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The Effect of Nepotism on Engagement and Turnover Intention in Lebanese Family Businesses

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of nepotism on employee engagement and turnover intention in Lebanese family businesses. Using a convenient sampling method, 378 participants from different administrative levels, departments and sectors within Lebanese family businesses were selected to complete the study questionnaire. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to analyse the data. The study's findings revealed that nepotism has a significant negative influence on employee engagement, meaning that when nepotism is present within Lebanese family businesses, employees are less likely to be engaged in their work. Additionally, the results indicated a significant positive relationship between nepotism and turnover intention. In other words, when nepotism exists, employees are more inclined to have the intention to leave their jobs. Therefore, it is crucial for family businesses in Lebanon to establish and implement policies and practices that foster fairness, transparency, and merit-based decision-making. By doing so, these businesses can enhance employee engagement and reduce turnover intention among their employees. The implications of this study can be valuable for Lebanese family business owners and managers seeking to mitigate the impact of nepotism on employee engagement and turnover intentions.

Keywords: Nepotism, Employee engagement, Turnover intention, Lebanese family businesses, Lebanon

1. Introduction

Nepotism is the term used when a person is hired or promoted in an organization based on family connections regardless of his or her knowledge, skills, achievements, and experience (Isaac et al., 2019). This practice involves owners or managers favouring their relatives in the workplace by providing them with jobs based on their kinship ties rather than their merit or qualifications (Bellow, 2003, Jaskiewicz et al., 2013). Many people see this as an unfair practice that prioritizes familial ties over more objective factors like skill set or level of professionalism when making hiring decisions (Chukwuma et al., 2019; Datta Sai et al., 2018).

Previous research has indicated that nepotism can create numerous issues within an organization. According to Chegini (2009) and Karakose (2014), nepotism can cause a decline in motivation and

morale, employee dissatisfaction, burnout, mistrust, depression, and other negative emotions. Additionally, (Folami, 2017; Sheehan & Reeve, 2020; Teixeira da Silva et al., 2019)

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found that nepotism can result in negative perceptions of the workplace, leading to decreased levels of commitment and engagement. Some research suggests that nepotism is especially harmful to the longterm health and financial stability of family businesses (Singh et al., 2021). Studies revealed that nepotism has a devastating effect on HR practices, employee satisfaction, and turnover rates (Carter et al., 2017).

Existing research indicates that nepotism is prevalent in family-owned businesses, where family members receiving preferential treatment in hiring, performance appraisal and promotions. (Cruz et al., 2011; Gersick et al., 1997; Jaskiewicz et al., 2013). This issue has been identified as one of the major challenges faced by family-owned businesses (Aina and Nicoletti 2018). Despite this, family businesses remain a crucial contributor to the global economy (Pukall & Calabrò, 2014), generating 70-90% of the global GDP, employing nearly 60% of the workforce (Family Firm Institute 2017), and accounting for 65-90% of all businesses worldwide (Salvato et al., 2019). Given their economic importance, it is imperative to address the specific challenges and issues faced by these businesses, including the issue of nepotism.

Nepotism is a widespread practice in Arab and Middle Eastern family businesses, and Lebanon is no exception, as supported by various studies (Bodolica et al., 2015; Sidani & Thornberry, 2013; Sonfield et al., 2016). El-Achkar et al. (2015) further reveals that approximately 60% of family-owned businesses in Lebanon engage in nepotistic practices, often appointing family members to key leadership positions. Moreover, a study by Sidani and Thornberry (2013) and Sonfield et al. (2016) on nepotism in the Arab world, including Lebanon, found that when nepotism is based purely on family biases, it can reduce the productivity of the family business human capital, leading to high employee disengagement, dissatisfaction, and turnover. Given the significant contribution of family businesses to Lebanon's economy, accounting for 85% of the private sector and 1.05 million jobs (Ministry of Economy and Trade, 2014), it is crucial to address the challenges these businesses face. One such challenge is the impact of nepotism on employee behavioural outcomes. Thus, the purpose of this research is to examine the effects of nepotism on employee engagement and turnover intention in Lebanese family businesses.

1.1. Literature review

1.1.1 Nepotism

Nepotism, according to (Wong and Klemer, 1994), is the hiring and advancement of unqualified or underqualified relatives simply by virtue of their relationship with an employee, officer, or shareholder in the firm. The term "nepo" is derived from Latin and conveys the meaning of "nephew," referring to the privilege of hiring family members or close (Ford and McLaughlin, 1986).

Moreover, nepotism is described by (Abdalla et al., 1998) as the illegitimate exploitation of power, influence, and status by an individual in a position of authority within a system to benefit their family and friends. This definition is supported by (Araslı et al., 2008) who stated that nepotism entails using one's power to give preferential treatment to personal connections instead of qualified individuals within an organization. To put it plainly, nepotism is the hiring or promotion of a candidate based on relationship ties regardless of his or her knowledge, skills, abilities, achievements, experience (Isaac et al., 2019). Originally, in the business world, nepotism initially referred to the hiring of a relative of a company's owner (Jain et al., 2022).

In this study, nepotism is defined as the employment of relatives without adequate qualifications (Jones, 2004), and over-rewarding family members more than non-family members and advancing to higher positions (Charles, 2014).

