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ORIGINAL PAPER

Family business succession and innovation: a systematic literature review

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Abstract

This study systematizes and classifies the state-of-the-art of knowledge about innovation and succession in family businesses. Our systematic literature review details the existing knowledge and establishes new points of departure for future research. This research analyzes 32 articles retrieved from the Web of Science database and makes recourse to bibliographic coupling through the VOS viewer software to identify the main lines of research on the theme of innovation and succession in family businesses before advancing new topics for future research. The results identify and classify the prevailing theoretical foci in this domain to: (i) Impact of Succession on Innovation; (ii) Succession and Sharing of Knowledge; and (iii) Obstacles to Innovation. This study also shows that the succession process hinders investment in innovation and that family businesses' innovation capacity represents life or death for these businesses. This review also presents a framework that shows how succession processes impact innovation in family businesses.

Keywords Innovation · Succession · Family business · Systematic literature review · Bibliographic coupling

1 Introduction

Family businesses represent the oldest type of commercial organisation and are now the key driver of wealth creation in both emerging and developed economies (Dana and Ramadani,2015; Harris et al., 2004; Ingram and Glód, 2018, Ramadani et al., 2020). Family businesses are those businesses at least 50% owned by a single family, a definition we adopt to define a family business. They are commercial organizations in which various generations of the same family may influence the decision-making processes to achieve objectives defined by the family leadership (Lee et al.,

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2017; Mukarram et al., 2018; Jain et al., 2022). In addition, according to König et al. (2013), family businesses are organizations characterized by the existence of individuals interrelated by their family bonds that deploy their influence in their businesses, whether through their direct participation or a family member holding executive roles.

Prior systematic literature reviews exist around innovation in family businesses (Akram et al., 2021; Aparicio et al., 2019; Calabrò et al., 2018; Casado-Belmonte et al., 2021; Filser et al., 2016; Fuetsch and Suess-Reyes, 2017d, 2016; Toska et al. 2021), open innovation in family businesses (Gjergji et al., 2019; Torchia and Calabrò 2019), organizational innovation in the family businesses (Suman and Das, 2020), and radical innovation in family businesses (Hu and Hughes, 2020). Cocnerning succession, there are systematic literature reviews that approach the role of women in inter-generational succession in family businesses (Kubíček et al., 2018; Ratten et al., 2018) and analyses on gender in intergenerational succession in agricultural estates (Sheridan et al., 2021) and (Cisneros et al. 2018) research networks on succession in family businesses. However, while innovation represents the lifeblood of family firms (Hu and Hughes, 2020), succession represents the future of a family business. It is remarkable then that no systematic literature review unique to succession and family business innovation, spanning both dimensions, has emerged. To address this omission and the bifurcation of innovation and succession, we present a systemic literature review that culminates in a framework for future lines of research into these two critical aspects of long-term family business survival.

This research aims to systematize and classify the state-of-the-art in innovation and succession in family businesses through a systematic literature review that details the existing knowledge, establishes new points of departure for future research and fills the gap that stills exists in the literature. The research gap focuses on the need to observe and classify the state-of-the-art research on family businesses, their succession processes, and the effects of innovation on these businesses. Part of the motivation for this review is the need to discover how innovation affects the succession processes of family businesses. This research also makes recourse to bibliographic coupling to identify the main lines of research on the theme of innovation and succession in family businesses before advancing new topics to inform future research endeavours.

Through the analysis of 32 articles sourced from the Web of Science database and through bibliographic coupling with recourse to VOSviewer software, we established three clusters in the body of literature on innovation and succession in family business: Impact of Succession on Innovation, Succession and Sharing of Knowledge, and Obstacles to Innovation. This research contributes to family business and managerial science by systematically mapping and classifying the literature on innovation and family succession into distinct clusters, developing a framework that shows how succession processes impact innovation in family businesses, and putting forward an integrated vision of key lines of enquiry and points of departure for future research.

Following this introduction, this article sets out the methodology applied, provides descriptive analysis of the selected articles and their journals of publication followed by a study of the bibliographic coupling. The following section then presents a discussion and the framework systematised from the research. Finally, we put forward the conclusions and future lines of research originating from this study.

2 Theoretical background

Family businesses perform leading roles in the global economy as they represent the largest number of economic ventures worldwide, and frequently evolve into complex business undertakings (Colli and Rose, 2008; Larissa, 2020). The business and the family are thus intimately interrelated with the business controlled by family members within the scope of obtaining its success and guaranteeing its sustainability by transferring it to future generations (Chua et al., 1999). According to Buang et al. (2013), family businesses run into internal conflicts among their respective members, particularly regarding issues surrounding succession, which represents a crucial factor for future survival, impacting the efficiency of succession processes. Many family businesses do not make it beyond the second generation. Various authors e approached this theme, proposing definitions for successful succession processes and correspondingly identifying the predictive factors for such successful succession processes (Morris et al., 1997; Dyck et al., 2002; Le Breton-Miller et al., 2004; Wang et al. 2015). According to Sharma et al. (2004) and Le Breton-Miller et al. (2004), defining successful succession processes comes about via two different dimensions: the satisfaction of the parties interested in the succession and the positive performance and viability of businesses following the succession process.

CEOs and business owners, sooner or later, must hand over the ownership and management of the company to other persons, with such transfers taking place either suddenly or in planned approaches. Given that the challenge of family business often involves surviving through to the third generation and beyond, families and their businesses have to plan succession across the three facets that constitute family businesses: the family, the business, and its ownership (Belausteguigoitia, 2012; Johnson et al., 2019). Around 70% of family businesses do not survive the transition of the founder to the second generation, with the 30% of family businesses making it through to the second generation then reduced to 15% on reaching the third generation and 11% when arriving at the fourth generation (Poza, 2014).

