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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES IN ALGERIAN FAMILY BUSINESSES: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the implementation of sustainable development practices in Algerian family businesses. Furthermore, it examines whether the application of these practices varies based on factors such as job title, educational attainment, and professional experience. A quantitative research methodology was employed, utilizing a questionnaire survey administered to 100 middle and upper-level management employees in these companies. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS V.25. The findings revealed that Algerian family businesses engage in practices aligned with all three TBL of SD (economic, social, and environmental). Moreover, no statistically significant differences in the application of these practices were observed across job titles, educational levels, or professional experience.

Keywords: Sustainable Development; Algerian Family Businesses; Economic Dimension; Social Dimension; Environmental Dimension.

1. Introduction

The notion of sustainable development is currently well-known and extensively utilized by numerous legal entities and individuals in their activities within the modern globalized globe (Bilan, 2013).

Despite the prominence of sustainable development in contemporary discourse, no clear consensus is apparent on its precise concept and the specific actions required to achieve it (Laine, 2005).

In today's dynamic business environment, achieving sustainable development requires companies to possess the resources and capabilities to adapt effectively to both short-term and long-term internal and external changes. This necessitates a comprehensive approach that integrates sustainable development strategies, policies, and procedures

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into all aspects of daily operations, enabling companies to gain and maintain a competitive edge while addressing current and future challenges (Naudé, 2011).

A comprehensive understanding of the private sector's role is paramount to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This knowledge is essential for both policymakers and businesses. By recognizing their impact, companies can develop strategies that not only enhance their own sustainability performance but also contribute significantly to the broader goals of sustainable development (van Zanten & van Tulder, 2021).

Sustainable development for businesses signifies a long-term vision that prioritizes social, economic, and environmental well-being (Domańska et al., (2022). One of these companies is family-owned business which is among the most prevalent and prosperous companies globally, playing a significant role in value creation across national economies, and this is the motivation behind these companies' increased focus on sustainable development. Future leaders in these businesses will face a unique set of challenges, including the need to navigate rapid change, overcome the barriers to sustainable development (SD), and create a new business landscape that delivers value to both society and the business (Naudé, 2011). Despite the significant attention garnered by the reach and influence of family-owned businesses on both local and international levels, research has yet to fully explore how their locality and internationalization strategies impact their sustainable development (Baù et al., 2021).

The existing body of literature on sustainable development in family businesses is extensive, with studies employing a range of methodological approaches (quantitative, qualitative, mixed method). However, a notable gap exists in the literature regarding the state of sustainable development within Algerian family businesses. To bridge this gap, this research investigates the current state of sustainable development practices in Algerian family businesses. A survey-based field study will be conducted to collect data from middle and senior management. Furthermore, the research will examine whether the responses exhibit statistically significant variations in the responses of participants based on their job title, educational attainment and professional experience, as these factors may influence their perceptions of sustainable development.

2. Literature Review

Sustainable development is a dynamic concept, recognizing that human prosperity and environmental integrity are deeply intertwined and constantly influence each other across geographical and temporal dimensions (van Zanten & van Tulder, 2021). Brundtland's (1987) definition of sustainable development, emphasizing the needs of both present and future generations, has served as a cornerstone for global initiatives aimed at realizing the goals of sustainable development.

The Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit witnessed the UN's formal embrace of sustainable development and sustainable agriculture through the adoption of Agenda 21. Implemented alongside the revision of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Agenda 21 recognized the interconnectedness of social, environmental, and economic factors. This framework was later expanded to include 21 targets, 60 indicators, and eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the period 2000-2015 (Dalampira & Nastis, 2020).The UN Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015, held concurrently during the 70th UN General, adopted new development guidelines and the post-2015 development agenda. The summit's outcome document, "Transforming Our World: An Agenda for Sustainable Development until 2030," outlined 17 SDGs each with specific targets (169 in total), to shape global development efforts (Nate et al., 2021).