1.1.2 Engagement

Engagement, according to (McCracken & Bradbury, 1981), is an individual's mental focus while performing a job. Furthermore, Chen (1992) define it as a person's emotional and rational connection to an organization. Moreover, May et al. (2004) describe engagement as the connection between an individual and their work, where the person utilizes and displays their physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities in their job performance.

Xu et al. (2013) stated that engagement encompasses an employee's organizational identity, work attitude, mental state, and responsibility effectiveness. In a similar vein, Xiao & Duan (2014) noted that engagement is comprised of an employee's initiative, loyalty, effectiveness, recognition, and commitment. Additionally, Schaufeli et al. (2022) defined engagement as a positive, fulfilling, workrelated state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption.

1.1.3 Turnover Intention

There is no universally accepted definition of turnover intention, as various authors have defined it in different ways. According to (Tett and Meyer, 1993), turnover intention is a conscious and deliberate wilfulness to leave the organization. Moreover, (Hom and Kinicki, 2001) defined turnover intentions as "an individual's desire to terminate his or her employment with an organization." Likewise, (Lee and Mitchell, 2004) defined turnover intentions as "an individual's determination to leave an organization."

Furthermore, (Wang and Chen, 2007) defined turnover intention as "an employee's stated willingness to leave an organization within a specified time period." Similarly, turnover intention as described by (Lambert and Hogan, 2009), is the cognitive process of deciding of quitting a job and the desire of leaving the job. Alatawi (2017) described turnover intention as the degree to which employees intend to stop their membership with their organizations. In simple terms, turnover intention indicates the intention to leave the job in a period ahead (Zhang et al.,2018).

1.2. Research questions

The researcher will briefly summarize the research problem of the current study in the following main research questions:

What is the effect of nepotism on employee engagement in Lebanese family businesses?

What is the effect of nepotism on turnover intention in Lebanese family businesses?

1.3. Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development

In this section, the researcher reviews some empirical studies that relate to the subject matter which is the effect of nepotism on employee engagement and turnover intention in Lebanese family businesses.

1.3.1 The effect of nepotism on employee engagement

Chukwuma et al., (2019) conducted a study to explore the effect of nepotism on employee emotional engagement within the context of private radio broadcasting firms in Southeast Nigeria. The finding from the inferential analysis indicated that nepotism had an insignificant negative relationship with employee emotional engagement in selected private radio firms in Southeast Nigeria. Additionally, Kawo and torun (2020) investigated the relationship between nepotism and employee disengagement across Ethiopian organizations. The regression analysis

revealed that nepotistic relationships significantly and positively contributed to disengagement. Lim et al., (2023) conducted a research study that aimed to investigate the role of psychological contract violation as a mediator or the "why" behind the relationship between nepotism and workplace commitment, with psychological attachment and turnover intention serving as affective and behavioural representations of workplace commitment. Using partial least squares structural equation modelling on a two-wave (time lag) survey of a sample of 488 frontline employees in the Indian hotel industry as a case, this study proactive mitigates common method bias while revealing that psychological contract violation acts as a complementary mediator between nepotism and workplace commitment in the form of psychological attachment and turnover intention. Based on the above literature review, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: Nepotism has a negative effect on Engagement in Lebanese family businesses

1.3.2 The effect of nepotism on turnover intention

In their research, (Elsayed and Daif, 2019) utilized the cause-effect model (Ishikawa diagram) to investigate the impact of nepotism on employee perceptions in the tourism and hospitality industry of Egypt. The study employed a qualitative analysis with purposive sampling technique, conducting interviews with human resource managers in selected hotels and travel agencies in Egypt. The main outcome of the study showed that nepotism has significant negative effects on employees in the tourism and hospitality sector. This includes reduced job satisfaction, increased job stress, decreased job commitment, and decreased organizational citizenship in the industry, leading to a decline in performance and increased employee turnover. The results also revealed that nepotism practices cause high levels of stress in the workplace, resulting in low job satisfaction and a higher likelihood of quitting. These practices can also result in high turnover costs and loss of talent in the industry.

In another study conducted by (Abdelghany and Abdel-Hafez 2021), the aim was to examine the effects of nepotism on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to quit among nursing staff. The study included all nursing staff working in Main Assiut University Hospital in Egypt with total number (no=1647). The collected data were verified using the statistical software package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 24. Descriptive statistics were used to present the data in percentages, mean and standard deviation were calculated as well. The majority of the nurse managers (83.5 %) had low level of nepotism perception, while the majority of staff nurses had a high level (88.2%). There was a highly significant positive correlation of nepotism with intention to quit, and there was a highly significant negative correlation with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The findings of the study indicated that nepotism had highly statistically adverse effects on almost all dimensions of the current study (nepotism paralyzed individual job satisfaction and leading to intention to quit among nursing staff). Based on the above literature review, the following hypothesis were developed:

H2: Nepotism has a positive effect on turnover intention in Lebanese family businesses

2. Method

2.1. Sample / Participant

The research population for this study consists of Lebanese family-owned businesses. According to the World Bank's 2022 report, 85% of the 225,000 businesses in Lebanon are family-owned, resulting in approximately 191,250 family-owned businesses in the country. Therefore, the research population for this study consists of these 191,250 Lebanese family-owned businesses.

