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Confucian values—such as filial piety, hierarchical order, and collective harmony—continue to shape gender roles and leadership expectations in Chinese society. In family business contexts, these values often position women as supporters rather than successors. While previous studies have portrayed Confucianism as a barrier to female entrepreneurship (Mustafa et al., 2019), few have explored how these values are negotiated or reframed in media narratives. This research examines the representation of Chinese women in family-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Chinese media.

Focusing on the post-One-Child Policy era (2015–2025)—a period of shifting family dynamics and evolving succession norms—this study draws on five case studies sourced from print and digital media, including newspapers, trade publications, and industry reports. A qualitative thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo to examine how media narratives frame the interplay between gender, leadership, and family duty.

In this presentation, I share preliminary findings that reveal a generational divide: some daughters quietly uphold traditional values through compliant succession, while others resist or disengage due to gendered expectations. Media narratives both reinforce and reshape cultural assumptions—at times validating women's leadership, and at others questioning their role in succession.

This research contributes to our understanding of how storytelling in the media shapes perceptions of leadership, succession planning, and gender norms in Chinese family-owned SMEs. It also provides practical insights for leadership development, inclusive succession planning, and policies designed to promote gender equity in family businesses.

**Keywords**

Confucian Values, Chinese Female Entrepreneurs, Family-Owned SMEs, Succession Planning, Gender and Leadership, Media Narratives, Cultural Change

**References**

Mustafa, M., Elliott, C., & Zhou, L. (2019). Succession in Chinese family SMEs: A gendered analysis of successor learning and development. *Human Resource Development International*, 22(5), 504–525. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2019.1608123>