

**RELIEVING OWNER-MANAGERS OF OPERATIONAL DUTIES: ALIGNING
LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES THROUGH DELEGATION AND EMPOWERING OF
NON-FAMILY EMPLOYEES WITHIN THE FAMILY BUSINESS**

AN ACTION RESEARCH INQUIRY

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the
degree of Doctor of Business Administration

by

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ABSTRACT

This research involves the real-live investigation of a family business and its managing-owners' reluctances to detach from day-to-day operational work. This subjects the family business to the on-going risk of operational dependency on family-managers and the loss of strategic direction due to inadequate managerial attention by the owner-managers. As the aim of the study is to address this specific workplace problem, action research (AR) was elected as the primary mode of inquiry in gathering data from the participants engaged in reflective learning, social development, and workplace intervention. This is in line with the ontological and epistemological direction of the study, given that the research is context-bound and problem-focused. In other words, AR aligns with the principles of relativism and social constructivism as the pursuit of reality is shaped by meaning and only accessible through the co-creation of its participants.

From the preliminary findings gathered from the researched site, it is suggested that family-ownership is the main source of influence impacting management's approach to the business. In fact, this had led to multiple role conflicts and dysfunctional confusion amongst the managing-owners that limited them from carrying out their leadership duties. The inclination to pursue non-financial goals such as retaining familial control, advocating family succession, and preserving emotional attachment to the firm has directly influenced management to maintain operational focus on day-to-day business activities. Hence, owner-managers are reluctant to delegate operational responsibilities and authority to non-family employees due to the perceived risk and uncertainty towards external agents.

The legitimate desire to improve this workplace situation was led by a group of managerial participants and an insider-researcher within the organisation with an aim to undertake the change process of AR. Confronted with the economic implications of pre-existing practices, AR participants were compelled to reveal their genuine fears of principal-agent threats, sense of family commitment to the business and reasonable concerns of declining organisational performance incurred by the prospective idea of delegating operational work to non-family employees. Nevertheless, the methodical process of action research empowered the AR group to evolve beyond prevailing ideologies, co-construct new perspectives and identify opportunities for actionable intervention within the planning action stage.

The implementation of planned actions resulted in a new delegation process that detached family-managers from administering day-to-day account payables within the finance department. In fact, this led to the reduction in operational work previously administered by the owner-manager by

relieving approximately 27% of her managerial capacity to attend to other areas of the business. This change in management practice has also improved the workplace situation in other aspects including job alignment, the trust between family and non-family employees, and managerial capacity for change while protecting the interests of family-ownership. Despite the successful implementation, this research was still limited in gathering data from non-family employees during the AR process due to the legitimate sensitivity within the family business. Nevertheless, the study concluded with the possibility for subsequent AR cycles that could further relieve managing-owners of their day-to-day duties in other operational scopes and respective functions.

DECLARATION OF OWN WORK

I hereby declare that this thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration is the results of my own work. To the best of my capacity, I have adhered to the standards of the ethical procedures established by the University of Liverpool's ethics committee.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.

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Chapter 1 | Introduction

1.0 Background of Study

In the field of family business literature (see e.g. Memili et al, 2013; Davis, Allen, and Hayes, 2010; Bernhard and O'Driscoll, 2011), many suggest that family businesses are able to outperform conventional non-family organisations because they exhibit the attributes of high levels of trust, cohesiveness and collective entrepreneurial spirit that set them ahead of market competition. However, it is also argued that family businesses are likely to incur a unique set of workplace problems due to family ownership which subjects the organisation to an additional layer of constant influence that complicates and intervenes with managerial decision-making (Ding, Qu, and Wu, 2016). In turn, it is imperative to recognise this reality throughout the study that underlie the complexities of workplace dilemmas that go beyond the explicit situation faced by the family business.

This introduction chapter aims to shed light on this problematic foundation within the family business that will unfold into a specific workplace problem which the research has addressed through a series of investigation and data gathering techniques directed at generating knowledge of a practitioner nature. The study background aims to provide a brief understanding of the participating family business and the workplace situation leading to a strategic problem faced by the organisation. Supported by literature within the field, it aims to shed light on the organisational problem and the social complexities incurred by top administrators of the business.

1.1 Background of the Organisational Context

The participating family business is a Singapore-based company that is privately-owned by five siblings (4 brothers & 1 sister) with shareholdings equally held amongst the owners. The business mainly deals with the sales and distribution of marine lubricants within the domestic and regional markets. The organisation's core functions include sales and marketing, engineering support, inventory management, operations and logistics, and accounts and finances. At the time of this study, the business had an annual turnover of approximately USD10 million with 26 full-time employees working within the organisation. This included four owner-managers and six familial offspring while the remaining employees were non-family hires. At that point, the family business was still primarily managed by the first generation while with their heirs have been playing active roles within the business. The following table 1.1 outlines the average years of employment across the different levels of the family organisation.

Table 1.1 : Average Years of Employment			
No	Position	Number of Employees	Average Years of Employment
1	Directors	4	41
2	Managers	6	10
3	Executives	10	4
4	Admin Support	1	15
5	Warehouse & Delivery Personnel	5	15

Although the family business had always been steadily profitable, the organisation had also seen a distinct and progressive decline in financial performance over the last decade. Fundamentally, this has been contributed by the increased cost of operating within a developed economy, the growing competition of new entrants, and the commoditisation of petroleum products within the marine market. In addition, the industry has experienced intense competition and the driving down of product prices due to the competitive pressure created by the increased number of market players.

Confronted with these financial challenges, this begs the serious question for strategic consideration regarding the existing business model and its long-term direction of the family business. However, strategic attention within the family business has been limited as the owner-managers were operationally attached to day-to-day running of the business. In fact, a vast majority of organisational decision-making were solely dependent on the managing-owners which compromises their availability to focus on strategic and long-term aspects of the business. Contextually, this forms the prerequisite for investigations deeper into the organisational situation and the owner-managers' workplace priorities.

1.1.1 Distractions of Familial Centralisation and Its Impact on the Business

Considering the foundation of the family business, managing-owners who are involved in the business often incur dual role conflict due to the attachment of familial and business goals that disorient the function of management (Memili et al, 2013). This in turn creates distractions for the owner-managers to consider prioritising familial demands such as socio-emotional wealth (SEW) over objective business goals that ultimately impact the performance of the organisation. This influences management to exhibit a 'family first' approach that jeopardises the economic survival of the business through financial performance trade-offs (Kellermanns, Eddleston and Zellweger,

2012; Minichilli et al, 2014). This includes the desire to exercise familial authority within the business, performing acts of altruistic conduct between family members, and succeeding the business across generations of kinship (Ding, Qu and Wu, 2016).

SEW aspirations influence family-managers towards retaining complete control of the business, including the day-to-day operational activities. This intrinsic motivation is further impacted by the perceived notion that agents are opportunistic and self-serving, thereby creating trust barriers between the managing-owners and non-family employees (Madison et al, 2016). In turn, the authorisation of non-family employees to administer day-to-day responsibilities incur the additional family agency cost required to monitor, align and control the appointed agent (Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Herrero, 2011). This validates the rationale for family resources to absorb these duties as no agency cost is necessary to align family-managers in this arrangement (Duh, 2010). Nevertheless, shaped by the dysfunctional motivations of its top administrators, these inwards-looking practices have impacted the organisation's ability to adapt to the shifting needs of the business.

1.2 The Problem Statement and Relevance of the Research

The problem statement underpinning the workplace situation was summarised as 'The managerial attachment for familial centralisation distracts owner-managers within the family business from performing their core leadership duties'. This is in line with the managing-owners being preoccupied in day-to-day operations of retaining familial control and authority which compromised their leadership priorities within the family business. This drew relevance in the research as limiting strategic attention by management undermining the business's opportunity cost that could have substantial implications on the long-term business. Simply put, the inability to redirect managerial resources to assume their leadership responsibilities could result in a negative strategic impact on the family business.

1.3 The Rationale and Motivation for the Research

The rational and motivation for undertaking this research is driven by the urgency, complexity, and strategic impact it had on my family business. Aside from the declining economic performance of the firm, owner-managers were also in their advancing years which was problematic as the day-to-day business was operationally dependent on their availability. This outlined the crucial juncture for management inquiry to swiftly and purposefully react to both the internal and external changing environments of the business. This included the complexities of family ownership which subjects management's goal orientation and their approach to the business. In addition, the

evolving workplace situation contextually would have an impact on how my peers and I might succeed the family business in the future. The opportunity to alter management practices and unlock strategic attention on the business was paramount towards building a more sustainable business for the family unit.

1.4 Research Aims

While the aim of the study was to work on the lack of strategic attention within the family business, its purpose was also to create executive awareness on the broader implications of the workplace problem that could result in severe economic and social consequences. It aims to explore and investigate the underlying impacts of the workplace situation including operational sustainability, familial distractions, organisational capacity and the overlooked opportunity cost incurred by the family business. In that context, the intent was to equip management with key information that will empower them to act and respond to both the immediate workplace problem and longer-term impacts of the business. In essence, the aim was to unlock strategic availability amongst the owner-managers and align with the increasing competitive business environment in sustaining the long-term family business.

1.4.1 Research Goals

Unlike conventional scholarly work that focuses on generating new theoretical knowledge about the world, this research aimed to address and advance a workplace problem through change and intervention. However, the research goal was not simply directed at attaining immediate workplace resolution, but rather to focus on the change process and social transformation of the participants seeking to improve the problematic workplace situation. It was then through that process of social change, development of critical consciousness and transformation of workplace conditions that revealed valuable insights and generated new learning grounded in practice. This underpinned the integral implementation of first, second and third-person inquiry in securing the research goals of achieving impact on the participating family business, its AR group participants, and the insider-researcher.

1.5 Research Questions

In this study, the main and primary question that will be considered is as follows:

- How can owner-managers reduce operational duties to better concentrate on their leadership roles?

Subsequent to the main question, there are other secondary questions which will be pursued and they are:

- Why are owner-managers resistant towards delegating operational duties to non-family employees?
- What are the owner-managers' perceived risks in assigning decision-making tasks to non-family managers?
- To what extent will owner-managers consider empowering non-family employees to make decisions for the family business?
- What control measures can be adopted to safeguard the insecurities of family-managers when delegating operational duties to non-family managers?

The primary and secondary questions are fundamental in guiding the action research question which is as follows:

- If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interests of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?

1.6 The Incremental Contribution to Actionable Knowledge

Considering the research questions of this study, the generation of new knowledge was limited to the context of the organisation and its participants. However, this also advocated the opportunity to acquire actionable knowledge by gaining access to the experiences of the participants as they attempted to remedy the workplace problem. This aligned with the epistemological intent of collecting data from the AR members involved in the change process as evidence that reality is socially constructed based on human experiences (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). In fact, the documented reactions of the participants attained through collaborative deliberations and reflective questioning within the AR group generated new insights and actionable perspectives that were tested and validated across the evolving workplace situation.

The disclosure of participatory experiences of the organisational actors navigating through the social complexities of the family domain served as a powerful means of actionable know-how in enriching managerial practice. The democratic facilitation of critical AR discussions empowered participants to challenge underlying assumptions, identify untapped perspectives and undergo social transformation as they methodically advanced through the action research process. In other words, the contributions of actionable knowledge were not established based on the project's

outcome, but rather the unfolding circumstances created by the AR group in overcoming problematic hurdles of strategic impact on the business. Although the actionable knowledge produced from this research cannot be generalised, knowing the perspectives of the participants' actions within the defined context of the study can be classified as a form of new knowledge that aids the advancement in practice.

1.7 The Implications of the Study

Given that this research was directed at establishing change and the advancement of management practices, the implications of this study impacted the participating family business and its participants. At the company level, detachment of family oversight in operational activities could impact organisational performance and increase managerial load in the short-term due to the handover training and supervision required in that process. However, this change ultimately builds operational independence and relieves family-managers of their secondary responsibilities in order to attend to more strategic areas of the business. In addition, change in these managerial practices was also expected to impact other aspects of the business including the strategic placement of resources, employee motivation, leadership ideologies, organisational competitiveness, and the like.

As for the participants involved in the AR project, these practitioners have undergone the process of self-development as they were confronted with deceiving workplace assumptions, socially-attached family practices and psychological traps that needed to be overcome in order to advance the workplace situation. In turn, AR participants have gained a deeper understanding of their practice, established a richer perspective of the family business and altered their attitude towards change as a viable alternative towards management practice.

1.8 Relevance and Experience of the Insider-researcher

During the undertaking of this doctoral study, I was assuming the role of the general manager and had been involved in the family business for slightly more than a decade. This provided me with the relevant experience and adequate overview of the underlying challenges faced by the family business. In fact, I was designated to learn from every department across different levels of the organisation during the initial years of my career within the business. Over the years, the family business has evolved to meet the shifting business needs but maintained adamant in certain management practices in order to safeguard family-ownership priorities. In turn, this fundamentally harmed the progress of the business in staying relevant in the rapidly increasing competitive marketplace. As part of the management team and a family member to the co-owned

business, this provided me with the capacity to gain access to the relevant stakeholders to influence the commencement of this AR project for the genuine good of the business.

In addition, having prior experience of working with the co-participants created feasibility of carrying out the AR group discussions in the desired fashion that stimulated and invited collaborative discussions for the purpose of problem-based inquiry. However, it was recognised that assuming the role of an insider-researcher created avenues of overlapping complexities due to the multiple obligations of being a researcher, employee and family member within the study. Nevertheless, the Observation, Reaction, Judgement, Intervention (ORJI) model which functions as a self-reflective tool was adopted during the AR process in regulating my bias and emotional instability as the insider-researcher within the study (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). In addition, the ORJI framework served as a vital data collection tool in conducting first and second-person inquiry designed to facilitate reflection-in-action within the AR group.

1.9 Structure and Roadmap of the DBA Thesis

Commencement of this DBA thesis began with the identification of a research problem that had substantial impact and the feasible likelihood of an intervention in the troubled workplace situation. This however needed to be supported by the appropriate academic literature and possess clear actionable orientation that was consistent with AR, which will be presented in chapter two. In fact, alignment between the research questions and methodology were fundamental to the prospective structure necessary to implement the study. In parallel, an ethical assessment on the researched site was required to seek consent from the business's authorising personnel before commencing the AR project. The approval of the thesis proposal and ethics application permitted the start of the research project which essentially began with the literature review. This comprehensive process was vital in building an academic foundation that informed and outlined the study.

This included the appropriate selection and conceptualisation of academic literature within the field to shed important light on the research problem. The subsequent step entailed formulating the research methodology that essentially guided the overall investigation process. Presented in chapter three, this involved the review of the ontological and epistemological conditions of the study that influenced the research method and data collection tools required to generate the research findings. This set the gears in place to commence on the primary research which was led by a pre-step investigation process directed at validating and problematising the workplace situation. Under chapter four, this initial process of gathering evidence within the researched site was vital in establishing context and purpose for the AR study.

This aligned the preunderstanding of the workplace problem as the AR group was carefully assembled to undergo the four-stage process of AR. As the research was conducted in real-world settings, data collection and analysis had to be executed in a timely manner and in parallel with the actual developments of the workplace situation which is presented in chapter five. Without the dedicated commitment of the insider-researcher and participants, the AR project would have incurred substantial lapses that would have impacted the research findings. Essentially, this process underlined the structure and roadmap undertaken within this research to investigate a workplace problem that entailed academic rigour and practitioner collaboration in generating new actionable knowledge.

Chapter 2 | Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relating to family businesses and the inherent problems of family-ownership. A search strategy was first outlined to guide the underlying approach to the literature review. This was followed by defining of the family business that was contextual to the research site. Main literatures reviewed includes role conflict in owner-managers, influences of socio-emotional wealth and parental altruism, problematic principal-agent relationships and stewardship theory. For the broader aspects of this study, the literature review also covered areas pertaining to succession, change of management, knowledge transfer, and professionalising of the family business. These theoretical paradigms were then synthesised into a conceptual framework to shed light and draw relevance to the researched workplace problem.

2.1 Search Strategy

Embarking on the literature review, it was important to outline a search strategy for the purpose of maintaining relevance to the study. Certainly, this does not discount the fact that the search entailed some level of exploration throughout the process. During the initial search phase, the primary attention was focused on identifying key concepts relating to the fields of family business management and leadership. However, instead of conducting a narrow search, the priority was to source through a wider domain that covered key words and terms associated to the workplace problem. This is because building the theoretical foundation for the research was particularly important during this stage of the study as it helped enrich my perspectives as the primary researcher.

The broadened scope of literature reviewed provided the opportunity to assess the eligibility of various supporting resources and allowed the synthesising of a conceptual framework to better inform the study. The exposure to alternative theoretical concepts also offered the space and availability for critical deliberation which aided the challenging of underlying assumptions and my pre-understanding. Nevertheless, progressing down the literature search essentially required careful review and selection in safeguarding its application within the context of the study. These relevant resources were further validated through a conceptual model intended at shedding important light on the research project.

2.2 Defining the Family Business

In the field of family business literature (see e.g. Debicki, Van de Graaff Randolph and Sobczak 2017, p. 93; Minichilli et al 2014, p. 1162; Hall and Nordqvist 2008, p. 52), it is acknowledged that the definition 'family business' is subject to a series of interpretations which impacts and limits fellow researchers in the academic community to leverage on their collective work to produce knowledge that is consistent for the field. By reviewing the literature, it was apparent that the definition 'family business' varies across different studies within the domain. For instance, Chua, Chrisman and Sharma (1999) suggest that most researchers within the field agree that family businesses are distinguished based on ownership and management involvement. However, they go on to argue that defining family businesses from this approach limits the identification of their uniqueness that differentiate them from non-family firms.

Instead, they propose that the definition of a family business must consist of two specific points; namely the vision of the firm that was established by the family unit and the intent to pursue this vision continuously across generations of the same family (Chua, Chrisman and Sharma, 1999). Astrachan, Klein, and Smyrnios (2002) on the other hand argues that the definition of family business alters between serving a distinct research purpose or aims to differentiate from non-family firms, hence is often defined by researchers on a case-to-case basis. In turn, they have formulated the F-PEC approach which incorporates power, experience, and culture in measuring the range of family influence on the organisation to aid researchers beyond the family business field to study and compare management issues (Astrachan, Klein, and Smyrnios, 2002). However, the F-PEC approach is less applicable in this study given that the research is context-bound and actionably driven. Despite the lack of a universal definition, it is still important to recognise that researchers are bound by scholarly parameters such as the component approach and the essence approach (Sharma, Chrisman and Gersick, 2012).

Also known as component-of-involvement approach, the first method essentially defines a family business based on the nature and degree of family involvement with the enterprise such as familial ownership, management control, corporate governance and succession across generations (Lau, 2010). The essence approach, on the other hand, focuses on providing a theoretical framework that identifies and explains the distinctiveness of family businesses by touching on the aspirations and involvement of familial members, which in turn influences the behavioural and organisational performance of the business (Sharma, Chrisman and Gersick, 2012). In other words, the essence approach includes a structured-based model which assesses both ownership and management as criteria, and an intentional-based model in validating that the enterprise will be preserved as a family business by its members (Lau, 2010). In light of these

considerations, the definition of a 'family business' in relation to this study was outlined as a business or organisation that is wholly-owned by the family and managed by its members across the controlling positions, including board members and senior management (structured-based) that aims to succeed the family business through its next generation (intentional-based).

2.3 Dual / Triple Role Conflict: Implications of Family Ownership

Based on the above family business definition, it was only natural for such family businesses to incur overlapping subsystems within their organisations that subjects them to the needs of both family and business objectives. Memili et al (2013) argue that family businesses are inclined towards dual role conflict as owner-managers bear family obligations while assuming managerial duties that create opposing goal orientation in the workplace. Accordingly, functioning in two subsystems simultaneously increases the complexity for family-managers to manage priorities and fulfil their responsibilities due to the impossible task of satisfying both family and business goals at the same time. Conceptually, this underlies the core of family businesses and their entangled belief systems that influence leadership decision-making towards being biased and dysfunctional.

For instance, the owner-manager could satisfy familial expectations by appointing an unqualified offspring over an experienced hire which conflicts with their professional responsibilities of selecting and developing legitimate talent for the organisation. Gersick, Davis, Hampton and Lansberg (1997) suggests that such dilemmas go beyond the conflicts of family and business to the owners and managers as well. The three-circle model is a framework that suggests family, ownership and business are three independent subsystems that incur overlap in family businesses and provides a lens of complexity involved in producing conflict within family businesses. For example, an owner-manager should exercise discretion in maximising shareholders' wealth but is influenced by familial stakeholders to pursue socio-emotional wealth for the family household which, in turn, conflicts with the business subsystem of profit maximisation.

This illustrates the unrealistic likelihood of pursuing ownership, family and business goals when one assumes multiple roles across the three subsystems. The following Diagram 2.3 outlines the various types of stakeholders involved in family businesses and the multiple role conflict incurred by the overlapping subsystems (Gersick, Davis, Hampton and Lansberg 1997, p. 6). Although the study was based on the life cycles of family businesses across succeeding generations, the three-circle model informs how fundamentally family firms are subjected to multiple opposing interests

of its stakeholders that ultimately limits, confuses, diverts and influences contradictory actions of the familial leaders of the business.

For example, a family member who is not at all involved in the business nor owns shares could influence his or her spouse who is an owner-manager to exercise preference or bias amongst the other stakeholders to further their cause in the family business. Moreover, it is not uncommon for owner-managers who overlap all three subsystems to exhibit parental altruism towards their offspring, which refers to the 'selfless' acts between familial members aimed at creating trust and mutual welfare within the family unit (Schulze, Lubatkin and Dino, 2003).

Diagram 2.3: The Three-Circle Model of Family Business

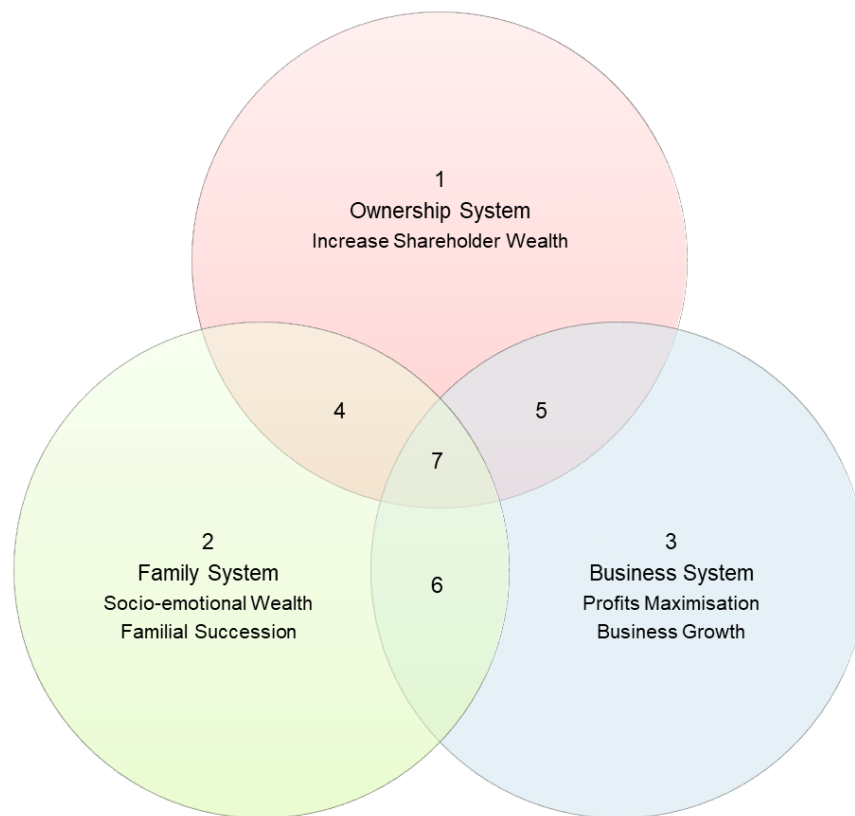


Table 2.3: The Three-Circle Model of Family Business

No	Subsystems			Stakeholder Role
1	Ownership			Stakeholder is purely an owner of the firm. He/she is not related to the family shareholders nor is an employee of the firm.
2	Family			Stakeholder is related to the family owners but does not possess shareholding nor is involved in the business (e.g. nonworking spouse, sibling or offspring with no ownership).
3	Business			Stakeholder is only involved in the business subsystem (e.g. non-family/non-owner employee). He/she is neither related to the family owners or possesses any shareholding in the firm.
4	Ownership	Family		Stakeholder is both an owner and family member of the family firm. However, he/she is not involved in any business activities/operations.
5	Ownership	Business		Stakeholder is a non-family shareholder and undertakes a functional role within the business (e.g. non-family owner-manager).
6	Family	Business		Stakeholder does not possess any shareholding but is related to the family owners and an employed staff of the firm (e.g. working spouse, sibling or offspring with no ownership).
7	Ownership	Family	Business	Stakeholder is involved in all three subsystems of ownership, family and the business. Often, these are the owner-managers of the family firm who undertake an active role within the business while being subjected to familial expectations while possessing shareholding within the firm.

Source: Adapted from Gersick, Davis, Hampton, and Lansberg (1997, p. 6)

In turn, the altruistic motivation shaped by the family system becomes a priority over business objectives and subsequently impact its owners' ability to increase shareholders' wealth due to the interconnected subsystems that restrict goal alignment in the family business. Van den Berghe and Carchon (2003) argue that altruistic behaviour of owner-managers can be counter-productive to corporate governance as it disrupts the balancing of organisational rules and practices focused on the interest of its stakeholders. The more altruism increases, the more parents are likely to feed wealth and resources to their offspring which can be highly detrimental to the business's overall performance. Considering this study, it is here that we must acknowledge that ownership structures in family-owned businesses create unconventional channels for stakeholder influence which could turn hazardous due to the lack of objective governance within the self-managed system.

The three entwined subsystems form a complex web of problems that cloud decision-makers from being collective in their fundamental decisions, impacting the higher good of the family business. The influence of family goals, paired with sole ownership and the added dimension of parental altruism, suggests a substantial need for inner control which segregates a boundary from non-family employees and the authority to exercise decisions within the family business. In the next

segment the literature review will move on to discuss socio-emotional wealth, which is the secondary core influence in family businesses, and how it pressures the behavioural motivation of the owner-managers in retaining managerial authority amongst family members.

2.4 Socio-emotional Wealth (SEW)

In a business where ownership is ultimately influenced by family stakeholders, intrinsic motivation within the firm is unlike traditional organisations due to the underlying attachments of its members that sought more than just the financial aspects of the business. Socio-emotional wealth (SEW) has been argued to shed light in this area where non-financial goals and emotional needs are seen as a primary priority within family businesses which deviates owner-managers from exhibiting business-objective decisions in the workplace (Naldi, Cennamo, Corbetta and Gomez-Mejia, 2013; Minichilli et al, 2014; Kellermanns, Eddleston and Zellweger, 2012). In fact, it is argued that SEW sets apart and distinguishes family businesses from non-family organisations (Brannon and Edmond, 2016). SEW refers to a set of non-economic goals that the inner familial unit pursues in the business.

Such desires include such areas as the ability for family members to exercise authority, embracing a sense of belonging and intimacy, preserving family values within the business, exhibiting altruistic conduct amongst family co-workers and creating jobs for family members to safeguard the 'family dynasty' through its generations (Ding, Qu and Wu, 2016). The consequence of pursuing such goals, however, has been suggested to cause financial performance trade-offs in the family business (Minichilli et al, 2014). This is because SEW emphasises the non-financial benefits of its members and the preserving of socio-emotional endowments over profit maximising and lucrative investments for the family business (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). In other words, the yearning for retaining family control within the business blinds family-business owners from recognising the impact of performance hazards on their businesses (Minichilli et al, 2014).

In fact, pursuing SEW is so significant that family businesses are willing to jeopardise the survival of the business in order to protect the non-economic goals and emotional interest of the familial unit (Kellermanns, Eddleston and Zellweger, 2012). Driven by the collective desire of the owner-managers, SEW creates high levels of cohesiveness that often shapes a 'family first' philosophy in pursuing idiosyncratic goals for the family business at the expense of non-family stakeholders (Kellermanns, Eddleston and Zellweger, 2012). However, it has also been suggested that the impact on financial performance through the SEW influence is subject to the generational stage

of the family business as later generation members have less socio-emotional aspirations, thereby resulting in an increased emphasis on profitability and financial goals for the business (Sciascia, Mazzola and Kellermanns, 2014).

This is based on Sciascia, Mazzola and Kellermanns's (2014) study, which argues that familial members at a later generational stage within the business identify less with the family business and are thus less emotionally involved. This is due to the extended family branches that in turn pursue different needs, plans and commitments. However, the lack for central SEW aspirations across its members could also generate negative effects for the business when the sibling partnerships or cousins consortium experience conflict due to added complexity and lack of integration. This often results in battling of personal agendas instead of maximising shareholder returns (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2013). It is also suggested that the emphasis for SEW is subject to the scale of the family business in respect to its size.

Brannon and Edmond's (2016) study found that small to medium sized family businesses have goals that are consistent with the five dimensions of SEW: family control, associating the firm with the family's identity, binding social ties, emotional attachment, and renewing family bonds through generational succession. In addition, SEW is also subject to the external business environment which could determine the economic outcomes to be positive or negative for the business (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). For instance, SEW could be beneficial in a stable environment where the family maintains control in retaining its market position for succeeding the family business to the next generation. However, this may not be the case in a highly competitive and ever-changing environment as SEW could drive management into becoming dysfunctional and obsolete if owner-managers continue to uphold the 'family first' attitude over objective business priorities.

Preserving SEW eventually comes down to maintaining control of the family business. Goh et al (2015) suggest two main sources of power aids in retaining family influence in orientating the management agenda. First, the appointment of a familial CEO which empowers the family with the knowledge and critical informational material that is needed to facilitate the business towards SEW goals. However, this also implies that the CEO succession is conducted based on mixed motives that are divided between SEW preservations and economic performance (Minichilli et al, 2014). Secondly, the use of ownership power in delegating family-managers to act on behalf of the family shareholders in assigning organisational resources to safeguard family interest over profit maximisation initiatives.

On a positive note, however, SEW has also been known to influence family members to join the business despite lower pecuniary returns than industry standards due to the social-cultural trust relations of the family unit (Dressler and Tauer, 2015; Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). In fact, social capital, which is driven by SEW, has been argued to be one of the most important competitive advantages of family businesses, enabling them to navigate through tough economic conditions by offsetting weaknesses in areas including human and financial capital and outperform non-family organisations (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). The question remains however, why are family businesses so emotionally entangled with SEW? Morgan and Gomez-Mejia (2014) argues that family owners and managerial decisions are directly influenced by the emotions within the socio-emotional paradigm.

In other words, the desire to preserve SEW develops emotional influence within family-managers that indirectly affects their decisions-making process (Morgan and Gomez-Mejia, 2014). Hence, the critical investigation of SEW can reveal the underlying means to family business decision-making that is driven by such emotions. Conceptualised as forms of affective states, emotions relate to instances by which individuals display behavioural responses that are guided by their attitudes (Morgan and Gomez-Mejia, 2014). For instance, the realisation of releasing organisational control by the owner-managers becomes an emotional process due to the attitude towards the handover as it conflicts with the desire for SEW. Thereby creating fear and a potential sense of loss, which leads to resistance that disrupts and potentially delays the initial commitment of managerial transition to non-family executives.

Image theory has also been suggested to shed light in the area of SEW conflict within family businesses (Vardaman and Gondo, 2014). When compared to rational-choice models where executives rationalise decisions based on the objective assessment of information to formulate financial alternatives, image theory argues that family-managers make decisions that are grounded in intrinsic values which are reflective of SEW goals (Vardaman and Gondo, 2014). Underlying the most salient manifest of these values has been suggested to be retention of day-to-day control and influence within the family business. Here, preserving with internal SEW has a negative influence towards self-serving behaviour that puts the needs of family members above that of other stakeholders. This creates the biased selection of family-managers over non-family hires when it comes to organisational authority.

In a different light however, it has been argued that SEW is highly valued in family businesses as it satisfies the need for personal identification and sense of belonging amongst its members

(Gomez-Mejia et al, 2007). Hence, family businesses can provide its members with self-defining roles based on familial ties and create that distinct organisational identification that is uniquely embraced by the family unit. In turn, safeguarding the family's SEW becomes a central goal in pressuring owner-managers towards the necessity for continued family control of the business. In contrast, such SEW goals may be beneficial for incoming generations and potentially achievable when the business goes through a stable business environment.

However, this is rarely permitted in today's ever-shifting and increasingly competitive marketplace, where insistence on SEW goals could lead to a dysfunctional organisation when non-financial goals are prioritised over the needs of the business (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). More importantly, it has been argued that maintaining control and the desire to influence day-to-day operations becomes a top priority for family businesses that pursue SEW agendas (Vardaman and Gondo, 2014). This is highly consistent with the action research that requires intervention in addressing the underlying reluctance of delegating and empowering non-family managers at the operational level. The following segment will go beyond the intrinsic motivations shaped by family business structures to review the detachment of the owners and managers that create agency problems in the family business.

2.5 Agency Theory

Agency theory has been a widely deliberated concept within the field of family business (see e.g. Schulze, Lubatkin, Dino and Buchholtz, 2001; Herrero, 2011; Van den Berghe and Carchon, 2003). In review of the literature, this will be broken down into the conceptual framework to first inform the theoretical components before discussing it within the context of the family business.

2.5.1 Agency Theory: The Conceptual Framework

In the field of family business studies, agency theory continues to be an area of scholarly inquiry due to its underlying inferences on strategic management, ownership structures, organisational economics, and financial performance within family-owned businesses. However, this research aims to draw on the fundamental and practical concerns of agency problems that prevent insecure business owners from releasing managerial control to even the most capable executives. Conceptually, Jensen and Meckling (1976) describe an agency relationship as a contract where an individual (the principal) authorises another (the agent) to perform tasks or make decisions on his or her behalf. Agency problems then take place when the appointed agent deviates to maximise self-interest over the expressed goals of the principal (Jensen and Meckling, 1976).

This conflict of interest between parties is based on the economic assumptions that suggest individuals are opportunistically self-serving by nature (Madison et al, 2016). In more recent findings however, it is also suggested that self-interest is bound by perception of fairness where the economic actor will only reciprocate to maximise their own utility when they are perceived to be recipients of inequitable treatment (Bosse and Phillips, 2016). The argument goes on to suggest that even opportunistic agents will not exercise negatively reciprocal behaviour unless treated unfairly or below established expectations (Bosse and Phillips, 2016). Another key aspect of the principal-agent paradigm is information asymmetries which allow managers to access information that is unknown to the owners, thus exploiting a blind spot to make decisions in their favour over shareholders' interest (Van de Berghe and Carchon, 2003).

In addition, adverse selection on part of the agents enables them to hide or refrain from telling the truth about their abilities and goals within the contractual relationship, thereby causing the principal to be misinformed in agent selection and assignments (Kallmuenzer, 2016). On the other hand, informational asymmetry could also apply to the agent where the representing party may have imperfect understanding of the principal's exact goals and motivations, thereby creating misalignment and misrepresentation between both parties (Michel and Kammerlander, 2015). This separation between the principal and agent therefore makes it difficult for shareholders to monitor or exert control over managerial agents within the workplace (Herrero, 2011). The principal-agent relationship underlies a set of associated problems that, in turn, produces an agency cost that is described to be threefold (Jensen and Meckling, 1976).

It is suggested that the principal can regulate agency behaviour by incurring a 'monitoring cost', an investment of control procedures and incentive programs to align managers towards maximising shareholder wealth. Subsequently, agents then incur a 'bonding cost' as they shift their efforts consistent with the incentives that were formulated to maximise welfare of the principal. It is argued that incurring zero agency problems through such initiatives is impossible due to differences in viewpoints, risk-appetite and ever-shifting goals of both the principals and agents across the decision-making process. This highlights the third component of agency cost known as 'residual loss' where divergence in decisions made by the agents does not fully fulfil the interest of the shareholders (Jensen and Meckling, 1976). In other words, agency costs comprise costs incurred by all activities and control mechanisms designed to influence managers to act in the best interest of the shareholders (Duh, 2010).

It is important to acknowledge that Jensen and Meckling's (1976) concept of agency theory is generically applicable across all forms of organisation and cooperative efforts which is relevant to

this research. However, at this juncture we must address the conceptual framework within the context that applies to the problem-based study. For example, the principal-agent relationship and approach to agency problems will differ based on the contextual situation such as an organisation's size, cultural influence, ownership preference, nature of business, external employment marketplace, and the like. These inferences will be further discussed in the subsequent sections aimed at addressing the various dimensions affecting the identified workplace problem and the implications on the action research.

2.5.2 Agency Theory in Family Businesses

Due to the subjectively unique ownership structures formed in family businesses, it is suggested that agency theory incurs an additional dimension of complexity that could potentially reduce or increase agency cost within their businesses. The common overlap in ownership and management is said to create opportunities for family businesses to significantly reduce agency costs through the objective alignment between principal (shareholders) and agents (familial offspring) that enhances organisational performance while reducing the need to incur monitoring cost (Duh, 2010). This is further attributed by the high trust cooperation between family-managers built on shared values that reduce agency cost (Duh, 2010). This is consistent with Herrero's (2011) argument that family businesses can outperform non-family corporations when organisational members function on high trust working relations due to the forging of familial bonds that align with the underlying goals of the family business.

Contrary to these arguments, family involvement is also known to increase agency costs due to parental altruism which obscures objective governance by management. However, such altruistic acts in favour of others are motivated by self-interest because failure to ensure the welfare of one's offspring could create harm to the altruist (Schulze et al, 2001). In turn, it is suggested that such altruistic behaviour helps shape a self-reinforcing culture of mutual support amongst the family agents, creates a sense of ownership that is collectively embraced by its members and reduces information asymmetries which cuts back on agency and monitoring cost (Karra, Tracey and Phillips, 2006).

However, the act of parental altruism to care and be generous with their offspring could result in inwards exploitation where family-managers learn to free-ride, receive a sense of entitlement, and expect privileged treatment which essentially creates more problems in the agency system (Karra, Tracey and Phillips, 2006). Influenced by parental altruism, owner-managers could unconsciously drain financial resources to feed their offspring's personal benefit, thereby incurring an

unconventional type of agency cost and harming the overall performance of the family business (Van de Berghe and Carchon, 2003). These agency problems could further manifest and cause moral hazards, conflict and resentment within the family unit. More importantly, it has been recognised that family-managers, owner-managers or family successors are somewhat restricted from policing other family agents due to the potential ramifications on familial ties and kinship (Karra, Tracey and Phillips, 2006).

For instance, an owner-director may restrain from disciplining his/her nephew for poor performance as it may upset sibling relations with his/her brother/sister who also sits on the board of directors. In turn, this ideology of prioritising family welfare over business goals defeats the purpose for corporate governance and creates additional complexity to the agency problem. Moreover, this is consistent with the purpose of many privately-owned family businesses that aim to maintain control and satisfy familial goals including preserving wealth, upholding social status and retain authority within the family business unit (Bendickson et al, 2016). This reflection on parental altruism validates the biased motivation for owner-managers to favour family offspring over non-family executives regardless of their value or contributions to the organisation in order to safeguard the family unit.

This is further reinforced by Van de Berghe and Carchon (2003), where it is suggested that privately-owned family businesses are known to be inclined towards self-employment of family members over competent-based recruitment from the external labour market. This also means that altruistic influence in family businesses could result in situations where owner-managers are prepared to support a bad agent (rotten child theorem) because of whom they are rather than what they do (Bendickson et al, 2016). In turn, it is only economically rational for competent candidates to drift away from applying with such family businesses, increasing the need for monitoring and incentive programs to align and regulate inferior agents in their workplace conduct.

Van de Berghe and Carchon (2003) go on to argue that internal hiring and assuming dual roles of the owner and manager incurs a conflict of interest due to the natural heterogeneous goals that threaten collaborative efforts and altruistic partnership between family agents. In addition, individual goals amongst the family-managers could come between the collective well-being of the familial unit. In their summary, principal-agent problems experienced by family businesses incur an entangled complex web of agency problems taking place vertically and horizontally between owner-managers, family agents and non-family agents (Van de Berghe and Carchon, 2003).

2.6 Stewardship Theory

In contrast to agency theory and SEW, stewardship theory is an alternate perspective within the field of family business literature that suggest opposing views on the conduct of familial self-interest. The theory suggests stewardship orientation fits well within the settings of family businesses as business owners develop deep emotional attachments with their businesses which shapes the desire to do good for the organisation instead of purely focusing on opportunistic and financial ends (Davis, Allen and Hayes, 2010). In a broader sense, the steward views the organisation as a valued entity in serving a social purpose to all its stakeholders that goes beyond the economic aspects of the business (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2015).

In other words, placing emphasis on being good stewards within the business challenges the assumptions of principal-agent conflict and the cost associated with agency theory as owner-managers are focused on the greater interests of the enterprise and succeeding a healthy business to their heirs. Hence, resources that were originally required to monitor and control agents can be relocated to maximise interest for the organisation through stewardship alignment which arguably creates competitive opportunities for the family business. Although both theories address the relationships between principal and management, agency theory is rooted within the parameters of the economics of self-interest, while the stewardship model is guided by paradigms in sociology and psychology which undertakes a more humanistic view of managers.

In a more pragmatic sense, practitioners have argued that agency theory provides a richer framework in underlying the peculiar problems in family businesses while the stewardship model describes governance within the family business context in an idealistic fashion (Madison et al, 2016). Returning to stewardship theory, it is argued that intrinsic satisfaction of the owners is gained through a successful business and the positive reputation associated with the family business (Davis, Allen and Hayes, 2010). The lack of stewardship relations within family businesses has been suggested to create inner conflict which harms the performance and ability to tap into organisational strategic flexibility (Davis, Allen and Hayes, 2010).

Stewardship theory also cross-extends into SEW where it is reflected that social, psychological and economic well-being is vital to the family business as community standing, career fulfilment, and protecting future generations are deemed as central goals for the family business (Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2015). However, orientating stewardship applies not only to the family members but non-family managers as well since it is conducted independently of the family owners in enhancing the business through altruistic motivation rather than aspiration of personal gain. This

is highly consistent with James, Jennings and Jennings' (2017) study where their research findings indicate that non-family managers exhibit higher levels of job performance despite associating less strongly and emotionally to the family business, and the lack of agency mechanisms. This underlines and questions the assumptions of agency theory that suggest non-family employees operate on self-interest, are opportunistic and require constant alignment through governing mechanisms.

2.7 Family Succession and Change Management

In the context of the workplace problem where first generation management and their offspring are presently involved in the business, it would be relevant to review and discuss the subject of family succession and change of management for strategic alignment as the business strives forward in the ever-changing competitive environment.

2.7.1 Succession – Letting Go

It is only appropriate to address the concern regarding succession having recognised the emotional attachments and intrinsic motivations of the family business that demands centralised control and authority within the familial unit. However, this review will be focused on management succession within the context of leadership readiness rather than ownership succession as the study is directed at empowering competent executives to succeed managerial duties so that family-owners can assume a more strategic function in the organisation. In fact, whether management can rest in the hands of the incoming generation, regardless of family or not, is dependent on the owners' strength to delegate authority, support successors in assuming their new roles and ultimately walk away from day-to-day operations (Giarmarco, 2012). The inability to execute this commitment could in turn jeopardise the handover process which eventually creates more harm than good for the family business (Marler, Botero and De Massis, 2017).

Identified as one of the major problems often faced by family businesses due to the perceived negative connotation, business succession is also seen as a strategic opportunity for emerging family businesses to address managerial needs (Duh, 2014). Moreover, succession has been described as the process of continuity where leadership roles are shared between predecessors and successors across generations to ensure survivability of the family business (Ramadani et al, 2017). However, it must not be considered as a one-off project that merely involves the retirement of management incumbents and assuming of leadership by their successors, but a planned process that is integrative to the business goals and outlook to safeguard the family

business from unforeseen circumstances (e.g. illness, death) that could paralyse the immediate functioning of the organisation (Ramadani et al, 2017).

In addition, it is argued that management succession is best realised when the next generation becomes the source of purpose in shaping the transfer of control and responsibility between family members due to the influence of familial kinship (Ramadani et al, 2017). However, this also suggests that succession is limited within the family unit in regards to managerial authority and organisational progress. Another struggle identified by owner-managers is the lack of sufficient critical characteristics within the available pool of candidates which is defined as management knowhow, business knowledge, decision-making competencies, industry network, legitimate and credible merits for future developments which inhibits incumbents from opening up to the next generation of family and non-family stakeholders (Duh, 2014).

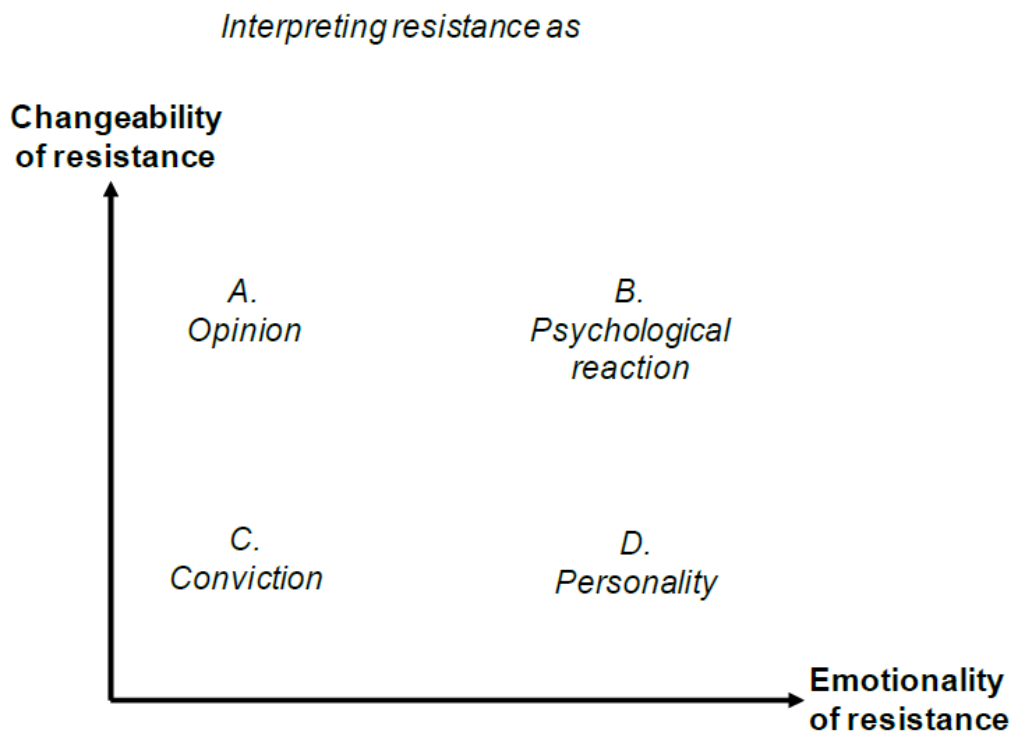
In many ways, administering a successful succession is very much conditional where traditionally it may require the commitment of family members, sharing of a collective vision or seeking professional aid in adopting a structured process. Some may entail a more creative approach as different stakeholders will need to front the initiative while others remain offstage in reinforcing the transition that best suits the power dynamics of the family business environment (Deschamps and Cisneros, 2014). It is also due to this subjectivity that scholarly academics struggle with developing a consistent framework to aid family businesses in unlocking management resistance to succession due to the ever-changing and limitless aspects of potential influence that occur within the family and business units. Hence, the next segment will touch on a more generic approach of change management that will enable action researchers to address resistance based on the situational reactions of the AR participants.

2.7.2 Change of Management

Given that change is required in this study through the action-oriented research model, it will be imperative to touch on the various aspects of the change of management and the challenges it imposes, particularly within the context of the family business domain. Naturally, it is conceivable for organisational leaders to perceive change as a form of threat based on the common notion that 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it' and that the more inert the business, the more it would succeed (Kilduff and Dougherty, 2000). This resistance has been identified as the emotional reaction that is often attributed by denial, anger, frustration and confusion which becomes a primary obstacle against successful change of management.

Introducing planned changes within the context of organisations are further classified as part of the company-life-cycle which are messy and complex in nature due to the conflicting emotions amongst employees across different levels of the enterprise, lack of trust and shift in identification (Invernizzi, Romenti, and Fumagalli, 2012). It is critical to recognise however that the focus here is on resistance-to-change occurring at the leadership level rather than challenges encountered during the change of management process. Louise (2010, p. 3) suggests that there are four types of interpretations pertaining to resistance categorised as opinion, psychological reaction, conviction and personality which are measured by two key variables referenced as changeability and emotionality. The model defines changeability as the potentiality to influence and alter the resistance level while emotionality refers to the emotional reaction towards a situational change.

Diagram 2.7.2: Four interpretations pertaining to assumptions on resistance on change



Source: Louise (2010, p. 3)

According to Louise's (2010) interpretation framework, resistance that is shaped by high changeability and low emotionality is classified as 'opinion', where there is opportunity for dialogue and negotiation to take place given that the subject incurs low resistance to change. This creates the possibility for a planned change of management. Resistance as 'psychological reaction' is influenced by high changeability with high emotionality where the subject is still willing to negotiate

but is emotionally affected by the change situation. This builds fear and anxiety. Turning to a change of management approach that is 'therapeutic' by engaging in collective dialogue supported by extensive information to better manage uncertainty and improve motivation as the primary goal should reduce overall resistance.

The third kind of resistance interpretation is described as 'conviction', where both changeability and emotionality are assumed to be low due to morality, which is influenced by the principles and beliefs rather than the emotional aspect of the subject. In turn, it is suggested resistance could be based on rational objections to change and should be seriously considered due to legitimate protest and alter the initial planned changes to be aligned with the organisation's goals. Lastly, resistance interpreted as 'personality' is formed by both low changeability and emotionality, which suggests change probability to be relatively low due to the emotional subject who exhibits irrationality and bitterness when faced with a changing situation.

The purpose for reviewing this theoretical framework within the literature is the value of actionable potential as presented in the table by Louise (2010, p.8) below. For example, a quick assessment of leadership resistance by the participating organisation can be interpreted as a psychological reaction which yields the approach of 'therapy' engagement to build acceptance of the subject with a primary objective of improving motivation for administering the change. However, this was further considered during the action research phase where AR set members engaged in dialogue pertaining to the workplace problem while adapting to the 'best-fit' strategy suggested by Louise's (2010) framework based on the type of interpreted resistance category.

