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ALICJA HADRYŚ

alicja.hadrys@ue.poznan.pl
Poznań University of Economics and Business. Institute of International Business and Economics
al. Niepodległości 10, 81-875 Poznań, Poland
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2684-9910

MANUELA WELLER

Manuela.Weller@w.thm.de
Technische Hochschule Mittelhessen – University of Applied Sciences. Small and Medium-Sized Companies & Entrepreneurship
Gebäude C50 – Raum 107-1. Stock, Giessen, Hesse, Germany
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0009-0005-3564-1865

Women Successors in Family-Owned Businesses in Poland

Keywords: family businesses; succession; women in family businesses; gender; Poland

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Abstract

Theoretical background: The family enterprises are regarded as the backbone of every economy. In Poland, it is estimated that more than 60% of small and medium-sized enterprises are family businesses. Taking into account the particularities of the Polish economy in connection with the period of political transformation after 1989, the majority of family firms are in the hands of the founding families respectively the first generation. The question of the succession process is of great importance for all family companies, but especially for Polish family businesses, since in the former communist system no private property could be passed on to future generations. The Polish entrepreneurial families therefore do not have enough practical succession experience. Moreover, the Polish society is still characterized by a conservative world view or female view, which means that the majority of entrepreneurs choose the eldest son as their potential successor.

Pobrane z czasopisma Annales H - Oeconomia **http://oeconomia.annales.umcs.pl**
Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

Purpose of the article: The aim of the study is to present the history of daughters successors in Polish family businesses in institutional context of transforming economy. The research follows the qualitative paradigm to find context sensitive data on female successors in family businesses in Poland.
Research methods: The research was designed and conducted according to the qualitative paradigm as this is the best way to understand the social realities of the actors involved. The research material was collected through semi-structured interviews with three daughters-successors in Polish family firms. The authors conducted with each female successor two interviews – a total of six interviews. The interviews last on average 1.5 hours. The longest last 2.5 hours. The interviews took place at the companies' headquarters. The interviewed persons were women from family-owned businesses.
Main findings: Taking into account the data collected, it can be assumed that the education of the next generation in the entrepreneurial families has a direct influence on the probability of a takeover. The study indirectly showed that society's attitude towards working women in Poland has changed. This survey can make an important contribution to the understanding of the dynamics that prevail in Polish family-run companies. These findings can in turn help to develop recommendations or guidelines for those business in the succession process.

Introduction

Family companies are the most common form of the economic entity in the world (Seaman, 2012; Braun et al., 2018) and are often referred to as the backbone of every national economy. Those companies are characterized by "treating the business like a family" (Joshi et al., 2012). Family businesses cases are difficult to analyze because they usually include not only business problems, but also property and family matters. Family involved in these shared businesses not only care about the future of the enterprise but also about the family's ongoing reputation (Zajkowski & Żukowska, 2020). Many family business cases revolve around the succession or leadership transition process (Sharma et al., 2013). In the last years, the gender question also took a special meaning in this process (Ratten et al., 2018). An important issue that is evolving in the family business literature is the increasing involvement of women in leadership and management roles (Halkias et al., 2011). This topic is very important for family-owned companies, because it is important to make the appropriate preparations to ensure the continuity and success of the company (Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian, 2008). Traditionally, in the family enterprises women took more "subtle" roles such as: wife, parent-in-law and the leader of the family (Ward & Sorenson, 1989). Many women, wives and daughters were raised in the belief that they are not suitable for company leadership roles (Galiano & Vinturella, 1995). However, this situation has changed in the recent years because more and more women decide to enter the business world. The same applies to family businesses, where women are increasingly choosing to join family businesses in order to pursue their careers (Cole, 1997). Many authors notice, that the family business context prepares women to the leadership and business initiative (Dajani et al. 2013). The number of publications and research on the role of the women in the family companies is extensive but still needs additions (Cole, 1997; Harveston et al., 1997,

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Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

Bowman-Upton & Heck, 1996; Danes & Olson, 2003; Vera & Dean, 2005; Boyatzis & Soler, 2009; Weller, 2009; Licznerska & Rembiasz, 2018). Sharma (2004) states in her article that systematic research has not yet been conducted to understand the context and individual factors of women in leadership positions, their goals – both in the development of the family business and the family itself – or the styles of women's management. At the same time, the author described the above-mentioned areas as interesting topics for meaningful scientific research (Sharma, 2004). The literature also showed that authors, both empirical and theoretical, highlight the changes that have taken place in recent years in the context of the growing presence of women in companies and family businesses. The first researches concentrated mainly on analyze the difficulties and obstacles faced by women at work in the family companies (Dumas, 1989; Salganicoff, 1990). Further research was carried out on the topic, such as the opportunities and benefits for women to work in family businesses and the ways women could take the lead in family businesses (Rowe & Hong, 2000; Vera & Dean, 2005). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to look at women presence in family business succession and institutional and context-sensitive factors by presenting the history of the daughters successors of the Polish family businesses, which took or are taking over the family business and succeed with conducting it. Amongst researches concerning the engagement of women in the succession process in family business it can be mention such areas, as: development of women professional career analysis, management and conduction of the family enterprise analysis, and emotional leadership and succession.

