

## Business-family interface and the performance of women entrepreneurs: The moderating effect of economic development

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### **Abstract:**

#### Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationships between women entrepreneurs' firm performance and two dimensions (enrichment and interference) of the business-family interface (BFI) in the moderating context of the level of economic development in two emerging countries – Morocco and Turkey. The enrichment perspective was operationalized as family instrumental (financial) and affective (moral) support, while interference was operationalized as gender-related personal problems.

#### Design/methodology/approach

The study drew upon the work-family interface (WFI) theory from the family embeddedness perspective in the context of institutional economics. In Morocco, a purposive sample of 116 women entrepreneurs completed a self-administered questionnaire using field collection, mail, and phone surveying methods. In Turkey, 147 women entrepreneurs completed the questionnaire online and through personal contacts in business organizations.

#### Findings

The findings indicated a positive relationship of family financial support with business performance of female entrepreneurs in Morocco, a less economically advanced country. However, family moral support is related to better firm performance in Turkey, a more advanced economy. Gender-related personal problems of women entrepreneurs appear to hamper their business performance in Turkey; while in Morocco, the performance of women entrepreneurs seems to improve in the face of such impediments.

#### Practical implications

The results provide initial evidence that female entrepreneurs benefit from the linkages of family-to-business enrichment in different ways, depending on the country's level of economic development. In less economically developed countries, women entrepreneurs benefit more from instrumental rather than affective components of the enrichment dimension of the BFI.

Conversely, in more economically advanced countries, female entrepreneurs benefit more from affective rather than the instrumental elements of this dimension. Likewise, the components of the interference dimension of the BFI affect female entrepreneurs differently depending on the economic development of the countries. Women in the less-developed country of Morocco are less impeded by their personal problems compared to their counterparts in Turkey, a more developed economy. Actually, Moroccan women entrepreneurs improved their business performance when facing obstacles, most likely due to their increased inner strength and resilience acquired when battling adversarial institutional conditions.

#### Originality/value

The present study makes three unique contributions to the entrepreneurship literature. First, the study links the two BFI dimensions (enrichment and interference) to firm performance with an exclusive focus on female business owners. Second, within the construct of enrichment, the study employs both family instrumental and emotional support. Third, the study shows that the country's level of economic development moderates the relationships between the BFI dimensions and firm performance.

**Keywords:** Economic development | Firm performance | Women entrepreneurs | Family support | Morocco/Turkey | Personal problems

#### Article:

### 1.Introduction

The existing studies have focused on the factors that influence nascent women entrepreneurs to start their businesses (Sesen and Pruett, 2014) while ignoring the performance of those businesses (McClelland et al., 2005). This study attempted to fill this gap by investigating women-owned business performance in relation to family financial and moral support (Noguera et al., 2015) and gender-related personal problems (Derera et al., 2014; Tlaiss, 2014). We considered these concepts as part of the business-family interface (BFI) (Jennings and McDougald, 2007), which is rooted in the work-family interface (WFI) theory (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011). The WFI theory seeks to explain job attitudes and behaviors. In entrepreneurship, researchers have started to recognize the relevance of business-family interface (BFI) because for entrepreneurs, the business and family domains are closely interrelated, as explained by the “family embeddedness” perspective (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003).

Based on the WFI theory, two major constructs underlie the BFI, enrichment (i.e. positive synergy between family and business) and interference (i.e. conflict between the two domains). The former one is also known as the enhancement perspective (Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1999) or the enrichment argument (Rothbard, 2001), while the latter one is known as the conflict perspective (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) or the depletion argument (Rothbard, 2001) (for additional details, see Jennings and McDougald, 2007). Thus, the two constructs capture the potential positive and negative spillovers between family and business (Hsu et al., 2016). Enrichment has multiple dimensions and contains both instrumental (organizational resources, financial resources, skills) and affective (positive emotions, moral support) components. Each of the two constructs spans either from family to business or from business to family (Hsu et al.,

2016). Most studies suggest that the BFI experience reflects a combination of the two perspectives (Hsu et al., 2016; Jennings and McDougald, 2007; Ohlott et al., 2004). For example, Hsu et al. (2016) incorporated both enrichment and interference processes in their gender-neutral study of exit intentions of entrepreneurs. We also employed the two BFI processes simultaneously to explain the entrepreneurial performance rather than exit intentions. Only few research works have linked WFI factors to firm performance (Jennings and McDougald, 2007). Our simultaneous focus on the two BFI processes allows for a more complete understanding of the relationship between BFI and entrepreneurial performance. Furthermore, we employed both instrumental and affective components of the enrichment construct of the BFI. Edelman et al. (2016) advocated for the use of both instrumental and emotional support, claiming that considering instrumental social support alone yields an incomplete picture of the family-to-business context. Our study took an important step in this direction.

A growing number of scholars recognize the importance of different contexts in which women entrepreneurs operate (Hughes et al., 2012; Noguera et al., 2015). Consequently, the need to develop a deeper understanding of women's entrepreneurship across different cultures, social norms, and institutions has been strongly advocated (Mari et al., 2016). Research that acknowledges the embeddedness of women's entrepreneurship in family and household contexts has been fairly developed either through the family embeddedness perspective (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003) or within the 5 M (markets, money, management, motherhood, and meso/macro environments) framework (Brush et al., 2009). Studies that examine country-specific peculiarities are still rare, particularly in the Non-Western world (Mari et al., 2016). Country-specific factors may account for the variance in women entrepreneurs' behaviors and outcomes (Daniele and Geys, 2016; Gupta and Levenburg, 2010; Pathak et al., 2013; Smith, 2008; Welsh et al., 2016).

As Simon-Moya et al. (2014) pointed out, only few attempts have been made to explain the entrepreneurial dynamics across various country settings (e.g. Australia and Belgium – Smith, 2008; Finland and Ireland – Heinonen et al., 2010; Russia and Ukraine – Iakovleva et al., 2013; Spain and Senegal – Garcia-Rodriguez et al., 2015; USA and Sweden – Ahl and Nelson, 2015; USA and Turkey – Sesen and Pruett, 2014).