Table 2.7.2: Characteristics of four interpretations of resistance to change

	A Opinion	B Psychological reaction	C Conviction	D Personality
	<i>High changeability, low emotionality</i>	<i>High changeability, high emotionality</i>	<i>Low changeability, low emotionality</i>	<i>Low changeability, high emotionality</i>
Theoretical influence*	Labour process theory, Human Resource Management theory	Social psychology (in part)	Moral philosophy, whistle-blowing theory	Biology, personality psychology
Central themes	Employee influence, opinions, feedback	Psychological reactions, stereotypes	Convictions, ideals, ethics	Personality, psychological predispositions
Management strategies*	Dialogue and adjustment of planned changes	"Therapy" (to build acceptance for planned changes)	Dialogue and - if feasible - adjustment of planned changes	Dismissal or replacement of resistant employees
Primary management goal with strategy	Improved quality of decisions	Improved employee motivation	Improved ethics	Improved efficiency

Source: Louise (2010, p.8)

2.7.3 Professionalising the Family Business

Looking beyond the constraints of familial centralisation and the distractions it has on the owner-managers, there are primary business justifications that support the need for professionalisation within family businesses. By professionalisation, I refer to the adoption of external professionals in undertaking managerial roles within family businesses. In other words, the family owners hire full time non-family employees with the intention of delegating managerial authority to these employees (Stewart and Hitt, 2012). In turn, this detaches ownership and control, or to an extent reduces familial control in directly managing the business (Zhang and Max, 2009). However, it is also argued that professionalisation is multidimensional and undertaking the holistic change towards 'principles of merits' of people placement will differ between family businesses due to the level of familial involvement, available competent heirs and the like (Zhang and Ma, 2009).

The main force for appointing professional managers in a family business has been argued to support a larger economic logic for globalised markets, along with the rapid development in technology required for survival, which ultimately cannot be filled by the mere capacity of family resources in the long-term (Zhang and Ma, 2009). Another rationale for engaging external professionals is the belief that non-family and non-owner personnel will be less 'invested' in the business, therefore will provide objectivity and rationality into the business instead of an emotional attachment by an owner-manager (Hall and Nordqvist, 2008). Alternatively, one could also argue that professional management is the only path towards resolving dysfunctional nepotism and conflict within family businesses (Hall and Nordqvist, 2008).

In the study conducted by Nikolovski, Radevska and Petkovska (2016), it is suggested that increased levels of professional management aid family businesses in successfully sustaining growth and development in today's highly competitive business environment. However, this is also dependent on the family businesses' willingness and desire to employ non-family managers who possess the right skillsets and values to execute the long-term vision of the family owners who are constantly subjected to the two subsystems of family and business that generate conflicting goals for the organisation (Nikolovski, Radevska and Petkovska, 2016). This is once again because of the strong inclination of retaining top managerial positions within the family to safeguard SEW despite its financial performance compromise.

Interestingly, however, there are family businesses that undertake loss averse positions and would consider external talent for the sake of financial performance over family heirs that strive for SEW (Chang and Shim, 2015). More importantly, Chang and Shim's (2015) study suggests transition of family-to-professional management not only improves organisational performance, but also enables family owners to balance existing and prospective wealth by tapping into external talent while mitigating agency cost for the family business. Stewart and Hitt (2012) suggest that there are six different modes of professionalisation that family businesses could undertake. This is due to the multiple dimensions faced by family leaders that differ in vision and mental outlook of their business.

Starting with the less 'professional' mode, minimally professional family businesses refer to the type of family organisation that is incapable of formal professionalisation due to cultural and emotional barriers incurred by the kinship system (Stewart and Hitt, 2012). Arguably, this is the most common challenge encountered by wholly-owned family businesses due to the overlapping familial and business systems that produce cognitive obstacles when it comes to initiating professionalisation. The wealth-dispensing private family business, on the other hand, seeks

independence from and control over external professional involvement in order to preserve non-financial and SEW by continuously relying on private capital instead of reaching out for public funding (Stewart and Hitt, 2012). Entrepreneurially operated family business refers to the professionalisation of the business through entrepreneurial and informal operations that are built on strong social ties and mutual cooperation that yields speed, adaptivity to change and superior performance against market competition (Stewart and Hitt, 2012).

Adopting this mode of professionalisation is unmistakably family as business operations are effortlessly based on kinship relations where unspoken norms, mutual trust and accommodation enable entrepreneurial advantage over traditional formalised non-family businesses. Entrepreneurial family business groups has been suggested as another mode of professionalisation, whereby the family firm pursues opportunities within the network of affiliated businesses while maintaining a system deeply rooted in kinship where collaboration of familial resources are made possible through informal agreements (Stewart and Hitt, 2012). In other words, family businesses also regard ethnicity, religion and background as part of the kinship network to enhance synergy and capacity in securing broader economic gain through this mode of professionalisation.

The pseudo-professional public family business is a model where the majority shareholder seeks the private benefits of control at the expense of minority shareholders, which essentially is gained through public equity (Stewart and Hitt, 2012). In turn, this mode of professionalisation incurs principal-principal conflict by exploiting inefficiencies of the model, expropriating other people's money for familial gain, and taking advantage of gaps in public governance (Stewart and Hitt, 2012). Finally, the hybrid professional family firm is defined as the professionally managed but family-controlled business that seeks benefits of professionalisation by hiring and empowering non-family professional managers while retaining family influence within the organisation (Stewart and Hitt, 2012). In return, it is suggested that positive familial attributes are enabled while limiting the negative ramifications of family involvement as non-family stakeholders are empowered to administer business decisions.

In a study identified by Stewart and Hitt (2012), this was made possible through professional management where top administrators were hired externally and promoted from within while putting strong emphasis on cultural fit within the family. The family shareholders then undertook an active ownership role by sharing the collective purpose and retaining important traditions while professional management focused on executing operational strategies for the business. Despite the wide interpretation of 'professionalisation' within the context of employment for non-family

managers in seeking broad change for the organisation, it is emphasised that these salaried professionals must ultimately attend to the needs of the owning families in order to be successful and sustainable.

2.7.4 Knowledge Transfer

Considering the need to relieve day-to-day operational duties from the owner-managers, knowledge transfer is the key foundation for a successful decentralised organisation structure. In fact, it is argued that effective knowledge transfer shapes the competitive advantage within businesses while enabling greater productivity and sustainable growth (Martínez, Galván and Palacios, 2013). By definition, knowledge transfer refers to the process of communication between two agents where tacit knowledge is exchanged in a purposeful fashion. However, within the context of family businesses, knowledge transfer is extended between generations which in turn encounter issues due to the accompanying relationship of parent and offspring between the agents.

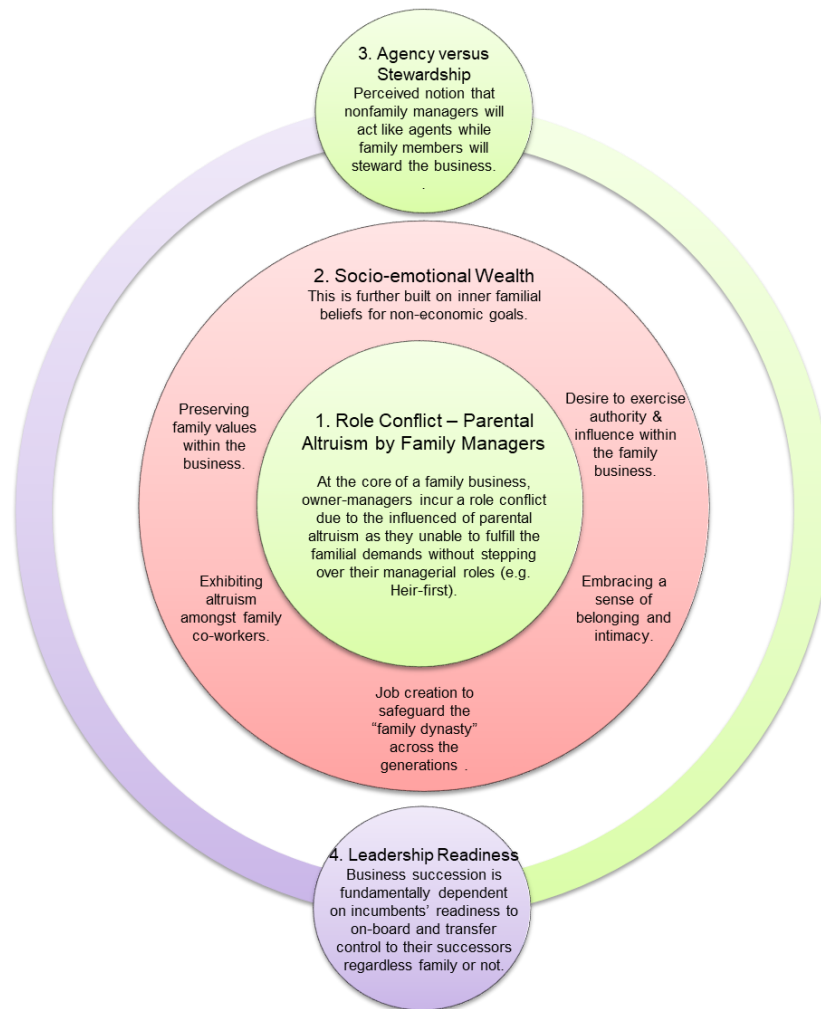
The intent to delegate and transfer decision-making competencies to non-family managers should also be seen as an opportunity for mutual learning, cooperation and creation of new knowledge for the organisation through the exchange of informative and explicit knowledge (Martínez, Galván and Palacios, 2013). Nonetheless, it is not uncommon for family businesses to experience constraints when it comes to knowledge transfers as such knowhow could be possessed by just a few family-managers which shape toxic monopolistic power or potential jealousy within the familial dimensions of the business. This creates barriers to share and transfer knowledge due to distrust between the business members (Martínez, Galván and Palacios, 2013).

2.8 Conceptualising a Framework within the Context of the Research Problem

The above arguments offer the actualities that define family businesses and the complexities involved when it comes to executive decision-making. However, to comprehend and imply that any of these theoretical paradigms are consistent across all family businesses is a mistake, as every family-owned enterprise is subjectively unique to their situational needs that influences organisational decision-making. Hence, the following conceptual model (Diagram 2.8) is a cumulative framework of correlating family business theories that outline the various forms of intrinsic motivation and stakeholder pressure faced by family businesses. However, the reaction towards any workplace situation will differ based on ownership structures that influence familial involvement, family values and principles that shape organisational goals and desires, maturity of

the business, family generation stage and the like, that enable or restrict decision-making at different levels and memberships (e.g. family versus non-family) of the business.

Diagram 2.8: Conceptual Model - Family Owner-Manager Motivational Resistance towards External Agents



2.8.1 Role Conflict – Parental Altruism by Family-Managers

At its core, family owned and managed businesses incur role conflict at the leadership level. This is because family involvement in business ownership and management responsibilities create the likelihood for role confusion when the functioning unit is self-regulated, influenced solely by familial members with multiple goals set by the family, shareholders and business operators. Despite the theoretical argument that family businesses can mitigate agency problems through owner-manager alignment, this arrangement essentially empowers but also exposes family members to pursue other unconventional goals as a business owner.

For instance, the traditional business owner will look to maximise his or her investment through dedicated management representatives. Whereas family business-owners are empowered as managers to pursue personal goals associated with the family due to influences such as parental altruism, creating dysfunctional conflict and declining financial performance for the organisation. Clearly, the primary source of motivation begins at the core structure of the family business where ownership and management integrate as one to pursue goals that are uniquely preferential to the familial unit.

2.8.2 Socio-emotional Wealth (SEW) – Non-economic Goals of the Family Firm

The family ownership structure explains how family businesses are in the position to consider SEW as an integral part of managerial motivation. Conceptually, the foundation has been established to support the extended core of ingrained motivation that resists empowerment of non-family executives as it conflicts with various dimensions of SEW. The mere consideration of delegating authority to an external professional would cause insecurity in the family due to the potential consequences it has on SEW aspirations. For instance, appointing a non-family CEO risks the likelihood of losing the 'family first' management philosophy and limits the capacity of exercising altruistic favours between family staff. Similarly, employing a non-family HR professional could modify in-house practices that hinder family offspring job security and lifetime employability.

Hence, the collective notion of passing control over to a non-family manager is not seen as consistent with the core motivations of family business. To that end however, it is also recognised that the pursuit of SEW will vary in each family business based on factors that are conditional to the leadership ideologies such as experience, educational background, generation stage, business environment, and the like. For example, a first-generation family business may put strong emphasis on preserving family values within the organisation while another that is run by the third generation with the top administrator possessing a strong professional background may seek to evolve towards corporate-related values. Likewise, the motivation to safeguard SEW is situational when the business is undergoing family succession, faced with increasing competitive pressure or experiencing declining financial performance which could result in family-managers engaged in a series of 'tug-of-war' to reconsider non-economic preferences for the organisation.

2.8.3 Agency Theory versus Stewardship Theory

Going beyond the core belief system of the family business, the supposition of agency theory suggests that the intrinsic motivations of owner-managers are pessimistic about engaging non-

family managers. Putting aside the fact that principal-agent relationships incur operational problems, it is essentially the division that separates both principal and non-family agents that is believed to trouble family owners. This is due to the presence of information asymmetries that shapes uncertainty within the family.

The principal-agent detachment creates an unknown in which owner-managers are unwilling to bear the risk involved that could potentially impact familial goals and expose company trade secrets. In contrast, it is believed that family members will adopt stewardship orientation due to emotional attachment created by ownership of the business, thereby seeking a preference for familial resources over external talent which validates another source of resistance toward non-family managers. The very notion that stewardship behaviour is altruistically motivated by the social and psychological well-being of the family business suggests consistency with intrinsic satisfaction for SEWS. This in turn creates a barrier for owner-managers to exhibit equal opportunities between familial and non-family employees.

2.8.4 Leadership Readiness – Releasing Authority and Management Control

Having discussed the various layers of motivation that influence family businesses in their decision-making processes, it comes down to the level of leadership readiness that limits or grants the approval for change in existing management practices. It is expected for owner-managers to be emotionally confronted when change is presented and the shift in organisational identity is questioned. This creates insecurity, confusion and uncertainty in the decision-makers. Despite the rationale behind the broader economic purpose for extending professional aid through non-family appointments, delegating authority is expected to be widely challenged by key stakeholders of the family unit due to the emotional attachment and loss of control within the business.

In addition, the reluctance can be perceived as a twofold issue where the management must be first willing to transfer authority to the next familial generation, followed by the extended obstacle of non-family professionals. Moreover, this is also subjected to the readily available pool of talent within the business that possesses the required managerial competencies in undertaking the operational leadership roles for management's consideration. Based on the subjectivity involved in addressing leadership readiness, participatory action research (PAR) is needed to continuously inquire on various academic frameworks such as change of management, knowledge transfer, succession processes, professionalisation modes and the like. PAR will better inform the study and participants in co-formulating actionable solutions for the family business.

2.8.5 Contributions of the Literature Review to the Workplace Problem

The review of the literature has presented an in-depth body of knowledge pertaining to family businesses and the unique set of management characteristics shaped by familial ownership. But how does this relate or contribute specifically to the identified research problem? Starting with role conflict, the arguments made that owner-managers are conflicted in their goal orientation due to the opposing responsibilities incurred by their multiple roles is theoretically precise (Gersick, Davis, Hampton & Lansberg, 1997). This concept proves to be consistent with owner-managers in the researched site as they seek to maximise day-to-day output but fail to oversee the strategic and long-term priorities due to the dual role conflict of ownership (maximise profits) and management (plan and direct organisation's overall goals). This in turn extends into an underlying source of influence that deviates owner-managers to pursue unconventional goals such as socio-emotional wealth (SEW) within the family business.

In review of SEW, it is evident that management does exhibit practices to preserve socio-emotional wealth including the retention of control and authority within the familial unit, binding of kinship within the workplace and displaying emotional attachment to the family business (Brannon & Edmond, 2016). Contextually, I agree that this contributed to the workplace problem as owner-managers yearn for control and are closely attached to the day-to-day business activities, hence limiting their strategic availability to perform key management duties. Although I concur with the concept of SEW in my study, its applicability depends on both the contextual situation and how a family business is defined. Unlike my workplace situation, family firms that have successfully transitioned to the second/third generation or are public listed may not be subjected to SEW as ownership, accountability, and the corporate culture do not permit for self-directed practices of the owner-managers.

In respect to agency theory, the economic assumption that agents operate on the premise of self-interest is apparently consistent with the participating organisation. Here, it is evident that the owner-managers limit principal-agent separation through tightly controlled workplace procedures, aligns employee behaviours with pay-for-performance schemes, and advocates the self-employment of family members. In turn, I believe that this further fuelled the workplace problem as day-to-day operations were largely dependent on family resources. Through these observations, the concept of stewardship theory and its arguments that owner-managers undertake a humanistic approach of serving the greater purpose of the family business appears to lack relevance and application. In fact, the development of emotional attachments to the family business have shaped the owner-managers to safeguard socio-emotional goals instead of stewarding the greater interest of the organisation.

Although stewardship practices are not visible within the context of the researched site, I would argue that its concept is largely value-driven and hence is subject to the managing-owners intrinsic aspirations to do good for the broader organisation and its stakeholders. Moving onto the contributions of family succession and change management, the literature reveals that the reality of seeing through a cohesive succession implementation largely depends on the predecessors' readiness and commitment, adequacy of succeeding candidates, and integrative efforts between generations to establish shared continuity on the family business. In view of the broader workplace problem, I feel that this built incremental complexity because of the advanced age (urgency) and emotional attachments (resistance) of the owner-managers to include their successors in the management function for strategic continuity.

Nevertheless, Louise (2010) argues that resistance to change can be mitigated by evaluating the changeability and emotionality of the managing-owners. According to the theoretical assessment of the research participants, a 'therapeutic' approach could aid the change process by engaging the owner-managers in collective dialogue and furnishing substantial information to better manage resistance and uncertainty. Even though the reliability of this interpretation framework is debateable, it supports the study by putting into perspective the perceived threats of the participants in guiding the consideration of alternative tones when delivering the action research. Next, the literature on professionalising family businesses sheds important light on the distinct advantages and longer-term benefits of appointing non-family professionals into managerial capacities. These include aligning objectivity with financial goals, supporting of the larger economic reasons in an increasingly competitive marketplace, and empowering managing-owners to balance financial reserves and prospective wealth for the family business.

In the context of this study, this informs the possibilities of exploiting greater economic returns if the manager-owners were able to direct their strategic course by tapping on external professionals to attend to the day-to-day business. In addition, Stewart and Hitt (2012) argues that there are different forms of professionalisation the family business could strive towards that best fits their longer-term interest. Although this may not address the immediate workplace problem, it certainly informs the owner-managers about "connecting-the-dots" and the necessity for strategic alignment during the action research process. In closing, the purpose of this subchapter is to draw relevance of the literature by reviewing it within the context of the workplace problem. This builds key arguments to make sense of the study and consider the applicability of the various theoretical paradigms that will support the broader aims of the research.

2.9 Summary

This chapter concludes the comprehensive review of the literature within the field of family business. Its purpose aimed to shed light on the research problem pertaining to the dysfunctionality of family management due to the multiple sources of influence impacting on leadership priorities. The theoretical concepts of dual role conflict, SEW, agency theory and parental altruism clearly informs the study that the purpose of the family business is uniquely different from traditional businesses. In addition, the literature review also explored other academic pieces that were relevant to the actionable component of this research including change of management, succession, and professionalising the family business in identifying the prospective hurdles during the AR implementation. Nevertheless, reviewing of the literature must go beyond the theoretical awareness and incorporate the context of the research problem which is vital in an actionable study. Hence, this directed the conceptualisation of the abstract model (Diagram 2.8) *'Family Owner-Manager Motivational Resistance towards External Agents'* as a distinctive effort to understand the underlying workplace problem.

Chapter 3 | Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction: Overview and Approach to Research

As the aim of this study was to address a specific workplace situation, the approach to inquiry required collaboration between the researcher and practitioners in undertaking an action-oriented research method. The participation of organisational members was vital in producing a substantial research result as the study was problem-centred and action-inspired, thereby underlying contextualisation as the fundamental process to inquiry. Only by respectfully taking the context into consideration was the researcher able to uncover valuable findings through the ever-changing, emerging and participative process. As revealed in the problem statement, managerial resources were limited in their strategic function due to the distractions of familial centralisation and involvement in day-to-day operational duties. This offered the opportunity for an insider-research, through the AR methodology, to direct the purpose of advancing management practices.

In brief, this chapter begins with the underlying research questions that guided and informed the study. This is followed by the research philosophy fundamental to the alignment of the broader methodology undertaken in the study. The research method then covers the mode of investigation and the four-stage structure of the AR process. The subsequent segment goes into my role as the insider-researcher that outlines specific opportunities and potential risks that could have been incurred during the study. This is supplemented with meta-learning that is directed at establishing impartiality as an insider-research and generating reflective data for scholarly development.

The chapter goes on to inform the study about the participating family business and the AR group members who were involved throughout the research. This is followed by the data collection tools and instruments that were adopted in gathering evidence of first, second and third-person inquiry. This ties in with the data analysis directed at interpreting the qualitative data in its contextual researched site through the elected coding procedures. Given that this study was conducted by an insider-researcher, it is imperative to touch on the ethical implication and politics of the organisation before finally concluding the chapter with a summary.

3.1 Research Questions

The research questions aim to guide the study by informing the basis for investigation. This is broken down into primary, secondary and AR to provide an organised outlook in shaping the research methodology and rationalising the research method for the study.

3.1.1 Primary Research Question

As the problem statement suggests, owner-managers' desire to retain familial authority within the business motivates them to focus on day-to-day control of operations. In turn, this limits their physical capacity to attend to other strategic areas of the business.

How can owner-managers reduce operational duties to better concentrate on their leadership roles?

In this action-oriented study, the plan was to visit possibilities of unlocking this long-term management behaviour so that the organisation could function in a more critically adaptive manner to the immediate ever-changing business environment. Hence, the above question was the primary focus of the study and featured actionable priorities in the AR project.

3.1.2 Secondary Research Questions

On reflection, the primary research question was highly focused on addressing the main concerns of a workplace problem. However, a subsequent set of questions naturally unfolded as I went deeper into the AR inquiry. The secondary questions were a natural subset to the primary question with potentially valid explanations to the fundamental situation.

1. Why are owner-managers resistant towards delegating operational duties to non-family employees?
2. What are the owner-managers' perceived risks in assigning decision-making tasks to non-family managers?
3. To what extent will owner-managers consider empowering non-family employees to make decision for the family business?
4. What control measures can be adopted to safeguard the insecurities of the family managers when delegating operational duties to non-family managers?

In fact, these questions were closely associated to the assumption that owner-managers yearn to retain managerial control due to their familial insecurities. In addition, the inquiries were viewed as the extension of the problem statement on how the AR group could advance the workplace situation within the acceptable parameters of family management. Finally, it also investigated the possible means of executing alternative managerial actions within a controlled and tolerable fashion. Naturally, if these questions remained unanswered, it would have been reasonable to say

that there was no probable cause for the AR project to continue due to the absence of evidence that warranted the study.

3.1.3 The Action Research Question

In such an action-oriented study in partnership with a participating organisation, it would not be complete if there was no visible AR question in directing the research project. Fundamentally, the AR consists of two-parts, an agreement for planned action and an assessment of the AR participants' reaction throughout the entire research process.

If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees (planned action), how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth (measure the reaction of the AR participants, the change process, and the project outcome)?

As expressed in the AR question, the action plan is for owner-managers to undertake more strategic roles within the business by firmly delegating operational day-to-day duties and empower decision-making authority to non-family employees. However, the aim was an attempt to advance the present situation through AR developments rather than an accomplishment of immediate change. During that change process, the dissertation was accountable for collecting and analysing applicable data from and together with the AR members on the project progress and outcomes.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy was the foundation that guided the methodology based on my ontological and epistemological beliefs. In other words, the investigation process which set out to answer the research questions was integral to the research methodology that was aligned to the philosophical beliefs of the study directed by the researcher. Hence, it was vital to consider the philosophical positions in underlying the research methodology that was undertaken in this study.

3.2.1 Ontology

Before considering the overall methodology for the study, it is conventional to review the ontological position that philosophically aligns to the basis of the research inquiry. This brings us to the fundamental debate of realism and relativism which is the foundation of beliefs about reality (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). The purpose for this deliberation is because the perception of reality will shape how the inquiry can be conducted in discovering the truth that the

research aims to pursue. Traditionally, realism is the belief that only one truth exists and that it does not change overtime. This single truth is then acquired through objective measurements, and once revealed can be generalised across other situations. Relativism on the other hand is the belief that there are multiple versions of reality. However, this philosophical view also incurs many perspectives due to the multiple viewpoints of different observers (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012).

This is because reality is now attached to meaning and shaped by context. Furthermore, this perceived reality which is context-bound cannot be generalised and will change and evolve overtime. Reflecting on the characteristics of both realism and relativism, I believed it would be rational to embrace and align with the notion of multiple realities because of the contextual study being problem-focused, situational and incured human subjectivity (Creswell, 2012). In other words, the truth (workplace problem) which was subjectively determined by the organisational actors is created by their experiences and shaped by context that I investigated throughout the study. Hence, we must acknowledge that the study undertaken with the participating family business was grounded by the beliefs of relativism. This was consistent with the intent of producing actionable knowledge from the study because the truth which is contextually limited cannot be generalised but could instead be applied to other similar situations.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Having recognised the ontological assumptions of this study, it is imperative to also touch on epistemology which questions the study of knowledge. In essence, it is argued that positivism and social constructionism are the two most renowned views of conducting research in the field of social science (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). Positivism which refers to the belief that the social world only exists externally, suggests the prerequisite for objective measurements in acquiring new knowledge and rejects subjective assessments such as interpretation or reflection. This type of paradigm of inquiry is consistent with the ontology realism in search of the truth or facts about reality.

Grounded by this belief, the researcher has attempted to maintain a distance from the researched and introduced control measures to avoid any form of influence on the end results. Social constructionism on the other hand promotes the view that reality is socially constructed by people based on their experiences (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). This in turn aligns with relativism which suggests that reality cannot exist without context and that the truth is built on multiple mental constructions influenced by social interaction and human experiences. In other

words, instead of finding knowledge through external observation, it is socially constructed and therefore incurs multiple realities that are considered subjectively correct.

Applying this belief of epistemology required the researcher and participants to co-create the findings through an interactive methodology. Unlike positivism which believes in a single truth and pursues results that are decontextualised, a social constructionism mode of inquiry suited this study because it enabled access to the contextual situation and co-construction of reality through social engagement of the researcher and participants. As a manager, it was clear that my personal values and beliefs lie a lot closer to relativism and constructionism having to deal with day-to-day workplace problems that are contextual, attached to human understanding and socially developed by the actionable lens of practitioners.

Looking at this from a critical perspective, it would be challenging to consider realism (one truth) within the study when the familial work environments across different organisations widely differ in terms of structure, culture and maturity which undoubtedly impacts the views of reality. In addition, the epistemological approach of positivism that acquires new knowledge without the subjective understanding of the participants engaged in actionable boundaries fundamentally conflicted with the research inquiries. Considering the research questions that sought to understand the owner-managers' underlying behaviour and driving motivation in conducting their leadership within the family business. This was an inquiry within a specific context that required interaction in a social environment in order to access and construct the truth of reality.

3.2.3 Aligning the Research Methodology

The views of reality and how it was created is primarily influenced by the research question which also underlined the methodology through the connections of ontology and epistemology. This is because the methodology refers to the philosophies that guide the research method and the data gathering techniques in the study. Based on Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson's (2012, p. 25) 'Methodological Implications of different Epistemologies' informative Table 3.2.3, the association between ontology and epistemology is likely to extend into the methodology that will best fit the research.

Within the context of this study, it was clear that the research was guided by the principles of relativism and social constructivism, thereby adopting a methodology that aimed to gather multiple perspectives of the participants through a qualitative method in collecting and analysing the research data (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). More specifically, action research has been conducted because it follows a process of knowledge construction with local participants

which is context-bound (relativism) and focuses on the reality of human experience (constructivism) that is tested and validated through action (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). In the next chapter, we will review further about this research method and the data collection techniques to best address the research questions in this study.

Table 3.2.3: Methodological Implications of different Epistemologies

Ontologies	Realism	Internal Realism	Relativism	Nominalism
Epistemology	Strong Positivism	Positivism	Constructionism	Strong Constructionism
Methodology				
<i>Aims</i>	Discovery	Exposure	Convergence	Invention
<i>Starting points</i>	Hypotheses	Propositions	Questions	Critique
<i>Designs</i>	Experiment	Large surveys; multi-cases	Cases and surveys	Engagement and reflexivity
<i>Data types</i>	Numbers and facts	Numbers and words	Words and numbers	Discourse and experiences
<i>Analysis/ interpretation</i>	Verification/ falsification	Correlation and regression	Triangulation and comparison	Sense-making; understanding
<i>Outcomes</i>	Confirmation of theories	Theory testing and generation	Theory generation	New insights and actions

Source: Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson's (2012, p. 25)

3.3 Research Method

The research method represents how data was collected and generated into new findings for the study. It outlines how the research was carried out through the selected mode of inquiry. Although its function is considered different from the methodology, the research method is closely-related as the data collection techniques are guided by the ontological and epistemological belief of the study. In the subsequent segments, I discuss action research (AR) and the data gathering procedures involved in generating the findings directed at answering the research questions.

3.3.1 Action Research (AR)

As the research goal was focused on improving the workplace situation through managerial intervention, action research (AR) was identified to be the most appropriate mode of study. This is because of its iterative process that is co-facilitated by the researcher-participant's partnership

in conducting problem diagnosis, action intervention and reflective learning (Avison et al, 1999). In other words, an empirical research method was undertaken in which the scholarly practitioner attempted to remedy real-world problems while studying the process simultaneously to generate new findings (Tuzun et al, 2018).

The approach has been defined as ‘a series of commitments to observe and problematise through practice a series of principles for conducting social enquiry’ which enabled the discovery of non-deterministic and reciprocal relationships in real-world settings (Durcikova, Lee and Brown 2018, p. 242). This in turn enabled the action researcher to collaborate with practitioners within their contextual situation to collectively inquire about present workplace practices with the intent towards prospective change consistent with the higher good of the business and generate new actionable knowledge (Cardiff, McCormack and McCance, 2018). In addition, the social change implied through AR is not the common changes that occur at the workplace, but through the increased involvement of key stakeholders to have a more controlled outlook on their organisation’s performance by constantly improving their capabilities in a sustainable fashion (Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

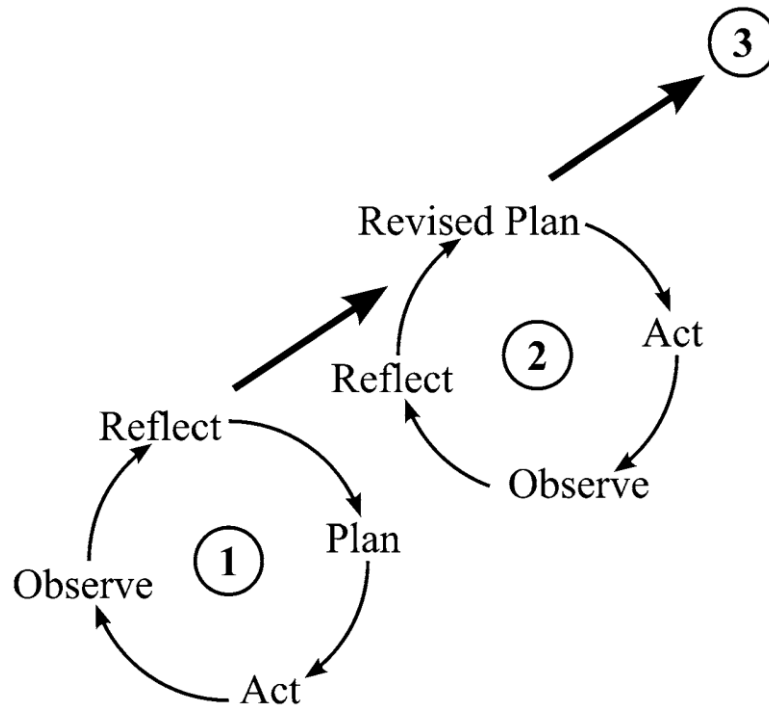
The goal of AR was not to discover facts under traditional research conditions of controlled circumstances, nor was it to bring about successful action without the rigour of research context, but the integration of both action and research so that there was a growing relevance for both practitioners and the researcher throughout the process. In practice, action research adopts a continuous spiral process that is engineered to bring about constructive change in real-world context by assuming the following steps (Zuber-Skerritt 2011, p. 33).

Table 3.3.1: Four Phases of an Action Research Cycle

1	Plan	Problem identification, situational analysis, and design strategic improvement plan.
2	Action	Implementation of strategic plan.
3	Observation	Structured monitoring, collecting feedback, and on-going evaluation.
4	Reflection	Perform reflection on the results obtained collaboratively and critically.

Source: Zuber-Skerritt (2011, p. 33)

Diagram 3.3.1.1: The Spiral of Action Research Cycles



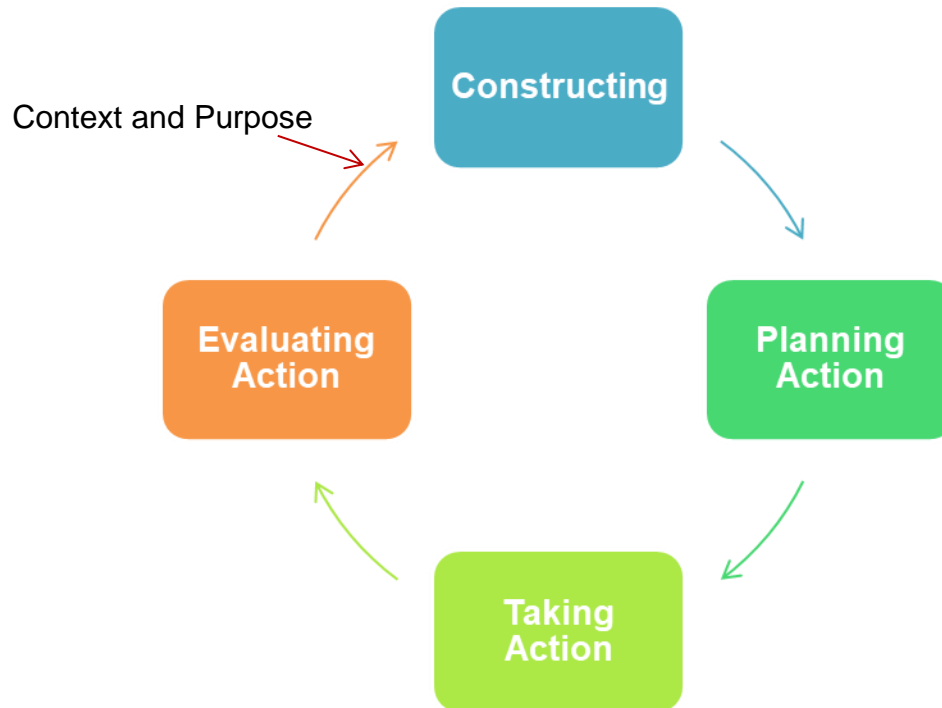
Source: Zuber-Skerritt (2011, p. 34)

Through this cyclical process, knowledge creation takes place through the questioning of participants on their concrete experiences, reflecting on the change process and evaluating the situational outcome with the intent of further enhancing practice within the altering workplace settings (Zuber-Skerritt 2011, p. 34). Fundamentally, AR is creative and flexible in its process due to its core function intended at addressing complex social problems within the organisation in unprecedented situations (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). Hence, it is recognised that the AR process is non-linear because of its continuous social construction and advancement intent which enables exploratory learning to take place through constant observation and participatory reflection.

This is also why there is no fixed form of AR definition due to its natural evolving qualities and developmental attributes (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). In this study, I adopted the AR framework by Coghlan and Brannick (2014) which consists of a pre-step followed by the four stage process consisting of (1) constructing, (2) planning action, (3) taking action and (4) evaluating action. In Diagram 3.3.1.2, the action research cycle illustrates the commencement of the AR process with preliminary stage intended at establishing context and purpose of the project (Coghlan and Brannick 2014, p. 9). At this pre-step stage, the goal is to determine the purpose and identify the context that underlies and justifies the action research. In other words, the researcher validates

the desirability and feasibility of the AR project by identifying the external and internal forces in driving change towards a future desired state at the workplace (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

Diagram 3.3.1.2: The Action Research Cycle



Source: Adapted from Coghlan and Brannick (2014, p. 9)

The other main purpose of the pre-step is establishing collaborative demand of key stakeholders in shaping ownership and assembling of the AR group members. After the pre-step, constructing is the first stage of the AR process. This involves the dialogic inauguration between AR members in constructing the underlying issues, planned actions and an implementation schedule (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). In practice, this process must be performed collaboratively amongst the participants in order to bring out the best of the AR group that attempts to advance the troubled workplace situation. Planning action is the second stage where participants focus their attention on outlining the necessary actions and subsequent steps expected during the implementation.

This is then followed by taking action where the formulated plans are implemented and intervention is made collaboratively between the respective AR members. In the fourth and final stage, the AR team reviews and evaluates the outcomes of the actions made in the workplace which is expected to find both intended and unforeseen results from the implementation. This is the reflection stage in that it is assessing the initial constructed plans, actions and reactions during

the process which summarises the AR cycle and should then set the foundation for the subsequent cycles (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

3.3.2 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

The basis for specifically electing participatory action research (PAR) as the preferred mode of inquiry was because of its strategic alignment with the primary goals of this study. By definition, PAR offers the twofold objectives of producing academic knowledge and actionable know-how that has practical value for organisations, which is consistent with the intent of this study (Kekale and Pirttila, 2006). In principle, PAR is more of an extension of AR through the emphasis on empowerment and active participation of organisational practitioners to drive and establish change within the workplace. The very fact that PAR aspires to transform existing workplace conditions to improved organisational settings confirms the need for managerial intervention which underlies participatory involvement in the process.

It is also natural that the knowledge pursuit in PAR needs to be contextual, evolving and value laden, based on the social insights co-created by the practitioners aimed at improving practice (Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2008). It is believed that PAR participants have assumed the role of a co-researcher because they are active in both decision-making and in action while partnering with the primary researcher in production of new knowledge (Uggerhoj, Henriksen and Andersen, 2018). As the insider-researcher, my role was to stimulate the consenting participants to reflect and analyse their present situation in order to act and inspire organisational improvement. Through their participation, the focus was on open communication between the respondents in a fashion that co-constructed new knowledge during the journey towards workplace enhancements.

However, this could only be captured through the communicative actions of the participants who were motivated at working through differences and formulating compelling real-world solutions while maintaining openness and dialog with me, the AR researcher (Kekale and Pirttila, 2006). During the study, it was my duty to create an atmosphere of democracy to enable my co-workers and empower their participation in sharing their experiences and reveal invaluable discoveries. In this research, the source of participation took place from two different groups; the participator-based group which were focused on defining the workplace problem, and the participator-controlled group who were organisational members with authority to intervene, make decisions and implement changes within the business (Kekale and Pirttila, 2006).

In other words, participator-based members were recruited under the AR pre-step, as discussed in the previous chapter, to help define and problematise the workplace. In the same way, this

could be viewed as the situational assessment stage which was vital to PAR as organisational context is the basis for conducting action research (Uggerhoj, Henriksen and Andersen, 2018). However, participants involved during the AR pre-step may not have necessarily joined the subsequent participatory phase as succeeding in this AR stage demanded managerial attention in adhering to the plan, act, observe and reflection process. In this latter action cycle, the goal was to on-board a voluntary department to bring about fruitful purpose and compelling participation of the respondents. Reflecting back to the workplace problem, it has been suggested that owner-managers are genuinely attached to preserving familial control which in turn affected leadership performance. Hence, I proposed recruitment of participator-based members who had adequate working engagements with these owner-managers but were not part of the management team.

3.3.3 The Role of an Insider-Researcher – Opportunities and Challenges

In this study, I assumed the role of an insider-researcher in conducting workplace inquiry within the family business. This entailed me to shoulder both the role of the manager and researcher which arguably suggested inheriting conflicting goals in the undertaking. However, through AR, the objective is one and the same. This is because of its unique approach to research in dealing with social realities by inviting active collaboration between the researcher and practitioners in conducting ‘inquiry-in-action’ with the main purpose of transforming previous workplace conditions into prospective organisational settings (Avison, 2002). More specifically, AR is not targeted at addressing research gaps within the academic field but rather creating knowledge within a specific workplace venue through the complex interaction with participants in multiple feedback loops.

This is where my position as the insider action researcher increased in complexity due to overlapping roles that I have undertaken within the study. As the researcher, it can be problematic to distribute power across the AR group due to my professional capacity and working relationship with the participants (colleagues). For instance, my professional authority within the workplace could have impacted on core research principles such as transparency and reflexivity amongst the participants if I was unable to facilitate the AR cycles in a perceived impartial fashion. Similarly, my identity as a family-manager who was conducting a study within my own family practices could also be mistaken as a form of personal gain instead of the genuine purpose of contributing to new knowledge and professional growth. Hence, it was imperative that I define my role as an insider-researcher clearly and carefully within the study to safeguard credibility of this research.

In most situations, the insider-researcher is first seen as an employee, followed by the researcher, and subsequently a third role as an internal consultant to the organisation (Roth, Shani and Leary 2007, p. 51). Through the course of AR collaboration, it is natural for participating co-workers to first view their colleague as an employee who has now taken on the additional role of a researcher. In addition, the insider-researcher must function in a way that maintains credibility towards both the practitioner group and academic community using appropriate language that engages the interest of each respective target audience (Roth, Shani and Leary, 2007). It is essential that the insider-researcher must be able to translate theoretical ideas to management practitioners and likewise capture relevant data from workplace intervention to reflect evidence of academic value.

The ability to successfully adapt and function in these multiple roles by 'putting on different hats' within the right context enabled me as the researcher to reap the advantages of an experienced insider and rid myself of the burden of role-conflict. The advantages of insider-researcher included having a profound understanding of the organisation's culture, the ability to enable natural flow of social interactions amongst participants, promoting transparency between AR members, and basically having the necessary know-how in navigating through the politics of the workplace hierarchy (Unluer, 2012). This was expected as an insider because of my familiarity with the local culture, formal and informal structures of the organisation, available network in accessing to the right stakeholders and knowledge of possible research interventions within the participating family business.

Nevertheless, this aspect of pre-understanding has also incurred arguments that the insider-researcher may lose impartiality in conducting the research due to his/her domestic familiarity which could subsequently lead to bias and unconsciously drawing of wrong conclusions (Roth, Shani and Leary, 2007). Another potential concern is the notion that the insider-researcher could be considered part of the data, thereby posing further risk of invading the ethnographic space and inviting criticisms of completely losing validity of the study (Workman, 2007). Another suggested fear by academics on AR, particularly produced by insider-researchers, is the presentation of new knowledge as legitimately epistemic because it is locally generated, practice-driven and context bound (Herr and Anderson, 2012).

It has been suggested that the insider-researcher could mitigate this by exercising reflective data collection to assist in recognising bias which subsequently should be challenged during the analysis stage (Workman, 2007). In detail, I plan to address this potential concern by pursuing meta-learning as defined by Coghlan and Brannick (2014) in the following chapter by systematically capturing insider reflections as part of the AR process. Finally, the insider-

researcher needs to face and navigate carefully through the political terrain of an organisation. The delivery of research findings and insights that warrant new changes to existing workplace practices can be sensitive to different stakeholders.

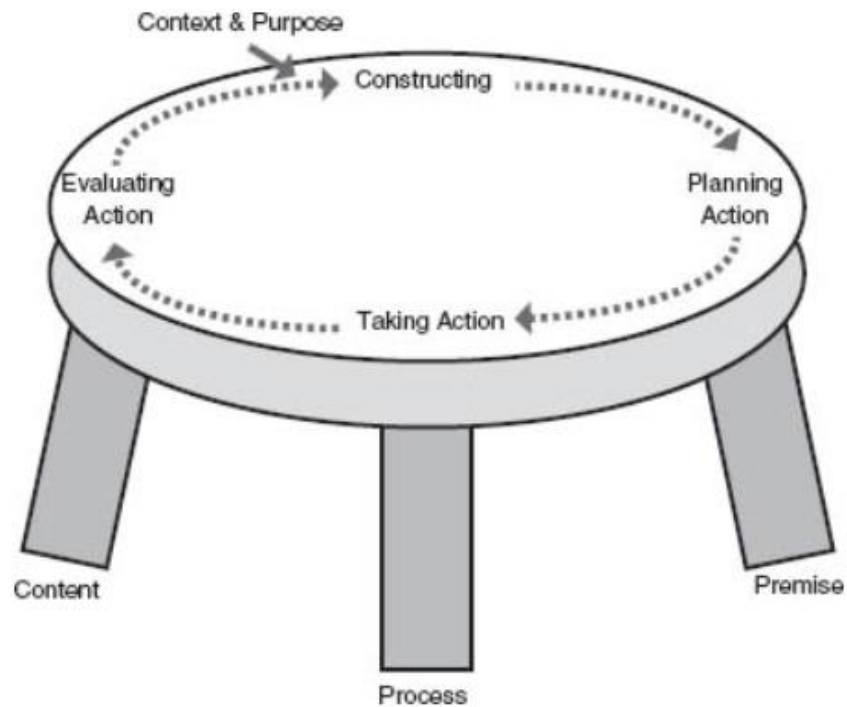
Lack in timeliness or inappropriately framing the results could end in unnecessary setbacks to both the study and professional development of the insider-researcher within the organisation. It is suggested that one way of mitigating this is to identify the right participants and obtain key stakeholder approvals in minimising project hurdles during the research process (Roth, Shani and Leary, 2007). Another proposed strategy in dealing with political dynamics is to 'set-the-scene' with the consent of management that the organisation is undergoing a change program that pursued initiatives consistent with the greater good of the business, thereby motivating and enabling AR members to collectively support the research intricately.

3.3.3.1 Reflection and Meta-Learning

Having shared the potential challenges of an insider-researcher conducting research within his/her own organisation, how would I go about overcoming this through AR in the production of new knowledge? This is where, as suggested by Coghlan and Brannick (2014), I turned to meta-learning as the foundation of my dissertation in ensuring rigour and quality of the study. This can be considered a form of reflection, but not the traditional mode of reflecting after data collected but rather reflection-in-action where the researcher is attentive to the events taking place and is empowered to shape AR directions (Coghlan and Shani, 2018). This is achieved by simultaneously conducting two AR cycles in parallel during the implementation of the project.

The plan, act, observe and reflect process executed together with the participants is referred to as the 'Core Action Research Cycle' while a second cycle called the 'Thesis Action Research Cycle' is running in parallel (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). What this means is during execution of the core action research cycle, the primary researcher is concurrently engaged in his/her own AR cycle in assessing how the project is progressing by continuously inquiring into the same four-step process and identifying new learning. In other words, the researcher conducts reflection on reflection as part of the learning process of AR in developing actionable knowledge, which is referred to as meta-learning. In action, this reflection will be conducted in three different ways. Namely content, process and premise as illustrated in Diagram 3.3.3.1 meta-cycle of action research (Coghlan and Brannick 2014, p. 13).

Diagram 3.3.3.1: Meta-cycle of Action Research



Source: Coghlan and Brannick (2014, p. 13)

In AR, this is considered critical because the applied reflection best represents the meta-cycle of inquiry in the study. Content reflection refers to the collection of what was planned, acted upon and evaluated, whereas process reflection focuses on how the participants administered the planning, action and evaluation steps. Premise reflection inquires into the unconscious and underlying assumptions of the participants across the AR project. The learning-on-learning 'meta-learning' metaphor is then formed when the three reflections are applied to AR where knowledge creation becomes more than just everyday managerial problem solving (Coghlan and Shani, 2018). Recognising that both the AR project and dissertation are integrally interlinked, the outcomes are fundamentally different because one is a systematic approach towards workplace advancement whereas the other is an inquiry into that project for the purpose of producing actionable know-how.

Accounting for the reflection-in-action can be limiting, therefore keeping a reflection journal during the progress of the AR is a necessity. In AR operations, I have kept a reflection journal of all the events that took place that are oriented towards learning, reflections and analysis that are related to practice. More specifically, it captured particular incidents where I intervened with the AR group,

their response or reactions to my inputs, my thoughts on what transpired and a broader reflection on the series of events (Coghlan and Shani 2018, p. 20). It has been suggested that a structure in guiding these reflections on the AR work aids in tracking my inquiries and learning throughout the process of journal keeping.

Table 3.3.3.1: Keeping a Reflective Journal

1	Recap an incident – What was said, by whom, and did what? How did I feel/think?
2	What questions arise from that incident?
3	What insights did I have for that incident? Reflecting on the situation and myself
4	Possibilities to test those insights? Question my own thinking?
5	Now what? Then what?

Source: Coghlan and Shani (2018, p. 20)

Linking the journal entries with one another across several incidents justifies the reflections of the researcher on how he or she could learn for further implementation.

3.4 Research Participants

As the study advanced and the AR project progressed into its operational phase, it was imperative to align back to the framework of Coghlan and Brannick (2014) where the AR process begins with a pre-step of identifying context and purpose for the study. At this juncture, it was legitimate to identify the relevant participants' involvement in the different phases of the research process. During the preliminary phase, it was clear that the workplace problem had been identified by the insider-researcher. This was further informed by reviewing the literature in development of the problem statement directed at the AR study. However, these efforts alone were not sufficient to claim legitimacy of the definite workplace situation and required some form of evidence in representing authenticity for actionable intervention within the participating family business. This is where the study entered the AR pre-step where data was collected to review the consistency of the initial proposition and undergo the problematising process before embarking on the actionable stage of the study.

After data was collected from the pre-step participants and analysed, the study proceeded onto a problematising chapter which captured evidence to possibly further refine the workplace situation for the AR participatory phase. In other words, the purpose for this preliminary data collection stage was directed at affirming managerial attachment for familial control within the family business, and the impact of such centralised managerial approach on the core leadership duties of the owner-managers. This further reinforced the concept of building context and purpose in the pre-stage while confirming desirability and viability of implementing the AR project within the researched site (Creswell, 2012). After the pre-step was complete, the case was presented to key stakeholders with the authority to intervene, review and implement changes that are critical for the advancement of practice within the family business.

It is important to point out that the respondents involved in the pre-step stage were from different functions across the business and were targeted at representing a more general view on owner-manager leadership. However, entering into the AR participatory phase required a more specific contextual site within the family business. Hence, the AR participants differed from the pre-step respondents because they were focused on a precise department objective to seek change and advancement within their specific contextual situation. Based on initial assessments that best fit the AR goals, the accounts and finance department was identified and selected because of its seemingly situation, accessibility and prospective outcome from the study. Nevertheless, the recruitment of pre-step respondents and AR participants will be discussed in the following subchapters of sampling strategy and sampling size.

