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## INSPIRING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN MIDDLE EAST OF SAUDI ARABIA

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### ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurship has faced various challenges in the world today. The challenges range between culture, perception and believe they cannot get into economical activities. Despite the progress that has been made in ensuring that women come into entrepreneurial activities. This study identifies some of the reasons why most women do not participate in entrepreneurship and considered various ways to inspire and encourage female in various entrepreneurial activities in Middle East of Saudi Arabia. Both quantitative and qualitative approach was used to gather the primary data through interview survey. The obtained survey data is analyses statically where the secondary data were used to answer the research questions consists of the reasons why most women do not participate in entrepreneurship, the importance of entrepreneurship in a country, the cultural practices that deter women from the Middle East participate in entrepreneurship, the weaknesses in some institutions in the Middle East that hinder women entrepreneurship, the factors that have made some women in the world to excel in their entrepreneurship undertakings and the factors that will inspire women entrepreneurs towards excelling and more coming on board. The result and discussion demonstrate involvement of women in entrepreneurship in any country is a very important practice that governments should encourage, which lead to growth of any economy of a country.

### INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is the backbone of economy in the world. The large percentage of the employment opportunities in the countries has been boosted through small business. Some of the famous innovations that have earned these countries millions of revenues have been through those entrepreneurs

who have dedicated most of their time to solve the problems they are facing [1].

Entrepreneurship can be undertaken both in the large scale and small scale respectively [2]. There is large corporate that have entrepreneurship department in their organizations, which are in charge of ensuring that new innovations and better ways of offering services have been implemented in the organization. In small scale is where individuals decide to venture into activities that they are passionate of and also because they want to get into economic activities that will assist them to grow. Employment has been said to be one of those areas that has made most of organizations to survive over years. The achievement has been due to the fact that entrepreneurs within the organization to always come up with products and services that remains attractive to their customers.

Most women have not been involved in entrepreneurial activities [3]. The scenario has been associated with the fact that culture has not been encouraging them to participate in economic activities. However, the few who have been in the field have performed excellently. The trend has shown that women become more innovative if they are given opportunity. Where motivation has been exercised, more have involved themselves in the process a factor that leads to success of entrepreneurship at large.

Opportunities that are available for women have been little compared to those of men. Women have limited activities that they are allowed to participate in the long run. However, in the real context it is common sense that women can do what can do. It is only that the mentality has been created in them that they cannot participate in particular activities [4]. The mentality that women can only contribute less when it comes to the factor of entrepreneurship has discouraged most of them from searching for those opportunities that they can undertake. Aidis et al. (2007) says that the motive of gender inequality in entrepreneurship has mostly found itself affecting mostly the female gender [5].

Bruin at al. (2007) suggests that the old perception about women has negatively impacted them in the participation in the entrepreneurship [6]. There has been continuous dragging of the old tradition into the entrepreneurship culture that has seen them be at a position of not succeeding. Gender will play an important role in success of entrepreneurship. Usually, there has been lack of family support for women in entrepreneurs. They always think that women not be as productive as male counterparts [7]. The perception has been of great impact towards the success of women entrepreneurs. There are cases that women need just a little support to make sure that they have gone to the next level in undertaking their activities but due to discouragements, they leave and feel as failures.

Women have been having another challenge of feeling that they should keep their businesses small. They fear expansion, as it will engage them more and limit them with time that they could have used in taking care of their families. The motive for them to hold business has been to be able to get something that will enable to take care of their children. This has limited their expansion and

ability to do more innovation. The mentality has eliminated potential utilization. Those with the ability to hold large businesses have not been a position of thinking on the expansion of their businesses [8]. Work life balance has been a challenge to many who think of fulfilling their legacy of getting into business. There has been the issue of pressure from both family matters and also that of businesses.

