

OVERCOMING BARRIERS: THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION OF FEMALE SUCCESSORS IN INDONESIAN FAMILY BUSINESS

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Abstract. Family businesses are vital to Indonesia's economy, making succession a critical process. However, female successors often face a "glass ceiling," due to ingrained gender biases and traditional family roles, limiting their advancement into leadership roles within their family business. Recognising their unique identities can function as an alternative pathway to leadership, ensuring business continuity by challenging gender bias. This study aims to explore how recognition empowers female successors in Indonesia family business to overcome gender bias and pursue leaderships roles. Employing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), this study explored the lived experiences of nine female successors based on specific criteria. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. This research reveals that female successors face gender bias and credibility gap. To gain recognition, female successors actively imitate their fathers' behaviour and building trust by fostering acceptance through dialogue. Drawing on Honneth's recognition theory, female successors' leadership transition is aided by verbal affirmation, paternal mentorship, legal adherence, and role appreciation. Future research should examine a larger sample and more diverse sample of female successors, tracking their experiences over a longer period, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities they encounter within the unique context understand their evolving experiences in family business.

Keywords: Indonesian family business, female successors, gender challenges, recognition, gender equality, leadership.

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1. Introduction

Family businesses are very important to research because they make a huge contribution to economic resilience in countries around the world, including Indonesia. Family companies are estimated to account for more than 95% of businesses in Indonesia (Daya, 2022). According to Anggita (2022), quoting Apung Sumengkar, Founder & Chief Executive Officer of Daya Qarsa, the majority of family-owned businesses in Indonesia, 95%, play an important role in the country's economy. Family firms account for approximately 82% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and are projected to experience substantial three-to four-fold growth in the next five to 10 years.

Study by Cidre and Weidman (2021) marking the evolving roles of women in the family business and their increasing representation at management level. However, data from PricewaterhouseCoopers (2022) shows that there is still a lack of leadership representation in the

family business. In addition, female successors face challenging roles to reach higher positions in organisations, which is usually referred to as a phenomenon glass ceiling (Saghaei & Nair, 2024). Therefore, leadership in Indonesian family businesses continues to be dominated by men.

While previous studies have indicated that female successors have personal uniqueness in the family and business compared to male successors, a significant research gap remains. Female successors in family business uniquely demonstrate intrinsic motivation through proactive idea sharing and norm-challenging behavior that enhance their visibility while reflecting a deep drive for personal growth and value alignment (Brophy et al., 2023). Studies suggest that men, particularly in certain cultural context, may prioritize leveraging power and dominance in intimate relationships, while women's motivations are shaped by a complex interplay of individual desires for emotional connection (Ribeiro et al., 2020; Wamoyi et al., 2022) Drawing from research on rural women in Indian agriculture, perceived

limitation on women's decision-making authority due to patriarchal norms may reflect similar power dynamics affecting women in Indonesian family businesses (Chaudhary et al., 2020). In Pakistani family businesses, daughters who succeed as leaders are often motivated by upholding the family legacy and supporting family dynamics, prioritizing familial obligations and values in ways that reinforce the importance of intergenerational continuity (Chang et al., 2021). Research suggests that women's intentions to lead family businesses are heavily influenced by familial support, highlighting the need to foster such support to empower female leadership (Duran-Encalada et al., 2021).

While prior research has explored how female successors navigate gendered work identity for legitimacy (McAdam et al., 2021) and achieve recognition from male counterparts (Brophy et al., 2023), other studies analyse identity constructions based on gender roles and family values (Xian et al., 2021). Furthermore, Tirdasari and Dhewanto (2020) has underscored the importance of planning and preparation for succession in Indonesia Family Businesses, emphasizing the need for female successors to be recognized and involved to ensure business continuity. However, the specific mechanisms that facilitate this recognition remain under-investigated. Moreover, Maseda et al. (2022) emphasize the limited research on female successors' identity formation.

