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Enhancing family business performance through dynamic capabilities and strategic creativity

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aimed to investigate the impact of strategic creativity on the relationship between dynamic capabilities and the performance of family-owned businesses. The literature calls for studies that explore how business performance can be enhanced. The study addresses such calls, exploring the roles of strategic creativity and dynamic capabilities in a family business context.

Design/methodology/approach: The study employed a quantitative enquiry, with 347 family businesses completing a standardised questionnaire across the Eastern Cape in South Africa. To assess the mediating effect of strategic creativity, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Dynamic capabilities were measured as the independent variable, while family business performance served as the dependent variable.

Findings: The results revealed that strategic creativity has a positive and significant mediating influence between dynamic capabilities, notably scenario planning, environmental scanning, business culture, knowledge creation, and formal organisation. It is worth noting that strategic creativity had the greatest indirect mediating effect on the dynamic capability, comprising environmental scanning and family business performance.

Recommendations/value: Family businesses are advised to adopt a dynamic capability framework that promotes strategic creativity, with an emphasis on environmental scanning, to enhance business performance.

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Managerial implications: From an organisational perspective, efforts can be put in place to foster family business performance by encouraging strategic creativity within and utilising dynamic capabilities.

Keywords: Dynamic capabilities; environmental scanning; family business; performance; strategic creativity.

JEL Classification: M10

1. INTRODUCTION

Family businesses are a driving force behind many global economies; collectively, they promote an estimated 90% of job creation (Beck *et al*., 2020). Family businesses contribute an estimated 75% to the gross domestic product of all economies worldwide (Chaudhary *et al*., 2021). According to Eze *et al*. (2021) and Rovelli *et al*. (2021), the operational definition of a family business first entails 50% share ownership comprising two or more family members (brother, sister, uncle, aunt, spouse, children, cousin, and or grandparents that are related by blood). Secondly, family members must be involved in the daily operations as either managers, advisors, or shareholders (Mikušová *et al*., 2020; Porfírio *et al*., 2019).

Research in the family business domain has proliferated in the last two decades (Rovelli *et al*., 2021); however, various themes remain understudied. Existing family business research primarily focuses on ownership control and structure, with a significant emphasis on succession (Camison-Zornoza *et al*., 2020). Consequently, the family business domain requires attention to minimise the literature gaps by considering strategic tools to enhance firm performance in uncertain economic environments. These are imperative themes to investigate as they can reconfigure family business performance (Pike-Bowles *et al*., 2022; Rovelli *et al*., 2021).

Recent studies indicate that businesses will not experience enhanced business performance unless they implement distinctive capabilities (Abbady *et al*., 2019; Park *et al.*, 2019). Given this, there is a need to promote and ensure the continued growth and performance of not only non-family businesses but also family businesses, given the continuously changing business landscape in South Africa (Koentjoro & Gunawan, 2020; Semke & Tiberius, 2020). By implementing a dynamic capabilities framework, family businesses could successfully sense, seize, and reconfigure their resources to exploit opportunities and stay ahead of the continuously changing business landscape (Beck *et al*., 2020; Semke & Tiberius, 2020). Consequently, these elements pave the way for effective decision-making and the cultivation of strategic creativity within a business (Hernández-Linares *et al*., 2019).

Although various studies focus on dynamic capabilities and strategic creativity within their respective disciplines, there is still a lack of references from the perspective of South African family businesses (Glyptis *et al*., 2021; Semke & Tiberius, 2020). In South Africa, the Eastern Cape Province is known for its harsh economic conditions. Additionally, current research primarily focuses on the South African provinces of Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Western Cape, as reported by Beck *et al*. (2020), Janse van Rensburg and Tjano (2020), and Urban and Nonkwelo (2020). Investigating such a topic within the Eastern Cape, South African locality, can potentially resolve practical problems currently faced by family businesses (Urban & Nonkwelo, 2020).

The study aimed to investigate the mediating effect of strategic creativity on the relationship between dynamic capabilities and performance in family businesses. The mediation analysis focuses on five distinct dynamic capabilities constructs: scenario planning, environmental scanning, business culture, knowledge creation, and the formal organisation. These constructs were suitable for the study, as insufficient attention has been paid to them within the family business domain (Krishnan, 2020; Ode & Ayavoo, 2020). The study, therefore, adds to the family business domain by providing key recommendations for family business owners operating in uncertain economic environments to enhance business performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review elucidates the theoretical framework and empirical literature. Here, concepts related to dynamic capabilities, strategic creativity, and family business performance are discussed, leading to the formulation of the study's hypotheses.

2.1 Family business performance

Family businesses involve family members coming together through their bonds to start a business (Calabrò *et al*., 2021). Unlike non-family firms, family businesses are predominantly family-controlled, with members of the same family either owning or co-owning the business (Hansen *et al*., 2020). Family businesses comprise a significant share of small and medium-sized enterprises globally, contributing to economic development in both developed and underdeveloped economies through job creation (Obermayer *et al*., 2021). Key differences between family and non-family firms stem from their creativity, shared family perspective, and open communication, which is facilitated by higher levels of discretion among family members regarding business operations and performance (Astrachan *et al*., 2020).

Razzak *et al.* (2020) found that current research demonstrates that family firms perform better than non-family firms; however, this depends on the key constructs studied. Hansen *et al*.

(2020) additionally recognised that family firms outperform non-family enterprises, particularly in established markets. Analysing family business performance subsequently indicates how well family members manage the business's operations (Bujan, 2020). To measure family business performance, various constructs exist that are categorised into financial and non-financial performance indicators (Alves & Gama, 2020). Financial performance indicators comprise the family business's profit and business growth. Non-financial performance indicators include family businesses' perceived success and productivity (González *et al*., 2023).

