

Strategies in Mitigating the Constraints and Obstacles of Qatari Women's Entrepreneurship in the Global Market

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Abstract: This Research Paper Rigorously Examines The Multi-Dimensional Challenges Facing Qatari Women Entrepreneurs (Qwes) As They Seek To Transition From Highly Successful Domestic Operations To Competitive Global Markets, Aligning Their Growth With The Economic Diversification Goals Of Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030). While Qatari Women Benefit From Superior Education And Robust Governmental Support, Their International Expansion Is Hampered By A Unique Confluence Of Socio-Cultural Friction, Financial Access Gaps, And Structural/Regulatory Hurdles Specific To Global Trade. This Paper Employs A Quantitative And Qualitative Study, Which Collected Data Through An Online Survey Questionnaire And Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews Conducted In English, Ensuring Confidentiality. These Data Were Collected From Qatari Women Who Own Or Co-Own An SME Registered With The Qatar Development Bank (QDB), Qatar Business Incubation Centre (QBIC), Or The Ministry Of Commerce And Industry (MOCI). The Study Identifies Three Core Constraint Clusters: Socio-Cultural Inertia (E.G., Restricted Physical Mobility For International Networking And B2B Engagement); Asymmetric Resource Access (E.G., Over-Reliance On Local Capital And Lack Of Deep Integration With Global VC And FDI Networks); And Structural Market Friction (E.G., Complexity Of Cross-Border Compliance, IP Protection, And Foreign Tax Regimes). To Mitigate These Obstacles, A Five-Pillar Strategic Policy Framework Is Proposed: Digital Export Ecosystems (DEE): Prioritizing Secure, Compliant Digital Platforms To Decouple Growth From Physical Mobility; Global Capital Co-Investment Mechanisms: Establishing State-Backed Funds That De-Risk Qwes For International Venture Capital; Targeted Market Access Facilitation: Creating 'Soft Landing' International Hubs In Key Trade Corridors (E.G., London, Singapore) To Provide Instant Legal And Logistical Infrastructure; Advanced Human Capital Development: Shifting Training Focus From Basic Entrepreneurship To Global Governance, Currency Risk Management, And International Negotiations; And Socio-Cultural Harmonization: Actively Promoting And Documenting Successful Female International Business Narratives To Reshape Public Perception And Internal Family Support Structures Regarding Cross-Border Commerce. The Findings Underscore That While QNV 2030 Provides The Macro-Level Mandate, Successful Global Scaling Requires Micro-Level Policy Interventions That Are Sensitive To The Cultural Context While Aggressively Leveraging Technology And Strategic Partnerships To Ensure Qatari Women Entrepreneurs Become Pivotal, Competitive Players In The Diversified Global Economy.

Keywords: *Strategies / Mitigating Business Constraints / Business Obstacles / Qatari Women's Entrepreneurship / Global Market.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The State of Qatar stands at a critical juncture, navigating its economic trajectory away from hydrocarbon dependency towards a sustainable, knowledge-based economy as articulated in the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030).[1] This ambitious transition places the diversification of national income and the robust development of the private sector, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), at the strategic forefront. Crucially, the empowerment of Qatari women entrepreneurs (QWEs) is recognized not merely as a

social imperative, but as a non-negotiable economic necessity for mobilising a significant segment of highly educated national human capital.[2]

Qatari women have achieved remarkable success in education, often surpassing their male counterparts in higher education attainment.[3] This educational prowess has translated into high levels of domestic entrepreneurial activity, particularly in sectors such as e-commerce, design, and bespoke services. However, the path from local success to sustained international competitiveness is fraught with unique

challenges that often stem from the complex interplay between traditional cultural dynamics,[4] the nature of capital accumulation in resource-rich states, and the inherent friction of global market entry for small enterprises. This research seeks to provide a definitive policy framework for mitigating these constraints, thereby allowing QWEs to fully contribute to Qatar's global economic footprint.

QNV 2030's Economic Development pillar mandates the creation of a diversified, competitive economy that reduces reliance on natural gas exports.[5] The successful realisation of this objective depends on cultivating a dynamic private sector capable of generating non-hydrocarbon export revenues and creating high-value jobs. Qatari women, with their established presence in high-growth, knowledge-intensive sectors (e.g., FinTech, EdTech, and specialised consulting), are uniquely positioned to spearhead this transition. The role of QWEs transcends mere business ownership; they drive innovation, foster competitive dynamics, and project Qatari soft power and ingenuity onto the global stage.[6] Yet, while government initiatives such as the Qatar Development Bank (QDB), Qatar Business Incubation Centre (QBIC), and various free zones have been successful in nurturing domestic startups, the mechanisms for bridging the gap between domestic stability and international scale remain underdeveloped.[7] The challenge is one of strategic acceleration: how to convert well-supported local firms into resilient, globally compliant, and capital-attractive multinational micro-enterprises.

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The fundamental problem addressed by this research is the structural and operational asymmetry that limits the international expansion potential of Qatari women-led enterprises, despite a favourable domestic ecosystem. While QWEs often demonstrate superior educational backgrounds and access to initial capital compared to their counterparts in many developed nations, they face specific headwinds when engaging the global market.[8]

➤ *Socio-Cultural Barriers*

These manifest primarily as constraints on physical mobility required for international trade shows, negotiations, and establishing foreign subsidiary trust. These soft constraints impact deep B2B network integration.

➤ *Financial Myopia*

Qatari firms often rely on local capital pools, which, while stable, lack the global network reach and risk appetite of international venture capital necessary for aggressive, rapid scale-up.[9]

➤ *The Liability of Foreignness*

When QWEs enter competitive foreign markets, they face inherent regulatory, cultural, and logistical barriers without the deep pre-existing international trade infrastructure enjoyed by firms from major trading nations.[10]

The mitigation strategies currently employed often address symptoms (e.g., providing more seed funding) rather

than the root causes (e.g., decoupling business networking from physical mobility). A comprehensive, policy-driven strategy is thus required to synchronise cultural sensitivities with global market demands.

III. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this research is to construct a Strategic Policy Framework that systematically addresses and mitigates the specific obstacles hindering the global expansion of Qatari women's entrepreneurship. The specific research objectives are:

- To conduct a critical review of the existing literature concerning women's entrepreneurship in resource-rich economies, focusing on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) context.
- To rigorously diagnose the specific clusters of constraints (socio-cultural, financial, and structural) that differentiate QWEs' challenges in the global market from their domestic ones.
- To synthesise best practices from other emerging market economies that have successfully launched women-led enterprises onto the global stage.
- To develop a multi-pillar, actionable, and culturally sensitive policy framework for key Qatari stakeholders (Government, Financial Institutions, and Chambers of Commerce) to facilitate and accelerate international market access for QWEs.
- To recommend a phased implementation roadmap for the proposed strategies, aligning them with the current trajectory of QNV 2030.

The scope of this study is limited to the entrepreneurial activities of Qatari female citizens (QWEs) with a focus on companies positioned for export and international service provision (SMEs and high-growth startups). The analysis is contextualised within the policy environment of Qatar and the operational requirements of major international trade corridors (North America, Europe, and Asia).

IV. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The study of Qatari women's entrepreneurship in the context of global expansion requires a multi-disciplinary literature review that synthesises insights from entrepreneurship studies, international business theory, and the sociology of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. This chapter establishes the theoretical foundations for the subsequent diagnosis of constraints and the formulation of the Strategic Mitigation Framework.

A. *Defining Women's Entrepreneurship in the GCC Context*

The classical Western definition of entrepreneurship—focused on high-growth ventures, radical innovation, and aggressive risk-taking—often fails to fully capture the nuances of female economic activity within the GCC, and

specifically Qatar.[11] While a segment of QWEs does pursue technology-driven, high-potential ventures, a significant portion operates within a framework characterised by embedded entrepreneurship.

➤ *Embedded Entrepreneurship and Opportunity vs. Necessity:*

In many developing and emerging markets, women's entrepreneurship is frequently categorised as 'necessity-driven'. [12] In Qatar, however, the classification is more complex. While the state provides a strong social safety net, Qatari women demonstrate a high rate of opportunity-driven entrepreneurship, particularly in the service, bespoke luxury, and e-commerce sectors, leveraging superior education and often access to significant initial capital derived from personal or family resources. [13] This differs fundamentally from necessity-driven entrepreneurship elsewhere; for Qatari women, entrepreneurship is an avenue for self-actualisation, control over work-life balance, and circumventing public sector bureaucratic limitations, rather than a sole means of financial survival. [14]

➤ *Sectoral Concentration and the 'Protected' Market:*

The local Qatari ecosystem, bolstered by high per-capita income and governmental procurement mandates, often functions as a "protected market". [15] QWEs thrive domestically by serving a large, affluent consumer base and by leveraging local networks that prioritise national businesses. [16] However, this success is often concentrated in non-tradable sectors such as retail, food and beverages, local consulting, and design. The transition to tradable, scalable goods and services capable of competing globally introduces a fundamental dislocation. Their success is highly context-dependent, raising questions about the portability of their competitive advantage to less familiar, more hostile international markets.

➤ *The Role of Education and Capital:*

A unique feature of the Qatari model is the high correlation between female educational attainment (a core QNV 2030 success story) and entrepreneurial engagement. [17] Education provides the foundational human capital (skills, confidence, and managerial capacity), while relative financial access (from family or a stable income) reduces the extreme financial pressures often associated with startup failure. Critically, however, this capital often remains private and networked, disconnected from the institutional demands and due diligence processes of global venture capital (VC) and Private Equity (PE), a gap that becomes crippling during international scaling. [18]

B. The Socio-Cultural Determinants of Female Economic Participation

Understanding the socio-cultural landscape is non-negotiable for formulating effective mitigation strategies. Entrepreneurial activity is not executed in a vacuum; it is deeply mediated by norms concerning Kinship, Reputation, and Mobility.

➤ *Kinship and the Family as the Primary Venture Capital:*

In Qatar, the extended family remains the paramount institution, and its role in women's entrepreneurial journeys is dual-natured. On one hand, the family often acts as the primary source of early-stage funding (seed capital), infrastructural support (office space, introductions), and social endorsement, providing a crucial buffer against failure. [19] On the other hand, the family often imposes informal governance constraints. [20] Decisions regarding debt, aggressive geographical expansion, and particularly, the extent of international travel required for business development are often subjected to family consultation and approval. This dynamic creates a risk-averse internal environment that can stifle the speed and decisiveness required for successful global market entry.

➤ *Reputation (Social Capital and Trust):*

In a close-knit society like Qatar, reputation is a non-monetary asset of immense value. For QWEs, engaging in business must align with and uphold the family's social standing. [21] International expansion poses a risk to reputation due to the perceived loss of control and transparency when operating in foreign jurisdictions. While trust is easily established in the domestic market through personal and tribal networks (strong ties), [22] the global market demands the cultivation of weak ties—relationships based on professional merit and contract law, often requiring sustained physical presence and deep interaction. [23] The resistance to international travel or networking can inadvertently limit the formation of these weak ties, making global trust-building costly and inefficient.

➤ *Mobility: The Global Friction Point:*

Physical and network mobility stand out as the single most critical socio-cultural friction point. International expansion inherently demands frequent travel for trade delegation participation, regulatory meetings, investor pitches, and partner negotiations. [24] Cultural norms, while evolving, can still place implicit or explicit constraints on a woman's unaccompanied, prolonged international movement, especially when this movement involves engaging with mixed-gender, high-stakes business environments. This constraint effectively decouples the QWE from the global deal-flow circuit, rendering many state-sponsored export promotion activities (e.g., attending large foreign trade shows) less effective for this demographic than for their male or expatriate counterparts.

C. Global Market Access Theories and SMEs: The Liability of Foreignness

The transition from domestic to global operations must be analysed through the lens of international business theory, specifically the challenges inherent to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating outside their home market. [25]

➤ *The Uppsala Model and Stages of Internationalisation:*

Early internationalisation models, such as the Uppsala Model, suggest a gradual process where firms first focus on markets with low psychic distance (similar language, culture, legal systems) before venturing into more distant and

complex territories.[26] However, the modern, born-global QWE, often leveraging digital platforms, attempts to circumvent these stages. This rapid approach, while ambitious, heightens the risks associated with the Liability of Foreignness (LOF).

