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**Examining stewardship in family firms, exploring the role of growth, career, and autonomy on the Accountant's psychological intention to stay**
**Adeel Qaiser**

Faculty of Business Administration, National College of Business Administration &amp; Economics, Lahore, Pakistan, Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Pakistan.

 (Corresponding Author) Email: [2231212@ncbae.edu.pk](mailto:2231212@ncbae.edu.pk)
**Syed Muhammad Adeel Abbas**

Faculty of Business Administration, National College of Business Administration &amp; Economics, Lahore, Pakistan.

 Email: [2231201@ncbae.edu.pk](mailto:2231201@ncbae.edu.pk)
**Basit Zafar**

Faculty of Commerce, Hailey College of Commerce, University of the Punjab Lahore, Pakistan.

 Email: [basitzafar238@gmail.com](mailto:basitzafar238@gmail.com)
**Professor Dr. Alia Ahmed**

(Dean) with Faculty of Business Administration, National College of Business Administration &amp; Economics, Lahore, Pakistan.

 Email: [dralia@ncbae.edu.pk](mailto:dralia@ncbae.edu.pk)
**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The present research examines how professional accountants' growth orientation, career opportunities, and autonomy form psychological ownership and their intention to stay, eventually nurturing stewardship behavior in the family-owned firms. Furthermore, it explores the organizational settings rather than family identification permits stewardship in an emerging economy.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Based on a self-administered cross-sectional survey of 396 practicing accountants employed in family firms. Structural equation modeling was applied to analyze the hypotheses among the accountant's growth, career, autonomy, psychological ownership, intention to stay, and ultimately stewardship behavior.

**Findings:** Overall, the results indicate that growth orientation, career opportunities, and professional autonomy significantly strengthen psychological ownership and intention to stay, ultimately strengthening stewardship behavior. Furthermore, results present that stewardship among non-family accountants emerges from workplace arrangements and psychological environments that nurture identification, obligation, accountability, and sustained affiliation.

**Practical implications:** Family firms can augment stewardship by nurturing growth orientation environments, proposing obvious career pathways, and allowing expressive autonomy. Such practices support retaining proficient accountants, diminish agency-driven propensities, and ensure long-term organizational stability.

**Originality/value:** The present research advances stewardship theory by signifying that such behavior in family-owned firms is empowered through structural and psychological tools rather than intrinsic family association. Furthermore, it contributes novel insights on how professional

*accountants, an overlooked population, yield stewardship-affiliated behaviors within the institutional setting of emerging economies.*

**Keywords:** Accountants, growth, career, and autonomy

## 1. Introduction

In today's era, family-owned businesses are the most predominant organizational structure either locally or globally, generating economic productivity, creating employment opportunities, and forming overall long-term wealth in both developed and emerging economies (Cyr et al., 2023). Their unique structures, governance mechanisms, long-term value, preservation of socioemotional wealth, relational trust, and intertwined family business identities form work environments that significantly contrast with non-family organizations (Frank et al., 2023). Moreover, such features become even more prominent in emerging economies, encompassing institutional voids, resource restrictions, and corporate governance often intensify the dependence on internal trust setups and stewardship-like behaviors for subsistence and permanency.

Inside these distinctive organizational settings, accountants signify a crucial yet overlooked and understudied professional group (Sandgren et al., 2023). Their crucial job title, roles, and responsibilities extend beyond transactional tasks to include business partners, strategic advising, monitoring, preserving financial integrity, designing internal controls, and forming decision-making structures (Sandgren et al., 2023). As boundary-spanning key players, they mediate between formal professional standards and informal family-driven prospects (Songini et al., 2022). Their role, obligation, commitment, and behavioral orientation, either compliance-driven or stewardship-driven, expressively influence reliability, transparency, accountability, resource allocation, and the reinforcement of principled organizational practices. Comprehending what inspires accountants in family-owned firms to validate stewardship behavior is crucial because such behaviors under stewardship contribute to continuity, trust-building, and the attainment of mutual goals (Novak et al., 2023). Such forms of stewardship behaviors are neither definite nor unconscious; they arise from tensed motivational surroundings formed by ambitions of growth, experiences, career development, autonomy at routine work, and psychological affiliations with the organization.

