

## **Streszczenie rozprawy doktorskiej w języku angielskim**

Recent research on family entrepreneurship has shown that heterogeneity is a fundamental feature defining the specificity of family businesses. Hence, the objectives and management strategies of a family business are determined by the size, financial results and professionalization degree. It is also the case with regard to succession, one of the most frequently discussed issues constituting the specificity of family entrepreneurship.

Scientific research does not sufficiently address the issue of differences in succession processes depending on the size of a family business size, and there is hardly any concerning small family businesses. The dissertation in question tries to fill this gap setting and the main objective of the work is to provide information on the specific nature of succession processes in small family businesses. Thus, in the conducted empirical research, attempts were made to show the specificity of succession processes by referring only to the determinants typical of small family businesses.

Taking small family businesses features into consideration, it is assumed that the dependencies and mutual relations between these processes and the life cycles of the owner family and the company have a significant impact on succession processes. Verifying the possibility to view succession processes in small family businesses from the perspective of the life cycles of the company and the family is the second main objective of the work.

The objectives of the dissertation influence the structure and framework of the research, which is divided into a theoretical literature review, and the empirical study. The first four chapters are literature studies the literature review, the fifth chapter is the account of the empirical study.

The first chapter presents the issues related to the problematic issue of family business definitions and the various typologies of family businesses. Next, the nature of family business is shown, focusing on its specific features and distinction of its activity. The chapter also discusses the development of family businesses in the time perspective and possible due conflicts at each stage. In this chapter the definition of family business is adopted which meets the doctorate's requirements.

The second chapter opens with a discussion of the nature of small enterprises is discussed and the issues-related to their definition. Two leading approaches in this area are presented: qualitative and quantitative one, and the application scope of each is indicated.

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Jakub Argyinacki

Next, the definition of enterprise size classes in Polish law according to quantitative measures was presented and an attempt was made to operationalize the definition of a small family business for the purposes of this doctoral thesis. The chapter ends with the presentation of family businesses share in the Polish economy.

The third chapter defines the concept and nature of family succession as a specific problem of family businesses. The determinants of succession in the areas most frequently discussed by scientists are presented. The analysis of the research enabled to identify facilitators and barriers to succession.

The fourth chapter presents succession strategies undertaken by family business owners and instruments for building succession strategies. Then, attention was drawn to the necessity indicated in the latest research to look differently at the succession process and re-verify the criterion of successful succession. Thus, research on the causes of survival of family businesses, including those undermining the higher survival rate of family businesses from non-family businesses. The chapter ends with an analysis of errors in succession strategies seen from the perspective of company and family life cycles. This perspective becomes a proposal to conduct the author's own empirical research.

The fifth chapter is empirical. In this chapter the research framework, methodology and research tools applied, along with their justification were discussed. In the next part of the chapter, the characteristics of the research sample are presented, and then the results of the research are presented. According to the concept, the degree of succession processes advancement in the surveyed companies was determined. At the same time, the respondents' opinion on the subsequent stages of succession was presented, with particular details of attitudes related to the actual or possible transfer of full power and ownership. Next, the economic situation of the surveyed enterprises at various of succession processes stages is presented. An important complement to the research results is data on the owners and successors knowledge regarding the succession process.

In the empirical part, the methodology was adapted to the specificity of the subject and object of the research. Due to the specificity of small family businesses, it was decided to conduct qualitative research in the form of individual structured interviews on a sample of 30 family businesses and individual in-depth studies (case studies) on a sample of 5 family businesses.

The empirical research results presented fill the research gap as they provide missing information in the literature on the specificity of succession processes in small family

businesses. The research results show that the synchronisation of succession chronology and life cycles of the company and family (owner and successor) has a significant impact on the succession processes course in small family businesses, and the economic situation of the company is one of the most important determinants of succession. The research also indicates that having different possibilities of succession regulation in small family businesses, the transfer of knowledge, values, power and ownership is perceived separately, and the concept of successful succession does not necessarily involve transferring all these elements. The lack of succession in its traditional sense, seen as a transfer of power and ownership, is not synonymous with failure for the small family businesses owners and successors for the owner family of a small business.

The aim of the work was also to verify the possibility of viewing succession processes in small family businesses from the perspective of the life cycles of the company and the family. The applied empirical research procedure and the created research tools have proved to be a reliable way of collecting and analysing data on succession processes in small family businesses. Its exact description makes it also possible to reuse it under the same or similar experimental conditions.

Thus, it is stated that the literature and empirical research undertaken according to the adopted research procedure enabled the achievement of the set goals and filled the research gap defined at the very start.

Keywords: family business, small family business, succession, succession processes, succession in a small family business, succession processes in a small family business, business life cycle, family life cycle.

*Jalimb Chyngal*