



**INVESTIGATING THE CONTEXTUAL
EMBEDDEDNESS OF FEMALE
ENTREPRENEURSHIP-
A FEMINIST AND INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH**

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of the contextual embeddedness of entrepreneurship on female entrepreneurs. The contextual embeddedness of entrepreneurship in the social and geo-cultural environments has been consistently documented and societal perceived gender differences play a salient role in the development of female entrepreneurship. Moreover, there is an increase in emphasis on institutions as strong influencers of entrepreneurial engagement given their strong influence on the culture, beliefs and values of individuals and their views of society. The contribution that institutional theory brings to the analysis of the current knowledge of the state of entrepreneurship is even more significant in the case of female entrepreneurs who, according to the literature, are constantly disadvantaged and continually faced with significant obstacles due to their institutional setting. Also, investigating female entrepreneurship from a feminist perspective allows for attaining more profound insights by conducting the analysis both through the views of the female entrepreneurs as well as for them. Accordingly, this thesis combines an institutional gender-aware approach and a feminist perspective simultaneously to advance a comprehensive framework for the study of female entrepreneurship. In particular, the newly developed framework adopted for this thesis, the Institutional and Feminist Female Entrepreneurship Model (IFFEM) investigates the effects of institutional factors on female entrepreneurship at the meso-environment, macro-environment and motherhood levels and interprets their influence through a feminist standpoint allowing for more in-depth insights from the perspective of the female entrepreneurs.

The investigation takes place in the Kingdom of Bahrain due to its standing as a representative Arab nation that lies in the heart of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the larger Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, as a response to the lack of research on female entrepreneurship in this region. The study is conducted using qualitative methodology via in-depth semi-structured interviews with a sample of 44 female entrepreneurs approached through a snowball sampling technique based on initial personal acquaintances. The sample is representative of locals and expats, owners of new startups, established enterprises, home-based businesses and electronic businesses. The findings highlight five main themes and several subthemes that influence female entrepreneurship at the meso-environment, macro-environment and motherhood levels. The main identified themes are, at the macro-environment 1) regulatory setting and 2) socio-economic conditions; at the meso-environment, 3) initiatives, and at the motherhood level, 4) motherhood ideals and 5) motherhood environs. In addition, the IFFEM model reveals additional interesting results that focus on the personal insights and perspectives of the female entrepreneurs, thereby confirming the appropriateness and relevance of the model as a tool for investigating female entrepreneurship. The

thesis concludes with useful recommendations at the practical and theoretical levels for the study of female entrepreneurship.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
LMRA	Labor market Regulatory Authority
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
CAWTAR	Center for Arab Women Training and Research
ILO	International Labor Organization
CR	Commercial Registration
VCR	Virtual Commercial Registration
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
SAHM	Stay at Home Mother

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study examines the contextual embeddedness of entrepreneurship and its effect on female entrepreneurs. It is structured as follows. Chapter 1 presents the introduction of the research and starts with a synopsis of all chapters constituting this thesis. It provides the background of the research along with an overview of the problem statement and the research aim and objectives, and it provides a short description of the methodological approach adopted, the contribution and the findings of the study. In addition, this chapter provides the contextual background on the Kingdom of Bahrain, where the research is undertaken. Chapter 2 presents the literature review, by providing a background on entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship, focusing on institutional theory, the 5M model of female entrepreneurship (Brush et al., 2009) gender theory and feminism in addition to giving minor attention to the theory of patriarchy and the Islamic religion. Chapter 3 provides the conceptual framework of the research developed by combining institutional theory in terms of the meso-environment, macro-environment and motherhood elements of the 5M model to the feminist standpoint approach for investigating female entrepreneurship. Chapter 4 presents the methodological approach and philosophical stance adopted for the study, explains the interview design and protocol and explains the methods for choosing the study sample. Chapter 5 presents and analyses the findings of the study. Chapter 6 provides the responses to the research questions and discusses the research findings. Finally, Chapter 7 provides the conclusion of the study as well as the knowledge, theoretical, practical and methodological contributions, and concludes with the study limitations and the research significance and provides recommendations for future research.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Entrepreneurship has been described as a dynamic fortune generating process (Ronstadt, 1984). Similarly, it is linked to methods employed by individuals in exploring new prospects, irrespective of their current wealth or assets (Stevenson, 1983). Recently, entrepreneurship has been identified as both an unforeseen and still unmeasured economic prospect (Cuervo et al., 2007). Apart from its various and changing definitions (Peverelli & Song, 2012), the vital role that entrepreneurship plays in the advancement and development of economies is undeniable (Minniti & L'evesque, 2008; Van Stel et al., 2007). Entrepreneurship, in general, complements the economic development of nations and contributes to the

advancement of the private sector, thereby creating a strong positive impact on society. For instance, establishing manufacturing industries constitutes a significant investment for any country, and an essential pillar in the development of nations' economies (Knox, Agnew, & McCarthy, 2014). Thus, entrepreneurship undoubtedly provides a critical contribution to advancing the societal and economic abilities of nations (Lindhult, 2011).

The more critical contribution is put forward by the participation of resourceful females, whose involvement in entrepreneurial activities has been reportedly on the rise. In the United States, for instance, reports suggest that female business owners constitute over 39% of total entrepreneurs actively operating companies in the country, and generate revenues more than \$1.6 Trillion (Shaheen, 2017). However, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor reports an apparent gender gap between males and females using TEA rates (Total Entrepreneurship Activity) revealing an average proportion of 16:11 male to female with a corresponding ratio of 0.69. In the case of the Middle East, this ratio is even lower at 14:8 male to female with a corresponding ratio of 0.57, noticeably below the reported GEM ratio for the same indicator. Regarding capability perceptions, which reflect the individual's internal self-perceptions, the report also shows another visible gender gap about TEA rates, with a score of 46% for women compared to 59% for men. These rates have not shown much change in comparison with the rates reported by the GEM in 2012 across 61 countries (Bosma, Wennekers & Amoros, 2012; GEM, 2015).

In addition, when looking at the involvement of females in entrepreneurship across nations, within the 83 countries that the GEM (2015) report covers, the highest rates of female entrepreneurs taking the initial steps to start a new venture are found in the low-to-middle income countries and the lowest rates of female entrepreneurial participation are found in high-income nations. This contribution, however worthwhile, is still significantly less than the rate of involvement of males in entrepreneurial activities. The report shows that the likelihood of men entering entrepreneurship is meaningfully higher than that of women. Notably, high-income economies report that the probability of men setting up new businesses or currently involved in established businesses is twice as that of women. As such, it is advocated that, for countries to attain the highest possible economic fulfilment, and realise the engagement of both males and females as partners contributing equally to societal and economic advancement, steps must be taken to ensure the fair and full representation of females as entrepreneurs similarly to their male counterparts (Meunier, Krylova & Ramalho, 2017).

Nonetheless, the phenomena of females starting-up their private businesses is on the rise, which gives ground for the need to study this topic as a standalone field of research (Meunier et al., 2017; OECD, 2013). From east to west, there is increasing numbers of females choosing entrepreneurship as a means of employment, and currently, more than a third of entrepreneurs in the world are women (Autio, 2007). Moreover, the salient involvement of female entrepreneurs in economic activities eases the transformation of females from job seekers to job creators, hence reducing total female unemployment and increasing their societal inclusion (Vogel, 2013). This is coupled with the reality that half of society is composed of women, who have a significant influence on national economies (Alsuwaigh 1989; Alsahlawi & Gardener 2004). The argument is those female business proprietors are a vital part of the backbone of a nation's economic growth since they are heavily involved in forming jobs and employing a large chunk of the workforce (Ascher, 2012). Also, the presence of female entrepreneurs benefits society on more levels than one. Engaging female entrepreneurs in the business practice enhance the experience with a unique set of skills, knowledge, expertise and attitudes that differ from those of male entrepreneurs (Safarik et al. 2003; Reed et al. 2012). Similarly, many research scholars identify the equally essential but substantially different insights contributed by both female and male entrepreneurs towards decision-making and problem-solving business culture (Brush 1992; Chaganti & Parasunaman 1996; Verheul & Thurik 2001).

The novel perspective that female entrepreneurs bring to the business world, be it through providing business solutions with different tactics, or by approaching entrepreneurial opportunities from different angles, enriches the business society with more skills, practices and experiences than those related solely to male entrepreneurs (Hattab, 2012). Furthermore, despite the significant contributions provided by female owned-enterprises (Minniti et al., 2005), female entrepreneurship, although previously neglected as an area of research- has been recently the focus of many researchers driven by an increasing interest in the self-employed female (Pellegrino & Reece 1982; Cuba et al 1983; Renko et al. 2012). Female entrepreneurship constitutes a response to the discriminatory practices faced by females in different cultures. It provides a medium to empower women and support their positive contributions to both the economy and society as a whole, especially in the form of job creation, and the increasing employment of women, who become partners in the economic process and the advancement of their nations, now and in the future (Storey, 2003). However, despite the significant success of many high achieving female entrepreneurs (Metcalf & Mimouni, 2011), the same is not true for most of the self-employed woman. The success of female entrepreneurs aspiring to achieve financial independence is more contingent upon their economic rather

than their political condition (Winn, 2005). The alternative to becoming self-dependent and being able to claim their financial freedom is to continue being reliant on others- mainly male figures- such as their husbands or fathers, and thereby giving up their hopes in realising their financial independence (Cole, 2015). Also, women in Arab countries are subjected to traditions that are more restrictive and face social and cultural dogmas that limit their entrepreneurial involvement and flexibility to deal with similar and additional limitations (Tlaiss, 2013).

The key motives for this thesis are twofold. First, the number of women entering entrepreneurship has increased dramatically since the 1970s (Welter, 2011; Cooke & Dar, 2008; Aidis et al., 2007; Davidson & Burke, 2004), and women entrepreneurs are contributing a considerable amount to the economy (Autio, 2007; Meunier et al., 2017). Second, despite the increase in female contribution to social and economic life, female entrepreneurial participation rates are still low compared to their male counterparts (Meunier et al., 2017; OECD 2013). Moreover, this trend has been persistent year after year, and recent statistics indicate that it does not seem to be fading away anytime soon (Meunier et al., 2017; GEM, 2015).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The subject of female entrepreneurship has garnered increased attention since the 1990s (Marlow, Henry & Carter, 2009). Numerous studies have attempted to uncover the many dogmas relating to female entrepreneurship and focused mainly on motivations, occupational choice, characteristics, demographics, challenges and success factors of female entrepreneurs. However, even with this increased attention, the ambiguities surrounding this field are far from entirely explored, and more research is needed to advance knowledge on this phenomenon. Historically, entrepreneurship has been studied through the lens of the male entrepreneur, without closely paying attention to the unique contributions that the self-employed female offer to the expanding business world (Buttner, 1993). In fact, it is shown that female entrepreneurs deal with additional influences over and above what their male counterparts deal with, and thus must undergo further significant obstacles, before they can achieve what their male counterparts have achieved under similar conditions (Friedson-Ridenour & Pierotti, 2018; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011; Jamali, 2009). As such, questions arise as to whether differences exist between general entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship. More specifically, whether the entrepreneur's gender plays a role in their entrepreneurial experience and whether there exist differences between general entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship that are traceable to the entrepreneur's gender. Concurrently, studies on entrepreneurship

and female entrepreneurship have been oblivious to realise the use of gender as a mere variable in the study of female entrepreneurship does not provide justice to the field of study, but on the contrary, it burdens the field with flawed and biased results. Recurring entrepreneurial studies have been calling for the use of gender as a social construct in the study of female entrepreneurship, to move away from the traditional views of gender that paint it as merely a biological sex ascribed at birth (Brush et al., 2009; Ahl, 2006)

Furthermore, entrepreneurship in general and female entrepreneurship are prone to be affected by the institutional forces taking effect in the background. Institutions, both formal and informal, play a significant role in entrepreneurship development, and more specifically, female entrepreneurs are extremely sensitive to the conditions of their environment. Notably, researchers have concluded that there are salient influences exerted on female entrepreneurship that are projected by factors at the meso-environment and macro-environment (Brush et al., 2009; Ettl & Walter, 2010). Also, entrepreneurship is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and the literature has pointed out the significant personal and contextual challenges that are faced by the female entrepreneurs in the form of regulatory hurdles, societal restrictions and cultural norms that burden female entrepreneurs with substantial obstacles to overcome (Hampel-Milagrosa, 2010; Yamada, 2004). In fact, despite having laws and regulations that encourage female entrepreneurial activities, female entrepreneurs are still faced with significant obstacles related to the implementation of these rules and the acceptance of such activities by culture and society. Therefore, an institutional perspective namely focusing on the effects of the factors at the meso and macro environments will reveal a better understanding of female entrepreneurship

Historically, women are socially assigned familial roles and duties such as housekeeper, the caretaker, the mother and the child bearer. Amidst the myriad of these responsibilities, women find it difficult to spend time working on their careers, and female entrepreneurs find it very challenging to dedicate the appropriate time needed to properly organise and grow their businesses (Bruni et al., 2004). This in turn eventually restricts their involvement in their business activities and ultimately decreases their credibility in the business circles. Therefore, extending the study of female entrepreneurship to consider the motherhood aspect of female entrepreneurs (motherhood being an element encompassing childrearing, caretaking and housekeeping responsibilities), is in fact necessary to achieve an accurate depiction of the contextual and social influences that impact female entrepreneurship, and consequently to achieve meaningful advancements in the study of female entrepreneurs.

An additional factor to consider is the use of quantitative methods in most studies on female entrepreneurship. While quantitative studies can provide significant information and useful results about a phenomenon, especially while still in its exploratory stage, the study of female entrepreneurship, which is now in its adolescent stage (Minniti, 2009), requires moving forward to more in-depth methods of analysis, to further advance the study of this field. Multiple calls have been launched by the literature to encourage the use of mixed methods and qualitative techniques in the study of female entrepreneurship (Mordi, Simpson, Singh, & Okafor, 2010; Brush et al., 2009), which acknowledge the reality that more is expected from research on female entrepreneurship to advance the knowledge in the field properly. Consequently, increasing literature is calling for studies that concentrate solely on women entrepreneurs, as opposed to ones comparing them with their male counterparts. Most importantly, the literature has become more interested in factoring in the personal stories of the female entrepreneurs to understand better the phenomena of female entrepreneurship. By raising the voice of the female entrepreneurs, it is expected the research can portray a better picture of the singularities of this phenomenon, and by considering their experiences, a more holistic understanding of female entrepreneurship can be achieved (Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

Another interesting issue that arises is the lack of information documenting the state of female entrepreneurship in a context other than the Western world (Mordi et al., 2010). Despite the advances that research on the self-employed female has witnessed in the context of the developed nations, research on this subject, especially in the context of the Arab world, namely the GCC and the MENA region, has been irregular, infrequent, and at best sporadic in nature (Dechant & Al-Lamky, 2005, Hattab 2012). However, female entrepreneurs in these regions encounter and deal with additional challenges they must tackle and overcome more than what their female counterparts must deal with in Western societies. Women in these regions have been unable to participate in certain areas of business activities that are deemed male-oriented and inappropriate for women, such as construction and manufacturing, and many women entrepreneurs still struggle to obtain the proper funding they need to set up and run their business. These problems, among others, are the direct result of the prevailing social perceptions and cultural expectations that accentuate the difficulties and the hardships they face (Jamali, 2009).

In summary, it can be concluded from the above description that female entrepreneurial activities are always under the effects of many societal, environmental and economic factors. Also, the study of female entrepreneurship is affected by several drawbacks hindering its advancement. First, on the methodological

level, studies on female entrepreneurship has been typically conducted using quantitative techniques. It is now imperative to use other methods that can achieve more profound insights about the intricacies of the field. Second, the typical male-oriented approach that has been employed in investigating female entrepreneurship lacks the integrity necessary to be able to report credible results from those investigations. Furthermore, gender-aware and female-oriented models able to understand gender as a social construct and not as a sexual identity are envisaged to be able to provide a more realistic picture reflective of the truthful state of female entrepreneurship. Third, concerning institutional effects, female entrepreneurs are under the impact of several factors influencing their business activities, such as regulations, society, culture, funding, networking, and their extended familial and motherhood responsibilities.

Consequently, the study of female entrepreneurship would realise a stronger understanding of these issues, among others, when tackled from the meso-environment level, the macro environment level and the motherhood level.

Lastly, in the absence of significant knowledge reported on the state of female entrepreneurship in a context other than that of the Western countries, particularly in the Arab GCC and the MENA countries, studies dealing with the female self-employed in an Arab setting can help advance the knowledge on female entrepreneurship. It will highlight the particularities that female entrepreneurs deal with that are specific to this region, thereby contributing to reducing the knowledge gap. Contextualising female entrepreneurship intends to give meaning to the phenomena without which there will be no clear understanding why female entrepreneurs are lagging in comparison with their male counterparts (Meunier et al., 2017; Welter, 2011, Ahl, 2006). Addressing the issue of context sheds light on the many social, economic, religious and political issues, among others running in the background that can affect the way business starts and grows.

To clarify, the study of female entrepreneurship has not been addressed from a purely female-centered qualitative and institutional perspective in an Arab context, and it is still unclear how the factors at the macro-environment, meso-environment and motherhood-environment affect female entrepreneurs. Therefore this thesis reduces the gap by investigating the contextual embeddedness of female entrepreneurship in the Kingdom of Bahrain through a feminist an institutional approach.

Moreover, to better understand the nature of contextual effects on female entrepreneurship, and in conjunction with the outcome of the literature review in Chapter Two, this thesis brings forward the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How is female entrepreneurship affected by institutional elements at the macro level?

Research Question 2: How is female entrepreneurship affected by institutional elements at the meso level?

Research Question 3: How is female entrepreneurship affected by institutional elements at the motherhood level?

Research Question 4: How does adopting the feminist approach lead to better understanding the phenomena of female entrepreneurship?

This section has stated the research gap and shown several issues that currently affect the study of female entrepreneurship. The next section will show the aim and objectives of this study which is formulated in line with the concerns above to capture the true essence of the female entrepreneurial experience and its challenges.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Considering the arguments presented in the previous section, it can be inferred that despite the crucial milestones that have been achieved in the field of female entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurs are still lagging their male counterparts, and research in the field is still in its adolescent stage (Minniti, 2009). Researchers have attributed this to the fact that most studies about female entrepreneurship have adopted predetermined male perspectives and quantitative techniques in their analysis, looking at entrepreneurial gender as a variable rather than a potent social construct significant (Meunier et al., 2017). Furthermore, the institutional environment, especially at the meso and macro levels casts a significant impact on both male and female entrepreneurs, with female entrepreneurs receiving the magnified consequences of those effects (de Vita et al., 2014). Therefore, the study of female entrepreneurship would further benefit from being studied with approaches designed to respond to those concerns. Female entrepreneurship research demands its mode of investigation, by advancing a method explicitly tailored for female entrepreneurship. Thus, this thesis proposes a novel model for the study of female entrepreneurship, which simultaneously combines feminism and gender-awareness with institutional theory, represented by the 5M model and focusing on the effects of the meso-environment, macro-environment and motherhood on female entrepreneurship through a feminist lens.

As such, the researcher's objectives can be summed up into the following points:

1. To critically review the literature on female entrepreneurship focusing on institutional and feminist theories.
2. To develop a conceptual model combining institutional and feminist approaches to use as a guiding framework for the study.
3. To investigate the effect of institutional factors on female entrepreneurship at the levels of the macro-environment, meso-environment and motherhood through a feminist approach.
4. To evaluate and propose a final model better suited for the study of female entrepreneurship

Moreover, since most studies on female entrepreneurship have been conducted in a Western setting (Chamlou, 2007), this thesis will be conducted in an Arab context, namely in the Kingdom of Bahrain, situated in the heart of the GCC and the MENA region, where female entrepreneurship has demonstrated even more lags. Stemming from the description above, this research aims to recognise the effects of institutional factors on female entrepreneurship at the meso, macro and motherhood levels in light of a feminist approach. Also, as the main stakeholders in the development of female entrepreneurship, this thesis aims to raise the voice of female entrepreneurs and to convey their opinions and experiences, thereby contributing to the current knowledge on the contextual embeddedness of female entrepreneurship and reducing the research gap.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This thesis adopts a different angle in the study of female entrepreneurship. Rather than searching for the institutional factors causing female entrepreneurial success and failure, it focuses on the dynamics that oversee the interaction of these various factors and their effects on female entrepreneurship. This thesis suggests combining an institutional gender-aware approach with a feminist perspective simultaneously, to achieve more coherent and comprehensive results in the study of female entrepreneurship. For that, the study embraces an interpretivist qualitative perspective and implements it through in-depth semi-structured interviews with female entrepreneur participants. Also, the phenomenological approach is called upon in the interpretation of the female entrepreneurship results in light of a feminist methodology, providing richer grounds for the interpretation of those effects.

The study takes effect in the context of the Kingdom of Bahrain. This is a country that has recently witnessed a surge in female entrepreneurial activities (Hasan & Almubarak, 2016; Ministry of Industry and Commerce, 2014), and due to its standing as a representative Arab nation that lies in the heart of the Gulf

Cooperation Council and the larger Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, as a response to the lack of research on female entrepreneurship in this region (Dechant & Al-Lamky, 2005). The study is conducted using qualitative methodology via in-depth semi-structured interviews with a sample of forty-four female entrepreneurs approached through a snowball sampling technique based on initial personal acquaintances. The sample is representative of locals and expats, owners of new startups, established enterprises, home-based businesses and electronic businesses participated in the interviews. The data from the interviews are transcribed, coded and analysed by the themes identified in terms of the macro, meso and motherhood elements of the environment, after which the resulting research findings are presented and discussed.

1.6 RESERCH CONTRIBUTION

The significance of this study is apparent on many levels. First, it constitutes a response to the literary discourse calling to use qualitative methodologies in investigating female entrepreneurship, altering the style to female entrepreneurial research traditionally approached with positivist and quantitative techniques. Second, it highlights the state of female entrepreneurs outside the Western context, in a previously under-researched area such as the Arab Muslim nation of the Kingdom of Bahrain, where data is scarce on female entrepreneurship. Third, by concentrating on the contextual embeddedness of female entrepreneurship at the meso, macro and motherhood levels through a feminist and institutional lens, this research differentiates itself by tackling the study of female entrepreneurship with a female-centred approach vis-a-vis the traditional male-centred approach. This consequently aids in gaining deeper insights into the real journeys of female entrepreneurs and shed the light on their opportunities and obstacles. Fourth, this work provides several recommendations on improving the context of entrepreneurial activities that can be used to futher advance the state of entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship.

1.7 THE CONTEXT OF BAHRAIN

1.7.1 Introduction

This research examines female entrepreneurship in the context of Bahrain. The main drivers for choosing this contextual setting are twofold. First, there is no denying the increased number of female entrepreneurs entering self-employment in Bahrain. The number of enterprises owned by females witnessed a growth of 14.3% (Hasan & Almubarak, 2016), raising their involvement in general commercial businesses in the

country to 39.5% in 2014 (Ministry of Industry and Commerce, 2014). Second, of prominent importance is the lack of scientific research addressing this issue in the Arab world, especially in Bahrain (Dechant & Al-Lamky, 2005). Many factors could be behind this recent surge especially regarding raised awareness brought about by the Supreme Council for Women and the many women empowering schemes recently introduced in the country. Consequently, since many factors help shape the overall environment under which female entrepreneurial activities are conducted, it is essential to understand the context in which such activities are taking place and become familiar with the contextual setting under which the investigation is taking place. This section aims to provide the necessary background needed for understanding the contextual setting of the female entrepreneurs who are the subject of interest in this study and give a clearer idea of the institutional factors at play regarding female entrepreneurship in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

1.7.2 Overview of The Kingdom of Bahrain

The Kingdom of Bahrain is situated on the Arab Sea and is constituted of an archipelago of around 40 islands and small islands. It is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which is constituted of the following six Arab States: The Kingdom of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The official national religion in the Kingdom of Bahrain is Islam, and it is followed by the majority of its inhabitants. Bahrain identifies as an independent Arab country; the Kingdom of Bahrain is fully sovereign and adopts a constitutional monarchy as its governmental system (Kingdom of Bahrain Profile, 2013). It is geographically located in the mid-west of the Arab Sea, at about 16-kilometres from the east shore of Saudi Arabia and 54-kilometres from the Qatar peninsula. Bahrain takes pride in being centrally located in the heart of the Arabian Gulf, with easy connections to the Middle East and the region, mainly North African and South Asian Countries by sea, air and land. With a total land area of 760 square meters, and aside from its main two seaports, wharf, shipbuilding and repair yard, its two operating airports- one military and one civil, Bahrain is connected through the King Fahad Causeway to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which constitutes the sole land access connecting between Bahrain and the rest of the world (Ministry of Interior Customs Affairs, 2018). The latest national statistics published in 2013 show a population of 1,281,332, of which 253,108 are expatriates- non-locals living in Bahrain from different nationalities (Bahrain Economic Development Board 2013). Bahrain witnessed the discovery of the first oil well in the region in 1932, which gave the country a significant economic boost and paved the way for rapid development. Bahrain's national currency is the Bahraini Dinar, which consists of smaller

units totalling 1000 Fils. The Kingdom of Bahrain is one of the few countries maintaining a more modern outlook in the Gulf region. However, most citizens still uphold modest Islamic dressing values (Bahrain Economic Development Board, 2013). Although Arabic is the only official language in the country, English is widely used, and most Bahraini nationals and expatriates can communicate well in English (Kingdom of Bahrain Profile, 2013).

In terms of economic freedom, Bahrain was recently ranked number 19 in the world according to the Index of Economic Freedom, which is a measure evaluating the ease of property and capital ownership, labour, and goods mobility. The Wall Street Journal and the Heritage Foundations in 2008 presented this measure in a joint report. Also, the measure reports on the individual's liberty regarding economic activities such as the choice of employment and the availability of labour force opportunities (UNDP, 2008, p. 50). Along the same line, the Maturity Level is a measure determined by ESCWA and calculated according to qualitative procedures that are used in evaluating the way in which electronic businesses (e-businesses) and electronic commerce (e-commerce) activities are carried out in each country. In this regard, Bahrain had reportedly been ranked at Maturity Level 2 in 2003, and at Maturity Level 4 2005, which is an indication of the efforts, dedication and commitment taken by the Kingdom of Bahrain in the area of electronic business activities and the benefits that stemming from them (UNDP, 2008, p. 48).

1.7.3 Women in Bahrain

The Kingdom of Bahrain has shown continuous commitment to improve the condition of its female citizens. Equal rights between females and males are guaranteed under the constitution since 2002, which also guarantees equal opportunity in the consideration for employment between both genders. Bahrain has agreed to several laws, charters and treaties that oversee women's rights in the country. The positive effects of such efforts can be seen in many sectors across the country, especially in the education and economic sectors. Legally, women have been elected as members of the parliament since 2002, have been elected as ministers since 2011 and are represented in the Board of Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry since 2014. They have also reached leadership positions, and many Bahraini women now serve as chief executive officers in companies of the private sector. Academically, female university graduates have outnumbered male graduates, a trend that shows the easier access for females to tertiary education. Bahrain has outperformed the 134 countries that the World Economic Forum reported on in the 2010 Global Gender Gap report, regarding the ratio of female birth rate to secondary schools and higher education enrollment.

Likewise, positive strides of change can be seen in the economic sector as well. For instance, the labour market has witnessed increased participation of females in the workforce, and this trend is expected to maintain its increase in the times to come. The introduced women related reforms have left a positive effect that has rippled through all aspects of society in the country. Moreover, similar positive strides of change can be seen in other areas as well. The progress achieved by the instigated reforms earns Bahrain a position as one of the leaders in the region regarding female empowerment, as can be seen in many proceedings of international conventions and reports relevant to women (National Report of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 2014). Bahrain surpassed other nations in the MENA region, achieving 1st place in the areas of women in the top and middle management in the public sector, with rates of 45% and 59%, respectively in those areas. Also, Bahrain has reported an increase in company female board members from 12 per cent in 2010 to 14 percent in 2014 (Women in Business and Management-ILO, 2016). Furthermore, while other GCC member countries have reported an increase in the number of female business owners and employers, Bahrain more than doubled her share with over 28% of women extending employment to others. Bahrain has also fared well in terms of economic participation and opportunity, gender gap and was reported as “best climber of the world on the economic participation and opportunity sub-index” (The World Economic Forum Gender Global Gap Report, 2015). In addition, Bahrain reported women in leadership positions in the public sector of 37%, second to only Tunis and topping the average of the MENA region of 29.1% (National Report of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 2014).

The Human Development Achievements of the Kingdom of Bahrain Report “A Ten-Year Review” issued by the United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office in February 2010 stated that “the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Development Index (GDI) values in Bahrain were equal in 2009 (0.895), which means that in terms of human development, there is no gender discrimination in Bahrain”.

Women’s Role in Economic Activity

The Kingdom of Bahrain placed at the 123rd place in terms of women’s participation in the labor market, 115th place in terms of the contribution of women to all sectors of the economy and placed 114th in comparison to men regarding their involvement in technical and professional jobs (Hausmann, Ryson & Zahidi, 2010). Furthermore, the United Nations report that Bahraini women’s involvement in the labour force is on the rise, both in the private and public sectors (UNDP, 2006), and has increased more than 83.4% since 2002, peaking at 29% of the total workforce participation in the most recent updates (LMRA, 2004; 2007). Also, the Gender Development Index ranks Bahrain at 41 out of 140 countries covered by the Index,

and the Gender Empowerment Measure ranks it at 68 out of 165 in terms of human and gender development according to the Gender Empowerment Measure (UNDP, 2009). Women in Bahrain are also taking a more significant role in Bahrain's public sector, representing 51% of the employees in the health ministry, 58% of the employees in the social affairs ministry and as high as 61% of the total number of employees in the ministry of education.

Moreover, it is important to note that reliable and up-to-date data in the MENA region is scarce and difficult to obtain (Al-Dosary & Rahman, 2005; Harry, 2007).

Women Entrepreneurs in Bahrain

Bahraini women entrepreneurs have been in the field since the 1960s, and in 2012, Bahraini female entrepreneurs held 29% of commercial registrations. Governmental and non-governmental agencies have shown commitment to the empowerment of women, from which many initiatives and projects ensued. The most noteworthy of them is the training and rehabilitation programmes that are designed to equip the women with the technical skills and knowledge needed to be able to start and manage small enterprises and ultimately become successful entrepreneurs. The Supreme Council mainly leads these initiatives for Women, headed by Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa. The Supreme Council for Women was created in August 2001 by an Amiri Order from His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa King of the Kingdom of Bahrain for female empowerment and was later amended by other Amiri Orders in 2001 and 2002 and a Royal Decree in 2004 (Supreme Council for Women, 2018). The Supreme Council for Women, in collaboration with the Bahrain Development Bank, and the labour market fund Tamkeen, launch most initiatives relating to funding and training. Also, other entities such as the UNIDO (the United Nations Industrial Development Organization) aim at promoting sustainability of women economic empowerment and are active in providing training and consulting services to interested entrepreneurs (UNIDO, 2018). Their initiatives are based on funding and financing schemes as well as training, business counselling and rehabilitation. More importantly, Bahrain has had one of the most successful models of entrepreneurship worldwide, and many countries in the region are implementing it. Several laws have also been introduced to facilitate the involvement of females in entrepreneurship, such as the Commercial Registration Law, the Commercial Companies Law and the Labor Law in the Private Sector.

In addition to some previous funding initiatives that are notable to have helped over 2,000 needing entrepreneurs (Metcalf & Mutlaq, 2011), some of the current initiatives worth highlighting are the following:

- Initiating the Bahrain Female Entrepreneur Honor Seal in 2011, which is given to outstanding Bahraini businesswomen who have shown a high level of commitment for entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility.
- Another notable initiative was the commissioning of the Bahraini Women's Competence Development Center (Riyadat) in 2010, which formally opened for business in 2013. The centre is meant to act as an incubator while also providing administrative, technical, consulting and technological facilities for women entrepreneurs in the startup stage.
- Following that in 2010, the HRH Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Financial Portfolio for Women Empowerment Programmes saw the light as a financing initiative for Bahraini women entrepreneurs. Ebdaa Bank, which is Arabic for Creativity Bank, provides the managing support for this project and it is concerned with extending soft loans and micro-financing services to Bahraini female business-owners, with funding assistance by Tamkeen-the Labor Fund and supervision by the Supreme Council for Women.
- The Ministry of Social Development created a similar initiative that caters for Islamic micro-financing services, the Royal Charity Organization and a pool of banks investing in a micro-bank called Bank Al Osra- in Arabic, which translates to Family Bank in English. The bank, which was inaugurated in 2010, caters to the needy Bahraini families or underprivileged individuals looking to fund their small projects. It is the first bank formally providing Islamic micro financing, thereby bridging the gap between Sharia'a compliance and obtaining necessary funds for business purposes. Although the bank is not solely intended for female entrepreneurs, most of the customers are females and women heads of households trying to provide for their families (Fisher, 2010).

1.7.4 Education and Foreign Labour

Overall, countries in the GCC lack the abundance of local skilled labourers (Allen Consulting Group, 2009). This trend, which began because of the fast-economic changes accompanying the dawn of the oil discovery, continues until recent times. In response to this, GCC nations opened these labour opportunities for foreign workers, and, with time, they started to form the majority of skilled labourers in these countries. These

foreign workers compensate for the lack of local workers and participate in the economic advancement of these countries. According to the most recent figures on the matter, Bahrain hosts a high number of expatriates in the labour force, with 83.1 percent, second to the UAE with 89.6 percent, and the GCC average is reported at around 61.7 percent (Rutledge, 2009). The lack of local skilled labour and the high dependence on foreign workers could be because Bahrainis refuse work in some sectors such as construction, logistics and hospitality (Allen Consulting Group, 2009). Like their counterparts in other GCC nations, Bahrainis are subject to local norms that deem these jobs, among others, inappropriate for their stature, and prefer looking for higher paying and less physical employment opportunities when available and would rather stay unemployed when they are not (Forstenlechner, 2010). Also, the lack of local skilled workers could also be traced to the generally weak educational and vocational training bodies in Bahrain, which in turn contributes to the decline in Bahraini skilled labour and increases the dependency on foreign labour (Al Dosary & Rahman, 2005). As in most nations around the globe, the purpose of the education system is to prepare young citizens for future employment positions that fit the labour market needs and participate in the economic development of their country (Harry, 2007). However, in the GCC nations, the focus has been on instilling nationalism principles among the young citizens and emphasising their identity as a nation rather than focusing on graduating workers well equipped for labour market needs (Ford, 2003; Gardner, 2003). Furthermore, Bahrain has witnessed significant educational reform, which started in the 1980s, and more attention has been given to raise the teaching standards across the nation, which can be seen through several initiatives intended to ensure quality assurance for both the education and training sectors (Allen Consulting Group, 2009). Also, other initiatives have been advanced to promote entrepreneurship and lifelong learning in schools and universities, both private and public, and introduce the youth to the option of being job creators when they enter the workforce, and not just job seekers (INJAZ, 2018).

1.7.5 Summary

This part has given a clear understanding of the various regulatory, cultural and economic settings in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It also highlighted the important strides of improvement that have been witnessed by the legislation regarding women in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Moreover, the emphasis that the Kingdom of Bahrain has put on women's rights as a crucial component in achieving economic and national goals has helped Bahrain succeed in moving in the right direction towards achieving the complete integration of

women in the social, political and economic aspects of the country. Furthermore, the United Nations report that Bahraini women's participation in the labour force continues to increase, in terms of both the private and public sectors, which is an indication of a healthy outlook for women's economic activity in the country (UNDP, 2006; LMRA, 2004; 2007). However, there remain further strides to be taken in order to reach complete female integration in the various national and economic aspects of Bahrain. Hence, the Kingdom of Bahrain has been chosen as a context for this study to further advance the knowledge on the development of female entrepreneurship in the country.

This section provided a good understanding of the prevailing rules, regulations, norms and traditions in the Kingdom of Bahrain that are necessary to frame the scope of the study correctly. Policies, laws, societal views and cultural expectations play an essential role in the development of female entrepreneurial spirits and endeavours and can sometimes even make or break a business. The next Chapter will discuss the prevailing literature on entrepreneurship, institutional theory, feminism, gender theory and patriarchy in light of female entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is split into five sections. The first section provides the introduction and identifies the need to study female entrepreneurship. The second presents the literature on general entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship in light of occupational choice, characteristics and factors of success. The third section describes the institutional theory, which will provide the necessary literature on the functioning of institutions and how they affect entrepreneurial attitudes and conduct, and then organises the literature according to the effect that institutions have on general entrepreneurship and later focuses on the institutions that influence females' pursuit of entrepreneurship. The fourth section shifts the focus to gender and feminist theory and presents the influences of gender perceptions on female entrepreneurial efforts and the development of their businesses. The last section presents the findings of the literature and confirms the existence of institutional differences to entrepreneurship that is based on gender differences, especially in the areas of informal networks, access to financing and behavioural attitudes, and discusses the importance of applying both feminist and institutional theories in the study of female entrepreneurship.

2.1.1 WHY CONTEXTUALIZE FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

Entrepreneurship and by extension female entrepreneurship are multidimensional phenomena that are socially and contextually embedded (Corbetta et al., 2013; Westlund, 2011; Yamada, 2004; Audretsch, 2003; Gartner, 1985). As discussed in the previous chapter, female entrepreneurs are exposed continuously to many influencing factors at the levels of society, the economy and the environment. Nonetheless, female entrepreneurship contributes significantly to the advancement of society and the economy especially in developing nations (Silivestru, 2013; Alsuwaigh 1989; Alsahlawi & Gardener 2004). This is evident through the preference to employ other females and through infusing a culture promoting women as job creators rather than job seekers (Vogel, 2013; Ascher, 2012). Furthermore, the study of female entrepreneurship is intertwined with two broad areas of research: gender/feminist theories and institutional theory.

The development of gender theory in relation to the study of entrepreneurship has proven to be a necessary condition to investigate the influence of gender on entrepreneurship. Specifically, the study of gender in

entrepreneurship tackles the social construction of gender and the differences it entails on the implementation of entrepreneurial activities. That said, and in light of their differences and particularities, the study of female entrepreneurship can be approached as a standalone field of research, separate and distinct from the study of general entrepreneurship (Popescu, 2012). It is not surprising that most if not all research scholars concentrating on the subject of female entrepreneurship have historically been females (e.g. Brush, (1992), Ahl, (2002); Gatewood et al., (2003); Stead (2015); Bruni et al., (2004), and it is argued that this trend will continue for the foreseeable future (Popescu, 2012).

Moreover, institutions play a significant role in entrepreneurship and cast salient effects on the progress and development of novel and established ventures alike. As such, scholars have been actively approaching entrepreneurial studies through institutional theory because of its significance in helping to unravel the nature of the institutional factors with the significant effects on entrepreneurship. The contribution that institutional theory brings to the analysis of the current knowledge of the state of entrepreneurship is even more significant in the case of female entrepreneurs who, according to the literature, are invariably disadvantaged and continually faced with significant obstacles due to their institutional setting (Hampel-Milagrosa, 2010; Yamada, 2004).

In line with Gartner's (1985) structure of venture creation, that organises venture creation into four dimensions, namely: the individual, the organisation, the process and the environment, female entrepreneurship studies can take many aspects. Here the same classification is used discussing gender differences concerning the different dimensions within the field of entrepreneurship. As with general entrepreneurship, the individual is the focus in female entrepreneurial studies, concentrating on topics such as motives, personalities, characteristics and demographics. Although early works on female entrepreneurship attributed the differing entrepreneurial experiences between men and women to their gender differences (Brush, 1992; p. 13), recent works have found that female and male entrepreneurs are more similar than different, especially in terms of psychological characteristics, attitudes and backgrounds (Ahl, 2002). However, research on environmental factors that affect entrepreneurship has seen considerable attention in the past few decades, given that studies have found that both female and male entrepreneurs follow a similar course in the process of creating and running their business (Ahl, 2002). Nevertheless, the characteristics of female-led ventures vary from those of male-led ventures, in that they have smaller sales volumes, different ambitions, distinct managerial attitudes, and different sources of start-up capital (Brush, 1992).

Furthermore, the observations about gender differences that have been made by the literature indicate that most females operate businesses in the services and retail industries and maintain a smaller firm size than that of males (Ahl, 2002). Also, women's networking efforts flourish differently than men's; hence their business connections can leave an impact on their way of doing business (Ahl, 2004, 2006). Moreover, studies on the firm performance show that performance-based gender differences are not strongly founded when considering the relative organisational aspects (Ahl, 2002, p. 108). Generally, female entrepreneurial studies on the individual focus on personal characteristics, motives and demographics, while studies on the environment investigate the accessibility to resources and functioning of support systems. Also, studies on the organisation turn their attention to profiling female entrepreneurial businesses, from firm size to sector and age, while studies on the process of new venture creation shift the focus to the process of business startups, such as networking and acquiring resources. Finally, studies investigating the disparities of business performance between female and male enterprises emphasise issues related to company performance (Ahl, 2002).

In light of the discussion above, questions arise about identifying the causes of these highlighted differences between male and female entrepreneurship mainly, whether society's differing perceptions of male and female entrepreneurs are at the root of such variances between general and female entrepreneurship. As such, there is a need to study female entrepreneurship through a framework that is explicitly devised to understand the particularities of female entrepreneurship under the prevailing institutional factors. The importance of such a female-sensitive approach lies in its ability to capture previously unnoticed information that can be useful in devising specific strategies to ease the challenges of female entrepreneurs and consequently reduce the entrepreneurship gender gap.