Building upon this foundation, an aiming to complement existing gender identity work research by examining recognition support beyond legitimacy-seeking, this study contributes by addressing the crucial, yet underexplored, aspect of recognising and addressing gender bias in relation to female successors. Specially, while acknowledging the unique qualities and motivations of female successors – including their intrinsic drive, prioritization of familial obligations, and the influence of familial support – the recognition that best incentivize and empower them to pursue leadership roles remain unclear. Addressing this gap, this study employs an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Approach (IPA) to explore the lived experience of female successors as they gain recognition for establishing their identity within Indonesian family businesses, thus fostering greater gender equity.

2. Literature review

Unequal recognition

This study investigates the challenges faced by female successors in Indonesia family business as they strive to overcome gender bias and patriarchal norms, and the need to establish their professional identities and gain recognition. Guided by Honneth's recognition theory (Honneth, 1996), this exploration emphasizes the vital role of parental trust and love fostering self-confidence and self-definition, respect for equal rights in providing equitable access to opportunities through solidarity in empowering decision-making and leadership opportunity. By examining these interconnected sphere of love, right, and solidarity, along-

side the influence of parental support and overcoming gender bias through cultural navigation, this research seeks to illuminate pathways for female successors to thrive, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of empowerment and equitable participation within family businesses (Aboim, 2020; Patmisari et al., 2024; Waelen, 2023). Honneth's framework illuminates how the journey for recognition intertwines with overcoming bias and achieving success in leadership roles.

Norms, beliefs, family relationships and business capabilities help identify female families (Hashim et al., 2021). The underrepresentation of women in family business leadership can be attributed to preferential treatment of male successors based on primogeniture, a bias reinforced by cultural norms favouring patrilineal kinship systems (Hamilton et al., 2021; Syibly et al., 2020). This dynamic limits opportunities for capable female successors, perpetuating male dominance despite women's potential to lead and inherit family businesses. Selamat and Endut (2020) reveal that self-beliefs and gender prejudices, particularly family opinions that females are not viable heir candidates, might prevent females from leading family businesses. Female successors align their way of leading the company to be more like their father's masculine leadership style to smooth the succession process (Byrne et al., 2021). Gender biases in family businesses, as noted by Urban and Nonkwelo (2022), coupled with diminished familial encouragement stemming from male preference (Porfirio et al., 2020), can undermine female successors' confidence and perpetuate feelings of inadequacy. Female successors boost their visibility by gaining employee trust and professionalising the family business, as well as by taking on temporary or secret responsibilities to support their male relatives (Xian et al., 2021). Prejudice arises when a female leader shows unfavourable behaviour, resulting in a less positive attitude towards recognising female leaders and creating obstacles for women in achieving leadership success (Bullough et al., 2022). Moreover, evidence suggests that female succession in family businesses is gendered with daughters typically disregarded or struggling to assume leadership responsibilities (Xian et al., 2021). Feuser et al. (2025) highlight factors influencing family business succession, yet the unequal recognition of female successors remain under-explored. This inequity can manifest as fewer opportunities or lower trust. This research addresses this gap by exploring the specific recognition challenges faced by female successors and how they navigate these challenges to achieve recognition of their work identity.

Building work identity

Occupational identity refers to the way in which individuals construct a sense of self in relation to the job or profession in which they work. Alvarado-Alvarez and Euwema (2024) highlight an evolving trend in family business where merit-based succession, rather than gender biases, increasingly shapes leadership opportunities, allowing the work environment to foster female successors' identities and con-

tribute to their job satisfaction and success. Nordhall et al. (2021) mention that personal identity was influenced by emotional and cognitive factors in social situations, shaped by childhood emotions, and influences emotional engagement, coherence, correspondence, mental timing, reflection, and cognitive agency. Giazitzoglu and Korede (2023) states that entrepreneurs must manage their image and behavior to be accepted and successful in the business world, regardless of their individual identity.

