Bahraini Female and Social Entrepreneurs Networking Behavior

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Abstract: Research that investigates female entrepreneurs and their networking relationships has evolved greatly in the last twenty years. Nevertheless, little research on female entrepreneurship in Bahrain in general and fewer have focused explicitly on female entrepreneurs in their social networks. This paper examines the motives for Bahraini females to engage in social entrepreneurship and the main factors influencing the development of networks within social entrepreneurship. An exploratory research approach was employed. Data was gathered through 14 in-depth interviews with Bahraini female entrepreneurs. Thematic analysis was used to organize and interpret qualitative data. Participants have strongly emphasized "self-fulfillment" as a motive for engaging in social entrepreneurship, indicating a need to satisfy intrinsic needs. Data analysis revealed that religion is the main motive for Bahraini females to engage in social entrepreneurship, while other sub-themes revolve around religious beliefs like reciprocity. This demonstrates that religion's values and social values inspire females to engage in this type of initiative. The analysis shows interrelated themes regarding network development, which are mostly spin in the "national culture" orbit.

Keywords: Gender diversity, Female, social entrepreneurship, network behavior, Bahrain

I. Introduction

Females' entrepreneurship has attracted greater attention in recent years, due to the significance of new business creation for economic growth and development (Jamali, 2009; Noguera et al., 2013). More women everywhere are becoming entrepreneurs than ever before. Females' entrepreneurship contributes to economic growth and employment creation. Additionally, it is progressively believed to elevate the diversity of entrepreneurship in any financial system (Verheul et al., 2006) and set out ways for female expression and potential accomplishment (Eddleston & Powell, 2008). Despite an increasing amount of evidence showing that the rate at which women are forming businesses has increased significantly (Minniti et al., 2005), there is a growing awareness of their role in economic development (OECD, 2000). However, the rates of female entrepreneurial activities are significantly and systematically lower than those for males (Minniti et al., 2005; Verheul et al., 2006; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007). Further, most studies have focused on male entrepreneurs (Baker et al., 1997; De Bruin et al., 2006, Brush et al., 2010), downplaying and undervaluing the role of female entrepreneurs (Marlow et al., 2009). Incongruous with the majority of female entrepreneurship research, the enormous number of studies of female business has focused on the demography, motivations, psychological characteristics, style of management and start up activities (Brush, 1992; Welter, 2004; Brush & Cooper, 2012; Henry et al., 2015). Recently, however, research has shifted to focus more on softer issues, including balance between work and family and non-monetary assets like markets, mentors and and social networks (Brush &Cooper, 2012; Marlow & McAdam, 2012). Hence, it is presumed that entrepreneurs are embraced with social networks (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Larson, 1991, 1992, Liu et al., 2020).

Despite the high investment of the public sector in education in many Arab countries, the percentage of women's contribution to the labor force still does not exceed 25% in the Middle East and North Africa (World Bank, 2013). This means that despite the high investments in women's education, which would raise the productive potential and earning capacity of every woman, the returns on this investment are still very weak. The Middle East and North Africa region has the highest unemployment rate around the world (16%), half of whom are young people,

and many of them are women. Regardless of the different and varying estimates of youth and women unemployment, all the numbers indicate the growing challenge facing Arab countries in order to secure job opportunities for young people.

The need for gender-based entrepreneurship research is even more critical in countries perceived as more male-dominated or have a patriarchal culture. Thus, it is important to consider gender matters in the culture and social field.

Overall, this study addresses the previous issues/gaps by examining the first: Motives for females' social entrepreneurship. Second: main factors influencing the development of Bahraini female entrepreneurs' network. Overall, this research aims to introduce a new view from a different cultural lens

II. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Ghalwash et al., (2017) state that social entrepreneurship is at an early and exciting stage of infancy, short on theory and definition and high in motivation and passion. Zahra et al., (2009, p.519) state that social entrepreneurship "encompasses the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or innovatively managing existing organizations". Zahra et al., (2009) study the typology and various definitions of social entrepreneurship and suggest that social entrepreneurs are strongly motivated to achieve some socially desirable objectives, like creating social wealth, total wealth, social justice, or the resolution of social problems. Overall, most existing definitions indicate that social entrepreneurship exploits social change and improvement opportunities rather than traditional profit maximization. Thus, social entrepreneurship aims to create social impact or resolve social issues and dilemmas through entrepreneurial approaches. Unlike business entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs pursue societal missions rather than maximizing profit (Dacinet et al., 2010).