Bower (2007) defines family business succession as the transition between the management and ownership of the company to the next generation of family members. Devins and Jones (2016) describe succession as a dynamic process that ends up operating as a socialization mechanism between the successor and the former incumbent. A successful succession process reflects not only on the future positive performance of the company but also on its viability (Le Breton-Miller et al., 2004). Succession is essential to generational continuity while also involving family progression at the expense of nonfamily members of staff (Sharma et al., 2001). Thus, such processes constitute important landmarks in family businesses as they necessarily drive change and create instability (Devins and Jones, 2016).

Innovation consists of every activity enabling businesses to design, develop, produce, and launch new products, services, or business models (Hu and Hughes, 2020; Rondi et al. 2019). Innovation means generating a new idea or applying existing ideas in new and different ways. In turn, Schumpeter defined innovation as "the introduction of a new product (or improvements to the quality of an already existing product), the introduction of a new production method, opening a new market, a new source for supplying raw materials or semi-manufactured goods, a new way of industrial organisation" (Schumpeter, 1934, p.66). Furthermore, Tidd et al. (1997) define innovation as a process of transforming opportunities into new ideas and putting them into practice. Ultimately the willingness and ability to innovate (Hu et al., 2022), regardless of specific innovation strategy (Scholes et al., 2021), fundamentally affects the longevity of family businesses.

Schmid et al. (2014) report that research and development (R&D) is higher at family-managed businesses, while earlier studies demonstrate the effects of family and their influences on the innovation outputs of companies (Classen et al., 2014; De Massis et al., 2015a; Matzler et al., 2015). Nonfamily businesses typically display a greater willingness to deploy formal monitoring and control mechanisms that stifle innovation activities, while family businesses tend to have more open channels of communication, make decisions informally and maintain flexibility in their processes that together create more innovation-friendly environments (Craig and Dibrell, 2006). A study by Classen et al. (2014) also reports that family businesses produce more process innovations than non-family companies. However, De Massis et al. (2015a) found that the innovation climate is more adverse to risk and more informal in family businesses, and their degree of innovativeness varies markedly for resource and socioemotional reasons (Hu et al., 2022).

Family businesses display different capacities to undertake more efficient transformations of their scarce resources into the production of innovation, thereby helping family businesses to achieve more innovation than non-family companies in terms of the relative amounts of resources consumed (Duran et al., 2016). Family businesses are better at 'doing more with less'. Duran et al. (2016) tie this in part to succession, arguing that the successor CEOs of family companies display strategic advantages that enable them to nurture their resources better and ensure the conversion of inputs into outputs is more productive.

Innovation is crucial for family businesses (Cesaroni et al. 2021), with its role deepened per its capacity to strengthen the sustainability of businesses through successive generations (Zellweger et al., 2012; Rondi et al. 2019; Ahmad et al., 2021). Many researchers propose that family involvement in management and ownership may influence business innovation (Llach and Nordqvist 2010; Kellermanns et al., 2012; Hughes et al., 2018; Cucculelli and Peruzzi, 2020; Scholes et al., 2021). But such influence and how this takes place alongside other driving factors are not yet well-defined by the literature, with research studies returning mixed results (De Massis et al., 2013; Calabrò et al., 2019; Hu and Hughes, 2020). Röd (2016, p.198) even describes this family influence as a "double-edged sword" potentially generating advantages and disadvantages for family business innovation.

Few studies have approached how innovation within family businesses changes over time and which factors influence the evolution of businesses and the generations managing them (Cesaroni et al. 2021). De Massis et al. (2015b) argue there is a need for further research to convey the diversity prevailing among family companies and identify the factors explaining the different orientations to innovation and why some family businesses successfully innovate over the longer term while others fail to do so.

Furthermore, researchers have reported how family businesses tend to be risk-averse, hindering the investment of capital in financing innovation projects that only carry uncertain results (Block et al., 2013). Scholes et al. (2021) indicate a general preference for exploitative innovation strategies among family firms because of governance mechanisms implemented by family stakeholders. According to Kotlar and De Massis (2013), family companies need to make recourse to external sources to obtain the capital necessary for investments in innovation, which may compromise the family objective of maintaining long term control over the business. Calabrò et al. (2018) refer to how conservative stances and organizational rigidity represent negative aspects for family businesses in terms of innovation that calls into question traditional product lines even while a long-term orientation and the involvement of various generations in the business can foster their innovation capacities (Cucculelli et al. 2016; De Massis et al., 2015b).

Research into family businesses innovation has deepened (De Massis, et al., 2015ad, 2016; Fuetsch, 2017) even while dividing into two areas, one focused on innovation inputs and the other on innovation outputs (De Massis et al., 2013). The studies of innovation inputs demonstrate that family companies invest less in innovation than nonfamily businesses (Feranita et al., 2017). According to Mitchell et al. (2009), research into the succession of CEOs in family businesses describes the transfer of control to the next generation, with these authors revealing the role of successor CEOs in product innovation and their openness to new ideas, taking risks, and accepting new knowledge and perspectives (Salvato, 2004; Kraiczy et al., 2015; Woodfield and Husted, 2017). Scholes et al. (2021) found that family businesses are more willing to adopt an explorative innovation strategy when next-generation involvement in the business is high, speaking again to the symbiotic relationship between innovation and succession.

