



## Nepotism and Turnover Intention in Middle Eastern Family Firms: Examining the Mediating Influence of Individual and Organizational Factors

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**Abstract** This study examines nepotism's direct and indirect effects on family firms, considering several critical factors mediating individual and organizational aspects. Specifically, on a sample of 387 family firms in the Middle East region, we investigate the mediating role of commitment, engagement, and job satisfaction in the relationship between nepotism and turnover intention. Using a structural equation modeling methodology to test our propositions empirically, results corroborate the pivotal mediating effects in elucidating how nepotism affects turnover intention. Our paper adds depth and nuances to this complex phenomenon in the context of strong familial influence in business development.

### CÓDIGO JEL M1, M21

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Empresas familiares,  
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Intención de  
rotación,  
Compromiso,  
Implicación,  
Satisfacción laboral

**Nepotismo e intención de rotación en empresas familiares de Oriente Medio: examinando la influencia mediadora de factores individuales y organizativos**

**Resumen** Este estudio examina los efectos directos e indirectos del nepotismo en las empresas familiares teniendo en cuenta la influencia de varios factores individuales y organizativos clave. En concreto, investigamos en una muestra de 387 empresas familiares libanesas, el papel mediador del compromiso, la implicación y la satisfacción laboral en la relación entre nepotismo e intención de rotación. Utilizando una metodología de modelización de ecuaciones estructurales para probar empíricamente nuestras proposiciones, los resultados corroboran los efectos mediadores fundamentales para dilucidar cómo afecta el nepotismo a la intención de rotación. Nuestro trabajo añade profundidad y matices a este complejo fenómeno en el contexto de la fuerte influencia familiar en el desarrollo empresarial.

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## 1. Introduction

Family firms have long been recognized as vital contributors to economic stability and growth in the global business management landscape (Lim et al., 2023). However, the unique dynamics within these firms often introduce challenges that can significantly impact their long-term sustainability (Jaskiewicz et al., 2013). While family involvement in business can foster loyalty, commitment, and shared values, it can also lead to perceptions of unfairness and inequity, particularly among non-family employees (Ushakov & Shatila, 2021). This dual-edged nature of nepotism makes it critical to understanding organizational behavior and employee dynamics within family firms (Jeong et al., 2022). In the Middle Eastern context, the issue of nepotism is particularly pronounced due to the region's solid cultural emphasis on familial ties and the predominance of family-owned businesses (Kidwell et al., 2024). The intertwining of business and family can exacerbate the effects of nepotism, potentially leading to reduced job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment among employees (Kiziloğlu, 2022).

Nepotism, defined as favoritism towards relatives or close associates, is typically associated with family firms, often showing the prevalence of family members in key managerial positions and leadership roles (Jeong et al., 2022). While familial involvement can foster a sense of heritage, dedication, and shared values, it can also introduce complexities related to fairness, transparency, and equality (Schmid & Sender, 2021). Job satisfaction measures how content and fulfilled employees feel with their roles, work environment, and overall employment conditions (Lim et al., 2023). It is a crucial determinant of employee motivation, performance, and intention to remain with or leave an organization (Jeong et al., 2022).

As for engagement, it represents the level of enthusiasm, involvement, and emotional investment that employees have in their work. High levels of engagement are associated with greater productivity, commitment, and lower turnover intentions within an organization (Hughes & Childers, 2023). At the same time, Lim et al. (2023) defined organizational commitment as the emotional attachment, loyalty, and dedication that an employee feels towards their organization. High levels of commitment often lead to a strong desire to contribute to the organization's success and a lower likelihood of leaving the company (Kiziloğlu, 2022). Lim et al. (2023) also defined turnover intention as the likelihood or intent of an employee to leave their current job and seek employment elsewhere. High turnover intention is often a result of dissatisfaction with

job conditions, lack of engagement, or low organizational commitment, and it can significantly impact organizational stability and performance (Shatila et al., 2024).

Despite the scarcity of studies on nepotism, literature generally assumes that family involvement harms firm performance (Jaskiewicz et al., 2013). Although some studies theoretically introduce the potential positive impact of nepotism (Firfiray et al., 2018), it is generally evidenced that nepotism introduces more detrimental effects on family firms when family connections rather than merit determine job placements or advancements (Kumar et al., 2022). This could lead non-family employees to perceive nepotism as unfair, impacting on their job satisfaction, commitment, and retention (Bloom & Van Reenen, 2007).

The research gap in understanding the impact of nepotism on psychological and behavioral outcomes within Middle Eastern family firms is particularly significant given the unique cultural and organizational dynamics of the region (Aloulou et al., 2024). In many Middle Eastern countries, family ties are deeply ingrained in social and business practices, often leading to the expectation that family members will be prioritized in employment decisions. While this can foster loyalty and continuity within the family business, it can also create an environment where non-family employees feel marginalized or undervalued. This sense of unfairness can lead to various negative outcomes, such as decreased job satisfaction and reduced organizational commitment. However, despite the prevalence of nepotism in these settings, there needs to be more empirical research that explores how these practices specifically impact employee behavior and attitudes in the Middle Eastern context (Nigam & Shatila, 2024). Most existing literature has focused on Western contexts, where the implications of nepotism may differ due to distinct cultural norms and business practices (Aloulou et al., 2024). Furthermore, the limited research that does exist often needs to account for the complex interplay between individual and organizational factors that mediate the relationship between nepotism and turnover intention. For instance, while some studies have identified a direct link between nepotism and turnover intention, few have explored how this relationship is influenced by organizational commitment, employee engagement, or job satisfaction. These mediating variables are crucial for understanding how nepotism impacts employees' decisions to stay with or leave an organization. Examining these mediators is necessary for literature to provide an accurate picture, potentially overlooking critical mechanisms through which nepotism exerts influence. This gap in the

research underscores the need for more comprehensive studies that consider the multifaceted nature of nepotism's impact on employee outcomes, particularly within the context of Middle Eastern family firms, where these dynamics are especially pronounced.

