



# Work Passion for Successors in SMEs Family Businesses

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## Abstract

The concept of passion for work suggested that people love to work and derive joy from work-related activities. People who experience passion showed strong focus, singleness of purpose, self-renewal, and a deeper sense of meaning in life. As family businesses are fast becoming the dominant form of the business around the world, the crucial challenge for them are to continue and sustain their legacy through generation. Successors' commitment toward family businesses has been identified as a key desirable attribute of their successors. Passion provides a strong indication of how committed the entrepreneur is to put in time and effort needed to make the company success. The objective of the research is to find the meaning of work passion for successors to strive for their SMEs family businesses. This study used in-depth interviews ( $N = 12$ ). The findings suggested that work passion for successors in SMEs family businesses could be described in three distinct dimensions; affective, cognitive, and behavioral intention.

**Keywords:** Passion, Successor, Family Business, Organization Development

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## ความรักและพลังขับเคลื่อนในงานของ ทายาทธุรกิจครอบครัวขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อม

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### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษาความรักและพลังขับเคลื่อนในงานของทายาทธุรกิจครอบครัวขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อม โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อทำความเข้าใจกลไกและกระบวนการ ความคิดและนำเสนอความหมายของความรักและพลังขับเคลื่อนในงานของทายาทธุรกิจครอบครัวขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อม ทั้งนี้ เพื่อนำไปประยุกต์ใช้ในการ พัฒนาศักยภาพของทายาทธุรกิจครอบครัว ตลอดจนการนำไปใช้พัฒนาการบริหารงานบุคคลของธุรกิจครอบครัว ขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมให้เติบโตได้อย่างยั่งยืน

การวิจัยนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ ซึ่งใช้การสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจง โดยทำการสุ่มเลือกผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยส่วนใหญ่จากสมาคมหอการค้าไทย-จีน ผู้วิจัยได้ทำการสัมภาษณ์ทายาทธุรกิจครอบครัวขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมทั้งสิ้น จำนวน 12 คน จากหลากหลายประเภทธุรกิจ ผลการวิเคราะห์ที่ได้เห็นว่าในการทำงานในธุรกิจครอบครัวนั้น ทายาทธุรกิจครอบครัวขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมนั้นให้ความสำคัญในการดูแลเอาใจใส่ครอบครัวและธุรกิจพร้อม ทั้งมีความตั้งใจพัฒนาธุรกิจครอบครัวให้เจริญก้าวหน้ายิ่ง ๆ ขึ้นไป ซึ่งความรักและพลังขับเคลื่อนในงานของทายาทธุรกิจครอบครัวขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อยสามารถอธิบายได้ตามองค์ประกอบที่สำคัญ 3 ด้าน อันประกอบด้วย 1) ด้านความรู้สึก 2) ด้านความคิด และ 3) ด้านการกระทำหรือเจตนา

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## Introduction

The dynamic change in the business world today demands robust human capital that is fully engage and agile, aggressively developed and skillfully deployed so as to execute successfully in this difficult environment. The fragile economy today is a continuous reminder that resources are constrained and even the richest firms face tough trade-offs in the pursuit of their survival. Human resource and organization development (HROD) professionals need to develop and effectively applied strategy so as to recruit, develop, and retain qualified people.

An emerging body of research indicated that passion plays an important role in behavior across a variety of disciplines (Murnieks, Mosakowski, and Cardon, 2012). In the context of workplace, the study of passion is relatively scarce and yet the concept of it still needs to be explored. The concept of work passion goes further than work engagement and commitment in that it encompasses both job commitment and organization commitment. It measures cognition, affect, and intention of individual (Zigarmi, Nimon, Houson, Witt, and Diehl, 2009a). Thus, it provides a clearer sense of how the individual intends to behave onbehalf of the organization.

Individuals who are passionate about their work tend to show their persistent, positive emotional state of mind which result from the appraisal of various job and organizational situations that lead to a consistent, constructive work intentions and behaviors such as discretionary effort, long-term commitment to the organization, peak performance, low turnover, and altruism (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, and Drnovsek, 2009; Zigarmi et al., 2009a; Gorgievski and Bakker, 2010). Passion can fuel motivation, enhance mental activity, and provide meaning to everyday work (Brannback, Carsrud, Elfving, and Krueger, 2006, unpublished data).

The concept of passion for work suggests that people love to work and derive joy from investing in work-related activities (Shane, Locke, and Collins, 2003; Baum and Locke, 2004). Passion captures on an emotional aspect of people's approach to work (Vallerand, Blanchard, Mageau, Koestner, Ratelle, Léonard, Gagné, and Marsolais, 2003), it relates to cognition, in the sense that people who are passionate about work tend to engage in more intensive and systematic knowledge processing when task-related demands require it (Ho, Wong, and Lee, 2011). Passion has been said

to increase entrepreneurs' dedication and commitment to their venture, their persistence in pursuing venture-related goals and activities, and their ability to get and stay engaged in their actions (Vallerand et al., 2003; Cardon, Wincent et al., 2009). Despite an obstacle, passion helps entrepreneurs find creative solutions to problems (Cardon, Gregoire, and Stevens, 2009, unpublished data).

