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Unpacking Women's Entrepreneurial Success in Iraq: The Mediating Role of Family Support

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Abstract
Women's entrepreneurship plays an important role in economic growth and social inclusion, yet women entrepreneurs in fragile and patriarchal contexts continue to face substantial structural, institutional, and socio-cultural constraints. Prior research identifies socio-cultural conditions, government support, financial support, and self-motivation as key determinants of women's entrepreneurial outcomes, little is known about mechanisms through which these factors influence business success, particularly role of family support. Drawing on Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory, this study examines direct effects of socio-cultural factors, government support, financial support, and self-motivation on women entrepreneurs' business success in Iraq and tests mediating role of family support. Using survey data from 493 women entrepreneurs and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), results show family support and financial support strongly enhance business success, while socio-cultural factors also have a significant positive effect. Government support exhibits a statistically significant but small direct effect on success. Self-motivation is negatively associated with business success but positively related to family support. Family support significantly mediates effects of financial support, government support, and self-motivation on business success, whereas its mediation of socio-cultural effects is weak. Study advances women's entrepreneurship research by demonstrating family support operates as a central mechanism through which key resources and motivations translate into performance. Findings further suggest that policies aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs in fragile contexts should complement financial and institutional support with family-sensitive and socially embedded interventions.
Keywords: Family Support, Government Support, Financial Support, Entrepreneurial Success, Female Entrepreneurship

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a critical driver of economic growth, innovation, employment generation, and social transformation across both developed and developing economies (Acs et al., 2018; Audretsch & Keilbach, 2007; Minniti & Naudé, 2010). Within this broader landscape, women's entrepreneurship has attracted growing scholarly and policy attention due to its potential to enhance household welfare, reduce poverty, promote gender equality, and stimulate inclusive economic development (Brush et al., 2019; Elam et al., 2019; Welsh et al., 2021). Over the past two decades, women's participation in entrepreneurial activity has increased substantially worldwide, yet persistent gender gaps remain in venture performance, growth orientation, and access to strategic resources (Jennings & Brush, 2013; Marlow & McAdam, 2013).

Despite their expanding presence, women entrepreneurs, particularly in developing and fragile contexts, continue to experience systematically lower levels of business survival, profitability, and scalability compared with men (Ahl, 2006; Carter et al., 2015; Minniti & Naudé, 2010). Their enterprises are more likely to operate in informal, low-capital, and low-growth sectors, and they often remain micro in size throughout their life cycle (Brush et al., 2019; Terjesen & Amorós, 2010). These patterns indicate that participation in entrepreneurship alone does not guarantee success, and that women's entrepreneurial outcomes are strongly shaped by structural, institutional, and socio-cultural conditions.

Extant literature identifies multiple determinants of women's entrepreneurial success, which can be broadly grouped into institutional factors, resource-related factors, socio-cultural influences, and individual-level characteristics. At the institutional level, government support in the form of training programs, regulatory facilitation, business development services, and gender-sensitive policies has been shown to influence women's entry into and performance in entrepreneurship (Feng et al., 2023; Jakovljevic et al., 2019; Welsh et al., 2021). However, evidence regarding the effectiveness of such support remains mixed, with several studies reporting weak or inconsistent impacts on firm-level outcomes in developing economies (Khan et al., 2021; Meyer & Peng, 2016).

Access to financial resources represents another fundamental determinant of entrepreneurial success. Women entrepreneurs face disproportionate barriers to external financing, including limited collateral, discriminatory lending practices, lower financial literacy, and exclusion from formal credit markets (Al-Kwifi et al., 2020; Carter et al., 2015; Singh & Dash, 2021). Restricted access to finance constrains start-up scale, limits investment in technology and human capital, and reduces firms' ability to withstand shocks. Numerous empirical studies demonstrate that financial support is positively associated with business performance and growth among women-owned enterprises (Feng et al., 2023; Nasir et al., 2019; Simba et al., 2022).

Socio-cultural factors further shape women's entrepreneurial opportunities and outcomes. Deeply embedded gender norms, patriarchal values, religious interpretations, and societal expectations regarding women's primary roles as caregivers often restrict women's mobility, time availability, and legitimacy as business owners (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Banu et al., 2021; Cardella et al., 2020). In many societies, entrepreneurship continues to be constructed as a masculine activity, which undermines women's confidence, credibility, and access to networks (Marlow & McAdam, 2013; Yadav & Unni, 2016). Empirical evidence suggests that unfavourable socio-cultural environments are associated with lower entrepreneurial intentions, weaker growth aspirations, and reduced business success among women (Badghish et al., 2023; Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017).

At the individual level, self-motivation, resilience, perseverance, and internal locus of control are widely viewed as central psychological drivers of entrepreneurial behaviour (Faisal & Al-Rasheed, 2021; Singh et al., 2017). Motivated individuals are expected to exert greater effort, persist in the face of obstacles, and proactively seek opportunities. Prior research generally reports positive associations between motivational attributes and entrepreneurial performance (Rafiki & Nasution, 2019; Staniewski & Awruk, 2019). Nevertheless, emerging evidence suggests that the effectiveness of individual motivation may depend heavily on contextual support systems, particularly in high-constraint environments (Khan et al., 2021).
While these streams of research have generated valuable insights, they share two important limitations. First, most studies examine these determinants independently, without considering how they interact to shape entrepreneurial success. Second, relatively little attention has been paid to the mechanisms through which these factors translate into performance outcomes. As a result, the literature remains fragmented, offering limited explanatory depth regarding why certain resources or supports matter more than others and under what conditions.

Family support has recently emerged as a particularly salient but under-theorized factor in women's entrepreneurship. Family members often provide emotional encouragement, start-up capital, unpaid labor, childcare, and legitimacy, especially in contexts where women's access to formal institutions and external networks is constrained (Khan et al., 2021; Qazi et al., 2022; Welsh et al., 2021). Supportive families can reduce work–family conflict, enhance self-efficacy, and facilitate resource mobilization, thereby strengthening women's capacity to operate and grow their businesses. Conversely, unsupportive families may restrict women's participation, intensify psychological strain, and reinforce traditional gender roles.

Despite this growing recognition, family support is most commonly treated as a direct predictor of entrepreneurial outcomes rather than as an explanatory mechanism linking broader contextual and individual factors to success. This treatment overlooks the possibility that financial resources, government interventions, socio-cultural conditions, and personal motivation may exert their influence primarily through family-based processes. For example, access to finance may improve performance only when families approve of and assist women's business activities; government programs may be effective only when families allow women to participate; and personal motivation may translate into action only when women receive emotional and practical backing at home.

