



Mapping the Landscape of Family Business Conflict: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Family businesses play a pivotal role in the global economy but are uniquely vulnerable to internal conflict due to the overlap of family and business roles. This systematic literature review (SLR) examines 25 peer-reviewed articles published between 2016 and 2025 to explore the evolving themes, theories, and methodologies in family business conflict research. The review responds to the urgent need for a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics amid rising challenges such as digitalization, intergenerational transitions, and global competitiveness. Using the PRISMA protocol and thematic analysis supported by the Watase Uake system, the study identifies four dominant categories in the literature: types of conflict (e.g., relational, generational, governance), sources of conflict, consequences of conflict on performance and relationships, and conflict resolution strategies. The findings reveal that Agency Theory and Socioemotional Wealth Theory are the most frequently applied, while cultural and digital factors increasingly influence conflict dynamics. Despite methodological diversity, research remains largely Western-centric and quantitatively focused, with limited attention to emotional and cultural dimensions in non-Western contexts. This SLR contributes by offering an integrative conceptual framework that synthesizes key variables, relationships, and contextual influences on family business conflict. It highlights the importance of culturally adaptive and proactive conflict management strategies, particularly in emerging markets. The study also identifies gaps for future research, including the need for longitudinal studies, mixed-method approaches, and exploration of digital tools in conflict resolution. The review informs both academic inquiry and practical governance in sustaining family firms.

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1. Introduction

Significant developments in the study of conflict in family businesses indicate a shift in focus from traditional approaches which emphasize interpersonal aspects and organizational structures towards a more comprehensive and multidimensional understanding, including the influence of technology and cultural factors (Caputo et al., 2018; Jensen & Knudsen, 2017). Initially, research predominantly addressed conflict as an obstacle to performance and innovation in family firms, rooted in a paradigm of inherent internal conflict (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016). However, recent literature shows a trend of integrating external and digital factors, such as the influence of technology and digitalization on conflict management. For example, Hiebl & Bürgel (2024) highlight that traditional conflict strategies must be adapted to the rapidly evolving digital era. Additionally, cultural and diversity factors have started to take center stage. Gavrić & Braje (2024) for instance, emphasize that intergenerational conflict is no longer merely seen as a barrier, but also as an opportunity for organizational reflection and internal cultural transformation. Furthermore, interdisciplinary and systems-theory-based approaches are becoming increasingly dominant, showing that conflict cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader social and cultural context in which it occurs (Nagel et al., 2024; Yezza et al., 2021).

This evolution reflects a more holistic understanding, where technological factors such as the use of ICT and social media also modulate the dynamics of conflict and communication within family businesses (Effendi, 2020). Technology, once considered an external factor, is now an integral part of conflict management strategies—for example, through the development of online communication systems that promote empathetic dialogue and transparency (Guerrero Calle et al., 2024). Overall, this transformation demonstrates that conflict management in the modern era is no longer reactive but rather proactive and adaptive, integrating cultural, technological, and internal family dynamics that were previously overlooked (Reina et al., 2017). Such approaches are highly relevant to global trends that drive innovation, cross-cultural collaboration, and digitalization in the context of family business, necessitating a deeper understanding of the factors that influence conflict and governance in the contemporary era (Caputo et al., 2018; Gavrić & Braje, 2024).

In the literature review on family business conflict, various articles employing review methods have significantly contributed to identifying research trends and dynamics in the field. For instance, earlier studies such as Smith and colleagues (2005) used systematic reviews to highlight key factors influencing family conflict, although these studies were limited in terms of geographic coverage and relied more on qualitative methodologies. Over time, research by Huang et al. (2015) expanded the discourse by providing comprehensive analyses of various empirical studies that consistently showed the influence of family structure and power on conflict, thus helping to identify common trends in the field. Overall, the review approach has helped affirm certain recurring findings and identify variations in results that may be influenced by geographic context or methodological choices. However, challenges remain in terms of data limitations and

the heterogeneity of the studies included, highlighting the need for longitudinal research and the development of more uniform conceptual frameworks. Therefore, review methodologies in this literature play an important role in navigating the diversity of findings and steering the field toward more focused and comprehensive research (Qiu & Freel, 2020).

The scope and objective of this systematic literature review (SLR) are to comprehensively identify, evaluate, and synthesize research on the dynamics of conflict within the context of family businesses, spanning various disciplines and methodological approaches. The main focus of this review includes key aspects that influence conflict, such as cultural, psychosocial, and emotional factors, as well as conflict management and resolution strategies applied in different geographical and cultural contexts. The goal of this SLR is to develop a holistic and integrative conceptual framework that captures the complex relationships among key variables and contextual factors in family business conflict. Additionally, the review aims to identify research gaps, showcase the diversity of approaches and findings, and offer guidance for researchers and practitioners in developing more effective, evidence-based conflict management strategies. The primary contribution expected from this SLR is the establishment of a new taxonomy and conceptual framework that can serve as a theoretical foundation for future studies, as well as for policy and practice in more holistic and context-sensitive conflict management within the family business realm.

How important is it to have a comprehensive understanding of conflict dynamics in family businesses within the current academic and industrial frameworks, considering the complexity and the impact on the sustainability and performance of family firms? In this context, what are the theoretical and practical implications of conflict management that could enrich the academic literature while providing strategic guidance for family business actors? Furthermore, given the rapid emergence of new trends such as digital technology, cultural diversity, and psychosocial dynamics, to what extent is there an urgent and relevant need for an in-depth systematic review of recent studies on family business conflict? Such a review is critical to identifying gaps, formulating a robust conceptual framework, and developing adaptive and effective conflict management strategies.

2. Literature Review

Family businesses are a distinct organizational form in which the roles of entrepreneur and family member are inherently intertwined (Hack-Polay et al., 2020a). In contrast, non-family firms tend to separate these roles more clearly. This overlap between business and family responsibilities has led to the development of a management approach that differs notably from that of non-family or small businesses (Kets de Vries, 1993). Over the past few decades, scholarly interest in family business studies has grown significantly (Benavides-Velasco et al., 2013).

Despite their longstanding importance, only recently has academic attention begun to reflect the vital role that family businesses play in the global economy. They are key drivers of economic development and form a core component of capitalist systems. According to the *Business Yearbook 2014*, family firms make up the majority of businesses worldwide and are major contributors to GDP. In Europe, they accounted for 70% of GDP in 2014, while in the U.S., over 80% of established firms and 77% of new ventures are family-owned (Cooper et al., 2013). These businesses also dominate employment, accounting for more than 80% of jobs in the private sector (Neuberg & Lank, 1998), and they hold a substantial share of GDP in most capitalist economies (Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2000; Sharma et al., 1996).

According to Mandl (2008) and Lambrecht & Naudts (2008), employees in family businesses can be classified into three groups: (1) the founder or their successor who leads the firm; (2) other family members involved through employment, ownership, or decision-making; and (3) non-family employees who recognize that their roles and decisions are significantly shaped by the influence of the family.

Family businesses are commonly defined by the central role of the founder, whose continued presence in leadership reinforces the family's influence within the organization. Anderson & Reeb (2003) for instance, argue that to qualify as a family firm, the CEO must be either the founder or a direct descendant. This influence is particularly evident in small family businesses, where the firm's structure, operations, and governance are often shaped around the entrepreneur. Another widely acknowledged criterion is the extent of family involvement, which plays a key role in shaping the behaviors and dynamics within the firm (Chrisman et al., 2014). Family members are often deeply embedded in ownership, managerial roles, and day-to-day operations (*Daily*1992, n.d.).

Debates around the definition of family business remain active, with many scholars emphasizing kinship ties among owners and managers (Vlasic, 2023). Research has shown that many new ventures are founded by family teams (Hack-Polay et al., 2020b), a trend increasingly seen in high-tech and knowledge-based sectors (Hellerstedt & Aldrich, 2008). To reduce ambiguity in defining family businesses, earlier studies introduced the concept of self-identification where managers explicitly label their firm as a family business (Holland & Boulton, 1984). Despite definitional complexity, family businesses face unique challenges that classical management theory often overlooks (Davis & Harveston, 2001; Davis & Stern, 1980). In response, De Massis et al. (2014) proposed a model emphasizing that family ownership, governance, and management only result in family-specific behaviors if the family has both the discretion and intent to pursue family-oriented goals. In line with this model, family firms are considered those where multiple family members hold controlling ownership, are actively involved in management, and aim to ensure succession and continuity within the family (Chua et al., 1999).

Researchers have noted that the intersection of family and business systems gives rise to distinct challenges and organizational dynamics (Habbershon et al., 2003). This

overlap often becomes a source of conflict, as family issues spill into business operations and vice versa (Daily & Dollinger, 1993; Harvey & Evans, 1994; Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2004). Family businesses are therefore seen as highly susceptible to conflict due to the convergence of emotional and economic goals (Kotlar & De Massis, 2013). The resulting relational dynamics are often fragile and complex.

Conflict management literature identifies three main types of conflict: task, process, and relationship conflict (Jehn, 1993, 1995). Task conflict involves disagreements over business goals and strategies; process conflict centers on how tasks should be executed; and relationship conflict stems from personal incompatibility among team members. The latter, in particular, can be highly disruptive due to its emotional intensity, often manifesting as distrust, hostility, and perceived ulterior motives.

