

# Socioemotional Approach: Exploring Women's Guilt in an All-Female Egyptian Family Business

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**Abstract** The role of women in family businesses is still an under-researched area, with existing research focusing on issues such as women's roles, work-life balance and equality in terms of pay or careers. This paper seeks to understand the close interpersonal relationships of a small family business. It uses a case study approach to examine the dynamics and emotions at play within the firm and then develops a thought-provoking model of guilt to explain these dynamics. The case study examines an all-female family business in Egypt (Sharm-el-Sheikh). It is a small women's wear business started and managed by the mother with both daughters employed. Using narrative inquiry, the research explores this family at a crucial turning point, following the business through near bankruptcy to 'seeing light at the end of the tunnel' before finally closing. The business achieved its recovery by professionalizing and changing ownership structures, aided by open communication and the recognition of roles and responsibilities. The research, conducted over a 2-year period starting in 2010 and ending in 2012, provides initial insights into the process through which family businesses are bound by guilt and love—emotions which exist simultaneously and which are reflected in the individuals, the businesses and the family members' lives. Suggestions for future research are also given. These include replication of the study in developed countries and other cultural contexts as well as development of a deeper understanding of the emotions of love and guilt in the context of working within and entering into family firms.

**Keywords** Family business • Case study • Egypt • Women • Socioemotional • Guilt

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## 1 Introduction

Family businesses are especially important in Middle Eastern economies, contributing significantly to GDP, employment and local areas (PWC 2016). While some multigenerational and wealthy families are well known—such as the 125 years of the El Rashidi family (El Rashidi el Mizan Confection) based in Cairo—smaller family businesses are of key interest as they may employ local people, contribute taxes and be seen as pillars of the community through their charity work. Hassan (2015) suggests that family businesses are the locomotive of development in Egypt and the Middle East, as international reports indicate that 90% of companies in the Middle East are family businesses that contribute 80% of the national income, account for 75% of the private sector and employ 70% of the private sector workforce. Hassan (2015) states that family businesses are strong in Egypt (except during the time of the nationalization) and can now help Egypt achieve an economic growth rate of 8% within a few years, provided that the founders—not just the sons—plan for the business to continue for generations to come. Therefore, family businesses are of significant importance to the world and to the Egyptian economy.

Internationally, family business has been defined in academic literature in several ways, with Sharma et al. (1996) identifying 34 different definitions for family business. Family business definitions vary in terms of degrees of ownership, overall input through governance or management by the family and the ability to transfer the business from one generation to the next. While these definitional differences may be problematic within the academic field, it should be noted that family businesses also define themselves as family businesses, irrespective of the views of academics.

Women have sometimes been described as ‘invisible’ and without influence in decision-making. Women’s efforts are not always properly recognized and rewarded in terms of job titles and salaries (Cesaroni and Sentuti 2014). Barriers for women in companies include the ‘glass ceiling’ (Burke 1997), ‘queen bee syndrome’ (Cooper 1997; Mavin 2006), ‘old boy networks’ (Burke 1997) and various forms of discrimination which women may encounter, such as diminished work-life balance or lack of career opportunities (Catalyst 2008; Mateos de Cabo et al. 2009). Cheung and Halpern (2010: 193) introduce the concept of the ‘motherhood wage penalty’, a term that describes the consistent finding that mothers earn less than comparable women without children and less than men in general. By contrast, married men appear to enjoy a marriage premium—an economic advantage that fathers enjoy in the workplace (Hersch and Stratton 2000).

Due to this inequality, many women leave the ‘corporate rat race’ disillusioned and start up their own companies (Wajcman 2004). However, surprisingly little research has been conducted which considers the circumstances in which these women work and how they run their firms (Díaz-García and Jiménez-Moreno 2010)

This research looks at a family business which is owned, managed and run by females. Although there is an assumption that love promotes commitment (Gonzaga et al. 2001), this exploratory case study identified not love but guilt as the primary bond between family members, their business and customers.

## 2 Background

Responding to a recent call from researchers to investigate 'family'-level phenomena (Chua et al. 1999), this study examines emotions within a family-owned business, taking the 'family' as the unit of study and exploring the underlying systems relative to the family firm—the family system and the business system, together with their overlap/interaction—more fully. Emotions in family businesses have sometimes been considered from a somewhat negative perspective. The starting point for the researchers in this case study was to consider how emotions might manifest and interplay within an all-female family firm—in this case, a small retail shop founded in 2003.

The overarching preconception of the research is that emotions may exert influence on family businesses, and the aim is to identify the extent of these emotions and explore how this dynamic may present itself in a family business setting. Understanding emotions in the workplace has been of interest to management scholars for more than a decade (Daus and Ashkanasy 2005). Emotion has been hailed as the missing ingredient in understanding organizational life (Fineman 2004). Hochschild (1979) suggests that emotion is embedded in the fabric of social practices. As she and others have indicated, extracting emotion—situationalizing it—is problematic and 'what we do, think and feel can be regarded as interpenetrative, context-bound and fluid' (found in Fineman 2004: 720). From a social constructionist perspective:

... emotions are not all our own, although we like to think they are. They are borrowed from our national and organizational culture, and we return them in sometimes modified form. This is how the norms of appropriate feelings and emotions change over time. The culture of the organization helps create and reinforce the dominant emotions of control in the workplace, such as guilt, fear, shame, anxiety or 'looking happy'. We have to learn what emotional 'face' is appropriate, and when. (Fineman 2003: 23)

The expression of emotions within the family business has been explored by Nicholson (2008) and in the context of family wars (Gordon and Nicholson 2010). However, family business research appears to have focused primarily on the study of negative expressions and manifestations of emotions in the family business. Emotions such as anger, hatred, mistrust and conflict have been explored within three main themes: first relationships; second, expression of emotions, and third, emotions. These can influence succession, transferring power and decision-making. Cosier and Harvey (1998) suggested there is functional conflict in family businesses, which is helpful and encourages improved decisions.