By examining both financial and non-financial performance indicators, the family's strategic capabilities and the firm's operational efficiencies are revealed (Huseyin, 2023). According to Maharajh *et al*. (2024), family dynamics play a crucial role in the performance of family businesses. Family dynamics, such as family strife, discretion, and rigidity, can negatively impact the firm's performance. However, if family dynamics are managed effectively, the company will experience reduced operational costs and a balanced psychological and emotional business environment, enhancing performance.

2.2 Strategic creativity

To further enhance business performance and develop a competitive edge, firms are encouraged to cultivate strategic creativity. Strategic creativity, also known as organisational creativity, refers to a firm's ability to develop innovative business ideas that enable it to remain ahead of competitors and satisfy customers (Nguyen *et al*., 2022). Strategic creativity can be implemented in various business processes, such as resource acquisition and reconfiguration, identifying new opportunities, and operations management. Wasim *et al*. (2024) noted that strategic creativity has been predominantly researched within the marketing field. These authors suggest that strategic creativity has been overlooked as a key contributor to business success, as it can lead to unique products. Consequently, a key component of defining strategic creativity lies in the novel ideas of the firm's employees.

Alyahya *et al*. (2023) acknowledged that firms must engage in strategic creativity to achieve sustainable performance, especially in uncertain operating environments. This finding was also reported by Nguyen et al. (2022), who recognised that strategic creativity explicitly enhances a firm's financial performance by enabling prompt market responses. However, Wasim *et al*. (2024) argue that there is a dearth of research linking strategic creativity and performance. Given that family businesses contribute significantly to global economic growth, gaining new and modernised insights into their operations is essential to better appreciate them (Maharajh *et al*., 2024). Further, Zhang *et al*. (2022) and Pike-Bowles *et al*. (2024)

recognised that the family business field requires advancement by accounting for diverse business constructs. Consequently, this study adopts a fresh perspective by investigating five distinct dynamic capabilities and the strategic creativity of family businesses.

2.3 Dynamic capabilities view

The underlying theoretical framework pursued in this study encompassed the dynamic capabilities view. According to Teece *et al*. (1997), the dynamic capabilities view is a crucial framework that enables a firm to attain a sustainable competitive advantage. Dynamic capabilities are an indispensable strategic tool that firms can implement to improve their performance (Čirjevskis, 2019). Such strategies include resource and asset acquisition and management that aid the exposure and requirements of a firm's capabilities (Ochoa *et al*., 2020). Consequently, the strategic management of a firm can improve performance by incorporating the dynamic capabilities view framework (Steininger *et al*., 2022).

The dynamic capabilities view stems from the resource-based view, which recognises that a firm can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage through the optimal use of its resources (Glyptis *et al*., 2021). The dynamic capability view complements the resource-based view by enabling firms to adopt a structured capabilities strategy, thereby protecting them against uncertain, continuously changing economic environments (Abu-Rumman *et al*., 2021). By doing this, firms can acquire new skills and competencies that contribute towards improved business performance and maintaining a competitive advantage (Teece *et al*., 1997). In comparison, the resource-based view centres on a firm's resource allocation, while the dynamic capability view focuses on both resource and capability allocation to improve business performance (Bleady *et al*., 2018).

The term' dynamic capabilities' illustrates a firm's ability to respond to changing operating environments by identifying opportunities, modifying existing business practices, reducing operational costs, and incorporating new resources and competencies to ensure continued business performance (Abbady *et al*., 2019). By doing this, firms are notably engaging in dynamic capabilities alongside strategic creativity. If a firm fails to implement the dynamic capabilities model, it will not realise its true potential, and business performance will not meet expectations (Bogers *et al*., 2019).

Daspit *et al*. (2019) recognised that the dynamic capabilities concept is popular within the strategic management field; however, it remains nascent within the family business sphere. The prominent dynamic capabilities construct comprises environmental scanning, scenario planning, knowledge creation, culture, and formal organisation (Gregurec *et al*., 2021; Ode & Ayavoo, 2020; Schwarz *et al*., 2019; Soluk *et al*., 2021).

2.3.1 *Environmental scanning*

The first dynamic capability, environmental scanning, is a core business activity that enables firms to analyse and identify trends within the changing internal and external environments (Soluk *et al*., 2021). These trends could have positive or negative impacts on the business performance. Therefore, environmental scanning enables a firm to foresee such events and respond effectively through planning (Alizadeh & Soltanisehat, 2019). According to Majekodunmi (2020), a positive relationship exists between strategic management and the implementation of a dynamic capabilities model within a business. Strategic creativity entails generating innovative ideas that aid business performance.

As a business engages in dynamic capabilities, it concurrently practices strategic creativity, indicating the relationship between the two constructs (Walia, 2021). The driving force behind strategic creativity is strategic foresight (Buehring & Bishop, 2020). Strategic foresight aligns the firm with an appropriate direction based on environmental scanning and scenario planning, ensuring the best possible predetermined direction is pursued (Buehring & Bishop, 2020; Pulsiri & Vatananan-Thesenvitz, 2021). Based on the aforementioned, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: A relationship exists between environmental scanning and the performance of family businesses.

Hypothesis 2: Strategic creativity mediates the relationship between environmental scanning and family business performance.

