Role Conflicts of Family Members in Family Firms

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Abstract:

The existence of role conflict among organizational members tends to create tensions inside organizations worldwide. However, in the context of family firms, having a dual role of being a member of a family and a member of the firm can represent interesting differences that make family firms an important form of organization to study. Following the tenets of the stewardship theory, our article develops a model where reciprocal altruism represents an antecedent to role conflict among family members. We further argue that perceptions of collective efficacy among family members have a moderating effect on the relationship between reciprocal altruism and role conflict. Last, we propose that role conflict in family firms reduces the family firm performance. Implications for future research and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Family firms | Role conflict | Reciprocal altruism | Collective efficacy

Article:

Family-owned and/or -managed businesses dominate the economic landscape worldwide (Morck & Yeung, 2004). Yet, little is known about the particular challenge that family firms encounter due to the distinctive nature of role conflict among family members who work in the organization. Family members are faced with multiple roles and activities that emerge from acting as members of the family and members of the family business (e.g., Gersick, Davis, Hampton, & Lansberg, 1997; Katz & Kahn, 1978), resulting in role conflict (for recent meta-analyses, see Schmidt, Roesler, Kusserow, & Rau, in press; Tubre & Collins, 2000).

Role conflict is defined as "the degree of incongruity or incompatibility of expectations associated with the role" (Croci, Doukas, & Gonenc, 2011, p. 474). Role conflict occurs when at least one role expectation is incompatible with at least one other (Beehr, Drexler, & Faulkner, 1997). Fulfilling the demands of one role might undermine the second role and the tension associated with one role can extend into the other one (Stoner, Hartman, & Arora, 1990). For family firms, managing role conflict among the working family members is critical because of the dual roles of being a family member and a family business employee (e.g., Barton & Gordon, 1988). In addition to highlighting the importance of role conflict in family firms, we explore how reciprocal altruism affects role conflict among family members (e.g., Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007). Indeed, the nature of family members' role conflict working in the family business is expected to be different from role conflict among employees in nonfamily firms owing to the unique mix between the family, the business, and idiosyncrasies such as reciprocal altruism that are rooted in the family, but affect the family firm behaviour as well.

In order to address the gap in the literature, we develop a theoretical framework that highlights the role conflicts that emerge among family members working for the family firm. [1] Our model draws on stewardship theory as this theory deals with the sociopsychological factors that determine members' intentions and behaviours in the family business (Davis, Allen, & Hayes, 2010; Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997). Moreover, the stewardship perspective is useful in the family firm context because family members place high value on the attainment of the goals of the family business (e.g., Davis et al., 1997, 2010). Our theoretical framework is driven by two research questions: (1) What factors mitigate/elevate role conflict in family firms? and (2) How does family business members' role conflict impact firm performance?

Our theoretical development implies that family and nonfamily firms differ in role conflicts due to the duality of family members' roles (Gersick et al., 1997), family firm-specific psychodynamic effects, such as marital discord (Schulze, Lubatkin, Dino, & Buchholtz, 2001), high levels of dependence on human and social capital that are family business employees with kinship ties and family's social networks (e.g., Arregle, Hitt, Sirmon, & Very, 2007), long-term orientation (e.g., Zellweger, 2007), and, ultimately, transgenerational sustainability (Kotlar & De Massis, 2013; Zellweger, Kellermanns, Chrisman, & Chua, 2012). We suggest that reciprocal altruism in family firms represents an integrative mechanism reducing role conflict in these types of businesses. Particularly, this relationship is moderated by perceptions of collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000), such as shared belief in the family's capabilities to attain family business goals. Studies suggest that a strong sense of collective efficacy can facilitate a positive interpersonal climate, greater cooperation, and helping behaviour among group members. These characteristics are consistent with family members engaging in stewardship behaviour. Indeed, Chen and Bliese (2002) also suggest that perceptions of collective efficacy can act as a buffer in mitigating negative effects of work stressors on group members' psychological well-being. Finally, our model suggests that if role conflict exists in family firms, the firm performance will be negatively affected.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Stewardship theory and the family firm