The economic empowerment of women is also the most prominent headline that prompted a rethinking of the economy. We cannot look to the future and prepare for the next stage without the actual participation of women in shaping this future, and no change can occur without the availability of an agent for change, which is women. Investing in women's economic empowerment is a direct path towards achieving gender equality, poverty reduction, and women's empowerment. Inclusive economic growth. All of this requires bold and corrective approaches aimed at creating a more economic environment Therefore, it is seen as a key tool to enhance social and economic wellbeing in developing countries. It solves many pressing issues and challenges like social inequality, poverty, education and environmental exploitation. This holds for

GCC countries in general and Bahrain specifically. Bahrain has a small population and employment in the government sector is limited, especially during the last three years that saw a decrease in government spending and a halt of new employment. The same applies to the private sector that has suffered from reduced demand generally and even more recently with the advent of the covid-19 crisis. Indeed, An Economic Ministry official told Middle East Eye that Bahrain planned to slash foreign workers by 25 % and to cutoff some jobs.

III. SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social entrepreneurs can start from excavation and foundation lying of strong relation networks to avoid problems in legality, social awareness and failure risks (Liu et al., 2020). Previous studies focused on entrepreneurs' social interactions is a central area of focus in the field. Also, social network ties are beneficial for numerous entrepreneurship-related outcomes, including opportunity discovery (Pollack et al., 2016). Females acquire the knowledge of how to support, provide and collect early on at the individual and business levels, effectively communicate past and present experiences, and help nourish each other's business ideas (Hersby et al., 2009). Therefore, network connections and bonds are basically important to female business holders (Welter, 2004).

IV. METHODOLOGY

Rowlands (2003) states that what we want to learn influences how we should understand it. Regarding this study, and as mentioned earlier, literature dealing with female entrepreneurial and networking is limited (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Hughes et al., 2012; Carrasco, 2014; Leitch & Harrison, 2014). Particularly from the view of cultural lens (Ahl, 2006). Therefore, considering the limited theoretical background, there is a need for qualitative exploratory study. Exploratory research aims to uncover ideas and better understand a situation where little information exists (Maxwell, 2005). This study aims to discover, illustrate and describe female Bahraini entrepreneurs' motives, their lived experiences from their viewpoint and in their own words.

Regarding the research method, and as this research aims to explore ideas and perceptions about the experience, a flexible approach is needed. Therefore, an in-depth narrative interview is a suitable research tool to gain a deep understanding of the research subject. There are no extensive lists of Bahraini female entrepreneurs, making it challenging to identify the research population accurately. Moreover, the absence of such data limit our ability to contact - potential participants.

The study utilized a non-random method to select the participants for this study. A purposeful sample was used,

as such participants were selected based on three criteria: first, interviewees should be Bahraini females. Second, they had been in business for more than three years to have sufficient experience in the field; finally, they were willing to participate in the study. It is worth mentioning that The Kingdom of Bahrain is the third smallest country in the world, the number of population is small further, the number female entrepreneurs are small generally but an even lesser number of females' social entrepreneurs. Therefore, and due to the lack of formal data regarding social entrepreneurs in Bahrain, the relative small number of population and the criteria for participants' selection, only 14 female social entrepreneurs were reached and interviewed. Table 1 presents the profiles of the interviewees. The interviewee's names in table 1 are not published due to privacy issue.

Table 1: Profiles of participants

Business type	Degree	Age	Children	Numerous businesses
Audiobook/consultancy	MBA	47	2	3
Import (horse riding materials)	Masters	45	3	1
Consultancy	Bachelor	43	3	1
Financial Investment	Bachelor	49	0	2
Mentoring	Bachelor	40	1	3
Sweet making / import	Bachelor	52	2	2
Training	PhD	53	2	1
Event Mgt	Bachelor	46	2	1
Event Mgt / teaching dancing	Bachelor	47	2	2
Safety Tools	Bachelor	45	0	2
Building Mgt	Bachelor	43	1	1

The interview guide proposed two main items: the motivations for entrepreneurship, and networks development. These questions were posed according to research objectives. All 14 interviews conducted were recorded and transcribed. The average duration of the interviews was about an hour and a half. The collected data were subjected to thematic content analysis. Tables were formed according to the research objectives, patterns were identified according to their meaning and placed under the main goals. Each design were given a code for example (RG for religion- RC for reciprocity). The identified patterns were clustered to form the basic research themes and sub themes. Moreover, random patters were indentified, which formulated a new research theme "obstacles to social entrepreneurship in Bahrain".

V. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The main findings present the major themes emerging from the narrative analysis of the interview data, answering the research question regarding motives for social entrepreneurship, and the main influences on the development of Bahraini female entrepreneurs' network. Three major themes were identified regarding the motive for entrepreneurship, while four main themes were identified for social network. Each theme was explained with examples drawn from participants' own words to show the essence of each theme.

Motives for social entrepreneurship:
Zahra et al., (2009) state that the goal of social entrepreneurship is deeply rooted in the values of their founders. Therefore, it is crucial to understand entrepreneurs' motives and drives. Based on the interviews analysis, social entrepreneurship is motivated by three major interrelated themes: self-fulfillment, religion and reciprocity. Self-fulfillment (happiness, contentment and satisfaction): Self-fulfillment (happiness, pleasure and satisfaction) was the strongest motive for becoming a social entrepreneur. The word "happy" was mentioned almost in every interview, and sometimes was repeated several times within the same interview. While almost all entrepreneurs had excellent and good positions in their organizations where they used to work before, they were not genuinely happy. Indeed 5 of the participants were in executive positions. Still, they were not content or happy and did not feel they were achieving what they wished to achieve in life. For them it was about self-actualization rather than attaining financial goals. They all had jobs and did well. Then later chose to move on. Indeed, all entrepreneurs had less income from their start-up in the first 2 to 3 years of incorporating the business. But they were happier, content and more satisfied. They felt they were in control and could do what they dreamt of doing, making the difference they always wanted.
One participant commented, "I always wanted to do something for the community. Don't get me wrong of course, I want to make money, but money is not the biggest thing for me".
One participant also stressed that "being happy and content was very important. After establishing my own business I found myself working more, harder and longer hours than before and with less money. But I am happy".

Religion:
Over 92% of participants mentioned Islam as influencing their motivation to start their business. For example, one participant said "I wish to do good things not only for me but also for next generations. I want to be a good Muslim and give to the people for the sake of God". Several statements like "Islam emphasizes s sense of community" and "religious rules" were mentioned during interviews (Aldulaimi, 2020). In this context, Mulyaningsih and Ramadani (2017) discuss what they call the Islamic social entrepreneurship phenomenon, and claim that Islam drives the existence of the social enterprise and social

entrepreneurs to detect and solve social problems in Muslim societies. People are predominately Muslims in Bahrain, with more than 95% of the population being Muslims. Islam is the driving force in society and permeates all aspects of life. Social and ethical duties and commitments are deeply rooted in a belief that the Islamic society is a "brotherhood" where equity and equality in personal worthiness, independent of wealth and status, prevail (Gibb, 1962). Islam emphasizes a sense of community, compassion, social justice, sharing and strengthening.

Similarly, and in a non-Islamic context, Zahra et al., (2009) claim that social entrepreneurship provides an alternative to a culture of greed and selfishness. In Islam, acts of charity can extend from the simple act of helping someone in daily chores to the more profound acts of donating money to the poor or in extreme cases registering a whole business or real estate as a running Islamic charity "Waqf". In this context, Syafii (2010) state that according to Islamic view, Allah is the absolute owner of any property, while peoples' ownership of property is limited to carrying out a mandate and spending it in accordance with al-Qur'an and al-Hadith. This idea was assured by 71% of participants as they claim that they "only" run the project, with the ultimate aim is society's benefit and they seek reward from Gad.