Entrepreneurship activities may be linked to national institutional environments (Estrin et al., 2013; Simon-Moya et al., 2014). Acs et al. (2008) suggested that broad ties between entrepreneurship, economic development, and institutions constitute a critical area of entrepreneurship study. Different countries' distinct institutional frameworks influence entrepreneurial activities differently (Simon-Moya et al., 2014). Therefore, we argue that institutional economics (North, 1990) is most appropriate for our study in which we compared women entrepreneurs in Morocco and Turkey. In fact, institutional theory has been applied to research in various entrepreneurship contexts (Noguera et al., 2015; Tlaiss, 2015), including predominately Islamic cultures, such as Pakistan (Nawaz, 2009) and the Middle East countries (Tlaiss, 2015).

Morocco and Turkey are similar to each other in many respects. Both countries comprise primarily (98 percent) of Islamic populations, although Morocco indicates Islam as the religion of the state whereas Turkey is secular by constitution. The two countries are considered culturally similar using Hofstede's measures. According to the Hofstede Resources Centre (<http://geert-hofstede.com/morocco.html>), both countries share a very high level of power distance, low levels of individualism (both are collectivistic), and high levels of uncertainty avoidance (behaviors to deal with unforeseeable future events). These comparable features are likely to have a similar effect on the Moroccan and Turkish women entrepreneurs' BFIs and business performance.

In other respects, Morocco and Turkey differ. The Moroccan economy is developing and is categorized as an efficiency-driven economy whereas Turkey has the world's 17th largest GDP and is in transition between the efficiency and innovation-driven stages (Acs et al., 2008). Therefore, we expect differences in the effect of the BFI dimensions on entrepreneurial performance when factoring in the two countries' economic development levels.

Thus, by focusing on Morocco and Turkey, we indirectly control for religion and culture, which are important socio-cultural factors affecting the entrepreneurial outcomes (Griffiths et al., 2013). In this study, we expected to identify a possible moderating effect of the country's level of economic development on the relationships of family financial/moral support and gender-related personal problems with the performance of women-owned businesses. To our knowledge, the use of the country level of economic development as a moderating variable of the relationship of BFI factors with the economic performance of women-owned businesses has not been explored. Wennekers and Thurik (1999) proposed a theoretical framework through which they explained how entrepreneurship influences economic growth. They also suggested the reciprocal link from economic growth to entrepreneurship and called for studies that would explore this link. Our study responds to this call by focusing on the influence of the country's level of economic development on (female-related) entrepreneurial processes.

The paper is organized as follows. First, a conceptual framework is defined and the hypotheses are developed. Subsequently, the methodology and results are presented. Finally, the findings are discussed and policy implications are outlined.

## **2. Conceptual framework and hypotheses**

As explained earlier, according to the institutional economics framework by North (1990), institutional settings vary by country contexts. The concept of "institution" is relevant when studying women entrepreneurs in international environments because the institutional economics theory explains the potential effect of ethnicities on entrepreneurs (Diaz-Garcia and Brush, 2012; Essers, 2009; Essers and Benschop, 2007, 2009; Essers et al., 2013; Okten, 2015; Tlaiss, 2014; Welter and Smallbone, 2011). Therefore, we investigated a possible moderating effect of the country's level of economic development on the relationships between women entrepreneurs' firm performance and two dimensions (enrichment and interference) of the BFI.

The business-family enrichment perspective assumes the exchange or sharing of resources (instrumental enrichment) and/or positive mood (affective enrichment) between the family and

business domains, typically in both directions (Eddleston and Powell, 2012; Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Powell and Eddleston, 2013). We included family financial support during the business launch as an element of instrumental enrichment and family moral support as a part of affective enrichment.

### ***2.1 Family financial support and the moderating role of the economic development***

We examined how the women entrepreneurs' decision to launch their businesses with or without their family members' financial involvement relates to firm performance. Thus, we assumed family-to-business direction only.

Developing countries are characterized by poor supportive policies and the need to improve their basic and social infrastructures. For a woman entrepreneur to be able to launch and grow her business venture in such adverse conditions, family financial support may be valuable and indispensable (Cetindamar et al., 2012). However, as a country moves from the efficiency-driven to the innovation-driven stage (e.g. Turkey), institutional assistance, and state support policies improve, reducing the women entrepreneurs' dependence on family financial help. The financial support that families provide to women entrepreneurs could be considered one of the important dimensions of entrepreneurship in the context of the institutional framework. Research has identified the existence of the relationship between economic development and entrepreneurship. Specifically, this relationship has been found to be mildly S-shaped (Acs et al., 2008). Women entrepreneurs who run their businesses in either the factor or efficiency-driven countries are most likely to need family financial support; whereas those in the innovation-driven economies are less likely to need support. This may be attributed to the fact that in highly developed countries, public support for entrepreneurship is high, institutions are mature, and support mechanisms are well organized. This allows women to be more independent from their families compared to their counterparts in less-developed countries. In general, in economically developed countries, the need for family financial support decreases. Mari et al. (2016) reported that family financial support negatively affects the performance of women entrepreneurs in Italy. Italy and Turkey are more economically developed compared to Morocco (Acs et al., 2008); thus, women entrepreneurs in these countries are less likely to require financial support from their families. A similar finding has been reported by Welsh et al. (2016). Therefore, women entrepreneurs in less economically developed countries (e.g. Morocco) may benefit more from family financial help compared to their counterparts in the more developed countries (Turkey). Financial support from families in less-developed countries may improve women entrepreneurs' performance in less-developed countries more compared to the developed countries. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

#### ***Hypotheses***

*H1.* The country's level of economic development will moderate the relationship between family financial support and firm performance, such that the relationship is positive and stronger in less economically developed countries compared to more economically developed countries.