Stewardship theory examines relationships in organizations where members have a collectivist orientation and are aligned with the interests of the organization (Davis et al., 1997, 2010). It is built on a different set of assumptions for predicting managers' (referred to as stewards) motivations towards goal attainment (Chrisman, Chua, Kellermanns, & Chang, 2007) that departs from agency theory, the dominant theoretical perspective, which suggests conflicts between the interests of the owner (principal) and the manager (agent) (for a review of agency theory, see Eisenhardt, 1989). Indeed, it is the focus on the intrinsic motivation of the manager that tries to further the common good, which represents the key distinction between stewardship and other theoretical perspectives (Davis et al.,1997).

Davis et al. (1997) argue that motivation, identification, and use of power are the key psychological elements influencing the relationships among stewards. Intrinsic rewards, such as career growth, achievement, self-actualization, affiliation, etc., motivate family business members to put their individual objectives aside and work towards attaining the goals of the family business (e.g., Corbetta & Salvato, 2004). Family business members also identify themselves with their organization by accepting the family firm mission and objectives and choose to behave in congruence with their family firm identity (Zellweger, Eddleston, & Kellermanns, 2010). Stewards, who do not have to be the owners of family firms (e.g., relatives of the owner employed by the family business), may develop a sense of psychological ownership and behave as quasi-owners of the family firm. Furthermore, the use of personal power deriving from family business members' personalistic and particularistic tendencies, which can fully develop in family firms (Carney, 2005), can facilitate stewardship behaviours in family firms.

In our article, we see stewardship behaviour, reflected by reciprocal altruism, as a key element to reduce the occurrence of role conflict in family firms. We present our theoretical model in Figure 1. First, we suggest that reciprocal altruism is a family firm specific determinant of role conflict among family business members. In the absence of a clear strategy and structure that is furthered by reciprocal altruism, family members can deviate from a stewardship behaviour due to lack of clear collective goals fostering self-centredness, individualistic goals, and behaviours. As such, the perceptions of employees affect the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes in family firms (e.g., Barnett & Kellermanns, 2006). Our model also explores the moderating role of family members' perceptions of collective efficacy (e.g., Bandura, 2000) on the relationships between (1) reciprocal altruism and (2) family members' role conflict. Last, we propose a link between levels of role conflict and performance.

Role conflict

Role conflict has been investigated in various academic disciplines (Schmidt et al., in press). Because organizations are "open systems of roles" where individuals play their parts with their interdependent behaviours in the formation of a social system (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 172), the potential for organizational members to experience role conflict is highly dependent on the expectations about the occurrence and/or compliance with two or more roles (e.g., House &

Rizzo, 1972; Katz & Kahn, 1978). Particularly, role conflicts emerge when individuals cannot fulfil the demands of one role without stepping over a second or third role (Stoner et al., 1990).

From the social exchange perspective (Shore & Barksdale, 1998; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), role conflict represents a prevalent challenge in organizations as it can create imbalance in the employee–employer relationship. Researchers have focused on the individual outcomes of role conflict such as intensified internal conflicts, anxiety, higher tension related to the job, lower job satisfaction and job involvement, less confidence in supervisors and in the organization, propensity to leave an organization, absenteeism, work–family conflict, and lower commitment to the organization (e.g., Floyd & Wooldridge, 2000; Tubre & Collins, 2000). Hence, role conflict is not only a micro-level personal matter, but also an interpersonal issue leading to macro-level organizational consequences, such as low performance, depression, and higher turnover (e.g., Good, Sisler, & Gentry, 1998; Schmidt et al., in press) that are costly to organizations.