The expression of emotions in terms of relationships has been examined in the following circumstances: boards of directors (Lane et al. 2006), father/son relationships (Davis and Tagiuri 1989), father/daughter emotional triangles (Grote 2003), emotional kinship group and divided families (Ainsworth and Wolfram-Cox 2003; Gabriel 2003) and mentoring (Boyd et al. 1999). Women have been examined as 'invisible' women in the contexts of husband/wife co-entrepreneurial couples and prenuptial agreements (Danes and Olson 2003), as siblings (Key and Cole 2001;

Friedman 1991) and in terms of sustaining trust (Sundaramurthy 2008; Cesinger et al. 2016). However, little research appears to have been conducted on all-female family businesses where women have founded, owned, operated and managed the family firm, especially in the context of Egypt.

Academics have considered the impact of emotions and change in the context of succession, transferring power, and decision-making (Chirico and Salvato 2008; Dyer 1986), in terms of loss and continuity of the family business (Herz Brown 1993) and in terms of the death of the family business (Goldberg 1997). Socioemotional development is a process that consists of variations that occur in an individual's personality, emotions and relationships with others during the individual's lifetime (Santrock 2007). Socioemotional team members devote their time and energy to support the emotional needs of others and seek to maintain the team as a social unit. This paper seeks to broaden our understanding of emotions and bonds within the family business and specifically to understand the socioemotional processes of working in an all-female family business. The paper also seeks to address calls by academics to consider intractable family-level issues within family businesses and to consider the 'family' as the unit of study. Recognizing the issues that family businesses face, understanding how to develop strategies to address them and creating family stories that explain the emotional dimension of these issues to family members are of prime importance to business success (de Vries et al. 2007). However, in Egypt and the Middle East—even though family businesses are seen as the locomotive of development—only 3% are capable of continuing until the fourth and fifth generations, dampening their chances of becoming large multinational companies. Furthermore, 70% of those companies are limited in duration to the lifespan of their founders, as 30 out of 100 businesses continue after the death of the founder (Hassan 2015).

De Vries et al. (2007: xix) suggest that 'the most intractable family business issues are not the business problems the organization faces, but the emotional issues that compound them'. This idea can be extended to exploring gendered processes in family business operations and dynamics, adding to the 'international evidence of the changes in men's and women's roles, positioning and leadership within family businesses' (Baines and Wheelock 2000; Cappuyns 2007; Danes et al. 2005).

Guilt is an emotion, an internal state and one of the 'sad' emotions (Fischer et al. 1990). Cognitive theory suggests that people who experience guilt on a chronic basis mistakenly suffer under the illusion that they have caused other people harm. Guilt occurs when a person realizes that they have violated a moral standard and undertakes an inner reflection on personal wrongdoing (Hoffman 1994). Therefore, this research was guided by the overarching research question: how do socioemotional processes, in particular guilt, manifest within an all-female-owned and all-female-operated family business?

This chapter is structured as follows. First, a literature review highlights previous relevant research. Second, the collected data from observations, interviews and field notes is discussed. Finally, the family business guilt model and its policy implications for Egypt are discussed.

## 2.1 *The Role of Women in Family Businesses*

Annino and Davidow (2009) have identified various roles that women play: wife, mother, stepmother, daughter, daughter-in-law, sister and sister-in law. However, these can be extended to include other roles such as grandmother, step-grandmother, stepsister, guardian, cousin and step-cousin. Women can be actively or passively involved in a family business, mostly moving along this spectrum at different stages. Case studies have highlighted that women can play an active role in initiating or funding a business before taking more of a passive role when looking after the family while the business grows (Cappuyns 2007; Aronoff 1998). Women who are not active in the family business are more likely to be educated, active and impassioned owners whose insights and inputs are encouraged and honoured rather than relegated to pillow talk (Aronoff 1998). 'Common wisdom' now suggests inclusion rather than exclusion of spouses at family ownership meetings (Aronoff 1998). Some authors use the terms 'emotional leadership' or 'chief emotional officer' to describe women's roles (Lyman 1988; Salganicoff 1990; Ward 1987). Ward (1987) considered that women carry out their task of emotional leadership in the family firm and that they frequently do so in an unrecognized capacity, they interpret the behaviour of one family member to another, they keep the communication channels open, they ensure that feelings are considered and they plan special family functions.

Research identifies women as increasingly represented in managerial positions and considered as potential successors within family businesses. However, there is still occupational segregation and women often occupy stereotypical roles. Women also often have subtle roles, and there is still an issue with non-recognition of the contribution of women (Cromie and O'Sullivan 1999; Curimbaba 2002; Dumas 1989; Frishkoff and Brown 1993; Brush 1992; Cadieux et al. 2002; Cole 1997; Vera and Dean 2005). There are a number of gaps in the research, including the role of women in family firm genesis (Fakoussa and Collins 2012), women on boards (IFB 2011) and women as founders of family businesses (Dumas 1989). This research addresses this neglected area of study.