Reciprocity:
Analysis revealed that reciprocity is an important deriver for social entrepreneurs. Almost all interviewed entrepreneurs felt that they owed something back to their families, friend and the larger community. This theme is closely related to religious theme mentioned above. Moreover, all participants were above 40 years of age, and feel that they have the improvement ideas accompanied with the required experience to start their projects. Statements like "it is the right time" and "I'm ready to fulfill my role" were utilized.
Further, it was found that participants faced numerous challenges when they started their businesses. They had little government support at the startup as Tamkeen (semi-government entity responsible for enabling and partially funding entrepreneurs in Bahrain) and most government agencies started later. Hence, the family and the community supported these entrepreneurs, and therefore, they felt that they had to give something back. Some even related this back to the religion factor where the concept of "Zakat" is one of Islam's five pillars. "Zakat" has several meanings: blessing, growth and development, holiness, and goodness (Yusfiarto et al., 2020). In Islam, Zakat was mention in the Holy Quran several times, for example:
"Take alms from a portion of their property, with that alms you cleanse and purify them and pray for them. Verily,

your prayers (become) peace of mind for them. and Allah heareth again knows." (QS: At-Taubah, 103)

Yusfiarto et al., (2020) explain that Zakat is part of the property with certain conditions, which God requires to its owner, to be submitted to those entitled to receive it, and the assets that are issued with the purpose of Zakat, will be a blessing, grow, develop, sacred and good. The interviews saw Zakat in the wider sense, in that they wanted to give back, not only assets but also knowledge, training support adoption, offering jobs and even financial support.
One participant explained, "my mother was my support and role model. The whole family helped me during schooling, university study and later in life. This stayed with me and I always wanted to help those who needed it just like people did to me".

Development of the network:
When interviewees were asked about networks, participants identified different kinds of networks that they are involved in. First; family and close friends' network. This is characterized by closeness, trust, no need for reciprocal behavior and ease of involvement. Second, business partners, bankers and financers, suppliers, customers and so on. And the third type is the government and non-government contacts. Regarding network development, interviews analysis has revealed interrelated subthemes, which mostly are spin in the "culture" orbit, which constitutes the basic theme.

Culture:
National cultures have their own distinctive characteristics. But at the same time there exists clusters of nations in which cultural similarities and geographic proximity act as the basis of groupings. According to the GLOBE project one of these clusters, is the Arabic cluster. The results of the Arabic cluster, societal practices are rated as high on group and family collectivism and power According to Tiessen (1997) individualist cultures typically create higher degrees of innovation and creativity within entrepreneurs, but, cultures that are characterized to be collectivist are more suited to advance and encourage successful endeavor through the support effective, efficient and well set up networking systems. Based on our analysis, culture was found to be a basic and umbrella theme that covers several sub-themes, including "family", "gender," and "culture of philanthropy."

Family as a network "Family Councils"
This subtheme is linked and derived from culture theme. According to interviewees, the family structure is diverse in Bahrain. There are at least three levels or categories. At one level some families are extensions of tribes on the Saudi side. They tend to be extended families, are closely

networked, provide a tremendous amount of support and are not as limiting as their Saudi counterparts. The family here is a very enabling and empowering force. At another level some Bahraini families are not tribal they are also highly networked, supportive and usually based on religious belonging. Again here, families are supportive, closely networked and provide support. The third level is Bahraini families that are not part of the first two categories and immigrant families that assimilated in the society which are usually more in to safe government and private jobs. There are less networking and less linkages in these kinds of families. Associations here are based on country of origin rather than belonging. In a way entrepreneurs reaped the advantages from more prominent families and the support they provide without sacrificing individual freedom. Most Bahraini families meet one day a week where everybody is invited, usually on Friday or Saturday. More importantly, numerous families developed what is known as "family councils," which is an informal gathering of the family where the elders and the young meet to consult in family and other matters, transfer knowledge, deal with arising problems, provide support and encouragement. Interviewees state that the role of the family council is undeniable in Bahrain. And while family councils are widespread in the Arab world they do have a certain distinctive advantage in Bahrain, which is the allowance for the individuality. You have all the benefits of a collective society without denying your personal freedom, space and privacy.

Regarding the role of family in networking, all interviewees state that family and close friends usually have significant influence particularly at the early stage of the business. Idea generation is where usually this network becomes activated. Family members who own businesses, work in baking or supporting entities give process suggestions and ideas to start with. The advice could be in evaluating an idea or suggesting new ideas. Usually, family and friend gatherings are where the tossing of idea and the brainstorming takes place. Second, participants claimed that putting people in contact with the right people is what these networks do next. Interviewees stated that family members and close friends can put you in contact with the right decision makers, advisors and gatekeepers who can help a lot in the startup phase.

