

ABSTRACT

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The doctoral dissertation is theoretical and empirical in nature. Its main objective is to identify and describe the implemented development strategies in family businesses of the SME sector in two different research periods, i.e. before and during the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the purposes of the scientific work, the main research hypothesis was formulated: "The development strategies of family businesses in the SME sector, implemented in the years 2018-2019, changed in the years 2020-2021, due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis".

Its verification was carried out taking into account appropriately selected statistical methods, and the results are presented in the last chapter of the thesis.

The basis for theoretical considerations is a critical analysis of the Polish and foreign-language scientific literature on the development strategy of enterprises, especially family businesses of the SME sector in Poland. The theoretical part has been prepared on the basis of bibliographic collections, including the literature on the subject, especially in the field of management and quality sciences. Empirical research was carried out in such a way as to verify the theoretical assumptions and accepted research hypotheses.

The dissertation consists of six chapters. The first three chapters constitute the theoretical part of the work, containing a critical analysis of the literature on the subject. The fourth chapter is methodical. Chapters five and six are empirical chapters, with chapter five presenting the results of empirical secondary research and chapter six presenting the results of empirical primary research. The characteristics of each chapter are presented below.

The **first chapter** presents the concept and essence of enterprise development. The conditions and factors of development, mechanisms of planning, organizing and coordinating development, as well as models of development of enterprises are presented, with an emphasis on the evolutionary and non-evolutionary development of modern enterprises.

The **second chapter** discusses the management of the development of family businesses. The definition and characteristics of family businesses are presented. Values and norms in family businesses are presented as a determinant of the actions taken in the management of their development. In addition, the key areas of management of the development of family businesses, i.e. human resources, innovation, internationalization and succession, were indicated. It shows how the management of the development of family businesses is in the light of the state, structure, complexity and dynamics of the contemporary environment. Attention was paid to dilemmas and challenges in managing the development of family businesses related to, for example, their values, norms and principles, the connection between ownership and management, relations with stakeholders and the multigenerational nature of family businesses.

The **third chapter** focuses on the development strategies of family businesses in the SME sector. The concept and essence of the development strategy are presented, presenting the views of selected authors on this subject. The determinants of planning, implementation and control of the enterprise development strategy are discussed, as well as the evolution of thoughts on the enterprise development strategy. This part of the paper also emphasizes the specificity of the development strategy of family businesses, presenting the characteristics and limitations of their strategies.

The **fourth chapter** refers to the research methodology of the doctoral dissertation. It presents the concept of research work, including research hypotheses and objectives, as well as the objective, subjective, temporal and spatial scope of the research. The selection of research objects and the criteria for their division as well as methods, techniques and research tools are indicated.

The **fifth chapter** analyses the determinants of the activity of family businesses in the SME sector in Poland in the period before and during the global crisis related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The legal, economic and social aspects of their activities are presented. The essence and significance of the global crisis related to the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences for the Polish economy were discussed. Aid activities for enterprises in Poland during the Covid-19 pandemic were presented, with particular

emphasis on entities from the SME sector. In addition, attention was paid to the dilemmas and challenges in managing the development of family businesses in the SME sector in the adopted research periods.

The sixth chapter is a presentation of the analyses and evaluation of the results of the primary research carried out in the field of factors and strategies for the development of family businesses in the SME sector before (2018-2019) and during the crisis related to the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2021). In this part of the paper, the factors and development strategies implemented among the surveyed enterprises in the adopted research periods and according to their size classes are indicated. In addition, the development plans of family businesses in the SME sector for the years 2023-2025 were presented. The last part of the thesis is its Summary and final conclusions with recommendations for entrepreneurs representing family businesses of the SME sector in Poland and political decision-makers shaping the conditions for the functioning of these entities. It is based on the broadest possible analysis, based on a critical review of the literature on the subject and author's research, including primary and secondary empirical research.

The obtained results have a practical value and can be treated as a valuable source of information on factors and strategies of development of family enterprises in the SME sector in the context of different socio-economic conditions in terms of managing the development of these businesses.