DOI: 10.18290/pepsi-2022-0002

Adam Biela*
Klaudia Martynowska

Wonder Is the Beginning of Wisdom. The Socratic Method in a Qualitative Study of Leadership in Family Firms

ABSTRACT

The study employed the Socratic method to conduct 32 semi-structured interviews with future successors of family firms, to explore the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and job crafting. Socratic questions were used to grasp regularities of participants' behavior. Inference by analogy was employed to foster rational and inductive reasoning of the participants. The results show that the Socratic method and analogy may be a valuable qualitative data collection method in reducing participants resistance and facilitating their self-initiated discovery in a sensitive research context. The validity and reliability of this method is discussed in terms of trustworthiness. Applying the Socratic method and analogy to the data collection method (interviews) may enhance the overall credibility of organizational qualitative research methods.

KEYWORDS: qualitative research; Socratic method; interviews; family firms.

* Correspondence regarding the paper should be sent to: Adam Biela (ORCID 0000-0002-3957-8382), Faculty of Social Sciences, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Al. Racławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland, e-mail: adam@biela.pl; or Klaudia Martynowska (ORCID: 0000-0003-1010-3057), Faculty of Social Sciences, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Al. Racławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland, e-mail: martynowska.klaudia@gmail.com.

INTRODUCTION

Through the decades of conducting research in the field of work psychology, there has been an emerging methodological dilemma in choosing the appropriate strategy to address the research aim. Such a methodological dilemma has been caused by two major issues in relevance to qualitative research which, in opposition to quantitative research, has encountered some difficulties: firstly, assessing the quality of such research; secondly, there are not enough widely researched tools available to grasp an organizational phenomenon in a scientific manner (e.g., Ngozwana, 2018). At the same time, some organizational researchers note a growing interest in qualitative research (Mohajan, 2018; Hays et al., 2016; Arnold, 2005). Qualitative research based on an iterative process produces results which comprise original knowledge of psychological life (e.g., Osbeck, 2014; Rennie, 2012), especially by capturing regularities in human behavior in a given social context, for instance in family firms. Thus, our analysis focuses on discussing the psychometric criteria of the well-grounded Socratic method and analogy applied in qualitative research. By presenting the research method applied in the study of family firms we aim at contributing to the development of qualitative methods, in particular semi-structured interviews basing on the classical tradition of Socratic dialogue.

The paper is structured in the following way. Firstly, we outline the literature background on interview as a qualitative data collection method; then we present theoretical assumptions of the Socratic method along with the use of analogy inference. The next part will involve the research project and the details of the specific method adopted in the study of family firms.

INTERVIEWS: A WELL-ESTABLISHED QUALITATIVE METHOD

In presenting the data collection method of interviews, we refer to sense-making literature as it provides opportunities to explore commonsense understandings of organizational phenomena within the work psychology field (e.g., Blatt et al., 2006; Macrae, 2009; Rafaeli, 2006). Sense-making, which originates from the work of Weick (1995), comprises the processes through which people make credible shared understandings of the social situations they operate in and the ways they function and progress in such context. As O'Leary and Chia (2007) suggest, "sensemaking requires adherence to certain established rules, principles and conventions for it to be at all productively intelligible within a community…. Such rules, principles and established conventions constitute here what we mean by the episteme of a particular sociocultural setting" (O'Leary & Chia, 2007, p. 393). Thus, exploring such an episteme involves adopting a tool which aims at deciphering jointly negotiated narratives in a given community, in the case of the present research – family firms. Interviews, unlike other methods of qualitative data collection enable a detailed yet naturalistic understanding of phenomena, namely entrepreneurial leadership. Additionally, this method makes it possible to attend to the key factors of family business context in all its complexity and fluidity. Addressing the power differential between the researcher and the participant involves critical, honest, reflective dialogue and flexibility, which could not have been conferred simply by adopting a quantitative research methodology. In other words, interviews are designed to tap into the experience, particularly in the semi-structured format, and are the most popular method of qualitative data collection in psychology (e.g., Madill, 2007). Semi-structured format of interviews signifies conversation with a purpose (Kvale, 2008). Topics of researcher's interest are fixed, nevertheless the process of conversation is flexible enough to allow participants to develop the conversation in the most convenient way. It may provide a variety of expressions of the examined phenomena, for instance opinions, emotions, experiences, stories that are crucial for analysis from different perspectives.

Reluctant participants: How to explore an organizational phenomenon?

