

ORIGINAL

## Exploring the influence of e-governance on family business strategy execution

### Exploración de la influencia de la gobernanza electrónica en la ejecución de la estrategia de las empresas familiares

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Cite as: Mansouri A, Belhaj I. Exploring the influence of e-governance on family business strategy execution. Data and Metadata. 2024; 3:.396. <https://doi.org/10.56294/dm2024.396>

Submitted: 05-02-2024

Revised: 21-05-2024

Accepted: 07-10-2024

Published: 08-10-2024

Editor: Adrián Alejandro Vitón Castillo 

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#### ABSTRACT

In a context marked by increasing digital transformation, this study sets out to examine the influence of e-governance on strategy execution within family businesses in Morocco. Adopting a qualitative approach, this research looks specifically at the effects of three dimensions of e-governance - e-participation, e-transparency, and e-accountability - on the effectiveness of strategic execution. Based on data collected from 31 family businesses, the analysis reveals that e-participation and e-accountability contribute significantly to improving strategic alignment, thus fostering more efficient strategic execution. On the other hand, the impact of e-transparency, while relevant, remains less pronounced. This study enriches the literature by highlighting the transformative potential of e-governance in the strategic management of family businesses, while taking into account the particularities of family culture, resistance to change and technological capabilities specific to these organizations.

**Keywords:** Family Business; E-Governance; Strategic Execution; Strategic Alignment.

#### RESUMEN

En un contexto marcado por la creciente transformación digital, este estudio se propone examinar la influencia de la gobernanza electrónica en la ejecución de la estrategia en las empresas familiares de Marruecos. Adoptando un enfoque cualitativo, esta investigación examina específicamente los efectos de tres dimensiones de la gobernanza electrónica -participación, transparencia y rendición de cuentas electrónicas- sobre la eficacia de la ejecución estratégica. A partir de datos recogidos en 31 empresas familiares, el análisis revela que la e-participación y la e-rendición de cuentas contribuyen significativamente a mejorar la alineación estratégica, fomentando así una ejecución estratégica más eficaz. En cambio, el impacto de la transparencia electrónica, aunque relevante, sigue siendo menos pronunciado. Este estudio enriquece la literatura al destacar el potencial transformador de la gobernanza electrónica en la gestión estratégica de las empresas familiares, teniendo en cuenta al mismo tiempo las particularidades de la cultura familiar, la resistencia al cambio y las capacidades tecnológicas específicas de estas organizaciones.

**Palabras clave:** Empresa Familiar; Gobernanza Electrónica; Ejecución Estratégica; Alineación Estratégica.

#### INTRODUCTION

Family businesses stand as the most enduring and widespread organizational structure worldwide (Moufdi & Mansouri, 2021). Over the course of the 20th century, family capitalism experienced a resurgence, reasserting

its importance after a period of overshadowing by the rise of managerial capitalism. Extensive research underscores the dominance of family enterprises within global economies, highlighting their significant role in driving national economic growth.

Despite its importance, it is crucial to recognize that the concept of the “family business” is a relatively recent area of academic study. This emerging field has sparked a growing body of research, with scholars increasingly focused on uncovering its unique characteristics (Mansouri, 2024; Salhi, 2017). As the literature on family businesses continues to expand, it further establishes the field’s relevance and scholarly legitimacy. Once neglected by academia, family enterprises now not only dominate various economic sectors but also frequently outperform other business models.

Research has highlighted the distinctive organizational, cultural, and strategic characteristics of family businesses. The interplay between the family system and the corporate system—each with its own unique needs and goals—has become a focal point of scholarly interest (Salhi, 2017). As a result, considerable attention has been devoted to understanding the expansion of family business activities, the pursuit of operational efficiency, and the preservation of family wealth across generations. Additionally, studies have explored the dual roles of family head and business leader, the integration of family and managerial governance, as well as the complexities of succession planning and intergenerational transitions (Mansouri, Mouaad & Moufdi, 2024).

