



Knowledge Management in Family Businesses: A Model Proposal Based On Qualitative Findings

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Abstract: Family businesses are characterized by unique structures where knowledge management processes are shaped through intergenerational transfer, tacit knowledge, and trust-based relationships. Despite this, theoretical and contextual analyses of how knowledge is managed within such organizations remain limited. This study offers an exploratory model proposal developed from 14 papers presented at the Türkiye Family Business Congress between 2004–2024. The proposal is not a generalizable model, but rather a conceptual mapping derived through content analysis. The research is grounded in Charmaz's (2008) constructivist grounded theory methodology. Data were analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding. The findings reveal that "knowledge application" is the most emphasized process, indicating a practical and experience-based orientation in family firms. Conversely, "knowledge creation" and "external knowledge integration" remain underdeveloped. Recent papers increasingly highlight themes such as digitalization, information security, and institutionalization. The results suggest that internal dynamics primarily drive knowledge management in family businesses, while strategic knowledge capabilities remain limited. Proposed conceptual model aligns with the knowledge-based view and contributes to a theoretical understanding of knowledge management practices specific to family businesses contexts.

Keywords: Family Business, Knowledge Management, Knowledge Application, Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

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1. Introduction

Knowledge occupies a central role among the strategic resources of contemporary businesses. It is becoming an increasingly valuable asset for most companies, and the effort to manage this asset is gaining popularity among academics and policymakers (Olubiyi, 2020). This issue is even more critical in the context of family businesses, where dynamics such as longevity, intergenerational transition, and cultural continuity are prominent. For family businesses, knowledge is not only an operational input but also a carrier of values, a reference for strategic decisions, and a basis on which organizational identity is reproduced. Family businesses have unique advantages in knowledge management due to their long-term perspective, desire for intergenerational continuity, and strong social ties. In these enterprises, tacit knowledge is typically passed down from generation to generation through the transfer of experience, tradition, and trust relationships. However, their closed structure, varying levels of professionalization, and desire for control rooted in emotional ties may limit knowledge sharing (Su & Daspit, 2021).

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Family businesses are important economic players both locally and globally, and their sustainability largely depends on intergenerational knowledge transfer. The tacit knowledge, experiential accumulation, and value-based organizational culture of these businesses should be preserved for the future, not only as a property heritage but also as a strategic knowledge heritage. As Letonja et al. (2021) demonstrate, knowledge management and especially knowledge transfer processes in family businesses directly influence the innovation capacities of successor generations. Knowledge transfer, supported by founders' early involvement of successors in the business, apprenticeship, participation in decision-making processes, and external learning opportunities, enables not only the reproduction of the past but also the creation of new, innovative knowledge. In this context, knowledge management in family businesses should be viewed not only as an operational necessity but also as a strategic imperative; intergenerational continuity should be reinforced through knowledge generation, sharing, and institutionalisation.

Today, knowledge is seen not only as a resource that enhances business performance but also as a strategic element that influences the sustainability and innovation capacity of family businesses. In this context, Aboelmaged et al. (2024), in a study that systematically examines the relationship between knowledge creation, sharing, transfer, and retention processes and organizational success by addressing the current practices of knowledge management in family businesses, highlight that family businesses have the potential to create a knowledge-based competitive advantage. However, this potential relies not only on explicit knowledge but also on family-specific values, norms, and tacit knowledge. The knowledge management process in family businesses should be regarded not just as a technical function but also as a strategic resource. Daspit et al. (2017) define knowledge management as a three-stage process of acquisition, sharing, and utilization, and emphasize that this process directly interacts with family-specific values, trust-based relationships, and governance structures. Social ties among family members facilitate the flow of information and support strategic decision-making processes. This approach demonstrates that knowledge management is essential not only for efficiency but also for sustainability and competitive advantage in family businesses.

On a global level, family businesses are a crucial part of the economy (Pipatanantakurn & Ractham, 2022). Similarly, in Türkiye, these businesses constitute a significant section of the private sector and serve as essential components of the national economy. The way knowledge is understood, managed, and shared in the institutionalisation processes of these businesses is directly affected by family dynamics. The literature on knowledge management in family businesses remains quite fragmented. The inconsistency in theoretical approaches and the lack of interdisciplinary integration hinder a comprehensive understanding of the field (Su & Daspit, 2021). As a result, there is a need for systematic analyses and the development of theoretical frameworks to explain the specific knowledge structures within family businesses. Therefore, increasing research that considers theoretical diversity and local context, aligned with the unique structure of family businesses, is vital.

Although the field of knowledge management has gained importance in business and management sciences in Türkiye in recent years, it remains a limited subject of study within family businesses. A study by Köseoğlu and Karayormuk (2010), based on proceedings from Family Business Congresses, states that the scientific community focused on family businesses in Türkiye is not yet well-developed, and therefore it cannot be regarded as a distinct field in management.

Additionally, the study states that the concept of "institutionalisation" in family businesses is generally discussed at congresses, but the common problem is not clearly defined. It mentions that there is no dominant approach that provides disciplinary unity in the field, where references to foreign works are usually made in papers. In another study by Köseoğlu and Karayormuk (2012), which builds on the related research, master's and doctoral theses were analyzed. The findings showed that these theses mainly focused on institutionalisation, which increased in 2010, and that supervisors did not study family businesses in their own postgraduate research. Furthermore, the study highlights that only one doctoral thesis author addressed family businesses during their master's degree, indicating that there is no cohesive scientific community in the theses, similar to the papers, and drawing attention to the different advisors and research subjects.

Bal (2024), in his study on postgraduate theses about family businesses, found that a total of 216 theses were written between 1993 and 2024, with 162 being master's theses and 54 doctoral theses. Among these, only one master's thesis focused on the field of information and document management. The theses frequently examined concepts such as institutionalisation, sustainability, crisis, nepotism, family constitution, and justice together. This indicates that academic interest in this area is limited both in quantity and quality. Although there has been an increase in studies on knowledge management in family businesses within the literature, issues of conceptual disorganization and lack of theoretical coherence persist (Su & Daspit, 2021).

