IRMBR www.irmbrjournal.com June 2022
International Review of Management and Business Research Vol. 11 Issue.2

Family Firms' Challenges toward Strategic Change: Internal and External Factors' Effects on Poultry Business Firm's Survival

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Abstract

Family-owned companies have a valuable place of investment and the Gross Domestic Product of nations. The agricultural sector affects the welfare and development of countries. We designed to research the strategic change management challenges of seventy-seven family firms of the Poultry Business Cluster (P.B.C.) in the sub-clusters of Breeder chicken growers, Feed producers, and Equipment suppliers (B.F.E.) in Iran. The study aimed to understand the family firms' survival strategies based on their strategic change policies. We applied a quantitative research method to measure respondents' attitudes using SPSS 22 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences 22) and ANOVA test. We also used the Likert scale to describe the traits and attitudes of respondents, the Delphi technique to get experts' opinions on the relevant topics, Cochran's random sampling method to get a finite sample population, and the Friedman ranking test to prioritize challenges from respondents' points of view. Finally, this article addresses the importance of variables of factors that affect the family firm's life cycle. This study showed that these firms apply change management strategies to survive. They use this strategy despite constraints of innovative traits, resources' orchestration, goal setting, entrepreneur knowledge, and investment to train the next generations.

Keywords: *Conflict, Goal, Innovation, Resource, Entrepreneurship, Life Cycle.*

Introduction

A company is a live entity like humans; when not fed adequately, it dies soon or lives like a sick person who takes pills every day to continue to tomorrow. The rapid change in the business environment has increased expectations from companies to respond to the changing demand to strengthen their ability to compete. Studies show that the economies rely on family businesses (World's top family businesses, 2021). Family business's scale in the economies led the researchers to study efficiency factors such as ownership, management, control, proficiency, and transition to the next generation. For example, Gerick *et al.* (1997) argue that 65-80% of the most significant demographic segment comprises family-owned businesses worldwide. In a U.S. economic study, family firms produced 50% of G.D.P. In the other case, Franchise (2010) argues that 95% of enterprises were accounted for by Thai family-owned S.M.E.s (Chienwittayakun, 2015). Despite the significant share of family-owned businesses, only 70% of family businesses succeeded in transmitting to the second generation, while less than 5% were transferred to the third generation.

The business environment and technological changes imply an efficient family firm (Liu, 2017). The rapid change in the business environment has increased expectations from companies to respond to the changing demand to strengthen their ability to compete with emerging and existing firms. Large enterprises, S.M.E.s, or S.M.B.s in the poultry cluster businesses must review their management and product/service processes in the current and future markets to preserve their competition strength to challenge local and international markets. In this way, we designed this study to define the effects of the business environment and the firm's internal affective variables such as market condition, technological needs, leading or controlling the organizations, generational transition issues, knowledge, and others that influenced poultry family companies. From the business environment in poultry business perception in Iran, to be understood whether the founders and managers have designed a strategy to preserve the competitiveness to survive, they need to be analyzed from a life cycle perspective.

Family firms' survival affects by factors related to work-family conflicts (Kasper, 2005), innovation, goal setting, resource alignment, entrepreneurship, and life-cycle strategy. By managing these factors, a change management strategy can make the company competitive, profitable, and stable in different situations (Seydo et al., 2009; Starbel, 1996; Miller& Wedell- Wedelsborg, 2003; De Massis, 2015).

Studies show that work-family conflicts influence the individual's job position and organizational outcomes (Leath, 2019). In other words, work responsibility can interfere with the responsibility in the family domain and vice versa (Baltes, 2010). Zahra (2005), Kepner (1991), Leitz & Klissen (2001), and Salvato (2004) argue that subsequent generations are often drivers of innovation, identifying entrepreneurial opportunities, and implementing new ways of processing (Beck, 2011a).

The diversity of goals and goal interaction in family firms implicated the theory building of organizational behavior, stakeholder management, and practical understanding of organizational goals. Organizational goals are firm growth, performance, and survival from an economic aspect. From a non-economic aspect internal serenity and relations are the primary goals of managers (Kotlar J. D., 2013).

Based on Michael Porter's value chain model, Xue (2005), cited in Kirli & Gumus (2011), discuss that final margin gain through an efficient process of managing resources (Kirli, 2011). Owning businesses affects resource availability, such as humans, funds, and market relations in family firms. Gilbert *et al.* (2006) and Lumpkin & Dess (2011) identify the financing, training, and hiring as salient resources for the start-up phase, while in a growth phase, skills (knowledge) as a resource to be enhanced to stimulate the growth. For example, in family firms, family managers are more successful than others in gaining resources; some non-family managers are incompetent and may harm performance (Jiang, 2010) and (Xu, 2018).

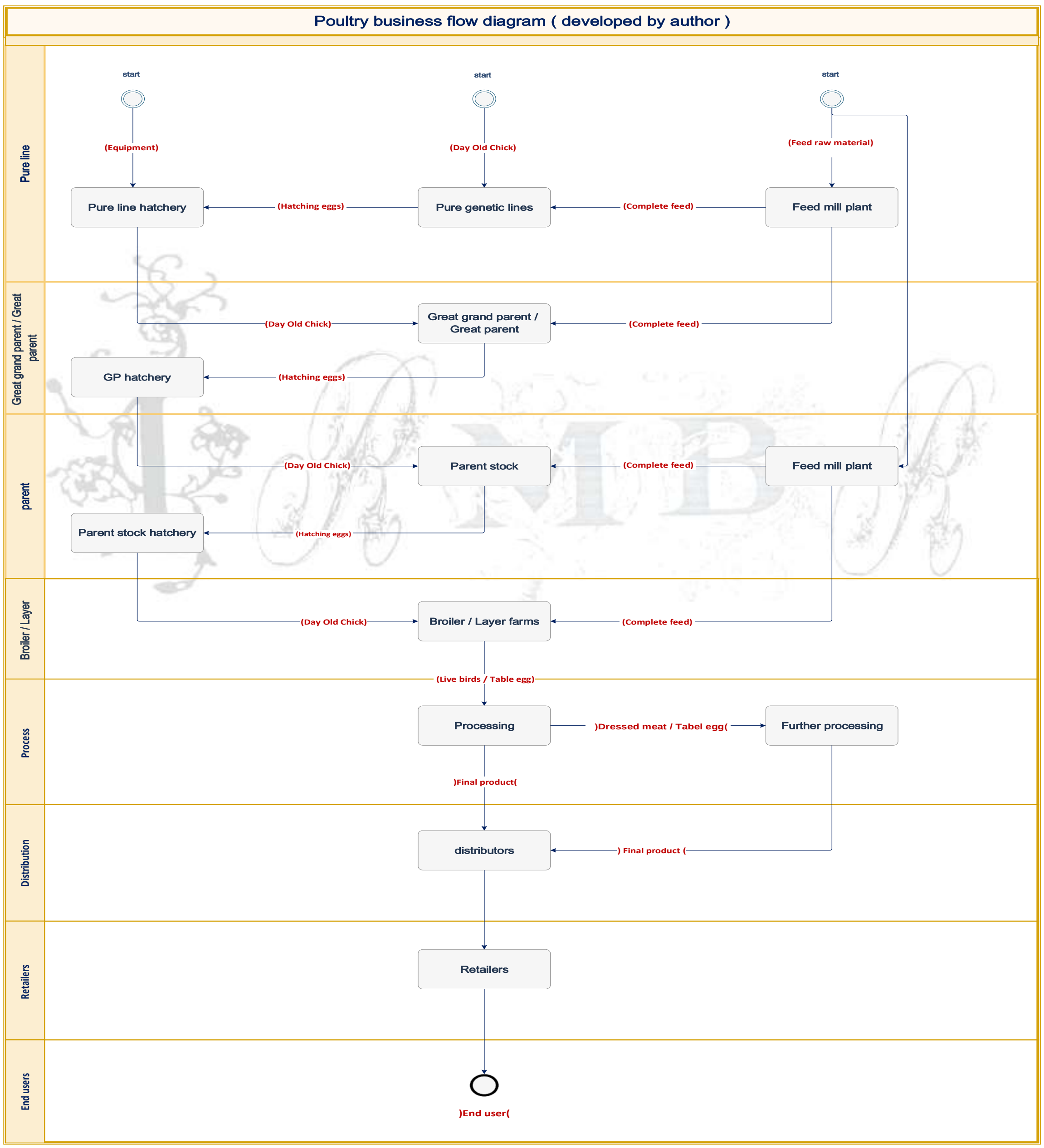
Scholars consider the entrepreneurship theory from different aspects, arguing that growth, profitability, and survival are critical for family businesses. In this way, they define entrepreneurs contribute to the development of firms to a national and global extent (Anderson *et al.*, 2005; Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Casillas & Moreno, 2010; Marchisio *et al.*, 2010; Zahra *et al.*, 2004; Zahra, 2005; Bresciani & Ferraris, 2014; Dana *et al.*, 2014).

