

■ Research Paper

Systemic Principles in the Study of Family Businesses

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This article presents a systems perspective on administration and psychology in the study of family owned companies. The principles of general systems theory and basic humanistic assumptions of business administration and the theoretical concepts of organizational and work psychology have been addressed. These analyses have been organized into a systematic interdisciplinary methodology to evaluate the environment of family companies and the realities of families involved in the management function. It is clearly evident that there is a pressing need to study viable ways for a joint performance evaluation between psychology and administrative functions that consider the interaction and interdependence between these disciplines. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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INTRODUCTION

This study views the family business as having two systemic dimensions: the business itself and the family. The relationship between these two explains their ongoing function as a business institution that aims to maintain and reproduce strategies. We believe that the diverse activities of members of a family business can be explained through the interrelationship between different institutional systems. Typically, the relationship between business and family creates conflicts at both levels that influence each other. Osorio

(2011) states that it is natural for businesses to seek advice to deal with their management difficulties and that understanding human issues is as important as technical managerial ones. In family businesses, interpersonal relationships become more difficult to handle, and conflicts are often passed from family life into businesses, leading to failure in many cases.

We have chosen a systemic approach (Bertalanffy, 1968) to carry out an interdisciplinary analysis for explaining management practice and family dynamics. Family businesses share a personal and professional reality that affects both of them, and there is a need to balance this work–family relationship. A research by Strobino and Teixeira (2014) conducted among women entrepreneurs showed that one of the main reasons that lead

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