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SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH IN THE MIDDLE EAST (SYSTEMATIC REVIEW)

*Review
Article*

Keywords

*Social entrepreneurship;
Nonprofit organizations;
Social innovation;
Systematic literature review;*

JEL Classification

A13; F63; L26; O35

Abstract

In the last few years, concert international efforts have been made to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs-2030), and societal well-being. Social Entrepreneurship (SE) is a new and creative approach to address diverse social challenges. Undoubtedly, SE is a flexible and dynamic framework capable of establishing the basic approach for responding to many urgent societies' challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and environmental issues (climate change, agricultural familiar, pollution). In this context, the main aim of this research was to give an overview of the development in research related to SE in the Middle East countries, based on Google Scholar database between 2010 and 2020. Results showed that, total research has reached 80 items, where the year 2015 has the highest number of research items (25), followed by 2017 (14), then 2016, 2017, 2018 with eight research items for each one. In terms of countries, research about SE in all Middle East as a whole represented 51% of the total number of researches: Egypt (12%), UAE (6%), Lebanon (6%), and Saudi Arabia (6%). The output of this research emphasizes that, the blooming emergence of SE in the Middle East happened mainly after the so called "Arab Spring", although it originally goes back to the 2000s. Furthermore, the Middle East region has a great potential for emerging SE with a remarkable appearance of women entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

By the end of 2100, the world population is expected to exceed 10 billion people (Gerland et al., 2014; Leridon, 2020), which poses a major challenge on the governance system all over the world (Shobe, 2020). It is associated with climate change, food shortage, poverty, and failure of old enterprises model in capturing modern changes (Mikalauskiene, Narutaviciute - Cikanauske, Sarkiunaite, Streimikiene, & Zlateva, 2018; Hallegatte and Rozenberg, 2017). All of these rapid changes have accelerated the needs of new business models which have a social tendency such as social entrepreneurship and social enterprises (Apostolopoulos, Newbery, & Gkartzios, 2019). The rapid growth of social and economic inequality has helped connect a large number of people with the idea of making business linked to humanitarian issues. Recently, social entrepreneurship has started to attract more attention globally due to its ability to address social issues, seizing opportunities to encode and dedicate them towards achieving the social value. It is briefly the process of using modern business attributes in order to encounter the accumulated social dilemmas.

ORIGINS OF THE CONCEPT

Social Entrepreneurship (SE) is a new and creative approach of business social engagements and social services. Nowadays, numerous organizations called “social enterprises” are operating around the world; however, many definitions have been introduced to this main title; where the early definition of an entrepreneur was an individual who has a purpose and strive for achieving it in addition to affording its risk, based on his expenses, in order to create a product (Buchko, 2018). Similarly, Schumpeter (1934) mentioned that an entrepreneur is a creator who uses the means of production in an innovative method, he also employs his initiative, imagination and common sense. However, an entrepreneur is reliable, trustworthy, looking for a future opportunity and ready to take the initiative. In the same vein, there are four steps to encounter the definition, which includes the action of combining the factors of production, selecting optimal resolutions in terms of creation, production and risk-taking. Whereas Eckhardt and Shane (2003) referred to entrepreneurship as selling new outputs at higher prices than the cost of production after creating and bringing them into existence by exploitation, evaluation and identification. Recently, Ahmad and Seymour, (2008) defined entrepreneurship as a concept related to an entrepreneurial action, where the latter is the adventurous individual activity in continuation of value making through the innovation of economic

action by discovering and picking new features, methods, tools or markets. Eisenmann (2013) indicated that entrepreneurship is the following up and continuation of a chance beyond riches available.

The awareness of social issues has become a reality, and it is available widely due to the fast spread of information through modern technologies. Hahn and Andor (2013) pointed out that the fresh experiences applied to overcome social obstacles which have a positive outcome that influence society, organizations and individuals, are known as social innovations. The proposition of the new tools, practices, and products which continuously compensate social requirements, are defined as social innovations (Marolt, Pucihar, & Zimmermann, 2015). Mulgan (2006) demonstrated that the elements and practices which aim to a sustainable and positive change to the society’s network, represent the terms of social innovation. Phills, Deiglmeier, & Miller (2008) concluded that social innovation is the brand-new settlement which face the growing quarrels of the society in a more dynamic, functional, sustainable and more rightful way than the running processes. Confirming the urgent and demanding international affairs such as inequality, climate change and chronic diseases encountered by the ineffective current models and policies were the reason behind the flourishing of social innovation as a favorable technique (Murray, Caulier-Grice, & Mulgan, 2010).