The family-owned business is valuable for financial wealth goals (Chirico et al., 2018; Gomez-Mejia et al., 2011) and for socio-emotional wealth. Family business survival as the source of employment is vital for societies, and family businesses significantly affect the wealth of communities (Razzak, 2019a). For the mature stages of the life cycle, Agrawell & Gort (2002) argue that keeping the previous resources at an efficient level and hiring skilled people to ensure the growth and support the innovation was required (Sirmon, 2011).

This research aimed to study strategic changes by combining variables configured in group questions from the Poultry Business Cluster (P.B.C.) in the sub-clusters of Breeder chicken growers, Feed producers, and Equipment suppliers (B.F.E.) of family firms. A substantial investment in developing countries gives valuable weight to study, especially at the current time when food security is a worldwide threat (Google, 2021). Despite many studies on family businesses, family agri-businesses have notably lacked literature. So, this gap impressively supports the idea of diverse research through a different group of family agri-business fields (File, 1994).

Poultry cluster's business in Iran

The poultry industry is a significant investment in the agricultural sector, mainly by family firms. Based to the Statistical Center of Iran (S.C.I., 2018-2019), in the thirty-one provinces by Grand Parent chicken (G.P.), Broiler Breeder chicken and layer breeder chicken farms raise about twenty-five million parent chicks per period. Despite economic turbulence (Iran's economic update, 2020), they produce two billion one-day-old broiler and commercial layer chicks annually. One-day-old chicks result in two million and five hundred thousand metric tons of chicken meat and seven hundred thousand tons of edible eggs per year (Statistical Center of Iran, 2018-2019).



Feed mill plants provide completed feed for farms, a salient and treasured business in Iran. Equipment suppliers supply poultry house machinery, hatchery equipment, feed mills machinery, processing plants, and distribution equipment. In Iran's poultry market, we identified that the broiler lines, layer lines, feed mill plants, and equipment suppliers were more organized and suitable for this research. The following flow diagram illustrates a typical poultry business structure.

Purpose of Study

We hypothesized that there is no defined approach suited to the firm's owners' strategic change in the industry. Therefore, to enlighten this issue, we examine eight hypotheses to explain;

Whether the Family Firms of the B.F.E. Strategically Change?

Therefore, this study objected to outlining the following factors' effects on family firms' survival strategy from respondents' viewpoint.

-The work-family conflicts affect the performance of family managers and firms.
-The family firms' innovation traits and strategy.
-The family firms' resource alignment strategy.
-The family firms' goal-setting strategy.
-The entrepreneurial behavior of founders and their descendant's effects.
-The founder and firm's life-cycle strategy.

Literature Review

Regarding the competency of firms to change strategically, Garg *et al*., (003); Larsen *et al.*, (1998); Segars, (2005); Xu *et al.*, (2003); Pettigrew and Whip (1992) discuss the great importance of business environment, strategy, and information system as tools of analysis in the firm level and business environment level (Lansiluoto, 2008). Because poultry meat responds to the global expanding consumption demand of animal proteins (OECD-FAO agricultural outlook 2017-2026, 2017), these firms' continued success is an essential issue for nations (Campbell, 2007). The market share of poultry products in developing countries will increase by about 3.5% annually from 2005 to 2030, especially in China, Brazil, and India (Narrod, 2008). The world's chicken meat production reported by F.A.O. (Food and Agriculture Organization), including the EU, Iran was the $^{ninth}/10^{th}$ chicken meat producer (Meat market review, 2020a).

Work-family Conflicts

Scholars discuss the family business owners' role as parents, children, employees, and siblings take them to the inter-role with family and work domain. In addition, they encountered the owners with their entrepreneur careers and explored the relationship between family-related conflicts and family business conflict strategies (Sundaramurty & Kreiner, 2008; Parasuraman & Simmer, 2001; Qiu and Freel (2020).

By finding the drivers, characteristics, and outcomes of work-family conflicts in or beyond the family business's implications for conflict management strategies, researchers considered the family-related and management-related conflict strategy's connection to improving the results of these conflicts (Qiu, 2020). From globalization's effects on work and family domains on family business owners' lives, Shah and Rajadhyaksha (2015) achieved that more global and larger cities can create work-family conflict than small cities in India (Shah, 2015).

Parasuraman *et al.* (1996) showed that work-family positively conflicted with life stress and negatively conflicted with the job satisfaction of business owners. Similarly, Karofsky *et al.* (2001) revealed that anxiety and frustration influence the work-family conflict in American family businesses. Finally, family firms face significant work-family conflicts that consequence anxiety and business dissatisfaction experiences (Kwan, 2012). Moreover, because of the faster changing of the role of the family and the work domain of parents' responsibility, more research is required on the family firms' work-life conflict issues (Huffman, 2014) to bridge the gap between gender roles in work-life conflicts.

Family Business Innovation

Innovation creates value for the firms to stay one step ahead of the competition (Buff, 2016). Researches show that the most challenged firms are amongst the most innovative businesses. Accordingly, Cefis & Marsili (2006) and Damanpour & Evan (1984) argue that a firm's innovativeness strongly influences performance, growth, and survival. The type of innovation varies by type of business. Zahra *et al.* (2004) pointed out innovation as a survival mechanism to protect competitiveness. They revealed that innovation is an effective source of evolution and prosperity of generation associated with the family firms' long-term outlook.

Gedajlovic *et al*. (2004), Millen *et al.* (2013), and Yu & Sung (2015) expected professionalization and facilitation of innovation processes by non-family members when conflicts emerge in decision-making. Studies on innovation in family firms show that they are anchored to the tradition but require innovation to remain competitive. In concurrence with this, Erdogan (2020) Turkey defined four strategies and categorized them as protecting the heritage, maintaining the essence, restoring the legacy, and embracing nostalgia (Erdogan, 2020). In another study on German family-owned S.M.E.s, Hillebrand *et al.* (2019) disclosed the generational effects on innovation. Compared to the next entering generations, they defined first generations' less encounter with the agency cost; hence, the first generation is more willing to innovate (Harith, 2020).

Researchers discuss innovation drivers in family-owned firms in many studies. For example, De Massis (2015) argues that the firm's strategy, business climate, and decision-makers in the organization affect product innovation. From a climate viewpoint, family managers are risk-averse and low formalized. From a decision-making viewpoint, he defined them are more efficient and independent, and from the strategy viewpoint, incremental innovation and an open approach (De Massis A., 2015).

Family Business Goal-Setting

Researchers argued different dimensions of goal setting in family firms. For example, some defined specifications of family firms such as domination of family members (Chua *et al*.,1999), the controversy of organizational goals (Argote & Greve, 2007; Cyert & March 1963; Simon, 1964), personal goal translation to the firm's policy, the separation of the occupational role and organizational goals (Simon, 1964) are some dimensions of goal setting in family firms.

The literature has shown that the interaction between families and the business system is complex for goal setting. Goal setting in family firms is vital because individuals translate their goals into organizational goals. Therefore, to set goals of an organization, the management should consider the factor of people who influence the decisions, the aspect of elements of goal setting, and the characteristic of individual goals that a person may turn into an organizational goal (Syert and March 1963; Simon, 1964; Cameron, 1978; Pierce & Dennis, 1983).

To goal setting in more extensive and complex organizations, several members of different divisions can influence their behavior and goals with their decisions. Therefore, goal setting should not be left to the senior team alone because executives also perform better when decision-making (Jacobides, 2007; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1977; Stevenson *et al.,* 1985; Floyd & Woldridge, 1992; Simon, 1964).

Habbershon *et al.* (2003) argue that the literature has shown that the overlap between families, ownership and the company must occur to ally with organizational goals in family firms. Usually, researchers consider it impossible to reach a standard solution when setting goals in family companies since, as aforementioned, it is a complex of goal-setting factors. For example, some family companies do not pursue family-oriented goals, or the quality of family participation in decision-making is different, or in some companies, to set goals, because of their complexity a higher knowledge and experiences are needed (Westhead & Howorth, 2007: Chrisman et al., 2012).

Kotlar and De Massis (2013) found that a broader range of external and senior managers must share the firms' strategic action plan financing in Italian S.M.E.s. Therefore, they must accept the decision to achieve the goals (Kotlar J. D., 2013c).

Resource Aligning

Resources must be defined and strategically aligned toward the firm's goal achievement in the determined time. We found human, market, knowledge, economic, financial, and information resources to examine in B.F.E. family firms in the literature.

