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Research Paper

Perceptions of Family Business Support Among African Academics

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines how academic representatives of African universities perceive the family business issue. It aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between this perception and the tertiary education of this topic and support for these businesses in selected African countries.

Methodology: The empirical part of this study aimed to examine the interdependence between African university representatives' perspectives of family businesses and specific support for these businesses. Firstly, in the context of promoting the topic in tertiary education and secondly, within the specific support for these businesses. For data processing, we used Chi-square tests to test the independence of the variables. To measure the strength of this relationship, we used Cramer's V- test.

Findings: The research results show that in countries where academics consider family businesses as a unique type of business, this subject is more likely to be adequately promoted in tertiary education. We also found that family businesses in these countries are more likely to receive specific support through special programmes, financial support and counselling.

Limitations: The random sample of respondents does not include respondents from all countries in Africa which makes the possibility of generalizing the research findings speculative.

Originality: The study offers new insights into family businesses in the context of tertiary education in African countries. It is the first study to show the relationship between academic perceptions of the family businesses and actual support for them.

Keywords: Family business; Africa; Tertiary education; Economical-faculties.

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1. Introduction

Africa is a continent of contrasts. There are African countries whose economies are not far from those of the developed world. At the other end of the spectrum, there are countries whose economies are literally frozen at a very low level and where millions of people live in extreme poverty - these are the "least developed countries" (hereafter also referred to as LDCs). These low-income countries struggle by underdeveloped institutional environment ensuring the sustainable development and they are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks. From the total amount of 46 LDC countries is 33 of them situated in Africa (United Nations, 2022).

Many academics and policy makers agree that entrepreneurship is an effective method for economic development and poverty reduction in underdeveloped regions of the world. Entrepreneurial activities create new jobs and increase productivity and added value (Carree & Thurik, 2010; Praag & Versloot, 2007; Shane, 2000). In particular, family businesses (hereafter also referred to as FB) are seen as key to economic development and are therefore the subject of intensive academic research in many European universities (see e.g. Shanker & Astrachan, 1996; Fang et al., 2012; Carsrud, 2006).

Family businesses are historically one of the oldest forms of business in the world. They stand for quality, tradition, credibility and sustainability and are based on shared values (Fang et al., 2012; Fox & Sohnesen, 2012; Khavul et al., 2009; O'Hara & Mandel, 2017). To date, however, there is no generally accepted definition of the term family business, which leads to different understandings of this term, and not only in academic research. While there are some approaches to defining the family business from an academic perspective (Steiger et al., 2015), the understanding of the family business in common usage can vary.

The different understanding of the term "family business" is reflected in the fact that in African countries, where it is estimated that more than 80% of private sector businesses are family businesses (Fox & Sohnesen, 2012; The World Bank, 2020), most African university students do not consider their parents' business to be a family business (Skrbková, 2021). Therefore, it could be assumed that the topic of family business is not sufficiently promoted at universities in Africa. In the first part of our study, we therefore focus firstly on finding out whether academics consider family businesses to be a specific form of business and secondly, whether tertiary education in African universities in the area of family business is sufficient according to university lecturers. We also investigate whether the academics at these universities consider it desirable to pay attention to the topic of family business and to treat it from the point of view of scientific research.

As long as family businesses are not clearly defined in common parlance, it is not possible to support them and promote the necessary development (European Parliament, 2015). The question is how to include this issue in the considerations of political parties and force them to take the initiative and create policies to support family businesses. The crucial step is to become aware of this issue and start perceiving family businesses as a unique form of enterprise. Universities, their researchers, students and graduates of relevant fields of study undoubtedly have the opportunity to play a crucial role in presenting, sharing and transfering credible information at a higher level (Hyland et al., 2006; Inzelt, 2004; Whitley & Frost, 1973). Therefore, if we want to ensure the visibility of family businesses, this issue must first be taken up and promoted by universities with their staff who can pass on the information to the government sector.

Based on their adequate performance and the adequately presented results of scientific studies, family businesses could gradually be recognised by state organisations. This fact would facilitate their access to government support, which is still insufficient in Africa (Yanwen, 2012; Hare a Davis, 2006). The aim of this study is therefore to find out how representatives of African universities perceive the issue of family business and whether there is a relationship between university academics' perceptions of this form of business and government support for family business.