Literature review

Researchers of family companies suggest, that the specificity of a family business favors the presence of women in business (Hollander & Bukowitz, 1990) and offers them independence and access to potentially better positions (Salganicoff, 1990) including leadership and management (Kim & Gao, 2013). In addition, working in a family business also means more flexibility in working hours and schedules, as well as greater safety at work (Salganicoff, 1990) and opportunities for development and advancement (Lyman, 1991). According to Edlund (1992) and Salganicoff (1990), women "humanize" working environment. They are becoming "transmitters" of the family culture to the enterprise (Hollander & Bukowitz, 1990), what can result from their natural tendency to share, showing respect and pursuance to cooperation (Sillars, 1995). The life of women is organized "around" the life of the family, while the life of men is organized around work (Gillis-Donovan & Moynihan-Bradt, 1990). Women working in a family enterprise show loyalty to a family and a business, and focus on the individual needs of all members of both subsystems of a family company. From the viewpoint of family business this duality can occur crucial (Salganicoff, 1990). Those characteristics allow to state, that women in the family companies support, solve

Pobrane z czasopisma Annales H - Oeconomia **http://oeconomia.annales.umcs.pl**
Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

problems, sooth conflicts, endeavor to maintain a family unity and a harmony between a family and a company (Salganicoff, 1990). Despite the fact, that women often are taking informal roles, they still have the power and an influence on what happen in the family business (Gillis-Donovan & Moynihan-Bradt, 1990; Weller, 2009).

Calás and Smircich (1993) note that the presence of women in the business can be very profitable. Due to their different perspectives, it can happen that employees who were previously ignored are perceived. Women have also a special talent for making "more from the less" (Calás & Smircich, 1993). Once, when the daughter was the only child, her husband was taking the family company management. Today those situations rather have no place, thanks to many fathers, which trusted their "own blood". Despite the fact, that she does not manage the company directly and on a regular bases, it is her own task to maintain the company in the family hands. In many family companies brother and sister manage the enterprise as a team. Cole (1997) conducted a qualitative research concerning a professional development of women in the succession process. The results of this analysis differ from those in the literature. Women who participated in the above research achieved high positions in their companies without gender discrimination, i.e. they did not experience the phenomenon of the "glass ceiling". In addition, the participants in this study had a very positive image of their careers and the feeling that their work is responsible and respected by the environment. The study of the succession process was more complex, but the "rule of the first son" was not as decisive as other authors claim. In her research, Cole gave some examples of women running family businesses despite older brothers.

The research conducted by Dumas (1992) showed that daughters cooperated efficiently with their fathers and then run the family company successful, because they were brought up from the childhood in the sense of value of work and active participation in the family company. Other authors (Galiano & Vinturella, 1995; Jaffe, 1990) emphasized that women, with which they conducted direct interviews, thought that the family companies give a possibility of the career development and they were satisfied working in the family business and felt there fulfilled. In addition, due to the elastic working hours, family businesses are considered to be an ideal workplace for women, which makes it easier to reconcile work and home responsibilities (Dumas, 1992, 1998; Frishkoff & Brown, 1993; Haynes et al., 1999). Moreover, an employment in the family enterprise gives an opportunity to work in the areas considered "masculine", for example, in the car industry or constructions. A family business thus gives a sense of job security and the satisfaction of working for oneself and one's family. On the other hand, Godfrey (1992) suggests that a family company can be a sort of "testing ground" for businesswomen and it will allow to prepare themselves to the professional contact with the client, investors, as well as with the employees. According to Dumas (1990), a family business is perfect environment for the preparation of the daughter to perform leadership roles with the help of "natural" mentor – the father, and that family business environment is rather

Pobrane z czasopisma Annales H - Oeconomia **http://oeconomia.annales.umcs.pl**
Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

friendly, thereby allows the daughters fully realize their potential for the benefit of the company. Moreover, according to Salganicoff (1990), family businesses are one of the few areas that offer real opportunities for women to reach the top positions in the company like CEO, board member, etc. Dumas (1998) claims that a woman managing a family business can have a positive influence on the next generations of women, that would work in the family business.

In turn, Allen and Langowitz (2003) conducted a study comparing family businesses with women and men. The researchers found that the choice of a woman for a successor is decisively influenced by whether a woman is already in the current structures. In 31% of the family businesses run by women for a successor were chosen also women, in comparison to 7% of successors in the businesses run by men. Rowe and Hong (2000) claim that women are more willing to join to the family business because: they already had professional experience, the firm is medium or large and also in the case of health problems of the husband. Dumas (1998) in his study undertook the analysis of the participation and leadership roles of women in the family business. The aim of this study was to determine what paths of career choose women in their path to the leadership in family business, what factors impact the selection of those paths, and what attributes are both women and businesswomen to manage the family business. Dumas conducted the interviews with 702 women, which at the time of the study were working in the family businesses, took the managing positions or were potential successors. Interesting result of this study was that those women had a crucial impact on the family enterprise management despite, that they had almost no ownership of the company. Based on the study, Dumas proposed a model of the path/way to the participation and leadership women in the family business. The researcher identified three phases, stages of women's "life" in the family businesses: "introduction", "path to participation" and "path to leadership". "Introduction" is an initiation, begins in the early childhood and lasts until the moment when a woman decides to join the family company. For all this time a daughter learns about both family and business values, discovers how the company operates, and over time more and more involves in the life of the company. At the same time, she acquires a technical knowledge and also interpersonal and management skills. Dumas believes that this period provides an excellent opportunity for long-term training in the direction of future work. The more positive experience of the time of "introduction", more possible, that the woman decides to work in the family company. When it comes to the stage of "path to participation", the author identifies four paths: setting up a business, starting from an unimportant issues and actions to increase the levels of responsibility, starting right from the managerial positions or work on special, commissioned projects. The last stage is "path to leadership", which largely depends on the family and the situation of the company. For women the factors motivating to take the "path of leadership" are sense of real opportunity and possibility to gain the power (especially, if similar possibilities are limited outside the family company) and also ability to use acquired during an education knowledge and skills. As it was

