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AND WHEN FAMILY AND ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS INTERMINGLE? A STUDY OF LABOR RELATIONS IN THE HOTEL SECTOR OF OURO PRETO, MINAS GERAIS[1]

E QUANDO O FAMILIAR E O ORGANIZACIONAL SE MISTURAM? UM ESTUDO DAS RELAÇÕES DE TRABALHO DO SETOR HOTELEIRO DE OURO PRETO - MINAS GERAIS

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the relationships between the family and the employee within a family business means diving into an ocean filled with bifurcations, possible sources, and different contexts, playing an essential role in the construction of knowledge and the interpretation of events. The general objective of this research is to understand the dynamics between family and business in the context of hotel organizations in Ouro Preto (MG). Methodologically, this is exploratory-descriptive research with a qualitative approach, based on semi-structured interviews and participant observation involving managers and long-serving employees of family-managed hotels and inns, all located in Ouro Preto. Based on a semi-structured interview guide, the interviews were analyzed using the content analysis technique, allowing for an in-depth interpretation of the responses obtained. The main results found concern the centrality of family management as a determining factor that influences employees' routines, especially with regard to decision-making, division of tasks, and informal hierarchies. Trust, affection, and informality emerge as striking features of these relationships, while at the same time they may generate conflicts and insecurities. It is concluded that the overlap between family and professional roles in family-run hotel organizations in Ouro Preto reveals both an environment of closeness and hospitality and challenges regarding professionalization and people management.

Keywords: family business, family, hospitality, Ouro Preto – MG.

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RESUMO

Compreender as relações entre a família e o funcionário dentro de uma empresa familiar é mergulhar em um oceano repleto de bifurcações, possibilidades de fontes e diferentes contextos, desempenhando um papel essencial na construção de saberes e na interpretação dos acontecimentos. Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo geral compreender a dinâmica entre família e empresa no contexto das organizações hoteleiras em Ouro Preto (MG). Metodologicamente, trata-se de uma pesquisa exploratória-descritiva, com abordagem qualitativa, fundamentada em entrevistas semiestruturadas e na observação participante junto aos gestores e funcionários mais antigos de hotéis e pousadas de gestão familiar, todos localizados em Ouro Preto. A partir de um roteiro semiestruturado, as entrevistas foram tratadas com base na técnica de análise de conteúdo, permitindo uma interpretação aprofundada das respostas obtidas. Os principais resultados encontrados dizem respeito à centralidade da administração familiar, enquanto fator determinante que influencia a rotina dos colaboradores, sobretudo no que se refere à tomada de decisões, divisão de tarefas e hierarquias informais. A confiança, a afetividade e a informalidade aparecem como traços marcantes dessas relações, ao mesmo tempo em que podem gerar conflitos e inseguranças. Conclui-se que a sobreposição entre os papéis familiares e profissionais nas organizações hoteleiras familiares de Ouro Preto revela tanto um ambiente de proximidade e acolhimento quanto desafios em relação à profissionalização e à gestão de pessoas.

Palavras-chave: empresa familiar, família, hotelaria, Ouro Preto - MG.

INTRODUCTION

The hotel sector in Ouro Preto (MG) plays a central role in local tourism, consisting mostly of family businesses focused on providing accommodation services. In addition to the economic impact, as evidenced by the 90% occupancy rate during the Tiradentes holiday in 2023, it is essential to analyze the interpersonal relationships established in these enterprises.

In family-run hotel businesses, personal service remains essential, with less influence from automation, as highlighted by Beni (2001). Based on practical experiences between 2019 and 2022, the author of this research observed that family ties directly influence the routine, power relations, and organizational



climate of the establishments. The overlap between personal and professional relationships can affect management and generate tensions in the workplace.

In this context, the death of founders and succession in leadership bring new dynamics to the company, as pointed out by Lambek (2011), highlighting the impact of affective relationships on administrative decisions. The research, therefore, aims to understand the dynamics between family and business in hotel organizations in Ouro Preto, focusing on: (1) identifying employees with the longest tenure; (2) analyzing how the relationship with the managing family influences the work routine; and (3) understanding how this dynamic affects service provision.

Based on authors such as Colbari (2006), Davel (2006), Waiandte (2008), the research examined the characteristics, challenges, and contradictions of family businesses. Such studies reveal that organizational culture, marked by trust, affection, and informal hierarchies, can both strengthen bonds and generate exclusion and conflicts. The notion of belonging is redefined, especially for those who are not part of the family nucleus.