The Iraqi context offers a compelling setting for examining these dynamics. Iraq has experienced decades of conflict, political instability, and economic disruption, which have weakened institutions, constrained labor markets, and exacerbated gender inequalities. Although women's educational attainment has improved, their labor force participation and entrepreneurial success remain low relative to men (World Bank, 2022). Iraqi women entrepreneurs face severe challenges related to access to finance, regulatory complexity, limited training opportunities, and pervasive socio-cultural restrictions. Traditional gender norms continue to shape expectations regarding women's roles within households and society, often positioning entrepreneurship as secondary to domestic responsibilities.

Within this environment, family occupies a central position in shaping women's life choices. Families may function simultaneously as gatekeepers who restrict women's economic activities and as enablers who provide crucial resources and legitimacy. Evidence from Arab and Muslim-majority societies indicates that women frequently require approval from male family members to start businesses and that family attitudes strongly influence women's entrepreneurial persistence (Badghish et al., 2023; Banu et al., 2021; Welsh et al., 2021). These features make Iraq a particularly appropriate context for investigating family support as a mediating mechanism.

Drawing on Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) and Social Capital Theory (Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), this study conceptualizes family support as a strategic resource that enhances women entrepreneurs' ability to acquire, combine, and deploy other resources. From an RBV perspective, family support represents a valuable, rare, and difficult-to-imitate asset that can generate competitive advantage. From a social capital perspective, family ties constitute dense, trust-based networks characterized by strong norms and obligations that facilitate resource exchange and opportunity recognition.

Against this backdrop, the present study develops and tests an integrative model in which family support mediates the relationships between socio-cultural factors, financial support, government support, self-motivation, and women entrepreneurs' business success in Iraq. By adopting this approach, the study makes three key contributions. First, it advances theory by repositioning family support as a central explanatory mechanism rather than a peripheral variable. Second, it extends entrepreneurship research into a fragile, underexplored context, thereby enhancing the contextual sensitivity of existing theories. Third, it provides evidence-based guidance for designing more effective, socially embedded entrepreneurship policies and support programs. In doing so, the study responds to calls for more holistic and contextually grounded models of women's entrepreneurship and contributes to a deeper understanding of how women navigate complex personal, familial, and institutional constraints in pursuit of business success.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature and develops the research hypotheses. Section 3 describes the research methodology, including sample selection, measurement of variables, and analytical procedures. Section 4 presents the empirical results. Section 5 discusses the findings in light of existing theory and prior studies. Finally, Section 6 concludes the study and outlines theoretical, practical, and policy implications.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Women's entrepreneurship has become an increasingly important topic within development economics and entrepreneurship research due to its potential to generate employment, enhance household income, and promote inclusive growth. Across developing and emerging economies, women-owned businesses contribute substantially to local economies, yet their ventures are often smaller, less capitalized, and more vulnerable than those owned by men (Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Terjesen & Amorós, 2010; Brush et al., 2019). These disparities reflect not only differences in individual capabilities but also deeply embedded structural and institutional conditions that shape women's access to resources and opportunities.

One major stream of research emphasizes the role of institutional environments in influencing entrepreneurial outcomes. Supportive regulations, access to training, business development services, and gender-sensitive policies can encourage venture creation and growth, whereas weak governance, regulatory burdens, and policy instability constrain entrepreneurial activity (Meyer & Peng, 2016; Elam et al., 2019). In many developing countries, government initiatives targeting women entrepreneurs exist, but their effectiveness varies considerably, often due to implementation challenges, limited outreach, or misalignment with local realities (Khan et al., 2021; Feng et al., 2023).

Another well-established determinant of women's entrepreneurial success is access to financial resources. Women entrepreneurs consistently face greater obstacles in obtaining external finance than men, stemming from limited collateral, lower credit histories, gender bias in lending, and exclusion from formal financial systems (Carter et al., 2015; Singh & Dash, 2021). Restricted access to finance limits women's ability to invest in equipment, technology, marketing, and skilled labor, thereby constraining productivity and growth. Empirical evidence across contexts shows a strong positive association between financial support and women-owned business performance (Nasir et al., 2019; Simba et al., 2022).

Beyond formal institutions and resources, socio-cultural factors play a powerful role in shaping women's entrepreneurial experiences. In many societies, prevailing gender norms assign women primary responsibility for household and caregiving duties, while entrepreneurship and income generation are perceived as masculine domains (Ahl, 2006; Marlow & McAdam, 2013). Such norms influence women's mobility, time allocation, legitimacy as business owners, and access to networks, often discouraging growth-oriented entrepreneurship (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Cardella et al., 2020). Studies consistently demonstrate that unfavorable socio-cultural environments are associated with lower entrepreneurial intentions, weaker growth aspirations, and reduced business success among women (Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017; Badghish et al., 2023).

At the individual level, psychological characteristics such as self-motivation, resilience, and persistence are commonly viewed as essential for entrepreneurial success. Motivated entrepreneurs are expected to exert greater effort, overcome obstacles, and proactively pursue opportunities (Singh et al., 2017; Staniewski & Awruk, 2019). However, emerging research suggests that the impact of individual motivation is highly context-dependent. In environments characterized by strong social constraints and weak institutional support, personal drive alone may not be sufficient to ensure success and may even increase stress and role conflict (Khan et al., 2021).

Increasingly, scholars have highlighted the importance of family support in women's entrepreneurship. Families can provide emotional encouragement, start-up capital, unpaid labor, childcare assistance, and legitimacy, all of which are crucial for sustaining women's business activities (Welsh et al., 2021; Qazi et al., 2022). Conversely, unsupportive families may restrict women's participation, discourage risk-taking, and reinforce traditional gender roles. Despite this recognition, most existing studies treat family support as a direct antecedent of entrepreneurial success, rather than examining its role as a mechanism through which broader contextual and individual factors operate.

The Iraqi context reflects many of these challenges in amplified form. Decades of conflict, political instability, and economic disruption have weakened institutions, limited private sector development, and intensified gender inequalities. Although women's educational attainment has improved, their labor force participation and entrepreneurial success remain low (World Bank, 2022). Iraqi women entrepreneurs face severe barriers related to access to finance, bureaucratic complexity, limited training opportunities, and restrictive socio-cultural norms. Within this environment, families often act as both gatekeepers and enablers of women's economic activity, making family support a particularly salient factor for understanding women's entrepreneurial success in Iraq.