The present research presents a two-layer model to illuminate how stewardship behavior among professional accountants emerges through interrelated proficient, emotional, and psychological mechanisms (Fasbender & Junker, 2025). The growth orientation, career opportunity, and professional autonomy denote significant precursor conditions at the first layer of the model, where the growth orientation reveals a desire for a professional accountant for consistent learning, development, and advancement; career opportunity denotes the perceived upward mobility within the firm; and professional autonomy represents the liberty to apply techniques, judgment, and proficiency. All of these constructs directly build two central psychological outcomes: psychological ownership, the understanding that "this organization is mine", and intention to stay, replicating continuing commitment and retention willingness (Zhao et al., 2022). These two psychological constructs function as direct originators of stewardship behavior. The professional accountants who sense and feel some sort of ownership toward the firm and intend to stay for a long tenure are more likely to participate in selfless and prosocial activities that shield and advance organizational interests (L. Guarana & Avolio, 2022).

The present study makes a significant academic and practical contribution by providing an organized, cohesive, and profession-specific framework that clarifies how stewardship forms behavior emerges among professional accountants in family-owned businesses within the

context of an emerging economy (Madison et al., 2021). Although stewardship has been studied and researched comprehensively, most prevailing research primarily emphasizes family members (Chrisman, 2019), which limits our understanding of how non-family professionals, particularly accountants, develop stewardship behaviors within the unique, trust-centered environment of family firms in emerging economies (Cyr et al., 2023). The most prevailing research studies highlights the need to scrutinize the role of non-family professionals in determining governance structure and permanency (Srivastava & Bhatia, 2022), yet preceding research have not effectually incorporated growth orientation, career opportunity, and professional autonomy into a consistent model that illuminates how such factors impact psychological ownership and intention to stay, both of which are known to drive stewardship behavior (Pierce et al., 2003).

The study seeks to answer the question, how accountants' inspirations and working environment yield psychological ownership and intention to stay, leading to stewardship behavior in family-owned firms (Ali et al., 2025). Furthermore, it inspects the influence of growth orientation, career opportunity, and professional autonomy on these psychological constructs by developing a profession-specific model intended for family firms in emerging economies (Marín et al., 2016), where professionalization and the incorporation of non-family authorities entail substantial challenges (Songini et al., 2022).

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Cultivating Stewardship in Family-Owned Businesses

The stewardship behavior can be defined as inherently motivated and socially beneficial behaviors determined by mutual interest instead of individual profits (Novak et al., 2023). Inside the family-owned business structures, stewardship propensities are often strengthened by collective philosophies, shared values, long-standing orientations, and trust-based governance networks that prioritize supremacy and permanency across generations (Cyr et al., 2023). In contrast to agency-motivated behaviors, which prioritize opportunism and necessitate continuous monitoring, stewardship arises in settings underscoring interpersonal contracts, psychological safety, and shared identity (Davis et al., 1997). Prevailing experimental studies designate that stewardship in existing family firms is not restricted to family members; non-family, either technical or professionals, also work as stewards when adequate structural and psychological conditions support such behavior (Songini et al., 2022). As far as professional accountants are concerned, stewardship is revealed in principled reporting, either financial or non-financial, preserving resources, and ordering organizational sustainability over immediate private gains, all indispensable for responsible governance. Consequently, stewardship theory suggests that stewards are professionals who intrinsically align their interests and support toward the firm's unlike self-interest agents in agency theory. Their behaviors are pro-organizational, seeking mutual long-standing goals instead of personal gains (Davis et al., 1997).

### 2.2 From Growth Orientations to Psychological Pathways

The term growth orientation refers to an individual's intrinsic aspiration for progress, competence, expansion, and career development (Kim & Beehr, 2022). Within family-controlled firms, professionals who recognize growth orientations have a tendency to cultivate robust interpersonal connections and motivation, as these firms frequently reward trustworthiness with augmented roles, duties, and skill improvement opportunities (Natto & Mokoaleli-Mokoteli, 2025). A robust form of growth orientation nurtures an intense psychological association and long-standing assurance (Cruz et al., 2012), as professionals recognize their interpersonal advancement as affiliated with the firm's progress. Such affiliation improves psychological ownership via spirits of personal investment and belonging (Pierce et al., 2003) and intensifies

intention to stay, primarily when growth visions seem steady and relationally secured (Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, professionals who interpret the firm as a structure for their progression and growth are inclined not only to feel responsible for its well-being but also to function in ways that maintain and support its stability. Hence, it is anticipated that growth orientation affects both psychological ownership and intention to stay.