Interviews may often be a more appropriate data collection method when researchers face reluctance of participants towards a range of quantitative methods, in particular questionnaires. The researchers of the present study faced such a challenge when researching a family business setting, where future successors simply did not want to fill out questionnaires as they associated it with unnecessary paperwork; moreover, providing deeply personal information in a written form felt rather uncomfortable to them. In this case, where the setting is organisation-specific, a researcher ought to make a decision regarding the use of appropriate tools to explore that. Thus, face-to-face interviews appeared to be the best methodological decision in terms of collecting research data.

On the other hand, reluctance of participants may also be reflected in the lack of willingness to share their experience. At this point, it has to be mentioned that conducting interviews involves a well-developed methodological skill. Generally speaking, little advice has been provided for novice work psychology researchers about such a skill which focuses on specific type of communication, therefore there is a methodological need for research over this qualitative method.

Basically, interviews in the field of work psychology comprise asking questions in relevance to a specific organizational phenomenon in order to grasp regularities, patterns in human behaviour. Nevertheless, we should say that participants may feel threatened or interrogated by a researcher, which eventually leads to reluctance, as we said above. While addressing these difficulties, we have adopted the Socratic method which proved to be a valuable method in reducing participants' resistance. This finding has been supported by the observation made by Overholser (1991) in terms of the psychotherapeutic process. At the core of the Socratic method lies the concept of insight which is the result of a slow and methodological progression (Nelsonet al., 1950). Such progression embodies a process of shaping the way the participant understands and integrates complex issues without asking questions which may be difficult for the participant to discern (Long et al., 1981).

In light of the above, the following part of the paper will present a research project and elaborate on the general principles of the Socratic method with respect to qualitative research. The reason behind this is that most literature on the Socratic method focuses on its application in teaching (Holme, 1992; DePierro et al., 2003) or psychotherapy (Overholser, 1993a; Brickhouse & Smith, 2009). There is a lack of research which would integrate this method in a methodological sense, that is to improve and develop the process of conducting interviews in a qualitative study.

Socratic method: A guided discovery

First and foremost, the principles of the Socratic method indicate the role of a facilitator, a therapist, or a researcher. It is imperative to mention that the facilitator ought to fully accept so-called "Socratic ignorance", which implies the limits of understanding in regard to dialogue (Overholser, 2010). Hence, dialogue involves two sides jointly exploring an unchartered territory, collaborating to seek knowledge (Vlastos, 1991). Beck et al. (1979) refers to this process as the collaborative empiricism consisting in clarifying new ideas which are perceived as hypotheses to be examined. This creates an opportunity for the activity of an inquisitive mind. As Meichenbaum (1994) outlines, such an inquisitive style endorses effective therapy. This is also the case when it comes to the researcher's position and their intellectual attitude throughout the whole process of data collection. Maintaining a cognitive curiosity towards the experience of participants, especially after conducting many interviews in the same social context, is rather challenging as the researcher may already notice some emerging patterns of behavior, which in fact may deteriorate and influence the way they conduct further interviews. Additionally, it may happen that the researcher unconsciously imposes some responses or directs an interview in such a way that some pre-formulated hypotheses in their mind get confirmed by participants' responses. Thus, the Socratic method provides some intellectual frames which keep the researcher's intellectual curiosity away from forming any kind of bias thinking. Therefore, the method has high validity as it accurately captures the subject's understanding of the explored phenomena. Consequently, in the line with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework of naturalistic inquiry, applying the Socratic method in interview may enhance the credibility of qualitative research.

Components of the Socratic method

The basic components of the Socratic method are inductive reasoning, systematic questioning, universal definitions and a disavowal of knowledge (Johnson & Matross, 1975; Overholser, 1991; 1993b; 1994). The first constituent lays the foundation for the Socratic method as it focuses on helping a client or a participant to reach the stage of generalization of experience, that is, to identify general assumptions, patterns or some themes which occur across various events in their lives (Overholser, 1993b). According to Gambrill (1993), this is obtained through a gradual accumulation and a systematic review of gathered evidence. In order to facilitate the process of inductive reasoning, the latter component of the Socratic method must be employed, namely systematic questioning, which has been widely used beyond the realms of philosophy: teaching (DePierro & Garafalo, 2003), psychotherapy, with cognitive therapy in particular (Neenan, 2009; Overholser, 2011), motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2012), and police interrogations of witnesses, especially children.

Generally speaking, Socratic questioning gradually disclosed unrealized knowledge that the others were not aware of. In doing so, Socrates and his partner discussed the meaning and implications of ideas, and the grounds for beliefs (Bedell, 1980). He explored people's beliefs to get at their core. Repetitive questioning was employed to force people to admit their ignorance (Nelson, 1980) and thus rely on logic instead of pride or faith when deciding which beliefs are valid (Schmid, 1983; Seeskin, 1987). Moreover, systematic questioning encourages clients to unveil the way to find the answers to their problems (Seeskin, 1987). Referring that to the process of data collection during the qualitative research, systematic questioning is a valuable tool which helps participants to articulate their thoughts and ideas and thus it facilitates their self-initiated discovery. Typically used open-ended questions aid respondents in considering new sources of information or adopting broader perspectives (Overholser, 2010). Therefore, open-ended questions encourage respondents to confront important issues by thinking, talking, and exploring. To be more specific, Kidd (1992) mentioned the five types of questions presented in Table 1.