Human Resource Aligning

Investors' approach effectively develops human capital. Aligning the organizational needs and human capital in each field requires specific knowledge and experience (Marrewijk, 2003). From an integrative view of strategic human resource management, a robust human capital planning process is an integral part of human resource efforts to improve its ability to advance the implementation of business strategy. For example, the process and tools consider Corning an American company's achievement of aligning its human capital with its strategy. In this regard, several users of methods software in Corning have suggested that preparing instructions and procedures of human capital should be subject to a pragmatic approach, identify them well, and prioritize the use of internal human capital in the organization. In addition, human resource leaders frequently discuss and analyze the processes, tools, and outcomes (Brush, 2005).

Market Resource Aligning

Scholars argue that resource diversification is part of a strategy related to product-market resource variability of firms. Business environment, organization, performance, and ownership create the specific resource deployment context. For example, the business environment as an external condition influenced the resource availability and the nature of a strategy in the life cycle of a business. Organization resource variability and contingency influence the top management to decide the extent of the organization. For example, the knowledge variability, culture, leadership attitude, and business scale affect the organizational strategy. The performance level dictates the process, and the owner finds the resource variability and influences a firm's system (Williamson, 1981; Porter, 1982; Anderson and Zeithmal, Galbraith & Nathanson, 1978, 1979; Harrigan, 1980).

Scholars argue that resource availability and efficient possibility (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996), trading resources (Chi, 1994), and merger and acquisition strategies, mingled with or embedded into the organization, drive the firms to employ the alliance strategy. Given the above discussion, scholars discuss the market uncertainty levels (Yoshino & Rangan, 1995), technological needs (Hagedoorn, 1993), internationalization a requirement (Dickson & Weaven, 1997), and other strategic purposes (Glaister&Buckely, 1996) influence the alliance strategy. Also, these factors lead the firms to ally, continue alone, merge, or venture jointly (Das, 2000b).

Knowledge Resource Aligning

"A worthy knowledge of the market is something that does not come overnight." Peterof (1993) argues that we cannot trade knowledge, even though tradable as a mobile resource. Instead, it is more valuable inside the firm that currently employees use than other likely users. Accumulated specific resources such as knowledge, skills, and values through on-the-job training within the firms are more valued than traded from outside the firm (Dierickx & Cool, 1989). Abel Duarte and O'Brien (2017), in the study of the Australian food family firms, identified a continuous accumulated knowledge and expertise as a fundamental resource together with efforts to diversify and add value to the products (Alonso Duarte, 2017a).

Harrison and Klein (2007) conceptualize the knowledge diversity and effects on organizational outcomes and benefits, separation, and disparity. They argue that variety stems from differences in knowledge and experience of members, separation relates to the results from the variance of opinions and approaches, and disparity originates from the unique status of the management team. They also argue that the variety mostly has positive effects while the separation and contrast negatively affect the organizational outcome by the theoretical debate.

Thacher & Patel (2012); Harrison & Klein (2007) discuss that disparity of the top management segregate them into two groups who do not share their knowledge and mitigate the positive effects of the diverse expertise of the organization. A negative result of separation emerges when family and non-family managers refuse to work together constructively. Other research revealed that a higher number of family members involved in the management leads the firm to negative consequences such as more relational conflicts (Kellermann & Eddleston, 2006) and less acquirement of external knowledge (Kraiczy *et al.*, 2014) by family firms (Kammerlanders, 2020b).

Economic Resource Aligning

Different countries diversely study economic resources to use resource-based and opportunity-based theoretical perspectives. For example, scholars defined various resources such as location, territories, peripheral regions, and natural resources to highlight the resource access of economies for businesses. Further, they introduce the global networks and corporate industrial resources to the development level of the business environments. Finally, some scholars considered the business environment to create a local pool of formal and informal resources, norms, values, traditions, and practices (Yuang, 2006).

From an internationalization perspective, Xia *et al.* (2007) studies of Singaporean foreign direct investment in China and Singapore-China joint ventures revealed six dimensions of peripheral resources of firms such as technical skills, managerial skills, and Guangxi. [1]Skills of employment, the profession of the employee, and internal/ external relationships of firms (Xia, 2007).

From the political viewpoint, the political alliances, the businesses supported by it, and the relationships among the disciplines and firms held by it, Baccarani and Golinelli (2011) argue that territory sustains the firm in the other definitions. Subsequently, the territory theories are a place of co-creation through operand and operant place resources. [2] For instance, Vago and Lusch (2016) define territory resources as an interaction between firm and territory through service-for-service exchange or considering social cohesion

[1] Guanxi defines the fundamental dynamic in personalized social networks of power and is a crucial system of beliefs in Chinese culture (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guanxi).

[2] Operand; in traditional good-dominant logic, people exchange for goods.
Operant; in emerging service-dominant logic, people exchange to acquire the benefits of specialized competence or services (https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Operand-and-Operant-Resources-Help-Distinguish-the-Logic-of-the-Goodsand-Service-Centred_tbl1_258142775.)

and trust among actors. Pollini (2005) discusses that territories release co-creation to design innovative processes to enhance shared values (Baccarani, 2019).

Firms in peripheral regions have the least access to the markets and face the higher cost of procurement of raw materials. More traditional firms live with fewer large trade companies and higher service costs in these areas. This geographical limitation is compound with limited training, development, and resources of S.M.E.s (Palnik & Polese, 1999; Nash & Martin, 2003; Pinho, 2008; Jones, 2005; Barcley & Porter, 2005; Clack, 2010; Venter *et al.*, 2006; and Norteboon, 1994). Therefore, location in peripheral regions can hinder S.M.E.s' innovation. Consisted with this, smaller organizations naturally have fewer resources and investments to manage innovation efforts in the peripheral areas (Harris, 2013).

Information Resource Aligning

Information resources continuously develop and expand in this industrialized world. Nowadays, information resources are available offline and online through the digital tools and fashion designated based on favors of end-users and marketing plans of organizations (Xiong & Zuo, 2019; Metzger, 2007; Savolainen, 2011; Ghasem Aghaei & Hassanein, 2015) and Beukes *et al.* (2016). There is classified information in different levels of security, from popular information like advertisements and some services to introduce firms and activities to the societies to very detailed confidential categories (Mahony, 2021).

Scholars are concerned with online information availability, qualities, and standards in the current era. Literature exhibited the lacking differentiated findings focused on family firms going through information. So, in this study, we generalize the delivered definitions to the family and non-family firms. Organizations by information systems handle and manage tangible/ intangible assets. Likewise, scholars argue that competitiveness enhances when strategically aligning information resources and knowledge resources with competitive strategies in the organizations. For example, they say that firms strategically improve business agility by paying attention to customers by a comprehensive investment in information systems.

The information system facilities by sharing various knowledge and facilitate communications between firms and individuals, support better decision-making and enable innovation capabilities (Al Ammary, 2014; Chan *et al.*, 2019; Tallen *et al.*, 2019; Turulja & Borgoric, 2018; Yoshikoni & Albertin, 2017; Gold *et al.*, 2001; Nguyen *et al.*, 2019; Shradze *et al.*, 2018). Subsequently, the alignment of information systems with business processes and knowledge resources enables firms to capture, maintain and reuse the information to improve business success (Albertin, 2020).

Risk management through information systems identifies the organizations' adverse events, vulnerabilities, and threats. Conversely, organizations need confidential and integrated information resources to protect against the threats that affect the organizations (Poppa, 2019).

Financial Resource Aligning

To achieve growth objectives, firms need to have sufficient financial resources. Financial resource constraints limit firms' access to other resources for growth and development (Sexton & Bowman-Upton, 1991). Sometimes, firms can access alternative resources when financial resource limit occurs (Dillinger, 1999). However, as scholars argue that entrepreneurs often lack the financial resources, they agree that financial resources as a determinant, facilitating the growth of a firm toward targeted success and competitiveness by entrepreneur firms (Cooper *et al.*, 1994; Wiklund & Shepherd, 2003; Song *et al.*, 2008; Fonseka *et al.*, 2014; Baker & Nelson, 2005).

Daovisan and Chamaratana (2020), in their studies on Laotian family-owned businesses, insist on the need to focus on firm management resilience rather than accepting strategic changes in financial resources (Daovisan, 2020). It is required to understand the fragments of the financial resource stream in the firm to understand the entrepreneurial families well (Wenwen, 2018; Bierl P. K., 2019). Considering the importance of resource orchestration in family firms, Habershon and Williams (1999) argue that a distinctive ability of family firms has defined to align resources as a characteristic to create and sustain a long-term competitive advantage (Bierl, 2019).

Entrepreneurship Role

Companies that integrate technology with entrepreneurship develop new technologies to create a competitive advantage. For example, technical entrepreneurs are entrepreneurs whose way of delivering value to customers leads to participation in crucial technologies. Therefore, it needs to equip the firm with the new technologies to generate innovation and commercialization with technical and business skills (Jabłoński, 2017).

D. Miller and P. Friesen (1983), Miller (1983), and JG Covin and D.P. Slevin (1988, 1989), from a dimension and performance viewpoint, introduce different aspects such as level of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial status, strategic status, and strategic orientation or entrepreneurship of a firm. They present the above characteristics or processes that lead to entrepreneurial action in the company. Entrepreneurship orientation is a structure with various dimensions such as pro-activeness, risk-taking, competitive progressiveness, and autonomy.