3.4.1 Sampling Strategy

Purposeful sampling was elected for this action research due to the qualitative conditions of the study. Purposeful sampling is founded on three main considerations, starting with who was selected as the participants, the sampling strategy and the sample size (Creswell, 2012). Whom to sample is dependent on the researcher's order of selecting participants who might be conveniently accessible, politically influential to the research, or even a regular individual who is able to contribute through their lived experiences specifically for the context of the study (Creswell, 2012). Hence, I specifically elected the pre-step respondents because of their direct working relationships with the managing-owners in order to provide an assessment of the workplace problem. In addition, I felt that the participation from both family and non-family respondents would be vital in providing an unbiased pool of data that would reflect a richer perspective on the workplace conditions.

The sampling strategy refers to participant selection that will empower production of purposeful information and understanding about the researched site which requires the consideration of who to sample, what form of sampling and how many respondents will be sampled (Creswell, 2012). In other words, the researcher should consider sampling at different levels of the researched site, identify a specific context and look at the individual or group levels to best formulate the approach to sampling for the study. In addition, the researcher should plan and anticipate for possible change in sampling as part of the broader strategy to the data collection process. Finally, the priority in sample size for a qualitative study is to focus on collection of comprehensive details about the researched site because the intent is not to generalise the acquired information but to reveal the specifics of the contextual study (Creswell, 2012).

Fundamentally, the logic for selecting purposeful sampling lies with the necessity to acquire information-rich participants for the qualitative study (Coyne, 1997; Emmel, 2013; Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Gill, 2020). This is common for researchers within the qualitative space to deliberately select informants who possess the relevant knowledge about the researched site for the purpose of both fit and practicality of addressing real-world problems (Emmel, 2013; Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Gill, 2020). This sampling method delivers the advantages of selecting participants that are most fruitful and cost-efficient for the research (Gill, 2020). Although it is argued that purposeful sampling is “biased” due to the selection process of certain informants with specific knowledge included in the study, it is ideal as that is the intent of adopting such a method where bias is used purposefully to facilitate the qualitative research (Morse, 1991). Nevertheless, there are limitations to purposeful sampling including the challenges of locating information-rich participants (Gill, 2020).

This could be due to gatekeepers that limit the recruitment of specific samples that could be potentially valuable to the study, thereby incurring bias in the broader sample pool collected for the research (Tuckett, 2004). Having discussed about the rationale, framework, advantages and drawbacks of purposeful sampling, it was still necessary to define the criteria and characteristics required for the samples. In addition, the criteria and characteristics of the samples needed for the AR pre-step and AR project differed fundamentally based on the data collection goals of the research. As the main intent of the AR pre-step respondents was to furnish information about the owner-managers’ approach to management and validate the workplace problem, the criteria formulated were directed at the following conditions. The following tables 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 reflect the sampling criteria and characteristics for the selected respondents involved in the AR pre-step interviews.

Table 3.4.1 : AR Pre-step Respondents – Sampling Criteria		
No	Sampling Criteria	Rational for Selecting Respondents
1	Working Relationship	Possesses adequate level of working relationship with the owner-managers in order to determine their management philosophy in the workplace.
2	Years of Service	Possesses a minimum of at least 1 year of working experience within the family business in order to creditably inform the study.
3	Education	Possesses a minimum intellectual capacity to participate in the individual interviews and adequately present creditable data on the workplace problem.
4	Familial Status	To include a diversity of family and non-family respondents targeted at establishing a well-balanced portfolio of data collected for the study.

Table 3.4.2 : AR Pre-step Respondents – Sample Characteristics							
No	Code	Position	Familial Status	Years of Service	Education	Gender	Relationship with Owner-managers
1	2G1	Manager	Family employee	3	First Degree	Female	Indirectly reports to an owner-manager through a department manager
2	2G2	Manager	Family employee	7	Master's Degree	Male	Directly reports to an owner-manager
3	2G3	Manager	Family employee	3	Master's Degree	Male	Directly reports to an owner-manager
4	2G4	Manager	Family employee	11	First Degree	Male	Directly reports to an owner-manager
5	N1	Manager	Non-family employee	2	First Degree	Male	Directly reports to an owner-manager
6	N2	Manager	Non-family employee	3	Diploma	Male	Indirectly reports to an owner-manager through a department manager
7	N3	Engineer	Non-family employee	10	Diploma	Male	Directly reports to an owner-manager
8	N4	Executive	Non-family employee	2	Diploma	Female	Indirectly reports to an owner-manager through a department manager
9	N5	Senior Executive	Non-family employee	5	First Degree	Male	Directly reports to an owner-manager
10	N6	Ops Coordinator	Non-family employee	1	Diploma	Female	Directly reports to an owner-manager

Code Reference

2G – Family Member from Second Generation

N – Non-family Staff

As established in the above tables, these ten participants were specifically selected not because of convenience or accessibility, but rather meeting the underlying criteria of ‘closeness’ with the owner-managers along with the other sampling criteria essential for the pre-step study. Moving onto the AR project, the sampling criteria and characteristics logically differed as the intent was to bring about change within the workplace through the four-stage cyclical process. As indicated earlier, the broader assessment led to the selection of the accounts and finance department because of its troubled situation, availability and prospective results that best fits the AR study. Despite this purposeful justification, it was still imperative to align the sampling criteria and characteristics in selecting of the AR members who will participate in this project. The following tables 3.4.3 and 3.4.4 indicates the rational in the sample selection process for the AR project.

Table 3.4.3 : AR Participants – Sampling Criteria		
No	Sampling Criteria	Rational for Selecting Respondents
1	Functional Relevance	Possesses adequate levels of functional knowledge and experience in contributing to the AR group discussions on the workplace problem.
2	Workplace Authority	Possesses adequate levels of workplace authority to decide or influence new changes for the organisation.
3	Administrative Accessibility	Possesses the administrative rights to carry out new implementations or processes within the workplace.
4	Education	Possesses a minimum intellectual capacity to participate in the AR group discussions targeted at advancing the workplace problem.

Table 3.4.4 : AR Participants – Sample Characteristics								
No	Code	Position	Familial Status	Years of Service	Education	Gender	Functional Relevance	Workplace Authority
1	1G1	Director (Owner-manager)	Family employee	43	‘O’ Levels	Male	Cross function	Possesses some authority
2	1G2	Director (Owner-manager)	Family employee	43	‘O’ Levels	Female	Direct function	Possess full authority
3	2G4	Manager	Family employee	11	First Degree	Male	Direct function	Possesses some authority
4	2G5	Manager	Family employee	28	First Degree	Female	Cross function	Possesses some influence
5	IR	GM (AR Researcher)	Family employee	10	Master’s Degree	Male	Not applicable	Not applicable

Code Reference

1G – Family Member from First Generation (Owner-Manager)

2G – Family Member from Second Generation

IR – Insider-Researcher

Based on the sampling criteria, two owner-managers and two managers (both offspring) were recruited to participate in the AR project based on their functional expertise, authoritative influence, administrative rights and intellectual capacities in advancing the workplace problem.

3.4.2 Sample Size

In respect to sample size, the scope must serve the purpose of being able to collect extensive detail about the site of what is fundamentally needed for the study rather than maximising the number of participants (Creswell, 2012). On that basis, the sample size is not directed at maximising but rather outlining a population that would viably furnish credible samples for data collection. In other words, the identified population must provide ample opportunity for the researcher to exercise his/her sampling strategy in the selection process.

Table 3.4.5 : Sample Size for AR Pre-Step Study				
Department	Population (Employees)	Sample Size	Percentage	Remarks
Senior Management	1	0	NA	This was the insider-researcher.
Sales & Marketing	7	6	86%	
Accounts & Finance	3	1	33%	1 of the samples did not possess intellectual relevance to participate in the interviews.
Operations & Logistics	7	1	14%	Large proportion of population lack intellectual capacity to participate in the interviews.
Technical Support	1	1	100%	
HR & Admin	1	0	0%	Unavailable during time of study.
Procurement	2	1	50%	
Total	22	10	45%	

Starting with the sampling pool for the AR pre-step, the preliminary population was not limited within any specific department. However, the four owner-managers were essentially taken out as possible interviewees as data collected were focused on their management approach within the family business. This reduced the sampling pool from twenty-six to twenty-two employees in undergoing the selection process. Considering the four main criteria of pre-existing relationship with the owner-manager, minimum years of service, adequate intellectual capacity and blend of

family and non-family respondents, ten participants were recruited from the defined population to gather data for the AR pre-step study. The above table 3.4.5 outlines the coverage of the sample size participating in the AR pre-step.

Table 3.4.6 : Sample Size for AR Project				
Position	Population (Employees)	Sample Size	Percentage	Remarks
Directors (Owner-managers)	2	2	100%	
Managers	2	2	100%	
Executive	1	0	0%	Denied participation due to non-family status.
Admin Support	1	0	0%	Does not possess adequate authority and intellectual relevance to participate in the AR study.
Total	6	4	67%	

As for the AR project, the sampling criteria entailed on a more targeted profile which limits the population to a smaller pool of participants. Guided by these criteria of functional expertise, workplace authority, administrative rights and intellectual proficiency, the qualified population included six employees that were either operating within the immediate relevant or cross-functional to the accounts and finance department. Through the selection process, a sample size of four out of the six samples were elected to participate in the AR cycles based on their purposeful relevance to the research project. The above table 3.4.6 summarises the sample size involved in the AR project.

3.5 Data Collection Tools and Instruments

In respect to the data collection tools and instruments, there were three main stages to consider that need to fit the purpose of collecting evidence within the AR study. This included the AR pre-step which involved the data gathering of the researched site in understanding the context and purpose for the study (Easterby-Smith, 2012). The second stage involved the participation and collaboration of the practitioners in which data collection was staged at both the group and individual level. The insider-researcher journal is the third data collection avenue which ran in tandem with the AR cycle in gathering meta-learning data which was critical to the production of new knowledge for the dissertation (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

3.5.1 The AR Pre-step Stage

During the AR pre-step, the purpose for collecting data was to gather evidence and support the case around the workplace situation from direct sources of the participating business. As reflected under the research participant's chapter, the participants selected for this stage were active practitioners directly reporting to top management (owner-managers) as they were a key channel to provide validation to the problem statement. In order to achieve this intent, data was collected through individual interviews to gather multiple perspectives of the workplace problem. More specifically, I conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with each individual because such a data collection technique offered the platform to go in-depth with the participants to potentially uncover new dimensions to the identified problem by capturing their personal experiences and views (Easterby-Smith, 2012).

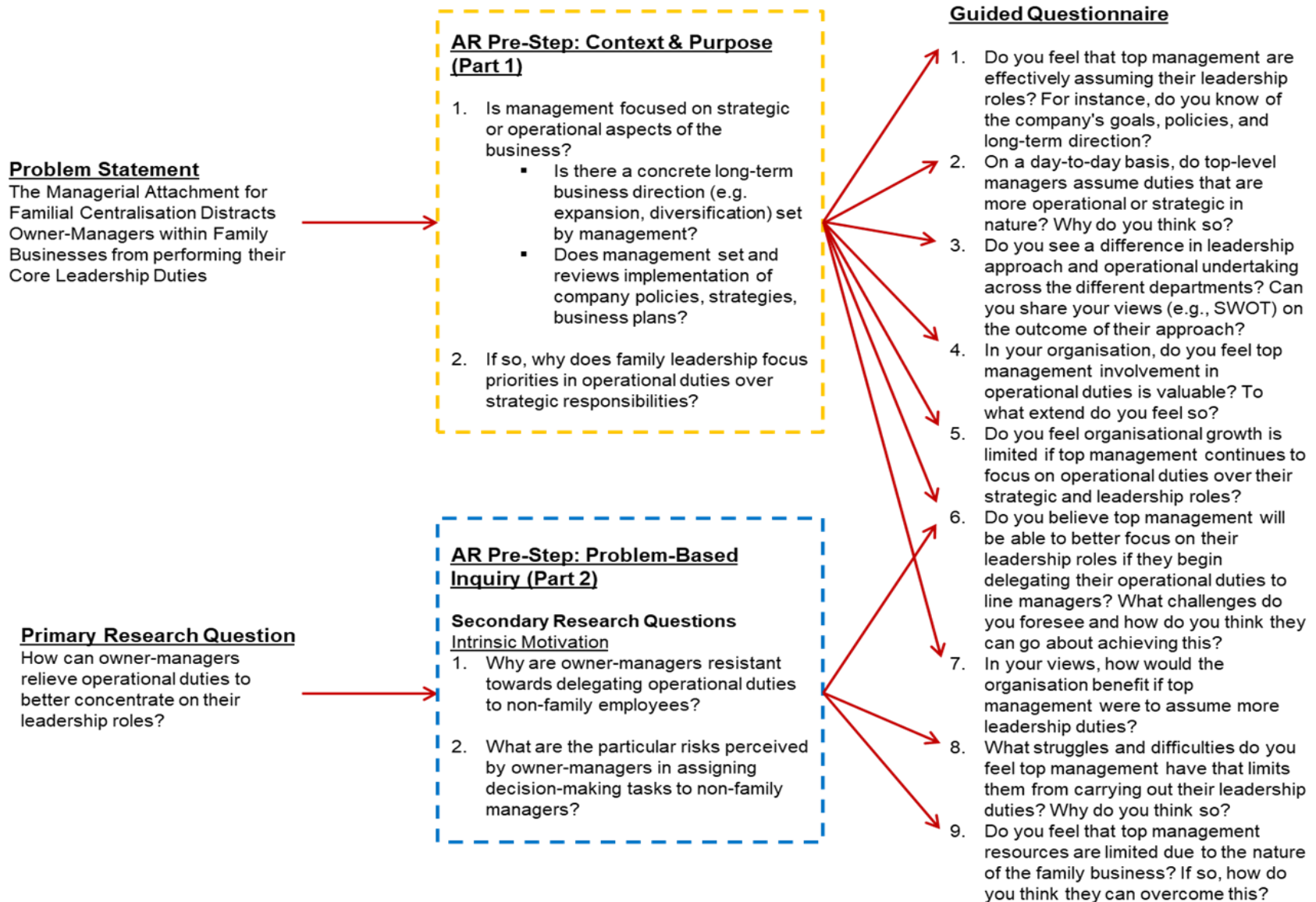
It is also important to acknowledge that instead of a highly structured or unstructured interview approach, the rationale for specifying semi-structured interviews was to provide sufficient guidance for the researcher to stay within the context of the study while allowing for open discussions with the participants. Thereby exploring untapped areas that were potentially associated to the workplace situation. Moreover, the purpose of these individual interviews was an attempt to understand the perspectives of the participants and what underlines their worldviews on current management practices. Moving into the approval process, the participants were engaged on a face-to-face basis to explain the purpose of the research and inform them about their rights and responsibilities in the study. Being mindful of my workplace authority, I was cautious in my delivery to the respondents in ensuring a democratic exchange in order to avoid any form of potential influence in the approval process. In addition, I had informed and seek approval from the respondents about the recording procedures of audiotaping the interviews during the sessions.

As all pre-step participants had agreed to take part in the preliminary study, they were involved in a series of semi-structured interviews guided by Appendix 1 with the intent of gathering their views and perspectives on the current duties of top managerial positions within the business. As presented in the following diagram 3.5.1, the development of the interview questions were an extension of the problem statement and primary research question (Creswell, 2012). In fact, this formed the core of the interview protocol framework in guiding open-ended questions during the face-to-face interviews (Creswell, 2012). This is presented in table 3.5.1 where a Microsoft excel sheet was used as an interview form to record the participants responses. In addition to the interview protocol, exercising appropriate interview procedures were also adopted by staying

closed to the questions, respecting the respondents within the commitment timeframes, and being a good and respectful listener (Creswell, 2012).

Table 3.5.1 : AR Pre-step Interview Protocol & Guide			
Interviewee		Department	
Designation		Familial Status	
Date		Place	
Time			
Guided Questionnaire (Semi-Structured Interviews)		Participant's Response	
Do you feel that top management are effectively assuming their leadership roles? For instance, do you know of the company's goals, policies, and long-term direction?			
On a day-to-day basis, do top-level managers assume duties that are more operational or strategic in nature? Why do you think so?			
Do you see a difference in leadership approach and operational undertaking across the different departments? Can you share your views on the outcome of their approach?			
In your organisation, do you feel top management involvement in operational duties is valuable? To what extend do you feel so?			
Do you feel organisational growth is limited if top management continues to focus on operational duties over their strategic and leadership roles?			
What struggles and difficulties do you feel top management have that limits them from carrying out their leadership duties? Why do you think so?			
Do you feel that top management resources are limited due to the nature of the family business? If so, how do you think they can overcome this?			
Do you believe top management will be able to better focus on their leadership roles if they begin delegate their operational duties to line managers? What challenges do you foresee and how do you think they can go about achieving this?			

Diagram 3.5.1: Aligning the Research Questions and Interview Questions



3.5.2 The AR Cycle – Participatory Stage

As the insider-researcher, I partnered with the PAR group members at this phase to undergo the construct, planning, action and evaluation process with the concise effort of improving the workplace situation. However, data collection under each stage of the AR process differed due to the kind of stakeholder involvement each participant might play during the change process. For example, during the construction and planning phase, it was feasible to elect 'AR Group Discussion' as the primary platform in obtaining data that is socially constructed by the participants in relation to the workplace problem. Fundamentally, data collection was to include group insights, personal perspectives and developmental conflict, as the group attempted to co-create a strategic plan to address the business issue. My role during the focus group discussions was more of a moderator than an interviewer as my priorities lay with initiating and facilitating the participating members to feel comfortable in airing their views and constructively reacting to their fellow colleagues.

Once a planned action had been collectively formulated by the AR participants, an 'AR Group Interview' mode of data collection throughout the act and observe stage documented the concrete experiences of the participants and tangible workplace developments. The rationale for selecting this method of data collection was to gather evidence of implementation difficulties, personal struggles, workplace resistance, execution versus initial plan, and the like. Finally, the evaluation stage demanded the assembly of the 'AR Group Discussion' to evaluate and co-reflect on the project's outcome. At this juncture, data collection was aimed at gaining evidence and understanding of the social practice of the practitioners, the change processes and business conditions of the progressive workplace situation. Importantly, this needed to be administered in a participative, self-reflective and critically collaborative fashion within the AR group in order to generate new and actionable learning from the study.

Although the structure of AR is anticipated to be fluid and unstructured, it was still relevant to facilitate the group discussions (Stage 1, 2 and 4) and the group interview (Stage 3) through a protocol framework that guides the data collection that was consistent with the advancing the workplace problem. The development of these open-ended inquiries are fundamentally an extension of the AR question "If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interests of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?" (Creswell, 2012). The following protocols (Table 3.5.2, 3.5.3, 3.5.4) were adopted in guiding the AR group discussions for third-person inquiry while simultaneously the insider-researcher journal captured data reflexivity throughout the sessions.

Table 3.5.2 : AR Group Discussion Protocol & Guide (Constructing & Planning Action Stage)					
AR Participant 1		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 2		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 3		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 4		Department		Designation	
Date		Place		Time	
Action Research Question		"If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interests of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?"			
AR Stage	Guided Questions		Participant's Response		
Constructing	Are managing-owners are operationally focused and why?				
Planning Action	If the owner-managers plan to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how can they accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business?				
	To what extent will owner-managers consider empowering non-family employees to make decisions in the family business?				
	What control measures can be adopted to safeguard the insecurities of family managers in relieving operational duties onto non-family employees?				

Table 3.5.3 : AR Group Interview Protocol & Guide (Taking Action Stage)

AR Participant 1		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 2		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 3		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 4		Department		Designation	
Date		Place		Time	
Action Research Question			"If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interests of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?"		
AR Stage	Guided Questions		Participant's Response		
Taking Action	From our previous discussion, the group had plan to assign accounts payable duties to KY, primarily consisting of the review and preparation of outstanding bills, writing of payment vouchers, issuing of cheques, and maintaining of historical and monthly reports. How has the implementation been so far?				
	Were there any changes from the original planning? For example, adding or eliminating more delegation duties to KY?				
	Did you face any challenges in carrying out the plans? For example, was KY able to assume the additional duties? Did he/she face any capacity or competency issues?				
	How was each new assignment transferred to KY? Who were involved? Preparation of outstanding bills. Administer payment vouchers. Writing of cheques. Maintaining payable records.				
	How did KY feel or react to this implementation?				
	Do you foresee the implementation as a successful one? Is it sustainable? Did management altered their views on this initiative?				
	Management concern of retaining authority and control by the family, is that achieved despite the implementation? The other matter of salaries, was it in any threat from this implementation? Did KY raise any questions?				

Table 3.5.4 : AR Group Discussion Protocol & Guide (Evaluating Action Stage)					
AR Participant 1		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 2		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 3		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 4		Department		Designation	
Date		Place		Time	
Action Research Question		“If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interests of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?”			
AR Stage	Guided Questions		Participant's Response		
Evaluating Action	Based on this change made to the organization, what are the outcomes at: 1. Department level 2. Individual manager level – Directors, Departments Manager (Increased availability in the workplace)? 3. Company level				
	Does the AR group plan to revisit or have any plans regarding the delegation of issuing of payments to non-family employee?				
	What has the AR group learned from this change process? What was good? What didn't go so well?				
	Does the AR Group plan to adopt other types of changes to the organization after going through this learning cycle (e.g., Hire additional staff to assume more operational duties in our other businesses)?				
	What other areas do does the AR group feel they can work on in addressing the broader sentiments of the organization? Other departments? Change in policy?				
	Does the AR group feel that these changes made will aid the family succession process?				
	Does the AR group feel that they have grown or acquired new knowledge through this change process?				
	Does the AR group feel that the family management is more receptive to change after this AR project?				

3.5.3 Insider-Researcher Journal

As highlighted during the meta-learning chapter, I kept a reflective journal throughout the participatory AR phase, marking down my experiences and observations and capturing my views as the insider-researcher. The purpose for undertaking journal-keeping was founded on two main

reasons, leveraging on the journal as a self-reflective tool in developing first-person abilities to better engage AR participants in a more critical manner, and data collection of key episodes from the project directed at learning-on-learning as the fundamental basis of the dissertation project in generating new actionable knowledge (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). In other words, the journal may be a self-evaluative interpretation tool for the insider-researcher to exercise reflection-in-action during the AR group interactions while data collected serves a different purpose of teasing out subjective interpretations on the account of examining and analysing key findings from each stage of the change process.

The framework in which I applied the journal entries was based on the ORJI model which refers to Observation, Reaction, Judgement, and Intervention (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). This outlined my thought processes which directly influenced my behaviour as the insider-researcher who is responsible for facilitating and interacting with the AR group discussions. Across this ORJI process, it is suggested that group facilitators often lack awareness and attentiveness between the observation and judgement stage because of natural emotional qualities that deny feelings and reduce impartiality, thereby progressing straight into the judgement and action stage. Hence, I adopted the following ORJI framework (Table 3.5.3.1) as the necessary guide for my engagement with the AR participants. This operative journal not only served as a functioning monitor for reflection-in-action during the AR interactions, but was also a crucial data collection tool that reflected the learning from first, second, and third person viewpoints.

In other words, the ORJI framework enables first-person inquiry into my practice as an insider-researcher from the post assessments regarding my personal assumptions, standpoints and actions undertaken within the workplace (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). Second-person inquiry was achieved by operationalising the ORJI procedures to achieve reflection-in-action to inquire and work with the AR participants in addressing the mutual challenges of the workplace problem that brought about joint action into the business (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). This was vital as 'informal' organisational influence such as behavioural developments, attitudes, norms and assumptions often contribute to the distortions of reality, thereby limiting managers' ability to collaborate and accurately diagnose situations, ultimately leading to ineffective interventions in the workplace (Coghlan and Rashford, 1990).

Table 3.5.5: ORJI Journal Framework			
Journal Purpose	ORJI Stage	Mode of Inquiry	ORJI Guide
AR Project	Observe	Second-Person Inquiry	Objectively record what was observed.
AR Project	Reaction	Second-Person Inquiry	How am I reacting emotionally to what I am observing? How can I mitigate these emotional influences in undertaking a more impartial view on the situation?
AR Dissertation	Reaction Post Assessment	First-Person Inquiry	Why did I react in this manner? What made me react in such an emotional fashion to the situation? How did my reaction correlate to workplace assumptions and practices?
AR Project	Judgment	Second-Person Inquiry	Review observations, recognise and acknowledge emotional reaction, and conduct objective assessment in judgement of the AR situation.
AR Dissertation	Judgement Post Assessment	First-Person Inquiry	How could I have judged the situation differently? What are the common obstacles arising from passing objective judgements from the AR discussion?
AR Project	Intervention	Second-Person Inquiry	Intervene with the situation if judgement supports the goals of the AR project. Take caution in such interventions to safeguard objectivity in the AR group discussions.
AR Dissertation	Post Intervention Assessment	First-Person Inquiry	Was the intervention justified? What could have taken place if you did not intervene in the AR situation? What could have improved from the present situation for future AR cycles?

Source: Adapted from Coghlan and Brannick (2014. P. 34)

Coghlan and Rashford (1990) argue that by adopting the ORJI system, the insider-researcher will be able to intervene by aiding AR participants to self-reflect, identify emotional existence and biases, and recognise perceptual distortions as the group progresses in AR discussion aimed at improving the troubled workplace situation. A more recent academic journal by Teehankee (2018) focused on strengthening the relevance of business education through the incorporation of AR, the paper also recommends the employment of ORJI in guiding the insider-researcher's reflection process of safeguarding against misperceptions, heightened emotional reactions, irrational analysis and intervention based on incorrect data. Aligning with the principles of ORJI aided second-person practice in collaboration with the AR participants to understand the intra-psychic

process of avoiding psychological traps through the facilitation of reflection-in-action in producing rigour in the AR (Teehankee, 2018; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

Finally, third-person inquiry, which is the construction of the AR project focused on change and advancement of management practices, is regarded as impersonal and the unbiased documentation of the project's outcome. However, it is undeniable that the first, second, and third-person inquiry underpins the integrated process of scholarly practice in generating actionable knowledge which is only possible by adopting reflective-in-action frameworks such as the ORJI model (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

Holistically, the primary purpose for undertaking this journal system was to assume the role of the insider-researcher in an impartial fashion, by keeping my emotional reactions in check and moderating any threatening biases in passing judgement, thereby safeguarding the AR project against any unjust intervention I could bring to the table. The other main purpose of this journal was to collect data when I was conducting reflection-in-action as evidence for the AR dissertation which is then used for further analysis and the production of new knowledge. In essence, it's aim was to track my experiences as the insider-researcher, capture reflective questions arising from those experiences, identify new insights, validate my views based on evidences collected, and record my decisions and actions taken within the AR project.

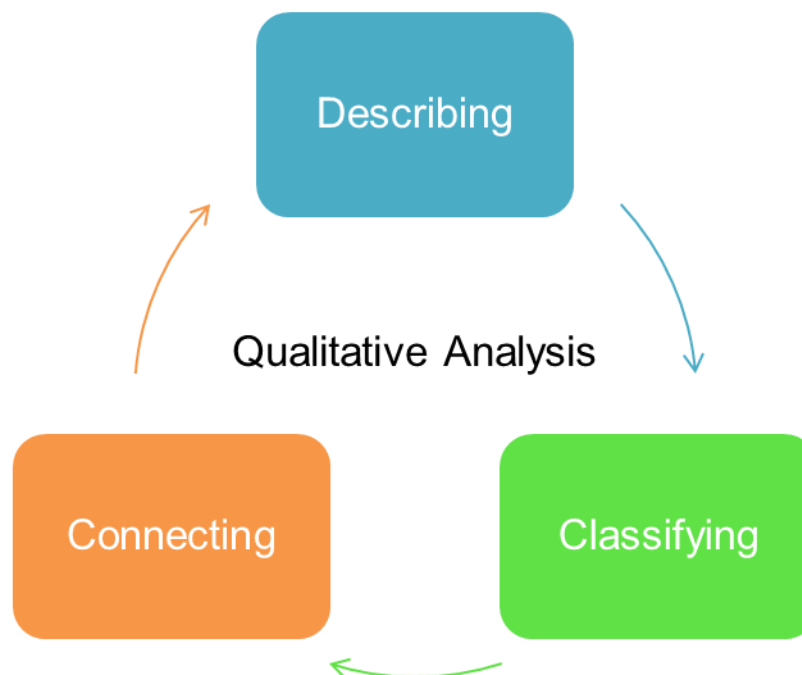
3.6 Data Analysis

Considering that the study is action-focused, it was anticipated that the data collected would be complex and messy in nature due to the qualitative inquiry made within the real-world context. Hence, selecting a suitable approach to data analysis was vital in producing an accurate reflection of the AR results. However, before electing any specific type of data analysis model, it was key to first understand its fundamentals. Data analysis is the process of breaking down and transforming the data beyond human impressions and intuitions by revealing its distinctive characteristics and structure through a rigorous and systematic procedure designed to interpret, explain and comprehend the data (Dey, 1993). It aims to describe the researched site by analysing the data to provide a fresh view through the interconnecting sources that empower classification and re-conceptualise the data.

Diagram 3.6.1 illustrates an adaptation of Dey's (1993, p. 32) three key pillars of description, classification and connection as an essential circular process in qualitative analysis. Starting with the description piece, it is comprised of more than just data and the presentation of fact as the purpose is to deliver a 'thick' description of the study comprising the context of action, the actor's

intentions and the process of how action transpired by providing in-depth and comprehensive explanations of the events' phenomenon (Dey, 1993). When we consider context, it is clear that action is situated in a broader setting of social and historical background and hence it is fundamental to infer meaning from its relevant context.

Diagram 3.6.1: Qualitative Analysis as a Circular Process



Source: Adapted from Dey (1993, p. 32)

In other words, the pursuit of reality does not separate from the context of the study and the actions of the researcher because of its integral relations between the observer and researched site (Dey, 1993). Intention is also key in qualitative description because the analysis of the data and conceptualisation must relate back to the intent of the actors involved. Finally, the process, which is interactive in itself empowers the researcher to gain a perspective and produce qualitative data which directly illuminates actor interactions in changing social situations over the period of time (Dey, 1993). It is then the integrative utility of context, intention and process to adequately produce a qualitative description of the social actions that best represent the holistic summary of the data collected. This is exhibited in Diagram 3.6.2 which outlines the three connecting aspects of context, intent and process adapted by Dey (1993, p. 33) in describing the data gathered from the workplace problem.

Diagram 3.6.2: Three Aspects of Description in Qualitative Analysis

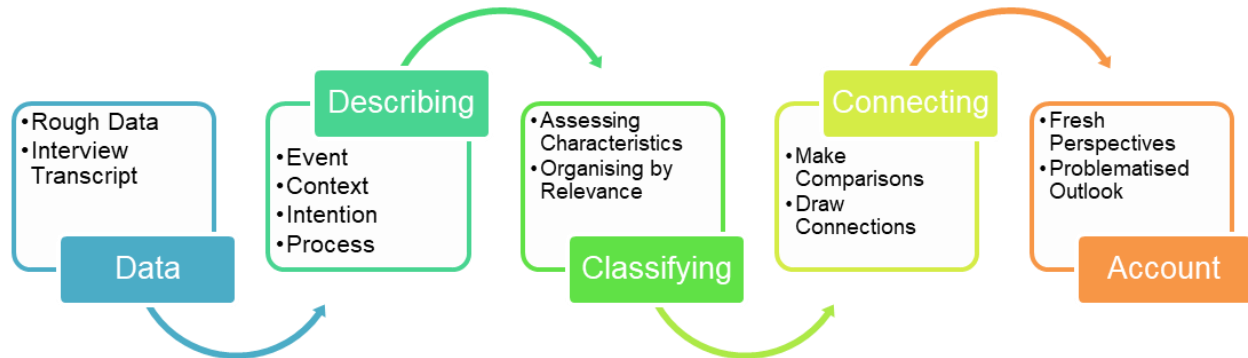


Source: Adapted from Dey (1993, p. 33)

Progressing onto classification, this refers to the process of assessing the characteristics of each data stream and assigning it to different categories in order to organise them by relevance (Dey, 1993). In turn, this allows the researcher to make effective comparisons and draw connections between the data streams in setting the conceptual foundation for analysis in a qualitative study. Making connections is the third vital component in qualitative analysis. After data is classified, the researcher will be able to establish connections between the categories and identify patterns within the data by reviewing the correlations and paint a picture which will be clearer and richer than initial assessments (Dey, 1993).

In addition, this newly shaped perspective will reveal variations and possibly exceptions from the data which underlines important explanations and unidentified connections that are essential to the overall research. This sequence of data, description, classification, connection, and finally producing an account of the analysis, as outlined in Diagram 3.6.3, should be seen as an inclining spiral that transcends the simple world of common sense by producing fresh perspectives (Dey 1993, p. 55). This is feasibly a problematised outlook, which is more than the collection of data made possible by the critical analytic process.

Diagram 3.6.3: Qualitative Analysis as an Iterative Spiral



Source: Adapted from Dey (1993, p. 55)

3.6.1 The Coding Process

The coding process adopted in this study followed a six-step procedure designed to systematically construct a theoretical narrative based on the raw text of the data collected (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). Consisting of three main phases, each stage carried out a different level of analysis. In the first phase, its purpose was to make the text manageable by conducting a filtering process of selecting and discarding parts of the text for analysis. This was done by first outlining the underlying research concerns before reviewing and selecting the text from the interview transcript within the theoretical framework of the study (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). In other words, the first two steps of the coding process involved the contextual research goals in selecting the relevant texts (Stone and Nyaupane, 2016). In phase two, the researcher worked at the subjective level based on the experiences of the AR participants by hearing what was said.

By identifying repeating ideas and hearing the voice of the researched participants, relevant texts were then grouped and organised into different themes and categories (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). This grouping of ideas from the transcripts and subsequent organisation of larger themes were conducted in steps three and four of the coding process (Stone and Nyaupane, 2016). Finally, the third phase of the coding process engaged in the more abstract level of developing theories. This involved the abstract construction of theoretical narrative through the grouping of

themes to conceptualise and retell the participants' stories within the theoretical framework of the study (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). In other words, the reconstructed narratives related to the personal stories that represented the subjective experiences of the participants in their views and own language which is vital in the social study of AR (Stone and Nyaupane, 2016).

Also known as inductive coding, the data-driven process adopted a 'bottom-up' method in which the researcher did not leverage on pre-existing codes but looked into identifying repeating ideas within the data in generating the codes (Fletcher, MacPhee, and Dickson, 2015). This mode of coding was adopted in other action research studies where the researcher inductively codes the raw data gathered from focus groups and interviews for thorough investigations in revealing recurring themes and conceptual understanding from the AR iterative process (Fletcher, MacPhee and Dickson, 2015; O'sheedy, 2014). In fact, the six-step coding procedure designed by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) is consistent with Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis comprising of six phases in analysing qualitative data (Stone and Nyaupane, 2019).

This follows six stages of getting familiarised with the data, generation of initial codes, searching and reviewing of themes, defining the themes and finally progressing onto the production of the write-up (Stone and Nyaupane, 2019). However, the purpose for electing Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) six-step procedure was the trending likelihood of integrating the principles of description, classification and connection into the coding process (Dey, 1993). More importantly, this proposed outline is consistent with the fundamental principles of the AR study as it takes into consideration vital elements including context for the social enquiry, acknowledging the intentions of the participants in construction of the AR goals, recognising the process as relevant reflective data points, and seeing the data through the lens of the research concerns and theoretical framework (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003; Dey, 1993).

In practice, the six-step procedure furnished a directive guide for the researcher in conducting the coding process in an organised and consistent manner. This was needed to aid the extensive process that is non-linear and messy in nature and could mislead the researcher if it was administered in a disorderly fashion. But how does one operationalise and integrate the principles of Dey (1993) with the coding procedure of Auerbach and Silverstein (2003)? The process followed Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) six-step systematic procedure while incorporating Dey's (1993) 'Qualitative analysis as a circular process' key elements across the various stages in directing the integrated coding process as reflected in Table 3.6.1.1.

Table 3.6.1: Six Steps for Constructing a Theoretical Narrative from Text		
Phase 1: Making the Text Manageable		
Step 1	Explicitly stating the research priorities and theoretical framework of the study.	
Step 2	Review the raw text and select relevant pieces from the transcript through the lens of the theoretical framework.	Context, intention, and process will be the fundamental basis in which text will be selected as the key describing piece of the coding process.
Phase 2: Hearing what is Said		
Step 3	Grouping of relevant text together by identifying repeating ideas.	Classify the data by assessing its characteristics, making comparisons, and organising them into different categories by collective relevance.
Step 4	Organise the grouping of repeating ideas into more generalised themes in different categories.	
Phase 3: Developing Theory		
Step 5	Grouping of themes into abstract construct that is consistent with the theoretical framework of the study.	Drawing connection between the categories and themes to paint a picture. This process aims to remain grounded in the data but provides a fresh and richer outlook on the researched site which is consistent with Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) view of "retelling" the participants' story and taking account of the qualitative analysis.
Step 6	Produce a theoretical narrative by retelling the participants' story in the light of a theoretical constructs.	

Source: Adapted from Auerbach and Silverstein (2003, p. 45-46) and Dey (p. 32)

This involved a coding terminology where the data transcripts were reviewed in a reflective process that enabled contextual sense-making, conceptualising and categorising of themes within the field of family business literature. This was done by performing the coding terminology across all data collected in a fashion that organised the data and enabled identification of patterns emerging between concepts in generating theoretical codes and linking key variables into an integrated theory (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012).

3.6.2 Conducting the Qualitative Analysis

In the actual conducting of the data analysis and coding process, I adopted the following steps in collecting, storing, and analysing the data for the AR study. This was applied for both individual interviews and AR group discussions for the analysis process. All participants' responses were voice recorded, stored and password protected within a thesis database. In addition to the voice recordings, I had also documented the participants' responses during the interviews and group discussions into a microsoft excel sheet as a backup database. All recordings from the individual

interviews and AR group discussions were manually transcribed into a microsoft words document where the qualitative analysis and coding process took place. First, I read each transcript in full to familiarise myself with the data collected by the interviewees and group participants. This was followed by a second re-reading of the transcripts with the specific intent of selecting text within its contextual inquiry as the first stage of the coding process. This is illustrated in the following screenshot (Diagram 3.6.4) of specific texts being selected based on the context of the inquiry.

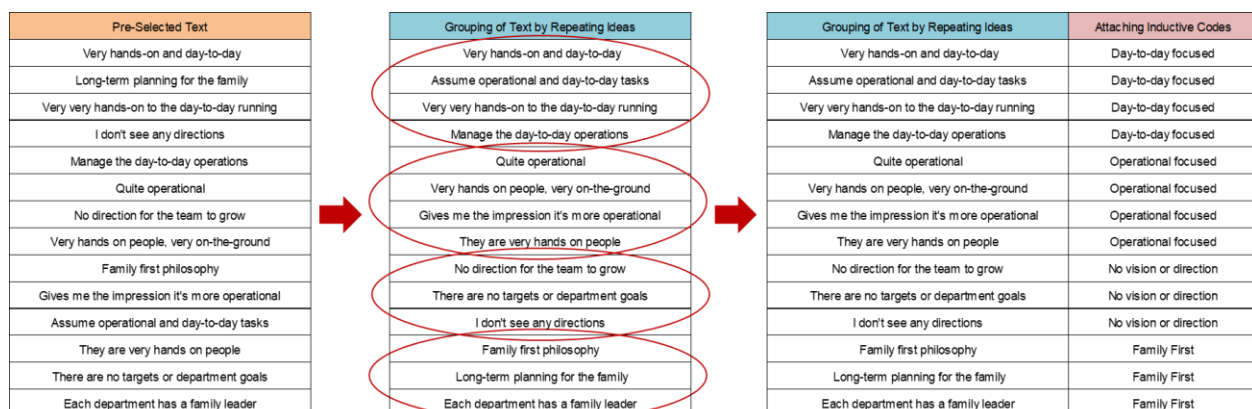
Diagram 3.6.4: Pre-Selection of Text from the Transcripts

Speaker 1: On a day-to-day basis, what do the top level managers do?

Speaker 2: Our top level management are very on the ground. They do a lot of operational tasks, day to day tasks. Not much planning involved, just making sure the business is running which could stem from their past experiences when they built the business up from the ground when it was only. When they first started the business there was, how do you run a company and today it is still the way they are running the company.

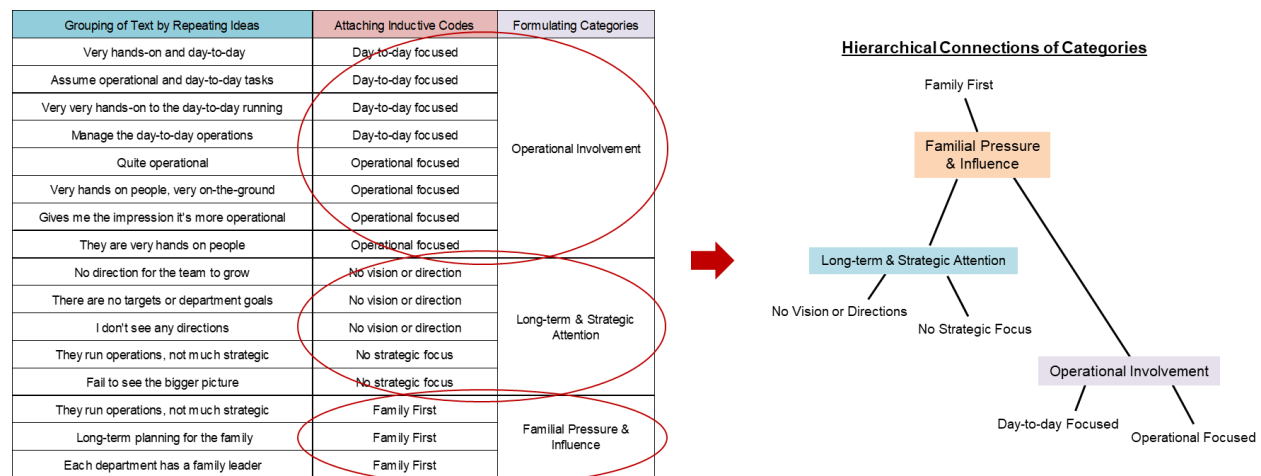
This was followed by the grouping of pre-selected text based on its relevance and identification of repeating ideas. Simultaneously, I also made comparisons between the text to distinguish differences and eliminated irrelevant one through this grouping process. Through this development, regularities started to emerge and codes were assigned to the text in an inductive fashion. The purpose for adopting inductive coding was to stay as original to the data at this stage of the process. The input of the selected text, grouping of repeating ideas, and attachment of codes were organised and administered through the use of the microsoft excel sheet. This coding process is demonstrated in the following diagram 3.6.5.

Diagram 3.6.5: Grouping of Text by Repeating Ideas and Attaching Inductive Codes



Moving onto the next phase of the coding process, I went back to review the initial codes for the purpose of consolidating overlapping codes and dropping others that lacked regularities. The retained codes were then grouped together to create categories. This was carried out in a more abstract level by qualifying the categories in a variety of concepts such as organisational conditions, workplace actions, or managerial processes. Essentially, it represents the progressive conceptualisation of underlying patterns obtained from the data collected. At this point, I started to draw the connections between the formulated categories with the intent of describing its underlying relationships. This was carried out through a hierarchical or figure format that outlined the broader results of the qualitative study. This process of formulating categories and drawing of connections is presented in diagram 3.6.6.

Diagram 3.6.6: Formulating of Categories and Drawing of Connections



The aim for a hierarchical or figure representation was to support the production of theoretical narratives by establishing the connections between the categories. The presentation of the findings was then carried out by retelling the participants' data-driven perspectives in a theoretical construct that were aligned with the research goals and workplace inquiry.

3.7 Ethical Implications and Organisation Politics

Conducting research within one's organisation often faces ethical and credibility issues due to the confidentiality of commercial and personal information, and possibly embarrassing information relating to the participating business, members and stakeholders when it comes to publishing the research findings (Coghlan, 2014). Furthermore, this sensitivity of insider-research increased in complexity for this participating business because it is family-owned, which incurs added opportunities for conflict to take place. For instance, citing a quote from a participant could be

seen from the viewpoint of both a co-worker and a family member, thereby inviting ethical implications if the respondent's responses impact on his or her well-being through that process. Hence, it was my responsibility to seek permission of the AR participants in regard to the level of anonymity they were comfortable with in safeguarding both their identities and the business involved in the study.

In addition, role clarification in respect to my intervention (e.g. data gathering and analysis) within the workplace was obligatory as the insider-researcher, providing transparency and distinction between my day-to-day duties even though they may seem integral to my professional responsibilities. Hence, an ethic approval process was undertaken and approved by the DBA Ethics Committee on the 12 September 2017 in performing this research. This included the authorisation letter of consent by the executive director of the participating organisation to perform the study within the business. Although this authorisation was secured with minimal resistance, I myself was ethically challenged as I recognised that the director's approval was somewhat influenced by my familial relationship although no form of kinship goodwill was extended.

In fact, the settings in which I had contacted all the participants encountered similar experiences due to pre-existing family and professional relations within the business. Nevertheless, I am pleased to confirm that all consenting participants were fully aware of their rights and responsibilities throughout the study. This brings me to the next crucial aspect of performing research within one's own organisation; the ability to recognise and navigate through political dynamics of its key stakeholders. Simply failing to acknowledge this reality could potentially undermine the entire study. Although management had officially approved the research that would potentially benefit the business, it is understandable that some may feel threatened due to unfamiliar exposure and potential identification of organisational weaknesses, thereby resulting in stakeholder reaction in blocking access to the main channels of data collection (Coghlan, 2014).

In addition, the natural dynamics of the AR is collaborative, and is projected to raise questions and imply judgments on the workplace problems that could shape political implications. Hence, in my undertaken role as an insider-researcher, I needed to be project focused for the organisation and speak to the right stakeholders and authorities in justifying the study. Indirectly, some may perceive my efforts as managing political relationships across various organisational members in progressing the AR for personal reasons, while in actuality my priority was to engage the appropriate participants in understanding the broader purpose of the study as a change agent while protecting the respective relationships between management and staff, and in this particular case familial relations.

3.8 Summary

This chapter summarises the methodology that was undertaken in this study originating from the research questions. This anchored the necessity to consider the ontological and epistemological grounds in determining the appropriate research method in acquiring the data and generating the findings for the study. In fact, the formulating of the research methodology was fundamental to the prospective success of the research because the views of realities influenced the choice of measurements and data collection techniques in pursuit of the truth. Based on the research inquiry which is context-bound and problem-concentrated, this rationalised the consistency with relativism and social constructivism. Whereas data collection was largely focused on AR group discussions and semi-structured interviews in gathering the lived experiences of the participants involved in the evolving change process. Given that this was an insider-research, the methodology also considered potential avenues of bias that could have compromised the quality of the study. This demanded the adoption of self-reflective frameworks (e.g. ORJI) in regulating and teasing out such partialities to safeguard the rigor of the investigation process. In addition, this established the integral principles of AR in facilitating first, second and third-person inquiry in directing reflection-in-action and promoting scholarly practice.

Chapter 4 | The Problematising Process – AR Pre-Step

4.0 Introduction: The Problematising Process – AR Pre-Step

Before advancing into the AR project, a pre-step must be conducted to examine the workplace situation by collecting data from the researched site to understand the context and align the purpose of the study. This problematising process aimed at validating and possibly reframing the workplace problem, providing the primary basis for the AR group to comprehend and formally commence the AR cycle. The AR pre-step conducted in this study entailed a two-part process in which the initial intent was to confirm and refine the workplace problem before advancing into the subsequent investigation stage of the problem-based inquiry. In other words, part one of the AR pre-step collected data to verify the workplace problem while the second portion investigated deeper into the qualitative behaviour that shaped the conditions of the organisational situation.

Evidence collected and analysed from the pre-step was formally presented to the participants involved in the AR project and implementing change in the business. However, it was important to comprehend and recognise that while the validated workplace problem may represent the wider sentiments of the organisation's situation, the AR project was more specific to the needs of the elected department in addressing an equivalent issue through the iterative process of the AR cycle. The findings of the AR pre-step study are presented in a sequence aligned to Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) six steps coding process which reflect the selection of relevant text from the transcript, forming of emerging categories and grouping of themes through the identification of repeating ideas from the text, and the production of a theoretical narrative that is consistent with the conceptual framework of the study.

4.1 AR Pre-Step: Context and Purpose (Part I) – Validating the Problem Statement

As the insider-researcher, defining the problem statement from my personal views could be considered subjective and academically challenged because there is no real data to support the conditions of the suggested workplace situation. Hence, the study was led by the AR pre-step with the primary purpose of validating the problem statement, assessing the workplace situation, and conducting problem-based inquiry in the business before progressing onto the participatory action phase (Easterby-Smith, 2012). In other words, phase one of the data collection process was focused on gathering evidence about the workplace situation while subsequently evolving into discovering and identifying the underlying causes of the AR problem by diving deeper into the perspectives and experiences of the respondents.

1. Is management focused on strategic or operational aspects of the business?
2. Is there a concrete long-term business direction (e.g. expansion, diversification) set by management?
3. Does management set and review implementation of company policies, strategies, business plans?
4. If so, why does family leadership focus priorities in operational duties over strategic responsibilities?

Appendix 1 outlines this two-part process which was guided by the initial problem statement and primary research question in developing the data collection structure directed at determining the context and purpose of the study. Followed by the problem-based inquiry which sought to uncover the intrinsic motivations of the researched participants. As reflected in the diagram, the first part focused on gathering evidence on the owner-managers approach to management. Plainly, are they more strategically or operationally focused, do they concentrate on long-term or short-term directives, and do they undertake duties of a more leadership or administrative nature? The second part of the data collection then focused on identifying the underlying reasons for such managerial behaviour by going in-depth with the interview respondents.

Operationally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected employees consisting of both family and non-family staff within the firm who actively engage with and report to the owner-managers. Data was collected on top management practices within the context of leadership lapses and familial control. Data was then collected from 10 respondents who participated in the individual interviews. This generated a set of data transcripts where the coding terminology was applied to produce related codes, categories and themes as the initial segment of the data analysis process. More specifically, the process followed the six-step procedure of Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) which aided the text filtering process to remain within the context of the research study, identified recurring ideas of the interviewees to be consistently grouped into different categories and themes, and finally retold the stories of the participants grounded in the conceptualised themes that empowered abstract construction of theoretical narrative.

The coding process was conducted in line with the principles of Dey (2003). The data transcript was coded within the considerations of context, intention and process of the actors and the evolving situation in identifying key describing pieces before classifying the data by its characteristics. Thereafter, making the necessary comparisons and organising their relevance by themes and categories. The analysis then progressed onto drawing connections across the themes and categories to 'paint a picture' of the thick and rich data which has now been

reconstructed to account for the qualitative analysis (Dey, 2003). Finally, this evolved into a theoretical narrative based on the collective works of the analysis by retelling the participants' story based on the primary findings of the AR pre-step inquiry (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003).