In summary, the literature on knowledge management in family businesses remains fragmented, theoretically disorganized, and lacking interdisciplinary coherence (Motoc, 2020; Su & Daspit, 2021). Studies conducted in Türkiye indicate that the knowledge management phenomenon is primarily addressed indirectly rather than through its institutional, technical, or strategic aspects, and in-depth theoretical development is limited (Bal, 2024; Köseoğlu & Karayormuk, 2010). To address this gap, this study examines research on knowledge management presented at the Türkiye Family Business Congresses from 2004 to 2024. Theses and dissertations on family businesses in Türkiye have mostly concentrated on general themes such as institutionalization and sustainability; strategic but implicit areas like knowledge management have been largely overlooked (Bal, 2024). In addition, the proceedings of the Family Business Congress have rarely been subjected to systematic analyses in academic literature, so the tacit knowledge and trends within these documents have largely remained hidden. Family Business Congresses serve as valuable scientific sources that can make a unique contribution to the knowledge management and family business literature, which is still developing in the Turkish context. From this perspective, this study examines how the academic understanding of knowledge management in family businesses has been shaped and has evolved in the Family Business Congresses in Türkiye over a twenty-year period. Concepts, themes, and relationship patterns were inductively derived from the papers using a grounded theory approach to reveal the current state of the subject.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. Section 2 elaborates on the theoretical foundations of knowledge management in family businesses and emphasizes its importance within the family business context. Section 3 delineates the research design, including the methodology, dataset, and sampling strategy. Section 4 presents the findings of the qualitative analysis and introduces the conceptual model developed via the grounded theory approach. The concluding section synthesizes the results, providing key implications, scholarly and practical contributions, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Foundations of Knowledge Management in Family Businesses

Conceptually, knowledge is the transformation of information obtained by organizing data into a meaningful form suitable for the purpose through mental processes (Köseoğlu et al., 2010; Martínez et al., 2013; Motoc, 2020). Managing this emerging knowledge plays a critical role in helping organizations gain a competitive advantage. Knowledge management, considered a strategic element for organizations to achieve this advantage and ensure sustainability, is explained by various theoretical approaches. However, knowledge management theories cannot be applied in their traditional forms in structures with strong socio-cultural traditions, value-based operations, and intergenerational continuity, such as family businesses; these theories are reinterpreted within the unique context of family businesses.

The theoretical foundation of knowledge management in family businesses is rooted in the crucial role of knowledge in decision-making processes. As Sir Francis Bacon, known for his maxim "knowledge is power," emphasised, applying knowledge at the right time and place is a key strategic resource for organisational effectiveness (Döring & Witt, 2019: 1). In this context, the core theories in knowledge management should be examined in relation to the particularities of family businesses.

The idea of tacit knowledge underpins knowledge management. According to this theory, tacit knowledge is personal, contextual, and inexpressible. The SECI model (Socialization, Externalization, Combination, Internalization) developed by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) views knowledge as a process that transforms knowledge through cycles of socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (Şener, 2020). The SECI model is one of the models that best explains the interaction of knowledge at the individual, group, organization, and society levels (Medeni, 2008). In family businesses, the transfer of tacit knowledge to future generations through socialization is a primary focus (Nonaka & von Krogh, 2009). Specifically, experience transfer, role modeling, and intra-family interactions are the main methods of sharing knowledge. However, because this knowledge is often not externalized, it cannot be institutionalized or systematically transferred to new generations (Ge & Campopiano, 2021). This creates a structure that emphasizes only the first stage of the SECI model (socialization), while the other stages of knowledge creation remain weak. Knowledge management in family businesses relies heavily on the loyalty and motivation of employees who perceive themselves as part of the extended family; in this context, knowledge is shared openly (Döring & Witt, 2019: 8). Employees' sense of belonging to the organization is crucial for knowledge sharing; therefore, family businesses bear significant responsibility in revealing tacit knowledge.

Another approach that centers on the processes of transforming and applying knowledge is the dynamic capabilities theory. Teece (2007) describes dynamic capabilities as an organisation's ability to respond quickly to environmental changes and reorganize its resources. This approach highlights the processes of perceiving, transforming, and applying knowledge. Family businesses may display a cautious and protective stance toward change. The founders' long-term vision and desire to maintain existing knowledge may restrict change (Letonja et al., 2021). In this context, the dynamic capabilities of family businesses are often rooted in internal resources (notably tacit knowledge), and their integration with the external environment may be weak. This restricts the transformative potential of knowledge management.

Another approach in which knowledge sharing is shaped through social relations is social capital theory. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) define social capital as the value created through social relationships such as trust, norms, and network structures. In this theory, knowledge sharing is promoted by strong social ties and an environment of trust. Family businesses tend to have high levels of social capital. The trust between family members, collective identity, and shared values foster knowledge sharing and cooperation (Daspit et al., 2017). However, these social ties can also create a closed structure. When knowledge flow is restricted within the family, the organisation's knowledge diversity and learning capacity may decline (Su & Daspit, 2021). An overly technical knowledge management approach is not suitable for family businesses. Offline tools tend to be more effective than digital media for knowledge sharing, especially in one-to-one interactions (Döring & Witt, 2019: 9).

The resource-based view, which considers knowledge as an organisational resource, suggests that sustainable competitive advantage depends on valuable, rare, inimitable, and organisation-specific resources that the business owns. Knowledge is one of these strategic resources. In family businesses, tacit knowledge, value-based culture, social capital, and intergenerational experience transfer are among such strategic resources (Martínez et al., 2013). However, the absence of systematic management of these resources, that is, the lack of knowledge management processes, results in underusing potential competitive advantages (Motoc, 2020). At this point, the resource-based view considers the institutionalisation of knowledge management systems as essential.