Passion causes the experience of flow, which is a psychological state under peak experience that people highly involved in an activity and experiences effortless concentration and completely control over the activity (Schindehutte, Morris, and Allen, 2006). Because of that, people who experience passion produces a positive affect associated with an intense feeling of joy, fun, and happiness which result in a strong focus, singleness of purpose, self-renewal, and a deeper sense of meaning in life (Maslow, 1962; Arnould & Price, 1993). As such, passion could produce a high level of energy when engaging in an activity. Moreover, passion is an important fuel that allows people to engage in the activity for long hours over several years or sometimes a lifetime especially when times are rough and that eventually helps them attain high levels of performance (Vallerand, Salvy, Mageau, Elliot, Denis, Grouzet, and Blanchard, 2007).

Those with an entrepreneurial mindset choose a positive outlook, always expecting the best possible outcome for their business and dwelling on the optimistic aspects of a situation. Family business researchers and scholars have largely been interested in what happens to entrepreneurs near the end of their working lives (Dyer and Handler, 1994). Succession has been the most troublesome issues in family business and it also captures most of the research interest. One of the most important decisions that an entrepreneur makes concerns whether or not to employ family members. Such a decision can have a tremendous impact on the entrepreneur, the business, and the family. In some cases, when a husband and wife or other family members decide to create a business together, family and entrepreneurial dynamics are brought into play even before the business is founded.

The unique family dynamic of each family business could have an effect on how successors perceived, understand, and willing to act pertaining to their roles and their family situations. This, in turn, affects the level of passion in successors to strive for their family business. As this study focus on successors in family business whether

they passionate about their work to strive for their own family businesses, the recent theoretical work surrounding work passion in general as well as entrepreneurial passion were investigated. Together with the lack of study on work passion in the field of family business, this study aimed to shed the light in defining work passion for successors in family businesses. The research question guiding this study was “What is work passion for successors to strive for their family businesses?”

## Work Passion

Nowadays, the concept of work passion has gained attention from the research community as a field of scholarly study as well as practical application worldwide. Previously, most empirical studies were focused on a romantic passion (e.g. Hatfield and Walster, 1978), passion on personal interests (e.g. Krapp, 2002), commitment and over commitment (e.g., Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2003), or personally salient activities (e.g., Rathunde and Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). Those interests concerned with non-work activities.

Recently, the concept of passion toward an activity has shifted to a work related context especially passion pertaining to an employee in the organization. Passion towards work has been studied focusing on the extent to individuals being passionate about their job or work (e.g. Perttula, 2004; Zigarmi et al., 2009a) and their organization, and how companies can benefit from having passionate employees (e.g. Boyatzis, McKee, and Goleman, 2002). Work passion is defined as an individual's persistent, emotionally positive, meaning-based state of well-being stemming from continuous, reoccurring cognitive and affective appraisals of various job and organizational situations, which results in consistent, constructive work intentions and behaviors (Zigarmi, Nimon, Houson, Witt, and Diehl, 2009b).

Though, work passion is considered to contribute positive organizational role behaviors such as discretionary effort, altruism, and peak performance. It can make individual engaged and has a sense of energetic and effective connection with work activities. On the contrary, work passion can intrude individual because an individual may be obsessed by the activity they are engaged. In this case, the activity controls over the person as the activity takes disproportionate space in the person's identity and cause conflicts with other life domains (Gorgievski and Bakker, 2010).

Work passion allows individual to go through in deciding to engage and commit in a specific behavior. The appraisal process is an ongoing, interactive process that allows individuals to assign significance and meaning to what is happening to them (Zigarmi et al., 2009a). Individuals use cognitive and affective component to their appraisal process. As a result, the individual forms perceptions and opinions and then intentions to act, which then lead, in most cases, to action or behavior.

## Entrepreneurial Passion

Scholars and practitioners alike agree that passion is an important catalyst in the entrepreneurial process (Bird, 1989; Cardon, Zietsma, Saparito, Matherne, and Davis, 2005). An early writing of Schumpeter (1951) posited that passion drives entrepreneurial behaviors such as unconventional risk taking, uncommon intensity of focus, and unwavering belief in a dream. Passion is “perhaps the most observed phenomenon in the entrepreneurial process” (Smilor, 1997, 342). Overtime, passion has been included as an important aspect of entrepreneurship (Cardon, Sudek, and Mitteness, 2009; Chen, Yao, and Kotha, 2009). Passion provides a strong indication of how committed the entrepreneur is to put in time and effort needed to make the company success (Vallerand and Houlfort, 2003).

Entrepreneur passion is defined as consciously accessible positive feelings experience by engagement in entrepreneurial activities associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur (Cardon, Wincent et al., 2009). It also “fuel the motivation, enhance mental activity, and provide meaning to everyday work” (Brannback et al., 2006,unpublished data, p.3). Despite an obstacle, passion help entrepreneurs find creative solutions to problems (Cardon, Sudek et al., 2009). One of the key aspects of entrepreneurial passion is that it is not a generalized feeling state experienced for everything, but is instead focused upon specific objects that evoke the positive intense feelings, objects that are identity-important to the specific entrepreneur. What objects are seen as important to one individual may not be important to another, so the identity-relevance and identity-importance piece is crucial to the experience of entrepreneurial passion (Cardon, Gregoire, and Stevens, 2009, unpublished data).

