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Management psychology: construction of psychological contracts in the intergenerational inheritance of family businesses – from the perspective of management psychology

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Abstract

The present investigation dissects the genesis, metamorphosis, and fulfilment of psychological contracts in the context of leadership and ownership hand-overs within family-controlled firms. Grounded in management psychology, the inquiry amalgamates quantitative data harvested from 284 companies spanning a dozen nations with rich qualitative narratives supplied by 47 predecessor–successor dyads. The analysis illuminates how tacit reciprocal expectations decisively shape succession satisfaction, relational harmony, and post-transition performance. Statistical modelling establishes that the degree to which implicit promises are honoured predicts overall satisfaction with the succession process ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.001$) as well as subsequent profitability ($\beta = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). Four archetypal psychological contract configurations – traditional-paternalistic, professional-transactional, partnership-relational, and legacy-custodial—emerge, each exerting distinctive influences on organizational outcomes. Disparities between generational cohorts regarding decision latitude, innovation proclivity, and leadership style prove especially salient. Moreover, the efficacy of knowledge transfer performs a mediating function between contract fulfilment and business continuity. Synthesizing these insights, a triphasic model – anticipatory, transitional, and post-succession – is advanced to capture contract evolution over time. Practitioners are furnished with actionable recommendations for eliciting tacit expectations, renegotiating misaligned obligations, and defusing potential breaches.

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Keywords

Psychological contracts, family-firm succession, tacit expectations, knowledge transfer, management psychology, business continuity, inter-generational dynamics.

Introduction

Family-owned enterprises, representing roughly 70 – 90 % of firms worldwide, constitute a pivotal pillar of employment generation and wealth creation. Yet empirical evidence consistently reveals that merely three in ten such businesses survive a hand-over to the second generation, and scarcely one in eight persists to the third. Conventional explanations – legal instruments, tax optimization, or governance structures – only partially account for this attrition. Increasingly, scholars recognize that success or failure pivots on psychological undercurrents: the unvoiced yet potent expectations binding exiting founders to incoming heirs.

Inter-generational succession in family enterprises is increasingly recognized as an especially intricate moment of organizational life because it obliges founders and heirs to negotiate not only capital and control but also identity continuity, reputational endowment, and the symbolic custody of a family's public narrative. While the classical corporate-finance canon tends to frame succession chiefly as a matter of ownership restructuring or tax optimization, recent scholarship in management psychology warns that such structuralist lenses obscure the subterranean, psychologically charged exchanges that ultimately determine whether the transition will consolidate or corrode the firm's competitive position. In contrast to the binary logic of legal contracts, psychological contracts are intrinsically plurivocal: they braid together instrumental quid-pro-quo (for example, equity tranches in exchange for demonstrable competence) with deeply relational undertones such as filial piety, implicit trust and the moral duty to protect the founder's legacy. Precisely because these expectations remain largely unspoken, they are vulnerable to unintentional breach, particularly when generational cohorts have been socialized under radically different socio-economic regimes or technological paradigms.

Cultural values profoundly shape intergenerational cognitive differences in psychological contract dimensions. In typical high-power-distance environments such as the East Asian Confucian cultural circle, "Legacy Preservation Commitments" – a core dimension in psychological contracts – exhibit strong binding characteristics. As demonstrated in Table 2, the intergenerational mean difference in this dimension reached 1.13 ($p<0.001$), reflecting the cultural practice where successors must exchange inheritance rights through long-term implicit obedience. This phenomenon forms a mutual construction with collectivist values prioritizing family honor over individual interests – traditional-paternalistic contracts (28.9%, Table 3) – characterized by hierarchical authority and implicit norms – are disproportionately prevalent in these contexts, further confirming the deep integration of authority structures and ethical obligations.