The sample for this study will comprise employees from different levels, departments, and sectors within Lebanese family-owned businesses. The selection of the sample will be based on a convenient sampling method, which involves individuals from the target population who meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or willingness to participate (Dörnyei, 2007). The researcher used a convenience sample due to the efforts, time, and research budget constraints.

2.2. Instrument(s)

Cochran's formula was used to determine the appropriate sample size for the study. This approach is particularly suitable for large populations, and it helps to identify the optimal number of participants necessary to attain a desired level of precision and confidence in the research findings (Cochran, 1977). Cochran's formula is given by the following: n=N/[1+N(e)2], where n represents the sample size, N represents the population size, and e represents the margin of error. In this study, the formula resulted in a sample size of 398 participants: n= 191,250/ [1+191,250(0.05)2] = 398.

The research aims to achieve its objectives by using a structured survey questionnaire. The questionnaire utilizes closed-ended questions to gain a clear understanding of the participants' thoughts and feelings. The original questionnaire was in English and translated into Arabic. The questionnaire design includes a 5-point Likert scale, with "5" indicating "Strongly Agree" and "1" indicating "Strongly Disagree." The questionnaire was made available in an electronic format and distributed to a diverse set of fields through several social media platforms, including Facebook and WhatsApp groups using Google forms. The final number of valid responses was 378 after eliminating invalid ones.

Variables are measured as follows: Nepotism was measured via six items in reference to the study by (Kawo and Torun, 2020). Engagement: Engagement was measured via eight 8 items in reference to the study by (Schaufeli & Bakker (2003). Turnover Intention: Turnover Intention was measured via six items in reference to the study by (Bothma and Roodt, 2013).

2.3. Data collection

To gather data for the study, the researcher used multiple data collection methods. The first method was to review existing research and relevant literature from reputable journals to collect secondary data. This data was used to gain a broader understanding of the topic and relevant to the study’s main question "What is the effect of nepotism on employee engagement, and turnover intention".

Additionally, the researcher collected primary data through a structured, closed-ended questionnaire to gain a more specific understanding of the topic and the population under study. The questionnaire was made available in an electronic format and distributed to a diverse set of fields through several social media platforms, including Facebook and WhatsApp groups using Google forms. The researcher also made phone calls and conducted site visits to increase participation rates and explain the study's purpose and the time required to complete the questionnaire. The final number of valid responses was 378 after eliminating invalid ones.

2.4 Data Analysis

The researcher analysed the data using a variety of statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modelling. SPSS 27 and AMOS 27 software were employed to process the data, evaluate the variables, and obtain comprehensive insights.

3. Results

3.1 Profiling of the respondents

This section presents a profile of the respondents. The respondents were characterized based on gender, age, level of income, employment status, years of experience, job position, and level of education. The profile of respondents is given in table 1.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents (N=378)

Attribute	Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	160	42.3
	Male	218	57.7
Age	20 -30 years	114	30.1
	31 -40 years	158	41.8
	41 -50 years	85	22.5
	51 -60 years	13	3.4
	More than 60	8	2.1
Income level	Less than $500	191	50.5
	$501 - $1000	102	27.0
	$1001 - $2000	47	12.4
	$2001 - $3000	24	6.3
	More than $3000	14	3.7
Employment Status	Full Time	264	70
	Part Time	114	30
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	226	59.8
	5-10 years	107	28.3
	11-15 years	28	7.4
	16-20 years	11	2.9
	More than 20years	6	1.6
Job Position	Non-Managerial	67	17.7
	Operational Level	99	26.2
	Middle Level Manager	178	47.1
	Top Level Manager	34	9.0
Educational Level	Secondary School	87	23.0
	Bachelors' Degree	226	60.0
	Masters' Degree	31	8.0

Doctoral Degree	6	1.5
Others	28	7.5

Table1 indicates that out of the 378 remaining respodents,42.3% were female and 57.7% were male. Concerning age, the largest group of participants falls within the age range of 31 to 40 years, accounting for 41.8%, followed by the age group of 20 to 30 years, which represents 30.1%. Participants aged between 41 to 50 years make up 22.5%, while 3.4% of participants are aged between 51 to 60 years. The remaining percentage of 2.1% is for participants aged 61 years and above.

Further, Table 3 displays the distribution of respondents according to their monthly income level. The largest group of respondents, which makes up 50.5% of the total, earn less than $500 per month. The second-largest group, accounting for 27.0%, falls within the income range of $501 to $1000 per month. About 12.4% of the respondents have a monthly income level between $1001 and $2000, while 6.3% are in the $2001 to $3000 income bracket. The remaining 3.7% receive a monthly income of more than $3000. Moreover, table 3 shows the frequency distribution of employment status. According to the results, the majority of individuals in the sample work full-time, with 264 individuals (70%) falling into this category. The remaining 114 individuals (30%) are part-time employees.

