

Algorithmic Governance for Inclusive Succession: A Socio-Technical Framework for AI Integration in Polygamous Family Firms

Abstract

This paper investigates the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in succession planning within family businesses, focusing on the unique governance complexities of polygamous family structures. While digital transformation offers significant potential for operational optimization, its integration into multi-branch kinship ecosystems remains under-theorized. Grounded in a triangulation of Socioemotional Wealth (SEW), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Agency Theory, this study proposes a novel socio-technical framework that positions AI as an agent of inclusion and fairness in decision-making. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature, the paper analyses how AI-driven decision-support systems can act as a neutral arbiter, mitigating "principal-principal" conflicts between competing maternal branches through data-driven, performance-based evaluations. However, the study identifies critical adoption barriers, specifically the tension between algorithmic rationality and the preservation of socioemotional assets. We argue that successful integration is contingent upon reaching a "Socio-Technical Equilibrium," where the Information System functions as a "Digital Steward" that enhances, rather than replaces, traditional family wisdom. By shifting the locus of authority toward an augmented meritocracy, this research offers a strategic roadmap for achieving equitable and sustainable leadership transitions. The paper concludes with four research propositions, providing a foundation for future empirical inquiry into the social implications of algorithmic governance and the role of information systems in fostering inclusive organizational environments.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Family Business, Succession Planning, Polygamy, Socioemotional Wealth (SEW), Algorithmic Governance.

Paper Type: Conceptual

Introduction

Succession planning is one of the most critical challenges for family businesses, determining not only the transfer of leadership but also the continuity of the business itself. Within this broad domain, succession planning in polygamous family businesses presents an even more intricate set of challenges. These businesses, characterized by multiple family branches stemming from polygamous marital structures, face heightened complexities in leadership transitions. The presence of multiple heirs from different branches of the family often exacerbates conflicts over leadership, resource allocation, and the preservation of family legacy (Ramadani et al., 2020). Such dynamics can jeopardize not only family harmony but also the long-term sustainability of the business.

In this complex context, Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers an innovative solution to facilitate objective decision-making, reduce emotional bias, and provide transparent evaluations of potential successors. Defined as "a machine-based system capable of inferring models and formulating predictions, recommendations, or decisions" (OECD, 2021), AI has demonstrated its potential to transform decision-making processes across industries (Philbeck & Davies, 2018). Through tools such as predictive analytics, machine learning, and natural language processing, AI can bring greater transparency and impartiality to leadership transitions. For family businesses, where succession is often fraught with emotional and interpersonal complexities, these capabilities hold significant promise (Kumar & Ratten, 2024). However, the adoption of AI in culturally and socio-emotionally sensitive environments like polygamous family businesses introduces unique challenges. Concerns about cultural resistance, the preservation of Socioemotional Wealth (SEW), and the compatibility of AI-driven decisions with traditional values and norms must be carefully addressed (Berrone et al., 2012; McCloskey et al., 2024).

This study is conceptual in nature, aiming to propose a framework for integrating AI into succession planning for polygamous family businesses. Drawing on insights from the literature on AI, family business governance, and socio-cultural dynamics, this paper examines how AI can mitigate conflicts, promote fairness, and enhance decision-making processes. The proposed framework is grounded in three key theoretical perspectives: Socioemotional Wealth (SEW), which emphasizes the preservation of family identity and legacy; the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which highlights the factors influencing AI adoption; and Agency Theory, which explores conflicts arising from the separation of ownership and management. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding the role of AI in navigating the intricate dynamics of succession planning in polygamous family businesses.

Despite growing interest in AI's role in business operations, its application in family business succession planning especially in the context of polygamous family structures—remains underexplored. Existing research often focuses on traditional family businesses or on the financial benefits of AI, overlooking the unique socio-cultural and emotional dynamics of polygamous families. This paper seeks to fill this gap by addressing the specific challenges of polygamous family businesses, where competing interests among family branches introduce additional layers of complexity (Haj Youssef et al., 2024). Unlike studies that prioritise financial metrics or operational efficiency, this paper emphasizes the integration of AI with socioemotional considerations to ensure leadership transitions align with both business sustainability and family traditions.

The primary objective of this study is to contribute to the academic discourse by proposing a conceptual framework that balances technological objectivity with the preservation of family-centric values. [Removal: Deleted repetitive phrasing about theoretical foundation here]. By addressing the interplay between AI, family dynamics, and succession

planning, this paper underscores the transformative potential of AI in ensuring smooth leadership transitions and long-term business success in polygamous family businesses.

Beyond the cultural and managerial dimensions of succession, this challenge can be fundamentally reframed as an Information Systems (IS) governance problem, where traditional human-led processes often lack the capacity to manage the "data-intensive" and "emotionally-noisy" landscape of complex family firms (Vial, 2019). By positioning AI as a sophisticated decision-support system, this paper explores the necessity of algorithmic transparency and Responsible AI frameworks to ensure that technological interventions remain ethical and accountable (Rai, 2020). Furthermore, integrating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) within this context allows for a deeper examination of the socio-technical barriers to digital transformation, specifically how user acceptance of information technology is mediated by deep-seated familial values (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Ultimately, this framework demonstrates how inclusive system design can promote digital inclusivity and equitable participation, ensuring that all family branches are fairly represented in the transition process.

Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence in Business and family business

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force, driving operational efficiency through machine-based models that formulate predictions and strategic recommendations (Huang & Rust, 2018; Philbeck & Davies, 2018). Technologies such as predictive analytics and machine learning enable businesses to automate complex operations and enhance decision-making across diverse functions (Ozcan et al., 2021; Mustak et al., 2021). Within the specific context of family businesses, AI provides a unique opportunity to modernize governance while navigating the preservation of Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) (Kumar & Ratten, 2024).

By introducing data-driven insights, AI-driven systems can support family firms in managing emotionally charged transitions, ensuring long-term institutional sustainability. However, adoption in family enterprises has historically lagged behind non-family firms due to systemic challenges, including cultural resistance, a significant "AI knowledge gap," and perceived threats to traditional paternalistic authority (Lannon et al., 2023; Ulrich & Frank, 2021). This resistance underscores a critical research gap regarding AI's role in family governance, where the interplay of traditional values and interpersonal dynamics creates a complex, "emotionally noisy" decision-making environment that necessitates a more objective, socio-technical approach.

AI in Family Business: Opportunities and Challenges

The application of AI in family businesses is closely linked to enhanced dynamic capabilities, enabling firms to navigate crises and maintain resilience through data-driven insights (Chaudhuri et al., 2022). By studying historical patterns, AI provides a foundation for more strategic growth identification and objective resource allocation. However, these opportunities are often hindered by significant adoption barriers.

Resistance to change is particularly acute among senior generations who perceive AI as a threat to traditional authority and the "personal touch" of family decision-making (Kumar & Ratten, 2024). Furthermore, many family firms lack the digital infrastructure and internal expertise necessary for effective AI implementation (Lannon et al., 2023; Ulrich & Frank, 2021). These structural and cultural hurdles are magnified during succession planning; the deep-seated emotional dynamics and competing interests among various family branches often clash with the objectivity of tech-driven decision-support systems.

Polygamy in Family Businesses

The complexities of succession planning are further amplified in polygamous family businesses, which involve multiple wives and their children as potential heirs. These structures are prevalent in regions such as Africa and the Middle East, where polygamy is legally or culturally practiced (Al-Krenawi, 2010). The extended family dynamics in these businesses often lead to disputes over leadership roles, resource allocation, and the preservation of family legacy (Gupta et al., 2010; Haj Youssef et al., 2024).

Research highlights that the hierarchy within polygamous families—such as the seniority of the wives or the birth order of their children—significantly influences decision-making processes (Lev-Weisel & Al-Krenawi, 2000). These hierarchies can result in systemic rivalries among half-siblings, further complicating succession planning and, in extreme cases, leading to the liquidation of businesses to avoid protracted legal or personal conflicts (Buckman et al., 2020). Despite these challenges, research on polygamous family businesses remains scarce, with most studies focusing on socio-psychological aspects rather than the governance implications for business succession (Ramírez-Pasillas et al., 2021). This research gap underscores the necessity for exploring how Information Systems, such as AI, can act as a neutral mechanism to address these unique socio-cultural challenges.

Succession Planning in Family Businesses

Succession planning remains a critical vulnerability for family enterprises, where a lack of formal processes often leads to governance instability and operational disruption (Wasim & Almeida, 2022). While traditional practices like primogeniture historically dominated, contemporary strategic pressures have driven a shift toward merit-based transitions to ensure long-term competitiveness (Yadav & Shankar, 2017; Ghee et al., 2015).

AI offers a transformative mechanism for this shift by providing an objective framework for candidate evaluation, knowledge transfer, and leadership development. Through performance-based analytics, AI-driven systems can assess the potential of multiple heirs against multidimensional data, aligning transition decisions with the firm's strategic objectives (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the reconciliation of data-driven objectivity with family-centric values remains a significant barrier. This tension is particularly acute in the "emotionally-noisy" governance structures of polygamous family businesses, where competing maternal branches complicate the path to an unbiased, meritocratic transition.

AI Applications in Succession Planning

AI enhances decision-support systems by mitigating the emotional biases that frequently compromise succession outcomes. Using predictive analytics, AI evaluates potential successors against objective performance metrics and alignment with long-term strategic goals (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2017). This data-driven approach allows family businesses to transition from rigid traditions toward meritocratic, strategically resilient leadership models. Beyond selection, AI facilitates successor development by capturing tacit institutional knowledge—which often resides exclusively with senior family members—and identifying critical expertise gaps (Wang & Jiang, 2018). By tracking progress and recommending personalized skill-building activities, these systems ensure that heirs are adequately equipped to meet the business's strategic objectives.

A notable advancement, "Theory of Mind" AI, is gaining significant attention for its potential to navigate the "emotionally-noisy" landscape of family firms. This type of AI is designed to understand and respond to human emotional states and intentions, making it uniquely valuable for mediating interpersonal dynamics (Sawang & Kivits, 2023). By facilitating more

transparent communication and reducing perceived favouritism, such systems can support smoother transitions in the culturally sensitive environments of polygamous family structures. Despite this potential, implementation remains challenged by cultural scepticism regarding algorithmic impartiality (Ulrich & Frank, 2021). To build the necessary Trust a central component of our proposed mediator AI systems must be designed as "Explainable" (XAI) tools that complement rather than replace human judgment. Integrating socioemotional considerations into the system design is essential to ensure that AI adoption aligns with, rather than disrupts, family governance structures.

AI and Succession in Polygamous Family Businesses

Succession planning in polygamous family businesses is uniquely complex due to the involvement of multiple heirs from different family branches, each with competing interests and varying degrees of influence. In such contexts, AI holds significant potential to address key challenges, including leadership selection, conflict mediation, and equitable resource allocation, while ensuring that succession decisions align with both business sustainability and family values.

