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# Preparing the successor through familial support and legitimacy: a multilevel framework

Saadat Saeed<sup>a</sup>, Daniela Gimenez-Jimenez<sup>b</sup>, Andrea Calabrò<sup>c</sup> and Sascha Kraus<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Management and Marketing, Durham University Business School, Durham, UK; <sup>b</sup>Technische Universität Dortmund, Fakultät Wirtschaftswissenschaften, Dortmund, Germany; <sup>c</sup>Chair for Sustainable Family Business & Entrepreneurship, IPAG Business School, France; <sup>d</sup>Faculty of Economics and Management, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Bolzano, Italy

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the interplay among parental support, familial legitimacy, and next-generation succession intentions in family businesses in different societal contexts. Building on attachment theory and insights from family business literature, the study underscores the influence of family at both the parental and societal levels in creating a nurturing environment that supports succession intentions. Using multi-level analyses, we show that a secure parental base of support empowers offspring to develop self-efficacy in participating in the family business (family business self-efficacy), which plays a central role in supporting succession intentions in family businesses. This relationship is strengthened by familial legitimacy – that is, how the societal values that surround family behaviours shape the relationships among parental support, self-efficacy in the family business, and succession intentions. The study provides a nuanced explanation for the family mechanisms and societal values that drive the succession intentions for family businesses' next generations.

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Next-generation succession intentions; family business; secure base of family support; familial legitimacy; family business self-efficacy; attachment theory

## Introduction

Given the generally low interest of next-generation family members to join their family businesses (Sieger et al. 2021), the next generation's engagement in succession plans has become a central question among family business researchers and practitioners. Overlooking the need to nurture commitment and leadership skills among next-generation family members jeopardizes the sustainability of family businesses (Björnberg and Nicholson 2012; Garcia, Sharma, et al. 2019). Central to this concern is the next generation's succession intentions (Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021; Lyons et al. 2023; Suhartanto 2022), which are usually marked by their ambition to have a leadership role in the family business (Zellweger, Sieger, and Halter 2011). The decision to succeed to leadership in the family business is often challenging for next-generation family members because of the many opportunities they often have outside the family business (Dou et al. 2021; Hahn et al. 2021). Taking on the role of a successor means embracing an uncertain future where the outcomes of one's actions are unpredictable. Moreover, a successor must possess family business domain specific

**CONTACT** Daniela Gimenez-Jimenez ✉ [Daniela.Gimenez@tu-dortmund.de](mailto:Daniela.Gimenez@tu-dortmund.de) Technische Universität Dortmund, Fakultät Wirtschaftswissenschaften, Vogelpothsweg 87, Dortmund D-44227, Germany

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skills, particularly family business self-efficacy (FB self-efficacy), to navigate relationships with both family and non-family members (DeNoble, Ehrlich, and Singh 2007).

A supportive family environment is identified as a crucial element in facilitating the transition and willingness of next-generation members to assume leadership roles, thereby navigating the associated complexities effectively (Discua Cruz, Hamilton, and Jack 2021; Marchisio et al. 2010; McMullen and Warnick 2015). The family's role extends beyond the micro-level of individual interactions to include macro-level societal context influences, thereby creating a nurturing environment conducive to fostering the succession transition and intentions (Nordqvist and Melin 2010). A multilevel perspective highlights the importance of examining both individual and contextual factors that collectively shape the succession intentions. The literature presents a variegated understanding of how parental support affects succession intentions and has reported mixed findings (e.g. Hahn et al. 2021; Torres, Augusto, and Quaresma 2023). This evidence suggests underexplored mechanisms concerning the role of a secure parental base of support in enhancing FB self-efficacy and mitigating the perceived challenges of succession (Garcia, Restubog, et al. 2019; Guan et al. 2016). While recent studies have begun to explore the mechanisms (Lyons et al. 2023; Suhartanto 2022; Zhu and Zhou 2021), they lack integration of the multilevel approach despite the prevalent role of societal values in the behaviours of entrepreneurial family members (Alrubaishi, McAdam, and Harrison 2021).

Our study endeavours to address this complexity by adopting a multilevel analytical perspective that integrates both individual and contextual antecedents, thereby offering a comprehensive exploration of how familial support mechanisms, underpinned by societal norms and values, influence the succession intentions within family businesses. Central to our inquiry are two pivotal questions: 1) *How does a secure parental base of support fuel the next generations' FB self-efficacy and lead to succession intentions?* And 2) *How does familial legitimacy shape the mechanisms that lead to succession intentions?* Drawing on attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, 1982), which emphasizes the role of support in aiding individuals in navigating and conquering new environments, we seek to unravel the mechanisms through which parental support influences succession intentions. These intentions are persistently low among next-generation family members worldwide (Sieger et al. 2021). We also examine the idea that societal values may mould these mechanisms, given the inherently social nature of the family unit (Bales and Parsons 2014). Specifically, we consider the relevance of *familial legitimacy* as an informal institutional arrangement that encapsulates elements like intergenerational survival, continuity orientation, network-based relationships, in-group solidarity, and patriarchal domination at the country level (Berrone et al. 2020). These elements influence how individuals perceive themselves as members of a social collective, such as a family (Olaniran and Roach 1994).

We test our theoretical model using data from the 2018 Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students Survey (GUESSS), the Global Competitiveness Report (World Economic Forum 2021), the GLOBE Research Project (House et al. 2004), and the World Values Survey (Welzel and Inglehart 2005).

Our research advances the scholarship on family businesses through a nuanced multilevel analysis, offering significant contributions in several key areas. First, it helps to identify the factors that drive next-generation succession in family firms. By synthesizing attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, 1982) and the context of family business, we underscore the pivotal role of a secure parental base of support that not only nurtures the successors' FB self-efficacy as it relates to the family business but also fosters succession intentions. Second, we offer a domain-specific theoretical perspective, positing FB self-efficacy as a distinct construct in the broader context of general competence-based self-efficacy (DeNoble, Ehrlich, and Singh 2007). Previous research uses entrepreneurial self-efficacy to predict next-generation family members' succession intentions in family businesses (Lyons et al. 2023; Zellweger, Sieger, and Halter 2011; Zhu and Zhou 2021), which may not be relevant to the family business domain. Thus, responding to Newman et al.'s (2019) call to investigate domain-specific sets of capabilities in the context of family firms. Third, we add to the literature on institutions and family business (Berrone et al. 2020) by exploring familial legitimacy as an informal institutional arrangement within the mechanisms of succession intentions. Within this

context, we also expand the discussion on family support and succession in family business context (Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021; Lyons et al. 2023; Zhu and Zhou 2021) by adding a multilevel approach. Our findings show the prevalent role of informal institutional arrangements, especially family values and norms, in shaping supportive environments, thus helping to explain that succession intentions are a socially bounded phenomenon (Lyons et al. 2023; Torres, Augusto, and Quaresma 2023).

## Theoretical framework

Offspring relationship with their parents is one of the most important relationships they will ever have. It provides them needed support (Bowlby 1969) and a major source of security and can have a lasting impact on the child's personality, values, attitudes, and behaviours throughout their entire life, including their career-related decision-making (Garcia, Restubog, et al. 2019; Miller, Steier, and Le Breton-Miller 2003). This phenomenon aligns seamlessly with attachment theory's principles: as a child embarks on their career and strives for autonomy and independence, the sense of security offered by their parents' functions as instrumental, emotional support and encouragement, equipping them with the courage to proceed. By providing a secure base of support, parents can enhance the next generation's management capabilities and increase their confidence in performing their roles as next-generation leaders (Zhu and Zhou 2021). In this context, the concept of familial legitimacy, operating as an informal institution, serves as a boundary condition in the relationship mechanism between parental support, FB self-efficacy, and succession intentions. Measured at the country level, familial legitimacy assesses the degree to which a national context exhibits the combination of social structure, relationships, and values that emphasize the family as the fundamental unit of economic productivity (Berrone et al. 2020). This measurement also considers the prominence of kinship ties as the primary means of conducting social and economic exchanges in that national context. As defined by Berrone et al. (2020), this concept captures the significance of the family-centric institution within a country's framework.