H1: Accountants' growth orientation positively impacts their psychological ownership

H2: Accountants' growth orientation positively impacts their intention to stay

### **2.3 Connecting Career Opportunities to Accountants' Psychological States**

The career opportunity defines the scope within which an individual identifies avenues for progression, proficiency, expertise improvement, and long-standing career development within the organization (Super & Hall, 1978). Prevailing research asserts that family-controlled firms have resisted offering career paths to non-family members, but as firms grow, career structures gradually influence obligation and retention (De Massis et al., 2021). When accountants distinguish obvious and attainable pathways for upward mobility (Stewart & Hitt, 2012), they reveal robust obligation, assurance, deeper role investment (De Vos et al., 2009), and intensified identification with the organization. All such insights encourage psychological ownership by making individuals feel integral to the firm's future (Wang et al., 2019) and surge intention to stay by decreasing uncertainty about long-term prospects (Kim & Beehr, 2022). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypotheses,

H3: An Accountant's career opportunity positively impacts their psychological ownership.

H4: An Accountant's career opportunity positively impacts their intention to stay.

### **2.4 Professional Autonomy Drives Psychological Agreement**

The term professional autonomy refers to the autonomy and self-determination accountants have to work out their experience, expertise, judgments, and inspire financial processes without unnecessary interference (Srivastava & Bhatia, 2022). The Family-owned firms gradually identify autonomy as an indispensable for professional charm and retention, particularly when connecting with composite financial and regulatory settings (Songini et al., 2022). The autonomy of professional accountants improves intrinsic motivation, nurtures trust-based affiliations, and reinforces psychological commitment. All such circumstances directly surge psychological ownership, as professional autonomy aligns the sense of control central to ownership feelings (Pierce et al., 2003). Moreover, in the same way, it raises intention to stay, since professional autonomy diminishes stress, burnout, improves job satisfaction, and raises long-standing incorporation into the firm (Giancaspro et al., 2021). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypotheses,

H5: Accountants' professional autonomy positively impacts their psychological ownership.

H6: Accountants' professional autonomy positively impacts their intention to stay.

### **2.5 Connecting Psychological Ownership to Stewardship Behavior**

The psychological ownership signifies a profound psychological association that leads individuals to feel the firm is "Associated With Them," nurturing obligation, responsibility, care, and protective behaviors (Pierce et al., 2020). In family-owned firms, the manifestation of ownership-similar spirits among non-family professional accountants is critical for nurturing stewardship, as it leads the behaviors such as principled reporting, accountability, preserving assets, and prioritizing mutual outcomes (Cyr et al., 2023). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypotheses,

H7: Accountants' psychological ownership positively impacts their stewardship behavior.

## 2.6 Intention to Stay Leads Stewardship Behavior

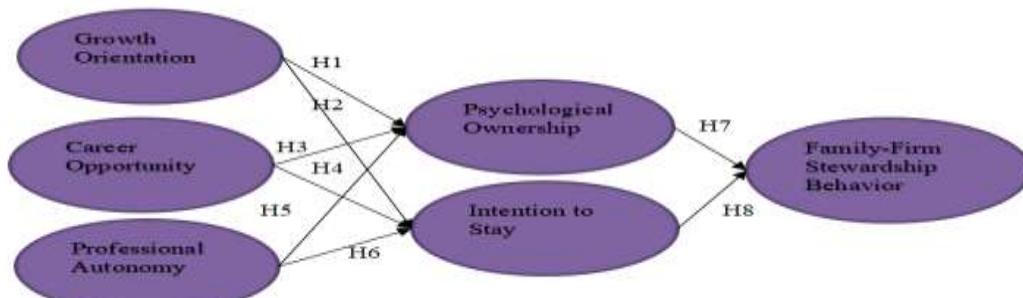
Intention to stay represents long-standing embeddedness and commitment towards the firms. Professional accountants who intend to remain with firms are eager to invest either behaviorally or emotionally, strengthen stability, alignment of long-term goals, and demonstrate prosocial, stewardship-affiliated deeds (Kim & Beehr, 2022). In family-owned firms, psychologically committed professionals vigorously underwrite organizational permanency, belief, and accountable governance, demonstrating significant essentials of stewardship.

H8: Accountant's intention to stay positively impacts stewardship behavior

## 2.7 Conceptual Model Integration

Collectively, the prevailing research supports a sequential logic: as three antecedents of professional accountants (Growth Orientation, Career Opportunity, and Professional Autonomy) shape two profound frames of mind (Psychological Ownership and Intention to Stay). Jointly, these states of mind then terminate in the presentation of Stewardship Behavior, a behavioral configuration central to the integrity and sustainability of family firms. Figure 1 presents the conceptual model.