For this study, we used a questionnaire to collect data. We created our own database with contact details of representatives from all economics faculties on the African continent. The economics faculties were selected based on the assumption that they have a higher level of knowledge and orientation towards family business and that at these faculties the topic of family business would be more likely to be included in the academic curriculum. The questionnaire was sent to randomly selected faculty representatives from our database. Half of them were from an LDC country.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. First, we discuss the theoretical background and literature on the definition of the family business and the appearance of this term in the European and African literature, and then we present the possibilities of business support in developing countries in order to develop our hypothesis. Second, we present the methodology, including the analytical approach of this study, followed by the analyses of the hypotheses of the study. We then interpret our findings in the discussion. In the last part of the paper, we draw the conclusion of our study and suggest possibilities for further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definitions

As already mentioned, a uniform, generally applicable definition that would enable a comparison of the individual surveys has not yet been introduced (Mandl, 2008). Family businesses can be of any size, age, ownership structure and legal form. In general, most professional studies dealing with family business topic can be divided into two groups according to the approach to family business. For the **first group**, the typical approach is called **COI** (orig. Components of Involvement Approach), where the so-called family is conditioned by the actual involvement of the family in the business, in the form of the size of its ownership in the company and the extent of its decision-making powers, and the overall influence of the family on the business (Steiger et al., 2015).

The **second group** of research defines a family business based on the so-called "**essence approach**", thus on the basis of the subjective designation of the owners of their own business as a family enterprise (Steiger et al., 2015). Although this criterion may seem rather superficial, it is far from being so. Mandl (2008) states that family businesses are created by connecting two structures - family and business. And it is the natural instincts for the protection of the family that lead to a focus on the long-term sustainability of the company in the future, rather than focusing on the realisation of short-term profits. As the

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company is handed down to future generations, in addition to the transfer of assets, there is also a transfer of social and cultural capital, which also includes the company's social responsibility and the family's value system. Therefore, if the company considers itself to be a family business, it also adapts its behaviour and conduct and the creation of plans for successful transferral to its own descendants (Mazzi, 2011; Dawson and Mussolino, 2014).

In addition to these two main divisions, there is a **third set** of research that combines the two approaches (Rau et al., 2018). This is called **F-PEC** and includes three dimensions for measuring family influence on society's decisions and behaviour. The first dimension, called "power", essentially replicates the COI approach and evaluates family involvement in the ownership and management of society. The second dimension includes the "experience" gained by the company through the transfer of the company across generations. The third and final dimension is "culture". It indicates the extent to which the company's visions match the family's values and the extent to which the family is connected to the company. The F-PEC approach does not try to differentiate and divide businesses into two groups, family and non-family, compared to the previous two models, but seeks to determine the extent to which a business is a family business. This theory therefore works with the idea that most businesses can be considered family businesses, at least to a minimal extent (Steiger et al., 2015; Rau et al., 2018).

2.2. Family business in the scientific field

Based on the study of the JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect and Proquest databases, the first mentions of family business appear in the professional literature around 1930, when it is mentioned at least marginally in publication from e.g. Jevons, (1934) and Keane (1942). Scientific research regarding this issue became strong, particularly in the USA in the 1970s. In Europe, the boom of scientific publication on the family businesses topic appeared approximately twenty years later, in the 1990s according to the databases mentioned above (e.g. Cromie et al., 1995; Phizacklea & Ram, 1995; Shanker & Astrachan, 1996). The new millennium brought many publications dealing with the issue of family companies from various perspectives (e.g. Carsrud, 2006; Mandl, 2008; Perret, 2016).

In 2015, the European Parliament issued a resolution regarding family businesses in Europe, asking the Commission of the European Union in cooperation with Eurostat to establish a "*statistically workable Europe-wide definition of "family business"* ", that would reflect the different situation in the individual member states (European Parliament, 2015). As a result, many associations have been founded that focus on supporting family businesses.

Publications focusing on family businesses in Africa began gradually appearing around 2010; however, more significant outreach can be perceived only after 2015 (Muhumed et al., 2017; Urban & Nonkwelo, 2020). Even though we can see that the topic of family business is becoming more popular among scholars in African countries, it may still be understood differently in common parlance. This assertion could be supported by the fact that the World Bank estimates that more than 80% of private sector businesses are family businesses (Fox & Sohnesen, 2012; The World Bank, 2020), but according to the Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students' Survey, most African university students do not consider their parents' businesses to be family businesses s (Skrbková, 2021).

