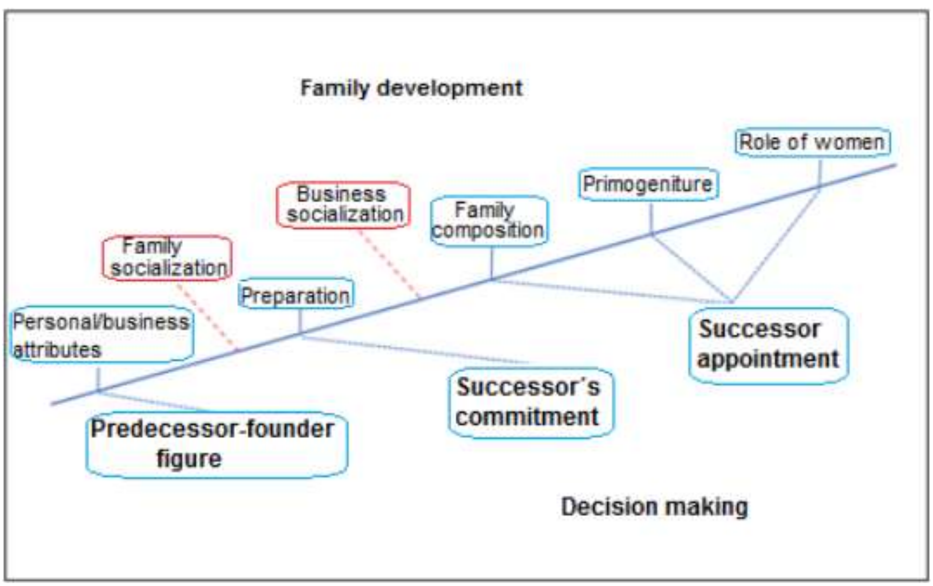

Fig.4. Moments of gender effect on succession

Source: compiled internally.

In this regard, according to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the predecessor's decision making is based on a logical sequence of cognition, a rational process which uses accessible information (particularly on the election of the successor), whose evaluation and prioritization makes the intention of completion more or less probable. Additionally, according to the theory of socioemotional wealth (Cruz, Berrone, and Gómez, 2011) during that process, the decision will be highly influenced by the family and the company, since family businesses may derive value from economic success and the emotional impact related to family identity, the perpetuation of a legacy, the visibility of the company or the preservation of family values through business.

The consideration of non-economic value leads to the very dynamic of the family, a successor’s availability and will, family influence, and commitment to the business. According to Boyd, Botero & Fediuk (2014), there must be a desire from the owners of the company to transfer the business to others, along with the availability of a potential successor to be in charge of it. Besides, from the standpoint of social interchange, humans make decisions based on costs and benefits. Hence, such calculations are present in the dynamics of succession, due to the multidimensional nature and the multiple interested parties (Daspit, Holt, Chrisman, and Long. 2015).

This leads straight to the second field of analysis of the gender effect on the succession process: the commitment of the successor, an almost irrational motivational force that pushes the individual into preserving certain policy or decision, despite the difficulties (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2001; Sharma & Irving, 2005). The intra case analysis showed that the components of this commitment are mainly related to the emotional and regulatory parts. However, how did that commitment come into existence? How is successor preparation associated to it? This is thought to be the key to understand the way the appointment of a successor is influenced by gender.

The scientific literature points to multiple determining factors in the selection of a successor, such as leadership, age, education, and capacity to manage the company wisely (Handler, 1989); characteristics of the successor and the owner, family relations, and a shared vision (Le-Bretton, Miller, & Steier, 2004); first-born child, ability and experience in business (sometimes linked to age), and accomplishment of the requisites set for the family (Echevarría, Idígoras, Azucena, and Molina, 2017). Concerning the factors related to the successor, the potential rewards of the business, confidence in the abilities and intentions of the successor, and alignment to personal needs, make up the main grounds for a successor to have the will to take control, whereas family harmony is the background of the relation between the owner and the successor, which influences on the level of readiness Venter, Boshoff, & Maas, 2005).