Familial legitimacy has the potential to shape various facets of an individual's life, including family relationships, capabilities, and decisions related to significant life events like the decision to assume responsibility for a family business. This concept bears resemblance to the notion of seeking social validation in the family, where individuals strive for recognition and approval from family members (Alesina and Giuliano 2010). In certain national environments, familial legitimacy is likely to carry substantial influence, shaping individuals' trajectories and behaviours in pursuit of upholding unity and cohesion in the family structure (Alrubaishi, McAdam, and Harrison 2021), such as the intent to take over family businesses.

Consequently, we posit that the link between parental support and succession intentions is contingent on the degree of emphasis placed on familial legitimacy. In contexts in which familial legitimacy is highly valued, the relationship between parental support and succession intentions is likely to be more pronounced than it is in other contexts, as parental support aligns with the deeply rooted norms and values of the family institution in that national context.

### *A secure base of parental support and succession intentions*

Attachment theory originally focused on how offspring's attaching to and getting support from their parents enhances or inhibits their career decision-making in novel and challenging environments (Bowlby 1969). The theory underscores the crucial role of the secure base of attachment, an intimate emotional bond that an individual establishes with their primary caregivers, typically their parents (Einav 2014; Feeney, Cassidy, and Ramos-Marcuse 2008), that facilitates independent exploration of one's surroundings (Waters and Cummings 2000). The theory suggests that supportive caretakers provide a secure base that enables an individual to have positive outlooks on life, to be likely to explore their environment, and to take risks (Mixon 2015). The secure base increases self-esteem and

resilience in the face of adversity (Raque-Bogdan et al. 2013). Those who have such a secure base are likely to develop relationships, have a sense of security and self-efficacy, and manage challenges (Garcia, Restubog, et al. 2019; Guan et al. 2016). Those who have no such base and do not have regular, responsive interactions with their attachment figure tend to form internalized schemas or working models about themselves, others, and their relationships that tend to be negative and mistrusting.

A secure base of parental support that promotes offspring's intentions and interests provides three forms of support: *availability*, *encouragement of growth*, and *noninterference* (Feeney and Thrush 2010). *Availability* refers to the attachment figure's proximity and availability when an individual needs emotional support and instrumental assistance (Turner et al. 2003). This form of availability can satisfy the individual's perceived autonomy, competency, and ability to master their environment because they can access help and advice from the attachment figure to overcome potential obstacles and deal with any adverse consequences of exploration (Feeney and Thrush 2010; McMullen and Warnick 2015). When an individual is exploring a new situation or activity, the attachment figure's availability conveys a sense of safety and security. *Encouragement of growth* refers to the degree to which the attachment figure fosters the individual's independence and mastery and provides an appropriate environment for achieving personal goals and developing competence (Bandura, Freeman, and Lightsey 1999). The attachment figure must also offer verbal encouragement and praise when the individual is successful (e.g. approval for hard work at school), rewards for learning, and praise for excellence (i.e. making good grades) (Turner et al. 2003). *Noninterference* refers to the degree to which the attachment figure respects the individual's autonomy and independence and is not overly controlling or intrusive but allows the individual to explore and make mistakes. Noninterference provides room for individuals to approach their environment on the basis of their interests, which strengthens their learning processes (Bandura, Freeman, and Lightsey 1999). Feeney and van Vleet (2010) show that individuals that have these three forms of support from their attachment figures tend to operate with a positive mood, to have a high level of self-worth, and demonstrate a high level of persistence and good performance in a career decision-making activity.

Attachment theory has received considerable empirical support over the past few decades and is applied to contexts like clinical psychology (Cassidy and Shaver 2002), group relations (Boccatto and Capozza 2011), political psychology (Koleva and Rip 2009), and organizations (Wu and Parker 2017). However, it has received scarce attention in family business research and few researchers observe its potential for understanding next-generation's succession intentions (Björnberg and Nicholson 2012; Zhu and Zhou 2021).

## **Hypothesis development**

### **Mediation mechanism: FB self-efficacy**

In the context of family businesses, a secure base of parental support can generate a sense of support in their offspring because they perceive that their parents give them opportunities to develop their capabilities through career-related modelling, instrumental assistance, verbal encouragement, and emotional support (Garcia, Sharma, et al. 2019; McMullen and Warnick 2015). Thus, parents create a climate in which all family members are encouraged to participate freely in interactions about a wide array of topics. A secure base of parental support ensures a sense of security (Ainsworth 1989), curiosity about the environment (Bowlby 1982), and a high level of identification with the family business (Dawson et al. 2015; Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021). When parents also offer their offspring instrumental assistance and verbal encouragement within a secure base of support, their offspring may develop a strong attachment to the business because their parents have nurtured them and are connected to the family business (McMullen and Warnick 2015). This sense of security and stability (Bowlby 2012) leads to next-generation family members' increasing their interest in the family business (Björnberg and Nicholson 2012).

Bandura (1986) argues that others' actions are the most common cause for behaviour. In the context of family businesses, parental support can affect their offspring's self-efficacy. Lyons et al. (2023) and Zhu and Zhou (2021) observe that parental emotional support and care are associated with entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and Suhartanto (2022) observes that instrumental and emotional support, verbal encouragement, and career modelling increase the next generation's perceived capabilities to manage family members. Hahn et al. (2021) find that instrumental support is positively related to succession intentions, while verbal encouragement is negatively associated with it. Despite these mixed findings, we contend that a secure base of support helps next-generation members believe that they are able to face obstacles and that their efforts to bring about change once they are in leadership roles will be appreciated and will not face unnecessary interference that can send signals of incompetence (Fisher, Nadler, and Whitcher-Alagna 1982). In this way, a secure base of parental support may nurture the development of an 'individual's confidence, decision-making capacity, and leadership' (Jaskiewicz et al. 2017, 316). We argue that the attachment figure's responsiveness, being available whenever next-generation family members need their emotional and instrumental support (O'Brien 1996), encouragement through verbal persuasion (McMullen and Warnick 2015), and non-interference (Raque-Bogdan et al. 2013) all help to fuel their FB self-efficacy. In particular, close verbal communication and emotional support influence offspring's ability to manage conflicts in the family business (Paskewitz and Beck 2017). This secure base helps next-generation family members to acquire abilities for dealing with conflicts with family members and non-family members, and specific knowledge about the family businesses, both of which are key to managing the business (DeNoble, Ehrlich, and Singh 2007). Having (not having) these abilities increases (decreases) next-generation family members' intention to engage in the family business because their belief in their ability motivates them to pursue (not pursue) that goal (Bandura 2018).

In short, a secure base of parental support fuels offspring's belief that they have the capabilities they need to manage the family business, allowing them to develop FB self-efficacy. The development of this self-efficacy through encouragement, modelling positive behaviours, and assisting with problem-solving (Swenson and Prelow 2005) increases offspring's engagement in the family businesses, whereas offspring who do not develop such FB self-efficacy will have low succession intentions. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 1:** FB Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between a secure base of parental support and next-generation family member's succession intentions.

### *The secure base of parental support across societal context*

The literature finds that formal institutional arrangements play a key role in creating differences across family firms worldwide (La Porta et al. 1998; Peng and Jiang 2010), although family business research overlooks country-level informal institutions (Berrone et al. 2020). Drawing from the comparative institutional theory lens, we examine the extent to which informal institutional arrangements shape secure attachments – specifically, the mechanism of a secure base of parental support – in career decision-making, given that family dynamics are deeply rooted in societal values (Alesina and Giuliano 2010; Bales and Parsons 2014). We propose that an offspring's behaviour does not occur in a vacuum because families are embedded in social context that constrain and structure their societal values through formal and informal institutions, but particularly informal institutions. We posit that informal institutions interact with our career decision-making mechanism based on evidence that how offspring may interpret their parents' parenting styles depends on factors like ethnicity, acculturation level, and societal values (Crockett et al. 2007).

Informal institutions are broadly defined as 'the unwritten rules of the game' (Friedland and Alford 1991, 9) and include the societal norms, values, and beliefs that are passed down from one generation to the next. These norms prescribe individual behaviours, shaping what is considered desirable or appropriate (North 1990). In some societal context, high power distance, collectivism, and the web of relations are values that strengthen family ties (Alrubaishi, McAdam, and Harrison



2021; Torres, Augusto, and Quaresma 2023). In addition, societal values, which consist of norms or guiding principles, shape societal behaviour (Rokeach 1973). Therefore, social context interacts with the development of the individual's self-efficacy (Bandura 2002) affecting their career decision-making (Mao, Hsu, and Fang 2016; Youn et al. 2023), particularly in the context of family businesses (Torres, Augusto, and Quaresma 2023). Self-efficacy differs across social context (Bandura 2002, 2018), and since individuals are embedded in social context, they replicate the societal values related to self-efficacy through their language, customs, and social practices (Bandura 2002).