Female successors need to adapt to the process of family business succession because they experience abandonment of identity, imbalance in personal and professional lives, as well as social challenges & gender norms and distrust. Gavrillets et al. (2024) reveal how social norms often favour eldest sons in family business succession due to tradition, but can evolve with societal changes, while Franco et al. (2023) assert that gender perspective and socio-cultural factors critically influence who is deemed a viable successor. Girls in China's Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces are seen as successors who face major obstacles in demanding recognition of trustworthy leadership roles (Xian et al., 2021). Role equality, marriage, children, sexism, the glass ceiling effect, and clarity of leadership roles limit Asian and Mexican women from becoming entrepreneurs and successors of family businesses (Cho et al., 2020; Duran-Encalada et al., 2021). Brophy et al. (2023) demonstrate that gender biases influence women's self-perception and sense of identity in these roles, significantly contributing to the persistence of male-dominated leadership in family businesses. Indonesian women in family businesses frequently face many injustices, such as being assessed according to the business practices of their male predecessors (Oktaviani et al., 2021) and enduring long working hours that compromise personal well-being and familial obligations (Kimbal, 2021). Beliefs, gender, family background, and culture affect female successors' professionals' identities in family business.

Akhmedova et al. (2020) detect that daughters succeeding the family business are motivated by recognition of their identity. Alvarado-Alvarez and Euwema (2024) emphasize that female successors' success hinges on developing a strong sense of self, enabling them to confidently navigate family dynamics, assert their vision, and effectively manage the business. Setyaningrum et al. (2023) suggest that female successors require significant external support to overcome inherent biases within family businesses that impede their leadership development. Culturally embedded norms and restrictions on family responsibilities frequently prevent female successors from being acknowledged as reliable leaders (Nguyen et al., 2021; Xian et al., 2021). As employees, women face distrust from employees, role ambiguity, and role conflict in family businesses (McAdam et al., 2021) which can hinder their ability to establish a strong work identity and gain recognition for their contribution. Females feel unrecognized in their ability to take on leadership positions compared to their male counterparts (Akhmedova et al., 2020). Kempster et al. (2023) highlight that women in family businesses

may struggle to gain the trust of male relatives, which hinders their decision-making and identity formation, emphasizing the importance of a supportive environment.

Female successors in family businesses construct work identities in various ways, even though they face many cultural challenges, gender norms and distrust. Facing pervasive gender stereotypes that equate leadership with masculinity, women often modify their approach to reflect masculine traits as a strategy to combat distrust (de Jager et al., 2023). Women seeking leadership positions often demonstrate their competence through high-quality work and effective decision-making, hoping to counteract gendered perceptions and secure more favourable assessments (O'Brien et al., 2023). Female leaders in family businesses apply caring and interpersonal relationships to gain recognition and trust from employees (Byrne et al., 2021). Maseda et al. (2023) emphasize that women in family businesses built their work identity through interaction with various stakeholders, and addressing the gendered aspects of these engagement is crucial for their empowerment. Marques (2022) reinforces the finding of Mussolino et al. (2019) that female successors in family businesses often redefine their leadership identities diverging from both their fathers' and brothers' approaches, as they navigate their evolving roles. However, McAdam et al. (2021) reveals that the female successor invites her father to build a work identity. Building upon the established networks and paternal influence, female successors actively engage to earn respect and establish their authority, aligning with the family legacy while forging their own paths in traditionally patriarchal environments (McAdam et al., 2021; Xian et al., 2021). Kurniawan et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of culture, family support, and entrepreneurial qualities for the success of Indonesian female entrepreneurs. However, their research does not explicitly explore the unique experience of female successors within family business or how they develop a distinct work identity as leaders in this context. As existing research demonstrates, female successors face challenges such as navigating gender stereotypes, reconciling family and business roles, and earning recognition in patriarchal environment (Brophy et al., 2023; McAdam et al., 2021). This research addresses this gap by asking: (1) How do Indonesian female leading family businesses balance their traditional upbringing with their modern roles as business leaders? (2) What specific challenges do they encounter in establishing their authority and gaining recognition within the family business, and how do they navigate these challenges to create a sustainable and personally fulfilling leadership role?