Past research on the role of women in family businesses has been related to the following topics: women integrating into the family business in order to help (accidental involvement); opportunities to access traditionally masculine industries; women's secretarial, pay clerk or billing clerk functions; women's differing pay and unpaid tasks; women's work in and/or outside the family business while being in charge of the sound functioning of the family; women being more likely to take part in a business founded by their husband (Rowe and Hong 2000; Cappuyns 2007; Lee et al. 2006). Further, Janjuha-Jivraj (2004) describes mothers as a 'buffer', ascribing to women the role of acting as a buffer between different generations. This reinforces ideas about the hidden nature of maternal involvement in familial dynamics. The authors conclude that this status is often unrecognized by family members.

Further relevant research by Tagiuri and Davis (1992) has highlighted the role conflicts between family, business running and business ownership, with Otten (2012) extending this to include the role of the individual. Family business writers use the term ‘role’ in discussing the issue of having multiple roles to perform—such multiple roles can result in ‘role conflict’ (Salganicoff 1990), ‘role carryover’ (Rosenblatt et al. 1985) and ‘role confusion’ (Freudenberger et al. 1989). These terms all refer to the two incompatible roles (business and family) contained in family business relationships.

Despite the relevance of the above research, the topic of women founders and owners of family businesses is still under-researched. Research can be found on second-generation women in family businesses. Curimbaba (2002) distinguishes three typical roles for daughters (‘heiresses’) in family businesses: ‘invisible’, ‘professional’ and ‘anchor’. These roles are greatly influenced by the woman’s birth position and the number of men in the same generation. While historically, Egyptian culture favoured first-born sons, this is gradually changing; more women are being educated, graduating from universities, starting their own businesses as entrepreneurs and taking over family businesses (ENID 2012).

Research conducted in the USA by Dumas (1989) involved in-depth interviews with 40 family members in 18 family-owned businesses in the Southern California area. Participants included 20 daughters and 15 fathers in first-generation family firms. Dumas concluded there were four categories of problems that affected daughters as managers in the family firm: untapped resources, identity conflict and ambiguity, family/managerial conflict and interdependence.

A similar study conducted by Cole (1997) involving nine case studies (with 23 research participants, 12 females and 11 males) identified similar themes: invisibility (women treating other women as invisible), women not accepting traditional roles, men and women playing the same roles, women taking longer to make decisions and women advancing as fast as men.

Research on women by Barrett and Moores (2006) involved interviewing different generations of women (16 participants were drawn from 15 firms) from family firms in Australia. They concluded that women faced different styles of learning leadership within the family firm. They categorized these as learning journeys to leadership in which they progressively learnt about business, learnt their business, learnt to lead their business and learnt to let go of their business. They tentatively labelled the women according to their experiences: long march, short journey, swimming against the tide, high road and low road and travelling companions.

Dumas (1989: 43) highlighted women’s need for intimacy or affiliation, identifying this as the key difference between women and men and their behaviour in family businesses. She suggests that man-man relationships, the tradition in family firms, have been based upon a need for independent behaviour which, in Dumas’s opinion, may not work for women. Women, by nature, may expect more ‘collaboration, cooperation, and interaction’ (1989: 43). This is disputed by Aronoff (1998: 184), who suggests that the gender issue is becoming a non-issue as it relates to leadership,

ownership and participation. Therefore, this research seeks to identify more depth in woman-woman relationships.

Furthermore, relationships within families are dynamic and shift constantly during the life cycle of a family—and women are socialized to protect and nurture the family. Given the ability of women to perform several roles simultaneously, they can provide the pliable adhesiveness that holds changing families together (Salganicoff 1990). Therefore, this case study adds to the literature by examining women and founder roles in an all-female family business in Egypt.

## 2.2 *Emotional Ownership and the Role of Guilt*

Zahn-Waxler (2000) linked the development of empathy to guilt and ultimately to distress, highlighting the differences between genders in dealing with problems and showing that women tended to internalize problems more. Following on from this theme, guilt is found in many areas, including business, psychology and sociology (i.e. Weiner et al. 1982; McBarnet 2010). Stanford (2012) identified guilt as a motivator which leads to stronger commitment. Such commitment is found throughout family businesses: in long-term goals, involvement in the local community and high staff commitment (Ward 1987).

In family businesses, 'financial commitment' is not enough; a deeper commitment is needed (Gallo et al. 2007), as the survival of the family and the family business may depend on it. Álvarez (2003) suggested that psychological ownership encourages emotional commitment. Sherwood and Glidewell (1972) suggested that in relationships, there are implicit contracts, which after a while may work against the relationship unless they are made explicit by negotiating a 'new' contract. They further identified that relationships can continue productively until another challenge requires the contract to be re-evaluated and renegotiated. This is often called a 'psychological contract'—a term used to define these unwritten expectations between individuals, the family and the family business.