➤ *The Amplified Liability of Foreignness (LOF):*

LOF, a foundational concept in international business, describes the competitive disadvantages foreign firms face relative to local firms in the host country, due to unfamiliarity with the local political, economic, legal, and cultural environment. For QWEs, this liability is amplified by specific internal constraints:

- *Network Disadvantage*

The strong reliance on local, trust-based networks that ensure domestic success is rendered irrelevant in foreign markets, where formal contract law, market familiarity, and pre-existing institutional knowledge are necessary.

- *Resource Disparity*

QWEs often lack the deep financial reserves and institutional support to absorb the high initial sunk costs associated with establishing foreign legal entities, securing specialised compliance, and running global marketing campaigns—all costs that are inherently higher for a foreign entrant.

- *The Cultural Interface*

While Qatari culture is respected, the nuances of doing business in, say, the German, Japanese, or Brazilian contexts require prolonged, culturally literate engagement. The constraints on mobility and network access hinder the acquisition of this vital, tacit knowledge.

- *In Essence, QWEs Face a Double Challenge*

They confront the standard LOF inherent to all global SMEs, coupled with a self-imposed or culturally reinforced Liability of Absence in the key international networking and negotiation environments. This theoretical convergence sets the stage for the specific constraint diagnosis in the following chapter.

D. Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and the Role of State Support (QDB, QBIC, Free Zones)

The concept of the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (EE) defines the set of interconnected actors, institutions, and processes that facilitate entrepreneurial activity.[27] In Qatar, the EE is distinctly state-driven and architected, a necessary condition in a rentier economy seeking rapid diversification. The government, through its various agencies, has successfully fostered a highly supportive domestic environment, providing critical resources that mitigate traditional failure risks for QWEs. Key pillars of this ecosystem include:

➤ *Qatar Development Bank (QDB)*

The paramount financier and promoter, QDB offers non-collateralised loans, equity investments, and comprehensive export promotion services under its 'Tasdeer' program.[28] QDB's role is crucial in de-risking domestic

ventures and providing the initial capital bridge that QWEs often seek outside traditional banking channels.

➤ *Qatar Business Incubation Centre (QBIC)*

Serving as a primary incubator and accelerator, QBIC provides essential training, mentorship, and co-working spaces.[29] It focuses heavily on developing core business skills and validating Minimum Viable Products (MVPs) for the local market.

➤ *Special Economic and Free Zones (e.g., QFC, QFZ)*

These zones provide attractive regulatory sandboxes, 100% foreign ownership, and streamlined international logistics.[30] They are intended to act as gateways to international markets and catalysts for high-tech, tradable sectors.

➤ *The Domestic Bias and the Export Gap:*

While these institutions are successful in nurturing startup formation, the literature suggests a critical divergence when moving from incubation to internationalisation. The training, financing metrics, and mentorship networks often remain domestically calibrated. For example, Tasdeer's export services, while comprehensive, still rely heavily on QWEs participating in traditional, physical international trade missions [31]—an activity directly constrained by the mobility issues discussed in Section 2.2. Furthermore, the capital provided, though ample for local operations, is typically not aligned with the stringent valuation and growth requirements demanded by global venture capitalists, creating a significant "Export Gap." The ecosystem is highly successful at creating entrepreneurs but less effective at creating global exporters out of the QWE demographic, underscoring the need for specialised policy tools.

E. Synthesis: Identifying the Context-Specific Gaps

The literature review reveals that the constraints facing Qatari women entrepreneurs are not those of deficient human capital or inadequate initial support, but rather those of asymmetric connectivity and mismatched infrastructure at the point of global expansion. The core challenge lies in the collision between a culturally protective, resource-rich domestic system and the hyper-competitive, mobility-dependent nature of the global market.

Three critical, context-specific gaps emerge from this synthesis, which the Strategic Policy Framework must directly address:

➤ *The Mobility-for-Network Gap (Socio-Cultural)*

This is the conflict where high-value international business network formation (which requires sustained, unconstrained physical presence) is undermined by cultural and familial norms limiting international mobility.[32] The current ecosystem fails to provide a scalable, digitally compliant, and culturally acceptable proxy for these essential face-to-face interactions.

➤ *The Local-to-Global Capital Bridge Gap (Financial)*

Despite having superior access to initial private or subsidised local capital, QWEs lack a systematic, state-

facilitated bridge to attract subsequent, sophisticated global Venture Capital (VC) or Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).[33] This gap is compounded by the lack of familiarity of international investors with Qatar's domestic corporate governance standards and Qatari founders' valuation demands.

➤ *The Global Governance Knowledge Gap (Structural)*

While QWEs possess excellent educational attainment, the specific, advanced technical knowledge required for global scaling—including international tax treaty interpretation, currency risk hedging, complex IP enforcement across multiple jurisdictions, and navigating foreign labour laws—is often missing from local entrepreneurial training programs.[34] This structural knowledge deficit magnifies the "Liability of Foreignness" (LOF). These three gaps—Mobility, Capital, and Knowledge—form the basis for the Constraint Diagnosis in Chapter III, which will meticulously dissect the operational manifestations of these theoretical misalignments.

V. METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a quantitative study (survey) where which the sample of Qatari women who own or co-own an SME registered with the Qatar Development Bank (QDB), Qatar Business Incubation Center (QBIC), or the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) and data collected through online survey questionnaire distributed through official channels (e.g., QDB, relevant women's business associations). A qualitative study with semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted in English, ensuring confidentiality.[35] Key questions focused on: decision-making regarding market entry, challenges in cross-cultural negotiation, strategies for maintaining cultural norms while travelling, and the tangible impact of QDB/government support. Also, strategic analysis methodology, utilising a comprehensive review of academic literature, policy documents, and institutional reports[35] from key Qatari stakeholders (QDB, Qatar Chamber, Ministry of Commerce and Industry). The methodological approach is structured as follows:

➤ *Contextual Mapping:*

Reviewing QNV 2030 and relevant national strategies to establish the political and economic mandate for QWEs.