3. Research methodology

Informants' selection

In this study, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative research approach focused on the exploring how individuals make sense of their lived experiences, was employed to understand the perspectives of

nine female successors in Indonesia family business (see Table 1). The initial informants were identified through their participation in the family business program at Ciputra University. Recommendation from research assistants familiar with potential informants helped ensure a diverse in the sample. Leveraging personal connections with many of the informants, researchers were able to identify eligible prospects and build rapport with them. Ultimately, nine informants were selected based on the specific criteria: (1) their fathers are still actively managing the family business; (2) they have at least two years of work experience in a family business, with various bachelor's degree or higher; (3) they represent diverse industries and roles within the family businesses.

Data collection

IPA offers a rich framework for understanding individuals' subjective experiences (Smith et al., 2022). This research was conducted in East and Central Java focusing nine female successors in local businesses. Interviewees were conducted twice with each informants using a combination of zoom sessions and offline meetings to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and ensure data reliability. Semi-structured interviews, guided by an interview guide, were conducted to explore their experiences, challenges and efforts for gaining recognition. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Salyn AI (Prosa, 2018) transcription software, with transcripts were carefully reviewed and validated for accuracy. To ensure data accuracy, audio-visual recording and written notes were also maintained. This comprehensive approach resulted in over 11 hours of data, providing a rich foundation for analysis.

Data analysis

Data were analysed using an interactive thematic analysis approach, following the established procedure outlined by Alase (2017), to systematically explore and

interpret the participant's lived experiences. To ensure the credibility of the analysis, multiple validation steps were employed. The process began with verbatim transcription of the interviews and multiple reading and listening sessions to familiarize with each participant's story. Second, the researchers independently coded the transcripts and identified initial themes through iterative reading and listening. Drawing on recognition theory (Honneth, 1996), the analysis explored how social and cultural factors influenced female successor's experiences of acknowledgment. Then, similar codes were grouped into broader, emergent themes – such as gender bias, trust issues, and recognition efforts. Next, these themes were continually compared, categorized, and discussed among the researcher team, leading to the development of organized, higher-order themes. The researchers examined relationships among themes within each case, revealing how gender bias and trust issues affected their strategies, such as open communication or role imitation to gain recognition. Comparing themes across cases helped identify common patterns, while metaphors and relevant theoretical perspectives enriched understanding. To ensure validity, triangulation with colleagues and experts was conducted, and inter-rater reliability was maintained above 80–90%; discussion were held to refine 10–20% of themes. This robust, collaborative process vividly illustrated how social and cultural norms shape female successors' experiences of being valued in Indonesian family businesses.

4. Research results

This research reveals that female successors in family businesses encounter significant challenges in gaining recognition due to role identity and trust issues. Thematic analysis of participant quotes uncovered a complex interplay of gender bias, trust dynamics, and recognition within this context (see Figure 1).

Table 1. Informant demographics and family business details

No	Pseudonym	Age	Marital Status	Work Experience	Industry	Role	Education
1	Inda	25	Single	3 years	Store building	Chief Marketing Officer	International Business Management
2	Ita	23	Single	3 years	Plastic Factory	Human Resources	International Business Management
3	Titi	25	Married	4 years	Shipbuilding Industry	Human Resources	International Business Management
4	Yani	21	Single	2 years	Electronic Retail	Chief Marketing Officer	International Business Management
5	Riz	23	Single	3 years	Furniture	Chief Operating Officer	International Business Management
6	Zafa	25	Married	4 years	Garment	Chief Executive Officer	Marketing Communication
7	Gene	27	Single	6 years	Tourism	Chief Executive Officer	Fashion Design
8	Ramain	23	Single	4 years	Building	Chief Executive Officer	Fashion Design
9	Doro	25	Single	4 years	Business Consultant & Certification	Chief Marketing Officer	International Business Management

