

MEN AS THE BACKBONE OF FAMILY ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE CHALLENGE BETWEEN HERITAGE AND INNOVATION

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the role of men as the mainstay of family entrepreneurship in Indonesia, the challenges faced mainly by men when they are required to uphold values passed down from generation to generation while innovating in the modern era. Not only as a source of income but also as a means of preserving values and identities passed down between generations, family businesses play an important role in the country's economy. However, globalization and digitalization are pushing family business actors, especially men who are traditionally considered the main decision makers and guardians of business stability, to continue to change. Using qualitative methodology with a literature study method, this study includes a literature review, namely, an analysis of several scientific sources including journals, academic books, and meeting proceedings that discuss topics related to family, gender, and innovation. The findings of this study indicate that men still play an important role in family businesses and struggle between preserving customs and adopting creativity. It is hoped that the next generation of men can find a balance between traditional values and innovative spirit so that family businesses remain relevant and competitive. This study emphasizes the importance of intergenerational communication, openness to new ideas, and adaptive leadership for the success of family businesses amid ongoing social and technological developments.

Keywords: family entrepreneurship, men, inheritance, innovation, business succession

INTRODUCTION

Family entrepreneurship has become one of the fundamental pillars of economic development in many countries, including Indonesia. Within the Indonesian socio-cultural framework, where the family is positioned as both a primary social unit and an economic entity, family businesses function not merely as income-generating activities but also as institutions for transmitting values, identity, skills, and social responsibility across generations. In this context, entrepreneurship is deeply embedded in familial structures, shaping both economic resilience and social continuity. As emphasized by Khamimah (2021), national economic growth is not solely dependent on large-scale industries or foreign capital inflows but is significantly influenced by entrepreneurial actors operating at the community level. Entrepreneurs play a strategic role in job creation, unemployment reduction, and income generation, thereby sustaining local economic ecosystems.

In Indonesia, the growing awareness of economic independence has further strengthened the relevance of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs serve not only as economic drivers but also as agents of social transformation who contribute to improving societal welfare and competitiveness. Within many family business settings, men are traditionally positioned as central figures in strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and safeguarding business continuity. Their role extends beyond managerial responsibilities; it embodies moral accountability, leadership symbolism, and the obligation to protect family legacy. This dual economic and socio-cultural function situates men at the intersection of authority, expectation, and responsibility.

However, the landscape of family entrepreneurship has evolved significantly due to globalization, rapid technological advancement, and digital transformation. The emergence of digital platforms, artificial intelligence, e-commerce ecosystems, and changing consumer preferences demands continuous innovation and adaptability. These structural shifts create a complex environment in which traditional business practices must coexist with technology-driven strategies. Men in family enterprises often find themselves navigating this delicate balance between preserving inherited values and embracing modernization. The tension between maintaining tradition and pursuing innovation has become a defining challenge in contemporary family entrepreneurship.

Prior research underscores the importance of balancing continuity and change. Hanifah, Rizal, and Arifianti (2021) argue that family heritage and traditional values provide strategic orientation and decision-making frameworks for subsequent generations. Traditions anchor business identity and serve as reference points in times of uncertainty. Simultaneously, innovation and creativity are essential for sustaining competitiveness and long-term viability. Maryati (2023) highlights that integrating innovation into family firm structures enhances competitive advantage, growth sustainability, and organizational resilience. Effective integration mechanisms allow businesses to evolve without losing their foundational identity.

Despite these insights, a significant research gap remains regarding the specific role of men as both guardians of tradition and agents of transformation in family entrepreneurship. Much of the existing literature emphasizes women's empowerment in family economic development, while the strategic, psychological, and social dimensions of men's roles are often underexplored. The pressures faced by men in reconciling conservative family expectations with innovation-driven market demands require deeper analytical attention. Issues such as identity negotiation, leadership adaptation, digital competence development, and emotional responsibility in succession contexts remain insufficiently examined.