**Figure 1 – Conceptual Model**



Source: Author's Own

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Data Collection Procedures, Population, and Sample

The present research applied real-life structural data collected from professional accountants employed in family-controlled organizations. Overall, the population exclusively consisted of professional accountants working in industry, replicating the research prominence on accounting and control procedures around family-owned firms' settings (Qaiser & Hassan, 2024). A quantitative research approach, along with a cross-sectional design employed, with the individual serving as the unit of analysis. Data collected over the self-reported questionnaires, around 498 questionnaires, were dispersed by an organized survey methodology. Overall, 410 questionnaires were returned, after initial screening and consistency analysis, around 396 were retained, resulting response rate of 79.5%. According to Bentler and Chou (1987), the suggested item-respondent ratio of 1:5 (46:230), the ultimate dataset adequately surpassed the required benchmark, confirming satisfactory statistical power for additional analysis (Brislin, 1980).

The sample's demographics data are presented in Table 1. Overall, the sample signifies a group of accounting professionals, predominantly male respondents, with a high level of qualification and affiliation through professional accounting bodies such as ICMAP, ICAP, and ACCA (Qaiser & Ahmed, 2025). The respondents in the sample hold crucial accounting, financial, and management roles within family-owned firms (Qaiser, Parveen, Gull, & Khan, 2025). With around 90% of respondents having 5 to 15 years of experience, the insights collected from this study are grounded in a wealth of practical knowledge.

**Table 1 – Demographics Analysis (n-396)**

Variable	Category	N	%	Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	288	73%	Education	ICAP	131	33%
	Female	108	27%		ICMAP	229	58%
	Total	396	100%		ACCA	36	9%
Designation	Manager			Experience	Total	396	100%
	Accounts	167	42%		5-10	131	33%
	Chief Financial Officer	80	20%		11-15	229	58%
	Management Controller	127	32%		16 &		
	Directors	22	6%		Above	36	9%
	Total	396	100%		Total	396	100%

Source: Author's Own

### 3.2 Measures

The present research utilized established measurement scales to analyze key constructs central to the study (Qaiser, Parveen, Gull, & Adeel, 2025). The growth orientation was assessed using a six-item scale that measures accountants' emphasis on growth and expansion, adapted from Wiklund and Shepherd (2003) and Sexton and Bowman (1984). The career opportunity was measured via a seven-item scale established by Weng et al. (2010), presenting apparent career opportunities for progression and consistent skill development. The professional autonomy of the accountant was measured using a seven-item scale validated by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006), which captures freedom, independence, discretion, and self-direction in the course of their duties. The construct of psychological ownership was evaluated by utilizing a nine-item scale validated by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004), covering the feelings of ownership, accountability, and emotional affiliation with the organization. The accountant's intention to stay was measured with an eight-item scale resulting from Meyer et al. (1993), assessing the accountant's will and emotional passion to persist with their organization. Lastly, the family-firm stewardship behavior was evaluated by applying a nine-item scale, derived from the values of stewardship defined by Miller and Le Breton-Miller (2006), customized for the context of accounting to measure long-standing, mutual, prosocial, and pro-organizational behavior features of family-owned firm settings (Qaiser, Abbas, & Ahmed, 2025).

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and internal reliability. Furthermore, internal reliability of the variables was evaluated by Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ), overall statistics of Composite Reliability ( $CR > 0.70$ ), certifying internal consistency. In addition, convergent validity was confirmed through an average variance extracted ( $AVE \geq 0.50$ ), and the discriminant validity of the constructs was established over the principle by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Additionally, to cover common method bias, procedural remedies comprised confidentiality assurances, randomized item sequencing, and psychological separation of constructs applied (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The figures of Harman's single-factor test showed that the common method bias accounted for 30.9% of the variance, below the generally accepted standard of 50%, suggesting that CMB is not a substantial issue in the present study.