Wodak (1981) created an 'interdisciplinary framework (selecting categories from linguistics, psychology and sociology)' (found in Wodak and Schulz 1986) to identify guilt in families, specifically focusing on mother-daughter relationships. Miceli and Castelfranchi's (1998) framework focused on interpersonal guilt in people giving charitable donations. They proposed three components of guilt: (a) one will not feel guilty about something for which one does not feel in some way responsible. Responsibility may stem from causing something to occur or from failing to avoid the onset of some occurrence; (b) action or lack thereof causes harm; (c) one's personal moral standards are violated. Using this as an example, in a family business, not 'helping out' in the business may cause the business to fail. The person may (a) feel 'connected to' the business, as it has been part of their family; (b) feel that their lack of action has caused harm; and (c) feel they ought to help their family and that it is immoral not to help someone in need. Marshack (1994)

**Table 1** Types of commitment

Group I	People who devote effort and enthusiasm but expect compensation
Group II	[As a company evolves] people who believe: ‘The company should compensate me while I owe nothing to the company’
Group III	People who believe: ‘While the company lasts, I should help it without any strong commitment’
Group IV	People who ask: ‘Are we a family business?’

describes the family business as a ‘closed system’ which reinforces the roles women play in the family and in the workforce.

Miceli and Castelfranchi’s framework (1998) has been used in different fields. For example, Ward and Styles (2012) used the framework to look at migration, using development theory to investigate relationships between mothers and daughters. Using this as a guideline, each individual’s narrative was taken and used to answer the following questions: (a) Did guilt exist? (b) If yes, towards whom or what? (c) Was it openly spoken about or merely implied?

Gallo and Cappuyns (2004) identified four different behavioural groups linked to levels of commitment to the family business. These appear to reflect the natural evolution between the family and the family business (Table 1).

One could also draw links with the life cycle of businesses as well as with each individual’s development as their own person (in terms of their role in the family business, the development of their own career and their life choices—such as having their own children).

In summary, limited research is currently available on Egypt and female-run businesses. This research seeks to develop understanding about guilt while following the business through its different levels of commitment and its dynamics in the context of family business in Egypt.

### 3 Research Design

#### 3.1 Method

Narrative is a powerful tool which can help communicate meaning (Bruner 1990). While there are many definitions of narrative inquiry, the definition offered by Connelly and Clandinin (2006)—which emphasizes the importance of ‘storied lives’—has been used for this study. They suggest that:

... arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are, and they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters



the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful.

Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (Connelly and Clandinin 2006: 477)

Narrative inquiry has been used broadly in studies of community (Huber and Whelan 2001), psychology, sociology, medicine, literature and cultural studies (Riessman 1993; Mishler 1995).

Fineman (2003: 9) introduces four different emotional perspectives: biological (genetic), early childhood (psychoanalytic), cognitive appraisal (behavioural) and social (social constructivist) as ways of offering insights into the emotional dynamics at play in an organization. The two particular forms that influenced and directed the analysis of the all-female family business were the social perspective and the psychoanalytic perspective. A social perspective emphasizes the importance of context and the cultural settings in which emotions are learnt and expressed, which can be gendered. Social learning can overwrite and transform biological impulses and early childhood experiences and interpretations.

Narrative methods assume that knowledge of any social phenomena may be held in stories which can be relayed, stored and retrieved. This method is ideally suited to investigations which seek to understand the 'why' behind human action, as it allows the investigator to put data into their own words. Hence, in this exploratory study of the subjective and emotional life of one family business, it was deemed useful as a way of seeking to understand this phenomenon, enabling it to be explored through the meanings that each member assigned to it. To derive meaning from stories, the personal background of the individual should be known and understood—this involves understanding the meaning of situations to the individual and the cultural and organizational context that shapes the way emotion is expressed and controlled (Fineman 2003). Therefore, this research is also a case study. Case studies can be used to answer 'why' and 'how' questions (Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 2003; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). Further, Suddaby (2006) suggests that case studies help researchers to gain new understanding of different relationships between social actors, outlining how these relationships and interactions actively construct reality.

The case study and resulting model are based on research conducted over a 2-year period between 2010 and 2012. This involved several visits to the shop together with detailed interviews, observations and field notes. The key data collection points were unstructured interviews covering general family business topics as well as exploring emotions with the case study business. Further informal conversations which informed the research also took place over the 2 years. These informal conversations have not been listed (Table 2).

Notes were taken during and after the interviews, and these notes, with observations and interview transcripts, were manually coded into themes. This case study was selected because the researcher was able to gather very detailed data over an extended period of time—this was rich data from each individual as well as from

**Table 2** Key interview times

Date	Interviews	Time	Method
Spring 2010	All women	2 h	Face to face (in shop with some disturbances)
Spring 2010	Mother Mother and Daughter A Mother and Daughter B	20 min 20 min 20 min	Face to face (in shop with some disturbances)
Autumn 2010	Mother Daughter A Daughter B	20 min 20 min 15 min	Skype (individual interviews, but each person could be overheard)
Spring 2011	All women	1 h	Face to face (in shop with some disturbances)
Spring 2011	Mother alone Daughters A and B Mother and Daughter A Mother and Daughter B	30 min 40 min 20 min 20 min	Face to face (in shop without disturbances)
Autumn 2011	Mother Daughter A Daughter B	20 min 20 min 15 min	Skype (individual interviews, but each person could be overheard)
Spring 2012	Mother Daughter A Daughter B	30 min 30 min 30 min	Face to face (in shop with some disturbances)

different combinations of the three women, such as the mother and daughter(s) or both daughters together in a range of circumstances.

### 3.2 Context

The small boutique was located centrally in the tourist town of Sharm-el-Sheikh. Based on one of the busy main streets, it had a small window as a shop front. This opened up into a dressing area, which was hidden from view. The shop stocked wedding dresses, groom suits, accessories such as veils and shoes and other things needed for weddings. It carried about 150 different dress styles, each valued at between \$180 and \$2000 [In 2011, Egyptian workers were paid an average weekly salary of LE534, by 2012 LE641 (\$89.60) (CAPMAS 2012).]<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Minimum wage (lowest nominal wage per month) for permanent government workers was set at 35 Egyptian pounds in 1984 and remained unchanged at that level until 2010. Minimum wages in Egypt were then increased to 700 EGP/month in 2012 and to 1200 EGP/month in 2014 (Trading Economics 2016). Egypt's inflation rate averaged 8.6% in 2012.