Role conflict within the context of family firms

Unlike employees in nonfamily firms, family members who work in the family firm have the dual role of being a family member and a family firm employee, complicating the responsibilities of fulfilling both family and business expectations (Gersick et al., 1997). Due to the interface between the family and the business (Arregle et al., 2007), the potential for generating role conflicts within family members tends to have a direct influence on the family business, as expectations and behaviours cannot be separated so easily.

Indeed, the individual's social identity, such as being a family member and a family employee, can impose an inconsistent and complex array of demands upon the person (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This is particularly challenging for family members as roles become more complex when they require an individual to be simultaneously involved in at least two subsystems (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Thereby, the expectations of family and business subsystems are combined to become the role of the family business member who will have a hard time to set his/her own priorities. If role pressures from work or from the family are incompatible, fulfilling both role expectations becomes an impossible task (Stoner et al., 1990). For example, if the parent-manager promotes an unqualified child, he/she meets the demands of a familial role by caring for the offspring; however, he/she is at conflict with the managerial role that requires an objective evaluation and judgement and would prohibit the display of nepotism in the business (e.g., Jaskiewicz, Uhlenbruck, Balkin, & Reay, 2013; Kidwell, Kellermanns, & Eddleston, 2012). In addition, such actions may also generate a set of unintended consequences that can negatively affect other organizational members (Mellewigt, Madhok, & Weibel, 2007; Wayne et al., 1997).

In sum, there is a higher potential for role conflict in family firms than in nonfamily firms due to the dual roles of family members of being a member of the family and working for the business. In the next section, we focus our attention to the situations that can mitigate and/or elevate role conflict in family firms and the family firms' performance implications. For our theoretical development, we rely on stewardship theory for three reasons: (1) sociopsychological factors play an important role in shaping the managers' dedication (Davis et al., 1997, 2010), (2) family business members are more dedicated to achieving firm goals than achieving personal goals (Chrisman et al.,2007), and (3) the perspective provides specific elements for family firms to manage the family members' relationships (Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007).

Reciprocal altruism

Altruism is "a moral value that motivates individuals to undertake actions that benefit others without any expectation of external award" (Schulze, Lubatkin, & Dino, 2002, p. 252). The literature on altruism is rooted in a variety of fields and multiple subdimensions have been developed (for a comprehensive typology of altruism in family firms, see Lubatkin, Durand, & Ling, 2007). For the purpose of the article, we focus on reciprocal altruism, which is defined as the exchange of goods and services that are costly acts between individuals such that one individual benefits from an act of the other, and then the other individual benefits in return (Brosnan & de Waal, 2002). Although the notion of reciprocal altruism has been expanded to family-oriented and paternalistic forms (see Lubatkin et al., 2007), the dominant conceptualization of reciprocal altruism assumes that family members work towards the greater good of the organization (Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007).

Indeed, reciprocal altruism can be regarded from a social exchange perspective in which both parties reap the rewards of their mutually beneficial exchange relationship. For example, there is a sense of trustworthiness generated from parents' belief that their offspring will not betray them (Weibel, 2007). Accordingly, reciprocal altruism is often associated (although not synonymous) with stewardship behaviours, as governance inefficiencies are more prone to develop in case of asymmetrical altruism, where one party acts opportunistically (Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007; Schulze et al., 2001).

Furthermore, reciprocal altruism can be facilitated by a successful transfer of norms and values by the parents to the offspring, which can lead to a strengthening of family ties and promotes reciprocity among family members (Lubatkin et al., 2007). When family business members behave in a reciprocal altruistic way (Chua, Chrisman, & Bergiel, 2009), their interests tend to be aligned with the interests of the family firm (Corbetta & Salvato, 2004). Those family business members tend to hold business objectives above their personal objectives (Zahra, 2003). When there is a sense of trust in the exchanges among the family members, this can reduce the need for engaging in controls and formalization that tend to occur in nonfamily firms (e.g., Mellewigt et al., 2007; Weibel, 2007). In that regard, following the stewardship perspective, reciprocal altruism facilitates bonding through trust, communication, respect, and love (Lubatkin, Schulze, Ling, & Dino, 2005) and thus fosters collectivistic behaviours in family firms (Corbetta & Salvato, 2004), which can turn short-term goals into long-term outcomes (Eddleston, Kellermanns, & Sarathy, 2008). However, not all family relations can generate positive outcomes as problems of adverse selection, moral hazard, or nepotism providing a wide range of scenarios for generating role conflicts among family members (e.g., Jaskiewicz et al., 2013; Kidwell et al., 2012).