### ***2.2 Family moral support and the moderating role of the level of economic development***

In this study, we examined the relation between family moral support, as a part of the affective dimension of the BFI enrichment process, and firm performance. Hsu et al. (2016) employed the business-family (affective only) enrichment construct in both directions because the outcome variable – the entrepreneurs’ intentions to exit their business for paid employment – could be assumed to simultaneously impact and be impacted by family considerations. In our study, we included family moral support during the business launch as an antecedent of firm performance.

The researchers have recognized the importance of family moral support in the emotional sustenance of entrepreneurs (Prasad et al., 2013). Family moral support may be considered a part of family social capital, which is a special type of capital that is inherent in family relationships (Cetindamar et al., 2012). Family members’ moral/emotional support may encourage women to become entrepreneurs or provide psychological help in dealing with business problems (Eddleston and Powell, 2012). Family moral support gives a woman entrepreneur confidence that she can manage her family-work responsibilities, thereby increasing the chances of business growth. Notwithstanding the overall positive effect of family support on firm performance, too much family involvement in a woman entrepreneur’s affairs can have negative consequences as well (Steier et al., 2009; Uzzi, 1997). Excessive family embeddedness, particularly in terms of moral (intangible) support, can restrict the new information and limit change. Social expectations may shift the focus from economic concerns to relational and moral issues, possibly violating the trust (Uzzi, 1997). Moral and emotional support from family may raise family expectations, and family members may believe that they have legitimate right to interfere with the business, thus decreasing business performance, particularly in the less-developed countries (i.e. Morocco) where family financial (tangible) support is crucial. In these countries, family moral support is particularly relevant, as family duties constitute some of the most important issues affecting entrepreneurial activities of women (Jennings and Brush, 2013) and decisions are frequently made only with the permission of the male head of the family, since women are generally not respected as authority figures in the workplace (Sullivan and Meek, 2012). Therefore, we hypothesized:

### ***Hypotheses***

*H2.* The country’s level of economic development will moderate the relationship between family moral support and firm performance, such that the relationship is negative and stronger in less economically developed countries compared to more economically developed countries.

### ***2.3 Personal problems and the moderating role of the level of economic development***

Interference (conflict between family and business, imbalance, spillover of negative emotions from one domain to the other) is the second dimension of the BFI, which women entrepreneurs frequently encounter. They do experience a significant interference between business and home roles, as these two spheres are interrelated (Stoner et al., 1990).

The business-family interference may work in both directions (Hsu et al., 2016; Shelton, 2006), although Loscocco and Bird (2012) suggested that the family tends to cause more problems to a woman entrepreneur. In our study, we followed Shelton’s (2006) assumption that no distinction

between these directions is necessary and investigated the effect of the BFI conflict on firm performance.

Literature suggests that gender-related personal problems affect women entrepreneurs' business performance in a negative way (Baughn et al., 2006; Mari et al., 2016). Women more often have a greater responsibility for childcare activities compared to men (Sullivan and Meek, 2012). Women have reported that being an entrepreneur affects their family life negatively (Mari et al., 2016; Ufuk and Ozgen, 2001). Women frequently complain that they suffer from negative social attitudes and experience lack of respect or are not being taken seriously by others in their business ventures (Baughn et al., 2006). The likelihood of experiencing personal problems may be higher for women entrepreneurs in countries that undergo turbulent and unstable changes in institutions (Welsh et al., 2016). The turmoil caused by the changing institutional environment combined with women's personal problems may negatively affect their business performance. This indicates that personal problems may affect women entrepreneurs more in the economies that are transitioning from an efficiency to innovation-driven economy that is characteristic of emerging economies. The volatile institutional changes may increase the uncertainty associated with running a business. They may further amplify obstacles for women entrepreneurs, increasing their perception of the negative influence of personal problems on their businesses. Turkey is an emerging and volatile economy in the transition phase between efficiency and innovation-driven stages while Morocco is still in the efficiency-driven stage (Acs et al., 2008). Therefore, we hypothesized:

### *Hypotheses*

*H3.* The country's level of economic development will moderate the relationship between personal problems and firm performance, such that the relationship is negative and stronger in more economically developed countries compared to less economically developed countries.

The study design is depicted in Figure 1.

## **3. Method**

### *3.1 Sample and data collection*

In both countries, we administered a self-administered questionnaire adapted from Hisrich et al. (2006) to women entrepreneurs. The survey included questions assessing personal characteristics, business characteristics and operations, planning, ownership, funding, obstacles and opportunities, networking, and perceived management skills. Three items related to family business were added to the survey's 27 questions. The resulting measurement instrument was translated and back-translated to French and Turkish using the procedure by Earley (1987). Additionally, the instrument was pre-tested and adapted to local cultural conditions.

In Morocco, the survey was administered in 2014 using field collection, mail, and phone interviews methods. The questionnaires were administered to women entrepreneurs through the Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Morocco (AFEM) network. One of the research team members attended three AFEM events, two in Casablanca and one in Rabat, to administer additional questionnaires. Most of the female entrepreneurs interviewed operated in the

economic centers of the Rabat-Casablanca area. A few interviews were conducted in Marrakech, Agadir, or Tangiers. The sample was purposive rather than representative, as no database exists in Morocco that would contain a comprehensive list of private firms and entrepreneurs, whether male or female. As such, more than 80 percent of the female entrepreneurs interviewed belonged to the AFEM association, which is very strong in Casablanca and Rabat but much less in the rest of the country. The sample did not include women operating businesses in rural areas and included only women who managed a formal, legally incorporated business venture.

In total, 116 women entrepreneurs responded to the survey and 113 returned the completed questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 97 percent. The respondents ranged from 20 to over 60 years of age. The largest group comprising 50-59 years old accounted for 36 percent of the participants, followed by 40-49 years old (34 percent) and 30-39 years old (22 percent) groups. Only 5 percent of the participants were over 60 years of age and 3 percent of the respondents were less than 30 years old.