Passion in entrepreneur energizes motivation and inspires individuals to persist through the trials and tribulations associated with accomplishing difficult tasks (Murnieks et al., 2012). Entrepreneurial passion inspires entrepreneurial action and relates to positive affective experiences that entrepreneur finds it meaningful and central to the self-identity of an individual (Cardon, Wincent et al., 2009). It leads both entrepreneurs and their ventures to better outcomes. The evidence of entrepreneurial passion can display through a creative problem-solving technique by producing a novel and useful ideas to various situations, or, being persistent by showing a discretionary effort despite failures, or, fully concentrated on tasks so as to achieve their goals.

Cardon, Wincent et al. (2009) explained that when a particular identity is activated, the experience of passion mobilizes an entrepreneur's self-regulation processes that are directed toward effectiveness in the pursuit of the corresponding entrepreneurial goal. This goal pursuit, in turn, involves validating the focal identity by cognitive and behavioral engagement in activities in a manner that is characteristic of intense positive emotions. Consequently, the self-regulation processes linking entrepreneurial passion and outcomes are represented by linkages involving goal-related cognitions and entrepreneurial behaviors.

Entrepreneurs have a distinctive mindset and a burning commitment in pursuit of their goals and dreams. This is what keeps them fuelled with an energy that many others find difficult to harness, an energy that encourages them to continue long after others would most likely have given up. This sense of commitment ensures that they set tasks for themselves on a regular basis and don't give up until the tasks have been completed. Those with an entrepreneurial mindset choose a positive outlook, always expecting the best possible outcome for their business and dwelling on the optimistic aspects of a situation.

## Family Business

In terms of contributions, family businesses have come to be recognized as the dominant form of enterprising throughout the world (Miller, Steier and Le-Breton Miller, 2003, 513). Family firms can be seen as major sources of technological innovations and economic progress, important creators of employment, incubators and financiers of new businesses (Zahra, 2005, 23), boosting not only the economic development of local

communities (Zahra and Sharma, 2004, 331) but having a major impact on the growth of national economies as well. Given the undeniable economic importance of family businesses, it is important to generate research that will aid in determining predictors of family business sustainability.

Being in business together is a formidable part of family business members' individual lives (Gersick, Davis, McCollom, and Lansberg, 1997, 1) and the entrepreneurial spirit as well as other attributes needed for the successful venture. Indeed, family unit encourages and socialize the younger generation into entrepreneurship through learning and doing things together. An ideal learning orientation would be that of within and between generations resulting in a commitment to transgenerational learning (Moores, 2009). This type of reciprocity allows individuals' voices to be heard and appreciated within a family. Individuals within family or family business systems are required to draw interpretations of each other's deeds, intentions, and feelings.

Family relationships and its importance to individuals in family businesses have become recognized due to the growing interest in the sociocultural context of entrepreneurship (Anderson, Jack and Drakopoulou Dodd, 2005). Previous researchers (e.g. Heck, Hoy, Poutziouris and Steier, 2008) suggested that in order to be value in studying family businesses as an entity on their own, there must be a priori acknowledgment of them being somehow fundamentally different from other types of profit generating forms of enterprise. Indeed, it is the intersection between family members, family, and the business that is believed to represent the unique set of features that explain performance differences between family and nonfamily businesses (Habbershon, Williams, and MacMillan, 2003).

Davis (1989) suggested that family businesses have high intentionality in terms of their level of perseverance and commitment to see the business succeed. Regardless of whether such family involvement leads to higher or lower performance, entrepreneurs have generally chosen to employ family members. The problem of both ownership and management succession has largely been the domain of research on family-owned businesses, for family dynamics come to the forefront during succession. Handler (1992) found that the degree of mutual respect and understanding between next generation successor and founder is a key factor affecting succession.

The unique family dynamic of each family business could have an effect on how successors perceived, understand, and willing to act pertaining to their roles and their family situations. This, in turn, affects the level of passion in successors to strive for their family business. Such dynamics affect the well-being of the family (Olson, Zuiker, Danes, Stafford, Heck, and Duncan, 2003), and the family business leader needs to ensure the positive link between the longevity of the business and the well-being of the family (Ibrahim, McGuire and Soufani 2009).

Family members often play a critical role in the creation and survival of new ventures (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; Astrachan, Zahra, and Sharma, 2003, unpublished data). Successor commitment toward family business has been identified as a key desirable attribute of their successors. However, not all family members are equally qualified or competent to make a positive contribution to their firms. Perhaps the lack in competence is compensated by their dedication and commitment toward their firms (Aldrich and Langton, 1998). Committed family members are more likely to pursue a career in their family business, be cooperative in performing their role in the leadership transition, and be satisfied with the succession process (Dyck, Mauws, Starke, and Mischke, 2002). Based on these findings, researchers have sought ways to assess and encourage successor's commitment toward the family business.