Overall, questions can have many different formats. Sanders (1966) developed a system of questions on the basis of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of thought processes at various cognitive levels. Hence, the following question types emerged: memory, translation, interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Applying various kinds of questions fosters conceptually integrated understanding (Farrar, 1984). Nevertheless, the Socratic method primarily draws on analysis, synthesis, and evaluation questions as they induce higher level cognitive processes. The scope of Socratic questions goes beyond a mere information gathering in order to focus on the integration and synthesis of different sources of information (Overholser, 1991). Following

Table 1. The type of questions presented by Kidd (1992).

Questions of clarification	Questions that probe reason and evidence	Questions that probe implications and consequences	Questions about the nature of questions
What do you mean by…?	What would be an example of such behaviour?	What are you implying by that?	Is this question easy or hard to answer?
What is your main point?	What led you in that belief?	When you say that, are you implying…?	Is this the same issue as…?
Could you put that another way?	Could you explain your reasons to me?	What would happen if you…?	How do you feel with this question?

the reasoning presented by Blank and White (1986) good questions put emphasis on reasons by bringing them out rather than facts. The literature encompasses memory questions which are associated with recalling or recognizing information by the client in a therapeutic session or a participant in the research which is essential to provide the required answer. Recalling the information depends on a person's skill to remember concrete facts and specific details. One of the advantages of memory questions certainly relate to an accurate and thorough assessment of the problem area. Another important aspect pertains to the well-being of the client or the participant during a session or an interview. At some point of any dialogue, exploring the realms of emotional and interpersonal issues seems to be overwhelming and makes further exploration difficult in a rational sense. Hence, asking questions about frequency, intensity and the duration of the problem can be a helpful way in managing, cognitively, the discussion about the problematic area. The examples of memory questions include: "When did the problem first begin?", "When was the last time it happened?", "What did you do when it happened?"

Other type of questions involve translation and interpretation. The first ones focus on changing or reshaping the information provided by the client or the participant in a similar form. In other words, it includes expressing thoughts and ideas in a different way which may enhance or broaden the perception of the problem. The examples of translation questions include: ‘What does it mean to you?’, ‘How can we make sense out of this?’

The latter type questions encompass discovery of links, relationships among provided facts, details, definitions etc., as some people seem to learn better when the discovery was performed on their own rather than by someone one providing them with appropriate explanations (Legrenzi, 1971; McDaniel & Schlager,1990). One of the ways to ask such questions is to present a person with two ideas and ask them to identify any relationship between them. Another way focuses on providing a person with one idea and a relationship and then asking the person about another idea which would fit that relationship. This type of questions focuses on associating a new problem with already existing information (Sanders, 1966), which facilitates bringing the information into conscious awareness (Chisholm, 1979). Thus, in the course of discussion it is easier for the person to relate the information to specific situations.

Analysis questions are based on problem-solving activity, mostly breaking down a problem into small parts. This activity requires conscious awareness, especially reflected in the process of thinking in order to develop a logical conclusion which must emerge from adequate evidence (Sanders, 1966). Therefore, this type of questions is mostly based on deductive reasoning including cause-and-effect logic. Overall, using analysis questions in any form of dialogue, especially interviews, helps eliminating inconsistencies in beliefs held by participants as they have an opportunity to apply a logical analysis to the evidence provided.

On the other hand, synthesis questions base the problem-solving activity on creative thinking which includes forming many various possible solutions. It is mostly about making connections among diverse elements so eventually they form a meaningful pattern (Tomm, 1987). For this reason, such questions frequently employ inductive reasoning. Moreover, this type of questions is useful in reaching the final content of universal definitions.

The last but not least type of questions, evaluation questions, comprises a two-stage decision-making process. The first step includes determining relevant standards; the next step is comparing the idea or behavior of the client or participant to these standards. Specifically, how well their performance meets the pre-formulated standards. Following the general principles of the Socratic method – clarification of thought and feelings (Haden, 1984) – these questions can be a valuable tool in reaching this goal.