As depicted in Table 3, the largest group of individuals in the sample falls into the category of less than 5 years of experience, with 226 individuals (59.8%). The category of 5-10 years of experience includes 107 individuals (28.3%), while the category of 11-15 years of experience comprises 28 individuals (7.4%). The categories of 16-20 years and more than 20 years of experience include only 11 individuals (2.9%) and 6 individuals (1.6%), respectively. Regarding job positions, the results show that the majority of individuals, 59.58%, hold Top-level managerial positions. This is followed by Middle-level managers, accounting for 19.58% of the sample. Operational level positions make up 9.58% of the sample, while Non-managerial positions account for the smallest percentage, 11.26%.

With respect to the educational levels, the majority of individuals in the sample have a bachelor's degree, with 226 individuals (60%) falling into this category. The second-largest group is those with a secondary school, accounting for 87 individuals (23%). The category of master's degree comprises 31 individuals (8%), while the category of doctoral degree includes only 6 individuals (1.5 %). The remaining 28 individuals (7.5%) have other educational levels.

3.2 Reliability Testing

As mentioned earlier, this research will test reliability through calculating Cronbach's alpha for the constructs and will adopt the rules proposed by (Hayajneh et al., 1994) to interpret Cronbach's alpha; i.e., less than 0.5, the reliability is low, between 0.5 and 0.8, the reliability is moderate, greater than 0.8, the reliability is high. Table 2 presents the results of reliability test for every construct.

Table 2: Reliability Test Scores

Construct	Construct Identifier	Initial number of items	Items carried for further analysis	Cronbach's Alpha
Nepotism	NEP	6	4	.883
Engagement	ENG	8	7	.856
Turnover Intention	TI	6	4	.717

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the reliability scores for all constructs were higher than the desired level of 0.5. The values of Cronbach's alpha for the constructs ranged from 0.717 to 0.883. Specifically, Cronbach's alpha values were 0.883 for nepotism, 0.750 for job satisfaction, and 0.717 for

turnover intention. The findings demonstrate that there is a significant similarity among the items assessing each factor. The reliability measures for all constructs were within an acceptable range, either moderate or high. Therefore, the results suggest that the scales are internally reliable and that the constructs can be used confidently for further analysis.

3.3 Testing the assumptions of SEM analysis.

In order to use SEM in the research, certain assumptions must be met explicitly such as normality (Aplin & Leveto, 1977). The research will test normality assumptions through skewness and kurtosis. (B. Brown et al., 2016) argues that "skew implies the data is asymmetrical about its mean; by which positive skew indicates that most of the scores are below the mean, and negative skew indicates just the opposite"; whereas kurtosis implies the peakedness of data, "by which a positive kurtosis is an indication of heavier tails and higher peak, and a negative kurtosis indicates the opposite". Statistical research has shown that skewness and kurtosis, affect inferential statistics, especially the mean, the standard deviation, correlations, and variance/covariance estimates (Jayasundera et al., 2017). (Lavy, 2019) claims that recommended values of skewness should be between -1 and +1; whereas for kurtosis it should be between -1.5 and +1.5. The Values of skewness and kurtosis for each variable in this research were calculated and demonstrated in table 3

Table 3: Skewness and Kurtosis Scores for Constructs

Construct	Skewness	Kurtosis
Nepotism	-0.754	0.732
Engagement	-0.440	0.530
Turnover Intention	-0.731	0.283

Table 3 displays the skewness and kurtosis scores for three constructs: Nepotism, Engagement, and Turnover Intention. The table reveals that all the values of skewness and kurtosis are within the acceptable range for all factors (i.e., between -1 and +1 for skewness and between -1.5 and +1.5 for kurtosis), indicating that the data is assumed to be normal. Specifically, for the nepotism factor the skew value and the kurtosis value were -0.754 and 0.732 consecutively, engagement were -0.440 and 0.530, and for turnover intention were -0.731 and 0.283.

3.4 Measurement model validation- Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Before testing the structural model, the research evaluates the measurement model fit, by which all these constructs were exposed to CFA using AMOS 24 (E. Park et al., 2019). Assert measurement model validity will be determined by: (1) Establishing satisfactory levels of Goodness-of-Fit (GOF), and (2) Attaining explicit confirmation of construct validity.

3.4.1 The results of CFA for constructs and full measurement model

In the following, the research will demonstrate in detail a series of CFA results for each construct subsequently, and the full measurement model results as well. With respect to the CFA of each construct, the factor loadings, un-standardized regression weights, and model fit indices will be reported. The factor loading is the "strength of the regression paths from the factors to the observed variables" (Haque & Aston, 2016); the factor loadings deliver information about the degree to which a given indicator is capable to measure the latent factor (Rocha et al., 2019). Un-standardized regression weights are prediction coefficients; they describe the association between two variables, i.e., a change in one variable after a unitary-change in the other. Standard Error (SE) is the standard deviation of the un-standardized regression coefficient reflecting the spread of the points from a regression line. The Critical ratio is "the ratio of each parameter estimate to its standard error, and it is significant at the 0.05 level (P level) if its value exceeds 1.96" (Takaya & Haeba Ramli, 2020).