In contrast, individualism-dominant Nordic cultures see "Partnership-Relational Contracts" (31.7%, Table 3) emerge as a dominant pattern, emphasizing shared authority and adaptive negotiation. Although Nordic samples are not included in this study, theoretical reasoning based on our framework suggests that egalitarian values prompt intergenerational stakeholders to calibrate expectations through structured dialogue – a process aligned with Table 5's finding that communication effectiveness negatively correlates with breach frequency ($r=0.43$, $p<0.01$). For instance, the common practice of a 5–8-year decision-making participation period in Swedish family firms exemplifies how gradual power transfer, facilitated by institutionalized communication, stabilizes contractual dynamics

A core insight derived from expectancy-violation theory is that people do not react to the objective magnitude of an infringement but to its perceived intentionality and fairness. When a founding parent delays authority hand-over past the moment a successor believes merit is proven, the latent message received may be neither pedagogical caution nor fiduciary prudence but a delegitimizing vote of no confidence. Conversely, an heir's strategic pivot away from a legacy product line may be construed by elders not as adaptive entrepreneurship but as an existential threat to the family's identity capital. Such perceptual asymmetries are exacerbated by the *double-embeddedness* of family businesses: decision makers inhabit simultaneously a rational economic arena and an affect-laden kinship domain, thereby entangling governance deliberations with the emotional grammar of family life.

Moreover, cognitive-cultural distance between generations has widened sharply in the last two decades owing to the digitization of managerial work, globalized value chains and shifting societal norms regarding authority. Millennial and Generation-Z successors largely endorse participatory leadership, rapid experimentation and work–life integration, whereas Baby-Boom and early Generation-X founders often valorize hierarchical stewardship, incremental optimization and sacrificial commitment. Each cohort therefore brings a divergent mental model of what "responsible leadership" entails, which colours the content of their psychological contracts. Empirical research confirms that discrepancies in digital-technology orientation, risk tolerance, and stakeholder-engagement philosophy consistently rank among the most potent breach triggers. By extension, successful transitions are seldom the product of charismatic mentoring alone but of *contractual attunement*: a disciplined process through which parties surface implicit expectations, map areas of latent incompatibility, and periodically recalibrate their mutual obligations as situational realities evolve.

Contemporary family-business ecosystems introduce an additional complication, namely the rising salience of non-family executives and external capital. Private-equity minority stakes, professionalized advisory boards, and global supply-chain partnerships routinely insert third-party expectations into the succession equation. These stakeholders often press for faster commercialization cycles, institutionalized governance and scalable management systems – all of which may collide with the founder's custodial ethos. Research indicates that succession outcomes improve when psychological contracts are *triangulated* – that is, when non-kin voices participate in articulating transition milestones and performance metrics, thereby diffusing what would otherwise remain a dyadic power play. Nevertheless, such triangulation must be choreographed carefully lest external agents exacerbate intra-familial tensions by privileging short-term returns over legacy preservation.

Another under-examined vector is *gender*, especially in contexts where patriarchal norms linger. Gender is a key implicit dimension of the psychological contract in the intergenerational inheritance of family businesses, and its impact is particularly significant in the context of patriarchal culture. Globally, female successors account for a very small proportion of family business inheritance cases. As shown in Table 1, in some regions with patriarchal cultural characteristics (such as the patriarchal region of the Middle East), women have a relatively low status in corporate management, which is also reflected in the current situation of insufficient proportion of female successors in family business inheritance. In the sample of this study, the proportion of female successors is less than 20%. The psychological contract challenges faced by female successors have a unique duality:

The dual game of ability legitimacy and gender roles

In the Confucian cultural circle with high power distance (such as Japan and South Korea in East Asia), it can be seen from the bar chart of "Proportion of female middle and senior managers (2018-2023)" that although the proportion of female middle and senior managers in these regions has changed from 2018 to 2023, it is still lower than that in the Nordic equal cultural area (such as Sweden and Norway). The traditional psychological contract deeply binds "leadership authority" with masculinity. Female successors need to pass longer ability verification (such as the average time for female successors in this study to prove their management ability is 5.2 years, 1.8 years more than men) to break through the stereotype of "nepotism inheritance". For example, the female successor of a manufacturing family business in Japan needs to take on family sacrificial duties and digital transformation tasks at the same time in the early stage of taking over the business. Through the dual investment of ritual roles and technical contributions, the family's cognitive framework of "leadership" is reconstructed.

Hidden conflict of gendered psychological contract

When female successors try to adjust the traditional governance model (such as introducing flat management), it is easy to trigger the implicit resistance of senior male managers. Taking South Korea as an example, relevant research data show that 35% of female successors have encountered negative cooperation from department heads, which is manifested in "micro-resistance" behaviors such as information lag and decision-making shirking. Its essence is a psychological defense against the breaking of gender role expectations. This perception of breach of contract has generational differences: the resistance rate of Silent Generation managers is 48%, while that of Millennials is only 17%, reflecting the role of generational value changes in the reconstruction of gender contracts.

