SUSTAINABILITY IN FAMILY BUSINESS: MECHANISMS, TECHNOLOGIES, AND BUSINESS MODELS FOR ACHIEVING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND SOCIAL EQUITY

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Abstract

Enhancing sustainability in terms of a simultaneous pursuit of economic, ecological and social goals has become a key requirement for firms across industries and countries. Although many studies have focused on multiple aspects surrounding the topic of sustainability such as mechanisms, technologies and business models, little is known about sustainability in family businesses. This constitutes a relevant research gap as most firms in western societies are family firms and as such are associated with unique characteristics that differentiate their governance, structures, and behaviors from non-family firms. We address this gap by providing a categorization of three relevant research areas that will be relevant to further contribute to understanding sustainability in family business: antecedences of sustainability, management of sustainability and bargaining from sustainability. After this overview, we demonstrate how the ten articles that were published in our special issue advance the identified research areas.

1. Introduction

Despite the immense technological progress and the general prosperity of the western society, we currently face several ecological and social grand challenges such as climate change, poverty, hunger etc. (Godfray et al., 2011; Howard-Grenville et al., 2014). Many of these challenges were further accelerated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, as social and economic consequences reduced global wealth and increased social disparity (He et al., 2020). These challenges are too complex and wicked to be solved by single actors, but rather call for collective contributions of governmental, individual and corporate players (Olsen et al., 2016). In order to provide guidelines for these actors, the United Nations (2020) have recently agreed on a set of 17 *sustainable development goals* (SDGs) that are defined to provide a "a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future". These goals provide a comprehensive view on sustainability that incorporates ecological, social and economic perspectives. Besides those governmental initiatives, the perceived need to address sustainability challenges created an increasing peer pressure as well as new customer demands forcing firms to embrace sustainability, which requires the integration of social and ecological goals into commercial business activities (Zollo et al., 2013).

Recent research in business and management addressed the topic of sustainability from various perspectives and units of analysis (Fellnhofer et al., 2014). Studies have demonstrated the long-term effects of adopting sustainability practices on organizational processes and performance (Eccles et al., 2014). These focused for example on the development of sustainable innovation (Biondi et al., 2002; Dangelico et al., 2013) or the use of new technologies in improving the sustainability of firms (Dao et al., 2011; Rohracher, 2001). By contrast, sustainability was related to the sustainable design of organizational value creation processes such as internal manufacturing

(Rusinko, 2007) or the supply chains and interorganizational collaborations of the organization (Linton et al., 2007; Wu et al., 2011). More recently, increased attention was directed to more holistic sustainability transitions in which firms systematically integrate sustainability into their organization and business model design (Abdelkafi et al., 2016; Morioka et al., 2017). Scholars have raised the issue that pursuing ecological, social and economic goals simultaneously can create substantial paradox tensions as firms need to combine more than one institutional logic (e.g., doing good and doing well) (Kraus et al., 2021; Schneider et al., 2019; Spieth et al., 2019).

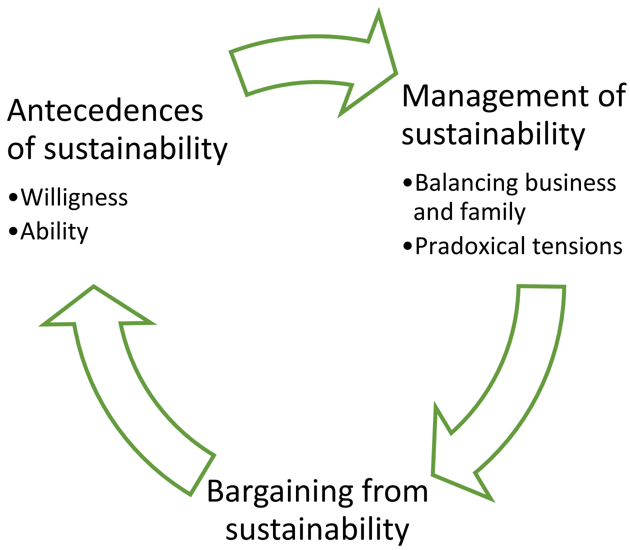
Previous research has demonstrated that sustainability is of particular importance for family firms and that family ownership may foster particular dimensions of sustainability whereas others are hindered (Adomako et al., 2019; Block et al., 2014). Family firms were also regarded as an important force in the proactive mitigation of climate change (Sharma et al., 2011). Prior research highlights that family firms have a tendency towards a sustainably responsible behavior as compared to non-family firms (Blodgett et al., 2011). Family firms are considered to be a special type of firm, as the identity and values of founders and/or the founder family have significant influence on the orientation of these firms (e.g., García-Álvarez et al., 2001; Kraus et al., 2011a). Family firms were shown to give a high priority to non-financial goals such as longevity, preservation of family reputation, responsibility for employees, and impact on the environment (Stafford et al., 1999; Zellweger et al., 2013), thus having characteristics that are in favor for changes towards sustainability. The distinctive nature of family firms can facilitate flexibility, intense customer-orientation and community involvement (Aronoff, 1998; Litz et al., 2000). By contrast, family firms are often described as conservative, risk-averse and hence reluctant to change (Calabrò et al., 2019; Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007).