Family businesses, while deeply rooted in tradition and values, often encounter significant challenges in executing their strategic initiatives. One of the primary obstacles lies in the inherent conflicts that arise across generations. These intergenerational tensions frequently stem from divergent perspectives on business priorities, risk tolerance, and growth strategies. Older generations may favor conservative approaches, preserving the status quo, while younger members may advocate for innovation and rapid expansion (Jouad, Moufdi & Mansouri, 2019). Such differences can lead to prolonged decision-making processes, where reaching a consensus becomes arduous and time-consuming. The slow pace of decision-making, exacerbated by the need to accommodate varying viewpoints and familial dynamics, often hampers the timely execution of strategic plans. Consequently, these businesses may struggle to maintain their competitive edge in rapidly changing markets, risking the erosion of their long-term sustainability.

In light of these challenges, the implementation of e-governance is emerging as a crucial solution for enhancing the effectiveness of strategic execution within family businesses. By integrating digital tools and platforms, e-governance offers an optimized approach to decision-making, fostering increased communication and collaboration between stakeholders (Páez Moreno Ánge & Parra Fonsec, 2024). By facilitating real-time access to crucial information and ensuring transparent processes, e-governance helps mitigate the risk of conflicts and misunderstandings, particularly those arising from generational differences. Furthermore, the adoption of e-governance practices significantly reduces the decision-making cycle, ensuring more agile and precise strategic execution. This digital transformation not only strengthens alignment between family members, it also gives the company an enhanced ability to respond to external market pressures, ensuring its longevity and success across generations.

This gap in the existing knowledge prompted us to conduct a thorough investigation. Faced with this deficiency, we found it essential to pursue this research. The main aim of our study is to examine the impact of e-governance on the execution of strategies within family businesses. Accordingly, our central research question is: how does e-governance facilitate effective strategic execution in family businesses?

This investigation is grounded in a thorough review of international literature, scholarly calls for research, and the unique characteristics of family businesses compared to non-family enterprises. In addressing this research question, our goal is to develop a comprehensive theoretical model that elucidates the influence of e-governance on the effective execution of strategies within family businesses. This model is intended to serve both as an innovative theoretical framework and as a practical tool with significant relevance to the succession planning process.

This article opens with an in-depth review of the literature, concentrating on the key concepts of e-governance in family businesses and the unique aspects of strategic execution within these organizations. It culminates in the development of a conceptual model that examines the influence of e-governance on the effectiveness of strategic execution. Following this, the research methodology is thoroughly outlined, leading into the presentation and discussion of the study’s findings. The concluding section summarizes the academic and managerial implications, addresses the study’s limitations, and suggests directions for future research.

### **E-governance and family businesses**

E-governance, often termed electronic governance, has the capacity to profoundly transform the operational framework of family businesses. This concept is multifaceted and revolutionary, encapsulating the significant influence of information and communication technologies (ICT) and artificial intelligence on business operations and stakeholder engagement, including interactions with employees, family members, and the wider community (Jejenywa *et al.*, 2024). By establishing essential connections, e-governance enhances transparency, user

accessibility, agility, and compliance in everyday operations, thereby improving the efficiency and cohesion of family enterprises (Khouya, 2023; Nam et al., 2024).

As family businesses increasingly navigate the demands of the digital age, e-governance emerges as a strategic approach that aligns with global business trends, securing their long-term viability (Larsson & Grönlund, 2014). It enables these enterprises to integrate advanced technologies for authentication and rights management, thereby reinforcing transparency and accountability (Srivastava, 2019). Implementing e-governance involves the adaptive use of the Internet, computing, and network systems, which facilitates seamless interaction with data and documents stored on organizational databases, whether through intranet systems or online connections (Asogwa, 2013). By harnessing digital technologies, family businesses can enhance governance practices, streamline communication, improve decision-making processes, and optimize service delivery (Butt & John, 2023).