Another theoretical approach to understanding how knowledge is processed within the organization and how behaviors are transformed is organisational learning theory. Argyris and Schön (1978) describe organisational learning as single loop (correcting mistakes) and double loop (questioning norms). In family businesses, learning primarily relies on repeating past experiences. This suggests that single-loop learning is common, and established norms and traditional decision-making structures are resistant to challenge. (Uslu, 2012). Structures supporting double-loop learning, such as critical thinking, professional feedback mechanisms, and external consultant involvement, are often absent.

Finally, the knowledge-based view developed by Grant (1996) argues that knowledge is the most critical strategic resource of the organization. This approach focuses on an organization's ability to acquire, store, transfer, and apply knowledge for sustainable competitive advantage. The strategic importance of knowledge management in family businesses is examined within the framework of this view. According to it, knowledge becomes the most valuable strategic resource for firms when it provides a competitive advantage that is difficult to imitate (Döring & Witt, 2019: 3). Family businesses serve as a strong example of the knowledge-based view because knowledge is intrinsic to the business, intertwined with organizational culture, and closely linked to leadership structures (Pipatanantakurn & Ractham, 2022). However, since this knowledge is usually dependent on individuals and transmitted orally, a systematic knowledge management infrastructure cannot be established. Technological, structural, and procedural knowledge management practices required by the knowledge-based view are very limited in family businesses (Baraz, 2004; Özbasar, 2006).

All these theories can be used to explain different aspects of knowledge management in family businesses. However, each theory takes a unique form when applied to family firms. The high emotional attachment, intergenerational knowledge transfer, social capital network, and internalized value system resulting from the family structure make it necessary to view knowledge management as not only a technical process but also a cultural and relational one (Aboelmaged et al., 2024; Ge & Campopiano, 2021).

2.2. Importance of Knowledge Management in Family Businesses

Knowledge management literature in the context of family businesses highlights the central role of knowledge in maintaining business process sustainability and creating competitive advantage ((Bağış et al., 2025; Martínez et al., 2013). Motoc (2020), in his study to develop the theoretical framework of knowledge management in family businesses, shows that the unique structural, cultural, and managerial traits of these organisations influence their knowledge management practices. The high level of trust among family members, shared values, and relationships based on tacit knowledge sharing suggest that knowledge is transferred mainly through informal rather than formal systems in these businesses. This situation makes family businesses distinctive in terms of knowledge management and may also cause challenges in systematic knowledge transfer.

Olubiyi (2020) found that knowledge management practices—such as creation, capture, sharing, transfer, application, and training—are crucial for boosting family business profitability in Nigeria. Ewanlen and Gabriel's (2023) study examines the impact of knowledge management practices on the sustainability of family businesses across three areas: knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, and knowledge storage. In the research conducted in Edo State, Nigeria, it was found that knowledge creation and knowledge sharing have a statistically significant and positive influence on the intergenerational continuity of family businesses. Conversely, the effect of knowledge storage practices was determined to be insignificant.

This suggests that intra-family social capital plays a vital role in knowledge transfer and learning processes, but systematic knowledge retention remains inadequately structured at the organizational level. Knowledge management in family businesses should be viewed not only as a technical tool but also as a strategic element for organizational learning, leadership succession, and cultural continuity. In particular, supporting knowledge sharing through informal methods such as mentoring and face-to-face interactions promotes intra-family knowledge transfer and helps ensure the long-term sustainability of the business (Ewanlen & Gabriel, 2023). Therefore, knowledge management practices in family businesses should be regarded not only as operational but also as intergenerational strategic tools.

Su and Daspit (2021: 57) developed a model to explain how knowledge management functions in family businesses. The initial step of this model is to identify the factors that influence knowledge management. These factors include beneficial effects like enhancing family social capital, fostering trust-based relationships, sharing stories and traditions, and preserving a collective culture.

On the other hand, negative effects such as preventing family conflicts and reducing status differences should also be considered. These factors directly influence the effectiveness of knowledge management processes. At the core of the model, knowledge is managed through four key processes: creating knowledge, storing knowledge, transferring knowledge, and applying knowledge. Effectively executing these processes is crucial both for producing business-centered outcomes (gaining competitive advantage, improving financial performance, developing innovation, promoting internationalization) and for achieving family-centered outcomes (ensuring intergenerational value transfer, promoting entrepreneurship, managing generational change). Regulating factors that influence all these relationships include analyzing environmental conditions, assessing organizational social capital, and managing non-family involvement.

In conclusion, this model offers a robust framework for systematically conceptualizing knowledge management in family businesses and assessing it from a strategic management standpoint. In this context, the articles analyzed in this study were reviewed in relation to the related conceptualisation.

3. Method

3.1. Scope of the Study

Academic congresses play a crucial role in sharing scientific knowledge with the academic community and stakeholders involved in applying that knowledge. Thanks to their inclusive formats that support various types of scientific presentation (such as panels, seminars, and conferences), congresses help diversify and increase the visibility of academic work. Because of this, congresses are among the most popular scientific settings for academics to present their research trends and to network professionally within their field (Tonbul & Ata Çiğdem, 2022). Specifically, papers that are not published in journals but reflect current issues, conceptual priorities, and the theoretical foundations of the academic community hold unique value by revealing implicit orientations that cannot be accessed through literature review.

Therefore, congress proceedings are a valid and useful data source for analyzing the level of institutionalization, research directions, and theoretical structuring of academic fields. Congress proceedings are considered primary data that reflect the level of institutionalization, research focuses, and discursive patterns within the field as seen in academic literature. Especially when compared to journal articles, congress proceedings offer more open and experimental content, providing rich empirical and discursive data on the development of a discipline. In this context, the proceedings are significant for revealing the theoretical structures and knowledge production methods of the field through both the topics and the language and concepts used. Therefore, a systematic analysis of the papers in this study is scientifically valuable to objectively identify the gaps in the literature.