In total, 14 percent of the respondents had only a high school degree, 37 percent had a bachelor's degree, and 34 percent completed graduate studies. Almost one in six (15 percent) had a doctorate degree.

In total, 76 percent of the respondents were married, 11 percent single, and 13 percent were divorced, separated, or widowed.

In Turkey, the data collection took place in 2012 using online surveys. The participants were recruited through personal contacts from business organizations throughout Turkey. The sample included women entrepreneurs from larger cities in the North (Istanbul and Izmit; 50 and 30 percent of the sample, respectively) and the South (Mersin: 20 percent of the sample). None of the participants lived in rural areas. In total, 147 women responded to the survey and 129 returned the completed survey, yielding a response rate of 88 percent.

The respondents ranged from under 20 to over 60 years of age. The largest group comprising 30-39 years old accounted for 33 percent of the participants, followed by 40-49 years old (32 percent), and 50-59 years old (17 percent) groups. 6 percent of the participants were over 60 years of age and 13 percent are less than 30 years old. Women more often have a greater responsibility for taking care of their children than men (Sullivan and Meek, 2012) and that is why they may be forced to start entrepreneurial ventures at a later age. Our two samples match this observation.

In total, 66 percent of the respondents were married, 21 percent were single, and 13 percent were divorced or widowed.

In total, 35 percent of the respondents had a high school degree or less, 50 percent had a bachelor's degree, and 12 percent completed graduate studies. Only 3 percent had a doctorate degree. In both countries, the business types indicated most women entrepreneurs' operations are focused on the local market (retailing, food stores, beauty salons, hand crafts, tailoring, publishing, etc.).

### ***3.2 Measures***

Firm performance was the dependent variable assessed using the respondent's current annual (self-reported) business income. Despite obvious subjectivity, self-reported performance measures (such as income) have been found to be reliable and highly correlated with the objective data (Cruz et al., 2012). Business income (or revenue) is amongst the most frequently used and validated indicators of firm financial performance (Dyer et al., 2012). All respondents were presented with the same five annual income brackets from which they could choose one that best reflected their business income. For each country, the brackets were adjusted so that the middle (third) bracket contained the average yearly salary, which was approximately MAD270,000 (Moroccan Dirham) and TRY85,000 (Turkish Lira) ([www.salaryexplorer.com](http://www.salaryexplorer.com)). The income selections were then aggregated into two categories, coded "1" when the respondent's annual business income was selected from any of the three highest income categories (high business performance group) and "0" when the first two income brackets were selected (low business performance group). Other studies (Cetindamar et al., 2012; Diaz-Garcia and Brush, 2012; Mari et al., 2016) also used an income-related categorical measure of firm performance.

### ***Family financial support (perceived)***

Access to financial capital is particularly important for women-owned businesses (Akehurst et al., 2012; Alon and Shneor, 2017; Bardasi et al., 2011; Iakovleva et al., 2013; Jennings and Brush, 2013; Shelton, 2006; Sullivan and Meek, 2012), especially during the start-up phase. It provides a woman entrepreneur with more flexibility and control to focus on the management and growth of her business (Akehurst et al., 2012; Cetindamar et al., 2012; Tlaiss, 2014). This variable was coded as "1" if a woman entrepreneur started the business borrowing from her family and "0" when she financed the start-up with her own savings or with money borrowed from nonrelatives and/or banks (Cruz et al., 2012). Juxtaposing family borrowing and other sources of funding helps better define women perceptions of family financial support. Since the most popular types of business activity are small-scale operations, more sophisticated means of access to capital (e.g. angel investments) are not a viable option.

### ***Family moral support (perceived)***

As explained earlier, family moral support is often assumed to be closely related to the level of business-family balance (Rehman and Roomi, 2012; Shelton, 2006). It has been considered as an important factor in shaping women's entrepreneurial processes (Chang et al., 2009; 2012; Welsh et al., 2014). We measured moral support from the family at two levels: "1" perceived support from the family member (spouse, parent, child, sibling, and/or relative), and "0" perceived lack of such support.

### ***Personal problems (perceived)***

Family duties constitute some of the most important issues affecting women entrepreneurial activities, particularly in the context of developing countries (Jennings and Brush, 2013). Business-family conflict is often an impediment to women succeeding as entrepreneurs (Noguera et al., 2015; Sullivan and Meek, 2012; Tlaiss, 2014; Ufuk and Ozgen, 2001). This variable was coded as "1" to indicate the perceived presence of any combination of emotional

stress, family stress, loneliness, conflict between business and family relationships, conflict between business and personal relationships, poor or lack of support, loneliness, and time management and as “0” to indicate the perceived absence of any of such problems.

### ***The country’s level of economic development***

This variable was coded as “1” to indicate a low level of economic development (as exemplified by Morocco) and as “0” to indicate a high level of economic development (as exemplified by Turkey).

### ***Control variables***

We controlled for additional variables to eliminate their possible influence on the relationships between the predictors and the dependent variable:

1. Business experience was used to differentiate whether a woman entrepreneur has been in the current business “1” longer than three years and “0” otherwise (Mari et al., 2016).
2. Entrepreneur’s age has an important influence on entry into entrepreneurship and subsequent stages of the business venture (Pathak et al., 2013). In this study, age was categorized as “1” if the entrepreneur was 40 and older and as “0” otherwise. The benchmark of 40 years, separating mature from younger women entrepreneurs, has been used in other studies (Mas-Tur et al., 2015).
3. Marital status indicated whether the respondent is either “1” married or “0” not married (Cetindamar et al., 2012).
4. Concerning network support, in emerging markets where resources are scarce, entrepreneurs need to take part in networks to survive and prosper (Polatoglu, 2007). Research suggests that women entrepreneurs have more restricted networks compared to men in that their networks consist disproportionately of members of the same gender. This phenomenon, labeled in the literature as sex-based homophily (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007, 2011), is particularly salient for female entrepreneurs. It restricts women’s access to venture capital and thus puts them at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts (Becker-Blease and Sohl, 2007). Support from different types of social networks (women’s professional groups, community organizations, social groups, and/or close friends) was measured at two levels coded as “1” when such support was indicated and as “0” when it was not indicated by the respondent (Jumaa and Sequeira, 2017).
5. Family business ownership. No consensus has been established among researchers regarding the definition of a family firm (Howorth et al., 2010). This study used Westhead’s (1997) definition that an owner’s “perception” is one of the elements that most closely captures the family business concept. Therefore, in our study, the respondents were asked to make their own judgment to determine whether their business was a “family business” in responding to the survey items. This variable was also measured at two levels coded as “1” if the participants defined their business as family oriented and as “0” when the participants indicated otherwise.