Analogy as a supporting tool in the Socratic method

Generally speaking, analogy used in a therapeutic process focuses on applying ideas from familiar to novel situations (Holland et al., 1986). The tool is used by a therapist who presents an analogy-embodying similarities with the present issue or they may adjust it with possible solutions. This tool may be also used by a researcher who uses analogy to provide a subject with an opportunity to refer to their deeper level of experience. Hence, it facilitates a more in-depth understanding of explored phenomena. As noted by Lee and Holyoak (2008), this cognitive ability includes representing and manipulating structured relationships which all together comprise relational reasoning. A human is able to perceive analogies between various situations and such active comparisons facilitate induction of a relational scheme which, on the other hand, fosters spontaneous transfer (Catrambone & Holyoak, 1989). In turn, such spontaneity in recognizing casually relevant relational similarities is of significant importance for creative thinking, especially for the scientific discovery (Hesse, 2000). Exploring the use of analogy in the quest of scientific discovery is beyond the scope of this paper as, primarily, the focus is placed on discovery obtained by the participants during a qualitative method of interviews.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that Author (1991) described this process of discovery in a detailed way. The foundations of analogy lie in the need for knowledge acquisition expressed in the very desire to understand a given situation. In other words, it is associated with cognitive "mastering" of a situation which fulfils the need for security, as the subject becomes conscious that in a given situation they are able to perform adequately and to realize an intended goal. The end result of cognitive processes is that a person understands the real situation in which they find themselves. If one experiences the situation for the first time, they tend to search for some connections between this situation and some other situation familiar to them.

In order to be able to assert that the real situation is analogical to the previously known situation, the knowing subject apart from discovering some surface similarity between the two situations must also establish a mutual correspondence at the level of base relations. The base relations usually include: cause–effect, effect–cause, interpersonal, etc. If one fails to see the base relationship that serves to organize the elements of the situation, one cannot see its analogical connection with any other situation and, by the same token, there will be insufficient grounds for a proper understanding of this situation. The understanding of the present situation consists precisely of the possibility of foreseeing events or states of affairs in this situation on the basis of a grasp of its analogical connection with the familiar situation. Formulating the similarities or differences between objects is an intellectual activity which directs attention as a result of a mental effort. However, it may also be the case that such an activity is intuitive and may be performed on the basis of insight which consists in a comprehensive formulation of the conformity of relations occurring in different objects in one "intellectual flash". The same type of intellectual activity is at the core of the Socratic method, where insight is the result of a slow and methodological progression (Nelson, 1980).

Once an analogy relationship is determined, a researcher proceeds to draw inferences about the elements, traits or relations of the new object from his knowledge about the elements, traits or relations related to the known object. As a consequence of this inference a theory about a new object is formulated. It should be stressed that many authors, when presenting the origin of their theories, do not mention that they result from inference by analogy, but their theories are systematically presented as the results of general assumptions of inductive generalizations. The construction of a theory of a new object using concluding by analogy may be interpreted as the activity of decision making, where the problem of cognition of the object is the question of the so-called cognitive decision.

In daily life situations, an individual is often confronted with the need to make analogical inferences concerning certain events of states, i.e. to act on the basis of his knowledge of other states or events. This inference may concern natural phenomena, interpersonal relationships or the interplay of both. The following types of inference may be distinguished: (1) inference concerning present states of affairs or events based on the acquaintance of similar events or states of affairs from the past; (2) inference concerning past events or states of affairs based on a knowledge of similar events in the present; and (3) inference concerning future events or states of affairs, whether past or present. There are two principal groups of factors conditioning the course of this activity: 1) the principles of research methodology in force in a certain period, and 2) the psychological dispositions of a scholar, his intellectual talents, hierarchy of values and the structure of needs, and particularly the intensity of such psychological needs as cognitive, achievement, development and safety needs.

Referring these rules to interviews, the psychological dispositions also relate to the participant who ought to feel safe and comfortable during the interview. Therefore, the role of a researcher is crucial in providing the participant with a feeling of trust and comfort so that the above-mentioned intellectual activities can be performed. While conducting interviews, on the basis of the Socratic method, the researcher may also apply analogy to elicit rational and inductive reasoning from the participants while they explore their behavior in a particular social context or personalize universal definitions related to the explored phenomenon.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Aim

The research was intended to explore the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and job crafting in family firms. The sample consisted of 32 participants from different family firms from Poland and the UK, with answered and unanswered occupational calling. The sample – potential or future firm successors – was purposefully selected as the research explored phenomena within a specific business context. The research was conducted in the participant's natural setting – their company or home – or by video or phone calls, chosen by interviewees prior to their consent to take part in the study. Semi structured interviews were conducted with the usage of a voice recorder with the participants' consent. The lengths of interviews ranged between 50 and 90 minutes. The aim was to capture the richness and complexity of participants' experience by being an active listener and by allowing the interview to progress down avenues they opened up rather than those dictated by the interview schedule. The researcher conducted interviews on the basis of the Socratic method and analogy. The subjective account of the researchers regarding the process of interviews is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The type of Socratic questions used in the study.