Although previous research has provided us with important insights on sustainability contributions of firms and on the general tendencies of family firms towards sustainability and change, the two areas have not yet been systematically integrated in research. Given that approximately 70-90 per cent of firms globally are considered to be family firms (Kraus et al., 2011b), in light of the grand sustainability challenges for businesses and society ahead of us, this constitutes a research gap of a significant practical and consequently academic relevance.

Several studies have empirically demonstrated that family firms achieve a greater corporate social responsibility (CSR) than non-family firms (Block et al., 2014; Dyer Jr et al., 2006; Gallo, 2004). Furthermore, previous research investigated the motivational schemas in family firms towards sustainability issues. The concept of socioemotional wealth (SEW) highlights that family owners are concerned with additional motives related to sustainability, such as the status of the family business in the local community or the consistency of actions with the family identity besides financial goals (Cesinger et al., 2016; Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). Transgenerational sustainability of family firms favors exchange systems in which collective benefits and reciprocity are important (Long et al., 2011). Further studies at the intersection of family business research and sustainability address more eclectic topics such as the financing of sustainability in family firms (Xiang et al., 2019; Xiang et al., 2020) or the role of board gender diversity (Cordeiro et al., 2020; Nadeem et al., 2020). Despite these contributions, the literature lacks theoretical understanding and empirical evidence regarding how sustainability can be effectively integrated in family firms.

Consequently, this special issue aims to provide a more comprehensive integration of sustainability and family firms towards a more fundamental understanding of sustainable family firms. We integrate studies from various theoretical perspectives, based on data from family firms across various cultural and institutional contexts. Together, we contribute to research on sustainability in family business by providing new insights into three broader perspectives: 1) antecedences of sustainability, 2) management of sustainability, and 3) bargaining from sustainability (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Main research areas for sustainability in family business



In this article, we proceed as follows: First, we reflect upon the existing research on sustainability in family firms and identify some key streams for future research in this area. Second, we discuss how the articles in this special issue advance these research areas.

2. Perspectives on sustainability in family business

2.1 Antecedences of sustainability

The distinct nature of family firms as compared to non-family firms creates a unique theoretical context for analyzing sustainability. Family firms are characterized by family influence exerted through family ownership in many cases in conjunction with family members in central governance and management functions (Astrachan et al., 2002). This phenomenological context has implications for how strategic decisions are made (e.g., the willingness to pursue sustainability-oriented strategies) and how business activities can be carried out (e.g. the ability to achieve a sustainable transformation). These two aspects of ability and willingness are considered to be constituting factors of family-oriented particularistic behavior (De Massis et al., 2014) and are thus providing primary determinants for the analysis of sustainability in family business.

Willingness of family firms to pursue sustainability

In family firms, family values and business goals are inseparable and mutually influence each other (Dyer Jr et al., 2006; Sharma et al., 2008; Zellweger et al., 2013). Consequently, strategic decisions of family firms are partially influenced by considerations of non-financial objectives rather than purely focusing on the economic success of the business (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). These non-financial considerations can have a stimulating effect for sustainability in family firms. In general, family firm decisions for engaging in corporate sustainability are stimulated by social considerations regarding various stakeholder groups (Cennamo et al., 2012). Family firms and their business families are closely embedded into their closer social network (Bichler et al., 2021), which creates a high feeling of responsibility and the willingness to give back to this network (Campopiano et al., 2012). This tendency toward CSR may be even greater if the family itself is an active member of or particularly visible to the community (Niehm et al., 2008; Zellweger et al., 2013). Furthermore, decisions in family firms typically have a long-term horizon grounded in the desire to pass down ownership to future generations (Le Breton–Miller et al., 2006) and to achieve transgenerational sustainability (Long et al., 2011). Delmas et al. (2014) show that the families' intention to pass over family firms to their children are associated with the adoption of sustainable certifications. Finally, studies have demonstrated that family firms' decisions are more prone to image and reputational concerns than their non-family counterparts (Sageder et al., 2018), which will stimulate the engagement for sustainability oriented activities from a more instrumental perspective (Zientara, 2017). These considerations indicate a higher willingness of family firms to engage in various dimensions of sustainability. Berrone et al. (2010) empirically substantiate this view by showing that U.S.-based family firms pollute less than their non-family counterparts.