3 Methodology

Bibliographic coupling deems there is an interrelationship between two articles whenever both cite in-common one or more articles, with the references to the articles cited taken into consideration as the means of determining the levels of similarity between these articles (Habib and Afzal, 2019; Kraus et al., 2020; Kraus et al. 2021; Linnenluecke et al., 2020; Donthu et al., 2021). Kessler (1963) defines bibliographic coupling as the only item of reference adopted by two articles. We adhered to general good practices and principles set by Kraus et al. (2022). Furthermore, the objective of systematic literature reviews involves, according to Tranfield et al. (2003), “a replicable and transparent process, hence, a detailed technology that seeks to minimize the bias through exhaustive searches of the literature, the published and unpublished articles and returning a path of decisions, procedures and conclusions to the reviewer” (p. 212).

In order to achieve the above-defined objectives, this systematic literature review made recourse to VOSviewer software to delineate the bibliographic coupling. The

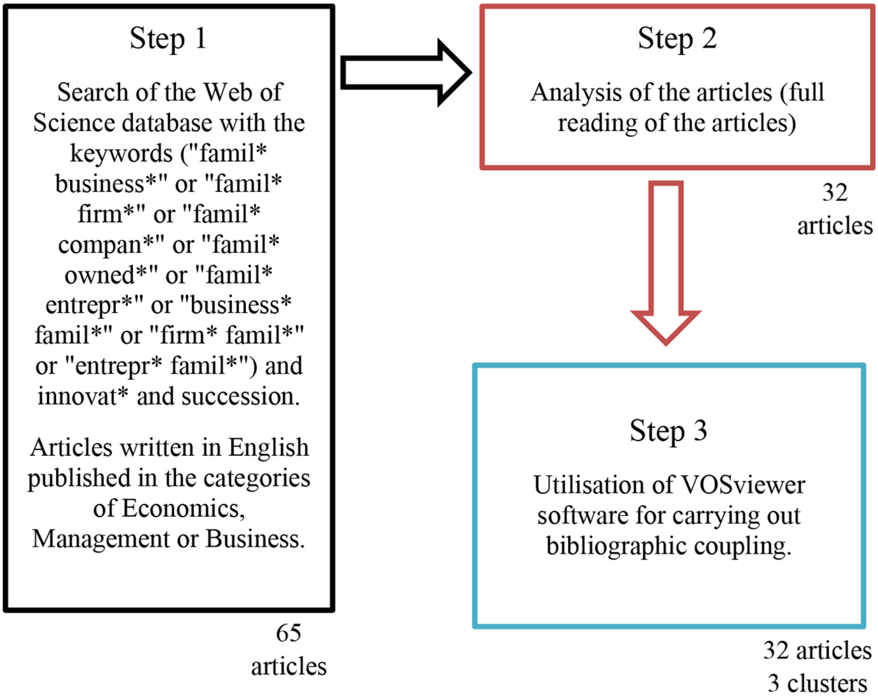

Fig. 1 Stages in the Systematic Literature Review (Own elaboration)

present systematic literature review began by defining the keywords that would be used in the database. Web of Science was the database chosen, and the keywords selected were based on family businesses, their different variations, innovation, and the succession process that family businesses go through. The process also included defining the type of documents used in this literature review, and the language that they would be in, settling on only articles written in English.

The systematic literature review process spans three stages. The first stage here consisted of searching the Web of Science database, in December 2021, deploying the keywords (“famil* business*” or “famil* firm*” or “famil* compan*” or “famil* owned*” or “famil* entrepr*” or “business* famil*” or “firm* famil*” or “entrepr* famil*”) and innovat* and succession. We selected only articles written in English, in the categories of Economics, Management or Business, resulting in 65 articles. In the second stage, we analyzed the titles and summaries of the articles to ensure the selection of only thoseanalyzing innovation and succession in family businesses. This step led to 32 articles meeting this criterion. This analysis consisted of a complete reading of the articles. After reading, a selection was made on whether each article addressed the theme under analysis, innovation and succession in family businesses. The articles that did not approach the theme were discarded from the database. The third and final phase involved the application of the VOSviewer software for bibliographic coupling. The research protocol is set out in Fig. 1.

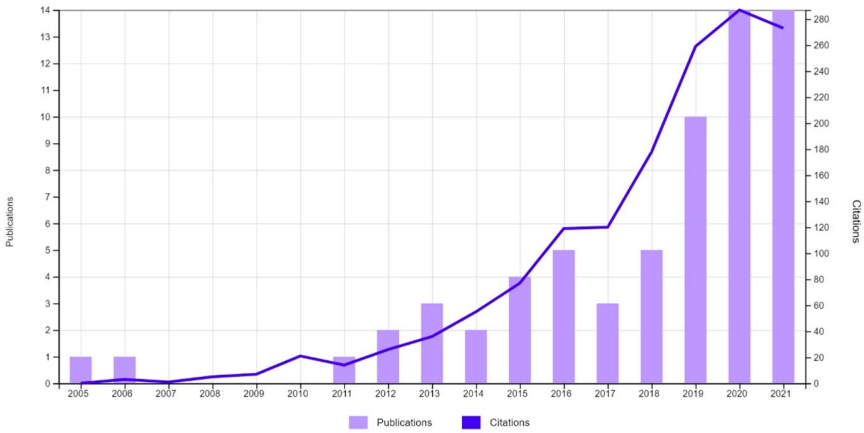

Fig. 2 Annual growth in publications on innovation and succession (Own elaboration)

After the search on Web of Science with the pre-defined keywords, the systematic literature review started with 65 articles. After an analysis and read-through of these articles, 33 were eliminated, either because they did not address the theme or were duplicates. The software VOSviewer was used on the final sample of 32 articles for the bibliographic coupling. Through bibliographic coupling, the remaining articles were classified into clusters. After the selection by the VOSviewer software, a new reading of the articles by cluster was performed to identify common lines of inquiry and research among each article, to verify whether articles were related to each other, and to determine the precise theme each article focused on. This process ultimately determined the name of each of the clusters identified.