Pobrane z czasopisma Annales H - Oeconomia **http://oeconomia.annales.umcs.pl**
Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

mentioned, very important factor affects a woman's path of leadership is the factor connected with the family. For example, illness or death of the company founder, departure from the company one of the family member or lack of brothers. The factors resulted from the situation of the family company may occur, for example, moment of serious crisis or rapid growth, or any other situation where additional help would be needed. Innarelli (1992) obtained very similar results to those presented by Dumas. In the qualitative study, the researcher interviewed directly 15 women and 15 men of the second-generation active in the family businesses.

Vera and Dean (2005) conducted study in which they took under consideration the situations of finished successions, when the successor was a woman/daughter. The researchers note that for women managing family businesses the largest problem is effort to prove, that they indeed are in the right place. What is more, they need to prove their competence, not only in the front of their employees but also to the family members. The authors noted also that in this issue it is much easier for women, who had an experience outside the family company. Their credibility as a managing partner seems to be greater, as well as larger is their self-esteem. It is also significant that in the family firms studied, the father-owner very exactly and precisely determined the position of the daughter in the company. According to Salganicoff (1990), women possess the special features, which may be for an enterprise valuable resource. The author believes also that women's psychological and social predispositions allow "humanization of the organization"[1] desirable in the business world. Amongst the special features of women the author points: loyalty towards family and firm, concern for all organization and family members needs and sensitivity on the individual necessities. These features Salganicoff recognizes as significant for prosperity and survival of the family business. Supportiveness and sensitivity are features, of which the leader should be made of. Fortunately, changes in the practical management show that above characteristics are more and more desirable and valuable for companies not only the family ones. In turn, Francis (1999) claims that most women possess the natural predispositions and characteristics, evaluated by the experts as necessary for managers and leaders to succeed. Amongst these characteristics the author distinguishes: ability to accomplish many tasks at the same time, ability to overcome contradictions and talent to trust own instinct and intuition and not only rational analysis. Lansberg (1992) believes that women in comparison to men are, as a rule, more aware of importance of interpersonal relations. In the case of the enterprises, in which the teamwork is a philosophy and structures are elastic and less bureaucratic these characteristics can be only an advantage. In turn, Frishkoff and Brown (1993) claim that women are better suited to team work and also better manage teams than men. It is mainly due to the fact, that women are more sensitive to the other's needs, what in turn may result in better management of the family business.

[1] Humanization of the organization emphasizes a human and emotional aspect of the organization.

Pobrane z czasopisma Annales H - Oeconomia **http://oeconomia.annales.umcs.pl**
Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

One of the recent studies conducted by the team led by Dugan (2008), focused on leadership challenges which may arise against women managing family companies. The authors claim that women communicate and manage totally different than men. Feminine style of management is more participative[2] and focused on building relations. They also sustain that a women, especially a daughter, who is a successor of her father, should focus on building and form her own style of management, and warn against "copying" the ancestor's style. In addition to the studies outlined above, it can be said that there are not many scientific research exploring the female styles in managing the family business. In societies there exist many gender stereotypes, which sometimes make difficult or even impede the opportunity to acquire high managing positions by women. Traditional roles and functions assigned to women often make them resign professional career. The family companies environment is also not free from this kind of discriminations or stereotypes (Jaffe, 1990). According to Starr and Yudkin (1996), in the family businesses women meet the same challenges as in the world of corporations. At the same time, they need to struggle with the problems that arise from the specific situation in which they are located. Amongst those problems can be mentioned: internal conflict between fulfilling roles (daughter-employee, mother-boss, etc.), and also torn between loyalty to family and loyalty to the company, relationships with parents, siblings or non-family employees (Dumas, 1992; Salganicoff, 1990).

One of traditionally most important tasks that women take on in the family companies is to foster peace and harmony in the family and the business, especially between the father-founder and the son. Women mediate between them, trying to maintain stability both in personal and business relation (Dumas, 1989). What is more, women always give an unconditional support, often devote money, time and efforts to the company founder, no matter whether he is a husband, a son, a brother or a father. Frishkoff and Brown (1993) claim that even if a woman is not an employee of the company or a shareholder, she emotionally becomes affiliated with the family business. In turn, according to Lyman (1991), women as the caretaker of the family matters gain unique knowledge about the family company. Women often fulfill extremely important role in bringing up the next generations, maybe "the next generation of leaders" (Dugan et al., 2008). They transmit the key values concerning the family and the company, which are crucial for continuity of functioning the family business and its success in the future. Amongst these key values, Dugan et al. (2008) point: work ethos, care of others, understanding the fact that family should "serve" the company and not to overuse it only for personal goals. Thus, some authors use the term "emotional leadership" or "chief emotional officer" (Salganicoff, 1990; Ward, 1987). Ward (1987) notes that women in the family companies fulfill the role

[2] Participative management style – management based on the involvement of employees, involving and encouraging employees from all levels of the organization to participate in the management of the organization.

