



# **Antecedents of Women Involvement in Family Businesses: Evidence from Lebanon**

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## **Abstract**

Family businesses are the cornerstone of the country's economy. Women have achieved high-level equality in both education and employment and take a crucial role in a family business. This study seeks to investigate the factors that drive women to be involved in family-owned businesses. To do so a survey was developed and administered to 130 women who work at a family business using a convenient sampling technique. In this study we used the software SPSS to perform the descriptive statistics, and regression analysis. The results indicate that Firm-level factors, Family level factors, and Individual-level factors have a significant impact mediated by extraversion and religiously on women's involvement in the family business. Recommendations for family business are provided and further studies in different contexts are therefore recommended.

**Keywords:** Family business, Women, involvement, Lebanon.

## **1. Introduction**

According to the Lebanese ministry of Economy and Trade, 90% of enterprises currently active in Lebanon can be categorized as SMEs. Family businesses constitute the majority of

the SMEs in Lebanon. The question of family business succession has seen considerable interest in the body of literature.

Family businesses succession models have received considerable attention in the literature. Family businesses battle to be continual over different ages. As business owners watch their kids grow up, they may dream of the day when their posterity can join the company as a team and ensure its continuing success.

For example, Gilding et al. (2015) investigated the antecedent of succession planning within the family business. They found that there are 4 outcomes of succession planning, e.g., institutionalization, implosion, imposition, and individualization. Furthermore, Mokhber et al. (2017) found that the performance of a family business is closely related to the preparation level of heirs and the relationship between family and business members

Women and family businesses are topics that also received considerable attention in numerous studies. Most importantly this field is very important and will receive more attention in underdeveloped countries. Kubíček & Machek (2019) noted that women play an integral role in family-owned businesses through their roles as regular employees or supportive mothers and daughters. Although historically their involvement was limited to some extent, in recent decades, female CEOs represented more than 15% of the fortune 500 companies <sup>1</sup> and more than 24 % of American family businesses<sup>2</sup>. These numbers clearly stated that the future might be witnessing increased female involvement in family-owned businesses.

Moreover, the study of family business succession in Lebanon has also been investigated. For example, Fahed-Sreih & Djoundourian (2006) found that older firms in Lebanon are more inclined to use participatory decision-making processes. In other words, older firms tend to have formal meetings to prepare and execute business plans. Most importantly the same authors mentioned that 75% of these firms consider female ownership acceptable and that they would accept a female to be a CEO.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to test a theoretical model that consists of 3 independent variables i.e., firm, family, and individual levers, the mediating effect of extraversion and religiosity on women's involvement in family businesses. These variables have been extensively investigated in the literature (Ajzen, 1991; Dell & Dohse, 2008; Kickul, 2010; Dhaliwal, 2000; Karatas-Özkan, 2011).

In other words, the objective of this study is to:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statista.com/chart/13995/female-ceos-in-fortune-500-companies/> (accessed April 10, 2022)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.familybusinesscenter.com/resources/family-business-facts/> (accessed April 10, 2022)

- To test the relationship between firm-level factors mediated by extraversion and religiously the involvement of women in a family business.
- To test the relationship between family-level factors mediated by extraversion and religiously the involvement of women in a family business.
- To test the relationship between individual-level factors mediated by extraversion and religiously the involvement of women in a family business.
- To evaluate the success of family business whether women are involved or not.

Therefore, the overall purpose of the current study is to explore factors influencing women's involvement in Lebanese family firms and to identify whether this involvement has a role in the business continuum or not. While there has been a shortage in research that undertake women and family business issues in the Lebanese market; which is formed of many different religions; despite the fact that, women have been playing an important role in this sector. Hence the examination can be a contribution to filling an existing gap in Lebanese family business.