Familial legitimacy is a concept that reflects a nation's informal institutional environment that stems from social order structures, social relationships, and societal values (Berrone et al. 2020; Friedland and Alford 1991). The *social order* system, which depicts how organizations and individuals organize themselves to take collective action, issues and assigns semi-permanent class structures and social categories to social groups (Cooley, Rieff, and Mead 2017). *Social relationships* structure and stabilize the interactions between organizations and people that are necessary to create a foundation on which individuals can organize resources and participate in social transactions (Portes 1998). *Values*, or guiding principles, define the cultural identity of a society as a whole and guide societal behaviour by shaping perceptions of reality (Rokeach 1973).

Familial legitimacy refers to 'the degree to which a country's environment is characterized by a set of social ordering systems, social relationships, and values that recognize the family as the basic unit of economic production, and kinship ties as the predominant conduit of social and economic exchange' (Berrone et al. 2020, 2). Familial legitimacy, which fosters a sense of security, emotional bonds, family ties, and care among family members (Alrubaishi, McAdam, and Harrison 2021), is akin to the role of an attachment figure. Familial legitimacy is intricately woven into the tapestry of family structures, relationships, and values (Alesina and Giuliano 2010), nurturing an environment where attachment dynamics can flourish.

### ***Boundary conditions: the moderating role of familial legitimacy***

Countries that feature a high degree of familial legitimacy exhibit distinctive patterns of behaviour that centre on familial values and norms (Miller, Le Breton-Miller, and Lester 2011). These social context prioritize reciprocity, altruism, trust-based personal connections, and loyalty in family circles. This heightened emphasis on family-centric principles is likely to foster an individual's sense of connection and responsibility to their family business. In such contexts, the notion of family heritage and the preservation of the family's reputation are not just economic considerations but encapsulate a collective identity (Miller, Le Breton-Miller, and Lester 2011).

In contrast, countries that feature weak familial legitimacy emphasize firm-centric priorities, focusing on economic success and competition through self-interest and performance-based rewards (Miller, Le Breton-Miller, and Lester 2011). Countries that have strong familial legitimacy lean towards collectivism, which emphasizes the role of families through hierarchies and patriarchy (Davis and Williamson 2019). This orientation engenders settings that are reminiscent of extended family structures and emphasize job security and collective support (Aycan et al. 2013).

In social contexts that espouse paternalistic ideals, individuals are guided largely by prescribed roles rather than their personal aspirations (Mustakallio, Autio, and Zahra 2002). In such contexts, familial values are rigorously transmitted across generations, safeguarding family traditions and business ownership (Sorenson 2000). A secure base of parental support in these settings encourages the transfer of knowledge about the family business to the next generation (Mussolino and Calabrò 2014), thus fostering FB self-efficacy. Accordingly, we propose that, in countries that feature high levels of familial legitimacy, the relationship between a secure base of parental support and FB self-efficacy is more robust than it is in countries that feature low levels of familial legitimacy. In light of these considerations, we posit:

**Hypothesis 2:** A high level of familial legitimacy in a country strengthens the positive association between a secure base of parental support and FB self-efficacy.

In countries that are characterized by high levels of familial legitimacy, the paternalistic leadership style that is often endorsed in family businesses (Miller, Le Breton-Miller, and Lester 2011) intertwines leadership roles with familial roles, creating a seamless integration of family dynamics into business operations (Berrone et al. 2020). This blurring of boundaries between family and business fosters a shared identity and sense of duty among family members towards both their kinship ties and the family enterprise. As next-generation family members perceive themselves as not merely future managers but as successors of their families' legacy (Jaskiewicz, Combs, and Rau 2015), their confidence in their FB self-efficacy is fortified.

Countries that have high levels of familial legitimacy emphasize collectivistic orientation by stressing that individuals need to be told what to do, and society backs those in power (Davis and Williamson 2019). In this context, a secure base of parental support helps to formulate next-generation family members' succession intentions. In contrast, countries that have low levels of familial legitimacy may prioritize individual autonomy and decision-making. For example, the United States, with its low level of familial legitimacy, shows a preference for accommodation and conflict avoidance among young adults, as compared to their Japanese counterparts (Shearman and Dumlao 2008). Furthermore, countries that feature a high level of familial legitimacy often contribute to the prevalence of nepotism in family businesses, as evidenced by the observations of Chen, Chittoor, and Vissa (2021) in the Indian context. In these countries, where family values are deeply ingrained and familial hierarchies are emphasized, the family ties that are pivotal within the family also extend to business endeavours (Alrubaishi, McAdam, and Harrison 2021).

We predict that next-generation family members are more likely to take over their family businesses in countries that have high levels of familial legitimacy than they are in countries that have low levels of familial legitimacy. In social contexts that are characterized by a strong preference for economic transactions to be organized along family lines (high familial legitimacy), firms are likely to follow a family-based ownership and governance structure (Greenwood et al. 2011), which will have a positive effect on the next generation's succession intentions. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 3:** A high level of familial legitimacy in a country strengthens the positive association between FB self-efficacy and next-generation family members' succession intentions.

Figure 1 presents our theoretical model.

### Methods

No structured databases that focus on the next-generation family members in family businesses are available (Prügl and Spitzley 2021), so limited research captures the perspectives of these next-generation members (Björnberg and Nicholson 2012; Dawson et al. 2015; Stavrou 1999). However, studies do leverage GUESSS data to investigate this demographic (e.g. Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021; Lyons et al. 2023; Zellweger, Sieger, and Halter 2011), and

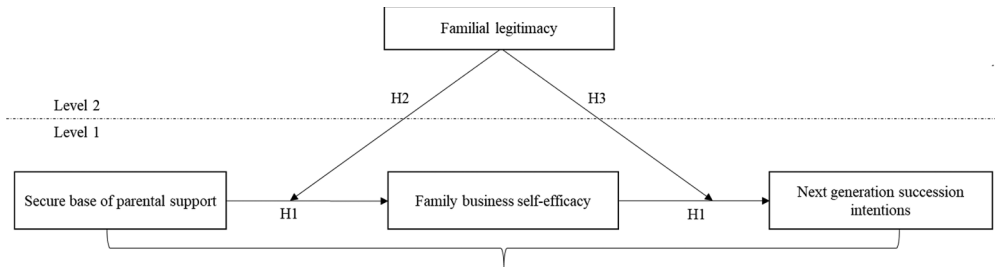


Figure 1. Theoretical framework.



**Table 1.** Sample characteristics.

Country	Family Business Legitimacy <sup>a</sup>	Secure base of parental support <sup>b</sup>	FB Self-efficacy <sup>b</sup>	Next-generation succession intentions
Algeria	0.81	4.63	4.75	3.07
Argentina	0.53	4.85	5.18	2.35
Australia	0.23	4.45	5.26	2.10
Austria	0.35	4.31	5.24	2.21
Brazil	0.74	4.29	4.82	2.12
Chile	0.64	4.81	5.13	2.47
China	0.60	5.50	5.45	4.89
Colombia	0.60	5.38	5.33	3.56
Czechia	0.59	4.34	4.01	2.54
Estonia	0.55	3.94	4.86	2.25
Finland	0.17	3.83	4.80	1.40
France	0.27	4.85	5.26	2.78
Germany	0.27	4.17	5.04	2.24
Greece	0.62	4.79	5.21	2.35
Hungary	0.69	4.30	5.00	2.30
Indonesia	0.81	5.00	4.97	4.20
Ireland	0.38	4.67	5.06	2.59
Italy	0.62	4.42	4.86	2.49
Japan	0.63	3.54	3.76	2.65
Jordan	0.70	4.93	4.82	3.18
Korea	0.68	4.56	4.22	2.63
Lithuania	0.56	4.69	5.18	2.70
Mexico	0.83	5.26	5.34	3.31
New Zealand	0.00	4.10	4.54	1.84
Norway	0.10	4.54	4.77	2.02
Pakistan	0.89	4.77	5.02	3.10
Peru	0.82	5.24	5.55	3.20
Poland	0.72	4.39	5.07	2.22
Portugal	0.57	4.61	4.98	2.39
Saudi Arabia	0.65	4.52	4.85	2.47
Slovakia	0.65	4.52	4.77	2.74
Slovenia	0.66	4.47	5.15	2.97
South Africa	0.66	4.36	4.92	2.06
Spain	0.39	4.66	4.86	2.11
Switzerland	0.19	4.17	5.03	2.10
Turkey	0.89	4.98	4.53	2.72
United Arab Emirates	0.98	4.87	4.90	3.31
United Kingdom	0.28	4.19	5.00	2.19
USA	0.33	4.71	4.46	2.38