Pobrane z czasopisma Annales H - Oeconomia **http://oeconomia.annales.umcs.pl**
Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

of the emotional leader often unconsciously. Around the women goes on the family life, communication, solving conflicts, they often organize the family meetings, etc. Poza and Messer (2001) claim that women in the family companies, no matter whether their participation in the company is formal or not, fulfill their role, which has a purpose to maintain and reinforce the unity of the family, and as a consequence maintain continuity of the family business. The role of the "emotional leader" is crucial in the process of succession and it is extremely difficult to replace.

The omission of women and the assignment of stereotypical roles is also visible in the analysis of the succession process. The daughters are rarely taken under consideration as serious candidates for a leader in the family company, exception is the crisis situations or when the founder of the company has no son (Curimbaba, 2002; Dumas, 1992, 1998; Haberman & Danes, 2007). This situation is, first of all a result of traditional approach to the succession, when the main and often the only legal successor of the family fortune was a first born son. According to Cabrera Suárez (1997), the traditional approach is, in a sense, a comfortable solution, releasing the fathers as parents from the unpleasant task of comparing and choosing between his children. At the same time, in the situations of limited sources of the family businesses, not appreciating possibilities and competence of daughters, which can occur very valuable and critical for the company, is sort of "a waste". Hollander and Bukowitz (1990) conducted a study, in which they analyzed an influence of the family culture on the chances of the women's professional development in the family businesses. The researchers note that primogeniture of the men descendant is the key factor in taking decision about succession, which in consequence impacts the lack of succession of daughters. It confirms the assumptions of Salganicoff (1990) who believes that ingrained in the family culture gender stereotypes can influence the decision on the choice of a successor. In the similar vein speak Keating and Little (1997) stating that the gender is an unwritten rule, according to which daughters cannot be successors. Such an assumption could be also the reason, why women do not take under consideration the family businesses as a places of professional career development (Dumas, 1992; Goldberg & Wooldridge, 1993; Vera & Dean, 2005). Nevertheless, many authors (Dumas et al., 1995; Nelton et al., 1998) criticize the rule of primogeniture as a main factor of the successor choice. They postulate the necessity of taking into account the selection of a successor according to predispositions, qualifications and skills, and not gender. Additionally, Brockhaus (2004) believes that definitely more studies analyzing primogeniture as a criterion of successor election should be conducted. Last year's researches (Aronoff, 1998; Gersick et al., 1999) show that more and more families decide to create a team: siblings woman and man, daughter and son, who would share the leadership and ownership of the company in the future. Such an approach makes all the children potential successors, no matter which gender they are. The main reasons given by women, who would like to join to the family company are: willing to help the family, accession of the post, which none from the family wouldn't take, and lack of

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Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

satisfaction of the recent job (Salganicoff, 1990). Moreover, women's work is not perceived as a professional career in the family business, and their goal is not usually to be the owner. The results of the study by Vera and Dean (2005) and Dumas (1992) are similar to those of Salagnicoff (1990). According to Barnes and Kaftan (1990), women-successors in the family companies meet obstacles on the way to the leadership. First, they must question the skepticism of the fathers and brothers (when they are present), who usually believe that the business is not an appropriate place for women. Women must constantly prove their competence and skills as well, as engagement in the family business (Korman & Habler, 1991). Employees of the company also often resist when the head of the company is the owner's daughter (Dumas, 1989). Many researchers assume that women often face the conflict of roles between expected role in the family (for example, being a wife and mother) and the role in a business (for example, own career aspirations) (Dumas, 1989; Hollander & Bukowitz, 1990). Women are often aware that they are not be able to manage all requirements at the highest level: the family, the firm and themselves. Therefore, they often decide to sacrifice one area to another. Such a feeling is the result of the social distribution of roles that gave women a completely different status over many years. It was until recent years brought a certain change. Women often indicate the balance between career and the family as the largest challenge. This, in turn, may lead to a lack of confidence as to further actions, both in the family and in the family company (Freudenberger et al., 1989). Women may feel unmotivated to work in the family business, when they are aware of their competence, predispositions and skills, but because of tradition of "firstborn son" they never occupy the key positions in the firm. So far, there is not many research on succession and gender issues. One of the most important and frequently quoted are Dumas's analyzes conducted in 1989 and 1992, who compare the relationship between a son and his father and a daughter and her father. The relationships between a daughter and her father are, according to the author of harmonious, but also very different nature. The daughters rarely compete with their fathers for power and control over the company. An interesting topic in this study is that women struggle not with their fathers, but more often with their mothers or ex-wives for "firm identity" and leadership or, for example, with a manager from outside the family. Other authors (Bork, 1993; Haberman & Danes, 2007) confirmed the belief that father-daughter succession appears less confrontational than father-son follow-up. Vera and Dean (2005) conducted research comparing the daughter-father and the daughter-mother successions. The researchers note that the succession of daughter and mother is much more difficult. The daughter has the impression of being in the shadow of her mother, and her style of leadership is being constantly compared to the way of her mother. Therefore, it seems that the "cross" succession (father-daughter, mother-son) should be much easier. However, there is still not enough empirical evidences to generalize this assumption.