**Table 2 - Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Analysis, and Internal Reliability**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GO		<b>0.87</b>								
CO		.440**		<b>0.88</b>						

PA	.444**	.469**	<b>0.87</b>						
PO	.415**	.399**	.491**	<b>0.91</b>					
IS	.441**	.473**	.519**	.502**	<b>0.89</b>				
FFS	.336**	.386**	.482**	.338**	.379**	<b>0.91</b>			
Gender	-.060	-.034	-.006	.000	.012	-.006	NA		
Designation	.039	.055	-.025	-.043	.033	-.028	.034	NA	
Education	.013	-.072	-.002	-.079	-.050	-.028	.010	-.016	NA
Experience	.132**	.070	.027	.065	.079	.083	.003	.392**	-.134**
Mean	3.22	3.18	3.25	3.25	3.35	3.20	1.27	1.35	1.76
SD	0.85	0.86	0.88	0.87	0.89	0.91	0.45	0.63	1.97

\*\* p ≤ 0.01, \*. p ≤ 0.05. Cronbach's alphas ( $\alpha$ ) are on the diagonal in parentheses. Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female.

Designation: 1= Manager Accounts, 2= Chief Financial Officer, 3= Management Controller, 4= Director

Education: 1= ICAP, 2= ICMAP, 3= ACCA. Experience: 1= 5-10 Years, 2 = 11-15, 3= 16 & Above.

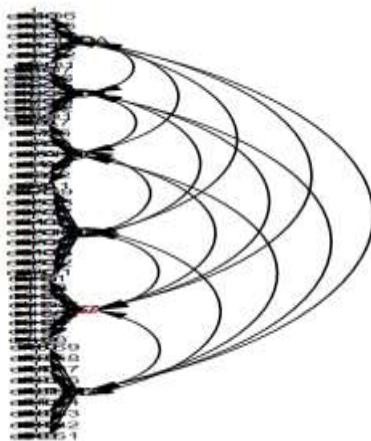
Conferring Anderson and Gerbing (1988), validating the measurement model is a obligatory phase before analyzing the structural model. As per Table 3 and Figure 2, the anticipated six-factor measurement model exhibits an adequate and strong model ( $\chi^2 = 1809.52$ , df = 974,  $\chi^2/df = 1.858$ , RMSEA = 0.047, CFI = 0.91, NNFI = 0.88). All these indices fall under the suggested standards,  $\chi^2/df < 3$ , RMSEA < 0.08 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Browne et al., 1993), and the values of CFI and NNFI nearby or surpassing 0.90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). For further evaluation, the results of single-factor model reveals a significantly worse fit ( $\chi^2 = 5847.455$ , df = 992,  $\chi^2/df = 5.895$ , RMSEA = 0.111, CFI = 0.499, NNFI = 0.454), representing substantial construct uniqueness concerns. On the basis of these indices, the six-factor measurement model is engaged as the most suitable illustration of the data, offering robust indication of discriminant validity and inclusive model acceptability.

**Table 3 – Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Variable	CMIN	DF	$\chi^2$	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
1-Factor Model	5847.455	992	5.895	0.499	0.454	0.111
2-Factor Model	5285.101	990	5.338	0.556	0.507	0.105
3-Factor Model	4659.988	989	4.712	0.620	0.565	0.970
4-Factor Model	3769.703	985	3.827	0.710	0.665	0.850
5-Factor Model	2945.325	980	3.005	0.797	0.725	0.071
6-Factor Model						
(A)	1809.520	974	1.858	0.910	0.880	0.047

(A): Growth orientation, career opportunity, Professional autonomy, Psychological ownership, Intent to stay, Stewardship behavior

**Figure 2 – Confirmatory Factor Analysis**




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Source: Author's Own

Lastly, the Table 4 validate that the convergent validity is completely recognized, as all constructs validate Average Variance Extracted values  $\geq 0.50$ , Composite Reliability values above the suggested benchmark of 0.70, and factor loadings surpassing 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Additionally, confirmation from Tables 4 designates that discriminant validity is also adequate. particularly, the square root value of each construct's average variance extracted surpasses its inter-construct correlations, representing satisfactory discriminant validity presented in Table 5 as the criteria established by Zaīt and Bertea (2011).

**Table 4 – Factor Loadings and Validities**

Variables	Items	Loading	CR	AVE	MSV
Intention to stay	IS8	0.733	0.894	0.515	0.343
	IS7	0.715			
	IS6	0.74			
	IS5	0.673			
	IS4	0.757			
	IS3	0.643			
	IS2	0.723			
Growth orientation	IS1	0.748			
	GO1	0.665	0.869	0.527	0.260
	GO2	0.741			
	GO3	0.717			
	GO4	0.751			
	GO5	0.789			
Career opportunity	GO6	0.684			
	CO1	0.75	0.879	0.511	0.281
	CO2	0.692			
	CO3	0.746			
	CO4	0.675			
	CO5	0.746			
	CO6	0.695			
Professional Autonomy	CO7	0.695			
	PA1	0.755	0.875	0.501	0.343
	PA2	0.704			