Therefore, it could be assumed that the topic of family business is not sufficiently promoted at universities in Africa.

On the basis of these findings, we have formulated our first research question:

RQ1: According to African academics, is enough attention being paid to the family business in university education?

We assume that the family business receives more attention in tertiary education in countries where the family business is considered a unique form of enterprise by scientists. We have therefore formulated the first hypothesis.

→ **Hypothesis 1:** The variables "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Sufficient support for FB in tertiary education" are independent of each other.

2.3. Possibilities of business support in developing countries

Entrepreneurial activities are related to a whole range of factors that influence them directly and indirectly and which differ considerably between developed and developing countries (Yanwen, 2012). However, especially in developing countries, they cannot function without external support. Entrepreneurship support programmes are an important policy tool in developing countries. Support measures can be allocated in various areas, but education and finance seem to be the most important (Cho & Honorati, 2014). In the field of finance, support is mostly provided through the provision of grants, soft loans or micro-credits to entrepreneurs or by enabling access to financial products (Giné & Mansuri, 2014), while in the education sector, support is mainly provided through general, technical, financial or entrepreneurial and business courses and training (Bruhn & Zia, 2011; Cho & Honorati, 2014).

The African Economic Consortium also points to the need for support in education for entrepreneurs, especially at the tertiary level. According to them, the university system is a necessary prerequisite for strengthening the continent's educational capacity, for the development of science, research, technology and innovation, and a tool for ensuring quality information transfer (Hare & Davis, 2006; İlhan Ertuna & Gurel, 2011). At the same time, according to Davidsson and Honig (2003), higher education also increases the efficiency of the individual entrepreneur, which affects the successful growth of the firm.

Another area in which companies can be supported is in counselling services (Cho & Honorati, 2014). Developing countries are characterised by a very poor institutional base due to a lack of simple administrative procedures and systems without unnecessary bureaucracy (Yanwen, 2012). As a result, many companies do not reach out for support due to lack of knowledge of the difficult rules and laws. Consulting and legal assistance is therefore another area where business support programmes are located.

Within the framework of our study, we therefore try to find an answer to our second research question:

RQ2: Is there a relationship between academics' attitudes towards family businesses and the existence of support (financial, educational, counselling) for family businesses in a particular country?

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We assume, that in countries where the family business is considered by scholars to be a unique form of business, more support for family businesses can be identified than in countries where the family business is not considered a unique form of business. We therefore set up a series of five hypotheses to test the independence between a particular support instrument for family businesses and their perception as a unique form of business according to academics.

→ **Hypothesis 2:** Variables "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Special programmes for FB" are independent.

→ **Hypothesis 3:** Variables "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Financial support for FB" are independent.

→ **Hypothesis 4:** Variables "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Additional courses or training for FB" are independent.

→ **Hypothesis 5:** Variables "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Counselling services for FB" are independent.

→ **Hypothesis 6:** Variables "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Free legal assistance for FB" are independent.

3. Methodology

A primary survey was chosen to find and clarify the findings leading to a better understanding of family business perceptions in developing countries from the scientist's point of view. The survey was conducted in the form of a questionnaire survey.

The primary data source for creating the own database of the African universities with economics faculty was the UniRank web portal (UniRank, 2020). The economics faculties were selected based on an assumption that they would have a higher level of knowledge and orientation with regard to the issues pertaining to family businesses. The faculty representatives' contact information was found directly on universities' public websites.

The questionnaire, in the form of structured interview, was first pilot tested before being finalised and translated into three language versions (English, French and Arabic). The questionnaires were made available to the participants using the Survio online platform.

3.1. Research sample

We identified a total of 570 economics faculties across the African continent. In 481 cases, we confirmed that the faculties are currently active according to their updated websites and found their contact information. We considered these faculties to be populations for this study. Of these, we randomly selected 38 economic faculties by lottery for our questionnaire survey. This method of random selection ensures that the results obtained from our sample are comparable to those that would have been obtained from a survey of the entire populations (Shadish et al., 2002). Our random sample included the respondents from 20 African countries, from which half of the respondents come from a country referred to as "least developed countries" (Table 1).