One of the most significant challenges in polygamous family businesses is the presence of multiple heirs, each vying for leadership roles. This often leads to disputes, as family members from different branches compete for control of the business. Bizri (2016) notes that in polygamous contexts, each wife may have several children, all of whom are potential successors. The resulting competition can destabilize both family harmony and business operations, especially if succession planning is influenced by familial favoritism or cultural norms like birth order.

AI can provide an impartial mechanism for evaluating the leadership potential of each heir. By relying on data-driven assessments that consider performance metrics, leadership qualities, and strategic vision, AI reduces the influence of emotional and interpersonal biases. Predictive analytics and machine learning can offer transparent evaluations, allowing families to make merit-based decisions rather than relying solely on tradition or familial loyalty (Sawang & Kivits, 2023). However, the design of AI algorithms is critical to their efficacy. For instance, AI systems must balance quantitative metrics, such as financial performance, with qualitative factors, such as the successor's alignment with family values and legacy. Failure to account for these socio-cultural nuances may result in resistance from family members, particularly in cultures where family harmony and tradition are deeply valued (Kumar & Ratten, 2024). Birth order has traditionally played a significant role in succession planning, particularly in polygamous families where the eldest child is often favoured for leadership roles. However, in these families, birth order can become ambiguous, as each wife's eldest child may claim seniority. This ambiguity often leads to disputes and complicates the succession process (Lyons et al., 2023).

AI's objectivity offers a way to navigate this complexity by focusing on merit rather than traditional norms. Through comprehensive assessments of each heir's qualifications and contributions, AI can identify the most capable leader, regardless of their birth order. This approach promotes fairness and ensures that succession decisions align with the long-term goals of the business. However, cultural implications cannot be ignored. In some families, birth order is deeply symbolic, and disregarding it may be perceived as a violation of tradition. To address this, AI systems should integrate cultural considerations into their decision-making frameworks, ensuring that their recommendations respect family norms while prioritizing business needs (Ulrich et al., 2023).

Intra-family rivalries are common in polygamous family businesses, as different branches of the family compete for influence and resources. These rivalries are often exacerbated by historical grievances and the unequal treatment of heirs, leading to conflicts

that can destabilize the business (Buckman et al., 2020). AI can act as a neutral mediator in these situations by providing data-driven insights that reduce the influence of personal biases. For example, AI can evaluate candidates based on objective criteria, such as their contributions to the business or their ability to lead effectively. These insights can help mitigate conflicts by offering transparent and impartial recommendations, fostering trust in the succession process. However, while AI can reduce tensions, it is not a comprehensive solution. Emotional and psychological dimensions of family dynamics often require human mediation and governance structures to complement AI's role. For instance, family councils or third-party mediators may still be necessary to address disputes that AI cannot resolve (Sawang & Kivits, 2023).

Resource allocation is another critical challenge in polygamous family businesses, where disputes over the distribution of assets can strain family relationships. Family members may perceive resource allocation as a zero-sum game, where one branch's gain comes at the expense of another. AI can help address this issue by simulating various allocation scenarios and providing data-driven recommendations for equitable distribution. By aligning resource allocation with both financial sustainability and family fairness, AI can reduce the perception of favoritism and mitigate tensions among family members (Wamba-Taguimdje et al., 2020). Despite its potential, AI's role in resource allocation must account for the emotional and symbolic value of assets. For instance, a family estate may hold greater sentimental significance than its financial value, and AI systems that overlook such factors may fail to gain acceptance. Therefore, AI-based recommendations should be complemented by human decision-making to ensure that emotional considerations are integrated into the allocation process.

Psychological and Social Effects on Heirs: Children in polygamous families often face psychological and social challenges, including feelings of neglect or rivalry with half-siblings, which can affect their preparedness for leadership roles (Al Sharif et al., 2016). AI can mitigate some of these challenges by introducing a structured and transparent succession process, reducing uncertainty and stress for potential heirs. For example, AI's clear criteria for leadership selection can provide heirs with a better understanding of their roles and expectations within the family business.

However, AI cannot address all psychological challenges. Mentorship and emotional support remain essential for preparing heirs for leadership roles. Family businesses should consider combining AI's data-driven insights with counseling and training programs to ensure that successors are emotionally equipped for their responsibilities (Bahari et al., 2021).

Trust and Mental Health Issues in Polygamous Families: Trust is a critical factor in the adoption of AI in family businesses, particularly in polygamous structures where relationships are often fragile. AI's impartiality can help build trust by ensuring that succession decisions are free from personal biases. However, trust in the AI system itself is equally important. If family members do not understand or trust the algorithms driving AI recommendations, they may reject its conclusions, leading to further disputes (Abd Razak et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the stress and anxiety associated with succession planning can exacerbate mental health challenges among heirs, particularly in polygamous families. AI can alleviate some of this stress by offering a clearer and more transparent process, but it is not a substitute for emotional and psychological support. Family businesses should integrate mental health resources into their succession planning processes to ensure that all family members feel supported and valued.

Theoretical Foundations

Succession planning in family businesses, particularly within polygamous structures, presents multifaceted challenges that necessitate a nuanced understanding of socio-cultural values, governance conflicts, and technological adoption. To address these complexities, this

study adopts a multi-lens theoretical approach grounded in Socioemotional Wealth (SEW), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Agency Theory. While SEW and Agency Theory provide deep insights into the social and relational tensions of the family firm, TAM offers a robust framework for evaluating the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a strategic intervention. By triangulating these perspectives, the study develops a comprehensive foundation for understanding how AI can be managed as a socio-technical for objective leadership transition in sensitive social environments.