	PA3	0.724			
	PA4	0.696			
	PA5	0.672			
	PA6	0.706			
	PA7	0.693			
Psychological ownership	PO1	0.739	0.913	0.540	0.314
	PO2	0.789			
	PO3	0.701			
	PO4	0.728			
	PO5	0.682			
	PO6	0.755			
	PO7	0.754			
	PO8	0.729			
	PO9	0.732			
Family Firm Stewardship Behavior	FFS1	0.78	0.912	0.535	0.283
	FFS2	0.711			
	FFS3	0.779			
	FFS4	0.685			
	FFS5	0.772			
	FFS6	0.71			
	FFS7	0.752			
	FFS8	0.679			
	FFS9	0.707			

Source: Author's Own

**Table 5 – Discriminant Validity**

	PO	IS	GO	CO	PA	FFS
<b>PO</b>	<b>0.735</b>					
<b>IS</b>	0.560	<b>0.717</b>				
<b>GO</b>	0.461	0.493	<b>0.726</b>			
<b>CO</b>	0.450	0.529	0.502	<b>0.715</b>		
<b>PA</b>	0.550	0.586	0.510	0.530	<b>0.708</b>	
<b>FFS</b>	0.368	0.416	0.370	0.419	0.532	<b>0.732</b>

Source: Author's Own

#### 4. Results

The findings of the statistical procedure directed to analyze the eight hypotheses presented in Table 6, whereas Figure 3 illuminates these results as per the overall research model.

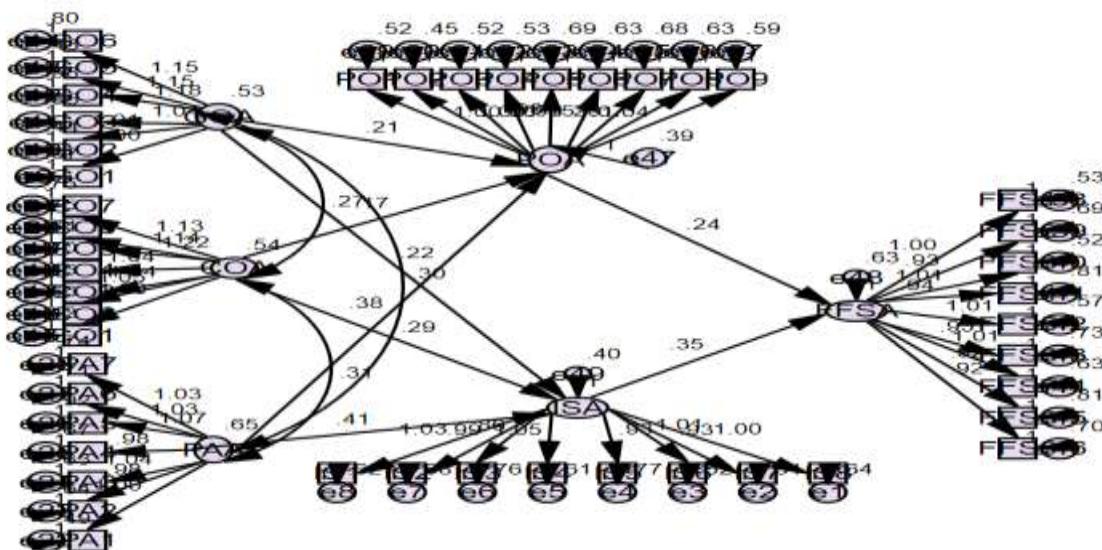
**Table 6 – Structural Model Results**

Hypotheses	Path	( $\beta$ )	S.E	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	PO <--- GO	0.21	0.067	3.16	0.002	Supported
H2	PO <--- CO	0.17	0.066	2.62	0.009	Supported
H3	PO <--- PA	0.38	0.064	5.84	***	Supported
H4	IS <--- GO	0.22	0.07	3.13	0.002	Supported
H5	IS <--- CO	0.29	0.071	4.06	***	Supported

H6	IS <--- PA	0.41	0.068	6.01	***	Supported
H7	FFS <--- PO	0.24	0.065	3.64	***	Supported
H8	FFS <--- IS	0.35	0.063	5.53	***	Supported

Source: Author's Own

**Figure 3 – Results of Structural Equation Modeling**



Source: Author's Own

H1: The findings designate that the growth orientation of accountants has a significant positive influence on psychological ownership with values ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), certifying that when professional accountants recognize the family-owned firm experience as aspiring, growing, and visionary, strategic, and proactive, they nurture robust feelings of bondings, obligation, affiliation (Cruz et al., 2012), and possessiveness toward their organization (Pierce et al., 2020). Such conditions augment opportunities for progress, skills development, and personal investment, which are significant psychological paths through which ownership feelings form (Avey et al., 2009). Therefore, growth-oriented family-owned firms obviously inspire accountants to internalize the organization as part of their identity.