Table 1. Representatives of research sample

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Country	N	LDC	Non LDC
Algeria	1		✓
Benin	2	✓	
Burkina Faso	1	✓	
Burundi	2	✓	
Cameroon	1		✓
Cape Verde	1		✓
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1	✓	
Egypt	1		✓
Ethiopia	1	✓	
Ghana	4		✓
Kenya	6		✓
Malawi	1	✓	
Nigeria	3	✓	
Rwanda	2	✓	
South Africa	2		✓
United Republic of Tanzania	1	✓	
Tunisia	1		✓
Uganda	4	✓	
Zambia	1	✓	
Zimbabwe	2		✓
Total	**38**	**19**	**19**

Source: Author´s own elaboration

3.2. Analytical approach

For the evaluation of hypotheses, we firstly divided the countries into two groups according to their answer, whether they consider family businesses as a unique form of business in their country. To test the hypotheses, we used Chi-square test of independence.

The first hypothesis tested the existence of a dependency between the values of “FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Sufficient support for FB in tertiary education". The Chi-square test of independence was also used to test Hypothesis 2 - 6 about the independence between the consideration of family business as a unique group of businesses by scientists and a specific support instrument for family businesses such as "Special programmes for FB", "Financial support for FB", "Additional education for FB", "Counselling service for FB" and "Free legal assistance for FB".

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To determine the strength of the relationship between the variables, Cramer's V-test was employed. According to Steinberg (2008) the relationship is less strong when the Cramer's value is below 0.30. If the value is between 0.30 and 0.50, it is a moderate or medium-strong association, while a Cramer's value above 0.50 means a strong association.

3.3. Profile of respondents

Overall, 31% of the responses were received from lecturers and senior lecturers, 23% from deans of the respective faculties, 8% from assistant professors, professors and researchers, 6% from doctoral students and the remaining 16% from respondents from other positions within the faculties. In 52.6% of all cases, respondents work at public universities. The remaining 47.4% of respondents work at private universities.

4. Results

Overall, 18% of respondents said that there is a legally embedded definition of family businesses in their country, and 34% of respondents claimed that family businesses are considered a unique form of business in their country.

Moreover, a total of 56% of respondents indicated that the term "family business" is commonly used in their country. These respondents come from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. As we can see, among these respondents are representatives from only three countries referred to as "least developed countries". Specifically, these are Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Tanzania. However, in the rest of the LDC countries explored, the "family business" term is not generally considered a unique group of businesses by the academics.

4.1. RQ1: According to African academics, is enough attention being paid to the family business in university education?

A total of 66% of the respondents do not consider a tertiary education in the field of family business to be sufficient. At the same time, 100% of them think that it would be useful to introduce a special subject focused on family business at their university. More than 97% of the respondents consider it desirable to pay attention to the family business and deal with it from the point of view of scientific research.

Moreover, we have assumed that the family business will receive more attention in tertiary education in countries where the family business is considered a unique form of business. To test our assumption, we formulated the first hypothesis:

→ Hypothesis 1: The variables "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Sufficient support for FB in tertiary education" are independent of each other.

To conduct the independence test, we first created a contingency table (Table 2) with the individual responses. We then conducted the Chi-square test of independence (see Table 3).

Table 2. "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Sufficient support for FB in tertiary education"

FB as a unique form of business according to academics		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
Sufficient support of FB within tertiary (university) education	Yes	8 - 61	21.05%	5 - 20	13.16%
	No	5 - 38	13.16%	20 - 80	52.63%
Total		13	34.21%	25	65.79%

Source: Author´s own elaboration

Table 3. Chi-Square test "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Sufficient support for FB in tertiary education"

Test	Statistic	Df	P-Value	Decision about H0
Chi-Square	6.557	1	0.0104	reject

Source: Author´s own elaboration

The P-value is less than 0.05, which means that we can reject the H0 hypothesis that the variables "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Sufficient support for FB within tertiary education" are independent at the 95% confidence level. In countries where the family business is considered a unique form of business undertaking according to scientist, gaining this issue more often support and recognition in tertiary education.