The following tables outline the coding section of the six-step procedure in which specific texts were identified from the voices of the business actors that were subsequently selected through the filtering process, respectively grouped and organised into relevant categories in order to break down the thick data transcript and re-inserting it into the abstract construct within the theoretical framework of the study. This led to six specific categories surfacing from the process, namely:

Table 4.1.1: Data Generated Categories – AR Pre-step (Part 1)	
C1	Operational Involvement
C2	Management Priorities
C3	Organisational Readiness
C4	Long-term and Strategic Attention
C5	Centralisation and Control
C6	Familial Pressure and Control

These categories are further elaborated within the chapter by reviewing and discussing the responses of the interviewed participants. Diagram 4.1.2 draws connection between the categories and themes in painting the abstract picture whose foundation was built on the primary data of the qualitative interviews. This reconstructed outlook on the qualitative findings provided a fresh perspective on the workplace situation relative to the initial problem statement. This informed and empowered the participating organisational actors to embark on AR cycles in bringing about change and advancement in managerial practices.

Table 4.1.2: Coding AR Pre-step (Part 1: C1 – C3)

Ref	Texts Quotes	Codes	Categories
2G1	They are really more operational.	Operational focused	C1 Operational Involvement
	They are very hands-on and day-to-day, not looking to set goals in place.	Day-to-day focused	
	They should advise and guide us instead of doing everything themselves.	Operational focused	
2G2	Our top managers are very on-the-ground.	Operational focused	
	They assume operational and day-to-day tasks.	Day-to-day focused	
2G3	They are very very hands-on to the day-to-day running.	Day-to-day focused	
2G4	Our department is quite operational, I don't think they change their company policies much.	Operational focused	
N1	For a family business, it entails certain aspects of scarcity of resources, so they have to get their hands dirty with the day-to-day running of the company.	Day-to-day focused	
N2	They give me the sense that they are very operational. In fact they are very hands on people.	Operational focused	
N3	I think to be very person specific, the sales director has given me the impression it's more operational. Not so much strategic. It seems that there's always dealing with a particular customer for the business.	Operational focused	
N4	What I see is more operation, provide the decisions, problem-solving and manage the operation day-to-day.	Day-to-day focused	
N5	Operational. Mostly day-to-day. Being in charge of the overall. Two of the directors have half of their time in the warehouse.	Operational focused	
2G1	He is very hands on. When there is problem, he will help us, solve it for us.	Operational focused	C2 Management Priorities
	They is currently not enough company policies.	Lack governance	
	They are not receptive to hire more manpower.	Manages overheads	
2G2	They want to oversee and make sure the company is doing well.	Focused on output	
	There is not much planning involved, just making sure the business is running.	Focused on output	
	Everything has to happen perfectly in a sense. There is no room for error.	Focused on output	
	Due to the lack of staff, they have to assume operational duties.	Lean operations	
	They ensure no mistakes happens.	Focused on output	
2G3	Everything is run smoothly when they're around.	Focused on output	
	We have a very flat hierarchy, consisting of just operations personnel and single supervisor.	Lean operations	
	We have a very flat hierarchy, consisting of just operations personnel and single supervisor, which leaves very little room for management to move up the hierarchy.	Lean operations	
	They are reactive, only actng when required.	Lean operations	
2G4	Unless there is more transparency, more policies in place so that everyone could see how each person are governed there.	Lack governance	
	They try to get things running rather than having more time or manpower;	Focus on output	
N5	Somehow they are able to make sure everything goes smoothly.	Focused on output	
N2	I would say being operationally involved is invaluable, but I think it is a bit slightly excessive because it takes up too much of their time whereas for people of their position surely start to groom the next person of new generation managers to take over them, which may take five to seven years for the transition.	Fail to build capability	C3 Organisational Readiness
N3	If they stay operational, they may not fully utilize the talents or manpower in their care, whereas being in an operational role, it's more like working rather than managing, than leading altogether. I feel a manager can learn to balance and lead to strategise a bit more, he can utilize the employees, their talents, whatever they have to potentially achieve goals.	Fail to build capability	
N5	If the sales and operations directors were on leave, the company can only function about 60%	Fail to build capability	
	Yes, if they train well, the lower skilled workers to be more competent, and able to take a full job.	Fail to build capability	
N6	Maybe they don't feel that it's time to hand over the rope to someone else other than themselves. They worry.	Resist succession	
	I think from last time, they're really very hands on because it's their business. It's habitual.	Resist succession	

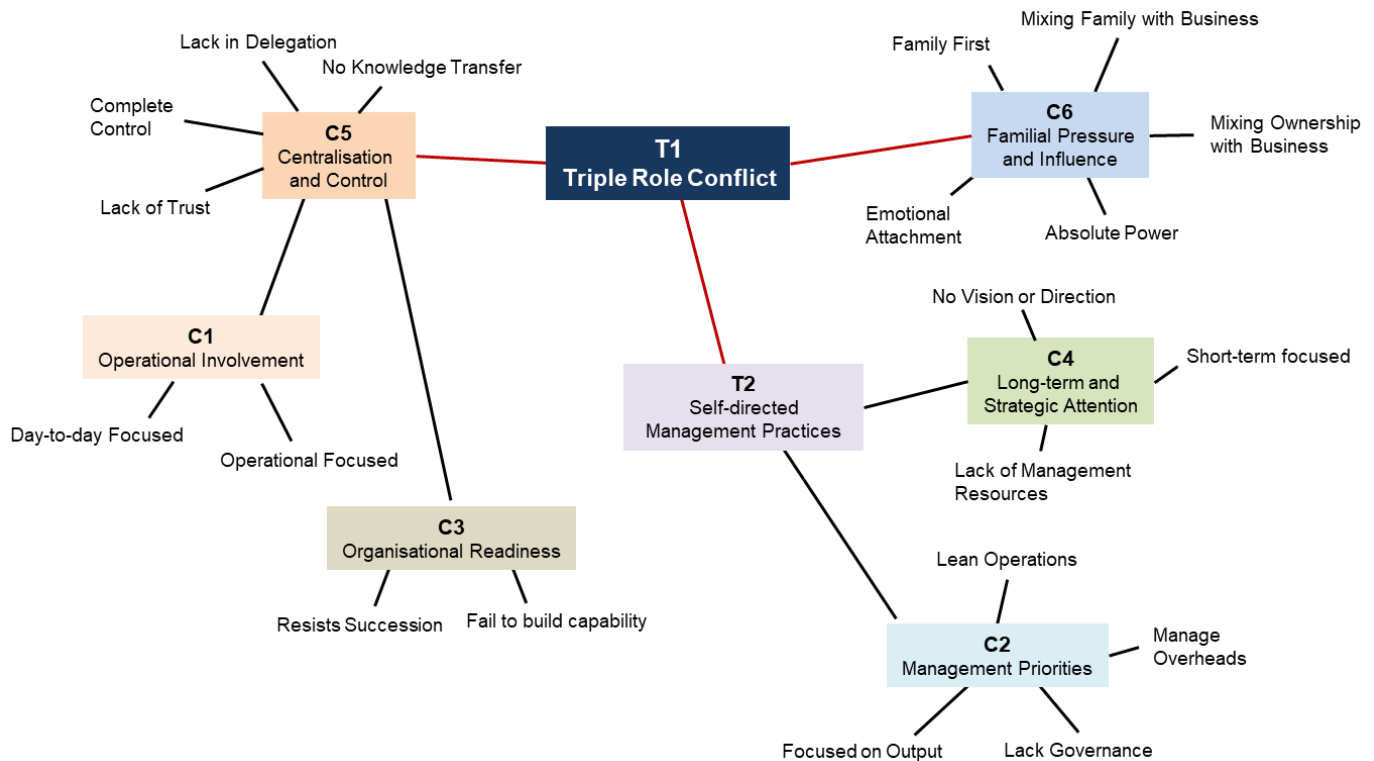
Table 4.1.3: Coding AR Pre-step (Part 1: C4 – C5)

Ref	Texts Quotes	Codes	Categories
2G1	I think the longest goal or target we have is for one year. There's no direction for the team to expand, motivate, or grow as a whole.	Short-term focused No vision or direction	C4 Long-term and Strategic Attention
2G2	There are no targets, there are no goals for any particular department to achieve towards the company's goals.	No vision or direction	
	They rarely take strategic decisions unless called for.	Short-term focused	
	There is no long-term growth for the company nor is there any room for or knowledge for expansion. Be it the current business or in any potential new businesses.	Short-term focused	
	Everybody is doing their work just to make sure the ship is afloat but there is no one that is helping to direct where the boat is going.	No vision or direction	
2G3	Their time invested into that day-to-day running, pulls them away from what I call high level strategic thinking.	Lack of management resources	
	They run operations, not much strategic.	No strategic focus	
2G4	They fail to see the bigger picture by just doing day-to-day work.	No strategic focus	
	They have no time to explore strategic decisions, and that's how they have run the business for decades.	Lack of management resources	
N1	As every individual's time is limited, to do more of operational on-the-ground kind of stuff, limits that time to sit down and to think and to strategise, which is a trade-off.	Lack of management resources	
	The time and energy spent on operations will affect the time that he can spend on strategising stuff.	Lack of management resources	
N2	I would say that probably between my direct manager and the older generation managers, they manage differently. I think for the older generation, there's not so much discussion on the company's future moving forward and even personal development.	No vision or direction	
N3	I don't see any directions, it's just to exist as an entity to do what it's doing now.	No vision or direction	
	The impression I get is like not very long-term. More short-term and technical.	Short-term focused	
	They seem to have fallen into sort of a routine. It's not really that they don't think of the long-term, it's really because of the comfortable routine. That's what they do.	No vision or direction	
N5	Then the top management would have more time for the future, the strategy of the whole company, and more time on expanding.	Lack of management resources	C5 Centralisation and Control
N6	He will talk to us about department goals once every three months.	Short-term focused	
2G1	They tend to want to have control in everything they see, or they want to control and do it on their own.	Complete control	
	Order processing should be passed down to line managers instead.	Lack in delegation	
2G2	There's no learning.	No knowledge transfer	
	Staff unable to cope with challenges and things start fall apart without management	No knowledge transfer	
	They don't entrust duties to their staff.	Lack of trust	
	They do not allow the staff to make mistakes and learn from them.	No knowledge transfer	
2G3	They control a lot, their hands are right there.	Complete control	
2G4	There is only one manager/director overseeing everything while the others are just doing operations, so there is no middle management in-between.	Lack in delegation	
N5	They make certain decisions that override that staff, which makes them a lack of trust and not valued. In addition, the bosses don't communicate the reasons for their decisions.	Lack of trust	
N6	I think even if they handed over to the next generation, they will still be worried because after all they have been doing this for years.	Compete control	

Table 4.1.4: Coding AR Pre-step (Part 1: C6)

Ref	Texts Quotes	Codes	Categories
2G1	There is a thin line between business and family, and they mix emotions, family matters, and company issues together.	Mixing family with business	C6 Familial Pressure and Influence
	They cannot be professional and discipline and balance family matters out.	Mixing family with business	
	Family ties might create tensions and create inter-department issues.	Family first	
	Offspring also creates tension between top management members.	Family over business	
	Because it's a family business, it's something very close to the heart.	Emotional Attachment	
	They can slowly release control to their children to ensure the company will be strong.	Family first	
	They hold on, they can't let go.	Emotional Attachment	
2G3	Because of the dynamics that they own the company, and they assume the top leadership roles, so that they see that as absolute.	Absolute power	
2G4	When you have family members involved, and the family culture, it becomes difficult because there's always favoritism and nepotism involved within the family organization	Mixing family with business	
	There is always a bit of family politics in play	Mixing family with business	
N1	There is differing objectives of an employee versus an employer, employer slash shareholder, which is the same thing because we're talking about a privately-owned enterprise. There is a monetary incentive, a growth incentive, hence their mindsets are fundamentally different from employees. Therefore, they want to take everything into their own hands as much as it is.	Mixing ownership & business	
	This is a family business. Certain things of course, business interests are tied with family stuff, family affairs. So I think transparency with employees is difficult because business goals and family stuff is all together.	Mixing family & business	
	Family first philosophy.	Family first	
N2	For top management, whatever the position, it's not just about the company, but also about the relationship amongst non-family and family. The position that they hold, the control that they can have over the company, when a decision has to be made, it becomes tougher when family members are affected.	Mixing family & business	
N3	The current intention and planning, long-term planning is by the Kim's family.	Family first	
N4	Of course there will be struggles due to the family business, need to consider for some of the personal feeling.	Mixing family & business	
	As a staff sometimes because I will consider it's a family business, each department has a family leader.	Family first	
N5	It's a challenge to take on the responsibility for nonfamily members, especially it's a family business company. He has greater role and responsibility to prove to others than the family members. He needs to outperform both family and non-family members. Only then can he really take the full responsibility.	Mixing family & business	
N6	Because we're outsiders. We are not family to them.	Family first	
	Then that will be up to them to decide whether they wish to continue to trust their family member or to trust the employee when it comes to competency.	Mixing family & business	

Diagram 4.1.2: AR Pre-Step: Validating the Problem Statement – Main Themes and Categories



In presenting these findings, it was vital to review the captured evidence of the participants that shaped the collection of categories and themes before discussing the concluding theoretical narrative of the AR pre-step outcomes. From a chronological standpoint, the interview sessions started with asking participants to identify the day-to-day duties, trends and responsibilities assumed by the owner-managers. In general, the response across both family and non-family employees were consistent in suggesting that these top-level managers are highly involved in the operational day-to-day running of the business. This was supported by the data that confirmed owner-managers do focus their daily efforts on operational execution over strategic aspects of the business.

Citing an example by a family respondent (2G1), she shared *‘They are very hands-on and day-to-day, not looking to set goals in place’* which provided insights to the immediate priorities of being operationally focused while lacking the strategic consideration for setting organisational goals by the owner-managers. In the eyes of the non-family employee, the reaction was also uniform as a manager (N2) said *‘They give me the sense that they are very operational. In fact, they are very hands on people’* which implies the primary focus of these family-managers were undoubtedly day-to-day operations. In context of the research question and the transparent intent

of both family and non-family respondents, it was clear that family management was focused on daily administration which derived the category 'operationally involved' in the running organisational day-to-day duties.

Another correlating trend began to emerge amongst the participants I spoke to. It became evident that there was a lack in long-term and strategic attention on the business. Both family and non-family respondents believed the existing management does not possess a tangible vision for the organisation and is typically short-term focused, possibly due to the lack of management resources in supporting such leadership activities. An engineer (N3) commented '*I don't see any directions, it's just to exist as an entity to do what it's doing now.*' This was a clear indication that management does not maintain any form of corporate outlook while constantly placing focus on the present.

This piece of evidence was further supported by other interviewees who shared that management has failed to see the bigger picture by falling into this comfortable routine of day-to-day work. Coming from a family offspring (2G3), the business development manager revealed '*Their time invested into day-to-day running, pulls them away from what I call high level strategic thinking*' which is an important insight that needs to be acknowledged by key familial actors. This is because the lack of strategic attention by managerial resources may not be a physical limitation but rather the ill-managed implications of self-directed management practices created by the influence of family ownership. In other words, owner-managers are in the position to set management priorities without any form of supervision because the business is family-owned and directed by the same group of siblings which permits them to operate at their very sole discretion.

Regarding management priorities, evidence gathered from the familial respondents suggests top management pride themselves on flawless execution when it comes to organisational output. During the interview with a family manager (2G2), he disclosed that '*Everything has to happen perfectly in a sense. There is no room for error.*' His view on managerial expectation, which directly implied that owner-managers will endure no mistakes when it comes to delivering organisational output, implied they are turning to micromanagement practices. However, subsequent evidence conflicted with these findings and suggested the desire for control has been influenced by familial ownership which requires a dual role capacity.

In fact, the interview sessions revealed that the business has been running on lean operations across the various functions while management consciously manages employee overheads in all departments. For example, one of the managers (2G4) shared that '*They try to get things running*

rather than having more time or manpower.' This reflected the twofold validation that management advocate day-to-day running of the business as the priority while preserving lean operations over investment of new hires. Indeed, this can be a question of management style rather than accusation of family business dysfunctional problems. Nevertheless, failure to build capacity in employees is undoubtedly a major problem and could leave the firm operationally paralysed during the absence of the owner-managers.

In addition, there are also consistencies within the data that suggested management was reluctant towards succession efforts due to the perceived lack of employee competencies. This was informed by the ops coordinator (N6) who shared *'Maybe they don't feel that it's time to hand over the rope to someone else other than themselves, they worry.'* This revealed internal struggles of reassigning operational duties and decision-making to subordinates. Furthermore, this was further underlined by a manager (N2) who shared

I would say being operationally involved is valuable, but I think it is a bit slightly excessive because it takes up too much of their time whereas for people of their position should start to groom the next person of new generation managers to take over them, which may take five to seven years for the transition. (N2)

In other words, the owner-managers were constantly involved in the operational aspects of the business while ignoring opportunities to develop organisational capability and succession planning. Considering all the data collected, the evidence confirmed that owner-managers were operationally focused, addressed short-term over long-term goals, prioritised on controlling functional duties, and managed lean operations in delivering organisational output. Clearly, the question became Why are owner-managers as organisational leaders concentrating on daily operations instead of long-term business strategies? Is it because of the lack of managerial resources? Or is it due to the misaligned priorities of the owner-managers that focus on day-to-day operations over strategic planning? Is there a lack in management knowledge in taking up more leadership areas of the business? More importantly, are these inquiries relevant to the presently identified and validated workplace problem?

Ultimately, these unanswered questions reflected the broader inquiry of 'Why do the family leaders focus priorities in operational duties over strategic responsibilities?' identified earlier as one of the main AR pre-step questions once the problem statement had been validated. This was where a distinct proportion of data started to make sense in disclosing the underlying motives for management to be operationally reserved. Feedback obtained by both family and non-family

respondents suggested that control and complete oversight was a prerequisite of the owner-managers. This was supplemented by a variety of reactions including the lack of trust, the absence of knowledge transfer efforts, and the need for complete control. For instance, the senior executive (N5) explained *'They make certain decisions that override the staff, which makes them a lack of trust and not valued. In addition, the bosses don't communicate the reasons for their decisions.'* This indicated a clear distinction that management have trust issues when it comes to operational running of the business.

Clearly, this practice of centralisation and control also connected to another managerial attribute that suggested knowledge sharing and employee development was moderated within the workplace. One of the managers (2G2) commented that *'They do not allow the staff to make mistakes and learn from them. There's no learning.'* thereby testifying that knowledge transfer is limited within the organisation. In other words, owner-managers operationalised their everyday work by closely instructing the employees to perform duties rigidly while withholding expert know-how so that knowledge transfer and learning is minimised in the workplace. Pausing for reflection, it was not surprising that managerial control had become a key priority due to the lack of trust in the employees, which in turn explained the resistance to delegate authority or transfer knowledge to other members in the business.

Based on that very reason, it was valid from the viewpoint of the owner-managers to preserve management know-how in order to retain power within the familial unit. Likewise, the array of management priorities that focused on output through lean operations accompanied by short-term goals could be viewed as the underlying conduct for advocating managerial control through the business's self-regulated power structures of the owner-managers. Finally, the category 'familial pressure and influence' was derived as the most significant argument by both family and non-family respondents. This constant recurrence by the respondents suggested that the management function had been implicated by mixing of family with business, which clouded managerial actors from exercising objective decision-making and goal-setting for the business.

Stating the views of the family offspring, he (2G4) claimed that *'When you have family members involved, and the family culture, it becomes difficult because there's always favouritism and nepotism involved within the family organisation'* which actually captured the authentic bias of the family business. Put differently, the familial influence increased the avenues for unsound managerial choices because the opposing subsystems in the family-owned business naturally created conflict amongst family-family and family-non-family actors. More and more, the familial element continued to interlock with other business aspects altogether.

These interferences have, in turn, shaped a 'family first' philosophy in which most respondents agreed that the leadership system was bound by kinship rather than job fit. For instance, the ops coordinator (N6) conveyed '*Because we're outsiders. We are not family to them.*' thus confirmed the lack of kin affiliation as a form of probable career consequence within the business. This notion of putting family ahead of other considerations was also consistent within the family circle. Aside from such distracting familial conditions, it is said that the intrinsic intent for control will still exist because of the influence of ownership. United with the added layer of family relations, the power structure, business purpose and internal governance was unlike any traditional organisational arrangement in directing objectivity and accountability to the rightful authorities.

In reflection of the broader analysis compressing of the coding process, grouping of categories which subsequently led to main themes and the theoretical narrative of retelling the participants' stories, I created Table 4.1.1 to provide a systematic outline on the evidence evolving through three main phases. This sheds light on how the data unfolded within the context of the study from authenticating the factual roles and responsibilities of the owner-managers to their leadership preferences in the family business. Then eventually learning about the intrinsic motivations of key organisational actors that underlie and contribute to the workplace problem. From the start, respondents were asked plainly about the perceived day-to-day duties and priorities of their top management. This revealed findings that owner-managers prioritise their time on daily business operations that are particularly short-term focused through micromanagement as a preferred choice of organisational administration.

Through these discoveries, it was also made known that management are inclined to keep the organisation operationally lean, actively manage employee overheads and resist succession development because of their short-term and micromanaging leadership approach. This advanced the interview sessions to move onto inquiring about the rationale behind such managerial preferences. On top of the list, safeguarding command and control was reflected as the most substantial reason for the disciplined approach adopted by the owner-managers. This has led to other findings such as limiting the sharing of management know-how beyond the family unit which has in turn impacted the employees' perceived self-worth and value in the workplace. In addition, day-to-day business operations generally suffered during managerial absence because employees were neither empowered nor equipped with the essential skillsets to perform competent decision-making for the organisation.

Table 4.1.5 : Context and Purpose – Validating Workplace Problem		
Phase 1 Authenticating the Roles, Duties, and Priorities of the Owner-Managers	Phase 2 Rationalisation for Owner-Managers Approach to the Business	Phase 3 Intrinsic Motivation and Foundation for Owner-Manager Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business Operations ▪ Directing Short-term Priorities ▪ Micromanagement Approach ▪ Focused on Business Output ▪ Lean Operations ▪ Delay Succession ▪ Manage Employee Headcount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Command and Control ▪ Lack of Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In Staff Competency ○ In Non-family Staff ▪ Limits Knowledge Sharing to Safeguard Trade Secrets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family Involvement and Influence ▪ Ownership-Management Structure ▪ Emotional Attachment ▪ Monetary Incentives

This was due to the twofold concern behind employee competencies which could compromise business output and the lack of trust in non-family agents, hence preserving authority and control within the family unit. This legitimate progression in interview dialogues revealed the final segment pertaining to intrinsic motivation of the owner-managers which functioned as the core foundation for directing absolute control in the workplace. It is said that the sole ownership of the family unit empowered them with exclusive rights in running the business within an ungoverned system, hence shaped the belief that authority and control must be preserved amongst family stakeholders through self-serving management practices. Over time this has been further influenced by other contributing factors, including the emotional attachment to the business and preserving monetary incentives for family livelihood.

In turn, this explained the accompanying actions of the owner-managers in seeking to protect company trade secrets, denying trust in non-family employees, the need to personally attend to daily operations, limiting external hires, and micromanaging all aspects of the business to retain control and uphold the well-being of the family members. More importantly, this verifies that the workplace problem does exist and aligns with the initial statement while providing legitimate insights, unknown intangibles and essential layers to the workplace situation which empowered the actionable piece of the research. My role as the insider-researcher was not to speak ill about the fashion in which my family business conducted its business but to identify the factual situation and underlying social rationale of the primary actors so that the AR implementation and actionable components could be established based on legitimate and concrete findings of the workplace.

In closing of part one of the AR pre-step, which was aimed at validating the problem statement, the data not only supported the initial hypothesis, but also provided a more systematic structural understanding to the current workplace situation. In the following segment, the plan was to dive deep into underlying causes that shape the insecurities of the owner-managers by conducting the problem-based inquiry and exploring the various channels of actionable opportunities perceived by the participants for further analysis.

4.2 AR Pre-Step: Problem-Based Inquiry (Part II) – Deep Dive into Workplace Problem

In part two of the AR pre-step, the purpose was to distinguish the shift in inquiry from validating the problem statement to diving deeper into the insecurities and key essentials of the workplace problem. As presented in Diagram 4.1.1, the continuation in interview sessions with the same group of respondents was guided and aligned to both primary and secondary research questions.

1. How can owner-managers relieve operational duties to better concentrate on their leadership roles?
2. Why are owner-managers resistant towards delegating operational duties to non-family employees?
3. What are the particular risks perceived by owner-managers in assigning decision-making tasks to non-family managers?

To some level, the findings in this segment overlapped with part one of the AR pre-step but provided more specific and focused responses to the inquiry on the workplace problem towards a more actionable outlook for managerial intervention within the family business. Similarly, the data was generated from the same ten respondents through individual interviews while the qualitative analysis underwent the six-step coding process in constructing a theoretical narrative from the text (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). Bearing in mind the guided questionnaire in Diagram 4.1.1 was directed at the perceived managerial risk and insecurities in releasing more operational duties to focus on their strategic and leadership role, the findings gathered from the interview sessions generated five main categories in reflection of the respondents' comments.

Table 4.2.1: Data Generated Categories – AR Pre-step (Part 2)	
C7	Management Competencies
C8	Management Motivations and Insecurities
C9	Trust Issues
C10	Succession Outlook
C11	Strategic Focus and Alignment

These findings are presented in the following tables along with Diagram 4.2.1 which connect the interrelating categories into broader themes in providing a broader visual picture in response to the problem-based inquiry.

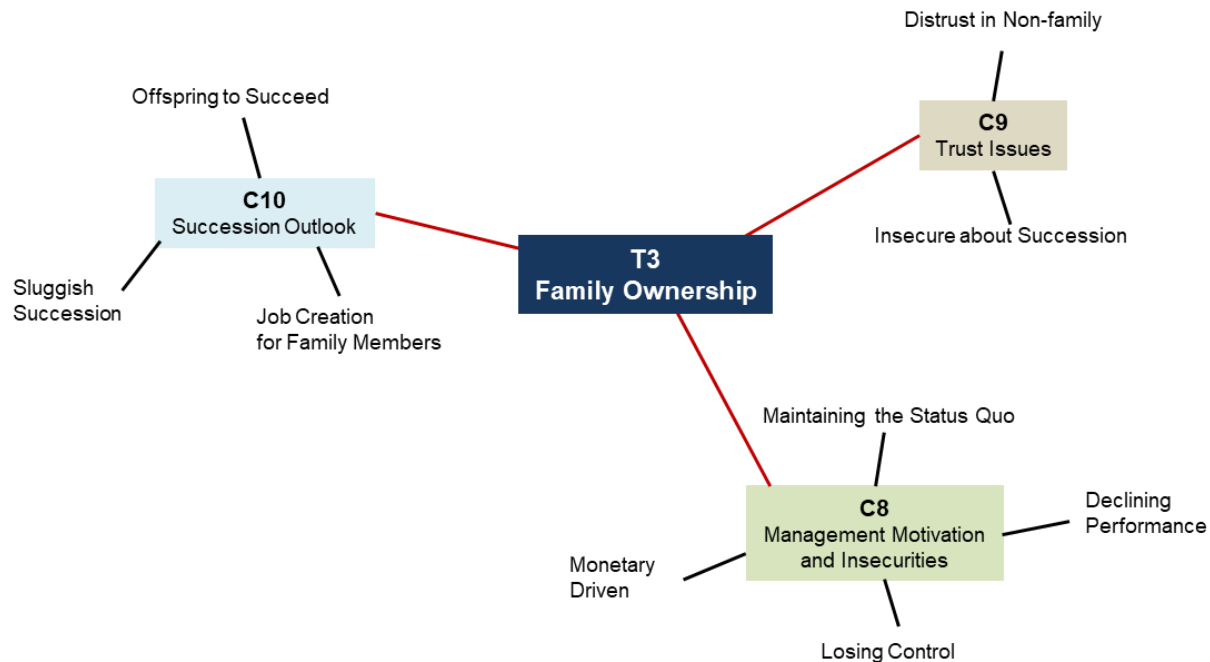
Table 4.2.2: Coding AR Pre-step (Part 2: C7 – C8)

Ref	Texts Quotes	Codes	Categories
2G1	Their prior experiences helps address workplace issues.	Leadership based on experience	C7 Management Competencies
	Its quite manual, they don't tap onto technology.	Resists change and new trainings	
2G2	What they have is the wealth of experience in running the company operationally.	Leadership based on experience	
	They do not have the knowledge to take it up another level at a strategic level.	Leadership lacks management knowledge	
2G3	They would like for the opportunity to grow, but lack the experience and education.	Leadership lacks management knowledge	
	They cannot pull themselves away from self-development.	Resists change and new trainings	
2G4	They lack some aspect of strategic decision making because they haven't been doing it.	Leadership lacks management knowledge	
	They all think they've been running the business all along by rational decision making process;	Leadership based on experience	
N6	I think it is valuable. It helps with the daily deliveries because they will sort out the orders that needs to be delivered every day.	Leadership based on experience	C8 Management Motivation and Insecurities
2G1	Individually, they might struggle to let go because everything must be perfect.	Compelled to work	
2G2	One of the main reasons is monetary, by maintaining a key position, they will land better salaries.	Monetary driven	
	Most of them are workaholics that they cannot put down their work.	Compelled to work	
2G2	They know that there is a need to change in mindset, which puts them in unfamiliar ground. Hence, the unwillingness to change.	Maintaining the status quo	
	It is very natural for them to continue doing what they have been doing because they are experts, and hence refusing the step up.	Maintaining the status quo	
2G4	They are also resistant to change and new opportunities that they are unfamiliar with.	Maintaining the status quo	
N1	Because of the high standards which they set for the companies, it's very difficult to align because the expectation of the employer is probably a lot higher than what the employees could possibly achieve or reach.	Declining performance	
N2	They are very action driven. Everyone seems afraid of taking the backseat. So, it makes it uncomfortable for them to actually do nothing.	Compelled to work	
	The general sense I get from management is things have been working fine all along, don't change it.	Maintaining the status quo	
	I would say they possibly desire control, but they are just more afraid of losing control, more than the desire to control.	Losing control	
	It's been heavy on them. So for them to delegate, they may take back the control when things are not going right.	Declining performance	
N3	I think that they instead might choose to stay somewhere comfortable, whereby they can still show their competence level at the operational level.	Maintaining the status quo	
	A sense of control. I won't go so far as to say they want to feel that they have power over a person. But, I think it's more on the line that they want to feel they have power to control the outcome.	Declining performance	
	Unable to let go. Potentially micromanaging. I will say in general is people have this kind of working style for so long. When they let go, things feel unfamiliar. They might end up actually trying to control the line managers again. Micromanaging the line managers. Even dictating the style how he does things, it is going to come into conflicts.	Losing control	
N4	Challenges, I think it's difficult to accept new things. Reasons, I think because for many years already there are procedures in place, which keeps the company moving quite good already. So they don't think they need to change.	Maintaining the status quo	

Table 4.2.3: Coding AR Pre-step (Part 2: C9 – C11)

Ref	Texts Quotes	Codes	Categories
2G2	They do not trust the next level management to be able take over successfully from their position which is why they have to always have a hand in their business.	Insecure about succession	C9 Trust Issues
2G2	They want to maintain all key position holders as family members.	Distrust in non-family	
2G4	They are quite afraid of outsiders getting insights of company finances. But I think that they can get outsiders to actually take charge for other departments.	Distrust in non-family	
N1	The trust factor of the employees is not so much then how they trust the family.	Distrust in non-family	
N5	One is routine, they have been doing that, the other thing is that, sometimes it's hard to find the right person to put the trust on. Trust is somehow a challenge.	Insecure about succession	
N6	It's very very rare to delegate to non-family staff because it's more a trust issue.	Distrust in non-family	
	Unless they really trust their staff or their staff have been with them for many, many years and they know that their business is safe with this staff.	Distrust in non-family	C10 Succession Outlook
2G1	They have their own children coming in, to hold some kind of position in every department.	Offspring to succeed	
	They do not look for external hires because they want their own children to be in charge.	Offspring to succeed	
2G2	I can say that they know that they're not in a position to have any need to hand it down, but when it comes to the actual process of handing down or transferring of knowledge, it's available but it is lacking.	Sluggish succession	
2G3	Because the initial talent is to maintain control within the family, our objective is to reserve for our family members.	Offspring to succeed	
	All the family members are placed as solution, because they are filling the gap, or stepping up to fill the gap, even though they may not be the best one to fill the job.	Offspring to succeed	
N1	Every person in a family will be entitled, to a certain extent, to work within the family in this business. The traditional line of thinking in HR is "fit for the job", it's kind of blurred here.	Job creation for family members	
	You have a very small pool of people to select from, and more often than not, family members in terms of managerial positions are considered over the employees because it's a family business.	Offspring to succeed	
N2	Moving forward, top management seem to be inadequate as there is few to select from as it's a family business.	Offspring to succeed	
N3	I'm gonna say is that, it's going to restrict to the family members. I'm going to be blunt, it's keeping it in the family.	Offspring to succeed	
N4	There is no power given to the external because internally there are so many decision makers already.	Offspring to succeed	
N5	Maybe only 70% to 80% of top management roles are reserved for family members.	Offspring to succeed	
N6	I think of the business owner they will pass it to their own family to help to continue run the business. Its dependent on family resources.	Offspring to succeed	C11 Strategic Focus and Alignment
	But they'll be successor of their parents. They will force their child to take over. There are such cases.	Offspring to succeed	
N1	I think the first thing that will change is the culture, where people are more in line with what they are thinking or discussing in a boardroom, which is something that is fundamentally powerful. Because when everyone is on the bandwagon, it's so much more productive than to having three, four, five people to talk about it and then so many people doesn't understand it.	Increase organisational moral and cultural shift	
N2	I think it would help drastically. Because, once they free themselves up, they will actually look at things differently. Yeah, and I think it's very important that top management gets ready for managers who are ready to take over, regardless family or not.	Opportunity for strategic attention	
N3	I must say that I feel that they might preform better if they delegate. Simply because if they do lesser of certain things, they might be able to focus on the other things. So, meaning they let go more of the operational and be able to focus more on the leadership strategic plannings.	Opportunity for strategic attention	
	I think if they really can manage to start leading, I assume there will be a cultural shift in the company. Maybe the employees and the company as a whole, can feel a general direction where the company is going, and it can potentially be good for the morale.	Increase organisational moral and cultural shift	
N5	Company would benefit, staff will be more competent to take on the day-to-day job, to run things smoothly. And then, the company will more stable, top management would have more time to release operationally, to be more focused on expanding, even for the new business.	Opportunity for strategic attention	
N6	That's possible if he is willing to and the person that he's passing the authority to is competent enough. They're able to do their job.	Opportunity for strategic attention	

Diagram 4.2.1: AR Pre-Step: Deep Dive into Workplace Problem (Family Ownership)



Fundamental to the problem-based inquiry, management motivation and insecurity was one of the most obvious categories that took immediate shape from the coding process. Interview respondents voiced their views that owner-managers constantly maintained the status quo, revealed concerns behind losing control and even perceived the risk declining performance if operational day-to-day tasks were delegated to the line managers. For instance, there were close consistencies between the family offspring where one manager (2G2) shared *‘They know that there is a need to change in mind-set, which puts them in unfamiliar ground. Hence, the unwillingness to change.’* and the other manager (2G3) who claimed *‘It is very natural for them to continue doing what they have been doing because they are experts, and hence refusing the step up.’* which indicated the intent of maintaining the status quo and resistance to change existing practices due to management insecurity of the owner-managers.

The other sign closely associated to this managerial uncertainty was the thought of losing control. Simply put, the notion of delegating their operational duties raised concerns of losing control within the family business. As expressed by one of respondent (N3), who commented his view about management was

Unable to let go. Potentially micromanaging. I will say in general that this people have this kind of working style for so long. When they let go, things feel unfamiliar. They might end up actually trying to control the line managers again. Micromanaging the line managers. Even dictating the style how he does things, it is going to come into conflicts. (N3)

This suggests the underlying need for managerial control in almost every aspect of the business was being shaped by what the respondent claims as dictatorship leadership exercised by the owner-managers. Another point worth mentioning which further supplemented this argument for not empowering their line managers was the likelihood of declining organisational performance. Informed by one of the non-family managers (N1), he shared

Because of the high standards which they set for the company, it's very difficult to align because the expectation of the employer is probably a lot higher than what the employees could possibly achieve or reach. (N1)

From this viewpoint, there was a clear motivation to retain decision-making authority amongst the owner-managers. The assumption was that delegating these essential duties would undoubtedly impact organisational output in comparison to their expectations as the business owners. The element of trust was another underlying fear expressed amongst the interview respondents that was consistent across both family and non-family participants.

However, the data also indicated two separate dimensions of trust that owner-managers struggle to overcome pertaining to delegation of operational leadership duties. The majority of the feedback was directed at mistrust in non-family employees due to the dynamics of the family-owned business. In a statement by one of the respondents (N1), who shared '*The trust factor of the employees is not so much then how they trust the family.*' which clearly represented a boundary between family and non-family members in regards to trust availability by the owner-managers. The other trust concern that was potentially disturbing to the owner-managers was the perception that the succeeding executives are incapable of assuming the operational leadership roles. For example, the senior executive (N5) described

One is routine, they have been doing that, the other thing is that, sometimes it's hard to find the right person to put the trust on. Trust is somehow a challenge. (N5)

In this context however, the respondent was describing trust regarding both moral and competency for owner-managers to consider delegating their decision-making authority to another. Transiting from this point of trust, succession outlook was the next category that was

generated from the coding process as a large percentage of the responses across the interviewees clearly indicated that offspring are to succeed the family business. As conveyed by one of the managers (2G1) *'They do not look for external hires because they want their own children to be in charge'*. To an extent, putting the family ahead of the business is so influential that jobs are created for familial members. This was identified when one respondent (N1) shared

Every person in a family will be entitled, to a certain extent, to work within the family in this business. The traditional line of thinking in HR is 'fit for the job', it's kind of blurred here. (N1)

which was a clear indication that job fit was now subjected to kinship during a recruitment process.

Clearly, the succession outlook on the family business implied leadership continuity is primarily restricted within the familial pool of candidates, thereby suggesting another dimension of limitations when it comes to non-family employee empowerment. Here, the coding process transformed the data in deriving the three main categories of management motivation and insecurities, trust issues, and succession outlook, which essentially are the three core pillars that turned to family ownership as the main theme in response to the problem-based inquiry. Descriptively, agency theory supported the ideology that detachment of the owner and manager resulted in mistrust, based on the assumption that agents are opportunistically self-serving by nature (Madison et al, 2016). However, what underlined this situation to be uniquely different from traditional businesses is that both the owner and manager can assume the same role within a family-owned business. Hence, providing the opportunity for multiple role conflict to occur in such a workplace setting. Similarly, the respondents' views on trust issues between family-managers and non-family employees were validated because of the overlapping subsystems of family ownership and management.

Once again, this created the space for channel conflict, shaped by family ownership that suffered from opposing points of views. This entanglement of different subsystems comprised of family, ownership and management also connected back to the shaping evidence that succession outlook limited owner-managers from delegating day-to-day decision-making to non-family resources due to the influence of SEW. Clearly, SEW may be the intrinsic energy that pressured owner-managers to pursue familial goals over economic objectives for the business. However, the underlying source that influenced this motivation derived from the triple role arrangement in self-managed systems which create an essentially dysfunctional and threatening nature. Hence, these multiple roles assumed by the owner-managers deviated their managerial judgment to preserve the family unit over rational business priorities. The following Table 4.2.4 provides a

systematic comprehension to Diagram 4.2.1 pertaining to family ownership as the main source of influence connected to the primary findings that were built on the theoretical constructs of this study.

Table 4.2.4 : Problem-Based Inquiry – Deep Dive into the Workplace Problem		
Source of Influence	Theoretical Pillars	Primary Findings
Family Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Triple Role Conflict ▪ Socio-emotional Wealth (SEW) ▪ Agency Theory 	Management Motivation and Insecurities
		Trust Issues
		Succession Outlook

As discussed, the findings directed at family succession, trust issues and general management insecurities have been contributed to by the source of influence derived from family ownership. The descriptive connection to these findings has been founded and supported by academic arguments within the field of family business studies. Starting with role conflict, this subjects the individual to the expectations of multiple demands and is unlikely to satisfy one without compromising on the goals of the second or third role (Memili et al, 2013). The arguments are evident and highly consistent with the primary findings as family-managers now have direct influence on the business including succession arrangements and running of the day-to-day business.

In other words, family ownership united with management duties incur unresolved role conflict due to the dispute for time, managerial attention and organisational resources are divided to serve the dividing goals of each separate role (Niehm et al, 2009). In reference to this conceptual understanding, releasing operational authority to non-family managers may allow owner-managers to better focus on the strategic long-term execution of the business but is conflicted by the dual role to preserve control of the firm only amongst familial members. Moving on to SEW, the theory argued that it is not uncommon for family principals (owner-managers) in the quest of preserving SEW to make decisions that could hurt financial performance. However, there are also arguments that suggest pursuing of SEW goals with proper alignment that fits the family business could enhance financial performance of the business (Naldi et al, 2013).

Nevertheless, the desire to retain control of the business while safeguarding business continuity for familial offspring without proper planning by the key stakeholders to equip the business to survive the external challenging marketplace is undoubtedly mistaken and naive of management. In fact, SEW consists of a series of non-financial goals including satisfying sense of belonging

and intimacy within the family unit, transference of family values in the business, and fulfilling the social obligations of preserving the familial dynasty (Gomez-Mejia et al, 2007). The purpose for stressing these main components of SEW is because safeguarding SEW has been argued to be somewhat inseparable from family-owned businesses and hence continued familial control becomes a fundamental purpose of the business (Gomez-Mejia et al, 2007).

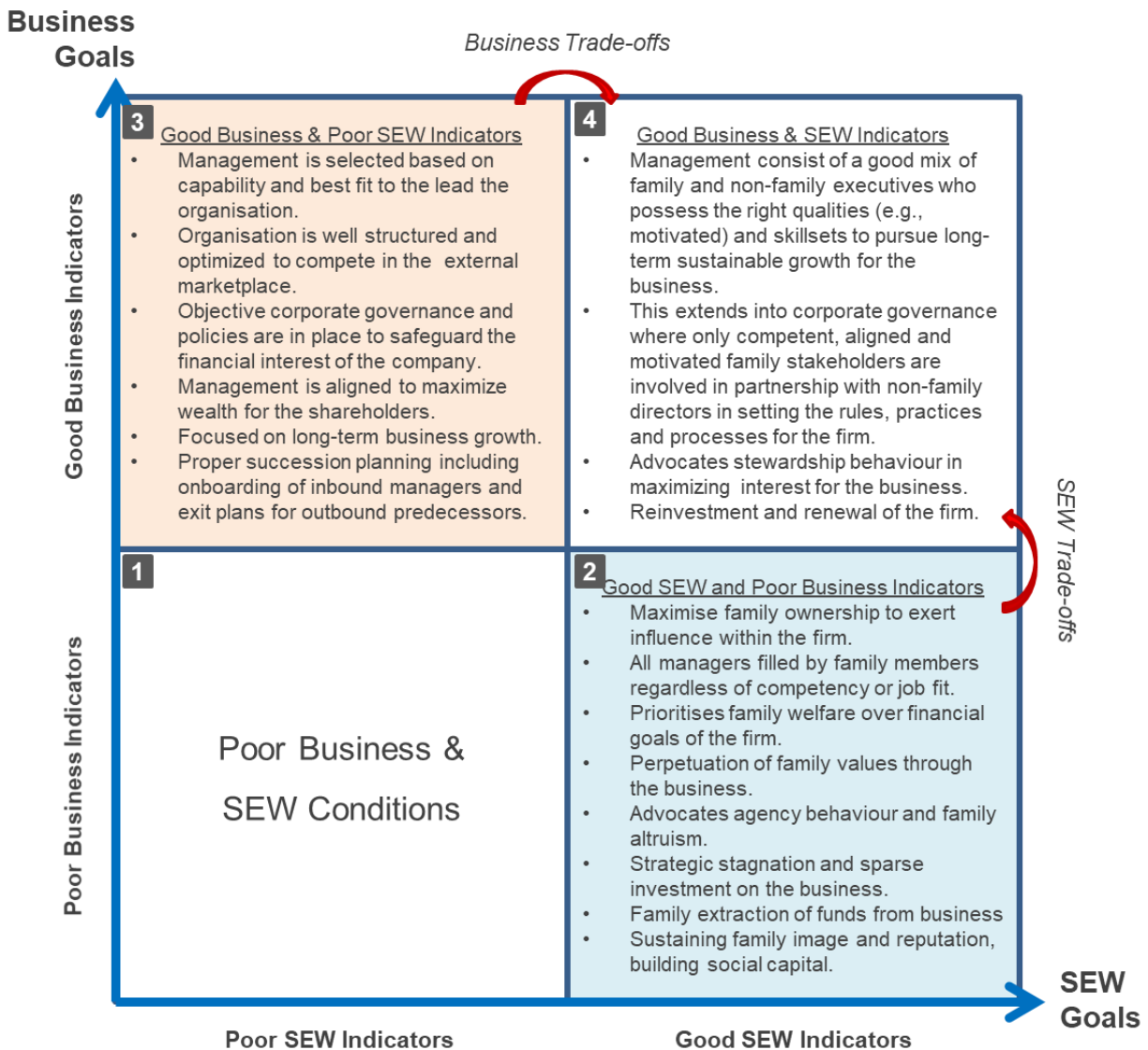
This aligned to the primary findings that revealed succession plans have been pre-determined and reserved for incoming family members which deviates owner-managers from the consideration of empowering non-family employee operational authority to administer day-to-day business activities. Finally, the third theoretical pillar connecting the cause of ownership influence with the primary findings was the prevailing concept of agency theory which is closely interrelated to SEW because of the consistent self-interest principles affecting workplace decision-making. This very concept suggests agency relationship becomes problematic when the principal delegates authority to another to perform a certain task which entails some form of decision-making (Schulze et al, 2001).

This consent to exercise decisions on behalf of the principal becomes touchy due to the perceived notions that agents operate on self-interest and therefore may misuse resources that are empowered to them (Kallmuenzer, 2016). This directly links back to the findings that voiced elements of trust issues pertaining to the motivations and insecurities of the owner-managers. These potential moral hazards posed by the empowering agent could in turn bring harm to both the welfare of the owners and employees, and ultimately threaten the performance of the family business (Schulze et al, 2001). This is also why within the context of SEW, owner-managers have a tendency of approaching non-family employees from a principal-agent relationship position due to the assumption that appointed agents function on self-interest.

Logically speaking however, such agency cost can be immediately omitted by combining ownership and control where the principal assumes the dual role of management. In turn, this returned me to the original study of owner-managers assuming multiple roles incurring dysfunctional conflict in operating the family business. In the following Diagram 4.2.2, I have assembled the following matrix based on the principles of role conflict, SEW and agency theory to illustrate how family ownership has become the sole source of influence in directing owner-managers in their managerial approach to the family business. The matrix table exhibits two different axis directed at SEW and business goals which essentially shape family businesses into different situations depending on the preferences of the top administrators. In the two-coloured segments, matrix box 2 and 3 indicate the two distinctions between SEW and business goals that

influence the management practices and preferences of the owner-managers due to the circumstance of their multiple assuming roles that incur directional conflict.

Diagram 4.2.2 – Role Conflict: Business vs. SEW Goals



The purpose for highlighting these conflicts is to illustrate the necessary trade-offs faced by the owner-managers when making organisational decisions within their own family business. For instance, the pursuit for a pure SEW objective to fill as many managerial positions by family members regardless of their legitimate competencies immediately conflicts with traditional business goals that management designations must be assumed by carefully selected candidates that not only are sufficiently capable but also serves as a good long-term fit for the business. Likewise, the ideology of exerting family ownership to gain influence within the business directly

opposes good corporate governance that should be grounded in transparency, adequate control measures and appropriate organisation processes and practices.

The inclination towards SEW goals in turn produces non-economic outcomes such as strategic stagnation due to constant extraction of organisational funds by management instead of striving for long-term growth by reinvesting in the business and its resources, including its human capital. Similarly, influenced by the pursuit of SEW shapes owner-managers to manage non-family employees as agents instead of stewards which compromises the likelihood of building a well-structured organisation that optimises its resources to focus and compete in the external marketplace. One way or the other, owner-managers are divided by SEW and business goals unless they are prepared to accept substantial trade-offs in the respective subsystems.

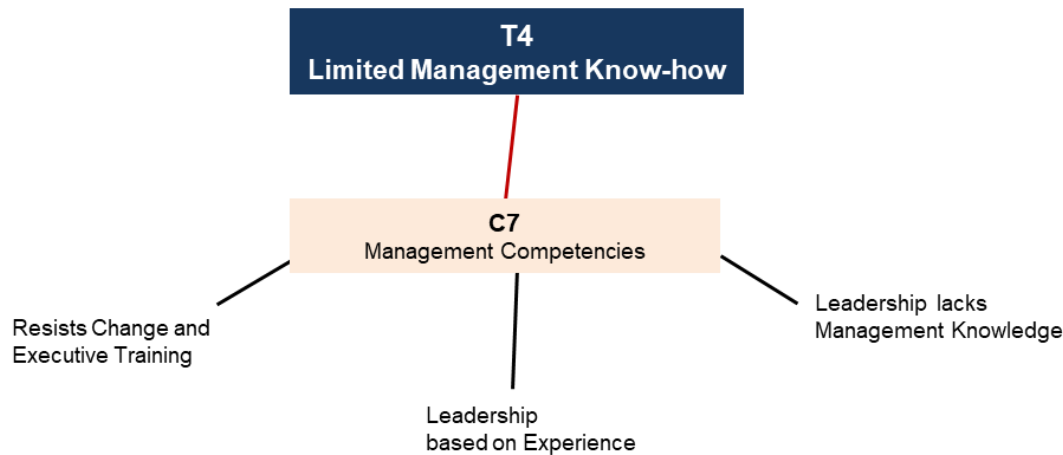
Alternatively, owner-managers could strive to attain a more collective approach to the family business with selective compromises between SEW and business priorities which is also situational to every family-owned business. As the matrix indicates, progression from matrix box number 3 to 4 requires some form of trade-off in respect to business goals. For instance, instead of purely focusing on managerial capability as the sole selection criteria, considering a good mix of family and non-family executives who possess the desired skillsets and are aligned to the collective goal of maximising shareholder wealth could be a viable solution for the family business.