The cultures that encourage entrepreneurship in the society have been a good boost to the governments. However, those cultures that do not encourage entrepreneurship have been a predicament to the whole community. There are cultures for example that do not allow women to engage in economic activities. They may hinder those women with the power innovation and working hard from engaging in activities that could have been important to the community at large. Therefore, this study looks into the factors and reasons why most women in Middle East of Saudi Arabia do not participate in entrepreneurship and contributes into the motivation and inspiring of women to enrol in entrepreneurship.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used quantitative and qualitative approach, where survey method is used to collect the data. The research design used is non-experimental. The additional information is deduced from the survey conducted in line with how women are leading the entrepreneurial world with the help of questionnaire technique, it will enhance the understanding of what the society thinks about businesswomen and how it affects their mentality as well as the contribution to the society.

### ***Research Design and Sample***

The research design is based on theoretical values in which, all the required data for the study are obtained from the previously gathered information. This study analyses the previously existing data (Secondary data) in Diverse materials are used so as to make the study more relevant as it will rely heavily on the secondary data. Diverse materials are used to acquire results. The sample size used is 84 respondents from various layers of society in Saudi Arabia.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

As a means to support the data analysis process, the proposed study will use scientific tools. Such a tool adoption will increase the quality and efficiency of the data collection process [9]. The collected data is analysed through the quantitative statistical analytical tools such as through charts, graphs, and other inferential statistical tools.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

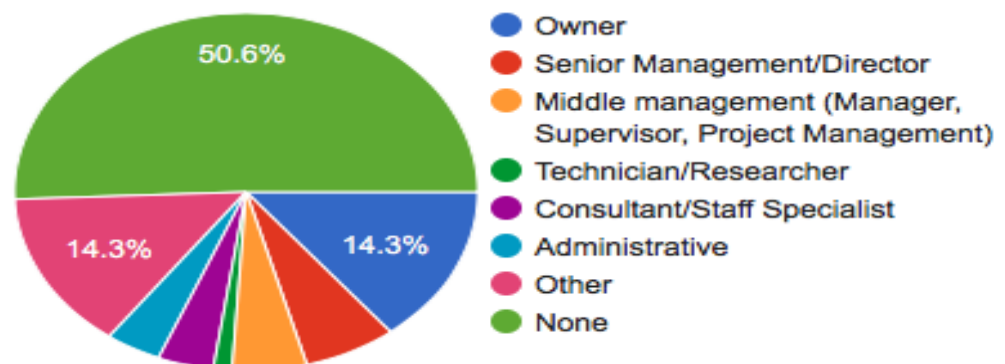
There are 84 respondents from various layers of society in Saudi Arabia have participated in this study. Table 1 shows the demographic of the participants and most of the entrepreneurs are women about 88.10%. Most of the participants about 76.19% are aged between 20 to 29 years old.

According to Table 1, about 57.14% of the participant claims for women started up their own business. Majority about 83.33% of the participants are government employee. About 84.53% of the participants have a proposed plan, but only 38.10% have ideas to start a business. The participants claim they require financial and technical help by 78.57% and 71.43% respectively.

**Table 1.** The Demographic of The Participants

Characteristics	Categori es	Frequen cy (n)	Percenta ge (%)
Gender	Male	10	11.90
	Female	74	88.10
Age group (years old)	20	3	3.57
	20-29	64	76.19
	30-39	9	10.71
	40-49	3	3.57
	50	5	5.95
Number of women started up their own business	Yes	48	57.14
	No	36	42.86
Government employee	Yes	70	83.33
	No	14	16.67
Have proposed plan	Yes	71	84.53
	No	13	15.48
Have ideas to starting a business	Yes	32	38.10
	No	52	61.90
Need any financial help	Yes	66	78.57
	No	18	21.43
Need Technical support	Yes	60	71.43
	No	24	28.57