Having a shot at social challenges, addressing and responding to them meanwhile the market and the public sector do not, is the reason why social entrepreneurship have raised (Brock and Stainer, 2009). Ultimately, achieving the social mission and refunding the growth through generated revenue are the main features of social enterprises (Masseti, 2008).

Social innovation includes concepts such as social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneur, and social enterprise. Where, social entrepreneurship focuses on the action and point to a process, while focusing on the creator instead is the definition of the social entrepreneur and the results achieved by the social entrepreneurship define the social enterprise (Westley and Antadze, 2010) (Figure 1).

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP (SE) VERSUS COMMERCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP (CE)

Filling the gaps which commercial entrepreneurship left empty is the main task of social entrepreneurship, due to its structural features (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006). In this sense, it is necessary for social entrepreneurship to include tools for income-

generating presented by the entrepreneurial approach, which prioritize the social benefits over the pure profit (Peredo and McLean, 2006 ; Douglas and Prentice, 2019). Thus, both concepts pursue to generate profit; however, the main difference implies in the objective of using the profit; where commercial entrepreneurship (CE) tends to create personal wealth; whereas social entrepreneurship (SE) rather to use benefit in creating social value (Austin et al., 2006; Mickiewicz, & Stephan, 2016; Seelos and Mair, 2005). Therefore, the difference between SE and the CE forms is based on the differentiation between value creation and value capture (Santos, 2012; Lumpkin et al., 2013). The fulfilment of medical services, shelter, education, water and food providing are the basic needs which concern the profit generated by social value (Certo and Miller, 2008). Many researchers agreed that the main distinction is the necessity for creating social value as a preference over economic value (Bacq, Hartog, & Hoogendoorn, 2013; Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010; Zahra et al., 2009).

The lack of resources will drive both government and profit-oriented companies towards the engagement in fields where value capturing has a higher potential than value creating. The opposite scenario where the engagement will be in the fields with higher potential of the value creation, is the domain of social entrepreneurship (Ormiston and Seymour, 2011; Lepak, Smith, & Taylor, 2007).

The terms of the overall mission, resource mobilization and measuring the performance are the main differences between SE and CE (Austin et al., 2006).

Social purpose has to be comprehensible as something that stand out from the collection of economic activity and social mission which make the outlines between the traditional various kinds of enterprises disappear (Porter and Kramer, 2006). A social project includes partners such as local authorities, support organizations, users, volunteers and paid workers, the participation of the various previous partners allow social enterprises to have new ways of organizing work (Defourny and Nyssens, 2013).

Recently, the spread of the unusual challenges, at all levels from the national to the global, needs to be addressed immediately. Neither the market nor the state can achieve this alone (Grieco, 2015). The negative relationship can be noticed between the decreasing volume of public-profit services specialized to fulfil the inhabitant's compound requirements, and the increasing demand for it (Becchetti and Borzaga, 2010).

The economic development models have been fundamentally changed by the directions of the present economy such as decreasing levels of economic growth, increasing complexity of the society and globalization (Borzaga et al., 2014).

Failing to maintain a low ratio of unemployment caused an elimination in the labor market affecting individuals and groups, this failure has reached the inadequate development policies, on the other hand, the reduction in the public spending funds was continuing (Becchetti and Borzaga, 2010). There is a protruded necessity for a "more sophisticated form of capitalism" that is related to social purpose in some way. It is no longer the liability of charity activities or non-profit organizations (Porter and Kramer, 2006).

Rebuilding the legitimacy and reputation for traditional forms of capitalism are the main concerns, a source of hope in these markets can be represented by entrepreneurs who focus on the unmet social needs in order to shape and create solutions for them (Pless, 2012).

Recognizing and exploiting commercial opportunities derived from the changes in market, competitiveness and technology are features related to the creation of innovative business ventures which can achieve a crucial role in enhancing the innovation process (OECD, 2018).