Socio-Technical Perspective on AI-Enabled Succession

To understand the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within the delicate process of succession, this study adopts a socio-technical perspective. This lens posits that an organization is a complex system comprising two interdependent subsystems: the social subsystem, which includes the people, relationships, and cultural values (represented here by SEW and Agency Theory), and the technical subsystem, which encompasses the tools, techniques, and knowledge used to transform inputs into outputs (represented by AI and TAM) (Bostrom & Heinen, 1977). In the context of polygamous family businesses, these two subsystems are often in tension due to the "emotional noise" of the social layer conflicting with the "algorithmic logic" of the technical layer.

The proposed framework seeks joint optimisation, a state where both subsystems are designed to support one another rather than conflict. For the technical subsystem to be accepted within a sensitive family structure, it must be perceived as a "Responsible AI" artifact one that is transparent, explainable, and aligned with the non-financial goals of the family (Rai, 2020). Conversely, for the social subsystem to benefit from AI, it must undergo a process of digital transformation where traditional norms are reconciled with data-driven insights (Vial, 2019). By triangulating SEW, TAM, and Agency Theory through this socio-technical lens, we provide a holistic view of how AI adoption (Use and Trust) serves as a mediating mechanism that balances family legacy with the need for objective, high-impact leadership transitions.

Socioemotional Wealth (SEW)

The concept of Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) is central to understanding family businesses, as it emphasises the non-financial goals that are often prioritised by family firms, such as family control, identity, and legacy (Berrone et al., 2012). In polygamous family businesses, the preservation of SEW becomes increasingly complex as multiple branches could hold competing interest. For instance, one branch may focus on maintaining centralised family control, while another prioritizes external business growth or specific cultural traditions.

AI offers an innovative way to preserve SEW by introducing data-driven, merit-based decision-making. By providing transparent evaluations of potential successors, AI can mitigate the influence of "emotional noise" and familial politics, ensuring that succession decisions align with both business sustainability and family values (McCloskey et al., 2024). For example, AI can evaluate leadership candidates based on objective criteria such as business acumen, strategic vision, while simultaneously weighting their alignment with family values, thus balancing SEW priorities across disparate family branches.

However, the integration of AI into succession planning also poses challenges. Family members may perceive a data-driven approach as a threat to traditional practices. If AI recommendations prioritize operational efficiency over family legacy, it can trigger resistance (Kumar & Ratten, 2024). To address this, AI tools must be designed to incorporate SEW considerations, ensuring that decisions account for both business performance and family-centric values.

Ultimately, within a socio-technical framework, SEW serves as the primary objective function the non-financial goal that the AI system must be designed to optimise. While traditional decision-support systems often prioritise economic efficiency, a "Responsible AI" framework in family firms must treat the preservation of family identity and dynastic continuity as critical system constraints (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007). In the intricate environment of a polygamous firm, where "fragmented SEW" can lead to competing interpretations of family legacy across different branches, the role of AI shifts from a simple calculator to an integrative Information System. By quantifying socio-emotional variables alongside performance metrics, the system facilitates a "value-sensitive design" that reduces the risk of cultural resistance and ensures that the technical output remains legitimate in the eyes of the family (Rai, 2020).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides a foundational framework for understanding how family businesses adopt AI within their governance structure. TAM posits that two primary factors: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) determine the likelihood of technology adoption (Davis, 1989). In the context of succession planning, AI's perceived usefulness lies in its ability to mitigate succession conflicts, provide objective evaluation, and enhance complex decision-making processes.

For polygamous family businesses, AI address critical challenges such as intra-family rivalries, and birth order ambiguity. By offering impartial assessments and promoting procedural fairness, AI has the potential to build trust among family members and ensure smoother leadership transitions (Sawang & Kivits, 2023). For example, AI-driven insights can resolve disputes by transparently identifying the most qualified successor, fostering acceptance among competing family branches.

However, TAM also highlights barriers to AI adoption. Cultural resistance is a significant issue in polygamous families, where traditional hierarchies are deeply entrenched (Ulrich et al., 2023). Older family members may resist AI recommendations that challenge longstanding practices like primogeniture. Furthermore, the "AI knowledge gap" often limits the perceived ease of use, particularly in smaller family firms (Kumar & Ratten, 2024). To overcome these challenges, AI systems must be designed for explainability, allowing family businesses to integrate them into their governance structures without overwhelming stakeholders with black-box complexity.

In the context of the socio-technical transition, TAM must be extended to account for the unique psychological and relational climate of the polygamous firm. Here, "Perceived Usefulness" (PU) transcends mere operational efficiency; it is redefined as the "Perceived Objectivity" of the system the extent to which family members believe the AI provides a "bias-free" governance mechanism that protects the interests of all family branches equally (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Conversely, "Perceived Ease of Use" (PEOU) is contingent upon Algorithmic Transparency. In a culture where hierarchical authority is paramount, a "black box" system creates a high cognitive burden and perceived risk. Therefore, the successful integration of AI requires a "glass box" approach, where the explainability of the model's outputs reduces resistance and fosters the trust necessary for generational acceptance of digital governance (Rai, 2020; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Agency Theory

Agency Theory provides a complementary framework for understanding the conflicts that arise during succession planning, particularly in polygamous family businesses. Traditionally, the theory highlights the principal-agent problem, where the interests of owners (principals) diverge from those of managers (agents) (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). In

polygamous businesses, these conflicts are magnified due to the complex relationships between multiple wives, their children, creating unique informational and relational hurdles.