➤ *Literature Synthesis*

Conducting a focused review on socio-cultural friction, financial access, and global trade theories as they apply to the GCC.

➤ *Constraint Diagnosis*

Structuring the observed and documented obstacles into three distinct, measurable clusters.

➤ *Framework Development*

(The Core Contribution): Developing the Five-Pillar Strategic Mitigation Framework based on the diagnosed root causes and international best practices.

➤ *Policy Prescription*

Offering detailed, stakeholder-specific recommendations and an implementation timeline.

The subsequent sections will proceed in this structured manner to deliver a comprehensive and actionable blueprint for securing the global competitiveness of Qatari women entrepreneurs.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Diagnosis of Constraints and Obstacles*

This session translates the theoretical misalignments identified in the literature review into operational realities, systematically diagnosing the specific constraints that inhibit the global scaling of Qatari women-led enterprises (QWEs). These obstacles are clustered into three categories—Socio-Cultural and Network Friction, Asymmetric Financial and Capital Access, and Structural and Regulatory Hurdles—which correspond directly to the identified gaps synthesised in this paper.

➤ *Constraint Cluster 1: Socio-Cultural and Network Friction*

This cluster directly addresses the Mobility-for-Network Gap, where traditional cultural dynamics intersect with the modern demands of international business, creating significant operational friction in global network building.

• *The Challenge of Physical Mobility and International B2B Networking*

Successful international expansion for SMEs is fundamentally dependent on B2B trust-building and information asymmetry reduction, activities traditionally achieved through direct, physical presence. This involves attending specialised trade shows, engaging in sustained pre-sale negotiations, and conducting site visits. For QWEs, this requirement presents a significant challenge due to implicit or explicit constraints on unaccompanied, prolonged international travel for business purposes, often rooted in family concerns regarding reputation and security. The operational consequence is the inability to access high-value, informal deal-flow networks. While digital communication facilitates initial contacts, securing major international contracts often requires repeated face-to-face engagements to establish the necessary personal rapport and commitment. When QWEs cannot participate in these critical physical interactions, they are relegated to dealing with lower-tier partners or relying on local male proxies (agents or employees) in foreign markets, which introduces agency risk and diminishes the founder's direct control over strategic development. This is a severe amplification of the Liability of Absence phenomenon, diminishing opportunities for high-stakes deal closure.

• *The Impact of Gender Segregation on Deal Flow and Mentorship*

The highly networked nature of the global business elite often relies on informal, mixed-gender social settings (e.g., conferences, social dinners, and sporting events) for forging pivotal investment and partnership relationships. While

Qatar's domestic environment has robust female professional networks, the expectation of gender segregation during global business travel severely restricts QWEs' ability to penetrate these established international weak-tie networks. Furthermore, the mentorship available to QWEs tends to be domestically focused. The lack of senior female Qatari role models who have successfully navigated large-scale, complex international business deals limits the transfer of critical tacit knowledge regarding global negotiation tactics, cultural nuances in foreign corporate governance, and scaling strategies for non-GCC markets. This network insulation maintains a domestic mindset, hindering the acquisition of the global perspective essential for aggressive scaling and executive development.

- *Internal Family Support Dynamics and Risk Aversion*

While initial family support is a strength, it often becomes a source of risk aversion at the point of high-stakes international expansion. Global scaling demands accepting high levels of debt, potentially diluting equity to foreign investors, and committing to complex foreign legal obligations. These actions often conflict with the family's traditional valuation of conservatism and reputation preservation. The family's informal governance function may veto or substantially slow down aggressive expansion strategies that carry perceived reputational risk or a high probability of visible public failure. This internal friction translates into a slow pace of decision-making, missing critical market windows, and an over-reliance on slow, debt-averse financing methods, ultimately compromising the firm's competitiveness against globally agile competitors.

- *Constraint Cluster 2: Asymmetric Financial and Capital Access*

This cluster focuses on the Local-to-Global Capital Bridge Gap, highlighting how QWEs' favourable domestic financial access becomes a disadvantage when seeking the institutional capital required for aggressive global scale-up.

- *Over-reliance on Personal and Local Bank Financing*

QWEs frequently start businesses using personal savings, family wealth, or local, state-subsidised loans (QDB). This "soft" capital is often adequate for market entry and domestic operation, but is inherently limited in size and scope for multi-million-dollar international expansions. Local banks, accustomed to asset-backed lending within a familiar legal framework, often exhibit risk aversion when faced with cross-border collateral and revenue streams, particularly from service-based or intellectual property (IP) heavy QWEs. Crucially, this over-reliance on local, conservative debt financing limits the use of equity financing—the fuel for high-growth global ventures. When QWEs do seek equity, they often look only to local high-net-worth individuals, which maintains the domestic bias and prevents the infusion of strategic international expertise that often accompanies global VC funding.

- *Disconnect from Global Venture Capital and Institutional FDI*

The primary structural impediment is the QWE ecosystem's disconnection from the global venture capital

(VC) and institutional Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) deal-flow circuits. International investors seek transparency, a proven track record in global compliance, and governance aligned with Western or international standards. QWEs often fail to meet these stringent requirements for several reasons:

- ✓ **Lack of Visibility:** The mobility constraint (3.1.1) means founders are physically absent from major global pitching platforms (e.g., Silicon Valley, London FinTech conferences).
- ✓ **Governance Standards:** The integration of family governance and informal business practices clashes with the demanding due diligence requirements of institutional VC, which requires formal, independent board structures and rigorous financial reporting.
- ✓ **Sectoral Familiarity:** Global VCs are less familiar with the specific domestic success drivers and valuation metrics of GCC-centric businesses, leading to an immediate discounting of enterprise valuation and heightened scepticism regarding scalability outside the protected market.