Theoretical Background

This study is grounded primarily in Resource-Based View (RBV) and Social Capital Theory, which together provide a complementary lens for explaining how women entrepreneurs acquire, mobilize, and transform resources into business success.

RBV posits that firms achieve sustained competitive advantage through the possession and effective deployment of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991). Traditionally, these resources include financial capital, human capital, technological assets, and organizational capabilities. In the context of women-owned businesses, access to financial support, training, and institutional assistance represents critical strategic resources that influence venture performance (Nasir et al., 2019; Feng et al., 2023). However, RBV also acknowledges the importance of intangible resources, such as reputation, trust, and relational assets, which are often more difficult to acquire and imitate.

Family support can be conceptualized as a distinctive intangible resource within the RBV framework. Emotional encouragement, practical assistance, and legitimacy provided by family members enhance women entrepreneurs' capacity to utilize financial resources, participate in government programs, and sustain entrepreneurial effort. From this perspective, family support does not merely coexist with other resources but amplifies their value, increasing their productivity and effectiveness.

Social Capital Theory further enriches this explanation by emphasizing the role of social relationships in facilitating access to resources and opportunities (Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital resides in networks of relationships characterized by trust, shared norms, and reciprocal obligations. Strong-tie networks, such as family, are particularly important in environments where formal institutions are weak or unreliable. These networks reduce transaction costs, provide informal insurance, and enable rapid resource mobilization. For women entrepreneurs in patriarchal societies, family-based social capital is especially consequential. Family members often control or influence women's access to financial assets, mobility, and participation in economic activities. Supportive families can legitimize women's entrepreneurial roles, negotiate social boundaries, and facilitate engagement with external actors. Unsupportive families, in contrast, can block access to opportunities regardless of women's personal motivation or external assistance.

Integrating RBV and Social Capital Theory allows this study to conceptualize family support as a strategic mediating resource. Financial support, government support, socio-cultural conditions, and self-motivation represent important inputs, but their effects on business success are expected to depend on whether women can mobilize family-based resources to convert these inputs into productive action. Accordingly, family support is theorized to mediate the relationships between these antecedents and women entrepreneurs' business success. This integrated theoretical framework moves beyond linear, individual-centric explanations of women's entrepreneurship and advances a more relational and context-sensitive understanding of how success is achieved in fragile and patriarchal environments.

Hypothesis Development

Socio-Cultural Factors and Women Entrepreneurs' Business Success

Socio-cultural environments shape norms, values, and expectations regarding gender roles, legitimacy, and acceptable economic behavior. In many developing and patriarchal societies, women face restrictive norms related to mobility, risk-taking, leadership, and public participation, which directly affect their entrepreneurial opportunities and outcomes (Ahl, 2006; Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Cardella et al., 2020). These socio-cultural constraints often limit women's access to markets, networks, and strategic resources, thereby suppressing business growth and sustainability (Marlow & McAdam, 2013; Yadav & Unni, 2016). Conversely, more supportive socio-cultural environments, characterized by positive social attitudes toward women-owned businesses, community acceptance, and normative endorsement of women's economic participation, enhance women's confidence, legitimacy, and opportunity recognition (Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017; Badghish et al., 2023). Empirical evidence shows that favorable socio-cultural conditions are positively associated with women's entrepreneurial intentions, persistence, and performance (Banu et al., 2021; Nasir et al., 2019). From an RBV perspective, socio-cultural legitimacy can be viewed as an intangible resource that enables women entrepreneurs to more effectively leverage other assets. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Socio-cultural factors have a significant positive relationship with women entrepreneurs' business success.

Financial Support and Women Entrepreneurs' Business Success

Access to financial resources is widely regarded as one of the most critical determinants of entrepreneurial success. Financial capital enables entrepreneurs to acquire equipment, hire employees, invest in technology, and expand operations (Carter et al., 2015; Singh & Dash, 2021). Women entrepreneurs, however, face disproportionate difficulties in accessing formal finance due to collateral requirements, discriminatory lending practices, and exclusion from financial networks (Al-Kwifi et al., 2020; Simba et al., 2022). Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that financial support positively influences women-owned firm performance, growth, and survival (Feng et al., 2023; Nasir et al., 2019). Within RBV, financial capital represents a foundational strategic resource that enhances firms' productive capacity. Therefore:

H2: Financial support has a significant positive relationship with women entrepreneurs' business success.

Government Support and Women Entrepreneurs' Business Success

Governments play an important role in shaping entrepreneurial ecosystems through policies, regulations, training programs, and business development services (Elam et al., 2019; Meyer & Peng, 2016). Government initiatives aimed at women entrepreneurs are intended to reduce market failures, improve access to resources, and address gender-specific barriers. Several studies report that government support is positively associated with entrepreneurial

performance (Jakovljevic et al., 2019; Feng et al., 2023). However, evidence from developing economies also suggests that the effectiveness of such support varies due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited outreach, and weak institutional enforcement (Khan et al., 2021). Despite these inconsistencies, government support remains an important institutional resource that can facilitate business success. Hence:
H3: Government support has a significant positive relationship with women entrepreneurs' business success.

Self-Motivation and Women Entrepreneurs' Business Success
Self-motivation reflects an individual's internal drive, persistence, and willingness to exert effort toward goal achievement. Motivated entrepreneurs are more likely to identify opportunities, overcome obstacles, and sustain engagement in entrepreneurial activity (Singh et al., 2017; Staniewski & Awruk, 2019). Psychological theories and entrepreneurship research generally associate higher motivation with superior performance outcomes (Rafiki & Nasution, 2019). From RBV, motivation represents a form of human capital that enhances the entrepreneur's ability to deploy resources productively. Accordingly:
H4: Self-motivation has a significant relationship with women entrepreneurs' business success.

Family Support and Women Entrepreneurs' Business Success
Family support encompasses emotional encouragement, financial assistance, childcare provision, operational involvement, and social legitimacy granted by close family members. In collectivist and patriarchal societies, women's entrepreneurial engagement is rarely an individual decision; rather, it is embedded within household power structures and normative expectations. Consequently, family approval and ongoing support often constitute a fundamental prerequisite for women's participation and persistence in entrepreneurship (Welsh et al., 2021; Qazi et al., 2022). Empirical research indicates that supportive families reduce work–family conflict, strengthen entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and facilitate access to household-controlled tangible and intangible resources, thereby enhancing women's ability to manage and expand their ventures (Khan et al., 2021; Banu et al., 2021). From a Social Capital Theory perspective, the family represents a strong-tie network characterized by high levels of trust, shared norms, and reciprocal obligations (Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). These relational attributes lower transaction costs and enable rapid mobilization of resources that are difficult to obtain through formal markets. Consistent with Resource-Based View, family support can also be conceptualized as a valuable and difficult-to-imitate intangible resource that strengthens women entrepreneurs' capacity to exploit financial, institutional, and human capital inputs. Accordingly, family support is expected to exert a direct positive influence on entrepreneurial outcomes.
H5: Family support has a significant positive relationship with women entrepreneurs' business success.

