

The role of values in enhancing longevity among indigenous black South African family businesses

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Background: Values play a fundamental role in the longevity of family businesses. However, not fully understanding these roles threatens their long-term survival. Given their potentially large numbers and subsequent ability to reduce unemployment and poverty, it is critical that black-owned South African businesses achieve entrepreneurial success. While much research exists on family business values in a Western and European context, research on family business values in an indigenous black South African (IBSA) context is nonexistent.

Aim: The aim of this research is to determine the role that family business values play in enhancing the longevity of IBSA family businesses.

Setting: The study focused on IBSA family businesses that are independently owned and managed by one or more IBSAs and which are located in various major cities of South Africa.

Methods: A qualitative methodological approach following a multiple-case study design was adopted. Semistructured interviews were conducted with several key participants using a combination of face-to-face, telephone and online interviews. The six steps of reflexive thematic analysis were used to analyse the data.

Results: Four themes describe the role of family business values in enhancing longevity among the IBSA family businesses. Family business values were found to guide the behaviour of family business members, build the identity of the business-owning families and their businesses and build a sense of community in both the family and the family business. The continuity and success of their family businesses were also attributed to these underlying family business values.

Conclusion: Family business founders and/or current leaders should articulate the value set they uphold and use it as a resource to build the identity of both their families and family businesses while moderating the behaviours of family business members.

Contribution: The study responds to several research calls to investigate family businesses in African cultural settings and provides practical guidance to scholars, entrepreneurs and practitioners on how family businesses can use values as strategic resources to enhance business longevity and success.

Keywords: black; family business; indigenous; longevity; South Africa; values.

Introduction

Globally, family businesses are recognised for their economic importance and high prevalence (Basly & Hammouda 2020:326; Hernandez-Perlines, Ribeiro-Soriano & Rodríguez-García 2020:2; Kumar & Dubey 2022:802). They provide 50% – 80% of global employment (Hsueh 2020:185; Maloni, Hiatt & Astrachan 2017) and contribute to more than 70% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) (Osunde 2017:1; Robertsson 2021). In South Africa, the Old Mutual Group (2022) estimates that about 80% of South African businesses are family businesses. In fact, about 60% of listed businesses on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) are family businesses (Rabenowitz et al. 2018).

While the longevity of family businesses in South Africa is important for economic growth, the majority experience high rates of failure and are not sustainable, especially among indigenous black South African (IBSA) family businesses (Nheta et al. 2020:1). There is a view that most indigenous black African businesses in South Africa lack the necessary strength to live longer or to be competitive and sustainable, both locally and internationally, complicating the prosperity and sustainability outlook of these businesses (Ssekitoleko & Du Plessis 2021:2). In fact, several authors highlight that in South Africa, 1 in 4 family businesses survive into the second generation, and only 1 in 10 make it into the third generation (Sifolo & Henama 2019:287; Urban & Nonkwelo

2022:268). Various reasons are put forward for these high failure rates, including poor leadership (Venter & Farrington 2016:35), a lack of succession planning (Gomba & Kele 2016:9; Tengeh & Phikiso 2021:332) and the lack of clear value sets (Van Aardt et al. 2016:13), all of which lead to conflict and disagreements among family business members and business stakeholders (Venter, Van Der Merwe & Farrington 2012:69).

The important role that values play in the long-term survival of businesses in general is well documented (Kaplan et al. 2016), and their role in contributing to the longevity of family businesses is noted (Rau, Schneider-Siebke & Günther 2019:195). Although there has been research on values in general in the context of family businesses (Marquès, Presas & Simon 2014; Parada et al. 2020; Picone et al. 2021; Simon et al. 2012), studies that focus on the role of family business values in an indigenous African family businesses context are nonexistent. Given the importance of family businesses to the South African economy and the increasing number of IBSA family businesses (Osunde 2017:1; Ssekitoleko & Du Plessis 2021:2; Urban & Nonkwelo 2022:266), as well as the importance of values to the longevity of these businesses (Fletcher, Melin & Gimeno 2012:127; Rau et al. 2019:195), this study sought to identify the roles that family business values play in contributing to the longevity of IBSA family businesses. This study contributes to the extant family business literature on values by explaining the important role of values and providing a greater understanding of family business behaviours (Parada et al. 2020:640; Ruf et al. 2021:48) from an indigenous African perspective. Additionally, this study has the potential to contribute to IBSA family business owners' and leaders' understanding of how family business values, as a distinct organisational resource, can be utilised to guide the behaviours of both internal and external stakeholders so as to contribute to the longevity of their businesses.

To demonstrate the important role of values in this study, the remainder of the article is structured as follows: firstly, the research problem and question of the study, as well as a brief review on the nature of values, are presented; secondly, the research design and methods, as well as the findings and discussion of key findings, are provided. Finally, the article discusses the strengths and limitations, as well as the conclusions and implications of the study.

Research problem and question

Much research exists on values in family businesses in general. Examples include the studies of Maung et al. (2020), Rau et al. (2019), Ogbachie and Anetor (2015) and Olejniczak (2014). However, research on the role of values in an indigenous African family business context is nonexistent. Furthermore, most research on values in family businesses has been done in Western and European countries. Studies include those of Gavriel-Fried and Shilo (2016), Strese et al. (2016), Zwack et al. (2016), Marquès et al. (2014), as well as Cruz, Hamilton and Jack (2012), where different cultural and value perspectives exist. To date, several family business scholars have alluded that more research on indigenous African family businesses

needs to be conducted to fully capture the richness, complexity and diversity of entrepreneurial activities in the African context (Agyapong & Acquah 2021:413; Farrington 2016:37; Matchaba-Hove 2020:4). Undertaking research on African family businesses assists researchers and practitioners to understand the cultural and economic differences that exist in these contexts (Acquaah 2013:145). Kaunda and Nkhoma (2013:159) point out that values, structures and relationships differ across societies and countries. Investigating family businesses from different institutional contexts may reveal differences and commonalities that exist between different ethnic groups (Arregle et al. 2021:1188).