### 3.3 Analyses

Descriptive statistics for the pooled sample are presented in Table I.

Standard tests for multicollinearity were conducted on the explanatory variables. The highest VIF score was 1.28 and the greatest condition index was 10.71. Values for both statistics were well below the common rules of thumb of 10 and 30, respectively, for each test. Therefore, multicollinearity was not a threat to our ability to test the study hypotheses. To address the possibility that the error term does not have a constant variance, heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors were estimated (White, 1980). We also performed Harman's single-factor test on all observed variables to diagnose common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The exploratory factor analysis produced the (unrotated) factor solution with five factors accounting for a 72.0 percent of the total variance explained. If common method bias were present, we would expect a single factor to be extracted and account for most of the variance in the variables included in the study. Since such single-factor solution did not emerge, the common method bias was not a concern in our study.

Since our dependent variable was dichotomous, we chose binary logistic regression (logit) for our analyses. To test the hypotheses, we used the sample of both Moroccan and Turkish respondents pooled together.

The equation used was:

$$PER = \alpha + \beta_1 YRS + \beta_2 AGE + \beta_3 MRD + \beta_4 NET + \beta_5 FBO + \beta_6 FFS + \beta_7 FMS + \beta_8 PPR + \beta_9 LED + \beta_{10} FFS \times LED + \beta_{11} FMS \times LED + \beta_{12} PPR \times LED + \varepsilon, PER = \alpha + \beta_1 YRS + \beta_2 AGE + \beta_3 MRD + \beta_4 NET + \beta_5 FBO + \beta_6 FFS + \beta_7 FMS + \beta_8 PPR + \beta_9 LED + \beta_{10} FFS \times LED + \beta_{11} FMS \times LED + \beta_{12} PPR \times LED + \varepsilon,$$

where  $PER=1$  if business performance is above average and 0 if it is below;  $YRS=1$  if business operates for at least three years and 0 otherwise;  $AGE=1$  if the entrepreneur's age is at least 40 years and 0 otherwise;  $MRD=1$  if currently married and 0 otherwise;  $NET=1$  if supported by women's social networks and 0 for lack of such support;  $FBO=1$  if family business ownership was declared and 0 if not;  $FFS=1$  if the business was started with money borrowed from the family and 0 when it was financed with own savings and/or with money borrowed from nonrelatives/banks;  $FMS=1$  if moral support from the family was acknowledged and 0 when not; and  $PPR=1$  for the presence of gender-related personal problems and 0 for lack of such problems;  $LED=1$  if the country's level of economic development is low (Morocco) and 0 when it is high (Turkey).

The existing studies frequently utilize models with the same dependent variable and various explanatory variables performed on different samples. For example, Bardasi et al. (2011) compared models across three regions. Saridakis et al. (2014) estimated their models in two groups: males and females. Sesen and Pruett (2014) compared their model across American and Turkish samples. In our study, we analyzed the pooled sample of Moroccan and Turkish entrepreneurs (Table II).

To enhance the interpretation, we corroborated the moderation results by outcome from two logistic regression analyses performed separately for each country (Table II).

## **4.Results**

Overall, the model was significant ( $\chi^2=26.68, p=0.009$ ), meaning that it was significantly different from the model with the constant only. Furthermore, the Hosmer-Lemeshow (H-L) goodness-of-fit test produced a desirable non-significant outcome ( $\chi^2=8.69, df=7, p=0.28$ ), indicating that the proposed model did not significantly differ from the observed one (for well-fitting models we want the H-L  $p$ -value to be greater than 0.05). Overall, 67.8 percent of the predictions were accurate, i.e., the proposed model predicted the assigned values of 0 or 1 in the observed (actual) model with 67.8 percent accuracy.

### ***4.1Family financial support***

The main effect of family financial support variable was significant and positively related to firm performance only for Moroccan women entrepreneurs. For Turkish women entrepreneurs, the relationship was negative and insignificant.

The interaction between family financial support and the country's level of economic development was positively related to firm performance, supporting H1. We calculated its odds ratio as  $e^{(-1.03+2.175)}=3.14$ . The result suggests that Moroccan women entrepreneurs who enjoy their families' financial support are 3.14 times more likely to achieve high business performance compared to women in Turkey.

### ***4.2Family moral support***

The main effect of family moral support was significant and positively related to firm performance only for Turkish women entrepreneurs. For Moroccan women entrepreneurs, the relationship was negative and insignificant.

The interaction term between family moral support and the country's level of economic development was negatively related to firm performance. Moroccan women were 44 percent less likely to achieve high business performance compared to Turkish women when both samples had high family moral support.

Thus, the two components (instrumental and emotional) of the enrichment dimension of the BFI yield reciprocal outcomes across the country's level of economic development spectrum.

### ***4.3Personal problems***

Finally, the main effect of the personal problems variable was significant and positively related to firm performance among Moroccan women entrepreneurs. For Turkish women entrepreneurs, however, the relationship was negative and insignificant.

The interaction between personal problems and the country's level of economic development was positively related to firm performance. Turkish women were 5.03 times less likely to achieve high business performance compared to Moroccan women when confronted with personal problems. In other words, women entrepreneurs in Turkey were more vulnerable to their personal problems compared to women in Morocco.