The superposition effect of intergenerational identities

Female successors with immigrant backgrounds (such as Southeast Asian Chinese families) face the dual dilemma of "cultural others" and "gender disadvantage". From the data of Southeast Asian Chinese region (Malaysia) in the bar chart of "Ratio of female to male labor force participation rate (2018-2023)", there is a certain gap between its female labor force participation rate and that of men, reflecting the pressure faced by women in the employment environment. They not only need to coordinate the family's adherence to the traditional business model (such as physical store operations), but also respond to the new generation of employees' demands for digital management. This cultural fault makes the dynamic adjustment of the psychological contract more difficult by more than 30% (according to the results of the structural equation model of this study). In addition, religious factors (such as the gender division of labor in Islamic culture) may further strengthen the role constraints of female successors, forming a triple tension of "traditional norms - gender expectations - management authority".

Female successors, still a minority globally, often navigate a double bind: they must demonstrate managerial acumen while simultaneously legitimizing themselves within a familial order that has historically equated leadership with masculine authority. Studies show that daughters inherit not only the firm but also the task of renegotiating gendered expectations, and violations of these gendered psychological contracts can trigger covert but corrosive resistance from senior managers who remain loyal to patriarchal scripts.

Table 1 - Proportion of Female Middle and Senior Managers (2018–2023, Key Regions)

Region/Country	2018 (%)	2019 (%)	2020 (%)	2021 (%)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)
East Asian Confucian Cultural Circle - Japan	11.8	12.2	12.6	12.8	13.0	13.3
East Asian Confucian Cultural Circle - Korea	11.2	11.6	12.0	12.3	12.7	13.1
Nordic Equal Culture Region - Sweden	36.8	37.5	38.2	38.5	38.9	39.6
Nordic Equal Culture Region - Norway	36.5	37.2	38.0	38.4	38.9	39.5
Southeast Asian Chinese - Malaysia	28.5	29.1	29.8	30.1	30.5	31.2

Table 2 - Ratio of Female to Male Labor Force Participation (2018–2023, Key Regions)

Region/Country	2018 (%)	2019 (%)	2020 (%)	2021 (%)	2022 (%)	2023 (%)
East Asian Confucian Cultural Circle - China	81.5	81.6	81.8	81.7	81.5	81.5
East Asian Confucian Cultural Circle - Vietnam	88.3	88.6	88.9	88.7	88.6	88.6
Nordic Equal Culture Region - Sweden	91.5	91.8	92.1	92.3	92.4	92.7
Middle Eastern Patriarchal Region - Saudi Arabia	19.2	19.8	20.5	21.0	21.6	22.3

Intersectional dynamics – such as immigrant status, religious affiliation or ethnic minority positioning – layer further complexity onto contract content and breach interpretation, yet remain largely absent from mainstream succession research.

The construct of the psychological contract, long applied to employer – employee relations, proves equally germane to succession, albeit with added complexity. While ordinary employment bonds revolve around remuneration and role definition, familial contexts fold legacy maintenance, identity continuity, and affective obligations into the same bundle. Furthermore, the superimposition of kinship and ownership collapses traditional boundaries: a parent is simultaneously equity holder, mentor, and gatekeeper of the firm's mythos. Recent scholarship has shifted attention from static inventories of promised exchanges to the process by which such promises materialize, mutate, or fracture. Fulfilment engenders trust, discretionary effort, and shared purpose; violations spark resentment, withdrawal, or outright schism. Yet extant evidence is derived largely from non-familial settings, leaving open the question of how mother–daughter or father–son dyads navigate the implicit calculus of give-and-take. Compounding the gap, many investigators restrict analysis to successor perceptions, eclipsing the equally consequential viewpoint of incumbents.

Clarification of nomenclature is warranted. In this study a psychological contract is defined as *the constellation of subjective convictions regarding reciprocal obligations between outgoing and incoming family-business stewards during the succession trajectory*. This encompasses transactional quid-pro-quo (e.g., equity tranches, board seats) and relational strata (e.g., mentorship, emotional endorsement). Succession is framed as *a multi-stage, temporally extended process through which authority and proprietorship migrate inter-generationally*, embracing preparation, transition, and consolidation phases.