Furthermore, despite the strategic importance of family business values in family businesses, several family business founders and owners fail to utilise these values to contribute to the uniqueness and longevity of their businesses (Alderson 2011:5). Most recently, Parada et al. (2020:639) and Rau et al. (2019:209) highlight that not fully understanding the role that family business values play in family businesses may result in stakeholders acting in ways inconsistent with those values, threatening the survival of family businesses. Murithi, Vershinina and Rodgers (2020:159) assert that there is a need to further explore the nature and role of institutional logics, such as the values in other institutional contexts. Furthermore, investigating the important role of family business values in family businesses may provide further insights into how values can be utilised effectively to enhance the longevity of family businesses (Binz et al. 2017:43; Fletcher et al. 2012:127), including IBSA family businesses.

Values play a fundamental role in the longevity of family businesses (Osei et al. 2012:15; Tàpies & Fernández- Moya 2012:136). The question that this study seeks to answer is: what role do family business values play in enhancing this longevity, or more specifically, the longevity of IBSA family businesses? By responding to this question, this study provides rich information which allows for a greater understanding on how family business values enhance the longevity of IBSA family businesses. In this study, an IBSA family business refers to a family business that is independently owned and managed by one or more IBSAs, excluding South Africans from the mixed race and Indian population groups.

Literature review

Conceptualisation of values

Values have been a central concept in the social sciences for over a century (Schwartz & Cieciuch 2022:9). Since the inception of social sciences, studies on values have been crucial in illuminating the social and personal organisation as well as the changes that exist in peoples' lives and communities. More recently, researchers have studied values in relation to human behaviour (eds. Roccas & Sagiv 2017), attitudes (Boer & Fischer 2013), personality (Parks-Leduc, Feldman & Bardi 2015), well-being (Schwartz & Sorteix 2018) and several other management concepts (Barrett 2017).

In the literature, several definitions of the concept of values are evident, and these can generally be regarded as consistent in some of their global meanings (Bardi & Schwartz 2003:1207). For example, from his seminal study on values, Rokeach (1973:5) defines values as 'an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence'. Schwartz (1996:2) defines values as 'desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives'. In a recent study, Ikin and McClenaghan (2019:206) define values as the 'general standards or principles considered intrinsically desirable ends'. In the current study, values refer to the beliefs about the importance of desirable goals that serve as standards and principles for evaluating human behaviour in a particular community (Schwartz 2016), such as a family business.

Values reflect what is imperative in people's lives and represent a motivational construct through which people strive to attain desirable goals (Benish-Weisman, Oreg & Berson 2022:844; Schwartz 2012:3). As explained by Winter and Jackson (2016:2000), values bind different stakeholders together and prompt them to act and behave in a certain way. That is, values as beliefs and principles tend to motivate action or a desirable end state of behaviour (Grigoryan & Schwartz 2021:1) and are considered instrumental in the behaviour formation of individuals and their communities (Ebniya 2020).

Values in general are often and immediately equated to traditional, family and religious values (Heinich 2020:225). This notion is supported by Ebniya (2020), who asserts that there is a strong connection between religion and values, because religion is seen as a source of values that significantly influence the behaviours of individuals, communities and nations. In their study, Chakraborty and Sadachar (2022) evaluate the connection between indigenous cultural values and sustainable apparel consumption by assessing values as a single-dimensional concept, being of both a traditional and religious nature. They further demonstrate the fluid nature of values, as the characteristics and descriptions they use tend to apply to all types of values, making it difficult to distinguish one value from another (Schwartz 2016). Therefore, owing to the fluid nature of values, values in the current study are conceptualised as a single-dimensional concept.

Studies on values in family businesses have often been conducted using a generic approach to values. For example, Rau et al. (2019) examine the role of generic family business values in explaining heterogeneity among German family businesses. Furthermore, De Groote and Bertschi-Michel (2021) investigate how the family business value of trust serves as a key factor in the relationship between family businesses and their advisors in Switzerland. Parada et al. (2020) investigate how values influence the way Spanish family businesses behave over time to perform virtuous acts. From these studies, it is evident and possible that scholars

may investigate common family business values using a generic approach. Similarly, in the current study, common family business values are examined from a generic approach. For the purpose of the current study, family business values are defined as 'explicit or implicit conceptions of the desirable [standards and principles] in both family and business life' (Koiranen 2002:177).

Values as resources in family businesses

Over the years, several family business scholars such as Ruf et al. (2021), Dieleman and Koning (2020), Zwack et al. (2016) and Mahto, Davis and Khanin (2014) have investigated how family business values influence behaviour in business-owning families and in their businesses. Family business values tend to be visible and well defined in family businesses (Hall & Nordqvist 2008:55; Short & Payne 2020:342). Within a family business, family business values provide a sense of community, especially in times of uncertainty (Fletcher et al. 2012:127; Hall & Nordqvist 2008:55), and play a fundamental role in both the family and the family business (Ganguli & Krishnan 2005:19).

Tàpies and Fernández-Moya (2012:139) identify family business values as resources and capabilities that contribute to sustainable competitive advantages among family businesses because they are not easily imitated by other businesses. Family business values act as a strategic resource and unique capability, define and shape the identities of family businesses (Parada & Viladés 2010:167) and are considered the glue that holds the culture together in both the family and the family business (Cameron & Quinn 2006:27). As highlighted by Aronoff (2004), a strong value set permeates the business-owning family and the business, creating a unique business culture. Family business values as strategic resources and capabilities determine the long-term objectives of a family business (Neff 2015:3) and influence its strategic decisions (Tàpies 2008; Yuan & Wu 2018:287).