Using a resource-based view (RBV) framework (Barney, 1991; Sirmon & Hitt, 2003), we consider that nepotism can erode human capital resources associated with employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, leading to increased turnover intention. This, in turn, can result in diminished productivity, higher recruitment costs, and disruptions in business operations. Specifically, by delving into these relationships, this study analyzes the effects of nepotism on turnover intention, considering the mediating effects of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee engagement.

The study structure proceeds by establishing nepotism as a framework for formulating hypotheses, then outlining the empirical methods and explaining the results comprehensively. The paper concludes by discussing the main findings and exhibiting some essential academic and practical implications.

## 2. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

RBV (Barney, 1991) comprehends the intricate dynamics of resource interactions in the link between nepotism and turnover intention. According to this perspective, distinct and valued resources and capabilities influence an organization's competitive advantage and performance. RBV is consistent with the notion that workers are valuable assets. The adverse associations between nepotism and employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and engagement, may hurt an organization's pool of resources (Firfiray et al., 2018). Nepotism is one of the phenomena that usually characterize family firms. The preference for relatives or close associates has significant positive and negative implications (Firfiray et al., 2018; Neckebrouck et al., 2018). Jeong et al. (2022) state that family firms try to preserve their social-emotional wealth at the cost of reducing their financial wealth, which is why they involve their immediate family members in organizational management. They refer to strategic nepotism, which involves family members in organizational management by enhancing managerial competencies and relying on skill development, which results in better performance.

However, few studies have supported this optimistic view of nepotism. According to Skorodziyevski et al. (2023), the knowledge of family

businesses is dissolved from different perspectives. Therefore, employees may believe their promotions and incentives are compromised in a potentially nepotistic environment, relying more on personal ties than merit. Employees feel their worth is undervalued, leading to negative feelings of unfairness, anger, and frustration (Akin & Karadas, 2023). Thus, most literature consistently highlights the detrimental impact of nepotism on several outputs (e.g., employee satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational commitment) and in various contexts (Agarwal, 2016; Basterretxea et al., 2019; Topsakal et al., 2024). Studies show that in environments where nepotism is prevalent, employees often feel insecure, untrusted with the company, unsatisfied, and unmotivated because of perceived unfairness in promotions and opportunities, which favor family connections over merit. This reduced enthusiasm for their roles leads to decreased organizational commitment and morale (Gorji et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2023; Moresová et al., 2021;). This negative effect of nepotism also includes turnover intention -the likelihood of seeking employment elsewhere. Employees are more likely to consider leaving their current jobs if they observe biased practices (Alwerthan et al., 2018). Whenever family, friends, relatives, or employees receive preferential hiring, promotions, or salary increases, regardless of their qualifications or performance, employees tend to look for other, more meritocratic, and equal jobs (Abbas et al., 2021; Dryjanska, 2023). Considering the above arguments, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

*H1: Nepotism has positive and indirect effects on turnover intention.*

Serfraz et al. (2022) have documented the detrimental impact of nepotism on job satisfaction. When employees perceive that hiring, promotions, and other career advancement opportunities are based on personal connections rather than qualifications or performance, it can lead to resentment, frustration, and decreased job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2021). This perception of injustice can create a toxic work environment, where employees feel undervalued and demotivated, ultimately hampering their job satisfaction (Erdirencelebi et al., 2021). Moreover, nepotism in the workplace can erode trust between employees and management, further diminishing job satisfaction. When workers believe that favoritism prevails over competence, it can lead to disengagement and a lack of confidence in the organization's leadership (Gholitabar et al., 2020). This lack of trust can cause employees to feel disconnected from their work and less com-

mitted to the organization's goals. As a result, overall morale within the workplace can suffer, leading to higher turnover rates and lower levels of job satisfaction among the broader employee base. Madden et al. (2020) researched the impact of nepotism on job satisfaction in the Pakistani context. Data were collected from 189 female employees working in family businesses in Sindh, Pakistan, using a purposive sampling technique (Ohana et al., 2023). The results demonstrated that nepotism tends to impact job satisfaction negatively; as nepotism increases in the workplace, the job satisfaction rate will decrease.

The relationship between nepotism and employee engagement has been explored extensively in the organizational behavior literature, with a consensus that nepotism negatively affects employee engagement (Sidani et al., 2023). When nepotism is prevalent, it can lead to disengagement as employees feel that their efforts and achievements are not recognized or rewarded fairly (Skorodzyevskiy et al., 2023). This perception can demotivate employees, reducing their enthusiasm and dedication to their roles, thereby decreasing their overall engagement levels. Furthermore, nepotism can create an environment where non-favored employees feel alienated or excluded from critical decision-making processes and opportunities for advancement (Camisón et al., 2021). This exclusion can lead to feelings of isolation and detachment from the organization's mission and goals, further reducing engagement. Employees who perceive their hard work will not be recognized or rewarded due to favoritism are less likely to go above and beyond (Gorji et al., 2020). The negative impact of nepotism on engagement is, therefore, significant, as it affects not only individual employees but also the broader organizational culture and effectiveness (Hughes et al., 2023).

The literature on organizational commitment suggests that nepotism can significantly undermine employee commitment, which refers to employees' psychological attachment and loyalty toward their organization (Kidwell et al., 2024). This perception of favoritism can lead to disillusionment, decreasing their commitment to the organization and increasing the likelihood of turnover (Lim et al., 2023). In addition to eroding loyalty, nepotism can disrupt organizational justice and fairness, critical components of employee commitment. When employees believe that promotions and rewards are based on personal relationships rather than merit, their commitment to the organization's goals and values can diminish (Ma, 2021). This lack of commitment can manifest in decreased job performance, lower organizational citizenship behavior, and a general decline in workplace morale. The literature emphasizes

that commitment is essential for organizational stability and success, and nepotism poses a significant threat to fostering a committed and motivated workforce (Jones, 2013; Madden et al., 2020).