<sup>a</sup>Source: Berrone et al. (2020).<sup>b</sup>Source: GUESSS dataset (2018).

we used the 2018 dataset to conduct our analysis. GUESSS data contains a large number of potential successors to family firms who are still university students, gathered by means of an online survey to reach next-generation members of the enterprising family at universities. Using the respondents' countries of residence, we matched the GUESSS data with the familial legitimacy index. The final sample consists of 21,029 next-generation's family business members who reported their parents were majority owners of a business, representing 39 economies (See Table 1 for more details).

### Study measures

Table 2 presents the scales used to measure the main variables. All the constructs were measured on a seven-point Likert scale that ranged from (7) strongly agree to (1) strongly disagree, unless otherwise indicated.

**Table 2.** Psychometric properties of the reflective scales.

Construct/Item	Loading
<i>Next-generation succession intentions</i> ( $CR = 0.97$ ; $AVE = 0.79$ )	
I am ready to do anything to take over my parents' business.	0.775
My professional goal is to become a successor in my parents' business.	0.915
I will make every effort to become a successor in my parents' business.	0.927
I am determined to become a successor in my parents' business in the future.	0.931
I have very seriously thought of taking over my parents' business.	0.845
I have the strong intention to become a successor in my parents' business one day.	0.914
<i>Secure base of parental support</i> ( $CR = 0.91$ ; $AVE = 0.85$ )	
My parents talked to me about how what I am learning will someday be able to help me in their business.	0.813
My parents taught me things that I will someday be able to use in their business.	0.858
My parents gave me chores that taught me skills I can use in my future career in their business	0.851
My parents told me about the kind of work they do at their business.	0.722
My parents told me about things that happen to them at their business.	0.717
My parents have taken me to their business.	0.654
My parents encouraged me to learn as much as I can at school.	0.913
My parents encouraged me to make good grades.	0.923
My parents told me they are proud of me when I do well in school.	0.871
My parents talked to me about what fun my future job in their business could be.	0.780
My parents said things that made me happy when I learned something I might use in their business.	0.823
My parents and I get excited when we talk about what a great job I might have someday in their business.	0.787
<i>FB Self-efficacy</i> ( $CR = 0.94$ ; $AVE = 0.70$ )	
Resolve disputes and/or manage conflicts with family members involved in the business.	0.827
Resolve disputes and/or manage conflicts with family members not involved in the business.	0.813
Conduct negotiations with the incumbent leader of the family firm.	0.830
Act diplomatically when different views emerge among family members.	0.815
Maintain healthy relationships with non-family employees.	0.808
Resolve disputes and/or manage conflicts with non-family employees.	0.865
Maintain and build healthy relationships with external stakeholders.	0.848
Resolve disputes and/or manage conflicts with external stakeholders.	0.855

### *Next-generation succession intentions*

This variable was measured with three statements to assess whether participants intended to join their family businesses. A six-item scale was adapted from Liñán and Chen (2009) to capture the degree of the respondents' behavioural intention. Armitage and Conner (2001) identify three distinct types of intention measures: desire, self – prediction and behavioural intention and argue that the latter type is closer to actual behaviour. For this reason, our measure capture next-generation members' more pure – intention to engage in family firms (Liñán and Chen 2009). The six items are highly correlated, so we averaged them to generate an index of next-generation members' succession intentions. Cronbach's alpha was 0.97.

We conducted a robustness check by calculating the correlation of the index of next-generation members' succession intentions with a categorical measure. Respondents were asked to choose one job that they intended to pursue from among six job categories. We coded the response 'a successor in my parents business' as 1 and the other responses (e.g. entrepreneur, working in a private firm or public institution) as 0. The correlation between the two measurements was significantly positive ( $r = 0.216$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The average of our new categorical measure was 0.057, so only 5.7% of respondents saw themselves as working in their family businesses, which is close to the number reported in Sieger, Fueglistaller, and Zellweger (2016).

### *Secure base of parental support*

We assessed secure base of parental support mainly using existing secure base support scale developed in the context of career-related parent support introduced by Turner et al. (2003). The scale consists of four main sub-dimensions: instrumental assistance, career-related modelling, verbal encouragement, and emotional support that provides secure base of parental support in terms of availability, encouragement of growth, and non-interference. Previous studies have provided evidence for the convergent and predictive validity of this measure (e.g. Raque-Bogdan et al. 2013). The

internal consistency of the assessment displayed a coefficient, which ranges between 0.78 and 0.85 (Turner et al. 2003), thus we averaged them to generate an index of secure base of parental support. Cronbach's alpha was 0.91.

### **FB self-efficacy**

In line with Bandura, FB self-efficacy pertains to next-generation members' beliefs in successfully managing the family business (Garcia, Sharma, et al. 2019). Family business research lacks empirical evidence on domain-specific self-efficacy, as most studies rely on entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Lyons et al. 2023; Zellweger, Sieger, and Halter 2011) whereas we know succeeding a family business requires a unique set of capabilities. In line with the desired family business capabilities described by DeNoble, Ehrlich, and Singh (2007), our FB self-efficacy captures the level of confidence next-generation family member has on resolving disputes, managing conflicts, diplomacy skills, negotiation management and developing relationships with the incumbent and other family members involved in the business. Cronbach's alpha was 0.94.

### **Familial legitimacy**

Developed by Berrone et al. (2020), familial legitimacy is a formative index that captures countries' familial legitimacy. Following Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer (2001), Berrone et al. (2020) use robust procedures to develop the familial legitimacy and identify five conceptual dimensions of the familial legitimacy index: intergenerational survival orientation, continuity orientation, network-based relationships, in-group solidarity, and patriarchal domination. The familial legitimacy index is based on twenty items from the Global Competitiveness Report (World Economic Forum 2021), the GLOBE Research Project (House et al. 2004), and the World Values Survey (Welzel and Inglehart 2005). The items were validated with the help of an independent panel of expert scholars around the world and weighted using the mean values for responses these experts gave in the survey.

### **Control variables**

We included additional individual-, family business-, and country-level variables that might affect next-generation succession intentions. On the individual level, we followed previous succession studies that highlight the importance of *age* (Stavrou 1999), *sex*, *marital status*, and *birth order* (Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021). Our *sex* variable is coded 0 for male and 1 for female. In terms of *marital status*, we coded 1 for married and 0 for all other options. For birth order, we controlled for the *number of older siblings*. Because accessibility of logics should advance along with level of education, we added a dummy variable for *education level*, coded 1 if the respondent had an undergraduate degree and 0 for other levels of education. We included a dummy for education in business or economics (HEBE), coded 0 if the participant had not attended any HEBE-related classes and 1 if they had, as such classes may be a source of bias (Zellweger et al. 2016). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is highly correlated with both succession intention and the explanatory variables of interest, thus we control this factor as well.