AI can help mitigate these conflicts by offering transparent, data-driven insights into leadership performance and potential. By evaluating successors based on quantifiable metrics, AI reduces the risk of nepotism and ensures that decisions align with the collective goals of the firm (Buckman et al., 2020). For example, AI can objectively assess whether a candidate possesses the strategic vision and leadership required to sustain the business, reducing the influence maternal favouritism or branch specific loyalties.

However, Agency Theory also raises concerns about the role of AI as a neutral entity. While AI can reduce biases, it may be perceived as an external threat to family control over the decision-making (Lyons et al., 2023). Therefore, AI must be positioned as a supportive tool that enhances, rather than replaces, family governance. Ensuring transparency in the system's logic is critical to building trust necessary for acceptance among family stakeholders.

Within a socio-technical framework, Agency Theory is redefined through the lens of Algorithmic Governance, where AI serves as a "digital monitor" to reduce the information asymmetries that typically plague multi-branch family firms. In polygamous structures, the "principal-principal" conflict where different family branches act as competing principals is often more disruptive than the traditional principal-agent divide. AI mitigates these agency costs by providing a transparent, data-driven record of candidate performance, thereby limiting the "agent entrenchment" or nepotism that can occur when a dominant branch controls the narrative (Buckman et al., 2020). By positioning the AI system as a neutral, third-party "agent" tasked with the objective evaluation of leadership potential, the firm establishes a more robust governance structure. This shift ensures that the successor's interests remain aligned with the collective goals of the entire family system, rather than the parochial interests of a single branch, thereby enhancing the long-term resilience of the firm (Rai, 2020).

Integrating SEW, TAM, and Agency Theory in AI-Based Succession Planning

Together, SEW, TAM, and Agency Theory provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding the role of AI in succession planning for polygamous family businesses. SEW emphasizes the necessity of preserving family identity and emotional bonds; while TAM highlights the socio-cognitive factors influencing AI adoption; and Agency Theory addresses the governance conflicts inherent in leadership. The integrating of these perspectives allows for the design AI tools that respect family values, enhance technological acceptance, and mitigate multifaceted agency conflicts.

This theoretical triangulation moves beyond a descriptive account of family dynamics to establish a multi-dimensional governance architecture. By integrating these three lenses, the proposed framework addresses the 'Succession Paradox' in polygamous firms: the urgent need for objective modernisation (TAM) without the erosion of traditional identity (SEW) or the escalation of branch-level conflicts (Agency Theory). We argue that the interaction between these theories creates a self-reinforcing socio-technical cycle: as AI transparency (TAM) reduces information asymmetry and favouritism (Agency), the resulting perceived fairness strengthens the collective family identity (SEW), which in turn lowers resistance to further digital transformation.

This integrated logic serves as the blueprint for the conceptual model. By aligning AI's capabilities with the socioemotional and cultural values of family businesses, for instance by weighting qualitative family legacy metrics alongside quantitative financial performance, This ensures that the technical subsystem (the AI) is not merely an external "tool" but an integrated component of the family's socio-technical ecosystem, specifically tailored to the unique complexities of polygamous family structures.

The Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework centres on the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into succession planning for polygamous family businesses, addressing the critical interplay between socioemotional, technological, and governance dimensions. AI is positioned as a transformative socio-technical mediator that supports leadership transitions by mitigating family conflicts, reducing emotional bias, and enabling data-driven decision-making.

Core Components of the Framework

1. AI as a Mediator in Succession Planning:

AI is envisioned as a neutral entity that mediates between competing family branches. By leveraging predictive analytics, and machine learning, AI provides objective evaluations of candidates and identifies knowledge gaps. This approach minimises interpersonal tensions and promote decisions that align with both business goals and family values.

2. AI's Role in Balancing Socioemotional Wealth (SEW):

- Preserving Family Identity and Legacy: AI integrates qualitative metrics, such as a candidate's alignment with family legacy, into its algorithms.
- Mitigating Emotional Bias: In polygamous family businesses, AI's data-driven nature provides an impartial perspective, reducing the influence of favouritism a common challenge in polygamous structures .
- Challenges: AI must be framed as a complementary tool that enhances, rather than replaces, human decision-making to avoid being seen as an "identity threat."

3. AI and Agency Theory: Reducing Conflicts:

- Transparent Leadership Evaluations: AI reduces principal-agent conflicts by ensuring successors are chosen based on competence rather than branch-specific loyalty.
- Conflict Mediation Among Multiple Heirs: AI acts as a neutral arbiter among half-siblings. For example, prescriptive analytics can present fair recommendations that foster trust in the process.
- Challenges: Trust requires Algorithmic Transparency; family members must understand how a recommendation was generated to accept its legitimacy.

4. Cultural Resistance and Technology Acceptance (TAM):

- Perceived Usefulness (PU): AI's ability to enhance decision-making and streamline transitions increases its perceived usefulness
- Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU): Achieved through customizable algorithms and "glass-box" interfaces that bridge the "AI knowledge gap."
- Challenges: Cultural resistance among older generations necessitates targeted education to bridge generational and digital divides.