Similarly, Kevin et al. (2006) recognized that entrepreneurial orientation is a dysfunctional business without a multidimensional structure, theoretically and by definition. Moreover, referring to an entrepreneurship company's common effects of innovation, pro-activeness, and risk-taking, they argue that the absence of either of these characteristics, even with the powerful presence of the other two, theoretically shows that the company is not an entrepreneur (Marvel., 2012).

Firm's Life Cycle

By aging firms, their life cycle influences the managerial situation. The management condition will affect the channel of investment opportunities, external financing, merging, and acquisition activities. For example, Carney *et al.* (2014) studies on mismanagement and misallocation of family resources and assets or the accumulation of "dead money" showed that a family business requires running a business and a family. Because of this complex system of "family" - "family business" - "family ownership," there is more space for conflict, problems of maintaining cohesion, maintaining shared insight, and prioritizing the family's current needs over the business.

According to the life cycle perspective of family organizations, Berl & Mainz (1932) and Chandler (1977) argue that the family control for these companies is reduced over time and gradually controlled by broader management unavailable to families. Therefore, it is expected that the age of these companies was negatively correlated with family control.

Family and business environment factors affect the control of family firms in different nations. For example, a study of the impact of firm longevity on their survival in a thousand Western European companies showed that from 1996 to 2006, in Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom, 52%, 70%, 65%, and 63% of family firms remained independent entities, and in addition, during this period just, 35%, 49%, 41%, and 35%, survived respectively. Studies have shown that factors such as weak investor support and conflict between managers and owners of companies have been among the factors influencing the results.

In an enlightening example, the story of the Glennon Brothers, the third generation of a family-owned business in Ireland, after three generations of extensive experience, teaches us how to move from being a manager to managing managers. The difficulties of this business's Glennon family's efforts led them to that "*the absence of alternatives will concentrate the mind."* The third-generation brothers learned that they must respect employees to survive and that ethical issues are prominent in success and solidarity with employees. When they needed an external manager with thirty years of successful experience in saw-milling industries, they realized that high family involvement, relatively informal family relationships, and no formal governance might deter the manager from his role (Clinton, 2017).

Research Method

This research aimed to investigate the current B.F.E. family firm's efficiency in facing the effects of organizational internal and external factors on strategic change and life longevity. It understood family firms' owners' attitudes about the hypotheses of this study, then ranked variables by the Friedman ranking test to find their importance from the respondent's point of view.

We considered a quantitative research method fulfilling a quantitative measurement of attitudes, and the family firms faced challenges in the B.F.E. of the poultry business cluster. Further, this research identified the experiences and perspectives of family business leaders through their priorities for the needs and necessities of business success. The central tendency of respondents' opinions was ranked to find the vital factors to respondents. Based on the knowledge gained from environmental challenges, the current study discusses the results to conclude with the help of literature in this business. Finally, the cases not found in the literature we encountered in this research were discussed as a research gap in this business.

Research Design

SPSS 22 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences 22) and ANOVA test (Analyze of Variance test) were applied for data analysis to find the difference among means. We designed it based on the quantitative research method, considering the research questions about the attitude of respondents about their business environment variables, internal organizational variables, and challenges faced by the B.F.E. family firms toward strategic changes. We selected the population of this study from the B.F.E. poultry sub-cluster, which is more organized than other sub-clusters and can take part in the study as family companies and a sample of the main target population.

Details of Respondents

Regarding variation of activities in the poultry products supply chain in the country and the large geographical size of the country (Iran Population 2021 (Live), 2021), the study had done among 175 family firms in the three sub-cluster of poultry business, including Breeder chicken growers, Feed producers, and Equipment suppliers (B.F.E.) in this research.

Sample Size

One hundred seventy-five medium and large family firms comprised the population in the poultry cluster. The selection logic was based on the sub-clusters association's list and the Statistic Center of Iran. By using Cochran's random sampling method for finite population, seventy-seven family firms were selected as a sample population (Cochran, 1977) as follows:

$$n = \frac{z^2.p(1-p)}{e^2} / 1 + \left[\frac{z^2.p(1-p)}{e^2 N}\right]$$

Where:

n = Sample size=77 N = Population size = 175
Z = 1.96 (The area under the normal curve for a 95% level of confidence)

e = Accepted margin of error at 95% level of confidence = 0.08
P = Estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population (= 0.5)

q = 1-P $n = \frac{(95 \times 1.96^2) \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5) + (175 \times 0.08^2)}$ n =76.5

Research Questions

Once family firms understand the positive and negative effects within and outside their business, they can take suitable strategies to manage any predicted situation. Therefore, analyzing internal and external factors is considered the most resilient action plan for their business before launching any strategic plan. Based on this strategy, this study was projected to determine if the B.F.E. family firms have the capability and specific plan to change strategically.

This research hypothesized some internal and external factors' effects on B.F.E. family firms to determine their capability toward competitiveness to succeed and survive. The questionnaire included eight hypotheses beyond the demographic and definitions of firms in the sample, as illustrated in table1. Finally, defined variables examined for each hypothesis are detailed in the questionnaire and explained in the findings chapter.

Table 1: Hypotheses List
H1) Business environment variables affect the family firms' performance through providing resources, social-emotional assets, information, and macro elements.
H2a) Family members' perception of family managers' efficiency and work-family conflicts influence family managers' performance in family firms.
H2b) In family firms, the family's behaviors, expectations, and support influence family managers' personal lives.
H3) External managers are a source of knowledge and effectively improve a family firm's performance without capable family managers.
H4) Family firms have innovative strategies to manage their business environment challenges.
H5) In family firms, performance affects by strategic goal setting and the level of pursuing strategy by families and managers.
H6) Family firms increase competitiveness by aligning resources to facilitate changes in the business environment.
H7) In family firms, founders' attitudes, culture, generation status, and family members aligning with a strategic change influence entrepreneurship.
H8) In the family firm's owner's presence, strategic resource management, following managers' training plans, and using external managers influence the life- cycle.

Research Process

The statistical population in this study included the family firms of the B.F.E. of poultry cluster in Iran. The Cochran random sampling method was applied (Cochran, 1977); (Sanae, 2008) to define the questionnaire's reliable internal consistency. The overall score was 0.866 showing high internal consistency reliability of the items in the research questionnaire. We designed the questionnaire for those respondents who were first-class owners or immediate dependents of the firm owner. Therefore, the questionnaire was responded to by owner-managers aware of all the questionnaire items. Peer reviews of previous studies supported the discussion here. Finally, we discussed nine group variables using by Friedman ranking test.

Research Limitations

Four business environment factors and some firms' constraints limited this study. First, the turbulent business environment limited the propensity of respondents' attention to this study. At the time of this study, the hardest economic sanction occurred, and the poultry business as a subsidized industry is engaged in challenges with the governmental and consumer sides. Second, policymakers were less cooperative in attracting the respondents and supporting the research related to strategy, especially of syndicates in this study (government and associations).

Third, Iran is a country of different nations and ethnicities, so to attract the participation of these companies, the researcher must already be familiar with them. Fourth, there was limited availability of official documents as necessary as approval documents for this research.

Results

Questionnaire Consistency Reliability

By achieving the acceptable reliability between 0.7-0.9, we would have validity to the significant relationship between items of this study to assess the study's efficiency (Garbutt, 2014). The Cronbach's reliability test resulted in a 0.866 of 77 valid cases that showed the high internal consistency of questions in the questionnaire. In this study, we surveyed the level of information, experiences, education, and some other factors, and the results showed in the table2.

Table2. Respondents' demography

Gender role. Women accounted for 2.6% of respondents taking part in the study.
Age distribution. 63% of managers (C.E.O.s) were less than 58 years old, and 37% were between 59 and 90 years old.
Education. 88% of owner-managers had a bachelor's degree and higher education, while 19.7% had education unrelated to their job.
Job-related experience. 61.3% of the respondents had less than 32 years of recent job experience.
Type of activity. Chicken grandparent and parent growers, animal feed producers, and equipment providers.
Job satisfaction. 90% of participants were satisfied with their job at the medium and higher level.

Also, we examined some related factors to identify the work and family history of the selected companies. Finally, the results showed in the table3.