Davis and Harveston (2001), building on early conflict theory (e.g., Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954; Ross, 1989), further categorized conflict in family firms as either substantive (task and process-based) or affective (emotionally driven). While conflict is present in both family and non-family firms, its likelihood is higher in family firms due to the blending of personal and professional roles (Lee & Rogoff, 1996; Trippe & Baumuel, 2015). This duality results in compounded conflicts and a greater need for targeted conflict resolution strategies (Harvey & Evans, 1994; Grossmann & Schlippe, 2015).

One common type of conflict in family businesses is role conflict, which arises from overlapping responsibilities in both family and business spheres (Katz & Kahn, 1978). This is particularly evident in work–family conflict, where professional demands interfere with personal obligations and vice versa (Fron et al., 1992; Carr & Hmieleski, 2015). Such conflicts can lead to burnout, strain relationships, and impair business performance. Another major source of tension is generational succession, a critical yet often mishandled phase. If not carefully planned and executed, succession can trigger conflict and undermine even well-established firms. Studies show that only 30% of family businesses survive into the second generation, largely due to poor succession planning, unprepared heirs, or internal rivalries (Davis & Harveston, 1998; Handler, 1990, 1992; Ward, 1997). The third major conflict type is agency conflict, which in family firms extends beyond classic principal-agent problems. It frequently occurs between different family members, family and non-family stakeholders, majority (family) and minority shareholders, or between owners and lenders (Morck et al., 1988; Schulze et al., 2003). Often, these tensions stem from opportunistic behavior driven by personal agendas.

Despite extensive research on family business and conflict management as separate fields, there remains a gap in integrating these perspectives. Few studies comprehensively apply conflict management theories to family firms, indicating a pressing need for more holistic and integrated approaches to understanding and resolving conflict in family business contexts.

3. Research Method

This study uses a systematic literature review because this method is reliable, reproducible, and scientific for building a knowledge base (Lim et al., 2022; Tranfield et al., 2003). The methodology used is based on Fauzi's (2022) method, which consists of four steps: time frame, database selection, article selection, and article classification.

Time Frame

To capture the evolving discourse and contemporary developments on the determinants of family business conflict, the literature review was conducted within a defined time frame spanning from 2016 to 2025. This period was selected to ensure the inclusion of recent empirical studies and theoretical advancements that reflect the dynamic challenges and transitions faced by family firms in recent years.

Database Selection

Using the keywords Business Family Conflict and Family Firm Conflict, a total of 104 articles were retrieved from the Scopus database covering the period from 2016 to 2025. The articles used are from peer-reviewed journals ranked Q1–Q3 with a high impact factor, written in English, and available in full-text format. Non-journal sources such as books, book chapters, reports, theses, and dissertations are excluded. The topics of focus include family business conflict, emotional intelligence, leadership, and innovation as a management strategy to overcome conflict in family businesses, with journal selection aimed at maintaining quality and avoiding changes in scope. In the initial identification phase, 54 articles were eliminated for the following reasons: 2 duplicate entries, 47 articles did not meet the eligibility criteria based on automatic screening (irrelevant topics, mismatch with keywords or publication years), 1 article was published in a journal outside the Q1–Q4 ranking, and 4 articles had no abstract. Of the remaining 50 articles that proceeded to the screening phase, none were eliminated, and all were included in the full-text retrieval phase. However, 24 full-text articles could not be accessed. As a result, only 26 articles were eligible for comprehensive assessment, and 2 of these were excluded due to specific methodological reasons. Ultimately, 25 articles were included in the main analysis. The analysis was conducted thematically based on the PRISMA protocol and further supported by the Watase Uake system (Wahyudi, 2024) to identify dominant themes and key patterns in the dynamics of family business conflict.

PRISMA Reporting: Business Family Conflict

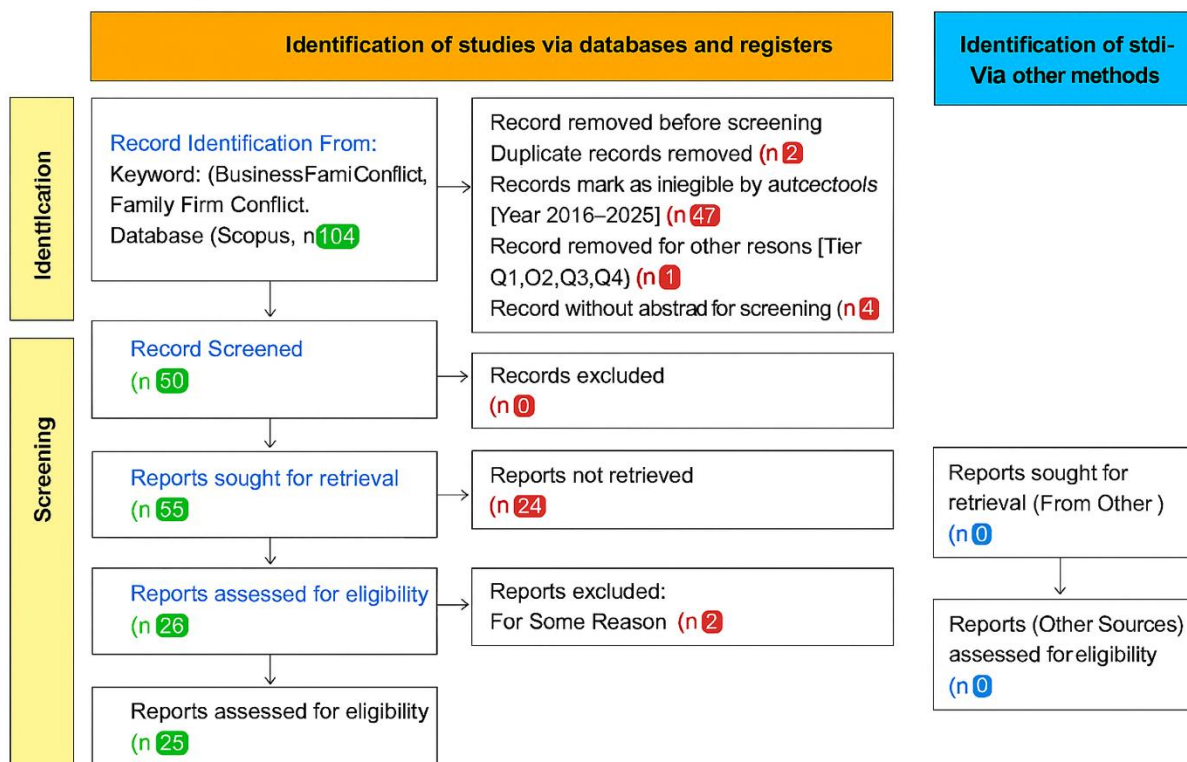


Figure 1. Screening Protocol
 Source : Authors;s own work processed by Watase

4. Results and Discussion

Table 2. Articles Distribution

| No | Author | Country | Journal | Tier | Method | Theory | Purpose | Result | Future Recommendation |
|----|--------------------------|---------------|---|------|---------------|---|---|--|--|
| 1 | Nagel et al., 2023 | Germany | Systems Research and Behavioral Science | Q1 | Qualitative | Cybernetic theory (Bateson's theory of schismogenesis and outside elements) | To understand how third elements (people, procedures, or objects) influence the escalation or de-escalation of conflicts in business families. | Third elements can either prevent, trigger, or resolve escalative conflicts in business families. Symbolically charged artefacts, trusted persons, and formal procedures can stabilize family systems and avoid schismogenesis. | Explore the possibility of deliberately developing third elements to manage conflicts and examine the influence of BF norms, orientations, or health conditions on conflict escalation. |
| 2 | RoseckÄ and Machek, 2022 | United States | Journal of Family and Economic Issues | Q2 | Quantitative | Social Capital Theory, Socioemotional Wealth Theory | To investigate how relational conflict affects family firm performance, the mediating role of family social capital, and the moderating role of family ownership. | Relational conflict harms family firm performance indirectly by reducing family social capital. High family ownership intensifies the negative effect of relational conflict on family social capital. | Investigate impact on bridging social capital, explore role of cognitive conflicts, consider broader aspects of socioemotional wealth and other contextual factors like succession and presence of nonfamily CEOs. |
| 3 | Wang and Zhang, 2021 | China | International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal | Q1 | Mixed methods | Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) | To explore what reduces business family offspring's intrapreneurial intentions in the family business context | Perceived relational conflicts negatively affect intrapreneurial intention via self-efficacy and outcome expectation. Parent-offspring conflict affects self-efficacy more, big-family conflict influences outcome expectation more. | Future studies could validate findings in other cultural settings and explore additional mediators/moderators |