Financial Support and Family Support
In many developing economies, financial resources are deeply embedded within household systems rather than accessed exclusively through formal markets. Women's access to external finance often depends on family approval, co-signing, guarantees, or the pooling of household assets (Carter et al., 2015; Singh & Dash, 2021). Even when finance is obtained from formal institutions, the decision to allocate and utilize these resources is frequently

influenced by household negotiations and power relations. Moreover, the availability of financial support may signal venture viability to family members, increasing their confidence in the business and their willingness to provide additional emotional, practical, and operational assistance. Prior studies suggest that financial stability reduces family concerns regarding risk and reputational loss, thereby strengthening family involvement in women-owned enterprises (Khan et al., 2021; Welsh et al., 2021). Therefore, financial support is expected not only to directly enhance business performance but also to foster higher levels of family support.
H6: Financial support has a significant positive relationship with family support.

Government Support and Family Support
Government support in the form of training programs, certification, subsidized finance, and business development services constitutes an important source of institutional endorsement. Such endorsement can enhance the perceived legitimacy of women's entrepreneurial activities within their households and communities. When families observe that women's businesses are formally recognized and supported by government agencies, they may view entrepreneurship as a socially acceptable and economically viable career path. In developing contexts, institutional signals play a particularly important role in shaping family attitudes, as households often rely on external validation to assess risk and appropriateness (Meyer & Peng, 2016; Welsh et al., 2021). Empirical evidence indicates that exposure to government-backed entrepreneurship programs can increase family encouragement and reduce resistance to women's business engagement (Khan et al., 2021). Accordingly:
H7: Government support has a significant positive relationship with family support.

Socio-Cultural Factors and Family Support
Socio-cultural norms constitute the broader value system within which families interpret women's economic roles. In societies where women's entrepreneurship is socially accepted and positively valued, families are more likely to encourage, legitimize, and assist women entrepreneurs. Conversely, in contexts dominated by traditional gender ideologies, families may discourage women's business activities and prioritize domestic responsibilities. Prior research demonstrates that socio-cultural environments shape household attitudes toward women's mobility, risk-taking, and leadership, which in turn influence the level of support provided by family members (Banu et al., 2021; Badghish et al., 2023; Cardella et al., 2020). Thus, socio-cultural conditions are expected to be systematically associated with variations in family support.
H8: Socio-cultural factors have a significant relationship with family support.

Self-Motivation and Family Support
Self-motivation reflects an individual's internal drive, persistence, and commitment to entrepreneurial goals. Highly motivated women entrepreneurs are more likely to actively seek family approval, negotiate household responsibilities, and demonstrate seriousness about their ventures through sustained effort and visible progress. Such behavioral signals may increase family members' confidence in the entrepreneur's capability and commitment, thereby eliciting greater emotional and practical support (Singh et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2021). Consequently, self-motivation is expected to positively influence family support.
H9: Self-motivation has a significant positive relationship with family support.

Mediating Role of Family Support

Integrating Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory, this study proposes that external resources (financial and government support), contextual conditions (socio-cultural factors), and internal resources (self-motivation) do not influence women entrepreneurs' business success solely through direct pathways. Instead, their effects are partially transmitted through family support, which determines whether these inputs can be effectively mobilized and converted into productive action.

Family support enhances women entrepreneurs' ability to combine financial capital, institutional assistance, and personal motivation into coherent entrepreneurial strategies. Prior studies increasingly recognize family support as a key transmission mechanism linking environmental conditions to entrepreneurial outcomes (Welsh et al., 2021; Qazi et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2021).

Accordingly, this study hypothesizes that:

H10: Family support mediates the relationship between financial support and women entrepreneurs' business success.

H11: Family support mediates the relationship between government support and women entrepreneurs' business success.

H12: Family support mediates the relationship between socio-cultural factors and women entrepreneurs' business success.

H13: Family support mediates the relationship between self-motivation and women entrepreneurs' business success.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships between socio-cultural factors, government support, financial support, self-motivation, family support, and women entrepreneurs' business success in Iraq, as well as the mediating role of family support within these relationships. A quantitative design is appropriate because the study is theory-driven, seeks to test hypothesized relationships among latent constructs, and aims to generalize findings across a defined population of women entrepreneurs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hair et al., 2022).

The study follows a deductive logic in which hypotheses derived from Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory are empirically tested using structured survey data. This approach allows for systematic assessment of direct and indirect effects and supports robust statistical inference. Quantitative survey designs are widely used in entrepreneurship research, particularly when examining perceptual constructs such as motivation, support mechanisms, and perceived business success (Rafiki & Nasution, 2019; Feng et al., 2023).

Given the complexity of the proposed model and the inclusion of mediation relationships, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is employed as the primary analytical technique. PLS-SEM is suitable for prediction-oriented research, complex models with multiple constructs and paths, and studies conducted in emerging economy contexts where data normality cannot be assumed (Hair et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2021).

A cross-sectional survey design is employed, whereby data are collected from respondents at a single point in time. Cross-sectional designs are appropriate when the objective is to examine associations among variables rather than to infer causality over time (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). This design is widely adopted in entrepreneurship and small business research due to its efficiency and suitability for capturing perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of entrepreneurs (Nasir et al., 2019; Staniewski & Awruk, 2019). The unit of analysis in this study is the individual woman entrepreneur who owns and actively manages a business. Focusing on owner-managers is consistent with prior women entrepreneurship research, which emphasizes the central role of the entrepreneur in shaping strategic decisions and performance outcomes (Brush et al., 2019; Welsh et al., 2021).

The research model specifies women entrepreneurs' business success as the endogenous outcome variable, socio-cultural factors, government support, financial support, and self-motivation as exogenous predictors, and family support as both a predictor and a mediating variable. This configuration allows simultaneous estimation of direct and indirect relationships within a single coherent framework. A structured questionnaire is used as the primary data collection instrument. Survey methodology is appropriate because it facilitates the collection of standardized data from a large sample and supports statistical generalization (Dillman et al., 2014). The questionnaire employs multi-item Likert-type scales adapted from established studies to ensure content validity and comparability with prior research.