The research is grounded in a qualitative approach, with an exploratory-descriptive nature, and uses semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentary analysis; in addition to content analysis, which made it possible to identify patterns of family management and their implications for employees' daily lives.

The article is structured into four sections: the first addresses family businesses and their particularities; the second reflects on social history and the imaginary of cordiality in organizational relationships; the third details the methodological procedures; and the fourth the categories of analysis. Based on this, the results obtained are discussed, seeking to broaden the understanding of the interactions between business, family, and work in the hotel sector of Ouro Preto.



FAMILY BUSINESSES: ORGANIZATION AND SOME CONCEPTS

The first section discusses the multiple conceptions of family businesses, highlighting the complexity and theoretical diversity surrounding this type of organization. The traditional definition, based solely on family ownership, has been expanded to include aspects such as the succession process, kinship relationships (including symbolic ones), and specific organizational dynamics.

Studies indicate that in Brazil the approach centered on succession predominates as the defining criterion of a family business. Authors such as Lodi (1978) and Chua, Chrisman and Sharma (1999) reinforce the importance of a multigenerational perspective and alignment between family and business values. In addition, there is growing interest in the social, affective, and symbolic relationships present in family businesses, going beyond economic logic.

The most evident challenges involve the conflict between the rational and the affective, the public and the private, especially during succession, where the founder plays a central role, often with a strong paternalistic and authoritarian character, which influences organizational culture. There is a constant tension between professionalization and the maintenance of affective ties, which can directly affect management and the organizational climate.

The organizational culture of family businesses, according to authors such as Davel, Pimenta, Corrêa and Machado, carries traits of the Brazilian social imaginary, such as hierarchy, personalism, and the “jeitinho,” influences originating from the patriarchal and colonial system.

In the hotel context of Ouro Preto, this configuration is strongly evident. The research points out that the professionalization of these companies requires not only consistent managerial practices, but also leadership that balances family and business interests, seeking to harmonize affective values with the logic of standardization required by the hotel industry.



Understanding family businesses requires a sensitive and multidisciplinary perspective that considers both symbolic and subjective elements and the formal aspects of management, especially regarding succession, power relations, and organizational culture.

In the second part of the first section, still concerning Family, Organizations and Social Arrangements, the research starts from the understanding that many of the hotel enterprises investigated in Ouro Preto are family-run, which involves specific social and organizational arrangements. The concept of family has changed in recent decades, directly impacting the configuration and management of these companies. Machado (2005), among other authors, points to the symbiotic relationship between family and business, where both mutually create value.

Family businesses reflect affective and symbolic dynamics that go beyond biological ties. Anthropological studies, such as those by Janet Carsten (2014), help to understand these connections as forms of socially constructed kinship, often mediated by exchanges, favors, and bonds of belonging. Non-family employees, for example, may feel part of the business family, which contributes to organizational cohesion.

The patriarchal model still strongly marks these organizations, with power centralized in the founder and head of the family, generally a man, which can generate resistance to change, difficulties in succession, and rigid hierarchies. Data from IBGE and SEBRAE (2024) reveal that 90% of Brazilian companies have a family profile, with great economic and social relevance, but face succession challenges. Only 30% reach the third generation. Governance, succession planning, and professionalization are identified as essential for business continuity.

Shuman, Stutz and Ward (2011) identify paradoxes inherent to these companies, such as the tension between tradition and innovation, or between



affectivity and economic rationality. Managing these paradoxes is seen as one of the secrets to the long-term success of family businesses. Even so, problems such as favoritism, lack of criteria, and resistance to professionalization are recurrent.

The studies by Gonçalves (2000) and Dyer (1988) point out that the organizational culture of many family businesses is marked by paternalistic patterns, where family members hold power and external employees are viewed with distrust. This structure can hinder succession and the company's adaptation to the market.

In the hotel sector of Ouro Preto, these elements are expressed in arrangements that mix family, work, and affection, with the presence of extended family nuclei and employees with symbolic ties to the owning family being common. This environment reinforces feelings of belonging, but also requires attention to conflict management, succession, and professionalization.

Finally, the research emphasizes that the success of family businesses is not based solely on profit, but on business continuity, strengthening organizational identity, and preserving family values over time.

ROOTS OF BRAZIL: REFLECTIONS ON THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

In chapter two, in developing the work Roots of Brazil, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda offers an analysis of the process of formation of Brazilian society based on Portuguese influences. His objective is to understand the founding elements of the Brazilian national character, questioning the formation of our identity and pointing to the transposition of elements of private life, such as family relationships, affection, and personal interests, into the public and institutional spheres.