2.3.2 *Scenario planning*

Scenario planning is recognised as a dynamic capability construct that enables firms to develop innovative action plans in response to various scenarios identified during environmental scanning (Schwarz *et al*., 2019). Although strategic management and dynamic capabilities are linked, business performance is not necessarily due to the sole implementation of a dynamic capabilities model. Enhanced business performance could result from improved processes and innovations; therefore, dynamic capabilities influence a type of change resulting from intentional preparedness (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Teece *et al*., 1997).

According to Boddenberg *et al*. (2024), scenario planning enables businesses to prepare for change in uncertain economic environments. Here, a hypothetical cause-and-effect relationship is explored to identify the chain of possible market trends. Practising this strategic exercise enables businesses to prepare for future uncertainties by developing action plans to respond to the identified scenarios. Consequently, hypotheses three and four are suggested:

Hypothesis 3: A relationship exists between scenario planning and the performance of family businesses.

Hypothesis 4: Strategic creativity mediates the relationship between scenario planning and family business performance.

2.3.3 *Knowledge creation*

Knowledge plays a vital role in identifying opportunities and innovation to make effective business decisions (Ode & Ayavoo, 2020). Oktarina and Witiastuti (2019) argued that a firm's strategic creativity further aids in knowledge creation, problem-solving, and networking, enabling it to put business practices ahead of competitors and gain a sustainable competitive advantage. A business culture that focuses on developing workforce knowledge can foster new ideas and outpace competitors (Bouncken *et al*., 2020). Consequently, there is a positive association between firms' dynamic capabilities when they reconfigure business activities based on their innovative concepts (Arokodare & Asikhia, 2020). However, to enhance knowledge creation and improve business innovation, knowledge management is required (Hlatywayo & Williamson, 2023; Ode & Ayavoo, 2020). Thus, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5: A relationship exists between knowledge creation and the performance of family businesses.

Hypothesis 6: Strategic creativity mediates the relationship between knowledge creation and family business performance.

2.3.4 *Business culture*

Azeem *et al*. (2021) and Naong *et al.* (2023) identified that knowledge creation enhances a firm's competitive advantage; however, a positive business culture must be present in the operational processes. Business cultures are unique to each business as they attain different resources and capabilities that drive the workforce to achieve business goals (Soluk *et al*., 2021). Business cultures that prioritise continuous knowledge advancement and innovative contributions from all employees can positively impact business performance, particularly during uncertain economic conditions such as those posed by COVID-19 (Caballero-Morales, 2021; Krishnan, 2020). This was similarly identified by Alipour *et al*. (2025), who determined that family business performance is associated with the business culture. Here, a stable working environment, emphasised by the family business culture, contributes to improved performance.

According to Ode and Ayavoo (2020), strategic creativity contributes to competitive advantage by adding innovations and ideas that competitors lack. Here, innovative ideas can range from employee suggestions for improving the workplace and tasks to enhancing a compliance system and introducing innovations for business products or services (Lee & Kim, 2021). According to Ziyae and Sadeghi (2020), strategic creativity must be embedded in the business culture. Incorporating creativity into the firm's culture will lead to increased development of innovative employees and the seizing of market opportunities aligned with predetermined strategic goals. By emphasising a positive business culture through creativity, firms can build a reputation as creative and innovative compared to competitors. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 7: A relationship exists between business culture and the performance of family businesses.

Hypothesis 8: Strategic creativity mediates the relationship between business culture and family business performance.

2.3.5 *Formal organisation*

A formal organisation, as a dynamic capability, encompasses the procedures and systems that the business adheres to to achieve its strategic direction (Gregurec *et al*., 2021; Masakale & Pooe, 2022). Due to the current unpredictable environments in which most businesses operate, firms need to modify their original business structures to aid long-term survival (Gregurec *et al*., 2021; Kamariotou & Kitsios, 2019). Current literature suggests that both strategic creativity and dynamic capabilities facilitate a firm's continuous improvement and enhanced business performance. However, there have been no recent investigations into such a relationship, specifically within the family business domain (Buehring & Bishop, 2020; Hernandez-Linares *et al*., 2019).

According to Mikalef *et al*. (2021), firms engage in strategic creativity when modifying and implementing business models to enhance performance. However, the same authors identified a gap in the empirical literature regarding this relationship, specifically within the field of family business. Schilke *et al*. (2018) further recognised that future research avenues should encompass analyses of moderating and mediating effects of dynamic capabilities and their antecedents. Based on this, the study puts forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 9: A relationship exists between the formal organisation and the performance of family businesses.