Table3. Firm's demography

Foundership	88.9% of respondents were founders.
Firm's age	73.75% less than 32 years, 25.3% between 30-50 years old.
Generational status of family members	54% were first generation, 41.6% of the second generation, and the third or beyond, almost negligible.
Number of employees	In 68.4% of firms less than a hundred, 16% of firms over a hundred to more than two hundred.
Family member employee	1-15 employees
Family members share of management (%)	In 48.6% of firms 20%, in 20% of firm’s 21-40%, in 10% of firms between 41-60%, in 11.4% of firms 61-80%, and in 10% of firms 80-100% of management.
Preference for hiring family managers	9% of respondents preferred family managers, 75% chose external managers, and the rest didn't differentiate.
Previous experience of working in the family firm	41.6% of respondents
Awareness of strategic change management	48.6% of respondents

Business Environment Factors' Effects

To understand the B.F.E. firm's leaders' attitude, programs, strategy, and capability to manage the firm to succeed and survive, we examined eight hypotheses that included fifty-nine variables. First, we used the Friedman ranking test method to find the differences in respondents' priorities as a non-parametric test from the ordinal data (Likert form), which we collected by random sampling to test the nine group variables. We hypothesized that these business environmental and internal factors influence the B.F.E. firms' performance, success, and survival.

Business Environment Variables (H1)

Researchers define business environment factors' effects on family firms' performance in recent decades. So, we examined the impact of investment security, job creation value by family firms, Macro-environment, change management strategy, and environmental information on B.F.E. firm's success and survival shown in table 4.

Table4. Distribution of variables of the business environment

	Agreed/ strongly agreed by respondents
Investment security effect	87%
Job creation effect	93.5%
Macro-environment effect	85.7%
The firm applies a change management strategy	87%
Access to the business environment information	64.9%

The results of the Friedman ranking test showed that variables with a p-value of 0.01 are significantly different [x^2 (df =5; N=77) =116.299; P<001]. From the respondent's viewpoint, these results approved the influence of the business environment factors on B.F.E. firms' performance. Also, among the variables, the value of job creation and macro-environment elements was ranked highest. In addition, the strategic change management application was moderately significant. Finally, the business environment's information and investment security had lower importance for the company's performance.

Work-family Conflicts (H2a)

To approve or reject that work-family conflict factors affect the performance of B.F.E. firms, we have measured the personal life work domain effects, forcing family members to join the firm, underestimating family member working values, preserving family heritage by family members, and the firm's issue effects on family members' personal life showed in table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of variables of work-family conflict

	Agreed/ strongly agree by respondents
Family manager's work-family conflict is higher than external managers	36.4%
Forcing family members to work in the family firm	29.9%
Leaders underestimate family members' working values	31.2%
Preserving family heritage by family members,	39%
The firm's issue affects family members' personal life	62.1%

The Friedman ranking test showed that these variables in the P-value 0.01 were significantly different [x^2 (df=5; N=77) =68.177; P<001]. The result did not reject the effects of the work-family conflicts. Respondents ranked higher in the family's impact and work domains on a family manager's efficiency. Also, they gave average rank to the family's tendency to preserve the hereditary value by family managers and the effect of forcing the family members to join the company. Finally, they gave the lower rank to the variable of underestimating the family managers working by the firm's leadership compared to external managers.

Family Managers' Personal Life (H2b)

We measured variables of management transition to the son, multi-responsibility of family members, family members' certainty to work, altruism, and unconventional behavior of family members at work to approve or reject their effects on family managers' personal life from respondents' experiences. The results showed in Table 6.

Table 6. Distribution of variables of family manager's personal life

	Agreed/strongly agreed by respondents
Management transition to the son	66.2%
Multi-occupational family members	63.6%
Inevitability to work	70.15
Parent's supportive behavior	27.35
Unconventional behavior of family members at work	39.65

The results of the Friedman ranking test of family firms affecting family manager's personal life showed that variables in the P-value of 0.01 were significantly different [x^2 (df=5; N=77)=43.962; P<001]. Therefore, the results did not reject that family firms affect family managers' personal lives. From the respondent's viewpoint, the definite existence of the work-family conflict and the policy of transition management to the son in the next generation was the most critical variables. Also, family managers' variable of co-operation in various jobs despite their inefficiency was moderately crucial in their performance. Finally, variables of unconventional behavior of family managers and family supportive behavior from family managers were the least important in family members' efficiency.

Family managers' efficiency compares to external managers (H3)

We examined external managers' attractiveness for family firms, external managers' management capability, positive effects of family manager's efficiency, adverse impact on employees' motivation, and the free-riding behavior of family managers to approve or reject external managers' efficiency in family firms. Results showed in table 7.

Table 7. Distribution of variables of family managers' efficiency compare to external manager

	Agreed/strongly agreed by respondents
External manager's attractiveness for family firms	79.9%
External manager's efficiency in family firms	83..1%
Family managers are efficient because of their authority	55.9%
Adverse effects of family firms on employee's motivations	16.9%
Adverse effects of free-riding behavior of family managers	32.5%

Friedman's ranking test shows that the variables of comparing family managers' efficiency to external managers' effects in P-value 0.01 differed significantly[x^2 (df=5; N=77)=43.962; P<001]. This result showed that we could not reject that external managers' efficiency. From respondents' viewpoint, external managers' capability and high efficiency had higher ranked variables. Also, they ranked moderately the authority of family managers and the free-riding behavior of family managers. Finally, they organized the adverse effects of family managers on employees' motivations as a less critical variable.

Innovation in family firms (H4)

To recognize the innovativeness in family firms, we designed the questions to find it out through the lenses of firm managers. To approve or reject that B.F.E. firms have an innovation strategy to manage their business environment challenges, we measured family managers' alignment with the firm's strategy, risk-averse characteristics, and informal relation to employees as innovative behavior. Also, in this hypothesis, we measured the free-riding behavior, making a practical decision, tendency to change the firm's strategy, desire to change products or services, and their viewpoint of the firm's strategy.

Table8. Distribution of variables of innovation in family firms

	Agreed/strongly agreed by respondents
Family managers' alignment with the firm's strategy	63.6%
Family managers' risk-averse behavior	50.7%
family managers like to modify the processes	46.8%
Family managers' informal relations with employees	27.3%
Younger managers' desire to change products/services	57.2%
Family managers support the strategy	50.7%
Family managers' ability to make the practical decision	44.2%
Family managers' free-riding behavior	64.9%

Friedman ranking test showed that the variables significantly affect the innovativeness [x^2 (df=7; N=77)=46.586 P<001]. Therefore, we cannot reject that family firms are innovative. Respondents ranked the family managers' alignment with the firm's strategy, free-riding behavior, and a better understanding of the firms' strategy as the most critical innovative variables. They also ranked the risk-aversion of family managers and their higher tendency to change the current processes as the moderate variable effective in innovativeness. Finally, they organized the more practical decisions by a family manager, informal relations with employees, and less desire of family younger managers to change production/services as a lower effective variable to stimulate innovativeness.

Family firm's goal-setting (H5)

To approve or reject that B.F.E. firms manage their goal-setting strategy, we examined the variables of managers' personal goal prioritizing, challenges of goal setting in family firms, and family managers translating personal goals to the firm's goals. Further, we examined the manager's conflict as a barrier to goal setting, external managers' efficiency in pursuing the firm's plan, and external managers' efficient communication to employees toward the firm's objectives.

Table 9. Distribution of variables of firm's goal-setting by family/external managers

	Agreed/strongly agreed by respondents
Prioritizing personal goals instead of the firm's goal by family members	50.7%
More challenges of goal setting in family firms	36.4%
Family managers translate their goals to the firm's goal	28.6%
Managers' conflict barrier of goal setting	25.1%
external managers pursue the firm's goal more efficient than family managers	52%
External manager efficiently encourages employees to set the firm's goal	33.8%

Friedman ranking test showed that the variables significantly are different$[x^2\ (df = 5;\ N = 77) = 39.757;\ P < 001]$. Therefore, we cannot reject that family firms are innovative. Respondents ranked the external managers pursuing the firm's goal more efficiently than family managers and managers' conflict barrier of goal setting as the highest important variable. They also ranked more challenges of goal setting in family firms, and family managers translate their goals to the firm's goal as moderately essential variables. Further, they ranked prioritizing personal goals instead of the firm's goal by family members and replacing a personal goal with an organizational plan as less critical variables.

The family firm's resource is aligned (H6)

We examined variables of assuring a firm's success by aligning resources, effective relationships with business partners, and human resources as bases of success to approve or reject B.F.E. firms' resource alignment strategy. Further, we examined the variables of aligning products/services properly to business environment changes, information, next-generation knowledge, and continuing traditional products/services to preserve the firm's values.

Table 10. Distribution of variables of family firm's resource aligning's

	Agreed/strongly agreed by respondents
Assuring the firm's success by aligning resources	84.4%
Effective relationships with business partners	53.3%
Human resources as bases of success	67.5%
Despite family's dependents on previous products/services changing them proper to market changes	72.7%
Environment information as a firm's resource	71.4%
Next-generation higher desire to absorb the knowledge compared to older	62.3%
Older generation desire to develop the exporting product/services	70.1%

Friedman ranking test showed that resource alignment variables in the P-value 0,01 significantly were different [x^2 (df=6; N=77) =22.759; P<001]. Therefore, these variables significantly affect the B.F.E. firm's success. This result approved that the firm's performance affects by its goal-setting strategy. The respondents ranked effective relationships with business partners, human resources as bases of success, and next-generation higher desire to absorb the knowledge compared to older as a higher important variable of strategic resource alignment. They also ranked the changing products/services to market changes and environment information as a firm's resource as a moderate variable of strategic resource alignment. Further, they ranked the firm's success by aligning resources and the older generation's desire to export products/services as lower important variables of strategic resource alignments.