While the prevailing literature often portrays nepotism as an opposing force on employee commitment, it's crucial to acknowledge that its effects may not be universally detrimental (Miller, 2023). In specific cultural or familial settings, nepotism could potentially strengthen employee commitment. For instance, in family-owned businesses or organizations where familial ties are highly valued, nepotism can foster a sense of loyalty and trust among those who benefit from these relationships (Moresová et al., 2021). In such environments, employees who are part of the familial network may feel a more substantial commitment to the organization, driven by a sense of duty to their family and the legacy of the business. This perspective suggests that nepotism could potentially enhance commitment in organizations where personal and professional relationships are closely intertwined and culturally accepted (Neckebrouck et al., 2018). Moreover, it is important to note that the impact of nepotism on commitment can vary depending on the transparency and fairness of nepotistic practices. Some researchers have suggested that when nepotism is openly acknowledged and accompanied by clear communication about its reasons and limits, its adverse effects on commitment can be mitigated (Ohana et al., 2023). For example, suppose employees understand that certain family members are hired due to their unique skills or knowledge that align with the organization's needs. In that case, they may be more accepting of these practices (Abbas et al., 2021). This transparency can help maintain a sense of organizational justice, which is crucial for sustaining employee commitment. Based on the above arguments, we propose the following hypotheses, with the hope that they will inspire further research and discussion:

*H2: There is a negative relationship between nepotism and job satisfaction*

*H3: There is a negative relationship between nepotism and engagement*

*H4: There is a negative relationship between nepotism and commitment*

The literature extensively supports the notion that job satisfaction is inversely related to turnover intention, meaning that as job satisfaction decreases, the likelihood of an employee intending to leave their job increases (Camisón et al., 2021). When employees are satisfied with their jobs, they are likelier to feel a sense of belong-



ing, fulfillment, and loyalty to their organization. This satisfaction reduces their desire to seek employment elsewhere, lowering turnover intention (Hughes et al., 2023). On the contrary, when employees experience dissatisfaction due to poor management, lack of recognition, or unchallenging work, their motivation to remain with the organization diminishes, leading to higher turnover intentions (Bauweraerts et al., 2023). Research also indicates that job satisfaction protects against turnover by fostering positive attitudes and behaviors in the workplace (Jeong et al., 2022). Satisfied employees are more engaged, productive, and willing to go the extra mile for their organization, further solidifying their intention to stay (Kidwell et al., 2024). Additionally, organizations prioritizing job satisfaction often experience lower turnover rates as they create a work environment where employees feel valued and supported (Firfiray et al., 2018). This relationship has been consistently observed across various industries and cultural contexts, suggesting that job satisfaction is crucial to an employee's decision to stay with or leave an organization (Schmid & Sender., 2021). Therefore, improving job satisfaction can be an effective strategy for organizations to reduce turnover intentions among their workforce (Akin & Karadas., 2023). Employee engagement is another critical factor that inversely influences turnover intention. Engaged employees typically exhibit higher levels of enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption in their work, translating into a solid commitment to their organization (Alwerthan et al., 2018). This commitment reduces their desire to leave, as they are likelier to find satisfaction and meaning in their roles (Schmid & Sender., 2021). Moreover, engagement is often linked to positive organizational outcomes such as increased productivity, innovation, and overall performance, further strengthening an employee's resolve to remain with the organization (Camisón et al., 2021). Engaged employees are also more likely to have positive relationships with their colleagues and supervisors, creating a supportive work environment that discourages turnover (Akin & Karadas.,

2023). However, employees may become disengaged when engagement levels drop, leading to feelings of detachment, apathy, and a higher likelihood of considering alternative employment opportunities (Kidwell et al., 2024). The inverse relationship between engagement and turnover intention underscores the importance of fostering a culture of engagement within organizations, as it can significantly reduce the risk of employee turnover.

The literature suggests a strong negative relationship between commitment and turnover intention, indicating that higher levels of commitment are associated with lower turnover intentions. Employees who are committed to their organization are more likely to identify with its values, mission, and goals, which fosters a sense of loyalty and responsibility to remain with the organization (Akin & Karadas., 2023). This commitment often manifests in a willingness to go above and beyond in their roles, a desire to contribute to the organization's success, and a reluctance to leave even when faced with challenges or alternative job opportunities. Furthermore, organizational commitment can be categorized into affective, continuance, and normative commitment, each reducing turnover intention (Kidwell et al., 2024). The literature emphasizes that organizations can reduce turnover intentions by fostering a strong sense of commitment among their employees, whether through enhancing job satisfaction, providing career development opportunities, or cultivating a supportive organizational culture (Alwerthan et al., 2018). Based on the above arguments, we propose the following hypotheses:

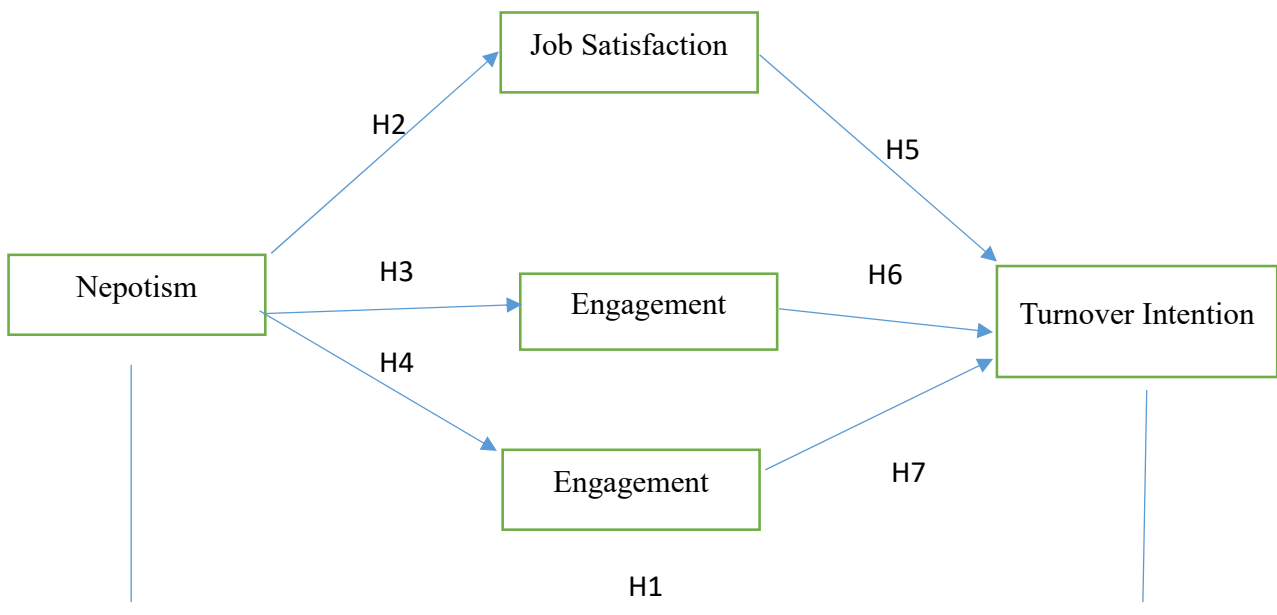
*H5: There is a negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention*

*H6: There is a negative relationship between engagement and turnover intention*

*H7: There is a negative relationship between commitment and turnover intention*

Based on the above literature, the following model has been developed:

Figure 1. Research model



Source: Author work

### 3. Methodology

This study aims to empirically examine how nepotism influences turnover intention in family firms, considering the mediating roles of job satisfaction, engagement, and commitment. A quantitative research methodology was implemented to address the research problem. This approach was chosen for its ability to statistically validate relationships between variables and provide generalizable findings across a large sample. The study employed a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, targeting Middle Eastern family businesses. A total of 490 questionnaires were distributed, and 387 valid responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 80%. This sample size is adequate for robust statistical analysis and gives meaningful insights into the studied relationships.

The study utilized a purposive sampling technique, justified by the need to focus specifically on family businesses within a particular region. This non-probability sampling method was selected to ensure that the sample accurately represented the population of interest—family businesses where nepotism is a relevant and culturally significant factor. Targeting businesses that meet specific criteria (family ownership, involvement in management, and firm size), the study could gather relevant data that aligns with the research objectives. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the col-

lected data. SEM was chosen for its ability to test complex relationships between multiple variables simultaneously, making it suitable for examining both nepotism's direct and indirect effects on turnover intention. SEM allows for including mediating variables, such as job satisfaction, engagement, and commitment, providing a comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms in the relationship between nepotism and turnover intention. The robustness of the model was assessed using various fit indices, and the results provided empirical support for the hypothesized relationships.

Table 1 presents the sample characteristics related to family ownership, involvement in management, generational stage, firm size, and firm age within the sample population. The distribution of family ownership shows that most firms have a significant ownership stake, with 37.9% holding between 40% and 60% ownership. Regarding family involvement in top management, a substantial proportion (40.3%) of firms have 50% to 75% family involvement. Concerning the generational stage, most firms (55.5%) are in the second generation, involving both the founder and their children. Firm size distribution indicates that a significant portion (39.7%) of firms have fewer than 50 employees, while 37.7% have between 250 and 500 employees. Regarding firm age, a considerable portion (35.4%) falls within the 5 to 9 years range, followed by 25.8% in the 10 to 14 years range.

**Table 1.** Family business characteristics

<b>Family ownership</b>		
10% to 20%	43	11.11%
20% to 40%	114	29.4%
40% to 60%	147	37.9%
60% to 80%	68	17.5%
80% to 100%	15	3.8%
<b>Family involvement in management</b>		
Less than 5%	57	14.7%
10% - 50%	49	12.6%
50%-75%	156	40.3%
75%-100%	125	32.2%
<b>Family generation</b>		
First generation	117	30.2%
Second generation	215	55.5%
Third and further generation	55	14.2%
<b>Firm Size</b>		
Less than 50 employees	154	39.7%
Between 50 and 249 employees	73	18.8%
Between 250 and 500 employees	146	37.7%
500 employees and above	14	3.6%
<b>Firm Age</b>		
Less than 5 years	90	23.2%
Between 5 years and 9 years	137	35.4%
Between 10 years and 14 years	100	25.8%
Between 15 years and 19 years	20	5.16%
20 years and more	40	10.33%

Source: Author work

Table 2 presents the characteristics of respondents in terms of their job positions and work experience. It shows that the majority of respondents, 52%, are in middle management positions, followed by 33% in lower management, and 15% in top management roles. In terms of experience,

35% of the respondents have 6 to 10 years of experience, making this the most common experience range. This is followed by 32% of respondents who have 1 to 5 years of experience, 20% with 15 to 20 years of experience, and 13% who have over 21 years of experience.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of respondents

Job Position	
	Percentage
Lower Management	33%
Middle Management	52%
Top Management	15%
Experience	
1 year to 5 years	32%
6 years to 10 years	35%
15 years to 20 years	20%
21 years and above	13%

Source: Author work

The questionnaires were built on the Likert scale extracted from previous literature; for instance, nepotism was operationalized using a structured questionnaire that included Likert-scale items assessing (ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree") employees' perceptions of the prevalence of nepotism within their organizations based on the scale of Ramez (2023). Job satisfaction (SAT) is considered the mediator in this research and was used to gauge overall contentment regarding job roles and working conditions within family businesses. Job satisfaction was measured based on Pimentel and Pereira's (2022) scale ranging from 1, "strongly disagree," to 5, "strongly agree.". The scale was validated by Macdonald and MacIntyre (1997).