3.4.2 CFA results for Nepotism Construct

Figure 1 depicts the CFA findings for nepotism construct. The items examined employees' perceptions and experiences with nepotism within an organization. (i.e., the practice of giving special treatment based on personal relationships, the reliance on personal connections rather than qualifications or merit). However, items NEP2 and NEP3 were removed from the scale as their scores were less than 0.5. The CFA model for NEP was re-specified as a variable with 4 indicator items.

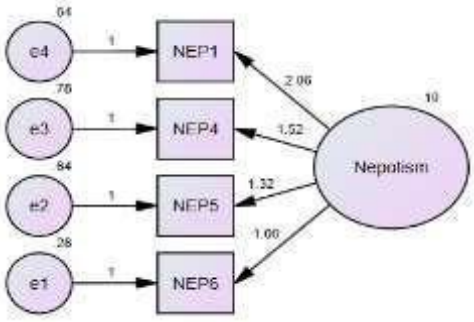

Figure1: CFA for Nepotism

Figure 1 presents the factor loadings for the NEP construct. It is shown that NEP1 has the highest factor loading (2.06), exhibiting the strongest ability to measure the construct, and NEP6 with the lowest factor loading value of (1), indicating a weaker ability to measure the construct. As the final model is composed of four items, this implies that it is a saturated (just-identified) model with zero degrees of freedom, and thus CMIN/DF, TLI, RMSEA, have no calculated values in AMOS.

Table 4: Regression weights for NEP

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
NEP1 ←	Nepotism	0.792	0.04	19.81	***
NEP4 ←	Nepotism	0.832	0.104	8.023	***
NEP5 ←	Nepotism	0.896	0.217	4.129	***
NEP6 ←	Nepotism	0.393	0.023	17.028	***

Table 4 displays the un-standardized regression estimates of NEP construct on its items, its Standard Error (SE), Critical Ratio (CR), and level of significance (P). All the factor coefficients were significant ($p < 0.001$), with critical ratio value greater than 1.96.

3.4.3 CFA results for Engagement Construct

Engagement construct is measured using eight items that probed respondents' opinions on various aspects of engagement in the workplace. (i.e., the sense of meaning and purpose in work, detachment from work, the pride derived from work accomplishments). However, item ENG8 was removed from the scale as its score were less than 0.5. The CFA model for ENG was re-specified as a variable with 7 indicator items.

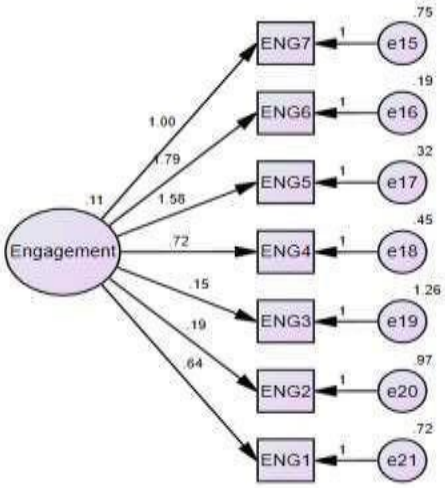

Figure2: CFA for Employee Engagement

Figure 2 shows the final standardized loading for ENG on its items. ENG6 showed the highest factor loading score of 1.79, followed by ENG5 and ENG7, and lastly ENG3 showing the weakest loading of 0.15. All the items measuring the ENG construct showed acceptable levels of standardized loadings above 0.5 except ENG8. The fit indices for the measurement model were as follows: CMIN/DF= 7.737, CFI = 0.847, TLI = 0.742, RMSEA = 0.293 and GFI = 0.979. (Banerjee & Doshi, 2020; Moilanen et al., 2020) argue that the measurement fit indices are designed to measure the overall measurement model rather than individual construct fit, and decreasing the number of indicators is a poor practice; because it will improve the model fit but will diminish the theoretical base and the construct validity.

Table 5: Regression weights for ENG

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ENG1	←	Engagement	0.940	0.263	3.574	***
ENG2	←	Engagement	0.839	0.127	6.606	***
ENG3	←	Engagement	0.760	0.107	7.102	***
ENG4	←	Engagement	0.645	0.109	5.917	***
ENG5	←	Engagement	0.453	0.109	4.155	***
ENG6	←	Engagement	0.843	0.191	4.413	***
ENG7	←	Engagement	0.493	0.183	2.693	***

The unstandardized regression estimates, SE, and CR values for engagement construct are depicted in Table 5. It is shown that the factor coefficients are all significant (0.001 level), with CR value greater than 1.96.

3.4.4 CFA results for Turnover Intention Construct

The turnover intention construct is measured using 4 items. Those items considered the assessments of employees' tendency to leave their current organizations. (i.e., limited career growth opportunities, barriers to achieving work-related objectives., reduced motivation and engagement). However, items TI2 and TI5 were removed from the scale as their scores were less than 0.5. The CFA model for TI was re-specified as a variable with 4 indicator items.

