

Affective commitment within small to mid-sized family and non- family firms

The influence of career opportunities

In June 2018 Ronja van Kruijsdijk graduated from the Tilburg School of Economics and Management at Tilburg University. Ronja followed the MSc Strategic Management and wrote her master thesis in the area of family firms. The following text is a summary of the MSc thesis.

Family firm contributions are important for the Dutch economy because family firms ensure employment for a large part of Dutch inhabitants, and provide over 50% of the gross national product. Family firms intertwine the natures of the family and the business, which is not the case in non-family firms. Furthermore, family firms emphasize a long term orientation and are more risk averse than non-family firms. This study proposes that differences between family and non-family firms could lead to differences in the levels of affective commitment and career opportunities that employees perceive.

In this study the following hypotheses are tested: 1) the level of affective commitment in family firms is higher than in non-family firms because family employees foster affective commitment among non-family employees. 2) Career opportunities are less prevalent in family firms since family members restrict the opportunities of non-family employees. 3) Providing career opportunities increases the level of affective commitment as doing so helps employees to meet their personal development and career goals. 4) Career opportunities mediate the relationship between family firm status and affective commitment.

To test these hypotheses, quantitative data were collected through surveys research among entrepreneurs and employees of family and non-family firms. The sample consists of 54 firms employing a total of 478 employees. While the entrepreneur survey measures family firm status, the employee survey, through a series of questions, accounts for the variables affective commitment and career opportunities. A multiple hierarchical regression is applied to test the hypotheses.

Results show that that family and non-family firms do not differ with regard to affective commitment and career opportunities, because there are no significant relationships. There is a small significant relationship between career opportunities and affective commitment, which suggests that employees who perceive greater career opportunities become more committed to the firm. No mediation effect is found.

If you are interested in the master thesis you can contact the Tilburg Institute of Family Business via tifb@tilburguniversity.edu and request a pdf file.