## **2. Literature review**

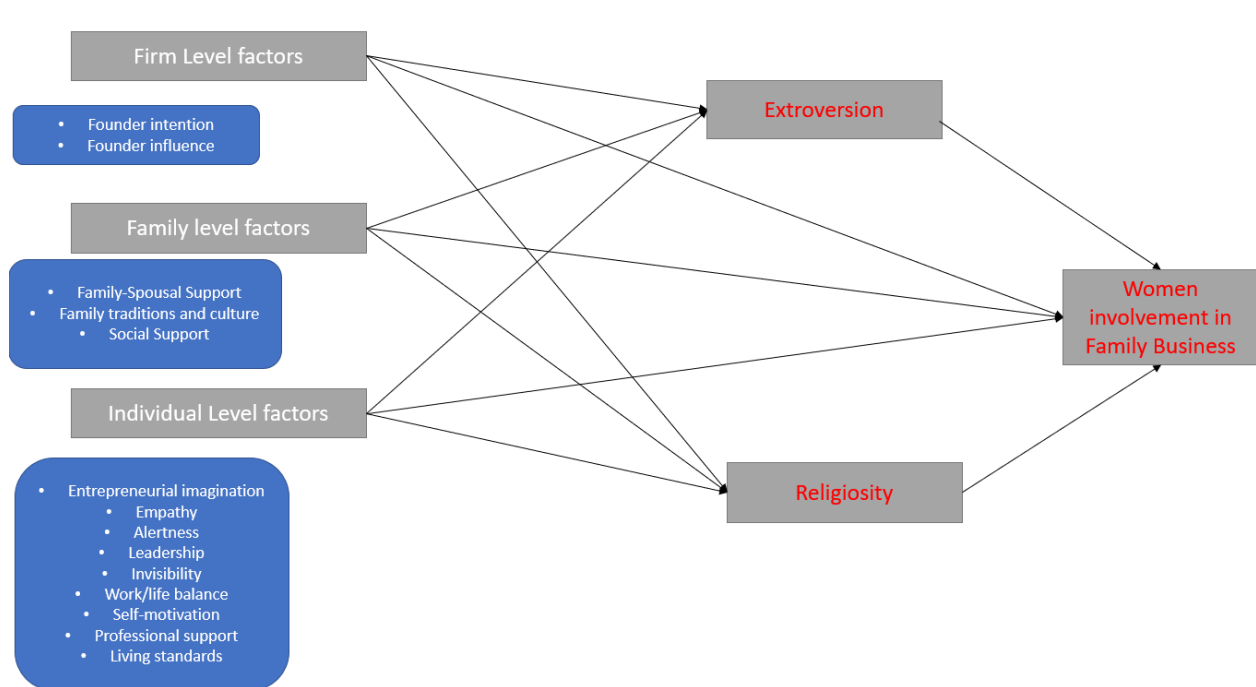
Sonfield (2012) performed a study on a sample of 811 family business companies in 8 different countries. The target was to test the relationship between males and females on the issue of gender discrimination. The result was that some factors like family conflicts, financial analysis, and management style didn't affect the percentage of female owners. On the contrary, Dianne and Welsh (2018) Studied the Business-family interface and the performance of women entrepreneurs. They compared women involved in the family business in two different countries Turkey (a less economically advanced country) and Morocco (a more economically advanced country). They studied the firm performance relative to women's involvement in two measurements enrichment (financially) and interference (morally). The results were that financial support has a positive effect on the family business performance in Morocco while in contrast; the moral support has a positive effect on turkey. D'Amato (2017) did a study on women's performance in family businesses. This study aimed to look at family business status concerning its gender diversification achievements. 88 Italian samples of wire firms during 2007-2014. The result was that women in family firms do not influence the firm even if they have high positions. And that her work is under the supervisor of the family.

Moreover, Campopiano (2017) conducted a study on the progress and challenges of women's involvement in the family firm. The results showed that according to the drivers-behavior-outcomes framework the greater focus to characterize women's involvement in family firms was on features, relationships, governance issues, and norms. A similar study by Constantinidis et al. (2017) stated the role of Moroccan women in family business success. The sample of the study consists of 60 businesswomen in Morocco. The study revealed that the role of some factors such as the type of family support, the diversity of women's practices, and the professional responsibilities are dependent on social class and background situation. Finally, Mari (2016) conducted a study on Family embeddedness and business performance. This study aimed to research how the family may influence the role of women in business. They found that women take advantage of family relationships when entering work to balance work and family life, thus helping her to show how strong the relationship between firm performance and being businesswomen.