At family business level this study controlled for *parents leading business*, respondent's *working for family business*, attachment to *business problems*, respondent's *personal share of ownership*, *firm size*, family business *firm performance* as factors that may also affect next-generation member's FB self-efficacy and succession intentions (Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021; Lyons et al. 2023). Given the profound influence that *parents leading business* can have on succession intentions, we control for it through a dummy variable. This variable assumes a value of 1 if the respondent acknowledges their father's or mother's operational leadership in the business. Recognizing the valuable insights and experiences that direct involvement in family business operations can provide, we factored in whether respondents had ever worked in their family business. This is coded as '1' for 'yes' and '0' for 'no'. Recognizing the significant role of emotional attachment and commitment in family business dynamics, we have controlled for next-generation family members' emotional connection to the business problems faced by their

family business: *I feel as if my parents' business's problems are my own*. This measure aligns with the notion that emotional attachment and identification with the business can strongly influence the next-generation member's intentions in the family enterprise. We control for the respondent's self-reported *personal ownership* stake in the business, as this could plausibly be correlated with both succession intention and perceived support of and commitment to the business. Literature suggests that the *size* of a family business can sway succession intentions (Zellweger and Sieger 2012). To account for this, and considering the presence of a few considerably large firms in our sample, we took the natural log of the number of employees as reported by respondents. *Firm performance* metrics provide invaluable insights into the financial health and direction of a business. We have controlled for this by using a respondent-rated comparison of their firm against competitors across key performance indicators, including relative growth in sales, market share, profit, and job creation over the past three years (Dess and Robinson 1984; Eddleston, Kellermanns, and Sarathy 2008).

At the country level, our study recognizes the importance of economic and demographic contexts in shaping outcomes. Accordingly, we incorporated a series of controls to capture these macro-level influences. We took into account the *Gross Domestic Product* (GDP) as it offers a snapshot of a country's economic health and can have implications on a family business's environment. Additionally, recognizing that the scale of the country's market can influence business decisions, we controlled for *population size*. Lastly, we do acknowledge that in some countries because of an unfriendly environment next-generation members might be pushed to take over their family business. In countries with limited alternative career opportunities or higher unemployment rates, it may seem appealing for heirs to develop takeover intentions. To account for this, we've incorporated the *unemployment* rate as a control variable.

### **Estimation method**

Given the hierarchical nature of our data, where individual-level observations were aggregated across 39 countries, we employed multi-level modelling for our analysis. Such an approach is particularly suited for datasets where observations are nested in different levels, as in our case, where individual metrics e.g. secure base of parental support, FB self-efficacy, and next-generation intentions are nested in country-specific parameters, including the familial legitimacy index. Adopting standard multivariate methods might not have been appropriate, as they might violate the assumption that observations are independent (Hofmann, Griffin, and Gavin 2000). Furthermore, relying solely on these methods would imply that external environments do not influence individuals' decision-making, specifically the informal institutional context in our study. Recognizing the importance of integrating both individual and institutional perspectives, we followed Autio, Pathak, and Wennberg (2013) recommendation of using a multilevel modelling.

## **Results**

### **Reliability and validity**

Before testing our hypotheses, we tested the reliability and validity of the measurement model by investigating the composite factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE), an indicator of discriminant validity (Bagozzi and Yi 1988). Table 2 reports the composite factor loadings, CR, and AVE. The final measurement model exceeds the commonly proposed thresholds for loadings, CR, and AVE (Bagozzi and Yi 1988). Finally, we investigated the latent variable correlations between the higher-order constructs and the other variables of interest in the structural model (Table 2). The correlations do not exceed the recommended threshold of 0.65 (Tabachnick and Fidell 2014). The analyses provide no evidence to suggest that there are reliability and validity violations (Tables 2 and 3).

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix.

	Mean	Stand. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
(1) Succession intentions	2.731	1.866	1									
(2) FB self-efficacy	5.004	1.388	.327**	1								
(3) Parental support	4.673	1.318	.541**	.470**	1							
(4) Age	24.151	53.027	-0.003	0.011	-0.001	1						
(5) Gender	0.557	0.497	-.191**	-.042**	-.099**	-0.004	1					
(6) Marital status	0.090	0.287	-0.012	0.010	-.016*	-.066**	0.010	1				
(7) Education level	0.790	0.407	.021**	-.014*	.029**	-.064**	0.010	-.124**	1			
(8) HEBE	0.279	0.448	.145**	.071**	.094**	-0.001	-0.005	-.014*	.058**	1		
(9) ESE	4.703	1.361	.361**	.447**	.431**	0.002	-.138**	.018*	.028**	.130**	1	
(10) Birth Order	0.295	0.456	-.020**	-.018**	-.058**	-0.008	.027**	-.0009	-.045**	-.015*	-.063**	1
(11) Parents leading business	0.904	0.295	-.029**	.055**	.062**	-.016*	0.013	-.0010	.017*	.015*	0.003	-.015*
(12) Working for family business	0.459	0.498	.244**	.180**	.283**	0.005	-.116**	.018**	-.034**	.059**	.126**	-.058**
(13) Business Problems	4.219	2.072	.462**	.378**	.496**	-.015*	-.096**	-.026**	-.006	.062**	.290**	-.049**
(14) Personal share ownership	1.543	0.879	.219**	.092**	.182**	0.005	-.043**	.015*	.015*	-.0002	.166**	-.059**
(15) Firm size	1.889	1.566	.367**	.128**	.223**	0.000	-.136**	-.0010	0.005	.066**	.220**	-.001
(16) Firm Performance	4.391	1.438	.465**	.390**	.529**	-.016*	-.071**	-.026**	.037**	.048**	.382**	-.029**
(17) GDP	0.147	0.923	-.257**	-.061**	-.188**	-0.005	.107**	-.048**	-.062**	.050**	-.204**	.023**
(18) Population	-0.002	0.238	.452**	.121**	.242**	0.007	-.264**	.014*	-.036**	0.003	.259**	.021**
(19) Unemployment rate	2.164	0.597	-.238**	-.069**	-.037**	0.006	.121**	.020**	.078**	-.082**	-.076**	-.135**
(20) Familial legitimacy	-0.132	1.002	.181**	.025**	.113**	-0.012	-.042**	0.012	.078**	.014*	.130**	.046**

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
(1) Succession intentions	1								
(2) FB self-efficacy	.085**	.234**	1						
(3) Parental support	.045**	.103**	.160**	1					
(4) Age	-0.008	.086**	.141**	.091**	1				
(5) Gender	-.083**	.169**	.320**	.157**	.370**	1			
(6) Marital status	.031**	.055**	-.151**	-.194**	-.168**	.168**	1		
(7) Education level	0.011	.093**	-.115**	.195**	.500**	.290**	.453**	1	
(8) HEBE	-0.077**	.093**	.229**	-.021**	-.315**	-.155**	-.070**	-.407**	1
(9) ESE	.102**	-.081**	-0.009	.109**	.099**	.097**	-.691**	.204**	-.045**
(10) Birth Order	-.026**	-.117**	.095**	.109**	.099**	.097**	-.691**	.204**	-.045**

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

### ***Analysis of common method bias***

Cross-sectional studies carry a high risk of common method bias. We tested for common method bias using a full collinearity approach and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), these methods are widely used by management scholars (Latan, Ringle, and Jabbour 2018). The analysis shows that the value obtained for the variance inflation factor (VIF) was less than 3, indicating that multicollinearity is unlikely in our study. The CFA revealed a poor model fit with single factor technique, so this provided us assurance that the common method variance is not an issue as when all factors loaded on common model demonstrated a poor fit to the data (TLI = 0.265; CFI = 0.534; IFI = 0.666; RMSEA = 0.186).

### ***Hypothesis testing***

#### ***Hypothesis 1: mediating hypothesis***

We used multilevel mediation analyses to formally test the proposed mediation effect following Stephan and Pathak (2016). We tested hypothesis 1 following three steps considered essential to test mediation (MacKinnon, Fairchild, and Fritz 2006). In the first step, we explored the relationship between the independent variable (secure base of parental support) and the mediator (FB self-efficacy). In the second step, we explored whether there is significant relationship between secure base of parental support and the dependent variable (next-generation succession intentions). In the third step, we sought to determine whether the strength of secure base of parental support's effect on next-generation succession intentions is reduced when the mediator (FB self-efficacy) is introduced into the regression. These three steps established FB self-efficacy's mediation of the relationship between secure base of parental support and next-generation succession intentions, as proposed in hypothesis 1.