OUTLOOK OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The blooming emergence of SE in the Middle East happened mainly after the so called "Arab Spring", but originally it goes back to the 2000s (Kakish, Shaheen, Dawwas, & Mehtap, 2015; Kreitmeyer, 2019; Ismail and Johnson, 2019; Nieva, 2015). The region has a high number of youth (Ayish, 2018; Jamali and Lanteri, 2016; Ismail and Johnson, 2019) in addition to the remarkable appearance of women entrepreneurship (Nieva, 2015). However, uniqueness is the feature of the multitude number of socio-economic challenges surrounding the society such as unemployment and gender inequality (Alarifi, Robson, & Kromidha, 2019; Kakish et al., 2015) mainly because it is unsolvable by neither the government nor the conventional organizations (Sulphey and Alkahtani, 2017; El Kallab and Salloum, 2017).

SE is encountered by special middle eastern obstacles, starting with identifying social entrepreneurship in the region (Jayakar and More, 2018), the lack of empirical research and evidence (Ghalwash, Tolba, & Ismail, 2017; Kakish et al., 2015), the lack for an understanding related to a legal framework (Abdo and Paris, 2017; Johnsen, 2017) in addition to the financial difficulties, bureaucracy, corruption and the weak infrastructure (El Ebrashi, 2018; Morrar, Amara, & Zwick, 2021). On the other hand, SE can play a crucial role in inspiring the economic growth and development (Aljuwaiber, 2020). Hence, focusing more on understanding the concept can give policy makers a

chance to adapt the social orientation into the future policies (Ashour, 2016). All in all, this research seeks to give an overview of development research about social entrepreneurship in the Middle East countries.

METHODS

Firstly the web of science database search was used to search for the following keywords "social entrepreneurship in the middle east", "entrepreneurship in the middle east". However, in most cases, the research output was between six and ten research papers. Hence, to overcome this issue, and to have a better comprehensive look on the emergence of social entrepreneurship researches in the Middle East; the Google Scholar database (<https://scholar.google.hu/>) was selected instead; Where the following words ("Social Entrepreneurship" + "Middle East"), were selected as research keywords between 2010 and 2020. Only Arabic Middle Eastern countries were included among the study since they share same language. Then, the output was verified to ensure that the content was matching with the research goal. Finally, 88 papers were selected and then classified according to the area in which they were conducted. Moreover, the citation number of these papers was also collected from the same website. Knowing that research items which were related to the Middle East as a whole have been considered as a separate part of research that were specified in which country of the Middle East they were conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research items and citations

Results showed that the year 2015 has the highest number of research items (25), followed by 2017 (14), then 2016, 2017, 2018 with eight research items for each one. However, the total researches were 80 items (Figure 2). In terms of citations, the research items of 2010 received 145 citations, followed by 2017 (113 citations), then 2015 (101 citations) as presented in Figure 2 (the red line). However, trend analysis by using Man-Kendall (Kendall, 1975; Mann, 1945) test and Sen slope (Sen, 1968) showed a positive but not significant trend for both number of research items and citations. Figure 2 shows a low number of research items and citations in 2020, which can be explained by that some papers may be submitted but not yet accepted by journals; similarly for the citations, that some papers may have just been accepted and published; then, there was not enough time to be used as a source of citation.

Social entrepreneurship research in the Middle Eastern countries

Figure 3 showed that research items related to SE in the Middle East as a whole represent 51% of the total research, followed by Egypt (12%), UAE (6%), Lebanon (6%), Saudi Arabia (6%), GCC (5%), Morocco (4%), Jordan (4%), Palestine (3%), and Tunisia (3%). Interestingly, no research items were recorded in some MENA countries such as Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, which reflects the lack of importance given to SE research in these countries. In terms of research types, Fig.4 depicted that the highest volume of research types are scientific research articles (31 items), followed by book chapters (27 items), and thesis (eight items). In this sense, it seems that SE research didn't attract much attention in the MENA regions.

CONCLUSIONS

The main essence of SE is to generate social value rather than personal benefits, which markedly contribute in development of any society through job creation, and supplementary income. Recently, SE research increased significantly in many parts of the world. In the Middle East SE research is still an emerging part, which needs to be distinguished from another economic sectors by providing the legal framework for it. The output of this research could be elaborated as follows: only 80 researches about SEs in the Middle East could be found in Google Scholar, which could be classified as: 31 articles, 27 book chapters, and eight theses.

Most of the research (51%) is focused on Middle East countries. Individual researches were highlighted in Egypt (12%), UAE (6%), Lebanon (6%), and Saudi Arabia (6%).

The highest number of research items were recorded in 2015 by 25 researches, followed by 2017 (14).