Engagement (ENG) is considered the second mediator and was operationalized based on Schaufeli et al. (2022) on a Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". Commitment (COM) is considered the third mediator and was measured based on the Mahfud et al. (2022) scale (ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree").

Turnover intention (TI) is the dependent variable and reflects employees' intentions to leave their jobs within family businesses. It was assessed based on the scale developed by Razzak et al. (2021) through a set of questions (ranging from 1 "very unlikely" to 5 "very likely") asking participants about their future career plans and their likelihood of seeking alternative employment.

#### 4. Findings

We first conducted a dimension reduction analysis to refine the factors under consideration. The results are summarized in Table 3, which provides the factor loadings for two dimensions: nepotism and engagement. Factor loadings represented the strength of the relationship between each item and its dimensions. As per Hair et al. (2014), a factor loading threshold of 0.5 was applied in our

analysis as a criterion for inclusion. Items with factor loadings below this threshold were eliminated in the dimension-reduction process. Specifically, item NEP6, with a factor loading of 0.362, was eliminated in the nepotism dimension. In the engagement dimension, item ENG8, with a factor loading of 0.361, did not meet the inclusion criteria since it does not significantly contribute to the final dimension scores. In the Commitment dimension, items COM1 and COM4, with factor loadings of 0.498 and 0.497, respectively, were excluded. Additionally, in the Satisfaction dimension, SAT6, which had a factor loading of 0.493, was eliminated. Lastly, in the Turnover Intention dimension, item TI4, with a factor loading of 0.458, did not meet the inclusion criteria and was consequently removed from our analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy returned a value of 0.739, indicating that the dataset is suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also yielded an approximate chi-square value of 638.782 with 10 degrees of freedom and a p-value less than 0.001. This outcome suggests that the correlation matrix significantly differs from the identity matrix, further confirming the suitability of the dataset for factor analysis.

**Table 3.** Dimensionality and reliability of measures

Construct	Items	Factor loadings
Nepotism (NEP)	NEP 1	0.588
	NEP 2	0.794
	NEP 3	0.723
	NEP 4	0.715
	NEP 5	0.791
	NEP 6	0.362
Engagement (ENG)	ENG 1	0.684
	ENG 2	0.729
	ENG 3	0.730
	ENG 4	0.623
	ENG 5	0.671
	ENG 6	0.773
	ENG 7	0.778
	ENG 8	0.361
Commitment (COM)	COM 1	0.498
	COM 2	0.698
	COM 3	0.768
	COM 4	0.497
	COM 5	0.703
	COM 6	0.707
	COM 7	0.714
	COM 8	0.678
Satisfaction (SAT)	SAT 1	0.710
	SAT 2	0.787
	SAT 3	0.748
	SAT 4	0.683
	SAT 5	0.745
	SAT 6	0.493
Turnover intention (TI)	TI 1	0.667
	TI 2	0.837
	TI 3	0.775
	TI 4	0.458
	TI 5	0.738
	TI 6	0.789

Source: Author work



### 5. Results

Table 4 presents the results of robustness tests for five key variables: NEP, ENG, COM, SAT, and TI. The Cronbach’s Alpha values, ranging from 0.701 to 0.858, are above the acceptable threshold of 0.7, indicating that the scales used for these variables exhibit good internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951). This suggests that the items within each construct reliably measure the same underlying concept. Composite Reliability (CR) values are also strong, exceeding the 0.7 benchmark across all variables, confirming the constructs’

reliability. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are all above 0.5, indicating adequate convergent validity. This means that the constructs are capturing sufficient variance from their respective items, reinforcing the validity of the measurement model. The Square Root of the AVE (SQRT AVE) values are all higher than their respective AVE values, providing evidence of discriminant validity, meaning that each construct is distinct from the others. The KMO value for NEP is 0.782, above the minimum threshold of 0.6, suggesting that the sample size is adequate for factor analysis and that the data is suitable for such analysis.

**Table 4.** Robustness tests

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE	SQRT AVE	KMO
NEP	0.701	0.846	0.527	0.726	0.782
ENG	0.719	0.878	0.510	0.714	
COM	0.858	0.860	0.506	0.711	
SAT	0.832	0.854	0.540	0.735	
TI	0.836	0.874	0.582	0.763	
Cronbach Alpha > 0.7, CR > 0.7, AVE > 0.5, KMO > 0.6					

Source: Author work

Table 5 presents the model fit indices for the structural model under consideration. The model fit is assessed using several vital indices: the Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Relative Fit Index (RFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI). The CMIN/DF ratio is 2.173, below the recommended threshold of 3, indicating an acceptable fit between the model and the observed data. This ratio suggests that the model is consistent with the data, supporting its validity. The GFI value of 0.839 exceeds the

minimum recommended value of 0.8, indicating a reasonable fit of the model to the data. The other fit indices also provide strong support for the model’s adequacy. The NFI and IFI values are 0.952 and 0.893, respectively, which exceed their respective thresholds of 0.9 and 0.8, demonstrating a good fit. However, the RFI value is 0.963, slightly above the 0.9 threshold, indicating strong consistency between the proposed model and the observed data. The TLI and CFI values are 0.813 and 0.950, respectively, exceeding the 0.8 benchmark, indicating that the model adequately accounts for the complexity of the data.

**Table 5.** Model fit

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	GFI	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Default model	71	586.860	270	2.173	0.839	0.952	0.963	0.893	0.813	0.950
CMIN < 3, GFI > 0.8, NFI > 0.9, RFI > 0.9, IFI > 0.8, TLI > 0.80, CFI > 0.80 (Hair et al., 2014)										

Source: Author work

Table 6 shows NEP, ENG, COM, SAT, and TI correlations. The correlations range from -0.710 to 0.572, with several significant at the 0.01 level.