Pobrane z czasopisma Annales H - Oeconomia **http://oeconomia.annales.umcs.pl**
Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

Introduction to the Polish institutional context

Polish context is very interesting, because with the collapse of the old regime in 1989, the outburst of entrepreneurship led to the creation of numerous family businesses, which became the backbone of the blossoming free-market economy (Bednarz et al., 2017) that is why most of Polish family businesses are still in first generation, the so-called "founder stage phase". There are also no official statistics on the number of family businesses in Poland (Surdej & Wach, 2010). It is estimated that over 60% of the medium and small-sized enterprises sector are the family businesses, which account for 40% of Polish GDP and employ for 50% of the working population. In view of the peculiarities of the Polish economy, which is connected with the political transformation after 1989, the majority of family businesses are in the hands of the founding generation, i.e. in the hands of the first generation. Therefore, the question of succession process is extremely important, especially that the family business in Poland has practically no tradition and experience. The majority of the owners often even in the process of choosing the successor do not take woman (daughter) under consideration. The successor in the family business is usually the oldest son (40% of the owners prefers the eldest son, 17% – the oldest daughter). The crucial aspect that will be considered in the election of the successor is his training and preparation for the takeover. Women are often better prepared, yet men are preferred as company successors. It is the belief and stereotypes that men can cope better with difficult situations and are more resilient and tougher in business life. In addition, a son guarantees in the course of succession "the continuity of the name". The chances of a woman grow if she proves that she is indeed very well prepared for the management of the company and has the necessary qualifications. Polish women still have low self-esteem in the labour market. In the situation in which there is no male successor in the family, the daughter comes into account, but this is still not the rule and depends on the attitude of her father. The following chapter presents three case studies of daughter-successors in Polish family businesses.

Research methods

The research was designed and conducted according to the qualitative paradigm as this is the best way to understand the social realities of the actors involved. The research material was collected through semi-structured interviews with three daughters-successors in Polish family firms. The authors conducted two interviews with each female successor – a total of six interviews. The interviews lasted on average 1.5 hours. The longest lasted 2.5 hours. The interviews took place at the companies' headquarters. The interviewed persons, women from family-owned businesses, were selected as follows:

– already work in a family-owned business and have a managerial function in family business,

Pobrane z czasopisma Annales H - Oeconomia **http://oeconomia.annales.umcs.pl**
Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

– have decision power,
– are in the succession process or after.

This selection of women for the study allows for a real analysis of the institutional and context-sensitive factors that facilitate the presence of women in family business management. Taking into account the specificity of the family business study, in particular due to the specificities of gender in management, the use of the qualitative method is justified. As a research tool, semi-structured interviews were used. To supplement the empirical material and to understand the broader social and situational context, the observation and analysis of historical data such as web pages of the surveyed family businesses was used. The results of the interviews are presented in the form of cases as it is possible to consciously grasp the real context in which the interviewee moves.

Case study 1 – Zosia

The history of Macar dates back to the 1950s, when Zosia's grandfather, a pharmacist, started producing cosmetics. Currently, she is working on a master plan for the development of the family business, thereby fixing the first steps for the next generation.

Case study 2 – Agnieszka

In 1975, Karoline's grandfather bought 12 ha of land near Swarzędz and founded a fruit grower company together with Agnieszka's father. During that time the company was specialized in fast-growing apple and plum varieties. During her studies, she already worked in the family business, where she took on a wide variety of tasks in marketing, advertising and in-store sales. In 2012, Agnieszka founded her own company named "Apple Valley".

Case study 3 – Anna

Anna Sobkowiak belongs to the fourth generation of the entrepreneurial family. Her mom established one of the first medical companies in Poland. Together with her mother, she began to help set up the company as a 20-year-old girl. In almost 20 years of economic activity, a rich product range has been created. Today, the family-owned company PANI TERESA MEDICA SA develops, produces and sells medical and medical textile products used in medical treatment, prophylaxis and rehabilitation. The company has won several awards and is one of the market leaders in the European market.

In Table 1 and 2 there is some general information about family-owned businesses and about the respondents.

Pobrane z czasopisma Annales H - Oeconomia **http://oeconomia.annales.umcs.pl**
Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

Table 1. Companies detail

Company	Year	Sector	Employees
1	1947	Cosmetics	40
2	1975	Agriculture	6
3	1990	Health	150

Source: Authors' own study.

Table 2. Respondents details

Case study	Successor	Age
1	Zosia	36
2	Agnieszka	30
3	Anna	40

Source: Authors' own study.