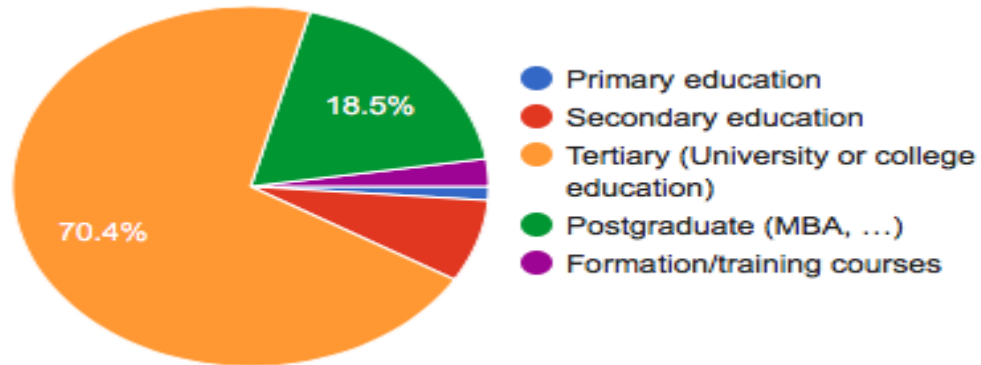
Figure 1 shows that majority of the respondents about 50.6% are technical and researcher. The second highest contributes by business owner and others, both mark the same percentage of 14.3%.



**Figure 1.** Current Positions in The Market

Figure 2 demonstrates the education level of the participants and majority of them about 70.4% are from tertiary such as University or college education.

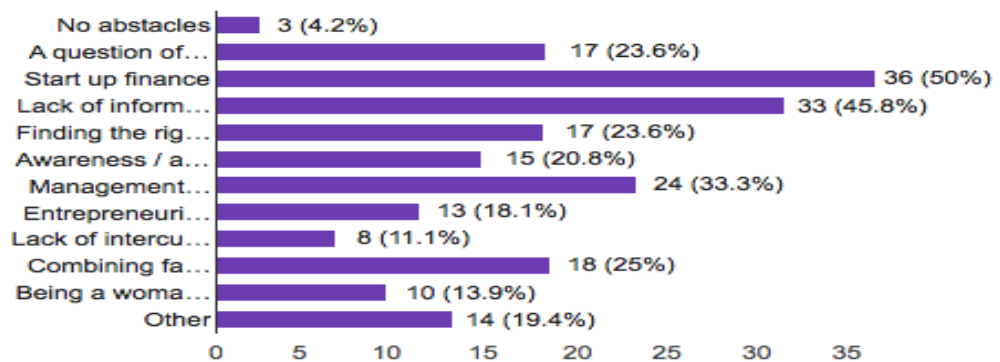
While the second highest postgraduate such as MBA by 18.5%. Some of them have high school and some of the training diplomas.



**Figure 2.** Education Level

Figure 3 demonstrates the problems faced during a start-up business. A real business doesn't start with anyone saying that they didn't face any problems. There are many problems associated from monetary to other values. About 50% of the participants claim they don't have start-up finance, followed by lack of infrastructure (45.8%) and management (33.3%). The reason because being a woman also marks the percentage of 19.4%.

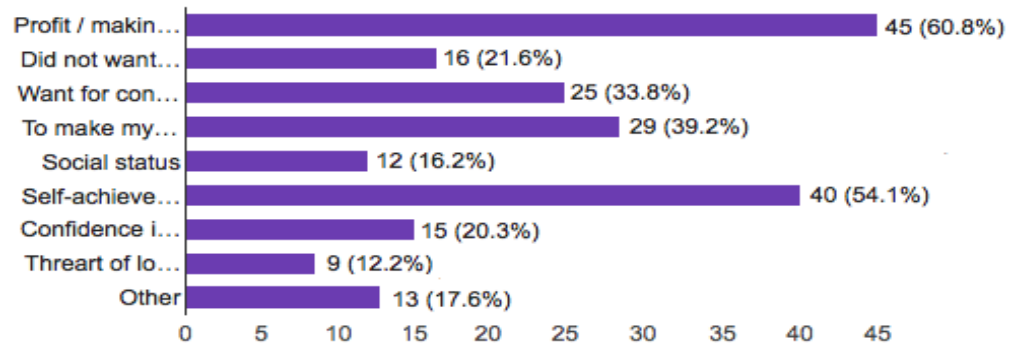
They said that lack of financial structure, infrastructure, management and others have led to backing out of their plans. Some participants even responded that being a woman was an obstacle in their entrepreneurial path. People felt that they could not achieve these business goals due to the fact that they are women and are inferior compared to men in this business. Although many of them were at high positions in the offices but could not gather courage to start up their own business.



