

FAMILY BUSINESS IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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Introduction and background

Family businesses as one of the most common but important forms of business organisation exist for hundred years in different sizes and sectors, in developed as well as developing economies (Stough, et al., 2015; Bjuggren, et.al., 2011). According to Institute for Family Business (2017), 88% of UK businesses are family owned and they employ 12.2 million people in the country.

Northamptonshire has a strong well-known heritage of family businesses, not just in the shoe industry but in other sectors. Family businesses play a vital role in Northamptonshire, help to bring stability to the local economy by creating employment opportunities, and more importantly, foster entrepreneurial spirit in the region (PwC, 2012).

The field of family business has gained great attention from researchers and practitioners for decades and significant contribution has been made to better understand its nature, its roles and family effects on the firms. However, the relationship between family businesses and regional development, i.e. how these two parallel fields are inter-related and interacted, is still underexplored, particularly from the local and regional level.

Research Aim and Objectives:

This research aims to fill in this gap and offers a better explanation of the relationship between family businesses and regional development in Northamptonshire.

The objectives are to:

- explore the role of family businesses in different counties in Northamptonshire
- understand how family businesses in Northamptonshire contribute to regional development (both economically and socially), regional employment and regional innovation
- investigate whether family businesses channel through traditional production factors (e.g. land, capital or labour) or/and new factors (knowledge and innovation), which in turn, foster regional development
- examine the regional policies (benefits and barriers) in Northamptonshire, which may or may not foster family business development in the region.

Methods:

This research is an ongoing longitudinal study, which will employ a mixed method, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect empirical data. Data collection will be multi-stages. An initial pilot study is designed and will be implemented in Winter 2019.

Potential Research contribution:

The nature of this research on family business and regional development suggests that a better understanding of the role family businesses play in Northamptonshire, which will come from a melding of theory and practice across disciplines such as family business, entrepreneurship, regional studies, geography and sociology.

The aim of this research is to develop a model, mainly to simplify the complex elements underlying the relationship between family business and regional develop in Northamptonshire, which could then be applied in other regions in the UK.

This research also aims to advance the understanding of family business, via shifting the focus of analysis from the actor, firm and the family levels to a more aggregate level, i.e. incorporating a regional level into the concept of family business and considering its embeddedness in social, economic, political and historical context.

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