Key Functions of AI in the Framework

Function	Description	Governance Outcome
Leadership Evaluation	Data-driven assessments focusing on performance and strategic alignment.	Merit-Based Succession
Knowledge Transfer	Digital preservation of tacit institutional knowledge.	Leadership Readiness
Conflict Mediation	Unbiased recommendations to reduce tensions between maternal branches.	Reduced Intra-Family Conflict
Resource Allocation	Simulating distribution scenarios to ensure equity.	Fair Asset Distribution

Table 1: Key functions of AI in the framework

Formalising Propositions

- Proposition 1 (P1): The perceived alignment of AI algorithms with the preservation of Socioemotional Wealth (SEW) positively influences the level of trust and adoption within polygamous family businesses.
- Proposition 2 (P2): Higher levels of Algorithmic Transparency (TAM) and explainability reduce the perceived risk of favouritism, thereby increasing the acceptance of AI as a neutral governance tool.
- Proposition 3 (P3): The successful adoption of AI, mediated by Trust, enables objective Conflict Mediation and Leadership Evaluation, mitigating the "Principal-Principal" rivalries inherent in multi-branch family structures.
- Proposition 4 (P4): AI-facilitated Resource Allocation leads to a more equitable distribution of assets, resulting in a state of Socio-Technical Equilibrium where sustainability and family harmony are jointly optimised.

Implementation Considerations

For the framework to be effective, several practical considerations must be addressed:

1. Customisation: AI systems must be adaptable to the cultural and structural nuances of polygamous family businesses, ensuring the algorithm accounts for varied kinship ties and branch-specific histories.
2. Transparency (Explainable AI-XAI): Beyond mere data processing, algorithms must be explainable. Providing clear rationales for recommendations ensures family members can verify the logic, which is the driver of building system trust.
3. Integration with Family Governance: AI should function as a Decision Support System (DSS) that complements existing human governance structures, such as family councils and advisory boards. This ensures technology facilitates rather than dictates the decision-making process, preserving the family sense of agency.

The structural logic of this framework is governed by a Socio-Technical flow, where the convergence of SEW, Agency Theory, and TAM serves as the critical antecedent to AI Adoption (Use & Trust). In the complex environment of a polygamous firm, "Use" is not merely a technical event but a social negotiation; therefore, "Trust" acts as the essential

psychological mediator that transforms a mathematical output into an accepted governance decision.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the framework follows a logical, multi-stage progression:

1. The Antecedents: The theoretical pillars (SEW, TAM, and Agency Theory) drive the central mediator of AI Adoption (Use & Trust).
2. Functional Processes (The Hexagonal Tasks): Once this "Use & Trust" threshold is met, the AI system can effectively execute its core tasks: Leadership Evaluation, Knowledge Transfer, Conflict Mediation, and Resource Allocation.
3. Governance Outcomes (The Rounded Rectangles): These functional processes serve as the direct catalysts for the final high-impact outcomes, such as Transparent Leadership and Fair Resource Distribution.

This transition from theoretical inputs to functional processes ultimately yields a state of Socio-Technical Equilibrium, where digital systems and traditional family structures coexist effectively to ensure both business sustainability and family harmony.