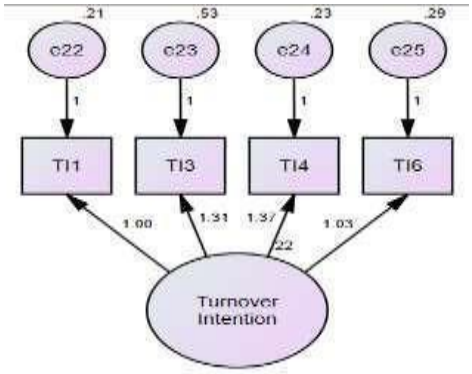

Figure3: CFA for Turnover Intention

Figure 3 displays the standardized loadings for the TI construct. It is shown that TI3 exhibited the highest capacity to measure TI, with a factor loading of 1.31, while TI4 had the lowest loading value of 0.22. The remaining item loadings ranged between these two values. Because the final model is composed of four items, this implies that the model is a saturated (justidentified) model with zero degrees of freedom, and thus CMIN/DF, TLI, RMSEA, are of no calculated values in AMOS.

Table 5: Regression Weights for Turnover Intention

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
T1 ←	Turnover Intention	0.94	0.07	13.67	***
T3 ←	Turnover Intention	1.066	0.085	12.134	***
T4 ←	Turnover Intention	1.076	0.089	11.194	***
T6 ←	Turnover Intention	1.042	0.090	11.582	***

Table 6 shows the un-standardized regression estimates for the items measuring turnover intention construct, in addition to SE and CR values. It demonstrated that all factor coefficients are significant ($p<0.001$), and their relevant CR values are greater than 1.96.

3.5 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed by examining standardized factor loadings for each item on their relevant factors, composite reliability scores, and average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct, and the results are depicted in Table 7. (Karki & Kangri Vishwavidyalaya, 2015) advises that the standardized factor loading estimates should be 0.5 or higher, and ideally 0.7 or higher; any lower values will drop the item out of analysis.

Table 6: Summary of final factor loadings scores

Variable	Item	Factor Loading	KMO
Nepotism	NE1	0.542	0.725
	NE2	0.469	

	NE3	0.415	
	NE4	0.528	
	NE5	0.659	
	NE6	0.852	
Engagement	ENG1	0.559	0.751
	ENG2	0.536	
	ENG3	0.557	
	ENG4	0.559	
	ENG5	0.568	
	ENG6	0.633	
	ENG7	0.963	
	ENG8	0.463	
Turnover Intention	TI1	0.559	0.893
	TI2	0.423	
	TI3	0.519	
	TI4	0.523	
	TI5	0.453	
	TI6	0.639	

Notes: According the cut off criterion for the acceptable limits, Factor loadings >0.5 (Hayajneh et al., 1994); Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) >0.50 (Hayajneh et al., 1994)

Table 7 displays the findings of a factor analysis conducted on a set of items belonging to three different variables: Nepotism (NE), Job Satisfaction (JS), and Turnover Intention (TI). Table 7 includes the mean and standard deviation for each item, as well as the factor loading and KMO value. The factor loading measures the strength of the relationship between each item and the underlying factor or latent variable being measured by the factor analysis. A factor loading of .5 or higher is considered strong, while loadings below .4 are considered weak. The KMO value is a measure of sampling adequacy, which indicates the proportion of variance in the items that can be explained by the factors. An acceptable KMO value is considered to be .6 or higher, while values below .6 are deemed poor.

Nepotism (NE): NE1, NE2, NE3, NE4, NE5 and NE6 represent the 6 items or variables that measure the construct of Nepotism. Table 7 showed that NE1 has a factor loading of 0.542, NE2 has a factor loading of 0.469, NE3 has a factor loading of 0.415, NE4 has a factor loading of 0.528, NE5 has a factor loading of 0.659, NE6 has a factor loading of 0.852. It can be noticed from the above analysis that NE2 and NE3 scored low factor analysis which means that these three factors will be excluded from the analysis of the structure equation modelling to minimize the risk of bias. The KMO value for Nepotism is 0.725, which is considered acceptable for factor analysis.

Engagement (ENG): ENG1, ENG2, ENG3, ENG4, ENG5, ENG6, ENG7 and ENG 8 represent the 5 items or variables that measure the construct of Engagement. A factor loading greater than 0.5 is generally considered to indicate a strong relationship. The factor loading of ENG1 is 0.559, ENG2 has a factor loading of 0.536, ENG3 has a factor loading of 0.557, ENG4 has a factor loading of 0.559,

ENG5 has a factor loading of 0.568, ENG6 has a factor loading of 0.633, ENG7 has a factor loading of 0.963, and ENG8 has a factor loading of 0.436. The KMO value for Engagement is 0.751 which is considered acceptable to conduct Structure Equation Modelling.

Turnover Intention (TI): TI1, TI2, TI3, TI4, TI5 and TI6 represent the 6 items or variables that measure the construct of Turnover Intention. The results showed that TI1 has a factor loading of 0.559, TI2 has a factor loading of 0.423, TI3 has a factor loading of 0.519, TI4 has a factor loading of 0.523, TI5 has a factor loading of 0.453, and TI6 has a factor loading of 0.639, which is moderate to strong and suggests that this item is a good measure of Turnover Intention. However, TI2 has the lowest factor loading and will be excluded from the analysis. The KMO value for Turnover Intention is 0.893, which is considered "excellent" and suggests that the items in this construct are highly correlated and provide a good representation of Turnover Intention.