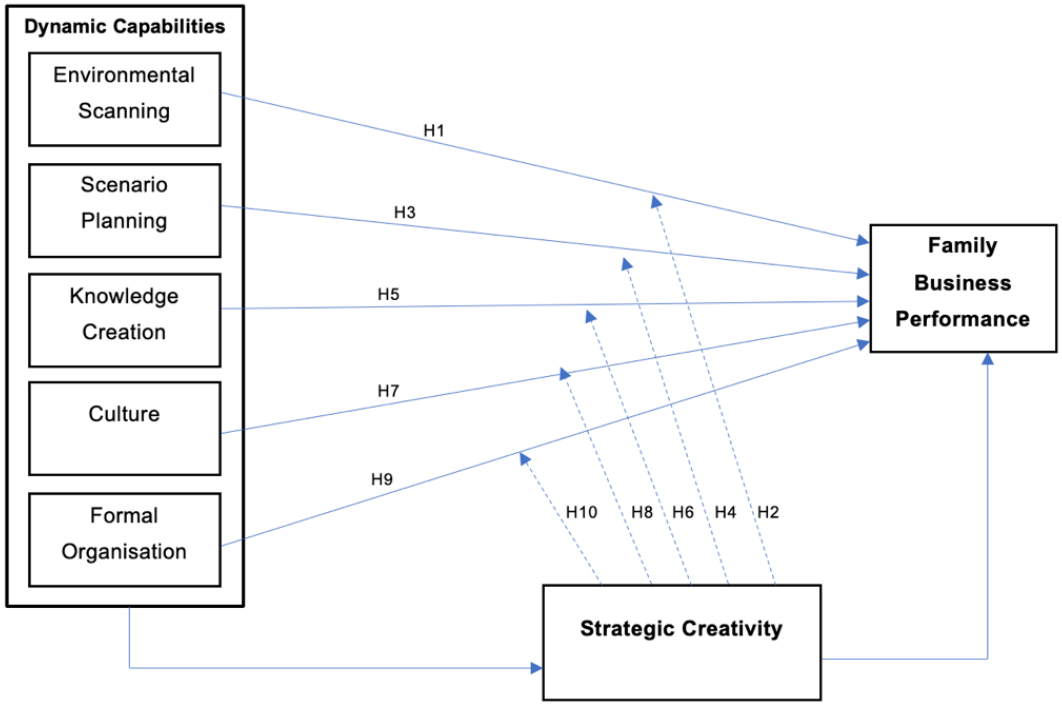
Hypothesis 10: Strategic creativity mediates the relationship between the formal organisation and the performance of family businesses.

2.4 Conceptual model

The independent variable consisted of dynamic capabilities, encompassing five selected dimensions. These five dimensions included scenario planning, environmental scanning, business culture, knowledge creation, and the formal organisation. The mediating variable was strategic creativity, while family business performance was the study's dependent variable. The research hypotheses outlined in Figure 1 were developed from the aforementioned literature review. The conceptual model illustrates the mediating role of strategic creativity in the relationships among the selected five dynamic capabilities and family business performance.

The conceptual model in Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesised relationships between the study's variables. It is essential to note that when testing a mediating variable, the relationships among the independent, dependent, and mediating variables are assessed (Wiid & Diggines, 2021).

Figure 1: Conceptual model



3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative research approach to conduct an inductive inquiry. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was selected because it enabled statistical analysis of the collected data to test the research hypotheses within a specific timeframe (Damico & Ball, 2019). Inductive logic is further associated with the ontological view of realists and with positivist epistemology (Mir & Greenwood, 2021). These two philosophical foundations were suitable for this study, as reality was understood through an objective viewpoint by measuring constructs that aid family business performance (Bryman, 2021).

3.1 Population and sample

The selected population consisted of family-owned businesses, while the sample unit comprised one owner or one manager from each of these family businesses. The sample unit was selected to represent only a single outlook per family business, as gaining multiple views from each family business was beyond the scope of this study. According to Hoon *et al*. (2023), single viewpoints minimise access limitations to multiple respondents from a single firm. Consequently, reducing data collection time and adhering to the time frame of the study. The sample unit had to comply with a specific inclusion criterion. The inclusion criteria included that the family business be formally registered and that the family business owner or manager own, co-own, or manage an operating family business within the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Studies focusing on Family business performance indicators are on the rise globally (Pike-Bowles *et al*., 2024). In South Africa, research on family business performance is limited, focusing primarily on various provinces and districts, particularly the Eastern Cape. Consequently, the Eastern Cape province was selected as the study locale firstly to add new insights and secondly because it is the researcher's hometown. The total number of respondents was 347 family businesses due to the scarcity of such firms in the Eastern Cape.

3.2 Research instrument and scale

The questionnaire was selected as the research instrument, enabling the study's variables to be measured through closed-ended questions using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree) (Kumar, 2019). The questionnaire entailed a standardised set of questions that were self-explanatory to the respondents. The research instrument used existing scales that are reliable and valid for measuring perceived family business performance, dynamic capabilities, and strategic creativity. The scales used to measure the study's variables were adapted from several existing studies that operationalised the items, as there was no existing standardised dynamic

capabilities scale encompassing all five of this study's variables at the time of investigation (Kump *et al*., 2019).

The Perceived Family Business Performance scale was extracted from Utrilla and Torraleja (2012), which comprised 13 items that specifically measured the financial and non-financial aspects of family businesses through constructs related to perceived family success, productivity, growth, and profit. The Strategic Creativity Scale was adopted from Mikalef and Gupta's (2021) work, which in turn drew its items from Lee and Choi's (2003) work. Here, five items measured strategic creativity. Lastly, the five selected dynamic capabilities dimensions of the study were measured using 13 items from Kump *et al*. (2019). Table 1 illustrates the items used to measure the study's variables.

Table 1: Research instrument scales

Variables	Items for measurement
Dynamic capabilities	**Environmental scanning**
	Our business knows the best practices in the market.
	Our business is up to date on the current market situation.
	Our business systematically searchers for information on the current market situation.
	Scenario planning
	Our business continually monitors our competitors' activities.
	Current information leads to the development of new products or services. Current information leads to the development of new products or services.
	Knowledge creation
	As a business, we know how to access new information.
	We can recognise what new information can be utilised in our business.
	Culture
	By defining clear responsibilities, we successfully implement plans for changes in our company.
	Even when unforeseen interruptions occur, change projects are seen through consistently in our company.
	In the past, we have demonstrated our strengths in implementing changes.
	Formal organisation
	Our company is capable of turning new technological knowledge into process and product innovation.
	Decision on planned changes is pursued consistently in our company.
	In our business, change projects can be implemented alongside daily operations.
Strategic creativity	**Strategic creativity**
	Our business has produced many novel and useful ideas (services/products).
	Our business fosters an environment that is conductive to our own ability to produce novel and useful ideas (services/products).
	Our business spends much time for producing novel and useful ideas (services/products).
	Our business considers producing novel and useful ideas (services/products) as important activities.
	Our business actively produces novel and useful ideas (services/products).
Perceived family business performance	**Perceived family success**
	There is satisfaction of the family members.
	There is satisfaction of the family participants.
	There is satisfaction of the successor.