Several scholars argue that a clear value set is a source of family business success and sustainability (Parada, Nordqvist & Gimeno 2010:358; Zapatero & Jiménez 2013:13). Family business values are credited with being a keystone in business-owning families because they contribute to the business performance (Parada et al. 2020:641; Rau et al. 2019:209). Tàpies and Fernández-Moya (2012:136) assert that values such as family unity, sacrifice, generosity and entrepreneurial spirit contribute to the longevity of family businesses.

Zapatero and Jiménez (2013:10) found that the existence of ethical values in a family business leads to high levels of integrity and confidence in the business. Family business values also facilitate ethical family business conduct and contribute to an ethical business environment (Dieleman & Koning 2020:675). Furthermore, family business values are central to successful leadership and the succession process (Zwack et al. 2016:594). It is the presence of family business values in family businesses that plays a fundamental role in

their longevity as they help to preserve the heritage of the business-owning family across generations (Osei et al. 2012:15).

Research design and methods

A qualitative methodological approach following a multiple-case study design was adopted to investigate a real-life setting where neither the phenomenon nor the participants under investigation could be manipulated (ed. Salkind 2010:1258). The use of multiple case studies enabled the researchers to explore, understand and interpret the meaning of the lived experiences, as well as the perceptions of individual participants (Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007:25), in relation to the role of family business values in IBSA family businesses.

Case selection and data collection

A nonprobability purposive sampling method, namely criterion sampling, was used to identify and select information-rich cases related to the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al. 2015:533). Indigenous black South African family businesses that met certain criteria based on the global Successful Transgenerational Entrepreneurship Practices (STEP) project were identified. These criteria were that the business-owning family must see their business as a family business; they should be involved in the main operations of the family business with at least 50% voting rights or shares; they must have at least one active operating business; and they should have a transgenerational intention (Habbershon, Nordqvist & Zellweger 2010:2). Several scholars consider STEP the leading project on investigating entrepreneurship and longevity within the context of family businesses (Habbershon et al. 2010:2). In addition, the family business must also be independently owned and managed by one or more IBSAs, excluding members of the mixed race and Indian populations. The exclusion of the other population groups is justified in that their value and cultural systems are vastly different from those of the black African population (Du Plessis, Saccaggi & De Bruin 2015:27).

Once the cases were identified, the researchers identified several key participants within each business with whom to undertake interviews. Key participants were one or more of the following: (1) a member of the most senior generation of the family business, (2) the business founder and/or current controlling family business leader, (3) a family member working in the family business, (4) a nonactive family member or (5) a nonfamily member.

While there is no specified sample size for qualitative studies (Kuper, Lingard & Levinson 2008:688; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016:297; eds. Venter & Van Zyl 2017:113), the concept of information power was used. This posits that the larger the information power that the sample holds, the lower the sample size needs to be and vice versa (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora 2015:2). Given the aim of the research, the specificity of the sample, the use of established theory, the quality of the interview dialogue and the analysis strategy

adopted in this study, a relatively smaller sample size was considered to have high information power. That is, the sample holds high levels of information power, which allowed the researchers to use a small sample size of seven family business cases and interviewing at least one key participant in each case.

Semistructured interviews were conducted using a combination of face-to-face, telephone and online interviews, allowing the researchers to cover a wide range of contexts, to use a series of questions (eds. Bryman & Bell 2014:216) and to vary the sequence of questions when necessary (ed. Maree 2016:93). Using semistructured interviews also enabled the researchers to maintain consistency when asking the interviewee questions (Bryman 2012:472). Interviews were conducted mainly in the English language and were audio-recorded after receiving the participants' full consent. During the interview sessions, the participants were also encouraged to reflect, elaborate and extend, rather than provide short, direct and closed answers. A total of 17 key participants were interviewed, comprising three family business founders who constituted the first generation, seven from the second generation and two from the third generation. Twelve of the participants were family members, while five were nonfamily members. The interviews ranged from 30 min to 137 min (see Table 1).

The researchers ensured the credibility of the data and research findings by using triangulation to add depth, breadth and richness to the data and findings (Saunders et al. 2016:207). After the data were collected and transcribed, the researchers utilised member checking to ensure the credibility of the data. The researchers requested the participants to check the accuracy, completeness and interpretation of the data.

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software program, ATLAS.ti version 9 (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin, Germany), was used to manage the coding and theme development process. The study followed the six steps of reflexive thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2020:4). In the first step, the researchers read the transcriptions in detail to get a sense of what was going on (Bengtsson 2016) and to become familiar with the data (Braun, Clarke & Hayfield 2022). This was followed by the second step, which involved systematically coding the data. The coding process started by defining the coding units and organising the data into manageable chunks (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout 2014). During the different phases of data coding, both inductive and deductive codes were relied upon. Both the familiarisation and coding processes prepared the researchers to conceptualise initial themes. In the third step, the researchers constructed the initial themes based on the codes developed in step two. The construction of the initial themes occurred through identifying the shared meanings underpinned by a central meaning-based concept. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2019:594), the researchers

TABLE 1: List of family business cases and participants.