Even though, many factors such as financial difficulties, absence of incentives, and lack of empirical research limit developing of SEs; however, this sector seems to be a promising one and could accelerate the development process in the Middle East region. Then, the study recommends more research to be carried out in this domain.

Biographical sketch

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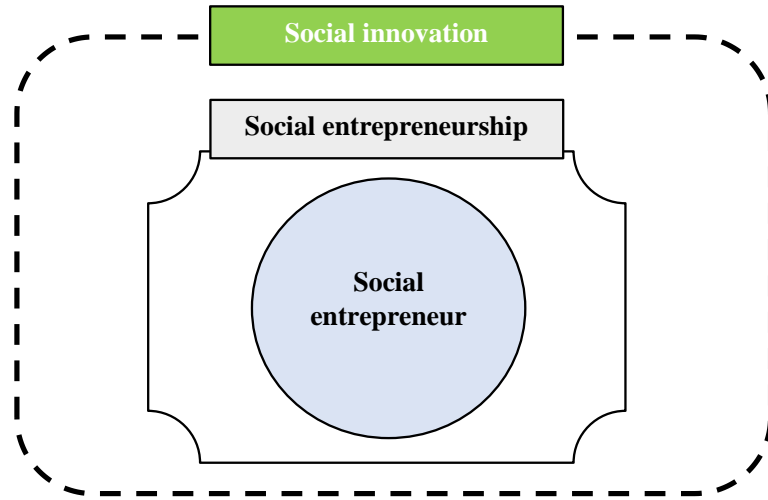


Figure 1
Concepts of social work
Source: Created by the author.

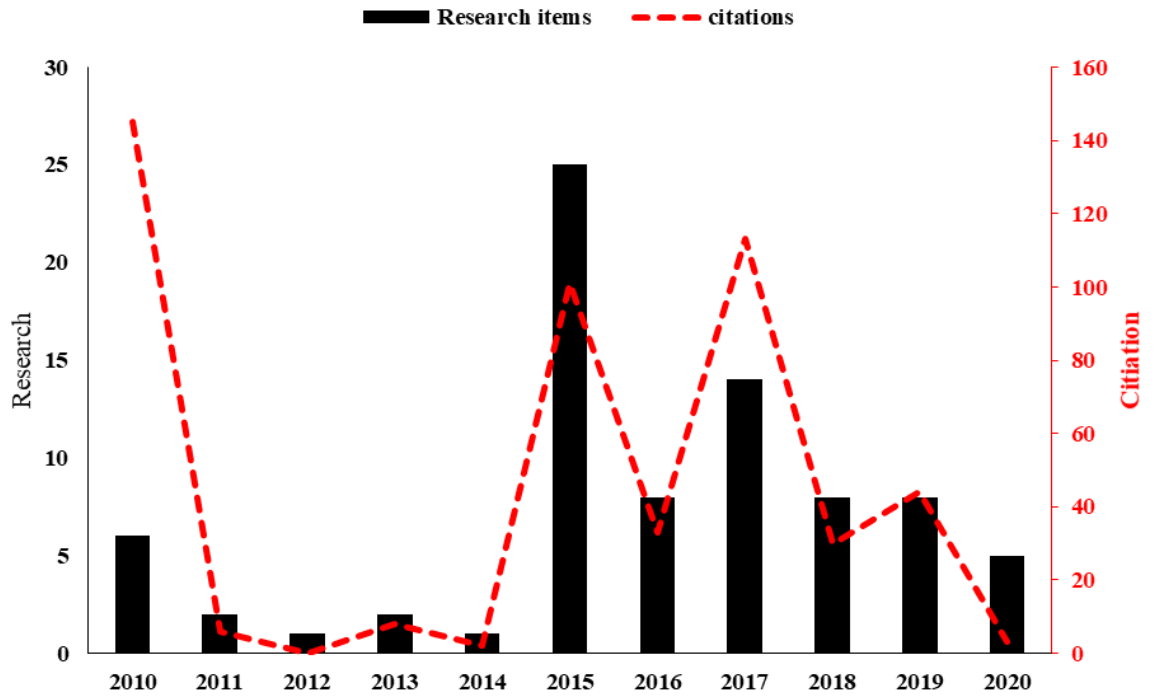


Figure 2
Research items and citations for social entrepreneurship in the Middle East between 2010-2020
based on Google scholar database
Source: Created by the author.

