

RESEARCH ON THE IMPACT OF FAMILY BUSINESSES ON EMPLOYMENT IN AZERBAIJAN

Agayeva Shalala Rafiq

Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC)

UNEC Business School

E-mail: agayeva.shalala.rafig.2024@unec.edu.az

ABSTRACT

Under market economy conditions, family businesses, which account for more than 60 percent of global employment, play a significant role in ensuring social welfare worldwide. The positive reputation of family businesses, based on establishing strong trust-based relationships with customers, as well as their substantial contribution to the socio-economic development of regions through the mobilization of local resources, makes the study of these businesses highly relevant. The main objective of the research is to assess the impact of family businesses on employment in Azerbaijan.

In the article, literature review, induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis, and questionnaire survey methods were employed as research methods. The findings indicate that family businesses play an important role in providing employment opportunities for vulnerable groups of the working-age population and low-skilled individuals.

Keywords: *Azerbaijan, business, employment, family businesses, social welfare*

JEL classification codes: *J23, L26, M10*

INTRODUCTION

The family businesses examined in this study demonstrate considerable differences from other forms of entrepreneurship in terms of managerial structure and governance practices. These distinctions can primarily be explained by the integration of ownership, management, and business control within the same social unit, namely the family. On the one hand, such integration contributes positively to the flexibility and efficiency of decision-making processes within the firm. On the other hand, it also increases the risk that intra-family relationships and conflicts may influence managerial decisions and organizational governance (Chua, Chrisman and Sharma, 1999). The intersection of these factors significantly distinguishes the management of family businesses from that of other business entities (Gersick et al., 1997). Consequently, both economic rationality and factors such as family values and

emotional attachment play a crucial role in the business decision-making process. It can be noted that these elements both complicate the governance mechanisms of family businesses and endow them with distinctive managerial characteristics.

In family businesses, knowledge and managerial experience are often closely associated with family values, decision-making culture, and the principles of intergenerational continuity. In this regard, a sustainable and robust governance system serves as a crucial prerequisite for the preservation and transfer of such knowledge. The multidimensional and intergenerational interaction formed between family values and business management distinguishes family businesses from other organizational forms. This interaction demonstrates that individual and family values can directly influence innovation processes, succession planning, and the steps taken toward the professionalization of the business (Zapata-Cantu et al., 2023).

The establishment and governance of family companies are influenced by a combination of economic, institutional, and socio-cultural factors that shape managerial decision-making processes. Family values, trust-based relationships, and intergenerational participation play a significant role in determining the organizational structure and sustainability of family enterprises. Moreover, effective governance mechanisms contribute to the long-term competitiveness and strategic development of family businesses in dynamic market environments (Musayev, 2023). Family businesses are generally regarded as a more stable and sustainable source of employment creation. Their intergenerational continuity ensures the preservation of jobs and contributes to resilience in the face of economic fluctuations. The impact of family businesses on employment is not limited to quantitative indicators; these firms also enhance productivity by relying on a high-trust environment and social capital (Amato et al., 2022).

Approximately 75% of operating business entities in the global economy and 81% of newly established enterprises are either managed by families or have family members as their principal shareholders. The report also indicates that in the South and East Asia regions, family-involved businesses hold the highest share within the overall entrepreneurial structure. These indicators demonstrate that in these economic systems, family entrepreneurship plays a significant role in ensuring employment and supporting socio-economic development (GEM, 2021). However, the existence of contradictory findings in empirical studies regarding the impact of family businesses on employment indicates a certain gap between micro- and macro-level analyses in the existing academic literature. Therefore, based on the analysis, three main conclusions have been drawn.

First, it has been identified that there is a limited number of studies examining the employment outcomes of family businesses in a comparative manner across different contexts, as well as directly

measuring the impact of specific factors on these outcomes. Since most of the existing research has been conducted within a single country or region and predominantly at the firm level, context-specific approaches tend to prevail. This, in turn, may lead to contradictory findings regarding the impact of the family dimension on employment, as well as difficulties in theoretical prediction across different studies.