Population and Sampling

The target population of this study comprises women entrepreneurs who own and actively manage small and medium-sized enterprises registered with the Trade Ministry of Iraq. Focusing on formally registered entrepreneurs ensures that respondents have legal business status and are operating within the recognized entrepreneurial ecosystem. In line with Global Entrepreneurship Monitor guidelines, only women who had been operating their businesses for at least 42 months were included, thereby capturing ventures that had moved beyond the nascent stage and allowing a more meaningful assessment of business success.

A probability sampling approach was adopted to enhance representativeness and reduce selection bias. Lists of registered women entrepreneurs were used as sampling frames where available, and respondents were randomly selected within accessible networks. Sample size adequacy was assessed using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table and further verified through the ten-times rule for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The final usable sample of 493 respondents exceeds these minimum requirements, providing sufficient statistical power for hypothesis testing.

Instrument Development

All constructs were measured using multi-item scales adapted from established studies in entrepreneurship and management literature to ensure content validity. Items were slightly contextualized to reflect the Iraqi environment while preserving their original conceptual meaning. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, which is widely accepted for measuring latent psychological and perceptual constructs (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020).

Socio-cultural Factors: Socio-cultural factors captured perceived cultural norms, gender role expectations, religious influence, and societal acceptance of women in business. Items were

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adapted from prior studies examining cultural constraints and social norms in women entrepreneurship (Nasir et al., 2019; Badghish et al., 2023; Banu et al., 2021).
Government Support: Government support measured respondents' perceptions of training programs, policy support, access to business information, regulatory facilitation, and government-backed initiatives. Items were adapted from Jakovljevic et al. (2019) and Feng et al. (2023).

Financial Support: Financial support assessed access to bank loans, microfinance, grants, venture capital, and ease of obtaining financing. Items were adapted from Nasir et al. (2019), Singh and Dash (2021), and Al-Kwifi et al. (2020).
Self-Motivation: Self-motivation captured persistence, resilience, commitment, and internal drive to overcome business challenges. Measurement items were adapted from Singh et al. (2017) and Faisal and Al-Rasheed (2021).
Family Support: Family support measured emotional encouragement, financial assistance, involvement in business activities, and approval from family members. Items were adapted from Qazi et al. (2022) and Khan et al. (2021).
Women Entrepreneurs' Success: Entrepreneurial success was operationalized using both financial and non-financial indicators, including profitability, sales growth, business stability, personal satisfaction, and perceived achievement of goals, following Simba et al. (2022) and Staniewski and Awruk (2019).

Prior to the main survey administration, a pilot study was conducted with a small group of women entrepreneurs in Iraq to assess the clarity, wording, and contextual appropriateness of the questionnaire items. The purpose of the pilot testing was to ensure that the instrument was understandable, culturally suitable, and capable of capturing the intended constructs. Feedback obtained from participants resulted in minor refinements in wording and sequencing of several items to enhance comprehension. Reliability analysis performed on the pilot data indicated that Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The results of the pilot study confirmed that the instrument was suitable for large-scale data collection.

Table 1
The Reliability Average Variance Extracted

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha (Standardized)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Business Success (BS)	0.988	0.988	0.847
Family Support (FAM)	0.968	0.962	0.818
Financial Support (FS)	0.808	0.816	0.570
Government Support (GS)	0.838	0.783	0.685
Socio-Cultural (SC)	0.882	0.882	0.598
Self-Motivation (SM)	0.873	0.876	0.612

Ethical approval for the study was obtained prior to data collection. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from each respondent before completing the questionnaire. Participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential and that the data would be used exclusively for academic research purposes. These procedures were implemented in line with established ethical standards for social science research (Israel & Hay, 2006).

Data Analysis Technique
The study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software to analyze the data and test the proposed research model. PLS-SEM is particularly appropriate for prediction-oriented research, complex models involving mediation, and studies conducted in emerging economy contexts where data normality cannot be assumed (Hair et al., 2022). Furthermore, PLS-SEM is suitable for analyzing relationships among latent constructs measured by multiple indicators.

Data analysis followed a two-stage approach. First, the measurement model was evaluated to assess indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Indicator reliability was confirmed through standardized factor loadings, while internal consistency was assessed using composite reliability values. Convergent validity was established through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity was examined using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio.

Second, the structural model was evaluated by examining path coefficients, their statistical significance, and explanatory power. Significance testing was performed using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess the amount of variance explained in the endogenous constructs, while effect size (f^2) values were examined to determine the relative impact of each exogenous variable. Predictive relevance of the model was evaluated using Stone–Geisser's Q^2 obtained through blindfolding procedures. The mediating role of family support was tested using bootstrapped indirect effects in accordance with the recommendations of Preacher and Hayes (2008). Mediation was established when the indirect effect was statistically significant and the confidence intervals did not include zero.

Results
Descriptive Analysis
The descriptive statistics reveal that most respondents are between 25 and 44 years old, possess at least secondary or post-secondary education, and operate predominantly in service-oriented and manufacturing sectors. These patterns are consistent with prior evidence from developing economies showing that women entrepreneurs tend to concentrate in relatively low-capital, locally oriented industries with modest growth potential (Brush et al., 2019; Terjesen & Amorós, 2010).

The high proportion of sole proprietorships and micro/small enterprises confirms the prevalence of necessity-driven or survival-oriented entrepreneurship among women, rather than opportunity-driven, high-growth ventures. This mirrors global findings that women-owned firms are more likely to remain small and under-capitalized, particularly in contexts characterized by institutional fragility (Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Jennings & Brush, 2013).

Notably, more than three-quarters of respondents reported access to some form of training or mentorship. However, the modest effect of government support observed later suggests that the presence of programs alone does not guarantee effectiveness. This discrepancy reinforces arguments that program quality, relevance, and implementation capacity matter more than mere availability (Khan et al., 2021; Meyer & Peng, 2016).