By contrast, the theoretical reasoning around SEW can lead to different conclusions regarding the willingness of family firms to pursue sustainability, when the potential consequences of sustainability orientations are considered. Many studies have shown that actively pursuing sustainability requires innovation (Keskin et al., 2020; Klewitz et al., 2014; Siqueira et al., 2016) and even holistic business model innovation (e.g., Schaltegger et al., 2016; Schneider et al., 2020; Spieth et al., 2019). In this regard, it has been shown that family firms are loss averse with respect to their SEW or non-financial benefits that accrue because of the ownership of a firm (Cennamo et al., 2012; Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007; Zellweger et al., 2013). In consequence, family firms are particularly averse to risky and uncertain activities that threaten ownership and control. Therefore, family firms' actions towards risky activities such as investments in R&D or the development of sustainable innovation and transformation are restricted by the aim of maintaining SEW (Chrisman et al., 2012), and are thus typically lower than in non-family firms (Block, 2012). Recently, it has been established that family firms are more focused on more predictable types of innovation (i.e., incremental and efficiency-oriented types of innovation) (Filser et al., 2016). Thus, although family firms invest less in R&D, their relative innovation output may be higher (Duran et al., 2016). The more conservative innovation behavior of family firms may even become more rigid as family firms' non-financial values comprise strong emotional bonds with the firms traditions and historical values, creating rigidities against substantial organizational changes (Erdogan et al., 2020). Against this background, the willingness of family firms to pursue sustainability-oriented activities may as well be lower as compared to their non-family counterparts.

Ability of family firms to pursue sustainability

Contrary to the conservative image of family firms, Chrisman et al. (2015) highlight a paradox: Family firms are endowed with superior abilities for technological innovation, these abilities are however not maximized due to insufficient willingness of family firms to innovate technologically. Regarding sustainability-oriented activities, the ability of family firms may be comparably high. De Massis et al. (2014), suggests the ability of family firms can be separated into family ability as discretion and family ability as resources. The first describes the ability of the family to direct, allocate, add to, or dispose of a firm's resources as well as to make decisions regarding strategic, structural, and tactical decisions. This discretion is embedded in structures, governance mechanisms and decision-making processes facilitating family owners power and legitimacy (Chrisman et al., 2015). In general, the typical ownership structure in family firms enables a relatively homogenous group of decision-makers (i.e., either family members or family influenced) to make substantial decisions without political maneuvering (Le Breton–Miller et al., 2006). This significantly reduces the overall agency costs of family firms (Chrisman et al., 2004) and can substantially increase the agility of family firms towards bold strategic reorientations and transformations such as sustainable business model innovations (Clauss et al., 2021; Doz et al., 2010). In contrast, if family members lack the willingness to pursue sustainability-oriented activities, they can block these transitions.

Alternatively, family ability as resources stems from the idiosyncratic resources that are available to family firms in pursuing strategic alternatives (De Massis et al., 2014; Sirmon et al., 2003). Family firms are known for firm-specific human and social capital, as they typically establish bonds with their internal and external stakeholders (Calabrò et al., 2021; Kang et al., 2020; Salvato et al., 2008). In consequence, family firms often have a shared understanding and intense knowledge transfer among stakeholders and can rely on the available resources in the broader social network (Sirmon et al., 2003) for facilitating sustainability-oriented activities. For example, family firms' employees demonstrate a high commitment to the organization and often support necessary change to help the firm (Kraus et al., 2020). On the contrary, intense established relationships create obligations to stakeholders (Huybrechts et al., 2011) that may if not compatible with sustainability transitions (e.g., because of sustainable supply chain management requirements (Gold et al., 2010)) lead to conflicts or may even hinder sustainability-oriented activities.