Second, the knowledge gap regarding the contextual characteristics in which family businesses operate highlights the need for future research to theoretically link employment outcomes with context. This necessitates the measurement of contextual variables and the analysis of their interaction with family-related and work-related factors.

Third, it is emphasized that the overall impact of family businesses on employment outcomes requires broader empirical investigation and stronger theoretical grounding across different levels of analysis, including local, regional, and national contexts (Amato, Basco and Lattanzi, 2022).

Notwithstanding the above, the emergence of family-based businesses is primarily driven by socio-economic necessity. In developing and low-income economies, family businesses serve as a key factor in ensuring employment opportunities. Business founders, operating with limited financial resources, often involve family members to sustain and expand their enterprises. This arrangement not only provides productive employment for family members but also helps overcome financial and human resource constraints within the business. Such enterprises significantly facilitate the integration of family members into the labor market and enable them to bypass entry barriers related to initial capital requirements (Astrachan and Shanker, 2003).

Consequently, the theoretical foundations explaining the impact of family businesses on employment are formed based on the integration of various scholarly approaches, indicating that this effect is realized through both internal and external mechanisms. The resource-based view, agency theory, and the socioemotional wealth perspective collectively substantiate how the integration of family and business systems influences firm-level employment policies. Family businesses are shaped not only by economic objectives, but also by social, cultural, and psychological factors that influence their formation and development processes. In many cases, necessity-driven motives such as unemployment, income insecurity, and limited labor market opportunities play a significant role in the emergence of family enterprises. These businesses often become an important mechanism for ensuring household sustainability, self-employment, and long-term economic resilience (Musayev, 2022; Mycaев, 2022).

The theories of social identity and social capital explain the contribution of family businesses to the promotion of employment within the framework of their interaction with local communities. In addition, characteristics such as intergenerational continuity, long-term strategic orientation, and an approach

focused on preserving human capital distinguish family businesses from short-term profit-oriented priorities and direct them toward more stable employment policies and institutional sustainability. From this perspective, family businesses should be regarded not only as a source of economic growth, but also as important socio-economic factors influencing the structure and qualitative indicators of the labor market. Although existing theoretical frameworks explain the employment-generating potential of family firms, the magnitude and nature of this effect may vary depending on factors such as country-specific characteristics, the institutional environment, and the stage of the firm's life cycle.

Therefore, a deeper and more systematic investigation of the impact of family businesses on employment remains relevant both in terms of theoretical conceptualization and empirical analysis.

Factors influencing the development of family businesses in Azerbaijan

The relationship between higher education, scientific integration, and economic development has been widely emphasized in academic literature. Universities play a significant role in strengthening human capital, increasing labor productivity, and supporting innovation-oriented economic systems through education and research activities (Muradov, 2017). In addition, competitive market structures and effective demonopolization mechanisms are considered important prerequisites for sustainable economic development and institutional efficiency (Muradov and Hacıyev, 2014).

Furthermore, the integration of science and education contributes to the formation of knowledge-based economies by enhancing cooperation between universities, research institutions, and industry sectors (Muradov et al., 2019; Muradov et al, 2018). Building upon Muradov's approaches regarding the strategic role of education in economic development and innovation-oriented growth, the successful implementation of digital transformation in family businesses also depends on the effectiveness of the national education system and the accessibility of educational opportunities for family entrepreneurs. Comparative analysis of the EU and Azerbaijan demonstrates that state support mechanisms aimed at improving digital competencies, vocational training, and entrepreneurial education contribute significantly to the modernization and sustainability of family enterprises (Musayev, 2025).

In this context, the integration of artificial intelligence into entrepreneurial ecosystems further strengthens innovation capacity and enhances decision-making processes in business environments. AI-driven tools facilitate the development of new business models, improve operational efficiency, and expand opportunities for innovation-based entrepreneurship, particularly in digitally transforming economies (Kərimova, 2025; Məmmədov, 2025).