A comprehensive perspective on e-governance within family businesses underscores its dual function: defining organizational roles and responsibilities while also shaping digital executive strategies and decision-making processes (Mykhalchenko, 2022). Although interpretations of e-governance may vary across the literature, there is a general consensus among scholars regarding its core principles, which include electronic participation, transparency, and accountability (Al Athmay, 2015; Ahmad et al., 2019; Charan, 2010; O'Donovan, 2023; OECD, 2016). As the digital era continues to drive transformation, family enterprises are increasingly adopting e-governance practices to enhance operational efficiency. The shift to electronic channels not only reduces administrative costs but also provides mechanisms for more effective service delivery (Dobrolyubova & Alexandrov, 2016). The automation of processes has resulted in significant time and resource savings, with operations available 24/7, giving employees greater flexibility in managing their responsibilities, which is particularly advantageous for those balancing other commitments (Gabriel, 2011; Arora & Gupta, 2017). This accessibility not only minimizes the need for reprocessing but also alleviates the demands of traditional office communications, making e-governance an indispensable asset for modern family businesses.

### **Strategic execution in family businesses**

Strategic execution is a fundamental process that transforms plans into concrete actions, orchestrating the distribution of resources, the formulation of policies and the coordination of efforts to achieve organizational goals (Bhatia, 2021). However, as Twum (2021) points out, many companies fail in this task, with failure rates ranging from 60% to 90%. This difficulty is exacerbated in family businesses, where unique dynamics and specific challenges can further complicate effective strategy implementation.

Family businesses, often characterized by direct family management and long-term objectives geared towards sustainability and inheritance, face particular obstacles in executing their strategies. One of the major challenges is reconciling the founders' long-term vision with the immediate requirements of the market. This duality can lead to dilemmas in resource allocation, where short-term imperatives clash with long-term strategic objectives (Qureshi & Bedekar, 2024). Moreover, family businesses have to navigate between the divergent interests of family members and those of the organization, which can complicate decision-making and resource management.

Effective strategy execution in this context requires a particular approach, integrating strategic foresight, skills development and stakeholder management. The need to maintain coherence between family vision and market realities calls for governance that combines both traditional aspects of family management and modern strategic management practices. Implementing strategy in a family business often involves sensitive management of family relationships and careful planning to avoid internal conflicts (Radomska, 2018).

The rapid evolution of technological and market environments also poses an additional challenge for family businesses. They need to adjust to the new conditions without compromising their heritage and core values. Execution strategies must therefore include flexibility mechanisms that enable rapid adaptation while remaining aligned with long-term family goals (Veera, 2018). This includes implementing agile processes for managing budgets and resources, as well as regularly revising strategic plans in response to market changes.

Talent and stakeholder management are also of crucial importance. Family businesses must not only attract and retain competent talent, but also maintain an effective communication system to align family interests with those of employees and other stakeholders. Proactive stakeholder engagement, coupled with a well-structured communication strategy, is essential to ensure successful execution of plans (Alqaisi, 2018).

To overcome these challenges, family businesses need to adopt an integrated approach that combines strategic foresight, resource efficiency, skills development and stakeholder engagement. By adopting these strategies, they can not only improve the execution of their strategies but also strengthen their resilience in the face of market uncertainties and internal tensions (Chotipurk et al., 2023). The harmonious integration of these elements enables family businesses to successfully navigate between tradition and innovation, ensuring their long-term sustainability and success.

### Conceptual model construction

The conceptual model designed to understand the influence of e-governance on strategy execution in family businesses is based on the identification and articulation of several key dimensions. This modeling process begins with an in-depth reflection on the key dimensions of e-governance, namely e-participation, e-transparency and e-responsibility, which form the basis of the model's independent variables.

The first step was to integrate the e-participation dimension. In the context of family businesses, e-participation refers to the engagement of family members and stakeholders through digital platforms. This dimension enhances communication and collaboration by facilitating the active involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process. E-participation thus strengthens strategic cohesion and encourages greater ownership of decisions, which is essential for effective strategy execution.