Accordingly, this study examines knowledge management in family businesses through the papers presented at the Family Business Congresses organized in Türkiye between 2004 and 2024. Designed within the framework of a qualitative research paradigm, the study adopts the grounded theory method. The grounded theory approach is based on direct observation and systematic coding of practices, documents, or texts in the field, rather than structured data sets. In this regard, papers are not only possible but also a preferred data source for theory generation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The grounded theory approach allows for developing conceptual categories and constructing a contextual theory based on direct data (Charmaz, 2008). Grounded theory is especially suitable for analyzing discourse patterns in areas that lack conceptual clarity or are in development. In this method, the goal is not generalization, but the systematic analysis of data until conceptual saturation is achieved. If the paper provides sufficient quality to reach thematic saturation in this context, it is possible to propose a model. However, the study does not offer a valid framework for all family businesses in Türkiye but only evaluates the practices presented in the papers. Additionally, since this research relies on publicly available data (congress proceedings), it does not require ethics committee approval.

3.2. Dataset and Sample

The research population consists of 10 proceedings books published within the scope of the Türkiye Family Business Congress from 2004 to 2024. The year 2004 signifies the commencement of the Family Business Congress's regular publication of its proceedings within an institutionally organized framework. Conversely, 2024 represents the most recent year for which complete-text papers are publicly accessible. Considering that the congress proceedings serve as a primary discursive source that directly mirrors thematic trajectories and conceptual advancements within the field, the study employed a full-count strategy, delineating the period to encompass the entire corpus of published volumes.

All of these books were published by Istanbul Kültür University and obtained from open access sources. Only publicly available proceedings were included in the study. Using purposive sampling, only papers related to themes such as knowledge management, knowledge technologies, knowledge sharing, organizational learning, and tacit knowledge were selected for analysis. The proceedings of 10 congresses held over the past 20 years amount to a total of 4,069 pages, containing 297 papers. A total of 297 conference papers were initially screened at the title and abstract level, as the titles and abstracts served as the primary criteria during the first-stage assessment. Only studies that contained knowledge-oriented concepts—such as knowledge management, knowledge technologies, organizational learning, knowledge sharing/transfer, tacit knowledge, intellectual capital, organizational memory, or information security—were included. Additional inclusion criteria required the papers to be situated within the context of family businesses, to be fully accessible in full-text form, and to be written in either Turkish or English. Papers that contained only indirect references to knowledge-related themes or lacked full-text access were excluded. Following this screening process, 14 papers were selected for qualitative analysis.

The study adhered to Creswell's (2016) general stages for qualitative data analysis; however, the coding procedures were guided by Charmaz's (2008) constructivist grounded theory approach, which emphasizes the co-construction of meaning between researcher and data, the iterative comparison of emerging concepts, and the integration of theoretical sensitivity throughout the analysis. Within this framework, the literature review was deliberately limited during the initial stages of analysis, while subsequent comparison with existing theories was employed to enhance theoretical contribution and validity. While inductive analysis based on in vivo codes enabled new themes to emerge directly from the data, deductive comparison with existing frameworks—particularly Su and Daspi's (2021) model of knowledge management in family firms—supported theoretical integration. In this sense, the analysis aligned with the idea that grounded theory does not solely generate new theory but also engages in theoretical dialogue with the literature (Birks & Mills, 2015). The resulting model reflects both data-driven conceptualization and alignment with the broader knowledge management literature. The emerging structure of the analysis can be summarised through three interconnected dimensions:

- **Antecedents:** Family values, capital structure, and cultural factors that influence knowledge processes.
- **Regulator Factors:** Contextual elements (e.g. digitalisation, non-family professional involvement) that transform or influence knowledge management processes.
- **Outcomes:** Outcomes of knowledge, such as its impact on organisational performance, sustainability or innovation.

Similarly, Whetten (1989) states that a theoretical contribution is shaped by questions such as "what does it affect, how does it affect, under what conditions does it affect?" which can be explained by the antecedent, moderator, and consequence structure. The 'antecedents, moderators, consequences' framework is one of the most commonly used theoretical models for developing relational and explanatory theory, especially in subfields such as organizational behaviour, strategic management, information systems, and human resources (MacKenzie et al., 2011). Additionally, the knowledge management process (knowledge creation, storage, transfer, or application), highlighted in each paper, was identified and categorised into these four processes. These methodological choices enabled a multidimensional analysis of

knowledge management structures specific to family businesses and provided a foundation for the theoretical modelling.

In this study, the coding process was conducted by a single researcher; consequently, statistical intercoder reliability coefficients were not computed. Instead, reliability was maintained through reflexive memoing, iterative recoding, continuous refinement of the codebook, and the preservation of an audit trail documenting the analytical procedures. These methodologies conform to the validity and reliability principles advised for single-coder qualitative research (Charmaz, 2008).

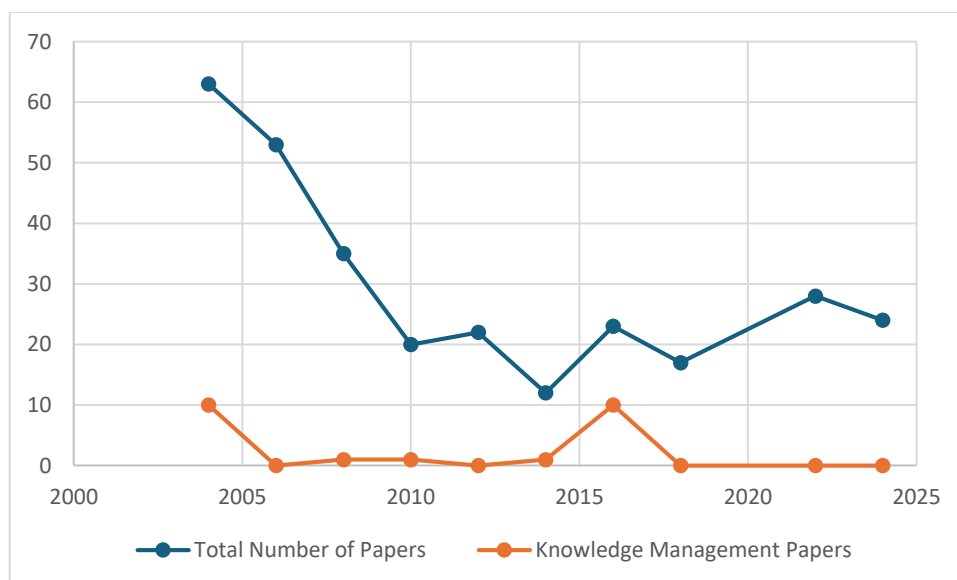
4. Findings

4.1. Quantitative Findings Regarding Congresses

Family Business Congresses (FBC) and the books containing all the papers included in the study have been published by İstanbul Kültür University since 2004.