- *Valuation Bias and Sectoral Concentration Risk*

The heavy concentration of QWEs in retail, food and beverages, and local service industries (non-tradable sectors) creates a sectoral concentration risk that deters large-scale, international institutional investment. Investors are often looking for firms in scalable, highly tradable sectors (DeepTech, advanced manufacturing, high-volume B2B SaaS). Furthermore, when QWEs enter a VC discussion, they often face a valuation bias. Global investors may undervalue firms whose success is perceived to rely heavily on subsidised local infrastructure or protected market access, viewing the domestic revenue base as less transferable to international competition. This valuation gap makes raising capital at competitive, necessary levels difficult, forcing QWEs to either accept poor terms or abandon aggressive scaling plans.

- *Constraint Cluster 3: Structural and Regulatory Hurdles*

This cluster addresses the Global Governance Knowledge Gap, analysing the specific legal and logistical friction points encountered when QWEs attempt to comply with the complex requirements of operating in multiple foreign jurisdictions.

- *Complexity of Cross-Border Legal and Tax Compliance (Foreign Jurisdictions)*

The administrative overhead and complexity of operating across jurisdictions represent a massive barrier for resource-limited SMEs. QWEs must navigate:

- ✓ **Foreign Legal Entity Formation:** The cost and procedural complexity of establishing a stable foreign subsidiary (e.g., in Europe or Asia).
- ✓ **International Tax Regimes:** Compliance with Double Taxation Treaties, Transfer Pricing rules, and Value Added Tax (VAT) in multiple markets, an area where

local accountants often lack the highly specialised expertise.

- ✓ **Export Controls and Tariffs:** Understanding and complying with non-tariff barriers, customs regulations, and rules of origin in destination markets. The current national ecosystem provides excellent local legal guidance but often lacks readily available, affordable, and consolidated advisory services focused on these outbound international compliance challenges, forcing QWEs to engage expensive, multi-national legal counsel independently.

- *Challenges in International Intellectual Property (IP) Registration and Protection*

For knowledge-based QWEs, Intellectual Property (IP) is their core tradable asset. However, the process of securing and enforcing IP rights globally is expensive, time-consuming, and procedurally complex. Qatari women-led firms frequently under-invest in securing international patents, trademarks, and design rights, relying instead on domestic protection, which is entirely inadequate when exporting. The absence of a standardised, subsidised mechanism to support multi-jurisdictional IP filing and enforcement leaves QWEs vulnerable. If they enter a foreign market without robust IP protection, their core innovation is at high risk of being copied, or they may face immediate litigation from pre-existing foreign rights holders, leading to costly market exits or the need to fundamentally alter their product offering.

- *Lack of Specialised Logistics and Export Infrastructure for SMEs*

While Qatar possesses world-class logistics infrastructure (e.g., Hamad Port, Qatar Airways Cargo), the system is optimised for large-scale, strategic commodity and freight movement. QWEs, operating at a lower volume and dealing with specialised, often high-value or perishable goods (e.g., luxury items, specialised technology components), require highly specialised, consolidated export services. The current infrastructure exhibits a deficit in:

- ✓ **Consolidated LCL (Less-than-Container Load) Services:** Affordable, high-frequency, consolidated freight options for small volume exporters.
- ✓ **"Last Mile" Compliance:** Integrated services that handle customs clearance, final delivery, and reverse logistics in the destination country, factoring in all necessary regulatory checks.
- ✓ **Temperature/Security Chain Expertise:** Specialised handling for sensitive goods, critical for maintaining product integrity across borders. This logistical deficit increases operational complexity and cost, making the end-product less price-competitive against firms from nations with deeper, established SME export logistics chains.

B. The Five-Pillar Strategic Mitigation Framework

The findings from Chapter III clearly demonstrate that the challenges faced by QWEs in global expansion are systemic, stemming from a strategic mismatch between the locally calibrated support ecosystem and the demanding

requirements of international competition. This chapter introduces the Five-Pillar Strategic Mitigation Framework (Framework), an integrated policy approach designed to systematically close the Mobility-for-Network, Local-to-Global Capital Bridge, and Global Governance Knowledge gaps.

- *Pillar 1: Digital Export Ecosystems (DEE) and E-Trade Compliance.*

This pillar directly addresses the Mobility-for-Network Gap by strategically leveraging Qatar's advanced digital infrastructure to decouple business networking and contract execution from the requirement for frequent physical travel.

- *Strategy: Decoupling Mobility from Market Access via Secure E-Platforms.*

The core strategy is to create a state-backed, highly secure digital platform where QWEs can conduct high-stakes B2B interactions, pitch sessions, and secure international contracts with the same level of trust and legal formality as in-person meetings. This platform acts as a protected, compliant digital proxy for physical networking and negotiation.

- *Policy Implementation: E-Compliance Certification and Digital Trade Corridors.*

- ✓ **Q-Trust Certification for QWEs:** Develop a national certification (e.g., "Q-Trust") that verifies the digital identity and financial compliance of QWE-led firms to international trade partners. This certification would serve as a digital "seal of approval," accelerating B2B trust-building and reducing due diligence time for foreign partners, thus compensating for the lack of physical presence.

- ✓ **Establish Digital Trade Corridors (DTCs):** Formalise bilateral digital agreements with key international trade partners (e.g., Singapore, London, Frankfurt) to facilitate secure, encrypted data sharing for regulatory, customs, and financial transaction purposes. DTCs simplify cross-border compliance, making the Qatari firm appear as digitally seamless as a local entity.

- ✓ **Virtual Trade Show Participation:** Subsidise specialised, secure virtual reality (VR) or advanced video conferencing systems in designated QDB/QBIC hubs, allowing QWEs to remotely host or attend global trade shows, conduct product demonstrations, and hold private, simultaneous bilateral meetings.

- *Pillar 2: Global Capital Co-Investment Mechanisms (GCCM)*

This pillar focuses on closing the Local-to-Global Capital Bridge Gap by actively de-risking QWEs for sophisticated international investors, thereby attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and global Venture Capital (VC).

- *Strategy: State-Backed De-Risking for International Financiers*

The strategy involves the Qatari state, primarily through QDB or the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), co-investing alongside international VC firms to provide a critical risk buffer. This shared risk model incentivises global investors, who gain access to a stable, resource-rich market while mitigating initial concerns over governance and scaling risk.