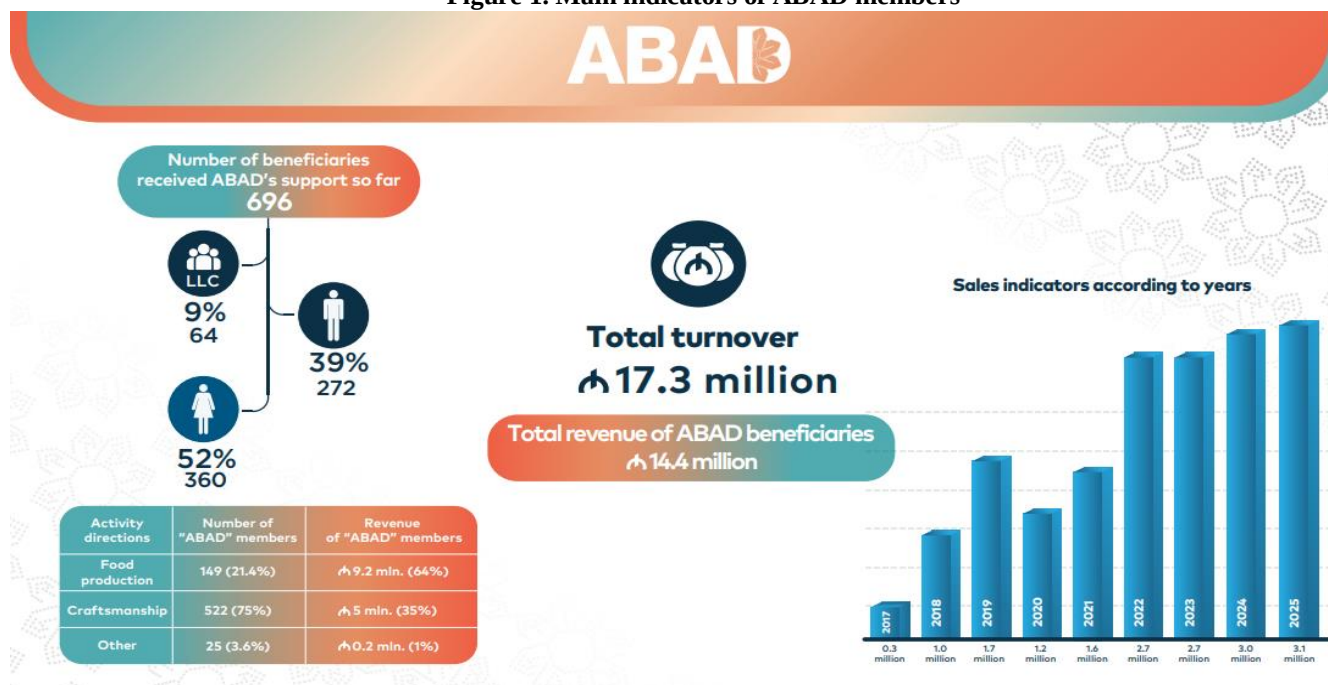
Family businesses in Azerbaijan are characterized by a combination of traditional economic practices and evolving institutional frameworks that shape their development trajectory. Empirical

evidence indicates that these enterprises are often driven by both economic necessity and long-term family-oriented strategic goals, which influence their sustainability and growth potential. In this context, family businesses represent a significant segment of the national economy, contributing to employment generation, entrepreneurial activity, and regional development (Musayev, 2025).

Family businesses operating in the digital economy are increasingly facing structural and technological challenges that require adaptation to rapidly changing business environments. The transition toward digitalization creates new opportunities for innovation, market expansion, and improved managerial efficiency, while also demanding enhanced digital competencies and strategic flexibility from family entrepreneurs. In this context, digital transformation is viewed as a key driver of competitiveness and long-term sustainability for family businesses in the modern economy (Musayev, 2024). The restoration and economic revitalization of the Karabakh region create significant opportunities for the expansion of family businesses through entrepreneurship, local investment, and employment generation. The development of family enterprises in the Karabakh region can contribute to sustainable regional growth by strengthening socio-economic stability and encouraging the reintegration of local communities into economic activity (Musayev, 2021). Furthermore, he argues that institutional support mechanisms, infrastructure development, and state-backed incentives are essential factors for ensuring the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of family businesses operating in the liberated territories of Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, the implementation of state policy related to family businesses began in 2016. In that year, by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, the establishment of ABAD (Public Legal Entity for Support to Family Businesses) marked an important indication of the global role of family enterprises and their significance in the national economy. The main objective of establishing ABAD was to ensure citizen participation in socio-economic development and to utilize the potential of family businesses in the country's growth. By joining this organization, family businesses gain access to support in areas such as equipment provision, marketing, consulting, sales organization, and other related services (Musayev, 2025).