While its main trade was related to weddings, the shop also carried a selection of materials suitable for other occasions. There were several shops (and the open market) selling patterns and cloth in Sharm, but this was one of the only shops in the town to sell 'Western'-style wedding dresses, and it targeted predominantly 'Western' tastes, mostly through word of mouth.

The business was started by the mother in 2003, at which time she was a sole trader and the sole owner of the business. From 2011 onwards, all three women had equal shares in the business. The business had existed for 7 years when the research started, and at that time, trade was declining. The business closed in 2015.

After its initial success, the business struggled (during the data collection period) before finally closing due to external factors beyond its control. In recent years, Egypt has undergone several economic and political changes. In brief, key political changes have included the 'Arab Spring' in 2011—known as the January 25 Revolution—which led to the ousting of the 40-year leader, Hosni Mubarak. Political turmoil followed, with Islamist Morsi elected as president in 2012 and the current president—General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi—elected in 2014. A major concern over economic stability developed, and this caused unrest and uncertainty for many businesses and entrepreneurs (Hattab 2012). While initially this turmoil had little effect on the tourist industry, the socio-economic climate made trading more difficult, especially in terms of sourcing materials and receiving deliveries. Further, since the air crash on 31 October 2015, there have been no tourist flights directly to Sharm, and it has become a virtual ghost town (Calder 2016). This has meant hotels, shops and other venues have been forced to close and let their staff go.

## 4 Findings

The mother's description of how she started the business centred around the fact that in Egypt, businesses have to contend with official requirements involving high volumes of paperwork and many processes. The mother stated: '*...instead of having a digital database, it's all physical in Egypt, which in return slows anything you have to do to get paperwork done*'.

She continued with examples of inefficiencies around starting up:

*It was in Ramadan and I was fasting. I went at 9am. I thought at that time of day, when everyone is fasting, I'll get things done quickly—only to find out that there was a queue in front of the building that went all the way up the stairs to the seventh floor. People were there from 2am in Ramadan to get their paperwork done.*

She explained that after she had waited in the queue for 5 h, the office closed at 2 p.m., leaving many people waiting. She further described the frequent difficulties faced in obtaining stock:

*Corruption plays a big part here in Egypt. Bribery appears to be the only way to work. I remember in the early stages of my start-up I refused to bribe an employee to finish the custom papers for me. They locked up the goods in the port for over 11 days. I was worried that late delivery would ruin my reputation amongst clients. Since then I have admitted that bribery in Egypt is part of the business.*

**Table 3** Family business members

	Mother	Daughter A	Daughter B
Personality description	Feels trapped and frustrated. Feels the business is all hers and she is not able to delegate responsibility	Strong headed and strong willed; feels she is letting down her husband and family	Not as confident as her sister; thinks her sister is better and stronger
Status	Widowed	Married, two children	Not married
Employment	Works 6 days per week (works Saturdays alone—the busiest day)	Works part-time while taking care of a family	Works 5 days per week
Roles pre-2011	Sewing and customer service	Customer service	Customer service
Roles post-2011	Sewing and customer service	Marketing	Finances
Education	Secondary school	Educated to 18 years of age	Educated to 18 years of age; completed some extra courses

After getting over the initial hurdles of corruption and bribery, the business initially grew and became profitable. However, profits had been declining over the 3 years preceding the start of the research, and by 2010 the shop had reduced its staff numbers from seven to three (mother, Daughter A and Daughter B). The sisters entered the business straight from school. The mother did not pay herself a wage, and both daughters took a reduced wage. The mother had also remortgaged her house in order to keep the business going. In 2010, profit was around 3%, roughly \$1000, with around 80 unsold dresses in stock (estimated value \$80,000). Table 3 describes the three family members and their contributions to the business.

#### **4.1 Family Roles and Guilt**

The family identified that the roles within the business seemed very unclear. There was no clear delegation or hierarchy. The mother saw herself very much in her maternal role, referring to herself in the third person as ‘Mum’ (e.g. ‘Mum works Saturdays’). In both private and business settings, both daughters referred to her as ‘Mum’.

There was little indication of the family members being able to distinguish between their personal and professional lives. This was reflected in the lack of system and organization within the business. During the course of the research, one strategy which the family discussed was leaving the ‘sister’ and ‘mother’ roles at the door as they came into the shop, as all felt they would work better together as colleagues than as family members. Daughter B stated: *‘Yes, of course I can work with [Daughter A]. There are only three of us. We don’t always get on, but that is*

*the sisters in us, not the colleagues in us*’. This shows willingness to attempt to be more professional.

Due to the lack of clear roles, there was persistent conflict between the women—especially between the two siblings—which appeared to erupt frequently.

### 4.2 Guilt and Changes

In 2010, the business had hit a critical stage. It could not afford to re-employ any staff, buy new stock, redecorate or invest. The mother stated: *‘I don’t know how to pay the girls or the bills’*.

Guilt was explained in different ways. Below are some examples.