2.2 ENTREPRENEURSHIP LITERATURE

The concept of female entrepreneurship requires increased attention and reflection efforts to advance its theory (Parker, 2005). However scarce, works on gender in entrepreneurship have been conventionally carried out in Western societies since the 1970s (Ahl, 2006), thus emphasising the conception that feminist studies originate in the west (Kim, 2007, p. 108), and nurture Western beliefs, and as such are not a proper fit for the study of female entrepreneurship in other cultures (Ahl, 2006). Nevertheless, studying female entrepreneurship in countries with unique historical backgrounds, differing beliefs, localised values, laws and policies entails the need to understand the local cultures deeply. Moreover, in each society, female

entrepreneurs lead different lives, uphold several roles, and therefore have varying experiences and social status (Blake and Hanson, 2009; Ali, 2007). In addition, although many women have experienced male oppression at one point or another, others have led their lives without being part of a patriarchal system (Ali, 2007, p. 196).

Hence, this section intends to present a general idea of the position of female entrepreneurship in relation to gender studies in entrepreneurship. Generally, studies exploring entrepreneurship followed three main themes, namely occupational choice, entrepreneurial characteristics and success factors. Furthermore, fueled by an increasing interest in the self-employed female, researchers have recently focused on studying female entrepreneurship as standalone research (Pellegrino & Reece 1982; Cuba et al., 1983; Renko et al., 2012). To understand the societal perceived differences between general entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs, this section presents the available literature about these two subjects considering occupational choice, entrepreneurial characteristics and success factors.

2.2.1 Occupational Choice

Many studies on occupational choice have shaped the literature on entrepreneurship. In the pioneering works of Say (1803), Marshall (1890) and Knight (1921), the entrepreneur was viewed as the primary risk bearer in an enterprise, enjoying autonomy, decision-making and management of the firm, unlike wageworker counterparts. Furthermore, whereas Cantillon, (1775), Say (1803), and Marshall (1890) have all insisted on the risk-bearing role that the entrepreneur plays in leading his entity, as opposed to wage-workers, Schumpeter (1911) believed the entrepreneur's risk approach is not a factor in his decision to be self-employed. Other works modelled entrepreneurial choice as an exchange between risks and return (Kilhstrom & Laffont, 1979; Knight, 1921), and differentiated between people's tolerance for risk across the workforce; those with a high acceptance for risk enter self-employment and can lead the largest firms (Kilhstrom & Laffont, 1979). Furthermore, there is no doubt that people's inherent abilities differ widely. In that sense, individuals are free to choose their careers according to their capabilities, where those with the highest abilities across the workforce continuum become entrepreneurs, and those indifferent between self-employment and paid employment are labelled "marginal entrepreneurs" (Lucas, 1978). This is also mirrored in Parker's work (2009), who identified the workforce as constituted of two groups, namely the entrepreneurial group, those who achieve their potential in self-employment, and those who fare better by entering paid employment. Furthermore, income risk is a big factor in one's occupational choice, and individuals are concerned about entering entrepreneurship because, unlike paid employment, it is an

unstable revenue environment. The most time devoted to self-employment the more significant the expected income, and in contrast, the least time dedicated to self-employment, the lower the expected income and the higher the associated risk (Parker, 1996).

Even though risk plays a vital role in most entrepreneurs' decisions, there still exist some differences between the male and female approaches to occupational choice. Lee's study (1997), on female entrepreneurial motivations in Singapore, led to four basic needs, namely, the need for achievement, affiliation, autonomy and dominance. He concluded that while female entrepreneurs exhibit a higher need for achievement and dominance, they do not have a higher need for autonomy, and they enjoy a similar need for affiliation as do female employees. University education was found to have a great influence on the need for achievement and the need for affiliation of female entrepreneurs. On the other hand, primary education had the strongest influence on the self-employed female's need for autonomy. Also, women entrepreneurs who have undergone primary school education were found to have the most prominent need for dominance. Thus, women's occupational choice is found to be the result of psychological needs. Women exhibiting a stronger need for achievement and dominance are not satisfied by paid jobs and as such compensate for that by pursuing self-employment careers. In addition, it was noted that their life experiences and family background influence women's needs.

Furthermore, regarding occupational choice, female entrepreneurs are reported to be significantly affected by economic considerations, such as current economic conditions, wage employment earnings, housing prices and unemployment rates, (Saridakis et al., 2014). Contrary to common assumptions whereby the female choice of going into self-employment is mainly influenced by social factors such as marriage and job flexibility, it is argued self-employed females are as influenced by economic factors in their decisions to become self-employed as their male counterparts, and less influenced by social factors. Another implication of their analysis is that women entrepreneurs are not exclusively affected by social factors as has been previously stereotyped, but that social factors strongly affect male entrepreneurs, more than their female counterparts.

On the other hand, the income for the self-employed female has been reported to decrease with marriage, housework and family size, in comparison with male earnings, which increase with marriage and family size (Hundley, 2000). The same applies to female and male wageworkers, but to a lesser extent, which means that self-employment is more sensitive to family size and composition, thereby stereotyping females

as more focused on housework, while males as more interested in market work. This is reportedly the case because women and men engage in self-employment for different reasons, given the flexibility, it offers for married women to be active marketplace participants albeit with lesser earnings while devoting more time to household commitments (Hundly, 2000).

Moreover, personal self-efficacy perceptions play an important part in persuading female to enter self-employment. Self-efficacy is explained as one's perception of their skills, capabilities and confidence to succeed as entrepreneurs. It is argued that these effects vary by gender and that unlike men, women lacking the self-confidence needed to pursue entrepreneurship would probably opt out of self-employment, thereby limiting their occupational choices (Wilson et al., 2007).

Furthermore, other studies measured the extent to which entrepreneurial self-perceptions leave an impact on the development of female entrepreneurship. For instance, the literature has identified that contrary to what is commonly perceived, females do not share strong entrepreneurial desires as do males. This is not because of their genetic predisposition, but because society has conditioned them to perceive that their roles as mothers and caretakers are of utmost importance, and anything that comes after that is inferior to their motherhood calling, thereby automatically judging entrepreneurship as an inappropriate career choice for them (Santos, Roomi & Linan, 2016). This makes them perceive a lower personal entrepreneurial attitude (their attraction towards becoming entrepreneurs) and lower entrepreneurial perceived behavioural control (their ability to be in control) which, in turn, explains why their intention levels are lower. Therefore, actions to increase female's perceived attraction and feasibility toward entrepreneurship will affect intentions and, eventually, on actual start-ups (Kickul, Wilson, Marlino, & Barbosa, 2008). Furthermore, proper education helps reverse prior negative perceptions among women and convince more females of their capabilities and entrepreneurial potential as they progress in their studies (Wilson et al., 2007).

2.2.2. Characteristics of Entrepreneurs

According to the literature, three main aspects define the topic of entrepreneurial characteristics, namely: psychological development, human capital and social capital. Furthermore, human capital is measured by the individual's education, skills, knowledge and acquired experience throughout their lifetime. The effect that human capital has on the entrepreneur is undeniable. Davidsson and Honig (2003) studied the consequences of both tacit knowledge (work and start-up experience) and explicit knowledge (formal education) on nascent entrepreneurs in Sweden. They found that although better education is essential for

entry into entrepreneurship, more benefit can be gained from earlier entrepreneurial experience in the phases of both opportunity discovery and exploitation. However, the managerial experience was not a necessary characteristic for entrepreneurial discovery and expansion since it was found to promote routine activities, which can hinder opportunity recognition and exploitation prospects. Social capital, on the other hand, measures the connections, acquaintances and business networks that one has access to as an entrepreneur. Moreover, investing in social capital has had the most substantial influence on the discovery and success of entrepreneurial ventures (Davidsson & Honig, 2003). These findings suggest that seeking, creating and maintaining business connections and entrepreneurial networks are far more fruitful and beneficial to venture creation than any education or experience the entrepreneur can earn and can translate to a lifetime of social support and reinforcement for his/her business.

On the other hand, psychological elements refer to a mix of emotions, mental perceptions and family support that the entrepreneur experiences throughout his/her entrepreneurial journey. In this vein, researchers studied the effects of psychological development on individuals as a predictor of their entrepreneurial potential (Schoon & Duckworth, 2012). Entrepreneurs were described to be in their thirties, influenced by parental and social attitudes, values and finances. They conclude that gender differences exist, as males are more inclined to enter self-employment than females, partly because women are faced with more difficulties to raise funding for their businesses (Blanchflower & Oswald, 1998), and as such, their success in business ventures is positively related to existing family resources. As such, the study confirms that parental support is vital for women entrepreneurial success. Men, on the other hand, were easily driven into self-employment if their fathers were entrepreneurs. Research found practical experience and knowledge of entrepreneurial expertise and self-employment culture and values inspire males more than females into entrepreneurship (McClelland, 1987; Uusitalo, 2001).

Regarding female entrepreneurial characteristics, studies conducted either have compared female entrepreneurs with their male counterparts or studied them exclusively in their own right. Moreover, most works have classified female entrepreneurial characteristics a similar fashion to their male counterparts and found that women entrepreneurs are subjected to additional factors both internally and externally, that affect them over and above the factors affecting their male counterparts in terms of human capital, social capital and psychological development (Friedson-Ridenour & Pierotti, 2018; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). For instance, Akehurst et al. (2012) explored the characteristics of female entrepreneurs in the region of Valencia, Spain, regarding motivation, obstacles and performance. They studied the effects of both internal factors, such as

demographics, age, marital status, number and existence of young children and familial influence, and external factors such as secure financing and steady expansion, on women entrepreneurs and their businesses. Their results indicated that while short-term expansion usually results from larger firms and ones that have previously grown, it affects job satisfaction in women entrepreneurs. They also found that being single positively affects their entrepreneurial ambitions, while the increase in some children raises complexities in their family life. Although age is not an influencing economic factor, it affects the entrepreneurial nature of women, the obstacles they face and their success in business.

On the other hand, the financial support that female entrepreneurs receive from their families helps sustain their ambitions and ease their problems, while other internal family ties (such as a relative being an entrepreneur) do not affect long-term business performance. Also, subsidies help women unsatisfied with their jobs to startup their businesses, and bank financing reduces problems of competitiveness and customer management. In the end, larger firms and firms created with family financing and support perform better and generate higher profits.

Furthermore, another study confirmed the existence of differences between males and females regarding their labour market status from their demographics, family, wealth and occupational status (Cowling and Taylor, 2001). The study divided the labour market into four states: unemployment, waged employment, individual self-employment and job-creating self-employment and studied the labour market transitions over four years from 1991 to 1995. The results indicate definite differences between self-employed males and females in terms of their knowledge and capabilities when contrasted with those in the other labour market states. Self-employed women were better educated than wage-employed women, unemployed and job-creating self-employed women, while self-employed and wage-employed men were both equally more qualified than job creators. Age was another factor used to measure experience and personal capabilities. Male job creators were older than wage-employed, self-employed and unemployed men were, but this was not apparent for females, and as such, more mature males endowed with extended experience and knowledge crucial for business success and expansion mostly undertake job creation. Self-employed females, on the other hand, have their credibility and legitimacy questioned, while highly educated women can benefit from their acquired education in raising their confidence levels, maintaining and improving customer and supplier relations, and obtaining adequate bank financing. Thus, the authors conclude that gender discrimination is present in factor and retail markets. The authors deduce that the low rates of transition between market states are an indication of significant obstacles to entry, growth and job creation

within self-employment. Individual self-employment is considered the first path to later expanding into job creation for both genders, although it is initially filled with increasingly complex problems and setbacks that can only be conquered by one's human capital. One of the most notary findings differentiates between the elements of human capital, noting that skill and experience (measured by age as proxy), are more significant in the case of job creators, than education, and are more useful and necessary in expanding a business and dealing with employees (Cowling and Taylor; 2001).

Likewise, Sexton and Bowman-Upton (1990) examined the psychological characteristics of both female and male entrepreneurs in the United States. The study was built on the fact that trait analysis studies implied that men and women have more of the same qualities than they do of their differences, (Bordin et al., 1963; Thumin, 1965; Singer and Abramson, 1973). However, according to earlier literature, women, especially women entrepreneurs, are still perceived to be managerially inferior to men, especially by financial institutions (Birley et al., 1986; Bowman-Upton et al., 1987; Olm et al., 1988; Buttner and Rosen, 1988). The argument is that personal psychological traits are an indicator of one's entrepreneurial abilities and subsequent decision to go into entrepreneurship. However, contrary to mainstream beliefs, no significant differences were found that indicate that female interpersonal traits make them more emotional than males, and thus, affect their entrepreneurship decision-making (Goleman, 1988). When focusing on interpersonal effects and social dependence as measures for emotionality, female and male participants also scored similarly on measures of conformity, harm avoidance and social adroitness. On the other hand, there exist further differences on measures of energy levels and risk-taking, in which females scored notably poorer than males. Among their risk-taking measures such as those measuring financial, physical, social and ethical risks, financial risk was the most influential element, conforming to the notion that regarding monetary profits, women entrepreneurs are more risk-averse than their male counterparts. Furthermore, society tends to exaggerate these differences. Another study reported that the financial sectors identified women entrepreneurs as less tolerant of and inclined to take risks in their businesses than their male counterparts (Buttner and Rosen, 1988). However, as mentioned earlier, this finding was rejected (Goleman, 1988), thus confirming that independence and exploring new prospects are strong characteristics of female entrepreneurs.

2.2.3. Determinants of Entrepreneurial Success

Many studies measure entrepreneurial success, basing their assessment on financial measures such as sales, profits, company expansion and number of employees, non-financial measures such as personal satisfaction, flexibility and fulfilment, in addition to being a delicate balancing act between personal and external factors. In an investigation into small businesses in Australia (Walker and Brown, 2004), entrepreneurs were found to gauge their companies' success based on both financial and non-financial measures. More significance was placed on the non-financial measures such as workplace flexibility, practising one's way of life and enjoying autonomy and contentment while running his/her business, and as such success in business is oftentimes reflective of its owner's achievements. In this sense, small businesses benefit the economy and society.

Individuals would prefer the satisfaction of being an entrepreneur and deal with the associated risk of self-employment, emotional burdens and the daily stress of operations than deal with workplace uncertainty as wage-employees. While this is generally true, their results indicate exceptions where financial success is the primary driver behind the entrepreneurial venture and the entrepreneur's plans for growth. Furthermore, social capital- identified as a combination of both internal and external factors- has been perceived as a determinant of success for entrepreneurs in the South Pacific region, and the ability to balance them correctly was crucial for entrepreneurial success (Attahir, 1995). The most critical factors observed were good management, readily accessible financing, individual traits and support from the government. There is also evidence of the importance of strong political ties and experience gained abroad, deemed as necessary for entrepreneurial advancement, in that region.

On the other hand, in the case of female entrepreneurship, financial difficulties emerge as one of the increasingly challenging aspects hindering the growth and success of female entrepreneurs. The monetary funding burdens faced by women in securing financial support for their startups continue to be documented continuously (e.g. Carter & Rosa, 1998; Heilman & Chen, 2003; Meunier et al., 2017; Qasim, 2018). Women encounter societal drawbacks and negative perceptions when in need of raising capital for their businesses and thus face uncertainty regarding the future of their enterprises. Furthermore, the growth of women-owned businesses or lack thereof, is due to factors beyond the control of the female business owners (Carter & Allen, 1997). The effects of the availability of financial support for growing female businesses surpass those of other factors such as the entrepreneur's lifestyle, growth plans and the personnel in charge.

Uncomplicated access to funds, through financial loans or private resources, a secure network of banking relationships and a clear vision for the future of the business are decisive factors in reaching the desired size of the enterprise, which is more crucial than the business owners' intentions or choices made.

Moreover, studies have found that women business owners who are not privileged with educational and supervisory abilities are disadvantaged compared to other female entrepreneurs. This is because their abilities are hindered and the obstacles they face augmented with a decreased level of formal education. Although management expertise is a welcome element increasing female motivation into becoming entrepreneurs, even the most capable female entrepreneurs report increasing obstacles in the course of running their businesses (Huarng et al., 2012). Other studies have found that women in both traditional businesses, such as retail and services, and in non-traditional ones, such as manufacturing, construction and technology, access to financial resources and dealing with lending agencies was cited as the major obstacle to women entrepreneurs. However, it was more pronounced in the case of women in non-traditional businesses (Anna, Chandler, Jansen & Mero, 1999). The analysis revealed that women who owned traditional businesses experienced stronger self-efficacy when it came to recognising venturing opportunities, while they also enjoyed stronger work prospects regarding work-life balance and security than their nontraditional counterparts. They also valued the financial assistance they received as significantly higher than women owners of nontraditional businesses, who, on the other hand, enjoyed more confidence in venture planning and financial earnings than women owners of traditional businesses.

Studies have found that both female entrepreneurs and managers portrayed similar results regarding success incentives, the locus of control, and masculinity factors, confirming that management and ownership draw on the same behavioural set from identical workers. Also, female entrepreneurs had more parental entrepreneurial figures than did the wage-employed managers, which explained the disparity when it came to these two types of workers choosing to enter different professions the self-employed and the wage earner. This is especially true for parental models, while not necessarily true for non-paternal models (Waddell, 1983). However, entrepreneurial success was not reported to be linked to having parental and non-parental self-employed model figures. Therefore, since self-employment is risky in and of itself, those who enter it would have initially enjoyed entrepreneurship and would fare well in it. Along the same lines, genetics have been found to play a significant role in assessing one's propensity to become an entrepreneur (Nicolaou & Shane, 2010).

Moreover, the type of higher education that females are exposed to plays a significant role in promoting entrepreneurship as a career choice for them and thus positively influencing their decision to enter entrepreneurship (Kickul et al., 2008; Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007). Studies show that shifting the focus in entrepreneurship education to account for the differences in perceptions, motivations and desires of female students can help influence their entrepreneurial aspirations. It can expose them to previously unthought-of entrepreneurial dreams, rather than just focusing on education for the sole purpose of overcoming discrimination (especially in terms of acquiring skills and accessing resources) (Bird & Brush 2002; Byrne & Fayolle 2010; Linan, Rodríguez-Cohard, & Rueda 2011). This challenge could be overcome by shedding light on successful female entrepreneurs that can act as role models for aspiring students, as well as arranging for female entrepreneurial mentors that can have a significant effect in shaping the ambitions and intentions of young potential female entrepreneurs (Kickul et al. 2008).

2.2.4. Major Barriers to Female Entrepreneurship

While the literature has found numerous factors that play essential roles in the advancement or delay of female entrepreneurship, the following three barriers have been identified as the most common deterrents to women entrepreneurship, especially by studies conducted in western societies (Bruni et al., 2004). First, the societal assigned domestic and familial roles to women limit their involvement in entrepreneurial activity as well as lessen their perceived integrity as potential entrepreneurs. Second, women are often dismissed when they seek technical expertise for their businesses, or when they express their need for additional training to assist them in running their ventures. They are often seen as inferior and incapable, which in turn blocks their access to the informal business networks, which can provide vital knowledge and connections needed for the survival and development of their business. Third, female entrepreneurs are faced with challenging difficulties when trying to raise funding for their businesses. Obtaining financial capital from banks or other financial institutions can sometimes be as hard as asking for it from family or friends when women are perceived as financially incompetent. Likewise, the following factors have been recognised as challenges to female entrepreneurial practices. These are legal barriers, the rules and regulations that ultimately interfere with the speed and ease of the process of venture creation (Jamali, 2009; Grey, 2010). Also, challenges of work-family life balance augment the complications faced by female entrepreneurs, and present women entrepreneurs with the onerous duty to strike the appropriate balance between these equally competing tasks, which only accentuates their entrepreneurial struggles (Brush, 2008; Zeidan & Bahrami, 2011).

2.2.5. Summary of Entrepreneurship Literature Review Findings

Research on entrepreneurship is always evolving and dynamic. Occupational choice has been found to have different aspects in general entrepreneurial studies than in studies on female entrepreneurs. This literature has shed light on the similarities and differences between male and female entrepreneurs in relations to their occupational choice, their characteristics, and their respective factors for success. Moreover, the findings confirm that male and female entrepreneurs are innately different and that their entrepreneurial activities need to be approached from perspectives tailored to each individually. This section discusses these findings in detail.

While entrepreneurial occupational choice has been linked to risk and return (Kilhstrom & Laffont, 1979), income expectations (Parker, 1996, 1997), and one's inherent abilities Lucas (1978), female entrepreneurial choice has been associated with women's psychological needs (Lee, 1997), economic factors (Saridakis et al., 2014), social aspects (Hundley, 2000) and perception of one's self-efficacy (Wilson et al., 2007). For entrepreneurial characteristics, the general entrepreneur is found to possess hands-on experience and entrepreneurial expertise and background knowledge (McClelland, 1987; Uusitalo, 2001). Psychologically, entrepreneurs seem to be swayed by parental and social perceptions, culture and finances. In addition, male entrepreneurs generally take the entrepreneurial path following their fathers' footsteps (Schoon & Duckworth, 2012), while female entrepreneurs, although influenced by their parents' self-employment occupational choice, are also dependent on parental support, whether financially or motivationally, and government subsidies due to the increased financial burdens they encounter in creating their business (Akehurst et al., 2012). Furthermore, female entrepreneurs are viewed as more risk-averse than their male counterparts (Buttner and Rosen, 1988), while also portrayed as more independent and explorative than male entrepreneurs (Sexton and Bowman-Upton, 1990). In relation to success factors, business success has been linked to a combination of personal and environmental traits. On the personal level, one's education, lifestyle, emotional and mental state and perceived job satisfaction plays a vital role in the success of a business venture (Walker & Brown, 2004), while environmental traits such as access to financing, workplace uncertainty, good management, government support, political ties, culture and external experience all influence business success as well (Attahir, 1995). In addition to those above personal and environmental entrepreneurial traits, women entrepreneurs are affected by the financial difficulties they face, and as such, their entrepreneurial success is linked to their networks, especially in the financial and banking sectors, and their family resources (Carter & Allen, 1997). Furthermore, genetics (Nicolaou &

Shane, 2010), self-confidence, economic management and having a parent as an entrepreneur all function as influential factors for female entrepreneurial success (Huarng et al. 2012, Carbera & Mauricio, 2017). A summary of this literature review is in Table 1.

The reviewed literature presented confirms that societal perceived gender differences exist between male and female entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs endure more difficulties before they can achieve success. These difficulties are especially evident in terms of necessary financial and emotional support and business connections. Governments and authorities are expected to overcome these hindrances by placing more emphasis on organisations that provide help and financial assistance tailored to female entrepreneurs. Further investigations need to be carried to discover the effectiveness of such organisations. Therefore, for the study of female entrepreneurship to yield its benefits, more attention needs to be directed to studying the contextual embeddedness of this phenomena, and to investigate the way in which the effects of the institutional and societal backgrounds can manifest themselves and interfere, whether positively or negatively, with the female entrepreneurial process. The next section about institutional theory provides more information on these matters.

2.3. INSTITUTIONAL THEORY

Institutions play an undeniable role in the progress and prosperity of nations and societies, on the economic, social and political levels. Acemoglu et al. (2005) describe institutions as the basis for lasting growth and development. It follows that, given their close and direct impact on all aspects of society; institutions necessarily interfere and ultimately influence the economic direction in each country. Initially, theories linking the entrepreneur's character to the performance of the business venture were greatly explored and pursued, but as increasing results found this link to be weak in some situations, this interest eventually faded (Meyer & Peng, 2005). Consequently, this gave way to the rise of the study of the interconnection of institutions and entrepreneurship, which reflects efforts to analyse the personality of the entrepreneur and the environment in which business creation is taking place (Leaptrott, 2005). Hence, in cases of entrepreneurial activity, whether individuals are encouraged or discouraged to pursue self-employment depends on the prevailing environmental conditions, which reflect the weakness or strength of the regulatory laws (Estrin et al., 2013; Klyver et al., 2013), educational systems (Salze-Lozac'h, 2011), cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Al-Alak & Al-Haddad, 2010; Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010; Singh et al., 2010; Belwal et al., 2012) that are in effect at that time.

Table 1: Summary of Literature Review Findings categorised in terms of Occupational Choice, Characteristics and Success Factors, and grouped between male and female entrepreneurs, while the table is extended with Additional Barriers to female entrepreneurs.

Findings	Males	Authors	Females	Authors
Occupational Choice	High-risk appetite Income expectations Inherent abilities	Kilhstrom & Laffont, (1979) Parker (1996, 1997) Lucas (1978)	Psychological needs Economic conditions Social aspects Self-efficacy perceptions	Lee (1997) Saridakis et al. (2014) Hundley (2000) Wilson et al. (2007)
Characteristics	Practical experience Entrepreneurial know-how Parental entrepreneurs	McClelland (1987) Uusitalo (2001) Schoon & Duckworth (2012)	Risk-averse Parental entrepreneurs Parental financial and motivational support Government subsidies Independent more Explorative	Buttner & Rosen (1988) Akehurst et al. (2012) Sexton & Bowman-Upton (1990)
Success Factors	Funding Education Lifestyle Emotional and mental state Managerial skills Government support Political Ties Culture Experience	Anna at al. (1999) Walker & Brown (2004) Attahir (1995)	Funding Education Lifestyle Emotional and mental state Managerial skills Government support Political Ties Culture Experience Genetics Self-confidence Parent Entrepreneur Financial management	Anna at al. (1999) Kickul et al. (2008), Wilson et al. (2007), Walker & Brown (2004) Attahir (1995) Nicolaou & Shane (2010) Waddell (1983), Huarng et al. 2012
Additional Barriers to Female Entrepreneurs			Societal assigned domestic and familial roles Adequate training opportunities Access to Adequate funding Networks and connections Legal barriers (rules and regulations) Work-family balance	Bruni et al. (2004) Carter & Allen (1997) Jamali (2009), Grey (2010) Brush (2008), Zeidan & Bahrami (2011)

This influence is even more pronounced in the case of female entrepreneurs who must deal with the magnified effects of these influences compared with their male entrepreneurs, given the many social, cultural, economic and religious considerations that they must deal with over and above the ones that their male counterparts are subjected to (De Vita et al., 2014). Accordingly, environmental influences affect and furthermore even interfere with the entrepreneurial efforts of female entrepreneurs, either enforcing their success or causing their failure.

This part is split into seven sections. Section 1 introduces institutional theory considering entrepreneurship and discusses the importance of applying institutional theory to female entrepreneurship. Section 2 explains the methodology in choosing and classifying the literature about institutional theory and female entrepreneurship. Section 3 presents the institutional theory and describes its numerous aspects. Section 4 organises the literature according to the effect of the institutions on general entrepreneurship. Section 5 organises the literature by focusing on the institutions that influence females' pursuit of entrepreneurship. Section 6 discusses the findings of the literature and confirms the existence of institutional differences to entrepreneurship based on gender differences, especially in the areas of informal networks, access to financing and behavioural attitudes. Section 7 concludes by the contributions of the study and general recommendations.

2.3.1 Institutional Aspects

North (1990) describes institutions as the “rules of the game in a society”. The institutional theory claims individuals will seek out their interests while limiting their activities to the prevailing rules and regulations (Ingram & Silverman, 2002, p.2). Consequently, the entrepreneur has been identified as the main driver of economic activity in a country (North, 1990). Furthermore, entrepreneurs must work within the available state rules and regulations. Institutions is divided into formal and informal and the interaction between these two forms the basis of institutional theory.

2.3.1.1 *Formal and Informal Institutions*

Formal Institutions:

As identified by North (1997), formal institutions can be summed up as the laws and constitutions governing a society, which can be easily reformed to meet the changing economic conditions and political climate in a country. They are the evident “rules of the game” as North (1990) would call them. They take the form

of rules and regulations and are ideally set up to reduce transaction costs by simplifying interactions and exchanges. They consist of state, legal and economic institutions, which open opportunities for entrepreneurship and play an influential role in determining the amount and characteristics of females who are self-employed. However, as entrepreneurs' prioritise their interests, the formation of formal institutions can be influenced to serve those narrow personal interests instead of serving the social well-being (North, 1994; Olson, 2000).

Informal institutions:

Informal institutions, on the other hand, are shaped after habits, norms and behaviours. They collectively form the spontaneous culture of a society. They are the hidden "rules of the game" that play a pivotal role in the shape and the prospects of society. Attitudes and behaviours that stem from informal institutions give direction and legitimacy to entrepreneurial activity. Informal institutions are spontaneous and form the general sentiment of society and the individual in identifying entrepreneurial prospects (Welter et al., 2003). Moreover, they also influence women's entrepreneurial desires and business goals (Aidis et al., 2009). In contrast to formal institutions, which can be easily altered, informal rules persist even if new formal rules that negate them are formed because cultural habits are difficult to change. In a sense, they offer a feeling of constancy and security and are hard to replace. These irregularities between formal and informal institutions can, and many times do lead to economic inefficiencies (North, 1997). Also, resistance to change makes it harder to achieve changes in informal rules (North, 1990). Lastly, institutions that benefit from those informal rules cling hard to them and may even partake in harmful practices to keep benefiting from them (North 1990; Dixit, 2004). As a result, formal and informal institutions are interconnected, and any change on one side leads to a corresponding change in the other (Williamson, 2000). Although the change may take time, when informal institutions change as a result of changing norms and traditions, this change needs to be reflected in formal institutions in turn. Similarly, when formal institutions are modified in response to economic and political climates, these changes are eventually absorbed in the culture and informal institutions (Welter et al., 2003).

2.3.1.2 Institutional Systems

The literature identifies three structures that define the institutional setting within a country. They are namely: the regulatory, cultural-cognitive and normative structures, which when coupled with corresponding actions and resources contribute to the stability and significance of societies (Scott 2014).

Regulatory System:

The regulatory system is the system where laws and regulations, control, rewards, endorse, support lead and direct organisations and individuals. This means that organisations are bound by policies and regulatory structures that describe the organisation's areas of freedom and limitations.

As Hirsh (1997) describes it, the organisations are coerced to comply for fear of sanctions and penalties that may be implied because of non-compliance. This is labelled as the logic of coercion and is the overriding system that achieves and maintains compliance with regulatory structures prescribing rules and regulations among establishments. The organisation, on the other hand, benefits from this system by gaining legitimacy when the regulatory authorities legislating these laws (Leaptrout, 2005) acknowledge it. In contrast, governments can exert influence regarding the implementation of rules and regulations in business matters as well as a governance structure. For example, lenient regulations can be associated with choosing some forms of legal business structures encouraging entrepreneurs to favour them while others can be associated with stringent rules discouraging their choice among entrepreneurs. In relation to business matters, the degree of financial and human capital assigned for specific organisational tasks can be required by rules and laws imposed by the government (Leaptrout, 2005). With time, more organisations would choose to comply with the imposed rules and regulations for fear of sanctions in case of non-compliance. This by itself forms a new generation of organisations leaning in and of themselves to full compliance with regulatory authorities thereby aiding in the abolishment of organisational non-conformity.

Normative System

The normative system, on the other hand, is based on the interaction between culture, customs, attitudes and beliefs, such as the perceptions of men and women's roles and occupations, the family structure and dynamic and the religious dogmas and ethnic traditions (Scott, 2014). Hinings et al. (1996) argue that each organisation can have its own set of values and norms that rise as a reflection of the organisation's environment. These norms can then be adopted by other organisations seeking legitimacy.

Hirsh (1997) identifies these normative forces as the "logic of appropriateness", effectively outlining the appropriate behavioural interplay between members of society. As far as the business organisation, normative forces rising both internally and externally can affect its functioning. The most prominent source of normative influence comes from social networks that can grow as an interplay between both internal and external organisational members (Granovetter, 1973). Also, industry manufacturers, unions and other

professional organisations usually pursue the voluntary adherence of businesses with the existing operational standards (Scott, 2014). Governments, as well as customers, can also play a role in the adherence of organisations to these norms by implicitly emphasising and expecting their application. The organisation also has a role in preserving the environment by responsible planning and utilising its resources, maintain customer and employee safety and satisfaction, which are common values among all businesses operating within the same community. All of these actions preserve the relationship among the organisation and its stakeholders in good standing is crucial to its existence as it cannot predict when it will be in need of stakeholder support, whether in terms of financial funding or partnerships and sponsorships. It is in the best interest of the organisation to conform to the existing norms and values deemed appropriate by these stakeholders (Scott, 2014; Leaptrott, 2005).

Cultural-Cognitive System

In organisational theory, the cognitive system refers to the perceptions and notions that a nation develops because of being exposed to multiple educational, training and social possibilities. It goes deeper into how the process of understanding takes place and how an individual's ideas and perceptions are formed. The shared beliefs, impressions and thought processes of society constitute its cultural-cognitive nature. It ultimately affects how a nation can interpret situations and respond to any actions. In his work on institutional theory, Scott (2001, p. 67) explains cognitive institutions as the ability to understand 'the shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made'. Organisations prefer uncertainty avoidance, and habitualization of activities brings about significant savings on time and effort when new organisations in the process of being formed copy others that have an established, functioning and efficient set of organisational rules and hierarchy in point (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In addition, the mimetic behaviour increases the feeling of security and reduces the anxiety associated with being different from the crowd.

Since organisations mimic each other in following best practices, which essentially sets them up for legitimacy, increases their feeling of security and reduces their anxiety, Hirsh (1997) proclaimed the interplay between cognitive forces as the "logic of orthodoxy". By following each other's footsteps in institutionalisation, organisations gain a lot by saving time and effort it would typically require setting up their new sets of institutional rules and best practices.

2.3.2 Institutions and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial activity can be grouped into three main forms: productive, non-productive and destructive (Baumol, 1990). The quality of prevailing institutions in the time of business formation determines the type of entrepreneurial activities chosen. On the one hand, strong institutions encourage the startup of value-enhancing businesses known as productive entrepreneurship (Schumpeter, 1934; Kirzner, 1973). This is mainly the case in developed economies where institutions are functioning effectively and where the main entrepreneurial risks arise from the setting of the business itself and the characteristics of the entrepreneurs involved. On the other hand, in situations where weak institutions prevail, the expected returns on productive entrepreneurship might be decreased in the face of increasing returns to non-productive and even criminal entrepreneurial activities, encouraging the latter and discouraging the former. This is typically the case in developing economies. As such, the literature has identified three features interconnecting entrepreneurship and institutions mostly used as an indication of a nation's entrepreneurial activities and the strengths of its institutions (Demirgüç-Kunt et al., 2006; Klapper et al., 2006). These three features are the system of property rights, the tax system and the quality of the financial institutions.

Regarding property rights, Harper (2003) argues that personal ownership affects an individual on more levels than one: it psychologically plays on the feelings of control and agency, which encourage entrepreneurial awareness and mindfulness. It is also argued that the absence of effective measures to ensure the protection of property rights deters entrepreneurs from potentially fruitful projects involving ownership and use of essential assets in economies where the property rights system is weak (De Soto, 2001; Rodrik, 2000). As North and Weingast (1989) put it, the higher the possibility that the regulator will modify the system of property rights in his/her self-interest, the lower the desire to partake in investment activities due to the higher uncertainty of the expected returns.

The tax system, on the other hand, has a lasting effect on entrepreneurship by influencing both the opportunity cost of the entrepreneur and the financial returns expected from business activities. The higher the tax margins, the weaker the incentive to start entrepreneurial activity directly influenced by the decrease returns, especially regarding opportunity driven entrepreneurship. Also, the availability of a state-directed welfare system will affect the decision to engage with entrepreneurship by increasing the alternative wage provided and as such decreasing the expected potential returns offered by entrepreneurial activity (Mickiewicz, 2009).

The availability of well-established financial institutions assures entrepreneurs need to focus on the process of venture creation without being distracted by the burdens of dealing with and worrying about funding their businesses. This is where the differences between formal and informal financial institutions are more pronounced. An entrepreneur might prefer obtaining funding from formal institutions whenever the formal sector is strong and prefer moving to the informal funding when those institutions are weak. (Korosteleva & Mickiewicz, 2008). Nevertheless, informal institutions might still attract entrepreneurial funding when formal institutions are not weak depending on the status of the entrepreneur: whether he/she wants to avoid dealing with collateral obligations or risking indebtedness or discrimination. This is undoubtedly more a prominent issue in the case of female entrepreneurs (Carter & Rosa, 1998).

2.3.3 Institutions' Effect on Entrepreneurship

Amid the continually changing entrepreneurship dynamics, with countries' efforts to adapt adequately their rules and regulations to the changing economic scene, the question remains as to which institutions are necessarily facilitating entrepreneurial entry for individuals and which are ultimately hindering it.

Regarding institutional effects on the decision to become an entrepreneur, studies have identified that property rights and the degree of governmental involvement play an important part about the entrepreneurial movement (Aidis et al. 2009). This confirms the notion that entrepreneurial activity would necessarily thrive in an institutional environment encouraging a strong rule of law and constrained governmental intervention. They conclude this effect is even more evident in developing economies. Furthermore, studies on the relationship between the institutional setting and entrepreneurial growth ambitions indicate a multifaceted association between institutions and possibilities for business growth (Estrin et al., 2013). More specifically, advanced levels of corruption leave a damaging mark on entrepreneurial aspirations.

Additionally, weak property rights systems and increased governmental involvement weaken entrepreneurial desires to venture into self-employment let alone thrive and grow businesses given the unpredictable nature of the prevailing institutional environment, namely continuous policy alterations and rising business costs. Concurrently, more stringent government authority is beneficial in the case of enforcing property rights. Moreover, although entrepreneurs' connections make-up for some countrywide institutional defects, many significant institutional weaknesses remain uncorrected.

Furthermore, the institutional landscape in some nations is characterised by a weak firm entry despite the strong formal institutional scene depicting an engaging entrepreneurial environment (Aidis & Adachi, 2007). Nonetheless, entrepreneurial activities are informally faced with unpredictable interferences from governmental agencies, a very weak rule of law and sporadic execution of rules and regulations. In addition, prevalent corruption brings about further barriers to business activities that impede not only new venture creation but also extend to their survival and exit. Furthermore, entrepreneurs are ultimately alienated by the greedy tax attitude of governments coupled with inconsistent and selective inspections from the many corresponding agencies (sanitary, health and fire) in addition to unfair labour regulations, difficulty accessing capital and industry concentration. Moreover, entry into entrepreneurship has been found to be controlled by the current well-established business owners, as is the case in Russia (Aidis et al., 2008). Hence, personal networks play an essential role in succeeding as an entrepreneur, and entrepreneurial insiders (current entrepreneurs) have a comparative advantage over entrepreneurial outsiders (new entrants). These personal connections though helpful, are found not to be enough to entirely offset the negative impact of the dysfunctional institutional setting in the country.

On the other hand, studies comparing the effects of institutions on male and female entrepreneurial entry decisions found that although an enhanced rule of law leading to stronger property rights and decreased transaction costs positively affects entrepreneurial entry and survival, this effect is not necessarily amplified in the case of female entrepreneurs (Estrin & Mickiewicz, 2009). In other words, regarding formal institutions, a stronger rule of law and enforced property rights affect both female and male entrepreneurs equally. However, it was reported that women's entrepreneurship and the size of the state sector are inversely related. The larger the state sector, the fewer females are encouraged to enter self-employment and the more difficulties women entrepreneurs face in growing and sustaining their existing businesses. This is because of dominating culture and social norms whereby women are still necessarily the main caretaker responsible for the family and the household. As such, women strongly value opportunities that provide them with higher income (when coupled with state incentives regarding education and health for instance) and disregard the ones that are linked to greater state interference (such as increased taxes) since pursuing those opportunities would constitute a negative trade-off in terms of their domestic responsibilities. In contrast, however, women do benefit from informal financing which positively influences their decision to engage in entrepreneurship. This ties-up with the results reported by De Soto

(2001) who concluded that what insufficient formal institutions lack, especially regarding the long time required to establish them, is compensated by the presence and availability of informal institutions.

Aside from the studies that focus on identifying the gender gap in entrepreneurship across countries, and pointing out its causes within countries, other researchers studied the impact of institutional reforms on easing the barriers faced by female entrepreneurs (Hampel-Milagrosa, 2010). Surprisingly, the results of the study point out that, the changes based on the World Bank's Doing Business Indicators (DBIs) can have an opposite effect on female entrepreneurship than is conceived. The argument is that the proposed reforms will not be able to address the issue of gender inequality in doing business in its entirety and thus might contribute to the discrimination faced by female entrepreneurs, instead of limiting it. As such, further research into female entrepreneurs is needed, with a focus on the hardships, they face especially regarding societal perceptions and traditional norms in both the qualitative and the quantitative forms can help better structure these reforms (Hampel-Milagrosa, 2010).

Aidis et al. (2010) analysed the effects of institutions in two transitioning economies - Lithuania and Ukraine. They achieved that by conducting surveys about the effect of both national formal and informal institutions with respect to female entrepreneurship. Institutions' roles in access to financing, informal networks, formal rules and regulations as well as norms and culture were explored. They conclude that in transitioning economies where institutional development is still lagging, gender variations are bound to appear. The authors attribute this to women's societal roles as caretakers and housekeepers, decreasing their tolerance for risk and ultimately limiting their access to informal networks. Their results are in line with earlier studies and indicate that obtaining funds is a tougher barrier for female business owners in both Lithuania and Ukraine than for male entrepreneurs. Also revealed was women's difficulty accessing informal networks, mainly due to their perceived gender role in the household.