Participant†	Family or nonfamily	Relation to founder	Generation	Position in business	Length of employment (years)
Vula Group					
Babalwa Zauka	Family	Daughter	2nd	Chief executive officer (CEO)	6
Xola Ngada	Nonfamily	Employee	Not applicable	Operations manager	10
Bhengu Holdings (Pty) Ltd					
Siboniso Bhengu	Family	Founder	1st	Retired	45
Patricia Bhengu	Family	Granddaughter	3rd	Operations manager	5
Fundiswa Funeral Parlour					
Zinhle Maswana	Family	Daughter	2nd	Employee	25
Thozama Maswana	Family	Daughter	2nd	Nonactive member	11
Daluxolo Ntubane	Nonfamily	Employee	Not applicable	Operations manager	40
Brown Funeral Services					
Tebogo Brown	Family	Son	2nd	CEO	24
Olwethu Cona	Nonfamily	Employee	Not applicable	Office manager	22
Sizwe Brown	Family	Grandson	3rd	Employee	5
Mathebula Marketing (Pty) Ltd					
Pamela Cube	Family	Founder	1st	CEO	21
Sihle Cube	Family	Daughter	2nd	Manager	8
Melinda Mosepele	Nonfamily	Employee	Not applicable	Employee	5
Nomusa Traditional Clothing					
Zanele Fani	Family	Daughter	2nd	CEO	9
Kagisho Investments					
Katlego Mothiba	Family	Founder	1st	CEO	16
Kabelo Mothiba	Family	Son	2nd	Branch manager	5
Judith Mailula	Nonfamily	Employee	Not applicable	Financial manager	11

†, Note that participant and business names were anonymised for protection of participants.

actively conceptualised and developed themes as ‘interpretive stories’ about the data using their theoretical assumptions as well as analytic resources and skills. In step four, the researchers reviewed the potential themes, and in some cases, the researchers had to go back to recode the data after making more sense of the codes. New codes were then assigned to the data. As suggested by Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019), the reviewing of themes in this study relied on the continuous analytical examination of data. This enabled the researchers to continuously shape and refine the initial themes to ensure that themes tell a distinctive and meaningful story that answers the research question. In the fifth step, the researchers defined and named the themes. As suggested by Terry et al. (2017), the researchers took an ‘interpretive orientation’, which helped them to tell a story that is based on, and about, the data. Themes were given definitions to help provide clarity and scope for each theme. In the last step, the researchers focused and refined their range of writings, including their familiarisation notes, field notes and memos into a single output that answered the research questions (Terry et al. 2017). Table 2 shows the final data structure and how the researchers moved from raw data to the aggregate themes. When analysing the data, family business values were inferred from the raw data based on what was perceived as important, as well as by the behaviour of participants, rather than by a direct reference to values themselves.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Nelson Mandela University Research Ethics Committee (ref. no. H19-BES-BMA-004).

Key findings

From the data coding and analysis process, four themes were developed to describe the role of family business values in enhancing the longevity of the participating family businesses. These themes are: providing behaviour guidance, identity building, building a sense of community and contributing to continuity and success, each of which are described with examples in the sections that follow.

Theme 1: Providing behaviour guidance

The findings of this study revealed that family business values play an important role in providing guidelines for human behaviour. Babalwa Zauka explained:

‘It [*values*] is like a guideline, it’s like a framework. I will never want to do something that would go against my family values.’ (family member, female, CEO)

Family business values help to establish the boundaries of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable within both the family and the family business. Thozama Maswana commented:

‘There are things that you know, that these things at my home we do not do them and these things we do them – this is allowed, this is not allowed [...] I try to be strict as well [...]. Because if you do not have those boundaries for them, they are always testing, trying to see how far they can go.’ (family member, female, nonactive member)

Through being strict, parents reinforce the family business values in their children and in this way provide guidelines for behaviour that uphold the values of their families. It is the values they learn at home from the family that influence how

TABLE 2: Data structure.

Raw data – Sample quotations	First-order level codes	Second-order level codes	Aggregate themes
'It [values] is like a guideline, it's like a framework. I will never want to do something that would go against my family values.' (Babalwa Zauka)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework for guidelines • Parents being strict with children • Setting and upholding boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting boundaries 	Provide behaviour guidance
'Values are there for drawing the line. You must toe the line, and you get people who want to negate that.' (Daluxolo Ntubane)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of conduct and drawing the line • Treating people (stakeholders) with respect • Setting an example by living the values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptable behaviour 	
'But then those [values] are what build a person.' (Siboniso Bhengu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds you as an adult • Represents what the family stands for • Reminds family members of their family heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family identity 	Identity building
'I believe that this company was built on those values and that is what is holding this company up.' (Kabelo Mothiba)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation for the business • Running the business operations • Establishing family business reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business identity 	
'We have been assisting her, if she needs any type of help, we are a call away. [...] But I think if you have such a support structure, it's much better.' (Patricia Bhengu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting structures • Loving the family • A home away from home environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmony and unity 	Build a sense of community
'I am trying to have it the same for my kids as well that during the holidays, their cousins are here, we go to the beach, [and] we try to do things together.' (Thozama Maswana)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social gatherings • Playing and working together as a family • A sense of belonging in the family and business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal connection 	
'If I show you figures you would not believe, in the last year we have had a tremendous growth in our kitchens [...] we have seen our growth sitting at thirty-four to fifty per cent growth as compared to last year.' (Patricia Bhengu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry relevance and competition • Improve on customer services • Innovation and creativity • Increase customer base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business growth 	Contribute to continuity and success
'I do so wish that we could carry this business, not only for us but also for our children, you know. Because I know that it is through the family business that I have managed to be where I am today.' (Zinhle Maswana)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family involvement in the business • New skills and knowledge • Family business continuity • A sense of ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and business legacy continuity 	

they behave in the family business. For example, Babalwa Zauka said:

'If we do not respect each other as a family, how do I respect my employees? If I am not fair with my family, how am I going to be fair on the other side?' (family member, female, CEO)

Family business values also provide guidelines for behaviour in the context of the family business. Daluxolo Ntubane pointed out:

'Values are there for drawing the line. You must toe the line, and you get people who want to negate that, and you tell him "boetie [brother], this is the line that we are drawing, if you want to be rude to customers this is not where you are supposed to be."' (nonfamily member, male, operations manager)

In the context of the family business, the findings specifically suggested that family business values provide guidelines for interacting with others, including customers and employees. Xola Ngada explained:

'Yes, I think they [values] are very important and I will tell you that we respect each other, we respect the customer [...] Even if the customer comes [to the family business] drunk, we do not chase them away; we wait for them to do all the drunk things and then you deal with them as if you are dealing with a normal person.' (nonfamily member, male, operations manager)

The role of family business values when interacting with others was also highlighted by Pamela Cube, who explained:

'I think embracing those values, because you're not an island when you're in a business. So, those values actually enable you to be embraced by the outside world because if you are not, you

don't respect people, no one will want to do business with you. If you are not honest – I am talking even about your clients.' (founder, female, CEO)

Pamela Cube further pointed out:

'If you look at it, these values they are not just about you, it is about your relationship with the community – be it the family, be it the business, be it the employees.' (founder, female, CEO)

Through living their values and setting an example, family members are also able to reinforce their family business values among those working in the family business, specifically those not related to the family. Patricia Bhengu commented:

'I think they [values] have a positive effect. I have this belief that things have a ripple effect. If people see you do something, they also do it. So, you cannot expect people to work hard when you, yourself you are not a hard worker.' (family member, female, operations manager)

It is from seeing what constitutes acceptable behaviour in the actions of their employers that family business employees have an example to follow. In addition, when they see their employers live out values that are consistent with their own, it is easier to believe in what they are doing. Xola Ngada explained how values:

'Help people [employees] believe in what they are doing [...] because if they [employees] don't believe in what they are doing, or if they [employees] don't even believe in the person they are working for, then you will have in a long distance, you will have a challenge.' (nonfamily member, male, operations manager)

Theme 2: Identity building

The findings of this study reveal that family business values play an important role in building the identity of individual family members, the family as a whole and the family business. Participants emphasised that family business values help build their identity as a person and help them to be accepted and welcomed into the community in which they live. According to Kabelo Mothiba:

‘The importance of values is that I always believe they build you as an adult, especially from young, they build you up to who you are going to be when you are out there in the real world by yourself.’ (family member, male, branch manager)

Similarly, Siboniso Bhengu pointed out:

‘But then those [*values*] are what builds a person but what’s left is that you must do your work properly and ask yourself whether you will be welcomed in the community.’ (founder, male, retired)

Family business values influence the identity of individual family members, and the identities of individual family members contribute towards building the identity of the family as a whole. In the context of the family, values represent what the family as a whole stands for. Thozama Maswana remarked:

‘It is telling them [*about the family values*], as she said you know, that when you are out there in the world you should be representing your family and who you are. And who you are is your family values.’ (family member, female, nonactive member)

In the same way that values underlie the identity of the family as a whole, values underlie the identity of the family business and influence how the family business is run. Kabelo Mothiba explained:

‘I believe that this company was built on those values and that is what is holding this company up. The importance of them [*values*] is to keep us; to remind us [*of*] where we are coming from. That is why we are here and to remind us why we are doing this.’ (family member, male, branch manager)

Babalwa Zauka commented:

‘Because if your family values are sort of warped or distorted, you can’t go into business. Because your values are who you are. Everything that you do and how you run your business, how you treat people, I believe that is impacted by your own internal family value system.’ (family member, female, CEO)

Some participants highlighted that family business values help establish the reputation of the family business. As a consequence of their values, participants strived to protect their integrity among the communities in which they live and their standing in the business community. Pamela Cube commented:

‘Again, I will put it in the context of the business in terms of clients. You know my fear and anxiety is that I would hate when a person X meets person Y and they happen to talk about Mathebula Marketing and Mathebula Marketing is Pamela Cube and then person X says “I don’t want anything to do with

Mathebula Marketing”, you know. So, that’s how I will protect my identity, my integrity.’ (founder, female, CEO)

Theme 3: Building a sense of community

The findings of this study revealed that family business values play an important role in building a sense of community among family members as well as in the family business. A community can be described as a group of people who have something in common and who feel a sense of belonging or interpersonal connection (Simon 2018). The families participating in this study showed high levels of closeness, support and warmth (familism) between family members. A sense of community was evident in the time they spend together and the manner in which this time together is spent (open and engaging) and in the love they showed for and the support they gave to each other. This sense of community was evident in how relationships are fostered between members and in the social gatherings that occur. Patricia Bhengu noted:

‘And I think this is what I love about my family that there isn’t anybody pushing each other, and this one wants that, and that one doesn’t want this and this one is not speaking to that one.’ (family member, female, operations manager)

Similarly, some participants concurred that the values they uphold assist in bringing them together, as they want to do things as family. Participants emphasised how these values foster long-lasting relationships among family members and across different generations. For example, Thozama Maswana explained:

‘And during the holidays – I remember my aunts, my mother’s sisters, they would always take us to the beach. They would always take us to playland at the beach with our cousins and I loved it – I absolutely loved it and I am trying to have it the same for my kids as well that during the holidays, their cousins are here, we go to the beach, we try to do things together.’ (family member, female, nonfamily member)

Furthermore, Thozama Maswana explained:

‘We have braai at home [...] yes, we have babysitters. Because my kids are younger and hers are older yeah [...] and I think with that, if you know, it will help take the [*family*] business into the next generation. That also would help in that their relationship is also not that of strangers as families.’ (family member, female, nonactive member)

Family business values are regarded as the source of unity among the family members, especially in times of uncertainty and trials, and provide a support structure to other family members when they need it. Patricia Bhengu narrated:

‘Even with my aunt [*Thami Bhengu*], just recently she lost my late uncle – what we did is we then gave her the opportunity to work from home. [...] We have been assisting her, however, we can – If she needs any type of help, we are a call away. [...] But I think if you have such a support structure, it’s much better.’ (family member, female, operations manager)

Family business values help build a sense of community among family business members by creating a sense of

home and family as well as providing support among those working in the family business. Sihle Cube explained:

'They [*the values*] are extremely important because it makes the working environment a place where you really feel it is your "home away from home" you know what I am saying? It feels like you have got a second family. You are not just there to do a job.' (family member, female, manager)

Sihle Cube further pointed out:

'You know because you need to belong to a team – it is not just about the work that we do. It is about caring for each other – supporting each other.' (family member, female, manager)

Through building a sense of community, family business values allow all family business members (family and nonfamily employees) to feel a sense of belonging, which leads to the creation of an environment where all members treat and view each other as part of one family. Babalwa Zauka explained:

'It makes me feel amazing. There is no better feeling. That is why I always say my staff are like my family. And they get it, yeah. We laugh together, we cry together.' (family member, female, CEO)

Similarly, nonfamily members also accept this gesture as they view themselves as part of the family that owns the family business. Xola Ngada remarked:

'They call us family – like we take each other as family.' (nonfamily member, male, operations manager)

Theme 4: Contributing to continuity and success

The findings of this study showed that the continuity and success of the participating family businesses is attributed to the underlying values of these businesses. Xola Ngada said:

'I think that [*values*] are a recipe for a strong business, for success, in a way.' (nonfamily member, male, operations manager)

Furthermore, Kabelo Mothiba stated:

'You know, I always see values as the pillars of this company, right. So, if they are not there, if the values crumble; ultimately, the company would crumble.' (family member, male, branch manager)

The importance of family business values to business success was further highlighted by Olwethu Cona, who said:

'Aren't they [*the values*] important because you should do right by the people like keeping your promises so that the business will grow and succeed – because if you don't do that then the business will go down.' (nonfamily member, female, office manager)

Similarly, Sihle Cube pointed out that:

'The success of any business, I think as well [*as*] one thing I think I have touched on before, you really need integrity as well – honesty and how you go about with your business dealings.' (family member, female, manager)

It was also noted that the institutionalisation of values into the participating business's operational decisions has led to positive outcomes such as business growth (as a measure of success). At the time of the interviews, participants indicated that their family businesses had been experiencing growth. At Bhengu Holdings, for example, growth had been experienced since the introduction of kitchens to the fuel-filling stations. According to Patricia Bhengu:

'If I show you figures you would not believe, in the last year we have had a tremendous growth in our kitchens [...] we have seen our growth sitting at thirty-four to fifty per cent growth as compared to last year.' (family member, female, operations manager)

For Daluxolo Ntubane, business growth was experienced as a result of competition in the industry. The increase in competition meant that the family business was forced to improve and enhance its customer services to remain relevant in the market. He stated that:

'The business is still growing now. And every day there are challenges and there are also opposition, competition and it keeps you awake all the time. But basically, we are still climbing.' (nonfamily member, male, operations manager)

For Kagisho Investments, business growth has been evident in areas such as entrepreneurship. Searching for new clients and increasing the customer base has been a priority for Kagisho Investments over the years. Family business values have been critical in sustaining the business growth of the company. According to Judith Mailula:

'Those clients are growing with us as well. Because there is just one thing I have seen – you will start with a customer [...] let us say they will just give you small things. They will only give you a route maybe to Durban and Cape Town. And mean whilst they have got all the other routes just to see how you perform and to their surprise we perform very well. [...] The person just opens, gives you the whole business. Because that is how we have grown with the other clients as well. That's why I'm saying even trust is one of the values that we really need.' (nonfamily member, female, financial manager)

The findings of this study suggested that the next-generation family members want to ensure that their family businesses succeed and that they want to carry on the legacy of the family and the family business so that future generations can continue enjoying the privileges that owning a family business brings. These family members wish to see their children enjoying the same privileges that they have enjoyed as a result of owning a family business. According to Zinhle Maswana:

'I do so wish that we could carry this business, not only for us but also for our children, you know. Because I know that it is through the family business that I have managed to be where I am today.' (family member, female, employee)

By carrying on the legacy of the family and the family business, the next-generation family members place value on the continuity of the family business. It is this value placed on continuity that encourages and pushes the next-generation

family members to work hard and be committed to ensuring the continuity, longevity and success of their family businesses.

The participating family businesses attributed the continuity and success of their businesses to the involvement of the family (children) in the running and operating of the business. It is the value placed on the involvement of the next-generation family members in the management and leadership of the family business that allows them to bring new skills and knowledge into the family business. The involvement of the next-generation family members helps in advancing the family business. As quoted by a local newspaper, the founder of Fundiswa Funeral Parlour, stated:

'They [*children*] all work in the funeral parlour business [...] I sent them to school to do these degrees [...] I would not have managed to do all this without their presence [*in the family business*].' (founder, male, retired)

Similarly, Kabelo Mothiba explained:

'And one thing my dad always says is he likes to say, "I am going to start stepping back and let you run, and I am just going to sit at the back because it is time for you guys to make decisions and run with it".' (family member, male, branch manager)

Involving the next generation family members in the business provides them with a sense of belonging and a feeling of being attached to the family business. It is this sense of belonging and attachment that gives them ownership in the family business. Thozama Maswana remarked:

'My father said the business belongs to us and that it's up to us to take it forward.' (family member, female, nonactive member)

The findings of the study suggested that without family involvement in the family business, the participating businesses would not be viewed as family businesses. A family business can only survive if family members remain and are involved in the running of the family business. There is a sense that through family involvement in the family business, values such as family and family ownership are instilled in the next-generation family members, and these values help contribute to the continuity and success of the family business.

Discussion of key findings

The findings of this study show that family business values play several roles in IBSA family businesses. It is through fulfilling these roles that family business values contribute to the longevity of these businesses (see Figure 1).