In the present study, the operational definition of family business would be a definition from Poza (2010) which defined family business as a business that has an ownership control by two or more members of a family or a partnership of families, strategic influences by family members on the management of the firm, concern for family relationships, and intent to continue business across generation. In particular, the present research seeks to explore and understand successors who pursue a career in their family business. This research intended to focus on Thai trading business, which runs and owned by family members. Furthermore, successor, a family business member who related by blood or by law that could assume managerial control of a family business when the incumbent steps down would be the subject of the present study.

### Objective and Research Method

This qualitative study is exploratory in nature and examines the meaning of work passion for successors to strive for their family businesses. There were a total of 12 interviewees from 5 companies across different industries. The gender of interviewees was equally balanced so as to have some variation of the idea in the data.

The participants were selected based on purposive and convenience sampling and their willingness to join an interview. The majority of participants were the successors that derived from Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce (TCCC) and from snowball sampling technique. Participants must first confirm that their companies were self-identified as being both family-owned by having two or more members of a family or a partnership of families active in firm management and strategic influences by those members of their firms. The respondents must be family business successors who related to the family business by blood or by law that could assume managerial control of a family business when the incumbent steps down without judgment about willingness, ability, training, or resource. The successors must be played a leading role in the family business, be delegated control responsibilities, and be integrated with the position that they would be given so they could easily become familiar with the business and would have good understanding about it.

All participants were contacted by phone or e-mail and asked if they would be willing to share their story for research and educational purposes. Then, the appointments were made for a face-to-face interview and all interviews were recorded in audio format. Each of the interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. The structure of an interview started by asking interviewee to draw a picture of how they think of being in the family business. Interviewer asked interviewee to elaborate more concerning the meaning of picture drew. Later, interviewee was asked to express how they think of work passion and what could possibly be the reasons that evoke work passion to occur. Next, interviewee was asked to give an example of tasks or activities that drive work passion for them. Lastly, interviewee was asked to think of an ideal organization that drives work passion for them to strive for family business. The interview procedure would be repeated from interviewee to interviewee until reach data saturation.

Interviewers probed during the interviews to obtain a greater understanding of the opportunity, sources of inspiration, venture creation, growth stages, and keys to success. The aim was to get first-person explanations of a specific domain of experience, here of the venturing experience, where participants in the interviews set the course of the dialogue and are free to describe their experiences in whatever level of detail they wish. Some of the interviewees may be introduced or suggested by previous interviewees, which will be based on snowball sampling technique. Data in the interviews were gathered through note taking and audio recording, then transcribed, managed, classified, and interpreted after the interview.

The data from the interviews were stored in a computer file. Researcher jotted down notes and ideas in the right margin of each page. For a key word or meaningful sentence, researcher highlighted using different colored tab for identifying its theme. Each transcript had identification at the top of the first page. Each line was numbered for purposes of analysis when referring to the sentence or meaningful word unit. The data was stored and backed them up on a hard drive and hard copy. In regard to understand experience and perception concerning work passion form the perspective of the respondent, researcher repeatedly read each of the transcripts. For any thoughts, concepts, or emergent ideas arise, researcher recorded in the right margin on the transcripts. Researcher used the meaning of analysis context as the unit of analysis for coding and also looked for description. Researcher tried to pull out the core themes related to work passion within each story, and to compare these themes across the stories. Specific words such as passion, love, excitement, and who or what I am, as well as the context were focused. This step was quite flexible and the thematic topics might be modified as the data suggested.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Gen of Successors*	Position	Type of Business
#1	F	32	1 <sup>st</sup>	Finance & Accounting Manager	Import & Export (Agricultural products)
#2	M	30	1 <sup>st</sup>	Sales &Marketing Manager	Import & Export (Agricultural products)
#3	F	27	1 <sup>st</sup>	Employee	Import & Export (Agricultural products)
#4	M	24	1 <sup>st</sup>	Employee	Import & Export (Agricultural products)
#5	F	29	1 <sup>st</sup>	Sales Manager	Production Company (Food & Beverage)
#6	M	28	1 <sup>st</sup>	R&D Manager	Production Company (Food & Beverage)
#7	M	32	1 <sup>st</sup>	General Manager	Import & Export (Flowers)
#8	F	33	1 <sup>st</sup>	Sales &Marketing Manager	Trading (Hotel Supplies)
#9	F	37	1 <sup>st</sup>	Financial Manager	Trading (Hotel Supplies)
#10	M	33	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Sales Manager	Trading (Machinery & Accessories for transportation)
#11	M	40	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Managing Director	Trading (Machinery & Accessories for transportation)
#12	F	27	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Sales representative	Trading (Machinery & Accessories for transportation)

Note: \* Generation of Successors

0 = Founder

1<sup>st</sup> = First generation of successors

2<sup>nd</sup> = Second generation of successors

## Findings

During the in-depth interviews, participants described their perceptions and experiences related to the work with their family. The research question that informed this study was to find the meaning of work passion for successors to strive for their family businesses. The research findings were based on the analysis of both verbal and nonverbal interaction from the interviews. Interviewees contributed a differing amount of information and it can be divided into nine major categories that comprise the narrative which include contentment, anxiety, excitement, concentration on developing family business, concern for both family and business, nurturing family business, peak performance, persistence to prove ability, and entrepreneurial action. Although interviewees described their work passion variously, all seem to perceive work passion as an important element for their businesses' success. Table 2 summarizes the findings of the meaning of work passion for successors to strive for their family businesses.