**Figure 3.** Problems Faced During A Start-Up Business

Figure 4 demonstrates the reason to start up a business. The reason of them wanted to start up a business is to make profit marks by 60.8%, follow by self-achievement about 54.1%. Making profit and self-achievement such as achieve social status and confidences are the main reason for them to start up a business. They are seeking profit in their venture or business. Some did not

associate it with monetary value and stated that it is a mark of self-respect, self-achievement and confidence. These are the reasons that inspired many women in the Middle East to enter into the field of entrepreneurship and start their own venture and build path for other women as inspiration. They are doing so because their success will inspire more women to participate in the market and uplift women's position in entrepreneurship.



**Figure 4.** Reason to Start Up A Business

## OVERALL DISCUSSION

In the recent years most of the countries in the world have been keen on entrepreneurship and small business. This is supported by most of the countries setting aside funds through their budgets to ensure that this sector is moving towards the required direction of success. The United States of America (USA) being one of the strongest economies in the world has been supportive to programs that are intended to support this sector. This can be evidenced by the upcoming various entrepreneurial summits that have been held in various parts of the world. The seriousness is a sign of how important entrepreneurship is important in the world today [10].

Also, other developed economies both in Europe and Asia have supported this sector in every way possible. Creating an environment that is able to support entrepreneurship and small business by putting up institutions that are supportive to the players in this sector. There are very many learning entrepreneurial institutions that are used to incubate most of the innovations that have been brought about by the citizens. The finance sector has not been left behind because incentives have been provided to those institutions that provide capital supports to both start-ups and other entrepreneurial firms. Laws have been enacted that support the existence of such firms.

All this is due to the realization that the small business and entrepreneurial culture in a country has a very significant contribution to the country. Taking an example in the employment part of the economy you find that this sector contributes fifty percent of the opportunities. Also, significant revenue is being collected from this sector, which may lead to the crippling of the government operations if the revenue is not received. Due to all this benefits that are being got from this sector we see the developed countries that are much focused on entrepreneurship.

Apart from the direct benefits that are being got by embracing entrepreneurship, it is believed that by having a workforce that is entrepreneurial-minded leads to a successful country. This is because those who have the character of an entrepreneur tend to be hardworking, innovative, and creative. A nation with many of its people having the above characters achieves its goals easily and it can be termed as successful. Various examples in the world can prove the statement above [11].

In the recent year, Visa, master card, swift transfer of money and online payment platforms that are meant to make trade easy and reduce the challenges faced. This has led to a rapid growth of this sector and most of the governments making a lot of revenues. The energy sector has not been left behind, where the innovation made to ensure use of clean energy so as to combat pollution of the environment. There are so many examples of innovations and creativity that are coming up all this are individual ideas that have been incubated and supported by respective governments that have turned to be fortunes [11].

However, there are still challenges encountered in ensuring that women are brought on board to undertake entrepreneurship. In most of the Middle East countries, the potential for women entrepreneurship has not been fully exhausted. Though there are very many innovative and creative women citizens, the environment and culture needed to support the implementation of the entrepreneurship ideas is not conducive [12]. Most of the governments in the Middle East have concentrated on the improvement the large industries owned mostly on by men.

On the other hand, they have not given the necessary much attention needed to ensure also that women are brought on board. What also has made most companies not nurture the attributes of entrepreneurship is the act of forgetting that those who are needed to work in these industries should have the entrepreneurial character to ensure success in them. Though most governments in the Middle East have realized the importance of women entrepreneurship in the economy, they have not done enough that can be used to inspire women get into actions [11].