	Productivity
	Participants are committed to the business.
	Participants are satisfied with the business.
	There has been a reduction in the level of absenteeism.
	Participants rarely leave the company voluntarily.
	Growth
	There has been improvement of the productivity index in the last three years.
	There has been sales growth in the last three years.
	There has been market share growth in the last three years.
	Profit
	There is economic profitability.
	There is rate of returns on capital.
	There is rate of returns on assets.

Table 1 presents the items used to measure the study's variables. According to the literature reviewed, the dependent variable, family business performance, utilises a perceived family business performance scale that encompasses both financial and non-financial performance indicators (Utrilla & Torraleja, 2012). The strategic creativity items provide insight into how a business generates novel, valuable ideas that positively influence performance. Subsequently, measuring the selected items, the influence of strategic creativity on the relation between dynamic capabilities and the performance of family businesses was determined.

3.3 Data collection

To promote data reliability and validity, a pilot test with 20 respondents with characteristics similar to those of the target group was conducted. A pilot study was conducted 2 months before data collection to ensure internal consistency, and the results were valid and reliable (Damico & Ball, 2019). Data collection was pursued to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, thereby ensuring that the respondent's personal information was stored and shared responsibly. Therefore, the respondents' personal information was not recorded, and each was allocated a pseudonym (Wiid & Diggines, 2021). The pseudonyms were numerical, ranging from 1 to 347, and were assigned to protect identities. Data collection took place face-to-face over six months, during which respondents spent an average of 15 minutes completing the questionnaire.

3.4 Data analysis

Data were processed, interpreted, and analysed using the SPSS software program. Descriptive statistics comprised basic distributions to determine frequencies and percentages. Additionally, the standard deviation (SD) and mean of the study's variables were tested. The inferential statistics entailed a multiple regression analysis to draw conclusions and test the hypotheses of this study (Wiid & Diggines, 2021). To test the mediating role of strategic creativity in the relationship between dynamic capabilities and family business performance, the Hayes PROCESS macro (Model 4) was employed.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Cronbach's alpha (CA) were tested to determine the reliability and validity of the research instrument. Subsequently, minimising common method variance and ensuring validity of the research results (Kock *et al*., 2021). According to Scharrer and Ramasubramanian (2021), a coefficient between 0.60 and 0.69 is deemed acceptable, while coefficients between 0.70 and 0.80, and above, are favourable. A coefficient value below 0.50 is identified as undesirable. Table 2 summarises the validity and reliability assessment of the items in the research instrument.

Table 2: Reliability and validity of the research instrument

Variables	Items loaded	Minimum and maximum CFA loadings	Overall CA
Strategic creativity	5	0.649 – 0.746	0.828
Family business performance	13	0.686 – 0.940	0.922
Dynamic capabilities	13	0.568 – 0.765	0.891

Table 2 shows that the study's variables had acceptable and favourable CFA loadings (0.568-0.940), indicating the validity of the research instrument. Additionally, the overall CA coefficients ranged from 0.828 to 0.922, indicating favourable reliability. Consequently, the research instrument proved to be both reliable and valid.

4. FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics examined the respondents' demographics, providing a clear picture of the study's sample. Table 3 summarises the respondents' demographics.

Table 3: Respondents' demographics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	155	44.7
Female	186	53.6
Did not identify	6	1.7
Number of family members employed		
0 to 2 family members	148	42.7
3 to 5 family members	130	37.5
6 to 9 family members	56	16.1
More than 10 family members	13	3.7
Number of years operating		
Below 1 year of operating	30	8.6
1 to 5 years of operating	91	26.2
6 to 10 years of operating	114	32.9
11 to 16 years of operating	62	17.9
17 to 22 years of operating	30	8.6
23-30 years of operating	9	2.6

More than 31 years of operating	11	3.2
Number of employees		
1 to 10 employees	157	45.2
11 to 20 employees	103	29.7
21 to 30 employees	58	16.7
31 to 40 employees	17	4.9
41 to 50 employees	7	2.0
More than 51 employees	5	1.5
Ownership		
Majority-owner	117	33.7
Co-owner	102	29.4
Manager	128	36.9

Table 3 indicates that the family business landscape of the Eastern Cape comprises a majority of female-owned businesses (53.6%) that have employed between zero and two family members (42.7%). Moreover, such family businesses have been operating for between 6 and 10 years (32.9%), with a total number of employees ranging from 1 to 10 (45.2%). Table 3 further illustrates that the managers of the family businesses primarily responded to the questionnaire (36.9%).

Additionally, descriptive analyses were conducted on the study's variables. Table 4 illustrates the overall mean and SD of the study's variables. SD is used to measure data dispersion (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2021). A lower SD statistic indicates that the data are closely aligned with the mean, while a higher SD indicates that the data are more dispersed from the mean.

Table 4: Variables descriptive statistics

Variables of the study	Mean	Standard deviation
Family business performance	3.7313	0.56301
Strategic creativity	3.8331	0.56396
Dynamic capabilities	3.8572	0.50704

The respondents generally agreed with the items in the research instrument, as illustrated in Table 4. This included family business performance (mean = 3.7313), strategic creativity (mean = 3.8331), and dynamic capabilities (mean = 3.8572). Dynamic capabilities had the highest mean and the lowest SD, indicating that the respondents were consistent in their responses. Consequently, Table 4 recognised that the responses were moderately distributed.