4 Results

4.1 Descriptive analysis of the articles

The following descriptive analysis and those presented in Figs. 2 and 3 focus on the 65 articles that appeared in the first step of the systematic literature review. In contrast, Fig. 4; Table 1 present the map of clusters and the composition of each cluster based on the 32 articles that appeared in the third step of the systematic literature review.

Figure 2 displays the growth in the initial 65 articles (before the analysis of the articles) and the number of citations published in the last five years. The peak number of publications occurred in 2021, even though there has been an ongoing and significant rise in publications ever since 2018. Figure 2 shows a time interval of 4 years, by choice of the authors, which makes it possible to observe the decrease in the number of citations between 2019 and 2020. This decrease in the number of citations may be related to the Covid-19 pandemic or, in an extreme situation, stagnated interest in the literature on innovation, succession and family businesses.

Table 1 Cluster Composition

Cluster 1 (n=15)	*Cluster 2 (n=12)*	*Cluster 3 (n=5)*
Ahmad et al., (2021)	Chalus-Sauvannet et al., (2016)	Civelek et al., (2021a)
Alrubaishi et al., (2021)	Chirapanda, (2020)	Ključnikov et al., (2021)
Calabrò et al., (2021)	Hillebrand, (2019)	Grundström et al., (2012)
Carney et al., (2019)	Letonja et al., (2016)	Civelek et al., (2021b)
Cesaroni et al. (2021)	Letonja & Duh, (2016)	Santiago, (2015)
Chen et al., (2020)	Letonja et al., (2021)	
Filser et al., (2018)	Li et al. (2021)	
Hauck & Prügl, (2015)	Schell et al., (2018)	
Kotlar & Chrisman, (2019)	Tobak et al., (2018)	
Memili et al., (2014)	Wang et al., (2019)	
Querbach et al., (2020)	Woodfield & Husted, (2017)	
Rondi et al. (2019)	Zybura et al. (2021)	
Schüssler et al., (2017)		
Wong & Chen, (2016)		
Yang et al. (2021)		

The 65 articles were published in a total of 44 journals with the *Journal of Family Business Strategy* accounting for the largest number with eight articles, followed by the *Journal of Family Business Management* on six, with *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* providing four publications. A sum of six journals accounts for two publications apiece, and there are 35 journals with but a single article on succession and innovation. Figure 3 encompasses the original 65 articles and details the ten journals with the largest number of publications and their respective years of publications. The timeframe in Fig. 3 shows us when articles that address the theme under study begin to appear and what kind of journals they are published in.

Table 2 presents the top ten journals and the respective country of the initial 65 articles. Table 2 also presents the h-index, which represents the number of articles in a journal that have been cited an *h* number of times. Table 2 shows that the United Kingdom is the country that appears most often as the country of origin of the journals with the largest number of publications, appearing in 6 out of 10. The values of the h-index of the ten journals with the highest number of publications are also between 18 and 169, with Equilibrium-Quarterly Journal of Economics and Economic Policy, from Poland, representing the lowest number, and Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, from the United States, representing the highest number.

The final 32 articles present various methodologies, from quantitative, qualitative, combined (quantitative and qualitative), and theoretical methodology. Of the final base of 32 articles, 17 present a quantitative methodology, 13 have a qualitative methodology and the remaining 2 have a combined and theoretical methodology.

Table 3 below shows the 20 journals where the final 32 articles were published, the number of citations per journal, and the H-index and country of origin. It is pos-

Fig. 3 Journals with most publications (Own elaboration)

Table 2 Journal country and H-index (initial 65 articles)

Journal	H-index	Country
Equilibrium-Quarterly Journal of Economics and Economic Policy	18	Poland
Journal of Family Business Management	20	United Kingdom
European Journal of International Management	28	United Kingdom
Journal of Family Business Strategy	51	United Kingdom
Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development	73	United Kingdom
Asia Pacific Journal of Management	83	United States
Journal of Small Business Management	120	United Kingdom
Journal of Product Innovation Management	154	United Kingdom
Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice	169	United States

sible to observe that 5 of the journals do not present any citation, however, 4 of them present an h-index above 20 with the Serbian Journal of Management presents an h-index of 11.

The journal Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice has the highest h-index (169); however, it is one of the journals without any citations in the final base of 32 articles. The Journal of Product Innovation has an h-index of 154 and 54 citations. In comparison, the journal with the highest number of citations is the Journal of Family Business Strategy with 193 citations and an h-index of 51.