In this study, family business values were found to *provide guidance for the behaviour* of business-owning family members, as well as for family and nonfamily members working in the family business. As behaviour guidelines, family business values help to establish the boundaries for what is considered acceptable or unacceptable behaviour within both the participating families and their family businesses. The literature supports this finding, highlighting that values motivate people's actions and behaviours (Florea, Cheung & Herndon 2013:398; Schwartz 2012:3, 2013:43) and serve as standards for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour within a community (Schwartz & Bilsky 1987:551). Human behaviour is therefore determined by how individuals perceive and follow their values (Zapatero & Jiménez 2013:9).

In the context of the participating family businesses, the findings specifically suggest that family business values provide guidelines for interacting with others, including interactions between family members and employees, as well as between all family and nonfamily employees in the family business and their interactions with customers. As suggested by Reddy (2009:19), in the context of the participating family businesses, values act as informal institutions that influence the way employees conduct and interact with business stakeholders.

As observed from the findings, family business values provide important guidelines for behaviour and decision-making and contribute to conducting business operations in an ethical manner. As is the case in the current study, Zapatero and Jiménez (2013:10) contend that the presence of ethical values in a family business leads to high levels of integrity and confidence in the business. It is the presence of ethical values that enable and facilitate an ethical business

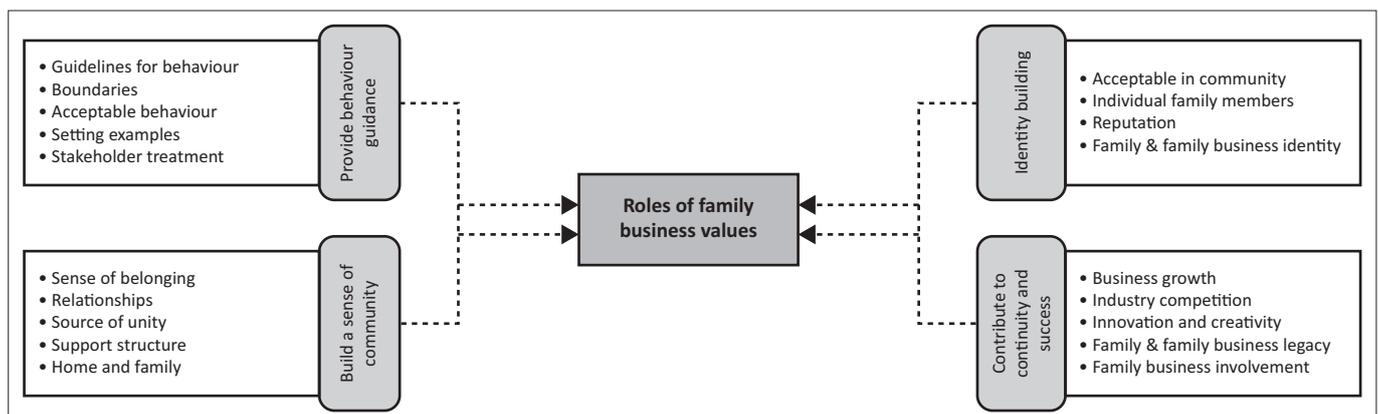


FIGURE 1: The roles of family business values in indigenous black South African family businesses.

environment (Astrachan et al. 2020:637; Dieleman & Koning 2020:675; Fathallah, Sidani & Khalil 2020:657).

In the current study, family business values were found to play an important role in *building the identities* of individual family members, the family as a whole and the family business. This finding concurs with those of Duh, Belak and Milfelner (2010:475), who contend that values serve to convey a sense of identity to family business members. Santiago, Pandey and Manalac (2019:54) point out that the participating business-owning families align their family and business values so as to protect the reputation and identity of the business, which is linked to the family identity. The family and the business identity and reputation are closely interlinked (Reck, Fischer & Brettel 2021), leading to the family businesses strongly focusing on preserving the identity of both the family and the business and vice versa (Kashmiri & Mahajan 2014:81).

The participating family businesses engage in numerous benevolent activities, which enhance the identity and reputation of both the family and the business. As they view themselves as part of the community, they strive to preserve their social identity in the communities they serve. According to Tajfel (1978:63), social identity is 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership'. As suggested by Schmidts and Shepherd (2015:177), the business-owning families want the family and business identity to be favourable in the eyes of their social and/or family business stakeholders. Pant and Ojha (2017:7) concur, noting that as guiding principles, values are necessary for building organisational identities, as has been the case in the current study.

Family business values are found to be cornerstones for *building a sense of community* in the participating families and in their family businesses. Upholding values enables both family and family business members to develop interpersonal connections and feelings of belonging to the family and the family business. According to Van der Merwe, Venter and Farrington (2012:19), values such as fairness, commitment, trust and openness are drivers of good family relationships. In the current study, values are a source of unity among family members and family business members. Most of the participating family business members feel a sense of belonging to the family and/or the family business, suggesting a sense of community in these businesses. As is the case in the current study, it is not uncommon for family businesses to be characterised by higher levels of emotional connection and belonging, participation, trust and better working environments than their nonfamily counterparts (Jiménez, Martos & Jiménez 2015:259; Ward 2008:4).

It is evident from the empirical findings that the participants attribute the *continuity and success* of their family businesses to the underlying values of these businesses. Family business

values have been identified as critical to sustaining the business growth of the participating family businesses. Upholding family business values such as innovation and creativity, customer focus and community are also identified by participants as key to the continuity and success of their family businesses. As suggested by Rau et al. (2019:198), the presence of values in the participating family businesses creates a unique organisational culture, which contributes to a sustainable competitive advantage for these businesses.

The institutionalisation of values into business functions and processes and their influence on operational decisions has led to positive outcomes such as growth for the participating family businesses. The findings of this study also concur with several studies, which have found that family business values contribute to the continuity and success of family businesses (Anggadwita et al. 2020:281; Ogbecchie & Anetor 2015:22; Rau et al. 2019:209).