The results, shown in Table 4, demonstrate that secure base of parental support is positively related to FB self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.230$ ,  $p < .001$ , model 1). The condition detailed in Step 2 is also supported because secure base of parental support is positively related to next-generation succession intentions ( $\beta = 0.310$ ,  $p < .001$ , model 4), the dependent variable. Finally, model 6 reports that secure base of parental support and FB self-efficacy are positively related to next-generation succession intentions. These analyses establish that the influence of secure base of parental support on next-generation succession intentions weakens when FB self-efficacy is introduced in model 6, thus indicating the mediating effect of FB self-efficacy. Our results show that, compared to the strength of secure base of parental support introduced in model 4 ( $\beta = 0.310$ ,  $p < .001$ ), its strength is reduced in model 6, after introducing FB self-efficacy in the same model ( $\beta = 0.283$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Additional mediation analysis revealed that the indirect effect ( $ab = 0.022$ ,  $p < .001$ ) denotes the effect of secure base of parental support on next-generation succession intentions through the mediating variable of FB self-efficacy. Moreover, the relationship between FB self-efficacy and the next-generation succession intentions is positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.095$ ,  $p < .001$ , model 5). In sum, we find that the positive relationship between secure base of parental support and next-generation succession intentions is partially mediated by FB self-efficacy.

#### ***Hypotheses 2–3: moderating hypotheses***

The likelihood ratio test (Hox, Moerbeek, and van de Schoot 2017) was significant for our data, suggesting non-independence of observations across countries. Specifically, rho, indicated that 13% of the total variation in next-generation succession intentions resided at the country level. This implies that considerable amounts of variance in next-generation succession intentions are due to country-specific contextual influences. In response to this, we examine hypotheses 2 and 3, the hypotheses on the societal-level familial legitimacy's moderating effect. H2 predicts that the societal-level familial legitimacy moderates the relationship between secure base of parental support and FB self-efficacy. As shown in Table 4, model 3, the interaction between secure base of parental support



**Table 4.** Multilevel regression analysis.

	Family Business Self-Efficacy			Next-Generation Succession Intentions			
	Model 1 Coef.(SE)	Model 2 Coef.(SE)	Model 3 Coef.(SE)	Model 4 Coef.(SE)	Model 5 Coef.(SE)	Model 6 Coef.(SE)	Model 7 Coef.(SE)
Age	.001* (.000)	.001* (.000)	.001* (.000)	.001 (.000)	.001 (.000)	.001 (.000)	.001 (.000)
Female	.044*** (.011)	.044*** (.011)	.05*** (.011)	-.111*** (.011)	-.126*** (.010)	-.111*** (.01)	-.117*** (.01)
Married	.025** (.011)	.025*** (.011)	.025*** (.011)	-.007 (.011)	-.015 (.011)	-.007 (.011)	-.007 (.011)
Education (UG = 1)	-.037** (.013)	-.036*** (.013)	-.038*** (.013)	.05*** (.013)	.053*** (.013)	.049*** (.012)	.049*** (.012)
Education (Business & Management = 1)	.011 (.012)	.010 (.011)	.010 (.011)	.176*** (.011)	.197*** (.011)	.176*** (.011)	.171*** (.011)
ESE	.270*** (.006)	.270*** (.012)	.270*** (.012)	.034*** (.005)	.057*** (.006)	.024*** (.006)	.023*** (.006)
Birth order	.005 (.012)	.005 (.012)	.005 (.012)	.001 (.012)	.005 (.011)	.001 (.011)	.001 (.011)
Parents leading business	.067*** (.017)	.066*** (.018)	.066*** (.018)	-.093*** (.017)	-.075*** (.017)	-.094*** (.017)	-.095*** (.017)
Working for family business	.058*** (.012)	.059*** (.011)	.059*** (.011)	.138*** (.010)	.212*** (.011)	.137*** (.011)	.139*** (.011)
Business Problems	.078*** (.002)	.078*** (.002)	.077*** (.002)	.092*** (.002)	.112*** (.002)	.091*** (.002)	.091*** (.003)
Personal share ownership	-.017** (.006)	-.017** (.006)	-.017*** (.006)	.074*** (.005)	.084*** (.006)	.074*** (.005)	.073*** (.005)
Firm size	-.015*** (.004)	-.014*** (.004)	-.015*** (.004)	.046*** (.004)	.046*** (.004)	.046*** (.003)	.046*** (.004)
Firm Performance	.094*** (.004)	.094*** (.005)	.093*** (.005)	.089*** (.004)	.142*** (.004)	.086*** (.004)	.085*** (.004)
GDP	.043 (.032)	.002 (.035)	.004 (.035)	-.063* (.028)	-.078* (.031)	-.011 (.029)	-.009 (.029)
Population	-.167 (.254)	-.248 (.239)	-.242 (.24)	.748*** (.215)	.808*** (.247)	.811*** (.193)	.814*** (.196)
Unemployment	.076 (.062)	.048 (.059)	.053 (.06)	-.112* (.053)	-.091 (.061)	-.090 (.049)	-.088 (.049)
Secure base of parental support	.230*** (.007)	.222*** (.008)	.223*** (.008)	.310*** (.007)		.283*** (.007)	.262*** (.007)
FB self-efficacy					.095*** (.006)	.036*** (.006)	.041*** (.007)
Familial legitimacy		-.072*** (.027)	-.069** (.027)			.080*** (.022)	.083*** (.022)
Secure base of parental support x Familial legitimacy			.026*** (.006)				
Family business self- efficacy X Familial legitimacy							.023*** (.005)
<b>Random part estimates</b>							
Number of groups (countries)	39	39	39	39	39	39	39
Number of observations	21029	21029	21029	21029	21029	21029	21029
<i>Model fit statistics</i>							
Residual country variance	0.57	0.54	0.54	0.53	0.54	0.49	0.49
Wald $\chi^2$	9154.94***	10403.57***	10431.77***	8287.12***	7298.84***	10311.73***	9597.01***
Log likelihood	-24013.788	-23587.896	-23578.426	-23246.843	-23596.66	-22560.179	-22795.072
LR test vs. linear model	345.95***	389.57***	398.01***	385.19***	444.41***	309.66***	347.19***

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

and familial legitimacy is positively related to FB self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.026, p < .001$ ), thus fully supporting hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 predicts that familial legitimacy moderates the relationship between FB self-efficacy and next-generation succession intentions. The results, reported in Table 4, model 7, reveal that the interaction between FB self-efficacy and familial legitimacy is positively related to next-generation succession intentions ( $\beta = 0.023, p < .001$ ), thus supporting hypothesis 3.

### **Robustness checks and other results**

We conducted a number of additional analyses and robustness tests to support our hypotheses-related results. First, to test the robustness of our mediation hypothesis (Hypothesis 1), we replicated our mediation model using a bootstrap procedure with 5,000 iterations. Our results confirm that the relationship between secure base of parental support and next-generation succession intentions is mediated by FB self-efficacy.

To further corroborate the results showcased in Table 5, which pertain to the moderating effect of societal-level familial legitimacy, we constrained our data. Specifically, we limited the dataset to countries that were in either at the top or bottom 10 and 15 based on their average familial legitimacy scores. The range of our familial legitimacy index scores span from 0 to 1. For the top 10 analysis, our sample was bifurcated into two categories based on the strength of their familial legitimacy index scores. The high-familial legitimacy group consisted of countries from the upper echelon, including nations like the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Pakistan. Conversely, the low-familial legitimacy group was constituted by countries that registered the lowest scores, such as New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland. We repeated the same procedure to develop a cluster of top/bottom of 15.

Our results in Table 5, models 1 and 2, supported our hypothesis 2 by reconfirming that the relationship between secure base of parental support and FB self-efficacy is stronger when the level of familial legitimacy is high remained consistent across both clusters of Top/bottom 10 (Model 1) and Top/bottom 15 (Model 2).

Our results for hypothesis 3, shown in Table 5, reconfirm that the relationship between FB self-efficacy and next-generation succession intentions is stronger when the level of familial legitimacy is high, remained consistent across in both clusters of Top/bottom 10 (Model 4) and Top/bottom 15 (Model 5).

We furthered our examination by testing our construct with an alternative measure of familial legitimacy, specifically, the dimension of 'individualism' as delineated by Hofstede. Individualism stands as a societal framework wherein individuals predominantly act out of self-interest, as opposed to prioritizing group interests. At its core, individualism and collectivism delineate the societal value spectrum from an 'I'-centric perspective to a 'we'-oriented approach (Hofstede 2011). Social contexts that score high on individualism are characterized by a loose-knit social structure. Here, individuals have limited expectations from their in-groups and are more predisposed to fend for themselves rather than seeking support from extended families or authoritative figures.