Table 3 Journal H-index, citations and Country (final 32 articles)

Journal	Number of Citations	H-index	Country
Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice	0	169	United States
Administrative Sciences	0	23	Switzerland
Managerial and Decision Economics	0	55	United Kingdom
Economics & Sociology	0	25	Poland
Serbian Journal of Management	0	11	Serbia
Emerging Markets Finance and Trade	1	43	United States
International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research	2	75	United Kingdom
Equilibrium-Quarterly Journal of Economics and Economic Policy	2	18	Poland
International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation	3	21	United Kingdom
Organizacija	8	11	Slovenia
Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences-Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l Administration	9	53	United States
European Journal of International Management	9	28	United Kingdom
Journal of Change Management	9	44	United States
Journal of Innovation & Knowledge	12	29	Netherlands
Knowledge Management Research & Practice	12	42	United Kingdom
Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies	14	47	United States
Journal of Family Business Management	14	20	United Kingdom
Journal of Small Business Management	16	120	United Kingdom
Journal of Product Innovation Management	54	154	United Kingdom
Journal of Family Business Strategy	193	51	United Kingdom

Tables 2 and 3 show that the origin of the articles in the research (Table 2 shows the 65 original articles from phase 1, Table 3 shows the 32 articles analyzed in the research) focuses mainly on the United Kingdom, followed by the United States. Switzerland, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, and the Netherlands are some of the countries that appear as the origin of the journals.

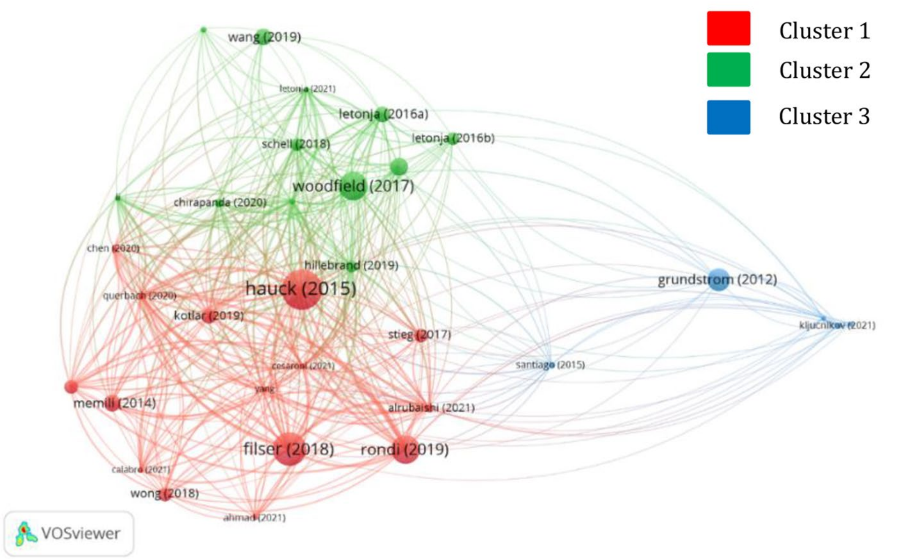

Fig. 4 Network of Clusters (VOSviewer)

4.2 Bibliographic coupling analysis

To analyze the core themes to innovation and family succession, we carried out bibliographic coupling through recourse to VOSviewer. Every article we analyzed, even that have not yet gained any citations, thus not excluding articles that have not received citations as this might lead to the loss of articles essential to the depth of the research. The VOSviewer software formed clusters with a minimum of three articles per cluster, with the 32 articles breaking down into three clusters, which Fig. 4 duly portrays.

Table 1 presents the composition of the three clusters encountered, with each one corresponding to one of the respective approaches: (1) Impact of Succession on Innovation, (2) Succession and Sharing of Knowledge and (3) Obstacles to Innovation.

4.2.1 Cluster 1: impact of succession on innovation (N = 15)

The 15 articles present in this cluster contribute to the literature with knowledge on the shaping of innovation and the influences of families on the potential for family business innovation. Ahmad et al. (2021) explore how the involvement of families in companies affects their innovative capacities, with such innovation enabling the companies to embark on the path to sustainable longevity. The authors demonstrate that innovation capacities are a life and death factor for companies operating in the globally competitive environment. In turn, Cesaroni et al. (2021) approach the ways family businesses' innovation capacities evolve between the first and second generations as well as the conditions that improve and favour this process. These authors also propose a typology of founders and successors concerning innovation and the influences such processes are subject to as they evolve from the founding to the successor generation.

Querbach et al. (2020) analyze how and under which conditions the retention of the predecessor's board membership impact on product innovation in family businesses in the wake of succession processes and with the results demonstrate that retaining the existing board of directors brings about negative consequences in terms of product innovation.

Wong and Chen (2018) study how the family firm's founder shapes the innovation performance of successor family CEOs and what outcomes compared with the succession of non-family related CEOs. They also study whether the results of innovation announcements receive stronger reactions on stock markets than those published following the succession of an external family member as CEO, with founders remaining within the company (belonging to the board), reducing the negative effect existing between heirs and innovation performance standards.

Carney et al. (2021) consider the differences in "lean" innovation performances among publicly listed family companies and those with open capital structures embarking on succession processes and comparing with those yet to begin any such process. These authors maintain that family businesses successors emerge significantly as keen adopters of lean innovation patented strategies.

Alrubaishi et al. (2021) approach the differences in the capacities and economic or non-economic orientation of family businesses and how these facets shape innovative activities. Their findings point to the need for businesses to hold the resource capacities as well as the appropriate economic orientation and shunning non-economic viewpoints in order to foster innovation.

Yang et al. (2021) empirically gauge the impact that succession has on family businesses in terms of their investments in corporate innovation. These authors also examine two different types of resources and state ownership and the potential moderating role existing in the relationship between succession and innovation investments. The authors identify how succession hinders innovation investment in family companies.