Memory questions	Translation questions	Interpretation questions	Analysis questions	Synthesis questions	Evaluation questions
When was the last time you felt that your job is not what you wanted to do?	What does being entrepreneur mean to you?	Does your father's behavior at home seem similar to his behavior at work?	What do you think is the reason of your complicated working relation with your father?	How would you see your job position if you had a chance to solve this problem?	How would you rate your job satisfaction?
When did your father praise you after you completed a task well?	How do you perceive a normal relationship between a son and a father?	How does your work situation differ from what you expected before you joined the company?	How can you tell that your father is proud of your achievements at work?	What are possible ways to implement your occupational calling into your daily tasks in the family firm?	What is the biggest challenge of working in a family firm?

Exploring relationship dynamics in a setting where family and business come into interplay is very complicated activity for both the researcher and the participant. Emotional connection, pent up emotions or unresolved conflicts often distort logical perception of a specific problem. It often happened that the participants felt rather overwhelmed by past events, which elicited an intense emotional reaction. Therefore, memory questions concerning frequency and facts directed participants' attention to facts and details and helped to broaden their perspective on a given issue so that eventually the problem did not seem so significant or unbearable to them.

Translation questions were very helpful in terms of challenging universal definitions held by the participants. Many generalizations about what a family business should look like and how the relationship with the father-owner should be maintained caused a lot of confusion and a sort of "emotional mess". The participants, especially those with unanswered occupational callings who had to join their family business were often under an influence of social norms which required them to lead a specific type of working life, which obviously stood in opposition to the values expressed by the family. Thus, translation questions made it possible to gain a clear understanding of universal definitions expressed by each participant in terms of their subjective experience of interpersonal relationships in their family businesses.

Similarly, interpretation questions also served to the researchers as a tool to interpret symbolic meaning from inductive analogies. Apart from that, these questions were used to enable the participant to unveil some relationships among previously stated definitions, facts, etc. The researchers also presented the participants with examples of situations so that they could relate their own experience to these situations, especially when it came to questions about job crafting. The researchers mentioned a few times that this form of proactive behavior may occur, for instance, to a future successor who is a law graduate and treats this profession as an occupational calling and due to unforeseen events has to join the family business (a gardening center), and after a while applies his legal skills in the daily routine which eventually increases his job satisfaction. Getting this kind of information helped participants to find relationships within similar situations in their lives.

Analysis questions direct the participant's focus and attention towards evidence which backs up their beliefs about certain issues. Moreover, elaborating on details, the logical aspects of the problem, stimulates finding any inconsistencies or misinterpretations of the information provided. The participants had a chance to reach the source or the cause of problematic situations which has not been addressed before. For instance, some unresolved issues piled up and rose to the extent of a huge problem which nearly caused a breakdown of a family business. The participants realized that they did not even remember the cause of the conflict with their parents as the negative emotions unable both sides to take a logical look at the case. Analysis questions facilitated deductive reasoning on the cause-and-effect basis.

When it comes to synthesis questions, the use of creative/divergent thinking enables finding a range of possible solution to the problem. It is a form of summarizing all the information in order to obtain a meaningful pattern. The participants in our research could gain a broader perspective on the job they performed in a family business, especially on those aspects which could potentially be associated with their true occupational passion. It was often the case that some participants, due to such a summarization, realized that they execute many tasks which share some similarities with their occupational calling or at least they have spotted some areas where they could implement some changes, also in terms of their behavior and attitude towards the leader/parent.

Evaluation questions used by the researchers put emphasis on establishing standards or value judgments on two levels, namely intrapersonal and interpersonal. In other words, future successors clarified their attitude and position towards values expressed in functioning of their family business. Following that, the participants related their usual behavior to those standards that enabled identification of some gaps and developmental areas. In other words, future successors learned about their performance and their parents' behavior from a more systemized perspective. The end result, besides the obvious methodological richness of the obtained data, was associated with a clarification of thoughts and feelings, which frequently has been described as an experience relief.

