

## POPULAR SCIENCE SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Women-owned businesses are well recognized as important for economic growth and job creation. For example, in Poland, the percentage of female entrepreneurs among all self-employed businesses in 2011 was 35.1%. Unfortunately, they still face obstacles that tend to be gender specific

Work and family are intertwined areas of life for most people but they are especially interconnected for entrepreneurs in general and female business owners in particular. Female entrepreneurs frequently perceive their businesses as efforts entrapped with their family relationships and responsibilities (mother/wife vs. business owner) so their approaches in managing work-life balance are connected to the effect of the family.

Research on the relationships between work/business and family typically invokes work-family interface (WFI) theory. This research is particularly important in the case of women's entrepreneurship. The WFI framework is built across two dimensions: enrichment and interference. Enrichment is defined as a positive connection between the business and family domains, while interference is defined as a conflict between the two areas. These two constructs go from business-to-family or family-to-business so there are four distinct elements that are formed. For example, family problems may affect firm performance, but also business failures may have a negative effect on family life. On the other hand, business successes may lead to greater family happiness.

The family-to-business enrichment construct is often further divided into instrumental (organisational, financial) and affective (moral, emotional) family support components.

The main research project objective consists of two parts: (1) developing and testing a conceptual model that links all the WFI dimensions, and performance of firms headed by female entrepreneurs, to each other in all possible directions, within the framework of the WFI theory, while taking into account various country contexts and perspectives. Such a comprehensive model is lacking in the literature. The model will be based on three principal components: enrichment and interference stemming from the business-family interface, and firm performance; (2) using the results of the tests to enhance the WFI theory by extending it to female entrepreneurship in various country contexts.

The research will use quantitative methods. The main source of data will be questionnaire-based surveys conducted in six selected countries based on their various levels of socio-economic development (a random sample of 300 women entrepreneurs will be drawn in each country).

The planned research will be first to include in the model *both* enrichment items, family instrumental and affective support, and their relationships with firm performance.

What is also lacking in the literature is a comprehensive approach to studying the reverse links from firm performance to the enrichment/interference constructs. In my project, I will be testing such connections. Specifically, I will argue that firm performance may affect the enrichment and interference dimensions. For example, female entrepreneurs who achieve visible success (or failure) in their business endeavors may start being perceived by their family members differently (positively or negatively).

In general, male and female entrepreneurs do encounter similar obstacles and barriers in their business ventures. However, what differs female entrepreneurs from their male counterparts is that women face an additional, gender-related, challenge, namely a greater responsibility for coordination of their engagements between business and family. These gender-related impediments are different in different institutional and cultural systems. This project aims to find out how, from a theoretical perspective, all those country contexts influence women entrepreneurs across national settings. The results will be useful for further developing and applying programs to promote women-owned business ventures depending on the country's level of development.