Klyver et al. (2013) have tackled this subject from a different perspective. They examined how strongly the level of gender equality affects female's entrepreneurial choice decisions as compared to their male counterparts and whether these results vary with varying levels of countries' economic development. The results of the study encompassing 61 nation prove that males and female decisions to enter entrepreneurship are influenced by gender equality. This inverse relationship shows the healthier the formal institutions and their execution of gender equality policies in a country, the less the incentive for females in the workforce to leave paid-employment and pursue self-employment. This necessarily widens the gender gap and is contingent upon the nation's level of economic and institutional development. The more advanced the

institutions and the stronger the economy, the weaker the desire and the drive for women to venture into business creation.

On the other hand, female entrepreneurship in Latin America and the Caribbean has been reported to necessitate institutional involvement for enhancing the state of opportunity-driven female entrepreneurs (Terjesen & Amoro, 2010). Although the region is home to a high rate of self-employed females, many of them are essentially necessity- driven instead of opportunity-driven. The region is found to foster a hostile environment towards growth geared towards female entrepreneurship since the research suggests that only 13 per cent of women entrepreneurs in the region plan to grow their companies in the coming five years. Hence, while women in that region might be endowed with the necessary skills and knowledge to become entrepreneurs, the lack of motivators and opportunities do not encourage such endeavours. Similarly, studies have investigated the role of institutions and culture across nations of comparable economic development about both males and females' decisions to become self-employed. They revealed that the gender wage differences, sectoral employment, leadership among women in business, childcare and public expenditures do not directly affect the decision of women to be self-employed, but instead they can sway their personal opinions (Elam & Terjesen, 2010).

Moreover, studies on the state of female entrepreneurship in the Middle East found that according to cultural, political and social norms, males are considered the dominant gender and women are their dependents. This patriarchal relationship is especially true regarding religious beliefs. This, in turn, creates many difficulties for women regarding setting-up even their home-based business (Al-Alak & Al-Haddad, 2010; Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010). In addition to the recurring issues that women encounter in starting-up their private business, such as difficulty in accessing financing, consumer markets and business networks, approval from the extended family has sometimes to be obtained to be self-employed without compromising any aspects of the family household (Al-Alak & Al-Haddad, 2010). Interestingly, studies on the effect of religion on female entrepreneurs in Islamic counties in East Asia found that religion has a positive influence on entrepreneurship by fostering behaviours such as ethical and social responsibility in addition to increased self-confidence when complying with Islamic rules (Faud & Bohari, 2011). This can only show that the cultural effect is more prevalent in the Middle East on the effect of religion.

Nonetheless, education also plays a major role in advancing the state of female entrepreneurs. This is particularly evident in the region of South-Asia. According to the Asian Foundation report on South-Asia (Salze-Lozac'h, 2011), women's limited access to education in South-Asian countries along with the

difficulty to obtain credit decreases their chances of success in establishing and maintaining a private business. Gendered education infers that men have access to learning and training opportunities that are withheld from women, making them unable to compete with their male counterparts, hence losing valuable entrepreneurial opportunities.

In addition to the factors above, women in Sub-Saharan Africa must deal with the difficulties of starting a business when caring for five, six, or more children (Singh et al., 2010; Belwal et al., 2012). Moreover, women in Sub-Saharan Africa countries are not taken seriously as entrepreneurs and marginalised as mere caretakers in the home. This is embedded in the population as a cultural belief whereby for women to be regarded as chaste and decent, they cannot be simultaneously independent and successful in their businesses. As such, women entrepreneurs must struggle to find respect and support from their customers, which negatively reflects on the advancement of female entrepreneurship in that region (Singh et al., 2010).

2.3.4 Institutional Background in the Kingdom of Bahrain

As explained in the literature on institutional theory above (See Section 2.3), the study of entrepreneurship is necessarily linked with the prevailing institutional conditions. While north (1990, 1997) differentiates between formal and informal institutions, with formal being written official laws and regulations and informal being those instilled in norms, culture and traditions, Scott (2005, 2014), differentiates between three levels of institutions, namely the regulative, normative and the cognitive levels. This section will explore the laws and regulations that are in effect in Bahrain, as well as the norms and traditions that prevail, and then will map them according to the three levels advanced by Scott (2005; 2014) namely regulatory, normative and cognitive.

Regulative Level

Under the regulatory level, the Bahraini Constitution is considered the reference in terms of formal rules and regulations that establish individuals' freedoms and organises the labour market. The King of Bahrain, Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa, in 2001 issued the current Constitution of Bahrain known as the Bahrain National Charter. In its first chapter, it, emphasises the right for to freedom, justice, equality, and equal opportunity, as fundamental principles guaranteed under the Bahraini Constitution. The Charter also refers to Islamic principles highlighting the values of equality of rights and duties for all citizens, without discrimination according to religious practices, origin or race. Article (13) of the Bahrain National Charter

is dedicated to matters related to work and employment, whereby work is deemed the responsibility of each citizen in the interest of individual and public good, and that the rights of every citizen to work and to select his/her type of work honorably and ethically and in agreement with public order. Moreover, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain further pledges the rejection of discrimination and ensuring the rights of its citizens to equal opportunities in employment (Bahrain National Charter, 2001).

Normative Level

As previously mentioned in the literature review above, (see Section 2.3.1), the normative system denotes the interplay between customs, norms, culture and beliefs. Scott (2008) also indicates the "obligatory dimension" of the normative system into society, whereby individuals' roles are prescribed based on mutual beliefs, social exchanges, common responsibilities and a shared sense of suitable actions and activities (Wicks, 2001). The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain dedicates thirteen articles to organising the social, political and economic rights of Bahraini citizens. An emphasis is prescribed to the family unit as the central pillar of society, and the constitution even goes further to specify the need to safeguard motherhood, children and caring for the youth. The Bahrain Constitution also highlights the role and the responsibilities expected of its female citizens particularly as a mother and as a member of society.

Furthermore, ownership rights, labour rights and other social individual rights are maintained under the Bahraini Constitution (Constitution of The Kingdom of Bahrain, 2002). In terms of public rights and obligations, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain ensures the freedom of belief and religion to all its citizens and guarantees their right to individual family freedom. It also preserves the liberty of its citizens to participate in creating societies and unions that are aligned with the national vision of The Kingdom of Bahrain. The Constitution thus upholds the State's role in retaining a positive normative environment, while the citizens uphold their role of participating in the advancement of the economy (Constitution of The Kingdom of Bahrain, 2002).

Cognitive Level

With regard to the cognitive level, the literature review presented above represents it as a nation's response to the sum of factors affecting the nature of society and characterised with shared beliefs, perceptions and ideas (see Section 2.3.2). Overall, institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain reflect this level by proclaiming their own set of organisational practices based on international standards. However, although most of these

practices are in line with standard practices worldwide, they lack incorporating policies that guarantee equal opportunities for males and females in the workplace. Also, these practices are also deficient in terms of adopting formal guidelines intended for family and sexual harassment matters. This inevitably links with the societal perceived gender roles assigned to females traditionally. However, the Kingdom of Bahrain has taken great strides of improvement in terms of women empowerment. Officially, the Kingdom of Bahrain National Charter (2001) guarantees the rights of women in Bahrain and safeguards them from political and economic discrimination. In that vein, the Supreme Council of Women headed by Her Highness Sheikha Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa was decreed by His Majesty the King and represents the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment to women empowerment both economically and politically. This came as a step-in line with similar prior and ongoing governmental efforts, and the Supreme Council of Women has left a distinctive mark in improving the state of females in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Metcalfe (2007) considers Bahrain "exemplary" for other Middle East countries with its commitment to women empowerment and women's rights. However, he also complains of the lack of information on women's professional working roles and the institutional factors that govern their contribution to economic advancement (Metcalfe, 2007). Nonetheless, the practical implications of such regulations and initiatives remain minimal, as women's participation in the labour force reaches a mere 29% (LMRA 2004; 2007). In the absence of formal organisational policies regarding maternity leave, part-time or flexible working arrangements, and on-site childcare assistance, females in the child-bearing age are faced with many difficulties when intending to keep a full-time job. Although the Bahraini Labor Law of 1979 grants women paid leave for 8 weeks of maternity, common organizational practices do not provide in-house policies regarding this issue, as women were usually expected to naturally quit work and take care of their babies after having them. In addition, the woman (and the family) are considered the main care-giver for children, not the organization (Adler, 2004), and due to the tightly knit family bonds and linkages, obtaining child-care assistance is deemed easily achievable within the family, thereby limiting the need for organizational daycare facilities (UNIFEM, 2004).

In spite of the initiatives and the regulatory steps taken to move forward with women empowerment (Bahrain National Charter, 2001), the fact remains that Bahrain is no different from the majority of the Islamic and Middle East countries that have established laws for equal opportunities in the workplace. These laws inevitably end up being interpreted according to customary norms and Islamic law (Sharia), and ultimately become concerned with protecting women and can sometimes shield them from certain work opportunities

(El-Azhary, 2003). Bahraini women are no different from their counterparts in the Middle East in terms of discrimination, although confirmatory empirical research on the matter is absent.

Therefore, the institutional setting in the Kingdom of Bahrain, in its regulative, normative and cognitive levels, has started to, but not yet fully reached, becoming a completely stable environment on the social, economic and political levels (Scott, 2001).

2.3.5 Summary of Institutional Findings

The study of female entrepreneurship considering prevailing institutional contexts is increasingly garnering noteworthy attention from research scholars in the field. Interestingly though, unlike what is commonly portrayed, institutions are found not to be gender neutral. As is shown in the previous section, entrepreneurship is influenced by the interplay of many economic, developmental and institutional factors. This effect is divided between formal institutions and informal institutions. In those terms, it was highlighted that although the formal institutions of a country such as its prevailing laws and regulations might seem to permit the idea of female entrepreneurship, women who do approach self-employment are reportedly faced with the inevitable effects of informal institutions, in the likes of gendered cultural norms and behavioural attitudes. The latter is a direct reflection of a society's patriarchic beliefs. This is observed in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance in Nigeria and Ethiopia, in addition to many countries in the Middle East. Religion also plays a significant role in the entrepreneurial dynamic in the Middle East, hindering the abilities of female business start-up aspirations, magnifying the difficulties they face in accessing capital, business networks and even consumer markets. However, religion has been found to instil a positive influence on female entrepreneurship in East Asia, such as Malaysia, emphasising ethical exchanges among individuals and responsible social attitudes. Furthermore, access to education in South-Asia, such as India, proved challenging for female entrepreneurs there, especially when compared with their male counterparts enjoying full access to education and training possibilities. Gendered education, together with funding difficulties, create an environment that discourages the establishment and growth of female enterprises in that region.

In transitioning economies, the flavour of female entrepreneurship is both similar to and different from those in developed economies. While institutional influences exerted on entrepreneurship are shared across all economies, these effects are amplified in female entrepreneurship in developing and transitioning economies, particularly those still behind on the institutional front. This is mostly evident in women entrepreneurs' access to financing, particularly when trying to obtain external funding, in addition to limited

access to informal networks. Nevertheless, these obstacles, women entrepreneurs vividly contribute to their countries' economies, such as in the case of ex-soviet states Lithuania and Ukraine. The same is true for female entrepreneurs in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the lack of well-established institutions, incentives and possibilities promote an unwelcoming and even damaging environment for opportunity-driven female entrepreneurship. Also, the gender wage gap, sectoral employment, childcare costs and female management and control indirectly influence the personal opinions of female entrepreneurs.

It is thought-provoking that gender equality influences males and females alike in their decisions to enter entrepreneurship. However, this is an inverse relationship, hence the stronger the formal institutions enforcing gender equality policies, the higher the incentive for female employees to remain employed and not venture into self-employment. A country's level of development also plays a similar role in respect to female entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, the size of the state sector inversely affects females' decisions to engaging in entrepreneurship, especially considering the increased obstacles they would have to deal with. In contrast, women have been found to benefit from informal institutions, especially informal financing, which can sometimes, but not always, compensate for the lack of availability and the limited cooperation of formal financial institutions.

In the same vein, the analysis of Bahrain's contextual environment through institutional theory in section 2.3.4 above, covered Bahraini formal and informal institutions and discussed the set of rules, norms and societal perceptions prevailing in the country, to name a few. This approach has provided a deeper understanding of the institutional setup in the Kingdom, while explicitly linking it with the regulative, normative and cognitive levels (Scott, 2008). The study of these three institutional levels has helped appreciate the obstacles and limitations that female entrepreneurs in the Kingdom of Bahrain can be faced with, and that can hurdle their advancement. In terms of the regulative environment, even though the Bahrain National Charter issued in 2001, clearly states its support for individual freedoms, equality, justice and equal opportunity for all its citizens, the reality is that this is not always being applied, as discriminatory practices are still in effect especially in relation to women's rights in the workplace. In terms of the normative environment, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain has also specified the intention of the state to safeguard the interests of its citizens, namely the women, the family and the ones in need. Also, the Constitution acknowledges the individual's ownership, labour and capital rights. As ideal as these measures

may be for the protection of individuals' rights, the reality is that there exists some level of nepotism and favouritism that is applied, albeit informally, which might still cast a hindering effect on a woman's genuine prospects of landing a suitable job. Finally, yet importantly, regarding the cognitive environment, the National Charter of Bahrain provides legislations that promote women empowerment and provides measures to uphold these rights and safeguard females in Bahrain from any discrimination they might face whether socially, economically or politically. Moreover, the creation of the Supreme Council for Women aims to further push through with the women empowerment agenda in Bahrain. Notwithstanding these efforts, Bahraini women's participation in the Bahraini workforce is peaks only at 29 per cent (LMRA, 2004; 2007), which is still relatively very low in comparison with the efforts involved. This could be because even if the formal institutional setup is conducive of women empowerment, attaining complete women empowerment can only be achieved when the informal setup, such as the culture, norms and ideals have changed to match the essence of the formal regulations.

2.4. GENDER THEORY, FEMINISM AND PATRIARCHY

While the study of entrepreneurship has been historically approached from the standpoint of male entrepreneurs, recent literature has suggested the importance of covering entrepreneurship culture through a female lens. Gender differences have taken a more prominent role in the study of entrepreneurship, and scholars in the field started distinguishing entrepreneurial efforts based on the gender of the entrepreneur. As such, the introduction of gender theory is envisaged to provide an alternative way of conceiving entrepreneurship, by shedding light on the different but equally significant experiences faced by females in the field, which is especially true on the social and political fronts (Hurley, 1999). The emphasis here is gender as a social construct, instead of biological sexual category (Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Foucault, 1978). Consequently, regardless of the time, place and prevailing culture, the argument is femininity and masculinity manifest themselves through human behaviours within the boundaries of the dominant gender norms (Butler, 1990). Furthermore, when it comes to female entrepreneurship, the literature has found that patriarchal societies habitually devalue the features, values and specificities of female entrepreneurship effectively rendering them insignificant (Calas, Bourne, & Smircich, 2009).

2.4.1 Gender Literature and Feminism

Scholarly literature started identifying gender in feminist and social works early in the 1970s (Toren et al., 1997). Apart from the general view of culture as a collective structure of human norms and beliefs,

developed through a male-controlled perspective (Simpson and Lewis, 2005), discussions about modern cultural norms expanded to include the viewpoint of females. This was the result on the realisation that human experiences can be observed and understood through other realities rather than limited to the male-dominated one (Stern, 1999). In this way, gender is viewed as an analytical tool employed in explaining the societal perceived biological differences between males and females. Simply put, the study of gender clarifies how men are socially viewed as different from women, regarding what is accepted as male behavior, and what is not, as well as what is accepted as female behaviour and what is not. In this sense, the bi-dimensional gender approach, when applied to differentiate between entrepreneurial characteristics, outlines femininity versus masculinity or what is known in sex roles as relationship versus task focus, respectively (Watson and Newby, 2004). According to feminist scholars, these differences are portrayed as purely the result of the social structure stemming from patriarchal beliefs.

Initially, the theories on gender focused on the similarities between comparable biological groups rather than the differences among different biological groups (Stern, 1999). Interestingly, the term “other sex” was used by Simone de Beauvoir to refer to females, in her book called “The Second Sex” (1949). Consequently, women were culturally regarded as inferior beings to men, thereby confirming the extent of the existence of a patriarchal society. Women were typically stereotyped into diminishing labels in contrast to the freedom and normalcy enjoyed by male’s worldwide (De Beauvoir, 1999). On the opposite side, the dichotomy was called upon by the feminist voice to give a more accurate portrayal of truth and knowledge (Stern, 1999). Consequently, research into feminist and gender issues aimed at fixing the male bias that is controlling most, if not all, academic practices and philosophies and is misleading when applied to female studies (Jansen and Davis, 1998).

2.4.2 Feminism Viewpoints

Liberal feminism and social feminism are the two sides of the feminism coin. Liberal feminism is rooted in the belief that males and females are born equal and that the differences that mark their existence later in life are the results of the deep, distorted and imposed views of society. Here, gender is not seen as a problem, the focus is on achieving equality even within typically ungendered organisational features (Simpson & Lewis, 2005). Nevertheless, subsequent studies of liberal feminism started emphasising the differences between men and women and encouraging feminine over masculine values (Ferguson, 1984). In effect, this has helped change the gender debate to start considering female differences as assets that contribute to

instead of limit theoretical studies (Rosener, 1990), thereby sometimes replacing the male standard as a gender benchmark. On the other side, social feminism believes that males and females are inherently different beings and portrays their dissimilarities as deeply recognised and brought forward by socialisation. This in turn gives rise to the perspective that since the male and female beings are naturally different, then their life experiences and views of the world are necessarily different and hence must be studied separately in order to get a comprehensive idea of the many academic disciplines and practices and philosophical concepts to be theorized (Popescu, 2012).

How is the entrepreneur viewed in each of these feminist perspectives? It is fair to state that based on liberal feminism, female entrepreneurs are discriminated against and treated rather unequally about access to resources both regarding financial assistance and social inclusion. This is because this school of thought believes men and women are essentially born the same as human beings and have the same qualities and capabilities, but these obstacles impede their professional development, consequently, affecting their business set up, which is different from their male counterparts. On the other hand, social feminism argues that given males and females are fundamentally different, with each endowed with differing skills and capabilities, therefore, the differences in challenges as entrepreneurs is traceable to early socialisation, and nothing else but their differing natures. Hence, innate variances between female and male entrepreneurs create alternative perspectives by which the world can be viewed and approached, especially regarding entrepreneurial habits and conduct. Hence, both feminist perspectives agree that differences do exist between male and female entrepreneurs and that these differences are believed to be either dispositional differences influenced by society (social feminism) or situational differences imposed by circumstantial elements (liberal feminism). Therefore, to study the impact of gender on entrepreneurial activity, situational and dispositional factors that are related to gender must be explored. One such case would be comparing female organisations smaller to their male counterparts; the comparison shows the differences in performance and organisational structure. Differentiating between female and male entrepreneurs can be difficult if they both live through similar personal and business profiles. However, their differences can be interpreted through the investigation of prevailing situational and dispositional elements.

2.4.3 The Concept of Patriarchy and Islam

Patriarchy is a societal structure whereby males are the dominant source of control, granted authoritative powers in all aspects of societal interaction. This system essentially renders females “inferior” to males, who enjoy unchallenged control over ownership rights, political representation, leadership roles, ethical

decisions and even the family construct. Linguistically speaking, patriarchy signifies the father's orders and implies that the father or the fatherly figure is in command and must be obeyed (Green, 2010; Meagher, 2011). Although this concept was, initially applied principally within the household, its practice later evolved to represent social constructs awarding controlling power to male adults (Giddens & Griffiths, 2006; Gordon, 1996; Boynton, & Malin, 2005). The practice of this approach has spanned over several societies, and male supremacy was carried out legally, socially, financially and politically (Malti-Douglas, 2007).

With regard to the religion of Islam, an emphasis is put on the individual males' duties to preserve and protect their families and their female counterparts. This is known as the concept of *quiwama*, or protection, which God bestowed among males alone. *Quiwama* encompasses all areas of social life for the Muslim, and even extends beyond the public sphere to private domains, making it customary for wives to include their desire to work in their marriage contracts, requiring the husband's approval to be granted and documented in the marriage contract as a precondition to the marriage (Metcalf, 2007). Furthermore, the Holy Kor'an, preserves equality between men and women and this is exemplified in the many *Soura's* in the Kor'an, which often name men and women separately, signifying the equality between both males and females (Roald, 2001), such as in the following excerpt from the *Soura Joint Forces*:

"For true men and women. For men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves) for men and women who guard their chastity and for men and women who engage in much Allah's praise, for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and great reward." (*Soura Joint Forces*, pp. 33- 35).

However, the Holy Kor'an maintains that even though men and women are created equal, they are nonetheless different, each unique in their own right (*Soura The Family of Imran*). This is highlighted in the next excerpt from the *Soura The Family of Imran*:

"And the male is not like the female." (*Soura The Family of Imran*, pp. 3-36).

Also, another excerpt from the *Soura of Scattering of Winds* highlights the notion of interdependence between males and females:

"And everything we have is created in pairs that you may remember." (*Soura Scattering of Winds*, pp. 51-49).

Consequently, it can be inferred that the religion of Islam regards men and women as complements -not opponents- in society, and as equals in their duties towards religion and humanity, each bestowed with unique characteristics.

2.4.4 The Institution of Gender

Typically, the concept of gender comprises the shared beliefs and cultural connotations that lead to the formation of ideas about individuals, their weaknesses and competencies (Thebaud, 2010). Gender as a structure comprises three levels: the micro, the interactional and the macro levels (Thebaud, 2010). The micro stage pertains to the assigned status, roles and responsibilities of an individual, whereas the interactional level is the norms and attitudes imposed by societal interactions on an individual and the macro level are concerned primarily with organisational and societal constructs such as collective beliefs and perceptions about resource ownership and individual possessions.

The interaction between these constructs ultimately reveals the disparity and discriminatory nature that the interplay between customs, norms and organisational processes eventually succumbs to (Thebaud, 2010). That said the notion of gender provides three different constructs that play an essential role in shaping people and societal perceptions about others. First, it identifies people as either men or women, (Lorber, 2008). Second, according to that classification, it reduces people to their prescribed gender roles and behaviours, which precede all other individual and personal characteristics such as religious beliefs, ethnic identity, economic status or even educational achievement. Hence, women are assigned the role of homemaker inside the household, while men are selected as the breadwinners outside the household. This imposed and expected gender disparity is the basis of discriminatory treatment and unequal perceptions that people are subjected to as a result of this construct. Third, societal attitudes and conducts towards others are born because of the influence of culture, norms, gender assigned roles and prevailing laws and administrations. Hence, in the institution of gender, white and wealthy males are traditionally in top positions while women and minorities are beneath them (Lorber, 2008). This inequality persists even with the dynamic changes that have occurred to men and women's perceptions of themselves. That is because societal constructs are harder to change, and gender dogmas are challenging to deconstruct (Blake and Hanson, 2009). Furthermore, although gender differences are strongly backed and real by societal perceptions, these differences should not translate into unequal and discriminatory treatment towards

individuals, while maintaining that gender structure as it is currently perceived, stands in the way of realising complete equality between males and females (Stefano, 1990). (Stefano, 1990, pp. 64–65).

2.4.5 The 5M Model

The primary model of entrepreneurship, encompassing the 3M's that drive entrepreneurial efforts, namely Money, Market and Management (Bates et al., 2007), has been extended to a 5M model in the study of female entrepreneurs (Brush et al., 2009). In the original 3M model, money represents the funding that acts as a facilitator for the entrepreneurial activity (Penrose, 1959; Bruno & Tyebjee, 1982). On the other hand, entrepreneurial activity can only take place in the market, and thus venture creation requires having access to marketplaces where trade exchanges can take place (Schumpeter, 1934; Kirzner, 1985; Shane, 2003). Also, the availability of managerial capabilities, such as personal and organisational skills are required for the effective operation of the business (Cliff & Aldrich, 2003). These three constructs constitute the necessary conditions or 'building blocks' - for the development and well-functioning of the entrepreneurial idea (Bates et al., 2007, p. 10). Nevertheless, access to these three indispensable resources proves to be a difficult task for female entrepreneurs, who encounter many obstacles on their way to establishing a new venture. Hence, the 5M model aims to address those issues and builds upon institutional theory in extending the 3M model of entrepreneurship to incorporate the female entrepreneurial elements. By focusing on the last two constructs of the 5M Model, the research can look deeper into the meaning of the concepts of Motherhood, the Meso and Macro environments pertaining to female entrepreneurship. Drawing from the notion that culture and society are at the root of entrepreneurial activity (Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Steyaert & Katz, 2004); the 5M model has been extended to include the elements of Motherhood and Meso/Macro environment in the entrepreneurial study.

Motherhood

The authors denote the female entrepreneur's familial and household responsibilities with the motherhood term. This is about the important role female's play in relation to their husbands, parents and children, and to the duties and responsibilities that taking care of a household encompasses. This reflects the societies' view of the female's role, which has been confined to solely taking care of the family and administering domestic chores.

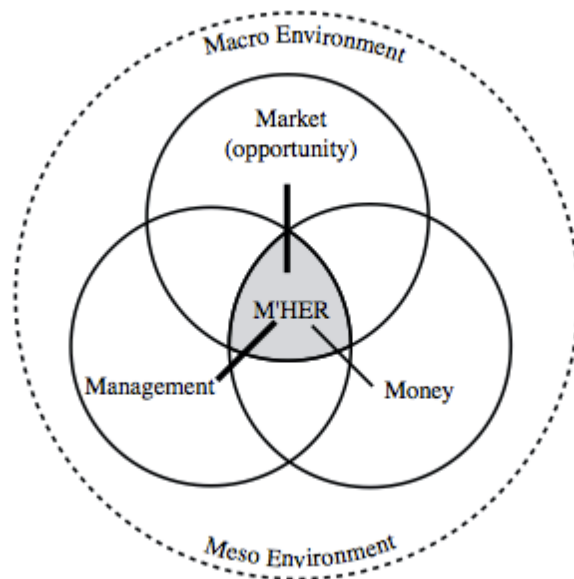


Figure 1: 5M Model (Brush et al., 2009)

Meso and Macro Environment

The meso environment refers to the supporting elements about a business venture, such as the strategies, policies, initiatives, as well as related industries and networks (Brush et al., 2009). The macro environment, on the other hand, is made up of the regulatory setup in the country, its governing laws and policies, in addition to its cultural norms and economic direction (Brush et al., 2009; Gupta, 2014; Hechevarria, 2015).

Since the entrepreneur operates her business in these environments, she will be directly affected by their interplay, while at the same time she is not able to influence them in any way. Thus, the institutional environment, as has been shown in the literature on institutional theory above, plays a crucial role in the development and advancement of female entrepreneurs and their businesses. Furthermore, having to deal with a multitude of rules and regulations deters entrepreneurs from undertaking new venture creation because of the complexities that it can entail (Bruton et al., 2010). Likewise, the same results can be extended to cover environments with very low to non-existing levels of rules and regulations, such as transition economies Lithuania, Ukraine and Russia, to name a few (See Institutional Theory above, Bruton et al., 2010, Iakovleva et al., 2013, Welter, 2011). The 5M Model intends to link the macro environment with the microenvironment of the entrepreneur by introducing the meso environment and emphasising the

analysis of these meso-level forces that affect business development. The 5M model will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three as part of the Conceptual Framework.

2.5 SUMMARY

The issue of gender in entrepreneurship has garnered increasing attention in recent times, especially after the rise and popularity of feminist voice literature, which has transferred much interest to the subject of female entrepreneurship. Contemporary works on the field continue to address the same critical issues about the act of venture creation as it has always addressed, but this time the focus has shifted from typically investigating female entrepreneurship from the viewpoint of male-inspired practices and models to conceptualising and exploring the field by using a feminist lens. Salient efforts have been made in presenting the experiences and peculiarities of the self-employed female, covering their struggles, achievements, intentions, beliefs, challenges and how they overcome them. Nevertheless, the field of female entrepreneurship is far from being exhausted, and continuous efforts are needed to present a clearer picture of the everyday instances that shape the experiences of female entrepreneurs, especially in the areas where they are behind and require assistance. Such areas identified by the literature include but are not limited to, access to financing and capital, technical know-how and abilities, networking connections and social linkages. Others are legal and regulatory support, availability of training opportunities and appropriate education, mentorship and the guidance of role models. Most importantly, the recognition of their equally essential and simultaneously demanding roles as mothers and caregivers, sometimes bearing the sole responsibility of managing and maintaining a properly functioning household, in addition to being independent individuals with equally big dreams to follow.

Nevertheless, it can be inferred from the literature mentioned above that although females have come to the fore of running their businesses, female-owned businesses are still relatively rare. Males are still the principal participators in entrepreneurship endeavours, and male TEA (Total Entrepreneurial Activity) rates still constitute the majority in comparison with female TEA rates (OECD, 2013). In addition, these rates vary between males and females in different countries and highlight the fact that females never outnumber male TEA rates. The exception is the African Country of Ghana (GEM Women's report, 2010), in which most of these female entrepreneurial undertakings are necessity based as against opportunity based, whereby females are pulled into rather than pushed into entrepreneurship. In any case, the main question

that arises here asks about the reasons for the differences in entrepreneurial activity between males and females, and the ways to overcome them.

Furthermore, while the literature has identified the areas above as being significant influencers on the rise and development of female entrepreneurs, what is still unclear is how these factors interplay to affect female entrepreneurship, and how the female entrepreneurs as stakeholders perceive them. This makes a clear call for using the 5M Model presented by Brush et al. (2009) as a vehicle that allows the integration of these different factors for analysis, ultimately allowing for a deeper and richer level of examination. This along with the call to study female entrepreneurship from a feminist point of view to provide a clearer picture of the state of female entrepreneurship and help advance the knowledge on the field by providing insights from the self-employed female and their entrepreneurial experiences. In addition, the adoption of institutional theory functions as a guide to study the effects of formal and informal institutional factors on female entrepreneurs and the development of female entrepreneurship in different contexts (Terjesen & Lloyd, 2015). Therefore, adopting a qualitative methodological approach and employing an interview-based style of investigation permits for probing for and attaining richer data for analysis and more profound insights. In this study, the Islamic nation of Bahrain is chosen as a context for the investigation to incorporate the effects of religion and to focus on Arabic cultural norms that are expected to have a magnifying effect on female entrepreneurial development.

The embeddedness of formal and informal institutions in society which dictates how people run their business activities helps accentuate the gender inequalities imposed by societal structures. This literature review has shown that the core of entrepreneurship is reduced to an interaction between economic, social and individual exchanges among formal and informal institutions. Concerning rules and regulations, governments ought to promote both general and female entrepreneurship as economic development tools accompanied by a stronger rule of law and policies ensuring fairness and equity in accessing education, funding and training among entrepreneurs. Furthermore, despite the crucial milestones that have been achieved in the field of female entrepreneurship, research in the field is still in its adolescent stage, with many areas of interest still un-tackled (Minniti, 2009). A feminist viewpoint coupled with an institutional perspective broadens the focus of the study by turning the attention to the larger constructs of society. Hence, to best explain the opportunities and threats faced by female entrepreneurs, the researcher's work is guided by institutional and gender theories, namely the 5M model of female entrepreneurship more specifically the meso, macro and motherhood elements first brought forward by the 5M model (Brush et

al., 2009), and second by the feminist theories in the form of the feminist standpoint methodology. Incorporating elements of both theories enables the researcher to examine the diverse experiences of female entrepreneurs considering socio-cultural and organisational influences that profoundly interfere with the female entrepreneur's very existence. The theory of feminism is concerned with societal oppression and patriarchal attitudes towards females, which constrain their freedom and limit their potential. On the other hand, institutional theory branches out and incorporates other constructs such as culture, norms, rules and regulations that act as a delimiter for female entrepreneurial participation and activities. Furthermore, by keeping a narrow focus on only personal and internal features, deficiencies originating from flawed and widespread societal misconceptions will be traced back to individual cases while the very societal and cultural attitudes that started them will remain intact (Ahl, 2006). Hence, to explain the phenomena of female entrepreneurs, it is imperative to first explore the societal and gender norms that govern it. Using feminist theory and institutional theory widen the understanding of female entrepreneurship through examining the influence of culture, norms, patriarchal attitudes, gender assigned roles and societal perceptions as well as prevailing rules and regulations.

This chapter introduced the main literature and research concerns that necessitate further investigation in this study. The main argument that was brought forward is that female entrepreneurship is affected by environmental factors at the meso, macro and motherhood levels and that studying these effects through a feminist approach provides for more in-depth insights and significant contributions to the study. The next chapter presents the proposed conceptual framework that this thesis advances combining both institutional theory and feminist theory for the study of female entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explored literature on entrepreneurship as a phenomenon that is socially and contextually embedded (Bruton & Ahlstrom, 2003; Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Martinelli, 2004; Minniti, 2009). Institutions, both formal (rules, regulations laws and policies) and informal (norms, customs, culture and beliefs) cast a significant influence on entrepreneurial efforts and can even make or break them (North, 1990; Steyaert and Katz, 2004). This effect is more pronounced in the case of female entrepreneurs who deal with the magnified effects of such institutions (de Vita et al., 2014). Furthermore, female entrepreneurship has been widely investigated in contemporary works, and a multitude of studies have shed light on the factors that promote or hinder female entrepreneurial success (Carter & Allen, 1997; Carter & Rosa, 1998; Heilman & Chen 2003; Nicolaou & Shane, 2010; Huarng et al., 2012, Cabrera and Mauricio, 2017). The primary purpose of these empirical studies was to outline and explore the phenomenon of female entrepreneurship as the first step to its understanding. Nonetheless, most of these studies have addressed the subject of female entrepreneurship from a general or a purely male entrepreneurship perspective thus overlooking the significant implications that can be reached through adopting a feminist perspective (Ahl, 2002, 2006; de Bruin et al., 2007; Welter, 2011).

However, some recent breakthroughs that have provided the field with the opportunity to be investigated in a new light. The most salient of these works is the 5M model presented by Brush et al., (2009). The 5M's refer to the elements of money, management, marketing, meso/macro environment and motherhood as the most vital areas in the process of venture creation. In this work, Brush, de Bruin and Welter bring forward a nascent gender-aware framework for the study of female entrepreneurship that addresses the environmental and contextual settings of female entrepreneurial efforts. Therefore, in addition to addressing the meso/macro environment affecting female entrepreneurship, the 5M model further addresses the motherhood aspect of the female entrepreneurs regarding household, family, child/elderly care and societal perceived female duties. This advancement has provided the first building blocks in a more gender-aware approach to female entrepreneurship and applied in some studies since then.

Although the 5M model grants special attention to female entrepreneurs by addressing their societal perceived gender-roles through incorporating the motherhood element into its design, it would benefit further by adding a feminist approach that can provide a better perspective on the study of the female

entrepreneurs. The absence of such perspective in the study of female entrepreneurship allows for the traditional interpretations of entrepreneurship studies to take over, thereby echoing customary male-centred views in analysing female entrepreneurial efforts. Alternatively, advancing a female entrepreneurial study that adopts a specific feminist perspective leads to accurately capturing the voices, needs and experiences lived by the female entrepreneurs. This, in turn, will contribute valuable insights to advancing the knowledge on the field of female entrepreneurship.

The feminist standpoint epistemology is a feminist approach that understands an individual's qualities, skills and knowledge as being the result of their upbringing and their 'location'. In other words, people's perspectives and actions are the results of their historical interactions with their societies and their environments (Symington, 2004; Collins, 2003). Furthermore, failure to address female concerns from a feminist perspective or adopting an inappropriate traditional approach that is oblivious to feminine particularities threatens to lead to misleading results and to leave pressing societal issues unresolved.

Consequently, the purpose of this chapter is to propose an institutional and feminist conceptual framework for the study of female entrepreneurship, which combines both elements from the 5M model and the feminist standpoint perspective. By incorporating elements from the 5M model that resonate in institutional theory, namely the meso/macro environment and the motherhood elements, this framework extends the research on female entrepreneurship to report on the societal and environmental factors that influence female entrepreneurship development. On the other hand, by including the perspective of feminism, this framework provides a deeper level of analysis of female entrepreneurship by interpreting female entrepreneurial experiences in light of their societal and environmental backgrounds.

This chapter is divided into five sections and is structured as follows. Section 1 introduces the topic, presents the gap in the literature and the main aim of the research. Section 2 is the theoretical background on conceptualisation and examined in two parts. The first part discusses feminism and presents the different feminist perspectives. The second part discusses the institutional theory and presents the institutional approaches. Section 3 is dedicated to discussing the 5M model and focuses on the motherhood, meso and macro environment elements. It also discusses the different works that have adopted the 5M model for the study of female entrepreneurship. Section 4 presents the proposed conceptual framework, the Institutional and Feminist Female Entrepreneurial Model (IFFEM) and discusses the methodology used to reach its conception. Finally, section 5 presents the conclusion and discussion of the proposed IFFEM conceptual framework and presents suggested future works stemming from it.

3.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The approach adopted in designing the IFFEM model integrates entrepreneurship with institutional theory, standpoint feminism and the 5M model of female entrepreneurship advanced by Brush et al. (2009). The first part of this section is devoted to a discussion on feminism and feminist perspectives, while the second part will explain the institutional theory and its connectedness to entrepreneurship and female entrepreneurship. The 5M model will be discussed in detail in section 3.

3.2.1 Feminist Perspectives

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” (de Beauvoir, 1949, p. 267)

Nothing captures the spirit of the feminist movement better than this quote by Simone de Beauvoir. In these words, she summarises how feminism considers gender as an acquired and not an innate social construct. While admitting to the reality of innate biological sexes, the feminist discourse makes the distinction between owning female body parts and between being a woman. However, societies usually identify people by their biological gender and accordingly prescribe rules, behaviours and gender roles to each individual. These perceived societal gender roles are effortlessly accepted as normal. In response to this simplistic view of gender and gender roles, feminist scholars have paid significant attention to the perspectives used in interpreting female-focused studies, and as a result, the literature has identified several main feminist approaches (Harding, 1987; 1991). These approaches have defied common scientific perspectives to research studies by moving away from the male-centred methods of research and encouraging the closer inclusion of females and female experiences into scientific studies (Alcoff and Potter, 2013). In that regard, feminist literature distinguishes between the three main feminist perspectives that are namely feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism and post-structural feminism. This distinction has provided scholars involved in feminist studies with the opportunity to adopt appropriately one of the approaches as a basis for their investigations. Nonetheless, although all three of these approaches enforce the adoption of a feminist perspective to research, they, however, revolve around several philosophical and conventional differences explained in the following sections.

3.2.1.1 Feminist Empiricism

Feminist empiricism is regarded as the equivalent to liberal feminism. Considered as the simplest form of feminist approaches, feminist empiricism stems from a positivist epistemology and realist ontology and sees men and women as distinct from their social structures. Gender is seen and treated as a variable that

aims to incorporate the subject of women into research studies and shed light on their very existence. This approach initiates the move to consider gender as a social structure and to differentiate between gender and biological sex. While it confirms the equality between men and women, it argues that they are each endowed with different qualities and characteristics that need to be reported on in order to achieve a full interpretation of knowledge (Hundleby, 2011). Whereas this approach believes that studying females as part of the study of the social sciences can help, reduce the male bias that had previously dominated the majority of conducted research studies. It considers women as deviating from the norm and hence sees them as the ones that need to be ‘fixed’ in order to be fully integrated with society (Marlow and Mc Adam, 2013). In this sense, it fails to address the existing ideologies and convictions that have led to and caused such flawed societal perspectives.

3.2.1.2 Feminist Standpoint Epistemology

Feminist standpoint epistemology is a feminist perspective that follows the critical realist school of thought and considers knowledge and society to be gendered in the power relations between men and women. It is an offshoot of social feminism. Standpoint feminism considers gender to be a social construct and not only a biological attribute assumed at birth. Rather, this approach sees human interactions between men and women constitute the material gender relations that reveal the power dynamics at play in each society. Men and women are exposed to different experiences, resulting in forming different practices and convictions than the other (Jackson, 2006). Standpoint feminism argues that unlike empirical feminism in which societies are viewed as “individual and flat objects”, it argues that there are multiples layers of reality, and people’s characteristics are a result of their lived experiences in these different layers in terms of social interactions, power dynamics, norms and traditions (Symington, 2004; Collins, 2003).

Furthermore, standpoint feminism is fundamentally driven by three central notions and aims to understand how situations, connections, societies and gender roles ultimately generate specific results (Clegg, 2006; Intemann, 2010; Alcoff and Potter, 2013). The first notion is that of situated knowledge, which attributes an individual’s lived experiences to his/her background. It asserts that societies, environments and time play a role in determining the limits of one’s knowledge and contributions. It necessitates the inclusion of the object of study as an active participant and agent, and not solely as a display or a resource at the disposal of the author or investigator (Harraway, 1988). The second notion is an epistemic advantage, stating that individuals who have been historically sidelined and dismissed can contribute immensely to the study of societies and traditions (Jackson, 2006). Females can advance knowledge significantly on the failure of

patriarchal practices in societies because they have faced it first-hand (Harding, 2006). The third and last notion on which standpoint feminism is based concerns the methodologies employed in such investigations, and emphasises the importance of advancing feminist research approaches that stem from, correctly represent the voices, and lived experiences of women. It is argued that the study of subordinate subjects is best initiated and approached from their perspective to examine accurately the circumstances, relationships, and dogmas that govern their subordination (Crasnow, 2006).

