UNRAVELING THE TAPESTRY OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Abstract - This thesis explores the landscape of female entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia, with a focus on the traditionally less-researched Northern and Southern regions, in addition to the more studied West, Central, and East areas. It seeks to understand the distinctive experiences, motivations, and challenges of Saudi women entrepreneurs within the context of their regional cultural, familial, and regulatory environments. Central to this study is the examination of family dynamics and societal norms. The research uncovers the dual role of family in entrepreneurship: while patriarchal norms pose barriers, supportive male family members, particularly husbands and fathers, emerge as key enablers. The impact of these dynamics varies across regions, reflecting differing degrees of adherence to traditional norms and patriarchal controls. The thesis also highlights the recent regulatory changes in Saudi Arabia, such as the modification of guardianship laws and the introduction of women's driving rights. These changes, although progressive, often clash with existing cultural and social norms, especially in less developed areas, affecting the entrepreneurial activities of Saudi women. A significant finding is the pervasive issue of sexual harassment and its detrimental impact on business growth and women's independence. Additionally, the research explores how women's past experiences shape their entrepreneurial identity, with a marked contrast between urban and rural areas.The thesis emphasizes the need for tailored policy interventions, recognizing the distinct challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in different Saudi regions. It suggests region-specific strategies, including public education campaigns, mentorship programs, financial incentives, and continued legal reform to support and empower these women. The research concludes by highlighting the resilience of Saudi women entrepreneurs and the necessity for ongoing support and recognition of their roles in the socio-economic landscape. It underscores the importance of these findings for policymakers and stakeholders in fostering a more equitable and inclusive entrepreneurial environment throughout Saudi Arabia.

Keywords - Entrepreneurship, Societal Norms, Family Dynamics, Patriarchal Norms, Female Empowerment.