4.1 Multiple regression analysis

The study employed simple mediation to identify the influence of strategic creativity on the link between the selected dynamic capabilities and the perceived performance of family

businesses. Table 5 illustrates the mediating role of strategic creativity in the relationship between dynamic capabilities and family business performance, which was tested using the Hayes PROCESS macro (Model 4) in SPSS. (Wiid & Diggines, 2021). The mediation analysis employed a bias-corrected 95% confidence interval based on a bootstrap sample size of 20000. Here, the unstandardised beta coefficient was examined to determine the change in a dependent variable when a mediating variable is introduced into an existing relationship between independent and dependent variables. Additionally, the standard deviation, denoted by β, represents the unstandardised beta coefficient values.

4.1.1 The link between dynamic capabilities and strategic creativity

An initial test was executed to identify the direct link between the five selected dynamic capabilities (X) and strategic creativity (M). The results indicated a significant relationship between the five selected dynamic capabilities and the mediating variable, strategic creativity. The link between environmental scanning and strategic creativity comprised a beta coefficient value of (0.391), a *t-value of (*9.180), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), a lower level confidence interval (LLCI) of (0.307), and an upper level confidence interval (ULCI) of (0.475). The link between scenario planning and strategic creativity entailed a beta coefficient value of (0.330), a *t-value of* (7.692), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.245), and a ULCI of (0.414).

The association between knowledge creation and strategic creativity included a beta coefficient value of (0.346), a *t-value of* (7.246), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.252), and a ULCI of (0.440). The link between business culture and strategic creativity entailed a beta coefficient value of (0.362), a *t-value of* (7.763), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.270), and a ULCI of (0.454). Lastly, the link between the formal organisation and strategic creativity comprised a beta coefficient value of (0.403), a *t-value of* (9.107), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.316), and a ULCI of (0.490).

The dynamic capabilities construct, entailing formal organisation, had the strongest significant relationship with strategic creativity (β=0.403), while the weakest significant effect was between scenario planning and strategic creativity (β=0.330), as seen in Table 5 (a) direct effects.

Table 5: Mediation effect

Effects	Unstandardised beta coefficients		Significance of beta coefficients		95% Confidence interval	
	Beta	SE	t-value	p-value	LLCI	ULCI
Environmental scanning						
Effect(s) - direct						
a) X → M	0.391	0.0433	9.180	<.0001	0.307	0.475
b) M → Y	0.404	0.052	7.716	<.0001	0.301	0.508
c) X → Y	0.128	0.046	2.776	0.006	0.037	0.219
Total effect(s) of X on Y	0.287	0.045	6.389	<.0001	0.198	0.375
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y	0.180	0.030	-	-	0.122	0.241
Scenario planning						
Effect(s) - direct						
a) X → M	0.330	0.043	7.692	<.0001	0.245	0.414
b) M → Y	0.401	0.051	7.940	<.0001	0.302	0.501
c) X → Y	0.152	0.044	3.500	0.001	0.067	0.238
Total effect(s) of X on Y	0.285	0.044	6.514	<.0001	0.199	0.371
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y	0.154	0.032	-	-	0.097	0.220
Knowledge creation						
Effect(s) - direct						
a) X → M	0.346	0.048	7.246	<.0001	0.252	0.440
b) M → Y	0.380	0.049	7.717	<.0001	0.283	0.477
c) X → Y	0.232	0.047	4.947	<.0001	0.140	0.324
Total effect(s) of X on Y	0.363	0.047	7.693	<.0001	0.270	0.456
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y	0.138	0.0303	-	-	0.083	0.199
Business culture						
Effect(s) - direct						
a) X → M	0.362	0.047	7.763	<.0001	0.270	0.454
b) M → Y	0.370	0.050	7.463	<.0001	0.273	0.468
c) X → Y	0.240	0.047	5.152	<.0001	0.148	0.332
Total effect(s) of X on Y	0.374	0.046	8.085	<.0001	0.283	0.465
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y	0.143	0.027	-	-	0.093	0.199
Formal organisation						
Direct effect(s)						
a) X → M	0.403	0.044	9.107	<.0001	0.316	0.490
b) M → Y	0.360	0.051	7.027	<.0001	0.259	0.461
c) X → Y	0.227	0.047	4.839	<.0001	0.135	0.319
Total effect(s) of X on Y	0.372	0.045	8.273	<.0001	0.283	0.460
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y	0.159	0.030	-	-	0.103	0.221

Note. *Significant effect at Alpha = 0.05. Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 20,000.

4.1.2 The effect of strategic creativity on family business performance

Secondly, the direct relationship between strategic creativity and the performance of family businesses was tested for each selected dynamic capability. The results include: environmental scanning beta coefficient value of (0.404), a *t-value of* (7.716), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.301), and a ULCI of (0.508). Scenario planning entailed a beta coefficient value of (0.401), a *t-value of* (7.940), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.302), and a ULCI of (0.501). The relationship between strategic creativity and knowledge creation comprised a beta coefficient of (0.380), a *t-value of* (7.717), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.283), and a ULCI of (0.477). Business culture entailed a beta coefficient value of (0.370), a *t-value of* (7.463), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.273), and a ULCI of (0.468).