3.2.1.3 Post-Structural Feminist Epistemology

Post-structural feminist theory is rooted in the post-modern school of thought. It adopts intersectionality as the primary concept in guiding its thesis. Intersectionality considers the study of social phenomena is best approached by addressing all aspects related to the field of study, such as gender, race, patriarchy and discrimination, and asserts that these aspects do not exist in separation, but interplay amongst each other to produce complex influences and are necessary to portray a proper understanding of the subject of study. Similar to standpoint feminism, post-structural feminism views reality as multi-layered and assumes the existence of multiple identities. It encourages feminist discourse and aims to understand women by analysing the elements of society that lead to patriarchy, gender inequality and discrimination. It views women not as objects of study, but as active subjects who can participate in advancing the research of their understanding (Clegg, 2006; Foucault, 2012). In other words, post-structural feminism tries to apprehend how gender ‘intersects’ with other layers of identities to capture their effects on female experiences, regarding privileges and disadvantages (Symington, 2004).

Historically, research on female entrepreneurship has been generally approached through traditional perspectives originating from male-centred approaches (Ahl, 2002, 2006; de Bruin et al., 2007). Moreover, most of the conducted studies have been exploratory in nature and adopted feminist empiricism. Consequently, female entrepreneurship literature slowly progressed towards more critical research approaches that incorporate the female entrepreneurs themselves into the study. These efforts aim at including the women entrepreneurs as partners in the research and not only as the objects of study. It is expected that more profound insights on female entrepreneurship can be reached by voicing the female entrepreneurs’ concerns through a feminist research perspective (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). Furthermore, as a response to the advancement in the female entrepreneurial research focus, this chapter proposes the adoption of a feminist standpoint approach as the best fit for an interpretivist purpose.

3.2.2. Institutional Perspective

As described by the literature, institutions are the “rules of the game in a society”, (North, 1990). Institutions cast a significant influence on individuals and businesses as well and define the boundaries between which they can operate. In its essence, institutional theory claims that individuals will seek out their personal interests while limiting their activities to the prevailing rules and regulations (Ingram and Silverman, 2002, p.2). It follows that, given their immediate influence on the social, personal and organisational attitudes, institutions essentially set the tone for the economic and regulatory conditions of nations. Culture, norms, traditions, regulations and relevant organisational policies dictate the degree of ease or difficulty that entrepreneurs must face in their journey to achieving entrepreneurial success. Furthermore, environments had historically played an important part in the promotion and development of entrepreneurship even before the literature began documenting it. One of the earliest frameworks advanced for the study of entrepreneurship was the framework for new venture creation (Gartner, 1985).

“Entrepreneurs do not operate in vacuums, they respond to their environment”.

(Gartner, 1985, p. 700)

This framework acknowledges that recognising the effect of the environment is a necessary condition for the rise and success of new ventures because the environment represents a major element in the start-ups and survival of new ventures. While this framework does not address the issue of gender in entrepreneurship, it highlights the vital role that the environment plays in the formation of a new venture. On the one hand, the environment is viewed as a determinant factor in the establishment and advancement of a new business entity. It reflects a set of external conditions to which the company must adhere to and adapt. On the other hand, the environment is seen as the sum of perceptions that the entrepreneur makes of the world around him/her and the influences affecting the new venture (Gartner, 1985).

3.2.2.1 Female entrepreneurship and Self-Perceptions

Self-perceptions play a vital role in opportunity recognition and the development and advancement of the entrepreneurial experience (de Bruin et al., 2007; GEM, 2015). It also shapes entrepreneurial goals influenced by societal norms and opinions; therefore, women can be limited by their self-perceptions as imposed on them by cultural customs (GEM, 2015). These customs require them to uphold their roles as housewives and avoid self-employment, restricting their ambitions and their entrepreneurial opportunities

to whatever society interprets as acceptable female businesses, and encouraging less of them to venturing into male-dominated industries (Baughn et al., 2006; Langowitz & Minniti, 2007; Gatewood et al., 1995).

Furthermore, opportunities are the result of women's upbringing and their personal life experiences (Brush, 1992). Additionally, women's perceptions of opportunities will vary based on how they tend to socialise (DeTienne & Chandler, 2007). Thus, their social networks ultimately differ from those of male entrepreneurs, which implies that the information they receive from these networks is different from what their male counterparts receive. Females tend to form mixed networks in which both men and women participate, but males tend to keep their networks mainly consisting of other males (Aldrich, 1989).

Moreover, the personal experiences of women entrepreneurs, once taken into consideration, can shed light on some previously unknown facts in venture creation. This can, in turn, add value and depth to entrepreneurial studies generally reigned by male standards.

3.2.2.2 Institutions and Female Entrepreneurship

Institutional theory is a key framework that can be used explaining the state of female entrepreneurs around the world. In fact, since societal aspects bind female entrepreneurs, it is imperative to study female entrepreneurship considering their social and institutional environment.

Furthermore, aside from the important contributions that the self-employed females offer to the economy, they tend to employ more women in their businesses, thereby including a significant number of the society in a nation's workforce (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). However, in relation to institutional theory, institutional concepts help enlighten unknown aspects and limitations about the labour market, societal perceived roles attributed to females and the obstacles that hinder the starting and developing of female self-owned businesses (e.g., Aidis, et al., 2007; Baughn et al., 2006; Welter, 2004; Welter and Smallbone, 2006). This is especially true in the case of the female entrepreneurs operating their ventures in a traditionally male industry, such as the female ventures involved in the manufacturing and construction businesses (De Vita et al., 2014).

Moreover, there have been repeated calls in the literature to address the influence of the environment in which the entrepreneurs operate their businesses (Gartner, 1985; Bird & Brush, 2002; Ahl, 2006; Brush et al., 2009). However, while several recent works have addressed this issue by shedding light on the environmental influences affecting the entrepreneurs and their ventures, the literature highlighting these influences in the case of female-led entrepreneurial ventures still lags (Brush et al., 2009). Accordingly,

there was the need to further investigate the environments that female entrepreneurs operate and study of the circumstances that surround their venture creation and operation processes while studying female entrepreneurship (Hughes, Jennings, Brush, Carter & Welter, 2012). Consequently, there is a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the exerted environmental forces at play and how these various environmental factors collectively affect the establishment and progress of female entrepreneurial efforts.

One of the early models that focused on the issue of gender in entrepreneurship while incorporating an institutional perspective is the 5M model of female entrepreneurship (Brush et al., 2009). This model emphasises the role of the meso environment (in relation to initiatives, support services, and related businesses) and the macro environment (in terms of society, traditions, the economy, and national policies) in the study of female entrepreneurship and uses the motherhood metaphor to represent women's socially given roles as care-takers and heads of households. The next section explains the 5M model in detail and highlights its various research applications.

3.3 THE 5M MODEL OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As discussed above, the 5M model has been advanced a gender-aware model for female entrepreneurship (Brush et al. 2009). The 5M model is itself an extension of the 3M model of entrepreneurship (Bates et al., 2007) concentrating on money, market and management as the necessary elements for new business ventures. The 5M model extends the 3M model by introducing additional factors affecting female entrepreneurship such as motherhood and the meso and macro environments. The motherhood aspect refers to elements of the family and household responsibilities of women, while the meso environment is concerned with the regulations, policies and the industry or more broadly, industry related networks, and the macro environment echoes the social norms, traditions and reflects the surrounding political and economic conditions.

3.3.1 Extending the 3M Model

As mentioned before, the 5M model of female entrepreneurship builds upon an older model, namely the 3M Model of entrepreneurship. The 3M model was previously developed to shed light on the three most important areas in the process of new venture creation. It also acts as a guide for new entrants into entrepreneurship by portraying how their business activities can be affected by the three M's. The three main constructs in this model are money, marketing and management, hence, named the 3M's model (Bates

et al., 2007). The 5M model extends the 3M model by including two additional constructs to the original three mentioned above, namely the meso/macro environment and the motherhood constructs (Brush et al., 2009). The 3M Model emphasises 3 important constructs that are imperative to the entrepreneur in the process of venture creation, specifically, the access to funding and capital (the money construct), the availability of human capital and managerial skills (the management construct), and the ability to identify opportunities for exploitation (the marketing construct). Furthermore, in addition to these three crucial and essential elements to the formation of a new business venture (Bates et al., 2007); the 5M model pays more attention to the case of the female entrepreneurs and the intricacies specific to their entrepreneurial needs. This gender-aware model for new venture creation concentrates on the contextual side where the female entrepreneurs set up their businesses, in addition to their roles as mothers and caretakers and their responsibilities inside the household. The 5M model refers to the extensions above as the meso/macro environment and the motherhood elements respectively, which are explained in the sections below.

Motherhood

Motherhood symbolises the entrepreneur's family and household duties that it entails on the female/mother, as the children's caregiver and the household's manager. This symbolism is, in fact, the reality that most women mostly face and constitutes the fundamental job they are entrusted with, stemming from longstanding societal norms. This, however, affects women entrepreneurs more than their male colleagues and leaves a crippling mark on the development and performance of their businesses (Brush et al., 2009, Iakovleva et al., 2013). The unfair distribution of household responsibilities and resources leaves female entrepreneurial businesses lagging on the 3M fronts of money, markets and management (Brush et al. 2009). Furthermore, the literature has found that family and household related factors play an integral role in womens' career prospects, and vice-versa (Jennings & McDougald, 2007).

Meso and Macro Environment

The meso environment is made up of regional support strategies, policies and initiatives as well as industry sectors, facilities, services and the networks that can affect opportunity recognition (Welter & Smallbone, 2010; Brush et al., 2009). Some industries are considered acceptable for females, such as services and design; while others are still considered as male disciplines such as building and construction, in which females still, face much resistance (Blau, Ferber & Winkler, 2002; Pitelis, 2005; Brush et al., 2009). On the other hand, the macro environment is constituted of national policies, strategies and regulations, as well as

cultural and economic influences (Brush et al., 2009; Gupta, 2014; Hechevarria, 2015). The connection between the meso and macro environments is tightly knit and is very valuable in explaining the interplay between the various contextual and societal factors and their effects on female entrepreneurial efforts, namely in terms of the non-economic challenges they face.

The 5M model, by incorporating the motherhood component, is considered a pioneer gender-aware effort that not only addresses the institutional side of female entrepreneurship through acknowledging the meso and macro environmental influences on the female entrepreneurs, but also provides access into female entrepreneurs' unfolding socially assigned gender duties and how they affect their entrepreneurial efforts.

3.3.2 The original 5M Model

There have been several variations of the proposed 5M framework for studying female entrepreneurship as originally envisioned by Brush, de Bruin and Welter (2009). In the original model, the motherhood construct was central and integral to understanding the entrepreneurial activities of women, and as such signified the importance of the role that the female entrepreneurs play regarding fulfilling their parts as caretakers, mothers and wives, in charge of running entire households if not more. The central role that women play in the life of the family overtakes the better part of their time and makes it difficult for them to venture into entrepreneurship let alone identify entrepreneurial opportunities. Hence, Brush, de Bruin and Welter emphasise that in order to understand female entrepreneurs, one must appreciate the intensity of their 'motherhood' duties and the extent to which those duties affect the odds of the female entrepreneurs and their business ventures. Here again, the emphasis is on the fact that the motherhood metaphor and what it represents has a greater effect on the lives and activities of the female entrepreneurs than have the meso and macro environments representing the regional strategies, policies, regulatory, cultural and economic aspects of entrepreneurship. The meso and macro environments project the way the other facets (money, market, management and motherhood) affect the female entrepreneurial activities. This is especially true regarding the social norms that influence the way society views female entrepreneurs and affects the operation of their businesses, from obtaining proper funding to building business networks, to manage successfully their business ventures.

3.3.3 Variations of the 5M Model

Several studies have benefitted from making small variations to the 5M model. For instance, in a study on female entrepreneurs in transition economies, a variation of the 5M model was developed to study female entrepreneurship in post-soviet Russia and Ukraine (Iakovleva et al., 2013). To understand the effects of familial history on entrepreneurs, they argued that historical family heritage is crucial to entrepreneurial success, and after conducting a qualitative study on 60 entrepreneurs, redefined the notion of ‘motherhood’ into ‘motherland’ and incorporated that into the 5M model (Iakovleva et al., 2013). By extending the motherhood construct into a motherland one, this study shifted its position from being central to all other constructs to being the broadest construct encompassing all others under it (Iakovleva et al., 2013).

On the other hand, the 5M model has also been applied to study the condition of the female entrepreneurs in an Arab setting, namely in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Danish & Smith, 2012). In this study, the application of the 5M model was limited to elements of the meso and macro environments, given that the study was taking place amidst segregation between males and females within the country. Because of that, the motherhood element was loosely investigated. Instead, the application of the 5M model in this study was far less concerned with the familial duties and motherhood responsibilities for which access is difficult to achieve and focused more on the meso and macro environments. The authors argued the importance of these two constructs in the study of female entrepreneurs outside of the western world, especially in a country such as Saudi Arabia. This, in turn, opened the opportunity for the researchers to engage in the investigation of the effects of gender segregation on female entrepreneurial efforts, as well as inquire about the role that the government and non-governmental organisations can play in supporting the female entrepreneurs.

In another study advanced by the authors of the 5M model (Brush, Allen, de Bruin & Welter, 2010), the 5M model was empirically tested using GEM data for 2009 (Bosma, Acs, Autio, Coduras & Levie, 2009). In this study, the authors focused on the motherhood construct in specific, to test its viability in investigating female entrepreneurs. They conducted their investigation by focusing on the motherhood/family construct and analysed the influence it exerts on the anticipation of female entrepreneurs for the growth of their ventures and their overall perception of the entrepreneurial opportunity presented to them. In testing this construct, however, the authors did not differentiate between male and female entrepreneurs and intentionally chose to test the effects of the motherhood concept on both genders to get a better understanding of the influence that this construct exerts on the lives of both categories of entrepreneurs.

The results they obtained showed that the rates of male entrepreneurs are higher across all the countries studied in the GEM 2009 report, which was a total to 54 countries representing developing and developed economies from four continents around the globe (Bosma et al., 2009). Their results also pointed out male entrepreneurs come from smaller families and rely less on familial connections in their entrepreneurial activities. Their perceptions of opportunity identification are also less dependent on advice from their families. The same is not true for the female entrepreneurs, who tend to have larger families and rely primarily on their familial networks in gaining help and advice in their entrepreneurial endeavours. In addition, the results of their study also show there are differences between male and female entrepreneurial experiences due to the embeddedness of the motherhood effects on their entrepreneurial expectations. The study findings show that male entrepreneurial growth expectations exceed those of the female entrepreneurs in the countries that were part of the study. The similarity between the results of the above study and the former question tested under the motherhood construct in this study confirm the existence of and the vital role of family presence and familial involvement. These are part of the motherhood concept and influence the attitudes of both the male and female entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurial undertakings resulting in different experiences for both males and females.

Furthermore, a study conducted in Germany examined the effects of the entrepreneur's gender and the contextual setting of the new venture on entrepreneurial learning (Ettl & Welter, 2010). The study employed the 5M model's meso, and macro environment constructs as a basis for evaluating female entrepreneurs in Germany. The study conducted in-depth interviews with both female entrepreneurs and experts in the field and focused on the sources of the entrepreneurial knowledge and expertise that the female entrepreneurs exhibit in running and developing their businesses. It also examined the extent to which female entrepreneurs are affected by social, familial and macro-environmental factors. The research concluded that the meso/macro environment does indeed play an essential role in the lives of female entrepreneurs from both a personal and a contextual point of view. Interestingly, their results suggest that although the effect of the meso environment is present, it is less prominent than the effects of both the micro and the macro environments, both representing respectively the individual and regulatory contexts that exert more powerful forces on the female entrepreneurial's endeavour, particularly in terms of their perspectives toward identifying prospective business opportunities. These findings sum up the forces that affect new venture creation for the female entrepreneur as both direct and indirect influences. The authors concluded with the necessity of devising policies that address these influences.

3.4 THE IFFEM CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter proposes a framework that takes into consideration the institutional and feminist sides to female entrepreneurship. The aim is to record and capture the dynamic interplay between the different factors at the meso and macro environments that affect the female entrepreneurs through a feminist lens. To achieve this end, the framework advances three propositions that extend to cover the institutional and feminist dimensions in the study of female entrepreneurship. One of the earlier models of entrepreneurship is the framework for the New Venture Creation presented by Gartner (1985). This framework explains the creation of a new venture by dividing it into four dimensions, namely the environment, the individual, the process and the organisation. Gartner describes the period of venture creation as a cycle of reciprocal relationships between these four dimensions. While this framework does not address the issue of gender in entrepreneurship, it highlights the critical role that the environment plays in the establishment of a new venture. Gartner acknowledges that recognising the effect of the environment is a necessary condition for the rise and success of new ventures because “entrepreneurs do not operate in vacuums, they respond to their environment” (Gartner, 1985, p. 700). This observation is echoed in the 5M model, which seeks to incorporate elements of the meso/macro environment into the study of female entrepreneurship. It also adds a gender-aware approach by including the Motherhood construct that aims at highlighting the gender-related roles attributed to women by society.

On the other hand, feminist methodology calls for ethical practices in gathering research data by protecting the identities of the female subjects involved in the study and by ensuring the confidential usage and storage of the data entrusted by the participants. In addition to the primary purpose of the feminist methodology which is to raise the voice of the female subjects and to emphasise their perspectives, feminist research aims to ensure that the results from studies can benefit the females subjects of the study. Hence employs the feminist methodology in our investigation about female entrepreneurship renders the study not just about female entrepreneurs but also for them. This gives the necessary pretext for adopting a feminist standpoint approach to the study of female entrepreneurship, which can both report on and include the female entrepreneurs as participants in their study. The discussion above leads to proposing an institutional and feminist model that operates under the following three propositions as explained below (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Cultural norms and national strategies define what an individual can undertake and achieve in life, and this is even more pronounced in the case of the female entrepreneurs (de Vita et al., 2014). Thus, the macro

environment, as has been shown in the literature on institutional theory above (Ettl & Welter, 2010; Al-Alak & Al-Haddad, 2010; Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010; Singh et al., 2010; Belwal et al., 2012), plays a crucial role in the development and advancement of female entrepreneurs and their businesses.

Proposition one: Female entrepreneurship is affected by the factors at the macro environment level, such as national policies, the economy, norms and traditions.

As shown by the literature, having to deal with a multitude of rules and regulations deters entrepreneurs from commencing the creation of a new venture because of the complexities that it can entail (Bruton et al., 2010). Likewise, the same results can be extended to cover situations with very low to non-existing levels of rules and regulations at the meso-environment (Estrin et al., 2013; Klyver et al., 2013), such as transition economies, Lithuania, Ukraine and Russia, to name a few (Bruton et al., 2010; Welter, 2011; Iakovleva et al., 2013).

Proposition two: Female entrepreneurship is affected by the factors at the meso environment level, such as rules, regulations and support initiatives.

The central role that women play in the life of the family overtakes the better part of their time and makes it difficult for them to venture into entrepreneurship let alone identify entrepreneurial opportunities (Jennings and McDougald, 2007; Brush et al., 2009, Iakovleva et al., 2013).

Proposition three: Female entrepreneurship is affected by the motherhood duties that society assigns to females, such as managing the household, raising the children and caring for the elderly.

Hereafter, by incorporating elements from both the feminist standpoint and the 5M institutional gender-aware approaches, this chapter advances a new comprehensive model for researching female entrepreneurship in context, namely the Institutional and Feminist Female Entrepreneurship Model (IFFEM).

The IFFEM incorporates the institutional and feminist approaches into an integrative multi-level analysis of female entrepreneurship. The phenomenon of female entrepreneurship is studied by integrating the meso-environment, macro-environment and motherhood elements and studying the effects of the interplay between them on female entrepreneurship through a feminist approach. The meso and macro environments and the motherhood constructs are represented alongside their representative factors as constructs surrounding female entrepreneurship. Furthermore, straight one-sided arrows connect the three constructs with female entrepreneurship, representing the influence exerted by all the constructs on female

entrepreneurship. The model shows the interplay of factors and their influence on female entrepreneurship approach from a feminist perspective thereby emphasising the research approach adopted for the study. In comparison with the 5M model by Brush et al. (2009), this model represents the motherhood construct as one of the elements affecting female entrepreneurship, alongside the other elements of study (the meso and macro environments) and not at the centre of the study as suggested by Brush et al. (2009) in the 5M model. The reason for this is that the proposed model aims to capture the effects of these elements and their various factors on female entrepreneurship, and hence all elements are studied equally and are given the same degree of attention as shown in Figure 2 below.

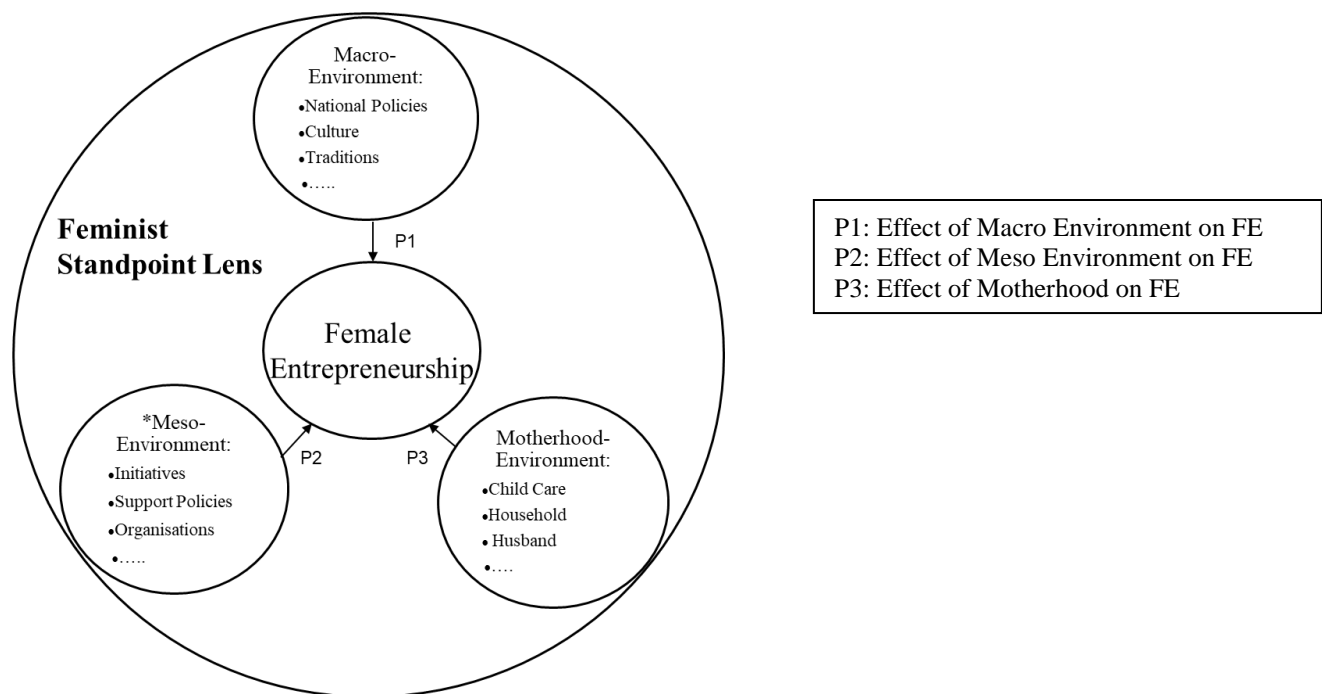


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework showing the Institutional and Feminist Female Entrepreneurship Model (IFFEM).
 *The meso environment acts as the link between the narrow micro-level environment and the wider macro-level environment (Pitelis, 2005; Dopfer, Foster & Potts, 2004).

Moreover, a quantitative study would not achieve the purpose of this investigation, which is interpretive and requires the exploration of emotions and attitudes of the female entrepreneurs subjected to institutional pressures to capture their behavioural responses to the manifestation of those pressures. Hence, a feminist qualitative approach will better explain the consequences of such pressures on female entrepreneurs by listening to their stories and empowering them to interpret the events and circumstances that have marked their personal struggles and achievements, as suggested by the literature (Mordi et al., 2010). Also,

approaching the study through a feminist lens reflects a commitment to the values and principles of the feminist research methodology for studies about females. Feminist research methods emphasise the importance of the research to be not just about the females studied but also for them, to conduct research works that ultimately benefit the females with practical inferences over and beyond the expected theoretical implications.

In addition, feminist research takes the view that reality is not complete without females and society's potential is not fulfilled without their active involvement. Therefore, academic research cannot realise its purpose of advancing knowledge without considering the female perspectives and genuinely understanding their roles and contributions (Mirchandani, 1999). Moreover, feminist research emphasises ethical practices in investigating phenomena and obtaining information and aims to steer away from intrusive research methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The feminist research methods essentially aim to safeguard the research participants' privacy and confidentiality, to provide original data that is authentic and unharmed and take the necessary measures ensuring the research subjects are rightfully and reasonably treated. Hence, appropriate measures should be put in place to minimise the exposure of the study subjects to any damage or unnecessary costs.

3.5. SUMMARY

The literature on female entrepreneurs has increasingly advance institutional and feminist approaches that address the environmental challenges affecting female entrepreneurs. There is a need to give attention to the environment in which female entrepreneurs practice entrepreneurship and to the roles bestowed upon them by society. This is because all entrepreneurial activities are mostly rooted in society (Davidsson & Honig, 2003; Steyaert & Katz, 2004), and its influence affects the existence and development of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, as a response to the shift in the female entrepreneurial research focus, demanding more interpretivist approaches to investigating female entrepreneurship, this chapter proposed the adoption of the feminist standpoint approach coupled with the 5M institutional model to investigate female entrepreneurship from a new light. Accordingly, the framework presented by this study is the Institutional and Feminist Female Entrepreneurship Model (IFFEM) for the study of female entrepreneurship. The IFFEM is a comprehensive model that oversees the research into female entrepreneurship by incorporating both the institutional and feminist perspectives. The next chapter introduces the different methodological viewpoints and philosophical stances as well as the context considered to identify the most suitable for data collection and analysis in this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the process by which the methodology adopted for the thesis study was conceived. It is argued that the rationale of structuring the research technique begins with the researcher choosing a research philosophy, methodological approach, procedure and information gathering strategy (Silverman, 2004). The research philosophy should reflect the beliefs of the researcher and aim to provide a guide to fulfilling the purpose of the research questions.

So, the next section lays out the motivation behind this chapter is to display an explanation of the methodology adopted for this study and to show the philosophical underpinnings of the approach selected by the researcher. As the point of the exploration is to dissect female entrepreneurs and investigate their personal views and feelings about their venturing into self-employment instead of becoming employees, the section concentrates on the interpretivist epistemology and constructionist ontology, hence adopting a qualitative technique to conducting the research.

As the study draws together three different regions of knowledge (section 4.1.3) –namely entrepreneurship, institutionalism and feminism, the utilisation of a mixed methodological system for this examination is warranted since it combines some uniting a few related methodological styles: qualitative, phenomenological and feminism.

As such, this chapter follows the following organisation. Section 1 starts with a survey of the paradigms found in entrepreneurship studies as arranged by Burrell and Morgan's (2005) paradigmatic classification, highlighting the development and legitimisation of more subjective methodologies in the field of entrepreneurship (section 4.1.1). The ensuing segments concentrate on phenomenology (4.1.2) and feminism (4.1.3) because of its significance to the adopted qualitative approach by the researcher. This is then trailed by an exchange of qualitative methodological approaches (4.1.4) because receiving such an approach is prescribed to be better for research employing phenomenological and feminist standards. Having given a general review of these points of view, Section 1 of the part closes with a presentation of the methodological approach received with the end goal of this exploration (area 4.1.5).

4.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The review of the literature presented in the previous chapter highlighted the many issues associated with entrepreneurship, institutional theory and feminism. It highlighted the existing gap in the literature by which female entrepreneurs have been neglected and how the literature has always approached and reported on entrepreneurship from a male perspective (Meunier et al., 2017; Brush et al., 2009; Mirchandani, 1999). Hence, the purpose of this study is to shed light on the lived experiences of female entrepreneurs by addressing their personal stories and reporting on their acquired perceptions while they were carving their way as self-made entrepreneurs. This thesis is thus a narrative exploratory study that focuses on the portrayal of their human experiences by giving an account of their circumstances, and the various external and internal influences that come into play as factors affecting their entrepreneurial journeys. The study, therefore, takes a qualitative research approach employing a subjectivist and interpretivist phenomenological and feminist stance in approaching this subject, based on personal semi-structured interviews. This stance will be elaborated on more in the following sections. First, let us start by revisiting the research questions, as set out by the literature gap.

Research Questions

This thesis is set out to investigate the ensuing main research question: How does the contextual embeddedness of entrepreneurship affect female entrepreneurship development? To help answer this question, the following sub-questions (see Section 1.2) relating to the investigation approach on female entrepreneurship that this these adopts have been proposed:

Research Question 1: How is female entrepreneurship affected by institutional elements at the macro level?

Research Question 2: How is female entrepreneurship affected by institutional elements at the meso level?

Research Question 3: How is female entrepreneurship affected by institutional elements at the motherhood level?

Research Question 4: How does adopting the feminist approach lead to better understanding the phenomena of female entrepreneurship?

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Philosophical stances on methodology vary widely depending on the stated purpose of the study. The main research stances that have been identified in philosophical theorising are epistemology and ontology (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Silverman, 2004). While ontology is concerned with understanding reality and making meaning about its central constituents, epistemology presents a framework for understanding the nature of information and the ways knowledge and learning are conceived (Silverman, 2004). Identifying an appropriate research philosophy is an iterative process where the choice made on the ontological level affects, and even more so clarifies the epistemological stance by which the research is to be conducted (Cope, 2003). It is essential to define the study's paradigmatic stance clearly and align it appropriately with the main research questions investigated in the research (Grant & Perren, 2002).

The researcher used the paradigms of ontology and epistemology to classify their differing philosophical stances.

Ontological Stance

Ontology is involved with explaining the meaning of reality, and as such admits to the possibility of multiple realities, each from the person reporting it. If the purpose of conducting the study were to present human experiences and report their beliefs and perceptions, then the ontological stance would be constructionist, with emphasis on the accurate portrayal of their stories. Constructionism is an ontological position that takes upon itself to find the meaning of social phenomena. It asserts that social world is the result of social constructs made by the social actors' accounts that are tied to social meanings, and thereby exist at a level that transcends the specific reality of objects. Hence, labels that the realities used to understand these social phenomena are nothing less than social constructs.

On the other hand, objectivism is an ontological position that believes that social phenomena and the meanings that are attributed to them are separate and distinct from their social actors. It proclaims that a clear distinction should be made between social phenomena and social actors, as they are entirely separate from each other. Hence, an objectivist ontological stance aims to analyze social phenomena without reverting to their social actors, but as standalone objects/situations that exist in and of themselves, stripped of any connection or interaction with the humans that act upon them, because they are external to the existence of their social actors and cannot be influenced by them.

Epistemological Stance

Epistemology, on the other side of the paradigm continuum, is concerned with the question of what should be regarded as human knowledge. In particular, the most eminent concern of epistemology is whether to consider the reality presented by the natural sciences as applied to the study of the social sciences, or whether there exists another view of the knowledge related to the social world. If the researcher is set out to find meaning to social phenomena or to describe human interactions, then the technique employed should intend to interpret these observations, and hence adopt an interpretivist epistemological stance. Interpretivism hence answers the concern of interpreting the meanings of social reality through the perceptions of its social actors and as such presents a subjective view of social phenomena that, according to interpretivists, is not separate from its people and exists in relation to their personal views and beliefs. The researcher, on the other hand, can employ positivism, if the study intends to present measures of the social constructs while regarding them as separate and distinct from their actors. That is, positivism considers social reality as singular and objective, and not affected by its social actors or by the process of investigating it. In other words, this technique originating from the social sciences considers knowledge as predetermined and fixed, and consequently not open to interpretation.

4.4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

Entrepreneurship literature has studied entrepreneurship from different theoretical perspectives, namely economics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, geography, gender, history and politics (Curran & Blackburn, 2001). Consequently, entrepreneurship has seen different methodological approaches through which its investigation has been conducted (Savage & Black, 1995). This multitude of methods employed in exploring the different facets of entrepreneurship from differing angles brings about fundamental concerns regarding the correct choice of methodology for a given entrepreneurial research. First, the presence of multiple approaches suggests the necessity of adequately classifying these approaches according to their corresponding research purpose. Second, challenges arise in choosing the proper research methodologies through which researchers can approach entrepreneurship studies. There have been some efforts to respond to these concerns, especially in literary works attempting to categorise the differing academic discourses that are significant influencers in the development of entrepreneurial studies (Grant & Perren, 2002). The main categorisation model employed was the Paradigmatic Framework developed by Burrell and Morgan (2005), as it constitutes “the most widely disseminated paradigmatic framework” in

methodological research (Grant & Perren, 2002, p. 188). Because of these and other efforts, the following methodological choice of other researchers investigating the field will be facilitated and warranted.

Burrell and Morgan (2005) understood the social sciences as disciplines embedded in philosophical assumptions and assumptions about nature and society (Grant & Perren, 2002). As such, the paradigmatic framework they developed is guided using two axes through which philosophical and social assumptions shall be identified. These two axes are objectivist-subjectivist and radical change-regulation.

As part of the objectivist stance, the reality in the social world is objective and conforms to standard global laws, and consequently is suited in the positivist methodological paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 2005). In positivism, the reality is assumed to be one, unchangeable and not open for interpretation, while existing independently in and by itself. In other words, the reality is the same, because it is free from all human interferences and made up of pure facts, in the same manner as natural facts (Silverman, 2004). In this case, theoretical knowledge is usually tested by statistical means to find relations between tested variables, and the results are quantitative. This naturally involves the adoption of a deductive approach, which confirms or refutes the suggested theoretical stance proposed at the beginning of the research. The deductive method takes place through undertaking thoroughly structured methodological analysis via conducted surveys or closed-ended questionnaires. Therefore, positivism is based on the notion that researcher and subject of study are separate and distinct, and that the researchers' beliefs and opinions do not influence the findings of the study (Silverman, 2004).

On the other hand, subjectivism is based on the belief that a complete separation between researcher and subject of study is impossible to achieve, and hence any research conducted ultimately comprises the involvement of the researcher in the process of the research, regardless of the techniques used in conducting the study. This philosophical stance stems from the subjectivist conviction that the social world is a result of the interaction between individuals and their personal experiences and that the objective of any research is, in fact, the interpretation of these lived human observations (Burrell & Morgan, 2005). Hence, they are part of the interpretivist methodological approach. Interpretivism adopts the view that the rise of society is built on the interactions between individuals, and that reality is evident in those interactions. Thus, what is real reflects human interactions and agreement among themselves to consider as being real. Reality is socially constructed, and different individuals can interpret the same situation differently depending on their view of reality, which can also change depending on their mood or time or prevailing beliefs. Consequently, their response to these situations can be influenced by their view of reality, and interactions with others.

However, people's interactions in society are not limited to exchanges with their environment, but they also extend to attempting to understand their surroundings and the events resulting from their social interactions. They look for meanings that can be induced from their exchanges and further facilitate their future interactions. Hence, the values they derive from their social relations are the results of their collectively constructed social interpretations. Nevertheless, in order to communicate these actions and conducts among each other, people turn to languages as the primary means to deliver their thoughts and beliefs. This in turn renders language as a method to infer context and provide a communicative measure to make sense of societally observed phenomena. As such, researchers turn to language as a resource by which to comprehend said phenomena (Welch & Piekarri, 2006). Hereafter, the need arises to investigate, subjectively, the reasons that drive the way people act as a necessary condition defining actions and behaviours (Cope, 2005). Henceforth, the popularity of the interpretive paradigm among researchers is because it encourages qualitative practices to conduct investigations, which base their approaches on collecting deep and meaningful hands-on data, instead of statistically observed facts (Silverman, 2004). On the other hand of the spectrum, comes the radicalists point of view, which interprets the world as ever changing and in a continuous state of conflict between oppressed and dominating societal parties (Burrell & Morgan, 2005). This stream of thought gives rise and purpose to the feminist approach, in which believers argue that the current state of the world is male dominated and hence feminist researchers enforce a feminist lens while conducting their investigations (Letherby, 2003). The last approach to methodological investigation is that of the regulatory perspective. Regulatory researchers emphasise the world's harmony and believe in societal accord and investigate the methods and systems to preserve and sustain it, which can lead to long-term prosperity (Burrell & Morgan, 2005).

The interaction between these four points of view gives rise to four paradigms each of which is a mix of two of the dimensions above: the functionalist, the interpretivist, the radical-humanist and the radical-structuralist paradigms (see Figure 3). Functionalists assume an objective approach to reality and focus on the order in society. Interpretivists take a subjective view of reality and accept order in society. Radical-humanists see reality from a subjectivist perspective and understand that society undergoes constant changes. Radical-structuralists, on the other hand, see reality from an objectivist perspective and focus on the idea of change in society (Burrell & Morgan, 2005).

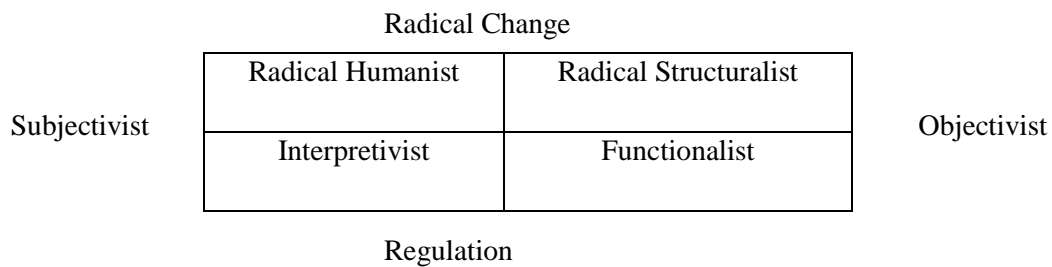


Figure 3: Burrell and Morgan's Paradigmatic Framework (Burrell & Morgan, 2005).

4.4.1 Phenomenology

The rise of female entrepreneurship as an influencing and contributing factor in economic development across nations has earned it the classification of a special phenomenon. Moreover, phenomenology means the study of appearances, or phenomena (Moran, 2000). In other words, phenomenology seeks to understand why certain phenomena take effect and how they manifest themselves. Also, the literature has also defined phenomenology as a portrayal of experiences an individual goes through, or the way these experiences present themselves (Hammond et al., 1991). As such, and because it stresses the importance of human experiences and attempts to explain and describe them, phenomenology fits best within the interpretivist epistemological paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 2005).

Phenomenology links between objectivity and subjectivity. Phenomenology views objectivity in social reality as formed through subjectivity. Therefore, subjectivity essentially helps form objectivity, and what is objective (Moran, 2000). Other literature argues that independent, objective reality is a far-fetched idea since an individual's experience is tightly connected to what is being experienced. Hence, relying on technical, scientific ways to identify objective reality is an incomplete measure of reality (Cope, 2003). Also, phenomenological literature points out that there is only one reality to be discovered in the world, and that is through subjectivism (Hammond et al., 1991). Furthermore, individuals live in collective societies, and thus the study of human beings cannot be isolated from their surroundings (Stewart & Mickunas, 1974). Since the purpose of phenomenology is to provide meaning to human experiences, phenomenologists need to approach their studies through the lens of the individuals studied (Cope, 2005, Burrell & Morgan, 2005). This approach to providing an accurate portrayal of lived experiences, and deeply understanding them requires suspending all previous conceptions before undergoing the phenomenological investigation (Cope,

2003; Moran, 2000). Also, the individuals' interpretation of the phenomena they have experienced is a necessary and significant part of the phenomena under investigation (Patton, 1990).

4.4.2 Feminism

When taking the interpretivist and phenomenological approaches to conducting research on female entrepreneurs, the next approach to adopt would have to be one by which the subjects of study can be empowered to give their interpretation of the phenomena under investigation. Hence, the introduction of the feminist perspective aims to provide the guiding light in dissecting the study of female entrepreneurs. As explained in feminist literature in section 2.4, the male perspective dominates social reality, and as pertaining to our study, the research on entrepreneurship.

Historically, women were not involved in academic life, males have constructed education and the knowledge stemming from it and primarily reflect the male perspective (Toren et al., 1997; Harding, 1987). This has been subsequently pointed out with revolutionizing works, which called for the inclusion of the feminist perspective in describing, theorizing and understanding reality, thus advancing the efforts to eradicate masculine biases and misrepresentations (De Beauvoir, 1999; Stern, 1999; Jansen & Davis, 1998), and the undetectable but influential male cultural standard (Collinson & Hearn, 1994). Hence, feminist researchers work on raising the voice of females and their experiences in their efforts to include the feminine point of view on social reality. Notably, the approach employed by feminist researchers is to appreciate and highlight the experiences of females and give them the chance to celebrate their lives, feelings, perceptions and achievements (Letherby, 2003). They tend to shed light on differences between females and male experiences to highlight the positivity of both perspectives and further enforce the notion that males and females are not rivals in the construction of society but on the contrary are partners in it and need to share their knowledge in order to coexist in peace.