Consequences for future research on family firm sustainability

Existing findings on the willingness and ability of family firms for sustainability are far from being conclusive. Except for few exemptions (Berrone et al., 2010; Block et al., 2014), previous studies have focused on the family influence on CSR and have put less emphasis on the environmental dimension. Therefore, there is a lack of research on how family willingness and ability influence various sustainability dimensions. In this regard, it will be relevant to investigate under which conditions family-oriented particularistic behavior (De Massis et al., 2014) may be favorable or detrimental to creating sustainability-oriented outcomes in family firms. This line of research should also investigate the simultaneous effects of willingness and ability (De Massis et al., 2014) and whether or not the ability-willingness paradox (Chrisman et al., 2015) also exists in relation to achieving sustainability outcomes.

In addition, because of variations in several key dimensions, family firms are not a homogenous group of businesses. Chua et al. (2012), suggests family firm heterogeneity can be categorized according to governance structures (e.g., Arregle et al., 2012), resources (Sirmon et al., 2003; Verbeke et al., 2012), and goals (Barnett et al., 2012; Chrisman et al., 2012; Kotlar et al., 2013). These may be explained and/or complemented with other contextual sources of heterogeneity such as firm size, generations involved, whether firms are public or small private family firms, industry, region of the firms under study etc. These important differences may inform how family involvement affects perceptions towards sustainability as well as the approaches, processes, and outcomes of sustainability transformation. Therefore, for understanding family influence in the complex phenomenon of sustainability, there is a need to further explore and explain the variations among family firms instead of just showing how different family firms are from non-family firms (Chua et al., 2012).

2.2 Management of sustainability

Complementing the question regarding the antecedences of sustainability-oriented activities in family firms, research should be dedicated to the management practices for successful implementation of such activities, an area that is significantly less established in family business research. General management research has provided various approaches and tools for managing certain elements of sustainability-oriented activities, such as financial accounting (Malik et al., 2021), business intelligence (Petrini et al., 2009), reporting (Thijssens et al., 2016), or supply chain management (Schaltegger et al., 2014). Furthermore, Lahtinen et al. (2019) identified transformative management activities in mobilizing sustainability transformations such as 1) challenging the dominant environment through reflexivity, 2) creating space for multi-vocal collaboration, 3) aligning collaborators' future visions, 4) restructuring principles, processes and practices, (5) removing mental, physical and cultural barriers, 6) designing effective feedback loops, 7) influencing public discourse and action, 8) ensuring the transparency of sustainability, and efforts, and 9) co-constructing a new environment. Furthermore, research has demonstrated the importance of certain firm-level and individual-level capabilities such as dynamic (Eikelenboom et al., 2019), learning (Wijethilake et al., 2020) or networking (Inigo et al., 2020) capabilities for successfully managing sustainability. Research on sustainability in family firms may specify or challenge these results in the specific contexts of family firms, in particular in relation to the management of resources (Sirmon et al., 2003). Despite the challenges in relation to the resource specificity mentioned above, the management of sustainability-oriented activities in family firms has to consider the management of the business as well as the management and alignment of the family (Eddleston et al., 2018).

The role of competing institutional logics across the family and business system

Integrating sustainability into the goals and strategies of organizations requires that dominant logics and value structures are changed. If a social and/or environmental purpose is to be achieved additionally in established firms, these firms may need to combine multiple, potentially conflicting institutional logics. Institutional logics are socially constructed sets of practices, assumptions, values and beliefs that guide and shape cognitions and behaviors in an organization (Thornton et al., 2012). These logics define which goals are to be achieved and how (Thornton, 2002). For repurposing the organization towards sustainability, the social and or environmental logic that is traditionally associated with non-profit firms is combined with the economic logic of for-profit firms (Wilson et al., 2013). This hybridity of institutional logics may create conflicts and ambiguities in the organization for multiple reasons: the behavioral compass of the organizational members embedded in the culture may be inconsistent with the new logic, ambiguity regarding performance measures may be created, incentives and promotion systems may be aligned with either one or the other logic, and competition for managerial attention and resource deployment may arise (e.g., Jay, 2013; Pache et al., 2013). Therefore, an important challenge for firms that integrate a sustainability purpose into an established organization lies in the management of the ambiguity of diverging objectives and values arising from conflicting institutional logics (Dahlmann et al., 2017). The solution to this issue is often associated with fundamental changes of business model (Laasch, 2018; Schneider et al., 2020; Spieth et al., 2019). Despite the already mentioned tendency of family business to refrain from radical transitions, considering institutional logics in family firms sustainability transitions may be noteworthy from two perspectives. First, family firms often rely on their tradition, which informs the dominant institutional logic of the firm (Suddaby et al., 2020). Therefore, family firms may be prone to conflicts between a traditional commercial institutional logic and a new sustainable institutional logic. Second, family firms may already blend an institutional logic of the family with an institutional logic of the market (Miller et al., 2017). Adding another sustainability institutional logic to this already complex system of practices, assumptions, values and beliefs may create theoretically relevant yet managerially challenging contexts for future research.