Secondly, the e-transparency dimension was incorporated into the model. E-transparency concerns the centralization and traceability of information using digital tools, enabling all stakeholders to access relevant data in real time. This increased transparency is crucial to building trust and aligning corporate objectives with family members' expectations. By improving visibility of decisions and actions, e-transparency contributes directly to strategic alignment, a key factor in successful strategy execution.

The e-accountability dimension completes this framework. E-accountability involves the use of digital systems to formalize and reinforce accountability within family governance. It translates into clear mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating performance, ensuring that each player is accountable for his or her actions in line with the company's strategic objectives. By establishing a culture of accountability, e-responsibility encourages more rigorous and effective execution of strategies.

Once these e-governance dimensions had been defined and integrated, it was necessary to consider the contextual factors likely to moderate the effect of e-governance. Among these moderators, family culture stands out as a key element. Family values and traditions influence how e-governance is perceived and adopted within the company. On the other hand, resistance to change on the part of family members or employees represents a potential barrier to the adoption of digital technologies, while the company's technological capabilities largely determine the success of e-governance initiatives.

The next step in the model's construction was the identification of the intermediate variable, namely strategic alignment. This concept captures e-governance's ability to synchronize family and business objectives with operational processes. Strategic alignment plays a mediating role in the model, linking the dimensions of e-governance to the effectiveness of strategic execution, which is the final dependent variable.

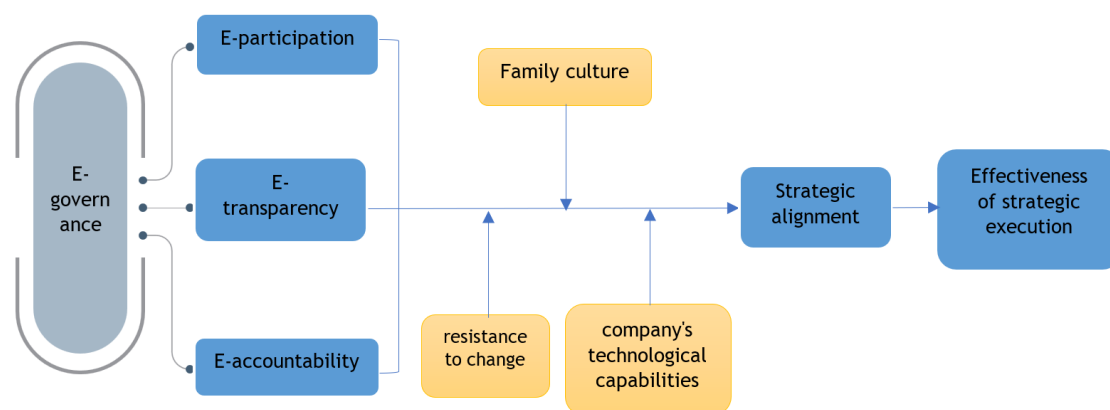


Figure 1. Research conceptual model

This conceptual model has been built by integrating the key dimensions of e-governance in a logical way, while taking into account contextual factors specific to family businesses. It provides a theoretical framework for analyzing and understanding the mechanisms by which e-governance can improve strategy execution in these companies, with an emphasis on the importance of strategic alignment as a central lever for success.

Following the construction of the theoretical and conceptual framework, it will be essential to define a robust approach for engaging with the empirical reality. This will entail determining the appropriate epistemological stance, as well as selecting the research methodology and methods to be employed during the empirical phase.

### METHODS

Based on the theoretical analysis of the influence of e-governance on the effectiveness of strategy execution within family businesses, it is particularly relevant to examine this issue within the Moroccan context, where family businesses constitute the backbone of the national economy.