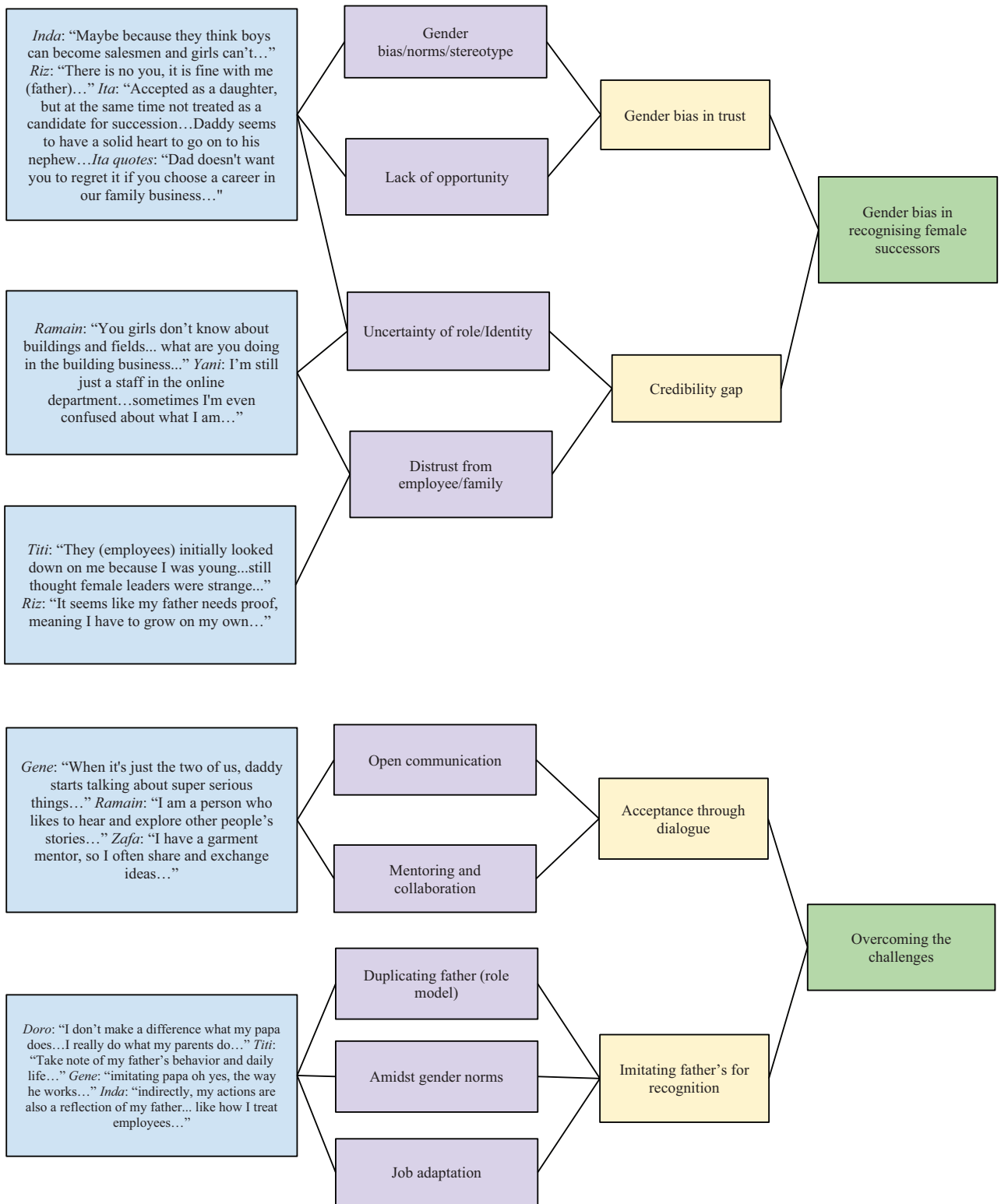


Figure 1. Challenges experienced by female successors in family business and how they navigate the limitations

These findings highlight the need for increased support and acknowledgment to empower female successors. The subsequent sections delve deeper into each of these themes illustrating challenges and efforts through rich informant narratives.

Gender bias in recognising female successors

In patriarchal society like Indonesia, where gender conventions limit female successors, developing role identity within family business becomes a significant challenge (Ramadani et al., 2017). Society still has a stereotype that men are more suitable to lead family businesses than women (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). Female successors may be unappreciated and trusted unequally by their families, employers, and other stakeholders. Gender biases and stereotypes create a chasm of mistrust, hindering female successors' progress and recognition within family businesses.