Actors for sustainability

As the transition towards sustainability has holistic implications on the organization and required significant adaptations of structures and people, research on sustainability has to consider the role of actors at various levels of the organization (Farla et al., 2012) and potentially across the boundaries of a firm. Furthermore, internal and external actors are sources of necessary knowledge (Aldieri et al., 2020; Schneider et al., 2020). Research has demonstrated the importance of a sustainability understanding, priorization and collective agency at an individual employee level in order to facilitate sustainable innovation and enhance sustainability performance (Luederitz et al., 2021; Massaro et al., 2020). Duarte (2010) highlights the importance of the individual values of managers involved in corporate sustainability. Managers need to understand their business models and the inherent tradeoffs when making strategic decisions about sustainability (McWilliams et al., 2016). Furthermore, relevant expertise enables managers to exert proactive leadership for the successful implementation of green innovation (de Medeiros et al., 2018). As a consequence, people-driven factors such as training and knowledge sharing, employee participation, leadership and management were shown to be the important success factors in the adoption sustainability practices (Sawe et al., 2021).

Family firms provide a unique setting for exploring the role of individual actors and the relationships among them. First, due to the ownership and governance structures of family firms, the individual role of certain actors regarding sustainability may be more important than in non-family firms (Berrone et al., 2010). This is particularly the case for owner-managers and more traditional paternalistic structures (e.g., Mussolino et al., 2014) where few actors consolidate most of the decision making power in the organization. Second, the family structures across management and ownership roles create complex systems where family influence is exerted

(Olson et al., 2003). Therefore, sustainability related knowledge, perceptions and/or rigidity in family firms may be influenced by family members in various roles. In this context, the management of sustainability-oriented initiatives will be significantly influenced by individuals, their knowledge and capabilities. Third, intra-family succession from one family generation to another was shown to be related to innovation and transformation in family businesses (Hauck et al., 2015). This is often because members of the next generation of the family firm can bring in potentially new external knowledge and perspectives that may facilitate a rejuvenation of the firm.

Consequences for future research on family firm sustainability

Contrary to the antecedences of sustainability, the potential research areas on the management of sustainability above were established without the consideration of the particularities of family firms. Therefore, the integration of the management of sustainability and family firm characteristics provides several areas where future research contributions could be made. Under consideration of the perspectives outlined above, future research should investigate how sustainability initiatives are successfully managed in family firms. This general research attempt may be specified by the consideration of the individual actors' (owner-manager, successor) responsibilities, capabilities and behaviors to identify the unique success or hindering factors that differentiate sustainability management in family and non-family firms. Additionally, micro foundations of sustainability management from a more behavioral perspective will be helpful to understand the complex institutional dynamics between the family system and emergent paradoxical institutional logics between ecological, environmental, and social purpose. From these perspectives, future research will thereby able to provide specific managerial implications for how to design, coordinate and control sustainability initiatives in family firms.

2.3 Bargaining from sustainability

To eventually substantiate if and under which conditions sustainability initiatives will pay off, research on family firm sustainability should investigate the consequences of different sustainability initiatives on other performance dimensions of family firms, such as financial firm performance, reputation, competitive advantage etc. Empirical studies have shown that improvement in a firm's sustainability activities can bring about superior performance in entrepreneurial ventures (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2019) and small and midsized firms (Roxas et al., 2017). More fine grained, Sroufe et al. (2019) demonstrated the positive effects of social sustainability on firms financial performance. Pullman et al. (2009) investigated the cost performance of firms in relation to environmental sustainability. Notably, neither individual practices nor environmental performance demonstrated a direct effect on cost performance. However, this relationship was mediated by improved quality. Recently, Nuber et al. (2020) found empirical evidence for a U-shaped relationship between sustainability and financial performance, suggesting that sustainability management should proactively strive for very high levels of corporate sustainability to as well generate financial performance.