These correlations are notably lower than the corresponding Square Root of the Average Variance Extracted (SQRT AVE) values presented in

Table 3. For instance, the highest correlation, 0.572, between ENG and COM is still lower than the SQRT AVE values of ENG (0.714) and COM (0.711). This indicates that each construct shares more variance with its items than any other construct, confirming discriminant solid validity. To illustrate further, the correlation between NEP and TI is 0.325, below the SQRT AVE for both NEP

(0.726) and TI (0.763). Similarly, the correlation between SAT and TI is -0.710, again lower than the SQRT AVE of SAT (0.735) and TI (0.763). These comparisons underscore that the constructs are distinct from one another, as the variance shared within a construct exceeds the variance shared between constructs

**Table 6.** Discriminant validity

	NEP	ENG	COMM	SAT	TI
Nepotism (NEP)	1				
Engagement (ENG)	-0.325**	1			
Commitment (COM)	-0.197**	0.572**	1		
Satisfaction (SAT)	-0.255	0.307**	0.487**	1	
Turnover intention (TI)	0.325	-0.244**	-0.444**	-0.710**	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)  
Source: Author work

Table 7 provides the results of the path analysis, which examined the relationships and associations between the variables in our study. The first set of paths represents the influence of nepotism on other variables. Nepotism negatively influenced commitment (estimate: -2.601, C.R.: -2.872), engagement (estimate: -2.971, C.R.: -2.873), and satisfaction (estimate: -2.730, C.R.: -2.805), and positively influenced Turnover Intention (estimate: 4.752, C.R.: 2.790). Additionally, there are

paths from satisfaction, engagement, and commitment to Turnover Intention. Satisfaction negatively influenced turnover intention (estimate: -0.772, C.R.: -10.044), engagement (estimate: -0.727, C.R.: 2.345), and commitment (estimate: -0.739, C.R.: -2.468). These path analysis results reveal the directional relationships and strengths among the variables in our study, shedding light on how nepotism affects other constructs and how Satisfaction, Engagement, and Commitment collectively impact Turnover Intention.

**Table 7.** Path analysis

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Commitment (COM)	<--- Nepotism (NEP)	-2.601	0.905	-2.872	0.004
Engagement (ENG)	<--- Nepotism (NEP)	-2.971	1.034	-2.873	0.002
Satisfaction (SAT)	<--- Nepotism (NEP)	-2.730	0.973	-2.805	0.005
Turnover Intention (TI)	<--- Nepotism (NEP)	4.752	1.703	2.790	0.019
Turnover Intention (TI)	<--- Satisfaction (SAT)	-0.772	0.077	-10.044	0.000
Turnover Intention (TI)	<--- Engagement (ENG)	-0.727	0.310	2.345	0.012
Turnover Intention (TI)	<--- Commitment (COM)	-0.739	0.300	-2.468	0.014

Source: Author work

Figure 2 illustrates the structural model examining the relationships between Nepotism as the independent variable, Job Satisfaction, Engagement, and Commitment as mediators, and Turn-

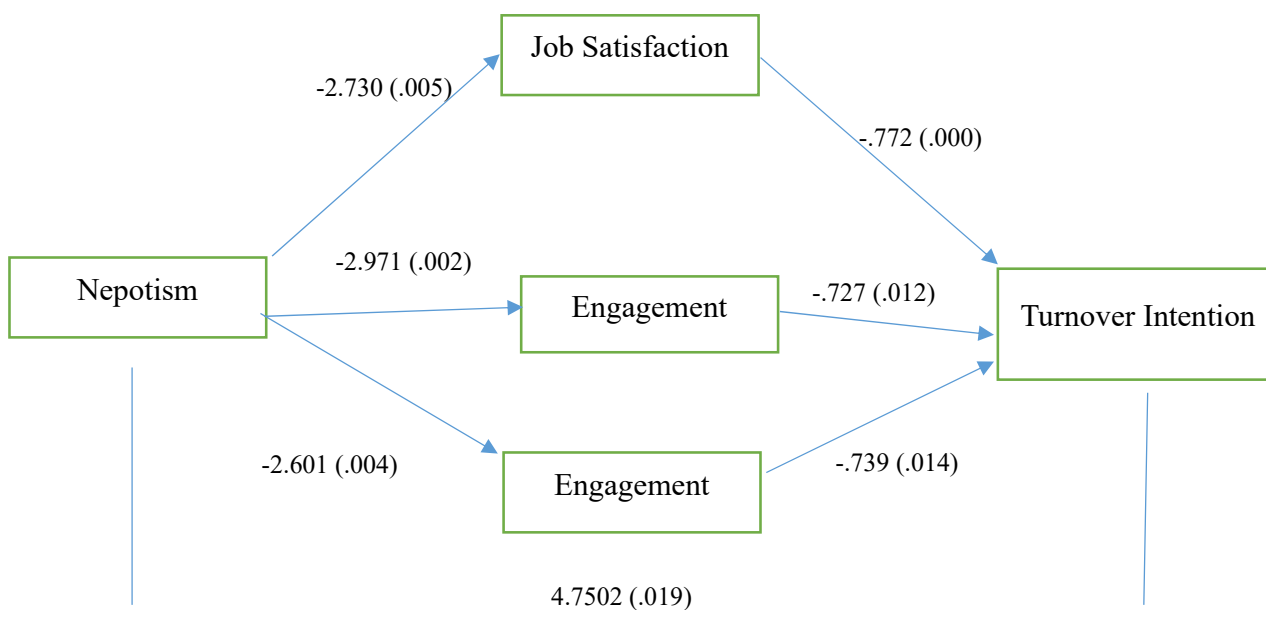
over Intention as the dependent variable. The model highlights several significant pathways with corresponding coefficients and p-values. Nepotism negatively impacts Job Satisfaction (-2.730,

$p = 0.005$ ), Engagement ( $-2.971, p = 0.002$ ), and Commitment ( $-2.601, p = 0.004$ ), indicating that higher levels of nepotism within an organization are associated with lower levels of these three mediators. This suggests that nepotism undermines employee morale and attachment to the organization, leading to negative organizational outcomes.