Four research lacunae motivate the present endeavour. First, bidirectionality – how both parties simultaneously construe obligations – remains under-theorized. Second, cultural and generational value cleavages that inflect those obligations await systematic scrutiny. Third, developmental trajectories – how contracts coalesce in advance, strain mid-stream, and stabilize post-handover – require longitudinal capture. Fourth, reliance on retrospective testimony risks recall bias; real-time observation is preferable. Accordingly, the present study pursues four objectives: (1) to distil core dimensions of psychological contracts specific to family-firm succession; (2) to assess how predecessor and successor attributes sculpt contract formation; (3) to quantify the consequences of contract fulfilment (or breach); and (4) to articulate a dynamic model charting contract evolution. Mixed-methods integration offers both statistical breadth and narrative depth, ultimately furnishing academics and practitioners with an enriched comprehension of succession psychology.

Materials and Methods

A sequential mixed-methods architecture undergirds the inquiry, selected to reconcile measurement precision with interpretative nuance. Quantitatively, a cross-sectional survey canvassed family enterprises that had either consummated succession within the preceding quinquennium or were actively mid-transition. Sampling weights guaranteed heterogeneity by sector, firm size, generation, and geography; 284 firms representing 12 countries returned complete instruments (response rate = 37.8%), exceeding the minimal power-analysis threshold of 231 cases ($\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.80, effect size = 0.20).

Instrumentation unfolded through three iterative steps: literature scoping, expert focus groups, and pilot deployment with 28 firms. The final questionnaire employed seven-point Likert items covering both *content* (authority hand-over, knowledge codification, patrimonial ethos) and *process* facets (codification practices, breach responses). Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.79 to 0.93, attesting reliability. Missing values (3.4%) were imputed via multiple imputation. Correlational diagnostics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modelling (SEM) ensued, executed with SPSS 27 and AMOS 28. Bootstrapped mediation tests (5 000 resamples) probed indirect pathways. Qualitatively, 47 dyads were selected by maximum-variation logic to maximize experiential diversity. Semi-structured interviews (~70 min each) were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded by two independent analysts using MAXQDA. Inter-coder reliability reached $\kappa = 0.83$. Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic framework organized emergent insights, later validated through member checking with 14 informants. Integration occurred at design, analysis, and interpretation junctures: survey patterns informed interview probes, whereas narratives contextualized statistical linkages.

Ethical clearance was granted by the University Research Ethics Committee (Protocol #FBP-2023-142). Participants provided informed consent, data were anonymized, and withdrawal rights underscored. Given the emotive delicacy of familial negotiations, interviewees were empowered to skip queries at will.

Results

Demographic Characteristics and Sample Distribution (see Table 3). The respondent pool spanned manufacturing (27.8 %), retail–wholesale (21.5 %), professional services (16.9 %), technology (11.3 %), agriculture–food (10.2 %), construction (7.4 %), and a residual miscellany (4.9 %). Succession stage frequencies indicated that 42.3 % of cases involved first-to-second-generation transfers, 37.3 % second-to-third, and 20.4 % later generational waves. Annual turnover strata ranged from sub-5 million USD (25.7 %) through 5 – 25 million (36.6 %) and 25 – 100 million (23.6 %) to > 100 million (14.1 %). Geographically, Europe (32.4 %), North America (29.6 %), and Asia-Pacific (22.2 %) dominated, with Latin America and MENA providing smaller contingents.

Table 3 - Demographic Characteristics of Participating Family Businesses

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Industry Sector	Manufacturing	79	27.8 %
	Retail/Wholesale	61	21.5 %
	Professional Services	48	16.9 %
	Technology	32	11.3 %
	Agriculture/Food	29	10.2 %
	Construction	21	7.4 %
	Other	14	4.9 %

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Generational Stage	1st → 2nd	120	42.3 %
	2nd → 3rd	106	37.3 %
	3rd → 4th	41	14.4 %
	4th or later	17	6.0 %
Business Size (Annual Revenue)	< 5 M USD	73	25.7 %
	5 – 25 M USD	104	36.6 %
	25 – 100 M USD	67	23.6 %
	> 100 M USD	40	14.1 %
Geographical Region	North America	84	29.6 %
	Europe	92	32.4 %
	Asia-Pacific	63	22.2 %
	Latin America	31	10.9 %
	Middle East/Africa	14	4.9 %

Dimensional Structure of Psychological Contracts

CFA distilled six latent factors (authority apportionment, knowledge transfer, legacy guardianship, financial structuring, decision latitude, and tempo calibration). Collectively they explained 100 % of variance in contract perception (see Table 4). Authority expectations surfaced as the principal driver (eigenvalue = 4.37; variance = 24.3 %). Cronbach's alphas across dimensions spanned 0.81 – 0.94, surpassing the 0.70 threshold.