Since its establishment, ABAD has ensured an institutional framework for the development of family businesses, thereby formally recognizing their existence within the legal domain. As a result, in recent years, a significant upward trend has been observed in both the number of ABAD-supported entrepreneurs and their key performance indicators (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Main indicators of ABAD members



Source: ABAD. (2026). Statistica 2025 Az. <https://www.abad.gov.az/az/open-informations>

As shown in Figure 2, family businesses that are members of ABAD have achieved significant development indicators within a relatively short period of time. Despite being a young organization, the number of its members has already approached 700. This demonstrates that the ABAD model is a sufficiently large-scale and successful initiative in terms of supporting the development of family businesses. The structure of ABAD participants shows that women account for 52%, men for 39%, and family businesses operating in the form of legal entities for 9%, indicating that the organization has a highly inclusive character and plays a broader role beyond ensuring gender balance. The fact that 52% of ABAD participants are women also demonstrates that ABAD contributes not only to the development of family businesses but also plays an important role in promoting women's entrepreneurship in Azerbaijan. When examining the reported economic indicators, the total turnover of members amounts to 17.3 million AZN, while the income generated by ABAD participants is 14.4 million AZN, confirming that the ABAD model creates tangible economic value. A sectoral analysis of family businesses shows that 75% of members, i.e., the vast majority, are engaged in handicrafts. However, when analyzed in terms of income, only 35% of total earnings are generated by this sector. "Other" sectors hold a relatively marginal share both in terms of the number of participants and the value they generate. In contrast, although family businesses operating in the food sector account for 22.4% of ABAD participants, they generate most of the total added value, specifically 64%. These statistical figures demonstrate that

handicraft production is not a highly productive or profitable sector, whereas the food industry ensures significantly higher income levels.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the food sector has strong potential to generate higher value and greater profitability for family businesses. On the other hand, the annual sales dynamics presented in the graph provide an understanding of the development trajectory of ABAD participants in real economic relations. Naturally, in the initial years of the organization's activity, sales volumes, like other indicators, were relatively low; however, higher growth dynamics were recorded in subsequent years. Specifically, while ABAD's sales amounted to 0.3 million AZN in 2017, the year in which the first statistical data were recorded, they increased more than tenfold, reaching 3.1 million AZN by 2025. Overall, these results confirm the success of the model, the effectiveness of the implemented support mechanisms, and the strong development potential of family businesses. However, in Azerbaijan there are no specific regulatory-legal acts or official state statistics dedicated exclusively to family businesses. This implies that the role of family businesses in the Azerbaijani economy is not limited to ABAD participants and is characterized by much broader macroeconomic indicators.

In this context, according to the empirical research conducted by Yusif Musayev at UNEC, who is one of the key researchers of family businesses in Azerbaijan and the first to systematically study their role in the national economy, 89.3% of micro, small, and medium-sized (MSME) enterprises operating in the country are family businesses (Musayev, 2025). This indicator shows that the real economic impact of family businesses is largely reflected within the performance of MSME enterprises. Considering that, at the global level, a substantial proportion of family businesses also fall within the MSME category, it can be argued that the inclusion of MSMEs in research is essential when studying family businesses in Azerbaijan.

Empirical analysis of the impact of family businesses on employment in Azerbaijan

Since there is no official statistical data on family businesses in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the impact of family businesses on employment will be assessed using qualitative methods and survey data. For this purpose, the survey conducted among various social groups on the topic of "The Impact of Family Businesses on Employment" enables the identification of the advantages and role of family businesses in the context of employment. (<https://forms.gle/kScdHc45NSVdWo7r7>).