In conclusion, the component analysis shows that the three variables include items with high factor loadings and favourable KMO values, indicating that they are accurately assessing separate underlying constructs.

3.6 Discriminant Validity

Table 7: Discriminant Validity

	Mean	SD	CR	AVE	MSV	NEP	ENG	TI
NEP	3.672	0.553	0.732	0.628	0.518	0.468		
ENG	2.418	0.723	0.689	0.448	0.338	0.258	0.192*	
TI	3.818	0.664	0.887	0.518	0.416	0.283	0.295***	0.254***

To inspect discriminant validity, the study compared the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values with the Maximum shared variance (MSV) scores and examined the correlation between two constructs to be less than the square roots of AVE of a designated construct which are the bolded numbers shown in the diagonal of Table 8. MSV is the highest shared variance between a construct and other factor in the model. MSV for Nepotism is 0.518, MSV for Engagement is 0.338, and MSV for Turnover Intention is 0.416. Thus, comparing MSV and AVE, shows that the MSV values for all constructs are less than AVE values indicating discriminant validity.

Additionally, the study compared the values of AVE square root scores of each construct with the intercorrelation of constructs indicates discriminant validity of measurements. It is shown that the AVE square root for Nepotism was 0.628, the AVE square root for Engagement was 0.448, the AVE square root for Turnover Intention was 0.518. Hence, it is demonstrated that the correlations between constructs are less than the AVE square root values indicating discriminant validity. In summary, outcomes illustrated in Table 8 depicts that AVE values for all constructs are greater than MSV values and shows that the AVE square root scores exceed the correlation values between constructs, which implies the existence of discriminant validity.

3.7 Model Assessment

The model was specified with three constructs namely Nepotism, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention. The results of the SEM analysis show the path coefficients between the factors under investigation, and the loadings of the measurements with their relevant factors. The results of the relationships are discussed in the following section. E" represents the error terms representing the residual variances within the variables. (Morrison et al., 1992) argues that "the parameters of a SEM are the variances, regression coefficients and covariance among variables", the regression coefficients are signified beside single-headed arrows that designate a hypothesized pathway among factors; and lastly the covariance is shown as double-headed bowed arrows between two variables specifying no directionality.

3.7.1 Structural Model Goodness of Fit

To assess the structural model goodness of fit (GOF), specific indices were checked: CMIN/DF (Chisquare divided by degrees of freedom), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index), GFI (Goodness-of-fit index), and RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation).

Table 8: Fit indices of the structural model

Fit index	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	CFI	GFI	TLI	RMSEA
Obtained Estimate	1353.494	290.000	4.665	0.765	0.843	0.899	0.070

The structural model in the research was found to provide an acceptable fit with the data as shown in Table 9. Some fit indices values are within the recommended levels i.e., CMIN/DF< 5, and 0.03<RMSEA<0.08; whereas CFI, TLI, and GFI are somewhat lower than the recommended levels of fit (Hanaysha, 2016; Karki & Kangri Vishwavidyalaya, 2015; Morrison et al., 1992). Although some fit indices are slightly below the ideal cut-off values; yet (Bing-You & Varaklis, 2016) argues that "more complex models with larger samples should not be held to the same strict standards, and so when samples are large and the model contains a large number of measured variables and parameter estimates, cut-off values of 0.95 on key GOF measures are unrealistic". Furthermore, (Morrison et al., 1992), debated that empirical results in marketing research designate that complexity of the proposed model is an essential element contributing to the conditional nature of goodness-of-fit valuations, and they propose that the broad rules of thumb (e.g. GFI be greater than 0.9) may be deceptive because they ignore such contingencies (number of latent and observed variables, sample size, complexity of model etc…); so, there is a margin beyond the dogmatic claim on the rule of thumb that certain fit indices should be larger than 0.9, it is obvious that the 0.9 value is a benchmark that several models do not accomplish.

3.7.2 Hypotheses testing

The hypotheses were tested by scrutinizing the standardized regression coefficient of path relationship (beta coefficients β), and the significance levels (p-values) of each hypothesized relationship. The outcomes of the hypothesis's tests suggested earlier for the research are described in Table 10.

Table 9:

Outcomes of relationships analysis

Proposed Hypotheses	β	P-value & Significance	Findings
H1: Nepotism negatively affects employee engagement in Lebanese family businesses	-0.328	0.002**	Supported
H2: Nepotism positively affects turnover intention in Lebanese family businesses.	0.336	0.013**	Supported

Note: *p ≤ 0.05, **p≤0.01, ***p≤0.001.

According to table 10, the findings indicated that there is a significant negative relationship between nepotism and engagement (β= -.328 and sig = .002< 0.05). Thus, H21is supported. Moreover, the results revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between nepotism and turnover intention (β= .336 and sig = .013< 0.05) thus, H2 is supported.

3.7.3 Assessing the Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

R^2 is the Coefficient of determination which measures "the proportion of the variance of the dependent variable about its mean that is explained by the independent, or predictor, variables; the coefficient can vary between 0 and 1, the higher the value of R^2, the greater the explanatory power of the regression equation, and therefore the better the prediction of the dependent variable" (Smith and DeWine, 1991). Studies that are aiming to explain human intentions and behaviour usually have R^2 values less than 0.5; because it is harder to anticipate like physical processes (Riyadi, 2018).