Gender bias in trust. The experiences of female successors reveal ongoing gender biases rooted in their father's perceptions. Many perceive that fathers doubted their abilities and favoured male relatives, such as nephews or brothers, for succession, which undermines their confidence and questions their perceived identity and legitimacy. Fathers often expressed concern about the sacrifices involved in working within the family business, reflecting a paternalistic attitude aimed at protecting their daughters but which inadvertently reinforces gender stereotypes. Furthermore, perceptions about women's capabilities, particularly in areas like sales and leadership, are often based on gendered assumptions that diminish their perceived competence despite equal potential. Overall, recognition of female successors appears closely tied to their conformity to traditional gender roles, limiting their opportunities for leadership and independent growth.

Credibility gap. Female successors often encounter challenges in obtaining recognition for their leadership abilities within the family business. This lack of recognition manifests in scepticism from employees and colleagues, primarily driven by gender stereotypes and perception of youth. Such biases lead to doubts about their decision-making skills and diminish their perceived credibility, making it difficult for them to establish themselves as effective leaders. These stereotypes often confine female successors to specific operational roles, limiting their opportunities for career growth and acknowledgment of their expertise. Consequentially, they must actively work to overcome these biases and foster an environment where their professional identity and leadership capabilities are recognized and valued.

Overcoming the recognition challenges

Female successors, with unique leadership and learning abilities to build strong relationships, align with previous research findings, paving the way to recognition and loyalty from various parties. They are learning to build trust.

Acceptance through dialogue. Interactions between female successors with parents, employees, and stakeholders

demonstrate strong guidance and communication, fostering a productive exchange of information. These women show collaboration, dialectics, and mediation as essential tools for gaining acceptance and navigating complex power dynamics. For instance, their openness to listening and exploring other's perspective reflects a proactive approach to relationship management. One successor describes her father engaging in serious, heartfelt conversation when alone, illustrating a willingness to establish deeper trust through sincere dialogue. Another emphasizes the value of mentorship, sharing idea, and experiences with mentors outside the family to expand insight and strengthen confidence. By demonstrating genuine interest and fostering collaborative exchanges, these female successors create bridges of trust that enhance their credibility and acceptance as future leaders. This approach underscores the significance of communication and relationship-building as vital tools for overcoming traditional barriers and establishing their legitimacy within the family business.

The support and direct verbal acknowledgment from fathers play a vital role in empowering female successors confidence, legitimacy, and motivation to lead. Such direct recognition serves as a form of psychological validation and encouragement, reinforcing their legitimacy and confidence to lead. For instance, when a father explicitly affirming her as CEO or entrusting her with a significant company transformation provides tangible evidence of trust and validation, which can significantly boost their leadership identity. Conversely, some portray a more reserved approach, with fathers rarely offering recognition – highlighting that consistent verbal affirmation remains a critical yet inconsistent factor in fostering their leadership identity. This recognition not only affirms their capabilities but also helps navigate complex family power dynamics, establish authority, and build trust among employees and stakeholders. Ultimately, direct verbal support from fathers is a vital tool for female successors to establish their legitimacy and succeed in traditionally male-dominated family business environments.

Imitating fathers for recognition. Some female successors imitate their father's behaviours and attitudes as a strategy to gain recognition and validate their leadership. For example, Doro describes her actions as "imitating the behaviour" of her father, while Gene mentions "copying the way" her father managed the business. Inda seeks to replicate her father's style of treating employees, viewing this mimicry as necessary to demonstrate worthiness. This behaviour underscores the perception that masculine traits and behaviour are essential for legitimacy in the business arena, reflecting the gendered expectation of leadership. For women, imitating their fathers becomes a way to navigate and challenge these norms, seeking validation in environments that favour traditionally masculine qualities. Riz's experience illustrate this dynamic vividly; she felt compelled to adopt more masculine behaviours to gain authority and overcome conflicting expectations, revealing the deep-seated need to perform gendered roles to establish professional identity and legitimacy within the family business.