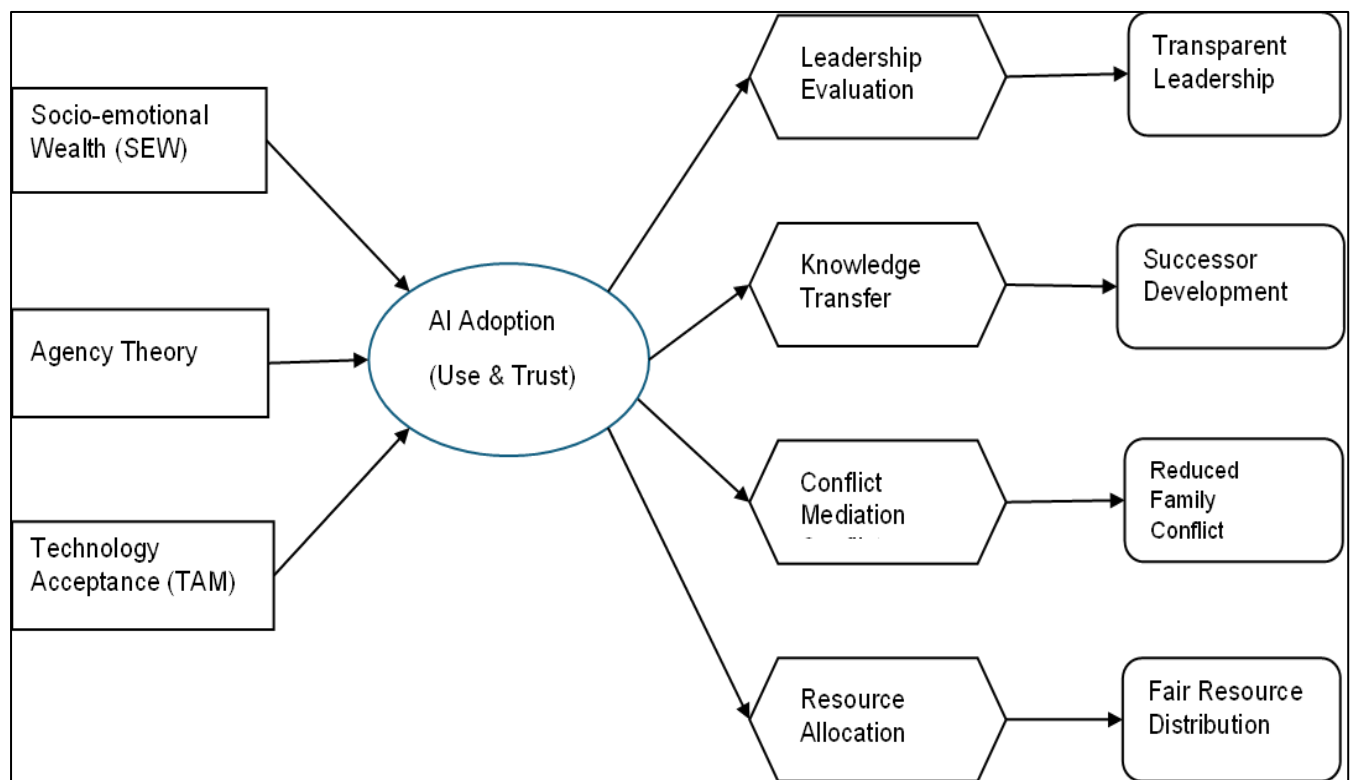


Figure 1: A Socio-Technical Framework for AI-Enabled Succession in Polygamous Family Businesses.

Discussion

The proposed conceptual framework provides a multifaceted approach to understanding the integration of AI within the succession planning process of polygamous family businesses. By positioning AI Adoption (Use & Trust) as a central mediator, the framework demonstrates how technical objectivity can be synthesized with sensitive family governance. While AI offers significant potential to address challenges such as leadership disputes, intra-family rivalries, and resource allocation, its implementation introduces distinct socio-technical complexities. These include cultural resistance, concerns regarding data quality, and the

ongoing challenge of balancing technological objectivity with the preservation of Socioemotional Wealth (SEW).

One of the core advantages of AI in succession planning is its capacity to introduce objectivity into a process traditionally fraught with emotional and interpersonal bias. In polygamous family businesses, where multiple heirs from different family branches compete for leadership, AI can serve as a neutral arbiter, providing data-driven evaluations of candidates. By prioritising quantifiable metrics such as business performance, strategic alignment, and leadership performance, AI can mitigate the disruptive influence of familial favouritism and promote merit based transitions (Sawang & Kivits, 2023). However, AI's impartiality does not fully address the socioemotional dimensions integral to family businesses. As emphasised by Socioemotional Wealth (SEW), family businesses prioritise non-financial goals, such as preservation of family legacy and the maintenance of emotional bonds (Berrone et al., 2012). In polygamous context, these priorities may be fragmented, with different branches emphasising distinct aspects of SEW, ranging from aggressive business growth to the rigid upholding of cultural traditions (McCloskey et al., 2024). Consequently, for AI to achieve legitimacy, systems must be designed through a value-sensitive lens that integrates SEW variables into their algorithms. This ensures that recommendations respect family-centric values alongside operational efficiency (Kumar & Ratten, 2024).

This integration represents a fundamental shift in the locus of authority within the polygamous firm. While traditional governance relies on hierarchical structures and seniority, the introduction of AI introduces a form of 'Algorithmic Authority' that can initially clash with deeply held cultural norms. However, the framework suggests that the 'perceived usefulness' (TAM) of AI is maximized when the system is positioned as a Decision Support System (DSS) that augments, rather than replaces, the wisdom of elders. By framing AI as a 'digital steward' of the family legacy, firms can reconcile the modern necessity for meritocracy with the continued preservation of Socioemotional Wealth. This stewardship model allows the technical subsystem to provide the objective data needed to resolve branch-level disputes while ensuring that the final decision-making power remains within the family's social subsystem.

AI's effectiveness in succession planning is fundamentally contingent upon its adoption, a process primarily governed by the dimensions of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). As Davis (1989) highlighted, adoption is determined by two key factors: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). While AI offers clear utility in optimizing decision-making and mitigating "principal-principal" conflicts, its integration is not guaranteed—particularly in polygamous family businesses where traditional, hierarchical governance is deeply entrenched. Cultural resistance remains a formidable barrier, especially among older generations who may perceive AI as an existential threat to their traditional authority or the family's socio-cultural values (Ulrich & Frank, 2021). In these contexts, where seniority and birth order often dictate the leadership pipeline, AI-driven recommendations that prioritize merit over age can be viewed as culturally disruptive. For instance, the favouring of an elder child—regardless of comparative competency—is a norm that data-driven insights may directly contradict. To mitigate this resistance, the "Perceived Ease of Use" must be addressed through user-friendly, "glass-box" interfaces that reduce technological intimidation. Furthermore, addressing the "AI knowledge gap" through targeted training is essential for smaller firms that lack institutional technical expertise (Kumar & Ratten, 2024). Ultimately, the successful adoption of AI depends on framing the technology as a cognitive enhancer that supports the wisdom of the elders rather than a replacement for their influence, thereby bridging the generational and digital divide.

Agency Theory offers a critical perspective on how AI can optimize succession planning by addressing the agency conflicts that arise from the separation of ownership and

management. In polygamous family businesses, these conflicts are often intensified by the intricate relationships between multiple maternal branches, each with distinct interests in the firm's future (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). AI serves as a powerful mechanism to reduce these tensions by providing objective, data-driven evaluations of candidate readiness, ensuring that leadership transitions align with strategic long-term goals rather than branch-specific favouritism (Buckman^b et al., 2020). However, the introduction of AI also presents a "control-legitimacy" challenge. Family members may perceive the algorithm as an external entity that threatens the family's sovereignty over their identity and legacy. To counteract this, AI must be positioned as a complementary governance tool rather than a replacement for family deliberation. From a socio-technical perspective, the mitigation of these conflicts depends entirely on the transparency of the technical artifact. In polygamous structures, mistrust often stems from "information asymmetry"—the perception that one family branch possesses more influence or data than others. AI acts as a transparent information infrastructure that moves the firm beyond simple technology adoption toward Algorithmic Governance. By utilizing Explainable AI (XAI), the "black box" of decision-making is opened, allowing all stakeholders including multiple wives and their heirs—to verify the objectivity of evaluations. This systemic transparency is the primary mechanism through which "Use & Trust" are built, serving as the central mediator in the conceptual model that leads to equitable leadership and resource distribution (Abd Razak et al., 2020).