The mediating variables, in turn, significantly influence Turnover Intention. Specifically, Job Satisfaction has a strong negative effect on Turnover Intention ( $-0.772, p = 0.000$ ), showing that employees who are more satisfied with their jobs

are less likely to intend to leave the organization. Similarly, Engagement ( $-0.727, p = 0.012$ ) and Commitment ( $-0.739, p = 0.014$ ) also negatively influence Turnover Intention, reinforcing that higher levels of employee engagement and commitment reduce the likelihood of turnover. Interestingly, Nepotism directly influences Turnover Intention positively ( $4.7502, p = 0.019$ ), suggesting that apart from its indirect effects through Job Satisfaction, Engagement, and Commitment, Nepotism also directly contributes to higher turnover intentions, likely due to perceived unfairness and reduced organizational trust.

**Figure 2.** Structural equation model



Source: Authors work

## 6. Discussion

In the Middle Eastern context, where family-owned businesses are prevalent, nepotism often plays a significant role in these firms' management and operational structures. As indicated by the negative path coefficient, Nepotism tends to diminish job satisfaction among employees. This outcome is particularly relevant in the Middle East, where the strong emphasis on familial ties and loyalty can lead to perceptions of favoritism and unfairness among non-family employees. When employees observe that promotions and opportunities are influenced more by family connections than by merit, their job satisfaction is likely to decrease. This feeling of discontent may stem from a perceived lack of equal opportunity and recognition, which are critical to maintaining morale and motivation in the workplace (Firfiray et al., 2018).

The results of this study demonstrate that nepotism also negatively impacts employee engagement, which is a crucial determinant of productivity and commitment in the workplace. In the Middle Eastern business environment, where familial relationships often dominate, employees who are not part of the family may feel alienated or less valued, leading to lower levels of engagement. Engagement requires employees to feel a sense of belonging and purpose within the organization. However, in a nepotistic setting, where important roles and decisions are reserved for family members, non-family employees might struggle to thoroughly invest themselves in their work. The lack of transparent and equitable practices can hinder their enthusiasm and emotional investment, ultimately reducing their willingness to go above and beyond in their roles. The results are in line with the studies of Sarfraz et al. (2022) and Schulze and Bövers (2022).

The study further reveals that nepotism negatively impacts organizational commitment. In the Middle East, where loyalty to family and close-knit social networks is highly valued, non-family employees might feel less committed to the organization if they perceive that nepotistic practices hinder their career advancement and recognition. Organizational commitment thrives in environments where employees believe in the fairness and integrity of the leadership. However, nepotism can undermine the psychological contract between employees and the organization, reducing commitment. Employees might feel that the organization does not reciprocate their efforts and loyalty, particularly if they perceive that family members are given preferential treatment. The study's findings align with the results of [Rivera and Melo \(2023\)](#) and [Ramos et al. \(2014\)](#).

The study's findings suggest that higher job satisfaction is associated with lower turnover intention. In Middle Eastern family businesses, where nepotistic practices already challenge job satisfaction, addressing the factors contributing to employee dissatisfaction is crucial to reduce turnover rates. Employees who are satisfied with their job roles, working conditions, and the fairness of management practices are less likely to seek employment elsewhere. In the Middle Eastern context, where job opportunities may be limited and family businesses play a significant role in the economy, maintaining high job satisfaction is essential to retaining talent. Organizations that fail to address issues of fairness and recognition may face higher turnover rates as dissatisfied employees look for more equitable and rewarding opportunities elsewhere. The findings of the study are in line with the findings of [Bauweraerts et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Kiziloğlu, \(2022\)](#).

Employee engagement is also shown to influence turnover intention negatively. In the Middle East, fostering high levels of employee engagement is particularly important in family-owned businesses, where employees may otherwise feel disconnected due to nepotistic practices. Engaged employees are likelier to remain loyal to the organization and less likely to consider leaving, as they feel a solid connection to their work and the organization's goals. However, in a nepotistic environment, where non-family employees might feel excluded from key decision-making processes and opportunities, engagement levels can suffer, leading to higher turnover intention. Addressing this issue by promoting inclusivity and recognition can help Middle Eastern family businesses retain their employees and reduce the costs associated with high turnover. The results are in line with the studies of [Sarfraz et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Schulze and Bövers \(2022\)](#).

Finally, the study shows that organizational commitment significantly reduces turnover intention. In Middle Eastern family firms, where commitment might be compromised by nepotism, it is essential to foster a sense of loyalty and attachment among all employees, not just family members. Organizational commitment is a key factor in retaining employees, as it reflects their emotional attachment to the organization and their willingness to contribute to its success. In Middle Eastern family businesses, building a culture of fairness, transparency, and inclusivity can strengthen organizational commitment, thereby reducing turnover intentions. By addressing the negative impacts of nepotism, Middle Eastern family firms can enhance employee commitment and ensure long-term stability and success. The findings of the study are in line with the findings of [Bauweraerts et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Kiziloğlu \(2022\)](#). The study indicates that nepotism directly increases turnover intention. This is particularly relevant in the Middle Eastern context given the cultural emphasis on familial loyalty within businesses. Non-family employees who perceive that their career advancement is blocked by nepotism may feel compelled to leave the organization for better opportunities where their efforts and merit are more likely to be recognized. This turnover can be detrimental to Middle Eastern family firms, losing valuable talent and institutional knowledge. To mitigate this, family businesses in the Middle East should consider implementing more meritocratic practices that reward performance and contribution, regardless of familial ties, to retain their best employees and reduce turnover intention. The findings of the study are in line with the findings of [Bauweraerts et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Kiziloğlu, \(2022\)](#).