Entrepreneurship (H7)

To measure the entrepreneurship behavior of B.F.E. firms, we examined the founder's (entrepreneur) effect on market development and the alignment of multiple generations' political attitudes and cultures with the organization's culture variables effects. Furthermore, we examined the families' agreement with the strategic changes.

Table 11. distribution of variables of entrepreneurship

	Agreed/strongly agreed by respondents
Founder's (entrepreneur)effects on market development	59.7%
Multiple generation's political attitudes and cultures	62.3%
Family's agreement with strategic changes	63.65

According to the Friedman ranking test, with the P-value of 0.01, all entrepreneurship variables significantly were different [x^2 (df=12; N=77) =103.027; P<001]. Therefore, the results have not rejected that B.F.E. family firms have an entrepreneurial strategy to survive. Respondents ranked the founders' effects on market development as the most important variable. They also ranked the multiple generation political and cultural attitude as an important medium variable. Further, they ranked the family's agreement with strategic changes as a lower important variable.

Family Firm's Life Cycle (H8)

To measure some defined variables' effects on the family firm's life cycle in the literature, we examined the owner's presence, resource management, the training program of family members for the future, relying on external managers, and family managers' efficiency compared to external managers. We also examined other variables, including transferring leadership to next-generation strategy, specific budget allocation to train family managers, preparing for the job by assigning different jobs, and information security. Finally, we measured the firm's information security, time spent at work, management cost, decision-making flexibility, and responsiveness. Results showed in table 12.

Table 12. family firm's life cycle's distribution of variables

	Agreed/strongly agreed by respondents
Dependence of a firm's life cycle on the owner's presence	74%
Applying a resource management strategy	76.6%
Specific training program for family managers	44.2%
The family firm's relying on external managers in future	58.4%
Family managers cause the firm to live longer	63.7%
Applying the strategy of transferring leadership to the next generation	45.5%
Specific budget allocation to train family managers	29.9
Training family members on the job through assigning different jobs	46.8%
Firm's information security by family managers	54.6%
More time spent at work by family members	77.9%
Family managers impose a lower management cost on the firm	54.6%
Family managers are more flexible in making a decision	72.4%
Family managers are more responsive than external managers	41.6%

Friedman's ranking test results in P-value 0.01 showed that variables are significantly different [x^2 (DF=2; N=77) =2.512; P>001], so we cannot reject that these family firms' life cycle strategy affects their survival strategy. The result approved that B.F.E. firms had effective plans for the firm's life longevity. The specific training program variables and budget allocation to the training and on-the-job training through assigning different jobs for family managers, applying the leadership transferring them to next-generation strategy, and family managers' higher responsiveness as the most critical variables that impact the firm's life ranked by respondents. Further, they ranked the reliance on external managers in the future, the information higher security by family managers, and lower management cost imposed by family managers as the medium effect variables on the family firm's life cycle. Finally, they ranked the dependence of a firm's life cycle on the owner's presence, resource management strategy, family managers causing the firm to live longer, and more time spent at work by family members. Family manager's higher flexibility to decide the less critical effect variables on family firms' life cycle in this study.

Discussion

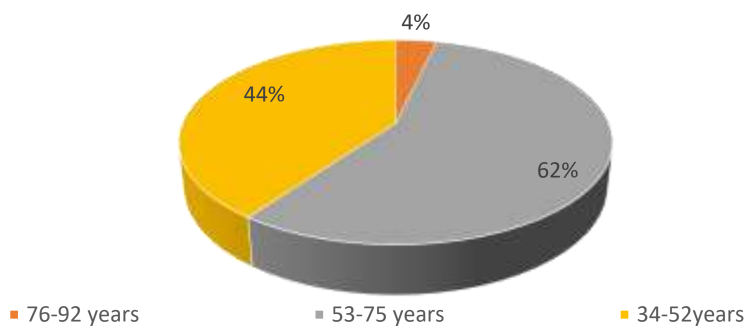
Women's Role in Leadership

The purpose of this study was to investigate the gender role factor in family businesses to find the position of women in the management of B.F.E. family firms and not just to reach the concept of women's share in employment. The subject of jobs has a broader scope from a social point of view and needs a different range of studies that narrow the information gap in this concept.

Age distribution

These findings showed that in the poultry industry, the young population is dominant in the leadership of these companies. Statistically, the skewness of the population curve has proved this aspect. Although entrepreneurs on the Board dictate policies to C.E.O.s, we expect the younger generations to make the firm's policies.

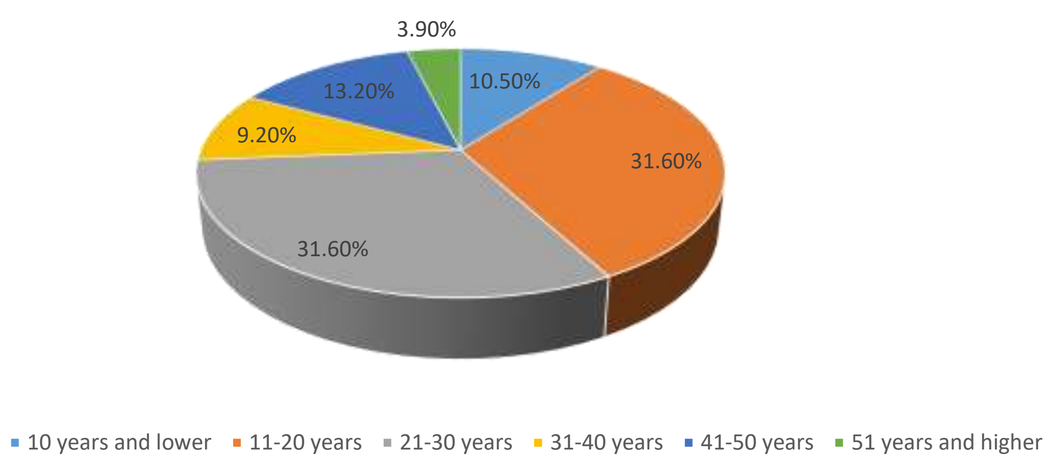
Chart 1. respondents' age distribution



Family Firms' Age

According to the literature, in family companies, the older the age and the larger the company's size means more family managers in the firm. When companies face challenges in the business environment, the behavior of family and non-family managers in dealing with them is different. Research has shown that when the number of family managers is higher, there is a more significant negative impact on the challenges faced by family companies when family managers do not have cohesion in running the company.

Chart.2 Firms' age distribution



Ward (1987) argues that as companies grow larger and older, the family's interests outweigh the company's. It will not pursue its goals appropriately, and its performance diminishes and becomes weaker (Albert, 2017). In this study, the age of companies with this research background has been considered; most firms aged less than 40 years. Understanding these factors' effects on a B.F.E. firm's performance needs an independent study. We can bridge this research gap by researching the age and size of companies in the future.

Job Experience

There are not enough resources to recognize the history of the emergence of family companies in the Iranian poultry industry. However, the history of these firms is the history of their current experienced managers, and there has been no history of studying it in literature. For this reason, we have dedicated one of the demographic questions to this study to bridge this gap. The chart shows the result of respondents' experiences in this study.

Education (related/unrelated)

Graham and Krahn (1995) found that a study of the effects of job-related education on high school and college graduates improved organizational management, interpersonal communication, and job-specific skills (Graham, 1995). Education is one of the most critical challenges for organizations. Because either the organizations do not have a complete program for training human resources, especially managers, or the selection of training programs for the younger generations is complicated. There is a kind of competition between children that limits the organization's to achieve the goal.

The current study results show that most B.F.E. populations have job-related education. For example, it showed that 88.3% of the C.E.O.s or members of the Board in this study owned a BSc. Degree and higher education, which 80.3% apply to their occupation. Therefore, in organizational management, the quality of communication between people and their job skills is expected to be high. Given that no specific studies of poultry sector businesses' education terms in Iran were not available then, research on the impact of job-related education in this business could be helpful for future studies.