Concerning the control variables, only “years in business” variable in Model 3 was significant and positively related to firm performance as reported in other studies (Saffu et al., 2008). “Age” and “Marital status” were positively but insignificantly related to firm performance across all three models while “Network support” and “Family business ownership” were negatively (but insignificantly) associated with the outcome variable.

## **5. Discussion and conclusion**

We examined the relationships between two dimensions of the BFI: enrichment (with two components, instrumental, exemplified by family financial support, and affective, depicted by family’s moral support) and interference (gender-related personal problems of women entrepreneurs) and business performance. Furthermore, we investigated how the country’s level of economic development, illustrated by two different economies, Morocco and Turkey, moderates these relationships. Our study followed Mari *et al.*’s (2016) call for comparisons among different countries to better understand the effects of various instruments on firms’ performance. The findings suggest significant interactions between the country economic differences and the research variables. Our results are in line with Smith’s (2008) claim that cross-national differences may be more important than, for example, differences between family and non-family firms.

The present study makes three unique contributions to the entrepreneurship literature. First, it links empirically the two BFI dimensions to women’s entrepreneurial performance. We are aware of only one study that included both enrichment and interference perspectives within the BFI framework (Hsu et al., 2016). However, the Hsu et al.’s (2016) study was gender neutral, and focused on entrepreneurial exit intentions rather than the firm performance. Our study was the first to link the two BFI aspects to firm performance with an exclusive focus on female business owners. Second, from the enrichment perspective, the current study employed both family instrumental and emotional support. Hsu et al. (2016) used only the affective component of enrichment. We responded to the call by Edelman et al. (2016) who suggested that considering instrumental social support alone yields an incomplete picture of the family-to-business context. Third, the study showed that the relationships between the BFI dimensions and firm performance are moderated by the country’s level of economic development. Our findings support Daniele and Geys’ (2016) suggestion that allowance should be made for cross-country heterogeneity (e.g. differences in the level of economic and institutional development) in studies that investigate family-business relationships.

Although no hypotheses were formulated for the model’s main effects, our findings showed intriguing reciprocal relationships between the two variables across the two countries of interest. Specifically, we found a positive and significant relationship between family financial support and firm performance for Moroccan women entrepreneurs and a negative (but insignificant) relationship for their Turkish counterparts. Conversely, we found a positive and significant relationship between family moral support and firm performance for Turkish women entrepreneurs and a negative (but insignificant) relationship for their Moroccan counterparts. Our contrasting findings are in line with the inconsistent results reported in the literature on the effects of the family support during women entrepreneurs’ business ventures. Kim and Gao

(2013) provided a list of studies, which found that family involvement in management (FIM) (instrumental and/or emotional) has either positive, negative, or no relationship with firm performance. Researchers suggest that such conflicting empirical results may be attributable, among other factors, to the lack of attention to organizational elements (e.g. the heterogeneity and diversity across family firms). They further suggest that these elements can moderate the relationship between FIM and performance. In our study, we assumed that external factors, such as the country's level of economic development, which can serve as a moderator between the variables of interest, might contribute to the aforementioned differences. Indeed, when our main effects (family financial and moral support) are combined with the country's level of economic development, they both become significant.

Specifically, it seems that family financial support is indispensable in less-developed countries (Morocco) where women are more likely to use loans from family members to establish their small business (Derera et al., 2014). Similarly, the country's level of economic development moderated the relationship between family moral support and business performance. However, family moral support was associated with a better firm performance among Turkish female entrepreneurs compared to their Moroccan counterparts. In Morocco, women still struggle significantly with their level of education and their ability to take part in economic activities. Women entrepreneurs who decide to follow their own career path may not get the family moral support they need to improve their business and perform efficiently. The perception of women's role in the society is still very conservative, even for the youngest entrepreneurs (Minialai and Sqalli, 2016). This outlook along with excessive family expectations may impede business development and performance. Edelman et al. (2016) called for studies to investigate the dual effects of family cohesiveness (emotional social support) as well as its heterogeneity across cultures and institutional settings. It has been suggested that family emotional support could have either negative or positive effect on entrepreneurial initiatives. Our findings are consistent with this idea, showing that the country's level of economic development may play a significant role in explaining such occurrences.

Finally, the relationship between our third main effect, gender-related personal problems, and business performance is inconclusive, which, again, is in agreement with the literature. The business-family conflict, exemplified by personal problems of female entrepreneurs, may have not only a negative, but also a positive direct effect on business performance (Jennings and McDougald, 2007). Besides the negative influence, one could imagine that such conflict could be beneficial if it motivates entrepreneurs to become better organized and efficient, which may in turn improve performance in the end (Jennings and McDougald, 2007). For example, multiple role commitments that are prevalent among women entrepreneurs (Jennings and McDougald, 2007) can improve their managerial skills and essentially performance (Ruderman et al., 2002). In our study, the association between personal problems and firm performance was significant and positive for Morocco and negative (but insignificant) for Turkey. Women entrepreneurs in Morocco may be more likely to engage entrepreneurship out of necessity compared to a more developed country, such as Turkey, where regular employment positions may be more available to female workforce. In this case, Moroccan women entrepreneurs have nothing to lose; therefore, they are more resilient compared to their counterparts in more developed economies.

Their ability to overcome personal problems makes them stronger, resulting in overall better performance (De Vita et al., 2014; Hampel-Milagrosa et al., 2015); hence, gender-related personal problems may not affect, or may have a positive relation with, business performance of women entrepreneurs in less-developed countries or may be even positively related to them. Furthermore, personal problems may negatively affect women entrepreneurs in countries where institutions undergo turbulent and unstable changes. This, in turn, may be the case for Turkey, which is in the transition period between efficiency and innovation stages; therefore, a negative (although insignificant) regression coefficient for personal problems of Turkish female entrepreneurs is plausible. For example, Ufuk and Ozgen (2001) reported the destructive effect of personal problems on the performance of Turkish women entrepreneurs. The volatile institutional environment may increase the uncertainty of running the business, amplify obstacles for women entrepreneurs, and increase their perception of the negative influence of personal problems on their businesses (Karkoulian et al., 2016; Mathew, 2010; Tlaiss, 2014).