Thus, with family firms that are characterized by stewardship tendencies, reciprocal altruism enhances collectivity in family firms (Karra, Tracey, & Phillips, 2006) by “increasing communication and cooperation, and thereby reducing information asymmetries” (Schulze et al., 2002, p. 253). Pro-organizational individuals place objectives of the collective higher than their personal goals, value long-term relationships and harmony, and avoid conflict and confrontations via direct communication (Davis et al., 1997). When communication channels are open and information asymmetries are lowered (Davis et al., 1997), individual roles are expected to be clearer for family business members and unrealistic role expectations can be prevented or reconciled with open communication. Therefore, reciprocal altruism can reduce role conflict among family members. Consequently,

Proposition 1: Reciprocal altruism is negatively associated with role conflict among family members working at family firms.

Collective efficacy as a moderator

Collective efficacy is a group's shared belief in its group capabilities to organize and execute actions necessary for attainment (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy affects individuals’ choice of settings, activities, skill acquisition, effort levels, taking the initiative, and persistence in coping with challenges and stressful situations (e.g., Bandura, 1982). At the individual level, self-efficacy is “believing in one's capability to perform a task”, influencing one's levels of “task effort, persistence toward challenges, expressed interest, and the degree of preferred goal difficulty” (Gist,1987, p. 472). In that regard, individuals with high levels of self-efficacy define their roles differently because of their different beliefs about personal competencies and proactively define situations themselves even though their roles in organizations might be prescribed (Jones, 1986). At the group level, Bandura (2000) considers two particular methods of measuring collective self-efficacy: Either each individual will add his/her personal capability to the entire group or the entire group is assessed as a whole. Studies generally treat collective efficacy as the aggregate of individual efficacy (e.g., Jex & Bliese, 1999). Accordingly, empirical results highlight the importance of collective efficacy in predicting motivation and performance and moderating the impact of work-related stressors on strains (Jex & Bliese,1999).

In family firms, collective efficacy is a critical element of “intrinsic motivation” within the stewardship theory (Davis et al., 1997). Perceptions of collective efficacy may be particularly important in family firms, as it is a source of encouragement and support (Chang, Memili, Chrisman, Kellermanns, & Chua, 2009; Pearson, Carr, & Shaw, 2008). Indeed, the family's financial and emotional support can elevate persistence and helps the family business members overcome obstacles. Higher levels of perceptions of collective efficacy among family members are expected to strengthen the mitigating effects of reciprocal altruism on role conflict through family members' proactively extending efforts and activities beyond their self-interests towards the achievement of the family business goals. A strong sense of collective efficacy can facilitate greater attention and effort to the demands of the situation. Family members' perceptions of collective efficacy will strengthen the relationship between reciprocal altruism and role conflict through managing and suppressing (e.g., Taylor & Bryant, 2007) their negative thoughts and emotions related with their personal role conflict for the sake of the common good.

Conversely, perceptions of low collective efficacy can elevate stress levels and impair performance by diverting attention from how to best proceed to concerns over failings and mishaps and ceasing effort (Jex & Bliese, 1999). Indeed, family members with low perceptions of collective efficacy will not benefit from reciprocally altruistic family firm environments that have the tendency to reduce role ambiguities and conflict (Eddleston et al., 2008). Their behaviour will likely be more passive during challenging situations and diminish the ability to benefit from reciprocal altruism.