Results

Case study 1 – Zosia

The history of Macar dates back to the 1950s, when Zosia's grandfather, a pharmacist, started producing cosmetics. Unfortunately, he died early and the company was taken over by almost eighteen-year-old Dariusz, Zosia's father. As a private business owner, it was very difficult at the time, because the state did not think it desirable. Over the years, the difficulties of the previous system manifest themselves. When martial law was over the situation improved a bit. Zosia and her two younger brothers were already born at this time. She explained that as a child, she already wanted to work with her father. So, it was not unusual for her to visit customers and suppliers with her father. The entrepreneurial situation was still difficult despite the improved economic infrastructure. Unfortunately, when Zosia was 15 years old her mother died. Zosia mentioned that this time was very difficult for the family, because her father had to manage three teenagers and the growing company. Some time later, Bella (Dressing Materials Plant in Toruń – TZMO) contacted Macar to supply them. Today Dariusz Makarczyk believes that the Bella company with its Baby Delfi line, for which he produced, has saved his family business. Thanks to this cooperation, modern machinery and equipment as well as new management methods were introduced. When the contract was finished, the firm already introduced own cosmetics: "Mother's Treasure". As the oldest of the siblings Makarczyk, Zosia felt responsible for the family and the company. Before that, however, she was not very interested in the family business because, as she says, she was "lazy", studying German and teaching for a while at school. When the contract at school finished she started to look for something new. Her father asked her to come to the company at least for a while (that was twelve years ago) and she started working there as an office girl. When the accountant got sick, she took over the books, ZUS-related issues, transferred the

Pobrane z czasopisma Annales H - Oeconomia **http://oeconomia.annales.umcs.pl**
Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

salaries to the staff and finally took care of marketing as a brand manager. It can be said that she runs the family business, but she says she is not fit for distribution. For this reason, she offered her brother this area in the family business, which turned out to be the right decision. Her father, on the other hand, is still responsible for the production of the company. In their view, gaining profits is not the top priority, but the continuity of the family business. In addition, employees should have a secured income. According to Zosia, the leadership of the family business is very important for regularity, perseverance and the pursuit of perfection. It is also important to develop a clear vision for the company right from the start. Then, intuition takes over and everything that needs to be done comes naturally. When it comes to a stressful experience, she mentions the tender offer of a competitor. She was promised that she would still be responsible for the development of the "Mother's Treasure" brand. Ultimately, however, the company was not acquired. The reason it was not sold was not because the buyer was no longer interested, but because ultimately the company remained a family business. In addition, the product line "Mother's Treasure" fits perfectly with the family business. According to Zosia, if something needs to be done well, one needs to believe in it. Moreover, one should consider whether the product or service is as good as you would like them to be.

From her stories it becomes clear that her father trusts her. For her, the family business is an inheritance that gives her a sense of independence. Zosia can be described as a strong personality, which is certainly due to the fact that she had to take over (as the eldest daughter after the early death of her mother) the responsibility for the family. Although she found this time very difficult, she is proud that she has mastered everything so successfully. Currently, she reports she is working on a master plan for the development of the family business, thereby fixing the first steps for the next generation.

Case study 2 – Agnieszka

"A passion for fruit growing in our family is now in the third generation", this is the motto of the owner Zdzisław Dębski – Karolina's father. With the passion of the grandfather for orchards, apple trees and fruits, the company's history began in the 1950s. First, apple orchards were leased in Mołdawsko and sweet cherry plantations in Poznań. Like Agnieszka's grandfather, her father is also a passionate fruit grower and he tried to pass on this interest to Agnieszka. But back to the beginnings of the company: In 1975, Karolina's grandfather bought 12 ha of land near Swarzędz and founded a fruit grower company together with Agnieszka's father. During that time the company was specialized in fast-growing apple and plum varieties. Later the father built a storage, cooling and sorting plant. In the course of time, he modernized the orchard by planting apple trees that had been grafted onto dwarf pads and imported from Holland, Belgium and Germany. In 1997, he was the first to build a cold store in Wielkopolska in order to bring apples to the market throughout the

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Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

year. Karolina's father opened a farm shop in 1999 and since then the company sells directly to the customer. Agnieszka and her sister were growing up in a house next to the orchard. From the narrative it becomes clear that the whole family life was organized around the fruit-growing enterprise. When Agnieszka talks about her older sister it gets apparent that she had no interest in the orchard or the family business. Instead, she took up a degree and graduated in it. Agnieszka on the other hand, grew up with the desire to take over the fruit farm. Although she candidly acknowledged that there were moments of doubt and the desire to change "the fate" came to her mind. During her studies, she already worked in the family business, where she took on a wide variety of tasks in marketing, advertising and in-store sales. Her story makes it clear that she held the position of flexible worker. A closer look at the division of tasks between Agnieszka and her father shows that they are more intuitive than strategic. She is responsible for product development and customer acquisition, as well as for the development of new marketing concepts.

In 2012, Agnieszka founded her own company named "Apple Valley". She decided to launch her own brand to show her father that she would be able to manage a company. Apple Valley produces juices from apples. Although, Apple Valley is very closely related to the father's company, it is totally independent. Raw material, apples, are also bought at the same conditions as other clients. Despite her company, Agnieszka continues to work in the family business, arguing that she has a high degree of commitment to her grandfather's desire to carry on the legacy. Looking for new business ideas, Agnieszka is also breaking new ground outside of fruit growing – this is why a new store is being created by selling not only apples but also organic products. Although Agnieszka's story makes working with her father fundamentally cooperative, there are also conflicts between the two that are often related to day-to-day business, such as the way transactions are handled, etc. Agnieszka claims they only have different views on business life. Officially, she already owns the company, as her father wants to retire in two years. However, she doubts that her father will leave the company. Agnieszka believes that he will work in the business to the end like her grandfather, which is, according to her, a great value.