Other studies have investigated the mediators and or moderators on the sustainability, performance relationship. De Mendonca et al. (2019) besides a positive main effect between targeting ecological sustainability and long-run market value find that this relationship is mediated by the increased environmental legitimacy of the firm. Whilst Eccles et al. (2014) found that high sustainability firms significantly outperform their counterparts over the long term, both in terms of stock market and accounting performance. This is because boards of directors of high sustainability firms are more likely to be formally responsible for sustainability, to have top management financial incentives that are a function of sustainability metrics, to have established processes for stakeholder engagement, to be more long-term oriented, and to exhibit higher measurement and disclosure of nonfinancial information. Eventually, the relationship between sustainability and performance, as already indicated, is moderated by having an adequate business model (Hall et al., 2012).

Consequences for future research on family firm sustainability

The existing evidence significantly increases the confidence in the benefits of sustainability from a strategy standpoint. However, it raises the question whether the performance consequences of sustainability in family firms are similar to the existing findings across firms. To date only Adomako et al. (2019) have investigated this relationship and found that the performance benefits of environmental sustainability orientation are more pronounced in nonfamily firms than in family firms. This study represents a starting point for future analysis that investigates if family firms are inferior in bargaining from sustainability initiatives. Here, it would be interesting to break down sustainability performance into the particular dimensions according to the triple bottom line. Furthermore, researchers may investigate the particularities (i.e., are they less willing to innovate their business model during sustainability transitions?) that are explaining why family firms could create a significantly lesser financial performance through their sustainability.

3. Articles in this issue

3.1 Overarching contributions to sustainability in family business

As an entrée into the special issue and the more focused contributions to the three areas described above, the article "*Sustainability in Family Business – a Bibliometric Study and a Research*

Agenda" by Ferreira, Fernandes, Schiavone and Mahto (2021) provides a systematic overview of the research the overall field of sustainability in family firms. The authors used a combination of bibliometric techniques such as citation, co-citation, and social network analysis for providing a improved understanding of the state-of-the-art in the field and its evolution. The authors identified four main research trends: 1) family business capital, 2) family business strategy, 3) family business social responsibility, and 4) family business succession. The postulate that there is significant scope for advancing knowledge on sustainability-related issues in family firms in each of these four topic areas. As a result of their analyses, the authors propose a research agenda for future studies that family business scholars should consider when dealing with sustainability-related issues, such as for instance the role of digital technologies in reaching sustainability, new sustainability-driven business models, new approaches for stakeholder management, and inter-firm collaborations.

3.2 Contributions to the antecedences of sustainability in family business

The articles in our special issue contribute to a improved understanding of the *antecedences of sustainability*:

The article "Family firms as agents of sustainable development: A normative perspective" by Ernst, Gerken, Hack and Hülsbeck (2022) investigates the conditions that lead family firms to engage in corporate sustainability for normative reasons – so far a theoretical black box. Such firms are driven by a sense of ethical responsibility or moral duty and engage in corporate sustainability not for instrumental reasons such as profit maximization. Based on survey data from a sample of 356 private family firms operating in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, the authors demonstrate that counteracting effects exist within a family firm that influence corporate sustainability motivation, thus providing a nuanced answer to the inconsistent findings of previous research, regarding the direction and magnitude of family influence on corporate sustainability performance. The findings clarify that, as owners, family members are likely to adopt a normative corporate sustainability motivation driven by socioemotional considerations. However, as managers responsible for the firm's economic success, family members become risk-averse to the introduction of corporate sustainability initiatives for normative reasons, because they bear the residual risk of management decisions. By integrating different theoretical explanations from research into family firms, corporate sustainability and corporate governance, the authors open the black box and explain the interplay between family and firm antecedents, and how this affects corporate sustainability motivation and corporate sustainability performance.

The study entitled "Sustainability Management in Supply Chains: The Role of Familiness" by Fritz, Ruel, Kallmuenzer Rainer Harms (2021) investigates the role that *familiness*, a key characteristic of family firms, plays in the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainability in supply chains. Indeed, familiness generally supports sustainability issues such as long-term orientation, social responsibility, ecological awareness and regional value creation. Thus, familiness could support the development of more sustainable supply chains. Findings from a comparative study of twelve cases of six family- and six non-family firms demonstrates that sustainability concerns differ at the upstream, focal-firm, and downstream firm levels. At the upstream level, we find that family firms tend to accentuate social concerns, contrary to non-family firms. Such differences are explored from an institutional theory perspective and arise because of several coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures, especially the firm's culture, values, and top management involvement. The findings also pinpoint new institutional pressures that were not addressed in the literature before concerning the type of product, the firm's economic stability, and the marketing positioning. This research opens new research avenues by crossing sustainability management in family firms and supply chains, where family firms could benefit from supply chain management research and vice versa to enhance business contribution to the SDGs.