The triple bottom line (TBL) framework, which emphasizes the integration of economic, environmental, and social dimensions, is a widely used framework for evaluating organizational sustainability. Current perspectives on sustainable development recognize that robust economic performance is essential for addressing social and environmental challenges (Isaksson, 2006).Corporate sustainability, encompassing concepts like CSR, environmental management, the TBL, corporate citizenship, and SD, represents a multifaceted approach. While these terms are often used interchangeably, it's crucial to recognize the distinct nuances and interconnectedness between them (Izzo et al., 2020).

The term "corporate sustainability" is frequently used to describe the implementation of strategies aimed at achieving SD at the business level. The use of these principles affects organizations' short- and long-term social, economic, and environmental performance (Sánchez et al., 2022).In their discussion of sustainable development's triple bottom line (TBL), scholars have addressed indicators for quantifying these aspects from a corporate perspective. Mian et al. (2017) contend that the achievement of the social dimension of sustainable development necessitates the consideration of three critical indicators: learning and growth (assessed through education, training, job security, and employment); community development (evaluated through the assessment of indigenous rights, good governance, cultural heritage, social involvement, human rights, and consumer/product responsibility); and safety and security (assessed through labor practices, fair practices, and health and safety). Alhaddi (2015) emphasized that the economic dimension of sustainability links organizational growth to economic expansion, highlighting the organization's contribution to local economic development and its ability to support future generations. Alhaddi (2015) further sees that the environmental aspect of the TBL involves practices that sustain environmental resources for future generations. In the same context Høgevold et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of several environmental factors, such as ecological footprint, climate change and global warming, the implementation of various initiatives, and the pursuit of product and process decarbonization, dematerialization, and efficiency gains.

Given their substantial contribution to value creation, family businesses are a critical component of organizational sustainability and warrant significant attention in sustainability discourse. These businesses are characterized by a governance structure where family members exercise primary decision-making authority, with the active participation of the second generation in both governance and management (Borre et al., 2022).

A key characteristic of family-owned businesses is the long tenure of their leaders, contributing to greater business continuity and stability. Moreover, these businesses often prioritize long-term sustainability and disciplined growth beyond immediate profitability. Finally, the strong family connection within these businesses fosters employee loyalty and long-term relationships (Brenes et al., 2011).

Domaṅska et al. (2022) argue that the Brundtland definition of sustainable development, aligns closely with the inherent nature of family-owned businesses. Similarly Dasanayaka et al (2021) pointed out that owners of family businesses are strongly motivated to achieve socio-environmental performance. This motivation stems from a desire to maintain the company's goodwill and reputation, and to ensure the long-term sustainability and positive legacy of the family business for future generations. It's crucial to ensure that sustainable practices adopted by these firms are aligned with the company's strategic objectives and effectively address the needs of their customers. Furthermore, any successful business strategy must prioritize the primary value proposition for customers – the reason they choose to purchase the good or service (Sánchez et al., 2022). Recognizing the intricate interplay of economic, social, and environmental factors, the SDGs offer a framework for businesses to maximize value creation while simultaneously minimizing their negative impacts and enhancing their positive contributions to society and the environment. This framework facilitates a deeper understanding of the multifaceted and interconnected impacts of business activities on sustainable development (Izzo et al., 2020).The distinctive attributes of family owners and family firms serve as a primary impetus for the burgeoning field of family firm research within the past decade (Cheng, 2014).

In Algeria, family businesses are widespread and contribute significantly to the country's economic value-added, job creation, and unemployment absorption. However, like many family businesses, they face the challenge of sustainability beyond the third generation of owners, often leading to mergers, sales, or, in the worst-case scenario, dissolution. Building on the aforementioned and literature review, this research seeks to shed light on the current state of sustainable development in Algerian family businesses through a quantitative approach based on a survey of middle and upper-level management personnel. The following first research hypothesis were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Algerian family businesses adopt practices aligned with all three dimensions (economic, social, environmental) of sustainable development.

In order to understand the disparities in responses among middle and upper-level management employees within these family businesses, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: The responses of middle and upper-level management employees in family businesses vary significantly based on their job title, educational attainment, and professional experience.