Among the key concepts permeating the work is that of the cordial man, which describes a figure marked by personalism in social relationships, even in contexts that require impersonality, such as the public and institutional spheres. Holanda (1995) argues that Brazilians tend to privilege personal ties over abstract and universal norms, which contributes to the weakening of institutions and the perpetuation of patrimonialist and clientelist practices. It is important to emphasize that the term cordial does not refer to kindness, but to the predominance of affections over reason.

In the model of social organization prevailing during the colonial period, the family was the main institution regulating social and economic life, with the father exercising authority over members of the household and workers. The “casa-grande’, the greatest symbol of this system, concentrated political, economic, and social power, mixing public and private spheres, which contributed to the fragility of state institutions and to the culture of personal favoritism that still marks part of Brazilian political and social daily life.

This influence of the private sphere over the public sphere remains a persistent characteristic of Brazilian social organization, fueling patrimonialism, a concept that describes the appropriation of public resources and assets as if they were private, and personalism, a practice that values personal relationships over impersonal criteria, such as merit or institutional norms.

Sérgio Buarque’s analysis dialogues with other authors who problematize these colonial legacies. Souza (2000) broadens this discussion by stating that the domination of the upper classes over the lower classes is sustained by the reproduction of an exclusionary social logic that naturalizes inequality and privilege. Pires (2017) also contributes by reflecting on the persistence of traditional family values in the everyday practices of Brazilian society, especially in local and inland contexts, such as those of Minas Gerais. Neuma Aguiar, in turn, when addressing social networks and the logic of the



Brazilian “jeitinho’, shows how family ties and mutual trust shape social practices that permeate political, economic, and even institutional management life.

In the city of Ouro Preto, for example, family ties intertwine with economic and social practices in sectors such as the hotel industry and tourism, spaces marked by hospitality that carries values inherited from Minas Gerais culture.

Brusadin (2018) proposes that ‘mineiridade’, as an expression of a way of being and existing in the world, reflects this cordiality, constructed from family ties, belonging, and affectivity. Therefore, the concept of the cordial man should not be interpreted as a celebration of Brazilian affectivity, but as a critical interpretive key to the social structures that still sustain informality in labor relations, the centrality of the family in economic and political decisions, and the prevalence of private values in the management of what should be public.

Understanding this legacy is fundamental to rethinking hospitality practices, forms of family business organization, and the challenges of professionalizing the tourism sector, especially in contexts where the traditional and the modern intertwine in complex ways.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach, focused on analyzing the forms of management and the characteristics of family-run hotels in the municipal seat of Ouro Preto, an urban nucleus listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the main local tourist hub. The choice of the geographical scope is justified by the historical, cultural, and economic relevance of the municipal seat, especially in the context of the hotel sector.

Ouro Preto was one of the first Brazilian cities to have an area listed by IPHAN, in 1938, and the first to receive the title of UNESCO World Heritage Site, in 1980. Its historic center preserves colonial buildings and expresses a strong relationship between urban and natural heritage, fundamental elements in the



configuration of the tourist space. The delimitation of the study area considered physical, geographical, sociocultural, and economic aspects, as well as the researcher's professional and academic experience.

The tourism sector in Ouro Preto was challenged by adversities such as the COVID-19 pandemic but demonstrates resilience. With 314 years of history, the city discusses new dialogues on tourism development; assuming a leading role in generating employment and income. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating the local population sustainably, considering issues such as qualification, appreciation of the workforce, and community impacts.

The research sample consisted of family-run hotel enterprises with at least fifteen years of operation. Of the one hundred and twenty accommodation establishments identified, ten met the criteria, and five agreed to participate in the study.

Chart 1- Interviewee Data

Interviewee	Age	Education	Time with Company	Position	Enterprise
Margarida	75	High School	10	Manager	Ouro
Marilda	58	High School	20	Manager	Diamante
Geralda	45	High School	5	Manager	Topázio
Irani	41	Higher Education	35	Manager	Esmeralda
Carlos	71	High School	10	Manager	Rubi
Márcio	62	Elementary School	40	Funcionário	Ouro
José	69	High School	15	Funcionário	Diamante
Tião	56	Elementary School	20	Funcionário	Diamante
João	65	Elementary School	30	Funcionário	Topázio
Mariza	58	Elementary School	11	Funcionário	Esmeralda
Edna	32	Higher Education	4	Funcionário	Ouro

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentary analysis. Participant selection used the



snowball technique, allowing access to managers and employees with the longest tenure in the companies.