Family business values such as hard work and loyalty, entrepreneurship, family business involvement and continuity of the family business are values that sustain the continuity and success of their businesses. Eze et al. (2021:819) found that Nigerian business-owning families who value the continuity of their family business are primarily concerned with sustaining and developing the business across generations, which contributes to the continuity and success of the business. It is through the involvement of family members in the participating family businesses that family business values such as familism and continuity of the family business have been instilled into the next-generation family members, and it is these family business values that are contributing to the success and continuity of their family businesses over time.

Study strengths and limitations

By using a qualitative approach and multiple-case study strategy, this study has identified the different roles that family business values play within the context of IBSA family businesses. This approach and strategy have provided rich information about what roles family business values play in enhancing the longevity of IBSA family businesses.

The findings provide insights on how IBSA business-owning families and their businesses could use their value set to establish boundaries, guide the behaviours of both family and nonfamily members and build a shared family and business identity while contributing to continuity and success the family business. With a high failure rate among black-owned businesses, understanding how family business values can be used as a resource may assist in building sustainable businesses that are based on values.

Given that the researchers assume that IBSA family businesses possess multiple and different social meanings and experiences, it would have been difficult to understand these differences if they were to be explored quantitatively. Because this study intended to investigate the experiences

and feelings of human beings as the subject matter, what constitutes acceptable knowledge on values is subjective (Wahyuni 2012:71). This study therefore provided subjective understandings of what constitutes acceptable knowledge on how the IBSA business-owning families and individual family and nonfamily members construct their social world and meanings.

In the light of the limitations of this study, it is important to stress that the use of face-to-face interviews as the method of primary data collection could have introduced potential bias into the study. Participants' subjective opinions, experiences and perceptions could have influenced their responses to this subject matter. Family businesses are known to be notoriously secretive and have control over what and how much information they are prepared to share with researchers. In the current study, some participants were sensitive to the questions asked and may have withheld certain information or answered in a manner that did not accurately reflect reality, resulting in biased responses.

In this study, the researchers used the English language as the main medium of communication when conducting interviews. However, most of the participants were not English native speakers, and some resorted to using their indigenous South African home languages, such as isiXhosa and isiZulu, when responding to the research questions posed. The use of the English language presented a language barrier in that although explained by the researchers, several business concepts used were not known or understood by participants. In addition, not being able to respond in their home languages possibly limited the ability of participants to effectively describe their feelings and experiences. In the case where participants had responded using their indigenous South African home languages, the researchers used a specialised linguist to translate such responses to the English language for the purpose of transcribing and data analysis.

Conclusions and implications of the study

This study approached family business values as resources and capabilities needed to moderate behaviours of family and nonfamily business members and achieve business success (Zapatero & Jiménez 2013:13). As highlighted in the findings, family business values were found to play several roles, namely providing behaviour guidance, identity building, building a sense of community and contributing to continuity and success.

It is recommended that IBSA family businesses uphold the value set that they want espoused and practised in their businesses to provide guidance to family and nonfamily members. These values should be demonstrated by the founders and/or current leaders so that they guide the behaviours of other family business members. Family business founders and/or current leaders should articulate the value set they uphold and use it as a resource to build the identity of

both their families and family businesses. Their values should be clearly communicated to all stakeholders to build clear family and business identities that will help them to be accepted and welcomed into the communities they serve. In addition, founders and/or leaders should enact codes of conduct policies and display artefacts of the family business values, which may promote acceptable behaviours among internal and external stakeholders. As suggested by Ward (2004:137), values beneficially impact the relationships family businesses have with different stakeholders. As such, the displaying of family business values will ensure that all stakeholders benefit from harmonious relationships, ultimately enhancing the continuity and success of the business.

Through upholding family business values that enhance relationships and build a sense of community among family and nonfamily business members, IBSA family businesses should create unity and a sense of belonging as well as a shared and common understanding towards achieving their objectives. As suggested by Ferro-Soto, Macías-Quintana and Vázquez-Rodríguez (2018:2), a sense of community encourages the willingness of family business members to work together to achieve business objectives. To build a sense of community, it is recommended that founders and/or current leaders should instil family business values that bring about shared purpose and responsibility among all family and nonfamily business members. In this regard, family business values such as commitment, loyalty, hard work and trust may be crucial in achieving shared purpose and responsibility among members.

It is also recommended that family business values be upheld, as the findings of this study show that by upholding these values, the chances of business longevity are increased. The founders and/or current leaders of IBSA family businesses should instil values such as customer focus, innovation and creativity, which will contribute to the increasing the customer base and ultimately enhance business growth. By upholding family business values that promote innovation and creativity among family and nonfamily employees, as well as family business values that foster family involvement and a sense of ownership among all members, the continuity and success and ultimately the longevity of the family business are enhanced.

Owing to founders' failure to utilise family business values (Alderson 2011:5), it is therefore recommended that IBSA family businesses use their values to contribute to the uniqueness and longevity of their businesses. By communicating a clear value set and setting examples of acceptable behaviours to different stakeholders, founders and/or current leaders can use family business values to guide the behaviour of stakeholders, build identities of the family and family businesses, build a sense of community and contribute to business continuity and success, ultimately enhancing family business longevity. Founders and/or current leaders of IBSA family businesses should put values into practice and should preserve the core values of their businesses, but as suggested by Agulles, Ceja and Tàpies

(2013:243), values should constantly be revised to ensure that family businesses adapt to the needs and changes in the markets.

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Authors' contributions

W.K. conducted the research, reviewed the literature, collected and analysed the data, made interpretations and finalised the report. S.M.F. and E.V. supervised the research project and provided the necessary advice during the study. The article manuscript was drafted and reviewed by all authors.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of the study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author, W.K. The data are not publicly available because they contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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