Lastly, the formal organisation had a beta coefficient value of (0.360), a *t-value of* (7.027), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.259), and a ULCI of (0.461), as seen in Table 5, b) direct effects. The results illustrated that strategic creativity has a significant and direct influence on family business performance for each dynamic capability. The strongest direct relationship between strategic creativity and family business performance was found for environmental scanning (β=0.404), while the weakest significant relationship was observed for formal organisation (β=0.360).

4.1.3 The relationship between dynamic capabilities and family business performance

When controlling for strategic creativity (M), the mediating variable, the results indicated that the five dynamic capabilities constructs (X) were significant predictors of perceived family business performance (Y), as illustrated in Table 5, direct effects, row c. Environmental scanning entailed a beta coefficient value of (0.128), a *t-value of* (2.776), a *p-value of* (<0.0006), a LLCI of (0.037), and an ULCI of (0.219). Scenario planning comprised a beta coefficient value of (0.152), a *t-value of* (3.500), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.067), and a ULCI of (0.238). Knowledge creation had a beta coefficient value of (0.232), a *t-value of* (4.947), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.140), and a ULCI of (0.324). The results revealed that business culture had a beta coefficient value of (0.240), a *t-value of* (5.152), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.148), and a ULCI of (0.332).

Lastly, the formal organisation had a beta coefficient value of (0.227), a *t-value of* (4.839), a *p-value of* (<0.0001), an LLCI of (0.135), and a ULCI of (0.319). Based on these statistics, business culture (β = 0.240) is the most significant predictor of dynamic capability in family businesses. In contrast, environmental scanning (β = 0.128) shows the weakest relationship with family business performance. After testing the direct effects of the aforementioned

variables, the total and indirect effects were determined to identify the mediating role of strategic creativity in the relationship between dynamic capabilities and family business performance.

4.1.4 The mediation effect of strategic creativity between dynamic capabilities and the performance of family businesses

The total effect of the mediating variable, strategic creativity (M), on the relationship between dynamic capabilities and family business performance was tested using a percentile bootstrap with 20000 samples. All five dynamic capabilities exhibited a significant relationship with family business performance, as illustrated in Table 5, which presents the total effects of X (dynamic capabilities) on Y (perceived family business performance). The total impact of dynamic capabilities on family business performance was influenced by environmental scanning (β=0.287), scenario planning (β=0.285), knowledge creation (β=0.363), business culture (β=0.374), and formal organisation (β=0.372). Of the five dynamic capabilities, business culture had the greatest total effect on family business performance, while scenario planning had the least.

Consequently, testing the indirect influence revealed that strategic creativity (M) significantly mediated the relationships among the five dynamic capability constructs and family business performance. The indirect effect results entailed; environmental scanning [β (0.180), LLCI (0.122), ULCI (0.241)]; scenario planning [β (0.154), LLCI (0.097), ULCI (0.220)]; knowledge creation [(β=0.138, 95% CI [0.083, 0.199]); business culture [β (0.143), LLCI (0.093), ULCI (0.199)]; and formal organisation [β (0.159), LLCI (0.103), ULCI (0.221)], as seen in Table 5, indirect effects of X (dynamic capabilities) on Y (perceived family business performance).

The findings highlighted that strategic creativity positively influences the association between the selected dynamic capabilities and the performance of family businesses. The highest mediating effect was observed between the dynamic capabilities construct, environmental scanning, and family business performance. The lowest mediating influence of strategic creativity was between knowledge creation and family business performance. Thus, based on these results, all alternative hypotheses of the study were accepted, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Hypotheses outcomes

Hypotheses number	Alternative hypotheses	Outcome
H_1	A relationship exists between environmental scanning and the performance of family businesses.	Accepted
H_2	Strategic creativity mediates the relationship between environmental scanning and family business performance.	Accepted
H_3	A relationship exists between scenario planning and the performance of family businesses.	Accepted
H_4	Strategic creativity mediates the relationship between scenario planning and family business performance.	Accepted
H_5	A relationship exists between knowledge creation and the performance of family businesses.	Accepted
H_6	Strategic creativity mediates the relationship between knowledge creation and the performance of family businesses.	Accepted
H_7	A relationship exists between business culture and the performance of family businesses.	Accepted
H_8	Strategic creativity mediates the relationship between business culture and the performance of family businesses.	Accepted
H_9	A relationship exists between the formal organisation and the performance of family businesses.	Accepted
H_{10}	Strategic creativity mediates the relationship between formal organisation and the performance of family businesses.	Accepted

The statistical outcomes for the hypotheses listed in Table 6 illustrate the study's five hypotheses. All five alternative hypotheses were accepted based on their statistical test results, with unstandardised beta coefficient values ranging from 0.138 to 0.159. These results essentially elucidate that a direct and significant relationship exists between the variables. Although the stipulated unstandardised beta coefficients appear small, a positive association exists between the variables and the mediator.

5. DISCUSSION

The study assessed the mediating role of strategic creativity in the relationship between dynamic capabilities and family business performance. The descriptive statistics provided new insights for the field of family business, particularly in the Eastern Cape, as previous research has not sufficiently considered this locale (Janse van Rensburg & Tjano, 2020; Urban & Nonkwelo, 2020). The results indicated that family businesses within the Eastern Cape are predominantly female-owned and have been operating between six and 10 years.

Based on the inferential statistics output, three key findings are made: a) a positive relationship exists between dynamic capabilities and strategic creativity, b) dynamic capabilities have a significant and direct effect on family business performance, and c) strategic creativity positively influences family business performance when dynamic capabilities are present. A

key theoretical contribution is made, as the findings illustrate that strategic creativity has the most significant mediating influence on the relationship between the dynamic capability dimension encompassing environmental scanning and family business performance. This represents a new insight for the field of family business, as Soluk *et al*. (2021) acknowledged that environmental scanning is a key strategic tool within firms; however, these authors do not specifically consider a mediating influence within the family business field.