Therefore, this study seeks to identify and analyze how men function as supporting and strategic actors in family entrepreneurship, particularly in balancing the preservation of traditional values with the necessity for innovation in the digital era. By examining this intersection, the study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of gendered leadership dynamics, intergenerational continuity, and adaptive strategies within family-owned enterprises in Indonesia's evolving economic landscape.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method, which is the collection of data through a systematic review of various scientific publications such as journal articles, academic books, and relevant conference proceedings. Literature reviews help researchers understand the development of previous theories and research results, as well as identify existing research gaps. According to Snyder (2019), literature studies serve not only to summarize previous research but also to synthesize and construct new knowledge conceptually. Literature sources were obtained through academic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate, with criteria of publications from the last ten years discussing family entrepreneurship, gender, and business innovation.

In addition, this study uses document analysis techniques, which involve analyzing the content of various scientific documents and publications to understand the meaning, context, and social representation of the phenomenon being studied. As explained by Bowen (2009), document analysis in qualitative research plays an important role in systematically interpreting textual data through a process of coding and categorization. This technique allows researchers to explore how the concepts of male roles, tradition, and innovation are framed in the context of family entrepreneurship.

With this research design, it is hoped that the results of the study can provide a deep understanding of the social and cultural dynamics in family entrepreneurship, as well as enrich the academic discourse on the relationship between gender, tradition, and innovation in the context of modern family businesses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Results of Systematic Literature Review

No	Title & Year	Author(s)	Study Focus	Method/Design	Main Results/Findings	Source
1	<i>An Insight into Family Business</i> (2021)	Hanifah, Rizal, & Arifianti	The importance of balancing tradition and innovation in family businesses	Qualitative descriptive (literature-based)	Family heritage and traditional values form the basis for decision-making, but innovation is still needed for the business to survive in the modern era	https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358128018
2	<i>Leadership and Innovation in Family Business</i> (2020)	Oktavia, Efferin, & Darmasetia wan	The influence of leadership style on innovation and the sustainability of family businesses	A qualitative case study	Open leadership and intergenerational communication encourage innovation and enhance the competitiveness of family businesses	https://jurnal.ubaya.ac.id/index.php/shum/article/view/2852
3	<i>FALLING DOWN THE KINGDOM: CULTURE</i>	Husien, Kirana, & Hermuning sih	Conflict between patriarchal culture and	Qualitative (phenomenological analysis)	Patriarchal values limit the space for innovation among the younger	https://doi.org/10.32770/ribaos.vol195-108

	AND TRADITION ON FAMILY BUSINESS SUCCESSIO N		modernity in the succession process		generation, so a more inclusive leadership approach is needed.	
4	<i>Case Study of the Entrepreneurial Orientation Role in the Sustainability of Family Business in Central Java</i>	Subagyo & Rahardjo	The role of entrepreneurial orientation in the sustainability of family businesses	Quantitative (regression analysis)	Younger generations with innovative and digital orientations are able to maintain business sustainability without abandoning family values.	https://bircu-journal.com/index.php/birci/article/view/5219?utm
5	<i>Entrepreneurial Portrait of Family Business Succession in Indonesia (2021)</i>	Raharjo et al.	Determinants of successful family business succession	Quantitative (SEM-PLS analysis)	Innovation capabilities have a positive effect on the competitiveness and adaptability of family businesses.	https://www.abacademies.org/articles/entrepreneurial-portrait-of-family-business-success