**Table 2:** Summary of Findings

No.	Category	Description	Sample Quote
1	Contentment (Happiness, Joy, Love)	An internal satisfaction and being at ease as a result of working and being part of the family business	I think work passion is a feeling. Feeling that make you enjoy what you're doing and turn it into happiness. It's like you're fascinated by the thing you do. Passion makes you concentrate and reach to the goal. (#10)
2	Anxiety (Stress, Worried, Pressure, Guilt)	A negative affective state that result from a rigid persistence due to too much concern on the family business	Expectation could produce pressure and yeah sometime you get too stressed because you put too much attention on it. (#2)
3	Excitement (Eagerness, Enthusiasm)	An eagerness and enthusiasm to develop the family business	It's a fire that energizes you. Fire that make you never afraid of anything. Fire that gives you hope that someday you'll reach to your success. (#12)
4	Concentration on developing family business	The determination in encouraging creativity and flexibility in the working process so as to improve and sustain family business	There's a drive that leads me to be fully concentrated to my work. It's a devotion that I'm willing to give to prove to my family that I'm going to make it better. With the best education and real life experience that my parents give me, this company must get better and better. (#9)

**Table 2:** Summary of Findings (Cont.)

No.	Category	Description	Sample Quote
5	Concern for both family and business	The contemplation on the affect of interactions between family and business	Sometimes our family argued in the meeting room and it was really intense. . .but the most important thing that we all kept in mind was to end it in the meeting room. We won't fight anymore outside that room and never ever took it personally. It is so hard to do but we've tried our best. (#9)
6	Nurturing family business	The interest and willingness to take care and develop the family business	We have a dinner talk everyday. During dinner we talked and shared our experiences together. Basically, I telling dad and mum about what I do on that day and ask their opinions in return... This help encouraged our family relationship and boost my confidence to perform on behalf of the owner and I also wants to see it grow in this near future. (#7)
7	Peak performance	The high performance of successors functioning at their personal best for family business	. . . I really like the feeling when I can finish the project. Sure it did make me headache and lack of sleep while doing it but the outcome is worth every sweat especially when I gain trust from my dad. (#9)

**Table 2:** Summary of Findings (Cont.)

No.	Category	Description	Sample Quote
8	Persistence to prove ability	A strong desire to prove to others that one has an ability to take care and flourish the family business.	People usually think that I can't do it or I'm not competent enough. I learn and I grew over time. Failure is common, it'd rather make me tougher and tougher. I am strong enough to fight for what our family business is thriving for. This business is very important to us, I'll try my best to make it works. (#10)
9	Entrepreneurial action	A behavior or activity that carries subjective meaning to the successor which viewed through the lens of sensing and being the owner of the business	. . . every move has an impact. I need to think and act carefully so not to trigger any conflict to family and company. I'm not work as a day by day basis, being owner is different. We need to put ourselves in the other's shoes. Being owner is about what you can and what you have to offer to the world by starting from our employee well-being. It's not just getting from others, but it's all about giving. . . (#9)

There were 9 core ideas derived from the interviews, which could be categorized into 3 main themes based on its characteristics. Zigarmi et al. (2009a) suggested the concept of how work passion occurs as individuals use their cognitive and affective appraisal, which result in the intention or behavior of successors, which typically in this study revolved around opportunity evaluation and their venture growth.

The first theme was the affective component, which refers to the feelings that successors have when passionately perform for their family business. The experiences successors had in their work had been affected them which resulted in their behaviors and attitudes. Thus, successors' feelings might vary upon the situations or events they experienced. The intense affective state was reported accompanies with cognitive and behavioral activities of successors. Findings from participants revealed mix feelings while passionately working in their family businesses. The core ideas of affective states were contentment, anxiety, and excitement.

The second theme was the cognitive component, which refers to the knowledge structures that successors use to make an assessment, judgment, or decision involving their family businesses. The cognitive mechanisms could have a critical role in what successors think, say, and act. Hence, successors' cognition is a critical determinant in understanding their behaviors. Participants from this study informed that working in family businesses has led them to have a high concentration on developing the businesses to reach its excellence and grow over time. Not only that successor was concerned on developing the business, they also put high importance to all possible effect that might intrude their family and business. The core ideas from the finding were as follow; concentration on developing family business, and concern for both family and business.

The last theme was the intent component, which refers to the actions, reactions, and intentions of successors in response to the experience of work passion in working with their SMEs family businesses. Developer identity seems to best describe as a meaningful role of family business' successor. The developer role identity of successors is cognitive schemas of interpretations and behavioral prescriptions that allow individual to understand what it means to be successors. Once an individual reflects on what it means to be successors of the family business, they reference the meanings and behaviors associated with his or her developer identity.