According to the literature, there are three unique aspects to employing the feminist methodology, which is namely, the focus on the females' experiences, the focus on ethics, and lastly the reason for the research (Letherby, 2003). First, through the focus on female experiences, feminism aims to give a more holistic view of reality by incorporating the outlook of females on society both personally and as active members participating and contributing to society. Without the inclusion of women's account of knowledge and society, there can never be a complete view of reality (Gunew, 1991; Mirchandani, 1999). This is in line

with the phenomenological stance to the methodology. Second, through focusing on ethics, the literature shows feminist methodology aims to move away from intrusive research methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011) to ensure that the confidentiality and privacy of the research participants are adequately preserved and that the research subjects have not been exploited in order to attain their data, and that the data collected is honest and untampered with. In this respect, researchers in the feminist methodology have employed techniques to lessen the possibility of damage or negative costs partaken by female research subjects. Lastly, the reasons for undertaking feminist research, according to feminist researchers, is not only envisioned to provide an accurate account of the women studied, hence, to be about women, but it also intends to benefit the research subjects, and hence it aims at to be for women (Harding, 1987). Thus, to alter overall societal sexist perceptions, feminist research aims at revolutionising theoretical and societal perceived gender discrimination against women through raising awareness and encouraging policies and regulations to support and decrease the societal gender gap (Gunew, 1991; Michandani, 1999).

The analysis above between phenomenology and feminist research approaches draws similarities between them, regarding the delicate interpretation of the subjects of investigation's experiences and the subjectivity required in the accurate portrayal of those experiences. In addition, phenomenology and feminist philosophical stances require the active involvement of the researcher during the undertaking of the investigation, as well as after it, during the analysis and interpretation phase, which evokes the qualitative methodological approach to conducting research with human subjects as the most suitable for this investigation (Cope, 2005; Letherby, 2003).

4.4.3 Qualitative Research Methodology

As an appropriate method to match the phenomenological and feminist philosophical stances, an inductive exploratory approach was considered best suitable for conducting the research study on the female entrepreneur. Since the purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions and characteristics of female entrepreneurs; the researcher does not make any theoretical assumptions at the start of the research project but leaves the theoretical stance to be induced from the findings of the study (Creswell, 2012). The inductive approach that marks exploratory studies, essentially characterises the qualitative methodology, by which this thesis is structured.

Qualitative methodology encompasses a mix of explanatory practices by which the researcher can organise, define and moreover come to terms with the data collected from studying an inherently existing phenomenon in society (Silverman, 2004). This approach is contrary to the quantitative approach, which is mainly concerned with inferring connections between variables via statistical means. Qualitative methodology's purpose is to illuminate aspects of social phenomena that have not been previously explored (Silverman, 2004). This explains the absence of a predefined theoretical framework adopted from the beginning of the research investigation, whereby the findings give rise to the corresponding theory. As the emphasis in qualitative studies is about understanding the meaning of human experiences, the main concern of the research is the research subjects and the accurate portrayal of their beliefs and perceptions. As such the researcher undertakes the research without assuming any stance – whether positive or negative, that can affect the process or outcome of the study (Silverman, 2004), which is in line with the phenomenological methodological approach also adopted for this study.

Another important aspect of the qualitative methodology approach is the flexibility and ease of use of its methods of data collection. The use of in-depth-interviews, whether semi-structured, unstructured or structured, constitutes an advantage in the case of qualitative studies, especially ones employing phenomenological and feminist analysis, because it allows the researcher the flexibility of changing the interview approach to adapt to the evolving information in the process of being collected. As a result, data emerging from such qualitative studies are both rich, deep and meaningful, and allows for detailed research analysis. Accordingly, this study will employ a qualitative semi-structured interview approach to collecting its data of female entrepreneurs' characteristics and their perceptions, which will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

Qualitative methodology has been increasingly supported by the entrepreneurship literature, which has highlighted the lack of information available in entrepreneurship research, mainly because the focus has been descriptive rather than explorative and positivistic rather than interpretive. This has resulted in a multitude of questions in the field of entrepreneurship being left unanswered, and qualitative methods are envisioned to fill this void (Ahl, 2006; Gartner & Birley, 2002, p.387). Also, the researcher favoured using the semi-structured interview design because it speeds the process of gaining the interviewees' trust by being in direct personal contact with them, which consequently increases their acceptance to provide deeper insights and personal information. Furthermore, such an approach is the most suitable for this type of investigation and in this context (the Muslim Arab nation of the Kingdom of Bahrain), because the Arab

culture is on that highly regards personal interaction as a key factor to gaining confidence in others. This is typically the case because traditionally, the Arab culture is reserved and private, and individuals prefer engaging in personal conversations, which can help them to easily open and confide in the researcher (Jabre et al., 1997).

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

Among the various available techniques for data collection, this thesis approaches the phase of gathering information by employing semi-structured in-depth interviews (Sanders, 1982). According to the methodological literature, this technique echoes the qualitative approach's emphasis to achieve profound exploratory analysis, as it allows the researcher the opportunity to adapt to the interviewees' level of comfort and probe for additional information according to the general atmosphere and of the interview setting, and the openness of the interviewees (Smith et al., 2009). The flexibility granted by the semi-structured feature of the one-on-one interviews employed succeeds in soliciting the most profound emotions and beliefs of the participants and gives room for the participants to feel free to include any details that they deem necessary, even without the researcher making a point to ask about it. The design of the questions employed takes into consideration the topic of investigation, namely female entrepreneurship, starting with a few related questions and building upon them according to the direction the interview is proceeding in (Patton, 1990).

During the interviews, a voice recorder was used to record the interview sessions, which allowed the researcher to transcribe them later, by first attaining the written consent of the interviewees ahead of time. This step was necessary to ensure the participants' no objection to being recorded, as some individuals might prefer otherwise. The use of a recording device is indispensable, according to the literature (Patton, 1990), because the reliance on the interview process being safely recorded relieves the researcher from the burden of note taking and enables him/her to be completely immersed and actively involved in the interviewing process, probing for additional, systematic and in-depth information when the situation demands it (Sanders, 1982). The formulation of the main questions is based on the specific themes that the researcher wished to discuss openly, and the subsequent probing came as a normal expansion to the flow of the conversations taking place. In fact, the researcher adopted an interview format where the researcher would open with "ice-breakers", namely short, informal questions, or descriptive statements that are designed to put the participants' mind at ease and builds the stage for a relaxed atmosphere which in turn

allows the respondents' the chance to contribute a more precise and accurate account of their experiences. This approach mirrors the methodological call by the literature (Thompson et al., 1989, p.139)

4.5.1 Sampling

The research sample for conducting the interviews was constituted of 44 female entrepreneurs based in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the researcher built the research sample by using a threefold approach to recruiting participants for the study, as detailed in the following sections.

Purposive Sampling

Initially the study adopted a purposive sampling approach by targeting female entrepreneurs due to their relevance to study the female entrepreneurship phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This is to ensure that all interviewees suited the criteria of selection and qualified to take part in the research study. The interview participants were all selected based in the fact that they are female entrepreneurs operating their businesses in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Personal Contacts

The first group of participants who took part in the study happened to be personal acquaintances of the researcher, who were established female employees operating their businesses in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and who have shown equal enthusiasm to be considered for the study and have consented to participate in the interviews.

Snowball Sampling

The third and last phase of enlisting participants in the study took place by using a snowballing technique, whereby the recommendations of participants recruited through personal connections were contacted to become part of the study. The snowball sample is created by first identifying the initial participants of the study, who later refer the researcher to other subjects possessing a similar profile allowing them to participate in the study. Once these new subjects have been identified and contacted to participate in the study, they, in turn, refer additional subjects as part of the study and the snowball sample picks up from there until having identified enough participants to join the research (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

4.5.2 Quality Control

The undergoing of academic research necessitates the quality assurance of the research process and all its components. The importance of this lies in the obligation to generate guaranteed results to enhance the literature and advance the knowledge further. Hence, as an active participant in the building of knowledge, the research has the responsibility to maintain the quality of his/her work throughout the researcher process. In the case of qualitative research, this process is known as employing rigour to ensure the quality of the research process (Tobin & Begley, 2004; Twycross & Shields, 2005; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). To gauge the rigour of the investigative work involves overlooking the whole research process, from the planning stage to the implementation stage, to certify the authenticity and trustworthiness of the research process and its design. As such, there are several measures that can be used to keep the quality of the undertaken research in check (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006; Freeman, DeMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St Pierre, 2007), namely, the trustworthiness of the research and the ethical considerations that were imposed while conducting the research.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness as an indicator of research quality can be viewed from two different perspectives, on one side, the qualitative perspective, and on the other side, the quantitative perspective. Regardless of the standpoint of the researcher approaching the research, these two perspectives both respond to the same concerns of the research recipients. First, in order to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative analysis, the researcher must answer to the issue of credibility of their results, which mirrors to the issue of internal validity in quantitative analysis. Second, the researcher must address the issue of transferability in qualitative analysis, which is referred to as external validity, in quantitative studies. The third concern is the issue known as dependability in qualitative analysis, which is parallel to reliability in quantitative research. Lastly the issue of conformity, as known in qualitative research, which is comparable to the objectivity measure in quantitative analysis.

This argument has been reasonably addressed by the literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Creswell, 2009), and can be summed up by authors Lincoln and Guba's (1985) argument describing the main concerns of trustworthiness:

"How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth making account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria involved, what questions asked, what would be persuasive on this issue?" (p. 290).

The next section examines the measures of quality assurance stated above.

Credibility

The test of credibility checks that the results of the study correctly interpret the social phenomena at hand, and that the approach that has been used to conduct the investigation fits within the standards of good academic practice (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Also, credibility aims to ensure that the findings have been formulated within the guidance of the theoretical framework that has been adopted by the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). For that, several methods exist to guarantee the credibility of qualitative research results, namely peer debriefing, reflexivity and member checks (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2002).

Member checking

To check the accuracy of research findings, member checking usually involves double-checking the validity of the findings, the collected data from the interviews and the interpretations and conclusions back to the respondents of the study in order for them to acknowledge the results that have been gathered, and confirm their relevance or make the necessary corrections where they deem essential, whether it is deleting from, adding to or rephrasing the gathered data (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002). This phase can also stretch to include the crosschecking of the general themes that have been associated with the interview findings for them to provide the necessary feedback and to confirm their accurate portrayal of the study at hand (Creswell 2009; Merriam, 2002).

Peer review/debriefing

This form of credibility checking involves attaining feedback on the results of the study that have been reached, by crosschecking them with peers or academic colleagues. The idea here is for the peers involved to act as external reviewers for the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and provide their feedback on the different aspects of the study, including but not limited to the data collection strategy, the analysis of the findings and the overall design of the research. The literature explains this process as the following: "peer examination would involve asking a colleague to scan some of the raw data and assess whether the findings

are plausible based on the data” (Merriam, 2002, p. 26). This process is envisioned to improve the analysis of the study at hand by providing a reason for peer academics and the thesis researcher to get acquainted with the research and its findings and provide constructive criticism of the plan of the investigation and its results. Moreover, the fact that this new analysis is coming from similar scholars provides the opportunity to gain from the differing perspectives and backgrounds of the chosen reviewers and will open the door for the researcher to look at things differently, which might enhance the interpretation of the results and lead to improved investigation findings.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity takes place as a quality assurance measure to guard against the biases that can arise as a result of the researcher’s stance regarding the research, as well as his/her later interpretation of the study results. This is very significant because it will aid in strengthening the study findings that could otherwise be regarded as weak and lacking credibility (Maxwell, 2005). One of the ways to avoid this bias is to disclose the position of the researcher to the interview participants and to keep a record of all the interventions he/she has provided during the interview process. Furthermore, the researcher’s ability to critically reflect on his/her attitude and his/her involvement in the study, constitutes a necessity for conducting qualitative research, and benefits the study by separating between the point of view that the researcher- also referred to as the “human instrument”- is adopting and the attitude of the study respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183).

Transferability

The ability to replicate the research study is an important aspect of any investigation, and that concept is known as generalizability. In its basic terms, generalizability as a measure of research quality requires that the researcher report on every aspect of the study and provide as many details as possible to facilitate the replication of the study by other investigators and in another place and time. The idea here is to make available the exact steps that were undertaken to undergo the study, thereby allowing another researcher who may be interested in recapturing the same study, the ability to transfer its various components to a different setting. Thus the aim here is to provide as detailed a description as possible, enriching the contextual analysis of the interview records and giving the readers the ability to infer the degree to which the analysis fits the data collected and the context of the topic in point, and as such whether the results can be transferred to other contexts (Merriam, 2002). This also allows the readers of the thesis the ability to

compare the results of the study in the context of their investigations, and consequently decide if the similarities exhibited between the two environments would mean that the findings of the research study are transferable to the new context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, the researcher in this thesis aims to provide as many details as possible and to report on all aspects of the study, and does so by keeping a record of all elements of the study related to the interview and the dealing with the interview participants and concurrently with all aspects of the design that has been employed as a guide of the study.

Dependability

The check for dependability aims to ensure the transparency of the research and its process. In fact, the case for dependability requires that the researcher asserts that the undertaking of the research, its philosophical foundations and the procedure followed for its design are wholly traceable, and as such the researcher can justify his rationale and demonstrate the reliability of the investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bryman and Bell, 2011). One way to enforce the element of dependability is to keep a record of all elements of the research process in order to allow for future replication of the study and to document all achieved results and the way the interviewing process took place and the results were achieved. In this study the researcher documents all aspects of the investigation, including but not limited to the data collection method and the interviews session that have been conducted with the study respondents. The literature argues that any investigation is not complete until the tests of dependability and credibility are in check (Robson, 1999, Punch, 1998). The literature goes as far as indicating that the results of research studies would be worthless had there been no measures employed to indicate their validity and reliability (Silverman, 2002).

Confirmability

Confirmability is a measure put forward to assure the readers of the research of the objectivity of the researcher in analysing the study. It is because the researcher should take all-possible measures to eliminate his/her influence on the data collection process and its analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher's theoretical stance and her values shall remain hidden and the researcher should do his best to put forward the voice of the participants in the study and should refrain from being swayed by his/her theoretical orientation and personal perceptions. In reality, confirmability, also known as confirmation, is, in essence, a review process by which the research is checked by first working its steps forwards, and then working these steps backwards, in an effort to ensure that the process by which the data was collected and later the findings were analyzed is thorough and sound, which in turn confirms the validity of the research results.

As the literature would argue, confirmability is marked by the researcher's honest representation of his/her personal opinions in regard of the topic of study, explicitly ahead of conducting the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As such, the researcher has the responsibility to disclose his/her position to the readers and to make clear what rationale caused the choice of methods for sampling and analysing techniques that were employed in advancing the study. This is, in addition, to pinpointing the initial theories that have helped shape the main lines of the study, and that continue guiding the rest of it. The objective of the researcher during the interpretation and analysis phase was not to come out with findings that can be generalised, but to single out the traits and principles that tie in and relate to the research at hand.

4.5.3 Ethical Arrangements

As research studies deal with personal information offered out by study participants, then there should be ethical measures taken to ensure the safety of this voluntarily provided information and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be interview participants or those committed to facilitating the researcher's access to data. This responsibility undoubtedly falls on the shoulders of the research who has the role in preserving the anonymity and the confidentiality of the involved participants. The presence of human subjects in any study further accentuates the importance of adhering to ethical rules and planning for attaining ethical approval ahead of starting to contact study participants. This pertains to the reality that participants might be harmed by their participation in research studies, especially when they speak out their mind, which might be against the opinion of others. Hence, this serious aspect must be addressed by obtaining the necessary permissions to conduct the study and disclosing any information that might deter the participants from joining the study. The most important aspect of ethical preparation is for the researcher to take the necessary precautions and safety measures to avoid any possibilities of the breach of confidentiality between the researcher and the research subjects and facilitators. As the main driver of this research is the openness of the interviewees and their genuine participation in the study, it was imperative for the researcher of this study to gain the trust and the confidence of the study's participants. Furthermore, the author of this study believes that the research that is built on mutual trust between the researcher and the research participants is an incredible act of faith in the judgement and composure of the researcher. As such, the researcher must approach the subject of ethical considerations with extreme caution and take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety and protection of all participants as well as of the collected data and the results stemming from the interviews. To that end, the researcher undertook several measures to

ensure the safety and confidentiality of the participants and the data collected to further the study findings. Many of the recommendations argued for by the literature can sum up these measures in the following steps below.

First, the researcher filled and submitted the Ethical Request Form required by the University Ethics Committee who oversees reviewing and providing necessary approvals that allow the researcher to proceed to the data collection phase. After submitting the form, the researcher had to wait to receive the corresponding approval letter before moving forward with the research.

Second, once the Ethical Request for had been approved, the researcher started to initiate contact with the initial contact points, the female entrepreneur's personal acquaintances. The purpose of this act is to inform them of my intentions to describe the nature and process of my investigation and to present it to their contacts who might be interested in being a part of the research investigation as well.

Third, the initial contact points provided the researcher with the contact information of potential study participants who have shown their interest to be included as interviewees in the study.

Fourth, the approval letter was later presented to the potential research participants as a means of explaining to them the nature and design of the research investigation and pursue their acceptance to become participants in the study.

Fifth, once all likely candidates were identified, the author started to set up the dates to conduct the interviews.

Sixth, as a precautionary measure, the participants were informed of the need to use a voice recorder to record the interviews, and that the recordings would be deleted once the study would have been completed. This step aims to maintain the confidentiality between the researcher and research subjects and to ensure this trust is not unintentionally breached.

Seventh, interview questions were not provided to the interviewees ahead of time, because the author wants to capture the initial reaction to the questions asked and does not want the participants to come into the interview with the answers for the questions already preconceived in their mind.

Eighth, the researcher explained at the end of the study, that the participants of the interview are entitled to receive a copy of the study results if they wish to do so, and that the study findings will be shared with the interested participants once the study had been finalised.

Ninth, the researcher also explained to the study participants that their names would not be published in the final research study, and the researcher will assign pseudonyms to all participants as a precautionary measure to ensure their anonymity and maintain their privacy.

Tenth, the researcher strived to maintain objectivity during all stages of the research study, particularly during the data collection and analysis phases. This included being attentive not to allow the researcher to indulge in speaking his/her point of view, and to remain objective as to portray the perceptions of the interview participants as the study pertains to showcasing their stories and personal accounts of their experience being female entrepreneurs.

Eleventh, the researcher took several measures to ensure the ethical analysis of the data collected from the interviews and later the ethical representation of the results. These practices were devised according to the recommendations of the pertaining literature (Shamoo & Resnik, 2009), and considered the following:

1. The first element was the protection of the participants. As the study pertains to human subjects, it was of utmost importance to the researcher to provide the highest protection in her ability to the research subjects, by maintaining their identity anonymous and biding by their desires and recommendations. This had the dual benefit of shielding them from any unnecessary risk that might cause them any harm and maximising their trust in the researcher which opened to the researcher unparalleled access to their deepest thoughts and feelings.
2. The second element was legality. The researcher showed deep respect to the regulations of the participating businesses and institutions and religiously followed the rules and policies of the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain.
3. The third ethical criterion enforced was integrity. The researcher took upon herself to ensure that promises made to participants are kept and that any arrangements made with the participants are followed through.
4. Consistency was the fourth criterion of the ethical practices that the researcher adopted in her study. For that, the researcher avoided any practices that might entail reaching differing results in the data collection and analysis phase and strived to maintain consistency throughout the investigation.
5. Exerting care and due diligence as the fifth measure of ethics. The researcher understands the salience of the data collected and the need for providing careful and correct analysis of the data collected. Therefore, the researcher avoided making any negligence practices by maintained

detailed and thorough records of the data and analysis process, in addition to carefully constructing the research design of the study.

6. The sixth measure of correct ethical practices employed was the principle of objectivity. This required the researcher to approach the investigation by eliminating bias in methodology and analysis and preserving any personal interests that may disturb the interpretation of the results and the research process.
7. The last but equally important measure put in place to ensure the proper ethical practices for the study is honesty. The research author believes that moral beliefs must steer any good research project and guided by ethical standards. To that extent, the researcher confirms that at the core of this research activity lies honesty and trust, and as such the author has maintained honest and sincere information relating to any correspondences, publications, as well as the research design, methods, and participants, in addition to the data collection and findings throughout the entire research process.

4.5.4 Interview Protocol

The researcher underwent the research study with the interests to reach insightful and purposeful findings that can contribute to the current knowledge the literature displays about female entrepreneurs. To that end, the researcher reverted to different techniques in order to improve her chances to obtain rich, unbiased and significant data. These different practices can be split into three stages, namely ones administered before the start of the interview, others that were applied after the end of the interview, and some that were administered during the interview itself. The practices summoned at each stage can be summed up in the following section.

Stage One: Before the Start of the Interviews

The research author prepared for the start of the interviews ahead of time, by following the following steps:

1. Contact the initial contact points- the personal contacts as specified at the start of the methodology chapter- by phone to set up a meeting date, time and agree on a location to conduct the interview.
2. Obtain the contact information of female entrepreneurs that are interested in participating in the study, also known as the snowballing technique.

3. Send personal invitation letter to participants via email, extending them with an official invitation to take part in the interviews.
4. Once the interview appointment has been scheduled, the researcher prepared all the necessary forms and informatory papers regarding the ethical and confidential treatment of the study participants and of all the information that they provide to the research author.
5. Arrange and ensure the proper functioning of the tools that will be employed in the interview process, such as the laptop computer, the voice recorder, and the necessary stationery needed for the smooth operating of the interviews.
6. Collecting as much background data on the interview participants as possible through internet search or word of mouth such as the type of business they are in and whether they were recently in the news, in order for the researcher to acquaint herself with the research subjects and their line of work, which will help her to break the ice with the interviewees and avoid the awkwardness at the start of the interview process.
7. Contacting the interviewees, a day before the interview date to remind them and confirm with them the interview appointment.
8. Prepare for different scenarios that might come up during the interview process, whereby the researcher might need to improvise and be fully capable of engaging the interviewee and probing her for additional information.
9. Prepare a mental map of how the interview process might shape up, and which steps to take in case of any unforeseen event happening during the interview, and later articulating this map on the researcher's notebook to refer to it in case of need.
10. Familiarise herself with the interview location before the interview date in order to avoid tardiness and arriving between 30-60 minutes early to the interview site on the day of the interview and looking over her interview notes to ensure complete readiness for the interview.

Stage Two: The Interview

This is the stage where the actual study takes place. To ensure that the researcher does not miss out on any valuable information from the interviewees, the following steps were followed:

1. Greet the interview participants and make them feel comfortable and interested.
2. Convey the researcher's appreciation and thanks for agreeing to participate in the study.
3. Maintain eye contact with the interview subjects as a sign of interest and attention.

4. Present the research, the nature of the study and aims to achieve.
5. Explain the interview process and how it will be conducted.
6. Clarify to the participants of the study the ethical considerations that the researcher put in place to protect their identity and the safety of the data collected.
7. Obtain their official approval to participate in the study and to use the recording device during the interview process, by requesting them to sign the Brunel BBS form designed for that.
8. Initiate the interview by asking a general question that relates to the topic of investigation and wait for the participant to elude to the topic of concern through the ordinary course of the discussion.
9. After the initial question, revert to other interview techniques to keep the discussion flowing, such as probing, asking for specifics or follow-up questions, interpreting questions and structuring questions.
10. Listen close and analyse the interviewees' responses and show interest in what they have to say. This is made possible using the recording device, which frees the researcher from the burden of note taking and allows her to be fully engaged with her study's participants.
11. At the end of the interview, thank the participants for their interest and time and inform them of how their interview responses will be transcribed and analysed, and inform the interviewees that the study results will be revealed to them if they are interested in receiving them.

Stage Three: After the End of the Interviews

The steps that the researcher took after the interview stage had been completed are the following:

1. Transfer the data collected from the voice recorder to the laptop computer and two additional storage devices, namely a hard drive and a memory stick, immediately after the end of the interview.
2. Double check that all data is well functioning and not corrupt.
3. Start the prescribing process as soon as possible- usually on the same day- to ensure that the researcher can recollect all aspects of the interview, such as the body language of the interviewees and their emotional state during the interview, which will provide for richer findings resulting from the study.
4. Save multiple copies of the transcriptions on secured devices to guard for the possibility of data loss.

5. Call the participants on the next day and express the researcher's sincere gratitude for their acceptance to participate in the study and entrusting the researcher with their personal and private information, reassuring them of the confidentiality and privacy measures that the research author put in place to guarantee their safety.
6. Arrange for the next step -the coding stage-, by preparing the appropriate software and necessary instruments needed to perform it.

4.5.5 Semi-Structured Interview Design

The importance of the method employed to conduct the actual study cannot be denied. A research instrument not well suited for the investigatory purpose of the study can either make or break the credibility of the study, and the validity of its findings. In this investigation, the researcher was interested in the perspectives of female entrepreneurs currently operating their businesses and intended to convey their characteristics, emotions and attitudes, by providing them with a medium in which to raise their voices. Hence, this thesis assumed an interviewing strategy to collect the data and developed a semi-structured interview design to allow the interviewees the space to be articulate on their own. The literature regards this method as being a favourite among qualitative researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Smith et al., 2009, Patton, 1990). The literature also provides several recommendations about preparing the interview questions, and that ensure a smoother and more successful interview process when adhered to (Bryman & Bell, 2011). These recommendations are listed in the following section.

1. Since the aim of conducting the interviews is to answer the research questions put in point by the researcher, the research author must formulate the interview questions with the endpoint in sight, in a manner that facilitates finding the answers to those questions.
2. The wording of the questions needs to be simple and not complicated, to ensure that the interview participants correctly understand what the question entails.
3. The interview questions should be asked in a language that the interviewees fluently understand and practice, to decrease the possibility of misunderstanding the questions. In this thesis, some of the interviewees had few of the questions asked to them in Arabic.
4. The research author should steer clear from leading questions and keep in line with the qualitative methodology aspects.

5. Keep an information sheet containing demographic information of the interview subject on hand, including name, title, age, a line of business and years of experience.
6. Ensure the correct functioning of the voice-recording device to facilitate the transcribing activities later.
7. Prioritise the comfort of the interviewee and ensure the appropriateness of the interview site.

After the interview data is collected and transcribed, an extensive analysis process begins. Given the nature of the research and the sensitivity of the data in question, the face-to-face interview approach is best suited to extract the most information of the interview subjects, who might be hesitant and less open to sharing their stories via other means of conducting the interviews. All female entrepreneurs interviewed preferred the personal approach, which gave the researcher the valuable opportunity to be directly involved in the way these women think and what their body language reveals about their emotions and aspirations. There is also the inherent flexibility that can only be provided during the face-to-face interviews, which allows the researcher to clarify some questions when need be by elaborating on them and providing more detail enabling the interview participant to become more involved and immersed in the prevailing discussion. The researcher projected to have the interview length between 90 to 120 minutes long, which was envisaged to provide ample time for the interviewer and the interviewee to cover the main points of the investigation. However, more time was given to cases where the interviewee had extensive details to point out, and all interviews ended with the interviewees clearly explaining that they had nothing further to say. The researcher took upon herself the role of the interviewer and maintained a dynamic listening composure, actively reacting to the interviewees' responses, summarising their points and probing for additional information from them to ensure their full engagement and participation that would yield to meaningful and productive conversations. According to the literature, these practices constitute the main interview protocol skills recommended for conducting qualitative interview studies (Seidman, 1998).

The first interviewee who was contacted was an acquaintance of the study author who approached the female entrepreneur in her place of business. As the potential research participant showed interest in being part of the study, and informed the research author of the availability of many women entrepreneurs who would be interested in participating as well, the researcher moved forward to the next step, which was to prepare the official documentation that are needed to be provided to the interview participants for their signature at the ahead of the start of the interview. During that time, the interview appointments were set up, including date, time and location according to the preference of the interviewed women entrepreneurs.

Also, the researcher prepared two versions of the interview questions, one in the English Language and one in the Arabic Language. This was done this way because although all of the interview participants were fluent in both English and Arabic, the researcher wanted to avoid any confusion that might arise due to some wording discrepancies and went about conducting the interview by asking the interview questions twice, first in English, and then in Arabic. Since the interviewees were switching between both languages at their choice, the researcher also sent out the transcribed results and analysis back to the interviewees for them to leave their feedback and make sure the results of the interpretation are matching their intentions and testimonies.

4.5.6 Main Interview Questions

The author of this research set out to investigate the perspectives and experiences of the female entrepreneurs on their entrepreneurial journeys. As such, the main interview questions were devised in a way that addresses these two main themes during the interviews. Accordingly, the researcher initiated the interview sessions with a simple question, listened carefully to the responses of the interviewees, and probed for additional questions once the respondents' answers were tapering off. The following is a list of the main interview questions and sub-questions:

Question 1: Why did you decide to become an entrepreneur?

Question 2: how was the process of starting up? What were the obstacles and opportunities that you encountered, and which ones do you still struggle with/benefit from until now?

Question 3: What effect do familial commitments have on your business responsibilities, and how do you manage them?

Question 4: How do you describe the current state of female entrepreneurship and what recommendations do you have to improve it.

The sub-questions

What were the reasons that led you to start your first business?

What was the reaction of your family/male figures?

Have you faced any difficulties in dealing with financial institutions? If so, what were they? In retrospect, what are your thoughts about them?

Have you faced any legal issues related to setting up your business? If so, what are they? In retrospect, what are your thoughts about them?

How do your responsibilities as a mother and in the household affect your role as an entrepreneur?

In your experience, do you think culture had a positive or negative impact on your entrepreneurial efforts? Did society's reactions to your work hinder or benefit your activities?

Can you identify other aspects that have benefitted you, or that would have benefitted you had they been presented to you at the time?

Several aspects were touched upon during the interviews, to ensure the researcher covered all angles of the investigation.

Aspect 1: Occupational Choice- Reasons for going into self-employment.

Aspect 2: Patriarchy- Husband/Father/Male Figure opinion/attitude.

Aspect 3: Motherhood- Effect of children/households' responsibilities.

Aspect 4: Environment and Gender- Effect of financial/legal institutions.

Aspect 5: Culture- Society's perspective and reactions.

Aspect 6: Success Factors/ Hindering Factors

The researcher did not stop at these questions but made sure to probe the interviewee for additional information when she felt that the respondent had much more to say but was unsure how to express it.

Human Subjects' Approval

Before the start of the interview process, the researcher presented the necessary documentation for approval through the BREO system, the Brunel University online system for requesting and approving ethical approval for conducting research on human subjects. A copy of the application and approval form is available in the Appendix section at the end of the thesis.

Participants Sample

Initially, the researcher searched carefully to identify appropriate candidates to participate in the research study. Therefore, the researcher has identified the participants in this research as female entrepreneurs who at the time of conducting the study own at least an existing and established business (Creswell, 2009; Smith et al., 2009). After the initial sample identification stage, the researcher carefully approached the identified potential participants, face-to-face or by telephone, to keep it as personal as possible. The nature of interviews and semi-structured interviews by design is based on establishing a personal connection between the interviewer and the interviewees. As such the author of this study took it upon herself to make sure that the interview participants felt at ease with the interviewer (the researcher herself), from the initial contact incidence, before the interview process even started. The author believes that gaining the trust of the participants is paramount to encourage the identified to participate in the study and become familiar enough to share details of their personal entrepreneurial experience. This, in turn, facilitates the engagement of the interviewee to offer voluntarily her most profound perspective on the entrepreneurial process in which she was involved.

The second-way participants were identified for the study were by word of mouth, namely as a recommendation from previous interviewees, who believed that the recommended participants have a significant contribution to add and could benefit the study with their different perspectives. This is known as snowball sampling and is very helpful in identifying potential study candidates (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Research Site

The interview process took place in different locations, depending on the interviewees' preferences. Some preferred to sit and talk over coffee in a coffee shop, and others preferred the interview site to be during their working hour at their workplace.

Data collection

The researcher framed the interview question in advance, but the way in which these questions are presented is flexible and dependent on and adapted to each interview (Patton, 1990).

Data analysis

The analysis process was long and not without complication, but at the same time very satisfying and fulfilling. The idea behind qualitative analysis can be summed up as -in the words of Bogdan and Biklen

(2007) “*working with the data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others*”. Consequently, the researcher prepared to tackle the data by first setting out a plan of action and being consistent with it throughout the analysis process, which has been described as a multi-phased approach (Creswell, 2013; Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002).

The first step in the analysis stage was to transcribe the data and begin analysing the written content (Creswell, 2009). The second step was to open code line-by-line throughout the whole transcripts (Esterberg, 2002). After codes were finalised, the researcher began stage three of the analysis process, in which related data were arranged meaningfully together. Subsequently, the researcher began the data reduction process to concentrate on the most relevant and significant data, and slowly themes began to emerge. Finally, the data were grouped under those themes according to their similarities, and the results of the analysis were grouped under four categories on the levels of analysis, under which several themes and subthemes relating to them.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a thorough explanation of the methodology adopted for this study. The methodology adopted for this study is a phenomenological feminist perspective with the background of the philosophical position as an interpretivist ontological stance and a subjectivist epistemology. The method of investigation used is semi-structured interviews designed to facilitate the earning the trust of the interviewees during the interview. This is most suitable for this study as it pertains to fulfil the objectives set out for this investigation. The interview participants are collected through a mix of personal contacts and snowball sampling allowing for a diversified and representative sample of participants. The next part will discuss in detail the context chose to conduct the study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study above. The study aimed to gather information from female entrepreneurs under the IFFEM model as a conceptual framework. As explained in Chapter 3 above, the IFFEM model is the Institutional and Feminist Female Entrepreneurial model developed by combining institutional theory with a feminist standpoint approach to provide a comprehensive model for the study of female entrepreneurship in context. In line with the feminist standpoint approach brought forward by the IFFEM model, semi-structured one-to-one in-depth interviews were conducted with female entrepreneurs operating their businesses in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The sample consisted of 44 interviewees contacted mainly through personal connections and a snowballing technique, who agreed to participate in the study. The sample is comprised of locals and expats who came to Bahrain to start specifically their business. The interviewed participants and their demographics are presented in Table 3 available under Appendix 1. After conducting the interviews according to the interview protocol in Chapter 4 above, the interview recordings were transcribed, and the transcripts were coded and re-coded, the data were analysed through thematic analysis, and the results of the investigation are presented in this chapter.

This study has revealed several findings grouped into five general categories under which several themes and subthemes emerge as follows. The first category is the findings under the macro level, which are grouped into two main themes; the first is related to rules and regulations, while the second is related to the social and economic conditions or the ‘contextual’ background. The second category is the findings under the meso level that include themes related to initiatives, subsidies and organisations. The third category discusses the findings on motherhood. In the fourth category, the insights and opinions of the interviewed female entrepreneurs are discussed, and in the fifth and final category, the researcher sheds light on the remarkable findings discovered from the interviews. Each category and its themes and subthemes are analysed in detail in the following sections.

This thesis adopts the definitions of the meso environment, macro environment and motherhood according to the classification provided by Brush, De Bruin and Welter (2010), the authors of the 5M framework themselves (Brush et al., 2009). This definition is the most appropriate for the current study as it is in line with the original 5M framework, which is used as a base to develop the conceptual framework for the study,

namely, the IFFEM framework introduced in Chapter 3. Category 1 presents a description of the macro environment and category 2, a description of the meso environment while a discussion of the motherhood construct takes place under category 3.

5.2 CATEGORY ONE: THE MACRO LEVEL

The macro environment generally encompasses the general formal and informal setups in the country, such as the laws, the policies, the culture and the economy. This usually involves the national rules, regulations and traditions, which are common to all citizens. While these elements take effect on a national level, they nonetheless play an essential role on the individual and organisational levels, and ultimately define the regulatory setting of the nation and shape its societal roles and expectations. Notably, the most profound effect is in the societal perceived gender roles assigned to individuals who dictate how a person is to live their life and be an active participant in society. The institutional contexts indicate what attitudes, norms, roles and opinions are appropriate in society and specify the ones to be embedded into individuals' lives and organisational cultures (Peng & Heath, 1996). The effect of these prevailing societal and institutional contexts can be seen not only by the number of women actively participating in entrepreneurial activities but also in the types of business activities they engage in and in their entrepreneurial attitudes towards managing and growing their businesses. These effects are also reflected in the attitudes of those in the positions of power such as at the household and the broader societal levels, in addition to the 'gatekeepers' of resources, such as funding and training opportunities, among others. In this regard, Brush et al. (2004) point out the scarcity of female venture capitals in the venture capital industry as an example of the lack of female 'gatekeepers' for funding opportunities.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Regulatory Setting

One of the strongest themes that kept emerging during the interviews is the willingness to update current laws with newer ones in line with the global entrepreneurship climate fostering innovation and technology. This reflects the predisposition of governmental bodies to provide flexible and conducive policies for a healthy business environment. This section presents the findings of the research regarding rules and regulations and divided into six subthemes, namely regulatory efforts, challenges to regulatory efforts, electronic markets, foreign ownership, increasing financial burdens and numerous and complex rules.

5.2.1.1 Regulatory Efforts

An important aspect mentioned by the interviewees was keeping up with the innovative concepts they are introducing in their start-ups. Many interviewees have explained how they have helped ‘change’ existing regulations to fit with modern business needs or ‘introduce’ new ones that identify innovative business concepts as part of the pool of commercial registrations (CR) acceptable as new ventures. This indicates the flexibility and the attentiveness at the regulatory and legislation making level that reflects the efforts put regarding formal institutions. In the following excerpts, interviewees explain their experiences concerning the part of their journeys related to obtaining the commercial registration certificate, which enables them start, their businesses in Bahrain. Following is a presentation of all these findings.

“When I went to apply for my CR my application was immediately denied. They told me a cargo business is not listed under the businesses allowed for a female and as such, they cannot process the application with my name on it. So, I registered it under my brother’s name and worked hard for the regulation to change, and eventually, it did, and now it allows females to open and operate businesses that are traditionally classified as ‘male businesses’” — interviewee HJC.

“Because my business is health related I fall under NHRA, the National Health Regulatory Authority and there were no clear cuts on who or what’s allowed and what’s not and the fact that it’s a new concept made it even harder to classify. Nobody would understand what does this fall under we’re health related but we were a business, so it was very confusing. However, thankfully that year was what took NHRA to finalise my application, and I only went and signed the lease of my centre after getting a written approval.” Interviewee MHN.

“It makes me happy to think I was able to initiate regulatory changes that will affect others after me. Now, if someone wants to get into this type of business, it would be easy for them because it is already acknowledged in the system. Part of my goal is not to make a business but also raise awareness about these issues and that more people can enjoy and benefit from them.” Interviewee HBN.

However, despite the government working on incorporating new rules and flexible regulations to integrate innovative and current trends in entrepreneurship, some issues still challenge the entrepreneurs involved. One of the most repeated issues female entrepreneurs complained about was related to the process of business start-up are the difficulties they face regarding the lengthy processing time it requires to launch

their businesses. The following excerpts represent what some of the women interviewed had to say about this issue.

“A year of rent to pay. This was the biggest obstacle, to be honest, and all my capital went into rent. So, when I started operating, this killed me. Moreover, that is why I am struggling in trying to keep afloat.” Interviewee JMW.

“Regulations are hard. In the system of obtaining a CR, you must have rent agreement as part to get the approval you have to get all the approvals and then you can start. So realistically it takes much time, and you have the pressure of paying rent, which is a killer.” Interviewee AAZ.

“Getting the CR was my biggest obstacle. It was so much headache. There were so many issues to deal with. I cannot even remember all the things that I went through. It was really hard really hard.” Interviewee VSO.

“The government is trying to do something good but then the people that they put in charge to deal with are either not qualified, or they just don’t care. No one cares what they are doing, they just go to work and try to pass the day and they don’t pay attention to what you’re saying and they keep doing mistakes.” Interviewee FJL.

“When I applied for the CR they made a mistake with me from the very beginning they were doing the wrong CR for me, and I reached the final stage and then someone realized that this was the wrong team and I had been going to all the wrong places and I had been paying and waiting for approvals and inspections for things that I didn’t really need and that took them four months. However, when they realised that they made a mistake, I had to delete everything, all the approvals and start from square one. That day I was going to have a nervous breakdown I already rented the shop, I was already paying rent already hired employees I had thought that in two to three months I would be able to start it did not work that way; it took more than six months to get my CR.” Interviewee VBS.

Although the incidents described by the above statements can be common to both male and female entrepreneurs, they nonetheless highlight the difficulties faced by the female entrepreneurs at the regulatory level and show how female-led businesses were able to bring about institutional change on the level of rules and regulations, and consequently pave the way for other entrepreneurs interested in starting similar innovative businesses. The necessary condition for such change in regulations to take place is governmental

buy-in. This signifies that the government is riding the innovation wave like the citizens, and the level of belief in entrepreneurship and innovation as future economic growth is a reality. Here, the interviewees almost collectively agreed that setting regulations is one thing and on the other hand implementing them is an entirely different story. They provided feedback reflecting the impact of not ensuring adequate considerations to support the implementation of such regulations, which affected many women entrepreneurs attempting to establish new businesses. Issues included banks restricting access to loans and facilities for women entrepreneurs without a guarantee from a man; the difficulty of raising capital because of lack of trust from the banks towards women entrepreneurs; and women entrepreneurs suffering from hard, complex and lengthy procedures to obtain financial support.

5.2.1.2 Challenges to Regulatory Efforts

When institutional change happens at the formal institutional level, North (1997), this shows the buy-in of the policy-makers and usually necessary follow-up steps to ensure the proper implementation at the executive level. Although the business climate in Bahrain is showing great strands of change in terms of updating rules and regulations to match the innovative directions of entrepreneurs, many of these changes are slow to achieve, and the interviewees have expressed their frustration and sometimes even despair at the lengthy processing and fees they have to endure while awaiting the activation of these changes. Some of these delays have caused the female entrepreneurs considerable expenses, as they had to maintain a rented property as a precondition for obtaining the commercial registration (CR) for their business. This, in turn, acted as a hindering factor and even caused some of the female entrepreneurs to struggle to keep things afloat even over a year after being granted the CR. The following are some of the excerpts about that.