5. Discussion

This research explores how female successors navigate gender norm challenges, such as trust issues and gender suspicion, and how they overcome these obstacles to achieve recognition within the family business. Drawing on Honneth's recognition theory, we find that female successes often seek validation and support through verbal recognition, paternal mentorship, legal norms, and role appreciation, which are crucial for their successful transition into leadership roles.

Although previous research has highlighted trust issues and gender bias in family business, our findings support the idea that trust inequalities extend beyond elder employees to include male relatives and siblings. This trust disparity aligns with earlier studies on gender stereotypes (Gavrilets et al., 2024; McAdam et al., 2021; Xian et al., 2021), but our research expands the understanding by focusing specifically on the Indonesian patriarchal context, where such inequalities are deeply embedded. Previous studies have noted that gender stereotypes influence perceptions of competence, such as beliefs that males are better suited for mobile, social, or leadership roles (Duran-Encalada et al., 2021; Franco et al., 2023; Gavrilets et al., 2024). Our findings support this, revealing that fathers and elder employees tend to see males as more assertive, aggressive, and competitive traits deemed advantageous for sales and leadership positions. These attitudes reinforce gendered expectations and biases that hinder female successors' recognition and participation in key business functions. Such stereotypes contribute to the glass ceiling, limiting female successors' career progression in family successions and decision-making roles (Akhmedova et al., 2020; Duran-Encalada et al., 2021; Xian et al., 2021). This dynamic underscores that, despite societal changes, traditional norms and gendered perceptions continue to shape perceptions of female successors' suitability for leadership, confirming their role as significant barriers. However, our research also expands this understanding by situating these issues within Indonesia's patriarchal environment, where deeply rooted attitudes – such as beliefs that males are more assertive and better suited for leadership – sustain ongoing gender inequality in succession. Addressing this stereotype is crucial for fostering more equitable recognition and participation of female in family business leadership.

Previous research, such as Tabassum and Nayak (2021), highlight how gender stereotype threat creates discomfort for women when judged by unfavourable preconceptions. Our finding support this, showing that female successors in male-dominated environments, including family business must overcome such biases to gain recognition and trust (Fiorini et al., 2022), the result align with studies like Byrne et al. (2021) and McAdam et al. (2021), which emphasize the relationship building skills – such as which emphasize that relationship-building skills – such as paying attention, collaboration,

knowledge sharing, and mentorship – are crucial for female successors to develop trust and recognition from stakeholders, parents, and employees. These relationships can foster parental recognition, employee loyalty, and better performance outcomes. Building upon this, our study addresses a significant, underexplored gap: while prior literature has viewed recognition mainly as a legitimacy-seeking process, little is known about how recognition support can actively counter gender bias and empower female's leadership. Our research highlights that recognition beyond formal legitimacy serves as an internal motivator, focusing on the "what" and "how" of recognition that incentives female successors. The novelty of our study lies in exploring these females' lived experiences through Honneth's recognition theory, emphasizing the importance of validation, direct acknowledgement, and familial support – factors especially vital in the patriarchal Indonesian environment. While previous studies acknowledge the importance of relationship-building and family support (Duran-Encalada et al., 2021), our findings specially highlight how paternal mentorships and verbal recognition-exemplified through the experiences of female like Gene, Romain, Inda, and Titi – actively empower them to challenge gender biases. These forms of validation foster greater equity in succession processes and represent a significant, context-specific contribution to the understanding of gender identity and leadership development.