Based on the comments in Tables 4 and 5, it appears that the realization about the potential closing of the shop due to lack of money caused the family members to examine themselves more deeply and to accept that things could not continue as they were. The mother realized that she had a deep attachment to the business, *‘her baby’*. To her, closure would not just mean the loss of ownership and monetary value but would have deeper psychological implications (Ucbasaran et al. 2012). The mother suggested: *‘I am going to look upon my daughters as young women— independent and both very competent. They can both actually do the job. And one of the first things. . . is making a formal partnership between the three of us’*.

In light of this, in 2011 the family decided to implement large changes: dividing ownership between all three women equally and consciously separating ‘family

**Table 4** Guilt and changes (1)

	Mother	Daughter A	Daughter B
Realization of a possible need to close the business (2010)	<p>‘The very very very worst thing would be to end up in bankruptcy court’</p> <p>‘Also, it is kind of tradition to handover the business to your children—to ensure that they have the opportunity to continue the legacy of the family and maintain their status’</p>	<p>‘I have never seen the actual numbers. I guess deep down we knew how it was, but after nine years of putting so much in and putting in so much financially, we need change’</p>	<p>‘I have never seen the numbers rot the business before. Seeing the figures makes it all so much more real. We have been burying our heads in the sand’</p>
Why carry on working?	<p>‘I have put my life, my money, my house into this. I can’t leave it. What about the customers? The girls? I can’t, I can’t—it has to work’</p>	<p>‘After investing years in the business, I grew up with it. I can’t have wasted years and just give up? Give up on my mum, my family, my community?’</p>	<p>‘I don’t know. I don’t know if it’s the love for mum or the love for the business. Or the guilt of failing? Letting her fail at her dream? It’s hard, but there is no way I could leave or close it’</p>

**Table 5** Guilt and changes (2)

	Mother	Daughter A	Daughter B
General exhaustion and guilt	<p>'I have to have everyone else's shifts. Everyone has Saturdays off. Mum hasn't had one off apart from that one wedding in January'</p> <p>'If I have a stroke, at least I'll have a rest in bed'</p> <p>'I would like to have a little bit of time to enjoy and a little bit of money to enjoy it with'</p> <p>'I feel guilty that I cannot offer the family better'</p>	<p>'I feel guilty about having children'</p> <p>'I feel guilty about feeling guilty about the children'</p> <p>'I feel guilty for not having enough for the business'</p> <p>'I feel like I let everyone down'</p>	<p>'I feel I have to live mum's dream—I can't leave her alone. She has no one but us'</p> <p>'I feel so guilty that I can't even dare to dream my own dreams'</p> <p>'I feel guilty for blaming mum and guilty for feeling guilty. I love her so much'</p>
Different bonding guilt examples	<p><i>Guilt about selfishness:</i></p> <p>'[Daughter B] said to me: everything that you said you wanted to do was all to help me—nothing was about you. I want you to get something out of this as well. It hasn't got to be about saving mum. You have to be part of the team'</p>	<p><i>Guilt about uncertainty:</i></p> <p>'I have not been focused in the past. I know that I've wanted to leave, do other things. But I believe now I can see clearly the path before me. I want to work alongside my family, in harmony. I feel now the shop is my chosen career path'</p>	<p><i>Guilt about not being 'enough':</i></p> <p>'Even though other people could probably do the job much better than me, I can bring love to the business. It is a family business; I can give what no other person can'</p>

mode' from 'business mode'. This professionalization of the family business meant they would work collaboratively as opposed to within family roles (mother, daughters and sisters).

Each of the women had clear areas of responsibility: Daughter B looked after the finances, Daughter A worked on marketing to attract customers and the mother trusted, tried not to interfere and focused on sewing and helping customers. (See Table 3 for pre- and post-2011 roles.)

Identifying as equals was illustrated in one exchange, in which the mother asked: 'Where are the sisters' (roles) going to be left from now on?' Daughter B replied: 'At the door before we come in', with Daughter A adding 'But so does the mum!'

Distributing ownership also had a major impact on Daughter A, who stated: 'Previously, when clients asked, it was "mum's shop", and I said things to my family like, "I help mum out on three days a week". However, now (with one third ownership), I feel like I am a viable member of the team and we are all partners'. This demonstrates that feelings of belonging seemed to increase with the changes, while feelings of guilt seemed to lessen—guilt was not being expressed as frequently. The diagrams below suggest that guilt in a family business increases or decreases with the sense of connectedness within the business.

Through exploring and crystallizing the feelings of all the parties, it became clear that the business and all the relationships were struggling and that there was a central theme of guilt running between these women:

- Within the ‘old’ family:
  - Guilt about not being able to pull their weight and letting everyone down
  - Guilt about not being able to give enough attention to the business
- Within the ‘new’ family:
  - Guilt about not being able to give enough attention to the children
  - Guilt about not being able to give enough attention to the family
- Within the family business:
  - Guilt about having children, as this detracts from time available to spend in the business
  - Guilt about not doing a proper job (Fig. 1)