The survey involved a total of 110 respondents representing different social categories, including entrepreneurs, teachers, students, and "other" groups (researchers and individuals employed in the service sector and public service occupations). Among the participants, 60.9% were women and 30.1% were men. Regarding the age distribution of the survey participants, 23.6% were young respondents aged

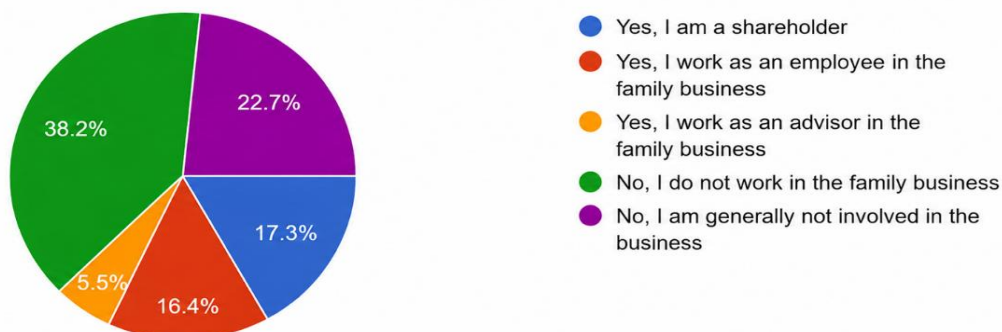
18-25, 41.8% belonged to the 26-35 age group, 22.7% were in the 36-45 age range, and 11.8% represented the upper age group of the economically active population aged 46-65. As can be seen, most respondents consist of young and middle-aged individuals, which is particularly relevant for assessing the impact of family businesses on employment. Regarding the economic regions of residence of the participants, although the majority represented the city of Baku, the involvement of respondents from all economic regions contributed to ensuring inclusiveness in the study. 52.7% of the survey participants were from the Baku economic region. This figure is approximately consistent with the distribution of entrepreneurs operating in Azerbaijan between Baku and the country's regions, reflecting a comparable level of diversification. 12.7% of respondents represented the Central Aran economic region, which may be related to the size of the region and the administrative districts it encompasses. Another significant share belongs to the Absheron-Khizi economic region with 9.1%. The Karabakh economic region accounts for 3.6%, while other economic regions each represent approximately 2-3% of the respondents. Although the number of participants from some regions is relatively small, the overall coverage of all regions ensures regional inclusiveness in the study, which is important for assessing the impact of family businesses on employment across different social groups.

One of the most important indicators in the demographic profile of survey participants, from the perspective of research inclusiveness, is their social status. Specifically, 18.2% of respondents were entrepreneurs, 66.4% were professionals and employees working in business entities and various organizations, 8.2% were teachers, and 7.3% were students. This diversity among participants makes it possible to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives regarding the impact of family businesses on employment and their various characteristics. Naturally, the responses of entrepreneurs, business entities, and professionals from other organizations are of greater analytical interest. However, the inclusion of teachers and students as social status categories in the survey was intended to capture the perspectives of individuals engaged in research or those involved in the academic process, thereby incorporating their views on the topic. Another noteworthy indicator is that approximately 40% of respondents answered "yes" to the question "Do you work in a family business?" (as an entrepreneur, a family member, or a non-family employee). The analysis shows that 39.2% of the respondents are directly involved in family businesses either as owners, family members, or non-family employees. This figure suggests that family businesses are highly integrated into economic activity and play a significant role in employment relations. A more detailed examination of respondents' level of involvement shows that 17.3% of them are family business owners. The participation of these individuals, whose share is expected to be higher in the real economy, is of relevance from a research perspective.

Figure 2. Survey participants' involvement in family business

Do you work in the family business?

110 responses



Source: Processing of survey data conducted by the author

The “other” category is represented by family members (16.4%) and individuals outside family businesses (5.5%), indicating that these enterprises play an important role not only in the employment of family members but also in providing job opportunities for non-family individuals.