As in the previous two cases, the country's level of economic development significantly moderated the relationship between the interference component of the BFI and firm performance. When a Turkish female entrepreneur is confronted with personal problems, she is less likely to achieve better business performance compared to her Moroccan counterpart. This outcome is credible in view of the above discussion.

In conclusion, our results show that the country's level of economic development influences the relationships within women entrepreneurial dynamics. Similarly, Pathak et al. (2013) found support for the associations between institutional and individual factors and women's entrepreneurial behaviors. Huggins and Thompson (2014) emphasized that entrepreneurship is a product not only of social and cultural values, but also of economic and business conditions across communities. Likewise, Simon-Moya et al. (2014) found that the level of entrepreneurship is related to the economic environment. The same policies in countries with varying institutional and economic contexts can lead to extremely different outcomes. Thus, entrepreneurship data need to reflect the stages of economic development (Acs et al., 2008). Heterogeneity in institutions across countries does affect entrepreneurial behaviors and outcomes (Daniele and Geys, 2016; Estrin et al., 2013; Gupta and Levenburg, 2010; Smith, 2008). Daniele and Geys (2016) suggested that the overall effect of strong family ties is likely to "vary across countries depending on their level of economic and institutional development" (p. 814). These researchers proposed weaker disruptive effects of strong family ties on the economic outcomes in less-developed countries. Our findings supported this conclusion, as revealed by the positive effects of the BFI dimensions – the family financial support as well as the effect of the business-family interference component (gender-related personal problems) – on firm performance in a less-developed economy (Morocco) compared to a more economically advanced country (Turkey).

In our model, we assumed that the relationship evolves only in the direction from the BFI constructs to firm performance. These relationships could be reciprocal in nature (Jennings and McDougald, 2007). For example, improved business performance could have a positive effect on business-family conflict. Further research is needed in this area.

In our study, we employed both the enrichment and interference perspectives as the independent variables related to firm performance. However, the business-family conflict might mediate the relationships between the enrichment construct and firm performance (Shelton, 2006). This is another area for further research.

## **6.Limitations and policy implications**

Both surveys were administered online and through support organizations; hence, our samples were purposive. Future studies should include a sample of women entrepreneurs who do not use the internet, or do not use it on a regular basis, to gain additional knowledge of female entrepreneurs operating in the informal sector. The informal sector accounts for a significant share of women's revenues and business. The informal economy in Morocco and Turkey is strong, especially among women entrepreneurs in economically deprived rural areas that were not assessed in this study. Further research should include women entrepreneurs in economically diverse areas. Moreover, since Moroccan and Turkish women entrepreneurs own about 40 percent of family businesses, future research could investigate the family firm dynamics.

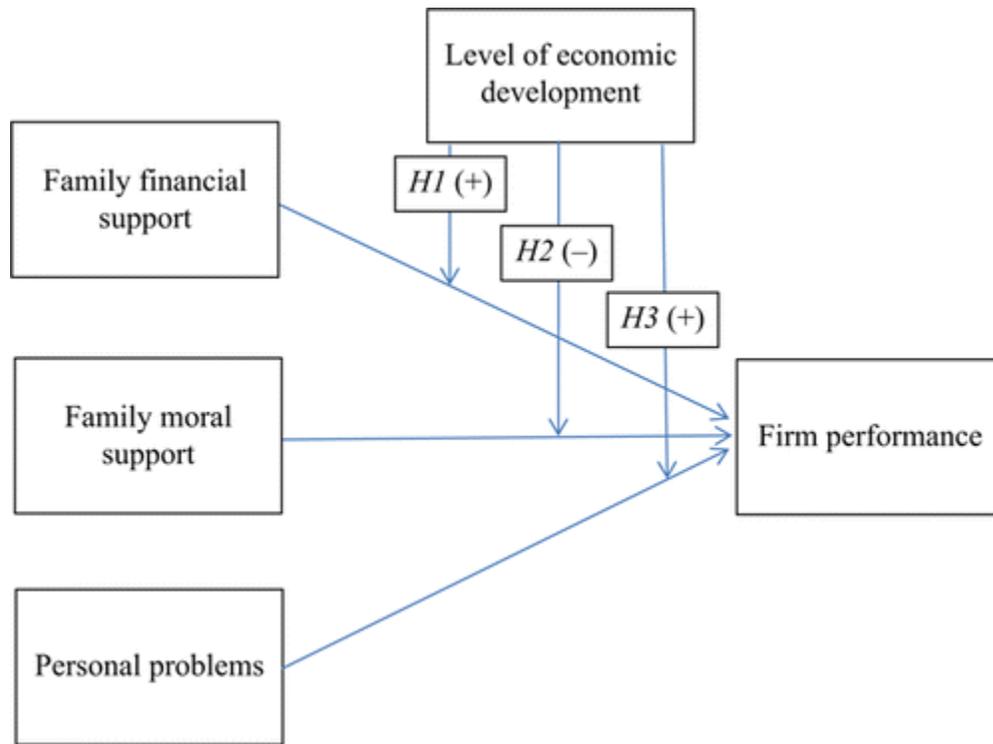
Our inferences about the direction of the relationships among measured variables should be treated with caution, as we used cross-sectional data. We assumed that the BFI dimensions (enrichment and interference) may affect business performance. However, as we noted earlier, greater entrepreneurial success (e.g. financial performance) may affect these dimensions as well. Longitudinal studies could investigate the dynamics of these relationships over time.