Graph 1 illustrates the distribution of papers on knowledge management in Family Business Congresses from 2004 to 2024, organized by year. As shown, most knowledge management papers appeared in 2004, with numbers fluctuating in subsequent years. Notably, there were sharp increases in 2016 and 2022, while some years saw no knowledge management papers at all papers.

Graph 1. Distribution of Papers by Year



The first five congresses were held, and the proceedings were edited by Tamer Koçel, one of the most influential academicians in the field of business administration. Tamer Koçel served as the Rector of İstanbul Kültür University from September 2004 to November 2008 and as the Director of the İstanbul Kültür University Family Business and Entrepreneurship Research Centre from 2004 to 2012 (İstanbul Kültür University, 2025). Notably, the proceedings books of the congresses chaired by Tamer Koçel contained numerous papers and placed a strong emphasis on the theme of knowledge management. In later periods, the editors were the directors of the Family Business and Entrepreneurship Research Centre. Thus, İstanbul Kültür University, under Tamer Koçel's leadership, has played a significant role in shaping the literature on family businesses in Türkiye.

Table 1. Organisation Dates of the Congresses and Number of Papers

Congresses	Date	Editor and Theme	Proceedings Book Page Number	Number of Proceedings / Proceedings Related to Information Management
1. FBC	2004	T. Koçel	686	63/5
2. FBC	2006	T. Koçel	692	53/1
3. FBC	2008	T. Koçel	475	35/1
4. FBC	2010	T. Koçel	372	20/0
5. FBC	2012	T. Koçel	636	22/2
6. FBC	2014	M. Gülaçtı	272	12/2
7. FBC	2016	D. Dünder	355	23/2
8. FBC	2018	U. Yozgat & A. Toksoy	248	17/0
9. FBC	2022	N. Çağlar & T. Y. Çakarel "Sustainability and Corporate Resilience"	89	28/1
10. FBC	2024	M. Paksoy, D. Kayalidereden & M. Bekmezci "Transformations in Business"	244	24/0

Another noteworthy point in Table 1 is that the last two congresses were thematic and aimed to address the interests and needs of the sector. In this context, "Sustainability and Corporate Resilience" and "Transformations in the Business World" have increased the number of studies on the impact of the digitalized world on family businesses. However, there is only 1 study directly addressing knowledge management in these themes. Similarly, while there is a sub-heading "Institutionalisation and Knowledge Management in Family Businesses" in 2016 in the congress content, this is not present in other years. This situation is likely due to the lack of interest in knowledge management literature in Türkiye.

4.1.1. Researchers with Papers in Congresses and Number of Papers

Almost all of the papers on knowledge management in the congresses were authored by different individuals. Only Baraz (2004, 2008, 2012) contributed more consistently to the field than others. Uslu (2012, 2016) also contributed to the field with two studies. There may be many reasons for this situation, but the academic social network is considered an important factor. Additionally, it is thought that the researchers do not have other studies that focus on the relevant subject, and certain issues related to research topic selection and specialization in Türkiye need to be discussed.

Table 2. Researchers with Papers in Congresses and Number of Papers

Author	Paper
B. Baraz	3
T. Uslu	2
H. Soyuer	1
V. D. Kalkan	1
N. Ada	1
Ş. Özbasar	1
S. Keskin	1
R. İraz, E. Özer	1
H. İbicioğlu, H. Doğan	1
Ş. Özmen, S. Yurtkoru, B. Sipahi	1
S. Demirkıran, A. Yaşar, M. K. Terzioğlu	1
TOTAL	14

4.2. Qualitative Findings Related to Congress Proceedings

This section presents the results of the content analysis conducted to examine how knowledge management has been conceptualized in the congress proceedings. The coding process followed Charmaz's (2008) constructivist grounded theory approach and was carried out in three stages. In the initial coding stage, line-by-line and event-based coding was applied, prioritizing in vivo codes to preserve the original discursive expressions of the authors and to capture meanings grounded in the data. In the focused coding stage, the most analytically significant codes were clustered and refined, allowing the condensation of data into higher-level thematic patterns. In the theoretical coding stage, relationships among categories were modeled, linking the emerging structure to the processes of knowledge creation, storage, transfer, and application. Through this iterative process, a comprehensive and integrative framework was developed that reflects both the thematic diversity and the disciplinary positioning of the analyzed papers. Ultimately, the papers were grouped under four overarching themes: technology-based knowledge management, socio-cultural and family-specific knowledge, knowledge within organizational processes and structures, and strategic alignment and transformation. Table 3 summarizes this categorization.