Intra-family rivalries, particularly among half-siblings in polygamous family businesses, represent a significant source of friction during succession (Buckman et al., 2020). AI can serve as a neutral arbiter in these conflicts by providing unbiased, data-driven assessments of each candidate's leadership potential. However, while AI can mitigate personal biases, it is not a panacea for resolving deep-seated emotional conflicts. Instead, AI's role should be viewed as a technical component of a broader, integrative governance framework that includes family councils, human mediation, and psychological support for heirs (Sawang & Kivits, 2023). Beyond conflict mediation, the digital preservation of institutional knowledge is a critical pillar of this framework. In many family firms, valuable business insights are held tacitly by a few key individuals. AI facilitates a systematic knowledge transfer process, capturing and externalizing this "silent" expertise to reduce operational disruption during transitions (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). This is particularly vital in polygamous structures, where involvement levels may vary significantly across different maternal branches. By ensuring that all potential successors have equitable access to the firm's intellectual capital, AI-driven knowledge management ensures the next generation—regardless of their branch—is adequately prepared for leadership, thereby fostering organizational resilience and continuity (Wang & Jiang, 2018).

The proposed framework has significant implications for both practitioners and researchers. For practitioners, it offers a strategic roadmap for integrating AI into succession planning, emphasizing the necessity of customization, transparency, and alignment with socioemotional values. For researchers, the framework identifies critical avenues for future empirical inquiry, such as examining the longitudinal impact of AI on family harmony, investigating specific trust-building strategies, and measuring the effectiveness of AI in resolving branch-level succession disputes (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Bahari et al., 2021).

Ultimately, this discussion underscores that the successful integration of AI requires a "Socio-Technical Equilibrium." This is a state where the AI system is technically robust and objective, yet socially "legitimate" because it has been tailored to respect the unique emotional landscape of the polygamous family. Consequently, practitioners must focus not only on algorithmic accuracy but also on the organizational change management required to align digital tools with ancestral values. This ensuring that technology facilitates, rather than dictates, an inclusive and sustainable decision-making process.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in succession planning within family businesses, with a specific focus on the intricate dynamics of polygamous family structures. By integrating insights from the literature on AI and succession planning and grounding the analysis in Socioemotional Wealth (SEW), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Agency Theory, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how AI serves as both a strategic solution and a socio-technical challenge in complex organizational contexts.

The literature confirms that AI offers significant opportunities for optimizing decision-making by mitigating emotional bias, ensuring merit-based transitions, and reducing conflicts through data-driven insights (Jarrahi, 2018; McCloskey et al., 2024). In polygamous structures, where succession is often complicated by competing maternal branches, AI can streamline transitions by providing transparent evaluations, thereby minimizing intra-family disputes (Ramadani et al., 2020). However, the practical implementation of AI must be approached with a nuanced understanding of the "Succession Paradox."

A critical insight of this study is the tension between AI's rational recommendations and the socioemotional values central to the family firm. SEW underscores the necessity of preserving identity and legacy (Berrone et al., 2012); thus, AI systems must be designed to integrate qualitative, family-centric considerations. Failure to do so risks significant cultural resistance (Kumar & Ratten, 2024). Furthermore, as highlighted by TAM, adoption is contingent upon overcoming the "AI knowledge gap" and ensuring systems are aligned with familial norms (Davis, 1989; Ulrich et al., 2023). From an Agency Theory perspective, while AI reduces the risk of nepotism, its effectiveness relies on Algorithmic Transparency. To build the necessary trust, AI must complement—rather than replace—family deliberation (Abd Razak et al., 2020).

The primary theoretical contribution of this research lies in the conceptual synthesis of these three frameworks within the unique boundary conditions of polygamous succession. We extend Agency Theory by positioning AI as a "Digital Steward" capable of mitigating "Principal-Principal" conflicts between competing family branches. This demonstrates that "Technology Acceptance" in family firms is not merely a matter of usability, but a negotiation of Socio-Technical Equilibrium.

In terms of practical and research implications, this study offers a roadmap for practitioners to harness AI while maintaining cultural harmony. By framing AI as a mediator that enhances traditional governance, firms can address both business objectives and familial needs.

For the research community, the Propositions (P1–P4) developed herein provide a rigorous roadmap for future empirical inquiry. Scholars are encouraged to utilize qualitative case studies or longitudinal surveys to validate the mediating roles of "Trust" and "Perceived Objectivity." Future research should also explore region-specific applications of AI where legal and cultural frameworks vary, ensuring that the "black box" of AI is effectively opened to remain culturally resonant and ethically transparent.

In conclusion, AI holds tremendous potential to revolutionise succession planning in polygamous family businesses. By aligning technological capabilities with socioemotional and cultural values, these unique enterprises can ensure leadership transitions that are both equitable and sustainable, supporting long-term resilience in an increasingly digital global economy.

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