Table 2
Demographics Details (n=493)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age Group	18–24	75	15.2
	25–34	174	35.3
	35–44	169	34.3
	45 Years and above	75	15.2
Marital Status	Single	160	32.5
	Married	295	59.8
	Single Mother	37	7.5
Level of Education	Primary education	33	6.7
	Secondary education	116	23.5
	Diploma	114	23.1
	Master	94	19.1
	PhD	90	18.3
	Professional Certificate	46	9.3
Type of Business	Service-Oriented business	189	38.3
	Manufacturing	129	26.2
	Other	175	35.5
Experience	1–3 Years	180	36.5
	4–6 Years	162	32.9
	7–10 Years	70	14.2
	More than 10 Years	77	15.6
	Other/Unspecified	4	0.8
Number of Employees	Self-Employed (No employees)	151	30.6
	1–5 Employees	54	11.0
	6–10 Employees	197	40.0
	More than 11 Employees	91	18.5
Family Support in Business	Sole Proprietorship	271	55.0
	Family Business	128	26.0
	Other	94	19.1
Ownership Type of Business	Sole Proprietorship	397	80.5
	Family Business	89	18.1
	Other	6	1.2
Access to Business-Related Training or Mentorship	Yes	370	75.1
	No	123	24.9

Before estimating the model, preliminary checks were completed to support the suitability of the data for multivariate analysis. In particular, collinearity diagnostics indicate acceptable tolerance and VIF values, supporting the assumption that the predictor constructs do not exhibit problematic multicollinearity. These results should be reported as Table 2 (Collinearity statistics: tolerance and VIF).

Table 3
Collinearity Statistics

	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		
Financial Support	0.588	1.702
Government Support	0.445	2.246
Socio Cultural	0.98	1.021
Family Support	0.339	2.951
Self-Motivation	0.966	1.035

The pattern of direct effects observed in this study reveals a clear ordering among the determinants of women entrepreneurs' business success in Iraq, in which relational and socially embedded resources outweigh individual-level psychological attributes and formal institutional mechanisms. This configuration challenges mainstream entrepreneurship models that privilege personal agency and instead supports context-sensitive perspectives emphasizing embeddedness, power structures, and informal institutions (Ahl, 2006; Jennings & Brush, 2013; Brush et al., 2019).

The strong positive relationship between family support and business success underscores the central role of the household as an economic and governance unit in fragile and patriarchal contexts. Rather than operating as autonomous actors, women entrepreneurs appear to be deeply embedded within family systems that shape access to resources, legitimacy, and decision-making authority. Family support functions simultaneously as a source of emotional reinforcement, a channel for financial and labor resources, and a legitimizing force that reduces social resistance toward women's market participation. This finding is consistent with prior studies showing that family encouragement, spousal support, and extended-family involvement significantly enhance women's entrepreneurial persistence and performance (Welsh et al., 2021; Qazi et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2021). Similar patterns have been reported in other developing and collectivist societies, where family approval often determines whether women can enter and sustain business activities (Cardella et al., 2020; Simba et al., 2022). The magnitude of the effect observed in this study suggests that family support is not merely a complementary factor but a foundational condition for business viability. From a theoretical standpoint, this extends Social Capital Theory by demonstrating that strong-tie networks can substitute for weak market-supporting institutions (Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), while also challenging Resource-Based View assumptions that firms independently own and control strategic resources (Barney, 1991). Instead, resources in this context appear to be collectively governed and relationally accessed.

Financial support exhibits a strong positive association with business success, reaffirming extensive evidence that access to capital remains a fundamental constraint for women entrepreneurs in developing economies (Carter et al., 2015; Singh & Dash, 2021; Nasir et al., 2019). Financial resources enable investment in inventory, equipment, and marketing, and help stabilize cash flows. However, the explanatory power of financial support is lower than that of family support, suggesting that capital alone does not guarantee performance improvements. Similar conclusions have been reached by Simba et al. (2022) and Feng et al. (2023), who show that women's access to finance produces uneven outcomes depending on household and social conditions. This pattern implies that financial resources constitute potential value rather than realized value, with their productivity contingent upon the presence of enabling social structures. Women who obtain external finance but lack family backing may face constraints related to mobility, household responsibilities, or intra-household bargaining, which can limit effective resource utilization (Khan et al., 2021; Welsh et al., 2021). The finding therefore supports a relational extension of RBV in which the value-creation capacity of resources is conditioned by social context rather than assumed to be universal.

Socio-cultural factors demonstrate a significant but comparatively modest positive relationship with business success. This indicates that supportive cultural norms facilitate women's entrepreneurship by lowering psychological barriers and enhancing social acceptance, but they do not directly generate competitive advantage. Prior research similarly suggests that culture primarily shapes entrepreneurial entry and legitimacy rather than post-entry performance (Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017; Terjesen & Amorós, 2010). Studies in Middle Eastern and conservative contexts show that when women's entrepreneurship is socially accepted, women are more likely to persist in business and pursue growth-oriented activities (Badghish et al., 2023; Banu et al., 2021). At the same time, the relatively smaller effect size observed in this study implies that culture operates as an enabling background condition rather than a proximate driver of performance. This helps reconcile mixed findings in the literature, where some studies report strong cultural effects and others find weak or insignificant relationships (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). The Iraqi evidence suggests that culture influences success indirectly through its impact on family attitudes, institutional responsiveness, and women's self-perceptions.

Government support displays a statistically significant yet substantively weak direct effect on business success. This mirrors findings from several developing economies where government entrepreneurship programs exist but generate limited firm-level impact (Khan et al., 2021; Rafiki & Nasution, 2019). Institutional theory offers a useful explanation: in weak institutional environments, formal policies often lack effective implementation, monitoring, and alignment with local needs (Meyer & Peng, 2016). Similar studies report that bureaucratic complexity, corruption, and poor targeting dilute the effectiveness of government support for women entrepreneurs (Cardella et al., 2020; Nasir et al., 2019). The Iraqi evidence therefore supports the view that government support may serve more as a symbolic signal of legitimacy than as a substantive performance-enhancing mechanism. This interpretation is consistent with research suggesting that institutional endorsement becomes impactful mainly when reinforced by family and community support (Welsh et al., 2021).

Perhaps the most theoretically provocative result is the negative direct association between self-motivation and business success. This contradicts dominant entrepreneurship theories that portray motivation as inherently beneficial (Singh et al., 2017; Staniewski & Awruk, 2019). However, emerging evidence from constrained contexts suggests that high personal drive does not always translate into positive outcomes when structural barriers remain strong (Khan et al., 2021; Simba et al., 2022). In patriarchal settings, highly motivated women may push against restrictive norms, increasing exposure to social sanctions, family conflict, and psychological strain, which can undermine performance. Feminist entrepreneurship scholars have long argued that individualistic models obscure power relations and overestimate the capacity of agency to overcome structural inequality (Ahl, 2006; Jennings & Brush, 2013). The current finding reinforces this critique by showing that motivation, in isolation, may become a source of tension rather than advantage.