Kotlar and Chrisman (2019) discuss the influence of family involvement over processes of organizational and strategic changes and, according to the literature, the family variable represents an important driver of change and innovation in the succession processes of family companies. Calabrò et al. (2021) debate the role of the family as an essential input for dealing with company crises during the Covid-19 pandemic and how these transform the challenges into opportunities to emerge more robustly from the financial crisis. These authors apply a research agenda from crisis management to family companies with four articles that consider succession, innovation and family governance.

In turn, the research by Rondi et al. (2019) focuses on the question of what role the family system plays in resolving the paradox between willingness-ability and how to unblock the potential for research innovation. The authors construct innovation postures applicable to family companies and correspondingly identifying four ideal types: (1) Learner, (2) Recreator, (3) Researcher and (4) Adventurer while also exploring the innovation stances of family firms and the dimensions associated with families to resolve the willingness-ability paradox.

Some studies delve into just how second-generation family company CEOS generate their motivation for investments in financial assets. The authors conclude that second-generation CEO characteristics, market competition and financial restrictions hold significant effects for second-generation successors even while there was no significant relationship between the financing of assets by the second generation of family businesses and their respective levels of performance, with investment in business innovation not harming the core business operations of businesses (Ejupi-Ibrahimi, et al. 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Korherr and Kanbach 2021; Nordqvist et al.2013; Strobl et al., 2020)

Furthermore, Filser et al. (2018) put forward a theoretical model that explains how family functionality and socio-emotional wealth influence the innovation capacities of companies. The authors apply a structural equation model which returns divergences between certain dimensions to socio-emotional wealth and innovation in companies. In turn, Hauck and Pruegl (2015) research how socio-emotional interrelate with the perspectives of the owners/managers and the phase of intra-family leadership succession as an opportunity for innovation activities in family businesses. The authors report how the existence of family adaptability and the proximity of a member to the company positively associated with the perceptions of the succession phase as an innovation opportunity.

Schussler et al. (2017) deepen the knowledge on the conditions in which change triggers the pathways to the internationalization of family businesses. These authors reporting that successor generation adopt internationalization strategies due to their long-term orientations with succession triggering the search for internationalization of a “born again global” family business type. Alayo et al. (2021) conducted similar research.

Finally, Memili et al. (2014) approach and explore the organizational psychological capital (PsyCap) in franchised family businesses. The authors provide an overall vision of the important role that PsyCap plays in franchised family businesses and in family succession intentions for building up innovation-friends behaviours in companies.

4.2.2 Cluster 2: succession and sharing of knowledge (N = 12)

This cluster contains a total of 12 articles that address family succession and how this may bring about effects on behaviours in the business. These studies also reveal important factors such as the sustainability of family businesses in addition to exploring the relationship between the entrepreneurial competencies of the founders and the innovation capacities of their successors.

Chalus-Sauvannet et al. (2016) tackle the cases of family succession in which such is an unexpected event, analyzing the cases of descendants that take up other careers outside of the family business but then return and become the successor. The authors set out the different motivations of descendants for such returns and the acceptance of succession; (1) benefitting from a professional career and personal success outside of the family business, acquiring various advantages for taking up a leadership position in the family business; (2) succession is the result of a personal and deliberated personal decision, neither forced nor pushed; (3) the profile and the situation of an unforeseen succession frames them as legitimate leaders with the heirs perceiving the family business management position as compensation for abandoning a promising career; (4) the acquisitions resulting from negotiations that place the heirs in the same position as the older generation and thus at the same level as the predecessors; (5) acting as entrepreneurs through their proactivity in the succession decisions of their parents, taking on risks, detecting new business opportunities and not hesitating over innovating; and (6) implementing changes while maintaining the support of predecessors in order to avoid destabilising the organisation.

According to Li et al. (2021), leaders who are exiting tend to continue to closely observe their successors following any transgenerational succession and that the successors concentrate on short term developments and investing less in R&D. These authors find substance for their argument that trans-generational succession reduces the intensity of R&D. Schell et al. (2018), in turn, focus on planned intra-family successions to grasp the role of social networks during succession processes. The authors identify patterns related to the transfer of networks of contacts that influence the duration and structure of the succession process. Schell et al. (2018) also observe how these social networks generate a strategic impact that may be crucial to the long-term survival of family businesses.

Wang et al. (2019) discuss how in questions around company succession, focusing on the successors and analyzing the impact of the successor's knowledge and desire for succession on sustainable corporate innovation and the success of succession. Their research findings observe that the approval of the leader shapes the relationship between the company successor and its sustainable innovation. Chirapanda (2020) analyzed factors important to the sustainability of family businesses before identifying how innovation, competitive advantage, leadership and team management, and establishing good relationships with the community constitute essential steps in achieving succession processes in family businesses.

Tobak et al. (2018) examine the experience, successful management and the succession of generations in a Hungarian company, and their results demonstrate that to ensure the maintenance of appropriate succession activities, family management should plan in advance. These authors also discuss how particular needs, including the sharing of knowledge, innovation performance and the best practices making up the company culture, perform an important role in passing on the baton within family businesses.

Furthermore, within this cluster, Letonja et al. (2016a) probe the relationship between the entrepreneurial competencies of the founders of family SMEs and the innovation of their successors. The authors convey how the entrepreneurial competencies of founders (their creativity, attitudes towards risk and technical knowledge and abilities) positively correlate with the innovation capacities of their successors.

Zybura et al. (2021) study the production of innovation following the succession of family members while also examining whether the origins of successors and the sustained influence of predecessors interrelate with innovation following succession, with these authors discovering that the extended influence of predecessors boosts the probability of producing innovations following succession processes.