Issues of trustworthiness

The naturalistic-qualitative paradigm used in our research requires specific criteria for addressing rigor and trustworthiness. It is worth mentioning that instead of explicating how rigor was obtained in a qualitative research, a number of leading qualitative researchers posited that reliability and validity were notions which refer to quantitative paradigm and not qualitative (Altheide & Johnson, 1998). More importantly, researchers such as Guba and Lincoln (1985) have determined new criteria by substituting reliability and validity with the parallel concept of "trustworthiness", more specifically: internal validity with credibility (authentic representations), external validity with transferability (extent of applicability), reliability with dependability (minimization of researcher idiosyncrasies), and objectivity with confirmability (researcher self-criticism). Guba and Lincoln (1985) have adopted appropriate methodological strategies for assessing qualitative rigor, namely the audit trail, members checks when coding, categorizing, confirming results with participants, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, structural corroboration and referential material adequacy. Moreover, attaining trustworthiness pertains to the researcher's characteristics, namely responsiveness, adaptability to changing circumstances, being holistic, sensitivity, having processional immediacy and ability for clarification and summarization. Many researchers (Sandelowski, 1986; Leininger, 1994), advocated the stance that reliability and validity were appropriate only for quantitative paradigm, and adopted proposed construct of trustworthiness by Guba and Lincoln (1985) for qualitative studies.

In the present study, which explores family firms, the external validation criteria which in the naturalistic paradigm are substituted by the extent of applicability, capture behavioural aspects of family firm's functioning such as the tenure of a family firm on the market, job satisfaction of future successors, effectiveness of family firm, successful succession planning.

Nevertheless, some other researchers (in Morse & Mitcham, 2002) maintained that reliability and validity remain suitable concepts for ensuring rigor in qualitative study, basing their argument on early research of Kvale (1989) who stated that to validate is to investigate, to check, to question, and to theorize. Therefore, according to them, the concepts of reliability and validity as overarching constructs can be appropriately used in all scientific paradigms. Morse and Mitcham (2002) criticized establishing trustworthiness at the end of the study instead of implementing strategies of verification during the study. They claimed that it increases the risk of omitting threats to the reliability and validity until it is too late to correct them. Moreover, they stated qualitative researchers ought to reclaim responsibility for reliability and validity by deployment of verification strategies aimed at self-correcting during the conduct of inquiry. As a result, this provides the shift of responsibility for maintaining reliability and validity from external reviewers' judgments to a researcher. The most recent concept, methodological integrity, developed by Levitt et al. (2017), serves as the methodological foundation of trustworthiness, with two components: fidelity and utility. This approach also promotes the shift from applying standardized and decontextualized procedures as criteria for rigor toward assessing the underlying methodological bases for trustworthiness (Levitt, et al., 2017).

Verification in qualitative research implemented at every step of a study furnishes a solid product (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010) by identifying and correcting errors prior to including them in a developing model or analysis. Constant and systematic data check, maintaining the focus, establishing the fit of data and the analytical method, monitoring interpretation makes the qualitative research iterative rather than linear. It must be noted that such verification strategies help the researcher decide when to continue, modify or complete the research process.

The verification strategies implemented during the present study consist of researcher's responsiveness, methodological coherence, theoretical sampling and sampling adequacy, an active analytical stance, and saturation. Researcher's responsiveness involved creativity, sensitivity, flexibility and ability to use verification strategies. What is more, responsiveness relates to remaining open and willing to resign from ideas which may be insufficiently supported despite the initial excitement about them. On the other hand, a lack of researcher's responsiveness may have an adverse effect on the validity of research. It may result from insufficient knowledge, excessive attachment to instructions instead of delving into data, inability to abstract, synthesize or go beyond the technical nature of data coding, working deductively on the basis of assumptions or theoretical framework followed previously. The last reason refers to following instructions automatically without using them in strategic decision-making.

Methodological coherence should be obtained between the research questions and the methodology. More specifically, the question should match the method, which, for its part, should match the data and the analysis. It is important to notify that the process may not be linear. For instance, the data may require the research question to be modified or the sampling changed. Therefore, all the methodological components and assumptions should fit the analytical aims and be verified throughout the research.

Another verification strategy is employing appropriate sampling of participants who have the best knowledge of the research topic. In the present study, the researcher investigates the perspective of family members who work in a family firm and are in the leader–follower relationship. Sampling adequacy, shown by saturation and replication (Morse, 1991), signifies that data covers the aspects of the explored phenomenon. In turn, saturating data which means continuing to bring new participants in to the study until the data set is complete and the data replicated, ensures comprehension and completeness. Additionally, looking for negative cases, in this case family members who have left their family business may ensure validity by pointing out aspects of the developing analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study employed an advanced method of conducting interviews in a qualitative research by adopting the Socratic method. The study addressed the methodological need which occurred as a result of the dilemma among researchers on choosing the appropriate strategy to explore an organizational phenomenon in a specific setting with highly reluctant participants. This mixed-method research explored the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and job crafting among future successors with unanswered or answered occupational calling, in family firms. Collecting data in family businesses, which turned out to be a very demanding organizational setting, unveiled some methodological aspects of collecting data worth further exploration. Conducting interviews on the basis of the Socratic method may involve the use of inference by analogy to foster rational and inductive reasoning of the participants while he or she explores their behavior in a particular social context or personalizes universal definitions related to the explored phenomenon. According to Socratic statement on self-discovery, each dialogue aimed to reach self-recognition of some moral, social, organizational or political truth. That is why the Socratic method, when applied in organizational psychology research, particularly in a family firm setting, helps to explore moral and organizational rules which shape work environment and human motivation.