Accordingly, we argue that perceptions of collective efficacy can strengthen the negative relationship between reciprocal altruism and role conflict as it facilitates a focus on overall goals and reduces the perceived conflicting demands on the individual. Therefore, the interaction effects of role conflict and perceptions of collective efficacy will be stronger in diminishing role conflict than the independent effects of reciprocal altruism on role conflict. Formally stated:

Proposition 2: The negative relationship between reciprocal altruism and role conflict in family firms will be moderated by the perceptions of collective efficacy of family members working at family firms. Specifically, higher levels of perceptions of collective efficacy will strengthen the negative relationship between reciprocal altruism and role conflict.

Role conflict and family firm performance

Last, we need to address the performance implications of role conflict in family businesses. In a recent study, Kotlar and DeMassis (2013) observed that family members may have divergences in setting goals, especially in cases when intrafamily succession is imminent, that may later generate social interaction processes where family members need to bargain towards collective agreements to avoid potential conflicts. Nonfamily firm-based studies (e.g., Matthews, Bulger, & Barnes-Farrell, 2010; Peterson et al., 1995) have associated role conflict with important organizational outcomes, such as low performance, through elevating negative feelings such as frustration, irritation, resentment, and worry. Hence, role conflict can interfere with work by diverging effort from work to coping with role conflict. This problem may be particularly acute in small- to medium-sized family firms where firm performance primarily depends on the contributions of family members. If family members involved in the business cannot resolve or cope with their role conflict, they may not be able to focus on the attainment of family firm goals and are likely to underperform. Furthermore, the performance of the family firm will suffer because of the tradeoffs between family-centred and business-centred goals (e.g., Chrisman, Memili, & Misra, 2014; Kotlar & De Massis, 2013) which will make family members set priorities and make compromises if divergences become unsolved. This can consequently harm family firm performance, particularly when the family business relies on a relatively small labour pool primarily composed of family members. Hence, we expect that:

Proposition 3: Role conflict among family members working at the family firm is negatively associated with family firm performance.

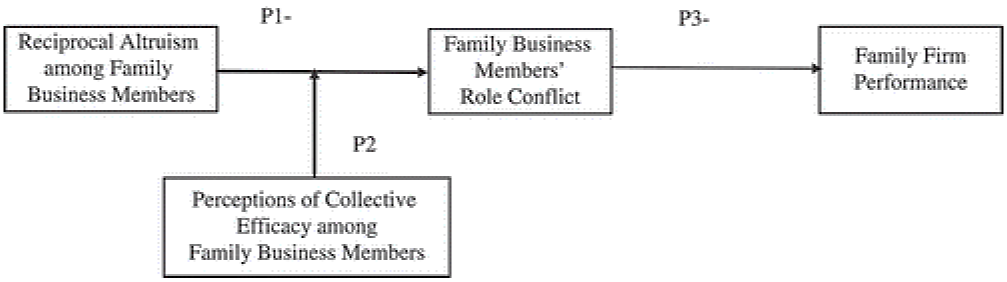

Figure 1. Family members' role conflict in family firms.

DISCUSSION

A study conducted in 21 countries shows that role conflict experiences in work environments are widespread worldwide (Peterson et al., 1995). In spite of these findings, role conflict in family firms, which are the most predominant organizational form worldwide, remains an underresearched area that requires attention. Researchers need to understand the importance that role conflict has on family business members and the implications it has for the family firm.

We offer several contributions to the study of role conflict in family firms. First, family business members' role conflict differs from that of employees in nonfamily firms due to duality of roles, heavy influence of family firm-specific sociopsychological factors, and high levels of reliance on family members' human and social capital to achieve a competitive advantage and ensure the long-term survival of the firm. This is not to say that nonfamily firm members cannot experience role conflict (e.g., Floyd & Lane, 2000). However, role conflict among family members has added levels of complexity. Second, we argue that reciprocal altruism mitigates role conflict and that role conflict is negatively related to performance in family firms. Third, we explain how family members' perceptions of collective efficacy moderate the relationship between reciprocal altruism and role conflict. Finally, our article is one of the first attempts in the family firm literature to explore family business members' role conflict.