“The process was lengthy and emotionally draining, but it was all worth it. I had spent months being thrown back and forth that process was very long, and it wasted money, effort and time and the way they have it is that you must show proof of rent in order to get the CR. In my case, I ended up paying a whole year’s rent before getting it.” Interviewee VBS.

“My concept is unique. No such classification describes what I do that they had to create that. I fall under something not in the process yet, but I guess this is a problem that people who bring in innovation face. They are pioneers, and there are no set regulations for their concepts. I took a risk 100%. It took me a year and three months to just get them to rewrite the regulations and acknowledge my concept in their classifications.” Interviewee MHN.

“The way I see it, more of this needs to take place in Bahrain; more legislations need to be put in place to ease the process of adapting to innovative new concepts. In a way, I am opening a field, and basically, whoever is interested in it, it will be ready for them they will not have to do this process again and go through what I went through. It already exists I mean.” Interviewee HBN.

In addition, the following account by one of the interviewed foreign female entrepreneurs highlights how even the smallest overlooked regulatory details can have an adverse effect.

“I felt looked down at in the airport. When I showed my visa for entry, the employee had to laugh because the naming on the profession category is actually “Businessman” instead of “Businesswoman” in Arabic. Because they still don’t have a category for ‘Businesswoman’ to denote female entrepreneurs. How could it be that the regulations are not following up with the big rise of the female entrepreneurs in the country.” Interviewee OLM.

These statements have shown that, when the regulatory and legal environment is not correctly set up to embrace innovative venture creation, it poses a threat for the entrepreneurs awaiting the regulatory approvals that would allow them to introduce their innovative concepts lawfully. Urbano & Turro (2013) study this element as a variable that might negatively affect enterprise creation the longer it takes to satisfy the necessary regulations. They refer to it as the ‘number of days that are officially required for an entrepreneur to start up and formally operate an industrial or commercial business’. This also ties in with the conclusion presented by Gnyawali and Fogel (1994), explaining how innovative entrepreneurs are the most negatively affected by commercial laws and policies that cannot keep up with the speed and needs of pioneer entrepreneurial trends.

5.2.1.3 Electronic Markets

Many of the interviewees have pointed out the importance of the availability of “Virtual Commercial Registrations” or “VCRs”, which have recently been introduced under the Bahraini commercial law. Before this introduction, entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs alike were confined to the traditional commercial registration, or “CR”, which required having a valid rental agreement for a business location as a necessary condition in the application for obtaining a CR. In practice, this requirement drained the start-up capital of many ventures and burdened the entrepreneurs’ pockets when coupled with lengthy processing times for the CR applications and acted as a deterrent for many others who could not secure enough capital. The

introduction of VCRs has solved this problem especially for many female entrepreneurs because it presents them the opportunity to work on an electronic platform, be it a website, Instagram, Snapchat or WhatsApp, among others, all the while providing them with the legal cover to stay legitimate. Of the female entrepreneurs interviewed, the following excerpts showcase their enthusiasm for the availability of VCRs.

“There is a lot of fees involved in the regular CR, I had a CR and I was paying rent for a location that I was not using but just keeping it in a way that I can keep my activities legal and this was the only way available. However, now, I just pay for the annual fees of the VCR, and that is it.”
Interviewee SPS.

“I am a one-woman show, I do everything all by myself, whereas the others have their employees and physical location, their work is on an extremely larger scale compared with my work. I do not have a physical location, I have a Virtual Commercial Registration, I work from home, and I have my Instagram and Snapchat accounts where I conduct my business, and I will have my website soon.” Interviewee BWE.

“I wanted to make my business legal, but I could not get a CR because of the difficulty in maintaining the high annual fees, I am a home-based business, and my profit is not enough for that. However, now I obtained a VCR, and I prefer to have it just for the safety of keeping my business legal.” Interviewee NOC.

I have been conducting my business from home for six years now, and I have never had a CR before. It is just too expensive when considering the annual fees and the rent required to maintain it. It is just not for me. However now with my VCR, I am a commercially registered home-based business and can participate in many exhibitions and events and grow my business for a small fee. The VCR opened those opportunities for me. It is great.” Interviewee IAF.

Bates (2007) identified the importance of the market aspect for entrepreneurial ventures and described markets as one of the three main building blocks necessary for any entrepreneurial undertaking, alongside the elements of money and management. In this regard, the 5M model (Brush et al., 2009) places the markets component as the key element above money and management (See Chapter 3), to portray the central role that being able to access appropriate market opportunities plays for entrepreneurial success. In this respect, the introduction of the virtual commercial registration as a form of electronic business helped open-up market opportunities for the female entrepreneurs that have been previously inaccessible to them,

especially in relation to the home-based businesses. This initiative grants them not only access to an increased range of markets but also by identifying them as legally registered businesses, presents them the extended opportunities of participating in a range of activities, schemes and opportunities, albeit limited, such as training and funding schemes.

5.2.1.4 Foreign Ownership

All the expatriate participants in the interview sample were pleased to have the opportunity to open for 100% foreign ownership of their ventures. The previous laws which required a Bahraini local partner sponsoring any foreign business activities were replaced with new laws allowing the entrepreneur to invest in wholly owned business in Bahrain and be able to obtain a CR under his/her name. This is of particular importance for foreign female entrepreneurs married to expatriate workers who have moved to Bahrain following their employment opportunities. These females, who find themselves in a foreign country, attempt to help in the household income and keep busy by becoming self-employed. Many of them previously avoided such decisions for fear of having to deal with a local partner, who will end up sharing their profits and killing their creativity without putting in any effort. Following are some excerpts from the interview sessions highlighting this issue.

“I was so worried that I need to have a partner for my business as an expat. However, luckily with the new laws allowing full expat ownership I can now pursue my business with ease of mind.”
Interviewee HSB.

“As an expat, getting my CR was the easiest thing. I applied online, and I believe I opened at the right time when they first allowed the expats to open with 100% ownership. Maybe that is why it was easy for me also because it was less busy at the time. However, it was very easy.” Interviewee MPS.

“I was looking to open a business in Bahrain for a few years, but I wanted to maintain 100% ownership and did not want a Bahraini partner as per the old law. As soon as 100% ownership for foreigners was opened, I capitalised on the new laws which were a great relief for me, and I am sure for other expats as well. The processing was online and was also very easy for me.”
Interviewee RWD.

“I am an expat, and I enjoy complete ownership of my business. I am very comfortable in my setting because I do not have to answer to a local partner, as was the case before. It was easy for me here mentally because I did not feel myself as a foreigner” Interviewee OLM.

These testimonials align with the literature on property rights. According to Harper (2003), the effects of personal ownership extend beyond physical ownership for an individual. The psychological influences cast by personal ownership impact the desire to engage in entrepreneurial plans and activities. On the other hand, the absence of laws ensuring adequate protection of property rights constitutes a barrier discouraging entrepreneurial involvement (De Soto, 2001; Rodrik, 2000). The entrepreneurs feel disadvantaged if the ownership of their venture is shared with others who are not active participants in the efforts and demands of their ventures, and hence prefer to shy away from such opportunities whenever they encounter them (North & Weingast, 1989).

5.2.1.5 Increasing Financial Burdens

In this study, many of the interviewed female entrepreneurs have expressed their discomfort with the number of fees and obligations that are bestowed on the entrepreneurs not only during the venture creation process but also as soon as they open for business. They complained of the difficulties that arise after the initial phase of set-up especially in terms obligations and rising fees. These include electricity fees, municipality fees, rent, water, renewal of Commercial Registrations (CR), Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) foreign labour recruitment fees and many other charges and dues that are enforced but that the entrepreneur herself is not necessarily able to draw any benefit from. Some of the extracts of the interviews about this point are presented in the following passages.

“In my line of business, most if not all my staff are non-Bahrainis, I have to pay a large portion of my income as LMRA fees. Add to that they just increased their fees which translates to increased expenses on my side. This hurts my bottom line.” Interviewee JMW.

“After opening many things such as LMRA fees, utility fees, municipality fees in addition to rent expenses, all of these things make it hard because everything became expensive now. These are all struggles because the services are overpriced compared with what they offer.” Interviewee GJC.

“They introduced higher CR activity fees without our buy-in. We went from paying five hundred Dinars to paying two thousand Dinars in a matter of a few months. It was shocking.” Interviewee SHC.

As can be seen from the above interview excerpts, the female entrepreneurs are burdened with many financial obligations that are sometimes too much for them to handle. They are especially distressed because all services are becoming more expensive and they even end up paying for services that they are not using. Some entrepreneurs see this issue as the responsibility of the government and propose that the government attempt to gain their buy-in before introducing such financial increases or mandatory obligations.

5.2.1.6 Numerous and Complex Rules

Many of the women entrepreneurs interviewed complained of the current commercial laws that forbid the individual from having both a full-time government job and a private business. This turns out to be a limiting element in the face of the potential growth prospects of the entrepreneur’s venture because of the difficulties they face in obtaining proper funding and their inability to benefit from governmental support and initiative programmes specifically designed to assist entrepreneurs and their start-ups. Bahraini entrepreneurs are required to quit their jobs to be granted the legitimacy of a commercial registration. This is based on the idea of the potential existence of a conflict of interest when attempting to combine between public service and a private business simultaneously. But the female entrepreneurs interviewed for this study had a different opinion, and requested responsible authorities understand female entrepreneurs are themselves adding to the economic growth of the country and helping the economy with their small and medium-sized businesses. Therefore, there should be some rules allowing them to maintain their ‘double employment’ status, as they call it, until they can achieve a certain level of independence in their businesses allowing them to leave paid employment comfortably. They argue the absence of adequate support and proper access to sufficient funding, seems to be the best alternative available instead of being forced to quit their jobs as a necessary condition to the initial step of obtaining the commercial registration (CR). Following are some extracts from the interviews highlighting these points.

“Until now I do not have a CR because I am a full-time employee. Until now I am considered a home business. Moreover, I am unable to open a shop officially because of this. Until now I work from home.” Interviewee MKK.

“Although there are many schemes to help female entrepreneurs, still there are not enough. In my situation, there are the initiatives that do not apply to me because I am employed, and I do not have a CR.” Interviewee IAF.

“They have linked all the fees together so if we miss one, they stop cancel all other services for us, so if I miss the municipality service fees, they block my water and electricity.” Interviewee GJC.

“I am not able to get a CR to be able to benefit from Tamkeen schemes that are offered for start-ups and entrepreneurs because I cannot have a CR now that I am a full-time employee. Quitting my job is now not an option because the profit from my business is not enough to make ends meet.” Interviewee APP.

“The only thing the CR would help me in is giving me a safety that I am legal while engaging in my business activities. I am one of those home businesses now, but I would like to grow and to make my business legal I need a CR or a VCR, and I prefer to have just for the security it gives me of having it at my business.” Interviewee SBA.

“The incubator requires a CR, and I do not have it. My problem is that I cannot get a location because I want to branch out, but I am unable to now.” Interviewee SBE.

“The fact that entrepreneurs are required to quit their jobs first in order to qualify for opening a commercial registration is by itself limiting for entrepreneurs. Why can’t I have both my work and my business at the same time? they need to look at it in a way that entrepreneurs are helping the economy of the country with my business, regardless of their daytime job.” Interviewee STB.

“I wished the regulatory process was not as long and complicated. It also keeps changing, and I am unsure if these changes take the form of more complications.” Interviewee MHN.

The complexity of regulations has always worked as a deterrent for entrepreneurs wishing to enter self-employment. As can be seen from the quotations above extracts, their situation is no different from the norm. Given their involvement in the complexities of the family, kids and household, this issue can only aggravate the situation for those already involved in their private businesses and may lead to pushing them out of their businesses or can act as an additional deterrent to those still contemplating the idea. This issue has been consistently raised by the entrepreneurial scholars before, and the literature has been particularly sensitive to the factors hindering entrepreneurs in their venture creation process. Begley et al. (2005) associate the myriad of rules and regulations by which entrepreneurs need to abide by a deterrence that might discourage potential entrepreneurs from entering self-employment. Specifically, potential

entrepreneurs currently holding full-time employment are especially affected when required to adhere to several laws and processes (Huarng et al., 2012). The literature agrees that factors such as the number of procedures, time and cost involved in starting a business have an adverse effect on entrepreneurship. Erixon and Weigel (2016) argue these regulations have become unbalanced and even unproportioned when compared with their expected benefits, as they make rise to many needless complications hindering the “mobility of professionals” and reducing their efficiency.

5.2.1.7 Summary

In summary, under the theme of the regulatory setting, the findings highlight the heavy interplay between the influencing factors at the macro level, especially regarding policies and procedures, and their undeniable effect on the entrepreneurial prospects of potential venture creations. This again highlights the importance of the qualitative paradigm employed which allowed the investigation to take place under a feminist standpoint lens and focus on the issues that are most significant to the female entrepreneurs. This helped uncover the exact areas where the challenges exist, which were not recognisable with the traditionally used male-centred approach. In the case of Bahrain, positive change is apparent regarding the adoption of flexible and up-to-date rules and regulations permitting the introduction of new innovative concepts under the umbrella of acknowledged commercial businesses in Bahrain, in addition to opening electronic business possibilities and full business ownership opportunities to foreigners. However, evidence suggests that the regulatory environment is behind regarding the financial and regulatory burdens born by the entrepreneur, the complexity of rules involved, their lengthy processing and the non-readiness of the personnel in charge of applying the new updates.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Socio-Economic Conditions

This section discusses the second theme under the macro-environment, namely socio-economic conditions, and is divided into four subthemes, mainly societal perceptions, economic prospects, innovation and working culture. These subthemes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

5.2.2.1 Societal Perceptions

“Women in Bahrain can contribute to society and economy in many ways.” Interviewee NSF.

This statement, as quoted by one of the female entrepreneur interviewees, sums up how women in Bahrain and their competencies are viewed in society. Furthermore, the views in society have shifted, and the once traditional view of females as simple housewives with limited contributions to society and the economy is slowly but surely fading away. The view of the female as subordinate to the male in the family or the workplace is being replaced by the female as a strong, opinionated woman seen as a peer of the male in most aspects of life. Culture is embracing the change and encouraging female entrepreneurs to aim high and be the best they can. This can be seen directly from the responses of the female entrepreneurs interviewed for this thesis, who have expressed their experiences in the following extracts from their interviews.

“The society is changing they do not just consider you as a woman or a man. They don’t care if you’re male or female, they want to see your product to see what you can do, if they are happy with it they will give you the deal, if they are not happy with it, they will give to someone else regardless of whether it’s a male or female.” Interviewee BEM.

“My business partner and brother told me that because you are a girl, your clients are giving you a higher chance and opportunity for continuity with them because they want to support women and they want people to see that the country has organisations that are supporting women entrepreneurs.” Interviewee NHC.

“Society’s perception is improving, and FE can now participate in many areas in business.” Interviewee GJC.

“I came out from my society where I need to work I need it to feel normal, because my mom worked and it taught me to be smart and to graduate and to get a degree and get a scholarship to be able to educate myself, so girls need to be well educated, they need to be strong they need to be well oriented we need to pay attention to raising these girls to being strong and independent and being available for them.” Interviewee LBA.

“Society is telling me because you are an entrepreneur and you’re able to manage kids and a job we see you as a role model. You give us hope in what you’re achieving for everybody so this gives me hope and it pushes me to continue my work and makes me happy to be able to influence girls that they don’t need to be employees, they can be entrepreneurs can do everything in life so it’s very inspirational for the kids and this gives me a push to continue working.” Interviewee MKK.

“As a foreigner, I felt very welcomed and protected here. People make me feel like home, and I feel respected even regards my culture and my beliefs. Bahrainis themselves are very humble and very helpful and very humane. So, this is my home now. I feel very in love with the culture, absolutely in love!” Interviewee RWD.

However, the following accounts by some of the interviewed female entrepreneurs highlight a different societal aspect and explain the situation from another perspective.

“I had to struggle with my family to allow me to open my own business. Moreover, it took me five years to convince them. I graduated kept looking for a job with no use. I found an opportunity and wanted to open my shop in selling school stationary. They would not accept because they felt that having a job is more prestigious than having to run around looking for sales of my products. I had no other option, so they finally accepted and now my business is thankfully doing better” Interviewee SPS.

“I still get those looks from people when I am participating at night in some pop-up market or event. It is worrisome that society might still patronise a self-employed woman, but those situations are decreasing now. I think people are getting more used to the idea of the female self-employed.” Interviewee NOC.

It can be seen from the above statements that societal perceptions have come a long way regarding their views of female entrepreneurs. Albeit a few exceptions, society is embracing the consequences of the role that female entrepreneurs play and is becoming increasingly supportive of the changes that female entrepreneurship brings to their communities. Female entrepreneurs are looked at as role models considering their contributions as heads of businesses, heads of households all the while raising their kids and fulfilling their roles as mothers. Society and culture are becoming more and more accepting of the contributions of the self-employed female and are slowly but surely embracing the inspiration they represent for young girls.

5.2.2.2 Economic Prospects

Most, if not all, of the female entrepreneurs interviewed, are aware of the increased attention recently given to the private sector in the country. They agree that there is significant care provided for improving the state of SMEs and increasing their contributions to shift the reliance of the economy, which has been consistently

dependent on oil, to other areas of economic prosperity. Also, more women are being empowered to engage in self-employment than ever before, and the ground is being set as part of the execution plan for the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 to facilitate the movement of the Bahraini economy away from oil dependency. Also, the female entrepreneurs interviewed have expressed their pride in having always supported their husbands in the responsibilities in the households, especially regarding financial contributions by having always been active participants in the different economic activities in the Kingdom of Bahrain as paid employees whether in public or private sectors in the country. This can be seen from the following extracts of the interviewee's responses.

“I have always been financially independent and helped my husband when the times are rough. Men and women in Bahrain work as partners in ensuring the greater good of the family and the kids.” Interviewee HJC.

“I do not think a time will come when I will have to close my shop because at the moment the economic direction in the country is improving, and there is more attention given to entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurship, and I have gained a lot from that.” Interviewee GJC.

“Bahrain is different, the ladies are always at the job, even if the men are committed to tradition and everything, they still want the woman to work and contribute to the support of the family.” Interviewee GSD.

“The future is looking brighter than ever before. Given the many initiatives taking place to facilitate entrepreneurship in the country lately, I know I have a better chance that my business will succeed now more than ever before.” Interviewee LBA.

“I have money to support my husband, I have to have money for my own so having money is nice in the nicest way it is nice to have it that is not so bad to work if it helps you be financially independent.” Interviewee SPS.

“I believe all of the changes we see now are regarding changing the focus from an oil-centred economy to a more diversified one. Moreover, that is great. It means that more is being done to guarantee that my business can withstand more obstacles than it was capable of before.” Interviewee JMW.

It is apparent from the above extracts that the state of female entrepreneurship is benefiting from the increased attention being devoted to other sectors of the Bahraini economy. The efforts in diversification and women involvement include opening new opportunities for women entrepreneurial markets and encouraging increased entrepreneurial and female entrepreneurial contributions to reduce oil dependency. However, being active contributors to the economy is not new to the females in the Kingdom of Bahrain. These efforts come at a time where the Bahraini woman has been historically part of the Bahraini workforce and has traditionally been financially independent and habitually sharing the financial responsibilities of the family and household with her husband through paid-employment.

5.2.2.3 Innovation

All the interviewees have emphasised that women in Bahrain are exceptionally resilient and achieving. Their opinion is backed by their accounts of achieving women in Bahrain, some of their mothers, friends or acquaintances, others, themselves. These women take pride in their ability to accomplish whatever they set their mind to, and the following excerpts give an idea of this common sentiment.

“There are some ladies who were pioneers and have changed a lot in Bahrain, and I believe women in Bahrain are especially strong they are not easy they can do it if they plan on something, they are able to achieve it.” Interviewee HBN.

“The process of opening my business and obtaining my commercial registration altered the regulations and created this type of service for other entrepreneurs to start also. In this sense, I am an innovator and a pioneer.” Interviewee MHN.

“I know so many female entrepreneurs who are pioneers in their fields. They are doing a great job of introducing their businesses to the market and filling a consumer need.” Interviewee MMS.

“When I first started my first business, it was the first of its kind, and that was thirty-seven years ago. I managed to become the agent to many international brands. There is always something new to think of.” Interviewee ACS.

“My business was the first CR of its kind. It was innovative. Before my business, no one had thought of opening a soft clay activities centre for kids. Most of the personnel here didn’t even know what soft clay is and how to deal with it. I was the first to bring it.” Interviewee AAZ.

“The women here in Bahrain are so strong and innovative; they do it all with their effort, there are not getting help from anyone. They are strong from within, and they are achievers. That is how they can succeed among all of the responsibilities that they have.” Interviewee MGS.

It is evident from the above accounts that the women of Bahrain are very proud of their abilities and their achievements, and they know exactly how they set themselves apart. Their stories describe their qualities of perseverance, commitment and determination, and their achievements state tales of females’ success, independence and the resolve to lead, innovate and be a pioneer. This situation highlights the cultural flexibility that is available to society at large enabling the females to be immersed in their roles and careers to the fullest (Hechavarria, 2015). These stories provide proof that self-perception undoubtedly play a salient role in supplying the female entrepreneurs with the necessary vision, determination and courage it needs to partake in the successful entrepreneurial activity, as has been repeatedly mentioned by the literature (de Bruin et al., 2007; GEM, 2015).

5.2.2.4 Working Culture

Many of the women entrepreneurs interviewed complained of the on-going problem of inefficient recruits they hire for their businesses. With only a few exceptions, most found the employees they have hired lack professionalism and commitment. They expressed the difficulties they face with the recruited staff who are unreliable, irresponsible and sometimes even disrespectful. This is highlighted through the following passages extracted from the female entrepreneurs’ interview responses.

“In hindsight, the knocks have been mainly about staffing. Staffing was probably one of the hardest things to have, as my business is not a coffee shop, so I cannot just teach the person to make coffee in a certain way. I need to train them to work with the kids and training is an essential part of my business, and we do it according to the franchise requirements. However, it is when things are running smoothly, and then suddenly the employee says, I need to leave the job, that is when I panic because sometimes there is no warning, even if it was due to personal problems, there is no warning for that, it just happens! Sometimes it all happens within a week. Moreover, it sets me back, because more than once I had travel plans, and that happened, and it was a big thing.” Interviewee FMG.

“I think staffing is one the biggest issues in my business. I had one employee who was using my business to travel to Bahrain and stay close to her fiancé. Even though she had her degree, she

only wanted to be sponsored to be here in order to be with her fiancé. She was not committed to her work. I want to be nice with my staff, but I have to put boundaries because they do try to take advantage of me.” Interviewee LOM.

“I try to recruit from the applicants through the Ministry of Labour which is something I wanted to do. However, that presented a lot of challenges. One day one of my two employees just disappeared, we tried to contact him to understand what was going on and see if we need to have someone to fill his shift. It was so irresponsible to leave unannounced, but he never came back which I find very bizarre.” Interviewee JHP.

“We had candidates that have just been very unreliable, I try to hire from the Ministry of Labor candidates, but the majority just didn’t work.” Interviewee JMW.

“The biggest obstacle is finding the right staff which is an obstacle until today, something that I have to deal with it daily. It is very hard to find reliable people. If I give them instructions there is always a misunderstanding, I must write everything down every single day, and I have to number everything in order, and they still get things wrong. I do not know why it is so hard.” Interviewee VBS.

“I do not want to be a horrible boss. I am trying to be easy going I am trying to be friends with my employees. I want them to be happy and relaxed in their work I do not want to be someone they fear, but it is very hard finding people to depend on and trust. I do not know what to do anymore. My biggest problem is employees.” Interviewee SBC.

“The staffing process is very complicated here. It is not easy to find qualified people, certified, experienced, and good teachers at the same time. Most of the time I must coach them and explain to them how they need to do it. Even though they are certified with University degrees, the quality of their work is not like in Europe for example.” Interviewee RWD.

From the above accounts, finding the right staffing for the business is not an easy task for these female entrepreneurs. The vast majority have agreed that the main problem with the staffing is the difficulty finding reliable staff, whom they can leave in charge of the simple tasks and duties for them to be able to tend to the more crucial ones. This shows that in the absence of proficient working standards, the businesses of the female entrepreneurs can suffer when the day-to-day operation of the business is compromised, which leads

to the female entrepreneurs themselves needing to mind both their role as the employer and their staff's role as employee simultaneously.

5.2.2.5 Summary

Furthermore, under the theme of the socio-economic conditions, the findings suggest that female entrepreneurs are directly influenced by the societal setting in which they operate their businesses. They thrive when praised and encouraged and are cautious and conservative when they are not. Also, the prevailing economic conditions also play a significant role in the progress and improvement of female entrepreneurship and acts as a catalyst that pushes through the development of female-run business ventures. However, other elements also play a defining role in shaping the prospects of success for the female business owners, namely the quality of the available working culture which affects the work ethics of their employees and can create unnecessary complexities hindering the advancement of their businesses. On the other hand, in the case of Bahrain, women entrepreneurs have shown a high level of innovation in their businesses which has translated into classifying them as pioneers in their fields, which can only be reflective of their drive and the fostering of a nurturing social setting. In this regard, it can be seen again, that employing the IFFEM framework for analysis has allowed the identification of specific elements affecting female entrepreneurship that were not significantly apparent before and has provided better insights into the issues that interfere with their entrepreneurial efforts.

5.3 CATEGORY 2: THE MESO LEVEL

The meso environment acts as the link between the narrow micro-level environment and the wider macro-level environment (Pitelis, 2005; Dopfer, Foster & Potts, 2004). The meso environment is concerned with the elements in between the macro and micro environments such as business networks, societies, initiatives, organisations and industries as well as the other aspects of work and social life (Aldrich, 1989). As shown in section 3.2 above, female self-perceptions are affected by their social networks which consequently influence their abilities for opportunity recognition (GEM, 2015). Females tend to socialise differently than males and build social networks that are a mix of males and females while male's social networks mainly consist of just men. This, in turn, plays a role in determining female entrepreneurs' access to funding and financial networks (cf. Carter et al., 2003; Shaw et al., 2006). In addition, women's access to their choice

of business activities is linked to their gendered image (Barrett, 1998), which renders certain industries and business sectors harder for them to penetrate and establish successful businesses in (Blau et al., 2002).

5.3.1 Theme 3: Initiatives

The study came out with many findings related to the initiatives set forth by the responsible bodies for easing the struggles of entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs. These findings are presented in the following section and can be categorised into six subthemes namely as funding initiatives, subsidies, training initiatives, challenges to funding and training initiatives, incubation scheme, and lastly initiatives related to networking and organisations.

5.3.1.1 Funding Initiatives

As mentioned in Chapter 4 above, the Kingdom of Bahrain has seen the birth of two funding initiatives (among earlier ones that are not the subject of this thesis) geared towards micro-entrepreneurs (mainly females) to support them in their small entrepreneurial projects, namely Ebdaa Bank (which is a conventional bank) and Bank Al-Osra (which is an Islamic bank), both inaugurated in 2010. The interviewees had mixed opinions on this initiative, as some of them had used their services, others had not. A significant number of them had not even heard about these initiatives, this calls for the need for more awareness by the initiating bodies of the availability and function of these schemes. The next lines contain some testimonials from the entrepreneurs about these initiatives in the following section.

*“I did not have difficulty to obtain funding just because I am a female. That was not a factor.”
Interviewee HDD.*

“It was easy to get along with the micro-bank employees, and it took less than one month to get the money from them. I had gone to other banks, and I also went to the Bahrain Development Bank, but I was not able to find a cosigner to support my case, so I was not able to get my application approved.” Interviewee MKK.

Most interviewees in this study who had used the services provided by these banks attest that although the initial act of getting approved and receiving the loan is easy and straight-forward, they had been appalled by the attitude of bank employees if there are any challenges in the repayment of the loan. A bank's employees were described by the interviewed female entrepreneurs as extremely rude when the

entrepreneurs had the slightest delay in settling the repayments. This attitude has left the entrepreneurs with a sense of repulse and complete dismissal from using their services again.

“I used their services because I needed funding but one these banks are very rude, and they were disrespectful compared to the other micro-credit bank, and even the pricing schedules are bad for their loans.” Interviewee SBA.

“I took funds from the two different micro-credit banks. With one bank I was able to pay back my loan very easily, but with the second bank, it was really bad. I was not able to pay it easily, and they were very aggressive and impatient in requiring their payments.” Interviewee BDS.

“if I don’t pay on the spot and I am Sue don’t have to come and take it from me by force they used to come the next day if I didn’t pay the day before even in my business and my work they were very humiliating what are they expecting. I am a small business they need to be patient with me that’s their job that’s why we took money from them this is not normal what date it so I took money from my I borrowed money from my sister and paid them their bank on the same day, and I told them you are for micro-financing how could you do that while sometimes we do it sometimes we don’t make money we can pay.” Interviewee BEM.

“One of these banks is not there to help but to make money. Its employees do this with everyone, and the commercial banks seem to be a better option for small businesses. The other banks were nice and helpful.” Interviewee SMG.

The literature has repeatedly emphasised that obtaining the proper finance for their businesses is a necessary condition for any entrepreneur (Bates et al., 2007, Brush et al., 2009). Female entrepreneurs, however, have an even harder time in obtaining financing as they face additional challenges over and above their male counterparts (de Bruin et al., 2007; Shaw et al., 2001; McClelland, 2004; Brush, 1997). On the contrary, the availability of micro-financing opportunities to female entrepreneurs has helped increase their self-confidence and raise their managerial independence (Amin et al., 1998).

As seen in the results presented in this section, the women entrepreneurs in Bahrain are no different from their Western counterparts. The initiatives put in place by the responsible bodies in the country to facilitate the access of the female entrepreneurs to necessary financing in Bahrain have presented both a solution and challenge for the female entrepreneurs. Given these initiatives are related to the meso environment, this

finding asserts elements at the meso environment directly affect female entrepreneurial activities and the growth prospects of their ventures.

5.3.1.2 Subsidies

Along the same lines as the financing schemes, the Kingdom of Bahrain has introduced the subsidies for Bahraini entrepreneurs to assist them in their entrepreneurial journeys. These subsidies are usually managed by the Bahrain Labour Fund, commonly known as “Tamkeen” which is an Arabic term that translates to “Empowerment” in English. Many of the interviewees have admitted to receiving some assistance from “Tamkeen” throughout their entrepreneurial endeavours. Tamkeen provides several support schemes for male and female entrepreneurs alike. It also reimburses for expenses incurred by the entrepreneur after the purchasing transaction. Initially, at its launch in 2006, Tamkeen used to subsidise 100% of the finance needed. Later, that amount decreased to 80%, and currently, it stands at only 50% (according to interviewees). However, between the purchasing of the required merchandise until the reimbursement phase, the process takes about six months to complete. Nonetheless, this type of support has proven to be a favourite among the interviewees, the majority of whom have benefitted from it.

“We have sought funding and support from Tamkeen who have been supportive with everything. Moreover, we have utilized it as well which has supported us and benefited us. It is a tedious process, but it is still there.” Interviewee JHP.

Other interviewees explained the importance of the Tamkeen funding schemes and went as far as even saying that they are rare schemes unavailable anywhere else in the world.

“Tamkeen can assist applicants with up to 50% of their funding requirements. It is great that they can fund 50%, this is something hard to get anywhere else in the world because these are rare supporting schemes.” Interviewee JMW.

“We are burdened by a lot of fees, but on the other side Tamkeen is perfect it helps us, and at the same time, they have put measures to avoid misuse of the provided funds which has made the process more complicated now. However, at least anyone can benefit from them, and I am too.” Interviewee RBJ.

“The only form of support that I got was from Tamkeen. We are approved by Tamkeen so for any project that we do for our client they will pay a part of it, such as covering part of the costs for

events and conferences or becoming sponsors or partners in our events. Honestly, I believe that Tamkeen is playing a huge role for us in these times.” Interviewee BEM.

“I believe the only organisation that is giving actual support in Bahrain currently is Tamkeen. I did the scheme where they support 50%, you can buy equipment, or you can get marketing, I did that with the equipment scheme. It is a very slow process, but it works out.” Interviewee MHN.

“I got a little help from Tamkeen which I regret not getting from the beginning because that would have been a great help. In the future in case I decide to expand or grow up, I would go and get help from them.” Interviewee GSD.

“I think anybody needs to go for Tamkeen grants because it seems there are a lot of funds available and they are willing to support businesses.” Interviewee MHG.

“We were supported by Tamkeen when the economic problems had happened. They gave a grant to everybody who had been affected by the situation. That was the only support we got throughout these thirteen years. Moreover, it was worthwhile... it got us going through the three months we lost business, it helped us, and I think Tamkeen helped us for more than three months!” Interviewee FMG.

The consequence of more attention and consideration recently geared towards entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs can be seen through the achieved results of these subsidies. The above testimonials provide undeniable proof that the more attention and care given to female entrepreneurs, regardless of the state of their entrepreneurial journeys, the higher their abilities to contribute and grow. The significant impact the subsidies from Tamkeen have had on the entrepreneurs involved highlights that the elements at the meso environment such as initiatives and dedicated resources to female entrepreneurs have a significant role to play in the launching prospects and potential of entrepreneurial ventures (Meunier et al., 2017).

5.3.1.3 Training Schemes

Aside from the financing schemes that are available through Tamkeen, it also offers free training schemes to Bahrainis but are applied through the process of reimbursement as well. The entrepreneur can register and pay for the desired training programme, locally in Bahrain or internationally, and once he/she has passed the course can apply for reimbursement from Tamkeen. Many female entrepreneurs interviewed can

recall they applied and benefited from training covered by Tamkeen. The following sections represent excerpts by female entrepreneurs who have benefited from these schemes.

“I did a course through Tamkeen for e-commerce and work design, and it helped me so much, now I know which questions to ask the client and what areas of service I can help them with.”
Interviewee NHC.

“There was a cooking school in UK where I would have to be studying, and I did not have any resources I was in deep debt. However, then I learned that Tamkeen is supporting it but on a reimbursement basis once the course is passed. I borrowed the money from my friend, and when I came back and got reimbursed, I was able to pay her back. Tamkeen is amazing in that regard.”
Interviewee FJL.

The main point to conveyed by this section is the importance of the training possibilities and the necessity of their availability to the prospects of the female entrepreneurs. In the context of Bahrain, without these available opportunities, the interviewees have expressed their frustration at not being able to perform as strongly as they would have desired in their businesses, and ultimately at not being able to achieve their business goals. Therefore, it can be inferred from the above that the availability of support and training schemes empowers the female entrepreneurs into unleashing their potential and achieving their best. This can be backed by the increased number of private and public institutions globally interested in devising strategies and initiatives to support and improve female entrepreneurs’ business positions and abilities and to strengthen the networking capacities of women entrepreneurs worldwide (Ramani et al. 2013; Minniti, 2010).

5.3.1.4 Challenges to Subsidies & Training Initiatives

Despite the efforts put forward by the concerned governmental and private sector employees into advancing the state of female entrepreneurs in the country, the fact of the matter remains that the no support scheme is complete if there are no adequate follow-up and support from its providing bodies. Most of the female entrepreneurs interviewed who had benefitted from Tamkeen’s financial and training schemes have complained of a lengthy process that consumes their efforts and energy to complete its requirements, that could have been put to better use in the running or expanding of their businesses.

“With Tamkeen from start to finish to receiving funds, there is at least a six months duration, so that gets tough especially in a business where you require funds to come in because you need them you require the reimbursements to happen promptly.” Interviewee HBN.

“Yes, it is a lengthy process, but if you try it, it works so to me that is fine.” Interviewee YBS.

“Tamkeen’s processing system is a very tedious process. Before obtaining the funding they require the submission of all initial documentation or quotations and everything has to be stamped and approved if there’s any change or modification to that it takes even longer so it is just a very laborious and tedious task.” Interviewee MHN.

“Luckily I have got my accounts team. They live and breathe Tamkeen, so I do not have to deal with it, although initially when I started my business, I was the only one running around and it was tough.” Interviewee JMW.

The unnecessary loss of time and energy experienced by the female entrepreneurs during the process of obtaining funding and training support for their ventures constitutes needless complications that impede the progress of the entrepreneurial venture. The literature has repeatedly noted that to encourage entrepreneurs to participate in new venture creations, it is imperative to reduce the time and cost involved in the process of starting a new business (Van Stel et al., 2007). While the purpose of these initiatives is to assist the entrepreneurs in overcoming financial and training difficulties that might impede their progress (Naude ´ et al., 2008; Gries & Naude ´, 2009) their improper implementation can further create new challenges that they need to be overcome.

5.3.1.5 Incubation Scheme’s Opportunities and Challenges

Bahraini Women’s Competence Development Center, commonly known as Riyadat, which formally opened in 2013 is Bahrain’s only female entrepreneurs’ incubator scheme (See Chapter Four). The centre is meant to act as an incubator while also providing administrative, technical, consulting and technological facilities for women entrepreneurs in the startup stage. This is an initiative geared solely towards female entrepreneurs and aims to provide exclusive incubation services to female start-ups. However, the interviewees had mixed opinions about the usefulness of such an initiative especially in its present state and had many reservations regarding the way it is currently run and managed. This explains why only a small number of the interviewees had even thought of applying and benefitting from the incubator’s services. Out

of the interviewed sample of 42 female entrepreneurs, only two ladies have benefited from Riyadat, and these two ladies are sisters. The following excerpts provide a better portrayal of the interviewees' opinions in this regard.

"The Riyadat incubator is very good, and the rent is cheap, so it solved my problems. However, it needs more marketing because very few people frequent it as it is. The support it provides for women entrepreneurs could be better". Interviewee GJC.

"It was difficult to get a spot because there were many applicants there was a committee choosing the tenants. They used to do lots of exhibitions for us and support us with the marketing, and they were doing a really good job at the beginning. However, later things changed." Interviewee GSD.

"The presence of the incubator mall was very good because I would not have been able to find a shop with reasonable rent in time and I would have had to go to a smaller mall and maybe a smaller place, and I liked being there." Interviewee JHP.

"Now the mall is not the same as before because they are not able to do the proper marketing for it." Interviewee AAZ.

On the other hand, most of the interviewed sample had negative feedback regarding this initiative. This can be inferred from the following excerpts.

"Management at the beginning was very good and active, but when they changed that management the whole mall changed." Interviewee SPS.

"Riyadat is a ghost town. It is a ghost town, that is a reality. No one goes there. It is very depressive." Interviewee MHN.

"The location of the mall is not a place where people would go unless they need something specifically from there. It is not a place people go to for an outing or with the intention to shop and look around." Interviewee SMG.

"The location of the mall is not the best. I do not go there myself. It is very far from where I live. I do not know if people go there, I feel that the mall is empty. There is a problem there it is not working out well." Interviewee MKK.

“There is a lot of competition to get into Riyadat, and a lot of requirements such as presentations, financial data, interviews and committee decision to approve the application. Lots of Riyadat appointments are based on personal connections rather than merit.” Interviewee GSD.

“Riyadat’s management was better when they first opened, and they had exhibitions to showcase our businesses. However, now it is not the same. The mall is almost dead; no one goes there anymore.” Interviewee GJC.

“I have not applied for a spot in Riyadat because renting a shop there is for only three years and then I would have to move out. Although rent is little, relocating the shop and redecorating are very expensive, especially for kitchen and baking installations, I would not want to repeat that, that would be crazy.” Interviewee VBS.

In general, most of the interviewees who strongly believed that the female incubator is beneficial and helpful to female entrepreneurs are the well-established female entrepreneurs with over 15 years in self-employment. This can be related to the fact that some of them are involved with the scheme itself through their work/connections with the Supreme Council for Women and the Bahrain Development Bank, the duo powering this incubation initiative. It could also be because it feels like a novel and perhaps desirable idea that they wished was present when they have first started their self-employment careers. This could be true in theory, because the driver behind the incubator is to assist the lady entrepreneurs in their start-up phase. However, this is not the sense that the majority of the younger female entrepreneurs have expressed. The current novice women entrepreneurs in Bahrain find that the location and the current style of management of the incubator make it way less appealing for them to even seek to apply for a spot in it. These younger entrepreneurs require different functions to set up and run their businesses that are typically not available in a classically run incubator centre. Although devoting a whole incubator mall to female entrepreneurs and their businesses is an initiative that shows commitment from the side of the authorities involved, the initiative unfortunately does not rise up to the expectations of the newer wave of female entrepreneurs in the country. These are pioneers in their businesses and are pursuing business concepts that do not fit the traditional business start-up profile.

5.3.1.6 Networks and Societies-Opportunities and Challenges

A few organisations represent business societies for women and networking opportunities geared towards female entrepreneurs. The most notable of these initiatives are the Bahrain Businesswomen's society (BBS), which has been in operation since the early 1990s. In addition to the training and networking events that are organised by the BBS for its members, the BBS was actively involved in receiving financial backing from UNIFEM to aid with the development of the entrepreneurship spirit and competencies of female entrepreneurs and has reportedly trained several hundreds of potential and current women entrepreneurs in the last decade (Metcalf, 2007).