Table 3. Thematic Categories of Papers

Year	Paper Title and Author(s)	Thematic Categories
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption and Use of Information Technologies in Family Businesses (Ş. Özmen, S. Yurtkoru, B. Sipahi) Information Technology Competence of Managers in Family Businesses: A Comparative Application (B. Baraz) Information-Based Strategic Resource Planning in Family Businesses (H. Soyuer) Continuity Management as a Factor Strengthening Performance in Family Businesses: Information and Business Continuity (V. D. Kalkan) A Research on the Comparison of Family Businesses with Other Businesses in terms of Tacit Knowledge Potential and Sources (H. İbicioğlu, H. Doğan) 	Technologically Based Knowledge Management
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of Intellectual (Non-Financial) Capital in Family Businesses (Ş. Özbasar) 	Socio-Cultural and Family Specific Forms of Knowledge
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation with the Perceptions of Family Businesses (B. Baraz) 	Knowledge in the Context of Organisational Processes and Structures
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Family Businesses Origin of Knowledge and Capital (B. Baraz) An Empirical Study on the Effects of Quality and Knowledge Management on Organisational Communication in Family Businesses in Marmara Region (T. Uslu) 	Knowledge in the Context of Organisational Processes and Structures
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Importance of Information Technologies in the Institutionalisation of Family Businesses: A Research in Gaziantep Province (R. İraz, E. Özer) 	Technologically Based Knowledge Management
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison of the Effects of Occupational Health and Safety Practices in Family Businesses on Institutionalisation and Use of Organisational Knowledge with Other Businesses (T. Uslu) Familiness Theory and Investigation of Family Businesses from the Perspective of Social and Intellectual Capital (N. Ada) 	Socio-Cultural and Family Specific Forms of Knowledge
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk Assessment Based Information System Security with Octave Allegro (S. Demirkıran, A. Yaşar, M. K. Terzioğlu) 	Strategic Contextual Alignment and Transformation

Although not explicitly mentioned in the papers, Table 4 shows that the underlying theories differ and no single school is centered around any particular theory. This conceptual and theoretical disorganization, along with the lack of unity, is also highlighted in literature on knowledge management within family businesses (Bal, 2024; Su & Daspit, 2021). It is important to note that the field has evolved theoretically over time. In 2004, studies mainly focused on resource-based, knowledge-based, and

organizational learning perspectives. After 2010, more specific frameworks such as social capital, institutionalization, and knowledge security emerged. By 2016, Ada's Familiness approach was introduced, and in 2022, a knowledge management perspective tailored to family businesses, emphasizing risk and security, began to develop. This suggests a multi-layered theoretical landscape in knowledge management, underscoring the need for innovative theoretical extensions, particularly within family business contexts.

Table 4. Theories on which the Papers are Based

Author(s)/year	Theory Based on
(Özmen, Yurtkoru & Sipahi, 2004)	Knowledge Based Opinion
(Baraz, 2004)	Dynamic Capabilities
(Soyuer, 2004)	Source Based Opinion
(Kalkan, 2004)	Organisational Learning Theory
(İbicioğlu & Doğan, 2004)	Tacit Knowledge Theory
(Özbasar, 2006)	Intellectual Capital Theory
(Baraz, 2008; Keskin, 2014)	Innovation Theory
(Baraz, 2012)	Social Capital Theory
(Uslu, 2012)	Organisational Knowledge Creation
(İraz & Özer, 2014)	Institutionalisation and Technology Acceptance
(Uslu, 2016)	Organisational Knowledge Management Theory
(Ada, 2016)	Family Supported Business (Familiness) Theory
(Demirkıran, Yaşar & Terzioğlu, 2022)	Information Security and Risk Management

Table 5. Knowledge Management Process and Research Area Prioritised by the Papers

Author(s)/year	Prioritised Knowledge Management Process	Research Area (antecedents, consequences, regulators)
(Özmen, Yurtkoru & Sipahi, 2004)	Knowledge Application	Pioneer
(Baraz, 2004)	Knowledge Application	Pioneer
(Soyuer, 2004)	Knowledge Application	Conclusion
(Kalkan, 2004)	Information Storage	Conclusion
(İbicioğlu & Doğan, 2004)	Knowledge Transfer	Pioneer
(Özbasar, 2006)	Information Storage	Conclusion
(Baraz, 2008)	Knowledge Creation	Conclusion
(Baraz, 2012)	Knowledge Transfer	Pioneer
(Uslu, 2012)	Knowledge Transfer	Conclusion
(İraz & Özer, 2014)	Knowledge Application	Regulator
(Keskin, 2014)	Knowledge Creation	Conclusion
(Uslu, 2016)	Knowledge Application	Regulator
(Ada, 2016)	Information Storage	Pioneer
(Demirkıran, Yaşar & Terzioğlu, 2022)	Information Storage	Regulator

Analyzing Table 5 by the categories of antecedent, moderator, and consequence, most papers focus on the key factors influencing knowledge management processes. Analyses of the outputs and impacts of specific knowledge management practices come second. The fewest number of papers examined contextual or situational factors (e.g. digitalisation, institutionalisation) that influence knowledge management processes. This distribution suggests that research on knowledge management in family businesses has largely focussed on structural inputs rather than cause-and-effect relationships. Knowledge management in family businesses is largely based on the internal dynamics and cultural heritage of the organisation. The main antecedents frequently referred to in the papers are family values and social capital, tacit knowledge and experience, and intellectual capital (Ada, 2016; Baraz, 2012; İbicioğlu & Doğan, 2004; Özbasar, 2006),

Knowledge management processes are shaped not only by internal resources but also by external influencers.

Digitalisation and technological integration, managerial competence, security and risk perception are some variables that draw attention in the papers (Baraz, 2004; İraz & Özer, 2014; Özmen et al., 2004; Demirkıran et al., 2022). The explained antecedent and regulatory factors directly affect knowledge creation (Baraz, 2008; Keskin, 2014), knowledge storage (Baraz, 2012; Özbasar, 2006), knowledge transfer (Uslu, 2016; Uslu, 2012), knowledge application (Kalkan, 2004; Soyuer, 2004) processes of knowledge management.

The findings indicate that knowledge management practices in family businesses are predominantly oriented toward the application of existing knowledge, rather than the systematic creation or diffusion of new knowledge. The high frequency of papers addressing the “Knowledge Application” process suggests that knowledge is primarily mobilised for operational decision-making, problem-solving, and routine management activities. This is consistent with studies emphasizing the dominance of experiential and tacit knowledge in family firms (Nonaka & von Krogh, 2009; Nonaka & Toyama, 2003).