As a result, most of the literature conducted in this section concluded that firm-level, family level, and individual level are almost always interlinked with women's involvement in the family business as the most frequently studied variable. Hence, our objective is to examine the mechanism by which they affect each other. Therefore, we depict the following research model that connects all the variables examined in the literature review in a structured and visually organized way (figure 1). In addition, Extraversion and religion are factors that control the role of women in the Arab world in general and Lebanon in particular. particularly, Hachana et al. (2018) examined the personality traits associated with entrepreneurial success and found that emotional stability, openness to experience and conscientiousness are related to entrepreneurial success. Moreover, Boz and Ergeneli (2014) found a direct relationship between father parenting styles on women to become entrepreneur. Moreover, Janowski & Szczepańska-Przekota (2022) found that the most effective variable to anticipate entrepreneurial effectiveness is the trait of extraversion.

Furthermore, religiosity is indeed another factor that might impact family business succession. For example, Harjoto & Rossi (2019) found that religiosity and female representation on the board is positively related to corporate social responsibility, and CEO's personal religiosity positively affects the firm's CSR performance. Bizri (2016) found some specific traits related to middle eastern countries, for example familial stewardship. Dana (2021) also noted that people from different religious backgrounds have unlike propensities to become

entrepreneurs. Based on these studies we included the variable religiosity in the research model.



**Figure 1: Research Model**

### 3. Methodology

Women play a vital role in a family business; although practically their role is invisible to the researchers, family business, and Lebanese culture. Thus, surveying women's role in Lebanese family business through the perspective of how women's involvement is affected by the firm, family, and individual levels and studying such factors can be of significant interest to various groups of researchers to understand the involvement of women in family business dynamics and some of the rules which govern them.

To verify the relationship between the independent variables (firm-level, family level, individual level), and the dependent variable (women's involvement in the family business) we used the cross-sectional survey technique to collect data (see appendix 1). The study was conducted at the different family businesses in different regions within Lebanon.

Using a survey as the method of data collection; the primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Questionnaires were administered directly to the chosen sample of the study to measure the outcome of the above-mentioned hypotheses using statistical methods and then the results are interpreted. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed to the target population (Women in Family Business) and a total of 102 questionnaires were

completed and returned. Questionnaires are categorized 6 parts where parts one consists of questions related to demographic variables, part two consists of questions related to firm-level, part three consists of questions related to family level, part four consists of questions related to the individual level, part five consists of questions related to mediators, part six consist of questions related to women involved in the family business.

## **4. Findings**

### *4.1. Reliability Test*

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for our items are above 0.7 suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of **Extraversion** for example is 0.884, which means that 88.4% of the variability in a composite score (by combining those seven items) would consider reliable. While Cronbach's alpha coefficient of **Social Support** for example was less than 0.7.

### *4.2. Validity Test*

All KMO values were greater than 0.5. So, we conclude that the analysis provides evidence of convergent validity (see table 2). (Bryman A. , 2011) defined Validity as the fact that “a measure of a concept really measures that concept”. For validity, two measures calculated: the Kraiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of Sphericity. KMO ranges from 0 to 1, all values greater than 0.5 are considered acceptable. In addition, Bartlett's measure tests the null hypothesis that the original correlation matrix is an identity matrix, for factor analysis to work the test should be significant (have significant value less than 0.05). The Sig. value for this analysis leads us to reject the null hypothesis (all p-values were less than 0.05) and conclude that there are correlations in the data set that are appropriate for factor analysis

**Table 2: KMO and Sig. of BTS**

Variable		KMO	Significance (p-value) for Bartlett's test of Sphericity
Firm level	Founder Intention to Accept a woman	0.691	0.000
	Founder Influence	0.709	0.000
Family level	Family-Spousal Support	0.751	0.000
	Family Traditions & Culture	0.615	0.000
	Social Support	0.623	0.000
Individual level	Entrepreneurial Imagination	0.664	0.000
	Empathy	0.646	0.000
	Alertness	0.722	0.000
	Leadership	0.6	0.000
	Invisibility	0.739	0.000
	Balancing work/life	0.717	0.000
	Self-Motivation	0.666	0.000
	Professional support	0.6	0.000
	Standard of living	0.667	0.000
Extraversion		0.815	0.000
Religion		0.748	0.000
Women's Involvement in Family Business		0.757	0.000

Moreover, from the frequency tabulations of the demographic characteristics of women involved in family business, it was revealed that the majority (45.1%) of the respondents were between the ages of 18 to 30, the majority (66.67%) has a bachelor's degree, the majority (58.85%) are Lebanese, the identity of the founder of the family business the majority (38.24%) are the fathers and majority (62.75%) has a monthly income between \$1000 and \$2000, this indicates that the sample is representative

#### *4.3. Multiple regression*

The 4 independent variables are correlated (Founder Intention to Accept a woman, Founder Influence, Extraversion, and Religion) with the dependent variable, Women Involvement in Family Business ( $R = 0.519$ ). Founder Intention to Accept a woman, Founder Influence, Extraversion and Religion explain 51.9% of the variance in Women's Involvement in Family Business ( $R^2 = 0.270$ ). The result shows that Founder's Intention to accept a woman, Founder

Influence, and Extraversion correlate positively and significantly, where Religion is not so correlated.