The interviews made it possible to understand family trajectories, kinship relationships, alliances, and conflicts within the enterprises. Non-participant observation made it possible to capture organizational interactions and routines without direct interference. To ensure anonymity, fictitious names were assigned to both participants and enterprises, identified as: Ouro, Diamante, Topázio, Esmeralda and Rubi.

Data analysis followed the principles of content analysis, according to Bardin (1977), allowing systematic categorization and interpretation of the statements in light of the theories in the literature. Rules such as clarity in defining categories, homogeneity, exhaustiveness, and objectivity of classification were considered.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FAMILY AND BUSINESS IN HOTEL ENTERPRISES IN OURO PRETO - MG

After transcribing the interviews and applying content analysis, three categories of analysis emerged: Cordial Relationships?; Family/Business: The Paradox; We are practically family.

In the first category, through the discourse extracted from the interviews, we will present statements that provided us with dimensions from the perspective of cordiality presented by Holanda (1996) and notions of kinship from Carsten (2014), alliances, trust, and animosities, both from managers and employees.

Cordial relationships? (employees)

As pointed out by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (1996), the Brazilian cordial man is characterized by acting based on feelings, seeking intimate ties and avoiding direct confrontation. This cultural trait is strongly present in the



family businesses of the hotel sector studied in Ouro Preto, where personal and professional relationships become intertwined. Employees' statements reveal ambivalence: affective bonds coexist with dissatisfaction and veiled conflicts. Many interviewees point to the tension between close treatment and precarious working conditions:

> There are days when it's nothing but problems, there are people who annoy you a lot, sometimes you feel like quitting and disappearing from Ouro Preto. (Tião – Diamante enterprise)
>
> I'm already retired, I still work there because I need to, the money is little. (Márcio – Ouro enterprise)
>
> If I found a place that paid more, I would leave there, I still work because I need to. (João – Topázio enterprise)

These statements indicate not only the difficulty of affective detachment, but also the lack of opportunities in the sector and professional devaluation. The organizational environment is often marked by comfort zones, where emotional stability prevails over professionalization.

> I'm used to it, I've really gotten used to all the confusion. (Edna – Ouro enterprise)
>
> The relationship with them, the family and everything, I thank them all for the job whether it is good or bad, I'm grateful because that's where I earn my bread and my things. (Marisa – Esmeralda enterprise)

Marisa's statement reveals loyalty based on necessity and affectivity, reflecting the clientelism discussed by Faoro (2001), where the personal bond takes precedence over the formal contract. This cordiality can mask inequalities and tensions:

> They have given me used things and we are grateful. May God give them double and triple, if they are already rich because everyone has their own luck. (João – Topázio enterprise)
>
> I'm very grateful to everyone, they helped me and my son a lot when I needed it, but it's very difficult here, I just wish they would fire me. (Marisa – Esmeralda enterprise)
>
> Here we only have value while we are useful to them, afterwards we are left aside. (Tião – Diamante enterprise)



These statements reveal an ambiguous relationship with the business family, where affective subordination coexists with the desire for professional recognition. The concept of the cordial man, who avoids ruptures and direct confrontations, appears in the way criticism is avoided or suppressed.

> He says he was talking to another relative that Margarida was selling some ‘stuff’ from the hotel and then she found out and didn’t like it. (João – Diamante enterprise)
>
> We had never fought before, and not everyone accepts being reprimanded, it doesn’t work anymore. Today the atmosphere is bad there, for things to work there everyone would have to get along. (Márcio – Ouro enterprise)

The absence of professionalization and the confusion between public and private are evident in these accounts, which also indicate power disputes and difficulty in emotional management.

> Here they treat me almost like family, right? Just not financially, right? (laughs) (Alaércio – Esmeralda enterprise)

Based on Carsten (2014), these relationships demonstrate how kinship is a social construction based on coexistence and practice. In the context of the cordial man, relationships such as “like a brother” replace formal ties, creating affective dependencies that make rational management difficult.

Cordial relationships? (managers)

In the analysis of managers, cordiality is also present, but from another perspective. Many minimize conflicts and romanticize relationships with employees:

> We have never been taken to court by any employee, we are very proud of that. (Irani – Esmeralda enterprise)
>
> Here they always come back to work with us. (Margarida – Ouro enterprise)



Managers interpret this permanence as satisfaction, while employees often remain due to a lack of options. This discrepancy reveals the difficulty of dialogue and self-criticism on the part of management.