To determine the strength of the association between the variables, Cramer's V-test was used. The strength of the dependency between the variables is 0.4154, indicating a moderately strong to strong association.

4.2. RQ2: Is there a relationship between academics' attitudes towards family businesses and the existence of support (financial, educational, counselling) for family businesses in a particular country?

To answer the second research question, we set up a series of five hypotheses to test the independence between a specific support instrument for family businesses such as "Special programmes for FB", "Financial support for FB", "Additional education for FB", "Counselling service for FB" and "Free legal assistance for FB" and the variable "FB as a unique form of business according to academics".

→ Hypothesis 2: Variables “FB as a unique form of business according to academics” and “Special programmes for FB” are independent.

→ Hypothesis 3: Variables “FB as a unique form of business according to academics” and “Financial support for FB” are independent.

→ Hypothesis 4: Variables “FB as a unique form of business according to academics” and “Additional courses or training for FB” are independent.

→ Hypothesis 5: Variables “FB as a unique form of business according to academics” and “Counselling services for FB” are independent.

→ Hypothesis 6: Variables "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Free legal assistance for FB" are independent.

We assume that in countries where the family business is considered a unique form of business by academics, there is more support for family businesses than in countries where the family business is not considered a unique form of business.

The individual responses are shown in the following contingency table (Table 4).

Table 4. "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Support for FB"

FB as a unique form of business according to academics	**N**	**Yes**		**No**		**% Row**
		N	%	N	%	
Special programmes	Yes	9	23.68%	0	0.00%	23.68%
	No	4	10.53%	25	65.79%	76.32%
Financial support	Yes	8	21.05%	6	15.79%	36.84%
	No	5	13.16%	19	50.00%	63.16%
Additional courses or training	Yes	7	18.42%	12	31.58%	50.00%
	No	6	15.79%	13	34.21%	50.00%
Counselling service	Yes	10	26.32%	7	18.42%	44.74%
	No	3	7.89%	19	50.00%	57.89%
Free legal assistance	Yes	6	15.79%	9	23.68%	39.47%
	No	7	18.42%	16	42.11%	60.53%

Source: Author´s own elaboration

A total of 24% of respondents stated that there are some special programmes for family businesses in their country. Not surprisingly, however, this response was only given by academics from countries where family businesses are considered a unique form of enterprise. This means that in countries where family businesses are considered a unique form of business, there are usually (in 70%) special programmes for them.

The possibility of accessing financial support (microfinance, soft loans, grants, ...) is available for family businesses in 37% of the respondents' countries.

Half of the respondents indicated that there is an offer of additional courses or training (general, technical, financial or entrepreneurial and business) for family business members in their country. Almost same amount of respondents, 45% of them, said that there are counselling services in their country that are also intended for family businesses, and 40% of respondents claimed that there is free legal assistance intended for family businesses in their country.

However, we wanted to find out whether there is a dependency between a specific support tool for family businesses and their perception as a unique form of business according to academics. Therefore, to test hypotheses 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 mentioned above, we performed the Chi-square test of independence as shown in Table 5 and use Cramer's V-test to show the strength of the association (see Table 5).

Table 5. Chi-Square test "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Support for FB"

		Df	**P-Value**		**Cramer´s V**

	Chi-Square Statistic			**Decision about H0**	
Special programmes	22.679	1	0.000	reject	0.773
Financial support	5.179	1	0.023	reject	0.369
Additional courses or training	0.117	1	0.732	do not reject	0.550
Counselling service	8.280	1	0.004	reject	0.467
Free legal assistance	0.369	1	0.544	do not reject	0.990

Source: Author´s own elaboration

According to our results, we are able to reject the H0 hypothesis that the variables are independent, with a 95% confidence level for the hypotheses 1, 2 and 4. In countries where the family business is considered a unique form of business among researchers, these businesses can more likely to find special programmes designed for them, to receive financial support and to have the opportunity to get advices within the counselling service.

The strength of dependence in the case of special programmes is 0.773, indicating a strong relationship. In the case of financial support and counselling services, it is 0.3692 and 0.467 respectively, indicating a moderately strong relationship.

In the hypothesis test of independence between the variables "FB as a unique form of business according to academics" and "Additional courses or training" and "Free legal assistance", we could not reject the H0 hypothesis about their independence.