***Women involvement in family business***

$$= 0.084 + 0.243 * (\text{Founder Intention to Accept a woman}) \\ + 0.144 * (\text{Founder Influence}) + 0.248 * (\text{Extraversion}) \\ + 0.059 * (\text{Religion}) + e(\text{error})$$

The 5 independent variables are correlated (Family-Spousal Support, Family Traditions & Culture, Social Support, Extraversion, and Religion) with the dependent variable, Women Involvement in Family Business (R = 0.494). Family-Spousal Support, Family Traditions & Culture, Social Support, and Extraversion and Religion explain 49.4% of the variance in Women's Involvement in Family Business (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.244). Social Support and Extraversion variables are significantly influencing the involvement of women in Family Business.

We get the following model:

***women involvement in family business***

$$= 1.616 - 0.006 * (\text{Family - Spousal Support}) + 0.047 \\ * (\text{Family Traditions \& Culture}) + 0.277 * (\text{Social Support}) \\ + 0.185 * (\text{Extraversion}) + 0.059 * (\text{Religion}) + e(\text{error})$$

The 9 independent variables are correlated (Entrepreneurial Imagination, Empathy, Alertness, Invisibility, Self-Motivation, Professional support, Standard of living, Extraversion, and Religion) with the dependent variable, Women Involvement in Family Business (R = 0.609). Entrepreneurial Imagination, Empathy, Alertness, Invisibility, Self-Motivation, Professional support, Standard of living, Extraversion, and Religion explain 37.1% of the variance in Women's Involvement in Family Business (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.371). The result shows that Empathy and Invisibility correlate positively and significantly, while Entrepreneurial Imagination, Alertness, Self-Motivation, Professional support, Standard of living, Extraversion, and Religion value are not so correlated.

***women involvement in family business***

$$= -0.101 + 0.185 * \text{Entrepreneurial Imagination} + 0.201 \\ * \text{Empathy} + 0.040 * \text{Alertness} + 0.188 * \text{Invisibility} - 0.015 \\ * \text{Self - Motivation} + 0.141 * \text{Professional support} + 0.069 \\ * \text{Standard of living} + 0.115 * \text{Extraversion} + 0.062 * \text{Religion} \\ + e(\text{error})$$



#### 4.4. Hypotheses Testing

The analysis finds that part of the hypotheses is supported, where hypotheses are either rejected or accepted at the significance level of 0.05. Results of the hypotheses testing are summarized in table 3.

**Table 3: Summary of Hypotheses Testing**

Hypothesis	Factors	Result
H1: Firm-level factors have a significant impact mediated by extraversion on women's involvement in family business.	Founder Intention to Accept a woman	Supported
	Founder Influence	Supported
H2: Family level factors have a significant impact mediated by extraversion on women involvement in family business.	Family-Spousal Support	Not supported
	Family Traditions & Culture	Not supported
	Social Support	Supported
H3: Individual-level factors have a significant impact on women involvement in family business.	Entrepreneurial Imagination	Not supported
	Empathy	Supported
	Alertness	Not supported
	Invisibility	Supported
	Self-Motivation	Not supported
	Professional support	Not supported
	Standard of living	Not supported

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

As the circumstances surrounding the women's entry into the family business usually revolved around ideas of business needs and women's availability. The incentives to enter the family business sometimes came from the women, other times it was obligatory to propose. It has been proved over again that the drivers: Founder Intention to Accept a woman, Founder Influence, Family-Spousal Support, Family Traditions & Culture, Social Support,

Entrepreneurial Imagination, Entrepreneurial Imagination, Empathy, Alertness, Invisibility, Self-Motivation, Professional support, Standard of living, Extraversion and Religion formed the basis behavior to determine the entry of women in the family business. The results showed that the factors Balancing work-life and leadership at the individual level are not significantly affected women involved in the family business. The current study demonstrates that all three levels were significantly correlated in a way that they have a direct effect on women entering family business. The results show a positive relationship between Firm-level factors on women involved in a family business, which is consistent in this regard with the results of several recent studies (Sonfield and Lussier, 2012; St-Arnaud, 2018). The results have revealed the positive effect of family-level factors on women involved in a family business and in this case, again the result is consistent with previous studies (Campopiano et al., 2017; Constantinidis, 2017).