> There are very complacent employees here, they don't pursue the opportunities life offers. (Carlos – Rubi enterprise)
>
> It's not me they have to please, but the guest, because they pay their salaries. (Margarida – Ouro enterprise)
>
> How do I see this here? We were raised with everything very organized, so we require the employee to have this same habit. (Geralda – Topázio enterprise)

Such statements demonstrate a logic of reproducing family values in the business environment, which can generate resistance to professional and meritocratic practices, often without considering the employees' social context.

> Nowadays people don't want to work, they want to work little, they don't like taking orders, it's hard to find people. (Marilda – Diamante enterprise)
>
> Unfortunately there are fights sometimes, the owner has a different view, there are employees who don't like being reprimanded. (Margarida – Ouro enterprise)

Even when managers defend harmony, a certain idealism and lack of self-criticism are perceptible:

> The best thing in the world is to go to work happy. (Irani – Esmeralda enterprise)
>
> They grow to love the inn, of course they create a bond. (Margarida – Ouro enterprise)

Cordiality, in this context, can function as a mechanism of symbolic control, where the affection expected from employees replaces rights and formal recognition.

> The whole family cares a lot about everything here, you have to choose carefully who you bring in here. (Marilda – Diamante enterprise)
>
> Here everyone works with pleasure, practically like one family. (Geralda - Topázio enterprise)



In the end, it is found that cordiality is not synonymous with harmony: it can conceal tensions and generate inequalities. The confusion between personal and professional relationships, marked by the model of the cordial man, reveals the limitations of Brazilian family businesses in building fair, transparent, and efficient professional environments.

Family/Business: the paradox (employee)

This section addresses the paradox of family businesses, based on the work The Family Business as a Paradox, by Shuman, Stutz and Ward (2011). According to the authors, this paradox arises from the tension between two forces: family logic and business logic. Issues such as maintaining tradition or modernizing the business or maintaining family control versus opening space for external professionals, exemplify these conflicts.

Although, initially, the interviewees minimize the difference between family and non-family businesses, their later statements reveal nuances that show how family management directly impacts the work environment.

> I think it would be the same thing if it weren't a family running it, I think it's the same thing, there would be confusion anyway. (Márcio)

This statement reveals a certain naturalization of conflicts, disregarding that, in family businesses, issues such as affection, favoritism, and succession tend to interfere significantly in decisions. According to Shuman et al. (2011), business and family have economic and emotional dimensions, and balance between both is essential. Prioritizing the emotional aspect can harm competitiveness, while focusing exclusively on the economic aspect disregards family culture.

> There are very complacent employees here, they don't pursue the opportunities life offers. (Carlos)

> Unfortunately there are fights sometimes, the owner has a different view, there are employees who don't like being reprimanded. (Margarida)



> The best thing in the world is to go to work happy. (Irani)

Such statements show how managers perceive the dynamics with employees, often associating performance problems with individual attitudes, without considering the effects of the family structure on management and organizational culture. The feeling of belonging is sometimes valued as a positive aspect. However, it can generate frustrations, as Ana's statement demonstrates:

> I've been here for more than seven years, they always told me that I would go to the meetings to learn and study the system, it was just a promise. Now they want to bring in as manager someone from outside who has never worked here, they don't value the people from here. (Ana)

Ana reports her dissatisfaction with the lack of internal recognition and with the possible appointment of someone from outside (with indirect family ties) to a leadership position. The perception of favoritism based on personal ties compromises meritocracy and employee engagement. Similarly, Edna expresses insecurity:

> The disadvantage of being a family business is not knowing what tomorrow will bring, at any moment things can change and anyone can come and give orders.

This statement highlights one of the main dilemmas of family businesses: the instability caused by the absence of formal management and succession processes. Borges and Okubo (2023) highlight disadvantages such as succession difficulties, subjective decisions, strategic rigidity, and the prioritization of family ties over technical criteria.

