

We examine the determinants of top management team professionalization in Belgian private family firms. Professionalization, conceptualized here as the inclusion of non-family managers, can be more challenging due to the unique composition of family firms. Therefore, predictions are based on contingency factors that are formed by three different subsystems: the ownership, business, and family system. A multi-theoretical approach is used to determine which family firms are more or less eager to hire non-family managers. Furthermore, the specific ties within a business family, translated by socio-emotional wealth, are considered to be influential. The results of the logistic regression analyses on a sample of 218 Belgian private family firms provide partial support for the effect of all three subsystems while also a significant influence of socio-emotional wealth is found. Hence, professionalization of top management teams in family firms is confirmed to be complex due to the unique interaction between the firm's owners, management and family.