Randerson's study entitled "Conceptualizing Family Business Social Responsibility (FBSR)", takes on the challenge of demonstrating how family firms can enact sustainable behaviours and champion efforts to solve the wicked problems we face. The study extends CSR to the realm of family business through conceptualizing FBSR. This extension relies on the concept of familiness and SEW, the two key constructs that characterize family firms, respectively as a basis for ethical behavior and as an idiosyncratic value system for decision-making. The author designs three stylized configurations of FBSR, according to which subsystem is determining stakeholder: instrumental (doing good in order to do well), normative (doing well and doing good) and dynastic (doing good through doing well) and shows how each configuration could improve how the family business can have a positive impact. Contributions to the family business literature include nourishing the growing stream of literature dedicated to family business heterogeneity. The study widens the SEW literature by, rather than using SEW as a collective catch-all to explain family firms sustainability, integrates it with familiness to undergird the extension. The familiness literature is also strengthened by a focus on how the family and the firm cross-fertilize each other's value systems and behaviors. Contributions to the CSR literature include extending to the realm of family business extant pillars of CSR research: Freeman's wheel of stakeholders, to more effectively map stakeholders in this complex context, and Carroll's pyramid to assist scholars understand stakeholders' priorities. Another important contribution is the link built between Spence's work for SMEs and the present theorizing for the broader reality of family firms.

In their contribution “Understanding Environmental Sustainability in Small Family-Owned Businesses: Integration of Religiosity, Ethical Judgment and Theory of Planned Behavior”, Singh, Sharma, Sharma and Dwivedi (2021) investigates the environmental sustainability intentions of family-owned businesses in Fiji. Through the theoretical lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior, the study investigates environmental sustainability intentions of family-owned businesses in Fiji. The conceptual model extends the Theory of Planned Behavior by incorporating intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity and ethical judgment as moderating variables. A quantitative research methodology is adopted that analyses data collected from 374 family-owned businesses in Fiji using structural equation modeling. This study’s results highlight that intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity positively impact attitude towards environmental sustainability for family-owned businesses. Attitude and subjective norms were found to impact environmental sustainability intention positively. Results also revealed that ethical judgment strengthened the positive relationship between attitude and subjective norms on environmental sustainability intention.

Miroshnychenko and Massis (2022) submission entitled “Sustainability practices of family and nonfamily firms: A worldwide study”, examines the sustainability practices of family and nonfamily firms worldwide using a longitudinal sample of listed firms. Their study enriches knowledge on the antecedents of environmental business behavior by demonstrating the importance of ownership concentration and explicitly accounting for the multidimensionality of organizational sustainability. In particular, after correcting for endogeneity of family ownership, using alternative model specifications and variable definitions, they highlight that family influence on the firm is on average detrimental to pollution prevention, green supply chain management, and green product development practices. These results suggest that addressing the climate change crisis through engaging in sustainability practices is more important for nonfamily firms, which pays greater attention to sustainability practices. Their article contributes to the debate in the regulatory, business, and academic communities on the sustainable actions of publicly traded firms by comparing the sustainability practices of family vs. nonfamily firms across countries and over time.

3.3 Contributions to the management of sustainability in family business

Three articles of this special issue primarily contribute to an improved understanding of the *management of sustainability* in family firms. In their article "Sustainability beyond economic prosperity: Social microfoundations of dynamic capabilities in family firms", Tiberius, Stiller and Dabić (2021) report on their qualitative study on the microfoundations of family firms' dynamic capabilities, with a special focus on economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The study found the majority of dynamic capability microfoundations in family firms relate to economic sustainability. In particular, a long-term, cross-generational future orientation, a tradition-based mindset, rapid and intuitive decision-making, speed in implementation, and a resource slack are considered to be important in highly dynamic markets to be able to continuously rearrange a firm's resource base and to allow for a sustained competitive advantage. Social sustainability also plays an important role for family firms, as they also contribute to economic sustainability. They are reflected in microfoundations such as an innovative mindset, human capital investments, and employee participation. The third pillar of sustainability relating to environmentalism could not be found to be an essential part of family firms' values (yet). The study, based on interviews with eleven German and Swiss family firms, contributes to the literature on distinctions between family and non-family firms by identifying further specific characteristics. It also adds specific micro foundations for sustainability to dynamic capabilities research.