## 7. Academic Contributions and Practical Implications

This study makes several significant theoretical contributions to the understanding of nepotism and its impact on employee turnover intention in family firms, particularly within the Middle Eastern context. By integrating the RBV framework, the research advances the theoretical understanding of how nepotism influences the human capital resources of organizations, specifically in family-owned businesses where familial ties are deeply ingrained in the organizational structure. The study highlights how nepotism can erode valuable human capital by negatively impacting job satisfaction, employee engagement, and organizational commitment, which are crucial resources for maintaining competitive advantage. This study shows that the pervasive culture of nepotism in family firms causes employees to become

less emotionally invested in their work, affecting their commitment, enthusiasm, and loyalty to the company (Kidwell et al., 2024), and negatively impacting the stock of human capital resources and organizational performance (Camisón et al., 2021). Academically, this study expands and updates the understanding of nepotism beyond socioemotional considerations by focusing on relevant direct and indirect individual behaviors and attitudes that influence employees' turnover intention.

By shedding light on how nepotism influences turnover intention and human capital resources, the study contributes to a more comprehensive knowledge of the dynamics at play within family firms. Building upon the RBV perspective, which emphasizes the strategic significance of human capital resources, family businesses can leverage this understanding to implement targeted interventions to promote fairness, meritocracy, and inclusiveness in their organizational practices.

These academic implications are directly connected to the suggestions for practitioners. We can infer several approaches in the workplace to mitigate the effects of nepotism. Organizations can minimize the adverse consequences of nepotism by promoting fairness, transparency, and merit-based decision-making in their employment practices (Hughes & Childers, 2023; Chandler et al., 2021). Enhancing and sustaining employee engagement, such as creating a positive work environment, offering development opportunities, and recognizing and rewarding employee contributions, can help reduce turnover intentions and retain valuable talent (Miller, 2023; Dawra et al., 2022). To do that, several key strategies should be implemented. Firstly, establishing transparent criteria and processes for employee advancement based on merits, competencies, and performance rather than familial connections is critical. Investing in leadership and management training programs for family managers can equip them with the necessary skills to lead effectively and promote a culture of fairness and equality. Second, creating a culture of inclusivity and equal opportunities is essential for addressing nepotism. This involves communicating a commitment to fairness and inclusiveness through policies, practices, and open dialogue. It is crucial to encourage employees to voice their concerns and actively address perceptions of favoritism or bias. Regular employee surveys and feedback sessions can help identify nepotism-related issues, which should be promptly addressed through concrete actions and continuous improvement of human resource practices and organizational culture. Finally, monitoring employee engagement and job satisfaction is vital. Utilizing employee engagement surveys to gauge enthusiasm and dedica-

tion in the workforce enables prompt action if nepotism-related issues are identified. Encouraging regular discussions between employees and supervisors to address job satisfaction concerns and developing clear career paths for all employees further contribute to retaining talented individuals and reducing turnover intentions. By implementing these strategies, family businesses can effectively mitigate the adverse effects of nepotism and cultivate a positive organizational culture conducive to sustained success.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the mediating roles of job satisfaction, engagement, and commitment in the relationship between nepotism and turnover intention. Previous research has largely focused on the direct effects of nepotism, but this study reveals the complex, indirect pathways through which nepotism influences employee behavior. By doing so, the research adds depth to existing theories of organizational behavior and employee dynamics in family firms, particularly in contexts where cultural norms strongly influence business practices. The findings suggest that the impact of nepotism on turnover intention is not only direct but also mediated by key psychological factors, offering a more comprehensive theoretical model for understanding employee retention in family businesses.

## 8. Conclusions

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the impact of nepotism on employee turnover intention within the context of Middle Eastern family firms, emphasizing the critical mediating roles of job satisfaction, employee engagement, and organizational commitment. Through the application of SEM, the findings reveal that nepotism negatively influences these mediators, thereby increasing employee turnover intention. In the Middle Eastern context, where family-owned businesses are prevalent and cultural norms strongly emphasize familial loyalty, the implications of these findings are particularly relevant. The study shows that nepotism, although culturally ingrained, can undermine the psychological contract between non-family employees and the organization, leading to feelings of unfairness, alienation, and ultimately, a higher propensity to leave the company. These insights are crucial for regional family firms, as they underscore the need for more meritocratic and transparent practices to maintain a committed and satisfied workforce.

The research contributes to the broader literature by filling the gap in understanding how nepotism impacts employee behavior and organizational



dynamics in non-Western contexts. It extends the RBV by demonstrating how nepotism can erode critical human capital resources, which are vital for sustaining a competitive advantage.

## 9, Limitations and Lines of Future Research

This study has limitations, which can be the starting point of exciting lines of future research. First, this study is conducted in a specific context where family businesses are developed. Although this context brings important particularities and complexities to understanding nepotism in family firms, family businesses can widely vary in size, industry, and organizational culture. Thus, replications in different contexts can provide a more comprehensive understanding of this topic. Second, while this research is based on a quantitative approach, it may not capture nepotism's nuances and qualitative aspects. Future studies may do this combination, using mixed-method approaches, to offer a more holistic perspective of nepotism in family firms. Finally, this study used a cross-sectional design and captured data at a single point in time. Although this design is suitable for examining associations between variables, it cannot establish causality or track changes in perceptions and experiences over time. Longitudinal studies can offer insights into the dynamics of nepotism as they evolve within family businesses. Future studies might include the relationship between the mediators themselves; for example, the researchers should consider the relationship between engagement, commitment and job satisfaction.

## Author contribution statement

**Khodor Shatila:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft, **Alba Yela-Aránega:** Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, **Gregorio Sánchez-Marín:** Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision.

## Conflict of interest statement

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## Declaration

This article was prepared solely by the authors without the use of generative AI tools

## Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the first author, [K.S], upon reasonable request.

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