However, it is important to note that although role conflict in family firms is likely to occur more often and is more complex, it does not automatically suggest that the overall performance of family firms is going to be inferior to nonfamily firms. Indeed, family firm-specific influences, often referred to as familiness (e.g., Habbershon, Williams, & MacMillan, 2003; Zellweger et al., 2010), can have both positive and negative effects on performance. Accordingly, family firm researchers need to have a better understanding of the nature of family influence as a dual edge sword to arrive at a better understanding of family firm performance and the potential performance differences between family and nonfamily firms.

Limitations and future research

We also need to mention a few limitations of our article that can be addressed in future research. The proposed relationships should particularly apply to smaller family firms with a larger degree of family involvement. However, family firms often also employ nonfamily employees who have their own complex roles and perceptions due to functioning in “a complex environment in family firms” (Sharma, 2004, p. 23). In many cases, nonfamily employees may form a larger portion of total employees than family members. Therefore, role conflict studies focusing on nonfamily employees in family firms would be complementing this article's contributions to the literature.

It is also important to highlight that family firms are heterogeneous based on strategic orientations (Chrisman, Chua, & Steier, 2005), family business life-cycles (Gersick et al., 1997), noneconomic goals (Chrisman et al., 2014), internal factors such as size, generation in charge, and industry conditions. In addition, the social processes among family members may vary and be affected by several factors such as personality traits (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991), perceptions of trust, controls, and behaviours (e.g., Mellewigt et al., 2007; Weibel, 2007), and social interactions (Kotlar & De Massis, 2013). These idiosyncrasies of family firms, their members, and their teamwork might affect the development and consequences of role conflict among family members. Our model specifically focused on family firm performance as the outcome variable. However, there may be additional outcome variables to consider (for an overview, see Yu, Lumpkin, Brigham, & Sorenson, 2012), which would also likely be negatively affected by role conflict experienced by family business members. For example, future research could investigate the interplay of personality and cohesion (for a nonfamily firm example, see Van Vianen & De Dreu, 2001) paired with the interplay of family firm-specific influences on family members’ role conflict on both economic and noneconomic performance, e.g., anxiety and depression (for a recent meta-analysis, see Schmidt et al., in press). Furthermore, cross-level effects on the proposed relationships (e.g., company structure, industry, or cultural effects) as well as related constructs to role conflict, like role overload (e.g., Tordera, González-Romá, & Peiró, 2008) could be investigated.

Our model focused on family members working in the family business. As we acknowledged early in the article, family members not working in the business may also experience role conflict (e.g., demands of the family business they are not employed in and their regular career demands). Research has looked at role salience in family firms (Barnett, Eddleston, & Kellermanns, 2009), but strains and their effects on family members not working in the firm due to role conflict or other causes are underresearched areas. In addition, how these strains affect other family members who work for the family firm also needs to be investigated.

Our model can also provide avenues for future empirical testing. On one side, prior research has established scales for reciprocal altruism and firm performance to use in the context of the family firm (Eddleston et al., 2008). In addition, researchers can adapt established scales for role conflict (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970) and collective efficacy (Chen & Bliese, 2002). Also, a recent overview of scales utilized in family firm research by Pearson and Carr (2014) may serve as a valuable resource for future research.

Even though we limited our attention on reciprocal altruism, it is important to consider alternative scenarios for mitigating and/or elevating role conflict given the other types of altruism, particularly parental altruism (Lubatkin et al., 2007). While we focused on all family members, the specific effects of the different types of parental altruism paired with the respective reciprocal or asymmetrical response from the offspring on role conflict are worthy of further investigation. Future research may want to test this assumption and show if altruism among family members can be influenced. Indeed, this and other studies have suggested that reciprocal altruism among family members is highly beneficial in family firms, and accordingly factors that could create this desirable form of altruism over time should be identified.