Entrepreneurship can prove to make a very significant impact in any country that tries to embrace it. Thus, countries that are much concerned with human rights groups always giving funds that are going towards the support of entrepreneurship throughout the world. The USA being an example of these countries spends millions of dollars yearly to see this program being implemented in most of the developing countries. Due to all these, the entrepreneurship means; reduction of dependency in the government, improved living standards, creation of more employment opportunities, it leads to elimination of civil wars in various countries, and also increased revenue collection by the governments.

The above significances and realizations are the ones that have made entrepreneurship to be taken seriously even making it necessary for legislation and creation of institutions that can ensure the culture is instilled to most of the

citizens of various countries. In addition, various entrepreneurial summits and conferences being conducted globally to emphasize the benefits. Hence, a country with entrepreneurial culture is a country with empowered citizens [13].

In the Middle East countries, most of the businesses owned by women entrepreneurship are small in size compared to that of the male entrepreneurs. However, the creation of this has been due to the perception that has been created by the public. Usually, women are perceived that they cannot manage big businesses. This is one point that discredits the ability of the women. However, it is the exact opposite since there are women who have taken up tasks in entrepreneurship and they have a success story. The fact that the men own large businesses compared women, gives them a profit advantage over the women.

However, the fact that women have been given the perception of being inferior has made them not to take the hard task of managing huge businesses. The whole old thinking about women about entrepreneurship has been one of the issues hindering women success in the Middle East. Performance based on perception is a very dangerous idea in the course of encouraging one to develop him. The lack of support from family members is one of those areas that need to improve and make women feel that they are some of the best entrepreneurs.

Though some few women have been in the front in ensuring that they take part in the entrepreneurship process in the world, they face some aspects that deter them. The aspect that they are given the larger role to play in a family has been of great impact in terms of their progress. Women have the responsibility of ensuring that family matters that are localized are taken care of. In the UAE for example, women are the ones who have the responsibility of taking care of the children in the family. With this, they will have very little time to put things in order in their engagement in other activities. In the process, they will not be able to optimally be productive. With the fact that most of the women entrepreneurs in the UAE are sole proprietors, most of them they operate businesses on their own.

Some of the factors that motivate women to get into entrepreneurship include the itch to get independent. When they get into business it means that they are able to generate income of their own. With income, then it is possible that women will not be dependent on their men. Also, with entrepreneurship there is flexibility. This is an aspect in human beings that most desire. Also, the motivation to get self-employed is there within the women culture and it has contributed immensely towards some more women getting into entrepreneurship. In some cases, there are circumstances that their families are supporting the women.

Husbands who have heavily participated in the entrepreneurship have been supportive to their wives by providing both material and professional support. The ventures where the husbands support women are likely to succeed, as they will always be having the guidance regarding the problems that they are facing. Also, entrepreneurship institutions in the Middle East have not fully



developed to equip women with skills that will enable them develops the entrepreneurship skills.

It was discovered that to bring more women into entrepreneurship then it is prudent that governments should provide special attention towards female citizens. Incentives that are to ensure that the women are getting conducive business environments should be encouraged. An example is where the Middle East governments can engage themselves in giving reduced interest loans to the women who are actively participating in entrepreneurship activities. This can be made capable through making partnerships with financial institutions to give subsidized loans. Public education is also an option to ensure that women are educated on the importance getting them into entrepreneurship. On top of that, the government can provide tax incentives that will encourage more women to come on board.

### CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship in any country is a very important practice that governments should encourage. Women entrepreneurship can be an additional factor that can lead to the growth of any economy of a country. The governments of the Middle East should further engage in rapid processes to encourage more women to participate in entrepreneurship by offers women any opportunity in undertaking entrepreneurship activities in order to define the benchmark. The culture that women are only left to participate in those activities that are meant for family cares should be discouraged. Instead, they should encourage more women to be independent. The government should provide some tax incentives for women in entrepreneurship. Lastly, it should set aside rewards for those women are performing well in their entrepreneurial ventures.

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