- *Policy Implementation: The QDB Global Expansion Matching Fund*

✓ *Global Expansion Matching Fund (GEMF)*: Establish a dedicated QDB fund (GEMF) mandated to match every dollar raised by a QWE from a pre-approved, non-GCC-based institutional VC or PE firm, up to a set ceiling (e.g., \$5 million). This mechanism directly leverages state capital to signal confidence and lower the effective risk exposure for foreign investors.

✓ *Standardised Global Governance Templates*: QDB, in partnership with QFC, must pre-develop and offer standardised international corporate governance and due diligence templates for QWEs seeking global capital. These templates, aligned with international best practices (IFRS, independent board structures), allow QWEs to accelerate their readiness for institutional investment, addressing the governance standards mismatch.

✓ *Targeted Investment Roadshows*: Organise bespoke, small-format roadshows specifically for QWEs in sectors targeted by QNV 2030 (e.g., FinTech, EdTech) in key global VC hubs, using the GEMF co-investment offer as the primary hook.

➤ *Pillar 3 Targeted Market Access Facilitation (TMAF)*

TMAF addresses the amplified Liability of Foreignness (LOF) and the structural constraints of foreign market entry by providing outsourced, subsidised infrastructure, offering QWEs a 'soft landing' abroad.

- *Strategy: Establishing "Soft Landing" International Business Hubs*

The strategy is to leverage Qatar's existing diplomatic and commercial presence abroad to establish dedicated, shared business accelerators or "hubs" in key trade cities (e.g., London, Shanghai, New York). These hubs provide pre-vetted legal, logistical, and administrative support infrastructure, eliminating the need for QWEs to navigate the complexities of foreign entity setup independently.

- *Policy Implementation: Legal, Logistical, and Compliance Vetting Services Abroad*

- *Subsidised Legal and Tax Vetting*: QDB or the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) should contract with specialised international legal and accounting firms (in key markets) to provide QWEs with subsidised or free first-stage compliance vetting on foreign entity registration, local labour laws, and initial tax obligations.

- *Logistics Consolidation Platform*: Integrate the national logistics providers (e.g., Qatar Airways Cargo) with foreign 'last mile' fulfilment partners to create a subsidised Logistics Consolidation Platform for QWEs. This platform aggregates LCL freight, provides guaranteed last-mile compliance, and offers specialised packaging/security for high-value goods.

- *Physical Co-Working and Presence*: The international hubs must offer subsidised physical space and local administrative support staff, allowing QWEs to maintain a permanent, yet low-cost, local presence without constant physical founder mobility.

➤ *Pillar 4 Advanced Human Capital Development (AHCD)*

This pillar is designed to close the Global Governance Knowledge Gap by shifting the focus of entrepreneurial training from domestic incubation to sophisticated international management and risk mitigation.

- *Strategy: From Local Business Skills to Global Governance Expertise*

The educational strategy must evolve beyond general business planning to concentrate on the complex, specialised knowledge required for operating a multi-jurisdictional enterprise. This involves intensive programs taught by international experts focused on high-level strategic risk management.

- *Policy Implementation: Strategic Training in Currency Hedging, M&A, and Cross-Cultural Negotiation*

- *Global Expansion Executive Program*: Create a specialised, mandatory training program for QWE leaders focusing on advanced topics: currency risk hedging, managing foreign exchange volatility, international Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A), and structuring complex international contracts and joint ventures.

- *IP Protection and Enforcement Seminars*: Launch subsidised, high-intensity workshops covering multi-jurisdictional IP registration (e.g., Madrid Protocol, PCT), enforcement strategies, and digital IP protection protocols.

- *Advanced Negotiation Simulation*: Incorporate intensive, scenario-based negotiation training led by international executive coaches, focusing specifically on cross-cultural business etiquette and negotiation styles prevalent in high-stakes global markets (addressing 3.1.2 and the LOF).

➤ *Pillar 5 Socio-Cultural Harmonisation and Advocacy (SCHA)*

This pillar recognises that sustainable global expansion requires the harmonisation of business strategy with the socio-cultural context, aiming to reduce internal risk aversion and normalise the image of the globally mobile Qatari business leader.

• *Strategy: Redefining the Narrative of the Globally Engaged Qatari Woman*

The strategy is to utilise public advocacy and national media campaigns to proactively celebrate and document the successes of globally-engaged QWEs. This is intended to reframe the narrative from one of personal risk (mobility, reputation) to one of national contribution and modern success, thereby reducing internal and familial friction.

• *Policy Implementation: National Media Campaigns and Documenting Success Narratives*

✓ **Qatar Global Women Leaders Campaign:** Launch a sustained national media campaign (televised, digital, print) profiling QWEs who have successfully secured international deals, emphasising their contribution to QNV 2030, and showcasing the professionalism and compliance of their international operations. This directly addresses family concerns regarding reputation.

✓ **Family and Stakeholder Engagement Workshops:** Host specialised workshops through the Qatar Chamber of Commerce targeting the immediate family members (spouses, parents, brothers) of QWEs, providing them with transparent information about the security, legal protection, and economic necessity of international business travel and financial risk-taking.

✓ **Formalised Mentorship from Global Male Leaders:** Establish a formal, high-profile mentorship program that pairs QWEs with senior Qatari male business leaders who have successfully navigated international markets, thereby providing a culturally comfortable avenue for transferring advanced global business tacit knowledge.

C. Implementation Roadmap

This session presents a phased implementation plan for the Strategic Mitigation Framework, detailing specific policy recommendations for key stakeholders, and concludes with an outline of future research to ensure the framework's efficacy and long-term success.

❖ *Implementation Roadmap: Phased Rollout (2025–2030)*

The Framework's success is dependent on a systematic, coordinated, and resource-aligned rollout. The proposed implementation spans five years (2025–2030), structured into three distinct phases that prioritise digital and foundational readiness before moving to active international capital and market engagement.

➤ *Phase 1: Foundation and Digital Readiness (2025–2026)*

This phase focuses on minimising the initial Mobility-for-Network Gap and building the legal and human capital infrastructure.