> Even though today there is one person from the family in charge giving orders, someone else can come and change everything because they are also an owner, an heir. (Márcio)

Márcio points to the instability caused by the overlap between ownership and management. Heirs, even without preparation or prior involvement, may assume or influence decisions, generating insecurity among employees. The absence of governance and succession planning compromises business



continuity (Lescura, Borges and Cappelle, 2021). In contrast, some interviewees perceive the presence of the family in command as positive, especially because of proximity:

> I think if it were a branch and the owners gave orders from Belo Horizonte it would be more complicated, when it's people from outside you don't know whether you'll keep your job. (Carlos)
>
> I like it because it's different from a private company, you don't have to answer to someone you've never seen in your life. (Marisa)

The statements reveal that, even with its conflicts and instabilities, the family environment conveys a certain emotional comfort to employees. However, this informality can hinder professional practices such as objective evaluations, performance demands, and career progression.

In summary, the accounts show that family management generates a paradoxical environment: while it offers emotional security and a sense of belonging, it also carries risks of instability, lack of recognition, and decisions based on personal ties. The challenge lies in balancing these dimensions as proposed by Shuman, Stutz and Ward (2011), replacing "versus" with "and" between family and business to promote sustainable, professional, and humanized management.

Family/Business: the paradox (managers)

Management in family businesses presents a relevant paradox: on the one hand, kinship ties strengthen trust and commitment; on the other, they generate challenges in administration, mainly in decision-making. Managers face the dilemma between preserving family values and adopting more efficient market practices, directly impacting business longevity.

> My father always received a lot of people here, Juscelino Kubitschek has been here at our house. We had a very active social life. I think that, because we were raised always receiving people, it makes the company grow more with the family running it, you know? (Margarida)



In this account, the overlap between family life and business dynamics can be observed. Family hospitality was incorporated into business management, creating a more welcoming environment. This practice, naturalized in the domestic environment, became a management and differentiation strategy, contributing to the organization's social capital. The family's active social life, associated with prestige and "knowing how to receive," strengthens ties with customers and partners, adding symbolic and economic value.

> I think this has value, this thing of receiving people as if it were our home, a cozy and welcoming environment as the main characteristics here. (Irani)

This statement reinforces the appreciation of welcoming as an organizational practice originating from family values. However, although this model brings the customer closer and personalizes the experience, it can generate difficulties regarding professionalization and the clear division of functions.

> Our distinguishing feature is precisely being a family. Guests leave as our friends, exchange contacts, ask about our lives, my WhatsApp is full of messages. The way we receive people here is different. Employees learn to treat people like our family, they are sweethearts. (Geralda)

This model, although effective for service, can overburden employees. According to Sant'Anna, Carneiro and Lescura (2021), there is precariousness in the hotel sector due to factors such as low wages, exhausting working hours, lack of opportunities for growth, and the constant demand for emotional availability. Such elements affect workers' well-being and can compromise the quality of hospitality offered.

> Employee and boss are never friends, but nowadays I think we have an alliance, we talk openly about everything. (Tião)

Tião's statement highlights another point of the paradox: the search for a closer relationship between management and staff can strengthen bonds, but can also compromise the objectivity and authority necessary for efficient



administration. Thus, balance is needed between affective proximity and professional management.

> My parents fought hard to have what we have here today, the family has always fought hard and it is very difficult to maintain. That's why we always have to have trustworthy people. (Geralda)

The family legacy is a significant symbolic value and, at the same time, a responsibility. Trust is fundamental in this context, but it must be accompanied by managerial competence, regardless of family ties. As Lescura (2009, p. 11) states, "in family organizations, the succession process has a distinct configuration, marked by complexity, because it goes beyond managerial and patrimonial transmission, but, above all, ideological transmission".

> It is a great satisfaction for me to see the house being preserved. It is a house that I still call mine, I'm always coming back, always going in. (Irani)

This account reinforces the symbolic and affective value attributed to the company's physical space, which becomes intertwined with family memory and identity. The company is understood as an extension of the home, strengthening the sense of belonging.

> I live here to help manage it, my sisters have an affective relationship with this place. Like every family, some agree, others disagree, but we've been keeping this going for 45 years. My brother decided to turn the house into an inn, he went through several conflicts, he was the power and decision-maker. He made decisions, he didn't ask, but we trusted him because he really was taking care of the property. (Margarida)

Here, leadership centralized in the figure of the brother reveals the trust delegated to a specific family member, even without formal processes of participation or succession. The power structure is based on relationships of affection and loyalty, not necessarily on technical criteria. With the death of the brother, the interviewee assumes management, revealing the continuity of family ties as an organizational pillar.



According to Shuman, Stutz and Ward (2011), family businesses face constant contradictions, as they need to reconcile emotional and economic interests. The balance between these forces—identity, tradition, social capital, professionalization, and innovation—is fundamental to business sustainability.