Foundership

Because our goal was to understand the impact of family business leadership on BFEfirm's life cycle, the founders' position in firm leadership was essential. Therefore, in the following discussions, we will examine the effects of the presence of the founder in the company on other factors considered in this study. This study was designed to define the policy of the firms from the viewpoint of leaders at the C.E.O. or board member position, mainly founders. Scholars argue that the founders, as entrepreneurs, prefer to maintain their presence in the organization they have created (Ang, Cole, & Lin, 2000; Demsetz &Villalonga, 2001; Shleifer & Vishny, 1997; Anderson & Reeb, 2003; Cronqvist & Nilsson, 2003; La Porta et al., 1999). Consistent with previous studies, 88.3% of the founders were C.E.O. or board members in this study. Over time, families and private/family companies grew, overcoming the market share and getting a dominant position in this business. This situation further justifies the founders' presence in the company. Concurrent with Kelly (2000) and Canella (2015), that conclude the founder makes policies, they do not run the firm on the opinion of family members (Cannella, 2015) and (Kelly, 2000) in these firms, founders play a pivotal role and ultimately affect the strategic behavior of the company.

Generational Status

Because most of the changes in family companies occur from within the core of the family, the uniformity and coordination of business and family growth were important to us in this study. Studies show that the founder is usually present in the company and has extensive power and connections; it affects the next generation and limits them to make the changes they want. Each of the ages after the founder is influenced by the founder differently. In this research, most firms present two generations in B.F.E. companies.

Manager Employment

We examined employees of companies from three perspectives. First, identify the size of companies in terms of the employee population, which was one indicator of company size. Second, by recognizing the number of family members in these companies, we could examine the challenges associated with family members. Third, to find out if the age of the companies had increased the number of family members in them.

According to the literature and findings of this study, while the first, second, and some third generations are employed, heterogeneous education and experiences of generations cause differences in their attitudes toward values, goals, and the ability to learn new sciences that lead them to conflicts (Gersick, Dais, Hampton, & Lensberg, 1997; Grout, 2003) (Chrisman, 2012).

The number of employees showed that most of the B.F.E. companies in this study were in the S.M.B. group. These companies' growth is expected to face managerial and leadership challenges, especially with family members and intergenerational issues. As a result, we expect relatively fast changes in the formation and organization when the new generation enters.

The literature expected more family members as the company got older, but our statistics did not prove this expectation in the B.F.E. firms. In this study, we could not find a positive or negative correlation between the company's age and the number of family members' employees (P-value (significant of 2 tailed) = 0.52, Pearson correlation= 0.076) in the B.F.E. companies. From stakeholder and behavioral theories, these factors are essential for B.F.E. companies. Therefore, more studies for finding a correlation between these variables could be helpful for strategic change in the future.

External Manager's Employment Constraints

Scholars agree that family-owned companies pursue non-economic and economic benefits from a family-oriented perspective. However, it may sometimes have prevented the employment of non-family managers because they desire to preserve family values, reputation, and friendly family relationships. For example, the literature shows that these companies sometimes hire a non-family manager for economic benefits. Instead, they usually avoid hiring external managers because they do not want to pay benefits to them, even though they need them.

Regarding the importance of these companies in the nation's economy and societies, scholars suggest that firms, through a strategic plan, should define the criterion of manager employment apart from their relation with company owners. Similarly, for example, Berron *et al.* (2010) point out that the value of companies in the global economy, the social values derived from the presence of these companies, the interests of stakeholders, and the company's survival should be the criteria for selecting a manager.

The results in B.F.E. companies agree with the opinion of scholars and literature related to the employment of their managers. However, in this study, there are no specific constraints for the work of non-family managers. For example, this study showed that 75% of firms did not restrict the recruitment of this type of manager.

Awareness of Strategic Change

Scholars argue they should do more studies on the essential factors of changing the understanding of the practices (Flamholtz, 2008). Thus, researchers have emphasized a culture of change in companies, whether they agree with or resist change, the experience of strategic change, and reinvestment while already investing in a system.

The most vital factor of this study was B.F.E. managers' awareness of strategic change to understand their ability to face the challenges of the business environment. Therefore, they were asked to answer the extent to which they are aware of the strategic change in the ever-changing environmental conditions. Although 41.6% of those managers had previous experience leading a family company, the result was surprising, as 88% of the participants in the study claimed to be aware of this need. Their awareness could be because of their academic knowledge. As a result, they have access to theoretical resources through educational institutes and universities. Regardless of quality, they are available in many states.

The Business Environment Affects Business Success (H1)

Findings from the business environment of B.F.E. companies showed these companies did not have adequate access to the information they needed to plan their strategy and action plans to succeed and survive. However, this study only asked about information availability, not the firm's ability to use them.

We found that the business environment could not provide accurate and trustable information they needed to employ effectively. Therefore, firms could not plan strategic changes that depended on information about the business environment. Although macro-environmental factors were expected to be the most crucial factor from the respondents' point of view, it was not a barrier to their current business success.

It is more likely that because of these companies' type of production activity and granting subsidies by the government, other macro-environmental factors could not pose a severe threat to these companies. Nevertheless, the conditions were unfavorable for these companies regarding investment security and the markets' prosperity. Nevertheless, the results show that most respondents expected a higher security level of investment.

Furthermore, investment security differs in different parts of the country, and we should do more research to understand this factor. Since governments have even supported companies' employment, they knew it as one of the essential factors supporting these companies. As a result, employment creation has different values in different regions, and because they knew it as the foundation of regional development, the government and society support it.

Work-family Conflicts (H2a)

Consistent with the literature (Walls, 2001; Cooper, 2018, Wiley, 2014), the domains of family and work effects on family managers' satisfaction, family firms' success, identifying work domains or family domains are valuable to employers in the firm's strategy. Regarding leadership attitude to the family, family managers, and success and survival of the family firm's work-family conflicts are parts of leadership responsibility to design the strategy to lead them toward proficiency.

This research has shown that B.F.E. companies face the challenge of family and work domains that require independent and detailed analysis. As findings showed, the working of family managers is the desire of owners (families) and preserving family heritage. The family members did not look at it functionally but as traditional family wealth, trying to keep it. We assess this behavior as expected in the family firms.

Personal life (H2b)

The company's management strategy influences the B.F.E. firm's life cycle and the private life of family members' managers. Consistent with the literature (Qiu & Freel, 2020; Forne *et al.*, 1992; Forne *et al.*, 1992, 1997; Edward and Rothbard, 2000 and Grevenhause *et al.*, 2006), many variables such as entrepreneur role and family role influence the family managers' personal life. Variables such as introducing sons for subsequent generational management, assigning many responsibilities for one, and the inefficiency of family members raise personal life issues. Therefore, a conflict strategy for these firms to decrease the adverse effects of these conflicts (Kwan et al., 2011) is essential to improve individuals' life and firms' performance.

These firms will encounter entrepreneurial conflicts consistent with Parasuraman and Simmer (2001). In addition, gender role conflicts that Pocock (2015) studied in the Australian family firms are more likely to increase leadership and personal life conflicts. However, it may comprise a critical part of the conflict strategy in the future.

Family/external Managers' Efficiency (H3)

Sometimes family firms suffer from economic losses, and they may turn to efficient external managers (Chrisman et al., 2012; Gomez-Magia et al., 2007; Pearson et al., 2008; Barron et al., 2012; Barnett& Clarmmens, 2006; Memili, 2013). Scholars also argue that when a family company experiences economic success, the tendency to non-economic goals increases (Anderson & Ribb, 2003; Chrisman et al., 2012; Chow et al., 2009; Barnett& Clarmmens, 2006).

This study showed that external managers were more desired for B.F.E. firms when they acquired knowledge and experiences to gain economic benefits. This study showed that leaders of these firms positively experienced the efficiency of external managers from financial aspects. However, we did not study the economic condition of B.F.E. firms; therefore, without concerning firms' internal needs, these results are consistent with literature that argues the external manager's efficiency from the aspect of the leadership of these firms considers economic goals. A specific study is needed to bridge the gap in the multidimensional efficiency of external managers in the future.

Innovativeness (H4)

Chapple (2011) argued that S.M.B.s are more talented than larger enterprises to innovate; similarly, Harith (2020), Beck *et al.* (2015), and Nordqvist (2012) argue that family members, especially first-generations more willing to innovate. Inconsistent with this result, D' Allura *et al.* (2019), Calabro *et al.* (2019), and Callis *et al.* (2011) argued that altruism or incremental innovative behaviors hinder innovation or environmental dynamism negatively affect the innovation process in family firms.

This study showed that family managers strategically aligned with change management from the lens of managers' effect on innovativeness. They agreed that managers were risk-averse despite family and took innovative strategies when the business environment changed. This study showed that despite free-riding behaviors and informal relationships with employees, they were not recognized as creative because the most current managers were the first generation (founder), so they innovatively challenge the business environment issues.

Goal-setting (H5)

According to Syert and March (1963), Simon (1964), Cameron (1978), and Pierce and Dennis (1983) found that people sometimes pursue their goals instead of organizational goals; literature showed that family firms face two significant challenges in setting organizational goals. First, individuals can replace or follow their goals instead of the firm's, and second, families try to influence the goal-setting strategy.