The cases studied in this research showed that all the companies invest in time, effort, and resources to achieve some compromise of successors to their specific interests, highlighting early training run by the predecessor, as transmission mechanisms of tacit knowledge integrated in processes, culture, and the relations in the organization. According to Cabrera, Zapata, and Vázquez (2001), gender can be analyzed as a factor that reflects the quality of the relation between the founder and the successor, and how it can affect the nature of knowledge transfer.

These results suggest that during the preparation process, precisely, trust relations are formed between the founder and the successor, and that the daughters and sons may have different socialization experiences in terms of their admission to the FC and succession. This specific socialization begins in the family and includes the business socialization process, clearly affecting knowledge transference (Henry, Fosset, & Helene, 2013).

Precisely, in the household and company, where girls acquire knowledge and skills gradually, they configure their vision of the company that they can perform in it (Dumas, 1998), which places them in one of these categories: “proactive” (they quickly perceive the business as theirs, and show their will to play an active role); “reactive” (do not consider themselves as potential successors, and do not get ready for a possible succession); and “evolutionary” (they discover the possibilities and opportunities when offered). In other words, motivation and commitment of daughters _and also their positioning as managers_ are built in relation to the surrounding, and their interactions with different key actors of the family and interested parts.

In case 1 (PAMC25), the first-born daughter from the third generation might be reactive, since she may be inhibited to participate in the main company of the family group, and therefore, move her interest to another company, whose sector (cosmetics) is more appropriate with the social construction of the gender. In cases 5 (DPFM32(, 6 (FAEE43), and 8 (FAEC46), the daughters were proactive, and in the first two, they were not appointed as successors, they enjoy important posts in other companies of the consortium. Finally, case 7 (FACC24), the daughter had an evolutionary vision which allowed her to make use of the opportunity given to her by the father before his death, whereas the granddaughter has been clearly proactive, making herself the strongest potential successor in the next process.

Finally, the cases studied evidence that the influence of the family group in decision making mainly corresponds to three aspects: first-born child (a selection mechanism *per se*), age of possible successors (linked to business abilities and experience), and the role of women in the company. Concerning the latter, cases 5 (DPFM32), 6 (FAEE43), and 8 (FAEC46), are examples that when a woman participates with the husband in the creation and development of a company, there are greater possibilities that the daughters receive training to assume managing positions in the business. One of the areas where women contribute to the family company is the capacity of influencing the next generation, modeling attitudes of their children, as to wealth reproduction and administration (Blondel, 2005), as well as in business succession, particularly as an influential force on the husband during succession, who is a businessman (Gómez, Takacs, Núñez, and Jacobson, 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

This research was extensive concerning the way used for data collection, considering that this study was developed in a country with adequate research culture, and, traditionally, with few cooperation ties between companies and universities, which could permit fluid communication to generate information exchanges in a confidence atmosphere.

The effects of gender on planning succession were explained, considering family composition, primogeniture, and the role of women through a theoretical proposal that establishes a comprehensive link between the family/ business dynamics and the conditions of socialization in terms of gender. Gender was found to be a factor in that it reflects the reality of the relation between predecessor and successor, which affects knowledge transfer.

This research notes how the process of succession is crossed by the influence on gender throughout family development and the family company, until a decision has to be made to find a successor, according to their own experiences and perceptions. The initial difficulty observed to find firms run by women, indicated how gender is an explicit or implicit factor in the succession of the Ecuadoran family companies. However, the cases studied provided a number of characteristics, as to the dynamics of family composition, which above all, brought understanding on the manner motivations emerge, and the successor's commitment, his or her association to preparation to take control of the company, as well as the close relation with the participation of the predecessor in the transmission of tacit knowledge, which derives in the generation of confidence based on the business experience of the successor.

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Conflicts of interest and conflict of ethics statement

Mara Cabanilla Guerra, author of this manuscript, declare that the content is original, and has not been submitted to another journal. I am responsible for the contents of this article, adding that it contains no plagiarism, conflicts of interest or conflicts of ethics.