This theoretic notion of collective pursuit of SEW and business goals is consistent with Mako, Csizmadia, and Heidrich's (2016) concept of 'Extended SEW Priorities' in which they argue and acknowledge the importance of respecting SEW within family-owned businesses while exploring the opportunities to extend these traditional beliefs based on the contextual situation faced by the family business. For example, instead of setting the precedents of permanent job security for all family members, they argue that owner-managers could focus on the possibilities of securing the long-term well-being of their future generations by engaging motivated and genuinely interested offspring to continue nurturing the family business (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016).

However, it is vital to acknowledge that matrix box number 4, which aspires to shape good business and SEW conditions, is highly subject to the best possible fit available to the circumstances of the business. The pursuit for conditions equivalent to that of matrix box number 4 is consistent with the goals of the AR in which the study strived to optimise resources within the organisation by having managing-owners release operational day-to-day duties to non-family executives. In turn, this will entail some element of SEW trade-off in terms of family control but

gains superior business conditions including greater strategic focus on the business, operational independence and increased readiness to compete in the external business environment.

Diagram 4.2.3 – AR Pre-Step: Deep Dive into Workplace Problem (Limited Management Know-how)



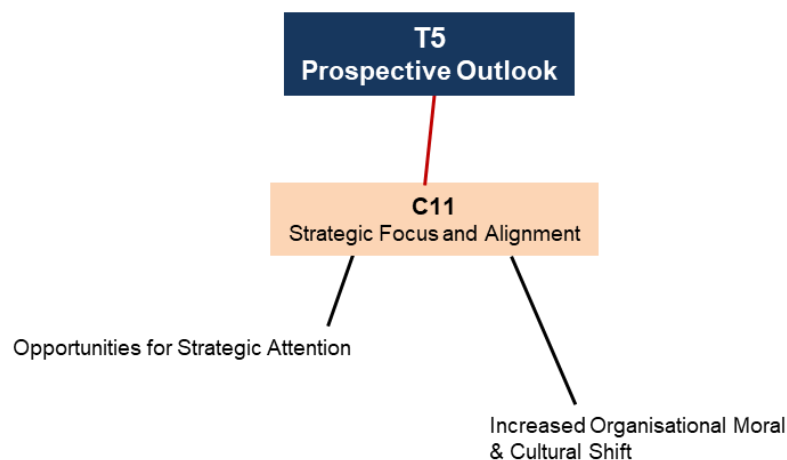
The other main theme that surfaced from the data suggested 'limited management know-how' of the owner-managers as one of the key contributing factors shaping their leadership approach in the workplace. However, there was a clear divide on this front as family respondents were primarily the group that voiced the lack in managerial competencies in the owner-managers. Non-family respondents directed their views to the opportunity for strategic focus and attention for the long-term business if management was able to break away from daily running of the business. Possibly, this was also because such insights are only available to the inner familial members. Whereas, non-family employees are not exposed to both official board meetings and informal management discussions which familial offspring are actively engaged in. Within the context of management competencies, the respondents angled in from three shaping categories.

The data advocated that management's leadership has been largely based on their experience, which is valuable in certain aspects but lacks adaptability in today's ever changing business environment. For example, one family manager (2G2) acknowledged that '*What they have is the wealth of experience in running the company operationally.*' He also went on to say that '*They do not have the knowledge to take it up another level at a strategic level.*' which indicated the disparity in managerial skillsets and aligned with several other respondents that the owner-managers may not be equipped with the adequate skillsets relating to strategic management, organisational leadership, and the like. On top of these findings, the data also informed the study that owner-managers struggled to embrace change and were reluctant to receive executive training. This is

where the marketing manager expressed her views on management's continued pursuit of manual practices in day-to-day operations and resists tapping into technology to aid the efficiency of the business.

Similarly, another family offspring (2G3) voiced '*They cannot pull themselves away from self-development.*' which was in indication that top management have been ignoring this vital aspect of executive development. Reflecting on the voices of the respondents, the findings indicated that management practices are largely directed based on actionable experience of the owner-managers. However, these senior managers do not possess the relevant management knowledge while continuing to refuse executive training or professional development that will essentially aid the business at the senior administrative level. These findings highlighted the importance of acknowledging that the reluctance to adopt delegation of operational authority as a strategic option could be fundamentally due to the fact that the owner-managers were unable comprehend this approach because of the gap in management knowledge rather than intrinsic influence.

Diagram 4.2.4 – AR Pre-Step: Deep Dive into Workplace Problem (Prospective Outlook)



The final category that was achieved through the coding process, but generally did not integrate with other findings, was the perceived outlook on the altered workplace situation. In other words, that the actionable component in AR study could essentially create value to the lives of the participants. What was key here, however, was that these voices were generated solely by the non-family employees. This created suspicions and concerns why familial offspring, who were engaged in the same interview process, did not express confidence in this potential advancement in the workplace problem. Was there reasonable doubt for family respondents to incur such lack

in conviction for the AR to be potentially successful? Were there missing pieces in the data collected which the coding process was unable to identify? These unanswered questions were addressed as the study progressed into the AR cycle with the participants.

Looking at the data, the respondents were asked 'Do you believe top management will be able to better focus on their leadership roles if they begin to delegate their operational duties to line managers?' This was where a series of responses indicated that there are tangible opportunities for strategic focus and alignment throughout the organisation by literally all the non-family respondents. These reactions were mainly categorised under 'opportunity for strategic attention' and 'increased organisational moral and cultural shift'. Starting with the comments by a non-family manager (N2), he shared

I think it would help drastically. Because, once they free themselves up, they will actually look at things differently. Yeah, and I think it's very important that top management gets ready for managers who are ready to take over, regardless family or not. (N2)

which was fundamentally encouraging because it shed light on the confidence in the leadership and capability of the owner-managers.

Similarly, his colleague (N3) commented that

I must say that I feel that they might perform better if they delegate. Simply because if they do lesser of certain things, they might be able to focus on the other things. So, meaning they let go more of the operational and be able to focus more on the leadership strategic planning. (N3)

which provided a logical argument in support that management will benefit the organisation if they focused their efforts on strategic obligations over operational ones. In the subsequent dialogues with the interview participants, this led on to the belief that it will positively shape the morale and culture of the organisation. For instance, one of the managers (N1) viewed the potential workplace situation as

I think the first thing that will change is the culture, where people are more in line with what they are thinking or discussing in a boardroom, which is something that is fundamentally powerful. Because when everyone is on the bandwagon, it's so much more productive than to having three, four, five people to talk about it and then so many people doesn't understand it. (N1)

which is both inspired and opportunistic for such possible changes within the workplace. This is where the AR project revealed the possibilities of progressive change and advancement in management practices which underlay the purpose of the entire study.

In review of part two of the AR pre-step, the data provided serious comprehension to the workplace situation which also held a fundamental consistency with the conceptual framework from the literature review. More importantly, retelling the stories of the participants and drawing connection between the findings and theoretical standings of the study helped determine a richer perspective of the underlying causes in shaping the workplace problem. Diving deep into the problem-based inquiry, the findings suggested family ownership was essentially the main source of influence driving management's behaviour of insecurity, inability to trust non-family employees and preserving key positions for family offspring. These findings were then supported by theoretical pillars within the field of family business studies, including dual role conflict, SEW and principal-agent problems that provided the descriptive connection to the primary theme.

The other key finding that was unforeseen was the 'lack in management know-how' which the evidence suggested is one of the primary resistances for owner-managers to reject delegation of operational duties. However, it was also due to this unshakable mind-set that the owner-managers resisted self-development and executive upgrading which limits the opportunity for them to explore alternative management approaches including delegation and strategic management. The final piece of the AR pre-step findings deviated more towards the potential outlook of the actionable component of this study. Firmly backed by the voices of the non-family respondents, evidence indicated that there are opportunities for strategic attention and increased organisational motivation if owner-managers were able to detach from operational involvement to focus on the long-term planning of the business.

4.3 Summary

In summary to this AR pre-step chapter, the purpose for this preliminary investigation was to validate and problematise the workplace situation before commencement of the AR intervention. This process not only confirms the workplace problem, but also sheds important light on the motivations and insecurities of the managing-owners. From the managerial trends identified from part one of the pre-step findings, it is evident that the collective actions directed by the owner-managers were focused on retaining control and authority within the family unit. This includes family managers staying continuously involved in day-to-day business activities, keeping the organisation operationally lean, resisting knowledge transfer beyond family management, and prioritising short-term over long-term goals. Nevertheless, part two of the pre-step investigations revealed that family-ownership is the main source of influence impacting family management and their approach to business.

In turn, the resistance to delegate and empower employees derive from the insecurities of distrust in non-family, potential decline in business performance, loss of operational control, and compromising family succession. In addition to these findings, it has also been suggested that the reluctance to delegate operational duties might be due to the lack of know-how by the incumbent management. In light of these findings, the respondents have reflected the feasibility for prospective change that could improve strategic focus and organisational moral if management was successful in assigning day-to-day duties to operational personnel. The qualitative evidence collect and processed from the pre-step investigation is a vital component of this study as it will inform the subsequent phase of the AR project and its participants directed at advancing the workplace situation.

Chapter 5 | The Action Research Project

5.0 Introduction: The Action Research Project

Having discussed the origins of the workplace problem, literature review, proposed methodology and AR pre-step investigations for the study, it is time to dive into the research project that was conducted with the participating organisation. This involved a series of research stages starting with the pre-step as the groundwork preparation before progressing into the full AR cycle with the consenting participants in collaborating and implementing change within the workplace focused on the advancement of management practices. In brief, the AR pre-step examined the workplace situation by collecting data from the researched site to understand the context and align the purpose of the study. This entailed a two-part process which validated and refined the workplace problem before advancing into the investigation stage of the problem-based inquiry.

However, it is important to comprehend and recognise that while the validated workplace problem may represent the wider sentiments of the business's situation, the action research cycle was more specific to the needs of the elected department in addressing an equivalent issue within that broader context through the systematic AR cycle. This was where the AR participants embarked on the four-stage AR process of constructing, planning, implementing and evaluating the actions that sought to address the workplace problem that was contextually precise to the participating department while representing actionable findings that could be applicable to the broader advancement of the organisation. These findings generated across the four-stage process were gathered through multiple channels, including the AR group discussion, individual interviews and insider-researcher journal. This enabled a broader collection of real-time, reflective and post evaluative data as evidence in building the richness of the research findings.

5.1 The AR Cycle (Stage 1): Constructing

As presented in the pre-step findings, the results not only validated the workplace problem but also generated contextual understanding for inauguration of the AR project that was led by the researcher-participants' partnership targeted at improving the organisational conditions. At this stage, much of the effort of the AR group was focused on problem identification, acknowledgement and situational analysis. However, before diving further into the workplace problem as most practitioners would immediately focus on, my priorities as the researcher were to align the AR group with the research goals, inform the participants of their rights and responsibilities, outline the disciplined AR process and the data gathering techniques adopted in the study. More importantly, this set the scene for AR group members to participate with a

commitment towards advancement in management practices within the context and scholarly boundaries of the social enquiry. Nevertheless, we must recognise that this cyclical process of social construction was non-linear and chaotic in nature due to the planned fundamentals of constant questioning, exploratory problem-solving and participatory reflection during the group discussions of the various AR investigation stages.

Furthermore, this study was grounded in PAR which strives to empower AR members with the active participation of workplace intervention aimed at transforming existing conditions into improved situations for the business. In order to achieve this, practitioner involvement entailed some level of flexibility in addressing complex social problems. It was only through this discovery process of practitioner engagement within the altering real-world settings that valuable insights were shaped and subsequently assembled into descriptive actionable know-how which served practical value to both the research and participating business.

As highlighted earlier, management extended their approval for the accounts and finance department to participate in this project because of its situational fit with the study and prospective payoff from the AR agenda. In fact, it was identified that all employees within the department are primarily focused on operational work with minimum attention on strategic financial planning. In other words, all department personnel consisting of a director (owner-manager) and the functional managers (family offspring) were preoccupied with operational duties such as day-to-day account receivable and outstanding payables. Apart from the lack of strategic attention, daily operations were once again stretched and limited to family resources which incurred high risk for the business during unforeseen downtime.

However, this also provided an opportunity for promising change within this vital function for a shift in managerial focus onto more strategic areas such as long-term financial planning, investments and budgeting. As the AR group members commenced on the project, the construction stage began with the presentation of the qualitative findings from the AR pre-step. This mainly included the views of organisational members on existing management practices, leadership values, familial ownership, and workplace opportunities within the context of strategic and operational duties. Fundamentally, the findings were a concrete reflection of how owner-managers conducted their business through the lens of both family and non-family employees. This shed important light to the AR group members that were assigned to begin constructing the workplace problem within the context of the accounts and finance department.

In the following segments, we review the reactions of the AR group members as they embark on the first stage of the AR cycle. However, the findings are presented in two different adaptations. The participatory contributions that underwent the qualitative analysis built on the consistent six-step process of constructing a theoretical narrative from the text, while the insider-researcher contributions were based on the ORJI model which captured the reflection-in-action recordings in presenting the meta-learning findings and third-person reflection attained from the post assessment (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). The purpose for performing the two different sets of analysis was to illuminate the segregation of data deriving from 'Core Action Research Cycle' and 'Thesis Action Research Cycle' that run in parallel to collectively generate the holistic findings of the AR (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

5.1.1 The AR Cycle (Stage 1): Constructing – Participatory Contributions

Going into the construction stage, AR participants were briefed about the identified workplace problem based on the pre-step findings. Essentially, this was supported by the primary data collected from members of the organisation associated to the workplace situation. This evidence-based approach to research aligns AR group members to the demand for legitimate change and intervention within the establishment. Nevertheless, the purpose of this constructing stage entailed validation for AR members participating in the actionable study. Hence, the AR group discussion was guided on the main question 'Do we agree that managing-owners are operationally focused and why?' which subsequently led to a series of supporting questions between the participants and insider-researcher in directing responses to this inquiry. The inauguration of AR group discussion aimed at identifying and constructing the underlying issues pertaining to the workplace problem before advancing into the planning action phase of the project.

At this stage, data was gathered from the AR participants who were actively engaged in group discussions targeted at validating the workplace problem. The data was subsequently coded in view of the context, intention and process of the participants across the evolving group discussions to categorise the text based on recurring ideas into constructed conceptualised themes and the building of a theoretical narrative. The following table reflects the filtered data which was subsequently grouped into respective categories obtained from the AR group discussions. This produced the four main categories in construction of the workplace situation through the lens of the AR group members.

Table 5.1.1: Data Generated Categories: AR Stage 1 - Constructing	
C12	Extending Attention on Non-family Resources
C13	Family Influence
C14	Sense of Commitment
C15	Agency Influence

During the initial phase of the constructing dialogues, the two directors participating in the AR both acknowledged the organisational problem in a surprisingly positive fashion while extending their keen interest to improve the workplace conditions.

Specifically, the one of the owner-managers (1G2) openly expressed *‘What do you said earlier, there is really a lot that has not been done.’* which was within the context of the pre-step findings in acknowledging the workplace problem and probable managerial intervention in the AR project. Similarly, the co-director (1G1) conveyed

One more main thing I can see is, as far as the staff is concerned, I think they would like to take more responsibility and be recognised in their job role, whichever job role they are doing. (1G1)

Which indicates the readiness for empowering non-family employees in the future. This category of extending attention on non-family resources was solely articulated by the managing-owners with uncomplimentary comments by their offspring who are line managers within the department. To a certain extent, this demonstrated the level of centralised authority exercised in the family organisation when it comes to executive decision-making.

Another category that was evident within the data was the amount of family influence on the business. Emotional attachment was one explicit proposition that connected with the need to get operationally involved in the business. As communicated by one of the managers (2G4)

At the end of the day there is always this emotional attachment to the company. That is not something you can detach from. It’s just like being in the family, you can’t just detach from your brother and sister and all that. (2G4)

This openly acknowledged the influence of family ownership on the business that entails the attachment for authority at some operational level in the business.

Table 5.1.2: Coding AR Stage 1 – Constructing (C12 – C15)

Ref	Texts Quotes	Codes	Categories
1G1	I think after hearing what you have said, I think a lot of things that need to be done.	Change Oriented	C12 Extending Attention on Nonfamily Resources
	But I think we need to overcome that. We need to overcome that.	Change Oriented	
	They are ready to take the role. But they felt that the family members are not willing to release that role to them.	Non-family Readiness	
	One more main thing I can see is, as far as the staff is concerned, I think they would like to take more responsibility and be recognised in their job role, whichever job role they are doing.	Non-family Empowerment	
	But you cannot get involved in everything. Sometimes you need to delegate some of the things to the staff to do. You must have trust.	Non-family Empowerment	
1G2	What do you said earlier, erm, there is really a lot that has not been done.	Change Oriented	
2G4	At the end of the day there is always this emotional attachment to the company. That is not something you can detach from. It's just like being in the family, you can't just detach from your brother and sister and all that.	Emotional Attachment	C13 Family Influence
1G2	I'm like 40 years in this line, and my own business.	Emotional Attachment	
	We still have this thinking as family will always be united as one.	Family Trust	
	If not, when I pass it onto somebody, I probably... I'm sad to say, I will pass it onto another family member.	Family Trust	
1G1	I think my view of this, in terms of security, in terms of money concerns. At the end of the day, if SF is handling it, if she's absent for, say a week or two, CH or MY will know what to do.	Family Trust	
2G4	Sometimes I think you really just need to fill in the gaps where there are not enough people. So, I think you really have to get your hands dirty.	Filling the Gaps	C14 Sense of Commitment
2G4	No matter what the family members, they will not let the business fail. They will strive to get it going no matter what.	Familial Commitment	
2G4	More like non-family won't go that far for the business. Like, they might not go the distance.	Doubt in Non-family Dedication	
1G2	The owner himself was also cleaning the tables because there was a shortage of staff and business was good.	Filling the Gaps	
1G2	I think probably you just want to make sure everything runs smoothly and nothing goes wrong.	Doubt in Non-family Performance	C15 Agency Influence
	Yes. No hiccups, no mistakes so that customers don't complain back to us.	Doubt in Non-family Performance	
	And let's say for example I let someone to do it, and that person is down and slow in his or her work, and the suppliers come back to me, it is not a very good image on our company.	Doubt in Non-family Performance	
	So far, there is not much confidence in employees in issuing a cheque yet.	Doubt in Non-family Performance	
	Let's say in the long run you don't do that job, they also fear that later the staff will do better than the bosses.	Non-family Threat	
	You will lose out to the staff.	Non-family Threat	
	Let's say the employee knows the trade and everything... He will run off and start his own business, small businesses.	Non-family Threat	
	That's where managing your time is very important. Somehow, I have to manage myself and do it in advance.	Self Assurance	
	For me, one thing is I will always pay to my suppliers on time.	Self Assurance	
1G1	There is a fear. Like you get yourself involved all the time. The fear is there, you won't feel comfortable.	Self Assurance	
	You always believe that your own hands are still the best way to manage things.	Self Assurance	
	He got this fear, that's why he wants to get involved in everything.	Non-family Threat	
	Sometimes, there is always this fear... You want to leave it to somebody outside the family to do it, there is always this fear that you made a mistake.	Doubt in Non-family Performance	
2G4	The safest pair of hands is our own.	Self Assurance	
2G5	But just now as mentioned, it could also be that you don't want the customers to complain about something. So, you think that maybe if you put in the effort first then you are pre-empting it.	Self Assurance	

This was even more apparent for the managing-owners who founded and have operated the company for more than four decades to date. For example, *'I'm like 40 years in this line, and my own business.'* was not a mere validation of the director's (1G2) years of working experience, but more importantly acknowledging the ownership and emotional attachment she had for her family business. The other contributing factor pertaining to family influence was the trust in kinship over non-family employees in which participants' advocated confidence and assurance amongst family members. This was built on comments of the AR members including *'We still have this thinking as family will always be united as one.'* and *'If not, when I pass it onto somebody, I probably... I'm sad to say, I will pass it onto another family member.'* where the managing-owner (1G2) acknowledged the bias towards the offspring due to the influence of family ownership.

The other category that surfaced from the coding process was the perceived sense of commitment by family-managers over non-family employees. In fact, this viewpoint shed light on both family and non-family level of commitment to the business. In the views of the department manager (2G4), he said *'No matter what, the family members they will not let the business fail. They will strive to get it going no matter what.'* while relating to non-family employees as *'More like non-family won't go that far for the business. Like, they might not go the distance.'* Clearly, this comparison aimed to rationalise the views on retaining operational authority within the family unit based on the suggested level of commitment between family and non-family resources. The final and most apparent argument amongst the AR participants regarded concerns pertaining to principal-agent relationship.

This entailed the need for managing-owners to be permanently engage in workplace operations due to the potential threat posed by non-family employees, doubt in organisational performance through delegating authority and having that self-assurance in performing operational duties. The notion of delegating, training and empowering another was seen as a potential threat to the family business in future context. This was explained by the founding member (1G2) *'Let's say the employee knows the trade and everything. He will run off and start his own business, small business.'* This is consistent with his co-director (1G2) who shared his view within the same context *'He got this fear, that's why he wants to get involved in everything.'* This was in reference to the fears and insecurities of another owner-manager who was not involved in the AR project.

These findings aligned with the principles of agency theory in which the principal is constantly concerned with the employed agent's functioning in self-interest, which in turn puts the organisation at risk. Similarly, both directors concurred that non-family employees might not perform up to their expectations, incurring reputational impact on the family business. This

viewpoint however differed from the previous argument that non-family employees are not as dedicated, which is bound by intrinsic motivation. Whereas this concern was directed at workplace competency which pertained to one's limited capabilities. In the AR dialogue, one of the directors (1G1) conveyed *'You want to leave it to somebody outside the family to do it, there is always this fear that you made a mistake.'* which indicated the lack in confidence on non-family proficiency.

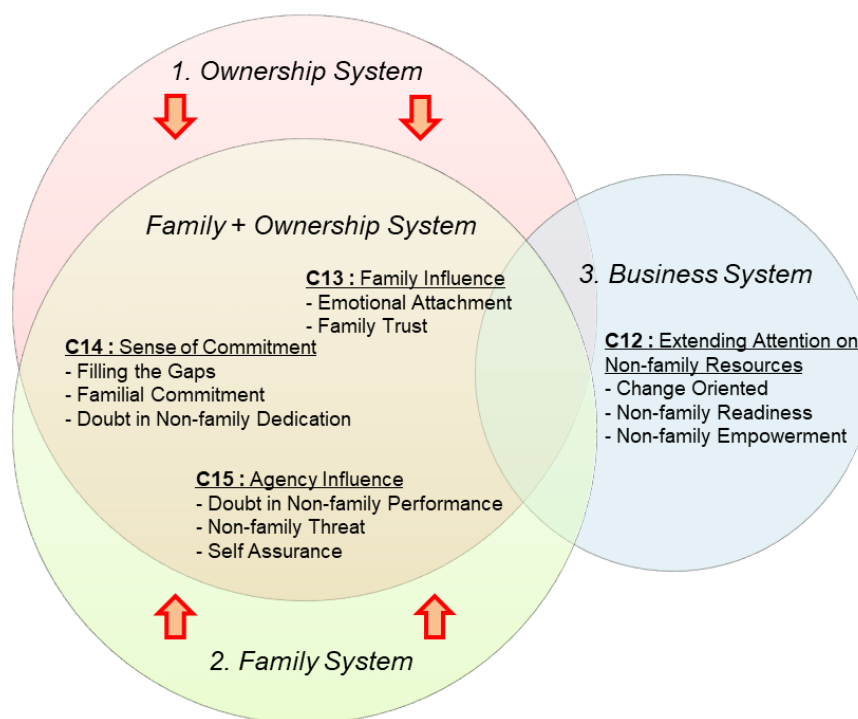
In turn, this led to a series of consistent responses amongst the AR participants that the inclination to be operationally focused was that performance does not get compromised when these duties are self-administered by the managing-owners. Surprisingly, even the familial offspring (2G4) shared the similar belief by stating *'The safest pair of hands is our own.'* The owner-manager (1G2) on the other hand focused her argument by choosing to believe in personal effectiveness by affirming *'That's where managing your time is very important. Somehow, I have to manage myself and do it in advance.'* This was seen as a form of denial as no resources, family or non-family, were subject to risk-free situations due to the uncontrollable external environment faced by the organisation. Nevertheless, it was only through these AR inter-engagements and reflections that the research could attain such valuable insights in accurately addressing the workplace problem.

Progressing on with the construction of the AR analysis, the generated categories grounded in the primary responses of the AR participants have been arranged within the framework of 'Three-circle model of family business' (Gersick et al, 1997). The purpose for organising these findings into this conceptual model was to present how real-world practitioners have been subjected to these in their practice due to the influence of family ownership creating multiple role conflict. The actions aimed at satisfying the interest of any one stakeholder contradicted with the well-being of another, thereby producing conflict created by the overlapping subsystems of ownership, family and management. In comparison to the original three-circle model of family business presented in chapter two, I adapted the following diagram to provide a more real-world representation of the overlapping subsystems within the specific context of this study.

As illustrated by Gersick et al (1997), the three-circle model demonstrates the theoretical overlap in three subsystems while the adaptation in my Diagram 5.1.1 outlines a closer unity between the family and ownership systems. This increased integration in family and ownership towards one unified system is shaped by the findings of family influence, sense of commitment and agency influence that was captured through the coding process of the AR discussions which justly suggests 'family ownership' as the core source of influence disrupting directors in their workplace decision-making. In reflection of the primary data, the emotional attachment shaped by the

founders who established the business paired with the enduring trust in kinship is undeniably caused by the influence of both ownership and family that conflict with traditional business goals including the building of organisational capacity which entails investing in non-family resources in the long run.

Diagram 5.1.1: Integrating the three-circle model of family business (AR Constructing)



Source: Adapted from Gersick, Davis, Hampton, and Lansberg (1997, p. 6)

Similarly, in regard to agency problems, which have been seen as the biggest hurdle for the AR participants, the findings clearly indicated that the resistance was shaped by both family and ownership as the uncertainty in agency performances were directed at non-family employees and not family members. Finally, the perceived sense of commitment by non-family employees in comparison to the business owners was another validation that the influence of both family and ownership has created a barrier for the directors to objectively pass executive judgment within the business. This qualitative analysis in placement of the construction findings into Gersick et

al's (1997) three-circle model with the modified outline of combining family and ownership into one subsystem is highly consistent with the AR pre-step findings that also considered family ownership as the source of intrinsic motivation driving the actions of the managing-owners.

In turn, this shaped family management to be actively involved operationally due to the sense of commitment to the business, the mutual trust amongst family members, and the fear of deviating agents bringing about irreversible risk to the organisation. It was also acknowledged that the shift from two separate domains into one 'family ownership' system was certainly situational to the researched site as ownership is 100% held by the family unit with equal shareholding across the five siblings. Hence, this unites family and ownership as mutually combined goals in the eyes of the owner-managers. What has also been recognised as situational to this study was the unique approach to business exercised by the family management. Shaped by their beliefs, values and know-how on the business, the managing-owners have demonstrated a preference for operational control on a day-to-day basis. Having adapted the findings into the three-circle model, it was also equally important to acknowledge that the owner-managers were not solely preoccupied with goals that served the interest of the family owners.

Even though AR participants have articulated their deep concerns pertaining to releasing operational authorities and responsibilities to non-family employees, the directors have recognised the urgent need for change and intervention to address the workplace situation. Extending attention to non-family employees is indeed a tangible step forward in the AR construction stage, in which the managing-owners have acknowledged the readiness in non-family employees, the possibilities of empowering these employees, and the sentiments to be change oriented in this study. However, how did the AR participants go about overcoming their fear and insecurities of releasing day-to-day duties to non-family employees? How were these family-managers able to break through their decades-long management practices which supposedly secured them many years of business success? This will be covered in the next section where I discuss the contributions of the insider-research obtained from the ORJI journal which was conducted in parallel with the AR cycle simultaneously.

5.1.2 The AR Cycle (Stage 1): Constructing – Insider-Researcher Contributions

Employing the use of an ORJI journal had a twofold purpose of collecting data from the researcher engaged in reflection-in-action as the AR was in session, and to sustain personal awareness and attentiveness in facilitating the group discussions as an insider stakeholder who could be subjected to emotional reception and workplace biases. In other words, the operative journal

served as both an AR monitoring tool for the insider-researcher and data collection instrument in gathering evidence to build the AR dissertation. The subsequent tables' present pieces of reflection-in-action evidence that took place during the AR discussions that involved important interventions in facilitating the participants to review the workplace problem and the AR inquiry. This was vital as practitioners can lose sight of their priorities during the AR negotiations when confronted with emotional denial and the embarrassment of acknowledging managerial weaknesses. Hence, the insider-researcher intervenes in such AR group deviation by employing an ORJI outline to guide reflection-in-action and tease out subjective judgments to align participants towards a purposeful change process that is captured in each journal entry.

5.1.2.1 Constructing: Journal Entry 1

In journal entry 1 of the AR constructing phase, the group discussion had progressed onto the inquiry directed at identifying the motivational influences that drive owner-managers to focus managerial attention on operational areas of the business. However, what clearly emerged during this AR situation was the tangible resistance of addressing the direct question by exhibiting a variety of avoiding tactics including delaying their response, talking out of context, and even keeping quiet during the group discussion.

1. Observe – AR Hearing

As observed in the AR group discussion, there was a shift in dynamics by the participants at this stage of the workplace inquiry. In this situation, I witnessed that AR participants were reluctant to make any comments pertaining to management practices that were inclined towards day-to-day operations. Subsequently, all AR members withhold their response until one of participants eventually started to quote examples from external scenarios while others attempted to support his case by justifying operational attachment to the family business is common. Chronologically, AR participants first refused to acknowledge the managerial preference for operationally focused practices. This was then followed by immediate justification for operational involvement such as filling the gap, incurring that emotional attachment as a family owner, and even the sense of security of being personally involved instead of relying on non-family employees. In turn, this formed a gap in the AR discussion that is contextually misaligned and might require correction.

2.1 Reaction – AR Hearing

In reaction to what was observed, I turned to my emotional self to reflect and evaluate my position as the insider-researcher of mitigating any bias to the AR situation. Immediate self-deliberation

led to a series of meditative questions including 'Why are the participants not responding to AR question?' and 'Why are they directing their response by quoting external examples instead of directly addressing it within the context of the workplace situation?' which in turn angered my perception of the AR participants. In that instance, I was experiencing the intrinsic need to interfere with the AR group discussion without further due consideration. These emotional reactions were clearly fuelled by the perceived unbecoming behaviours of the AR practitioners in addressing the workplace problem.

2.2 Reaction – AR Post Reflection

As I conduct the post assessment on my emotional reactions, it is evident that my subconscious mind was subjected to the relational overlap in family and professional capacities that led me to become upset with the AR participants for their non-responsive behaviours to the AR question. In other words, the multiple relationships that exist in this study have disrupted my role as an insider-researcher which could compromise my ability to conduct my duties if I continue to maintain ignorance of this hazardous influence.

3.1 Judgement – AR Hearing

Based on the actualities of my observations, my priority is to exercise unbiased judgement of the situation before considering any form of intervention in the AR study. However, this involves not only recognition of the emotional self, but also accepting that the production of fair judgement is conditional to effective personal awareness. Hence, it is both reasonable and practical to adopt frameworks such as the ORJI procedures in facilitating insider-researchers in their research studies due to the possibilities of incurring 'human errors' when engaged in social interactions. In this AR situation, it has come to my attention that AR participants are perhaps faced with the intrinsic struggles of confessing managerial weaknesses within the group and hence were unable to account the workplace gap within that dialogical session.

3.2 Judgement – AR Post Reflection

As I review the judgement made during the AR session, I realise that there are always opportunities of interpreting a situation in a critical yet unbiased standpoint. However, we will be simultaneously subject to personal assumptions, emotional receptions and situational settings that in turn form abstract obstacles that need to be overcome before a critical perspective can be reached. Within the context of this AR situation, instead of interpreting that the participating actors are insecure about discussing management weaknesses, directing their views by advocating

external examples could be a progressive approach which allows them to reveal the truth eventually. In turn, the AR group could have gained a more natural AR session if the participants were able to advance down this alternative path.

4.1 Intervention – AR Hearing

Returning to the live AR session, an intervention was made based on the judgement that participants were trapped by their inability to express and discuss managerial gaps with the clear purpose of redirecting their focus within context of the workplace situation. However, the intervention was administered by posing questions designed to create clarity, inspire reflection, challenge underlying assumptions, and encourage breakthroughs while retaining ownership by the AR participants. More importantly, the questions that were posed and the way they were delivered should not reflect the perception of being judged, manipulated, or interrogated. Fundamentally, the primary purpose for injecting questions into the AR discussion is to promote action learning which is not targeted at what is already known, but the mutual discovery of the truth by the participants.

4.2 Intervention – AR Post Reflection

Finally, as I review this journal entry and the ORJI progression, I believe that the intervention created value as AR participants were able to advance and respond in relevance to the organisation problem which in turn generated important insights for the constructing of the workplace situation. Looking forward however, I believe that I should exercise greater patience as the facilitator to empower participants to ‘storm’ during the AR discussions in unfolding critical viewpoints before intervening with the AR situation. As presented in my post-judgement assessment, the perceived unbecoming behaviour of the AR participants could have been a biased judgment and adopting a more diligent approach in perceiving emotional influence is highly valuable in conducting social research.

Table 5.1.2.1 : ORJI Journal 1				
AR Question: If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family staff, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business?				
Journal Purpose	ORJI Stage	Mode of Inquiry	ORJI Guide	Reflection-in-action Post Reflection
AR Project	Observe	Second-person Inquiry	Objectively record what was observed.	The AR participants were very reluctant to make any comments pertaining to management practices that was inclined towards day-to-day operations. Subsequently, all AR members delayed their response until one participant eventually started to cite examples from external lessons while others attempted to support his case by justifying operational attachment to the family business is common.
AR Project	Reaction	Second-person Inquiry	How am I reacting emotionally to what I am observing? How can I mitigate these emotional influences in undertaking a more impartial view on the situation?	Why are the participants not responsive to question? Why are they avoiding the question by citing external examples instead? Why are they not consistent with their earlier comments that suggest delegation is a possible alternative for the future?
AR Dissertation	Reaction Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Why did I react in this manner? What made me react in such an emotional fashion to the situation? How did my reaction correlate to workplace assumptions and practices?	My reaction was negatively influenced by my familial and professional relationship with the AR participants which led me to get upset with their non-responsive behaviour to the main question that is vital to the constructing stage.
AR Project	Judgment	Second-person Inquiry	Review observations, recognise and acknowledge emotional reaction, and conduct objective assessment in judgement of the AR situation.	Objectively, there are possibilities that the AR participants are facing intrinsic challenges in expressing their "weaknesses" within the group discussion and hence are avoiding the question directly by delaying or turning to external examples.
AR Dissertation	Judgement Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	How could I have judged the situation differently? What are the common obstacles arising from passing objective judgements from the AR discussion?	Instead of assuming that individuals are insecure about discussing their weaknesses, having an open mind in judging participants comments could lead to unforeseen realization moments. For instance, citing of external examples could potentially be a preferred communication approach of demonstrating their views and should not be perceived as denial or other forms of insecurity.
AR Project	Intervention	Second-person Inquiry	Intervene with the situation if judgement supports the goals of the AR project. Take caution in such interventions to safeguard objectivity in the AR group discussions.	This is where I intervened in the group discussion to align the AR participants to focus on the context of the workplace situation instead of discussing external scenarios. This was administered by injecting relevant sub-questions to the main inquiry of the study.
AR Dissertation	Post Intervention Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Was the intervention justified? What could have taken place if you did not intervene in the AR situation? What could have improved from the present situation for future AR cycles?	The intervention was validated as AR participants began to respond in relevance to the workplace inquiry which also subsequently led to important insights for the constructing stage. Nevertheless, such intervention could be further improved by allowing participants to "storm" in the AR discussion in unfolding the humbling truth before implementing alignment efforts.

5.1.2.2 Constructing: Journal Entry 2

The last journal entry recorded from the constructing stage was when the participants had progressed onto the AR inquiry 'If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interests of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?' In this scenario, AR participants had displayed resistance of releasing operational duties to non-family staff supported by an array of baseless reasons and self-justification in support of their familial cause of retaining authority within the family.

1. Observe – AR Hearing

During observation, there were signs of collective support between the AR participants to retain operational duties by family members pertaining to accounts and financial responsibilities. The justifications made seemed subjectively biased that non-family staff are incapable of undertaking these duties while suggesting minimal risk scenarios if family-managers continue to assume these responsibilities. The supporting illustrations made by the AR members include confidence in managerial time-management therefore risk in potential downtime is minimised and the unlikely overlap in work leave amongst family-managers due to internal coordination. However, these possibilities do not put into consideration environmental risks (e.g. accidents, emergencies) that are both uncontrollable and unforeseen by the business.

2.1 Reaction – AR Hearing

As I begin to assess my emotional reactions to the AR observations, two deliberate questions instantly came to mind. Firstly, 'Why do family-management discussions always reach this stage of self-believe and self-justification when faced with workplace situations that threatens familial control?' This emotional frustration is then followed by another inquiry 'Why can't they be open enough to consider new and alternative ways to approaching the problem?' Clearly, these negative build-ups in emotions are a reflection of my observations that are subject to my views as the insider-researcher. I couldn't help but believe that family-managers have turned to denial when confronted with the sensitive inquiry of re-assigning operational authority.

2.2 Reaction – AR Post Reflection

Looking at my emotional reactions from the AR session, it is obvious that the continued observations of 'hardened' management practices that negatively promote closed system decision-making by the family-managers conflicts with my professional approach to problem-

solving. However, I too must acknowledge that my perspective has incurred workplace assumptions contributed to by many years of operating experience within the family business. More importantly, my simultaneous role as akin, colleague, and now an AR facilitator has allowed me to be biased in my reactions due to the overlapping relationships. As the insider-researcher, I might have viewed the situation through the family lens which influences my emotional availability to blame the AR participants for their flaws which conflicts with my role of the group facilitator. Hence, the ORJI procedure is a vital self-assessment tool to aid me through the AR discussions of maintaining impartiality.

3.1 Judgement – AR Hearing

Putting my emotions in-check and re-assessing my observations on the AR performance, there is genuine concern that the participants are at risk of suffering from 'Groupthink' which will be counter-productive with the AR project. The employment of groupthink is the unconscious inclination of sustaining group morale in which the unit incurs human errors and defective judgement in pursuit of justifying their actions. In turn, group members could undergo a process of self-deception, forced consent, and accommodate group ethics and values due to the pressure of uniformity. The signs of collective rationalisation, stereotyping against the unpractised, and impressions of invulnerabilities amongst the participants are consistent warnings of groupthink witnessed in the AR session (Janis, 1973).

3.2 Judgement – AR Post Reflection

During the post assessment, I realised that there is the possibility that I may not have adequately considered the functional or departmental aspects of the arguments presented by the AR participants. Due to the lack of perspective, it would be important to validate the comments of the AR members in order to clarify and align my views in securing a more complete judgement to what was observed. For instance, the collective comments that account payables are time sensitive and re-assigning such duties to a non-family staff incurs more time and resources might be a genuine challenge for the department. However, instead of assuming that AR participants are subconsciously protecting group members from the discussions, inserting more facilitating questions in seeking clarity could have improved the process of achieving impartial judgement.

4.1 Intervention – AR Hearing

In view of the AR circumstance that participants are subject to the threats of groupthink, this validated the necessity for intervention to breach the developing of hazardous group dynamics.

However, the approach undertaken in the intervention was to create alternative scenarios in generating critical dialogue and present a more pragmatic outlook on the workplace problem. The purpose of the intervention aims to provide a perspective of multiple risk dimensions that AR participants may face rather than directionally facilitate the group towards a resolution. Intervention was made with great caution to safeguard its purpose of the AR group discussions while attempting to break the bad practices of groupthink that will result in unproductive workplace consequences.

4.2 Intervention – AR Post Reflection

As I reflect on this AR intervention, the introduction of new workplace scenarios had empowered the group to unlock and discover different perspectives, risks, and opportunities pertaining to the workplace problem. In that process, AR participants were able to reflect and comprehend the uncertainty of the existing organisational practices, thereby learning to defy past managerial habits in considering alternative approaches for the business. Without this intervention, the AR group will face intrinsic limitations of advancing onto the next stage of planning action due to the lack of conviction for corrective action within the workplace.

Table 5.1.2.2 : ORJI Journal 2				
AR Question: If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family staff, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business?				
Journal Purpose	ORJI Stage	Mode of Inquiry	ORJI Guide	Reflection-in-action Post Reflection
AR Project	Observe	Second-person Inquiry	Objectively record what was observed.	AR participants were collectively suggesting minimum risk scenarios based on past experiences as a justification to continue relying on family resources. For instance, advocating good time-management and unlikelihood of overlap in managerial leave as a rational to continue relying on family managers for operational duties.
AR Project	Reaction	Second-person Inquiry	How am I reacting emotionally to what I am observing? How can I mitigate these emotional influences in undertaking a more impartial view on the situation?	Why do family-management discussions always reach this stage of self-believe and self-justification when faced with workplace situations that threatens familial control? Why can't they be open enough to consider new and alternative ways to approaching the problem?
AR Dissertation	Reaction Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Why did I react in this manner? What made me react in such an emotional fashion to the situation? How did my reaction correlate to workplace assumptions and practices?	The continued observations of "harden" management practices that negatively promotes closed system decision-making by the family managers conflicts with my professional approach to problem-solving. Hence, emotionally affected my reaction to the situation.
AR Project	Judgment	Second-person Inquiry	Review observations, recognise and acknowledge emotional reaction, and conduct objective assessment in judgement of the AR situation.	Being mindful about my emotional reaction, I reflected deeper and recognised that the participants are at risk of entering into a 'groupthink' situation which in turn could lead to an counter-productive AR session with the group. This will require careful intervention to break the bad practices to reconsider other contributing factors to the workplace problem.
AR Dissertation	Judgement Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	How could I have judged the situation differently? What are the common obstacles arising from passing objective judgements from the AR discussion?	In my post judgement assessment, I believe that I did not sufficiently include the functional or departmental context into consideration. This may further validate the comments of the AR participants which I lack in perspective. In future, I should increase efforts to clarify this aspect in aligning a more objective judgement during the AR discussions.
AR Project	Intervention	Second-person Inquiry	Intervene with the situation if judgement supports the goals of the AR project. Take caution in such interventions to safeguard objectivity in the AR group discussions.	Intervention was made to create alternative scenarios in presenting a more pragmatic outlook on the workplace problem. The purpose was to provide a perspective of multiple risk dimensions to obtain a richer managerial view on the workplace situation.
AR Dissertation	Post Intervention Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Was the intervention justified? What could have taken place if you did not intervene in the AR situation? What could have improved from the present situation for future AR cycles?	The intervention brought value for the AR discussion as participants began to acknowledge the various possibilities of risk if problem identification was conducted too hastily. If intervention was not made, the AR group will struggle to progress onto the planning action stage due to the lack of convention for corrective action within the workplace.

5.1.3 The AR Cycle (Stage 1): Constructing – Findings and Project Outcome

This point marks the completion of phase one of the action research cycle. Nominated AR participants successfully concluded their dialogic group discussions at the constructing stage. The primary findings of the core action research cycle have been presented in the participatory contributions of this chapter which focus on the actionable scope of the study. The thesis action research cycle which runs in parallel with the core AR has been an integral component in aligning the insider-researcher in unbiased implementation of meta-learning which is a distinguishing factor of the action-oriented study. More than anything, the combination of the core action and thesis action research cycles are inseparable as it incorporates the social inquiry of the first, second and third persons involved in the study.

In brief, the first-person inquiry is the reflection of my own practice where data has been collected in the ORJI journal post-assessment entries which inquire into my underlying assumptions, behaviours and actions undertaken during the study (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). The second-person inquiry explores the workplace problem in collaboration with the AR participants through group discussions, joint action and critical intervention by complying with the ORJI procedure in exercising reflection-in-action during the AR sessions (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). Finally, the third-person inquiry is essentially the workplace inquiry which involves the direct actions of AR participants within their organisations and is actualised through participatory contributions by publishing primary data (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). Nevertheless, only with the integration of the first, second, and third person inquiry can I integrate scholarly practice into the research in generating actionable knowledge through that collaborative and reflective AR process.

5.1.3.1 Constructing: First-person Inquiry

The post-assessments conducted in the ORJI journal served as an invaluable avenue to first-person inquiry on my personal practice. Through my reflections, it has been brutally challenging yet rewarding to re-examine my shifting views as I engaged in reflection-in-actions during the AR interactive sessions. The reality of human flaws hits me as I realised how underlying assumptions have influenced my professional practice in the workplace. In addition, the perceived belief of being impartial and of clear intent was also tested as I complied with the ORJI procedures and found that my observations have been subjectively altered by attributes of personal emotions. This required correction and alignment in my judgement before formulating any class of intervention within the AR sessions.

Looking back, I systematically resisted making assumptions on what was observed, manage my partiality, and tap into my know-how as the insider-researcher in passing impartial judgement on the unfolding situation. This included accepting the comments of my colleagues that may be subjectively unsound from my viewpoint and explore underlying possibilities in the acquisition of critical yet relevant perspectives. This reflective journey of self-awareness, particularly in an action-oriented study that involved the family business, subjected me to the overlapping relationships of being a family member, co-worker and insider-researcher which created different dimensions of influence where I felt conflicted and dysfunctional in performing my role as the AR facilitator.

This was where the first-person inquiry supports me in recognising the different types of behavioural defects I could be exposed to base on the source of influence. For instance, looking at my observations from a familial context could lead me to being emotionally disturbed due to the prevailing kinship that 'permits' me to be disrespectful whereas interpretation from a colleague's perspective may result in a competitive reaction which then influences the urgency to exert alternative proposals instead of approaching the dialogue with an open-mind. As I progressed onto stage two of the AR cycle, I believed that clarity on my own practice would continue to be revealed as I engaged in different conflicting scenarios and battled with my assumptions and biases, intent in advancing towards a scholarly practitioner.

5.1.3.2 Constructing: Second-person Inquiry

Reviewing the AR hearings which document how second-person inquiry was conducted with the AR group, it has been consistent with the ORJI procedures being a vital operative tool in regulating the insider-researcher's emotional reactions, aligning judgements with observations and the exercising of critical assessment in carrying out reflection-in-action for every intervention. However, all of which would have been unproductive if I was unable to inquire and work with the AR participants in addressing the mutual workplace issue through joint actions of group collaboration. Looking back at my conduct to second-person inquiry, I realised that the group dynamics and my ability to participate critically, yet in a democratic fashion, was paramount to the success of the four-stage AR process because it was first and second-person learning which transpired into third-person inquiry in forming and producing actionable knowledge for the study (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

It is recognised that this integral relationship from first to second-person inquiry navigated my reflections into action by shaping my AR interventions. Without this process, the outcome of my

involvement in the AR sessions could result in divided arguments and controlled discussions. This is where the extension from first to second-person practice allowed me to seek clarity instead of rely on assumptions, share mutual concerns in building trust, encourage receptivity towards the workplace problem and shape ownership in formulating solutions directed at advancing management practices (Marquardt, 2007). It was evident that my assumptions on the AR group's reluctance to acknowledge their managerial preferences was part of my bias as the researcher and had inevitably impacted the study.

This reflexive consideration is important in management research in unmasking researcher biases and assumptions to reflect the influences altering the research inquiry (Barge, 2004). If I had chosen to eliminate my researcher biases and empower the AR group to self-facilitate, the study could have deviated into defining an alternative workplace problem or resulted in a complete standstill, which would have modified the study. Nevertheless, as part of second-person inquiry, my role was to intervene in advocating the AR principles which entailed the timely placement and framing of questions in empowering breakthrough discussions by the AR participants. As I progressed from first to second-person inquiry, I learned to appreciate the underpinning concept of a scholar-practitioner in integrating scholarship in my practice and not simply a senior manager conducting research about his or her practice.

5.1.3.3 Constructing: Third-person Inquiry

The third-person inquiry which was the subsequent process of the first and second-person practice essentially moved away from reflectivity of the study into the core AR project which was directionally focused on improving workplace conditions of the AR group where primary data was gathered and analysed. From the participatory contributions, the findings conclusively indicate an integrative shift from the two 'family' and 'ownership' subsystems into one unified 'family ownership' system shaped by the circumstance of sole ownership by the family unit. This illustrated the distinction between the theoretical three-circle model of family business and reality that were subject to the conditions of practice (Gersick et al, 1997). What this suggested was that the source of influence in management priorities are primarily rooted in the 'family ownership' and 'business' systems which caused dysfunctional goals due to the conflicting interest of each subsystem.

This primary source of influence was reinforced by the concrete views of the AR participants that owner-managers are operationally focused due to their persistent sense of commitment to the family business, emotional attachment and confidence in family members, and the fear of agency

risk, which underpins the foundation of family ownership. Through the inquiry process of the AR discussions, the group was able to achieve a breakthrough by recognising the potential risks of withholding operational duties and responsibilities from non-family resources.

Although the AR group was faced with denial and insecurities, impartial probing and alignment efforts helped unlock critical perspectives from the participants. In fact, acknowledging the need to exert greater attention on non-family employees were the vital turning point for the AR constructing stage. This was when both the managing-owners were able to adopt a change-oriented approach on the workplace situation and expressed considerations of empowering non-family employees in the future. In turn, AR participants were able to successfully construct and define the workplace situation, identify the underlying problems, acknowledge the risks posed to the business, and developed a joint consent for intervention to improve management practice and workplace conditions.

In this, there was actionable knowledge residing within the group discussions as participants were able to define and outline management priorities within the setting of the family business. This socially transformed the AR group to comprehend their fears, insecurities, attachments and neglected business obligations due to the subconscious barrier created by family ownership. As management designations were fully occupied by family members, it was not uncommon for the familial unit to lack cohesiveness due to unhealthy assumptions and inadequate communication. However, as demonstrated in stage one of the AR process, family management can overcome such flaws and strengthen their united front by conducting frequent and constructive group discussions. Recognising that the actionable knowledge established here was relatively contextual to the participating organisation, it would be relevant for comparable family businesses to reflect on these learnings and regulate balanced communication within the family unit to foster and align management priorities.

5.2 The AR Cycle (Stage 2): Planning Action

In this section, the AR progressed to the planning action stage as the participants set out to address the workplace problem that was defined by the same group of people. AR members collaborates on and planed the necessary actions directed at advancing the conditions of the workplace situation. In other words, the AR group aimed to detach operational involvement of the directors in day-to-day functional duties so that they could focus their attention on more strategic areas of the business. This was where data was gathered from the participants as they attempted to overcome the undesirable effects of the workplace problem which was presented in the

participatory contributions as findings on third-person inquiry. In parallel to the AR project, second and third-person inquiry was conducted through the ORJI framework in presenting the findings of reflection-in-action and post assessments of the insider-researcher in building the AR dissertation.