H2: The career opportunity among professional accountants positively improves psychological ownership in a significant way with values ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ), supporting the prevailing literature (Pierce et al., 2003). Professional accountants who recognize better career opportunities for progression, competencies, and talent growth exhibit robust feelings of bonding, accountability, affiliation, and a logic of "mine-ness" toward the firm (Weng et al., 2010).

H3: The accountant's professional autonomy has a significant impact on psychological ownership, being a robust predictor with values ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p = ***$ ) aligned with present studies (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Greater freedom and discretion to exercise professionalism in their routine task improve accountants' spirits of ownership, obligation, and emotional affiliation towards their firms (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004).

H4: The growth orientation of the professional accountant has a significant positive effect on their intention to stay in family-owned firms with values ( $\beta = 0.22$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), supporting current research (Sexton & Bowman, 1984). Professional accountants who observe a firm as aspiring and

future-oriented present a resilient assurance, commitment, and a greater intention to remain with the firm for a longer tenure (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2003).

H5: The career opportunities for professional accountants significantly influence their intention to stay with firms with values ( $\beta = 0.29, p = ***$ ), indicating that accountants recognizing higher progressive and growth visions are more likely to stay and remain dedicated towards their firms (Weng et al., 2010).

H6: The professional autonomy of accountants intensely predicts their intentions to stay with firms in a significant manner with values ( $\beta = 0.41, p = ***$ ), signifying that superior job control, autonomy, and exercise of proficiency augment organizational commitment (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006).

H7: The accountant's psychological ownership positively influences stewardship behavior as it's a substantial predictor of family-firm stewardship behavior with values ( $\beta = 0.24, p = ***$ ). The professional accountants who are familiar with a strong sense of ownership are involved in responsible, protective, and pro-organizational deeds (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004).

H8: An Accountant's intention to stay in a firm is a strong predictor and positively influences family-firm stewardship behavior with ( $\beta = 0.35, p = ***$ ), designating that greater intentions to stay validate greater engagement in enduring, pro-organizational deed, and stewardship aligned with prevailing literature (Meyer et al., 1993).

## 5. Discussion

H1: The results support the perspectives of stewardship theory, stating that supportive, growth-oriented, development-rich environments (Cruz et al., 2012), trigger accountants' intrinsic motivation to perform in the firm's best interest (Davis et al., 1997). In the context of family firms, growth orientation indicates long-standing consistency and mutual purpose, strengthening socioemotional wealth motives such as control, reputation, permanency, and legacy (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). For instance, professional accountants who perceive these visionary aims are more likely to adopt a mindset of stewardship, with psychological ownership serving as a significant internal mechanism that fosters accountable, mutual, and prosocial behavior (Vandewalle et al., 2019).

H2: Inside the family-controlled firms, obvious career opportunities and anticipated prospects strengthen psychological ownership by augmenting apparent organizational support (De Vos et al., 2009), and nurturing long-standing interpersonal commitment (Madison et al., 2021). Through the lens of stewardship theory, when professional accountants observe alignment between their personal career development and the firm's growth, they internalize firm goals and a mature stewardship-oriented psychological mindset (Davis et al., 1997).

H3: Through the perspectives of stewardship theory, an accountant's professional autonomy permits them to exercise proficiency and capabilities aligned with organizational norms and values, supporting pro-organizational behavior (Davis et al., 1997). In the context of family firms, such autonomy yields both rational and emotional ownership, thus augmenting stewardship-oriented deeds (Cyr et al., 2023).

H4: In the settings of family-controlled firms, a growth-oriented philosophy indicates permanency and expressive opportunities, reassuring sustained commitment (Fang et al., 2021). The research findings align with Stewardship Theory, which emphasizes that growth-oriented and sustained environments foster intrinsic commitment and stewardship propensities (Davis et al., 1997).