Also, as for individual-level factors, seven out of nine positively affected women involved in family business which is consistent in this regard with the results of several recent studies (Ramadani, 2017, Samara, 2019 ). As for the factors ‘Balancing work-life’ and ‘leadership’ the result of the study showed that they are not significantly affected women involved in a family business this is not consistent with the study by Michela Mari (2016) where ‘Balancing work-life’ has a positive impact on women involved in family business.

This study suggested that family business should encourage an environment that helps monitor the three concepts and their interrelations as considered. Family businesses are an essential source of economic growth for Lebanon by transferring a wealth of capital, knowledge, and skills beyond generations.

This study has some limitation, first the convenient sampling method used in the study I certainly a limitation. Simple random sampling methods are for sure more reliable sampling methods. However, convenient sampling was used because of the scarcity of data on the specific population.

An additional limitation is the use of statistical methods. Although simple regression is valid in our study, because of the study include attitudinal variables, the use of structural equation modeling would have been a more accurate choice.

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Appendix I- Questionnaire

**Part 1: Demographic aspects**

<b>Age:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 18 – 30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31-35 <input type="checkbox"/> Above 35	<b>Education Level:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> High School <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> Masters <input type="checkbox"/> PHD	<b>Income:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$1000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 - \$2000 <input type="checkbox"/> Above \$2000
<b>Nationality:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Lebanese <input type="checkbox"/> Palestinian <input type="checkbox"/> Syrian <input type="checkbox"/> Others	<b>Identify the founder of the family business:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Father <input type="checkbox"/> Mother <input type="checkbox"/> Both Parents <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparents <input type="checkbox"/> Brother <input type="checkbox"/> Sister <input type="checkbox"/> Aunt <input type="checkbox"/> Uncle <input type="checkbox"/> Husband <input type="checkbox"/> Self	

Kindly use the following scale to answer the questions.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

(Please encircle the appropriate number against each statement)

**Part 2**

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
<b>Founder Intention to Accept a woman</b>					
2.1 I'm welcomed to work in the field of family business	1	2	3	4	5
2.2 You are allowed to move freely around the clock like your male family members.	1	2	3	4	5
2.3 Founder intention plays major role in choosing you as a women	1	2	3	4	5
2.4 Founder gender plays major role in choosing you as a female	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Founder Influence</b>					
2.5 Founder plays a major role in the management of the company's activities	1	2	3	4	5
2.6 Founder prepares one of the family members to receive his/her duties in the future	1	2	3	4	5
2.7 Founder affects the succession plan positively	1	2	3	4	5
2.8 Founder must have personal and administrative skills to ensure the succession process	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Family-Spousal Support</b>					
3.1 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to be independent at work	1	2	3	4	5
3.2 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to enter the job without formal barriers	1	2	3	4	5
3.3 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to be develop faster	1	2	3	4	5
3.4 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to be respectful	1	2	3	4	5
3.5 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to have a reasonable workload	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Family Traditions &amp; Culture</b>					