Thus, despite the significant share of family businesses in employment, 38.2% of respondents reported working in non-family enterprises. On the other hand, 22.7% of survey participants indicated that they are not employed, which is largely explained by the inclusion of students as a separate social category among respondents. In other words, the fact that students are not part of the workforce has contributed to this figure. Overall, the grouping of respondents within the active labor force and the participation of individuals from diverse social backgrounds in the survey ensure inclusiveness, which is essential for identifying the role of family businesses in employment and the factors influencing it. One of the most significant findings from a research perspective is the respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of family businesses on employment.

As shown in figure 3, based on the opinions of respondents including entrepreneurs, teachers, students, researchers, and professionals, the main factors determining the positive impact of family businesses on employment are as follows.

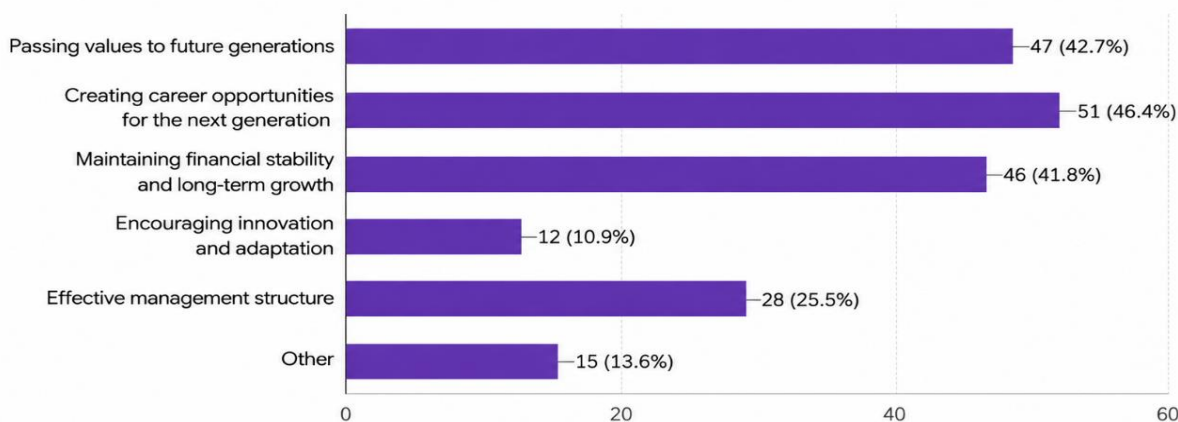
First, according to 46.6% of respondents, the most important factor is that family businesses provide employment opportunities for low-skilled individuals. This factor is related to the ability of family businesses to support vulnerable groups and individuals with lower competitiveness in the real labor market. Considering that family businesses in the Republic of Azerbaijan predominantly operate as micro

and small enterprises, this factor is particularly important in terms of enhancing employment and improving social welfare in the regions.

Figure 3. Key advantages of family businesses in ensuring employment

Which of the following factors do you consider to have the greatest impact on the sustainability of family businesses? (You may select multiple answers)

110 responses



Source: Processed survey data conducted by the author

The second factor, identified by 42.7% of respondents, is the intergenerational transfer characteristic of family businesses. The long-term orientation of family enterprises ensures their continuity and facilitates the transfer of knowledge, skills, and experience gained in entrepreneurship to subsequent generations. Thus, this factor makes family businesses essential for maintaining existing jobs and ensuring stable employment, contributing significantly to the development of local communities.

The third factor, noted by 36.4% of respondents, is the sustainability of family businesses, meaning their ability to preserve operations by mobilizing resources during periods of economic crisis. This factor ultimately ensures job stability during economic fluctuations. Accordingly, both the second and third factors are closely related to the sustainable and stable nature of family businesses.

The fourth factor influencing employment is related to the management structure of family businesses. The trust-based environment and relatively simple management system within these firms facilitate flexible decision-making and encourage the creation of new job opportunities.