However, there have been complaints about the type of assistance that the BBS provides. Most of the female entrepreneurs interviewed in this study, both the new and the established entrepreneurs, explained that the approach of the BBS is outdated and not engaging enough for new entrepreneurs, and cannot thereby provide them with fulfilling solutions and contemporary advice. In addition, young women entrepreneurs are not well represented as members of the society and attribute that to the difficulty of matching their ideas to those of the female entrepreneurs in charge of the BBS. The following are some excerpts highlighting these points. They do not have much to add to the contemporary issues faced by female entrepreneurs.

"We wanted to work with the Bahrain Business Women's Society and to partner them up with the next generation of women whom they can mentor, but it did not work. Our mindsets are not on the same page. So, we decided to have our society among us. It is not a registered society yet, but we will see how it goes." Interviewee LBA.

"We had to create our own little thing because we were not satisfied with the services available at other societies. We hope this will appeal to other female entrepreneurs who share the same points of view, but it is still under setup because we are all still setting up our businesses and doing all of that we are all in the kind of starter phase, and we are all young parents." Interviewee MGS.

"I did not get any value from going to any organisation or society here. Moreover, I went to many of them in the hopes to come out with some assistance especially when I was going through the regulatory crisis after which they cancelled the license on my product. Although they tried to help, they honestly did not have, much to offer and I did not get any assistance from them." Interviewee SMG.

“The mothers I am within the group have helped me, they gave me much information and helped me benefit from what they have been through with their businesses and their children before me. So, these ladies provide support for me, and they tell me that they all went through it. These ladies give me a push, and they give me the support to go to another level, and all we need is a listening ear and support. Especially mental support. It is as important as financial support especially if the woman is raising her kids really, not just the nanny. We start asking these questions because we do not know these things, we do not have experience. We as a group thought of making a coop for women among us, but we were not aware if it will work out or not, we are very busy as it is.”
Interviewee AAZ.

The above statements show the networking and societies’ options available in the country, with a few exceptions, do not satisfy the need of most female entrepreneurs currently on the entrepreneurship scene in Bahrain. As one entrepreneur expressed it, female entrepreneurs need and appreciate the support from other female entrepreneurs who can advise how to deal with government regulatory bodies and listen to their problems, without being subjected to judgmental attitudes. Some of the female entrepreneurs decided to take matters into their own hands and have created their groups of networks that help each other with business-related matters, give advice to each other on motherhood issues and provide the necessary support to each other when needed, especially mental support. This aligns with the literature explaining that the way women network and socialise leaves its mark on their business ventures and their opportunities for growth, and hence requires more effort to create such valuable business networks (Ahl, 2004, 2006; DeTienne & Chandler, 2007). Also, through these networks, the female entrepreneurs help support each other’s operations through cross-promoting their businesses which have proved to be a successful way to spread the awareness about each other’s businesses to make up for the missing role of the networks and societies needed.

5.3.2 Summary

Under the meso-environment level, the analysis shows variable elements that influence female entrepreneurial development. These are funding, training, subsidies, incubation, and networking initiatives. The results of the analysis shows that although the contributions of these initiatives are essential to the female entrepreneur, inappropriate management of the schemes hinders its full benefit to the female entrepreneurs. With the lack of proper execution of the proposed initiatives, the female entrepreneurs are left to find ways to overcome the difficulties they face, except for some subsidies and training schemes

available. Once more, the proposed IFFEM can capture the intricate details which contribute to the overall process of entrepreneurship and can have either a positive or an adverse effect on the efforts of the female entrepreneurs. By reporting on the meso-environment, the IFFEM framework succeeds in conveying the issues of importance to female entrepreneurs, not only regarding the available initiatives but also in terms of their proper implementation.

5.4 CATEGORY 3: MOTHERHOOD

The motherhood construct is used as a representation of the family context, namely in terms of the household unit more so than in terms of the extended family background (Brush et al., 2009). This is especially significant when realising that a female's role, responsibilities and attitudes towards her household cast their influence on her ability to disconnect and focus on her work, requiring more of her attention and efforts. Therefore, the many duties assigned to the female, the mother within the household, require that the study of female entrepreneurship expands to include the overall family context rather than merely focusing on the entrepreneur herself, as a consequence to her central household role in which she is mainly affected by her surroundings (Brush & Manolova, 2004; Jennings & McDougald, 2007). Previous work by Aldrich and Cliff (2003) and Carter and Ram (2003) address this issue and conclude that the household context plays a significant role on female entrepreneurs' opportunity development and recognition and their access to appropriate resources. The findings related to motherhood are discussed in the following sections.

5.4.1 Theme 4: Motherhood Ideals

The theme of motherhood ideals pertains to the thoughts and emotions that the female entrepreneurs deal with in relation to their roles as mothers and heads-of-households, and is split into two subthemes, comprising motherhood plans and motherhood guilt and responsibilities.

5.4.1.1 Motherhood Plans

Most of the interviewed women entrepreneurs have expressed how the thought of motherhood has been a factor in their decision to enter entrepreneurship. As part of their preparation to become mothers, or as part of their current motherhood status, planning to be able to spend more time with their kids played an influential role in their search to combine their roles as mothers while still being able to contribute financially to the household. Also, many of the females interviewed explained how entrepreneurship helped

them stay productive and fulfilled a sense of personal satisfaction in their lives while balancing out their duties as mothers. Below are some of the excerpts of the interviews about this issue.

“I decided to do something that could help me when I was going to have kids, and banking would not there is no support system and the hours are long.” Interviewee BDS.

“I was in depression after having kids and could not stand to stay in my job, and I quit while my husband was jobless at the time. My decision to quit was a shock and a big risk, but I was in a deep depression after having my kids. Motherhood changed everything in me even the way I think, and my point of views.” Interviewee EMF.

“I worked at a full-time job for ten years. Having my own business gave me the flexibility to be with my kids after ten years of working in a full-time job. I can now go to school events without having to take permission from my boss who was humiliating.” Interviewee MPS.

Some of the female entrepreneurs have expressed their myriad of emotions following her becoming a mother as follows.

“I think what pushed me to quit my job and open this shop mainly was having kids. Motherhood left me wanting more of it; I felt like this was my purpose, what I was born to do not just as a temporary phase. That is when I decided to quit my job and take it further. I had no choice, I could not just quit and stay at home. I opened this concept because I wanted those feelings to last forever.” Interviewee MHN.

“After having kids, I wanted to become like my mother a stay at home mom (SAHM), but I could not because my mom was supported by my dad whereas my husband was jobless. So, I decided to quit my full-time job and focus on self-employment to be closer to my kids as much as I can.” Interviewee NSF.

“I need to spend quality time with my daughter I am not going to work myself to death ok I have a service that is valuable I am going to charge what it deserves to be charged so I can also have time with my kid. I could never go back to be an employee like I was before.” Interviewee RWD.

Most of the women interviewed have admitted that motherhood has pushed them to become female entrepreneurs. They described the mental and emotional changes of being a mother. Also, for financial and personal reasons, they cannot be stay at home mothers, therefore, the need to become entrepreneurs, to make ends meet, and fulfill their personal satisfaction. Being a stay at home mum was the preferred option for many of the interviewed female entrepreneurs. However, financial and societal commitments have forced them to have to either keep a steady job or turn to entrepreneurship as a middle grounds solution between staying at home and working full-time.

5.4.1.2 Motherhood Guilt and Responsibilities

The vast majority of the female entrepreneurs interviewed expressed their biggest obstacle in working on their businesses as dealing with the feeling of guilt when working while they need to be and prefer to be with their children. The many responsibilities they have between home, children and business duties leave them no choice but to try to balance their responsibilities between competing interests, which is challenging especially when it comes to their emotional attachment to their children and their desire to devote all their time to them. These emotions and difficulties have been expressed through the following passages as articulated by the female entrepreneurs during their interviews.

“It is very difficult to achieve and to balance between motherhood and business life. It is so hard to have to be running a business full-time while needing to be a good mother just like everyone else. Sometimes it is even crippling to just think about it.” Interviewee AAZ.

“The mum has so much to do, for example I feel frustrated because I would prefer to take my daughter to go swimming and do gymnastics and do her activities during the afternoon and make her develop her talents instead I'm helping other children of other people and my daughter is like not having none of that because I have to work.” Interviewee RWD.

“These are the obstacles, to have my daughter in the car the whole time from 6 am sometimes from 4:30 am, she does not sleep enough hours as a child should sleep, and she does not eat how she should eat, always on the go. Not spending enough time with her, being so exhausted with no energy for her, for myself. Yeah, the obstacles are more emotional than regulatory. Moreover, it slows me down.” Interviewee APP.

“My family is number one anything that would affect my relationship with my family or kids I will give it up. Every person has different priorities of principles in life, but my mine is my family first.”
Interviewee GSD.

“Since I was a little girl, I wanted to be a SAHM. I wanted to have kids. I love kids so much, I just want to be a mother. I feel like I want to throw everything out to be the best mother I can be.”
Interviewee BWE.

“However, I have kids, that is what people do not realise, I need to spend time with them more than I spend with people, so for them, this has become a part of their life they are used to it, but now they are beginning to say just give up on it, just close it, we are tired, we want you.” Interviewee FMG.

“Overall I am satisfied with what I have achieved. However, that maternal instinct and the feeling of guilt keeps giving me second thoughts which you do not act upon, rarely I do. It is the centre of my actions and all that I do, my motherhood instinct and position.” Interviewee MHN.

“I love my business, and I did not mind working a lot I did not mind before my daughter was born. After she was born, it would kill me with guilt that I should be with her, but I couldn't. I would get out of the house she would still be sleeping I would arrive back, and she would be sleeping. I was not the one feeding her I was not the one giving her the bath I was not the one doing anything with her.” Interviewee RWD.

The above statements show how frustrated the female entrepreneurs become when having to deal with their roles as mothers and business owners simultaneously. The difficulties lie mainly in their inability to overcome their emotions of guilt and deficiency regarding their duties as mothers and their responsibilities towards their children. The struggle becomes so real that some of them have even described it as a crippling sensation, leaving them feeling helpless and sad at times.

5.4.2 Theme 5: Motherhood Environs

The theme of motherhood environs refers to the elements in the environment surrounding the female entrepreneurs and identifies whether they are encouraging or discouraging of their entrepreneurial efforts. The theme comprises two subthemes, namely husbands' attitudes and supporting opportunities, which are discussed in detail in the next section.

5.4.2.1 Husbands' Attitudes

The interviewees had mixed opinions concerning their husbands' attitudes, the roles and effect of husbands in their lives and businesses. According to their accounts, their husbands' attitudes were split between supportive and unsupportive of their businesses and their entrepreneurial endeavours. On the positive side, some of these husbands provided the flexibility for their female entrepreneur wives to ease financial pressures in their businesses. Others only provided emotional to pursue their dreams of being entrepreneurs. Similarly, others provided material support in helping with the business or with the household and children to relieve their wives from those burdens. This can be seen from the following extracts from the interviewee responses.

"Thank God for my husband! I know people whose husbands are financially well off but are not very generous and are forcing their women to work. Some women would not want to retire because their husbands won't give them enough and they cannot start asking for as little money as it is from their husbands." Interviewee IAF.

"I am fortunate enough; my husband is very supportive he told me not to think about the financial issues of the business and encouraged me to do it! He told me that if I believed in myself so did he." Interviewee LOM.

"I am so grateful that my husband is very supportive financially. He oversees all the kids and household needs. I keep asking him if he needs me to find a full-time job to help you. He keeps telling me no need because he loves the idea that I am giving my time to the kids and that I am available for the family and I do not need to go work he can manage the finance." Interviewee BWE.

"Thank God compared to what I hear from others who do not get support from their husbands I do not want to complain. Moreover, also life is full of giving and take and sacrifices. Moreover, he is giving me the luxury of doing what I like on my time. So that is great." Interviewee MHG.

"My husband is my silent partner in the background. Many things I do not have to worry about because my husband takes care of them without me. Which is a blessing really, to not have to deal with everything myself." Interviewee AAZ.

“My husband is so supportive. He has his own business too, and his office is next door to mine. Sometimes when we bring our son to the office he will have him a little while I have my meetings and then we will swap.” Interviewee JMW.

“My husband for sure I think there are a lot of husbands who would not do what my husband does when he says that he is going to take two days out of his schedule for work to watch our son it is unique and mature what he does.” Interviewee HDD.

“Now that my husband got used to me working and he saw my abilities and determination, he supported me when I opened my second business.” Interviewee SMG.

On the other hand, some interviewees complained of unsupportive husbands.

“I wanted to open a transportation company, and he always asked me to leave this idea because it is not a place for a woman.” Interviewee HJC.

“My husband did not get involved even from the beginning. He was neither supportive nor unsympathetic. Also when I said I was quitting my job, he said you’re free to do what you want and was not bothered by it.” Interviewee LRI.

“I am 100% independent and dependent on myself only. My husband does not believe there is a benefit to my work, so he does not give a penny. If I asked him, he would be asking me why do you need money why do you need this much cash? So, I used my own money to start my project and when he gives me his opinion, I take it otherwise I don’t ask him for it.” Interviewee HSB.

“My husband was never totally supportive. In a way he wanted me to open my business but then in a way although he knows I am working some days 20 hours a day he still comes home, and he expects dinner ready which is sometimes impossible for me to do.” Interviewee NOC.

“The biggest issue with my husband is me not being home and not doing my duties as a wife, as a mother. Although he knew from the beginning that it is not going to be easy and that I’m not going to be around much and that I will need his help and support and he had agreed.” Interviewee VBS.

It is evident from these accounts that husbands' support plays a major role in the entrepreneurial experiences of female entrepreneurs. Although the concept of patriarchy is existent within the societal communities, it does not manifest itself as much as is expected among marital relations between the female entrepreneurs and their husbands. Regarding the Religion of Islam, the obtained data showcase how the concept of *Quiwama* explained earlier in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.4.1.2), is apparent in the attitudes of the husbands who find themselves supporting their wives, on all fronts, whether financially, emotionally and materially. This, in turn, helps the female entrepreneurs direct more of their efforts to the operation of their businesses while gaining more momentum without being required to be responsible for every aspect in the household by themselves. Also, this points to a change in societal perceptions whereby men and women are seen as equals and peers, rather than as superiors and subordinates as is required by the teachings of the Holy Kor'an. This has been mentioned in the literature in Chapter Two (Roald, 2001), and highlights the Islamic view of society and the fact that men in Bahrain are willing to partake in the household responsibilities with their female partners and support them in fulfilling themselves through their entrepreneurial endeavours. Furthermore, the presence of supporting husbands, fathers and encouraging male figures presents the females with the luxury to decide their careers however they see fit. However, there remains husbands who refuse to do so and therefore constitute a drain on their female entrepreneur wives who are expected to maintain their roles as mothers, wives, heads of households along in addition to their roles as female entrepreneurs which necessarily leaves its mark on their venture performance and interfere with the potential growth of their businesses.

5.4.2.2 Supporting Opportunities

One of the positive aspects of being a female entrepreneur in Bahrain that was constantly repeated among interviewees was the availability of cheap childcare. This not only allows the women to depend on the availability of nannies when needed, but it also presents these women with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the intricacies of running their businesses and growing them. This is especially evident in the opinions of expat female entrepreneurs who find this matter crucial when looking after kids while running their ventures. Women in Western societies are left alone to deal with difficulties of raising children and simultaneously running a business. The following excerpt from Olga, a music and art school owner from Bella Russia is reflective of this matter.

“There are great opportunities presented to mothers here because one can afford skilled nannies for cheap, which is something not available elsewhere.” Interviewee OLM.

“Having nannies makes it easier to be able to leave the kids and tend to urgent work matters. We are very lucky in this.” Interviewee STB.

The female entrepreneurs also expressed being blessed to have so much support from their friends and families. These accounts are supported by many statements provided by the interviewed female entrepreneurs. The following is an excerpt from a local female entrepreneur in which she talks about the different possibilities of childcare available for them, which are not available for ladies elsewhere.

“Us as mothers and entrepreneurs being able to have this connection and support from family and friends is great. We are so lucky compared to the women entrepreneurs in the West because they do not have that type of connection over there and support from the people around them. It must be very difficult for them to catch up. This is a very positive thing in our society.” Interviewee SBA.

“The state of female entrepreneurship is improving because the women in Bahrain are smart and patient and God gave them this ability to keep changing and improving and be patient as long as they have support from the family and the society.” Interviewee HBN.

However, more is expected in relation to providing appropriate childcare options for mothers, as expressed by some of the female entrepreneurs interviewed, and can be summed up in the following statements extracted from their interviews.

“This does not replace the need to have specialised centres for our kids. Moreover, having a nurse instead of a nanny in such centres. It is what we lack here.” Interviewee FJL.

“Taking the kids to football practice, ballet and art lessons is a struggle on its own. We need educational centres that cater to different activities for different kid’s ages without the need for nannies, and that can add value to the children.” Interviewee LOM.

“Times have changed, and moms cannot always be available the same as before. Nannies are not the solution because they do not raise children, they are just a patching bandage that will later show an ugly wound. Mothers are coming exhausted after work to catch up on raising their kids. We need to reorganise the way we live our lives and our lively responsibilities.” Interviewee SLS.

In conclusion, female entrepreneurs in Bahrain can benefit from the availability of family members willing to care for their children when they are tending to urgent business matters, particularly their mothers and their sister, which is something that is rarely available to women entrepreneurs in Western societies. They believe that without this tremendous amount of assistance they could not have achieved what they have achieved so far. This is mostly due to the cultural background in which the family comes first and is expected to be always available for other family members in their times of need, providing both physical and financial support for them. On the other hand, this type of support is rarely available for female entrepreneurs in the Western societies, as such women and female entrepreneurs are expected to depend on themselves when it comes to running the household and their businesses alike.

5.4.3 Summary

This study highlighted two different themes influential to female entrepreneurship, namely the motherhood ideals theme and the motherhood environs theme. Under the motherhood ideals, the study uncovered the main reason most female entrepreneurs decide to engage in self-employment is to be available for their families. Full-time employment becomes too demanding once the female entrepreneurs become mothers, and the female mothers opt for entrepreneurship as a middle ground between family and working life. Also the findings highlight the difficulties facing female entrepreneurs at the personal level, that is their constant struggle as mothers who are unable to pursue their maternal duties and caring for their children while tending to their business responsibilities. In this sense, motherhood can simultaneously be seen as an incentive, pulling them into entrepreneurship, and as an obstacle for female entrepreneurs, pushing them away of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the female entrepreneurs are affected by their surroundings, such as husbands, childcare, friends and families, and the support, or lack thereof, that they receive leaves a significant mark on their entrepreneurial journeys.

5.5 CATEGORY 4: EMERGING INSIGHTS

Several emerging themes have been identified that do not fit the macro, meso or motherhood categories, and which represent interesting findings linking mainly the female entrepreneurial efforts to market opportunities and reflecting personal aspects of the female entrepreneurs. These emerging themes are business opportunities, experience and human capital, personal faith, parent entrepreneur, independence and mentorship. The next section discusses these themes in detail.

5.5.1 Business Opportunities

One of the recurring emerging themes by the interviewees was the need for recurring business opportunities for their businesses to guarantee a steady stream of income. They argued this could be easily implemented if authorities can enforce such agreements with these businesses whether through ministries, schools, big companies and long-term contracts. They emphasised female entrepreneurs need to be given an opportunity to grow their businesses and showcase their capabilities. The following excerpts from their interview responses explain their point of view.

“All government authorities and ministries should be supportive of a program that directs business opportunities towards small businesses, whether male- or female-owned. If something like this works out it works out for the benefit of the country. However, so far there seems to be no cooperation between different government bodies on something this.” Interviewee GJC.

“There are mentors; there is guidance, there are incubators, there is support, what I feel people here require is to give them a chance, give them an opportunity, give them business once at least once.” Interviewee NHC.

“Programs that support female entrepreneurship and present female entrepreneurs with business opportunities are helping out society through tremendously because female entrepreneurs are a big chunk of society.” Interviewee AAZ.

“We need the ministries’ support to work with our businesses and show us support instead of saving their budgets and returning it.” Interviewee JBP.

From the above, the interviewees believe that among all the available facilities and initiatives geared towards female entrepreneurial businesses, which provide meaningful assistance and are helpful in their own rights, the female entrepreneurial scene is missing the availability of significant business opportunities. These could be recurring contracts with the schools, ministries or other governmental agencies, which can help transform the state of the female entrepreneurs’ businesses and accelerate their growth. Not surprisingly, marketing and market opportunities constitute one of the main building blocks of entrepreneurial businesses (Bates et al., 2007) and as such failing attract and retain an appropriate level of business contracts threatens the very livelihood of the startup ventures and constitutes a major hindrance

for the female entrepreneurs aspiring to accomplish and expand. The interviewed female entrepreneurs argued that the implementation of supporting programmes to ensure the supply of recurring business opportunities would have extended the benefits that can be felt across the economy and the country as a whole, and not only through the perceived benefits for the female entrepreneurs.

5.5.2 Experience and Human Capital

Many of the female entrepreneurs interviewed have complained of the inability of their target markets to fully grasp the idea behind their services, given their innovative nature. On the one hand, this could be attributed to the reluctance of the public to immediately embrace these novel concepts which do not directly relate to their culture, beliefs and traditions. However, on the other hand, the literature has repeatedly emphasised the importance of human capital for male and female entrepreneurs alike, as explained in Chapter Two. Davidsson and Honig (2003) identified prior work and entrepreneurial experience constitute an important advantage for entrepreneurs in the initial as well as the advanced phases of their businesses, especially regarding opportunity discovery and exploitation. This suggests that in the absence of necessary background entrepreneurial experience, these nascent female entrepreneurs are facing such difficulties in their businesses due to overlooking one of the main building blocks of venture creation as identified by Bates et al.'s (2007) 3Ms, namely marketing. Not raising appropriate awareness needed for launching their novel business concepts has resulted in their target markets not fully grasping the idea behind their businesses. The following are some extracts from the interviews that highlight this issue.

“I do not think anyone really understood the concept of my business and why it is so important for children, nobody really knows or understands this concept, and I think everyone thinks that it is a money making the thing, and honestly, you cannot get rich off of it.” Interviewee FMG.

“When I saw how the business was running in the U.S. I was sold on bringing it to Bahrain. The sensory play was still new, and I was one of the first to bring it here. However, when I opened, I was disappointed in the turnout of people; I think I was misled by U.S. branch’s successful operation.” Interviewee GJC.

“I opened a franchise project for babies for two years, but I did not have much demand for the program, so I was not able to keep up with the franchise fees, and I stopped it because it was not sustainable. Although the program was very good and new, I believe the culture was not ready for

it, it needed more awareness about the importance of baby-gear programs in the country.”

Interviewee MKK.

“Personally I think I made a mistake by opening the store fast and not knowing it really well. I normally like to be unique and do these programs that are different, so I think it was just not the right time for it. My mistake is that I didn’t check on the acceptability of this program here and didn’t take opinions on it before. Such a project needs more awareness because it’s for babies.”

Interviewee RBJ.

“I think I was overconfident when I started, and I regret it. I understand the market a bit more now, and I think I at the time of startup I was only thinking of people around me more and that they would have the same mentality as I do and in reality, it is not. The majority of the people do not have my same mentality. I need to do a lot of raising awareness in order to achieve the potential of my business and the value of what I am offering because unfortunately many people still don’t see the value in it.” Interviewee MHN.

This aligns with the results of Cowling and Taylor (2001), who have found that self-employment remains marked with a multitude of obstacles and complexities that can only be overcome with the entrepreneurs’ human capital, especially in terms of skills and experience. Furthermore, the way the female entrepreneurs describe their setbacks while clearly expressing their regret for neglecting the aspects of proper marketing and raising awareness for their businesses proves that these female entrepreneurs have learned from their experiences and thereby confirms the importance of experience and human capital for the success of entrepreneurial ventures. Thus, the stronger the human capital experienced by the female entrepreneurs, the healthier their approach to running their businesses and the stronger their chances of success.

5.5.3 Personal Faith

Many of the respondents appeared to be religious individuals who considered their religious activities as part of their non-work lives that must be balanced with their work-life. This is in line with Dean’s (2007) argument that achieving a balance between religion/spiritual life and work life is now an important matter for employees so that they may derive solace and satisfaction from their work. Also, Onuoha (2005) asserts that religion shapes most of an individual’s way of life so that no matter what their profession is, they still want to fulfil their religious obligations.

“What I want to add and that I believe in deeply, is that when a person is clean and honest and has clean intentions in his/her business, and does not only consider it as just a money making thing, and when he has passion and love for his job, and a considers it a mission, God helps him with no issues. This is not only a spiritual talk, but this is also reality and out of the experience, things that happen to help you. You have no idea they come out from where.” Interviewee SHC.

“It is not about depending on yourself anymore as a human; it is God’s will that helps you achieve what you want when you are dedicated.” Interviewee SBE.

“I depend on the spiritual things that happened to me during this journey, and this seeded a belief in me that some things need to be left to God almighty coz he is the only one who can help you when you put your mind to it. If your heart is truly in something, and you believe, it will work out for you.” Interviewee MHG.

“It is all about what you want, you desire it is very powerful for achieving your dreams. This is available in everyone’s lives, but you must pay attention to it. Some things still marvel me. Somethings are hard to achieve, but not impossible to achieve. Your life is a reflection of what is inside of you.” Interviewee SBC.

“As long as I am under the support of God, I do not need to kill myself with worry; God will take care of me just like he did before. I learned how to deal with people who were judgmental; I completely changed after this experience. I do not go to extremes in happiness or sadness; there is a balance in everything. Now I am still climbing, but I’m not fighting anymore. Stress is less but there of course. Once you a taste of success you cannot get enough. This is the highest joy I get, the influence I have on the small young entrepreneurs.” Interviewee FJL.

These findings showcase the importance of personal faith and believing in one’s abilities to succeed as an entrepreneur. These females can achieve their goals by empowering themselves whether through their religion, their self-confidence in their abilities and their perseverance. This comes from the influence of cultural upbringing that these females have gone through which has endowed them with the serenity and patience that a successful entrepreneurship venture needs to expand and flourish.

5.5.4 Parent Entrepreneur

Most female entrepreneurs interviewed find it a negative point to have had either or both of their parents as entrepreneurs, because they had experienced first-hand the difficulties of running a business while raising a family and were reluctant to go through that themselves. They also worry about their children having to deal with their mothers being constantly away from them. Some of them even tried to postpone becoming an entrepreneur until a later time, but eventually gave up and surrendered to their calling. On the other hand, having been raised in an entrepreneurship family has helped them understand better their journeys as entrepreneurs and prepare mentally to adjust their expectations. This can be seen in the following passages extracted from the interview responses with the female entrepreneurs.

“My father was an entrepreneur, but it did not inspire me to have my own business. I wanted to do better than him; I wanted to do differently. Moreover, I did not agree with many of his decisions. It was too exhausting to run the business. The only things I learned from him are honesty, integrity and loyalty in my work.” RWD

“Mom was against opening my own business because of she knew the commitment it takes having run the family’s business while I was growing up. The first thing she said to me when I told her I’ve decided to open a shop she was like did you forget? Are you sure? She never told me no, don’t do it but yeah, she was trying to warn me, are you sure this is what you want to do? Are you willing to go through that?” Interviewee VBS.

“My mom was never around when I was a child. Literally. She was always busy with her business. I did not want to be like her. I did not want to be an entrepreneur. I wanted to be a stay at home mom with my kids” Interviewee BWE.

“My mom is an over-achiever, she is active on many fronts, and she loves it. She is a serial entrepreneur who is extremely socially active and raised me and my siblings while doing all that. I hated being away from her all the time. Growing-up all I wanted to be was a stay- at- home mom because I did not want my kids to go through the same when I have them.” Interviewee MHN.

The above statements by the interviewed female entrepreneurs show how their prior experiences with their parents as entrepreneurs have shaped their convictions and influenced their view of their entrepreneurial journeys, and their relationship with their families. This explains how these ladies have had different

experiences in running their businesses than their parents' because they had learned from their parents' mistakes. However, the fact that these female entrepreneurs did not choose to become entrepreneurs because of either or both their parents had done so previously explains how they based their decision on their experience as a child growing up with parents always consumed by their business, and hence had a rather opposite reaction preferring to becoming stay at home mothers instead. This contradicts findings reported by Waddell (1983) in the literature, which stated that having a parent entrepreneur positively affected the intention of female entrepreneurs to become self-employed. However, the study reported that female entrepreneurs had more parental self-employed figures than did female wage employees. Also, the study by Nicolaou and Shane (2010) confirmed genetics had a role in influencing female and male entrepreneurs alike in following the footsteps of parent entrepreneurs.

5.5.5 Independence

Another recurring theme was strong-willed females that are well-aware of their surroundings and able to make life-changing decisions when it comes to their future and the future of their businesses and families. Their determination and resolve tell the tale of independent, mature and knowledgeable women who can take decisions as an individual. This point can be explicitly highlighted from the following excerpts taken from the responses of the female entrepreneur interviewees.

"I've also felt that this marriage is not good for me it is pushing me back and me as an entrepreneur I can't be pushed back I can't stay in a situation in a marriage that is killing me killing my creativity kidding my abilities I needed something or some relationship that would push me forward."
Interviewee FJL.

"The perception of women is changing. My daughters need to see that me as a wife, I do not need to take upon me the finances and responsibilities of the household and be exhausted in order to be satisfying my husband and the society, my kids need to see a healthy relationship between their parents, it was not healthy between us. I was handling the house as a mom and a dad, so he can be comfortable." Interviewee AAZ.

"My husband is holding back the growth of my business. I would choose to have my business over my husband because my business is making me happy. If I wanted to keep my husband but let go of my business then I wouldn't be happy with my husband and our relationship would be ruined"

because my business gives me my happiness and if I'm not happy so I wouldn't be able to stay with him anyway." Interviewee MKK.

"I could not stay with my husband because he was too restrictive, and not understanding about my line of work. I've had my business since before I met him, and I met him through my business, I own events and media agency, and as part of my work, I need to appear on TV sometimes. He was not OK with that, and not OK with the way I dressed. It caused so many issues between us; I could not continue with him. Now I have my son with me and we have divorced, I am so happy that this is all over." Interviewee BEM

The determination and effort that the interviewed female entrepreneurs have put in their businesses have empowered and strengthened them, unwilling to make sacrifices when it comes to their businesses and personal lives and believes. These findings were reflected in the opinions of these female entrepreneurs when asked about their marriage and husbands, and more women entrepreneurs are decisive when it comes down to deciding between their husbands or businesses and are very clear about their opinions and plans.

5.5.6 Mentorship

Many of the interviewed female entrepreneurs have admitted to having used the services of a professional mentor, or life coach, while others have admitted that they usually benefit from consulting their personal confidante's mentors that they have had throughout their life, such as a friend, a significant other, or a family member. This has shown that the many burdens of life, motherhood, family and running a business has taken a toll on these entrepreneurs and has necessitated that they require additional guidance whether on their professional or personal levels. Following are some excerpts about the benefits that the lady entrepreneurs are finding from their services.

"My coach came in and tried to improve me a lot and tried to help me a lot and she was able to think about how to improve my business idea, and she started giving me other ideas and she was trying hard with me although I was still not convinced that others would benefit from these ideas, but it turns out that she was right and now my business became a success because of her.", Interviewee HSB

“The life coach works on your personality and many aspects of your life not just the business side of it. The mentor inspires you to help you come out with your ideas and makes you reflect on who you are and how you can achieve better.” GSD

“And I said why did I do it and then I turn myself around and say I need to do this because I chose this nobody chose me nobody forced me to do it, so you need to learn to love it and that’s what I get but you know it’s just to talk to people sometimes and be able to hear without getting judged because that’s what people really want to do that so stands there was a mentor who told you this is how it’s the best way to do it this is the direction and this is what I want to do it this is what I want to set up now I have the people but everybody so busy doing stuff that it’s never possible but that’s what we need is in this with the woman’s business association is supposed to do”, Interviewee FMG.

“Whatever it would be nice to be in a group of mentorship where nobody judges you, and you can talk and you can get drinks without being judged strength I would’ve really appreciated that when I was going through a really difficult time I would’ve really appreciated a group of women or whatever let’s say, women, because you’re writing about women OK that would say it’s OK we’ve been through it it’s going to be fine you can talk don’t worry forget about the government as I said because forget about.” Interviewee JHP.

As can be seen from the above passages, the reason these female entrepreneurs seek mentorship assistance is because of the many responsibilities they have in life, and not being able to think clearly about all of them at once. As expressed by them, a mentor keeps them grounded, believes in them and helps them think straight and focus on improving their business. These life coaches work on many aspects of life and not just the business side like the female entrepreneurs’ personalities and attitudes. Furthermore, mentorship has been discussed by the literature which has described it as a solid way to help female entrepreneurs overcome their insecurities and unleash their entrepreneurial potential (Kickul et al., 2008). This has been shown to be a necessary arrangement where the female entrepreneur can have a place where she can share her disappointments and can have her struggles listened to at the end of the day without being judged. As one entrepreneur stated, that female entrepreneurs need emotional support as much as, if not more than, actual material support.

5.5.7 Summary

In summary, the findings of the Emerging Insights category reveal several points that are interesting to mention. First, it was noticeable that the female entrepreneurs lacked business experience, which explains some of their business choices and the drawbacks that their businesses are facing. However, a new culture of mentorship is forming, and female entrepreneurs are resorting to paid and unpaid mentoring services to overcome some of their problems. Also, having one or both of their parents as an entrepreneur while growing-up brings mixed emotions to their entrepreneurial journeys limiting their aptitude for venture growth as a response to the lack of parental attention they were exposed to while growing up. As a reverse reaction to that, they chose to concentrate on their families rather than grow their businesses. Another interesting finding was the theme of personal faith, emphasising the female entrepreneurs' attachment to religion and belief in God Almighty, which boosts their self-confidence and raises their enthusiasm and positive outlook on their business prospects. Furthermore, the findings uncover another interesting aspect of the interviewees, namely their independent nature, determination, and decisiveness in making important decisions related to their personal, family and business lives. Moreover, despite all the available opportunities and initiatives, the availability of continuous and consistent business opportunities remains the most crucial concern of female entrepreneurs, as it affects the very livelihood of their business ventures.

5.6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The previous sections included a detailed analysis of the results of the study. The findings were analysed according to the meso and macro environments and the motherhood levels. This section aims to discuss the analysis and tie it in with the relevant research propositions presented in Chapter 3. A summary of findings can be found in Table 2, grouped first under the category (meso, macro, motherhood and emerging insights), then as subthemes under their corresponding themes. The table also classifies these subthemes as generic (relevant to both male and female entrepreneurs) and as specific (relevant to only female entrepreneurs).

The gender-aware approach that this thesis adopts for the investigation of the contextual embeddedness of female entrepreneurship is stemmed from institutional theory and influenced by the 5M model for female entrepreneurship initially brought forward by Brush de Bruin and Welter (2009). The model incorporates the institutional perspective through addressing the meso/macro environments and the motherhood aspects of female entrepreneurs, (Brush et al., 2009). In the 5M model, motherhood, as well as the meso and macro environments are seen as essential building blocks in the business creation process in addition to the initial

3M's, as advanced by Bates et al. (2007), namely money, management and markets. The introduction of the additional 2Ms, the meso/macro environment and motherhood, are meant to transform the model into a gender-aware framework able to appreciate the particular case of female entrepreneurship and to focus more in-depth on the intricacies that shape its existence. The model thereby addresses the issue of gender not just as a variable in entrepreneurial research studies, but by recognising the unique particularities that being a woman involves, the model responds to the discourse that calls to viewing gender as a social construct rather than a mere control variable. Also, the model applies institutional theory by taking into consideration the effects of the meso and macro environment, combined as a single element, on female entrepreneurship.

However, although the 5M model is a gender-aware framework, it does not include the feminist approach needed to capture the intricacies of female entrepreneurship more accurately. By adopting a feminist frame of reference, this thesis proposed combining both a variation of the 5M model and the feminist standpoint perspective to advance a comprehensive framework for the study of female entrepreneurship able to integrate institutional theory with the interpretation of a feminist standpoint lens. Furthermore, the inclusion of a feminist perspective in the model aimed at studying female entrepreneurship provided the opportunity to highlight the female entrepreneurs' perspectives by creating a more female-centric approach, to identify their personal experiences. It allows the investigation to shift from identifying gender and its prescribed roles, behaviours and duties as being linked only to one's biological sex, and hence predefined and fixed, to rather understanding that differences do exist between genders and as such studying gender as a social construct in and of itself permits the investigation to reach a previously ignored but significant dimension of knowledge from which novel information can be obtained. Thus, the study of female entrepreneurship which was previously confined to male-centred approaches can now benefit from a fresh perspective that puts the female entrepreneurs in a central focus and emphasises areas of female entrepreneurial research that were traditionally repeatedly overlooked.

Through comparing with the IFFEM conceptual framework proposed in Chapter 3 (Figure 2), the following statements can be made about the propositions brought forward by the conceptual framework.

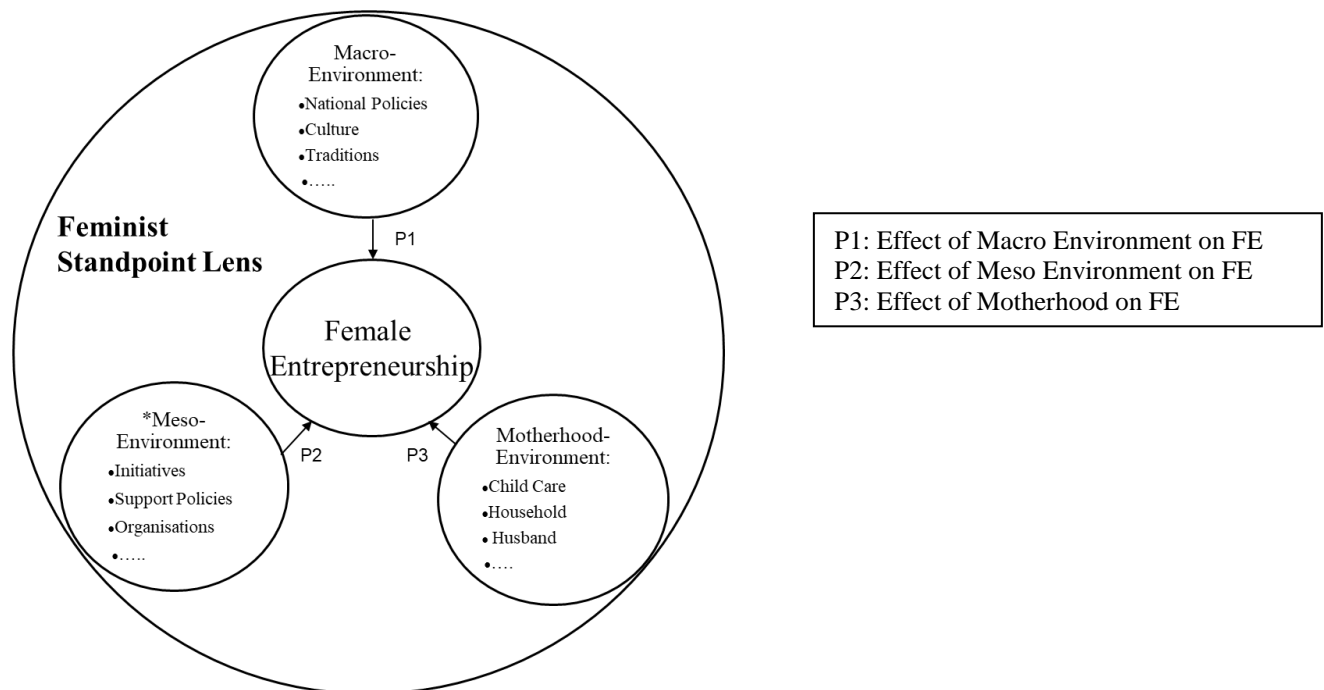


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework showing the Institutional and Feminist Female Entrepreneurship Model (IFFEM).
*The meso environment acts as the link between the narrow micro-level environment and the wider macro-level environment (Pitelis, 2005; Dopfer, Foster & Potts, 2004).

Proposition 1- Female entrepreneurs are affected by the influences at the macro-environment

Ten out of twenty-six findings were linked to the macro-environment, which highlights the two main themes that identified namely the regulatory setting and the socio-economic conditions. These themes came out as the most prominent regarding the factors that affect female entrepreneurs, with some having a stronger effect than others. Therefore, the amount of influence that is exerted on female entrepreneurs by macro-level factors is evident, and despite that, some of these findings have been brought forward by the literature before, several new ones arise as a result of this study, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Proposition 2- Female entrepreneurs are affected by the influences at the meso-environment

The findings at the meso-environment constitute eight out of the 26 findings and are all concentrated under the theme of initiatives. Ranging from funding to training, to incubation to networking, the findings at the meso level have helped identify new factors about the study of female entrepreneurship. In particular, it was identified that female entrepreneurs especially benefit from the available subsidies, while they are

particularly affected by the challenges accompanying all other initiatives. This explains the need to pay attention to the bureaucracy and complexities about the implementation of these initiatives, which are alienating the female entrepreneurs and limiting their assigned benefit. Therefore, the findings at the meso-level are particularly significant, as they shed light on areas that were not identified by the literature before. These findings will be later discussed in the next chapter.