| No | Author | Country | Journal | Tier | Method | Theory | Purpose | Result | Future Recommendation |
|----|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|------|--------------|---|--|---|--|
| 4 | RoseckÃ¡ and Machek, 2021 | Cross Country | Journal of Business Economics | Q1 | Qualitative | Conflict Theory; Socioemotional Wealth Theory | To explore the role of non-family members in conflict processes in family firms through a systematic review. | Non-family members influence conflict emergence and resolution in family firms; act as mediators; influence conflict outcomes at individual, family, and firm levels; involved in three conflict types: affective, cognitive, and interest-based. | Future research should address conflicts involving non-family members with clearer empirical insights; expand across cultural contexts; investigate interventions. |
| 5 | Elgoibar et al., 2024 | Ecuador | European Management Journal | Q1 | Quantitative | Socioemotional Wealth Theory | To analyze the relationship between laissez-faire leadership, trust in subordinates, and use of problem-solving conflict management in FBs vs NFBs | LFL is more common in FBs, affects trust in subordinates, and promotes problem-solving more in FBs than NFBs. Trust mediates this relationship: both affective and cognitive in FBs, only cognitive in NFBs | Extend to different cultures and countries, include longitudinal data, explore other leadership styles |
| 6 | Ardyan et al., 2023 | Indonesia | Heliyon | Q1 | Quantitative | Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument; Sustainable Family Business Theory (SFBT); System Theory | To explore intergenerational conflict resolution strategies in developing new family business values and ensuring business sustainability. | Collaboration, accommodation, and forcing strategies significantly impact new value creation, which in turn significantly impacts business sustainability. Compromising and avoiding were found insignificant. | Future research should use a larger sample, employ other research methods, and explore the influence of new value creation on business success. |
| 7 | Eddleston et al., 2019 | Switzerland and Germany | Journal of Business Research | Q1 | Quantitative | Conservation of Resources (COR) theory and Job | To understand how perceived organizational performance influences work-to-family conflict | The study highlights the importance of perceived organizational performance as a stressor that increases | Future research should explore the reciprocal effects between perceived organizational |

| No | Author | Country | Journal | Tier | Method | Theory | Purpose | Result | Future Recommendation |
|----|-------------------------------|---------|--|------|--------------|---|---|--|--|
| | | | | | | Demands-Resources (JDR) model. | among managers and how supervisor support can buffer this relationship. | work-to-family conflict, and the complexity of supervisor support in alleviating this conflict. | performance, supervisor support, and work-to-family conflict over time. |
| 8 | Purkayastha et al., 2022 | India | Journal of Business Research | Q1 | Quantitative | Agency Theory | To empirically investigate how different governance structures in family firms influence the prevalence of Type I and Type II agency conflicts. | Family-controlled, non-family-managed firms best minimize both Type I and Type II conflicts. Family control reduces Type I conflicts, while management control increases Type II conflicts. Balanced governance configurations are most effective. | Incorporate additional governance dimensions, explore different institutional settings, consider longitudinal effects with newer data. |
| 9 | Geiger, 2024 | USA | Journal of Business Venturing Insights | Q1 | Qualitative | Social Role Theory & Socialization Theory | To investigate whether gender differences in social responsibility and family-to-work conflict are significantly associated with firm financial performance in entrepreneurship | Gender positively affects social responsibility and family-to-work conflict. Social responsibility enhances firm financial performance while family-to-work conflict hinders it. Findings robust across full and strict samples (new/small firms). | Calls for more primary-level research on gender effects using socialization and social roles; also suggests exploration in social innovation, diversity, nonprofits, and work-life balance in entrepreneurship |
| 10 | Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016 | Spain | Journal of Family Business Strategy | Q1 | Quantitative | Agency Theory | To investigate how agency conflict between family managers and family owners affects performance in wholly family-owned firms from a generational perspective. | The findings indicate that ownership concentration by active family owners positively influences firm performance, while governance mechanisms specific to family firms also enhance performance. | Future research should explore the agency conflicts in family firms in different cultural contexts and industries, as well as longitudinal studies to assess changes over time. |

| No | Author | Country | Journal | Tier | Method | Theory | Purpose | Result | Future Recommendation |
|----|----------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|------|--------------|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | | | | | However, the influence of these factors varies across generational stages, with first-generation firms experiencing different dynamics compared to later generations. | |
| 11 | Corten et al., 2017 | Belgium | Journal of Family Business Strategy | Q1 | Quantitative | Agency Theory | The research aims to investigate whether audit quality demand is influenced by the level of intrafamily agency conflicts and the moderating role of the board of directors in private family firms. | The findings indicate that higher levels of family cohesion are associated with lower audit demand, and the effectiveness of the board of directors moderates this relationship, suggesting that family firms may first seek internal solutions to agency conflicts before engaging external auditors. | Future research directions include examining the effectiveness of high-quality auditors in mitigating intrafamily agency conflicts, exploring the perceptions of audit quality in family firms, and investigating the interactions between different types of agency conflicts in family firms. |
| 12 | Kanadl? et al., 2020 | Norway | Journal of Family Business Strategy | Q1 | Quantitative | Decision-Making Perspective in Group Dynamics | To examine the effects of task conflict on board control and advisory task performance in family firms and the moderating role of board openness. | Task conflict alone does not significantly impact board task performance, but when moderated by board openness, it positively affects both advisory and control tasks. | Extend research to other countries; investigate generational ownership structures; explore other moderating variables such as CEO leadership and constructive confrontation norms. |
| 13 | Ma and Turel, 2019 | China | Telematics and Informatics | Q1 | Quantitative | Social exchange theory, leader-member exchange theory, | To examine how peer guanxi and supervisor-subordinate guanxi moderate the relationship between IT use for work | IT use for work increases work-family conflict; peer guanxi reduces it; supervisor-subordinate guanxi strengthens the effect | Replicate in other countries, include non-IT-related antecedents of work-family conflict |

| No | Author | Country | Journal | Tier | Method | Theory | Purpose | Result | Future Recommendation |
|----|--------------------------|---------------|--|------|--------------|--|---|---|---|
| 14 | Jensen and Knudsen, 2016 | Norway | European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology | Q1 | Quantitative | interpersonal trust theory, stress spillover theory Work-Family Conflict theory and Job Demands-Resources model | and work-family conflict in Chinese firms To examine longitudinal effects and reciprocal relationships between business travel, WFC, emotional exhaustion, and psychological health complaints | of IT use for work on work-family conflict; gender differences found where male employees are more affected. Business travel increased WFC; WFC led to emotional exhaustion and psychological health complaints; reciprocal relations found among all key variables; effects did not vary by childcare responsibility. | Include more waves; compare frequent and infrequent travellers; incorporate subjective travel experiences; examine recovery and work tasks during travel |
| 15 | Paskewitz and Beck, 2017 | United States | Journal of Family Communication | Q1 | Quantitative | Intragroup Conflict Theory | To examine how family communication patterns predict intragroup conflict types and how these types relate to job satisfaction, communication, and profitability | Conversation and conformity orientation predict relational, process, and status conflict; only status conflict predicts communication satisfaction; conversation orientation directly impacts job and communication satisfaction. | Incorporate group-level/multilevel modeling and explore communication strategies and conflict styles in family farm conflict |
| 16 | Basheer et al., 2021 | Malaysia | Cogent Economics & Finance | Q2 | Quantitative | Agency Theory | To trace the nature of agency conflicts in family-owned pyramidal business groups in Malaysia and assess their impact on firm value. | PP conflict is more severe in family-owned pyramidal firms and negatively affects firm value; supports the expropriation hypothesis showing minority shareholders are at risk. | Future research should explore firms with government or institutional ownership and examine direct and indirect impacts of financial decisions on PP conflict and firm value. |

| No | Author | Country | Journal | Tier | Method | Theory | Purpose | Result | Future Recommendation |
|----|---------------------------|----------------|--|------|---------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| 17 | Caputo et al., 2018 | United Kingdom | International Journal of Conflict Management | Q2 | Mixed methods | Agency Theory, Stewardship Theory | To map the intellectual structure and explore integration between conflict management and family business research | Conflicts impact family firm performance, growth, innovation; multi-generational conflicts and identity clashes are major antecedents; need formal and informal conflict resolution mechanisms. | Encourage interdisciplinary integration, explore conflict resolution models in family business context |
| 18 | Yu et al., 2018 | China | International Journal of Conflict Management | Q2 | Quantitative | Agency theory | This study investigates the governance conflict in Chinese family firms between family-based managers and external managers, focusing on the impact of this conflict on firm performance. | The study finds that governance conflicts can lead to improved firm performance through enhanced management efficiency and capital investment, despite the potential loss of control for family owners. | Future research should explore the structural measures of conflict and utilize longer time series data for more comprehensive analysis. |
| 19 | Islas-Moreno et al., 2021 | Mexico | Journal of Family Business Management | Q1 | Qualitative | NA | To explore the link between the adoption of governance practices and conflicts experienced in family businesses, and to analyze the evolution of governance practices in these businesses. | The findings indicate that governance practices primarily focus on leadership and business efficiency, with family governance being neglected, despite its importance in mitigating family-related conflicts. Additionally, the study finds that the adoption of governance practices is more influenced by the desire for organizational efficiency than by past conflicts experienced. | Future research should explore other economic sectors and family businesses with varying performance levels to understand the dynamics of governance adoption and conflict management better. |