3. Methods

3.1. Data Collection and Sample

To collect primary data for this study, a structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of middle and upper-level managers employed in 22 family-owned businesses located in Western Algeria. The questionnaire comprised two distinct sections. The first section gathered demographic information from respondents, including educational attainment ,job title, and professional experience. The second section focused on the study variable, sustainable development (SD), encompassing its three key dimensions: economic (5 items), social (6 items), and environmental (6 items). A 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) was used to assess responses. The Relative Importance Index (RII) was employed to rank the indicators based on their significance (Table1).

A total of 100 completed questionnaires were collected from this target population and subsequently analyzed using SPSS v.25 statistical software.

Table 1 Relative Importance Index (RII)

RII Values	Importance level	
O.8 ≤ RII ≤1	High	H
0.6 ≤ RII ≤0.8	High-Medium	H-M
0.4 ≤ RII ≤0.6	Medium	M
0.2≤ RII ≤0.4	Medium-Low	M-L
0≤ RII ≤0.2	Low	L

Source: Own Processing

3.2. Sample Characteristics

Regarding job titles, a considerable proportion of respondents held other middle and upper-level management positions within family businesses (52 responses). Department heads constituted the second-largest group, followed by company owners and executive managers. The general manager position was the least frequently represented.

The analysis of the sample's educational attainment revealed that individuals with a Master's degree constituted the largest proportion (42%), followed by those with a Bachelor's degree (23%). Respondents with a high school diploma comprised the third-largest group (17%). The remaining categories included 8% with an MBA, 7% with other unspecified educational levels, and 3% with doctoral degrees. Notably, 76% of the respondents held university degrees (Master's, MBA, Doctorate), which is consistent with the target sample of middle and upper-level managers, as these positions typically require a university-level education.

In terms of professional experience, the largest group of respondents (28 individuals) had 5-10 years of experience. The second-largest group consisted of those with fewer than 5 years of experience. The remaining respondents were divided between those with over 15 years of experience and those with 11-15 years of experience.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS 25 (version 25). Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha to evaluate internal consistency, and descriptive statistics were employed to summarize response patterns and identify overarching trends. Hypotheses testing was performed using inferential statistical methods, such as *t*-tests and ANOVA, to examine group differences and relationships in line with the study's research objectives.

4. Results

4.1. Reliability Test

The reliability of the sustainable development scale, which consists of 17 items, was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. As shown in Table 2 below, the findings indicated a strong level of internal consistency, with an Alpha coefficient surpassing the widely accepted threshold of 0.70.

Table 2 Reliability Test

Cronbach's alpha value	N of items
.752	17

Source: SPSS v.25 outputs

4.2. Testing of Hypotheses

Table 3 below reveals a general tendency among respondents to agree with the implementation of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The mean scores for the items varied, starting from a minimum of 3.33 (for the item stating that the company recycles waste generated from the production process) to a high of 4.44 (for the item indicating that the company is keen to increase its production capacity without negatively impacting the environment). The overall mean scores for the dimensions also varied, with the social dimension ranking highest at 3.96, followed by the economic dimension at 3.94, and the environmental dimension at 3.735. All mean scores fell within the agreement range on the five-point Likert scale. Regarding the Relative Importance Index (RII), it showed high to medium (H-M) levels for most items and dimensions, except for items (ECO3,ECO5,SOC2,SOC3,SOC5,ENV6) which were of high levels (H).