Apart from the advancement of the qualitative method, the Socratic method facilitated the process of self-discovery within participants through guided discovery by using a mixture of formats throughout the systematic questioning process. The content of most Socratic questions is designed to foster independent, rational problem-solving (Milliren et al., 2007) which we propose to build on John Dewey's idea of "reflective inquiry", facilitating the process of the participants' learning. Thus, it constitutes a future research implication to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate whether the learning process has occurred within the participants that is whether they have developed specific skills of job crafting which were explored in the primary study.

The Socratic method can also be used to identify patterns that can be observed over time and across situations. Hence, it serves as a valuable tool in conducting a longitudinal, qualitative study. In addition, the dialogue may focus on the common elements that exist across diverse items (Chessick, 1982), expending the use of the Socratic method in exploring a wide range of organizational phenomena. Moreover, the Socratic method and analogy used as qualitative methods provide a methodological framework as a response to the philosophical discussion over the issues of trustworthiness in a mixed-method research.

REFERENCES

Arnold, J. (2005). *Work psychology: Understanding human behaviour in the workplace* (4th ed.). Prentice-Hall.

Biela, A. (1991). *Analogy in science: From a psychological perspective*. Peter Lang.

Bedell, G. (1980). *Philosophizing with Socrates: An introduction to the study of philosophy*. University Press of America.

Blank, M., & White, S. J. (1986). Questions: A powerful but misused form of classroom exchange. *Topics in Language Disorders*, *6*(2), 1–12.

Blatt, R., Christianson, M. K., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Rosenthal, M. M. (2006). A sensemaking lens on reliability. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, *27*, 897–917. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.392

Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: Vol. 1. Cognitive domain*. McKay, 20–24.

Brickhouse, T. C., & Smith, N. D. (2009). Socratic teaching and Socratic method. In H. Siegel (Ed.) *The Oxford handbook of philosophy of education*. Oxford University Press.

Catrambone, R., & Holyoak, K. J. (1989). Overcoming contextual limitations on problem-solving transfer. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, *15*(6), 1147–1156.

Chessick, R. D. (1982). Socrates: first psychotherapist. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, *42*, 71–83.

Chisholm, R. M. (1979). Objects and persons: Revision and replies. *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, *7*, 317-388.

Cresswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2010). Designing and conducting mixed methods research (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

DePierro, E., Garafalo, F., & Toomey, R. T. (2003). Using a Socratic dialog to help students construct fundamental concepts. *J. Chem. Educ*, *80*, 12, 1408. https://doi.org/10.1021/ed080p1408

Farrar, M. T. (1984). Asking better questions. *Reading Teacher*, *38*, 10–15.

Fishman, E. M. (1985). Counteracting misconceptions about the Socratic method. *College Teaching*, *33*, 185–188.

Gambrill, E. (1993). What critical thinking offers to clinicians and clients. *The Behavior Therapist*, *16*, 141–146.

Haden, J. (1984). Socratic ignorance. *New essays on Socrates*, 17–28.

Hays, D. G., Wood, C., Dahl, H., & Kirk-Jenkins, A. (2016). Methodological rigor in *Journal of Counseling & Development* Qualitative Research Articles: A 15-Year Review. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *94*(2), 172–183. http://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12074

Hesse, M. (2000). *Models and Analogies. A companion to the philosophy of science.* Blackwell.

Holland, J. H., Holyoak K., Nisbett, R. E., & Thagard P. R. (1986). *Induction: Processes of inference, learning, and discovery.* MIT Press.

Holme, T. A. (1992). Using the Socratic method in large lecture classes. *Journal of Chemical Education*, *69*, 974–977.

Johnson, D. W., & Matross, R. P. (1975). *Attitude modification methods. Helping people change.* Pergamon.

Kidd, I. (1992). Socratic questions. In B. Gower & M. C. Stokes (Eds.), *Socratic questions: New essays on the philosophy or Socrates and its significance* (pp. 82–92). Routledge, 1992.

Kvale, S. (2008). *Doing interviews*. Sage Publications.

Lee, H. S., & Holyoak, K. J. (2008). The role of causal models in analogical inference. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, *34*, 1111–1122. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012581

Legrenzi, P. (1971). Discovery as a means to understanding. *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, *23*, 417–422.