Table 1: Foundation and Digital Readiness (2025–2026)

<i>Pillar</i>	<i>Actionable Milestones</i>	<i>Output/Deliverable</i>
Pillar 1 (DEE)	Develop and pilot the secure Digital Export Ecosystem (DEE) platform.	Functional, secure digital B2B platform with verified QWE profiles.
Pillar 1 (DEE)	Finalize the legal framework for the <i>Q-Trust Certification</i> in coordination with MOCI and partner countries.	Formal legal recognition of the certification.
Pillar 4 (AHCD)	Launch the first cohort of the mandatory <i>Global Expansion Executive Program</i> focusing on international finance and governance.	A pool of QWEs with certified expertise in cross-border operations.
Pillar 2 (GCCM)	Legally structure and capitalize the <i>Global Expansion Matching Fund (GEMF)</i> and establish the Standardized Global Governance Templates for due diligence.	GEMF capital secured; Governance templates integrated into QDB requirements.

➤ *Phase 2: Capital Bridge and Market Pilots (2027–2028)*

This phase tests the capital and access mechanisms, bridging the Local-to-Global Capital Bridge Gap through targeted interventions.

Table 2: Capital Bridge and Market Pilots (2027–2028)

<i>Pillar</i>	<i>Actionable Milestones</i>	<i>Output/Deliverable</i>
Pillar 2 (GCCM)	Secure co-investment agreements with two international Tier 1 Venture Capital or Private Equity firms.	Activation of the GEMF; First three co-investment deals executed with QWEs.
Pillar 3 (TMAF)	Open the first two <i>Targeted Market Access Facilitation (TMAF) Hubs</i> in a key European and Asian trade corridor (e.g., London and Singapore).	Physical and legal 'soft landing' infrastructure available for QWEs.
Pillar 3 (TMAF)	Full integration and launch of the Logistics Consolidation Platform in partnership with national carriers and foreign 'last mile' providers.	Reduced shipping cost and complexity for small volume exports.
Pillar 5 (SCHA)	Introduce the Family and Stakeholder Engagement Workshops into the required curriculum for all QWEs utilizing the GEMF and TMAF services.	Quantifiable reduction in founder-reported familial constraints on travel/risk-taking.

➤ *Phase 3: Scaling and Cultural Integration (2029–2030)*

The final phase focuses on expansion, cultural embedding, and measuring long-term impact on the national economy.

Table 3: Scaling and Cultural Integration (2029–2030)

Pillar	Actionable Milestones	Output/Deliverable
Pillar 5 (SCHA)	Full national media rollout of the "Qatar Global Women Leaders" campaign, featuring QWEs who secured international capital in Phase 2.	A public shift in perception and acceptance of global female leadership.
Pillar 3 (TMAF)	Expansion of the TMAF Hub network to at least two additional complex markets (e.g., Shanghai, New York).	Diversified global presence and access to new trade blocks.
Pillar 4 (AHCD)	Advanced training modules are integrated into permanent national university curricula, establishing a sustainable pipeline of global governance talent.	Local capacity for advanced global business training.
Review	Comprehensive impact assessment (quantitative) of non-hydrocarbon export revenue and secured international capital by QWEs.	Data-driven validation of the Framework's efficacy against QNV 2030 goals.

VII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The Framework requires distinct, non-overlapping mandates for key institutions to ensure accountability and resource efficiency. These recommendations are specific and highly actionable:

A. Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI)

MOCI is mandated to lead the legal and regulatory architecture necessary for global compliance.

➤ *Grant Legal Equivalence to Q-Trust Certification*

MOCI must formally recognise the Q-Trust Certification (Pillar 1) as legally equivalent to an initial physical business visit or due diligence process in bilateral trade memorandums, focusing specifically on B2B contracts valued under \$500,000. This drastically reduces the pressure for physical mobility in initial deal-making.

➤ *Institute an IP Shielding Program*

Create a program, administered through MOCI's IP Directorate, to fully subsidise the first \$5,000 of multi-jurisdictional Intellectual Property (IP) filing fees for any QWE firm that has secured non-domestic revenue over \$100,000 in the preceding year. This is a targeted intervention to overcome the IP protection barrier.

➤ *Formalise Digital Trade Corridors (DTCs)*

MOCI should negotiate and sign at least two formal bilateral Digital Trade Corridor agreements by 2026, standardising digital protocols for customs, tax reporting, and verifiable e-signatures, making the Qatari business interface seamless with major foreign trade partners.

B. Qatar Development Bank (QDB)

QDB remains the central operational and financial driver. Its recommendations focus on shifting its internal metrics and aligning its financing with global standards.

- **Mandate Global Governance for Funding:** QDB must make the adoption of the Standardised Global Governance Templates (Pillar 2) a non-negotiable prerequisite for

accessing any financing or co-investment through the Global Expansion Matching Fund (GEMF). This ensures QWEs are "investment ready" for institutional foreign capital.

- **Establish an International Acceleration Desk:** QDB should establish a dedicated desk staffed by international banking and finance professionals (non-Qatari nationals with deep experience in Western/Asian VC and cross-border M&A) to advise QWEs on complex valuation methodologies, term sheet negotiation, and currency risk management (Pillar 4), thereby closing the Global Governance Knowledge Gap.
- **Reform Export KPI Reporting:** QDB's Tasdeer program must shift its primary Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) away from measuring the number of QWEs participating in trade missions (a mobility-constrained metric) toward measuring the total value of non-hydrocarbon export revenue generated and the volume of foreign institutional capital secured by QWEs annually.

C. Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Chamber holds the vital responsibility of addressing the socio-cultural constraints and leveraging its authority within the private sector.

- **Mandatory Foundational Trust Workshops:** Utilise the Chamber's social and business authority to make the Family and Stakeholder Engagement Workshops (Pillar 5) a mandatory component for QWEs seeking QDB international support. The Chamber's endorsement of the economic necessity of risk and mobility will be more effective than a solely governmental appeal.
- **Facilitate International Peer-to-Peer Networks:** Establish formal agreements with international female entrepreneur organisations or foreign Chambers of Commerce in target markets (Pillar 3) to create direct peer-to-peer mentorship and networking exchanges. This provides QWEs with culturally safe, high-trust avenues to build the 'weak ties' necessary for global deal flow (Constraint 3.1.2).
- **Curriculum Alignment Vetting:** Provide active, continuous feedback to the academic institutions delivering the Advanced Human Capital Development (AHCD) programs (Pillar 4), ensuring that the training modules

reflect the most current complexities in international contract law, negotiation tactics, and regional compliance issues faced by Chamber members.