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

Sustainable Development (SD)		Items/Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	RII
Economic dimension (ECO)	ECO1	The business strives to increase its profits while minimizing resource consumption.	3.98	.77824	.796 (H-M)
	ECO2	The business is committed to reducing the prices and costs of its products/services while maintaining their quality.	3.90	.67420	.78 (H-M)
	ECO3	The business uses resources (energy, water, raw materials) rationally and without waste.	4.05	.75712	.81 (H)
	ECO4	The firm undertakes the recycling of by-products from its production operations	3.33	1.20651	.666 (H-M)
	ECO5	The business aims to boost its production output without compromising environmental standards	4.44	4.06592	.888 (H)
		Overall (ECO)	**3.9400**	**.98165**	**.788 (H-M)**
Social dimension (SOC)	SOC1	The business is committed to meeting the diverse needs of the community in which it operates.	3.86	.80428	.772 (H-M)
	SOC2	The company's employees enjoy various rights such as occupational safety, health insurance, the right to vacation, and fair wage distribution.	4.03	.94767	.806 (H)
	SOC3	The firm actively seeks to attract talented and skilled professionals from the community it serves	4.05	.77035	.81 (H)
	SOC4	The business's employees undergo various training and development programs to enhance their professional skills.	3.85	.91425	.77 (H-M)
	SOC5	The business meets its customers' needs for quality and affordable prices and responds to their various concerns.	4.10	.65905	.82 (H)
	SOC6	The business is committed to developing plans related to its social responsibilities.	3.87	.78695	.774 (H-M)
		Overall (SOC)	**3.9600**	**.57253**	**.792 (H-M)**

Environmental dimension (ENV)	ENV1	The business participates in and supports environmental protection programs, such as clean-up campaigns and tree planting.	3.39	1.06263	.678 (H-M)
	ENV2	The business takes measures to reduce emissions and harmful gases.	3.77	.82701	.754 (H-M)
	ENV3	The business views environmental protection as a responsibility it must uphold.	3.81	.86100	.762 (H-M)
	ENV4	At least one of the firm's products or services is environmentally friendly.	3.67	.94340	.734 (H-M)
	ENV5	The business takes into account the possible adverse environmental effects when creating new products or services.	3.72	.98555	.744 (H-M)
	ENV6	The business adheres to laws and regulations that require environmental protection.	4.05	.80873	.81 (H)
		Overall (ENV)	**3.7350**	**.69796**	**.747 (H-M)**

Source: Author based on SPSS v.25 outputs

These findings can be further supported by the t-test results presented in the table 4 below, where the first hypothesis was tested after being statistically formulated:

H0: Algerian family businesses do not adopt practices aligned with all three dimensions (economic, social, environmental) of sustainable development at significance level of (P≤5%).

H1: Algerian family businesses adopt practices aligned with all three dimensions (economic, social, environmental) of sustainable development at significance level of (P≤5%).

Table 4 One Sample T-test

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper

ECO	9.576	99	.000	.94000	.7452	1.1348
SOC	16.768	99	.000	.96000	.8464	1.0736
ENV	10.531	99	.000	.73500	.5965	.8735

Source: SPSS v.25 outputs

Table 4 demonstrates statistically significant results at the 0.05 level. All p-values were less than 0.005, supporting the alternative hypothesis which states that Algerian family businesses adopt practices aligned with all three dimensions (economic, social, environmental) of sustainable development.

The next step involves investigating whether there are statistically significant differences in respondents' answers based on their educational attainment, professional experience, and job title. A one-way ANOVA test was employed for this analysis.

The second hypothesis is composed of the following three sub-hypotheses:

The first sub-hypothesis (Table 5):

H0: The adoption of sustainable development dimensions by Algerian family businesses does not vary significantly across different job titles at a level of (P≤5%).

H1: The adoption of sustainable development dimensions by Algerian family businesses vary significantly across different job titles at a level of (P≤5%).

Table 5 Differences in Sustainable Development Based on Job Title

ANOVA					
Sustainable Development					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.431	26	.486	1.284	.280
Within Groups	27.643	73	.379		
Total	30.075	99			

Source: SPSS v.25 outputs

The table5 above represents that the significant value is 0.280 and it is higher than normally accepted value of 0.05. Therefore, the Null hypothesis is accepted and concluded that there is no significant in responses of middle and upper-level management employees in family businesses based on their job title.

The second sub-hypothesis (Table6):

H0: The adoption of sustainable development dimensions by Algerian family businesses does not vary significantly across different educational attainment at a level of (P≤5%).