In addition, Hillebrand (2019) describes the generation–innovation relationship in family businesses and recognizing how the degree of family influence over the business varies down through the generations. The author tests whether the generation–innovation relationship derives from considerations relating to family management and the intention to transfer family control, with this author proposing that family businesses raise their production of innovation over generations. At the same time, innovation has positive and negative effects following increases in family influence.

Letonja and Duh (2016) study the dynamics of knowledge transfer processes and their effects on the innovation capacities of the successors. Their results identify how the tacit knowledge transferred from founders to successors is of importance even while not in itself sufficient to boost the innovation capacities of successors. Woodfield and Husted (2017) examine the sharing of knowledge among generations within family businesses operating in traditional industries before proposing that sharing knowledge is bidirectional, leading to innovative results and change. According to these findings, the traditional industries tend to lead towards dependency and cause significant inertia regarding managing the innovation activities ongoing in companies.

Finally, Letonja et al. (2021) also explore the dynamics of knowledge transfers undertaken during family business succession and the effects these have on the innovation capacities of successors. Their results demonstrate the importance of founders transferring knowledge to successors even though this is not a sufficient factor for boosting the innovation capacities of their successors.

4.2.3 Cluster 3: obstacles to innovation (N = 5)

This cluster incorporates five articles that contribute research findings on how the innovation capacities of family businesses vary in keeping with different criteria, including company size, sector of activity and industry. The articles in this cluster analyze innovation and succession in family businesses over the long term and whether business inertia hinders their progress.

For example, Grundstrom et al. (2012) compare the different forms of company management and the respective perceptions in keeping with the adopted type of succession (internal family successions versus external acquisitions). The article evaluates post-succession perceptions of innovation and management in family businesses to conclude that the choice of successor and the business-related values bring about inertia within the scope of which only minor changes in the innovation orientation become feasible. While external managers may concentrate on growth through innovation, family businesses diversify so as not to abandon prior businesses. In the research, the authors identify some intermediate factors such as client involvement, type of SME and the motivations for acquisition that shape the innovation culture of organizations and establish explanatory connections to the intensity and methodologies of innovation.

Civelek et al. (2021a) approach how the innovation capacities of family SMEs transform following the sector of activity, company size, industry and type of succession. The authors report that SME innovation differs depending on the sector of activity, size and industry while furthermore demonstrating that the innovation capacities of SMEs do not alter according to the involvement of succession. Ključnikov et al. (2021) also analyze the differences in innovation capacities and the obstacles some family businesses encounter with their research findings confirming that the innovation capacities of companies do not depend on the characteristics or age of the founder/entrepreneur.

Furthermore, the research by Santiago (2015) into how inertia or omission explains the failure of family companies to make progress as failure to act causes company decline and thus conveys the need for action and strategies to avoid companies entering into decline with this author maintaining that when some family members are unable to introduce innovation into companies, in its own right, constitutes a guarantee of business failure.

Finally, Civelek et al. (2021b) examine differences existing in the innovation capacities of family businesses, taking into consideration the age of the founders of each company, the juridical status of their businesses and their succession processes. According to these authors, the capacity for global innovation does not differ according to the business' or the founder's characteristics but with higher levels of organizational innovation emerging in SMEs where the successor is present in the company.

5 Discussion and framework for innovation and succession

The clusters found in this research thus present various perspectives on family businesses, the succession process, and the effects they have on each other. The first cluster addresses the impact of the succession process on innovation, however, this cluster does not present how innovation is impacted, and how the succession process can be prevented from affecting the innovation of the companies. Cluster 2 focuses on succession and knowledge sharing. Yet, it does not mention or present how knowledge sharing affects the innovation capacity of companies or how the succession process influences the sharing of knowledge within companies. The third and last cluster presents the obstacles to innovation. However, it reveals few publications that mention some of the obstacles to innovation and do not present the causes or consequences of these obstacles.

It is also possible to observe clusters 1 and 2 present a closer connection, compared to cluster 3, after examining Fig. 4 above in this research. It can be assumed that the clusters Impact of Succession in Innovation (1) and Succession and Sharing of Knowledge (2) have a stronger connection due to the proximity of the themes addressed in each cluster. Cluster 3 presents mostly articles related to the obstacles to innovation, as the type of industry and sector of activity of companies, and both clusters 1 and 2 address the issue of succession and its impact on the businesses. They have more characteristics in common and appear more interconnected (Fig. 4).

This research thereby makes contributions, including the systematization of the existing research on the field of innovation and family businesses and their respective succession processes and correspondingly providing a mapping of the literature and an integrated vision of the state-of-the-art while putting forward points of departure for future lines of research. The research shows that the family is vital for the company, causing effects with positive or negative repercussions on the innovation capacity of companies, which can lead to the failure or success of family businesses.

These findings indicate the importance that the family's involvement in the firm and its innovation activities impacts the success of family businesses and their future.