Taken together, the direct effects reveal that women's entrepreneurial success in Iraq is fundamentally relationally organized. Relational resources exert greater influence than material resources, which in turn outweigh contextual conditions and individual traits. This hierarchy is consistent with calls in recent literature to move beyond individual-centric explanations toward socially embedded models of women's entrepreneurship (Brush et al., 2019; Welsh et al., 2021). The findings therefore contribute to theory by positioning families and close social networks as central engines of entrepreneurial success rather than peripheral contextual factors.

Table 4
The direct relationships between the variables

Item	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
FAM -> BS	0.29	0.29	0.04	6.73	***
FS -> BS	0.37	0.37	0.06	6.49	***
FS -> FAM	0.68	0.68	0.05	13.42	***
GS -> BS	0.01	0.01	0.05	2.70	***
GS -> FAM	0.58	0.58	0.08	7.05	***
SC -> BS	0.16	0.16	0.04	4.22	***
SC -> FAM	0.09	0.09	0.05	1.83	**
SM -> BS	-0.12	-0.13	0.04	2.82	***
SM -> FAM	0.14	0.14	0.04	3.32	***

Analysis of Mediation Hypotheses

The mediation results in table 5 provide compelling evidence that family support functions as a central transmission mechanism through which multiple antecedents are converted into women entrepreneurs' business success in Iraq. Rather than operating merely as an additional explanatory variable, family support emerges as an essential relational conduit that activates, amplifies, or constrains the effectiveness of financial, governmental, socio-cultural, and motivational resources. This pattern deepens the explanatory power of both Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory by demonstrating that resources and capabilities do not automatically translate into performance; instead, they become productive when embedded within supportive family structures.

The strong and significant mediation of family support in the relationship between financial support and business success indicates that financial resources generate superior outcomes when families are actively involved. This finding suggests that families play a critical role in governing how financial capital is allocated, monitored, and utilized within women-owned ventures. Prior studies similarly report that women's access to finance is often mediated by household decision-making, spousal approval, and collective control of assets, particularly in developing and collectivist societies (Carter et al., 2015; Singh & Dash, 2021; Khan et al., 2021). Welsh et al. (2021) and Qazi et al. (2022) also show that family encouragement strengthens women's confidence to invest, take risks, and expand their businesses. The present findings extend this literature by empirically demonstrating that finance alone is insufficient; it is family-backed finance that yields performance gains. Theoretically, this supports a relational interpretation of RBV, in which the value of financial capital depends on its social embedding rather than its mere availability.

Table 5
Analysis of mediation hypotheses

	Original sample (O)	**Sample mean (M)**	**Standard deviation (STDEV)**	**T statistics (|O/STDEV|)**	**P values**
FS -> FAM -> BS	0.23	0.22	0.04	6.14	0.00
GS -> FAM -> BS	0.12	0.12	0.02	5.14	0.00
SC -> FAM -> BS	0.03	0.03	0.02	1.77	0.08
SM -> FAM -> BS	0.04	0.04	0.01	3.02	0.00

Family support also significantly mediates the relationship between government support and business success, indicating that institutional interventions become more effective when they enhance family-level legitimacy. Government programs may signal that women's entrepreneurship is socially acceptable, economically valuable, and worthy of investment. When families interpret such signals positively, they become more willing to provide financial assistance, operational help, and moral encouragement. Similar conclusions have been reached by studies showing that government initiatives influence women's entrepreneurial outcomes indirectly by shaping social perceptions rather than directly improving firm performance (Rafiki & Nasution, 2019; Cardella et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021). This mediation effect helps explain why the direct impact of government support is weak while its indirect impact is stronger. From an institutional perspective, this suggests that policies aimed at women entrepreneurs must engage not only individuals but also families and communities to achieve meaningful impact.

The mediation of family support between self-motivation and business success further clarifies the complex role of individual agency in constrained contexts. While self-motivation alone exhibits a negative direct association with success, it positively predicts family support, which in turn enhances performance. This pattern implies that motivated women are more likely to negotiate household roles, seek approval, and demonstrate commitment, thereby eliciting family backing. Once family support is secured, motivation becomes productive. This finding resonates with research suggesting that women's agency is relationally constituted and that individual drive becomes effective only when recognized and supported by close social networks (Singh et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2021; Simba et al., 2022). It also reinforces feminist critiques of entrepreneurship models that assume motivation operates independently of social context (Ahl, 2006; Jennings & Brush, 2013). Conceptually, motivation in this setting functions as a catalyst for mobilizing social capital rather than as a standalone performance driver.

By contrast, the mediation of family support between socio-cultural factors and business success is weak and only marginally significant. This suggests that culture influences entrepreneurial outcomes through broader structural pathways that extend beyond the family unit. Socio-cultural norms shape women’s access to education, labor markets, and institutional support, as well as societal expectations regarding gender roles, which collectively affect entrepreneurial opportunities (Terjesen & Amorós, 2010; Cabrera & Mauricio, 2017; Badghish et al., 2023). While families are certainly influenced by cultural norms, culture also operates at community, organizational, and institutional levels, which may explain the weaker mediation effect. This distinction highlights the multi-layered nature of context in women’s entrepreneurship, where some forces operate primarily at the micro (family) level and others at macro levels.