The article "Industry 4.0 Impacts on Responsible Environmental and Societal Management in the Family Business" by Kazancoglu, Sezer, Ozkan-Ozen, Kumar Mangla and Kumar (2021) investigates the impacts of Industry 4.0 on responsible environmental management and society in the context of a family business. Among other advances, Industry 4.0 technologies are having a growing impact on society; they have become a significant part of family business resources to create more sustainable environments and exploit new opportunities. This study has employed a system dynamics model to evaluate the impacts of Industry 4.0 on the clean production processes of family firms in an emerging economy and to describe Industry 4.0 practices on determinants of ethical behavior and environmental management. Implementation is conducted in the packaging sector to analyze the impacts of Industry 4.0 on CO2 emissions, total packaging waste recovery and societal responsibilities on family firms in Turkey. The results demonstrate that ethical business development contributes toward enhancing CSR and environmental management systems in an Industry 4.0 context. The findings inform the efforts of managers, governments and decision-makers to analyze and manage the societal and environmental impacts of their activities to create a more sustainable environment for family firms.

The study "Substantial Response or Impression Management? Compliance Strategies for Sustainable Development Responsibility in Family Firms" by Wu, Monfort, Jin and Shen (2022) investigates how family business choose compliance strategy to response sustainable development responsibility in different contexts. Compliance strategies for sustainability responsibility in family firms involve substantial response and impression management. Substantial responses seek to reduce pollution by making significant changes in production, processes or product design.

Impression management seeks stakeholder support and turns away from large investments in sustainable technology or processes. By investigating the compliance strategies of family firms with a sample of 2,977 Chinese companies the authors note that family firms use both impression management and substantial response strategies. Public pressure positively moderates the use of impression management. Notably, business-government relations positively moderate the use of impression management and negatively moderate the use of substantial response. Finally, the results reveal that the moderating effects of public pressure and business-government relations are context-dependent on institutional voids.

3.4 Contributions to bargaining from sustainability in family firms

Although other studies included performance variables other than only sustainability, only one study in this special issue is dedicated to the *bargaining from sustainability* in family firms. The study "Environmental Commitment and Innovation as Catalysts for Export Performance in Family Firms" by Haddoud, Onjewu and Nowiński (2021) investigates the impact of environmental commitment on family firms' export performance. Using a sample of 382 cases in Poland, the authors explore correlations between strategic commitment to environmental issues, firms' innovation and export intensity. They also test the moderating effect of environmental quality certifications in the association between strategic commitment to environmental issues along the lines of product innovation and process innovation. Their ensuing analysis supports the prevailing impression that family firms are inherently environmentally conscious. However, unlike prior studies, the authors find that strategic commitment to environmental issues is more linked to process innovation than product innovation. Subsequently, they proceed to explain the overstretched nature of family firms in Poland and the unfeasibility of product innovation from a resource-constrained perspective. Their results highlight that strategic commitment to environmental issues directly increases export performance, although process innovation has a stronger effect on such internationalization. The study also noted that environmental quality certification moderates the association between strategic commitment to environmental issues and process innovation. In summary, the environmental commitment – export performance paradox is somewhat clarified in the specific context of family firms in Poland.

4. Conclusions

When talking about "sustainability", business and management scholars typically took a strategic perspective of the firm, mainly aiming at sustainable competitive advantages (Bharadwaj et al., 1993). Thus as a consequence of the previously described rapid changes and grand challenges not only our economies and the firms within, but also societies and nature are increasingly being regarded as elements that can only jointly form a meaningful triad, so that the purely economic perspective is increasingly being complemented by social perspectives (Lee et al., 2019) and environmental sustainability (Panda et al., 2020). This is where this special issue contributes, with a special focus on the type of business that determines most economies worldwide – the family firm. This type of firm is said to have a special responsibility for society, since it does not correspond to the ideal-typical *homo economicus* idea of a purely objectively acting business, but on the contrary, due to its special endowment with family-related, i.e. not (directly) economic characteristics, has a greater significance and responsibility for individual persons, groups and their overall environment. The contributions in our Special Issue are therefore to be seen as a starting point to approach the research topic "Sustainability in Family Business" in a more explorative way, to identify its different sub-areas at this point in time (see Figure 1) and to raise awareness of the relevance of this rising topic among the readership of TFSC, thus contributing to the growing discourse on this so far widely under researched topic in the family business community (Rovelli et al., 2021). We hope that this compilation represents a step in this direction, and that it has provided ideas for further, more detailed research on this important topic.

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