


Chapter 5

Pathways to Family Firms' Sustainable Human Resource Management

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ABSTRACT

The chapter consists of three parts: Family Firms, Sustainable Human Resource Management, and Pathways to Family Firms. First, we discuss the importance of family firms and the theoretical perspective of family science theories. Secondly, the author explores the emerging concept of sustainable human resource management (SHRM) and introduces pathways to sustainable futures. What is sustainability, and how was it integrated into HRM? It draws on the wider literature on Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Sustainable Resource Management (SRM), and organizational theory to offer insights into the relationship between sustainability and HRM. The key issue addressed is the balancing act between short-term economic efficiency and long-term sustainability in managing human resources. Last but not least, we discuss the pathways to family firms and how family firm sustainable practices contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030.

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INTRODUCTION

Classical View of Family Firms

Families are recognized as a fundamental component of societal structures. Even within contemporary capitalist societies, families are acknowledged as distinct entities (Martinez & Aldrich, 2014). Structural functionalists view the family as a primary source for socializing and nurturing children, who subsequently become integral members of society. Additionally, families play a crucial role in facilitating geographical mobility, as capitalist systems provide the necessary capital for individuals to establish businesses, while families contribute unpaid labor to support these enterprises. However, the structural functionalist perspective has become less relevant since its prominence four decades ago in the study of family dynamics (McIntyre, 1966). Despite criticisms of functionalism, it continues to hold significance in the realms of family and family business research (Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 2009). The functionalist framework is rooted in the concept of the “sociologicistic theorem” (Parson, 1951) and was notably supported by Parsons' student, who stated that “Everyone wants to do that which others want him to do, and others always act as he expects and wishes...” (Williams, 1961, p. 75). Parsons (1965) argued that the operation of social systems relies on “solidarity,” which is essential for individuals to survive and function as part of the larger group known as society. Therefore, in functionalism, the actions of individuals are crucial as they adhere to established norms for the collective benefit of the whole.

The functionalist perspective posits that the primary objective is the survival of the larger collective, which can encompass any group within the social framework. For a group to thrive, it is essential for its members to have clearly defined roles. These roles constitute subsystems, with the family being a key subsystem within the broader structure. The family is responsible for ensuring the replacement of its members in both biological and sociological contexts as needed by the larger community. To function optimally, the family requires a well-defined structure, with specific roles established within its dynamics. Consequently, family members have distinct roles that revolve around shared values and norms, fostering strong internal bonds compared to external relationships, and ultimately maintaining a state of equilibrium.

Moreover, the family has specific roles assigned to its members. The father typically assumes the instrumental role, acting as the primary provider and safeguarding the family from socioeconomic instability. In contrast, the mother fulfills an expressive role, nurturing emotional connections within the family, especially during the father's absence due to work commitments, thereby contributing to the family's and society's overall emotional well-being. Parsons (1965) further argues that

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