In pursuit of this objective, we have adopted a research strategy grounded in an interpretivist epistemological stance and an exploratory qualitative research methodology, specifically utilizing individual interviews. This approach will enable us to gain a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the aforementioned issue. As Hlady (2002) suggests, the use of interviews is crucial in the analysis of management situations, particularly in research involving complex phenomena.

The construction of a qualitative sample tends to be purposeful rather than random (Miles & Huberman, 2010). The concept of a “statistically representative sample” has lost much of its relevance in qualitative research and has been supplanted by the notion of “progressive sample construction.”

Accordingly, our sample of 31 family businesses was selected based on the data we gathered either through our own knowledge or within the business community, rather than through a random selection process. We ensured that these family businesses shared sufficient common characteristics with regard to the issue under study while being diverse in terms of form, size, activities, etc., to enrich our analysis.

For the present research, we have selected 31 family businesses. The businesses included in our study are as follows:

**Table 1.** Companies included in the exploratory study

Company	Activity	Size	Legal form	City	Generation	Interviewee
E1	Advertising agency	Medium-sized company	SARL AU	Rabat	1st generation	Founder
E2	Leather production shoe	Medium-sized company	SARL AU	Beni mellal	1st generation	Founder
E3	Transport	Medium-sized company	SARL	Casablanca	2nd generation	Successor
E4	Cosmetics	Small business	SARL	Casablanca	1st generation	Founder
E5	Fuel	Medium-sized company	Limited company	Tanger	2nd generation	CEO
E6	School group	Medium-sized company	SARL	Larache	2nd generation	Founder
E7	School group	Small business	SARL	Meknès	1st generation	Founder
E8	Restaurant	Small business	SARL	Fès	Cohabitation of two generations	Successor
E9	Real estate	Large company	Limited company	Meknès	1st generation	CEO
E10	Furniture	Small business	SARL	Fès	Cohabitation of two generations	Founder
E11	Transport	Small business	SARL	Meknès	1st generation	Founder
E12	Digital marketing agency	Small business	SARL	Tanger	1st generation	Successor
E13	Leather bag production	Medium-sized company	SARL	Rabat	1st generation	Founder
E14	Sale of merchandise	Small business	SARL	Meknès	1st generation	Founder
E15	Furniture	Medium-sized company	SARL	Meknès	1st generation	Founder
E16	Restaurant	Small business	SARL	Meknès	1st generation	Founder
E17	Marble production	Large company	SARL	Tanger	1st generation	Founder
E18	Sales & distribution of fuel and other petroleum products	Medium-sized company	Limited company	Larache	1st generation	Founder
E19	Sale of merchandise	Medium-sized company	SNC	Meknès	1st generation	Founder
E20	Restaurant	Medium-sized company	SARL	Meknès	Cohabitation of two generations	Successor
E21	Real estate	Medium-sized company	SARL	Meknès	1st generation	Founder
E22	Restaurant	Small business	SARL	Larache	1st generation	Founder
E23	Women's hairdressing salon	Small business	SARL	Meknès	1st generation	Founder
E24	Transport	Small business	SARL	Fès	1st generation	Founder
E25	Clinic	Medium-sized company	Limited company	Fès	Cohabitation of two generations	CEO
E26	Furniture	Small business	SARL	Tanger	1st generation	Founder



E27	Solar panel production	Medium-sized company	SARL	Casablanca	1st generation	Founder
E28	BTP	Small business	SARL	EL hajeb	1st generation	Founder
E29	Advertising agency	Small business	SARL AU	Casablanca	1st generation	Founder
E30	Clinic	Medium-sized company	Limited company	Meknès	1st generation	CEO
E31	Making room	Medium-sized company	SARL	Casablanca	1st generation	Founder

## RESULTS

After collecting and analyzing qualitative data from 31 family businesses, several significant relationships were identified between e-governance dimensions and the effectiveness of strategic execution.