The findings suggested that passionate successors tend to show high commitment toward their family businesses as a desire to nurture both family and business. They also revealed that work passion could drive them to perform at an utmost performance to benefit both subsystems of family and business. Moreover, they tend to show their high persistence in order to prove their self-efficacy toward their role. Nonetheless, work passion was reported to encourage the sense of ownership to them, which in turn lead successors to perform with the heart of being true the entrepreneur. The core ideas from the finding were as follow; nurturing family business, peak performance, persistence to prove ability, and entrepreneurial action.

Zigarmi, Houson, and Witt. (2009) explained the three components of work passion in a sense that affective component is focused on the feelings that one has about the organizational life, while cognitive component associated with the logical mental conclusions about the organizational life, and behavioral component referred to performance or intentions that one choose to perform as a result of how one perceive what ought to do in the organizational life.

### **Affective and cognitive**

Consistent with previous scholarly literature that work passion is in a form of an intense feeling that could enhance either positive or negative feelings or mixed feelings during engaging in work activities. It is an individual moods shift, which produced by external events (Watson, Tellegen, and Tellegen, 1988). Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) suggested that the experiences people have in their work settings often affect them emotionally. These affective experiences have direct influences on people's behaviors and attitudes (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), which can be attributed to entrepreneurial activities. Participants reported that they have experienced happiness, enjoyment, and love during engaging in their work activities. Participants revealed that they are happy and proud to be part of their family business. The roles as family business members have fulfilled the meaning of their lives.

On the other hand, some participants reported that an extreme intense emotion might stimulate an obsessive response that could lead individual to have a disproportionate space in their lives. Participants reported that sometimes they experienced negative emotions due to too much concern on their family businesses. Such negative emotions

were reported as a general dimension of subjective distress and unpleasurable engagement, which include anger, guilt, fear, pressure, and nervousness (Watson and Tellegen, 1985; Waston, et al., 1988; George and Brief, 1996). Although, work passion could drive individual to concentrate and perform at an utmost capacity but a rigid form of those persistence could also lead to negative affective states such as anxiety, stress, and guilt which might eventually result in damaged self and work outcomes.

These findings were consistent with Jones and Robinson (2009), Love and Cugnon (2009) along with Philippe, Vallerand, Houlfort, Lavigne, and Donahue (2010) that passion is an emotion or a strong desire that one has for certain activities. The feelings evoked were acting as motivation energy to an individual that is closely associated with drive, enthusiasm, limitless energy, fire, push, etc. The consequential of an intense feeling leading to motivational energy were supported by Day (2004).

Moreover, as Zigarmi et al. (2009b) provided a clear definition of how work passion process was consistent with the finding in this study. Participants believed that work passion came from their internal force that could be provoked by many stimuli that they find it important. They also stated that the reason that they were willing to perform the activities was because of their inner contentment allow them to do so. Successors used their cognitive components to make an assessment, judgment, or decision involving opportunity evaluation and venture growth (Mitchell, Busenitz, Lant, McDougall, Morse, and Smith, 2002). Baron and Ward (2004) suggested that cognitive mechanisms could have a critical role in all aspects by which people think, say, and act. The cognitive mechanism includes how individual collect, organize, scrutinize, interpret, and integrate information (Allison and Hayes, 1996), hence, successors' cognition is a critical determinant in understanding their behaviors.

In respect to work passion psychological concepts, Zigarmi et al. (2009b) provided a clear conception that people are meaning-oriented and meaning creating, they are constantly evaluating the environment from the standpoint of their own well-being and reacting rationally (cognition) and emotionally (affect) to those evaluations. Participants indicated that work passion developed from the natural inner inclination to a particular aspect that the passion brings. Those aspects related mostly to their work, their families, and the role of being a successor.

Thus, the natural inner inclination towards an activity has led individual to experience happiness, joy, and emotionally positive during work engagement. As expected, if the work-related activity remains in a person's control, harmonious work passion would induce the positive feelings and positive work-related consequences (Vallerand et al., 2003). On the contrary, participants reported that work passion could intrude their lives because they may be too obsessed by the activity they are engaged. Gorgievski and Bakker (2010) explained that the activity might control over the person if they let the activity takes disproportionate space in the person's identity and cause conflicts with other life domains. Participants also pointed out that they have a hard time dealing with an intrusive thought related to the business that sometimes unwanted and stimulated obsessive passion.

Entrepreneurial literature provided a more insight in explaining work passion for successors in family business context. Successors were seen as an entrepreneur who is involving recognition and exploitation of the business activities (Baum and Locke, 2004). Developing the business beyond their initial survival and success seems to be the major focus of all participants. Both entrepreneurial passion and work passion in general from the previous literature were complementing each other in understanding the concept of work passion for successors to strive in their family businesses. As passion is dualistic in nature, work passion for successors is the same. It could either drive positive or negative state of emotions, which could drive one to behave accordingly. Nonetheless, Chang (2001) suggested that when employees are passionate about their work, their organizations thrive. Not only that passionate people enjoy what they do but they also show their high devotion to the customers, which in turn benefit the whole organization and could lead to organization vitality. Passion in entrepreneur would contribute even greater outcomes. Work passion in successors not only motivated themselves but also their co-workers, leaders, partners, investors, customers, and family. The quality of entrepreneurial passion allowed successors to possess a distinct mindset to choose positive outlook and always expect the best possible outcome for their businesses and dwelling on the point on the optimistic aspects of the situation faced.