Furthermore, participants claimed that obtaining and provision of customers is another vital role for family. Moreover, over 85% of participants admit that their families and friends were their first customers. In this regard, one participant said "It is popular here for families and friends to try and support a business by becoming immediate customers for that business until it's up and running". The most important network was always the family network. In a society that is characterized by being small, open and educated, family support was always a very important factor in the success of these entrepreneurs.

Gender:
Bahrain may prove to be different in this regard as women seem to have a comparable if not even more extensive network than men do. This is facilitated by the nature of the culture itself such as the existence of extended families that can be of immense help for entrepreneurs over half of interviewees asserted especially women, this point. Surprisingly, 60% of interviewees stated that the patriarchal nature of Arab culture has supported them in developing their network. They stated that males "husbands, brothers, fathers and sometimes sons" feels that females are in need for constant assist, thus they believe that they have to support them. They carry the responsibilities of connecting them with their own network, which makes females entrepreneurs with wider and diverse networks, including females' own family, friends and relatives. The other includes their relatives male personal and professional relationships. This contradicts what has been claimed by (Aldrich et al., 1986) and (Renzulli et al., 2000) as they stated that women entrepreneurs have less diverse networks.

Moreover, our finding demonstrates inconsistency with the claim of (Brush, 1992; Mirchandani, 1999; Benschop, 2009; Roomi et al., 2009) who stated that women often develop less level of social networks than males. Another minor pattern has emerged from the interviews analysis, which claimed that females' education level impacts their network. The role of education is significant as Bahrain had formal schooling open for both males and females since 1928. The education level is assumed to have an impact on expanding females' networks as well as to engage in entrepreneurship from the first beginning. In this context, Levie and Hart (2011) state that people are more likely to be social entrepreneurs with increasing levels of education. Overall, Bahraini females did not consider gender as a barrier to develop their business network. It was found that they were satisfied with the support they – as females- receive from their families and community.

A Culture of Philanthropy
Bahrain is a Muslim country and therefore, the morals of society derive from the Islamic faith. As mentioned earlier, giving to the poor or less fortunate is part of the value systems in Bahrain. The Arabian culture is also a culture of generosity and giving. According to the interviewees, this is not limited to their own desire to engage in social entrepreneurship, but also to wide society who wish to be an active part. This in turn enhances and expands their network.

All entrepreneurs participating in the study have a sense of philanthropy and wish to give back to their wider society. On the other hand, over 78% of interviewees claim that investors, business people, lawyers and consultants were willing to help, give their free advises and sometimes donate when it comes to social and nonprofit business, this indicate their desire to engage of such activities. One

participant states "this reflects Islamic, Arabic values and also a global sense of giving that permeates local culture and values".

Obstacles to Social Entrepreneurship:
The average age of the researched group was 40+ which means that most of these females started their work before Tamkeen (semi-government entity responsible for enabling and partially funding entrepreneurs in Bahrain) was even established. All of the entrepreneurs used their own money to start the business. Some used their savings, one even sold her house and another took all her employment compensation and started the project. This case was found in United Arab Emirates. Haan (2004) states that females usually use their savings for start-up capital, where banks only provide initial funding for 35% of women entrepreneurs.

Due to the age demography, there was little support at the time these entrepreneurs started their businesses. Notable is the existence of business sharks (at that time not angel investors) who would lend money but expect a very high rate of return at the cost of the entrepreneurs making good profits. Some entrepreneurs argued that self-funding was essential to make sure that they had complete control of their business. When Tamkeen came about the businesses were established, but the entrepreneurs understudy benefited from Tamkeen to fund exhibitions, marketing and sometimes partial payment for employees. The absence of a solid legal framework was another obstacle that faced participants. In this context, over 57% of interviews claim that although philanthropy and Zakat are very deep in Muslim ideology, they are commonly practiced as individual efforts that lack institutionalization. Overall, funding was the main obstacle to Bahrain females' social entrepreneurship, followed by a lack of formal legal systems (Aldulaimi et al., 2020).