From the AR efforts obtained from the constructing stage, participants have realised the associated risks and long-term implications to the business if they continued to remain adamant to the existing workplace situation. Through the process of social construction, AR participants were now more aware of their fears and were able to recognise the bias of family influence which affected the economic performance of the business. In turn, AR participants formally voiced their intent to change prevailing operational duties to be undertaken by non-family employees while safeguarding the interest of the family business. In this AR development, transiting from constructing of the workplace problem into the planning action phase, the group shifted their attention onto the actionable stage of inquiry guided by the following questions.

1. If we plan to delegate operational duties to non-family staff, how can we accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business?
2. To what extent will owner-managers consider empowering non-family staff in their operational duties?
3. What control measures can be adopted to safeguard the insecurities of family managers in relieving operational duties onto non-family managers?

In the planning action stage, data continued to be gathered through AR group discussions as participants attempted to work as a group to address the workplace problem within the domains of the accounts and finance department with the support of key stakeholders (e.g. Members of the board of directors) in authorising executive decisions to bring about prospective change and advancement in organisational practices.

5.2.1 The AR Cycle (Stage 2): Planning Action – Participatory Contributions

As the study reached its AR planning action stage of the project, interpreting and analysing the data was expected to incur an underlying shift as the inquiry had changed from the investigations of a 'why' to a 'how' as participants moved into the plan-for-action phase. When compared to the constructing stage where the inquiry was focused on identifying why managing-owners were operationally involved in the business, the planning action phase altered the investigation to focus on how participants were able to overcome the workplace problem while preserving the interest of their family business. This aligns with Dey's (1993) qualitative principles to data analysis which respects the context of action, intents of the actors, and the process of emerging actions by the

AR participants. Considering these key fundamentals, the data was categorised within the domains of solution-making as the participants were engaged in AR dialogue focused at possible avenues to release day-to-day responsibilities of the owner-managers in building operational sustainability for the family business.

Looking at the data gathered from the group discussions, key findings suggested the grouping of three specific categories shaped by the AR participants as they attempt to shortlist, select and define operational duties that could be delegated to existing accounts personnel. The first observations indicated retention of family authority as a primary priority before the group progressed any further in the discussion of assigning functional duties to non-family employees. For example, one of the directors (1G1) voiced *'Internet banking always needs to be done by CH or MY'* who are both family offspring to the business. The processing of internet banking services entails a two-part process of the administrator and authoriser in which both personnel need to be equipped with passcodes and authorisation devices.

Examining this statement by the director (1G1), it was evident that he views security risk in delegating internet banking duties to non-family employees. The department manager on the other hand was more receptive to empower the administrative processing to external employees while maintaining firmly that authorisation should be retained by family members. He (2G4) commented that *'Whether it's a payment by cheque or bank transfer, it has to be authorised by one of the authorised signatories.'* in which the reference to authorised personnel indicated family members. The repeating of remarks by the AR participants distinguished the need to retain authority within the family unit. The other correlating concern captured in the AR discussions pertained to the trust in family members over external employees, which had been highly consistent ever since the group embarked on the AR project.

As expressed by the owner-manager (1G2) she shared *'As for the issuing of cheques, I still think the family members should be doing it. I don't know, but I'm still not comfortable with somebody else issuing the cheques.'* In other words, the managing-owner voiced her insecurities of leaving the processing of cheques in the hands of non-family employees. The obvious unity of the trust in kinship and desire to retain operational authority within the family could be the preliminary safeguard to how AR participants eliminated prospective options in the decision-making process. In the progressive AR discussion, participants began to focus on outlining duties that were off-limits. This primarily included the administration of employee salaries and disclosing of bank statements which were deemed as sensitive duties.

For instance, one manager (2G4) expressed doubt in delegating such responsibilities by conveying *'I think the other fairly sensitive part of it is the salaries, I'm not sure if this one of the areas that we want to get her to prepare.'* This was also consistent with the director (1G2) who expressed

I'm not confident also in employee salaries, because if she does that she will see the employees, who's getting paid how much and for what and also the family and what they're getting paid. (1G2)

Here, what the AR participants were saying was that gaining insights into employee salaries is a sensitive undertaking. However, within that discussion, it was also the potential risk of the agency relationship that would incur another dimension of problems. Exposing such information to non-family employees could pose a threat to the family unit.

As expressed by the managing-owner (1G2), this posed as a form of security concern while the manager (2G4) agreed to withhold the payroll duties from non-family employees. With respect to the bank statements, it was apparent that the connection with employee salary was once again the driving factor for limiting non-family employee oversight of this area of responsibilities. This was reinforced by the department manager (2G4) who commented that

The other thing is bank statements, because a bank statement tells you salaries as well. So, probably we could keep a separate file for these two documents and the other thing is she does not have access to, is online banking service. (2G4)

Considering this communication, it was also evident that the AR group planned to safeguard these sensitive areas of information from non-family employees by segregating the financial records while initiating the reassigning of possible duties to department personnel.

Apart from staff salary, it was also suggested that the bank statements obtain other aspects of delicate information as informed by the director (1G2) who explained *'Not only these, sometimes more sensitive like BG to the oil major, I don't agree for them to see that.'* which reflected financial commitment to business principals and insights into the economic standing of the business. At this point, the approach which the AR participants had undertaken in deciding functional duties to be delegated to non-family employees was by adopting a filtering process in outlining responsibilities that are off-limits and in line with safeguarding the interest of the family-owners. In between the group discussions, there were pockets of resistance exhibited by the AR participants who voiced opinions that the implementation of delegating existing operational duties

would incur additional managerial attention due to the training and monitoring required on a day-to-day basis.

The sentiments of this additional burden on the owner-managers were consistent across the AR members. For example, the owner-manager (1G2) conveyed '*I feel there is always a double check and somebody has to check, and double checking to me is always a waste of time.*' which stressed the level of managerial compromise in employing this change in the workplace. Nevertheless, the AR group was able to overcome this conflict by looking past the short-term commitment and weighing the benefits of added capacity to attend to strategic long-term areas of the business. The coding process in selecting relevant pieces from the data through the identification of repeating ideas within the context, intentions and process of the group discussion empowered the generalisation of themes into the three following categories.

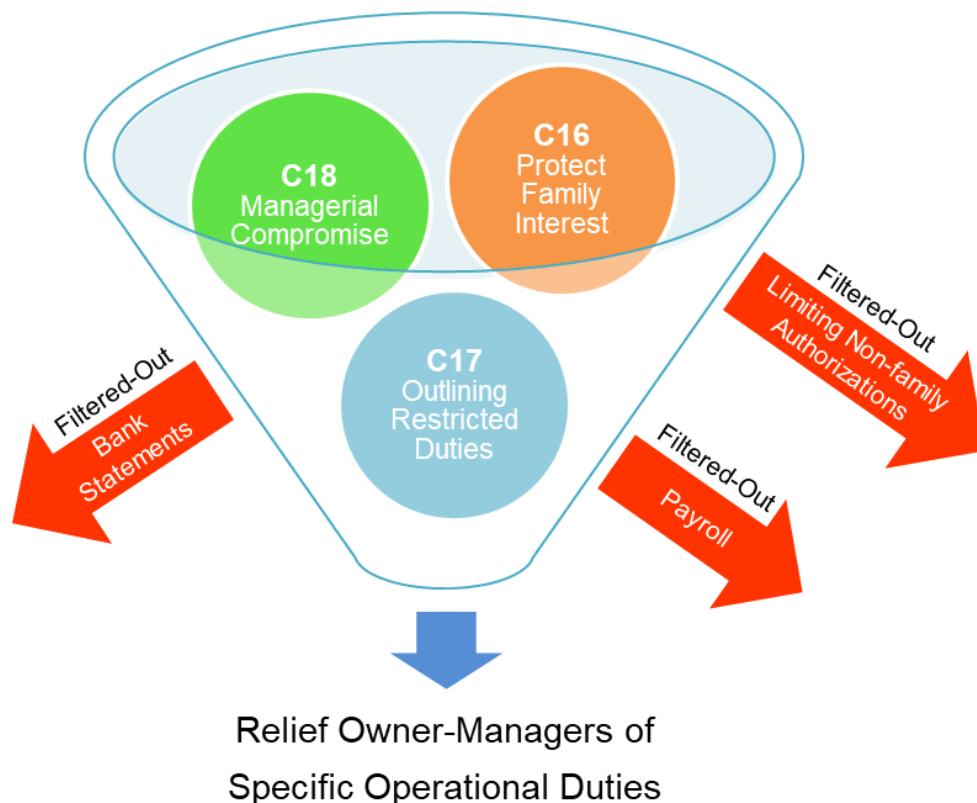
Table 5.2.1: Data Generated Categories: AR Stage 2 – Planning Action	
C16	Protect Family Interest
C17	Outlining Restricted Duties
C18	Managerial Compromise

Table 5.2.2: Coding AR Stage 2 – Planning Action (C16 – C18)

Ref	Texts Quotes	Codes	Categories
2G4	Whether it's a payment by cheque or bank transfer, it has to be authorised by one of the authorised signatories.	Retaining Family Authority	C16 Protect Family Interest
	But I think for things like preparation of bills, for payments, writing the vouchers, writing checks, ultimately when it comes to payment, top management can check before actually releasing the funds.	Retaining Family Authority	
	I mean, she can maybe prepare and then the authorising authority authorises it.	Retaining Family Authority	
1G1	Internet banking always needs to be done by CH or MY.	Retaining Family Authority	
	She can't do it, because she's not authorised to do it and the bank will not accept it unless you are a director.	Retaining Family Authority	
1G2	As for the issuing of cheques, I still think the family members should be doing it. I don't know, but I'm still not comfortable with somebody else issuing the cheques.	Family Trust	C17 Outlining Restricted Duties
1G1	Confidentiality, the bank statement is to protect the family members. So it needs to be managed by CH or MY.	Family Trust	
2G4	I think the other fairly sensitive part of it is the salaries, I'm not sure if this one of the areas that we want to get her to prepare.	Sensitive Duties	
	The other thing is bank statements, because a bank statement tells you salaries as well. So, probably we could keep a separate file for these two documents and the other thing is she does not have access to, is online banking service.	Sensitive Duties	
1G1	She can't do it. It's too sensitive, for salaries.	Sensitive Duties	
1G2	Because the cheques all going by running numbers, if she sees anything missing I mean she also has the right to ask why is it missing. But if that cheque happens to be for salary, it's a bit more sensitive.	Sensitive Duties	
	As for bank statements, I'm still don't wish for her to see, because in the bank statement obviously you can see all the debits and the credits and from that you know everything that you need to.	Sensitive Duties	
	Not only these, sometimes more sensitive like BG to the oil major, I don't agree for them to see that.	Sensitive Duties	
	Where money is concerned, a lot of things is sensitive, especially in salaries.	Sensitive Duties	
2G4	Okay, I think salary, preparation of salary-wise, we all agree that we will not pass at the moment, we will not be passing it to non-family members.	Non-family Threat	
1G2	I'm not confident also in employee salaries, because if she does that she will see the employees, who's getting paid how much and for what and also the family and what they're getting paid.	Non-family Threat	
	It is a security concern.	Non-family Threat	
	As for the payables, I'm still not comfortable passing employees. I don't know how you feel about it.	Non-family Threat	
1G2	I feel there is always a double check and somebody has to check, and double checking to me is always a waste of time.	Additional Managerial Attention	C18 Managerial Compromise
	Preparation, especially when she first starts, we have to double check, that to me is double time needed.	Additional Managerial Attention	
2G4	Yes, there is additional work, you still need to check her work.	Additional Managerial Attention	
1G1	So, it's double the workload.	Additional Managerial Attention	

In this next stage of the qualitative analysis, the intent was to draw on the connections between the grouped categories and reciting the AR discussions of the participants through a conceptual framework that essentially illustrated the action planning process conducted by the group. More importantly, this interpretation must be founded basis on data collected from the AR participants in conveying the planning action process within the context, process and intents of the practitioners involved in the study. This abstract construct is illustrated in Diagram 5.2.1 as evidence gathered demonstrated a systematic process which the AR participants undertook in creating control measures as they progressively advanced towards a collective agreement in workplace decisions.

Diagram 5.2.1 – The Pipeline Filtering Approach to Decision-Making (AR Planning Action)



The above diagram attempts to describe the decision-making process adopted by the participants who were engaged in the planning action stage of the AR cycle. Diagram 5.2.1 is best defined as a funnel that eliminates undesired options by first identifying and inserting conditions that are paramount to the goals of family ownership. By doing so, the funnel will in response filters out possibilities that create conflict with the desired conditions of the decision-makers. For example, for 'A' to exist within a certain domain, the coexistence of 'B' is not possible and thereby driving it

to be removed through the filtering process of the pipeline. In the context of this workplace where managing-owners wish to protect the interest of family ownership, managerial power must be retained within the family unit which in turn limits the possibility of empowering any authority to non-family employees.

Similarly, the outlining of work responsibilities that are sensitive due to the distrust between principal and agent caused the owner-managers to remove these operational duties from the delegation process. This model which the AR participants chose to adopt was a legitimate reflection of practitioner decision-making in the real-world setting. This theoretical fashioned framework 'The pipeline filtering approach to decision-making' illustrates the visual outline of management practices employed by the AR participants in the workplace. Through the process of AR discussions, participants were able to jointly reach a consensus of assigning several account payable duties to non-family employees within the department which included the reviewing and preparation of outstanding bills, writing of payment vouchers, issuing of cheques, and maintaining of historical and monthly reports.

However, what has been deemed vital to the finance and accounts managers was the retention of authorisation in releasing funds to external parties, the full administration of payroll, and accessibility to the consolidated bank statements which are to be kept within boundaries of the family members. Nevertheless, it has been acknowledged that releasing accounts payable duties to non-family employees has never been done in the history of the family business. These small steps in delegating administrative duties may not signify a major change in day-to-day operations, but certainly represents a giant leap for the family business as managing-owners were able to achieve a breakthrough in management practices.

5.2.2 The AR Cycle (Stage 2): Planning Action – Insider-Researcher Contributions

Moving onto the contributions of the insider-researcher, the findings presented in this segment are directed at first and second-person inquiry in collecting meta-learning evidence on my personal practice and the AR group performance through the implementation of reflection-in-action (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). The ORJI records documented during the AR sessions revealed key findings through the first-person inquiry of the insider-researcher as I experienced conflict with the participants across an array of personal and professional differences. Confronted with these cognitive disputes, the operative ORJI procedures regulated my participation to be impartial yet critical in inquiring into the AR group through collaborative partnership of advancing the workplace conditions in second-person inquiry. This integral arrangement of first and second-

person practice in facilitating the AR project in turn became the platform in which actionable knowledge was produced by the primary data collected and analysed in the ORJI journal.

5.2.2.1 Planning Action: Journal Entry 3

Let's revisit the intent of stage two of the AR cycle which was essentially based on the actionable inquiry 'If management plan to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?' where key stakeholders from the accounts and finance department participated in formulating alternative solutions to the workplace situation. During that AR discussion, there was a moment when the group focused the planning for payroll as a viable responsibility that could be delegated. However, this quickly developed into collective resistance within the group which rejected the idea of assigning any payroll duties to non-family employees without a sound reasoning on this managerial decision.

1. Observe – AR Hearing

As I observed the AR discussion as participants touched on the duties of payroll, there was a systematic accumulation by the group members in labelling salary administration as a sensitive task within the family business context. This developed into concrete rejections by key stakeholders about the mere consideration of delegating this responsibility to non-family employees within the business. This included both the administrative and authorisation aspects of payroll duties. Subsequently, the deliberations revealed that AR participants are in general uncomfortable with the idea that employee salaries will be disclosed to a non-family employee but did not clarify nor challenge the rationale behind this decision.

2.1 Reaction – AR Hearing

The immediate reaction that emotionally impacted on my perspectives was 'Why are they reluctant to pass over these administrative duties when the authorisation of salary release still remains with the family-managers?' This conflicts with the simple comprehension that familial control is already preserved within the family, where is the harm in assigning these administrative tasks in freeing up managerial capacity for more important areas of the business. The other emotional reaction from this particular observation was 'How do they justify this aspect of salary administration to be sensitive when non-family firms are able to practice this successfully through external hires?' Reflecting deeper however, I realised that my personal emotions are focused on the kinship of the AR participants in which 'they' who are in fault are my uncles and cousins

instead of justly viewing them as personnel involved in a study to advance the workplace situation. This realisation quickly simmered down my emotional response to what was initially observed by successfully progressing down the ORJI framework.

2.2 Reaction – AR Post Reflection

As I review my reactions from the AR session, it is obvious that my emotional response to the situation was shaped by the perceived hurdle created by the participants. This could further hurt progress with the AR project without the adequate inquisition into views of the practitioners. In turn, I tried to justify my viewpoints by conducting external comparisons which is bias as AR projects are contextual and situational to the intent of the participating actors. As I take a step back, I have come to realise that emotional influence is a common practitioner flaw which limits managers in exercising impartial judgement due to their personal vulnerabilities and insecurities.

3.1 Judgement – AR Hearing

Aligning with the ORJI measures, it had come to my attention that emotionally I have been compromised due to the influence and prejudice in my judgment on the AR participants. I should not be comparing the workplace situation with practices from non-family organisations because what the AR participants are faced with is highly specific, contextual and situational to the family business. Through this realisation, I assessed my observations to reach an alternative perspective that the AR group's rationale in determining payroll duties to be sensitive for non-family undertaking hides an unspoken rather than unjustified truth. The underlying collectiveness in reaching an agreement without the explicit need to deliberate stressed the need for further inquiry with the AR participants.

3.2 Judgement – AR Post Reflection

My shift in judgement and realisation of personal bias toward the AR observations was vital in establishing reflection-in-action which underlies the primary purpose of conducting second-person inquiry. Looking back, the AR situation fashioned the opportunity to reveal and learn about an undiscovered truth of owner-manager perspectives on compensation sensitivity within the family business. Furthermore, the acquisition of practitioner insights creates the possibility of unlocking 'hardened' rules of family business practices through the actionable study. This is the distinction between traditional managers that are solely solution-driven and the scholarly practitioner who exhibits rigor in their approach to problem-advancement.

4.1 Intervention – AR Hearing

The revised judgement on the AR observations compels me to inquire further into the matter of payroll administration as to what constitutes 'functionally sensitive for non-family staff undertakings' within the family business. The mode of intervention aims to approach the group for intrinsic clarity rather than influencing the actionable aspect of the AR discussion. This will enable participants to reflect, reconsider, and reframe their perspectives on their existing viewpoints for prospective critical debate within the group in unveiling emerging knowledge that was previously unknown through the process of AR collaboration. More importantly, the mode of inquiry through clarifying questioning is to engage and not manipulate the group discussions which would compromise the underlying intent of the AR study.

4.2 Intervention – AR Post Reflection

On a post assessment note, the intervention conducted with the participants brought about a valuable insight that essentially represents an undiscovered viewpoint of the family-managers. Through second-person inquiry, the AR participants reveal that employee salaries within a family business is deemed as highly sensitive due to the possibility of incurring motivational issues and conflict amongst the employees. Regardless how objective and consistent the compensation system has been adopted by the family firm, any disparity in salary package between family and non-family employees will be subjectively viewed and perceived as bias. From a first-person practice, failure to inquire into this perspective would have resulted in the loss of a key finding that is vital to the actionable know-how of the study.

Table 5.2.2.1 : ORJI Journal 3				
AR Question: If we plan to delegate operational duties to non-family staff, how can we accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business?				
Journal Purpose	ORJI Stage	Mode of Inquiry	ORJI Guide	Reflection-in-action Post Reflection
AR Project	Observe	Second-person Inquiry	Objectively record what was observed.	As the AR participants were discussing possibly duties that could be delegated to nonfamily personnel, there was strong resistance particularly in regards to administration of employees salaries. This refusal was consistent across all AR group members that delegating this aspect of the operational work is highly sensitive.
AR Project	Reaction	Second-person Inquiry	How am I reacting emotionally to what I am observing? How can I mitigate these emotional influences in undertaking a more impartial view on the situation?	Why are they reluctant to pass over these administrative duties when the authorization of salary release still remains with the family managers? How do they justify this aspect of salary administration to be sensitive when nonfamily firms are able to practice this successfully through external hires?
AR Dissertation	Reaction Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Why did I react in this manner? What made me react in such an emotional fashion to the situation? How did my reaction correlate to workplace assumptions and practices?	My emotional reactions relating to my observations was shaped by a perceived obstacle created by the AR participants in progressing the project onto an actionable state, hence attempting to adopt a rationale reasoning to justify my viewpoint which actually lacked deeper reflections on understanding the AR group motivation.
AR Project	Judgment	Second-person Inquiry	Review observations, recognise and acknowledge emotional reaction, and conduct objective assessment in judgement of the AR situation.	Initially, I felt that my reaction to the AR observations was sound and objective. However, my personal assessment of benchmarking our practices against nonfamily firms is bias because I had fail to recognize that the family business is fundamentally different in many ways.
AR Dissertation	Judgement Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	How could I have judged the situation differently? What are the common obstacles arising from passing objective judgements from the AR discussion?	My shift in judgement and realization of my initial bias was a vital piece of carrying out reflection-in-action. Looking back, it is now that I realize that I could have viewed the situation as an opportunity to unfold and learn an undiscovered truth about the family managers. This is the distinction between traditional managers that are solution-driven and scholarly practitioners who exhibits rigor in their approach to problem-advancement.
AR Project	Intervention	Second-person Inquiry	Intervene with the situation if judgement supports the goals of the AR project. Take caution in such interventions to safeguard objectivity in the AR group discussions.	My amended judgement to my initial observations compels me to inquire rather than intervene with the AR discussion by clarifying their definition of sensitivity pertaining to the exposure of employee salaries to a nonfamily staff.
AR Dissertation	Post Intervention Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Was the intervention justified? What could have taken place if you did not intervene in the AR situation? What could have improved from the present situation for future AR cycles?	The approach to inquire rather than intervene with the AR participants led to valuable insights of the family managers. The disclosure of employees salary beyond the family unit may create motivational issues and conflict amongst nonfamily staff. This is because no matter how objective a compensation model has been adopted by the organization, the disparity in salary range between family and nonfamily staff will be perceived as bias. Failure to inquire into this perspective would have resulted in the loss of a key finding to the actionable know-how of the study.

5.2.2.2 Planning Action: Journal Entry 4

In journal entry 4 of the planning action stage, the AR group has reached a point of passive negotiation where participants had become reluctant to make concrete decisions on delegating specific accounts and finance duties despite having outlined the parameters that are sensitive and off-limits to non-family employees. The situation of an AR standstill could be an indication of a critical juncture of underlying entanglement between the participants but also the possibility of stagnating risk that produces sluggish progress in the AR project.

1. Observe – AR Hearing

As I continue to observe the hearings of the AR session, it seemed that respective group members were taking turns to define the functional duties and determine the level of strategic attention required by family managers. Through these alignment discussions, it seemed that the conversations began to recycle amongst the group members with no tangible progress towards any action or contextual resolutions. In other words, the AR discussion was at a standstill as participants were going ‘back-and-forth’ and approving the comments of one another for the sake of dialogue. This led to a series of passive negotiations with no concrete findings explicitly by the participants that actionable change will be introduced to advance the workplace situation.

2.1 Reaction – AR Hearing

Reacting to these observations, the thought that first clouded my mind was ‘Why are they delaying the decision to assign payable duties to our accounts receivable after identifying the sensitive pieces such as payroll will be retained by family staff?’ as it seemed that my colleagues were avoiding the obvious. In addition, ‘Why does 1G2 and 2G4 accept their respective viewpoints but fail to reach to an agreement on delegating specific duties to a non-family employee?’ which illustrates signs of passive negotiation and the likelihood of a stagnating AR discussion. This in turn aroused my emotional self to perceive participants as evading the implementation of local actions at the workplace. Quickly however, I reminded myself of the multiple roles I was assuming. This has been particularly useful and consistent in realising how my reactions affected by personal emotions were frequently connected to the prevailing relationships with the participants. In turn, this shapes the perception that I have a privilege of taking authority for granted in addressing the AR situation instead of exercising impartial assessments on the participants. Through this realisation, I was able to redirect my emotional response and consider the possibilities of underlying struggles in the participants which require additional effort in appropriately advancing the AR project.

2.2 Reaction – AR Post Reflection

As I review my reactions from a first-person practice, the emotional conflict emerged as I perceived that group members were mutually and unconsciously supportive of delaying the workplace decision despite having outlined the roles and responsibilities that could be delegated to non-family employees. Clearly however, the ORJI made me realise that my overlapping roles incurred as the insider-researcher is what underlies my emotional reaction in directing frustration onto the AR participants due to my kinship and workplace relationship as co-workers. Within that emotional space, I had failed to reflect and identify the rationales behind their behaviour before passing judgement which could have been a downfall if I had not aligned with procedures of the ORJI framework.

3.1 Judgement – AR Hearing

The realignment in assessment of my observations entails me to comprehend that the passive deliberations exhibited by the AR participants are possibly caused by an underlying connection linked to motivational insecurities shaped by the uncertainty of a new initiative that is unfamiliar to the family business. To some level, managing-owners are now confronted with the rational demand of breaking the family rules to accommodate the management goals of the family business. This inner conflict between family ownership and management goals stimulate the existence of a continuous tug-of-war which shapes owner-managers to be dysfunctional in their practice and limit their capacity to exercise sound decisions.

3.2 Judgement – AR Post Reflection

Eliminating emotional influence in exercising impartial judgement during the AR sessions has been a vital piece in carrying out reflection-in-action. However, looking back at the data transcripts from the coding process, it has come to my realisation that possibly the passive negotiations between the AR members could have been shaped by their familial relationship instead of the insecurities of a new initiatives. Perhaps, AR members were unable to come to an agreement due to the influence of kinship that diminishes their motivation to negotiate and arrive at a collective outcome. As mature beings, the lack of inquisitiveness to inquire deeper and comprehend the situation is often the downfall of practicing managers as they seek to resolve what was not appropriately defined in the first place. As illustrated in this post judgement assessment, the possibility of attaining an alternative truth is readily obtainable when one is prepared to critically reflect and consider alternative realities.

4.1 Intervention – AR Hearing

As judgements calls for intervention to unlock the dialogical dilemma, I stepped in as the insider-researcher to facilitate inquiry on the stalling situation of the AR discussion. This was implemented with great caution of facilitating and outlining the voices of the participants in eliminating ambiguity and passiveness in the AR group. Importantly, the approach undertaken in engaging the AR participants was to recite but not reframe their comments in a fashion that considers the subsequent actions required to bring the project forward. In addition, reiterating the safeguards of the implementation was vital in reassuring the participants the preservations of their familial priorities through the inauguration. Lastly, dialogical exchange was facilitated legitimately with no intent of hastening the AR process in enabling the natural unfolding of actionable development.

4.2 Intervention – AR Post Reflection

As I review my intervention with the AR group, the outcome from the mediation was certainly necessary as participants were able to progress onto the next step of taking action into the workplace. Failing to have intervened in the situation could have led to an extended session of AR members 'waiting for one another' which is counterproductive and likely to incur the risk of compromising advancement in the AR project. The small but obvious shift in action planning performed by the participants secured a tangible change in management practice. This documented the inauguration of releasing account payable responsibilities to a non-family employee, which might not have been probable without the ORJI led intervention conducted with the AR group.

Table 5.2.2.2 : ORJI Journal 4				
AR Question: If we plan to delegate operational duties to non-family staff, how can we accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business?				
Journal Purpose	ORJI Stage	Mode of Inquiry	ORJI Guide	Reflection-in-action Post Reflection
AR Project	Observe	Second-person Inquiry	Objectively record what was observed.	The respective AR participants took turns to define the functional duties and outline the level of strategic and operational attention required by family managers. However, the AR discussion came to a standstill as participants were going "back-and-forth" with no tangible outlook on alternative options for consideration. This progressed onto a series of passive negotiations in recycling previous discussions with no advancement in the AR project.
AR Project	Reaction	Second-person Inquiry	How am I reacting emotionally to what I am observing? How can I mitigate these emotional influences in undertaking a more impartial view on the situation?	Why are they delaying the decision to assign payable duties to our accounts receivable personnel after identifying the sensitive pieces (e.g., salary) that will be retained by family staff? Why does the director and the department manager accept their respective viewpoints but fail to reach to an agreement on delegating specific duties to the non-family employee?
AR Dissertation	Reaction Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Why did I react in this manner? What made me react in such an emotional fashion to the situation? How did my reaction correlate to workplace assumptions and practices?	My emotional reactions on the AR situation was shaped by my perceived views that objectively participants had already outlined implementation options but were recycling their ideas unnecessarily. Clearly however, this is where I failed to reflect and identify the rationales behind their behaviour before passing objective judgement which could have been a downfall if I had not align with ORJI.
AR Project	Judgment	Second-person Inquiry	Review observations, recognise and acknowledge emotional reaction, and conduct objective assessment in judgement of the AR situation.	My emotional reactions blind me to interpret that the participants are avoiding their responsibilities in the AR project. Objective assessment however aligns me to comprehend that the passive deliberation amongst the AR participants could be caused by several motivational insecurities shaped by the uncertainty of a new initiative that is unfamiliar to the family business.
AR Dissertation	Judgement Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	How could I have judged the situation differently? What are the common obstacles arising from passing objective judgements from the AR discussion?	Eliminating emotional influence in exercising objective judgement during the AR sessions has been a vital piece in carrying out reflection-in-action. Looking back at the transcripts, there are possibilities that the passive negotiations between the AR members could have been shaped by their familial relationship instead of the insecurities of a new initiatives. Perhaps, AR members were unable to come to an agreement due to the influence of kinship that diminishes their motivation to negotiate and arrive at a collective outcome.
AR Project	Intervention	Second-person Inquiry	Intervene with the situation if judgement supports the goals of the AR project. Take caution in such interventions to safeguard objectivity in the AR group discussions.	Relying on my judgement on the situation, an intervention is necessary to unlock the dialogical dilemma in which AR members have incurred passive participation in deciding actionable change in the workplace. This was implemented with great caution of facilitating and outlining the voices of the participants in eliminating ambiguity and passiveness in the AR group.
AR Dissertation	Post Intervention Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Was the intervention justified? What could have taken place if you did not intervene in the AR situation? What could have improved from the present situation for future AR cycles?	Intervention in the AR situation was crucial in supporting the group in taking the next step. Failure to intervene could have resulted in an extended situation of AR members "waiting for one another" is counterproductive and incurs the risk of compromising the progress of the participants. An alternative approach could have been to inquire into their passive reactions between AR members on their inability to come together for an agreement. This could have enable them reflect, grow individually and together as team within the workplace.

5.2.3 The AR Cycle (Stage 2): Planning Action – Findings and Project Outcome

Through the developments of the planning action stage, the AR participants had socially collaborated and inquired into the workplace situation with the central purpose of transforming its problematic conditions into improved settings for the family organisation. In that process, AR participants were confronted by the mere comprehension of the entrenched workplace problem which subsequently led to the witnessing of evolving developmental reactions of collective denial and compelling realisations within the group. However, it was also through the contextual and active participation of the AR group that enabled them to learn by exploring, negotiating and discovering the unknown.

This social construction process in turn secured the shifting consensus of the AR group in delivering a breakthrough in modifying existing management practices of delegating accounts payable duties to non-family employees which had never been tested in the history of the family business. In these key findings, the core action research cycle had been focused on analysing the evidence gathered by the participants who were collaboratively engaged in advancing the workplace situation through the course of AR participation. With the organisation problem clearly defined by the participants, the AR group was consciously directed at formulating viable solutions that must fit and improve the specified workplace conditions before advancing into the next phase of taking action in the establishment. This non-linear process of AR discussions has been documented in presenting the outcomes and key findings on first, second and third-person practice conducted in the planning action stage of the study.

5.2.3.1 Planning Action: First-Person Inquiry

In first-person inquiry, the ORJI journal not only served as an operative checklist in establishing reflection-in-action, but also furnished real-time data of my insider-researcher experiences from the AR sessions. As I consolidate and reflect on the key learning from first-person practice, it was undeniably obvious that my pre-understanding of the workplace and underlying relationships of kinship were the constant basis of my assumptions. This in turn created personal barriers in limiting my practice as an insider-researcher to conduct neutral judgement in every situation. In other words, this stimulated the emotional function in clouding my observations with a prejudiced lens that influenced my judgement within the AR settings. For example, the preconceived notion regarding the leadership values of the AR group members triggered a breach in my emotions, which essentially turned into a source of negative influence in judging the AR situation.

These assumptions falsely empowered me to believe in my capabilities over my co-researchers who may have valid justification for their AR participation and behaviours which I was unable to detect due to my bias. The realisation of these unwelcome assumptions was going to be a continuous self-battle in diminishing the 'hardening' process of the experienced manager who will in time gradually become irrelevant to the workplace due to the fundamental lack in critical reflection and learning through the evolving times. During the planning action sessions, where participants were conflicted and incurred undesirable motivations, I realised that my emotional reception was not only influenced by my assumptions but also by the multiple roles I had undertaken.

In other words, I had been involuntarily channelled by my attention of the family domain in allowing myself to be subjected to the irrelevant dimensions of family membership instead of operating within the independent context of AR relationships. In many senses, the data collected from the insider-researcher's journal provided areas of self-examination before I could derive at these personal findings. This was accomplished by exercising reflexivity in opposing personal logic and welcoming contradictions through the process of first-person inquiry (Orr and Bennett, 2009). Recognising this made me realise the prospective dangers of overlapping roles and its dysfunctional space if one is unaware and unable to eliminate the incumbencies of the preceding separate capacity in a new undertaking. Bringing this learning forward into the next stage of AR cycle, it was clear that my priorities did not solely lie in becoming a more efficient and credible practitioner, but also to consciously unfold additional lessons of self-awareness and understanding in advancing my scholarly practice within the workplace.

5.2.3.2 Planning Action: Second-Person Inquiry

Looking into second-person practice, which was focused on the co-inquiry of the AR group, I was able to identify emotional disorders connected with my pre-judgement which shaped my assumptions. As I reflected and reconsidered my preconceived notions on the behaviours of the AR participants, I was able to compartmentalise my assumptions from observations in arriving at a more impartial comprehension of the situation. This implementation directs reflection to act in an altered fashion that aligned and embodied the key principles of AR in collaborating, exercising open communication and conducting unbiased intervention to empower the discovery of untold realities. In actuality, the shift in judgement was not influenced by governing emotional reactions but rather realising and acknowledging its existence and modifying the approach to inquire and clarify with the AR group on any observations of project deviation.

For example, the episode of passive negotiation between the participants in prolonging AR advancement emotionally affected my perceptions of my colleagues. However, through this realisation I was able to recognise how my views can be subjectively misleading as the AR group were preoccupied with their insecurities which misrepresented the surface of the situation. This in turn offered the opportunity to conduct 'inquiry-in-action' within the social conditions of the AR group to navigate, deliberate and co-create alternative solutions of actionable intent. The inquiry through second-person practice had compelled me to recognise and confess my lack of self-awareness in my personal practice. Hence, I had accepted the ORJI journal as part of my scholarly training in cultivating reflectivity as a fundamental basis in my day-to-day practice.

Nevertheless, it was also imperative to recognise that the passive negotiations exhibited by the participants derived as a form of crisis representation as they struggled to 'turn back' on their pre-existing know-how and beliefs in order to critically move forward in the AR project (Cunliffe, 2003). The reflexivity displayed here involved the 'unsettling' conflict of overcoming deeply rooted practitioner experiences within the AR group in which social realities were constructed and exposed to critical questioning in making truth claims for the study (Cunliffe, 2002). It is through this reflexive process that AR members were tested in their critical and moral practices within the politicised environment to emerge beyond their limitations and increase their professional awareness (Cunliffe, 2004).

5.2.3.3 Planning Action: Third-Person Inquiry

Third-person inquiry in the planning action stage was a crucial turning point as it represented the developments in the AR project that entailed the tangible formulating of deliberate actions that would be implemented in the participating business. Having journeyed this far, the AR group had managed to secure a fruitful advancement in the project that would alter traditional management practices in the family business. As defined by the AR group, the inquiry is focused on 'If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interests of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?' in which the participants had managed to outline specific operational duties within the accounts payable areas that will be officially reassigned to a non-family employee, relieving administrative obligations of family-managers to attend to strategic domains of the business.

This initiative may represent a small change in management practice but should be perceived as a major shift in ownership ideologies that could largely alter the family business transformation in

the future. The successful planning of new actions was achieved by a specific decision-making approach adopted by the AR participants in prioritising safeguards (e.g. family interest) and funnelling out unacceptable options before shortlisting and negotiating possible alternatives to the workplace problem. As illustrated in Diagram 5.2.1, the pipeline filtering process refers to the conceptual framework of the participants' approach to decision-making where primary data was collected and interpreted based on the context, process, and intents of the AR group members engaged in the project. In turn, this directed the qualitative analysis to focus on 'how' the AR participants strived to resolve and improve the operationally involved situation of the directors in turning their attention onto management duties in the organisation.

This was also vital to the contribution of actionable knowledge which has been an advancement from the constructing stage of the AR process. The identification of duties deemed sensitive to family management empowered the participants to strategically select specific responsibilities for delegating while maintaining control and authority within the familial unit. Outlining such a process may be more tedious when compared to traditional organisations, but it enables family businesses to overcome the struggles of owner-managers absorbing the majority of the operational work. In fact, the pipeline filtering approach to decision-making framework (Diagram 5.2.1) can be readily adopted by other family businesses confronted with similar challenges. This differs from traditional practices of considering alternative solutions to workplace problems because it offers a more controlled procedure that are needed to safeguard the familial complexities of ownership while providing greater flexibility as it is not limited by function or hierarchy.

5.3 The AR Cycle (Stage 3): Taking Action

The AR project now entered its implementation stage as participants were taking planned actions within the business to remedy the troubled workplace situation. As reflected in the previous section, AR participants have identified and outlined specific accounts payable duties to be assigned to a non-family employee. This served the objective of relieving operational availability of the managing-owners and family-managers to begin focusing on more strategic functions of the business. Compared to stage one and two of the AR process where participants had gathered together for the purpose of problem identification, situational analysis and formulating a strategic improvement plan, stage three primarily focused on implementation of the planned actions through concrete intervention in the business. Hence, data collection was conducted by interviewing the AR participants in documenting a detailed implementation of the actions taken within the workplace.

Apart from gathering evidence on the change process, the intent was to also validate the actions carried out by the AR participants, identify any deviations from the original plans and inquire into the consistencies of the implementation. This was vital as the data collected represented the actionable perspectives of the AR participants as they took action and dealt with the non-linear social complexities in the workplace. Moving from the settings of AR group discussions to interviews in data collection, this did not excuse the adoption of ORJI. This was because as the insider-researcher I am unconditionally subjected to my biases which will compromise the rigour and quality of the study if left unchecked.

As the AR group moved into the reassignment of account payable duties to the accounts receivables employee (planned actions), this task fell primarily onto the both the family managers (2G4 & 2G5) while the directors (1G1 & 1G2) undertook a more supervisory role during the implementation stage. Based on the specific duties outlined by the participants, the AR group had collectively consented that both the line managers will be capable of executing this delegation initiative while the owner-managers oversaw the change process. Directionally, data collection was focused on the two AR participants who undertook the planned actions within the business through a group interview.

5.3.1 The AR Cycle (Stage 3): Taking Action – Participatory Contributions

At this stage, the purpose of the participatory contributions was to reflect a detailed documentation of the implementation made by the AR participants. After the previous AR session on action planning, both managers (2G4 & 2G5) have been authorised to assign the subsequent payable duties to the accounts receivable employee. This sought to detach operational work from the managing-owners so that they had the capacity to prioritise more on critical leadership roles in the family business.

Table 5.3.1.1 below reflects a complete outline of accounts payable responsibilities that will be delegated to a designated non-family employee. Through the AR efforts of workplace intervention, the successful re-assignment of these administrative duties not only relieves family-managers of their day-to-day operational involvement, but also empowers them to focus on more strategic financial areas such as budgeting, asset investments, risk management and the like. The AR implementation undertook a timeline of approximately one month due to the functional turnaround that required training and task handover between department personnel. AR group interviews were conducted concurrently as the authorised participants started to take actions within the workplace in gathering data on the progress and actuality of the implementation.

Table 5.3.1.1 – Accounts Payable Duties for Reassignment		
No	Selected Payable Duties	Operational Involvement
1	Preparation of outstanding bills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tally of vendors' bills with purchase orders. - Consolidation of bills in preparation for payment. - Resolve any discrepancies with external vendors.
2	Administer payment vouchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recording and writing of payment vouchers. - Physical filing of payment voucher with vendors' bills.
3	Issuing of cheques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparing of payment by issuing (writing) of cheques. - Seek authorisation signature by approved manager.
4	Maintaining records of payables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inputting of vendors bills into accounting system. - Review records of vendors' paid and outstanding bills year-to-date.

By doing so, this would also limit any unexpected drastic changes to the action plans and safeguard against potential deviation in the AR project. In the first data collection meeting, AR participants had assigned the two payable duties of preparation of outstanding bills and administration of payment vouchers onto the designated accounts employee. This was paired with the on-going training and close supervision by both managers (2G4 & 2G5) who were competent and familiar with the processes. In this undertaking, both AR participants provided positive feedback on the implementation of the planned initiatives and even expressed the likelihood of permanently delegating such duties from the directors. Starting with one of the family managers (2G4), he stated that *'She is quite proficient and learnt it quite fast'* which was within the context of the on-going training process.

This was validated by the other manager (2G5) who claimed

She picked up quite okay and she also learnt how to spot any errors fast, so it's good when she does the consolidation for statement of accounts before she prepares the vouchers. (2G5)

From a motivational standpoint, one manager (2G4) informed that *'She was quite glad that we did it because she's been doing receivables only for a couple of years now'* while the other (2G5)

added '*One thing about her is she likes to learn new stuff, so that's a plus point*' which suggested the fruitful implementation of the planned actions. At this moment, both AR participants did not encounter any specific challenges in carrying out the intervention in re-assigning the accounts payable responsibilities to a non-family employee.

However, moving into the subsequent delegation phase which was focused on transferring the duties of issuing cheques and maintaining payable records, the AR participants were faced with a roadblock. It had become apparent that the participants were struggling with the hurdle of assigning the non-family employee with the responsibility of issuing cheques despite authorisation still remaining with the family-managers. At this juncture, AR participants were on track to conclude the planned actions of the implementation. However, the writing and issuing of cheques was retained by one of the owner-managers during the implementation stage. This was informed by the manager (2G4) that

The director has decided to take the cheque portion back and it will not be passed on to the accounts receivable personnel. This is really sensitive because of the employee salaries and director remunerations. (2G4)

Looking back at the planning action stage, the original proposal was to assign the issuing of cheques to the accounts employee while separating the portion on payroll due to the sensitivity of the family business. However, it has been recognised that transferring the day-to-day ownership of the chequebook would inevitably leave traces of sensitive information pertaining to employee salaries and remuneration. This was consistent with the original intent of keeping the bank reconciliation within the family unit as it will reflect the movement of funds including staff salaries and remunerations. Hence, the AR participants had collectively consented to retain this area of issuing cheques within family members at the present moment. Moving on to the final portion of the AR implementation, this entailed the designated staff to begin monitoring and maintaining records of paid and outstanding bills and was successfully reassigned by the AR participants.

Although the department manager did encounter some operational issues in transferring this task due to the limitations of the accounting system, he (2G4) explained that

One other thing was the granting of permission in the system itself. Because we had to segregate what she could access and what she should not, the system is more rigid then you think. But in the end we did manage to overcome it, so I don't think there was a problem. (2G4)

This signified the commitment of the participants in delivering the planned actions of the AR project which directed the collective goals formulated by the same group of workplace practitioners. Going forward, the participants were looking into turning this change initiative into a permanent arrangement. However, this may require an additional two to three months to fully assess the adequate undertaking of the account payables duties by the designated employee. This is because training is still on-going as certain scopes of accounts payables, including goods and services tax submissions, are conducted on a quarterly basis.

Table 5.3.1.2 – Quantifying the Impact of the AR Implementation				
No	Selected Payable Duties	Owner	AR Implementation	Est. Man-hours
1	Preparation of outstanding bills	Owner-manager	Success	16 hours
2	Administer payment vouchers	Owner-manager	Success	32 hours
3	Issuing of cheques	Owner-manager	Postponed	16 hours
4	Maintaining records of payables	Department Manager	Success	12 hours

As we reviewed the impact of the actions taken within the business in a quantifiable basis (Table 5.3.1.2), the AR participants have managed to eliminate 60 hours of day-to-day work accumulated across both the managers in the accounts and finance department. Based on the assumption of maximum work hours per week, the director would have clocked an estimate of 176 hours a month. In turn, the successful implementation of this AR assignment would have essentially relieved an approximate 27% of her existing operational duties. This substantial increase in availability marks the commencement of improved utilisation in human resources not only at the top-level management, but across various levels of the organisation. This is because respective stakeholders will be able to strategically align to their pre-designated responsibilities that are designed to create specific value for the family business.

In addition, social impact has also been observed as the evidence indicates positive shaping of employee motivation through the undertaking of new assignments. Due to the unique dynamics of the family firm, accepting responsibilities that were previously performed by the owner-managers affirms the level of trust and confidence they have in the non-family employee. It is vital

to acknowledge that the AR implementation has been consistent across the various stages as participants had distinctively defined familial safeguards including workplace authorisations and payroll sensitivities which justify the amended actions taken within the business. More importantly, this implementation has essentially addressed the AR question of managerial intent of delegating operational duties to non-family employees while protecting the interest of the family business priorities through successful intervention of transferring accounts payable responsibilities to designated non-family personnel in the family business.

5.3.2 The AR Cycle (Stage 3): Taking Action – Insider-Researcher Contributions

Looking into the insider-researcher contributions at this stage of taking action within the business, the data collected from the journal entries were reduced when compared to the previous stages of the AR process. This is because reflection-in-action essentially took place when the researcher was attentive in identifying conflict and conceptual deviations between AR members through the simultaneous conducting of dual AR cycles in capturing new learning (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). However, because the implementation was carried out smoothly with AR participants experiencing minimum disruptions in the delegation process, the amount of critical assessment opportunities was reasonably reduced simultaneously. Nevertheless, having arrived at this stage of the AR process and having gained some experience in performing reflection-in-action, I believe that there were opportunities to reflect and inquire into the conditions of the impeccable implementation of the planned actions.

5.3.2.1 Taking Action: Journal Entry – 5

This journal entry reflects the inquiry into the withdrawal of the original planned actions of transferring chequebook payables to the designated accounts personnel who was a non-family employee in the business. In this context however, data was collected on the premise of a group interview that involved both managers (2G4 & 2G5) who were directly involved in the implementation. This was a vital inquiry as the withdrawal represents a deviation from the original plans formulated by the AR group and the possibility of modifying the intent impact of the workplace situation. It also represents my reactions as the insider-researcher on how I reflected and acted towards the development of the AR implementation through a first-person perspective of deepening my scholarly practice in the workplace.

1. Observe – AR Hearing

At this stage of the AR group interview, the participants had informed that two out of the four specific accounts payable duties had been smoothly assigned to the designated employee. However, the third responsibility which entails the issuing of payment by administering the chequebook was withdrawn due to the sensitivity. In fact, the manager (2G4) had informed that it was the direction of the owner-manager (1G2) to withdraw this portion of the payables. In addition, this responsibility of issuing cheques will be retained and performed only by her or other family-managers.

2.1 Reaction – AR Hearing

As this was informed during the AR interview, I quickly noted down my reaction and recalled back to the planning action stage that the priorities of the participants was to retain family authority while releasing administrative work to operational personnel so that management could assume more important and leadership duties in the workplace. In principle, although this conflicts with the original plans, it surprisingly did not incline me to emotionally react in an irrational behaviour. In fact, I progressed to view the matter impartially, shaped by inquisitiveness to understand deeper about the change in plans by the AR participants.

2.2 Reaction – AR Post Reflection

Looking back at how I reacted to the participants comments, I believe that I had assumed a stable emotional position on the unexpected change in implementation due to the continuous practice of reflection-in-action which is gradually shaping me to detach from biased assumptions when confronted with the AR discrepancy. In reality, the ability to react impartially while tapping into the acquired know-how underpins the fundamental qualities of a scholarly practitioner because he or she will be able to review and reconsider the dimensions of the workplace problem while not being subjected to the underlying assumptions that limit unbiased assessments and the formulating of alternative solutions.

3.1 Judgement – AR Hearing

As I review my observations on the participants' decision to withdraw the re-assigning of chequebook administration to a non-family employee, it leads me to assess and derive at the judgement that the implementation has incurred a clear deviation from the original AR plans. Conceptually, this differs from their original principles of releasing administrative duties to operational resources while maintaining authority by the owner-managers. This is because issuing of the cheques is only complete when authorised family personnel have reviewed and the

approved to release payment by physically signing off the payment slip. This in turn retained authority within the family unit while administrative work is delegated to operational resources of the business.

3.2 Judgement – AR Post Reflection

The judgement conducted during the AR session did not incur any noticeable obstacles as I was not subjected by my personal assumptions in the assessment of the altered plans made by the participants. Failing to regulate my insider views on this AR change would have fuelled emotional influence and bias onto the participants which could have resulted in unjust and possibly one-sided dialogues. Equally important, what was identified from this journal entry is the reasonable detachment of my familial relationship with the AR members in deriving my judgement. This had been particularly challenging in the previous AR stage where I became clouded and upset with my colleagues due to the overlapping capacity of kinship that 'permitted' me to falsely take the AR participants for granted.

4.1 Intervention – AR Hearing

Based on my judgements, the situation demands further inquiry into the altered plans by seeking to clarify and understand the rationale behind the withdrawal made by the AR participants. It is important to indicate that the intent of this inquiry is not to influence or modify the decisions of the AR members, but rather to seek comprehension before considering further intervention in the implementation stage. In other words, if the outcome of the inquiry does not justify a reasonable cause for the revised planned actions, the participants may have to reassemble and conduct an AR group discussion in reconsidering their position and alternative means of implementation.

4.2 Intervention – AR Post Reflection

In review of the inquiry made on the withdrawal of the planned action, the finance manager had justified the necessity to withdraw the issuing of cheques by a non-family employees because it runs the risk of exposing payable sensitivity through the ownership of the chequebook records. In turn, delegating of these responsibilities will inevitably reveal areas of payroll which were a justified concern raised by the family-managers since the planning action stage of the AR process. More importantly, the participants plan to revisit this opportunity through the likelihood of other avenues (e.g. e-payments) after the completion of this AR cycle. This illustrates the on-going commitment of the AR participants of continuing to delegate administrative duties of the directors to increase the effectiveness of their managerial human resources.