| No | Author | Country | Journal | Tier | Method | Theory | Purpose | Result | Future Recommendation |
|----|---------------------------|---------------|---|------|---------------|-----------------|---|---|--|
| 20 | Claußen and Schulte, 2017 | Germany | Journal of Organizational Change Management | Q2 | Qualitative | Systems Theory | To understand how conflicts impact change in family businesses and to identify family business-specific conflicts that influence change. | The study identifies three types of conflicts (open, latent, and awareness of risk) as drivers of change in family businesses. | Future research should pursue large-scale approaches to validate and generalize findings, and consider longitudinal designs to capture change over time. |
| 21 | Bärgerl and Hiebl, 2024 | Germany | IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management | Q1 | Mixed methods | Conflict Theory | To examine how different conflict management strategies influence digitalization in family firms and how generational ownership dispersion moderates these relationships | Compromise strategies consistently support digitalization, collaboration effective mainly in single-generation ownership, and avoidance is ineffective | Future studies should use longitudinal data, include other countries, and investigate more detailed digitalization strategies |
| 22 | Joshi et al., 2018 | India | Vision: The Journal of Business Perspective | Q3 | Qualitative | NA | To investigate the nature of conflicts that arise in a closely held family business (CHFb) and to identify variables that ensure successful transition from one generation to the next. | Conflicts are inevitable in CHFb but can be constructive. Gender bias and lack of planning led to mismanagement. VUCA elements intensified family issues. A competent female successor was overlooked due to traditional norms. | Further studies could explore comparative cases or develop frameworks for structured succession planning in CHFb. |
| 23 | Reina et al., 2017 | United States | Organization Science | Q1 | Quantitative | Agency Theory | To investigate the impact of CEO family-to-work conflict on firm performance through decision-making comprehensiveness and the moderating role of job engagement | FWC negatively affects CEO decision-making comprehensiveness, reducing firm performance. CEO job engagement buffers this effect. Significant indirect effects are demonstrated through moderated mediation analysis. | Future research should explore effects in other industries and cultures, use longitudinal designs, and consider other moderators or mediators |

| No | Author | Country | Journal | Tier | Method | Theory | Purpose | Result | Future Recommendation |
|----|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|-------------|--|---|---|--|
| 24 | Yezza et al., 2021 | Tunisia | Entrepreneurship Research Journal | Q3 | Qualitative | Emotional Dissonance Theory and Conflict Theory | To understand how conflict and emotional dissonance interact and what factors influence emotional expression during the family business succession process. | Emotional dissonance contributes to conflict escalation in family business succession; religious and cultural norms shape emotional expression; empathy and critical family events can de-escalate conflicts. | Conduct multi-case and quantitative studies to explore emotional dissonance and cultural dimensions in succession; explore physiological measures of emotion; analyze solutions to emotional dissonance. |
| 25 | Gavri and Braje, 2024 | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Administrative Sciences | Q2 | Qualitative | Conflict Transformation Theory, Systems Theory, Organizational Culture Theory (Schein) | To investigate the sources and types of intergenerational conflict in family firms and explore the role of these conflicts in shaping organizational culture. | Intergenerational conflicts trigger self-reflection in founders, leading to changes in behavior that influence organizational culture. Conflicts, if managed well, promote openness, critical thinking, and collaboration within firms. | Incorporate perspectives of non-family employees; explore gender dynamics; expand to include quantitative data and failed firms. |

4. Result and Discussion

The Evolution of Trends and Paradigms in Family Business Conflict Studies from 2016 to 2025.

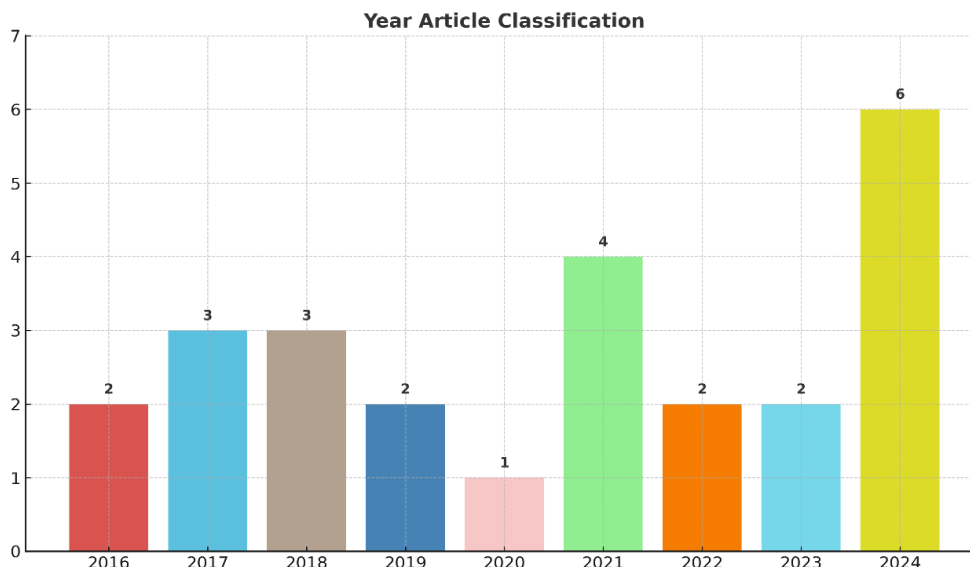


Figure 2. Year of Publication

The trend of publications on family business conflict research has fluctuated throughout the period from 2016 to 2024. The number of publications was relatively low at the beginning of the period, with 2 articles in 2016 and declining to just 1 article in 2020. A significant increase occurred in 2024, which recorded the highest number of publications with 6 articles. Additionally, a notable surge was seen in 2021 with 4 articles. Although there was a decline in the following years, the number of publications remained stable at around 2 to 3 articles per year. This data indicates that the topic of family business conflict continues to attract scholarly attention, reflecting its ongoing relevance in addressing internal dynamics of family firms as well as external environmental changes across different periods.

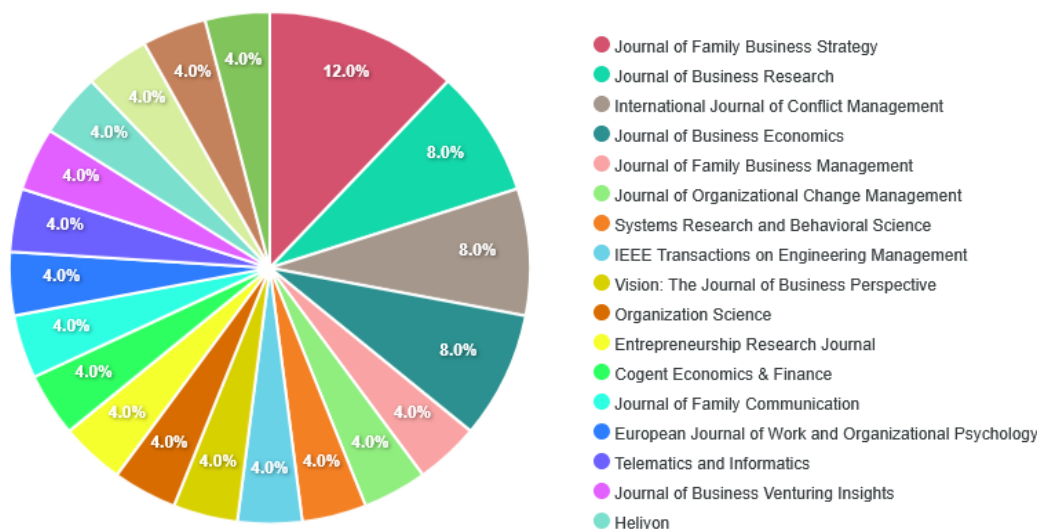


Figure 3. Journal Distribution

Based on the journal distribution of the 25 articles in this systematic literature review (SLR) on family business conflict, it is evident that the topic is published across a variety of multidisciplinary journals. The Journal of Family Business Strategy stands out as the dominant source, contributing 12% of the articles, highlighting its role as a primary outlet for research on conflicts in family businesses. In addition, several other journals such as the Journal of Business Research, International Journal of Conflict Management, and Journal of Family Business Management each contributed 8%, reflecting sustained interest from the academic community across management and business fields. The remaining 4% of articles are evenly distributed across various other journals, including those focusing on

organizational studies, occupational psychology, family communication, and information technology. This indicates that the issue of family business conflict is not only of interest to researchers in family business studies, but is also highly relevant within the broader contexts of change management, organizational behavior, communication, and technology—underscoring the multidimensional nature of conflict within family businesses.

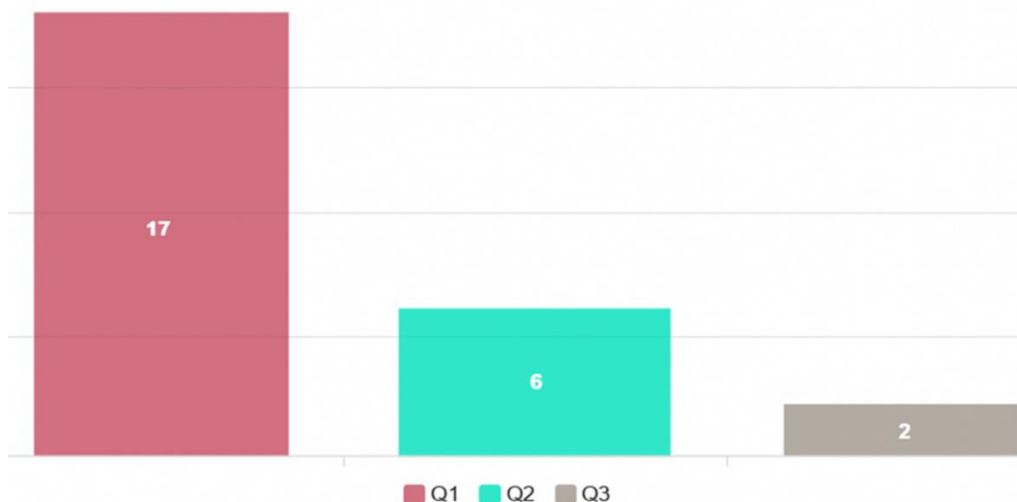


Figure 4. Journal Tier Classification

Based on the Journal Tier Classification chart of the 25 articles included in this systematic literature review (SLR) on family business conflict, the majority of the articles were published in high-reputation journals. A total of 17 articles (68%) were published in Q1 journals, indicating the high quality and strong academic recognition of the family business conflict topic within the international scholarly community. Meanwhile, 6 articles (24%) appeared in Q2 journals, and only 2 articles (8%) were published in Q3 journals.