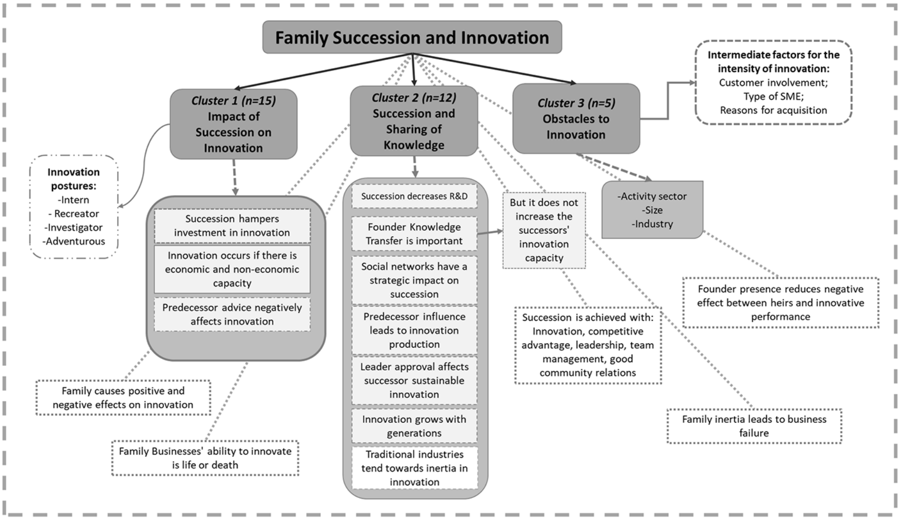

Fig. 5 Research framework (Own elaboration)

Based on the three clusters obtained from the bibliographic coupling of the 32 articles, Fig. 5 sets out the proposed framework for innovation and succession. This framework conveys how succession processes impact business innovation and how advice from predecessors may bring negative consequences for innovation, even though different stances toward innovation also emerge and with families driving both positive and negative effects for innovation in businesses.

The framework also details how the transfer of knowledge by founders holds importance, even while in itself insufficient to boost the capacity for the innovation of successors. The framework further exposes how the influence of the predecessor guides the production of innovation in family businesses with successful succession processes attained by innovation, competitive advantage, leadership, team management and good relations with the community. This framework thereby details the themes approached by research into succession and innovation in family companies and the potential lines for future research.

The proposed framework demonstrates the essential points of each of the clusters identified in the research. The framework presents how innovation affects the succession processes of family businesses, and how innovation influences the success of these businesses. The framework presented also conveys the different stances towards innovation adopted by families alongside the respective effects they cause and how the transfer of knowledge holds particular importance to the family and the succession process, even while in itself an insufficient factor for boosting the innovation capacities of successors. The proposed framework thus enables the analysis and observation of the outputs of past research findings and that approach and define the paths for future research projects.

Succession hinders investment in innovation by family businesses, according to Yang et al. (2021) even while the family emerges as an important input to business succession and innovation. Research findings also point to how the predecessor continuing to provide advice holds negative consequences for innovation by those businesses even while the sustained influence of predecessors leads to innovation following the succession process. The transfer of knowledge by the founder is important to the succession process, although insufficient to boost the innovation capacities of their successors.

6 Conclusions, limitations and future research directions

We may conclude that succession constitutes an integral facet of family businesses and may alter their respective levels of innovation. Regarding the issue of succession, we may also accept that this process triggers specific alterations in family businesses that shape the production of innovation by the successors and the production of innovation by family businesses. This article also reports on the need for the transfer and sharing of knowledge between predecessors and successors and identifying some factors of importance not only to succession but also to business sustainability, such as innovation, competitive advantage, leadership, team management and good relationships with the community.

We may also affirm that innovation generates impacts and influences how family businesses behave and undertake their succession processes with these impacts also extending to the innovation capacities in effect at these companies. The current study sought to identify how succession in family businesses shapes their levels of innovation even while the bibliographic coupling results demonstrate that the literature displays greater interest in the impact of succession on innovation (cluster 1). The other clusters, succession and the sharing of knowledge (cluster 2) and obstacles to innovation (cluster 3), demonstrate the recent rise in research outputs since 2019, reflecting both the recent nature of these theme alongside their growing importance.

This study conveys how research has focused on how innovation and succession impact family companies even while there was scant research on how innovation might leverage the succession processes of companies or how succession processes stimulate the innovation capacities of their successors. The literature reflects the need to expand research into the effects of succession on company innovation and how they maintain their innovation capacities within the scope of family businesses following succession processes.

This article maps the key themes in the literature on innovation and succession in family businesses and suggests new research lines. This also differs from other systematic literature reviews as this research expands the knowledge on succession and innovation in family businesses following many recent publications.

A limitation of this study is its recourse to only one database, which may have prevented access to other articles relevant to this research field. Moreover, despite care at every step, the process of excluding articles may have rejected articles falling within the scope of this research. Another limitation of the study is the timeframe used in the systematic literature review protocol, which covers publications up to the year 2021, excluding articles after this date, which may have added nuance to the present study.

In conclusion, the research findings make contributions across both the theoretical and practical levels through this systematization of the existing research on family

Table 4 Future lines of research

Cluster	Future lines of research
(1) Impact of Succession on Innovation	• How innovation positionings shape succession in family companies • How to transform succession processes into innovation • Factors influencing innovation in family companies with family successors *versus* external successors. • What are the best conditions for innovation during succession processes
(2) Succession and Sharing of Knowledge	• Why do the innovation activities of traditional industries stagnate in family businesses? • How does innovation rise or decrease over the course of generations? • In what way does the influence of predecessors alter the production of innovation by their successors?
(3) Obstacles to Innovation	• Studying which factors impact on the innovation capacities of family companies • What types of innovation are subject to influence by the characteristics of company founders

business succession and innovation. Our study provides new insights and a better understanding of the themes dominant in the literature. Our study also represents the first systematic literature review on the succession–innovation relationship in the family business. The practical research implications span the directions for future lines of research, thereby meeting the gaps identified in Table 4. Our study demonstrates how this theme remains far from fully explored.

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