### *E-Participation and Strategic Alignment*

E-participation, which refers to the engagement of family members through digital platforms, is significantly influenced by family culture. In companies where family culture values inclusion and collective participation, the adoption of digital tools has fostered greater strategic alignment. The leaders of these companies often stressed that e-participation had strengthened cohesion and enabled better synchronization of family and organizational objectives.

“Our family has always valued open dialogue. With the adoption of these digital tools, everyone can express themselves, which has clarified our common goals.” (E10, Founder)

However, resistance to change has been a major obstacle in some companies. Family members, particularly seniors, have shown a reluctance to embrace these new technologies, thus hindering e-participation’s potential to improve strategic alignment.

As a result, in companies where the family culture is open to participation and resistance to change is low, e-participation can significantly improve strategic alignment. Conversely, strong resistance to change could limit the potential benefits of e-participation.

### *E-Transparency and Strategic Alignment*

E-transparency, which involves the centralization and traceability of information, has shown varied results depending on the company’s technological capabilities. In technologically advanced companies, e-transparency has enabled a better flow of information, leading to a more coherent alignment of strategies with operations.

“We invested in a platform that centralizes all our data. This has enabled us to see clearly where we are in relation to our strategic objectives.” (E1, Founder)

However, in companies with limited technological capabilities, the implementation of e-transparency has been less effective. The complexity of the tools and the lack of technical skills have hampered the potential impact of e-transparency on strategic alignment.

As a result, e-transparency is most effective in companies with sufficient technological capabilities to manage digital tools. In companies where these capabilities are limited, e-transparency may not fully realize its potential to improve strategic alignment.

### *E-Accountability and Strategic Alignment*

E-accountability, which aims to formalize and reinforce responsibilities via digital systems, is closely linked to family culture and resistance to change. In families where the culture values individual and collective responsibility, e-responsibility has led to more rigorous strategic alignment and execution of strategies. However, resistance to change, especially on the part of older members or those reluctant to adopt new technologies, has sometimes reduced the effectiveness of these tools.

“We’ve always had a culture of accountability. With these new tools, it’s become even easier to keep track of who’s doing what, and to make sure tasks get done.” (E17, Founder)

However, in companies where the family culture is less rigid, and where resistance to change is strong, e-responsibility has sometimes been perceived as an imposition or a form of excessive control, which may have generated tensions.

As a result, e-accountability is most effective in family-run businesses where the culture encourages responsibility and resistance to change is low. In companies where these conditions are not met, e-accountability may be perceived negatively, which could undermine the effectiveness of strategic execution.

### *Strategic Alignment and effectiveness of strategic execution*

The analysis of the relationship between strategic alignment and the effectiveness of strategic execution in Moroccan family businesses reveals interesting dynamics that vary according to the specific characteristics of

each company.

In companies where strong strategic alignment was observed, executives noted a significant improvement in the effectiveness of strategic execution. Strategic alignment, defined as the coherence between family and organizational objectives and operational capabilities, led to better resource allocation, reduced internal conflicts, and smoother strategy execution.

“When we took the time to make sure our family goals were aligned with our business goals, everything fell into place naturally. Decisions were clearer and easier to implement.” (E25, CEO)

However, results show that strategic alignment is not always easy to achieve. In companies where alignment was weak, managers often cited discrepancies between family members’ expectations and business objectives as a source of tension. These divergences led to poorly executed decisions, delays, and sometimes even failures to implement strategies.

“There was a mismatch between what some family members wanted and what the company actually needed. This created a lot of confusion and delays in executing our plans.” (E6, Founder)

In summary, we can say that strategic alignment is a key factor for effective strategic execution in Moroccan family businesses. However, this alignment is strongly influenced by contextual factors such as family culture, resistance to change, and the company’s technological capabilities. To maximize the effectiveness of strategic execution, it is crucial that family businesses work to strengthen their strategic alignment while taking these moderators into account to overcome potential challenges.