This distribution suggests that research on family business conflict is not only gaining increasing attention but is also considered worthy of publication in high-ranking journals with rigorous selection standards. These findings reinforce the notion that conflict within family businesses is a research area with strong academic relevance and practical significance for the fields of business and management.

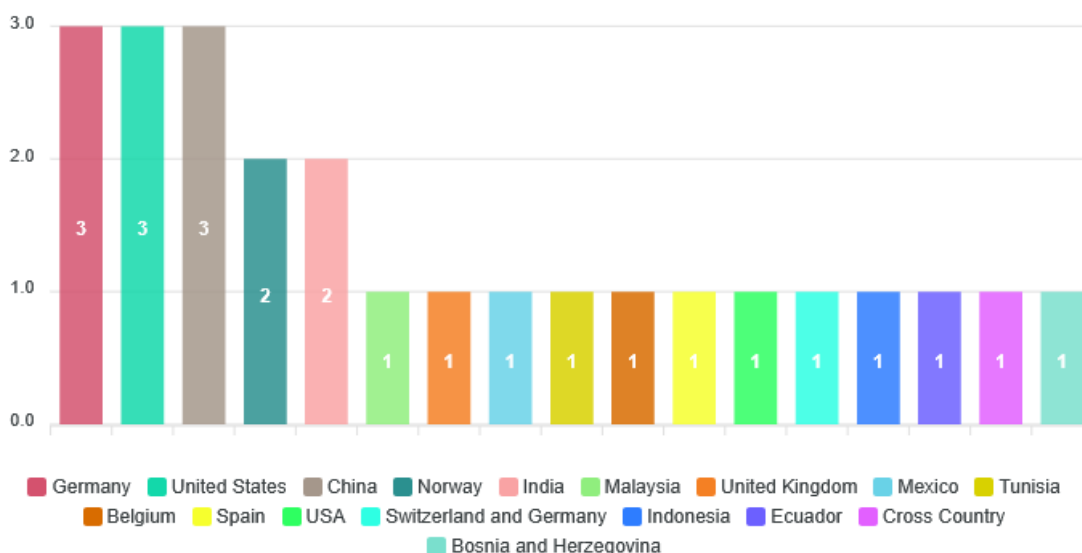


Figure 5. Country Classification

It is evident that research on the topic of *family business conflict* is spread across various countries, reflecting a global perspective on conflict within family firms. Three countries dominate the publication contributions—Germany, the United States, and China each contributing 3 articles. Meanwhile, Norway and India each contributed 2 articles. The remaining articles come from countries such as Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Tunisia, Belgium, Spain, the United States (a different article), Switzerland and Germany (a

collaborative study), Indonesia, Ecuador, a cross-country study, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, each contributing 1 article.

This distribution demonstrates that *family business conflict* is an issue receiving widespread attention in diverse geographic and cultural contexts, underlining the importance of cross-national understanding of the dynamics of conflict within family businesses. It also opens up opportunities for comparative international research to explore how differences in culture, legal systems, and family values influence the emergence and resolution of conflicts in family enterprises.

Contributions of Methodology, Theory, Context, and Content in Understanding Family Business Conflict.

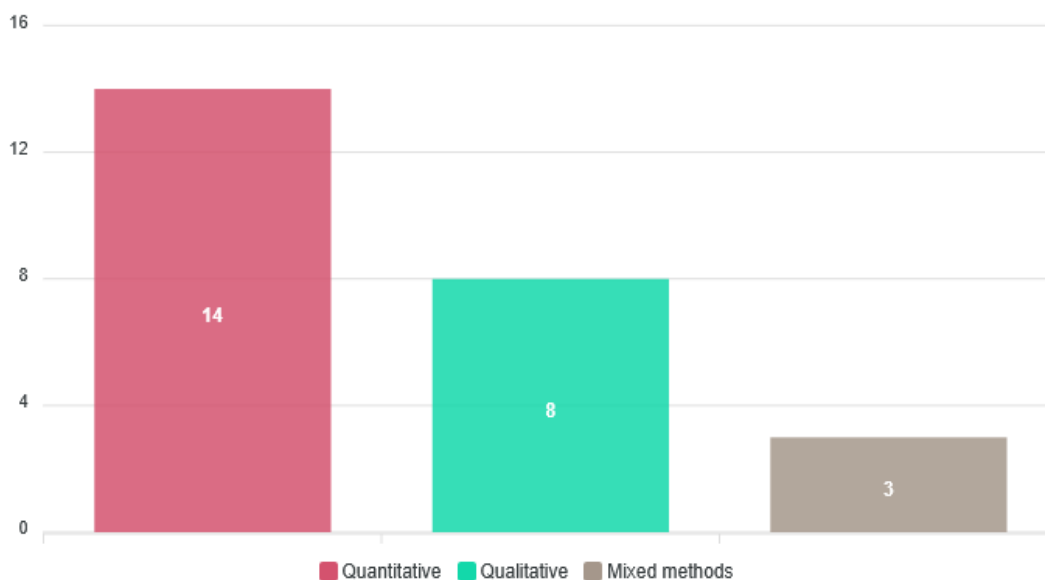


Figure 6. Method Classification

Research methods related to *family business conflict* are predominantly quantitative, with 14 articles—or approximately 58.3% of the total studies—employing this approach. This indicates a tendency among researchers to empirically measure conflict in family businesses using numerical data and statistical analysis, aiming to produce generalizable findings. Meanwhile, 8 articles (33.3%) utilized qualitative methods, reflecting an interest in deeply exploring the dynamics of conflict, social contexts, and individual narratives within family firms. Additionally, *mixed methods* were employed in 3 articles (12.5%), signaling efforts by researchers to combine the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

This distribution suggests that research on family business conflict still leans heavily toward quantitative approaches, although the importance of exploring contextual aspects through qualitative and mixed methods is increasingly recognized.

Table 2. Contribution Theory

| No | Theory | Citation | Total Article | Authors |
|----|--|----------|---------------|---|
| 1 | Agency Theory | 149 | 6 | Purkayastha et al., 2022; Basheer et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2018; Reina et al., 2017; Corten et al., 2017; Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016 |
| 2 | Agency Theory, Stewardship Theory | 168 | 1 | Caputo et al., 2018 |
| 3 | Conflict Theory | 11 | 1 | Bürgel and Hiebl, 2024 |
| 4 | Conflict Theory; Socioemotional Wealth Theory | 11 | 1 | Rosecká and Machek, 2021 |
| 5 | Conflict Transformation Theory, Systems Theory, Organizational Culture Theory (Schein) | 2 | 1 | Gavri? and Braje, 2024 |

| No | Theory | Citation | Total Article | Authors |
|----|--|----------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 6 | Conservation of Resources (COR) theory and Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model. | 13 | 1 | Eddleston et al., 2019 |
| 7 | Cybernetic theory (Bateson's theory of schismogenesis and outside elements) | 1 | 1 | Nagel et al., 2023 |
| 8 | Decision-Making Perspective in Group Dynamics | 13 | 1 | Kanadl? et al., 2020 |
| 9 | Emotional Dissonance Theory and Conflict Theory | 20 | 1 | Yezza et al., 2021 |
| 10 | Intragroup Conflict Theory | 20 | 1 | Paskewitz and Beck, 2017 |
| 11 | Social Capital Theory, Socioemotional Wealth Theory | 8 | 1 | Rosecká and Machek, 2022 |
| 12 | Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) | 14 | 1 | Wang and Zhang, 2021 |
| 13 | Social exchange theory, leader-member exchange theory, interpersonal trust theory, stress spillover theory | 12 | 1 | Ma and Turel, 2019 |
| 14 | Social Role Theory & Socialization Theory | 0 | 1 | Geiger, 2024 |
| 15 | Socioemotional Wealth Theory | 6 | 1 | Elgoibar et al., 2024 |
| 16 | Systems Theory | 21 | 1 | Claßen and Schulte, 2017 |
| 17 | Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument; Sustainable Family Business Theory (SFBT); System Theory | 7 | 1 | Ardyan et al., 2023 |
| 18 | Work-Family Conflict theory and Job Demands-Resources model | 34 | 1 | Jensen and Knudsen, 2016 |

Contexts and Focus on Research

Based on Table 1, the contextual analysis of research areas presented shows that studies on family business conflict are geographically diverse, with major representation from countries such as Germany, the United States, China, and Indonesia, as well as other nations like Belgium, Spain, Norway, and Bosnia. This reflects that family conflict in the business context is a global issue, adapted to the unique cultural and institutional structures of each country (Nagel et al., 2023; Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Yezza et al., 2021). In Western countries such as the United States and Germany, research tends to focus more on governance-related conflict, interpersonal dynamics, and their effects on firm performance (Rosecká & Machek, 2022; Claßen & Schulte, 2017). Meanwhile, in Asian countries like China and Indonesia, studies place more emphasis on intrapersonal aspects, intergenerational relationships, and the influence of local culture on conflict (Wang & Zhang, 2021; Ardyan et al., 2023).