Table 5.3.2.1 : ORJI Journal 5				
AR Question: Why did the director withdraw the original plan of issuing cheques to non-family accounts personnel?				
Journal Purpose	ORJI Stage	Mode of Inquiry	ORJI Guide	Reflection-in-action Post Reflection
AR Project	Observe	Second-person Inquiry	Objectively record what was observed.	The department manager (2G4) has informed that the director has decided to withdraw the portion on the writing of cheque back for the family managers to administer. He went on to claim that the cheque portion will not be passed on to the accounts receivable personnel because it was sensitive.
AR Project	Reaction	Second-person Inquiry	How am I reacting emotionally to what I am observing? How can I mitigate these emotional influences in undertaking a more impartial view on the situation?	As this piece of information began to process through my mind, it was somewhat surprising as I recalled that the concern lies with retaining family authority. Hence, the AR group had approved the transferring of this administrative duty to a nonfamily operational staff. However, emotionally I was not affected as believed that there should be a rational reason behind this decision.
AR Dissertation	Reaction Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Why did I react in this manner? What made me react in such an emotional fashion to the situation? How did my reaction correlate to workplace assumptions and practices?	Looking back at how I reacted to the situation, I believe that my stabilized emotional position had been developed gradually by the constant practice of reflection-in-action. In fact, my views did not incur any personal assumptions but instead demonstrated an open mind towards the revised plans.
AR Project	Judgment	Second-person Inquiry	Review observations, recognise and acknowledge emotional reaction, and conduct objective assessment in judgement of the AR situation.	Based on my observations, the objective assessment indicates a clear deviation from the original plans of passing on cheque-book payables to the non-family employee while retaining this responsibility primarily within the family members. In principle, this differs from their conceptual approval of releasing administrative duties to operational resources while maintaining authority with the owner-managers.
AR Dissertation	Judgement Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	How could I have judged the situation differently? What are the common obstacles arising from passing objective judgements from the AR discussion?	As I look at my judgement made during the AR session, it seems that there were no tangible obstacles restricting me from conducting an objective assessment because I was not emotionally impacted by my assumptions, nor did I turn to my familial relationship with the AR member in blaming the withdrawal of the planned actions.
AR Project	Intervention	Second-person Inquiry	Intervene with the situation if judgement supports the goals of the AR project. Take caution in such interventions to safeguard objectivity in the AR group discussions.	The judgement on the situation demands for further inquiry pertaining to the amendments made on the original plans by seeking clarity and identifying the rational behind the withdrawal. The purpose is not to influence and alter the decisions of the AR members, but seek to comprehend before further intervention is to be made in the implementation stage.
AR Dissertation	Post Intervention Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Was the intervention justified? What could have taken place if you did not intervene in the AR situation? What could have improved from the present situation for future AR cycles?	The inquiry on the withdrawal with potential intervention on the amended plans was justified as the finance manager explained the risk on transferring the duties involving the company's cheque. It was during the implementation that the AR participants realized that inheriting the cheque-book records will expose payable sensitivity including the payroll which was a justified concern raised by the family managers. More importantly, the participants plan to revisit this opportunity through other avenues (e.g., e-payments) in the future which illustrates the on-going commitment of delegating administrative duties from the owner-managers.

5.3.3 The AR Cycle (Stage 3): Taking Action – Findings and Project Outcome

This section concludes the AR stage of taking action within the organisation. It also marks a significant milestone in the family business as AR participants were able to introduce concrete change in management practices which were arguably due to the monopolised influence of family ownership in dictating business priorities in the business. The implementation of the planned actions was proficiently carried out with limited disruptions incurred by the AR participants and business members. Nevertheless, there was a slight run-in with an area of the implementation involving the handover of chequebook administration to non-family employees. This responsibility will continue to remain in the capacity of the family-managers for the present moment. However, this withdrawal was clearly validated with detailed justifications of protecting the interest of the owner-managers that aligns with their long-term governing of the business. This signifies the transformational process of taking action within the workplace as AR participants were actively engaged from planning to execution of the formulated strategies which essentially articulates the fundamental qualities of participatory action research (PAR).

5.3.3.1 Taking Action: First-Person Inquiry

In first-person inquiry, the ORJI journal not only served as an operative checklist in establishing reflection-in-action, but also furnished real-time data of my insider-researcher experiences from the AR sessions. This data gathered from my collaborative partnership with the AR participants in co-investigating into the workplace problem allowed me to conduct first-person inquiry through the post assessments on my personal practice as an insider-researcher. As I consolidated and reflected on the key learning from first-person practice, it was undeniably obvious that my pre-understanding of the workplace and underlying relationships of kinship were the constant basis of my assumptions. This in turn has created personal barriers in limiting my practice as an insider-researcher to conduct clear judgement in every situation. In other words, this stimulated the emotional function in clouding my observations with a prejudiced lens that influenced my judgement within the AR settings.

In fact, my assumptions have falsely empowered me to believe in my capabilities over my co-researchers who may have valid justification for their AR participation and behaviours which I was unable to detect due to my biases. The realisation of these unwelcomed assumptions is going to be a continuous self-battle in diminishing the 'hardening' process of the experienced manager who will, in time, become irrelevant to the workplace due to the fundamental lack in critical reflection and learning through the evolving times. Positively however, the persistent practice of

ORJI and mental training across the AR project stages has gradually increased my awareness of identifying psychological traps that have influenced my judgment. The constant practice of reflection-in-action has not only shaped my emotional stability in dealing with conflicting workplace situations, but also directed my continuous attention on the multiple roles that entailed different obligations and actions.

5.3.3.2 Taking Action: Second-Person Inquiry

At this AR stage of taking action, it was important to point out that I was not directly involved in the implementation as the planned changes were employed by the AR participants within their respective functional department. Nevertheless, second-person inquiry was still conducted through the on-going assessment of the implementation with the AR members as they carried out the action plans in the workplace. Apart from collecting data in the interview sessions, my role as the action researcher was to focus on the developments of the social changes that occur in the researched site and by its AR participants. This entails the gathering of feedback and the on-going assessment of the AR members to adequately engage in second-person inquiry on the change process. In this context, the collaborations between insider-researcher and AR participants were not simply the traditional practices of workplace cooperation but the incremental commitment towards social inquiry in safeguarding the developmental rigour of the AR study.

In other words, the purpose of conducting co-inquiry was to reveal critical know-how amongst the AR members that was both actionable and relevant to practice. In second-person inquiry, this does not necessary entail the production of a new strategy or altering the mental outlook of the participants, but simply the discovery behind the rationale of prevailing practices were sufficiently valuable to AR. This was realised as AR participants intervened in the workplace and identified implementation risk in their original plans. Through participatory reflection, AR participants were able to rationalise their withdrawal decision, maintain consistent with preserving the interest of family ownership, but not compromise on the AR project goals of releasing administrative duties from the owner-managers. This empowered AR members towards the unconscious realisation of their own practices being impacted and created through second-person inquiry.

5.3.3.3 Taking Action: Third-Person Inquiry

Inquiring into third-person practice, it was commendable to acknowledge that the AR participants had been relatively successful in carrying out planned actions in the business. Essentially, this involved the re-assignment of administrative duties that effectively relieve the family-managers attention on day-to-day operational work. This change process incurred a reasonable timeline of

approximately one month which was consistent with the planned duration specified by the AR participants in overseeing the entire course that requires handovers, training, and performance review of the delegated duties. In actuality, the accounts payable responsibilities of preparing outstanding bills, administering payment vouchers and maintaining records of payables are now re-channelled to an operational employee in charge of day-to-day running of department duties. Introducing this change into the workplace has accumulated an increase in managerial availability of approximately 60 hours by the directors to shift their attention onto more strategic areas of the business.

In addition, the impact on third-person inquiry was not limited to the participants of the AR study but also members of the business involved in the change process. This was validated in the primary data that established positive response by non-family employees on the change initiative while family offspring also considered the implementation as a productive advancement in business succession. During taking action, the AR participants had also withdrawn the original plan of assigning the writing of cheques to a non-family employee. Although the issuing of cheques would have been authorised by a senior family-manager, it is recognised that having access to the chequebook records would inevitably reveal sensitive payable information that included payroll. The AR choice to withdraw this initiative was positively consistent with the fundamental principles of safeguarding against prospective conflict amongst organisational members in the family business. Although the change may seem inconsequential to many, this actuality represents a giant leap forward for the family business that had struggled to release accounts payable responsibilities for more than four decades due to the influence of family ownership.

5.4 The AR Cycle (Stage 4): Evaluating Action

The AR project now entered its fourth and final stage of the cyclical process. This is where the AR group gathered back to review and evaluate the outcomes of the actions taken in advancing the workplace problem. In addition, the AR team reflected on the overall change process and explored the possibilities of a subsequent AR cycle in extending the advancement of management practices into the broader workplace situation or other functional domains of the business. In this closing stage, data collection was gathered through AR group discussion which included all the original participants involved from stage one of the AR project. Essentially, the AR group discussion was also guided by a list of interview questions formulated to align with the intent of generating relevant data for the AR study. Its purpose is focused on inquiring into the concrete experiences of the AR participants through the socially constructed process of change intended

to improve workplace conditions. In addition, having a semi-structured outline aids the data collection process in directing an agenda while respecting the non-linear dynamics of AR that potentially explore other connecting domains such as family succession, cross department implementation, or even an extended AR cycle.

5.4.1 The AR Cycle (Stage 4): Evaluating Action – Participatory Contributions

Aligning with the principles of Dey (1993), the consideration of the three descriptive components of context, intent and process in the qualitative analysis generated four specific categories from the data as reflected below.

Table 5.4.1: Data Generated Categories: AR Stage 4 – Evaluating Action	
C19	Job Alignment
C20	Bridging Family and Non-family Trust
C21	Change Oriented
C22	Protecting Family Ownership

Starting with job alignment (C19), this category was simply formed by the recurring responses of the AR participants that implied the increase in managerial availability of the family-managers and the improvement of internal control by distributing responsibilities to the respective levels of the organisation. With the administrative duties of accounts payables successfully delegated to operational personnel, managing-owners now have additional capacity to shift their day-to-day priorities to more strategic areas of the business. In fact, this was consistent across all four AR participants who confirmed the increased availability experienced by the department line managers. Turning to the department manager (2G4), he commented that *‘It does save us a bulk of our time in doing or implementing accounts payables.’*

The director (1G2) on the other hand shared that *‘It has actually given me a little bit more time to focus on other things’* while going on to convey *‘Previously I didn’t have the time to look into tax accounting, which now I can focus on that.’* Beyond question, these are evidence of impact on the workplace conditions and its participants in realising the primary goal of the AR project in detaching operational involvement of the owner-managers. However, a larger impact to this implementation was the improvement of internal controls for the organisation. Specifically, this was informed by the manager (2G4) that *‘There’s segregation of duties, rather than only depending on one person.’* but went on to add that *‘I think this has also helped with our*

compliance.’ In other words, due to the segregation of responsibilities, the line managers can now review and monitor the work produced by department employees in upholding the standards of company processes.

This was also validated by the other owner-manager (1G1) who commented *‘I think it’s give them more check and balance also.’* which was within the context of assigning responsibilities to the relevant parties within the department. In addition, he (1G1) went on to suggest that this initiative will be progressively introduced into his department by stating *‘I’m think of giving them more responsibility in managing other areas, especially arrivals and warehousing and also customer service.’* These data driven codes gathered from the AR participants clearly indicate the sentiments of job alignment and the advancement in workplace conditions from the implementation of the AR project. Another category that was identified by the repeating comments of the AR participants was bridging trust between family and non-family stakeholders (C20).

In other words, family-managers who previously struggled to trust non-family employees due to the influence of family ownership are now explicitly extending greater confidence in their working employees. For instance, one director (1G1) said *‘We start to learn to put more trust in not only family members, but also to the staff.’* However, through the actions taken within the business, the trust appears mutual as the co-director (1G2) shared *‘They feel that we as family members actually put more trust in them.’* which represents the increased trust by non-family staff in the management.

In addition, this has led to probable career progression for non-family employees due to the management’s developing trust in delegating more responsibilities to external hires. This was clearly articulated when the department manager (2G4) conveyed *‘And there’s possible career progression, even though it’s a sensitive portion of our business.’* which indicates the obvious direction in assigning sensitive duties to non-family employees that, in turn, contributes to advancement in career development. The third category that emerged from the repeated identification of the data was the increased orientation for change amongst the AR participants. Specifically, there was a fundamental shift in managerial mind-set supported by tangible suggestions of initiating workplace changes that correlate to the actions taken through the AR project.

One rather impactful comment shared by the owner-manager (1G2) was

It's something I think I have to accept, because now everything is changing, but we are so hard headed, like the last 30 years, 40 years, now I really think that things are changing and I really have to accept this. (1G2)

Which clearly represents a shift in mind-set by a key stakeholder of the family firm. This was also supplemented by the other manager (2G5) who conveyed *'Forces us to have a more open mind in hiring and in training and in trust also.'* as she was discussing within the context of succession and sustaining the way the family business should be operated in the long-term.

The expressed intent to extend further change within the organisation was even more remarkable as this could serve as subsequent AR cycles in addressing the broader workplace situation. This was first communicated by the department manager (2G4) who suggested

I think what we could do is we could hire staff to, not replace, but take on what the accounts receivable personnel was doing initially and therefore after that she can also progress further by picking up more payables and other parts of the business. (2G4)

This further attested to the on-going intent of delegating accounts payable responsibilities through new hires to distribute operational duties across different levels of the department. This director (1G2) then went on to exert her opinion that such new practices should be considered in other areas of the business by saying *'I also hope that when we make this change that the other departments will do it also, so that they themselves can make some change in their own other department.'*

This comment was in turn supported by the other owner-manager (1G1) who responded *'I also noted that we're going to do some implementation of change as far as the operations area is concerned.'* Collectively, the voices of the participants embodied a change oriented position as a result of the AR project, shaped by intrinsic acknowledgement of the ever-shifting business environment and the explicit observations of new initiatives that will possibly be implemented in the family business. The fourth and final category documented from the qualitative analysis was the constant obligation to protect family ownership. This notion was not unfamiliar to this study as the influence from family ownership has been identified consistently across the course of the AR project. In this session, AR participants continued to caution the execution of such new initiatives by adopting safeguards that were aligned with the interest of family ownership.

For instance, the discussion on possibly delegating the authorisation of fund transfers to non-family employees was primarily subjected to the segregation of sensitive information before

management would consider proceeding with the initiative to protect the expressed interest of the owner-managers. This was raised by the department manager (2G4) who claimed

Maybe different conditions that can be set in the system itself can actually allow us to differentiate which areas she would be able to access and which areas were the important ones which only the family members can access. (2G4)

Which clearly indicates the planned separation of information available between family and non-family employees. This was also consistent with the plan of a new hire where he (2G4) commented *'That's also why new staff comes in can do the less sensitive portion of it'*.

Observing such consistency across the AR practitioners demonstrated how family ownership has influenced the core of management ideologies in driving its key stakeholders to constantly identify safeguards for the familial unit. The other recurring evidence seen in the data that also promoted the interest of family ownership was the on-going succession from first to second generation. In fact, it has been conveyed by AR participants that one outcome of the AR project was to support the family succession process due to the altered work structures that fits well with the incoming generation's approach to management. Shared by the managing-owner (1G2), she said

I feel that what we have done is good for succession planning, because it will feel that for us, on our shoulders, will not be so heavy, adopt a more managerial role to oversee everything. (1G2)

In other words, the existing management's scope of work will not be fully adopted by the second generation but will instead embrace a more managerial approach to running the family business. Rightfully speaking, the collection of categories generated from the data conceptually belong to a definable theme that was consistent with the theoretical framework of the AR study. At this juncture, the outcomes of these data-driven categories were clearly produced by the concrete experiences of the AR participants who were involved in the overall process of the full AR cycle. In other words, the AR group members who underwent the social transformation are the result of their participation in the various stages of the AR project. Upon review, the impact on the AR participants was not limited within the boundaries of this AR project. This was because the nominated participants involved in the AR study were top administrators who set the strategic tone for the family business going forward.

Table 5.4.2: Coding AR Stage 4 – Evaluating (C19 – C20)

Ref	Texts Quotes	Codes	Categories
2G4	She's able to do it on her own with overseeing on our part, so that frees some of our time.	Increased Managerial Availability	C19 Job Alignment
	It does save us a bulk of our time in doing or implementing accounts payables.	Increased Managerial Availability	
2G5	I can spend more time on HR with the other departments, with the other staff.	Increased Managerial Availability	
	It also gives me more time to review government policies that have been updated recently.	Increased Managerial Availability	
1G1	They have more time for the other areas they have not been able to follow up.	Increased Managerial Availability	
	Especially for the CFO, she has a bit more time to look into more important areas, like investment, expansion, so-called audits, in that sense, so that at least everything is in place.	Increased Managerial Availability	
1G2	It has actually given me a little bit more time to focus on other things	Increased Managerial Availability	
	But actually I also can focus on any other thing now, now I have more time.	Increased Managerial Availability	
	Previously I didn't have the time to look into tax accounting, which now I can focus on that.	Increased Managerial Availability	
	And also review my property assets, we're trying to manage another way, because we need to expand, so I have more time to do other things now.	Increased Managerial Availability	
2G4	Right now it's just mentoring and checking on her work.	Improving Internal Control	
	I think this has also helped with our compliance.	Improving Internal Control	
1G1	I think it's give them more check and balance also.	Improving Internal Control	
1G2	We just have to check, but it's better, because usually you have one person doing the work. Now at least two or three, and we just check.	Improving Internal Control	
2G4	There's segregation of duties, rather than only depending on one person.	Distribution of Duties	
	And as far as it goes it will benefit the company more in terms of time management.	Distribution of Duties	
1G1	I'm think of giving them more responsibility in managing other areas, especially arrivals and warehousing and also customer service.	Distribution of Duties	
2G5	When other staff can see that a non-family member has access to payable, they feel that maybe they can improve themselves better and that they also have a chance to progress.	Increased Non-family Trust in Management	C20 Bridging Family and Non-family Trust
1G2	They feel that we as family members actually put more trust in them.	Increased Non-family Trust in Management	
1G1	We start to learn to put more trust in not only family members, but also to the staff.	Increased Trust in Non-family	
1G1	I think on their end the staff feel that they're given a more responsible role and they feel their career progresses.	Non-family Career Progression	
2G4	And there's possible career progression, even though it's a sensitive portion of our business.	Non-family Career Progression	
	I think for us when we've got enough trust in certain employees, we do actually want to help them improve further in their careers.	Non-family Career Progression	

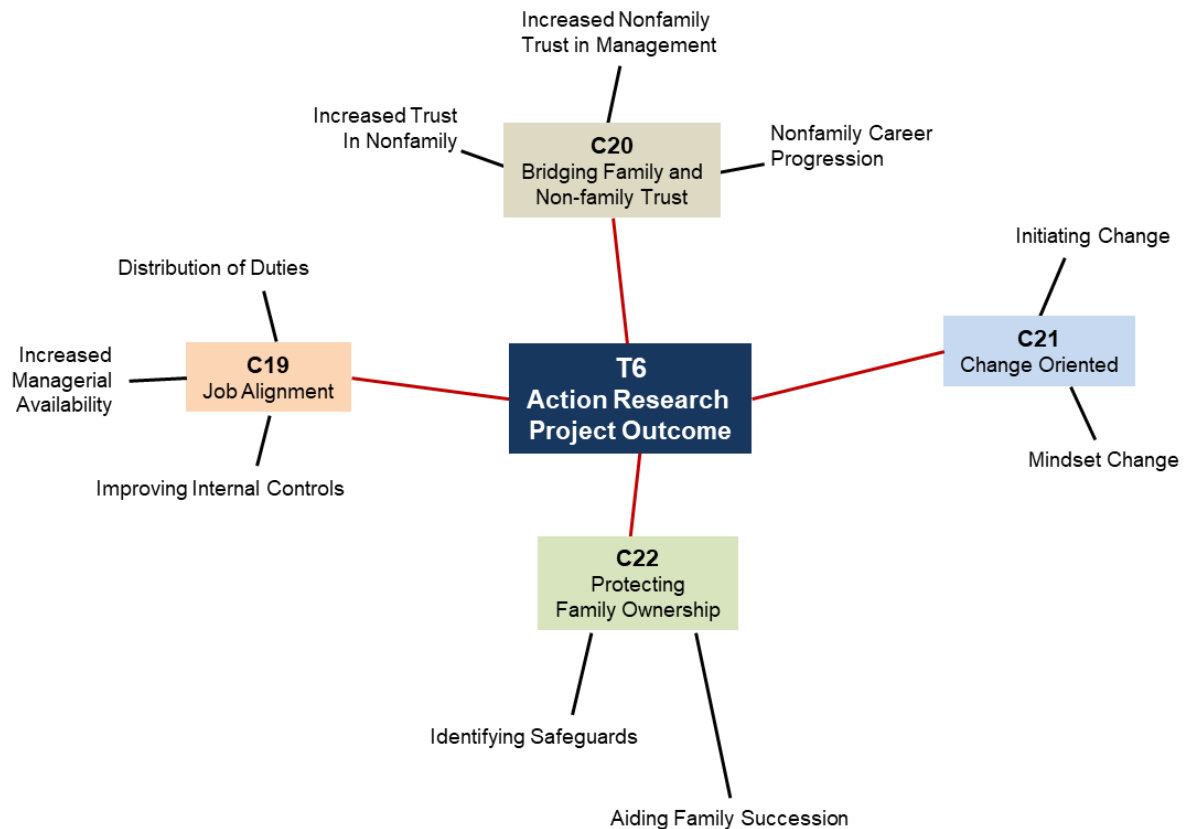
Table 5.4.3: Coding AR Stage 4 – Evaluating (C21 – C22)

Ref	Texts Quotes	Codes	Categories
2G4	I think what we could do is, we could hire staff to, not replace, but take on what KY was doing initially and therefore after that KY can also progress further by picking up more payables and other parts of the business.	Initiating Change	C21 Change Oriented
	I think what may be possible is that we'll start going more to the online banking transactions, depending on how the bank systems work maybe in the future.	Initiating Change	
1G2	I also hope that when we make this change that the other departments will do it also, so that they themselves can make some change in their own other department.	Initiating Change	
1G1	I also noted that we're going to do some implementation of change as far as the operations area is concerned.	Initiating Change	
1G2	It's something I think I have to accept, because now everything is changing, but we are so hard headed, like the last 30 years, 40 years, now I really think that things are changing and I really have to accept this.	Mindset Change	
	If not, I think definitely our company will be lagging behind.	Mindset Change	
2G5	I think learning to have a more open mindset, because growing and working in a family business now it's like the world is changing	Mindset Change	
	Forces us to have a more open mind in hiring and in training and in trust also.	Mindset Change	
1G2	I feel that what we have done is good for succession planning, because it will feel that for us, on our shoulders, will not be so heavy, adopt a more managerial role to oversee everything.	Aiding Family Succession	C22 Protecting Family Ownership
2G5	Personally I find that actually this helps, because it actually pushes family members to work harder to prove themselves in succession.	Aiding Family Succession	
2G4	Maybe different conditions that can be set in the system itself can actually allow us to differentiate which areas she would be able to access and which areas were the important ones which only the family members can access.	Identifying Safeguards	
	That's also why new staff comes in can do the less sensitive portion of it	Identifying Safeguards	
2G5	If the banks can actually segregate and let us choose what we can view and what we cannot view, that might help.	Identifying Safeguards	
	When we bring in new staff, we have to start then from scratch, so we will have to judge how well and how much we can allocate.	Identifying Safeguards	

More importantly, it was the data that indicated the fundamental shift in managerial ideologies of the managing-owners that incurred a positive mind-set change when compared to the initial stages of the AR project. In addition, AR participants now acknowledge the implications of sustaining inwards-looking management practices and have begun to recognise the expressed readiness of non-family resources to assume more responsibilities that unlock management's credible advancement across the AR project. In actuality, the outcomes of the AR project reflects an array of workplace developments including the strengthening of internal control through distribution of responsibilities, cultivating mutual trust between family and non-family stakeholders, creating career opportunities for non-family employees, supporting the family succession, and even altering the inflexible way of thinking of family management.

These are significant modifications in practitioner behaviour and organisational conditions within the family business that were produced by the AR project. For example, the AR participants are already embarking on the next actionable phase which includes the recruitment of a new hire to further relieve operational duties amongst the family-managers. Similarly, the managing-owners are now embracing stewardship-led behaviour which differs from the initial AR constructing phase where non-family employees were previously viewed as self-interested agents. Diagram 5.4.1 represents the AR project as the central source of enabling these impacts experienced by the participating family business.

Diagram 5.4.1 – Organisational Impact (AR Evaluating Action)



This was validated as AR participants are now exploring new areas for non-family employees to maximise value for the organisation whereas in the past owner-managers would limit such opportunities purely to protect the interest of family ownership. Without question, safeguarding the family unit remains a primary priority to the business. However, AR participants are now more innovative in adapting their approach to management in enhancing organisational effectiveness. In addition, the trust in non-family employees have also endured a major shift as owner-managers have explicitly recognised the increase in employee dedication through the course of the AR project. The social transformation of the business and its participants towards a forward-looking perspective does not pertain to any specific project stage but rather the overall process of the AR project in unlocking the possibilities of advancing management practices.

5.4.2 The AR Cycle (Stage 4): Evaluating Action – Insider-Researcher Contributions

From the ORJI process, the data collected in the insider-researcher journal captured personal reflections that were regulated through the framework in facilitating of my conduct and social

inquiry into second-person practice with the AR participants. However, promoting reflection-in-action through second-person practice did not separate from first-person inquiry as the process structures the development of scholarly practice by exercising reflective awareness when collaborating and inquiring into the co-participants. In addition, first-person inquiry did not expire after the AR sessions as data collected enabled further self-assessments in identifying critical perspective and underlying assumptions for the purpose of advancing scholarly practice. The evaluating of actions conducted with the co-participants pertaining to the project's outcome and the full AR cycle recorded favourable results from the study. However, the production of promising research findings did not diminish the commitment to reflection-in-action in first and second-person practice. Journal entries 7 and 8 present evidence of first-person practice as I conducted social inquiry with the AR participants within the regulated framework of ORJI.

5.4.2.1 Evaluating Action: Journal Entry – 6

In this journal entry, the feedback conveyed by one of the AR participants was unexpectedly conflicting with the project's outcome and the underlying voices of the other group members. As the AR group were discussing about the key learning from the change process, the department manager (2G4) had expressed minimal developmental opportunities from a personal and professional capacity. This contradicted with his co-participants who shared specific learning extending from employer-employee trust, non-family motivation, and even managerial adamancy through tangible illustrations from the improved workplace conditions. This validated the opportunity for second-person inquiry by conforming to the ORJI framework in directing first-person reflection and AR intervention.

1. Observe – AR Hearing

As the AR group progressed onto the discussion on key learning from the overall change process, the department manager (2G4) conveyed that he did not experience any professional developments from the AR project. This was then complimented by his viewpoint that the AR initiative was essentially limited by the incumbent management and it was a good step forward for the family business due to the shift in leadership mind-set.

2.1 Reaction – AR Hearing

In my capacity as a direct familial peer to this manager (2G4), I do acknowledge this perspective as I am able to see through an overlapping dimension of his professional lens. In fact, all the second-generation members involved in the family business had the privilege to receive higher

education. However, this does not imply that we possess superior knowledge that can be left unchallenged. As a seasoned practitioner within the family business, this took me by genuine surprise that even a young manager can be subjected to the 'hardening' process and the inclination of believing in one's self. In actuality, the learning obtained from the AR project has been astonishing and extremely impactful to me as the insider-researcher.

2.2 Reaction – AR Post Reflection

Looking at my reaction on a post assessment basis, the mental conflict incurred by a distinct difference in value systems is undeniably humanistic vulnerability that will affect personal awareness and effectiveness as a practicing manager. However, it is also tangibly recognisable that through the course of this AR project and the committed discipline to honestly reflect on ORJI that I am increasingly aware of my emotional consciousness in regulating my practice as the insider-researcher. In comparison to the previous journal entries, the reaction stages were filled with reflective inquiries that emotionally channels anger and frustration whereas this encounter collected evidence of conflicting point of view in a non-provoked fashion.

3.1 Judgement – AR Hearing

In review of my observations, I believe that the absence of learning claimed by the participating manager (2G4) was based on assumptions which lead to a genuine opportunity for participatory reflection through second-person inquiry. This could also be contributed to by the lack of clarity which narrowed the perspective that learning was limited within the boundaries of the primary AR goals which did not put into consideration the other complimentary key developments that had unfolded in the process of the AR process.

3.2 Judgement – AR Post Reflection

It is evident that the preoccupation with emotional dispute limits any manager in passing impartial yet 'simpler' fashion. Looking deeper at this post assessment, I have come to recognise that participatory reflection should not be limited to the designated participant but rather extended to the AR group in conducting social inquiry. Indeed, the AR participant (2G4) was unable to identify or possibly distinguish the valuable lessons from the AR process. However, the core of AR values the co-construction of actionable practices which does not limit participatory reflection to any specific respondent but rather the collective group involved in the emerging process. In this particular post assessment, it has come to my attention that the narrowing of perspective is

incurred when one is in-action, encounters an obstacle, and fails to look 'outside-the-box' which could potentially reveal professional judgement that addresses the broader workplace situation.

4.1 Intervention – AR Hearing

Aligning with the judgement made to the AR situation, this advocates the necessity to conduct second-person inquiry in stimulating participatory reflection with the AR group. The purpose certainly is not to direct and seek acknowledgement of any specific learning, but to unfold perspectives that impacts the AR participants in a critical fashion. In other words, intervention is made to validate the absence of participant development beyond the primary goals of the AR project by exploring the holistic process of social inquiry with co-participants. This aims to promote the reality of non-linear discovery within the AR setting which is creative and flexible in the social construction of actionable knowledge.

4.2 Intervention – AR Post Reflection

Second-person inquiry with the AR group enabled the exploration of unconsidered perspectives in looking beyond the project's outcomes to consider the ramifications of the change process. This was vital as participatory reflection empowered the realisation in the AR members to comprehend the tangible shift in management mind-set and attitude towards change as this has been an unyielding perception of the managing-owners limiting any form of organisational transformation. In fact, this led to the underlying confession of senior management concerning their lack of innovation and continuous resistance to change over the past decades. Going forward, family management is proud to embrace the planning of new initiatives that are currently in the pipeline for future implementation.

Table 5.4.2.1 : ORJI Journal 6				
AR Question: What has the AR team learned from this change process? What was good? What didn't go so well?				
Journal Purpose	ORJI Stage	Mode of Inquiry	ORJI Guide	Reflection-in-action Post Reflection
AR Project	Observe	Second-person Inquiry	Objectively record what was observed.	As the AR participants took turns to share about their experiences on the change process and the AR project, the department manager (2G4) shared that he did not grow or learnt much for the overall process. He then went on to justify that being of a younger age, he would have already advocated the change if not for the senior generation resistance.
AR Project	Reaction	Second-person Inquiry	How am I reacting emotionally to what I am observing? How can I mitigate these emotional influences in undertaking a more impartial view on the situation?	I do acknowledge that I did have similar perspectives being part of the second family generation. However, the learning realized from the AR project for me personally was extremely impactful and valuable, even as a seasoned practitioner. This took me by surprise that even a young practitioner is subjected to the "hardening" process and the inclination of believing in one's self.
AR Dissertation	Reaction Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Why did I react in this manner? What made me react in such an emotional fashion to the situation? How did my reaction correlate to workplace assumptions and practices?	It is evident that my emotional reactions to any mental conflict is a humanistic vulnerability that could subject my personal effectiveness as a manager. However, in the course of this AR project and the constant practice of ORJI, I was genuinely aware of this emotion and was not affected to alter my practice as the insider-researcher.
AR Project	Judgment	Second-person Inquiry	Review observations, recognise and acknowledge emotional reaction, and conduct objective assessment in judgement of the AR situation.	Based on my observations and recognizing my emotional position, it is obvious that there is an opportunity for participatory reflection for the AR member to further self-assess the change process at the individual and group level.
AR Dissertation	Judgement Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	How could I have judged the situation differently? What are the common obstacles arising from passing objective judgements from the AR discussion?	Reflecting on my judgement on the post assessment basis, I do realize that the participatory reflection does not only apply to that specific AR member, but also could be extended to the AR group members in enabling a deeper and richer learning process. The obstacle encountered when one is in action is often the narrow perspectives and lack of looking "outside-the-box" that could unfold professional judgement that actually addresses the broader workplace situation.
AR Project	Intervention	Second-person Inquiry	Intervene with the situation if judgement supports the goals of the AR project. Take caution in such interventions to safeguard objectivity in the AR group discussions.	Evidently, my judgement on the situation advocates the necessity to conduct second-person inquiry in promoting participatory reflection with the AR group. The purpose certainly is not to direct and seek acknowledgement of any specific learning, but to unfold perspectives that impacts the AR participants in a critical fashion.
AR Dissertation	Post Intervention Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Was the intervention justified? What could have taken place if you did not intervene in the AR situation? What could have improved from the present situation for future AR cycles?	The intervention conducted explored deeper into the perspectives of the AR participants to look beyond the AR project, but the change process in which his co-workers had created value within the organization by advancing the workplace situation. This led to the realization on the tangible change in mindset and shift in leadership ideologies that will initiate future changes in the organization.

5.4.2.2 Evaluating Action: Journal Entry – 7

Focused on deliberating the outcomes of the AR project, the participants have made known that the actions taken within the organisation to improve the workplace situation have contributed to favourable conditions for family succession. More specifically, the distribution of operational duties and shift in strategic focus will aid the succeeding generation in managing the family organisation in a more sustainable fashion. However, it is the department manager (2G4) who once again played the role as the devil's advocate by adamantly exerting his view that the family business is ultimately subjected to the limitations of familial resources which fundamentally conflicts with the purpose of the entire AR project.

1. Observe – AR Hearing

The inquiry on AR impact in the workplace has captured the consensus of both the managing-owners and their offspring that the project's implementation enhances the process of business for the family business. Considering this response, the manager (2G4) extended his views that the family business will still be limited to the availability of family resources to grow and develop the business. He emphasised this point on the significance behind manpower that is required to continuously grow and expand the family business. This was supplemented by his perspective that depending on the reproduction of family offspring was certainly not a practical avenue in sustaining the family business. Hence, this becomes a limitation to the incremental growth of business portfolios or simply growing the family business beyond a certain point.

2.1 Reaction – AR Hearing

Through these observations, my emotional reactions to the AR scene were 'Why is the department manager sticking to this viewpoint when family-managers have successfully been able to delegate operational work through non-family working professionals? Why does he not recognise that there are alternative approaches to managing the family business?' These emotional reactions are obviously rooted in assumptions that could potentially influence my judgement as the insider-researcher to falsely intervene in the AR situation and compromise the data collection process. Aligning with the primary intent of ORJI, I had to recognise these emotional considerations that were clouding my judgement and reflect deeper on the remarks of the AR participant by impartially assessing his views instead of being subjected to the underlying assumptions shaped by my worldviews.

2.2 Reaction – AR Post Reflection

Clearly, my initial response to the AR situation was emotionally unsound due to the conflicting views conveyed by the department manager on family succession and the project's outcome which are fundamentally interrelated. Moreover, the fear of a fellow familial successor having to incur this managerial outlook will be exceedingly problematic to the family business. However, these are undoubtedly the assumptions from my viewpoint which has limited the impartial consideration for an alternative perspective. This continued source of influence will create limitations to the reconsideration of untapped possibilities or even misinterpretation. Failure to have recognised this dimension would have undeniably led to an unfair judgement and the probable biased facilitation of the AR group discussion.

3.1 Judgement – AR Hearing

Through the ORJI process, I realise that I had been emotionally influenced by the conflicting perspectives of my AR colleague which was shaped by my personal assumptions. This required correction, rationalisation, and altering of judgement to what was essentially observed in the AR session. This shifted my views to the possibility of a misconception or even a different outlook on the business aspirations which leads to a difference in viewpoint. For instance, if my mental vision of the family organisation clashes with his outlook for the business, there are genuine possibilities in justifying his viewpoints. This warrants the likelihood for second-person inquiry to validate the expressed opinions of the AR participants in exploring and revealing fresh considerations within the context of the change process that applies to family succession.

3.2 Judgement – AR Post Reflection

In reflection, it has occurred to me that the possession of good communication alone does not necessarily lead to productive dialogue, accurate interpretation and unbiased assessment in the workplace. In fact, the ability to reflect and increase personal awareness is vital in recognising the various sources of influences that impact managerial judgement. In my case, there is no doubt that undertaking multiple roles and the recurring conflict in personal values are the unconscious obstacles that limit me from becoming a more effective practitioner. Although the ORJI process has enabled me to be more proficient through the course of the AR project, it is undeniable that this will be a work-in-progress as I continue to face emerging situations of conflict in the workplace.

4.1 Intervention – AR Hearing

Based on the observed AR situation, it is important to validate the context of the expressed views of this participant (2G4). This is because the adamant belief to continue relying on family resources to sustain the business would have incurred vain impact on the AR project. In other words, the implementation of the AR study becomes purposeless while the production of 'favourable' outcome is basically superficial with no intrinsic developments in management ideologies. Nevertheless, the intervention through second-person practice should not in any way compromise on the fundamentals of AR which focuses on collaborative inquiry and reflective learning.

4.2 Intervention – AR Post Reflection

Looking at the outcomes of the intervention, second-person inquiry was most certainly legitimate as this validated the underlying concerns of the manager (2G4) pertaining to the limitations of family resources in filling managerial positions within the business. In his view, the primary challenge lies with the shortage of credible manpower that possess the right qualities and competencies for management fit. In fact, he went on to acknowledge that this on-going challenge requires the family management to continuously innovate their approach to the business as demonstrated through the change process of the AR project. This was further supported by the other AR participants that acknowledged their mental resistance over the past years and the pressing need to consider alternative avenues for workplace solutions that are more sustainable to the family business.

Table 5.4.2.2 : ORJI Journal 7				
AR Question: Do you think these changes made from the AR project will aid the family succession process?				
Journal Purpose	ORJI Stage	Mode of Inquiry	ORJI Guide	Reflection-in-action Post Reflection
AR Project	Observe	Second-person Inquiry	Objectively record what was observed.	It is consistent across all the AR participants that the change made from the AR project will support the family succession process in a more sustainable fashion. However, the department manager (2G4) advocated the notion that the family business is still limited by the amount of family resources to grow and expand the business. In addition, depending on the reproduction of family offspring is not a practical solution in the long-term.
AR Project	Reaction	Second-person Inquiry	How am I reacting emotionally to what I am observing? How can I mitigate these emotional influences in undertaking a more impartial view on the situation?	Why is the finance manager sticking to this viewpoint when family managers have successfully been able to delegate operational work through nonfamily working professionals? Why does he not recognize that there are alternative approaches to managing the family business?
AR Dissertation	Reaction Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Why did I react in this manner? What made me react in such an emotional fashion to the situation? How did my reaction correlate to workplace assumptions and practices?	My emotional reactions on the manager's (2G4) comments were shaped by his inconsistent perspectives on the AR project outcome and family succession which are correlated. In addition, incurring this managerial mentality is potentially problematic in the context of succeeding in the family business. Nevertheless, these emotions are falsely influenced by my personal outlook on the family business and should be mitigated by assuming an impartial view on the AR situation.
AR Project	Judgment	Second-person Inquiry	Review observations, recognise and acknowledge emotional reaction, and conduct objective assessment in judgement of the AR situation.	The ORJI system has made me recognized that emotionally I was subjected due to the conflict in perspective with my AR colleague. Hence, I rationalized and altered my judgement to what was observed. This shifted my views to the possibility of a misconception or even a different outlook on the business aspirations which leads to a difference in viewpoint.
AR Dissertation	Judgement Post Assessment	First-person Inquiry	How could I have judged the situation differently? What are the common obstacles arising from passing objective judgements from the AR discussion?	Arriving at an objective assessment within the workplace does not only require clarity or good communication, but personal awareness in recognizing sources of influence that could impact managerial judgement. In my case, the multiple roles and conflicting value systems are often the unconscious obstacles that limits me from becoming a more effective practitioner.
AR Project	Intervention	Second-person Inquiry	Intervene with the situation if judgement supports the goals of the AR project. Take caution in such interventions to safeguard objectivity in the AR group discussions.	Intervention at this juncture is vital to inquire into the AR group if the workplace advancement had actually created value for the organization and shaped the participants to be more critical in addressing workplace problems.
AR Dissertation	Post Intervention Assessment	First-person Inquiry	Was the intervention justified? What could have taken place if you did not intervene in the AR situation? What could have improved from the present situation for future AR cycles?	Second-person inquiry was validated as the finance manager was expressing the obvious challenge of family resource limitations and that this requires the family management to innovate in addressing the on-going familial challenge. In fact, this was further supported by the other AR participants that acknowledge their mental resistance over the past years and the need to consider alternative avenues for workplace solutions that are more sustainable to the family business.

5.4.3 The AR Cycle (Stage 4): Evaluating Action – Findings and Project Outcome

The evaluating of action taken within the organisation is the final closing stage of the AR cyclical process. This involved the reflection by co-participants in assessing the change process and outcomes of the AR project in generating key findings from third-person practice. However, this does not necessarily mark the end of the collaborative efforts of the AR participants. In practice, data collected and analysed could serve as valuable insights in building the foundation for a subsequent AR cycle targeted at advancing management practice through a series of alternative avenues. In other words, the AR participants could expand improvement efforts through further developments from what changes have already implemented in the business, reconsider the adoption of a complementary alternative approach in addressing the workplace situation, or even extending the newly developed framework into other functional departments of the organisation.

It is important to recognise that the production of improved practices is not solely influenced by participatory collaboration but also the processes of second-person practice which is channelled by first-person inquiry in facilitating reflection-in-action as its core function of AR. However, this does not in any way suggest that the AR researcher is the main source of influence impacting the project, but rather the regulated processes of ORJI and facilitating the desired behaviours of its participants that results in productive cause-and-effect through the actionable change process. Hence, the findings and concluding outcomes of the AR project are discussed within the context of first, second and third-person inquiry, and the impact in its respective practices.

5.4.3.1 Evaluating Action: First-Person Inquiry

Across the AR project, the prerequisite for reflection-in-action in developing first-person practice is undeniably a challenging process due to the inherited human tendencies of occupying personal assumptions, emotional influence and individual biases that obstruct managers from becoming effective practitioners. In the evaluating of action, it is surprising yet not alarming to encounter new avenues of personal assumptions that persist to impact first-person practice within my capacity as the insider-researcher. Overtime, the adoption of ORJI aligns my mental practice as I related to personal experiences to engage in situations whilst committing to being impartial by reflecting in real-time the psychological traps designed to cloud impartial judgements. However, as illustrated at this final stage of the AR process, the short-term employment of ORJI is merely the beginning of a long-term obligation towards scholarly practice in tackling the continuous developments of first-person gaps shaped by accumulative experiences.

For instance, in the previous AR stages, it was recognised that my personal bias and emotional shortcomings were contributed to by the unconscious familial relationship with the participants that led to prejudiced judgement. Bearing that in mind, I was certainly more cautious about this inclination but failed to recognise the narrowing of my perspectives shaped by the favourable outcomes of the AR project that blinded me to reconsider the critical views of my co-researchers. This supports the lasting need to adopt a practical reflective framework that instituted practitioner awareness in dealing with conflicting workplace situations instead of resorting to familiar outlets that shaped misleading assumptions and bias. This aligned with the conviction for reflexivity to question personal beliefs, values, assumptions and relationships in order to function responsibly within the workplace where social and organisational realities are shaped regardless of intention (Cunliffe, 2020).

In fact, self-reflexivity evolved as an inherent practice through the reflection-in-action process to challenge my normalities and altered my intervention that underpinned the social realities of the research project in a morally appropriate fashion. It was also important to recognise that conducting first-person inquiry was not limited to real-time contact but also accessible through post-reflection in acquiring critical perspectives by analysing and identifying undesirable assumptions that was vital to the problematising process. It was equally important to revisit the events in unfolding learning opportunities that extended to the integral process of continuous improvement in management practices. Without a doubt, the impact on first-person inquiry has fundamentally changed my views as a managing-practitioner and my personal practice that goes beyond the AR project.

5.4.3.2 Evaluating Action: Second-Person Inquiry

Second-person practice has been a vital component throughout the AR project in facilitating the primary purpose of collaborative inquiry with the participants in distinguishing AR discussions that advocated workplace assumptions and challenged these growing prejudices across the research study. Even at the final stage of the AR process, participants were obligated to evaluate the actions taken within the business in a critical fashion. This was because AR participants were constantly subjected to the psychological tendencies of exhibiting adamancy and biased behaviour in order to protect a variety of interests that deviated from the essential production of valuable insights and actionable know-how. In the context of this final AR stage, second-person inquiry was key in revealing the unyielding attitudes of family-managers in acknowledging the inevitability of change and adapting to the shifting needs of the business and external competition.

In addition, the fostering of participatory reflection empowered AR participants with the discovery of fresh perspectives and the opportunity for social transformation which underpinned the fundamental purpose of AR. This shaped the democratic process of reflective learning and revealed unplanned developments through the AR change process. For instance, the truth claimed by the participating manager (2G4) that no professional development was established through the AR project was challenged as a result of self-reflexivity and my responsibility as the insider-researcher to invoke the critical practitioner in the participant (Cunliffe, 2004). Through this process of critical reflexive practice, he was able to uncover his managerial assumptions that would have limited his leadership growth and negatively impacted organisational realities shaped by his influence. From a self-reflexivity perspective, this was vital to go beyond questioning the truths claimed by the AR participant (2G4) by subsequently inquiring into my interpretations that shaped the realities that are claimed within this research (Cunliffe, 2003).

It was also important to recognise that second-person inquiry did not limit its practice within the boundaries of evaluating the overall process of the project but also extended into the potential advancement of a subsequent AR cycle. For example, the outcomes of the AR project may have offered favourable results which influenced the probable recruitment of external hires to aid the progress of further distributing operational duties. However, it was also not uncommon that the faster results were obtained, the quicker management were willing to push for the subsequent initiative. Such practices, if left unchallenged, could incur unforeseen risk that could have long-term implications to the business. Collectively, AR participants must reflect and debate constructively on the potential consequences by challenging underlying assumptions and consider alternative perspectives in maintaining relevance in the emerging workplace situation.

5.4.3.3 Evaluating Action: Third-Person Inquiry

In third-person inquiry, the intent was to evaluate the actions taken by the participants within the organisation and assess the impact of change. Data generated suggested a fundamental shift in management practices that essentially aided the delegation process of distributing operational responsibilities beyond familial resources. This has, in turn, modified the attributes of the business to align job assignments to the respective personnel, enhancing internal controls and optimisation of department resources. This piece of actionable knowledge was particularly valuable to the participants as they came to realise delegating duties unlocks the possibility for improved governance through the appropriate distribution of responsibilities. Through the implementation of the planned actions, it was also believed that employer-employee trust has been strengthened between family and non-family members. This is because duties assigned by the managing-

owners were seen as a form of approval in entrusting key responsibilities to the non-family employees in developing their careers in the family business.

The increased engagement between family-managers and non-family employees also served as a new form of actionable knowledge as owner-managers earlier perceived it to be additional workload rather than a means of motivating staff and cultivating greater trust within the business. Another recurring idea revealed from the data has been the tangible shift in managerial receptiveness towards change in the workplace. What was astonishing about this discovery was the social transformation amongst the participants in contrast to their prospective views when they first embarked on the AR journey. This was validated by the concrete realisation of the AR participants in voicing their outdated views and demands for change within the family business. In fact, the level of readiness has generated a series of actionable initiatives including the potential new hire to further decentralise operational duties from family-managers, the reconsideration of authorising non-family employees for issuing payables through other avenues, and even introducing this delegation framework into other departments of the family business.

Through the lens of third-person inquiry, the outcome of the AR project certainly advocated a successful implementation in impacting the business and its participating stakeholders in a positive manner. In addition, evidence collected suggested the genuine possibility for a succeeding AR cycle with opportunities for further advancement in management practices. Nevertheless, securing a productive AR project did not solely depend on the commitment of its participants or actionable intervention, but a collection of attributes that included researcher-participants partnership, the democratic process of social inquiry, the disciplined four-stage process, conducting reflection-in-action, and the like. Only by aligning to these AR obligations could the project yield knowledge that was both actionable and relevant to the evolving business.

5.5 Summary

This summary outlines the completion of the AR project. Starting with the preliminary investigations, the problematising process validated and confirmed the existence of the research problem. This empowered participants to not only comprehend the context and purpose of the AR project, but also instilled a distinct sense of motivation to strive and improve the workplace situation. Nevertheless, the participatory advancement across each stage of the AR was anything but smooth. This is because participants struggled as they were confronted with the mere consideration of detaching from their operational responsibilities that they have been assuming

for more than four decades. This led to instances of passive negotiations, collective denial, and affirmations of self-belief to justify pre-existing management practices.

The democratic facilitation of inquiry-in-action with the group was a vital ingredient that enabled participants to look beyond their assumptions and consider alternative perspectives. This was too brutally challenging for the insider-researcher to conduct reflection-in-action due to the multiple relationships incurred in the study and personal biases that constantly influenced distortion of realities. Despite these psychological hurdles, the AR group was able to advance and successfully implement change which respectably increased managerial optimisation within the family business. This was realised through the methodical AR system founded on the integral framework of first, second and third-person inquiry.

Chapter 6 | Discussion and Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

In this final chapter, I will be summarising the outcomes and implications of the AR study by touching on the background and objectives of the research and key findings from the AR pre-step and project. This is then followed by the impact on the family business, the AR group and the insider-researcher, which aligns with research goals of first, second and third-person inquiry. Subsequently, I will be covering the limitations of the study and the opportunities for future AR cycles that could further aid the participating organisation in addressing the broader workplace problem. Finally, the conclusion will provide a summarised recap of the AR study and the research findings.

6.1 Background and Objectives of the Study

The privately-owned family business has been in the lubricant business for more than forty years. However, over the past decade, the firm was faced with declining financial performance due to the increased competitive pressure and maturity of the lubricants industry. Confronted with this workplace situation, this called for increased strategic attention by the owner-managers which was visibly lacking due to the preoccupation of overseeing day-to-day business activities. In addition, the operational dependency and advanced years of the owner-managers also raised incremental concerns pertaining to business continuity. This outlined the urgency and strategic implications for undertaking this study for the purpose of improving the workplace problem. Importantly, the literature has informed the study about the uniqueness of family businesses and the competitive advantages that set them apart in the marketplace.