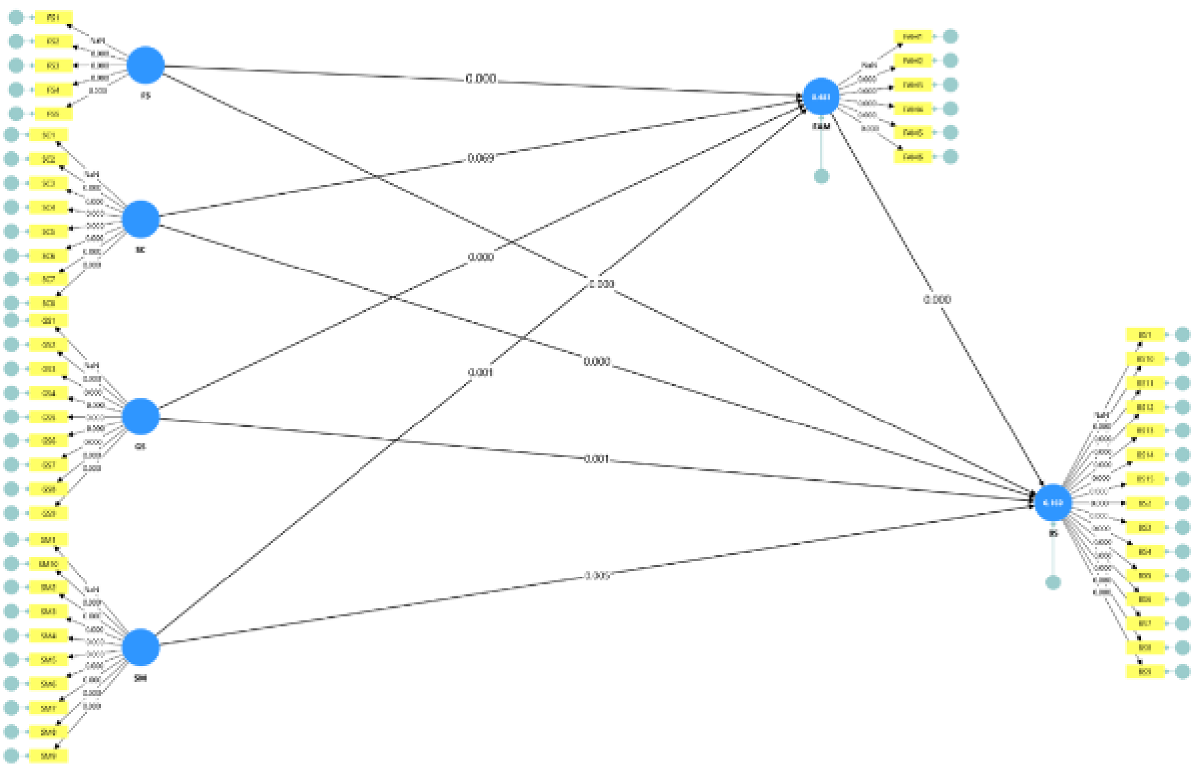

Figure 1: SEM Model Results

Conclusion
This study examined how socio-cultural factors, government support, financial support, and self-motivation influence women entrepreneurs’ business success in Iraq and investigated the mediating role of family support within these relationships. Using survey data from 493 women entrepreneurs and PLS-SEM analysis, the findings demonstrate that women’s entrepreneurial success in Iraq is shaped not only by access to resources and institutional

support, but also, critically, by the extent to which these inputs are embedded within supportive family environments.

The results show that family support and financial support are the most powerful direct predictors of business success, while socio-cultural factors also exert a positive influence. Government support, although statistically significant, displays a very small direct effect on success, suggesting that formal policy interventions alone may be insufficient to generate meaningful entrepreneurial outcomes. A particularly notable finding is the negative direct relationship between self-motivation and business success, coupled with a positive relationship between self-motivation and family support. This pattern suggests that in highly constrained environments, individual drive does not automatically translate into performance and may even expose women to heightened role strain and resistance unless buffered by family backing.

Importantly, the mediation analysis confirms that family support plays a central mechanistic role in translating financial resources, government support, and motivational energy into business success. In contrast, the indirect effect of socio-cultural factors through family support is weak, implying that culture influences success primarily through broader structural channels rather than exclusively through the family. Collectively, these findings reposition family support from a peripheral contextual variable to a core explanatory mechanism in women's entrepreneurship, particularly in fragile and patriarchal settings such as Iraq.
By integrating Resource-Based View and Social Capital Theory, this study extends current understanding of how tangible and intangible resources become productive assets only when anchored in trusted social relationships. The study therefore contributes theoretically, empirically, and contextually to women's entrepreneurship literature and provides a foundation for designing more socially grounded support systems for women entrepreneurs.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

First, this study challenges dominant women's entrepreneurship models that privilege individual-level traits (such as motivation and self-efficacy) as primary drivers of success. The negative direct effect of self-motivation on business success indicates that psychological capital alone may be insufficient, and potentially counterproductive, under conditions of institutional fragility and strong gender norms. This finding calls for a reconceptualization of motivation as a conditional resource, whose productivity depends on relational and social embedding rather than intrinsic intensity alone.

Second, the strong mediating role of family support suggests that family constitutes a distinct form of strategic resource that operates differently from conventional social capital constructs such as networks or associations. Future theory development should explicitly distinguish family-based social capital from broader network-based social capital, as the former is characterized by higher emotional density, normative authority, and legitimacy-conferring power—features that are especially salient in patriarchal societies.

Third, the weak mediation of socio-cultural factors implies that culture may operate as a structural constraint rather than a relational mechanism. This finding invites future models to treat socio-cultural context as a higher-order institutional layer that shapes opportunity structures, legitimacy thresholds, and rule enforcement, rather than assuming its effects flow primarily through interpersonal relationships.

Practical Implications

Government entrepreneurship policies in Iraq currently appear to emphasize formal instruments (training programs, financing schemes, and regulations). However, the minimal direct effect of government support on success indicates that such policies may suffer from limited reach, weak targeting, or implementation gaps. Policymakers should therefore shift from a program-centric approach to a household-embedded approach. Specifically, entrepreneurship programs should be redesigned to engage family members, particularly spouses and senior household decision-makers, through awareness sessions, joint training modules, or family-inclusive orientation workshops. This would directly target the legitimacy and approval mechanisms that condition women's entrepreneurial behavior. Furthermore, financial assistance programs should incorporate family-based screening and support mechanisms, such as allowing co-signing by family members, offering family-backed micro-guarantees, or structuring repayment models that recognize household income pooling. These adjustments would align formal financial systems with existing informal resource mobilization practices.

Non-governmental organizations, incubators, and development agencies should move beyond individual-centric training models and adopt relational capability-building approaches. For example, mentorship programs could pair women entrepreneurs with mentor families rather than only individual mentors, or facilitate peer-family learning circles where households share experiences in supporting women-led enterprises. Business advisory services should also include modules on managing family dynamics, negotiating household roles, and converting family involvement into productive organizational structures rather than informal labor arrangements that limit scalability.

The findings suggest that women entrepreneurs may benefit from strategically cultivating family alliances alongside building business skills. Rather than viewing family obligations solely as constraints, women entrepreneurs can reframe family members as potential collaborators, legitimacy providers, and resource brokers. This perspective encourages a shift from purely individualistic entrepreneurial identity toward a relational entrepreneurial identity that aligns with local socio-cultural realities.

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