## DISCUSSION

The current study explored the influence of e-governance on strategy execution in Moroccan family businesses, taking into account cultural specificities, resistance to change, and technological capabilities. The results reveal complex dynamics in which e-governance tools such as e-participation, e-transparency and e-accountability interact differentially with these contextual variables. By confronting these results with the findings of previous research, we highlight the particularities of the family business environment, while highlighting the challenges and opportunities that arise when integrating e-governance practices to improve strategic execution.

Firstly, e-participation has demonstrated its potential for strengthening the involvement of family members in the strategic decision-making process. This is in line with the work of Moufdi & Mansouri (2021) and Schmidt & Brauer (2006), who showed that active stakeholder participation improves strategic alignment. However, in our study, the impact of e-participation is strongly modulated by family culture. In families that value dialogue and collective decision-making, e-participation fostered more coherent strategic alignment. Conversely, in more hierarchical and conservative family contexts, this dimension of e-governance met with resistance, limiting its effectiveness. This observation qualifies Schmidt and Brauer’s conclusions by showing that, in family businesses, internal culture plays a decisive role in the effectiveness of e-participation.

Secondly, e-transparency revealed contrasting results. While Klačmer et al (2015) emphasize the importance of transparency for improving organizational performance, our study shows that such transparency can give rise to confidentiality-related fears, particularly in family cultures where information sharing is traditionally restricted. Resistance to change played a critical role here, hindering the adoption of more transparent practices. These results suggest that, unlike the technology companies studied by Klačmer et al., Moroccan family businesses face particular challenges linked to their culture and governance structure.

Thirdly, e-accountability showed a positive effect on the effectiveness of strategic execution, by clarifying roles and enhancing the commitment of family members. These results are consistent with the findings of Malelak et al. (2020) and Ying et al. (2021), who showed that effective governance structures promote better strategy execution. However, in our study, this beneficial effect is attenuated in companies where technological capabilities are limited. This suggests that, although the principles of e-accountability are universally beneficial, their implementation is highly dependent on the technological resources available.

Strategic alignment, identified as a central pivot in our model, acts as a mediator between e-governance practices and the effectiveness of strategic execution. Our results corroborate previous work in agency theory, which suggests that technology can help to better manage agency problems by enhancing transparency and accountability (Schmidt and Brauer, 2006). However, our study goes further, showing that this alignment is particularly crucial in family businesses, where interpersonal and cultural dynamics can either reinforce or weaken the influence of e-governance.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of adapting e-governance practices to the specific cultural and technological context of family businesses to maximize their influence on strategic execution. Unlike non-family businesses, where processes are often more standardized, family businesses have to deal with internal dynamics that modify the effectiveness of e-governance tools. It is therefore essential for the leaders of these companies to carefully manage change and develop their technological capabilities to overcome the obstacles to adopting these tools, thereby improving the effectiveness of their strategies.

## CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to examine the influence of e-governance on strategy execution in Moroccan family businesses, taking into account the specific dimensions of e-participation, e-transparency, and e-accountability. The results show that these factors play a crucial role in improving the effectiveness of strategic execution, although their impact varies according to the family and organizational context. E-participation and e-responsibility proved to be the most influential elements, strengthening communication and collaboration between family members, while e-accountability, although less pronounced, remains essential for establishing trust and guaranteeing the coherence of strategic actions.

This study highlights the importance for family businesses of integrating e-governance practices in a holistic way, to foster better alignment between strategic objectives and execution capabilities. However, it is also crucial to consider the challenges associated with family culture, resistance to change and technological capabilities, which can moderate the effectiveness of these practices.

As this research has an exploratory focus, the results are primarily intended to provide insights and lay the groundwork for future research. Such future research could further explore these relationships in other cultural and industrial contexts, while examining other dimensions of e-governance to offer a more comprehensive perspective. Ultimately, this study contributes to the e-governance literature by providing useful insights for family businesses seeking to optimize their strategic execution in an increasingly digitalized environment.

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#### **FINANCING**

The authors did not receive financing for the development of this research.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

#### **AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION**

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