Companies have the opportunity to retain satisfied workers, optimizing resources in the recruitment, selection, and training of new workers; they will have employees predisposed to the practice of hospitality, precisely because they feel welcomed within the organizational sphere of work. (Sant'Anna, Carneiro and Lescura, 2021, p. 14)

When properly conducted, welcoming practices favor workers' well-being and strengthen organizational culture, positively reflecting on the customer experience. Investing in employee well-being, therefore, is not only an ethical issue, but a strategy of competitiveness and reputation.

We are practically family" (employees)

The expression "we are practically family" emerged recurrently during interviews with employees and managers, highlighting the complexity of professional relationships in the context of family businesses. This statement reveals how the business structure assumes symbolic characteristics of a family nucleus, based on emotional bonds and traditions that span generations. Employees report feelings of belonging and proximity that, although positive, generate dilemmas at decisive moments in management, such as hiring and dismissals. José, for example, states:

> My wife is their cousin, right? Here I'm practically a relative of the family, I worked with all the owners, father, mother, son, daughter-in-law, everyone.

This account expresses the fusion between professional and family relationships, indicating an organic and continuous succession model. Contact with different generations intensifies the perception of being part of that group,



even without blood ties. However, this feeling can cause frustrations. Carlos exemplifies the tension between proximity and professional recognition.

> Here we do things as if we were family, I've already given up asking for a uniform, I go and buy it myself. Now the salary could be better, I've already asked them to improve it, otherwise I'm leaving.

Despite the affective relationship, there are demands for better working conditions and respect for basic rights. Informality can overburden the worker, leading them to assume costs or responsibilities that should belong to the company. The idea of "being family" strengthens bonds but can also generate feelings of exploitation and dissatisfaction.

According to Sant'Anna, Carneiro and Lescura (2021), decent work must guarantee freedom, adequate remuneration, and personal fulfillment. When properly supported, workers tend to offer better experiences to customers, consolidating internal hospitality as a reflection of external hospitality. It is therefore essential to balance a welcoming environment with clear management, active listening, and impartial decisions. Employee Marisa illustrates the ambiguity of this welcoming:

> That's why I owe this family for the support I didn't even have from my own family.

Referring to the support received during a personal problem with her son, she expresses gratitude as a debt. This feeling of obligation can be interpreted as recognition or as veiled pressure. In another statement, she reveals how the workplace became a refuge:

> There was one day when it was three in the morning and I came here, I couldn't sleep, all hell was breaking loose at home, so I got up and came here. I had to come to work at six in the morning anyway.

The hotel ceases to be merely a professional space and begins to offer emotional security and welcoming, creating a relationship that mixes care and dependence. The statement by Edna, another employee, reinforces this type of bond:



> I see her as a mother to me, we are open with each other. Because of the advice and everything we talk about regarding things here at the hotel. Today I can say that we have an alliance between us.

Here, the relationship with the manager assumes family-like contours, signaling intense emotional involvement that goes beyond the boundaries of work. Grzybovski (2008) observes that the concept of family expands beyond blood ties, being constructed through years of coexistence and trust.

This idea of an “extended family” can create a welcoming environment in the hotel industry, favoring the guest experience. However, excessive familiarity can also generate frustrations, especially when the trust placed is not reciprocated in moments of conflict or disagreement.

Thus, daily coexistence, the sharing of values, and the sense of belonging become structuring elements of the routine in these enterprises. But this symbolic construction of family needs to be accompanied by fair policies, professional management, and formal recognition of workers, to prevent affective ties from concealing power asymmetries and precarious working conditions.

We are practically family” (managers)

The managers’ statements reveal an affective perception of relationships with employees, highlighting bonds that go beyond the formal employment contract. The metaphor of “family” is constantly evoked to explain the proximity, care, and mutual commitment present in the daily life of family-run inns.

> They grow to love the inn, of course, they create a bond. I’ve never had a relationship problem here, they (the employees) themselves worry about us, there is a family here, we are a family. They spend more time here than at home. (Margarida)

Margarida’s statement demonstrates how the feeling of belonging is reinforced by daily coexistence, configuring the workplace as an extension of personal life. The reference to family appears as synonymous with care,



solidarity, and affection. However, this proximity can generate discomfort when privileges are perceived as unequal between family and non-family members.