A notable recent development in the literature is the growing attention to the involvement of non-family actors in family business conflicts, particularly the influence of external parties such as non-family managers and board members (Rosecká & Machek, 2021; Kanadl? et al., 2020). The citation distribution indicates that many studies focus on aspects of governance, intergenerational conflict, decision-making conflicts, and role-related conflicts, pointing to the need for understanding conflict within strategic and structural frameworks (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Reina et al., 2017). The implications of this trend suggest that future research should explore more deeply the specific cultural contexts and the impact of conflict in the transformation and modernization dynamics of family businesses, both internally and externally (Bürgel & Hiebl, 2024). The relevance of this theme is particularly high, as family conflict remains a major challenge as well as an opportunity for innovation in managing the sustainability of family businesses amidst the complexities of globalization and digitalization. Therefore, cross-country and integrative studies will be essential to identify strategic, adaptive, and relevant solutions for the future (Caputo et al., 2018; Yezza et al., 2021).

In addition, an analysis of research focus reveals the key concerns of previous studies on family business conflict. In general, research focuses on the dynamics of internal conflict, both in terms of processes and their impacts on organizational performance, family relationships, and factors that support or hinder conflict resolution (Nagel et al., 2023; Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Caputo et al., 2018). Many studies emphasize the impact of conflict on firm performance and decision-making, such as those by Reina et al. (2017) and Rosecká and Machek (2021), which focus on the implications of conflict for sustainability and organizational efficiency. Other research pays attention to interpersonal relationships and communication processes within family businesses—for example, Paskewitz and Beck (2017) and Joshi et al. (2018)—highlighting the importance of communication patterns and gender roles in conflict management. Additionally, studies on intergenerational conflict and its handling have become key areas of focus in research by Ardyan et al. (2023) and Gavrić and Braje (2024), demonstrating growing attention to intergenerational governance and the conflict dynamics that arise during succession processes. The most frequently cited studies are those that emphasize internal family aspects and business performance (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Caputo et al., 2018; Reina et al., 2017), indicating a trend in which family relationships and internal conflicts are the central focus in the literature on family business conflict.

On the other hand, studies examining external aspects such as the influence of culture, gender, and corporate governance (e.g., Wang & Zhang, 2021; Geiger, 2024; Yezza et al., 2021) add contextual dimensions that enrich our understanding of the diverse factors influencing conflict dynamics. The implications of this trend suggest that future research needs to further highlight innovative aspects of conflict management, including cultural and technological context analysis, as well as the development of methodologies capable of uncovering indirect and complex forms of conflict. In the face of globalization and digitalization challenges, the relevance of the family business conflict theme is becoming increasingly important. Effectively managed conflict can present opportunities for innovation and the development of organizational resilience, whereas unmanaged conflict poses risks to performance and business continuity. Therefore, future research is expected to integrate psychological, social, and technological aspects to offer comprehensive and adaptive practical recommendations for managing family business conflict.

Table 3. Contributions of Methodology, Theory, Context, and Content in Understanding Family Business Conflict

| No | Author | Category 1 Type Conflict | Category 2 Sources of Conflict | Category 3 Consequence of conflict | Category 4 |
|----|-------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| 1 | Nagel et al. | Leadership-related conflict, specifically conflict due to laissez-faire leadership style | Third elements (people, process) | Conflict resolution | Cybernetic conflict management |
| 2 | Roseck and Machek | Relational and family conflict | Relational conflicts affectin | Performance impact | Social capital conflict mitigation |
| 3 | Wang and Zhang | Intrapreneurial intention | Intrapreneurial conflicts | Intrapreneurial intention | Intrapreneurial conflict reduction |
| 4 | Roseck and Machek | Non-family members involvement | Non-family members conflict | Conflict management strategy | Conflict stabilization vs. escalation |
| 5 | Elgoibar et al. | Leadership and trust conflicts) | Leadership style | Leadership influence | Leadership trust conflict management |
| 6 | Ardyan et al. | Intergenerational conflict resolution | Intergenerational conflicts | Intergenerational conflict | Intergenerational conflict resolution |
| 7 | Eddleston et al. | Work-to-family conflict | Organizational performance | Work-family conflict | Technology-mediated conflict management |
| 8 | Purkayastha et al. | Agency conflicts in governance | Agency conflicts in governance | Agency conflict, Governance | Conflict Type and Change Management |
| 9 | Geiger | Family conflict in governance practice | Gender, social responsibility | Gender and social responsibility impacts on firm | Gender and Family Conflict Resolution |
| 10 | Blanco-Mazagatos et al. | Agency Conflict (Ownership & Governance) | Agency conflict between family | Travel demand, WFC | Agency Conflict Resolution |
| 11 | Corten et al. | Conflict affecting change in family | Family governance and conflict in specific sector | Governance conflicts influencing firm value | Leadership and Trust Conflict Management |

| No | Author | Category 1 Type Conflict | Category 2 Sources of Conflict | Category 3 Consequence of conflict | Category 4 |
|----|---------------------|--|---|---|--|
| 12 | Kanadl et al. | Board task conflict and managerial | Family organizational conflicts in China | Governance conflicts as a driver for firm performance | Board Conflict Management |
| 13 | Ma and Turel | IT use and work-family conflict | Qualitative | Conflict as a driver of Change in family firms | Conflict as driver of change |
| 14 | Jensen and Knudsen | Business travel and work-family conflict | Travel/job demand conflict | Consequences | Travel and WFC Conflict Resolution |
| 15 | Paskewitz and Beck | Intragroup conflict in family farm | Succession conflict and gender conflict | Family communication | Conflict strategies for digital transformation |
| 16 | Basheer et al. | Conflict during family business success | Consequences of conflict | Consequences of conflict | Agency Conflict Resolution |
| 17 | Caputo et al. | Conflict impacting change in family | Conflict Management and Resolution | Consequences of conflict | Conflict Management and Resolution |
| 18 | Yu et al. | Governance conflict from external | Governance conflict (internal/external managers) | Governance conflict | Governance Conflict Resolution |
| 19 | Islas-Moreno et al. | Conflict in governance practices | Conflicts and governance practices | Conflict and governance practices | Family Governance Conflict Resolution |
| 20 | Claayen and Schulte | Systemic & Change-conflict in Family | Types of conflicts (open, latent, risk awareness) | Conflict as driver of change | Conflic Impact On Change |
| 21 | Bargel and Hiebl | Conflicts in digital transformation | Conflicts during digital transformation | Conflict and digital transformation | Digital Conflict Management |
| 22 | Joshi et al. | Conflict in succession and gender bias | Generational conflict and gender bias | Conflicts in succession and gender bias | Conflict as a trigger for succession and norm |
| 23 | Reina et al. | Family-to-work conflict in CEO | Family-to-work conflict of CEO | Family-to-work conflict | Family-to-work conflict mitigation |

| No | Author | Category 1 Type Conflict | Category 2 Sources of Conflict | Category 3 Consequence of conflict | Category 4 |
|-----------|-----------------|---|---|---|--|
| 24 | Yezza et al. | Conflict and emotional dissonance | Conflict and emotional dissonance | Conflict and emotional dissonance | Conflict and emotional dissonance management |
| 25 | Gavri and Braje | Intergenerational conflict in organization) | Intergenerational conflicts and culture | Intergenerational conflicts and culture | Conflict transformation and organizational culture |

Conflict Type

The analysis of previous studies in Table [...] shows that the most frequently used category is “Conflict Type,” which appears in 12 out of 25 studies (48%) (Nagel et al., 2023; Rosecká & Machek, 2021; Wang & Zhang, 2021; Elgoibar et al., 2024; Ardyan et al., 2023; Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Corten et al., 2017; Kanadl? et al., 2020; Ma & Turel, 2019; Jensen & Knudsen, 2016; Paskewitz & Beck, 2017; Reina et al., 2017). This trend indicates that the primary focus in family business conflict studies is the classification of conflict by type, such as relational conflict, intergenerational conflict, leadership conflict, governance conflict, intragroup conflict, or conflicts related to specific processes such as inheritance and gender (Rosecká & Machek, 2021; Joshi et al., 2018). Additionally, this category highlights the diversity of issues faced by family businesses, ranging from interpersonal conflict among family members and governance-related conflict to intrapersonal conflicts in decision-making processes and emotional or identity-based conflicts (Yezza et al., 2021). Alongside this, the “Sources of Conflict” category also emerges, offering perspectives on conflict origins, such as ownership risk, leadership styles, and governance-related disputes (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Elgoibar et al., 2024; Reina et al., 2017).

The consistent use of the “Conflict Type” category illustrates that research in this field remains concentrated on understanding conflict classification as a core framework for analyzing the dynamics and impacts of family business conflict. This trend suggests that categorizing conflict by type is critical for the development of future resolution and conflict management strategies. The relevance of this approach to recent research challenges and opportunities is significant, as it provides a comprehensive analytical framework that is valuable for anticipating and managing complex and diverse conflicts. It also opens opportunities for more targeted research on the causes and impacts of conflict across various cultural and industry contexts (Nagel et al., 2023; Elgoibar et al., 2024). Therefore, the “Conflict Type” category serves as a vital foundation for strengthening the study of conflict in family businesses and supporting the development of effective resolution models in the future (Rosecká & Machek, 2021).