VIII. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The implementation of the Strategic Mitigation Framework will create a fertile and unique ground for empirical research, enabling policymakers to continuously refine the strategy and maximise its impact. Future research should transition from diagnosis to rigorous impact assessment:

➤ *Empirical Assessment of Capital Bridging Success*

Conduct a quantitative, longitudinal study to track the Rate and Size of International VC/PE attracted by QWEs who utilised the Global Expansion Matching Fund (GEMF), comparing their success metrics (valuation, growth rate, international deal flow) against a control group of non-participating QWEs. This will provide definitive evidence on the efficacy of state-backed de-risking.

➤ *Validating Digital Decoupling Efficacy*

Perform an econometric analysis to measure the change in a QWE's non-hydrocarbon export revenue as a function of their reliance on the Digital Export Ecosystem (DEE) platform, cross-referenced with founder-reported physical international travel days. The goal is to empirically validate the hypothesis that market access has been successfully decoupled from the constraint of physical mobility.

➤ *Longitudinal Study of Socio-Cultural Risk Tolerance*

Undertake a large-scale sociological study, pre- and post-Phase 3, assessing the shift in internal familial and societal risk tolerance toward a woman's global business ambitions. Metrics could include changes in family acceptance levels for foreign debt, equity dilution, and unescorted business travel, measuring the true impact of the Socio-Cultural Harmonisation and Advocacy (SCHA) pillar.

IX. SECURING A GLOBAL ECONOMIC FUTURE FOR QATARI WOMEN

The trajectory of the Qatari economy, as defined by Qatar National Vision 2030, pivots on successful and sustainable diversification away from hydrocarbons. This research established that the most highly educated and dynamic segment of the Qatari workforce—its women entrepreneurs—possesses the ambition and human capital to spearhead this transition but is systemically hampered by the collision of local context and global market demands.

The identified challenges—the Mobility-for-Network Gap, the Local-to-Global Capital Bridge Gap, and the Global Governance Knowledge Gap—are not isolated issues but rather interwoven constraints rooted in the current misalignment of the domestic ecosystem with global requirements. The Five-Pillar Strategic Mitigation Framework (DEE, GCCM, TMAF, AHCD, SCHA) serves as a comprehensive, integrated, and culturally sensitive blueprint to resolve this misalignment. The Framework's core value

proposition is its ability to leverage Qatar's strengths (its digital infrastructure, state capital, and commitment to education) to overcome its constraints, primarily by using technology as a proxy for physical presence and state backing as a bridge for international trust.

The success of this Framework represents more than just economic growth; it is a triple imperative for QNV 2030:

- **Economic Imperative:** It secures the necessary growth of non-hydrocarbon export revenues, creating a resilient, diversified income stream for the nation.
- **Human Development Imperative:** It converts the superior educational attainment of Qatari women into high-impact, globally competitive economic leadership, fulfilling the Vision's mandate for advanced human capital utilisation.
- **Social Imperative:** It modernises and affirms the role of the Qatari woman on the global stage, proving that cultural heritage and international economic competitiveness can be harmonised to achieve national aspirations.
- **Ultimately,** the acceleration of Qatari women entrepreneurs onto the global stage is not an optional social program; it is a strategic economic necessity. The adoption and diligent implementation of this Framework will ensure Qatari women are not just beneficiaries of QNV 2030, but its most dynamic and competitive champions.

X. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

A. *Theoretical Contribution*

This study makes a significant contribution to the fields of international entrepreneurship and gender and entrepreneurship in the Middle East.

➤ *Contextualising Internationalisation Theories*

It refines internationalisation models (e.g., Uppsala model, Born Global theory) by introducing a contextual cultural constraint variable. For Qatari women, the decision to export is not just a rational economic choice based on firm resources or market knowledge; it is deeply moderated by socio-cultural permission and familial support. This suggests that in culturally conservative contexts, internationalisation theory must account for non-market social capital as a critical resource, separate from purely economic or institutional capital.

➤ *Bridging the Rhetoric-Reality Gap*

The research provides empirical evidence of the "rhetoric-reality" gap in state-led women's empowerment initiatives. While government rhetoric aligns with global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promotes female economic participation, the practical implementation often fails to fully address the deeply entrenched, informal institutional barriers that limit international growth. This highlights the need for a more bottom-up approach that empowers women to advocate for their rights within their communities, rather than relying solely on top-down decrees.

B. Practical Implications and Recommendations

The findings offer clear direction for policymakers in Qatar and the wider GCC region:

➤ Develop Gender-Sensitive Export Programs

Qatar Development Bank (QDB) and other bodies should design export readiness programs with flexible timings, virtual components, and specialised mentorship linking female entrepreneurs with successful Qatari and regional women exporters. This should include financial products that recognise non-traditional collateral or business structures often favoured by women.

➤ Foster Formal Networking

Create exclusive, government-backed, formal female business networks to provide a structured, culturally acceptable alternative to male-dominated informal networks, focusing on high-level contacts and international trade opportunities.

➤ Advocate for Shared Responsibility

Policy and national awareness campaigns should actively promote the concept of shared domestic and family responsibilities between men and women. This crucial step is needed to alleviate the "double burden" and allow women the necessary time and mobility for international business.

XI. CONCLUSION

The economic empowerment of Qatari women is a critical pillar of the nation's strategy for a knowledge-based, diversified economy, as articulated in Qatar National Vision 2030. This research confirms that while the foundation for female entrepreneurship is robust, the path to export-led growth for women-led SMEs is significantly hindered by a persistent dual burden of generic SME constraints and deeply rooted socio-cultural barriers. Addressing this requires a shift from gender-neutral support to gender-sensitive policy solutions that are pragmatic, targeted, and, most importantly, culturally informed. Future success in internationalising women-led businesses depends not just on economic policy, but on a societal commitment to redefine gender roles in the context of global commerce.

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