Table 6 illustrates how the study's thematic findings were analytically aligned with Nonaka and Takeuchi’s SECI knowledge conversion model. Accordingly, the most prominent process in knowledge management practices—“knowledge application”—corresponds to the E→T (internalisation) phase of the SECI model, indicating that knowledge is embedded in decision-making, problem-solving, and operational routines. In contrast, the “knowledge storage” process aligns with the E→E (combination) phase, reflecting initiatives such as digital archiving, data integration, and the development of corporate memory. “Knowledge transfer” corresponds to the T→T (socialisation) phase, which is based on the intergenerational transmission of tacit knowledge; however, the limited representation of the “knowledge creation” process reveals the weakness of the T→E (externalisation) phase. This mapping shows that knowledge in family businesses is predominantly preserved and applied, while processes such as sharing, formalisation, and innovation-oriented knowledge generation are not yet institutionally embedded. Thus, the Table 6 not only clarifies the theoretical positioning of the themes developed in the study but also systematically demonstrates the concentration of knowledge management processes across different SECI phases.

Tablo 6. Alignment of the SECI Model with the Knowledge Management Processes and Themes Identified in the Study

SECI Phase	Knowledge Management Process	Thematic Correspondence in the Findings
Socialisation (T → T) <i>Tacit → Tacit Knowledge</i>	Knowledge Transfer	Socio-cultural and family-specific knowledge
Externalisation (T → E) <i>Tacit → Explicit Knowledge</i>	Knowledge Creation	Formalisation of knowledge within organisational processes
Combination (E → E) <i>Explicit → Explicit Knowledge</i>	Knowledge Storage	Technology-based knowledge management
Internalisation (E → T) <i>Explicit → Tacit Knowledge</i>	Knowledge Application	Strategic adaptation and knowledge-based decision making

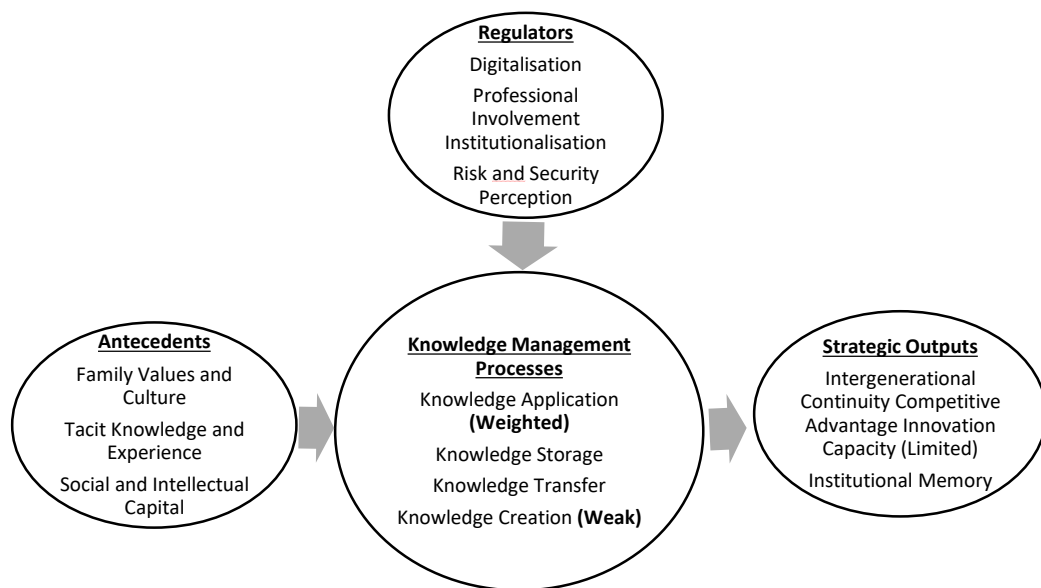
Viewed through the lens of dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2007), this imbalance suggests that the adaptive capacity of family firms may be constrained: organisations that rely heavily on existing tacit knowledge may react effectively in stable environments, but they may struggle to reconfigure knowledge resources in response to environmental change, technological shifts, or competitive pressures. Thus, the findings imply that knowledge management in family businesses remains utilitarian rather than developmental, and that the institutionalisation of innovation-oriented learning mechanisms is still in a formative stage.

Knowledge creation in family businesses is often explored through intrinsic motivation, experience transfer, and the intersection of traditional knowledge and modernization. However, due to the limited number of studies, this field remains underdeveloped in the Turkish context. The process of knowledge

storage is crucial for ensuring a healthy transition between generations in family businesses. While many papers emphasize the protection and secure transfer of tacit knowledge, systematic knowledge archiving and digitalisation opportunities receive limited attention. Addressing this gap is vital for establishing a robust knowledge ecosystem. Knowledge transfer is mainly highlighted as occurring through trust within the family, close relationships, and role modeling. Nevertheless, the process mainly involves family members, with little focus on acquiring knowledge from external sources, indicating weak external knowledge networks and limited integration.

Content analysis reveals patterns showing how knowledge management processes—creation, storage, transfer, and application—interrelate within family businesses. These are linked to family-specific factors and context, as shown in Figure 1, illustrating both the relationships' nature and strength, supporting the study's framework.

Figure 1. Knowledge Management Dynamics Model in Family Businesses- Model Proposal



Source: Created by the author.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships among antecedents (family values, tacit knowledge, social and intellectual capital), moderators (digitalization, professionalization, risk perception), and outcomes (innovation, sustainability, and intergenerational continuity). Arrows indicate influence; line thickness shows evidence strength (weak, weighted); dashed lines for limited findings. Evidence from 14 studies (see Tables 3–5).