Sources of Conflict

The next most frequently used theme in *family business conflict* research is “Sources of Conflict,” which appears in 15 out of the 25 studies reviewed. The use of this category indicates that researchers tend to focus on identifying and analyzing the factors that trigger conflict within family businesses—such as interpersonal conflicts among family members, governance-related disputes, leadership styles, and external influences like governance structures (Purkayastha et al., 2022; Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Corten et al., 2017). This emphasis highlights the importance of understanding the root causes of conflict in order to design effective resolution strategies. Citation distribution within this category reflects a wide range of topics, including internal family conflicts, intergenerational disputes, governance-related tensions, as well as conflicts related to gender roles and technology adoption (Rosecká & Machek, 2021; Ardyan et al., 2023; Geiger, 2024). This trend suggests that researchers are increasingly examining conflict from multiple source dimensions, adapting to different geographic and organizational contexts.

This approach illustrates that identifying sources of conflict is a critical starting point in efforts to manage and resolve disputes within family business environments and to support business continuity (Nagel et al., 2023; Wang & Zhang, 2021). The implication of this trend is that a major challenge for future research is to integrate diverse sources of conflict using multidisciplinary and pragmatic approaches that encompass cultural, social, and economic aspects. Accordingly, future studies are expected to explore more dynamic and context-specific conflict sources and develop adaptive and innovative resolution models. The relevance of this theme is particularly high, given that family business conflict remains a key challenge for long-term sustainability. Future research opportunities may therefore be directed toward strengthening conflict mitigation strategies that are tailored to local characteristics and digitalization trends, ultimately facilitating the success of future generations.

Consequence of conflict

Many studies highlight the impact of conflict on various aspects of organizational dynamics and internal relationships, particularly within the category of “conflict

consequences,” which includes conflict management, organizational conflict, governance-related conflict, and their effects on company performance. The citation distribution within this category indicates that the consequences of conflict remain a primary focus across diverse geographical contexts and methodological approaches. For instance, studies by Blanco-Mazagatos et al. (2016) and Reina et al. (2017) position conflict consequences as a crucial part of their analysis due to their significant impact on the sustainability of family businesses. These studies emphasize the importance of understanding how internal conflicts especially those related to governance and intergenerational relationships can influence the stability and continuity of family firms (Basheer et al., 2021; Ardyan et al., 2023). Additionally, several studies adopt quantitative approaches such as regression analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (Nguen et al., 2024; Jensen & Knudsen, 2016) to empirically reinforce the relevance of measuring conflict impact.

These findings indicate that the consequences of conflict are not merely theoretical issues but also carry substantial practical implications for family business management. As family businesses become increasingly complex due to generational shifts, digitalization, and globalization, this issue becomes more relevant for ongoing investigation. Further research is needed to explore how conflict affects organizational adaptability, innovation, and sustainability amid modern challenges. Thus, a deep understanding of conflict consequences becomes a critical foundation for developing theoretical insights and formulating effective conflict management strategies within the context of contemporary family businesses.

Conflict Resolution Strategy

An analysis of Category 4 in the table of previous studies on family business conflicts reveals that this categorization generally places greater emphasis on conflict management and resolution. The most frequently cited themes include “Cybernetic Conflict Management” (Nagel et al., 2023), “Conflict Stabilization vs. Escalation” (Rosecká & Machek, 2021), and “Conflict Management and Resolution” (Caputo et al., 2018), collectively indicating that managerial approaches to conflict have become a central theme in this research area. The highest citation distribution is found in the domain of conflict and resolution, highlighting a strong scholarly interest in how conflict is managed and resolved within the family business context (Jensen & Knudsen, 2016; Basheer et al., 2021). This trend suggests that researchers are not only concerned with mapping the sources and types of conflict but are also focused on identifying practical solutions and conflict management strategies to sustain family businesses.

This category points to the need for future studies to deepen the understanding of adaptive and innovative conflict resolution dynamics, especially considering the complexity of family relationships influenced by cultural, technological, and governance-related factors. While some studies, such as those by Wang and Zhang (2021) and Yezza et al. (2021), place greater emphasis on intrapersonal and emotional aspects, the conflict resolution category reflects a growing momentum toward research that emphasizes the implementation of effective managerial strategies. The implication of this trend is that one of the main challenges going forward is to develop more contextual and digitally based conflict resolution models that align with current technological advancements. Research opportunities also exist to explore the role of culture and family values in building sustainable conflict resolution strategies, as explored in depth by studies such as Geiger (2024) and Gavrić & Braje (2024). Therefore, the theme of conflict management and resolution remains highly relevant as a research focus that can offer both practical solutions and theoretical enrichment in addressing the increasingly complex and dynamic nature of conflict in family businesses.

Development of Research on Family Business Conflict

Based on the previous research data table on family business conflict, Column Content 1 reveals a variety of key themes, although certain motifs dominate. Quantitatively, the theme of “Conflict” and its variants such as “Family Business Conflict” and “Intergenerational Conflict” appear as the most frequently used content among authors, with a relatively higher count than other themes. For instance, studies by Nagel et al. (2023) and Gavrić & Braje (2024) utilize the concept of conflict broadly, from systems theory, conflict transformation, to organizational culture perspectives. Meanwhile, studies by Rosecká and Machek (2021, 2022) adopt conflict theory and socioemotional wealth frameworks to analyze conflict dynamics in family business contexts. The citation distribution of Content 1 shows that most studies tend to directly examine conflicts related to family dynamics in business, including intergenerational conflict, managerial conflict, and internal family disputes.

This approach reflects a trend in which family conflict remains a central focus due to its significant impact on business continuity and performance, as highlighted by Corten et al. (2017) and Blanco-Mazagatos et al. (2016). The implication of this trend underscores the importance of understanding conflict not only in management terms but also from emotional and cultural family analyses (Yezza et al., 2021), and in the development of adaptive and sustainable conflict resolution strategies. The relevance of the conflict theme is increasingly significant in facing modern challenges such as global business competition and internal family complexities. It also opens avenues for innovative research that integrates systems theory, organizational culture, and digital technology in conflict management. Future studies can expand analyses into psychological, cross-cultural, and technological aspects to explore practical solutions that align with the evolving dynamics of family businesses.

Research Focus / Themes

Analysis of Content 2 from the table of prior studies reveals that the most commonly addressed theme is “Conflict,” focusing on various aspects of conflict in family businesses. Most studies, including those by Nagel et al. (2023), Rosecká and Machek (2022, 2021), and Elgoibar et al. (2024), highlight conflicts related to internal family dynamics such as conflict strategies and intergenerational tensions. Other studies focus on management and governance-related conflicts, as found in works by Corten et al. (2017), Blanco-Mazagatos et al. (2016), and Paskewitz & Beck (2017), emphasizing the role of conflict in decision-making and business continuity. The findings from this content suggest that conflict remains a central issue in the family business literature, especially concerning intrafamilial relationships, ownership, and governance. Some research narrows down to more specific themes such as intergenerational conflicts (Gavrić & Braje, 2024) and emotional conflicts during succession (Yezza et al., 2021), affirming that conflict is not merely structural but also deeply emotional and cultural.

The citation distribution of Content 2 shows that themes such as intrafamilial and governance-related conflict dominate the focus, reflecting a consensus that conflict is a key issue that must be understood and managed to ensure the sustainability of family firms. This trend suggests that future research needs to broaden the understanding of conflict as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon, involving psychological, cultural, and technological factors. These implications are particularly relevant in addressing modern challenges such as digitalization and globalization, which require researchers and practitioners to integrate innovative perspectives into the study of conflict in family business contexts (Rosecká & Machek, 2022; Nagel et al., 2023).

Key Contributions, Methodological Gaps, Main Findings, and Future Research Directions from the Synthesized Articles

Novelty of the Reviewed Studies: Unique Contributions from Articles

The studies reviewed in this SLR present various novel contributions that enrich the scientific discourse on conflict in family businesses. Some studies explicitly introduce new theoretical frameworks not previously applied in this context, such as cybernetic theory and Bateson's concept of schismogenesis to explain conflict escalation among family business members (Nagel et al., 2023). Others focus on differentiating types of conflict, such as distinguishing between parent-child and sibling-sibling conflicts, which are shown to have different impacts on younger generations' intrapreneurial intentions (Wang & Zhang, 2021). An intriguing development is the exploration of non-family actors in organizational conflict an area rarely addressed systematically (Rosecká & Machek, 2021).

Novelty also emerges through the integration of laissez-faire leadership with trust-based conflict management, particularly in collectivist cultures such as Ecuador (Elgoibar et al., 2024). Several studies combine conflict analysis with gender and social responsibility dimensions and their influence on financial performance (Geiger, 2024), or examine agency conflicts between active and passive owners across generational ownership structures (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016). The use of instruments like the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument to assess conflict resolution in family SMEs is another innovative step rarely undertaken (Arduyan et al., 2023). Overall, the novelty of these studies arises not only from theories and methods but also from empirical contexts and previously unexplored combinations of variables.