H5: Inside family-controlled firms, the career opportunities are predominantly influential, as inspired accountants who identify obvious career pathways are more likely to embrace protective, collectivistic, and long-perspective behavioral orientations rather than opportunistic

or self-serving ones (Novak et al., 2023). Through the lens of stewardship, prospects for career development align accountants' ambitions with organizational goals, thus reinforcing consistent commitment and the tendency to participate in stewardship behaviors (Davis et al., 1997).

H6: The prevailing studies validate that empowered accountants prioritize mutual interest and prioritize organizational goals over temporal personal gains (Cyr et al., 2023). In the context of family firms, where interpersonal governance and long-term direction are prominent, professional autonomy boosts both devotion and identification, making professionals more likely to stay and perform as stewards rather than opportunistic agents (Zahra et al., 2004).

H7: Inside family-controlled firms, accountants' psychological ownership inspires them to perform in a way that ensures sustainability and consistent financial performance. Furthermore, stewardship theory proposes that feelings of affiliation, commitment, and ownership yield intrinsic obligation and a long-standing orientation toward organizational well-being (Novak et al., 2023).

H8: Concerning stewardship theory, professional accountants dedicated to staying in the firm prioritize organizational deeds and mutual interests over personal gain, either short-term or long-term, thereby supporting stewardship conduct (Chrisman, 2019). Furthermore, findings emphasize the dire role of accountants' intention to stay in augmenting stewardship within family firm perspectives.

### 5.1 Conclusion

The present research validates that accountants' growth orientation, career opportunities, and professional autonomy expressively augment their psychological state of ownership and intention to stay in their family-controlled firms, eventually reinforcing stewardship in their performance and behavior (Marín et al., 2016). Furthermore, findings suggest that accountants' behavior of stewardship is not intrinsic, but relatively arises when organizational settings offer progressive prospects, freedom for independence, discretion, and enduring stability (Davis et al., 1997). Professional accountants who recognize their firms as visionary and proactive yield robust commitment, affiliation, bonding, obligation, and dedication, fundamental aspects of stewardship (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2006). Eventually, the findings of the study emphasized the prominence of aligning professional structures with stewardship-like settings in family-owned firms.

### 5.2 Theoretical Implications

Present research contributes significantly to stewardship theory by presenting that stewardship performances and behaviors among non-family professionals emerge from underlying conditions (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2006), predominantly, growth visions, career progress, and professional autonomy rather than family identity alone (Davis et al., 1997). Furthermore, it strengthens psychological ownership as a crucial tool over which organizational practices outline stewardship (Pierce et al., 2020). In addition, aligning intention to stay as an antecedent to stewardship contributes to retention as well as family business scholarship, highlighting sustainability and tenure permanency as indispensable for interpersonal governance and socio-emotional wealth preservation (Chrisman, 2019). Overall, these understandings prolong the organizational change research literature by illuminating how inspiration, identity, and professional autonomy interrelate to yield stewardship performances in family-owned firms, specifically in emerging economies.

### 5.3 Managerial Implications

For policymakers and practicing professionals, these findings underline that stewardship can be cultivated intentionally. A robust growth orientation indicates stability, eventually boosting intense psychological investment (Cruz et al., 2012). Perfect career prospects augment

commitment by nurturing fairness and long-standing identification (De Vos et al., 2009). Furthermore, the autonomy makes strong intrinsic inspiration and pro-organizational conduct, essential to stewardship reasoning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Inside emerging economies, where family-owned firms are dominant, weak governance structures can benefit significantly by nurturing these environments to retain skilled and proficient professionals, eventually building supportive stewardship-ambitious governance.

#### **5.4 Limitations**

The present research's cross-sectional strategy restricts causal interpretation (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010), as well as dependence on self-reported data may raise latent common method biases, regardless of applied safeguards (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Furthermore, present outcomes are contextually limited to professional accountants employed in family-owned firms in the context of an emerging economy, restricting generalizability (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Moreover, crucial constructs like socioemotional wealth priorities, governance arrangements, and family participation were not incorporated, although these aspects may outline stewardship dynamics.

#### **5.5 Prospect Research**

The prospective research must apply longitudinal designs to cover the enlargement of psychological ownership and stewardship performance over the period (Ployhart & Kim, 2013). Multi-professional and cross-cultural judgments can advance the clarification of how institutional and regulatory settings moderate stewardship development (Krawitz et al., 2016). Incorporating socioemotional wealth priorities and family governance concepts could propose a novel theoretical model (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). Lastly, the qualitative and mixed methods approach could extend comprehension of professional expertise and experiences behind autonomy, ownership, and retention.

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