Our results provide evidence that female entrepreneurs benefit from linkages of family-to-business enrichment in different ways, depending on the country's level of economic development. In less economically developed countries, instrumental rather than affective components of the enrichment dimension of the BFI are likely to benefit women more. Conversely, in more economically advanced countries, female entrepreneurs benefit more from affective rather than instrumental elements of this dimension. Similarly, components of the interference dimension of the family-to-business interface affect female entrepreneurs differently depending on economic development. Women in less-developed countries not only are less impeded by their personal problems compared to their counterparts in more developed economies, but they also manage to turn these obstacles into their favor and improve their business performance. This is probably due to their increased inner strength and resilience acquired when battling the country's adverse institutional conditions.

Important policy implications can be formulated based on the above finding. Governments in less economically developed countries should pay more attention to programs that offer instrumental support to female entrepreneurs, such as financial assistance, organizational help, training, mentoring from successful entrepreneurs, and opportunities for direct observation of successful businesses. On the other hand, more advanced economies should focus more on providing affective help to their female entrepreneurs as well as on programs that will teach them cope with personal problems and other impediments caused by stress intensified by higher level of economic development. These programs should involve the entire family and include modeling of positive behaviors to assist women with their businesses.

Finally, childcare assistance and elder care should be a primary concern for both developed and emerging economies, as family-related responsibilities continue to affect the growth and performance of women-owned businesses. Consistently throughout the world, the lack of family support systems hinders the development of women entrepreneurs and their businesses.

Economic growth is a priority worldwide. Our study shows that the effects of support systems and challenges on women entrepreneurs' enterprises differ substantially across various country contexts. The overall effects of recent political upheavals on women entrepreneurs, on the families, and on the economies need to be measured so policy makers can design effective support programs for women entrepreneurs.



**Figure 1** Study design

**Table I** Descriptive statistics (means and Pearson correlation coefficients): Morocco and Turkey combined

Variable	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(1) Firm performance (PER)	0.35	1								
(2) Family financial support (FFS)	0.32	0.01	1							
(3) Family Moral Support (FMS)	0.44	0.08	0.06	1						

(4) Personal problems (PPR)	0.77	0.06	0.07	0.12	1					
(5) Level of economic development (LED)	0.60	0.01	-0.16	-0.06	-0.03	1				
(6) Business experience (YRS)	0.83	0.24**	-0.08	-0.01	-0.04	0.14	1			
(7) Age (AGE)	0.63	0.14	-0.17	-0.09	-0.08	0.38**	0.37**	1		
(8) Marital status (MRD)	0.78	0.16	-0.09	0.39**	-0.04	0.13	0.26**	0.13	1	
(9) Network support (NET)	0.82	-0.08	-0.20*	-0.03	0.11	-0.02	-0.10	0.06	0.02	1
(10) Family business ownership (FBO)	0.37	-0.04	0.12	0.11	0.00	0.04	0.07	0.10	0.06	-0.10

**Notes:**  $n=115$ . Correlation coefficients are significant as  $*p < 0.05$ ;  $**p < 0.01$ , two-tailed tests

**Table II** Logistic regression results

Variable	B (SE) Exp (B): OR (95% CI)		
	Morocco ( $n=69$ )	Turkey ( $n=46$ )	Morocco/Turkey combined ( $n=115$ )
Constant	-4.30*** (1.57)	-1.17 (1.51)	-1.70 (1.15)
<i>Control variables</i>			
Business experience (YRS)	1.52 (1.01)	1.47 (1.30)	1.42* (0.74)
	4.59 (0.46-45.63)	4.37 (0.36-52.99)	4.13 (0.79-21.55)
Age (AGE)	0.79 (0.73)	0.77 (0.84)	0.81 (0.54)
	2.19 (0.46-10.38)	2.16 (0.44-10.69)	2.25 (0.77-6.59)
Marital status (MRD)	0.98 (0.97)	0.24 (1.34)	0.62 (0.69)
	2.66 (0.46-15.27)	1.27 (0.13-12.54)	1.85 (0.49-6.98)
Network support (NET)	-0.29 (0.70)	-1.14 (0.98)	-0.72 (0.55)
	0.75 (0.17-3.26)	0.32 (0.04-2.97)	0.49 (0.15-1.53)
Family business ownership (FBO)	-0.71 (0.63)	-0.01 (0.79)	-0.35 (0.46)
	0.49 (0.15-1.65)	0.99 (0.18-5.57)	0.71 (0.28-1.78)
<i>Independent variables</i>			
Family financial support (FFS)	1.32* (0.73)	-1.17 (0.84)	-1.03 (0.75)
	3.73 (1.00-13.89)	0.31 (0.06-1.62)	0.36 (0.08-1.67)

Family moral support (FMS)	-0.59 (0.59)	1.65** (0.76)	1.49* (0.76)
	0.56 (0.17-1.83)	5.22 (0.88-30.80)	4.41 (0.91-21.38)
Personal problems (PPR)	1.51** (0.64)	-0.88 (0.77)	-0.77 (0.78)
	4.53 (0.96-21.45)	0.42 (0.05-3.20)	0.46 (0.07-3.11)
<i>Moderator variable</i>			
Level of economic development (LED)			-2.04** (0.96)
			0.13 (0.01-1.38)
<i>Interaction terms</i>			
FFS×LED			2.17** (0.99)
			8.80 (1.25-61.97)
FMS×LED			-2.07** (0.97)
			0.13 (0.02-0.83)
PPR×LED			2.39** (1.02)
			10.91 (0.96-123.93)
<i>Reliability</i>			
Model $\chi^2$ ( <i>p</i> -value)	13.09 (0.11)	15.09 (0.06)	26.68 (0.01)
Hosmer and Lemeshow $\chi^2$ ( <i>p</i> -value)	11.66 (0.17)	5.26 (0.63)	8.69 (0.28)
Cox and Snell $R^2$	0.17	0.28	0.21
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.24	0.39	0.29
Correct classification	66.7%	73.9%	67.8%

**Notes:** Heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors (SE) are shown in the parentheses.

Dependent variable: firm performance (PER). Regression coefficients are significant as

\* $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed tests

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