Methodological and Contextual Limitations Identified in the Studies

This SLR on family business conflict highlights several methodological and contextual limitations that must be acknowledged to frame the findings appropriately. One major issue is the limited scope of data sources. Most analyzed studies focus on English-language publications centered in North America and Europe (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Reina et al., 2017; Corten et al., 2017), leading to geographic and cultural bias. Consequently, regions such as Africa and Latin America remain underrepresented in the global literature (Yezza et al., 2021; Arduyan et al., 2023).

Methodological evolution also affects analytical comprehensiveness. Most studies employ quantitative methods especially surveys and statistical analysis which, while enhancing data validity, tend to overlook the subjective and emotional dimensions of conflict (Purkayastha et al., 2022; González et al., 2018). Qualitative and case study approaches capable of capturing emotions, culture, and interpersonal complexities are less commonly used, limiting a holistic understanding (Gavrić & Braje, 2024; Islas-Moreno et al., 2021). Moreover, longitudinal studies are scarce, hindering deeper insights into the evolution of conflict over time, even though understanding conflict trajectories is essential (Hao & Li, 2021).

In terms of theoretical choice, most studies rely on agency and social conflict theories, overlooking more holistic frameworks like family psychology, cultural influence, and advanced technological applications in conflict management (Schulze et al., 2003; Rosecká & Machek, 2021). Analytical tools are often limited to basic statistics and visual analysis, leaving the potential of predictive modeling, Big Data, or AI underutilized (Caputo et al., 2018; Yezza et al., 2021). These limitations call for future studies that are more inclusive, interdisciplinary, and technologically adaptive to provide innovative strategies aligned with the digital era (Bürgel & Hiebl, 2024; Hao & Li, 2021).

Key Findings and Thematic Insights

The main contributions of the reviewed studies highlight that research on family business conflict remains a dynamic and highly relevant field in current academic discourse.

Findings from the 25 analyzed articles provide a rich and nuanced understanding of conflict dynamics, emphasizing various forms of internal conflict—particularly intergenerational, relational, and governance-related conflicts—as critical themes for sustaining family business performance (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Reina et al., 2017).

Many studies reveal that poorly managed relational conflict can erode a family's social capital, weaken trust among members, and dampen innovation, particularly among younger generations. Passive leadership styles, such as *laissez-faire*, often exacerbate these issues by reducing open communication and increasing role ambiguity (Nagel et al., 2023). Analyses of key variables—such as communication, family structure, and trust—further affirm that effective conflict management significantly influences firm performance and stability (Zahra & Sharma, 2004; Lambrecht & Lievens, 2008). Notably, some studies find that the involvement of non-family actors in management structures can either defuse or intensify conflict, depending on the specific context and mechanisms involved.

Conflicts are also rooted in generational differences in values, visions, and expectations, as well as in gender roles and work–family balance, indicating that conflict extends beyond structural dimensions to include psychological and personal factors. Several studies emphasize the importance of cultural and social norms across regions, noting that collectivist values in Asia and Latin America shape conflict differently compared to more formal and systemic approaches in Western countries (Wang & Zhang, 2021; Zhang & Song, 2019). Methodologically, most research applies both quantitative and qualitative approaches, using tools like SPSS and AMOS for empirical testing alongside in-depth interviews to capture emotional and relational dimensions more holistically (Yezza et al., 2021; Claßen & Schulte, 2017).

The relevance of this topic continues to grow in the digital and global era, where family business conflicts are increasingly multidimensional and cross-cultural. This demands innovative, context-sensitive managerial strategies (Bürgel & Hiebl, 2024). Therefore, these studies contribute not only to academic theory but also to practical applications through the development of adaptive and culturally grounded conflict resolution models that support long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

Future Research Directions

Recommendations across the reviewed articles offer a clear path for future inquiry. Many scholars call for expanding research beyond developed countries to include collectivist cultures and emerging markets in order to capture broader cross-cultural variation. There is also a strong demand for longitudinal studies that can trace the evolution of conflict over time. Given the complexity of conflict, mixed-methods approaches are widely encouraged to combine in-depth qualitative insights with generalizable quantitative evidence.

Future research should also explore additional mediating and moderating variables such as trust, intergenerational communication, and socioemotional values that underpin conflict resolution in family businesses. Several articles emphasize the need to develop culturally and organizationally grounded intervention models that prevent or constructively manage conflict. Interdisciplinary collaboration spanning psychology, sociology, and strategic management is also recommended to achieve more comprehensive perspectives.

Furthermore, scholars advocate for the development of conflict management training programs and policies tailored specifically to family businesses to support intergenerational continuity. In short, future research must be more inclusive, transdisciplinary, and attuned to the evolving social dynamics within and around family businesses.

Practical Implications

The synthesis of findings reveals several practical insights for family business management. First, internal conflict management must be prioritized to maintain both business continuity and family harmony. The application of frameworks such as agency

theory and interpersonal relationship theory can help managers and owners identify conflict sources stemming from differences in interests, power, and expectations (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Reina et al., 2017). To reduce relational conflict, it is essential to foster transparent communication and trust through clear and fair mechanisms (Paskewitz & Beck, 2017; Yezza et al., 2021).

Second, building robust governance systems and formal dispute resolution procedures can minimize prolonged conflict and reduce tensions arising from generational or ownership differences (Corten et al., 2017; González et al., 2023). Conflict management strategies must also be adapted to specific cultural and regional contexts, as research shows considerable variation by geography and level of economic development (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Joshi et al., 2018). For example, in emerging markets like Indonesia and China, culturally sensitive strategies that align with traditional values are more effective in resolving conflict (Ardyan et al., 2023; Wang & Zhang, 2021).

Third, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches in conflict management provides a more comprehensive understanding and enhances solution accuracy (Bürgel & Hiebl, 2024). The adoption of digital tools is also increasingly relevant; platforms for open communication and conflict monitoring—such as online reports and discussions—enable early detection and proactive resolution (Elgoibar et al., 2024). Moreover, implementing tech-based conflict management training and workshops, along with soft skills development in empathy and negotiation, should be part of the broader family business training strategy (Yeza et al., 2021).

In general conclusion, effective conflict management in family businesses requires a proactive approach that emphasizes open communication, transparent governance structures, cultural adaptability, and the strategic use of digital technologies. These measures not only support timely and constructive conflict resolution but also strengthen family cohesion, enabling long-term growth and innovation. The practical insights drawn from the reviewed studies highlight the critical role of relationship-based, culturally sensitive, and technologically informed strategies in ensuring that family businesses remain resilient and competitive in an increasingly complex environment.

5. Conclusion

This systematic literature review (SLR) reveals that research on family business conflict is a dynamic, multidisciplinary, and evolving field situated within the Theory–Context–Methodology (TCM) framework. From a theoretical perspective, Agency Theory remains the dominant lens used to explain power dynamics and control between family members and external actors (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Corten et al., 2017; Reina et al., 2017). However, Socioemotional Wealth and Social Capital Theories have gained significant traction for their ability to capture the emotional, relational, and social dimensions underlying both internal and external conflicts in family firms (Rosecká & Machek, 2022; Geiger, 2024).

Conceptually, most studies focus on internal conflicts involving interpersonal relationships, governance structures, and intergenerational tensions—core dynamics in family business relationships (Gavrić & Braje, 2024; Yezza et al., 2021). These conflicts are shaped by internal mechanisms such as family structure, communication patterns, and managerial professionalism, all of which directly affect business sustainability and performance (Schulze et al., 2003; Lambrecht & Lievens, 2008).

In terms of context, there is a noticeable geographic trend. Studies from developed countries, particularly the U.S. and Europe, dominate the literature and emphasize governance, conflict strategy, and professionalization (Reina et al., 2017; Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016). Meanwhile, research from emerging markets in Asia and Africa is growing, highlighting the role of culture and social norms as distinguishing factors in conflict management (Ardyan et al., 2023; Wang & Zhang, 2021). These cultural factors have been

shown to act as critical mediators in conflict resolution strategies and strategic decision-making (Martini & Putri, 2021).

Methodologically, quantitative approaches still prevail—especially surveys and statistical techniques such as SEM and regression—providing strong empirical validity and generalizability (Purkayastha et al., 2022; Basheer et al., 2021). However, qualitative and mixed-methods studies are gaining ground, particularly in exploring contextual and emotional aspects that cannot be fully captured numerically (Gavrić & Braje, 2024; Nagel et al., 2023). This methodological diversity allows for deeper insights into conflict mechanisms and more effective intervention strategies. The findings also underscore the importance of adaptive and context-sensitive interventions, including effective communication, proactive conflict resolution, and the use of relevant theories to guide outcomes (Blanco-Mazagatos et al., 2016; Rosecká & Machek, 2021). In this regard, the integration of digital technologies and hybrid methodologies offers strategic tools for addressing conflict complexity and enhancing solution effectiveness (Caputo et al., 2018; Yezza et al., 2021).

The desired outcome of such strategies is the long-term success of family businesses alongside the preservation of interpersonal harmony—both of which are achievable when internal mechanisms and interventions are properly designed and sustainably implemented (Gersick et al., 1997; Schulze et al., 2003). Therefore, the integration of theory, context, internal mechanisms, and tailored interventions is essential for effectively managing family business conflict. This SLR recommends the development of an interdisciplinary framework that is responsive to cultural, social, and contemporary challenges such as globalization and digital transformation (Bürgel & Hiebl, 2024). Through this comprehensive approach, both the academic understanding and practical management of family business conflict can be significantly advanced to meet the demands of an increasingly complex future.

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