A review of the literature shows that in Indonesia, men are still central figures in maintaining the sustainability of family businesses. This role is not only related to economic responsibilities, but also to social legitimacy rooted in patriarchal cultural systems in various regions. According to Henryk Dzwigol's research, in many Indonesian entrepreneurial families, men are often considered *the main decision makers* in terms of investment, expansion, and business innovation, while women tend to play a supporting role in administrative management or customer relations. This condition illustrates how traditional social values still frame the division of gender roles in family entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, in the context of family entrepreneurship in Indonesia, men play a significant role as the main pillar in maintaining the continuity of the business across generations. This role is not only economic in nature, but also symbolic, representing honor, responsibility, and leadership within the family. According to Oktavia, Efferin, and Darmasetiawan (2020), the characteristics of male leadership in family businesses are often associated with values of honesty, responsibility, and the ability to maintain the family's reputation as a form of *social legacy*. However, challenges arise when the next generation of men is faced with the demands of innovation, which requires the courage to abandon some conservative values in order for the business to remain relevant to the changing times.

However, the process of leadership transition in family businesses in Indonesia is often marked by a clash between patriarchal culture and modernity. A study by Husien, Kirana, and Hermuningsih (2021) found that in many family businesses, especially in traditional sectors such as batik and handicrafts, male figures are considered symbols of power and the final decision-makers in the succession process. As a result, innovation is often delayed because the younger generation feels constrained by old values that emphasize hierarchy and obedience to the father figure. This condition illustrates the classic dilemma between preserving heritage and encouraging sustainable innovation.

Unlike the founding generation, young male heirs to businesses now face more complex social and market pressures. Subagyo and Rahardjo (2022) show that a strong entrepreneurial orientation plays an important role in maintaining the sustainability of family businesses. Male successors who dare to experiment, network, and utilize digital technology have proven to be more capable of maintaining the relevance of the business without having to abandon inherited values such as honesty, work ethic, and good social relationships.

The important findings of Raharjo et al.'s (2021) research indicate that the success of succession greatly depends on the ability of the next generation to internalize family values while demonstrating an entrepreneurial vision that is adaptive to changes in the external environment. They emphasize that intergenerational conflict often arises when the expectations of the founders and the aspirations of the younger generation are not aligned. For

example, the founders may want the business to continue "as is," while the next generation sees the need for diversification or a shift in business model in order to remain competitive.

From various local studies, it appears that **innovation** in family businesses in Indonesia is no longer an optional choice but a strategic necessity for businesses to remain relevant and competitive. For example, *Leadership and Innovation in Family Business* by Oktavia, Efferin, & Darmasetiawan (2020) found that a leadership style that is open to new ideas and effective communication between generations greatly facilitates innovation in family businesses. In the creative sector's craft sub-sector, research by Tiba & Situmorang (2022) shows that entrepreneurial orientation and innovation capabilities have a positive influence on business sustainability, especially the ability to accelerate market entry and respond to changes in demand.

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Based on these findings, the role of men as successors to family businesses in the Indonesian context can be interpreted as figures who not only maintain the continuity of the legacy but must also be pioneers of internal change. In this case study, successful male successors are those who can mediate the pressures of tradition and the need for innovation, for example, by introducing modern marketing methods, digital collaboration, or opening new lines of business without damaging family trust and the cultural coherence of the internal organization. Furthermore, this study suggests that intergenerational communication, family member participation in decision-making, and openness to new ideas are important elements for a harmonious succession and continued business growth.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that men still play a major role in maintaining the continuity of family businesses in Indonesia, both as successors of economic responsibility and as guardians of traditional values passed down from generation to generation. Amidst developments marked by technological advances and changes in business patterns, the role of men in family entrepreneurship is now required to be more adaptive and innovative in order for businesses to remain relevant and competitive. The balance between preserving family heritage and developing innovation is a major challenge that must be faced by the next generation. They must not only maintain business stability, but also be able to bring about renewal through creative ideas and strategies that are in line with current market needs. Open communication between generations, mutual respect between old values and new ideas, and flexible leadership are the keys to success in the family business succession process. Thus, the sustainability of family entrepreneurship will depend on the ability of the next generation of men to combine inherited values with a spirit of innovation. In the future, further research is expected to highlight the collaborative role of men and women in creating a more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable model of family entrepreneurship.

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