However, this study got no different results from previous research results in B.F.E. firms. Most agreed that external managers would positively affect organizational goal-setting and pursue the firm's goals better than family managers.

Resource alignment (H6)

Diversified studies have shown that the orchestration of strategic resources is critical to an organization's survival. As previously published in the literature, market conditions, knowledge, economics, environment, internal and external information of the organization, humans, finance, and education are known resources that affect the life and survival of an organization. Thus, their orchestration at all stages will lead a company to a better pace of life (Jawaher & McLaughlin, 2001; Rutherford *et al.*, 2003; Gilbert et al., 2006; Lumpkin & Dess, 2011; Das & Teng, 2003; Penrose, 1959; Agrawell & Gort, 2002).

Human resource. Scholars focus on human resource policies' influence on a family business's competitiveness and life cycle. Especially the generational process and top-down processes of family companies are fundamental from the human resource aspect. To meet the needs of an organization's human resources, they must constantly update it with the knowledge of using changing technologies. However, organizations must have the expertise to do this (Galdeano, 2016; Breton-Miller & Miller, 2015; Brush, 2005; Marrewijk, 2003). This study showed it was highly valued, although human resources in these companies were not recognized as critical.

Market Resources. The literature shows that a company must strategically possess values through the resources in a dynamic movement in the market. Access to resources is vital for local, national, and international companies. Therefore, according to scholars, companies should decide globally to produce themselves, buy the products, or join other companies. For example, companies may need resources through trading partners, mergers, joint ventures, or acquisitions. Other factors such as market uncertainty, the need for technology, and the need to be present in international markets cause companies to decide on a joint venture or alliance.

This study showed that the variable ranking of the market had a lower effect on the survival of family firms.[3]Their opinions showed that a strong desire to communicate appropriately with business partners (primarily local) positively affected their success and survival.

Knowledge resource. Scholars argue that the variety of products and services causes stability in the market, resulting from organizational knowledge resource alignment. The management becomes efficient by accumulating the knowledge resource and aligning it with family companies' growth and survival strategy. Scholars consider the accumulation of knowledge through on-the-job training strategy, training of family managers, or employing external managers. Therefore, for a sustainable business in the market, companies must consider the development of knowledge to increase creative exploitation by creating a variety of products and services (Peterof, 1993; Dierickx & Cool, 1989; Abel Duarte & O'Brien, 2017; Gupta *et al.*, 2006; Kammerlander, 2020; Randolph, 2020; O'Brien & Seamus, 2017; Harrison and Klein 2007; Duran *et al., 2016*).

[3] For years and at the time of this study, the country was under economic sanctions, so trade and financial relations were minimal. Therefore, businesses, especially family firms, face constraints in establishing business relations with foreign investment inside or outside the borders. Consequently, other studies to understand the business relations at the international level, mutual joint-venturing, foreign investment, alliances, or acquisitions would be helpful.

In this study, companies considered that knowledge was one of the essential needs to succeed for new generations after the founder. However, this variable was less critical than other cognitive resources for them.

Economic resources. Scholars argue that a firm's location, territories, peripheral regions, and natural resources determine the business's success and life cycle. The variables mentioned above, norms, values, traditions, and practices, are vital to business success. A global network, technology, skilled workers, and political and geographical restrictions limit a business's success. Further, to be smaller, access to fewer resources to innovate (Young, 2006; Battisti *et al*., 2012; Barney, 1991; Tolbot, 2008; Xia, 2007; Baccarani *et al*., 2011; Harris, 2012). In this study, We did not measure certain economic variables. We assessed it in a general view, but a specific study is suggested for the future.

Entrepreneurship (H7)

Given that the survival of family businesses depends on the entrepreneurship of different generations, the entrepreneurship in family companies plays a vital role in their strategic growth, profitability, and survival. Since entrepreneurship is a multidimensional phenomenon, it will not lead to commercialized entrepreneurship. Instead, companies must have an ambidextrous entrepreneurial strategy to connect operational processes, supply chain, communication, and innovation. Entrepreneurship makes the company more competitive and sustainable toward strategic change (Ricketts, 2008; Vrontis, 2019; Jabłońskie, 2017; Marvel. 2012).

In this study, the companies agreed upon the effectiveness of the founder, culture, attitude, generation, market policy, and the support of family members on strategic changes. Given that 60-63% of the B.F.E. firms' respondents agreed with the above results, their knowledge of entrepreneurship is weaker than other factors such as innovation, work-family conflicts, resource alignment, and goal-setting. However, they all agreed that this factor influences their strategic change and survival.

Statistically, the founder position was the most effective, and families' support of the strategic changes was the least effective. At the same time, the variables of culture, attitude, generation, and market policies had a mediocre effect on entrepreneurship. This study also showed that understanding entrepreneurship in these firms needs more independent study to narrow the gap in its definitions.

Firm's Life Cycle (H8)

Scholars argue that financial wealth, social-emotional values, age, and managerial efficiency impact the family firm's survival. For example, a family manager could become more efficient while family companies grew longer. However, some research shows that older family-owned firms' management is more complex than younger ones because the number of family members increases alongside aging.

Moreover, the development level of financial markets and the efficient leadership of active calls in local, national, or international markets for investment have enabled family companies to extend their efficiency and lives longer (Chirico *et al*., 2018; Gomez-Mejia *et al.*, 2011; Razzak M. R., 2019; Franks *et al.*, 2012).

In some studies, scholars have found that trust is one of the intermediate ways for family companies to survive. In particular, companies that could not manage the company through family managers or trusted external managers can continue in the market until family members have grown enough and take responsibility for running the company.

Some of these firms have learned the values and requirements to compete and survive over time and continue to live successfully today. Ultimately, the survival of companies depends on a corporate executive to either adapt to the business environment and the times or prepare the new generation to lead the firm promptly (Carney *et al.*, 2014; Allcock & Filatotchev, 2010; Arthurs *et al.*, 2008; Bruton *et al*., 2010; Child & Rodriguez, 2003; Chrisman *et al.*, 2012; Scholes L. W., 2014; Clinton, 2017).

In this study, because of the importance of this factor, we measured more variables in the business environment of B.F.E. companies. For example, we found variables such as the company owner in management, competition strategy and survival policies, specific programs, and budget to train family managers as influential variables in the family firms' life cycle in this study. Most of these companies did not have a management training program and budget and did not train people in different jobs and responsibilities. Finally, they disagreed that family managers are more accountable than external managers.

B.E.F. firms did not agree to other variables such as more confidence in family firms' information by family members, lower costs of family managers, and higher flexibility in unstable markets. Statistical analysis showed that these firms agreed on the effectiveness of family managers' presence in the company, more time spent, flexibility to make decisions, and strategic management.

The positive impact of the family manager over the company's life cycle, information security by family managers, reliance on external managers for the future, lower cost of the family manager for the company, and on-the-job training of family managers for the future was considered a moderate priority. Accordingly, these firms have a vague management horizon concerning their survival strategy.

Conclusion

In most B.F.E. family firms, over 80% were run by first-generation with high job satisfaction and 30 years of experience. However, since most managers were the first generation, aware of strategic change management necessities, and have the flexibility to make decisions, we expect they innovatively challenge the business environment issues.

Work-family domains challenge was a reducing factor of motivation and innovation for B.F.E. companies. However, the family managers' personal lives were still constraints of efficient strategic change management. Without concerning the firm's internal condition and attitude toward the resource aligning aspect, most of its leaders agree to the higher alignment of external managers with firms' strategies.

They accepted that family and family members influenced the goal-setting through translating their goals into organizational goals. On the contrary, external managers pursue organizational goals more efficiently. However, founders are still working in these firms, inadequate entrepreneur knowledge in BFE firms, and individualism superiority weakens human resource training and entrepreneurship.

Although a slower pace of technology change in the agricultural sector has provided more opportunities for managers and owners of these companies to update their survival policies, the financial support of owners increases competitive power by family members. Adversely, families and family managers' impacts on strategic change policies, external managers' employment, selective attitude, and ambiguous manager training programs threatened these firms' life cycle.

Consistent with previous studies, this study showed that an inefficient human resources recruitment and training policy were significant barriers to success and survival. Further, the B.F.E. companies could not effectively use the information of the business environment in their strategic change planning because of the general conditions prevailing in the creation and circulation mechanism inside the industry. As a result, the Boards of directors were not adequately capable of constantly evaluating the business environment changes to choose alternative strategies to grow sustainably to live longer.

Recommendation

We conducted this study in the conditions of economic instability in the country. Its repetition in a stable situation can make our understanding of change management more efficient. Moreover, given that the government is actively intervening in business policy-making, we recommend conducting this study in a different context with greater focus. Studying the external managers in these firms to narrow the research gap on their efficiency would be helpful because the other side of this study is the external manager. Therefore, additional research must be done from the psychological perspective of non-family managers (He, 2019).

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