The fifth factor is related to the application of innovative approaches in family businesses, which was emphasized by a relatively small share of respondents (10.9%). It can be argued that this indicator reflects the barriers faced by micro and small family enterprises in adopting innovations and suggests a tendency toward traditional business practices within such firms.

The sixth factor refers to the “other” responses of 13.6% of survey participants, indicating that respondents also perceive additional advantages of family businesses in terms of their impact on employment.

In summary, the analysis shows that family businesses function as a more socially oriented phenomenon that generates sustainable employment and stable job opportunities. However, the persistently low level of innovation adoption may, in the long term, negatively affect the ability of family businesses to fulfill their broader social functions within society.

RESULTS

The significant impact of family businesses on employment can be explained by several factors. Based on the literature review and logical generalization, the employment effects of family businesses can be classified into three main dimensions:

First, most family businesses operate as micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, thereby representing a dominant form within the economy.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, family businesses provide more sustainable and stable employment opportunities due to their intergenerational continuity and succession-based structure.

Third, family businesses play a crucial role in employment generation in rural and remote areas, thereby acting as a key driver of socio-economic development and the welfare of local communities across different regions. Building on these arguments, the findings of this study further substantiate the view that family businesses in Azerbaijan are not only economically significant actors but also socially embedded institutions that contribute to inclusive and sustainable employment generation.

This study examined the impact of family businesses on employment in Azerbaijan, combining theoretical insights with empirical evidence derived from survey data. The analysis demonstrates that family businesses represent a significant component of the national economic structure, particularly within the MSME sector, and play an essential role in employment generation. The findings indicate that family businesses contribute to employment primarily by providing job opportunities for low-skilled and vulnerable groups, ensuring intergenerational job continuity, and maintaining relatively stable employment during periods of economic fluctuation. Their trust-based governance structures and simplified decision-making mechanisms further enhance flexibility in job creation and labor absorption, particularly at the local and regional levels.

At the same time, the results reveal that while family businesses demonstrate strong social and employment-related functions, their innovation capacity remains comparatively limited, especially

among micro and small enterprises. This reliance on traditional practices may constrain their long-term competitiveness and broader economic contribution if not addressed through targeted policy support. Overall, the study confirms that family businesses in Azerbaijan are not only economically significant but also socially embedded institutions that support inclusive employment and social welfare. However, strengthening their innovative potential and institutional support mechanisms would further enhance their role in sustainable employment creation and economic development.

Overall, the study confirms that family businesses in Azerbaijan are not only economically significant but also socially embedded institutions that support inclusive employment and social welfare. However, strengthening their innovative potential and institutional support mechanisms would further enhance their role in sustainable employment creation and economic development.

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XÜLASƏ

Bazar iqtisadiyyatı şəraitində qlobal məşğulluğun 60 faizindən çoxunu təmin edən ailə biznesləri dünya miqyasında sosial rifahın formalaşmasında mühüm rol oynayır. Müştərilərlə etimada əsaslanan möhkəm münasibətlərin qurulması nəticəsində formalaşan müsbət nüfuzu, eləcə də yerli resursların səfərbər edilməsi yolu ilə regionların sosial-iqtisadi inkişafına verdiyi əhəmiyyətli töhfə ailə bizneslərinin tədqiqini aktual edir.

Tədqiqatın əsas məqsədi ailə bizneslərinin Azərbaycanda məşğulluğa təsirinin qiymətləndirilməsi və təhlil edilməsidir. Məqalədə tədqiqat metodları kimi ədəbiyyat icmal, induksiya, deduksiya, təhlil, sintez və anket sorğusu metodlarından istifadə edilmişdir. Tədqiqatın yekun nəticələri göstərir ki, ailə biznesləri əmək qabiliyyətli əhalinin həssas qruplarının və aşağı ixtisaslı şəxslərin məşğulluq imkanları ilə təmin olunmasında mühüm rol oynayır.

Açar sözlər: *Azərbaycan, ailə biznesləri, biznes, sosial rifah, məşğulluq*

JEL kodları: *J23, L26, M10*