Levitt, H. M., Motulsky, S. L., Wertz, F. J., Morrow, S. L., & Ponterotto, J. G. (2017). Recommendations for designing and reviewing qualitative research in psychology: Promoting methodological integrity. *Qualitative Psychology*, *4*(1), 2–22. https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000082

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Sage.

Long, L., Long, T. J., & Paradise, L. V. (1981). *Questioning: Skills for the helping process*. Brooks/Cole.

Macrae, C. (2009). Making risks visible: Identifying and interpreting threats to airline flight safety. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *82*(2), 273–293. https://doi.org/10.1348/096317908X314045

Madill, A., Jordan, A., & Shirley, C. (2000). Objectivity and reliability in qualitative analysis: Realist, contextualist and radical structuralist epistemologies. *British Journal of Psychology*, *91*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1348/000712600161646

McDaniel, M. A., & Schlager, M. S. (1990). Discovery learning and transfer of problem-solving skills. *Cognition and Instruction*, *7*(2), 129–159. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532690xci0702_3

Meichenbaum, D. (1994). *A clinical handbook/practical therapist manual*. University of Waterloo, Department of Psychology.

Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2012). *Motivational interviewing: Helping people change*. Guilford Press.

Milliren, A., Milliren, M., & Eckstein, D. (2007). Combining Socratic questions with the "ADAPT" problem-solving model: Implications for couple's conflict resolution. *The Family Journal*, *15*(4), 415–419.

Mohajan, H. K. (2018). Qualitative research methodology in social sciences and related subjects. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, *7*(1), 23–48.

Morse, J. M. (1991). Approaches to qualitative-quantitative methodological triangulation. *Nursing research*, *40*(2), 120–123.

Morse, J. M., & Mitcham, C. (2002). Exploring qualitatively-derived concepts: Inductive—deductive pitfalls. *International journal of qualitative methods*, *1*(4), 28–35.

Neenan, M. (2009). Using Socratic questioning in coaching. *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy*, *27*(4), 249–264.

Nelson, L., Brown, T. K., Blanshard, B., & Kraft, J. (1950). *Socratic method and critical philosophy*. Yale University Press.

Ngozwana, N. (2018). Ethical dilemmas in qualitative research methodology: Researcher's reflections. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, *4*(1), 19–28.

O'Leary, M., & Chia, R. (2007). Epistemes and structures of sensemaking in organizational life. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *16*, 392–406.

Osbeck, L. M. (2014). Scientific reasoning as sense making: Implications for qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Psychology*, *1*(1), 34–46. https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000004

Overholser, J. C. (1991). The Socratic method as a technique in psychotherapy supervision. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *22*, 68–74.

Overholser, J. C. (1993a). Elements of the Socratic method: I. Systematic questioning. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, *30*(1), 67–74.

Overholser, J. C. (1993b). Elements of the Socratic method: II. Inductive reasoning. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, *30*(1), 75–85.

Overholser, J. C. (1994). Elements of the Socratic method: III. Universal definitions. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, *31*(2), 286–293.

Overholser, J. C. (2010). Psychotherapy according to the Socratic method: Integrating ancient philosophy with contemporary cognitive therapy. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, *24*(4), 354–363.

Overholser, J. C. (2011). Collaborative empiricism, guided discovery, and the Socratic method: Core processes for effective cognitive therapy. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, *18*(1), 62–66.

Rafaeli, A. (2006). Sense-making of employment: On whether and why people read employment advertising. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, *27*(6), 858–881. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.399

Rennie, D. L. (2012). Qualitative research as methodical hermeneutics. *Psychological Methods*, *17*(3), 385–398. http://doi.org/10.1037/a0029250

Rutter, J. G., & Friedberg, R. D. (1999). Guidelines for the effective use of Socratic dialogue in cognitive therapy. In L. Vande Creek & T. L. Jackson (Eds.), *Innovations in clinical practice: A source book* (Vol. 17, pp. 481–490). Professional Resource Press/Professional Resource Exchange.

Sanders, N. M. (1966). *Classroom questions: What kinds?* HarperCollins College Division.

Schmid, W. T. (1983). Socratic moderation and self-knowledge. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, *21*(3), 339–348.

Seeskin, K. (1987). *Dialogue and discovery: A study in Socratic method*. SUNY Press.

Tomm, K. (1987). Interventive interviewing: Part II. Reflexive questioning as a means to enable self-healing. *Family process*, *26*(2), 167–183. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1987.00167.x

Vlastos, G. (1991). *Socrates, ironist and moral philosopher*. Cornell University Press.

Weick, K. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Sage.