Guri et al. (2022) describe female language use within male-dominated workplace in Malaysia, noting that women often engage in rapport-talk, reflecting a relational approach to conversation rather than direct imitation of male communication style. In contrast, while Ummiroh et al. (2022) explore how women social entrepreneurs navigate societal and familial patriarchal structures by defining their professional identities distinct from paternal expectations, our research suggests that some female successors in family businesses still feel compelled to imitate their father's behaviours and attitudes to gain recognition and acknowledgment. This aligns with Byrne et al. (2021) who emphasize the potential for female successors to adopt a masculine leadership style as a strategy to validate their authority. However, our findings also highlight the drawbacks of this approach, as such imitation can hinder the development of a distinct leadership identity and limit personal growth. The experience of Inda, Gene, Riz, and Doro provide evidence that imitating father's behaviours significantly influences female successor's identities and career trajectories, suggesting that, although it can lead to positive recognition, it may also obstruct the formation of authentic, individual leadership styles. Therefore, our study underscores the importance for female successors to develop their own leadership identities – beyond more emulation – by striking a balance between respecting tradition and embracing innovation, a balance crucial for navigating succession challenges and realizing their full potential.

6. Conclusions

This research investigated the multifaceted challenges confronting female successions in Indonesian Family business including gender bias, credibility gaps, limited opportunities. We have gained valuable insight into how female successors navigate these complex dynamics by examining the effort employed by these female successors. Applying Interpretative Analysis (IPA) allowed us to deeply explore the lived experiences of female successors, capturing rich, contextualized account of their challenges and strategies. By grounding this qualitative data in Honneth's recognition theory, we revealed that their journey is influenced by three domains: emotional relationships based on family dynamic, equal rights and respect in solidarity, and role appreciation to take opportunity in business.

While traditional approaches often highlight the legitimacy-seeking aspect of gender, our study contribute a novel perspective by illuminating the role of familial support, verbal acknowledgement, and paternal mentorship. Through strategies such as "acceptance through dialogue" where open and honest communication helps build trust, and "imitating fathers for recognition," which involves emulating successful role models, Indonesia female successors create personal success formula to challenge existing norms. This not only empowers them but also enhance the overall sustainability of their family business by blending traditional wisdom with modern leadership strategies.

Theoretical implications. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of gender and leadership, highlighting the critical role of recognition in shaping the leadership trajectories for female successors. By recognising females' strategic importance through formal acknowledgment, we unlock their full potential and enable them to thrive.

Managerial implication. Female successors demonstrate empathy, resilience, and strategic thinking, with their impact significantly enhanced by formal recognition. This allows them to fully assert their leadership identity and offer unique value. Family businesses should prioritize creating inclusive environments, promoting open communication, and implementing fair evaluations systems to empower female successors. Additionally, policy makers should advocate for gender equality and support initiatives promoting women's advancement in leadership.

Limitation of the research. This study has several limitations, First, the sample size was relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all female successors in Indonesia family businesses. Second, while the study included diverse family structure, larger samples with more balanced sibling configurations are needed for a comprehensive analysis. Third, this study did not delve deeply into the impact of varying family norms, beliefs, and values on the dynamic of interactions between incumbents and female successors. Additionally, the study did not fully explore the potential influence of the varying duration of female successors involvement in the family business. Finally, the focus on specific regions and demographics within Indonesia may limit the applicability of the findings to the entire country.

Future research could address these limitations by:

1. Expand sample size and diversity: Future studies can get more sources, whether through geography, levels of experience, family dynamics (single female child, multiple daughters, or multiple children with female ones), etc.
2. Conduct comparative analysis of cultural dynamics: Use longitudinal analysis and be done in each region to be more accurate and better to look at family dynamics and values.
3. Explore the effect of longer engagement in family business impact the leadership development and career trajectories of female successors.
4. Collect more qualitative data about understanding from a variety of perspectives. What about those women that did not complete training? What about female middle managers? What about family female member by marriage involved in the family business?

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Author contributions

Leonardo Jeffirro and Jovita Joventia are responsible for organizing and cleaning the interview transcripts. They identified and highlighted important quotes from the

transcript. They conducted research to find relevant literature and identify potential theoretical frameworks. Leonardo and Jovita also contributed to the design and development of the data analysis, data collection, and data interpretation processes. Komala Inggawati, my supervisor and advisor, provided expert guidance and feedback throughout the research process. She reviewed and provided comments on the research draft. She also offered valuable suggestions on various aspects of the research, including methodology, analysis, and interpretation.

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