3.6 Sons had more ability to influence strategic decisions	1	2	3	4	5
3.7 Family undervalued my ability to assume leadership position	1	2	3	4	5
3.8 It was difficult to advance because men prevailed in the hierarchy of the company	1	2	3	4	5
3.9 The wishes of the older generation are obeyed	1	2	3	4	5
3.10 Family members of the older generation set the rules	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Social Support</b>					
3.11 My social connections were not professionally helpful	1	2	3	4	5
3.12 I share my feelings about work issue with family members	1	2	3	4	5
3.13 I feel comfortable talking about work issue in any manner I want	1	2	3	4	5
3.14 Others influence the way I feel	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Entrepreneurial Imagination</b>					
4.1 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to influence the future of the business	1	2	3	4	5
4.2 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to improve the business	1	2	3	4	5
4.3 A career as entrepreneur is attractive for me	1	2	3	4	5
4.4 Being an entrepreneur would entail great satisfaction forme.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Empathy</b>					
4.5 I feel as if my family's business problems are my own.	1	2	3	4	5
4.6 I do not feel a sense of belonging to my family business.	1	2	3	4	5
4.7 I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career as a part of my family business.	1	2	3	4	5
4.8 I do not feel "emotionally" attached to my family business.	1	2	3	4	5
4.9 It would be very hard for me to leave my family business now, even if I wanted to.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Alertness</b>					
4.10 The successor must have administrative and personal skills to ensure the success of succession process	1	2	3	4	5
4.11 The successor must have the ability to identify opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
4.12 The successor must have the ability to explore resources	1	2	3	4	5
4.13 The successor must have the ability to help employees to grow personally and professionally	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Leadership</b>					
4.14 The successor plays a key role in the management of the company's activities	1	2	3	4	5
4.15 The successor must have the ability to share decision making	1	2	3	4	5
4.16 I did not have role models to develop my leadership style	1	2	3	4	5
4.17 I face challenges very effectively	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Invisibility</b>					
4.18 The founder had doubts in my professional and leadership abilities	1	2	3	4	5
4.19 The older generation is highly supportive to the goals of the male younger generation	1	2	3	4	5
4.20 The older generation is very responsive to the needs of the male younger generation	1	2	3	4	5
4.21 Older family members are attentive to the concerns of male younger family	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Balancing work/life</b>					
4.22 My family life influence my work	1	2	3	4	5

4.23 My work influence my family life	1	2	3	4	5
4.24 I balance job related duties and home related duties	1	2	3	4	5
4.25 The demands of my work interfere with my home family life.	1	2	3	4	5
4.26 The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Self-Motivation</b>					
4.27 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to do the work I enjoy	1	2	3	4	5
4.28 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to do challenging tasks	1	2	3	4	5
4.29 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to work for family	1	2	3	4	5
4.30 I do not feel any obligation to pursue a career with my family business.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Professional support</b>					
4.31 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to develop professionally	1	2	3	4	5
4.32 I receive economic support from working at family business (loans, subsidies, others)	1	2	3	4	5
4.33 I receive non-economic support from working at family business (advice, education, training, others)	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Standard of living</b>					
4.34 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to gain a certain standard of living	1	2	3	4	5
4.35 For me, working in family business is an opportunity to have a competitive income	1	2	3	4	5
4.36 At this time, pursuing a career in my family business is a matter of necessity	1	2	3	4	5
4.37 It would be costly for me to leave my family business now.	1	2	3	4	5

## Part 5

<b>Extraversion</b>					
5.1 I feel comfortable around people	1	2	3	4	5
5.2 I make friends easily	1	2	3	4	5
5.3 I am skilled in handling social situations	1	2	3	4	5
5.4 I know how to captivate people.	1	2	3	4	5
5.5 I start conversations	1	2	3	4	5
5.6 I warm up quickly to others	1	2	3	4	5
5.7 I talk to lots of different people at parties	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Religion</b>					
5.8 Religion helps me to lead a better life	1	2	3	4	5
5.9 Saying my prayers helps me a lot	1	2	3	4	5
5.10 I believe that God helps me	1	2	3	4	5
5.11 I read the Holy books for inspiration and motivation.	1	2	3	4	5
5.12 I regularly spend some amount from my monthly income for charity/ sadaqah	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Women Involvement in a Family Business</b>					
6.1 My motivator or drive to make a leap into family business has been the need to achieve personal growth.	1	2	3	4	5
6.2 My motivator or drive to make a leap into family business has been the need to be recognized.	1	2	3	4	5
6.3 My motivator or drive to make a leap into family business has been the need to be satisfied (sense of self-worth).	1	2	3	4	5



6.4 My motivator or drive to make a leap into family business has been the need for economic payoff.	1	2	3	4	5
6.5 My motivator or drive to make a leap into family business has been the need to create supplement incomes for the family.	1	2	3	4	5
6.6 My motivator or drive to make a leap into family business has been the need of family business.	1	2	3	4	5
6.7 My motivator or drive to make a leap into family business has been the need to achieve personal growth.	1	2	3	4	5

**Thank you very much for your cooperation**