Moreover, based on stewardship theory, this article generally views the family firm members as stewards (Davis et al.,1997, 2010) whose interests are aligned with the interests of the family firm and family business objectives are held above personal objectives (Corbetta & Salvato, 2004). However, as Karra et al. (2006) point out, stewardship behaviours in some family firms may give way to agency behaviours over time. As the family business becomes successful and well-established, complacency might set in and some family members may start free riding and shirking (Kidwell et al., 2012). Accordingly, family members' role conflict may increase and become sustained in a family firm environment dominated by agency behaviours. Longitudinal studies or a qualitative approach that can capture these types of different developments at various stages of the family firm life cycles will be highly desirable.

In addition, the relationship between role conflict and other types of conflict (for an overview, see McKee, Madden, Kellermanns, & Eddleston, 2014) deserves further investigation. One may expect that role conflict may have differential impacts on relational, task, and process conflict. Hence, future research should investigate if role conflict can trigger the occurrence of these conflicts. At the same time, these types of conflict may also serve as a trigger of role conflict. For example, existing relationship conflict may further highlight the duality of the family and family business roles that each family member has to live up to. Thus, longitudinal studies that investigate the interplay between conflict and role conflict are highly desirable.

Future research can also explore how role conflict among family members might affect social identification in family firms. Although social identity theory has applied the notion of role conflict in nonfamily firms, family business studies still lack this integration (for exceptions, see Zellweger et al., 2010). Hence, we do not know whether role conflict affects social identification differently in family firms compared to nonfamily firms.

We have proposed a parsimonious model to highlight the complexities of role conflict in family firms. However, future research may want to expand on the family firm-specific antecedents of role conflict that might reduce the likelihood for role conflict to occur in family firms. For example, family adaptability and family cohesion could be an interesting antecedent of role conflict in family firms. Furthermore, the complexity of the family, e.g., number of family members and generations, as well as the ownership structure could be useful extensions.

Last, family business members' role conflict might vary in different cultural settings. Future research can explore how family business members' role conflict is affected by dimensions of culture that are power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term versus short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001). For example, one can expect higher levels of family business members' role conflict in large power distance societies because of greater inequalities in family and work environments (Hofstede, 1994).

Implications for practice

Aside from the theoretical contributions and future research directions, we provide the following practical implications for managing role conflict in family firms.

First, family firms represent arenas for understanding how organizations can minimize role conflict that emerges among organizational members. Particularly, when families are strong and cohesive towards attaining goals and setting strategic directions for the future, its members can understand their organizational position as well as their expectations to perform and behave. This is important, because failing to reduce role conflicts can imply work dissatisfaction, and potentially accelerate turnover intentions and negative performance consequences. Engaging in stewardship behaviour can enable organizational members to become more focused on valuing their activities and reduce their conflicts because of kinship ties and altruism.

Although the distinctiveness of being a family business member can generate additional layers of complexity when analysing role conflict, role conflict should be manageable if the business generates participation among its members. This will facilitate the family members' ability to manage the expectations that emerge from their multiple roles. Particularly, as the family pursues the vision of retaining the business under family control, it can be expected that shared values and group cohesiveness generated from reciprocal altruism can enable the reduction of role conflicts among family members.

In conclusion, theory and practice can benefit from our conceptual framework with a better understanding of family members' role conflict in family firms. Because of the complexity of being a family member, understanding of the nature, consequences, and determinants of family members' role conflict is critical in retention and career development of family business members who play a key role in transgenerational survival and success in family firms.

Notes

[1] Family members not working in the family firm are also exposed to role conflict. This group of family members, however, is beyond the scope of our article.

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