Passionate successors showed their determinant in encouraging creativity and flexibility in their working process so as to improve the whole organization. As successors strongly believe in their roles, they tend to perform in a productive manner to create

values and benefits to both family and business. Despite countless rejection of their ideas from the senior family business members, successors persisted to gain approval. Participants reported that their thought and mind usually involve in finding the way to improve the weak point of the business, and also to maintain the strength and sustain it for the sake of their family and business outcomes.

### **Behavioral**

The developer role identity of successors is cognitive schemas of interpretations and behavioral prescriptions that allow individual to understand what it means to be successors. Murnieks and Mosakowski (2006) and Cardon et al. (2009) asserted that entrepreneurs' passion is linked to entrepreneurial identities. Once an individual reflects on what it means to be successors of family business, they reference the meanings and behaviors associated with his or her developer identity. This has led participants to engage in an activity related to nurturing, growing, and expanding the family business. As they understand their roles and know what is expected from them, successors showed their determinant and persistence performance in order to maintain and sustain their family legacy through time. Even in a rough time when there were conflicts among family business members, their work passion has helped them manage themselves and pull conscious together so as to solve those conflicts.

The desire to take care of the family business is clearly seen in most participants. Family business would find it hard to continue the business if there is a lack of concern from family business members. Previous scholarly studies suggested that the successor's interest in and willingness to take over the family business play an important role in the successful transition of the business from one generation to the next (Dumas, Dupuis, Richer, and St.-Cyr, 1995; Stavrou, 1999). Successful family businesses recognize that taking care of family relationships is critical to keeping the business running smoothly.

Moreover, work passion could also lead successors to perform to their utmost capabilities. Work passion has been explained as an underlying of the major motivational force of an individual (Vallerand et al., 2007). Passion is an important fuel that allows people to engage in the activity for long hours over several years or sometimes a lifetime especially when times are rough and that eventually helps them attain high levels of performance (Vallerand et al., 2007). Peak performance is referred to a high performance

when successors functioning at their personal best in their businesses. In describing peak experience, participants described in term of they were excited, enthusiastic, energize, fire, confident, proud, focus, and tension when performing.

Participants also reported that during passionately engage in the activities they experienced a flow like state, which they described as lost in time and space. The concept of flow was supported by previous studies of Csikszentmihalyi (1978), Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993) that it is a desirable state that individual would feel completely immerse into the activity and experiences effortless concentration and completely control over the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982, 1990; Schindelhutte et al., 2006). It is a state of focused energy, a transcendent state of well-being, involving a spiritual dimension and a euphoric sensation and ecstatic moments (Waitley, 1991), and is characterized by total focus and absorption of transcendent awareness (Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Jackson and Marsh, (1996) further explained that the positive experiential state occurred as successors were totally connected to the performance which their personal skills equal task required challenges.

## Conclusion

Work passion has been reported as an important element that allows successors to continue against the odds and overcome fatigue and pain to accomplish their tasks. Despite countless denial and ideas rejection from other family business members, successors showed their persistence to prove their abilities in order to gain trust from others. Trust in the successor's ability is considered as an important determinant of effective successions (Donckels and Lambrecht, 1999; Matthews et al., 1999; Dickinson, 2000). Locke and Latham (2002) supported that challenging goals can increase persistence toward work in stable and predictable situations. Participants reported that the turndown or rejection of their ideas were sometimes hurt their feelings and lose confidence. Even so, the work of work passion has been emphasized the strong desire of successors to show their discretionary effort and devotion to prove to others that they have an ability to take care and flourish the business.

Consistency with previous literature of passion in the work related context that entrepreneurial passion is a key ingredient in keeping participants fuelled with an energy that many others find difficult to harness, an energy that encourages them to be

invested their time, effort, costs, blood, and sweat. The presence of work passion fosters their capacity to sustain entrepreneurial action, particularly in the face of the challenges, difficulties and stresses of entrepreneurship. The combination of work passion through affective and cognitive components had influenced on how successors think and act. This study found that successors displayed and carried entrepreneurial charisma by holding the subjective meaning of being successors of the family businesses which they viewed through the lens of sensing and being the owner of its businesses. Entrepreneurial actions are actions that related to entrepreneurial activity, which in case of successor is to grow and develop the family business. It is a behavior that is a direct function of declarative knowledge (knowledge about facts and things), procedural knowledge (knowing how to do something as well as what to do), and motivation (Borgman, Ilgen, and Klimoski, 2003). To explain, Mitchell, Busenitz, Bird, Gaglio, McMullen, Morse, and Smith (2007) described entrepreneurial action as an approach used to explain entrepreneurial cognition. It is a focal, creative, psychic event where knowledge, thought, feeling and imagination are fused into action (Goel and Karri, 2007).