H1: The adoption of sustainable development dimensions by Algerian family businesses vary significantly across different educational attainment at a level of (P≤5%).

Table 6 Differences in Sustainable Development Based on educational attainment

ANOVA					
Sustainable Development					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.785	9	.157	.436	.823
Within Groups	32.428	90	.360		
Total	33.213	99			

Source: SPSS v.25 outputs

The findings in the table6 above reveals a p-value of 0.823, which exceeds the conventional significance level of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted, suggesting no statistically significant differences in responses among middle and upper-level management employees in family businesses based on their educational attainment.

The third sub-hypothesis (Table7):

H0: The adoption of sustainable development dimensions by Algerian family businesses does not vary significantly across professional experience at a level of (P≤5%).

H1: The adoption of sustainable development dimensions by Algerian family businesses vary significantly across professional experience at a level of (P≤5%).

Table 7 Differences in Sustainable Development Based on professional experience

ANOVA					
Sustainable Development					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.062	5	.515	1.540	.197
Within Groups	31.460	94	.335		
Total	33.521	99			

Source: SPSS v.25 outputs

Table 7 above indicates that the significance value is 0.197, which is greater than the commonly accepted threshold of 0.05. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted, leading to the conclusion that there is no significant difference in the responses of middle and upper-level management employees in family businesses when considering their professional experience.

5. Discussion

The results pertaining to the first hypothesis indicate that Algerian family businesses implement practices aligned with the three dimensions of sustainable development. The calculated mean scores of 3.96, 3.94, and 3.735 for the social, economic, and environmental dimensions, respectively, reveal a consensus among respondents regarding the application of these dimensions within the studied organizations. Moreover, the results of the hypothesis test, which posits that Algerian family businesses adopt practices consistent with the three dimensions of sustainable development, were confirmed. These findings underscore the significant commitment of Algerian family businesses to sustainable development practices, as they positively impact the firms' performance, reputation, and most importantly, their longevity and intergenerational transfer. This aligns with the literature review, which suggests that companies striving to adopt sustainable development practices are more likely to ensure their long-term survival and transition across generations. While the results related to the second hypothesis revealed no statistically significant variations in the adoption of sustainable development dimensions among Algerian family businesses attributable to job title, professional experience, or educational attainment, this can be attributed to several factors. Most notably, the close proximity of middle and upper-level management employees and the strong relationships between them, particularly familial ties, as many belong to the same family. This familiarity facilitates the exchange of knowledge and experiences regarding sustainable development, regardless of their job title, educational level, or work experience. Furthermore, a significant factor contributing to the lack of differences is the shared values within Algerian family businesses. Many of these businesses adopt practices such as social responsibility and environmental management, ensuring that all employees are well-acquainted with the key aspects of sustainable development.

6. Conclusion

Through this study, we aimed to investigate the reality of sustainable development in Algerian family businesses. The results indicated that these latter implement practices that align with the three dimensions of SD. Meanwhile, it was found that there were no statistically significant differences in the level of sustainable development application attributable to job title, educational qualifications, or work experience.

Within the context of academic contributions, this study is the first of its kind to delve into the reality of sustainable development in Algerian family businesses. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous study has addressed a similar topic, making this research highly significant both academically and practically. It paves the way for future studies to delve deeper into this subject.

This research demonstrates the need for greater emphasis on sustainable practices in Algerian family businesses. By understanding the current state of sustainable development within these firms, owners can make informed decisions to enhance the long-term viability and sustainability of their enterprises, thereby addressing the common challenges associated with succession and intergenerational transfer. Furthermore, this research can serve as a valuable resource for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to promote sustainable development in the Algerian business landscape.

One limitation of this study is the sample size, which may not be fully representative of the broader population of Algerian family businesses. Future research should consider increasing the sample size and exploring the use of additional data sources to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, future studies could benefit from a more in-depth analysis of sustainability reporting practices and qualitative interviews with business owners to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the adoption of sustainable practices.

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