5. Discussion

Promoting entrepreneurship and creating a business-friendly environment are generally seen as a means to increase employment and reduce poverty. Because of their prevalence, family businesses can play a crucial role in revitalising underdeveloped economies (Acquaah, 2013). However, the concept of family business is not legally anchored in most of the countries (European Parliament, 2015), which we also confirmed in our survey of university academics in randomly selected African countries. Although the term “family business” is commonly used in more than half of the countries, only a few countries have a legally established definition.

This could complicate their position in accessing government support and be one of the reasons for their failure and demise within a short time period, especially in developing countries (Mgudlwa, 2017). Without a unified definition of family businesses, it is not possible to create a supportive environment for them (Mandl, 2008). However, as we found, the topic of family business is nowadays intensively researched at universities also in developing countries in Africa, and in one third of the countries surveyed, the term "family business" is considered by scholars as a specific form of business. Furthermore, in our survey we found a dependency between this perception of family businesses and the recognition for this topic in lectures at universities. In countries where academics consider family businesses as a specific form of business, this topic receives more support and recognition in university sphere.

Furthermore, we found a dependency between this perception and government support for family businesses in some specific support instruments. It is possible that in these countries, where the term "family business" is seen as a special form of business, these businesses are more likely to perceive and report themselves as family businesses. This increases the chance that political parties and government organisations will develop a greater awareness of the family business phenomenon.

Although we did not find a dependency between academics' different perceptions of family businesses and the provision of additional courses or training or free legal assistance provided by the government, we did find that family businesses were more likely to receive specific programmes and financial support such as microfinance, soft loans, grants and counselling in those countries where a family business is considered by academics as a unique form of business. In fact, lack of financial resources was one of the most frequently mentioned obstacles in the start-up phase of a family business (Chirkunova et al., 2016). Therefore, creating special programmes and providing financial support for family businesses is a cornerstone for their vitality and longevity. In addition, the opportunity to seek advice on difficult legal systems in developing countries can save time that businesses can use effectively elsewhere in their business.

If family businesses are seen as a unique group of businesses and taught in higher education as a special form of business, they will become more visible. This could lead to a better distribution of support for such businesses. Defining family businesses can play a key role in creating the right infrastructure to support their vitality and longevity. This is the only way they can survive in the long term and pass the business from one generation to the next (Covin et al., 2000; Wiklund, 1999).´

6. Conclusion

As the results of the study show, family businesses are gradually gaining importance in academic research. We found that in countries where academics consider family businesses as a special form of business, this topic receives more support and recognition in higher education. Furthermore, our results show that in countries where academics consider family businesses as a special form of business, this topic receives more recognition and support not only in academic ground, but also commercial environment. Family businesses there are more likely to be supported by financial resources and advisory services within the programmes specifically designed for them. This could help them to be competitive, survive longer and pass the business on to the next generation.

However, among the respondents who indicated that the term family business is common in their country, only three of the randomly selected nineteen (see Table 1) are representatives from countries profiled as least developed countries. These are Burkina

Faso, Nigeria and Tanzania. In the other LDC countries studied, the term "family business" is generally not considered a specific group of businesses. According to our findings, it be assumed that support for family businesses in these countries is inadequate. However, we can expect that if the topic of family businesses gradually receives more attention in academia, it could also receive more attention among the general public and in politics. It is therefore necessary to bring the topic of family businesses to the centre of the attention of academic staff. However, in our study there are certain limitations.

Apart from the usual disadvantages of collecting primary data by means of questionnaires, we must mention other specific limitations. Even though the random sample of at least 30 respondents should ensure the possibility of generalisation (Shadish et al., 2002), the generalisation of our findings to the African continent is speculative because our study does not include respondents from all African countries due to the random sample. Furthermore, as respondents come from different countries with different cultures, they may have different understandings of the meaning of each question and of the term "family business", which needs to be taken into account when drawing conclusions.

Nevertheless, our study shows that it is desirable to explore the topic of family businesses in academic research, as it could attract more attention from policy makers, especially in countries where family businesses are not yet seen as a special form of business. However, further studies analysing the perception of family businesses must first clarify whether the understanding of family businesses in developing countries differs from its specification in developed countries, or whether it is essentially the same.

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