Case study 3 – Anna

Anna Sobkowiak belongs to the fourth generation of the entrepreneurial family. Her mom established one of the first medical companies in Poland. Together with her mother, she began to help set up the company as a 20-year-old girl. From today's point of view, she points out that they did not have any idea what to expect. Much of the success stories of Polish companies are similar. After opening the markets in 1989, families became self-employed with a small amount of money. They had no equipment or no technological knowledge, but they had the will and determination to work on their business venture. Anna says that besides her mother, her grandfather also had a great influence on her upbringing. From her stories it becomes apparent that she was

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Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

strictly educated. She was a good student; ambitious and eager to learn. As a teenager she already knew a lot about politics, trade or economy. With age, she took over own projects in the family business. She was also involved in financial decisions. From today's point of view, it was a great advantage for Anna that she could watch her mother and grandfather working on their own idea. This made it possible for her to understand the strength and responsibility that both her mother and grandfather took on. Today, she follows these values both in life and in the business. After sudden and unexpected death of her mother, Anna understood that there was a purpose in her soon introduction to the world of adults – in this way she was prepared to be an independent successor. Anna's real career aspiration was jewelry designer, but she graduated from an agricultural college. She introduced the smallest company in Poland on the stock market. She kept most of the shares for herself and became one of the few people and probably the only woman who had absolute control over a publicly traded corporation. She ruled the company with an iron hand, while maintaining almost collegial relationships with her employees. She says of herself that she is not a feminist, but a big supporter of a marriage. In practice, she raises three sons from two different relationships. Her mother and her sister were involved in the management of the company, and there are a large number of women in both the workforce and the management.

In the analyzed cases of the daughters in succession in Poland, three phases can be distinguished, the phases of the path to participation and leadership of women in the family form, which is consistent with the model proposed by Dumas (1998) (Table 3).

Table 3. Path to participation and leadership of women in the family businesses (according to Dumas, 1998)

	"Introduction"	"Path to participation"	"Path to leadership"
Zosia	in the childhood	starting with the less important matters; soon taking a managerial position	moment of the serious crisis
Agnieszka	in the childhood	starting with the managerial position	sense of the real opportunity; possibility to use the knowledge and skills acquired during the education
Anna	in the childhood	starting with the managerial position; co-ownership of the family company	co-ownership and the death of the mother

Source: Authors' own study.

In all cases there was the phase of "introduction" to the family business in childhood. The daughters interviewed admitted that they had already accompanied their parents or fathers as children in the company. During this time, all interviewees admitted that they discovered the importance of work, acquired technical knowledge or could develop their interpersonal relationships. Overall, all three women felt that this time was positive and enriching. In the "path to participation" phase, only Zosia started with less important things, but soon she took over a leadership position in the company. Agnieszka and Anna, on the other hand, started their careers in the management of the family business. Anna also became a co-owner of the family company.

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Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

The results of the case comparison support Dumas's thesis that the likelihood of women working in a business is closely linked to their positive experiences during the "introduction" phase. For Zosia and Anna, the "path to leadership" was linked to the family factor. For Zosia, it was the company crisis and for Anna the sudden death of her mother. Agnieszka's "path to leadership", on the other hand, is more connected with the individual motivation and sense of the real opportunity. When considering the areas of women's involvement in the family business, we can distinguish topics such as professional career, management and emotional leadership (Table 4).

Table 4. Areas of women's involvement in the family business

	Professional career	Management	Emotional leadership
Zosia	First years after graduation outside the family company. Now: CEO	Democratic style (consultative) with the elements of the participative style.	She involved a younger brother in the family business. Now Sale Director; she wants the firm to be passed on to the next generation – children of her brothers.
Agnieszka	Part job in the family company during the high school period. Now: Marketing Director in the family business.	Democratic style (consultative) with the elements of the participative style.	Because of the young age she does not think about passing the firm on to the next generations yet.
Anna	Work in the family business from the very beginning. Now: Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board.	Democratic style (consultative).	Mother of three sons; she would like one of them to take over the family company.

Source: Authors' own study.

In the analyzed cases, there is no evidence that the career of the daughters' was prevented by their gender. This result is compatible with the explanations given by Cole (1997). However, if one observes the entry of the women and their respective areas of responsibility, these were initially more supportive activities. Only over time and due to drastic changes in the women's family situation did women begin to rise to the position of leader. For this reason, it is probable that the social gender played a role at the beginning of the activity, albeit not consciously. In addition, the professional career is closely linked to the entrepreneurial family. Only in one case (Zosia) does she gain work experience outside the family business. Everyone else started working in the family business. Overall, the surveyed daughters see the work in the family business as a good opportunity to develop their careers, and they are very satisfied with their work in the company. It corresponds to the studies of Galiano and Vinturella (1995), Jaffe (1990) and at the same time contradicts the study of Francis (1999). If we look at the leadership style, it is rather a democratic (consultative) style with the elements of participation. According to the definition proposed by Likert and Bales (Modaff et al., 2008), the democratic (advisory) style gives instructions to employees after discussing the topic and their views (Cicellin et al., 2015). It provides a certain degree of an activation of subordinates in a team management, but participative style is characterized by the fact that the group of employees determine its own goals and

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Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

making decisions, the manager usually only accepts these. The results of this study only partly correspond to the Dugan et al.'s (2008). As part of the follow-up process (Table 3), the cases studied do not support the stereotypical approach that daughters are rarely considered as serious family businesses (Curimbaba, 2002; Dumas, 1992, 1998; Haberman & Danes, 2007). In all cases, the daughters were the first choice, even though there were other candidates. According to Salganicoff (1990), working in the family business of women is not considered a career. In the present cases, this statement is not confirmed, as the motives of the successors prove.