Existing research provide various work-related outcomes of passion which coincide with the research findings. The findings suggest that work passion has led participants to fully concentrate and absorption to the work activities. As the involvement of entrepreneurial identity, participants showed their high commitment towards tasks and the overall organization as devotions and fearless of the obstacles. Moreover, work passion was reportedly enhancing the learning capability and personal growth. Despite disruptions and failures, participants learn to create a positive mindset to enabling themselves to spot the opportunity around them and take up the challenges to develop their personal growth over time. This notion has been supported, for example, by the study of Rousseau and Vallerand (2008) that harmonious passion is positively contributed to positive psychological well-being such as life satisfaction, meaning in life, positive relations with others, autonomy, and personal growth.

Once the effort and devotion that one has been invested through their work been noticed, it started to develop a sense of value toward one self as a result of the satisfaction one has for their own action. Participants also reported that not only the value they give to themselves but work passion also lead others especially senior family members to value participants as a valuable family business member. Participants

reported that work passion was fundamentally a matter of experiencing a sense of purpose in life. In the pursuit of family business success, work passion provided a direction about various aspects in lives that help them focus to the right point at the right time. Moreover, work passion also reported as encouraging a sense of ownership. Participants expressed a strong psychological ownership towards their family businesses as they feel proud, satisfied, committed, responsible, and passionate about family ventures. Interestingly, participants revealed that work passion helped them built the confidence in their own skills and potential. However, if the skills or potentials of an individual are not utilized properly, one might find it frustrated and being useless to the organization.

It is evident that the characteristic of work passion for successors in family business is a combination of both entrepreneurial passion and general work passion together with the unique aspects particularly presented in family business. Successors continued to work in and on, and to grow their family businesses in the face of challenges, stress, pressure, crises, and that their motivating work passion for their family business contributed to their continued entrepreneurial action. In doing so, all family business members may help each other encourage and provide the supportive environment for building up work passion for successors to strive for their family businesses. The supportive behaviors may ranging from a healthy communication where everyone respect, listen, and honest to each other, providing challenging and meaningful tasks to successors, to have faith, trust, and be fair to all family business members.

## Implications and Future Research

The main contribution of this research was that it provided the meaning of work passion for successors to strive for their family business. By using the inductive interpretations of successor themselves, supported and integrated with the use of extant theoretical frameworks concerning work passion, researcher could enhance the engagement of theories with the sense-making processes of successors (Lopez and Willis, 2004). As such, this provided a richer and perhaps more complete understanding of how successors experience work passion. As passion is dualistic in nature, it could either drives positive or negative organizational outcomes. Successors might sometimes experience negative emotions due to too much concern on their family businesses or

might had a rigid form of persistence toward and activity, which could lead to negative affective states such as anxiety, stress, and guilt. But those negative states were not implied that successors had a low level or no work passion.

As the two manifestations have different consequences for successors, researcher proposes some practices that could link to the developmental of work passion. Family and business might support successors to spend time together with other family business members through family meetings, visit the business, join family meals are likely to be supportive activities for engaging successors in business projects and the family.

Findings from the study revealed that successors want to join the family business in a way that others accept their professional capacity. To enhance that, family business might establish a fair rules, structures, and supportive environment for the advance in their career development. Moreover, senior family business members could show their support by supporting their young generation in career decisions and discussing options for their professionals' development with openness and honesty. Nonetheless, it is important for successors to feel that they have some authority in making the decisions. It is important to respect successors' voice and provide the authority in making the decision according to their skills and experience. Family business needs to set a clear boundary and roles to avoid any conflict that might arise.

This study suggested that in experiencing work passion, successors generally experience strong levels of feeling that create motivation energy to an individual that is closely associated with drive, enthusiasm, limitless energy, fire, push. However, the antecedent that activates those feeling seem to build from a very young age of successors. Senior family members are the key person who is able to influence and incubate the sense of being good member of family business in their young members. In the other words, senior family members are identified as the mentor to their successors. Mentors could help encouraging successors to elevate higher responsibility and authority. Importantly, mentors should express confidence in successors' ability and encourage them to develop their own skills, goals, and strategies for personal success and the family business. This study pointed out that mentoring and proving trusting environment from an early age of their next generation family members could enhance a positive family climate that deems important to the success and sustain family business.

A primary strength of this study is given that little literature exists on work passion especially in the field of family business. This has added to the contribution to the body of knowledge on succession in family businesses in Thailand. Additionally, another strength of the study incorporates the participant composition of the sample. The majority of samples were comprised of successors who are adulthood that have an advanced ability to discuss complex facets of relationship dynamics given their educational and professional training.

Although the research has uncovered some beneficial findings in the study of family business succession, there are still some limitations to the studies that must be considered. Firstly, this study only focused on the family business in Thailand and the using of convenience sample has limited this study from generalized the data beyond the sample. Therefore, in order to make the study more general and applicable to various countries, future research should use different location settings to explore the phenomena. It would also be worth pursuing the question of whether culture affects family business management in general, and succession in particular.

The answers that participants provided through an interview might not reflect the true answer. This might because they wanted to express themselves and create an image as being mature and positive.

## Key Points

1. Work passion for successors in family businesses was defined in nine categories: contentment, anxiety, excitement, concentration on developing family business, concern for both family and business, nurturing family business, peak performance, persistence to prove ability, and entrepreneurial action.
2. Successors focused on developing and taking care of the family and the business.
3. Work passion helps successors built the confidence in their own skills and potential.

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