Table 4 - Factor Analysis of Psychological Contract Dimensions

Psychological Contract Dimension	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha	Mean Predecessor	Mean Successor	Gap Significance
Authority Distribution Expectations	0.87	24.3 %	0.94	5.74	5.29	$p < 0.001$
Knowledge Transfer Obligations	0.84	21.2 %	0.89	6.12	5.87	$p < 0.05$
Legacy Preservation Commitments	0.79	16.8 %	0.87	5.96	4.83	$p < 0.001$
Financial Arrangement Expectations	0.76	14.5 %	0.83	5.48	5.61	n.s.
Decision Autonomy Parameters	0.74	12.7 %	0.84	5.23	6.17	$p < 0.001$
Timeline/Pace Considerations	0.71	10.5 %	0.81	4.89	5.73	$p < 0.001$

Disparities between generations were sharpest regarding legacy preservation ($\Delta = 1.13$) and decision autonomy ($\Delta = 0.94$), foreshadowing contention if left unaddressed. Only finance-related obligations evidenced parity, arguably because pecuniary matters are usually disciplined by legal counsel and accountants.

Typology of Psychological Contracts

Hierarchical and K-means clustering uncovered four prototypes (Table 5). Nearly a third of dyads embraced a partnership-relational stance distinguished by balanced agency and iterative dialogue, yielding the highest satisfaction and performance upticks. Conversely, the traditional-paternalistic model – frequent in high power-distance cultures – retained patriarchal control and suffered the greatest relational friction.

Table 5 - Typology of Psychological Contracts in Family Business Succession

Contract Type	Defining Characteristics	Prevalence	Predecessor Satisfaction	Successor Satisfaction	Business Performance Impact	Conflict Frequency (incidents/month)
Traditional-Paternalistic	High incumbent control; extensive mentoring; slow timetable; implicit norms	28.9 %	4.87	3.42	− 0.23	6.4
Professional-Transactional	Formal metrics; clear boundaries; accelerated hand-over; codified terms	23.6 %	4.12	4.56	+ 0.19	3.2
Partnership-Relational	Shared authority; co-leadership; adaptive pacing; explicit renegotiation	31.7 %	5.63	5.78	+ 0.47	2.1
Legacy-Custodial	Heritage stewardship; community anchoring; gradual competence validation	15.8 %	5.24	4.37	+ 0.11	4.5

Multinomial logistic regression indicated that formal governance mechanisms (e.g., advisory boards) tripled the odds of a professional-transactional contract ($OR = 3.7$, $p < 0.001$). Advanced business education quadrupled likelihood of that same archetype ($OR = 4.2$, $p < 0.001$), while operating in manufacturing nearly doubled the probability of a paternalistic pattern ($OR = 1.8$, $p < 0.05$).

Psychological Contract Fulfilment and Succession Outcomes

SEM path coefficients establish fulfilment as a robust determinant of multiple outputs (Table 6). Satisfaction, relational quality, commitment, and knowledge exchange all display $\beta \geq 0.58$ with $p < 0.001$. Indirect bootstrapped effects reveal that knowledge-transfer effectiveness mediates the fulfilment – performance nexus (indirect = 0.37, 95 % CI = 0.28 – 0.46). Moderation testing demonstrates that formal succession planning intensifies the positive slope between fulfilment and performance (interaction $\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting synergies between clear psychological and structural scaffolds.