In our examination, the correlation between our familial legitimacy measure and the individualism construct proved to be substantial at  $-.78 (p < .001)$ . Recognizing the robustness of this relationship, we integrated individualism into our analyses as an alternative representation of familial legitimacy. Specifically, it was incorporated into Models 3 and 4 of Table 5. The outcomes further buttressed our core hypotheses, underscoring the reliability and validity of our results even when subjected to alternative measurements.

In another robustness test, we considered attitude towards family business successions (De Massis et al. 2016) as a secondary measurement of next-generation succession intentions. According to the literature on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Liñán and Chen 2009), attitude is one of the most accurate determinants of next-generation succession intentions. The result reconfirms our all hypotheses. These results provide additional validation of the claim that parent' support in the form of availability, encouragement of growth, and non-interference (i.e. secure base

**Table 5.** Robustness checks.

	Family Business Self-Efficacy			Next-Generation Succession Intentions		
	Model 1 Top/Bottom 10 FL*	Model 2 Top/Bottom 15 FL	Model 3 Individualism	Model 4 Top/Bottom 10 FL	Model 5 Top/Bottom 15 FL	Model 6 Individualism
Age	.001*** (0.00)	.001*** (0.00)	.001*** (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)
Female	.074*** (.019)	.06*** (.014)	.049*** (.011)	-.112*** (.017)	-.126*** (.012)	-.110*** (.01)
Married	.026 (.022)	.035** (.014)	.031*** (.011)	-.001 (.021)	-.003 (.012)	.002 (.011)
Education (UG = 1)	-.008 (.024)	-.053*** (.017)	-.037*** (.013)	.104*** (.022)	.076*** (.015)	.049*** (.012)
Education (HEBE = 1)	.011 (.022)	.009 (.016)	.01 (.012)	.197*** (.02)	.183*** (.014)	.172*** (.011)
ESE	.299*** (.011)	.269*** (.008)	.270*** (.006)	.020** (.01)	.024*** (.007)	.026*** (.006)
Birth order	-.018 (.019)	-.012 (.015)	.008 (.012)	.004 (.017)	.010 (.014)	.003 (.011)
Parents leading business	.088*** (.031)	.078*** (.024)	.069*** (.018)	-.078*** (.028)	-.098*** (.021)	-.096*** (.017)
Working for family business	.061*** (.021)	.049*** (.015)	.045*** (.011)	.131*** (.019)	.111*** (.013)	.119*** (.011)
Business Problems	.061*** (.005)	.071*** (.004)	.077*** (.003)	.092*** (.005)	.083*** (.003)	.091*** (.003)
Personal share ownership	-.032 (.029)	-.044** (.021)	-.043*** (.016)	.073*** (.027)	.106*** (.019)	.119*** (.015)
Firm size	-.023*** (.007)	-.018*** (.005)	-.014*** (.004)	.056*** (.006)	.062*** (.005)	.048*** (.004)
Firm Performance	.076*** (.008)	.085*** (.006)	.091*** (.005)	.072*** (.007)	.073*** (.005)	.084*** (.004)
GDP	-.036 (.045)	-.024 (.034)	.047 (.033)	-.009 (.038)	-.031 (.032)	-.025 (.028)
Population	-1.028 (.943)	-1.518* (.823)	-.238 (.259)	.504 (.817)	.02 (.755)	.672*** (.194)
Unemployment	-.118 (.101)	-.052 (.064)	.082 (.064)	-.076 (.086)	-.086 (.059)	-.100** (.049)
Secure base of parental support	.063* (.035)	.155*** (.024)	.338*** (.015)	.27*** (.012)	.257*** (.008)	.26*** (.007)
FB self-efficacy				.031* (.015)	.034* (.019)	.024*** (.007)
Familial legitimacy (FL)	-.257** (.100)	-.157** (.066)		.227*** (.086)	.181*** (.061)	
Individualism			.067** (.029)			-.065*** (.024)
Secure base of parental support x FL	.094*** (.021)	.036** (.015)				
Secure base of parental support x Individualism			-.052*** (0.00)			
Family business self-efficacy x FL				.039* (.021)	.033** (.013)	
Family business self-efficacy x Individualism						-.033*** (.006)
Random part estimates						
Number of groups (countries)	21	31	38	21	31	38
Number of observations	7,125	14,368	21,016	7,125	14,368	21,016
Model fit statistics						
Residual country variance	.57	.61	.54	.49	.48	.49
Wald $\chi^2$	3039.61***	5579.33***	10494.64***	3519.52***	6433.00**	10322.13***
Log likelihood	-8165.3863	-16924.8	-23536	-7597.8672	-15174.674	-22523.55
LR test vs. linear model	74.20***	174.25***	334.08***	58.57***	126.79***	338.64***

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

\*FL refers to familial legitimacy.

of parental support) is an important facilitator of attitude towards family business, which later develop next-generation's succession intentions. (The additional tests are available on request).

## Discussion

Building on attachment theory and family business literature, our findings reveal that FB self-efficacy partially mediates the positive relationship between secure base of parental support and offspring's succession intentions. Additional findings show that, in countries with high familial legitimacy, familial legitimacy not only strengthens the positive relationship between secure base of parental support and FB self-efficacy but also the positive relationship between FB self-efficacy and next-generation members' succession intentions. We explain the main findings in this section.

Our results reveal that secure base of parental support provides the encouragement, knowledge, and capabilities the next-generation needs to develop the perception that they have the ability to run the family business successfully (Garcia, Sharma et al. 2019). This finding supports previous work that the secure base of parental support mechanism nurtures next-generation family members' relationships with the family business (McMullen and Warnick 2015). An explanation could be that the attachment figure provides security and stability by using verbal and non-verbal communication, in this way the next-generation family members not only create an emotional bond with the attachment figure (Einav 2014; Feeney, Cassidy, and Ramos-Marcuse 2008) but also with the family business. An alternative explanation could be supportive parents allow offspring to explore, to learn, and to make mistakes by being no intrusive or over controlling as well as encouraging them to be independent (Feeney and Thrush 2010). As Bandura, Freeman, and Lightsey (1999) argue that attachment figures offer offspring an optimal environment to pursue personal goals and cultivate capabilities. We demonstrate that this dynamic is especially significant in the family business context. Instrumental assistance, career-related modelling, verbal encouragement, and emotional support collectively create a nurturing environment that appears crucial for offspring to nurture their involvement in the family business. These elements not only provide practical guidance but also foster a sense of belonging and motivation. Through these constructive interactions between the next-generation family members and their parents, offspring can cultivate and bolster their perceived capabilities (DeNoble, Ehrlich, and Singh 2007; Garcia, Sharma, et al. 2019), instilling confidence in their potential roles and contributions to the family business. This foundational support is vital for ensuring the continuity and growth of family businesses through the next generation.

Our findings also indicate that FB self-efficacy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the next-generation family members' succession intentions. This result is in line with previous theoretical work considering FB self-efficacy as a predictor of next-generation succession intentions (DeNoble, Ehrlich, and Singh 2007; Garcia, Sharma, et al. 2019). In other words, secure base of parental support nurtures FB self-efficacy, which is necessary but not sufficient for a potential successor to want to take over the family business (Garcia, Sharma, et al. 2019). Previous findings have shown that career alignment and high exposure to the family business has a partial effect on the affective commitment to the family business (Dawson et al. 2015; Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021), the emotional ownership (Björnberg and Nicholson 2012), and personal fit (Zhu and Zhou 2021). We show that FB self-efficacy is a missing piece of the underlying mechanisms that relate parental support and next-generation succession intentions.