The model shows how family-specific antecedents influence knowledge processes, with contextual factors moderating their effects on performance and sustainability. Following Charmaz's (2008) constructivist grounded theory approach, the analysis progressed from initial coding, which involved identifying meaning units and in vivo expressions directly from the texts, to focused coding, where analytically significant codes were refined and clustered around key theoretical frameworks such as the SECI model, knowledge-based view, social capital theory, and dynamic capabilities theory. In the theoretical coding stage, these clusters were integrated into a coherent structure linking the four core knowledge management processes—creation, storage, transfer, and application—within an antecedent–moderator–outcome framework. The analysis of 14 studies revealed that knowledge application was the most emphasized process, whereas knowledge storage and knowledge transfer appeared limited, and knowledge creation remained underdeveloped. These findings indicate recognizable conceptual patterns but do not imply causal relationships; therefore, the

resulting framework should be viewed as a conceptual and exploratory model rather than a definitive causal theory.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to conceptualize knowledge management practices specific to family businesses based on the grounded theory analysis of 14 papers presented at the Family Business Congresses held in Türkiye between 2004 and 2024. For this purpose, the categories derived from the qualitative findings were formulated into a model proposal.

This study, which analyzes 14 papers using grounded theory, reveals that knowledge management in family businesses centers on four core processes. Knowledge application is most prominent, storage is moderate, transfer is limited, and creation is weak, reflecting an inward focus on utilizing existing knowledge. The findings align with the literature, which highlights the fragmented and internalized nature of knowledge management in family businesses (e.g., Su & Daspit, 2021). Although the SECI model's socialization (tacit-to-tacit) is prominent, weaker externalization (tacit-to-explicit) and combination (explicit-to-explicit) suggest that Turkish family businesses mainly rely on tacit knowledge.

Considering the theories behind the papers analyzed in the study and the themes they address, it is clear that knowledge management practices in family businesses should be approached not only through technical systems but also within the context of social and cultural dynamics. Similarly, the literature emphasizes that knowledge management in family businesses is influenced by traditional knowledge-sharing practices, trust-based relationships, and intergenerational interactions. Aboelmegeed et al. (2024) argue that for effective knowledge management, in addition to technical infrastructure, social capital, family culture, and governance structure should be viewed holistically. Therefore, it is crucial to see knowledge management not just as an operational activity but also as a strategic element of intra-family relationships and organizational culture, both in theory and practice.

Motoc (2020) argues that knowledge management cannot be reduced to just technical processes; instead, it should be reevaluated within the unique dynamics of family businesses, using approaches like social capital theory, resource-based view, and organizational learning theory. Likewise, the key themes in the papers show that knowledge management is intertwined with intra-organizational relationships, family culture, and strategic directions. In this regard, it can be said that although the theoretical foundation in the reviewed papers is limited, there is a strong intuition about the strategic importance of knowledge management in practice. This suggests that academic work in the field should be more closely aligned with existing theoretical frameworks (Motoc, 2020).

Knowledge management processes in family businesses, especially during intergenerational transfer, are shaped not only by technical systems but also by relational and cultural elements. Ge and Campopiano (2021) state that knowledge management in family businesses is closely tied to the company's historical background, values, and leadership structure. Here, tacit knowledge plays a crucial role in transferring knowledge to new generations through trust-based relationships, open communication, and active participation of family members in the business. Therefore, the effectiveness of knowledge management in family firms should be assessed not only through structural systems but also in relation to social dynamics. Köseoğlu et al. (2010) reveal that Turkish managers mostly view knowledge management as technology-oriented. However, given the tangible benefits of knowledge management to business activities, social relationship-based approaches should not be overlooked. This suggests that knowledge management can achieve better results by integrating with corporate culture and social dynamics, particularly in structures with high social capital, such as family businesses.

While the findings of this study reveal that the literature on knowledge management in family businesses is highly fragmented and multidisciplinary, the comprehensive systematic review by Bağış et al. (2025) makes an essential contribution by offering a holistic framework. It highlights that themes such as knowledge sharing, transfer, intergenerational learning, and socio-emotional richness in family businesses are influenced not only by technical processes but also by family dynamics and cultural values. Specifically,

how familiness, emotional attachment, and institutionalization processes guide knowledge management practices sheds light on relational aspects often overlooked in the existing literature. In this way, it reduces the theoretical and contextual fragmentation, clearly underscores the strategic importance of knowledge management in family businesses, and points toward an interdisciplinary direction for future research (Bağış et al., 2025). Ultimately, it shows that knowledge management should be regarded not only as a logical, instrumental process but also as a relational and value-driven structure.

Although the theoretical grounding in the papers is generally limited, the data show patterns that can be explained by theories such as the knowledge-based perspective, socio-emotional wealth, and psychological ownership. This suggests that theories based on the values and relationships of individuals at the micro level need to be utilised more in understanding knowledge practices in family businesses. It has been shown that knowledge management is not only limited to creation and transfer processes, but also has relational aspects such as knowledge retention, concealment, value attribution, and ritualisation. Family hierarchy, emotional attachment, and traditional roles have significant effects on knowledge sharing. At this point, concepts such as "relational capital", "trust culture", and "participatory value transfer" should find more place in theoretical models.

Although the grounded theory method employed in this study, based on the analysis of 14 congress papers, provided a qualitative approach to theory development and enabled in-context explanations absent in the existing literature, it is constrained by the limited dataset, which restricts cross-sectoral comparisons and causal testing, as well as by the inherent limitations of qualitative content analysis regarding the generalizability of findings. In the future, such exploratory approaches could be supported by longitudinal and mixed-method research to illustrate better the temporal changes in knowledge processes and intergenerational shifts. Knowledge management in family businesses is not only connected to technical and structural systems but also influenced by cultural, emotional, and relational factors. Therefore, future studies should focus on uncovering how knowledge management in family firms is built upon unique foundations such as tacit knowledge, trust-based relationships, and intergenerational transfer.

In conclusion, this study takes a step toward developing a unique conceptual framework for knowledge management practices of family businesses in Türkiye; however, more comprehensive, empirically grounded, and theoretically in-depth research is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the field.

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