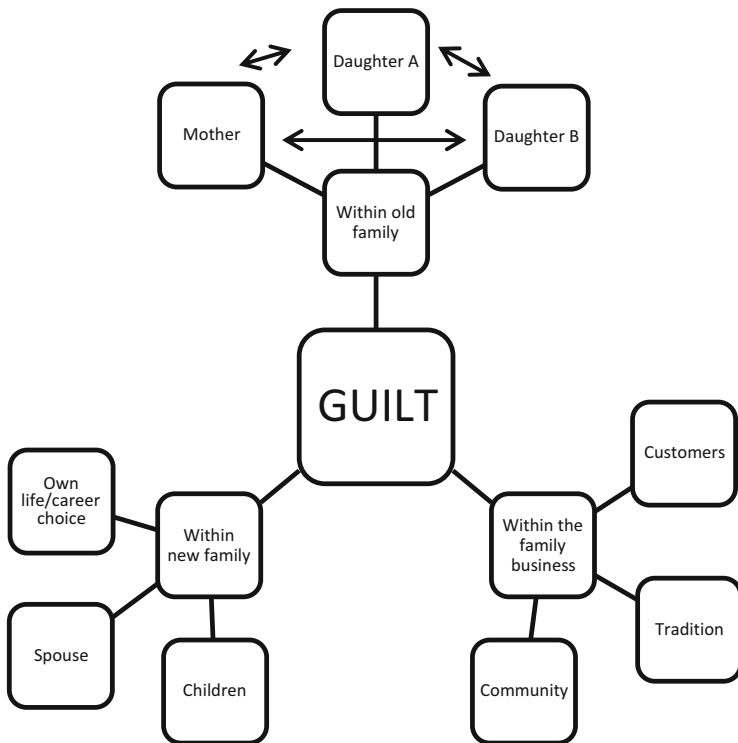


Fig. 1 Guilt in an Egyptian family business

This simplified model shows how guilt bonds all the elements together and demonstrates that the closer the individual is to the business, the higher the levels of guilt experienced (Figs. 2 and 3).

The deep bond that exists seems to be built on love but also on guilt within each separate section of each individual’s life. This model helps to explain the burden that is often described as being part of family businesses. Though research has shown that love promotes commitment (Gonzaga et al. 2001), in this case, the guilt related to the surrounding family, the community, each other and the business appears a stronger cause.

Parrott (2001) argues that there is no social psychology that does not involve emotions. Emotions distinguish themselves from sensations, feelings and moods. Researchers have described ‘trees’ of emotions (Parrott 2001) with six primary emotions and ‘wheels’ of emotions (Plutchik 1980) with eight basic emotions, showing interplay and connectivity between emotions. Emotions might be linked to culture and to cultural or local expectations as well as to socio-economic expectations (see Sect. 5). Culturally listening and sharing the community customs

Fig. 2 Triangle of guilt

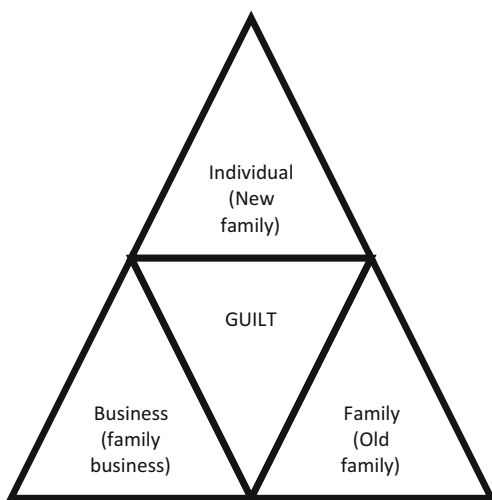
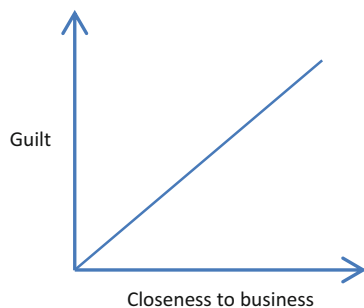


Fig. 3 Simplified graph of guilt





leads to *Baraka* (which means blessings) that a future leader must constantly search for their own success and that of their family. Further, local factors—such as it being a matter of honour to preserve the social status of the family, the importance of community structure or a duty to the community—also influence the intergenerational knowledge transfer process. These factors all add further to feelings of guilt in terms of letting down direct or indirect family or the community. These in the context of family and family businesses need to be explored.

Using this study as a basis, a model can be identified where a balance can exist between the connection a woman feels to the business and the connection she feels to her family. Many studies in work-life balance report the feeling of being torn, but to date, this has not been identified in this context of women in family businesses.

### 4.3 Family Business Guilt Model

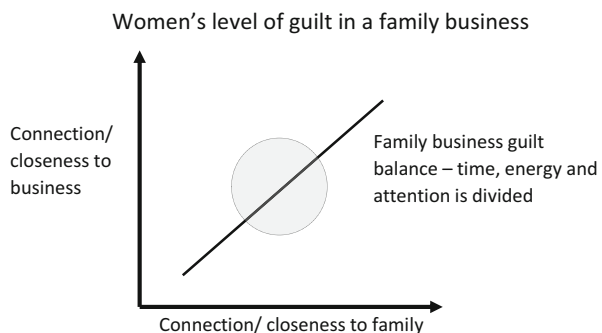
Using this study as a basis, it is suggested that there is a balance for women between closeness to business and family where they are able to fulfil all their roles: those to the business as well as their ‘old’ and ‘new’ family (Fig. 4).

The family business guilt model suggests that there is an optimum zone between the closeness/connection to the family and to the business. Guilt becomes apparent if you are too close to either the business or the family. As discussed, neither family nor business is static, and therefore constant realignment and awareness are needed to identify the connection/closeness to the business or family and make adjustments if needed in order to avoid feelings of guilt towards either.