Although current research recognises that exercising scenario planning, environmental scanning, business culture, knowledge creation, and the formal organisation do enhance business performance, there is a primary focus on non-family businesses as opposed to family businesses (Alizadeh & Soltanisehat, 2019; Gregurec *et al*., 2021; Schwarz *et al*., 2019). The study's findings, therefore, offer new insights through the lens of family businesses, indicating that strategic creativity positively mediates the association between the selected dynamic capabilities and family business performance. Consequently, these findings contribute to the field of family business by showing that family business performance improves when dynamic capabilities and strategic creativity are both present in business operations.

Furthermore, existing research indicates that a positive business culture is a significant contributor to a firm's performance (Soluk et al., 2021), as was similarly identified in this study through the total effect. However, when testing the mediation effect of strategic creativity on the relationship between business culture and family business performance, the findings revealed that although there was a positive mediation effect, it was not a key contributing dynamic capability to enhancing family business performance. Thus, this research study found that family business performance is predominantly improved when environmental scanning and strategic creativity are aligned.

The results of this investigation align with the work of Arokodare and Asikhia (2020), who recognised that firms must engage in strategic creativity by incorporating the dynamic capabilities model to gain a competitive advantage. Furthermore, this study's findings build on the work of Majekodunmi (2020) and Oktarina and Witiastuti (2019). These authors acknowledged that being creative facilitates business performance by continuously improving the firm's resources and capabilities. This investigation adds to the body of knowledge by accounting for a unique mediation effect in family businesses.

These findings, therefore, add to the works of Buehring and Bishop (2020), Pulsiri and Vatananan-Thesenvitz (2021), and Walia (2021), where these authors focused on non-family firms and strategic constructs entailing creativity and leadership that contribute towards improved business performance, with no attention placed on these concepts from a family

business standpoint. This study's findings concur with the author's work, which shows that creativity is a key contributor to improved business performance when strategic creativity is practised simultaneously.

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings resulted in key implications and recommendations for family businesses and practitioners specialising in family firms in emerging economies. Such implications and recommendations have the potential to transform the family business landscape in South Africa, enhancing business performance and long-term survival in uncertain economic environments (Aldrich *et al*., 2021). Family businesses are suggested to modify their current strategies to include a dynamic capabilities framework (Pike-Bowles *et al*., 2024).

Such a framework should focus on promoting strategic creativity to enhance family business performance. The primary focus should be on environmental scanning within the business's daily operations. Such a dynamic capabilities framework would enable family businesses to sense, seize, and reconfigure their resources and capabilities, thereby enhancing business performance in fluctuating operating environments (Semke & Tiberius, 2020). Additionally, the dynamic capabilities framework should outline the business's current, future, and anticipated dynamic capability constructs. This would allow a family business to determine which dynamic capabilities it currently possesses and how they contribute to business performance when aligned with strategic creativity.

Moreover, it would indicate the missing dynamic capabilities required to reposition the firm's strategic creative direction in the future and how the firm will achieve this (Daspit et al., 2019; Glyptis et al., 2021). Practitioners who focus on family businesses are advised to reconfigure their current business offerings to include a comprehensive dynamic capabilities framework. Here, practitioners should observe a family business's current dynamic capabilities and the presence of strategic creativity.

Based on the observation, a detailed report and a uniquely developed dynamic capabilities framework should be proposed to the family business to enhance performance. Consequently, assisting family business performance in South Africa by providing a lucrative dynamic capabilities framework for family businesses to implement (Pike-Bowles *et al*., 2024).

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES

Regarding the study's limitations, three were identified. Firstly, no family business database exists in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa; therefore, the authors developed one for this investigation. The database was created by approaching numerous businesses across the eight districts of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the study.

Secondly, the study considered only one perspective per family business; therefore, multiple perspectives were not acknowledged within the study's specified timeframe. Thirdly, the risk of common method variance and researcher bias is always a concern in cross-sectional studies (Kock *et al*., 2021). However, this limitation was mitigated by conducting a pilot study to assess the research instrument's reliability and validity, which used CFA and scales that have been shown to be reliable and valid in other publications, while ensuring respondent anonymity.

Future research is needed to develop comprehensive databases for South African family businesses that take into account multiple perspectives within each family business. Future research avenues could involve replicating this study from a qualitative perspective. By doing this, a subjective view of the participant's opinions and experiences can be obtained. Additionally, future research is suggested to identify the strategic benchmarks that should be incorporated into a robust dynamic capabilities framework that emphasises strategic creativity and family business performance.

8. CONCLUSION

Family businesses face uncertain economic conditions, which require them to redefine their existing strategic tools to improve business performance. The study investigated the mediating influence of strategic creativity between five dynamic capability dimensions (scenario planning, environmental scanning, business culture, knowledge creation, and the formal organisation) and family business performance in South Africa. The results indicated that the five hypotheses were supported, suggesting that strategic creativity positively influences the association between dynamic capabilities and the performance of family businesses in South Africa.

Family businesses are encouraged to adopt a dynamic capabilities framework to enhance performance in unstable economic conditions. Family business practitioners are further urged to assess such a dynamic capabilities framework that fosters strategic creativity within South African family businesses. Such a tactical framework can increase the performance of family businesses across South Africa through innovation. The results, therefore, provide distinctive theoretical contributions to the field of family business.

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Data availability: The data used for this article is available on request from the corresponding author.

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