Table 6 - Regression Analysis: Psychological Contract Fulfilment and Succession Outcomes

Outcome Variable	Standardised β	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Adjusted R^2
Succession Satisfaction	0.69	0.06	11.47	< 0.001	0.58
Post-Succession Business Performance	0.47	0.07	6.73	< 0.001	0.41
Predecessor–Successor Relationship Quality	0.72	0.05	14.26	< 0.001	0.56
Successor Commitment	0.58	0.06	9.65	< 0.001	0.43
Knowledge Transfer Effectiveness	0.63	0.06	10.71	< 0.001	0.47
Employee Acceptance of Succession	0.41	0.07	5.84	< 0.001	0.38
External Stakeholder Confidence	0.38	0.07	5.39	< 0.001	0.36
Family Harmony	0.54	0.06	8.92	< 0.001	0.42

Inter-Generational Differences and Contract Formation

Generational cleavages exert a profound pull on breach propensity (Table 7). Disagreement over digitalization (effect size $d = 1.67$) correlates most strongly with breach frequency ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$), followed closely by leadership-style divergence ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$). Notably, high-calibre communication practices dampen but do not nullify these associations: in top-quartile communicators, the digital gap's correlation with breaches shrinks to $r = 0.41$ yet remains significant.

Table 7 - Inter-Generational Differences and Psychological Contract Dynamics

Dimension	Predecessor Mean (SD)	Successor Mean (SD)	Effect Size d	r Breach Frequency	r Breach Severity	r Communication Effectiveness
Leadership Style Preferences	5.82 (0.74)	4.12 (0.81)	1.47	0.67**	0.71**	0.43**
Risk Tolerance	4.17 (0.92)	5.63 (0.87)	1.24	0.58**	0.62**	0.38**
Innovation Orientation	4.43 (0.83)	5.94 (0.71)	1.32	0.64**	0.69**	0.41**
Work–Life Balance Priorities	4.26 (0.96)	5.78 (0.68)	1.18	0.52**	0.47**	0.36**
Digital Technology Adoption	3.84 (1.05)	6.21 (0.63)	1.67	0.73**	0.68**	0.49**
Stakeholder Relationship Approach	5.67 (0.78)	4.92 (0.84)	0.86	0.43**	0.39**	0.31**
Financial Risk Management	4.31 (0.88)	5.16 (0.92)	0.74	0.47**	0.42**	0.35**
International Expansion Attitude	4.12 (1.06)	5.83 (0.77)	1.29	0.61**	0.57**	0.40**

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

Qualitative vignettes enrich these figures. One millennial successor in a German Mittelstand tooling firm recounted how her proposal for additive-manufacturing investment clashed with her father's cash-conservative ethos: "He equated debt with gambling. I saw it as strategic leverage." Such misaligned mental models, when undisclosed, ripen into perceived breaches once operational decisions are made.

Evolution across Succession Stages

A three-wave panel ($n = 68$) chronicles temporal flux. Repeated-measures ANOVA confirms that psychological contracts grow more explicit over time ($M = 3.87 \rightarrow 5.26 \rightarrow 5.84$, $p < 0.001$). Yet breach frequency traces an inverted-U: 3.1 per month pre-succession, peaking at 7.3 during transition, retreating to 4.2 post-succession. Severity mirrors this arc ($4.12 \rightarrow 5.84 \rightarrow 4.73$). Quarterly renegotiation meetings, when instituted, curtail severe breaches by 53 %, underscoring the prophylactic value of formal reflection.

Discussion

By threading rigorous statistics with lived narratives, this study corroborates that psychological contracts are neither incidental nor static artefacts during succession. Rather, they constitute dynamic socio-cognitive agreements whose fulfilment (or violation) tangibly shapes economic and relational outcomes. The six-dimension scaffold offers a granular diagnostic lens; the four-type taxonomy affords practitioners a heuristic for tailoring interventions; the triphasic temporal model alerts advisors to high-risk intervals.

Cultural Management Implications, the six-dimension framework and four-type taxonomy enable culturally tailored interventions:

High Power-Distance Cultures (e.g., East Asia, Table 1)

Leverage "Legacy Preservation Commitments" (Table 2) by integrating traditional rituals into formal succession plans. For example, in Confucian-influenced firms, codifying family values into governance charters can reconcile implicit obligations with modern legal structures, reducing legacy-related conflicts ($\Delta = 1.13$, Table 4).

Individualistic Cultures (e.g., Europe, Table 1)

Strengthen "Partnership-Relational" contracts (31.7%, Table 5) through institutionalized renegotiation mechanisms (e.g., quarterly meetings), aligning with the region's preference for explicit dialogue to address "Decision Autonomy" gaps ($\Delta = 0.94$, Table 4).

Emerging Markets with Mixed Norms

In sectors like manufacturing (27.8%, Table 3), where paternalistic models persist (OR = 1.8, Table 5), introduce hybrid governance—combining professional advisors (to mitigate financial risks, Table 4) with family councils to honor cultural hierarchies.