Zosia is CEO, and her father manages the production and participates in taking the strategic decisions. Agnieszka is Marketing Director and her dad is still CEO of the family business. Those two examples confirm the study carried out by Vera and Dean (2005) who noted that the cross-succession could be much easier. A confirmation of this fact can be that all companies are innovative in their markets. The daughters in the examined family businesses represent either the third and fourth generation. On this basis, it can be said that if a woman/daughter is a representative of at least the third generation associated with the business, then it is more likely that the succession will be successful and the family company will thrive. It is obvious that conditions such as adequate "introduction" to the company, training, career development, positive motivation and family support must be met (see Table 5).

Table 5. Succession process

	Manner of choosing successor	Motivation to succession	Stages of succession / the company situation	Generation involved in business
Zosia	First choice; two younger brothers	Willing to maintain and development of the family heritage	CEO; the father manages the production and participates in taking the strategic decisions	Third – the firm established by the grandfather
Agnieszka	First choice; the older sister	Profile of the company economic activity consent with the interests; attachment to the family tradition	Marketing Director; The father is still CEO / the company develops – new products	Third – the firm established by the grandfather
Anna	First choice; the younger sister	Development of the family business	Chairwoman of the Management Board; company develop – new products and markets	Fourth generation of entrepreneurs; in the family company she is a second generation – the firm established by the mother

Source: Authors' own study.

Given the difficulties faced by women in their leadership roles, it was more likely that the problems were caused by the external environment, such as suppliers or customers. However, these difficulties were more temporary and affected the company's results. Zosia, Agnieszka and Anna did not notice "the glass ceiling phenomenon" and saw no need to constantly demonstrate their competence and skills (Cole, 1997; Korman & Habler, 1991). This may confirm the assumption of

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Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

Hollander and Bukowitz's (1990) that the specificity of the family business favours the presence of women in the business.

Discussions

The study of women in family business succession process is dealing not only with the history of successors, but also with the dynamics of family business after succession. Analyses of cases concerning the daughter successor to family business in Poland confirm the assumption that the environment of the family business favours the development of women's professional career. Presented histories of the women, the family businesses' daughters-successors indicate also the dynamics of the company after women's succession. These cases, collected by semi-structured interviews, were analyzed according to the following areas proposed by researchers dealing with issues of women's succession: path to participation of women in family companies, professional career, management, emotional leadership and succession.

As part of the succession process analysis there were distinguished: manner of successor choosing, motivation to succession, stage of succession and situation of a family company during this process, and also a generation involved in a business. The path to participation and leadership of daughters is very similar, and these women had a sense of a real opportunity of the management and ownership in the family businesses. All of them are associated with the family companies from an early childhood and their real professional careers began there. Looking at the leadership style of women, it becomes clear that they prefer a more democratic leadership style, which partly coincides with Dugan et al.'s (2008) study. The question of emotional leadership as described by the authors occurred in two respondents, those who either have children of their own or care for children of other family members. In this case, the willingness to hand over the family business to the next generation is very important. Only in the third case, it was not possible to find anything in this aspect which was probably due to the fact that the interviewed woman is still very young and does not have children. In all cases, the daughters are the first choice for the company successor, despite the presence of other potential candidates. The main motivation for taking over the family company was to develop the business and the attachment to the tradition.

In two cases, women occupy the highest positions in the family business, and in one of these cases, the father still manages one of the departments and is involved in the strategic decisions about the family business. In the third case, it can be said that the daughter and the father co-manage the family company, although the father is the person, who still formally occupies the CEO position. After taking over the managerial positions by the daughters all family businesses surveyed developed new products and markets. In analyzed cases, the women had no great difficulty

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Data: 11/09/2026 00:33:57

establishing themselves in the company – the so-called "glass ceiling" syndrome was found in none of the cases described.

The interviewed daughters represent either the third or fourth generation. Taking into account the data collected, it can be assumed that the education of the next generation in the entrepreneurial families has a direct influence on the probability of a takeover. The study indirectly showed that society's attitude towards working women in Poland has changed. In order to consolidate the results found here, further research should be carried out on women working in the family business (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010).

Limitations and directions for further research

The largest limitation of the presented research is obviously the small number of the cases analyzed. In order to consolidate the results obtained here, the number of cases should be increased in the next study and then supplemented by a quantitative study. This study provides a new context for research on family businesses but still more research is needed. This research is an essential contribution to understanding the dynamics of family-owned enterprises and could thus support the construction of guidelines that would help to build a family business success. It can by assumed that bringing up in the entrepreneurial family for generations affects a subsequent management and development of the family company. Further research may also focus on that issues.

A continuation of the research on the role and importance of women in family companies, including their obviously successors, should be carried out not only in Poland but also in former socialistic countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, etc. in order to gain more knowledge about family business after *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, which could help to develop valuable recommendations for family companies in terms of managing diversity and using the potential of women in these countries. The other weakness of the study is related to the assumption that the companies developed more strongly after they had been taken over by the daughters. Here, a study dealing with the analysis of company figures would be recommended.

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