## 5 Limitations

This paper has several limitations. First, the research was conducted in a specific part of Egypt, Sharm-el-Sheikh. This tourist city grew rapidly from a portside village to a multicultural complex based on tourists and their values and culture.

**Fig. 4** Optimum zone of guilt in a family business



Sharm, like many tourist cities in Egypt (including tourist areas along the Nile River such as Luxor, Qina, Aswan and the Valley of the Kings and Red Sea resorts such as Hurghada), appears to have more opportunities for women and fewer restrictions due to the differing culture. These areas are not representative of either the capital, Cairo, or other less tourist-focused cities.

A second limitation is that the research relies on a single case study. The particular business upon which the study was based was selected through a convenience sampling method due to the staff speaking a good level of English. Over a period of 2 years between 2010 and 2012, the researcher was able to observe and get to know the family. This could have exposed the research to researcher bias (i.e. through the researcher seeing what they wanted to see or not asking certain questions) or to participant bias (i.e. the participants telling the researcher what they 'think' the researcher wants to hear or portraying themselves in an artificial light). Furthermore, as Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) noted: 'Interpretation does not take place in a neutral, apolitical, ideology-free space, nor is an autonomous, value-free researcher responsible for it' (2009: 9). The 'object of study' can usefully be regarded as a social construction; after all, people construct their social reality. Yet it must be noted that this also applies to researchers. Von Glasersfeld (1991) spoke of trivial construction, when researchers reserve the social construction for the object of study while implying that they themselves remain outside such constructing and are able—in some sense objectively—to portray the social constructions. This objection, that researchers' own 'constructing' is ignored in most qualitative research and appears to apply to much mainstream qualitative research (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009). The research has the benefit of acknowledging social construction, thus trying throughout this research not to fall into the trap noted by these authors.

The researchers used this family business not only to capture a unique and in-depth case study but also to identify a new model—the 'family business guilt model'. This was possible due to the longitudinal aspect of the research. This longitudinal study covers various stages of the business cycle, following it from start-up to ultimate failure. While socio-economic changes in Sharm had an impact, it is important to note that social class plays a factor in determining power and authority, which are sometimes determinants of success in Egypt (Elsaid and Elsaid 2012). The family had no one to draw on for social standing or support, as neither their family name nor their economic status was influential. The research was not able to pinpoint the business at a particular stage (start-up, growth, maturity or decline) which may influence the level of guilt experienced or expressed by the family business members as increased or decreased external pressures caused by business, human and life cycle. As there are different systems interacting—the family, the family business and the life stages of the individuals—closer attention should be paid to the nuances of life, which is, by definition, never stagnant. Therefore, this research uses the case study not to examine its context but to identify that the phenomenon of guilt which has so far been under-researched in the family business field.

## 6 Further Research

The identification of a family business guilt balance assumes that the underlying feelings towards the family, the business and other individuals are actually based on guilt. This model is currently based on one in-depth case study of an all-female, owner-managed family business in Egypt. While the case study shows that the daughters and mother felt happier in their roles once they had clarified them, further in-depth interviews are needed to see what happens to guilt. Relevant interview questions include: does guilt lessen because other elements have taken priority? Is the guilt in relation to one's own family/customers/environment increased or reduced when fear of closure is less of a factor? What is the impact on guilt of balance in family businesses? The model needs to be explored alongside further data, including data on differently gendered and generationally diverse family businesses. This data needs to be both in the form of qualitative research (to refine the model and add nuances) and quantitative research (to identify possible generalizations and cultural differences).

Furthermore, many models of family businesses are based on research conducted in the USA and developed countries. Therefore, they lack description of how entrepreneurship is carried out in developing markets (ENID 2012; Lingelbach et al. 2005; Sonfield and Lussier 2009). This model has been created based on a developing country and needs to be critically evaluated in developed countries where culture and background are different.

## 7 (Policy) Implications

The topic of business and emotions is a research area which is attracting growing interest, especially in relation to family businesses, where emotion and business are found in close proximity. For policymakers, understanding the underlying dynamics of business is important, particularly given that family businesses make up 90% of the economy. Most family businesses are small, employing less than ten people, making this research highly valuable to policymakers in terms of helping them to support businesses—especially small family businesses. Policymakers need to be aware of the underlying dynamics within small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in order to legislate and support effectively (ENID 2012). Giving targeted and accurate support means family businesses receive the care they need in order to increase productivity, be sustainable and grow. In Egypt, with its culture and current socio-economic issues, this can be considered key. One possible implication of this research for policymakers is that they could decrease the 'red tape' around small businesses, thus making starting and running a business easier. Further, education creating an increased awareness for small businesses, family and business roles, family dynamics and family business structure could support the success of these businesses.

For management practitioners, this is of critical importance. Gaining an understanding of family members' motivations, dreams, what they feel is expected of them, and how they view their own individuality (particularly when working within parent-owned businesses) is vital. Helping family businesses identify responsibilities and communication lines and offering support for the different environments where multiple roles overlap (i.e. sister, daughter and wife) is also crucial.

This research has also highlighted the issue of verbalizing guilt within the family, the family business and the extended family. This is important because being tied to the family business due to love and guilt can cause resentment and anger. While guilt as a motivator may lead to stronger commitment, it can become overbearing and results in negativity. These emotions can have negative effects on the individual, the family and the family business. Raising awareness and creating a safe space where these emotions can be discussed may support family businesses and their emotional health. Developing a healthy balance between closeness and distance within both the business and the family, while being aware of the long-term commitment to both the business and the family, is likely to benefit everyone.

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