> Here, there were people who worked on the construction, from the beginning, and are still here. There are people, for example, who have already worked here for 42 years. They came for the construction work and are still here today. They stay until they retire, they worked until retirement. (Marilda)

Longevity in employment is interpreted as a sign of satisfaction and loyalty. However, such a perception may disregard structural factors, such as the scarcity of opportunities in the labor market, as warned by Sant'Anna, Carneiro and Lescura (2021). Even so, prolonged permanence can contribute positively to preserving organizational culture and strengthening intergenerational bonds.

> At the inn we are very united, like family, you know? (...) an example is when it gets very full and everyone has to come to work to handle the demand. Everyone comes willingly, without complaining. (Tião)

The unity highlighted by Tião is interpreted as unconditional dedication to the collective. The extra effort of employees during periods of high demand is normalized, without questioning working hours or compensation. This perception reinforces the idea that emotional involvement often replaces formal working conditions. Despite the spirit of collectivity, it is essential that there be tangible recognition, such as adequate remuneration and decent working conditions.

> Here I want what is best for everyone just as I want it for my children, I see them as daughters. Whatever they can count on me for, they can count on me, but it's that thing, right? No one is irreplaceable. (Irani)

Irani's statement illustrates the ambiguity present in family relationships within the organizational environment. At the same time that she expresses affection and offers support, she establishes a boundary by stating that "no one is irreplaceable." This ambivalence demonstrates that, despite the humanized discourse, business decisions are still governed by rationality and the logic of efficiency.

In summary, the managers interviewed project a work environment marked by emotional bonds and affectivity, which strengthens the sense of



belonging and engagement. However, caution is necessary so that such relationships do not conceal power asymmetries, overload, or harmful informalities. The coexistence of affection and professionalism requires structured management, capable of maintaining family culture without compromising workers' rights and well-being.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Understanding family businesses in the hotel sector in Ouro Preto requires more than observing formal management structures. It is necessary to recognize that these organizations operate based on affective bonds, symbolisms, and traditions that permeate economic logic. Throughout the research, it was possible to identify that the daily life of these enterprises is marked by the dynamics between personal and professional relationships, which directly influences the work environment.

The investigation highlighted employees with the longest tenure in family-run hotels in the city, showing how long-term bonds contribute to relationships of intimacy, a sense of belonging, and trust. However, conflicts and difficulties in defining the roles between employees and family members also emerge.

The interviews revealed a characteristic ambiguity in these relationships: while there is loyalty, a sense of collectivity, and a welcoming environment, complaints also arise regarding centralized decision-making, family conflicts, and the absence of formal organization. Even so, both recognize that the lack of professionalization and internal conflicts can compromise business performance and sustainability.

By engaging with authors such as Lodi (1978), Machado (2005), Chua, Chrisman and Sharma (1999) and Carsten (2014), the research broadens the understanding of family in the business context, including symbolic ties and bonds of belonging. This reveals a management dynamic based not only on



technical criteria, but also on affective relationships, which can strengthen internal bonds or generate exclusions and tensions.

By relating Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (1995) contributes to interpreting the influence of values from the private sphere on management practices. The concept of the “cordial man” helps to understand how personalism and favoritism structure organizational culture. In Ouro Preto, these elements are intensified by the presence of *mineiridade* and hospitality based on community and family ties, as analyzed by Brusadin (2018) and Pires (2017).

The research highlighted the value of the practical knowledge of the longest-serving employees, emphasizing their autonomy and experience in serving guests. Strategies such as active listening and recognition contribute to engagement and stability in the workplace. Methodologically, the study faced difficulties in accessing sensitive information and the interviewees, requiring ethical and sensitive approaches to understand the complexity of relationships in family businesses.

Thus, when analyzing family businesses in light of these dimensions, it becomes clear that their sustainability depends on a balance between preserving family characteristics and adopting professionalized management strategies. In addition, a deeper examination of kinship dynamics makes it possible to better understand the challenges related to succession, the balance between family interests, and business continuity.

The relevance of family businesses to the economy and tourism reinforces the need for future studies that integrate sociocultural and economic aspects, considering how kinship ties shape their strategies, challenges, and contributions to society. Thus, this work contributes to the academic field by reinforcing the importance of understanding the complexities inherent in blood relationships in the business context and the need for practices that combine tradition and modernity in the city of Ouro Preto.



Finally, the theoretical and practical advances of this study lie in articulating the reality of family businesses in Ouro Preto with broader reflections on the hotel sector beyond an economic perspective, while taking into account determining social factors. By reflecting on themes such as succession, centralization of power, and professionalization, the research contributes by offering an interpretation within the regional and tourism context.

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