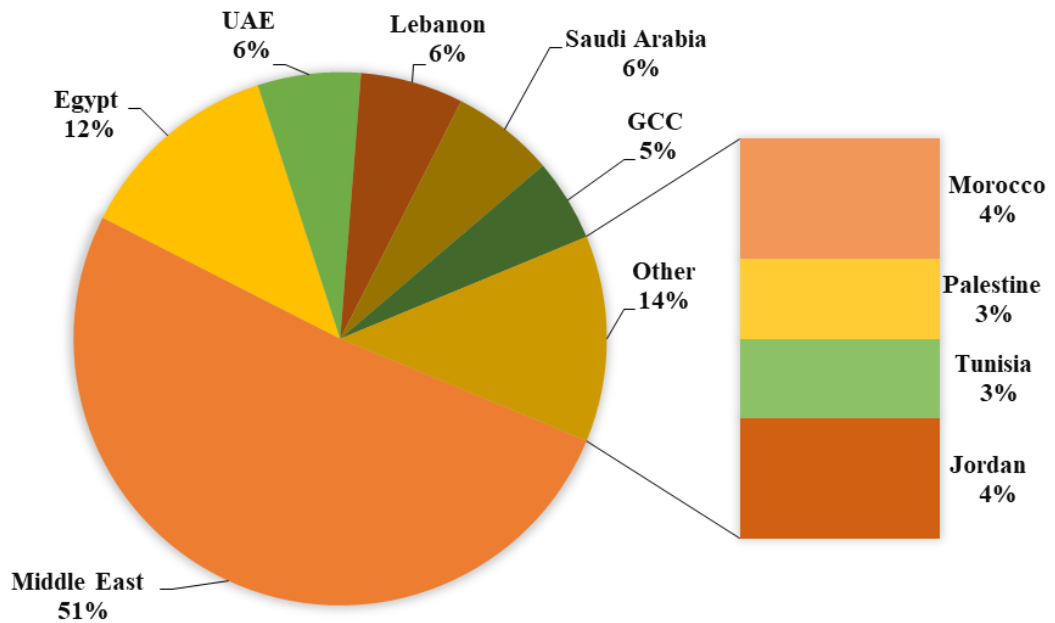


Figure 3
Classification of social entrepreneurship research items in the Middle East
Source: Created by the author.

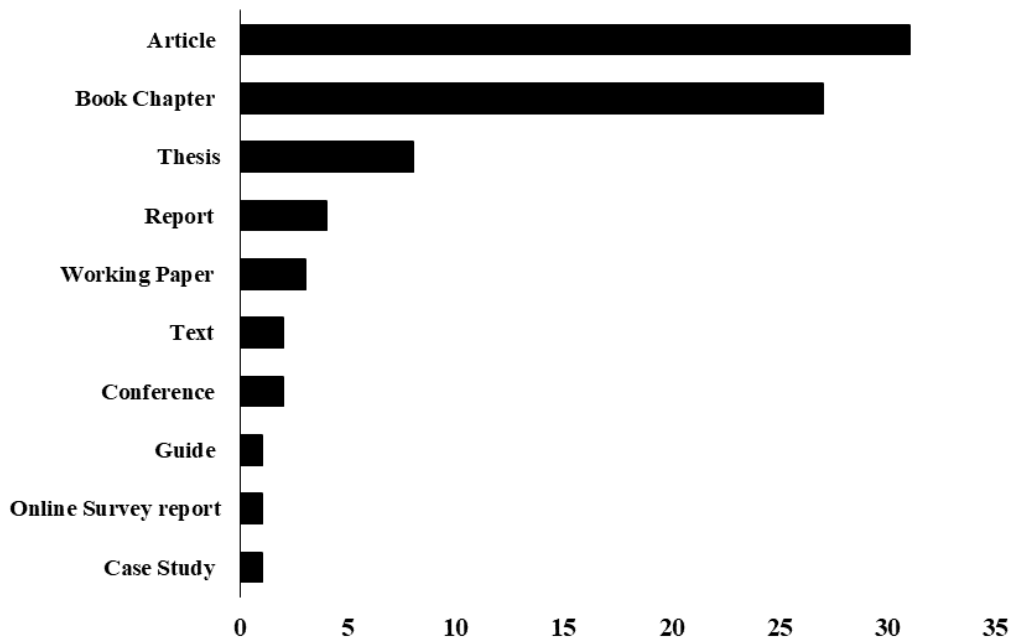


Figure 4
Type of research for social entrepreneurship in the Middle East
Source: Created by the author.