Table 11: Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Construct	R squared
Nepotism	0.562
Engagement	0.409
Turnover Intention	0.430

Table 11 displayed the values for the endogenous constructs of the research conceptual model. In this research, the endogenous variables are Nepotism, Engagement and turnover intention, which have R^2 value of 0.562, 0.409, and 0.430, respectively. This implies that the model developed by the research have reasonable predictive relevance for job satisfaction and turnover intention in the Lebanese Family Business setting.

4. Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the effect of nepotism on employee behaviour outcomes in the Lebanese family businesses. Specifically, the study will examine the effect of nepotism on employee engagement, and turnover intentions. The data analysis process demonstrated the following outcomes:

The outcomes of this study also revealed that nepotism negatively affect employee engagement in the Lebanese family businesses. This result may be explained due to the significant involvement of family members in the operations and decision-making processes in Lebanese family businesses. When family members occupy key positions and are involved in decision-making, there is a higher likelihood of them favouring their relatives over non-family employees, even if the latter may be more qualified or deserving. As a consequence, non-family employees may feel undervalued and overlooked, leading to feelings of resentment and mistrust towards the organization, which in turn reduce their level of engagement. The above outcomes could be interpreted by the fact that a considerable proportion of the sample falls into the category of individuals earning less than $500 (50.5% of the sample size), who may exhibit lower levels of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and engagement due to limited growth opportunities and financial improvement. Individuals in this income category who are actively seeking better opportunities may feel dissatisfied with their current earnings and recognize that their chances for upward mobility are limited within the organization due to the presence of nepotism. This can result in decreased job satisfaction, diminish commitment level, and reduced engagement with work. Thus, based on the evidence and analysis conducted, hypothesis 1 is validated

The finding of the study also revealed that nepotism positively impact turnover intention in the Lebanese family businesses. This outcome could be interpreted by considering the deep-rooted influence of family ties and kinship networks in Lebanese culture. Lebanese society places a strong emphasis on loyalty to family and maintains tightly knit social connections. These cultural values and social dynamics can amplify the effects of nepotism in Lebanese family businesses. Given this context, non-family employees may feel a heightened sense of frustration and job dissatisfaction, as the prevalence of nepotism can create an environment that prioritize family interests over merit-based principles. As a consequence, they may perceive that their chances for career advancement and growth are constrained. This can contribute to a stronger desire to seek employment opportunities outside the organization, resulting in higher turnover intention. This result could be attributed to the fact that a significant portion of the sample units fell into the category of those with less than 5 years of experience (59.8% of the sample size), who may exhibit higher turnover intentions. This category, being in the early stages of establishing their careers, may be more inclined to seek better opportunities elsewhere as they may perceive limited opportunities for growth and promotion within the organization due to the presence of nepotism. Thus, based on the evidence and analysis conducted, hypothesis 2 is validated

4.1 Limitations and suggested ideas for future studies:

First, this study employed a quantitative approach. While this approach can provide valuable information on the prevalence of attitudes and behaviours, it may not fully capture the complexity of the relationship between nepotism, engagement, and turnover intentions. To obtain a richer insight into nepotism and this relationship, future research could adopt a mixed-method approach that combines quantitative data with qualitative insights gathered from in-depth interviews or focus groups. Second, the current study used convenience sampling method. While this method allowed for the collection of valuable data, it is possible that the sample may not accurately represent the entire population. Therefore, future studies could consider employing alternative sampling techniques such as purposive sampling to obtain a more diverse and representative sample.

Third, the study's findings are specific to the context of Lebanese family businesses which may not be applicable to other types of organizations or cultural contexts. Therefore, it is recommended to replicate this study in other cultural and national contexts to determine whether the results are consistent across different settings.

Finally, the study's sample size was relatively small compared to the number of employees in Lebanese family businesses, raising the possibility of bias in the findings. To address this limitation, future studies can employ larger sample sizes to minimize potential bias and increase the generalizability of the results.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the examination of the effect of nepotism on employee engagement and turnover intention reveals significant implications for organizations. The findings suggest that nepotism, characterized by favouritism towards family members or close acquaintances, exerts a detrimental impact on both engagement and turnover intention among employees. The presence of nepotism in the workplace tends to undermine employees' perception of fairness and meritocracy, creating an environment of perceived inequality. Consequently, this erodes their engagement levels, as they may feel undervalued and overlooked for opportunities and rewards. The lack of equal opportunities based on merit can lead to a decline in motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization. Furthermore, the research indicates that nepotism contributes to increased turnover intention among employees. Individuals who perceive nepotistic practices may develop a sense of frustration, disillusionment, and reduced organizational loyalty. They may seek alternative employment opportunities where their skills and contributions are more likely to be recognized and rewarded fairly. It is crucial for organizations to recognize the negative consequences of nepotism on engagement and turnover intention and take proactive measures to address and mitigate these issues. Implementing transparent and merit-based recruitment and promotion processes, providing equal opportunities for all employees, and fostering a culture of inclusivity can help minimize the negative effects of nepotism and promote employee engagement and retention.

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