This includes mitigating of agency problems by assuming of the owner-manager role, exercising parental altruism to reinforce and cultivate collective ownership across the family unit, and pursuing unconventional SEW goals which enhances social capital even during rough economic conditions (Schulze, Lubatkin, & Dino, 2002; Van den Berghe, & Carchon, 2003; Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). However, conducting the business in this fashion also inherits structural problems such as dual role conflict by the owner-managers, motivational shifts towards familial welfare over economic goals, and the exposure of “self-control” which is highly problematic for the family firm (Memili, Chang, Kellermanns, & Welsh, 2013; Goh, Rasli, Tan, & Choi, 2015; Schulze, Lubatkin, Dino, & Buchholtz, 2001). This underpinned the problem statement ‘The managerial attachment for familial centralisation distracts owner-managers within the family

business from performing their core leadership duties' as the underlying cause for management to continuously focus on the day-to-day operations.

On that note, the aim of this research was to increase strategic attention within the family business by partnering with key organisational actors to unlock managerial availability in addressing the broader issues of the workplace problem. This goes in line with the research goals of generating new knowledge in practice as AR participants attempted to remedy the workplace situation, subjected themselves to co-inquiry, and underwent social transformation through the change process (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). Simultaneously, the foundation of this study is grounded in scholarly practice which targets the production of practitioner reflexivity and actionable know-how by employing first, second, and third-person inquiry across the AR project. This integral approach of collaborative participation to improve workplace conditions supported by reflection-in-action underlines the objective of the study by going beyond traditional practice to problematise, promote practitioner development, and unlock valuable insights in supporting the production of actionable knowledge for the research.

6.2 The AR Pre-Step – Key Findings

Prior to the AR project, a pre-step investigation was conducted to validate, problematise, and define the workplace problem for the purpose of building context and aligning the research for AR intervention. Structurally, this was directed at first verifying the conditions of the workplace situation followed by deeper investigations into the qualitative aspects of the managing-owners. This led to the key findings pertaining to existing management practices adopted by the owner-managers that were outlined by six main categories based on the evidence gathered by the interview respondents.

Operational Involvement (C1)

Both family and non-family respondents have shared that the owner-managers are operationally involved and overall in charge of the day-to-day business. This desire to maintain control of the day-to-day operations is seen as a top priority to safeguard SEW interest and has been a defining characteristic amongst family businesses (Brannon and Edmond, 2016; Vardaman and Gondo, 2014).

Management Priorities (C2)

The input on management priorities has been largely informed by family respondents through a series of reactions gathered from the individual interviews. This includes focusing on operational

output, maintaining of lean operations by managing overheads, and disregarding governance as management priority within the family business. These findings imply consistency with Herrero's (2011) study that the reduction of agency problems within small family businesses have proven to exhibit greater organisational efficiency. This is because a family manager who possesses the right experience, understands the familial tradition and corporate culture, is able to produce results more efficiently than a non-family manager (Herrero, 2011). This contribution of the literature rationalises the practice observed within the researched site.

Organisational Readiness (C3)

The failure to build capability and resist succession within the family business were also key findings obtained particularly from the pool of non-family respondents. This suggested the lack of organisational readiness in the context of business continuity due to the operational dependency on the owner-managers for the day-to-day business. However, these findings have been validated based on Trevinyo-Rodriguez and Bontis's (2010) study that knowledge transmission within a family firm typically occurs inside of the familial social context which refers to the interplay between family traditions, ties, and emotions. In other words, knowledge transfer takes place during social exchanges where the nature of information flow is shared within the family group, hence limiting the distribution of "family wisdom" within the non-family employees (Trevinyo-Rodriguez and Bontis, 2010). Turning to SEW, it is suggested that succession possess as a potential threat of weakening family control and preservation of family welfare (Minichilli, Nordqvist, Corbetta and Amore, 2014). This validates the motivation for the owner-managers to oppose succession efforts due to its risk of disrupting SEW within the family unit.

Long-term and Strategic Attention (C4)

Concerns surrounding the lack of strategic attention and long-term directive was evident across most pre-step interviewees. These findings were founded on the respondents' reactions that there were no clear vision or strategic focus demonstrated by the owner-managers. This overlapped into the views pertaining to the lack of managerial resources as managing-owners were preoccupied with day-to-day business activities. However, the exhibiting of greater control over the daily operations is consistent with internal SEW (Vardaman and Gondo, 2014). This causes the owner-managers to sustain deeper emotional attachments and a stronger sense of identity with the family firm (Gomez-Mejia, Haynes, Nunez-Nickel, Jacobson & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007; Minichilli, Nordqvist, Corbetta and Amore, 2014). Hence, losing sight of potential performance

hazards including long-term and strategic planning due to the underlying desire to maintain in power.

Centralisation and Control (C5)

Organisational centralisation and control represents the broader aim of the owner-managers. This has influenced managerial practices to resist delegating of operational duties and the limiting of knowledge transfers due to the strong desire for complete control. In fact, this interconnects with the other two categories of operational involvement (C1) and organisational readiness (C3) which confirms that the owner-managers are involved in the day-to-day business and fail to build capability within the organisation. This is a validation with SEW that family control and authority is a powerful influence that strongly alter management priorities within the family business (Brannon, & Edmond, 2016; Kellermanns, Eddleston and Zellweger, 2012; Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016; Naldi, Cennamo, Corbetta and Gomez-Mejia, 2013).

Familial Pressure (C6)

The final and most discussed subject from phase one of the pre-step findings is the extent of familial pressure and influence the family has on the business. Consistent across both family and non-family respondents, it is suggested that there is constant mixing of family considerations within the business. This often puts business priorities secondary to that of familial goals or even conflicts that occur within the family. Although this largely derives from the influence of SEW, the source for disputes between family and business are shaped by the dual role conflict of the owner-managers. Due to the ownership structure of family shareholders playing an active role in management, this created divided responsibilities from two subsystems which makes it impossible for the managing-owners to fulfil one role without compromising of another (Memili, Chang, Kellermanns and Welsh, 2013). In fact, each subsystem (e.g., family, business) is argued to retain different norms, membership standards and value structures that conflict in nature, thereby incurring dividing complexities in the roles assumed by the owner-managers (Gersick, Davis, Hampton and Lansberg, 1997).

The above findings represent the outcomes from the pre-step study focused on comprehending the workplace situation. These results indicate solid consistency with three particular theoretical frameworks, namely socio-emotional wealth, agency theory and dual role conflict. However, these theoretical interpretations were not exclusive to any specific finding but rather beared multiple overlaps which was expected in the real-world settings. For example, the influence of SEW will not occur without family-owners taking up management duties which simultaneously incurs role

conflict. Similarly, the opportunity to reduce agency problems by assuming managerial roles is also conditional to family-ownership which in turn subjects management to the influence of SEW. Nevertheless, these underlying connections in the findings did merge into a broader theme that suggests ownership structure is the originating source to role conflict, SEW and principal-agent relations within the family business. Importantly, it is acknowledged that these theoretical paradigms helped comprehend the management practices seen in the researched site. Moving into the second phase of the pre-step study, the shift in focus was directed at identifying the underlying causes influencing existing management practices.

Management Competencies (C7)

Management competencies was flagged as one key area contributing to the lack of strategic coverage by the owner-managers. The findings suggest that owner-managers essentially lack the competencies in the strategic space, have resisted executive trainings, and generally runs the operational business instead of building capability for the organisation. This has been identified as one of the motivations that led the managing-owners to stay within their operational roles in the business. However, this also poses incremental concerns for the broader workplace problem of operational dependency on the owner-managers due to their advanced years and the urgency for succession considerations. This is consistent with Wiecek-Janka, Mierzwiak and Kijewska's (2016) study that points out the 'lack of professional training' is deemed as one of the top main barriers to business successions within family firms. Hence, the broader theme of 'limited management know-how' emerged as a key rationale for owner-managers to focus on the operational routines.

Management Motivations and Insecurities (C8)

The findings on management motivation and insecurities derived from a collection of evidence gathered by the pre-step respondents. This included management's desire to maintain the status quo, the insecurities of losing control, and the obligation to work diligently for the family business. This inclination to sustain the status quo is inspired by the preservation of family control, thereby limiting any form of deviation in management practices (Goh, Rasli, Tan and Choi, 2015). This is consistent with the dimensions of SEW which often directs a 'maintenance strategy', even in the process of succession where family actors deter change in retaining authority within the business (Minichilli, Nordqvist, Corbetta and Amore, 2014). In fact, it is not uncommon for businesses to exert measures to maintain passive based on the belief that change threatens the organisation's survival (Kilduff and Dougherty, 2000). Moreover, resistance to change is known to trigger the

natural reactions of denial, anger and frustration which increases the complexity due to the strong emotional attachment with the family firm (Louise, 2010; Brannon and Edmond, 2016).

Trust Issues (C9)

The owner-managers resistance to place trust in non-family employees were consistently evident across most of the pre-step respondents. This created constraints in delegating operational duties and authorities to employees who are non-family. Often defined as high-trust organisations, this is achieved when the business is family-managed and is able to align principal-agent goals due to the shared values and default trust-worthiness placed on family agents (Herrero, 2011). Importantly however, this principal-agent problem acknowledges its influence from family-ownership and the intertwining implications of role conflict incurred by the managing-owners.

Succession Outlook (C10)

Turning to the succession outlook for the family business, this was clearly a recurring theme that surfaced from the data gathered by the interview participants. The responds were largely consistent with the notion that managerial designations were only reserved for family members regardless of their capabilities. This is in line with the influence of SEW where family organisations adopt less formalised HR policies and are likely to select succession candidates within the family circle (Vardaman and Gondo, 2014). In fact, succession is outlined as one of the five key SEW dimensions that aids the renewal of family bonds and social ties (Brannon and Edmond, 2016).

This predetermination that family offspring will succeed the business contextually justifies the owner-managers declined efforts to train, develop and impart know-how to non-family employees within the firm. Conceptually, SEW and agency theory have reinforced the findings of management motivation and securities (C8), trust issues (C9) and succession outlook (C10) for the pre-step study. However, it is the influence of family ownership that underlined the qualitative relationships between these categories as owner-managers are subjected to family goals within the context of the business settings, thereby encountering opposing demands due to role conflict (Memili et al, 2013).

Strategic Focus and Alignment (C11)

Interestingly, the findings on strategic focus and alignment were only expressed by non-family respondents in the study. These idealistic views were mainly directed at perceived opportunities for strategic attention and a positive moral shift if the owner-managers were able to undertake a more strategic function within the organisation. However, the lack of consent by the family

offspring drew deep concerns as they fundamentally operate closer to the managing-owners within the familial circle. This points out the possible reality that family groupthink has occurred and is likely preventing management from due progress (Janis, 1973).

Alternatively, family respondents could have retained valid insights that inform the complex limitations of realising strategic focus by the owner-managers. Nevertheless, this motivation exhibited by non-family employees is recognised as a feasible driver for change (Rosenbaum, More and Steane, 2018). In fact, Burke and Litwin go on to expand that there are nine key drivers for change, of which the external environment (commoditisation of lubricants industry), leadership (lack of strategic attention), culture (micromanagement), and individual skills (organisational capabilities) evidently apply to the confronted workplace problem (Rosenbaum, More and Steane, 2018).

The outcome of the pre-step investigations reaffirmed the purpose of the AR inquiry that owner-managers lacked strategic focus in the family business. In fact, this problematising process revealed a comprehensive overview of the problematic conditions faced by both the internal stakeholders and non-family employees. The comprehension of these findings brought forward key areas that were vital in aligning the commencement of the AR project.

6.3 The AR Project – Key Findings

Equipped with the findings of the AR pre-step, this presented the actionable opportunity for the AR group to address the workplace problem by undergoing the four-stage process of constructing, planning, implementing and evaluating of actions directed at advancing the broader issues of the family organisation. This was carried out through the integration of first, second and third-person practice which underpinned the foundation of reflexivity to co-inquire into the AR group as participants attempted to improve the workplace situation within the real-time settings.

Stage 1 – Constructing

The constructing stage outlined the workplace problem from the perspectives of the owner-managers. This was focused on the existing management practices and the necessary to unlock strategic coverage for the family business. Interestingly, these findings mirrored consistency with the pre-step findings. These included family influence (C13), sense of commitment (C14) and agency influence (C15).

Family Influence (C13)

The influence of family has been shaped by the deep emotional attachment to the business and the unyielding trust amongst familial members. This is not uncommon for small family firms to incur greater SEW influence where the emotional bond is formed by the years of hard labour from the owners (Brannon and Edmond, 2016). This was clearly articulated by the owner-manager who expressed the deep attachment in building the family business over the past forty years. This further aligned with the concept of SEW that the emotional endowment vested into the family business became an attachment that entailed safeguarding of the firm's reputation and social identity (Ding, Qu and Wu, 2016). Hence, justifying the actions of being operationally involved to protect this interest. The dimension of trust within the family has also influence management practices when it comes to authority, empowerment, and distribution of know-how. This is because high levels of trust is only displayed within the family unit which influences the prerequisite for complete control and the preservation of SEW (Goh, Rasli, Tan, and Choi, 2015; Brannon and Edmond, 2016).

Sense of commitment (C14)

In constructing of the workplace situation, AR participants argued that their obligations to the family organisation was driven by the necessity to fill performance gaps, commitments to the family unit, and the lack of dedications by non-family hires. The strong sense of commitment has been suggested to be influenced by family ownership where wealth is perceived to be associated to business performance (Goh, Rasli, Tan, and Choi, 2015). This justified the AR participants' belief to fill any organisational gap and was further reinforced by the influence of SEW to actively protect the survivability of the family business across its generations (Dressler and Tauer, 2015). This also led to the fundamental perception that non-family staff lacked dedication in compared to family employees, thereby taking up operational duties whenever possible.

Agency Influence (C15)

Nevertheless, the fear of agency flaws was identified as the more obvious cause for the owner-managers to retain operational authority and involvement in the day-to-day business. It is argued that family businesses are able to exhibit greater organisational commitment and economic results due to the influence of SEW where managing-owners retain control and performance standards of the firm (Debicki, Van de Graaff Randolph and Sobczak, 2017; Goh, Rasli, Tan, and Choi, 2015). However, this has instilled near-perfect aspirations set by the owner-managers in shaping the lack of confidence in non-family agents expressed by the AR participants. In addition,

the notion of self-assurance creates the false believe that owner-managers themselves are able to produce greater efficiency within their own capacities (Cuba & Milbourn, 1982).

This is increasingly dangerous as it could result in self-delusion where owner-managers become guided by a false sense of security when confronted with organisational problems (Gomez-Mejia, Haynes, Nunez-Nickel, Jacobson, and Moyano-Fuentes, 2007). In addition, the perceived threat imposed by non-family agents was underlined as a key concern by the AR participants. The fear of being overruled or betrayed by non-family employees align with the theoretical argument that separation of management and ownership incurs agency threat (Kallmuenzer, 2016). The emphasis here is largely focused on information asymmetries where the owner-manager inadvertently contracts a less able, ethical or committed agent which results in costly consequences for the family firm (Chrisman, Chua and Litz, 2004).

Extending Attention on Non-Family Resources (C12)

The shift in attention on the non-family employees was realised when AR participants were presented with the pre-step findings. This directed a change-oriented mind-set in the owner-managers having recognised the expressed readiness and desire to contribute more within the family business. This presented the opportunity to extend social bonds beyond the family unit which is arguably an important extension of SEW as long-standing relationships with non-family employees is deemed as a vital component to the survival of the family business (Brannon and Edmond, 2016). In fact, it is further argued that relational contracts pertaining to emotional and sentimental expectations between family principal and non-family agents have prevailed over financial relations (Minichilli, Nordqvist, Corbetta and Amore, 2014). This prospective inclination to alter management practices was unlocked by the increased awareness of the workplace situation by the owner-managers. This demonstrated conducts of stewardship motivations to look beyond self-interest and seek an affective sense of connection with non-family employees aimed at building social and economic well-being (Henssen, Voordeckers, Lambrechts and Koironen, 2014; Le Breton-Miller and Miller, 2015).

Stage 2 – Planning Action

The planning action stage entailed the formulating of improvement plans that would increase owner-managers' availability to focus on strategic areas of the business. In that AR discussion, three specific findings were identified through the decision-making process, namely protecting of family interest (C16), outlining of sensitive duties (C17), and the notion of managerial compromise (C18) in delegating of operational duties to non-family employees.

Protect Family Interest (C16)

The proposed reduction in operational involvement by the owner-managers entailed the distinct safeguard of retaining authority within the family unit. Influenced by the risks of divergent interests and asymmetric information caused by principal-agent cooperation, the owners believed in withholding management power within the family to mitigate against agency threats and protect organisational performance (Chrisman, Chua and Litz, 2004; Duh, 2010). Aside from the aim of overcoming potential agency problems, it is suggested that centralised decision-making within the operational space represents an important effect on the broader strategy and culture in the family business (Martin, McKelvie and Lumpkin, 2016). Hence, this was established as a key criteria in the consideration of releasing operational duties to a non-family employee.

Outlining Restricted Duties (C17)

The prospective intent of delegating operational duties revealed concerns of disclosing sensitive information such as employee compensation to non-family employees and the likelihood of agency threats. The arguments articulated by the AR participants suggests the likely perception of unfair compensation between family and non-family employees regardless of how impartial the remuneration system has been structured within the family firm. This suggests consistency with fairness heuristic theory where family involvement directly affects the justice perception of non-family employees due to their lack of status within the business (Barnett and Kellermanns, 2006). This causes non-family employees to question the trustworthiness of HR processes developed by the family unit to be free of bias and favouritism, the possibility of being exploited by the family-owned business, and the eventual loss of identity of becoming a valued member in the family firm (Barnett and Kellermanns, 2006). Hence, AR participants decided to restrict the delegating of duties pertaining to employee remuneration to limit misconceptions of unfair compensation being practiced within the family business. In addition, the authorisation of payables were also retained within family managers to safeguard against any potential agency threats.

Managerial Compromise (C18)

The last component raised by the AR participants is the time and effort invested in delegation which also incurs the risk of returns that are either uncertain or prolonged. In delegation, it is evident that the manager becomes the coach and will needs to spend substantial time and attention on the receiving party (Swank and Visser, 2007). Although attention spent on subordinates can be a costly consequence, successful delegating of operational tasks effectively

releases managers from everyday minor activities to focus on more conceptual and creative contributions in the business (Swank and Visser, 2007; Cuba & Milbourn, 1982).

The conceptualising of these findings suggested the adoption of a funnelling approach in which AR participants systematically identified key priorities and filtered undesirables in their decision-making process. This was done by establishing family interests that influenced the selection of duties that were restricted for reassignment followed by the acknowledgement of dedicating managerial attention for the delegation exercise. More importantly, dealing with the resistance to change and mitigating of emotional reactions was most crucial to this change process as participants were constantly influenced by SEW aspirations and perceived agency threats. This was achieved through the presentation of the pre-step findings and empowering AR participants to co-construct the workplace problem. Presented with extensive organisational data, this helped the AR group to engage in collective dialogue, build acceptance of the workplace situation, reduce managerial uncertainty, and overcome leadership resistance to plan for change within the business (Louise, 2010).

Stage 3 – Taking Action

This AR stage entailed the implementation of planned actions outlined by the participants. This included the delegation of four specific responsibilities to an accounts receivable personnel, namely the preparation of outstanding bills, administration of payment vouchers, issuing of cheques, and maintaining of payable records. This reassignment of accounts payable duties aimed to release a portion of operational responsibilities that were previously performed by the managing-owner and department manager, thereby relieving managerial capacity to focus on strategic areas of the business. During implementation, the assigned managers who supervised the delegation hand-over experienced minimum disruptions as the non-family accounts staff was able to exhibit functional proficiency and a positive attitude in the new undertaking.

However, it was also identified during implementation that the issuing of cheques would inevitably disclose employee/director salaries due to the administration process. As this was deemed as highly sensitive to the AR participants, the owner-manager withdrew this task from the non-family employee to align with the management's core. Nevertheless, the successful transfer in accounts payables suggests clear reduction in operational attention (estimated 60 hours per month) by the financial managers. Specifically, this translated into an approximate 27% relieve in managerial capacity by the owner-manager involved in the project. The outcome of these findings underlines

the important contribution to practice in delivering tangible change and advancements to the workplace problem in the AR study.

Stage 4 – Evaluating Action

Evaluating of action taken within the family organisation extended four main findings attained from the delegation of operational work by the owner-managers. Essentially, the new implementation resulted in improved job alignment (C19), bridging of trust between family and non-family staff (C20), shaping of change-oriented mindset by the managing-owners (C21), and maintaining consistent in the protection of family ownership (C22).

Job Alignment (C19)

It is suggested that aligning job tasks was achieved based on the evidence of increased managerial availability, improved internal controls, and segregation of duties within the accounts and finance function. This is important as department personnel not only distributed functional duties but also have a shared responsibility in completing the tasks collectively. Simultaneously, this is carried out by coaching, supervising, communicating, and supplying constructive feedback between manager and subordinate throughout the delegation process. These findings draw consistent with Pareto's Law ABC principle of time management where business-owners should delegate routine and administrative duties while elevating their responsibilities to develop organisational capability and plan for the long-term orientation of the business (Cuba & Milbourn, 1982). This is because delegation remains as a vital component of management as business-owners who try and stay on top of everything incurs the likely risk of failing to manage anything (Cuba & Milbourn, 1982).

Bridging Family and Non-Family Trust (C20)

The basis for increased mutual trust between family and non-family personnel was suggested by an array of site evidence. First, the notion of being tasked with accounts payable responsibilities within a family firm qualifies a certain level of trust in the non-employee as it entailed the sensitive administration of outgoing "family funds". Second, placing trust in non-family employees was also explicitly acknowledged by the family managers as a necessary attribute if they plan to pursue a long-term sustainable business. Lastly, the expansion in job scope underlines the enrichment of career progression and future prospects within organisation. In turn, trust is placed on management for creating greater job security within the family business.

This increased relational trust is crucial for the social system in any family business as it binds together family and non-family employees in creating a common purpose (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). If managed adequately, it is argued that the family firm will be presented with the main advantages of employee loyalty, trust and mutual understanding across the organisation (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). However, building trust in this social system is a long and difficult process, and could incur fast erosion if left unattended. Hence, management must avoid ambiguity in dealing with non-family employees as it could be perceived as familial sacrifices and destroy one of the most significant intangible assets in the family business (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). This goes in line with the suggested findings by the AR participants that developing mutual trust will be a key means towards long-term employee commitment for the family firm.

Change Oriented (C21)

At this final cyclical stage of the AR process, it was observed that participants exhibited a change-oriented attitude towards the workplace situation through post-initiation of new improvement plans (future AR cycles) and the expressed necessity to adapt to the shifting environment. It is suggested that the collaboration and collective actions achieved by the AR group has increased their capacity for change. This is supported by respectful participation, social inclusion, and the fundamental sense-making process in overcoming resistance while the acquisition of new practice, widen know-how, and increased commitment to the AR project has enhanced the group's collective capacity for change (Lawrence, 1954; Katombe, 2018). This aligns with the implementation of AR where data is collected through researcher-practitioner collaboration in furnishing adequate and important information to inspire active participation, stimulate managerial involvement, and aid decision-making in overcoming resistance to change (Line, Sullivan, Smithwick, and Mischung, 2015; Kulkarni, 2016)

Protecting Family Ownership (C22)

The protection of family ownership continues to take precedence in times of organisational change. This was suggested by the persistent need to safeguard against potential agency risks and the facilitating of family succession for the business. These findings have been consistent across the AR study where contributions of socio-emotional wealth and agency theory has shed significant light on the managerial behaviours of the owner-managers. The influence of SEW entails the retention of long-term familial control by perpetuating the family dynasty across future generations which aligns with the owner-manager's intent of handing down the business to their

offspring (Naldi, Cennamo, Corbetta and Gomez-Mejia, 2013; Kellermanns, Eddleston and Zellweger, 2012). In extension to this argument, the desire for complete control is also challenged due to the moral hazard incurred by involving non-family agents in tackling information asymmetry, thereby influencing the prerequisite for safeguards to protect the family business (Klein and Bell, 2007). Nevertheless, these findings are not unexpected due to the structure of family ownership which altered the organisational core to accommodate two subsystems, thereby complicating the responsibilities of the owner-managers to fulfil unconventional goals of SEW (Memili, Chang, Kellermanns and Welsh, 2013).

The key findings from this AR project presented evidence of social transformation and advancement in the management practices. This was observed as participants uncovered the implications of centralised management practices resulting in the loss of strategic attention and operational dependency on family resources. This unlocked executive motivation to alter pre-existing practices directed at assigning operational responsibilities (administration of accounts payables) to non-family employees in aligning owner-managers duties to focus on strategic areas of the business. Underpinned by reflexivity, this paradigm shift was realised as AR participants were able to identify familial bias, mitigate self-justification, and overcome social insecurities in successfully presenting change in the real-world settings of the family firm (Cunliffe, 2004).

6.4 Impact on the Family Business

In this study, the impact on the family business was specific to the accounts and finance department. This involved the successful implementation of transferring accounts payable duties previously administered by family managers to a non-family employee within the department. This entailed managerial commitment to coach and train the department personnel in assigning of these functional duties. In addition, increased communication and cooperation between manager and subordinate was needed in ensuring functional clarity, purposeful transfer, and expanding accountability in the delegation exercise (Swank and Visser, 2007; Tomescu-Dumitrescu and Mihai, 2019). In this context, the manager is obligated to become the subject matter expert and must strive to self-develop his or her communication skills in adequately facilitating the delegation process.

Importantly, this has impacted the firm's effective functioning in aligning job responsibilities across different levels of the organisation. In extension, this helped reduce the managerial load of the owner-manager to devote greater attention onto strategic areas of the family business (Swank and Visser, 2007; Cuba & Milbourn, 1982; Tomescu-Dumitrescu and Mihai, 2019). Employee

motivation was also positively affected as the subordinate responded favourably to the incremental duties by exhibiting greater responsibility and dedication to the overall assignment (Swank and Visser, 2007). This aligned with the perceived notion of career development as the employee is continuously equipped with new skillsets to take on more challenging tasks, thereby improving job satisfaction within the workplace (Tomescu-Dumitrescu and Mihai, 2019).

Due to the influence of family ownership, the perception of unfair treatment amongst non-family employees is not uncommon. Hence, the choice to delegate accounts payables responsibilities and invest in a non-family employee has also built trust and confidence in the management (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). The segregation of operational duties has tangibly impacted the organisation by relieving day-to-day responsibilities of the owner-manager, enhanced optimisation of departmental resources, increased employee motivation, and built mutual trust between family and non-family personnel within the family business. This aligns with the research conducted by Cuba and Milbourn Jr (1982) that business owners who were able to adopt delegation as a management approach secured higher performance and financial rewards as they break away from operational work and exercised greater attention to goal setting, long-term planning, and strategic decision-making by spending more time managing the business and less time doing the day-to-day duties.

The outcome of this AR intervention may have accomplished the original purpose of detaching managerial resources from day-to-day operations and expand leadership capacity to create strategic value for the business. However, the implications of decentralising organisational duties go beyond these primary goals. This includes improved governance in which department members shared mutual responsibility in ensuring organisational standards whereas previously the duties were self-administered and self-approved by the managing-owner, which ran the risk of corrupt intents or even genuine human errors. In addition, job alignment and the distribution of respective duties not only enhances internal controls and employee motivation, but also shaped team independency which was vital in creating contingencies and operational sustainability as no specific resource became indispensable.

Going forward, the impact on the business is not limited by this AR alone as there is proven evidence for subsequent cycles of inquiries that lie across different scopes and functional departments. This includes the possibility of recruiting a new hire to further evolve the necessity of reassigning operational work within the accounts department or introducing the delegation process in the operations division. The explicit feedback by the participants offer opportunities of

delivering future actionable know-how that will be vital to the broader growth of the family business.

6.5 Impact on the AR Group

The impact on the AR group was exhibited by the modified attributes of the participating managers. This was key to the contributions to practice and likelihood for further developments in the family business. This underlined the transformation in management perspectives in unlocking a change-oriented mentality, extending important trust in non-family employees and increasing managerial availability to cover strategic areas in the business. The intent of improving social practice and altering workplace conditions entailed the process of critical collaboration, empowered participation and self-evaluation of practice (Cardiff, McCormack and McCance, 2018; Zuber-Skerritt 2011, p. 35). This change established by and with the participants led to the acquisition of new knowledge of improving workplace conditions, thereby enhancing their collective capacity and change-inspired confidence within the AR group (Katombe, 2018).

With the increased know-how of carrying out delegation and decentralisation of operational duties, AR participants incurred less resistance and exhibited improved readiness attained from the positive influence and motivation of the AR participation process (Line, Sullivan, Smithwick, and Mischung, 2015; Katombe, 2018). This was demonstrated by the noticeable shift in managerial tone of considering alternative solutions including the recruitment of a new hire to further assign operational tasks, decentralising administrative duties in other departments, and the explicit recognition to adapt to the shifting business environment. Importantly, participating in the sense-making process had constructively revealed the strategic impact of entrusting non-family agents with greater operational responsibilities by the AR participants. This is because the advantages of increased effective functioning, reduction of managerial load, improved employee motivation, and enhanced career development were observed and recognised by the owner-managers from the project's implementation (Tomescu-Dumitrescu and Mihai, 2019).

These outcomes were vital as it aligned with the intent of overcoming the broader issues of the workplace problem in detaching operational dependency on family resources and building a more sustainable organisational structure that will support family succession in the future. In turn, this anchored the fundamental notion that the family unit must learn to extend trust in non-family agents in shaping a trust-based social system which binds family and non-family employees together for a common purpose (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016). This has impacted the AR group by altering the original management philosophy of the owner-managers which included

the fear of losing control, incurring loss time to delegate, and the lack of trust in non-family employees (Cuba and Milbourn Jr., 1982). The modified management outlook of establishing trust relations between family and non-family members demonstrated consistency with the trust-based social system directed at building loyalty and a long-term commitment of the employees (Mako, Csizmadia and Heidrich, 2016).

Lastly, the increased managerial availability of the owner-managers entails the redesigning of job duties and broader responsibilities. Aside from the immediate duties of supervising their subordinates on the delegated tasks, the family managers must now consider re-prioritising their scope of work in creating strategic value that was previously lacking within the family business. This could vary widely from financial budgeting to refinement of existing business models or even expansion of product portfolios in diversifying business risk for the family organisation. However, this change could also be seen as unfamiliar territory to the owner-managers as they have never broken away from day-to-day running of the business. This runs the risk of them deviating onto the wrong path or even resuming back to their operational tasks due to their deep emotional attachment with the firm (Brannon and Edmond, 2016). Nevertheless, this underpinned evidences of progress and strategic impact on the AR group with the presented opportunity to re-define critical job functions across different levels of the organisation that aligns with the long-term aspirations of the family business.

6.6 Impact on the Insider-Researcher

As I reflect on my experiences as the insider-researcher, I would classify the AR project as a necessary journey towards scholarly practice. In this, I am not suggesting that the successful completion of an AR study qualifies the researcher as a scholarly practitioner. Instead, that is merely the beginning of his or her journey towards one. The ability to reflect and act within one's practice while maintaining impartiality in dialogue may seem logically ordinary within everyday life. However, the complexity involved in adequately directing this is truly inconceivable. In my AR study, there were a couple of impactful lessons that have fully altered my outlook as a manager. Starting with emotional influence, regulating this aspect was brutally challenging due to the variety of available avenues affecting my practice.

Before embarking on this research project, I had perceived myself to be emotionally consistent and capable of navigating through the complex and unreasonable workplace environment. However, compelled by the ORJI framework, I now recognise that my emotional impartiality was often compromised when faced with situations that conflict with my personal values and

expectations (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). In fact, a simple encounter of disoriented workplace discussion alone was enough to upset my emotional soundness. The overlapping roles of being a family member, colleague and insider-researcher increase the complexities in managing emotional interruptions. For example, the irrational reactions by the AR group subjected me to incur emotional confusion due to the added relationship of kinship, thereby stimulating my familial attachment to take matters for granted instead of approaching the situation in my professional capacity.

Failure to reflect on my personal reactions could have simply transformed the situation into a family debate with my relatives on the premises of the workplace. Hence, the ownership falls onto the manager to consciously reflect, identify and tease out emotional influences as part of his or her underlying commitment towards scholarly practice. The other key learning observed in this AR study was the deconstruction of underlying assumptions that often misinforms our practice in the workplace (Orr and Bennett, 2009). Holistically, the commitment to reflexivity consider our values, relationships, language and assumptions when interacting with others empowers us to become more aware of 'knowing-from-within' as it is continuously re-constructed in our inconsistent and problematic day-to-day lives (Cunliffe, 2002). No doubt the constant practice of 'turning back' on our truths and realities is brutal and exhausting. This has been the most impactful learning and development of my insider-researcher experience (Barge, 2004).

This is because as managers progressively continue to build their experiences in different areas of their profession, these established assumptions become closely attached to the individual and the way they assess workplace situations. To some level, these assumptions in turn trap practitioners to look beyond their worldviews in reconsidering alternative viewpoints. This is where self-exploration and inquiry-in-action are vital in unlocking perceived realities and discovering untapped perspectives (Avison, 2002). This is because interacting with external stakeholders can be emotionally challenging as we become subjected to the added dimensions of competitiveness, self-belief, misinterpretation, and other communicative elements that misinform our judgments. Another impact from this journey as the insider-researcher has been the ethical component. Even though 'reflection-in-action' was constantly performed to regulate self-emotions and promote timely intervention within the group discussions, navigating through the AR participants still incurred some level of ethical impact (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

This was because the constructive deliberations may have accomplished professional development and unlocking of valuable perspective within the AR group. However, this could also have impacted the participants to feel inferior despite possessing decades of managerial

experiences within the trade. This realisation made me recognise that despite all the honest diplomacy conducted within a social setting, the pursuit of progress will inevitably upset certain stakeholders. In this AR study, I was challenged in ways that were somewhat indescribable and unexpected. Documenting my experiences as the insider-researcher was certainly demanding as the exploratory process entailed emotional sacrifices, defying self-logic, and breaking of cognitive habits in order to unlock critical perspectives and uncover new discoveries (Cunliffe, 2003).

However, it is also through this process that I have learned the value of first-person development and its impact on second-person practice. This has altered my philosophical choice as a manager in how I am inspired to conduct my practice in the complex and deviating workplace of the family business. Going forward, I intend to remain committed to this journey of self-improvement and scholarly practice by advocating reflection-in-action as my operative process in dealing with emotional conflicts and undesirable assumptions. With the sustaining workplace situation, this will be vital in managing multiple role conflict, inner disputes and the emotional attachment to the family unit. More importantly, I hope to uncover new learning that will aid personal development and the community that is reflective beyond my practice as a manager.

6.7 Limitations of the AR Study

In review of the AR project, there are visible limitations to the research that could have furnished additional findings in producing a more complete and holistic study. There are three segments all related to data that would have further enriched the AR study. First, the source of primary data available for collection was limited due to sensitivity of the family business. In this, I am referring to the untapped data and feedback of the non-family employee who took on the additional duties that were successfully delegated by the AR participants. With respect to participating organisation, data collection was not authorised on the premise that management does not wish to disclose their shortcoming and developmental efforts through the means of an AR project.

As the AR goal was to detach family-managers from day-to-day operations to focus on more strategic areas of the business, the primary data gathered from the lived experiences of the participants in overcoming this challenge maintains relevant for the main analysis and generating of the research findings. However, having that added data would certainly have supplemented the findings and validated the responses of the AR participants in corroborating the project's outcome and build further credibility to the study. The second area on research limitation has to do with personal biases and the pre-existing relationship with the participants in conducting of the AR project. Even though the AR is governed by specific control systems such as ORJI in

regulating bias, there is still the very real possibility that the change process was influenced by kinship, thereby compromising the data that was analysed.

This was also why AR documents each step taken in the process by the respective participants in identifying areas of probable bias through first, second and third-person inquiry. For example, the purpose of second-person inquiry is to work with the AR group in addressing workplace complexities by empowering their participation to co-reflect and formulate viable solutions for future implementation. The unfolding of these new learnings was then documented and analysed in generating the research findings. In addition, first-person inquiry was also documented through the insider-researcher journal that was guided by the ORJI reflective framework. Nevertheless, this still does not completely rule out the possibility that the AR advancement process was realised based on the impartiality of the participants due to their pre-existing relationship with the insider-researcher.

Finally, the limitation on the actionable scope permitted for the project narrowed the opportunity of broader exploration on the workplace situation. In other words, inquiring on the insecurities of the owner-managers in releasing operational responsibilities to the non-family employees was limited to the accounts and finance department despite pre-step findings gathered across the business. As the research title suggests 'Relieving Owner-Managers of Operational Duties: aligning leadership priorities through delegation and empowering of non-family employees within the family business'. Although this is fundamentally consistent with the intent and outcomes of the AR project, the implementation of the action-oriented study was confined within a specific function due to the sceptical confidence placed on the project by the authorising personnel.

As a small-to-medium sized enterprise (SME), the owner-managers were also concerned about the cost implications if the project had to involve multiple stakeholders across the business. This would impact managerial resources and the possibility of compromising business performance due to the opportunity cost incurred to serve the AR study. Nevertheless, from a short-term perspective, this classifies as a limitation because having access to the broader research site would reflect a more holistic representation of the study with comparable data between the different functions for AR analysis. Evidently, this can be overcome in the longer-term by conducting a subsequent AR cycle in other areas of the business and generating new insights, challenges, and actionable know-how in tackling the workplace problem. In fact, the subsequent section will explore the opportunities for future AR cycles based on the outcomes of the existing project and considerations informed by the AR participants.

6.8 Future AR Cycles

With respect to the potential for future AR projects, there are opportunities within the existing researched site or even alternate family businesses that are confronted with similar problematic conditions. Starting with the present business, the modified workplace conditions offer the viability for a subsequent AR cycle in extending new and revised advancement practices in different areas of the business. Informed by the AR participants during the evaluating of action, they shared the intent of revisiting the issuing of payables by a non-family employee by exploring alternative means and electronic systems. Another area for further exploratory is the resistance of disclosing employee salary due to the potential misconceptions of unfair HR compensation practices by non-family employees. However, fairness heuristics theory argues that if HR practices are structured fairly and effectively communicated across the organisation, it can positively influence the perception of justice by non-family employees (Barnett and Kellermanns, 2006).

In fact, Martin, McKelvie and Lumpkin's (2016) research has shown that decentralising HR practices can diminish the family-first bias and upkeep the morale of non-family employees by delegating such administrative tasks to operational personnel of the hierarchy. In turn, this provides the AR group with the opportunity to address any misperception of justice by non-family employees by adapting existing practices through a series of subsequent AR cycles. Another change initiative expressed by the AR group was the hiring of an additional accounts personnel to further extend their efforts of releasing operational responsibilities to non-family employees, thereby realising greater managerial availability to attend to strategic and long-term planning for the business. This potential AR project is expected to have substantial impact to the business as an additional hire will increase the capacity by almost 30% for the department.

The successful implementation of this prospective project would positively demonstrate the influence of AR within real-world settings. Finally, it was also shared by one of the directors (1G1) his intent of introducing this concept of transferring day-to-day duties to non-family employees within the operations department. This was based on his aspirations of developing dedicated employees to assume more operational leadership roles and create a more independent team. This in turn could serve as a subsequent AR project within a different function which entails the four-step process as the participants and contextual challenges are expected to differ from the previous AR group. Looking beyond the possibilities for an AR project from the present business, I believe that there are opportunities for other family businesses opposed by comparable workplace conditions to conduct their own AR study in advancing their organisational situation.

Although AR addresses the contextual problems that are more specific to the participating businesses, it would be academically feasible and practical to compare and review the unfolding process of the participants as they strive to overcome the dysfunctional problems and the impact of social change on the AR group. By generating these findings from an equivalent but alternate source, there will be opportunities in making qualitative comparisons of the reactions of the managing-owners, and a trend analysis in building a theoretical yet actionable framework to better inform practitioners as they deal with familial workplace complexities affecting their business performance.

6.9 Conclusion

This thesis sets out to address a workplace problem specifically within the context of the participating family business by employing AR as the primary mode of inquiry. By adopting the cyclical process, knowledge creation is generated by inquiring into the lived experiences of the AR participants as they partner with the insider-researcher to overcome the problem of the owner-managers deviating their attentions onto day-to-day operations of the family business (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). However, the discovery process entailed the integration of first, second and third-person practice in order to regulate bias of the insider-researcher, collaborate with the AR participants to perform reflection-in-action, and data collection on the advancements of the AR project (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

This enabled inquiry into the reflective journal of the AR researcher, the social developments and experiences of the participants as practitioners in a real-world context, and the concrete outcomes of the AR project that impacted on the business. The social construction and advancement of the AR project has successfully transferred a sizable amount of operational duties previously administered by the owner-manager (1G2) to existing non-family employees. The delegation of day-to-day accounts payables has translated into an approximate 27% increase in availability by the managing-owner to attend to other strategic functions of the business. Although this change in organisational practice only applies to the accounts and finance department for this study, it signifies a major shift in management ideology as family-managers have struggled to release operational control for more than four decades due to the influence of family-ownership and the non-economic priorities of the business.

In review of the AR project, the process has also furnished practitioner insights on the insecurities of running a family business (e.g. agency problems, emotional attachment), and the systematic filtering process adopted in decision-making to safeguard socio-emotional goals (e.g. sensitive

duties, authorisation). These primary findings demonstrated the actionable qualities of practice in overcoming workplace problems through second-person inquiry and the qualitative evidence of multiple realities that is contextual to the participating business. In closing, the social transformation of the AR participants, advancement in management practices, and impact on first-person inquiry towards scholarly practice has secured the primary goals of the study with articulated opportunities for future research that can value-add the actionable knowledge created from this project.

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Appendix 1

Primary Question	Secondary Questions	AR Pre-Step (Part 1): Validating the Problem Statement
		Individual Interview Questions
<u>Problem Statement</u> The Managerial Attachment for Familial Centralisation Distracts Owner-Managers within Family Firms from performing their Core Leadership Duties	<u>Workplace Problematising</u> 1. Is management focused on strategic or operational aspects of the business? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is there a concrete long-term business direction (expansion, diversification) for the organisation? ▪ Does management set and reviews implementation of company policies, strategies, business plans? 2. If so, why does family leadership focus priorities in operational duties over strategic responsibilities?	Do you feel that top management are effectively assuming their leadership roles? For instance, do you know of the company's goals, policies, and long-term direction?
		On a day-to-day basis, do top-level managers assume duties that are more operational or strategic in nature? Why do you think so?
		Do you see a difference in leadership approach and operational undertaking across the different departments? Can you share your views (e.g., SWOT) on the outcome of their approach?
		In your organisation, do you feel top management involvement in operational duties is valuable? To what extent do you feel so?
		Do you feel organisational growth is limited if top management continues to focus on operational duties over their strategic and leadership roles?
		Do you believe top management will be able to better focus on their leadership roles if they begin delegate their operational duties to line managers? What challenges do you foresee and how do you think they can go about achieving this?
		In your views, how would the organisation benefit if top management were to assume more leadership duties?

Primary Question	Secondary Questions	AR Pre-step (Part 2): Deep Dive into Workplace Problem
		Individual Interview Questions
AR Inquiry How can owner-managers relief operational duties to better concentrate on their leadership roles?	Problem-Based Inquiry <u>Intrinsic Motivation</u> 1. Why are owner-managers resistance towards delegating operational duties to non-family employees? 2. What are the particular risks perceived by owner-managers in assigning decision-making tasks to non-family managers?	Do you believe top management will be able to better focus on their leadership roles if they begin delegate their operational duties to line managers? What challenges do you foresee and how do you think they can go about achieving this?
		What struggles and difficulties do you feel top management have that limits them from carrying out their leadership duties? Why do you think so?
		Do you feel that top management resources are limited due to the nature of the family business? If so, how do you think they can overcome this?

Table 3.5.1 : Interview Protocol & Guide			
Interviewee		Department	
Designation		Familial Status	
Date		Place	
Time			
Guided Questionnaire (Semi-Structured Interviews)		Participant's Response	
Do you feel that top management are effectively assuming their leadership roles? For instance, do you know of the company's goals, policies, and long-term direction?			
On a day-to-day basis, do top-level managers assume duties that are more operational or strategic in nature? Why do you think so?			
Do you see a difference in leadership approach and operational undertaking across the different departments? Can you share your views on the outcome of their approach?			
In your organisation, do you feel top management involvement in operational duties is valuable? To what extend do you feel so?			
Do you feel organisational growth is limited if top management continues to focus on operational duties over their strategic and leadership roles?			
What struggles and difficulties do you feel top management have that limits them from carrying out their leadership duties? Why do you think so?			
Do you feel that top management resources are limited due to the nature of the family business? If so, how do you think they can overcome this?			
Do you believe top management will be able to better focus on their leadership roles if they begin delegate their operational duties to line managers? What challenges do you foresee and how do you think they can go about achieving this?			

Appendix 2

Action Research Question	AR Stage 1: Constructing AR Stage 2: Planning Action
	AR Group Discussion Questions
<p>Action Research Question If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family staff, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?</p>	Do we agree that managing-owners are operationally focused and why?
	If we plan to delegate operational duties to non-family staff, how can we accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business?
	To what extent will owner-managers consider empowering non-family staff to make decisions in the family business?
	What control measures can be adopted to safeguard the insecurities of family managers in relieving operational duties onto non-family managers?

Table 3.5.2 : AR Group Discussion Protocol & Guide (Constructing & Planning Action Stage)					
AR Participant 1		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 2		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 3		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 4		Department		Designation	
Date		Place		Time	
Action Research Question		"If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interests of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?"			
AR Stage	Guided Questions		Participant's Response		
Constructing	Are managing-owners are operationally focused and why?				
Planning Action	If the owner-managers plan to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how can they accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business?				
	To what extent will owner-managers consider empowering non-family employees to make decisions in the family business?				
	What control measures can be adopted to safeguard the insecurities of family managers in relieving operational duties onto non-family employees?				

Appendix 3

Action Research Question	AR Stage 3: Taking Action
	AR Group Interview
<p>Action Research Question If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family staff, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?</p>	<p>From our previous discussion, the group had plan to assign accounts payable duties to KY, primarily consisting of the review and preparation of outstanding bills, writing of payment vouchers, issuing of cheques, and maintaining of historical and monthly reports. How has the implementation been so far?</p>
	<p>Were there any changes from the original planning? For example, adding or eliminating more delegation duties to KY?</p>
	<p>Did you face any challenges in carrying out the plans? For example, was KY able to assume the additional duties? Did she face any capacity or competency issues? Did management decide to alter the original plans?</p>
	<p>How was each new assignment transferred to KY? Who were involved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparation of outstanding bills. ▪ Administer payment vouchers. ▪ Writing of cheques. ▪ Maintaining payable records.
	<p>What else is required for the on-going implementation? Is there a timeline you are looking at?</p>
	<p>How did KY feel or react to this implementation?</p>
	<p>Do you foresee the implementation as a successful one? Is it sustainable? Did management had a change of heart?</p>
	<p>Management concern of retaining authority and control by the family, is that achieved despite the implementation? The other matter of salaries, was it in any threat from this implementation? Did KY raise any questions?</p>

Table 3.5.3 : AR Group Interview Protocol & Guide (Taking Action Stage)					
AR Participant 1		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 2		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 3		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 4		Department		Designation	
Date		Place		Time	
Action Research Question		"If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interests of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?"			
AR Stage	Guided Questions		Participant's Response		
Taking Action	From our previous discussion, the group had plan to assign accounts payable duties to KY, primarily consisting of the review and preparation of outstanding bills, writing of payment vouchers, issuing of cheques, and maintaining of historical and monthly reports. How has the implementation been so far?				
	Were there any changes from the original planning? For example, adding or eliminating more delegation duties to KY?				
	Did you face any challenges in carrying out the plans? For example, was KY able to assume the additional duties? Did he/she face any capacity or competency issues?				
	How was each new assignment transferred to KY? Who were involved? Preparation of outstanding bills. Administer payment vouchers. Writing of cheques. Maintaining payable records.				
	How did KY feel or react to this implementation?				
	Do you foresee the implementation as a successful one? Is it sustainable? Did management altered their views on this initiative?				
	Management concern of retaining authority and control by the family, is that achieved despite the implementation? The other matter of salaries, was it in any threat from this implementation? Did KY raise any questions?				

Appendix 4

Action Research Question	AR Stage 4: Evaluating Action
	AR Group Discussion Questions
Action Research Question If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family staff, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interest of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?	Based on this change made to the organization, what are the outcomes at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Department level ▪ Individual manager level – CFO, Finance Manager (Increased availability in the workplace)? ▪ Company level
	Does the team plan to revisit or have any plans regarding the delegation of issuing of payments to non-family staff?
	What has the team learned from this change process? What was good? What didn't go so well?
	Does the team plan to adopt other types of change to the organisation after going through this learning cycle (e.g., Hire additional staff to assume more operational duties in our other businesses)?
	What other areas do you feel we can work on in addressing the broader sentiments of the organisation? Other departments? Change in policy?
	Do you think that these changes made will aid the family succession process?
	Do you feel that you have grown through this change process?
	Do you feel that the family business is more receptive to change after this AR project?

Table 3.5.4 : AR Group Discussion Protocol & Guide (Evaluating Action Stage)					
AR Participant 1		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 2		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 3		Department		Designation	
AR Participant 4		Department		Designation	
Date		Place		Time	
Action Research Question		"If management plans to delegate operational duties to non-family employees, how is management able to accomplish this while protecting the interests of the family business such as socio-emotional wealth?"			
AR Stage	Guided Questions		Participant's Response		
Evaluating Action	Based on this change made to the organization, what are the outcomes at: 1. Department level 2. Individual manager level – Directors, Departments Manager (Increased availability in the workplace)? 3. Company level				
	Does the AR group plan to revisit or have any plans regarding the delegation of issuing of payments to non-family employee?				
	What has the AR group learned from this change process? What was good? What didn't go so well?				
	Does the AR Group plan to adopt other types of changes to the organization after going through this learning cycle (e.g., Hire additional staff to assume more operational duties in our other businesses)?				
	What other areas do does the AR group feel they can work on in addressing the broader sentiments of the organization? Other departments? Change in policy?				
	Does the AR group feel that these changes made will aid the family succession process?				
	Does the AR group feel that they have grown or acquired new knowledge through this change process?				
	Does the AR group feel that the family management is more receptive to change after this AR project?				