Finally, familial legitimacy not only strengthens the relationship between a secure base of parental support and FB self-efficacy but also the relationship between FB self-efficacy and next-generation succession intentions. Therefore, in countries with high familial legitimacy orientation (e.g. Algeria, Turkey, Pakistan), the positive relationship between a secure base of parental support and FB self-efficacy is stronger than it is in countries with low familial legitimacy orientation. Growing up in countries where family firms are recognized as 'the basic unit of economic production, and kinship ties' (Berrone et al. 2020, 2) and with parents that provide a secure base, familial legitimacy reinforces this secure base allowing offspring to develop FB

self-efficacy. Thus, strong familial legitimacy orientation countries shed light on some of Chen, Chittoor, and Vissa (2021) findings, including that nepotism orientation is rooted in emerging economies like that of India. For example, in countries like Ghana, India, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates, the country's paternalistic orientation facilitates family values' transmission across generations, ensuring that knowledge about the family business is passed on to the offspring (Mussolino and Calabrò 2014). Thus, high familial legitimacy through their family ties and values in a country (Alesina and Giuliano 2010) strengthens the emotional bonds and sense of security provided by a supportive environment in the form of a secure base of parental support enabling FB self-efficacy.

As for the relationship between FB self-efficacy and next-generation succession intentions, countries with high familial legitimacy have a strong preference for economic transactions that are organized along family lines, so firms are likely to follow a family-based ownership and governance structure (Greenwood et al. 2011). Therefore, a next-generation family member who has developed FB self-efficacy and lives in a high familial legitimacy country is likely to be willing to engage in the family firm. These findings are in line with Alrubaishi, McAdam, and Harrison (2021), who find the importance of the pervasive role of societal values (in our case, familial legitimacy) in shaping the entrepreneurial behaviours of successor, which in our case is succession intentions.

### ***Theoretical contributions and practical implications***

Attachment theory and comparative institutionalism help showing that the complex mechanism that is required to prepare the next-generation to take over the family business involves secure base of parental support and informal institutional arrangements. In fact, the findings show that supportive family environment is shaped by social values in term of familial legitimacy, representing the importance of taking into account the country level when studying next-generation's succession intentions. Thus, by looking at the family level through the offspring's perspective and showing the importance of healthy exchange between parents and offspring, we contribute to the conversation on next-generation members' succession intentions (Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021; Lyons et al. 2023; McMullen and Warnick 2015; Suhartanto 2022). Our study supports the conceptual work by Garcia, Sharma, et al. (2019), which looks at the relationships among secure base of parental support, FB self-efficacy, and next-generation succession intentions in the family business. However, using attachment theory allows us to see the key role of supportive environments through secure base of parental support in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge of the family business managerial capabilities, family's values on the next-generation family members. While there has been a recent push to understand family business succession from the perspective of next-generation family members (e.g. Björnberg and Nicholson 2012; Dawson et al. 2015; Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021), the literature presents inconsistent findings regarding how a supportive environment influences the succession intentions of the next generation (Hahn et al. 2021; Lyons et al. 2023; Suhartanto 2022). Specifically, there is limited understanding of how parents influence their young family members in family businesses across different societal context, even though evidence indicates that career decision-making processes vary significantly among societal context (Mao, Hsu, and Fang 2016; Youn et al. 2023).

Additionally, our findings show that FB self-efficacy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for relating secure base of parental support and succession intentions. We believe that FB self-efficacy complement affective commitment (Dawson et al. 2015; Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2021; Lyons et al. 2023), and emotional ownership constructs (Björnberg and Nicholson 2012), as part of the mechanism that leads to next-generation family members' succession intentions. We consider that we contribute to attachment theory by providing a new application context such as the one of family businesses. We do this by studying the role of secure base of parental support in the next-generation succession intentions in family businesses. Our findings show that attachment theory cannot only explain proactive behaviour (Wu and Parker 2017), career management (Crawshaw and Game 2015),

turnover intentions (Dahling and Librizzi 2015) but also career intentions, in particular next-generation succession intention.

The study also adds to the literature on the role of informal institutional arrangement in family business by exploring how next-generation family members' succession intentions is embedded in social norms, in particular familial legitimacy (Berrone et al. 2020). Our findings indicate that, in strong familial legitimacy countries, attachment figures adhere to patriarchal traditions and foster in-group collectivism (Howell et al. 2007) and emphasizing kinship centred long-standing social ties and transmitting values to next-generation members (Alrubaishi, McAdam, and Harrison 2021; Jaskiewicz, Combs, and Rau 2015). Therefore, in high familial legitimacy orientation countries could fill the family voids (e.g. low or non-secure base of parental support) in this mechanism. Thus, we add to the stream of literature that focuses on understanding the role of family values as an institution in family and non-family members (Chen, Chittoor, and Vissa 2021).

For family business owners, if the goal is to keep the business in the family, we suggest that is key to have a nurturing and supportive relationship between parents and offspring, as it allows them to develop the skills and abilities that are required for running the family business. Likewise, offspring who have a nurturing relationship with their parents will see themselves as valuable family members. In countries with low familial legitimacy orientation like Denmark, Finland, and New Zealand, a nurturing relationship is particularly necessary because these countries do not perceive family businesses as the basic unit of economic production (Berrone et al. 2020). Therefore, the parent-offspring relationship is central to offspring's future engagement in the family. In countries with high familial legitimacy orientation like Ghana, India, Malaysia, and United Arab Emirates, it is not necessary to obligate offspring to be involved in the family businesses, since the societal values in these countries have a positive impact on the development of offspring's succession intentions. However, healthful support provides knowledge and guidance to offspring during their career decision-making process, which leads to their engagement in the family business.

### ***Regional development implications***

Our robustness tests shed light on the complex interplay between familial legitimacy and family support, emphasizing the need for tailored regional policies that support family businesses. The findings suggest that familial legitimacy significantly bolsters the impact of parental support on the perceived capabilities for managing the family business, thereby shaping family members' succession intentions. The results of Models 1 and 4 of Table 5 illustrate this well. We included countries from regions characterized by high familial legitimacy, such as the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Algeria, United Arab Emirates), Asia (Pakistan, Indonesia), and South Africa, contrasted with those of low legitimacy regions like Oceania (Australia and New Zealand) and certain Nordic (Norway, Finland) and some Western European (France, United Kingdom). The coefficients reveal substantial change, demonstrating a pronounced effect of familial legitimacy on enhancing the role of parental support in developing FB self-efficacy. Therefore, family legitimacy is a critical factor in navigating the intricacies of succession.

In regions characterized by high family legitimacy, policymakers and advisors to family businesses are well-positioned to capitalize on this societal endorsement. Enhancing parental initiatives could further empower next-generation members' self-efficacy, propelling them towards succession. Concrete measures could include specialized academic programmes dedicated to the complexities of family business management, governance, and succession planning. In contrast, regions where familial legitimacy is less pronounced demand innovative interventions to elevate family business' prominence and perceived value. Such measures aim to realign societal perceptions with the vital role of family businesses in the economic and social spheres. Actions could encompass launching extensive campaigns to amplify economic and social impact of family businesses and fostering robust family business associations capable of championing their cause at the governmental level. Overall, the development of



region-specific policies, informed by our findings, can help nurture an environment where family businesses can thrive, and the next generation is empowered to contribute to their legacy with confidence and efficacy.

### **Limitations and directions for future research**

Our results are not without limitations. Our study focuses on next-generation family members who may intend to take over their family businesses, but we do not capture actual behaviour. We encourage future research to use this model and longitudinal data to investigate individuals who face a near-term succession decision to understand their actual behaviours. Future studies should also use other family science theories, such as the ABC-X model, to study how disruptive situations, such as parents with cognitive disabilities, parents who are teenagers, and families that are experiencing other challenges, influence the relationship that goes from secure base of parental support to FB self-efficacy to succession intentions. In this line, it would be interesting to study the relationship between past family conflicts (such as heirs conflictive behaviours for reaching position) or destructive environment (e.g. having narcissistic parents) and societal norms influences succession intentions. In addition, our model does not account for gender differences. The literature shows that men have higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy than women do (Wilson, Kickul, and Marlino 2007), so daughters face particular challenges in succeeding to their family businesses (Campopiano et al. 2017). We suggest that future research combines role congruity theory or family communication patterns theory to examine whether the relationship that goes from parental communication support to FB self-efficacy to succession intentions has gender differences. Additionally, we did not test for emotions and love in studying this topic. We suggest using Sternberg's (1986) theory of love might unravel further insights how love types influence on next-generation's succession intentions. Given that our results show the moderating role of familial legitimacy as an informal institutional arrangement, future research could study other informal institutional arrangements, such as how religious values affect the development of FB self-efficacy and the next-generation's succession intentions.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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