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Participants have strongly emphasized "self-fulfillment" as a motive for engaging in social entrepreneurship. Similarly, Ernest (2012) found that most social entrepreneurs almost share the same entrepreneurial personality traits as the need for risk-taking, innovativeness, need for achievement, need for independence and pro-activeness. These elements indicate that social entrepreneurship can satisfy intrinsic needs from within entrepreneurs. In this context, Ghalwash et al., (2017) argue that entrepreneurship is more than increasing personal profit and wealth. Moreover, the analysis demonstrates that religion is the main derive for Bahraini females to engage in social entrepreneurship, while other sub-themes revolve around religious beliefs like reciprocity. Ghalwash et al. (2017) state that humanitarian aspects and compassion towards community are common personal characteristics among all founding entrepreneurs. In non-Islamic context, Levie and Hart (2011) suggest that women may be motivated to become social entrepreneurs by a desire to improve the socio-economic environment of their community. Ostrander (2007) argues that social entrepreneurs are motivated by "altruism" or philanthropy. Accordingly, although both standpoints hold to the essence of "social responsibility" and lead to creating value for the society, the perspective of Bahraini females is based on the social value of religion.

Regarding network development, the analysis shows interrelated themes, mostly spin in "national culture" orbit. The main subthemes that were emerged are "family", "gender" and "culture of philanthropy". It was found that family is one of the strongest networks for social entrepreneurs; this does make sense in Arab world. Sidani and Thornberry (2009) argue that family is the central institution in Arab society. Hammoud (2011) state that the family stills the strongest and fundamental unit of social and business organization in Arab world. Hammoud (2011) state the Arab family has served guardian and as a mediator or link between the individual and community, by facilitating its members' access to positions, roles, and careers in public life. This analysis point to an exciting finding, as for Bahraini women, being female was an advantage in networking development; this contradict what has been cited by Goby and Erogul (2011) who stated that women engage less in formal networking and claim an absence of historic female networking spaces; due to the tradition of conservative Islamic societies. However, our research findings are compatible with Goby and Erogul (2011) claim that women usually depend on family networks as an ongoing source of support throughout all their entrepreneurial stages. Thus, women depend on their family to develop their network, indicating dependency of "gender" theme upon "family" which is formed according to "culture" customs. Culture of philanthropy is another motive that derives women from engaging in social entrepreneurship and for different actors to engage and support such projects. Philanthropy is formed and shaped according to religious values and national culture as well. The figure below illustrates the research findings:
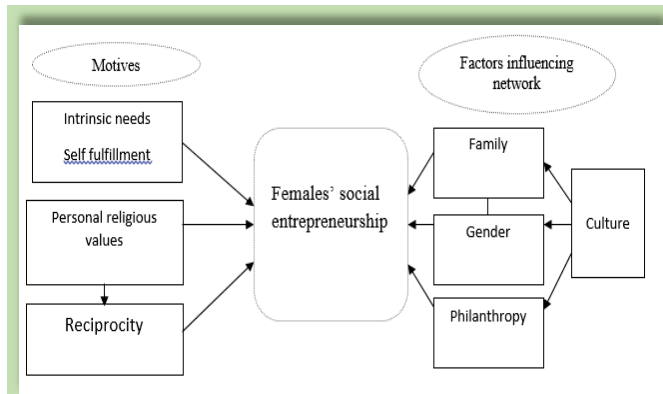
Figure 1: Summary of the Research findings

Overall, this paper introduces new insight into Bahraini females' entrepreneurship motives. "Self-fulfillment" was found to be a strong motive for engaging in social entrepreneurship, indicating a need to satisfy intrinsic needs. Further, religion was found to be a major drive for Bahraini females to engage in social entrepreneurship. At the same time, other sub-themes revolve around religious beliefs like reciprocity and sympathy for society. This demonstrates that religion's values and social value are what inspire females to engage in such effort. Regarding network development, the analysis shows interrelated themes shaped in the crucible of "national culture": the role of family, gender, and philanthropy. Finally, social entrepreneurship was mostly discussed from a western perspective (Mulyaningsih & Ramadani, 2017), further, it was claimed that the western perspective is not based on religious viewpoints (Almari, 2014). Therefore, this study introduced a religious-based perspective underlying the establishment of faith-based organizations. This perspective is rarely investigated, as claimed by Mulyaningsih and Ramadani (2017).

Limitation of the study:
The main limitation of this study is the limited number of participants. Thus, there is a need for further large-scale study to validate the results of this study empirically. Further, this study revealed some unplanned issues like the obstacles to social entrepreneurship, which require more studies in this area. Finally, this study concludes that social entrepreneurship in Bahrain is founded on the root of faith, this indicates a need for more studies to explore the religious-based organizations in the Arab world.

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