Managerial Implications

First, surfacing tacit expectations early – preferably during strategic planning retreats – pre-empts misinterpretation. Structured dialogues should canvass *all* six dimensions, resisting the temptation to focus solely on equity splits. Second, codification (e.g., family charters) should not ossify contracts but rather provide a living document subject to renegotiation. Third, mentoring should be reciprocal: incumbents transmit tacit know-how; successors tutor elders in digital systems, fostering mutual respect. Finally, advisory boards comprising non-kin experts can arbitrate conflicts when dyads deadlock.

Limitations and Future Research

Cross-sectional breadth is counter-balanced by longitudinal depth only in a subset; broader time-series coverage would sharpen causal claims. Cultural moderation merits deeper ethnographic immersion, and the burgeoning digital transformation literature invites intersectional study: how does platformisation reshape psychological-contract content?

Conclusion

Psychological contracts are the invisible architecture that supports family business succession. If respected, they promote satisfaction ($\beta = 0.69$), enhance performance ($\beta = 0.47$), and strengthen family harmony ($\beta = 0.54$). If broken, they can cause conflict and jeopardize family succession. Therefore, recognizing, clarifying, and regularly recalibrating these tacit agreements is not an aid but a key to intergenerational succession.

An important extension of this framework is the role of gender as a dimension of the underlying psychological contract, especially in patriarchal contexts. Cultural diversity shapes the shape of psychological contracts — e.g., collaborative governance in Europe, innovation focus in North America, and succession focus in Asia – and gender intersects with these norms to create unique succession challenges. For example:

Globally, women make up less than 20% of successors and face the dual pressure of proving their abilities (5.2 years on average, 1.8 years more than men) while adapting to gender role expectations in Confucian culture.

Communication interventions reduced the frequency of breaches by 34% in male-dominated groups, but were only effective by 19% for women, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive strategies.

Generational differences highlight how evolving values reshape gender contract dynamics.

This study suggests that ignoring gender dynamics leads to incomplete explanations of psychological contract ruptures and ineffective interventions. While future research can deepen insights into regional differences (as discussed earlier), the immediate implications are clear: Incorporating gender as a core psychological contract variable—alongside cultural and generational factors—is critical to building a robust theory of family business succession. By understanding how “leader masculinity” and cultural norms reinforce differences, scholars and practitioners can design more inclusive strategies to maintain intergenerational harmony and performance.

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Психология управления: построение психологических контрактов в межпоколенческом наследовании семейного бизнеса – с точки зрения психологии управления

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Аннотация

Настоящее исследование анализирует формирование, трансформацию и выполнение психологических контрактов в процессе передачи лидерства и собственности в семейных компаниях. Основываясь на концепциях управленческой психологии, работа сочетает количественные данные 284 компаний из двенадцати стран с углубленным качественным анализом 47 диад «предшественник-преемник». Т Результаты демонстрируют решающее влияние неявных взаимных ожиданий на удовлетворенность процессом преемственности, гармоничность отношений и операционную эффективность после перехода. Анализ выявил решающее влияние неявных взаимных ожиданий на удовлетворенность преемственностью, гармоничность отношений и операционную эффективность после перехода. Статистическое моделирование показывает: степень выполнения неформальных обязательств предсказывает общую удовлетворенность процессом преемственности ($r = 0,74$, $p < 0,001$) и последующую прибыльность компании ($\beta = 0,68$, $p < 0,001$). Выделены четыре архетипические конфигурации психологических контрактов: традиционно-патерналистская, профессионально-транзакционная, партнерско-отношенческая и наследственно-опекунская, каждая из которых по-разному влияет на организационные результаты. Межпоколенческие различия в свободе принятия решений, склонности к инновациям и стилях руководства оказались особенно значимыми. Эффективность передачи знаний выполняет посредническую функцию между выполнением контрактов и обеспечением непрерывности бизнеса. На основе полученных данных предложена трехфазная модель эволюции контрактов: упреждающая, переходная и пост-преемственная. Практические рекомендации включают инструменты выявления неявных ожиданий, гармонизации обязательств и профилактики нарушений психологического контракта.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

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Ключевые слова

Психологические контракты, преемственность между семьей и фирмой, неявные ожидания, передача знаний, психология управления, непрерывность бизнеса, межпоколенческая динамика.

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