Proposition 3- Female entrepreneurs are affected by the influences at the motherhood level

The findings at the motherhood level comprise two themes, namely motherhood ideals and motherhood environs. Each of these themes has been associated with two subthemes grouped under it. The motherhood ideals theme constitutes the culmination of maternal instincts and emotions that drive the female entrepreneurs. Through these findings, it becomes clear that most female entrepreneurs enter self-employment to combine their roles as mothers and heads-of-household to their roles as individuals and citizens, aiming simultaneously to fulfil themselves and contribute to society. With regard to the theme of motherhood environs, the amount and type of support that the female entrepreneurs are provided with ultimately shapes their entrepreneurial experiences and defines the how easy or complexity of their entrepreneurial journeys. These findings are only made possible given the depth of analysis provided by the feminist approach coupled with qualitative analysis, under the developed IFFEM framework advanced for this study ensuring that the investigation is both about and for the female entrepreneurs. These findings will also be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Table 2: Summary of Findings- Classification of findings in terms of Macro, Meso and Motherhood levels as generic to both male and female entrepreneurs, or specific to only female entrepreneurs.

Category 1: The Macro Level			
Serial Number	Theme 1: The Regulatory Setting	Generic (Affecting Males and Females)	Specific (Affecting mainly Females)
1.	Regulatory Efforts	X	
2.	Challenges to Regulatory Efforts	X	
3.	Electronic Markets	X	X
4.	Foreign Ownership	X	
5.	Increasing Financial Burdens	X	
6.	Numerous and Complex Rules	X	
Theme 2: Socio-Economic Conditions			
7.	Societal Perceptions		X
8.	Economic Prospects	X	X
9.	Innovation	X	
10.	Working Culture	X	
Category 2: the Meso Level		Generic (Affecting Males and Females)	Specific (Affecting mainly Females)
Theme 3: Initiatives			
11.	Funding Initiatives	X	X
12.	Subsidies	X	X
13.	Training Schemes	X	X
14.	Challenges to Subsidies & Training Initiatives	X	X
15.	Incubation Scheme	X	X
16.	Challenges to Incubation Scheme	X	X
17.	Networks and Societies	X	X
18.	Challenges to Networks and Societies	X	X
Category 3: Motherhood		Generic (Affecting Males and Females)	Specific (Affecting mainly Females)
Theme 4: Motherhood Ideals			
19.	Motherhood Plans		X
20.	Motherhood Guilt and Responsibilities		X
Theme 5: Motherhood Environs			
21.	Husbands' Attitudes		X
22.	Supporting Opportunities		X
Category 4: Emerging Insights		Generic (Affecting Males and Females)	Specific (Affecting mainly Females)
23.	Parent Entrepreneur	X	X
24.	Business Opportunities		
25.	Experience and Human Capital		
26.	Independence		X
27.	Personal Faith		X
28.	Mentorship	X	X

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The contextual embeddedness of entrepreneurship plays a significant role in the success of business ventures and extends to shape the experiences of the entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial journeys (Welter, 2011). Nonetheless, regarding female entrepreneurship, the state of women entrepreneurs in Bahrain mirrors that of the other parts of the world, which has witnessed progress namely in the areas of economic development and employment (Hassan et al., 2014). The Kingdom of Bahrain has recently become a fertile ground for the birth and growth of entrepreneurship, shown by the growing number of SMEs every year. According to the Labour Market Regulatory Authority in Bahrain (Zawya, 2015), the number of SMEs in the Kingdom is about 99% of all enterprises, of which over 92% are micro-enterprises. These numbers are continuously on the rise. Nevertheless, similar to their counterparts in the West and the developed nations, women in the Middle East are no exception when it comes to society's perceptions and inequality. Although the Islamic culture believes and preaches that women thoroughly enjoy their rights and exercise them, females are still suffering from obstructive traditions that limit their progress and overall involvement in business activities (Ahmed, 2010; Nazir, 2005).

In some countries, women must obtain permission from their fathers or husbands to participate in the workforce and to obtain financial funding (UNDP, 2006). Although this situation is changing, and women are starting to have an increased public presence in the Arab world, the rate of participation in economic life is still lower elsewhere in the world, with only 28% of active female adult participants, which is considered as the lowest in the world (UNDP, 2006; Ahmed, 2010). However, there is no doubt that the cultural and social landscape in Bahrain differentiates it from the rest of the world. Similarities arise between the closely knit GCC countries, of whom Bahrain is a part, and the other Arab countries in the region (GEM, 2010), where reports suggest that 98% of females in the region have no existing business activity (World Bank, 2008).

This study was able to highlight how the context in which female entrepreneurs start-up and run their businesses affects the way in which they operate them. While the previous chapter presented the findings of this thesis, this chapter will discuss the findings in light of the relevant literature and will highlight the main results of the analysis by addressing how the thesis responds to the main research questions. This chapter is split into five sections, as follows. Section 1 introduces the chapter and highlights the main points

of discussion. Section 2 responds to Research Question 1, and discusses the findings on the macro-environment, section 3 responds to Research Question 2 and discusses the findings on the meso-environment, and section 4 responds to Research Question 3 and discusses the findings on motherhood. Similarly, section 5 responds to Research Question 4 and discusses the results of adopting the newly advanced IFFEM framework, and section 6 discusses the research findings on emerging insights. Lastly, section 7 discusses the findings between generic and specific results and presents a summary of the discussion and the findings obtained.

6.2 THE MACRO LEVEL

Research Question 1: How is female entrepreneurship affected by institutional elements at the macro level?

From the investigation results in the macro environment, this thesis identified several findings relating to the regulatory setting affecting female entrepreneurs in the context of Bahrain. Although most of these findings indicate a tendency towards integrating female entrepreneurship and innovation into the regulatory move towards an environment more conducive to women-based-businesses, the reality is the introduction of these efforts still lacks in implementation. While on the one hand, the proposed changes constitute a positive approach towards female entrepreneurship, such as updating existing commercial laws and adapting regulations to embrace innovation and technological changes, these efforts lack the necessary follow-up mechanisms to ensure the proper alignment of the modifications with their execution measures. As reported in the Chapter 5 findings above, most interviewees complained of lengthy processing times, underqualified personnel in charge, complexities involved and the increased financial burdens. This is supported by the findings of the Report on Training of Female Entrepreneurs published by the Supreme Council for Women in Bahrain, which identifies the environment needed for businesses of female entrepreneurs to thrive as one that provides the legislative environment necessary for them to achieve success (Alajami & Alsaleh, 2011).

However, setting regulations is one thing and implementing them is another. With responses reflecting the impact of inadequate consideration employed to support women entrepreneurs attempting to establish new businesses, this research identified issues that affect female entrepreneurs are at the regulatory level. While the regulations set forth are envisaged to help empower female entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurial undertakings, the poor execution prevents them from serving their expected purpose. Meanwhile, the

amount of frustration female entrepreneurs feel while starting up their businesses signifies the process of obtaining a commercial registration is far from being a simple task, and literature has previously reported that female entrepreneurs are more affected by start-up costs than their male counterparts (Horrell & Krishnan, 2007). Van Stel et al. (2007), argue that one of the main regulations that can be taken by SME and Entrepreneurship policymakers that seek to increase rates of new firm formation is to enable the starting of business to take place as quickly and cheaply as possible. This position aligns with the results of other literary works on the impact of the complexity of the regulatory environment on start-up entrepreneurial efforts (Hampel-Milagrosa, 2010; Minniti & Naude', 2010). However, governments can exert influence regarding the implementation of rules and regulations in business matters as well as governance structure. For example, leaner regulations can be associated with choosing some forms of legal business structures encouraging entrepreneurs to favour them while others can be associated with stringent rules discouraging their choice (Leaptrott, 2005). Concerning business regulatory matters, governments can dedicate more training, financial and human capital for the organisations assigned with the tasks of processing and implementing commercial laws and regulations.

Furthermore, a more onerous regulation of entry is generally associated with greater corruption and a larger unofficial economy. In addition, less democratic governments regulate entry more heavily, and this regulation does not seem to yield visible social benefits (Djankov et al. 2002; Tanas & Audretsch 2011). That is why some governments and institutions focus attention upon lowering the entry "barriers" to the formation of new firms. Such "barriers" include the length of time taken to start a business, the number and cost of any permits or licenses required and any minimum capital requirements for a new firm (Van Stel et al. 2007). Especially those interested in starting new businesses and innovative projects (Urbano & Turro, 2013; Gnyawali & Fogel, 1994) may perceive overall, inefficient government regulation in the economy negatively.

Institutional theory literature refers to this macro-environmental factor as disorganised government regulation negatively affecting the economy especially since it affects the novice entrepreneurs contemplating establishing new, innovative business startups (Gnyawali & Fogel 1994). It would be beneficial for first-time entrepreneurs if the authorities in charge of setting up entrepreneurship policies to reduce barriers to entry by accelerating the process of business formation and reducing its costs, in order to encourage a higher number of new startups (Van Stel et al. 2007). Similarly, also instigate assistance programmes aimed to support a solid foundation of new ventures in their initial phases of start-up.

The findings on societal perceptions showed an increased acceptance of women in self-employment, albeit a few exceptions and consider female entrepreneurs as role models able to influence young female generations. This does not come as a surprise, because females in Bahrain have always enjoyed considerable responsibilities and duties as contributing members of society (See Section 4.10). Nonetheless, gendered societal perceptions are still in effect, and although the majority of interviewed female entrepreneurs have reported an increasingly accepted view of society, others have been subjected to negative societal perceptions and attitudes. However, these perceptions seem to be slowly fading away and making room for a culture that is embracing female entrepreneurship, achievements and leadership abilities. This is directly in line with the teachings of the Holy Kor'an, which emphasise equality between men in women regarding their rights as individuals (Roald, 2001), as is described in many Souras of the Holy Kor'an (See Section 2.4.3)

On the other hand, The Kingdom of Bahrain, similar to other GCC countries, has witnessed significant economic progress since the discovery of oil, and have subsequently had their economies heavily dependent on the oil industry. However, recent efforts have shown the intention and resolve of these countries to move to other sustainable methods of economic activity (Mazzarol, 1999; Dechant & Al-Lamky, 2005). In the same vein, these nations, particularly Bahrain, have turned their attention to entrepreneurship as a method of diversifying their economic prospects, and emphasising continuous economic growth. Consequently, entrepreneurship, as well as female entrepreneurship, have been promoted as a means of creating jobs and supporting governmental agencies (Dechant & Al-Lamky, 2005). Furthermore, in the wake of realising the importance of the economic contributions of female citizens to the country and the positive impact their participation as an active member in all areas of public life has on the society, efforts to enforce the involvement of females in general and female entrepreneurs in specific have been particularly intensified in the country. This is particularly apparent as part of the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030. This vision, which was brought forward through the efforts of the Bahrain Economic Development Board and Tamkeen, shows the emphasis that the authorities put on the role that is played by female entrepreneurs in the country. This is seen in the newly enacted laws promoting diversification and equal opportunity in the labour market, and the results are visible in the increased numbers of females entering the job market whether as employees or entrepreneurs. This is also evident by the significant efforts in the areas of initiatives and regulations geared towards women as mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2 above.

6.3 THE MESO LEVEL

Research Question 2: How is female entrepreneurship affected by institutional elements at the meso level?

This study identified six subthemes at the meso-environment level that can be all described as relating to the main theme of initiatives. These subthemes are related to funding, training, subsidies, incubation, networking and organisation initiatives. It is safe to state that establishing a new venture is typically not the final step on the road to entrepreneurship, but only the beginning. It is evident that the amount of effort and attention spent by the entrepreneurs on the startup phase of their venture increases significantly once the enterprise is open for business, and the challenges in obtaining adequate resources increase with it (Mordi et al., 2010). The operating costs and financial obligations that are essential to the proper functioning of the business is challenging entrepreneurs to be able to cover these expenses and might even deter potential entrepreneurs from being self-employed. As discussed earlier, there are significant efforts to diversify the economy and improve the state of entrepreneurship, focusing on female inclusions in economic contributions in the country. Consequently, specific initiatives have been developed to facilitate the inclusion of females in entrepreneurial activities. These include the labour fund Tamkeen, the female incubator Riyadat, the micro-financing schemes Alosra Bank and Ebdaa Bank and the societies and organisations such as UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) that aim to ease the entrepreneurial hurdles for female entrepreneurs (See Section 4.10). Also, the creation of electronic business opportunities that are manageable from home, and do not require significant capital investments to start. However, female entrepreneurs seem to be mostly benefitting from available subsidies schemes, which again confirms the strong need of female entrepreneurs to access adequate funding for their businesses.

Moreover, to ensure the proper functioning of these initiatives, governments and authorities are expected to overcome any related complexities or hindrances that may arise during their execution phase by placing more emphasis on the organisations that are implementing them. This will ensure that the help and financial assistance they are envisaged to provide for female entrepreneurs ultimately reaches them, as studies have shown that proper access to micro-financing has been a defining element in the development of female entrepreneurship (Qasim, 2018; Minniti & Naudé, 2010; Kevane & Wydick, 2001). However, as it currently stands, the envisaged benefit from these initiatives is not yet been fully achieved, and there should be further investigations to uncover the appropriate methods of implementing such initiatives to ensure the full benefit to female entrepreneurs and not reach a dead-end (Ahl & Marlow 2012). These results can be linked to the

reportedly lower numbers of female-run businesses in comparison with male-run businesses (Klyver et al., 2013), and confirms the literature on women-owned businesses' slower growth, increased failure rates and movement from opportunity towards necessity-based entrepreneurs (Madichie & Gallant 2012; Almobaireek & Manolova 2013).

6.4 THE MOTHERHOOD LEVEL

Research Question 3: How is female entrepreneurship affected by institutional elements at the motherhood level?

With regard to motherhood, the findings suggest women entrepreneurs identify strongly with the roles as mothers and heads-of-households, and that strong identification represents the factor that ultimately pushes them into becoming entrepreneurs. This is seen through the plans that the female entrepreneurs make using their motherhood instinct, expressing their desire to be available to raise their kids and take care of the household while still working and achieving financial stability for their families (Thebaud, 2010). Here, gender is seen as an informal institution, interfering with and dictating the career path that the females embark on. This aligns with the literature on gender as an institution (Section 2.4.4) and confirms how the societal prescribed gender roles and expectations precede other personal or religious characteristics (Lorber, 2008). Also, female entrepreneurs must deal with the multitude of duties and tasks as heads of households, mothers and caretakers in addition to their responsibilities as venture heads, in charge of entire business operations. This distracts them from their businesses, while at the same time it affects their ability to focus entirely on their families and being available with their children. In this vein, gender as an informal institution plays a dual role as an enabler of women's entrepreneurial aspirations and as a limitation constraining their progress as entrepreneurs (Leung, 2011). Furthermore, female entrepreneurs are affected by their surroundings, and the attitude of their entourage strongly affects their entrepreneurial prospects.

6.5 THE IFFEM FRAMEWORK

Research Question 4: How does adopting the feminist approach lead to better understanding the phenomena of female entrepreneurship?

The new framework advanced by this thesis for the study of female entrepreneurship has successfully shown that by combining both institutional theory and feminist theory research on female entrepreneurship is able to reach deeper levels of analysis that were not attained before. The IFFEM, by incorporating a feminist perspective, in addition to the institutional perspective allowed the research to achieve a clearer

understanding of the surrounding environmental factors affecting female entrepreneurship development. By moving away from the traditional male-centred approaches whereby the entrepreneur's gender is merely counted as a variable in the analysis (Alcoff and Potter, 2013), this approach allows research on female entrepreneurship to extend beyond quantified as a variable and focus on making meaning of the female entrepreneurship as a phenomenon. In its essence, the feminist approach adopted in this thesis enabled the female entrepreneurs interviewed to confidently discuss their experiences and voluntarily share sensitive details and circumstances that proved to be crucial for the findings and the analysis. The obtaining of such delicate data would not have been possible with the traditional and quantitative means of investigation, due to their handling of the entrepreneurship phenomena as a male-lead field rather than being open to the idea of differencing but equally important experiences and contributions of both male and female entrepreneurs. The feminist approach to the investigation strengthens the role of the research subjects and allows the research to be simultaneously about and for them (Popescu, 2012), thereby creating for them a sense of ownership towards the research and providing them with the opportunity to further contribute to the development of the field.

6.6 EMERGING INSIGHTS

In addition to answering the four main research questions, this research study has succeeded in identifying several findings that not classified under the macro, meso or motherhood levels. These findings constituted novel or exciting results and depicted as “Emerging Insights”, discussed in the following section.

The importance of adequate business opportunities for female entrepreneurs cannot be denied. Small businesses do not thrive on customer sales; they require big projects, tenders and recurrent sales for them to be able to survive and grow. That is what the entrepreneurs need from the government, to provide them with big business to ensure their continuity. All other aspects/areas/obstacles are manageable with a guarantee of strong business opportunities for their ventures. Also, another theme that was present during the investigation was the need for mentorship with no judgement. Moreover, the female entrepreneurs were already employing mentorship services during the study, which confirms the strong need entrepreneurs expressed regarding mentorship. This theme was not previously investigated before and is a remarkable finding to report.

Regarding religion, the results of this study do not align with the findings on Islamic religion in the Middle East, which report that religion acts as a barrier for female entrepreneurial efforts (Al-Alak & Al-Haddad,

2010; Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010). However, they align with the findings on Islamic religion in South-East Asia, where the religious teachings of Islam are considered supportive of female entrepreneurial efforts which are a natural application to the women's rights as expressed in the Souras of the Holy Kor'an (Roald, 2001, Hutchings et al. 2010; Metcalfe & Mimouni 2011). However, there still exist some patriarchal attitudes about what is acceptable for females and what is not, which can only indicate a stronger inclination to cultural rather than religious perceptions (Faud & Bohari, 2011).

Another interesting finding reported by this study as an emerging insight is the noteworthy independence of female entrepreneurs, which is apparent from their resilient attitude towards facing the difficulties they encounter both at their personal and business levels. These findings support the literature on women entrepreneurs that identified female entrepreneurs as independent, strong and risk takers (Goleman, 1988).

6.7 SUMMARY

Discussion- Generic and Specific Results

The findings in this study have helped deepen the understanding of the contextual and social embeddedness of female entrepreneurship. Moreover, the conducted investigation identified generic findings applicable to both male and female entrepreneurs, and others that are more specific to female entrepreneurs. As the results of the analysis in Table 2 show, the findings at the macro level are divided into two main themes, each with several subthemes. Under the regulatory setting theme, the findings indicate female entrepreneurs are affected by common regulatory efforts, including the availability of electronic markets, foreign ownership opportunities, the amount and complexity of the rules and regulations, and the increasing financial burdens bestowed on the entrepreneurs. However, while some of these factors affect both male and female entrepreneurs, others mainly affect female entrepreneurs. With regard to the regulatory efforts, both male and female entrepreneurs are equally affected by this element, as regulatory updates that entrepreneurial trends and innovation are simultaneously beneficial to both types of entrepreneurs, while the obstacles encountered as part of that element are equally challenging to males and females as well. This is also true about the availability of foreign ownership opportunities, the complexity of rules and regulations and the increasing financial burdens that the entrepreneurs of both genders face. However, in the case of electronic market opportunities, even though both male and female entrepreneurs benefit from their introduction, their effect is more pronounced for the female entrepreneurs, because it introduces them to markets they were not able to access before, right from the comfort of their own homes. This is especially significant when

considering the social dogmas that still govern female self-employment attitudes, the increasing financial burdens while the women entrepreneurs suffer from difficulties obtaining finances (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2010). Nevertheless, the essential assistance this element provides is most emphasised in the female entrepreneurs' roles as mothers and heads of households, because it allows them the opportunity to practice entrepreneurship without inconveniencing their children, and families in the process (Friedson-Ridenour & Pierotti, 2018).

Likewise, on the theme of socio-economic conditions, the identified subthemes is grouped under societal perceptions, economic prospects, innovation and working culture. Societal perceptions are of significant importance to female entrepreneurs because of the negative perceptions still associated with self-employed females. However, the findings suggest a significant and gradual movement towards better societal acceptance of female business owners, to the extent that the female self-employed are proudly pictured as role models and exemplars for young girls (Byrne, Fattoum & Diaz-Garcia, 2018). In addition, economic prospects have a stronger impact on female entrepreneurial efforts, compared to those of their male counterparts, because they help ease the other financial difficulties that female entrepreneur's experience, over and above their male counterparts, as has been repeated continuously in the literature (Friedson-Ridenour & Pierotti, 2018; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011, Welter, 2011; Jamali, 2009; Ahl, 2006). Furthermore, while the findings on the prevailing working culture can be extended to include both male and female entrepreneurs, the findings on innovation resonate well with the calls in the literature emphasising the different but equally important contributions provided by the inclusion of female entrepreneurs into economic activities in the country (Verheul & Thurik 2001; Chaganti & Parasunaman 1996; Brush, 1992).

In terms of the findings at the meso level, the analysis identified several subthemes stemming from the central theme of initiatives. The subthemes comprise of funding initiatives, training initiatives, subsidies, incubation, networks and societies. All these initiatives affect both female and their male counterparts; however, the female entrepreneurs are more affected by the challenges affecting the implementation of these initiatives, which renders some of them non-beneficial to them altogether. The reason for this is businesses of female entrepreneurs tend to be service-oriented and operate at a smaller scale than the businesses of their male counterparts. It means that they are immediately affected by even the smallest obstacles they face, and when the intended benefit from these initiatives does not materialise, they have more to lose in terms of their initial investment and expenses incurred (Qasim, 2018).

At the motherhood level, two themes have been identified, with two other subthemes stemming from them. The findings under the subtheme of motherhood ideals, namely motherhood plans and motherhood guilt and responsibilities find resonance with the literature on gender awareness, especially regarding the difficulties mothers who are female entrepreneur face in terms of additional duties and responsibilities. These factors are women-specific and cannot be extended to include male entrepreneurs as the role of domestic and family caregiver has been prescribed to females by society (Friedson-Ridenour & Pierotti, 2018). Furthermore, the subtheme of motherhood environs reveals the elements surrounding the female entrepreneurs, such as the husbands' attitudes and the available supporting opportunities. These are also specific to female entrepreneurs, as husbands' attitudes describe the effect of the support or lack thereof that the female entrepreneurs receive from their husbands, which has a significant influence on how they operate and grow their businesses. Also, the availability of supporting factors such as assistance from family, friends, or hired help in taking care of the children increases the female entrepreneurs' focus on improving their businesses and raises their chances of growth and success.

Furthermore, the results under emerging insights highlight four interesting themes, namely parent entrepreneur, independence, personal faith and mentorship. With regard to parent entrepreneur, while the results are extendable to male and female entrepreneurs alike, female entrepreneurs are especially affected by this finding as it reflects their attitude towards their businesses and their families, as a response to the attitudes of their parents as entrepreneurs during their childhood. The findings related to mentorship can also affect both male and female entrepreneurs. However, female entrepreneurs are likely to benefit the most from these mentorship services, which can make up for their lack of networks and connections and hence assist them in their business concerns and endeavours. This study also uncovered some characteristics of female entrepreneurs, regarding their independence, resolve and clarity of thought about their business and family decisions. This is an interesting finding because it highlights the fact women entrepreneurs are far from being weak or inexperienced but are capable, knowledgeable, determined and self-confident. Another interesting finding was the element of personal faith, which leads the female entrepreneurs to have belief and confidence that they will achieve success in one way or another, resulting in the confidence they need to continue to pursue their aspirations. This finding could not have been obtained with the traditional quantitative enquires and necessitates the use of a qualitative approach.

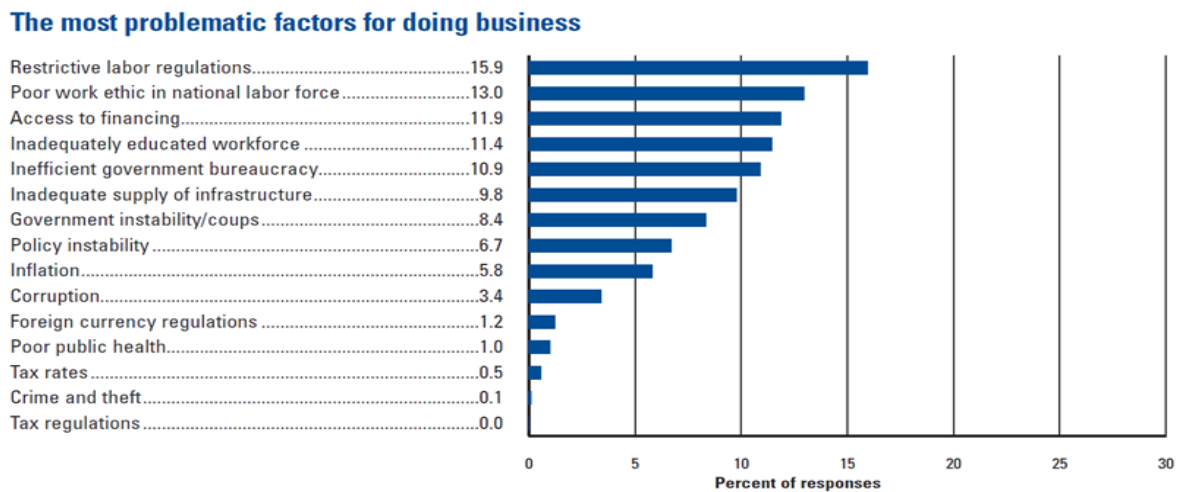


Figure 4: The most problematic factors for doing Business in Bahrain. Source: Global Competitiveness Report, World Economic Forum, 2011-2012, p. 108.

The findings are in line with the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report (2011-2012, p.108), which ranks the most problematic issues concerning entrepreneurs in 142 countries, including the Kingdom of Bahrain for whom the resulting statistics are presented in Figure 4. The report notably highlights that entrepreneurs in the Kingdom of Bahrain rank the complexity of commercial and labour regulations at the height of their concerns. This ties in with the study findings on the regulatory theme, at the macro-environment level (see Section 5.2.1), followed by a weak working culture which was discovered by the study’s finding under socio-economic conditions at the macro-environment level (see Section 5.2.2). Furthermore, difficulty in accessing finances is ranked third, and these ties in with the finding on subsidies and funding initiatives, in the meso-environment level analysis (see Section 5.3.1). The fourth-ranked problematic issue is the lack of adequately educated workforce, which is reflected in the study finding under the challenges to regulatory efforts section at the macro-environment level category (see Section 5.2.1.2). The fifth in the top five problematic areas for entrepreneurs in the country is inefficient government bureaucracy, which can also be seen under the regulatory theme in the macro-environment level category (see Section 5.2.1).

The 5M model of female entrepreneurship (Brush et al., 2009) constituted a basis for the IFFEM conceptual framework developed and adopted by this thesis and provided the building blocks on which the conceptual framework lies. As explained in section 5.6 above, the 5M model is a gender-aware model that is stemmed from institutional theory and identifies the meso/macro and motherhood environments in addition to the 3Ms (money, management and markets) as first advanced by Bates et al. (2007) as the necessary elements

for entrepreneurship. The meso environment acts as the link between the narrow micro-level environment and the wider macro-level environment (Pitelis, 2005; Dopfer et al., 2004). For the purpose of this thesis, the IFFEM gender-aware framework borrowed the motherhood, meso and macro environment constructs from the 5M model and applied each one of them as a separate level of analysis for investigating the contextual embeddedness of female entrepreneurship. This provided the analysis with insights into the multiple dimensions influencing female entrepreneurship as entrepreneurship is a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Hampel-Milagrosa, 2010; Yamada, 2004). Coupled with the feminist standpoint lens, the meso-environment, macro-environment and motherhood constructs from the 5M model combined to create the IFEEM framework and enabled the research to reach significant and original findings that were not previously discovered.

Therefore, as can be seen from the findings of the study above, employing the IFFEM framework in the investigation and analysis of this thesis has uncovered several findings that were previously overlooked under the traditional male-centred methods of analysis. The shift from using gender as merely a variable in the study of female entrepreneurship into employing feminist and gender-aware means of investigation has allowed the results of the study to unveil findings that are of importance to female entrepreneurial development. These finding can be summed up as challenges and opportunities faced at the regulatory, societal, economic, initiative, personal and motherhood levels enrich the literature on female entrepreneurship with new knowledge on the field and provide the policy-makers and concerned bodies with valuable information useful in designing future strategies and plans in promoting and improving the state of female entrepreneurship. Moreover, these results could not have been achieved without employing a qualitative method of analysis, responding to calls in the literature (Mordi et al., 2010). This was achieved by focusing on the interpretivist philosophical paradigm and using a phenomenological feminist design for the semi-structured interviews, instead of the typical explorative techniques of quantitative analysis.

This study was able to highlight how the context in which female entrepreneurs' start-up and run their businesses affects the way in which they operate them. The results obtained at each level of analysis validate the appropriateness of the conceptual model employed for this study, namely the IFFEM framework that was developed by the researcher for this investigation. The combination of institutional theory and feminism, along with a qualitative methodological approach, has helped clarify the influencing factors at the macro, meso and motherhood levels and helped uncover additional knowledge that was before unattainable under traditional methods of analysis.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The continuous development of female entrepreneurship across countries produces a significant positive impact on their national economies. By emphasising the importance of established female entrepreneurs and facilitating their entrepreneurial efforts, countries can witness the resulting economic and social benefits across multiple levels. First, female entrepreneurs are more likely to lend a helping hand to other females in the society by consistently hiring more women as employees in their companies, thereby increasing the overall inclusion of females in the workforce, and essentially countering discrimination against women in the job market (Byrne et al., 2018; GEM, 2015). Secondly, successful women entrepreneurs become role models to younger females and can have a strong influence on their future ambitions and aspirations when considering employment prospects (GEM, 2015). Lastly, through the reasons above, increasing the participation of females as entrepreneurs can have a ripple effect on society, by encouraging female involvement in private sector development, which fosters creativity and promotes a different way of doing business than the traditional masculine approach (Aidis et al., 2007; GEM, 2015). Nevertheless, female entrepreneurial activity rates are consistently reported to be below those of the male entrepreneurs, and female entrepreneurship businesses suffer from the smaller size, limited activity and less success rate than those of their male counterparts (Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011). The increased attention that entrepreneurial literature has paid to the topic of female entrepreneurship in Western economies has helped set it as an established field of research (Moore, 1990). However, research reporting on female entrepreneurs in nations outside the Western setting has not yet had its share of the attention, the studies' methodology tends to be mostly quantitative (Ahl, 2006; Gartner & Birley, 2002). Female entrepreneurship remains in its current state an underexplored field in many areas around the world, especially in the MENA region (Dechant & Al-Lamky, 2005, Hattab 2012).

This thesis set out to reduce the knowledge gap by reporting on the contextual embeddedness of entrepreneurship and its effect on female entrepreneurship development. This was achieved by advancing a model combining institutional theory, feminism and qualitative analysis, namely the IFFEM, and testing it with an empirical study in the Arab Muslim context of the Kingdom of Bahrain. This chapter is organised as follows. Section 1 presents the introduction and highlights the other parts of the chapter. Section 2 discusses the research's contribution to knowledge. Section 3 discusses the theoretical contributions of the

research. Section 4 highlights the contributions to practice that are advanced by the thesis, while section 5 highlights the contribution to the methodology. Next, section 6 presents the thesis's research reflection, and section 7 discusses the limitations of the research, while section 8 covers the research significance. Finally, section 9 concludes with recommendations for further research.

7.2 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Despite the growing interest in female entrepreneurship worldwide, female entrepreneurs in the emerging economies have not had their share of attention, especially in the Middle East and North African landscape (Hattab, 2012). More specifically in the Arab countries, although female participation in self-employment and economic growth has risen noticeably in recent years, this field of research is still untamed and has not been duly explored (Hattab, 2012; Dechant & Al-Lamky, 2005). This thesis contributes to the knowledge of female entrepreneurship in an Arab context, by studying the contextual embeddedness of female entrepreneurs in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Furthermore, the main contribution is that this thesis extends the knowledge of female entrepreneurship as follows: First, among the scarcity of the literature on female entrepreneurship in an Arab context, this thesis provides the most in-depth analysis about the phenomena of female entrepreneurship examined in the region thus far. This comes as a response to the lack of adequate literature on female entrepreneurs in a context other than the Western context. Also, this work is the first-to the knowledge of the researcher- that covers the contextual embeddedness of female entrepreneurship in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and such can make meaning of the phenomena of female entrepreneurship in the country by shedding light on its differing aspects.

Furthermore, this thesis identifies the challenges and opportunities that the female entrepreneurs are subjected to at the meso-environment level, macro-environment level and motherhood level, especially regarding the factors that have not been identified before. By studying the macro environment, this thesis has identified ten factors that impact female entrepreneurship, some of which that have not been previously identified, such as the impact of the prevailing working culture and innovation. Moreover, the findings at the macro-level shed light on the improving societal perceptions in the country, which reflects the previously defined adverse viewpoints on the state of females and female entrepreneurs are slowly fading away and making space for societal attitudes that are accepting of and embracing women empowerment and women's involvement in self-employment. This comes by encouraging economic prospects that look to include females in the workforce as entrepreneurs, to diversify the economic tendencies in line with the

Bahrain Economic Vision 2030. As such, the thesis showcases the simultaneous change accruing approximately at the same time among both formal institutions (economic strategies and regulatory settings) and informal institutions (societal norms and perceptions) (North, 1990).

In light of the and meso environment, this thesis identified five major elements as perceived by the women themselves that play a vital role in the success of female entrepreneurship ventures, namely, funding initiatives, training initiatives, subsidies, incubation schemes, and societies and networks. Also, the research reflected on both the opportunities and the challenges that these elements pose for the female entrepreneurs, and how variations in their implementation can turn them from activities intended to help flourish female entrepreneurial activities to hindering practices (Section 5.3). The research also identified the most favourable initiative for the female entrepreneurs from the ones abovementioned was the subsidies initiative by Tamkeen, which paid a percentage of 50%, or higher, of the entrepreneurs' needs for funding of their business activities. This again confirms the immense importance of adequate funding opportunities for female entrepreneurs in the survival and growth of their business ventures (Carter & Rosa, 1998; Heilman & Chen, 2003; Meunier et al., 2017; Qasim, 2018).

Furthermore, the knowledge gathered at the motherhood level describes the effect of the societal assigned gender roles to female entrepreneurs, which burden them with additional domestic and child caring duties over and above their responsibilities as business owners. However, as previously mentioned, this thesis was able to uncover new knowledge at the motherhood level, regarding the availability of supporting husbands and supporting opportunities especially childcare. Also, the thesis confirmed the extended difficulties that are bestowed on female entrepreneurs because of their societally assigned gender roles and responsibilities, in addition to their intense feelings of guilt and responsibility towards their children and their households, which takes away their time and focus on their entrepreneurial and business activities.

Furthermore, this thesis identified some interesting findings categorised as emerging insights, and unique that may or may not align with previous literature. These findings on religion confirm that it plays a vital role in the lives of female entrepreneurs and shapes their ideas and beliefs. In this sense, the findings of the study enforce the notion that the Islamic religion does not forbid the woman from pursuing a career in entrepreneurship, but instead encourages that. This extends the literature with new information on the role of Islam in promoting female entrepreneurship, contrary to common belief. Also, the need for mentors was not comprehensively documented in previous works. However, this thesis contributes by introducing it as a strong theme that has been repeatedly mentioned and requested among female entrepreneurs, of whom a

significant number admitted to using mentors or life coach services during their entrepreneurial journeys. Another contribution to knowledge is the strong sense of independence that the female entrepreneurs have, which refutes the idea of weak and helpless females and replaces it with the image of resilient, mature and determined women. This thesis also contributes to knowledge by highlighting the need for recurring business opportunities as constant markets for female entrepreneurs, such as government deals or big project contracts, since access to stable markets pertains to the very livelihood of these businesses. Furthermore, access to relevant markets remains the most important worry of female entrepreneurs (Bates et al., 2007), irrespective of the extent and amount of initiative in place to facilitate their business activities. All these findings are made possible through the in-depth qualitative investigation techniques which render the analysis richer and more meaningful and allows for achieving more profound results. The use of phenomenology and the feminist methods of inquiry enabled this thesis to contribute to knowledge in aspects that were previously dominated by quantitative research techniques, as such, expand the literature with new rich knowledge gathered through the use of qualitative inquiry.

7.3 CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

This thesis has advanced a new framework for the study of female entrepreneurship and its contextual embeddedness, namely the IFFEM. The IFFEM emphasises the vital role of the institutional effects of the various macro, meso and motherhood factors on female entrepreneurship and interprets them through a feminist lens. Structurally, this model borrows the motherhood facet from the 5M Model as one of its main elements. Furthermore, the meso environment and the macro environment first advanced as one component in the 5M model are each advanced as separate elements and formed the remaining two facets of the model. Female entrepreneurship is at the core of the model, and the meso, macro and motherhood components are portrayed side by side in a triangular shape, surrounding female entrepreneurship. The effect of all three elements on female entrepreneurship is represented by one-sided arrows originating from the three elements towards female entrepreneurship. Lastly, the final element in this model is the feminist standpoint approach. By serving as a lens to oversee the study on female entrepreneurship, it ensures that the work and results of the study are conducted, interpreted by and for the benefit of the female entrepreneurs.

Therefore, by simultaneously combining institutional elements and a feminist perspective in one model, the IFFEM framework responds to literary calls to extend the literature on female entrepreneurship by providing insights into emotions, beliefs and attitudes of female entrepreneurs in response to the various environmental and social pressures they are faced with (Bird and Brush, 2002; Ahl, 2006; Brush et al.,

2009; Hampel-Milagrosa, 2010). The motherhood metaphor and how it affects the lives and activities of the female entrepreneurs presents an opportunity for the model to apprehend further the significance and depth by which those responsibilities can influence female entrepreneurial efforts. Furthermore, as intended in the original 5M model, this framework emphasises the analysis of the forces at the meso-level that affect business development by addressing the meso environment in which the female entrepreneurs operate. This, in turn, provides a link between the macro and microenvironments of the female entrepreneurs and highlights the effects that the supporting strategies, policies and initiatives have on female entrepreneurship. Likewise, addressing the macro environment sheds light on the various economic, regulatory and cultural factors that influence the development of female entrepreneurship and underlines the societal habits and norms that influence the way society views female entrepreneurs and affects the daily operation of their business.

The adoption of the feminist standpoint in the IFFEM framework enhances the literature on female entrepreneurship towards more in-depth analytical approaches that can better explain female entrepreneurial issues (Hughes et al., 2012). Stemming from a subjectivist research philosophy, the adoption of feminism position produced research results based on the interpretations of the female entrepreneurs themselves about the various meso, macro and motherhood factors that influence their entrepreneurial journeys. Rather than superficially quantifying and merely reporting on the environmental factors that affect female entrepreneurial efforts, the IFFEM framework using the feminism approach enables attaining further clarification, recognises the female entrepreneurship phenomena and advances the knowledge related to female entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial efforts.

7.4 CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

As with all research efforts, the objective of conducting the research is to identify where the main problems arise and propose suggestions on how to solve them. To this end, this research reported many issues regarding the contextual embeddedness of female entrepreneurship and its effect on the female entrepreneurial development, and as such can have several contributions worth consideration — the most noteworthy recommendation that this research principally proposes highlights the very essence of the thesis itself. At its core, the thesis endorses a qualitative approach to investigating female entrepreneurship, and this method of investigation has delivered insights that were not possible under quantitative techniques. Therefore, to advance and reinforce the women entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial presence, a more proactive

approach must consider the importance of raising the female entrepreneurs' voice and identifying with their struggles. Similarly, policymakers and government officials are encouraged to conduct periodic researches, interviews and discussions with female entrepreneurs, listening to their issues, aspirations and struggles to keep up-to-date with current matters of interest, and thus tailor their regulatory and supporting efforts to their needs. Listening to the current struggles and opinions of female entrepreneurs will avert many drawbacks and disappointments they have, and the necessary efforts directed to where they can be more useful and beneficial for female entrepreneurs. Furthermore, this thesis makes several other recommendations that are grouped according to the macro-environment, meso-environment and motherhood levels and presented in the following paragraphs.

Regarding the macro-environment level, the research has highlighted several findings to which it makes the following recommendations:

1. Encourage the culture of women as a significant driving force of the economy, by addressing social and cultural taboos that limit the participation of women in certain areas of public and private business life.
2. Encourage all entities, organisations, government bodies and authorities involved in female entrepreneurial support to highlight their role and services in promoting and supporting female entrepreneurial activities.
3. Essential training for personnel involved in implementing regulatory requirements and financial subsidies. It will avoid unnecessary delays and complexities encountered by the female entrepreneurs during the startup and later operating phases of their business ventures.
4. Promote the basics of a healthy working culture by creating awareness on the importance of maintaining good work ethics and business morals through programmes targeting school and university students highlighting the importance of integrity, loyalty and honesty on the job and encouraging the adoption of proper ethical and moral standards.
5. Provide adequate business opportunities for the female entrepreneurs to ensure the continuation of their businesses, by supporting their ventures through setting a national strategy for the inclusion of female-venture tailored into the budgeting efforts of ministries, government bodies and partnering entities.

Regarding the meso-environment level, the following are recommended:

6. Provide incubation schemes bespoke to serve the needs of female entrepreneurs, by first conducting female-entrepreneurship-gearred studies that can indicate how to shape the incubation efforts appropriately.
7. Provide better business training opportunities for female entrepreneurs to improve their business and managerial skills and avoid costly mishaps later in their businesses.
8. Create awareness of the available initiatives and facilities provided for women entrepreneurs, by conducting seminars and training sessions that promote these services on a regular basis.
9. Provide mentorship and counselling opportunities and promote success stories for female entrepreneurs which can help them deal with the insecurities of starting a new business and gain the self-confidence they need to succeed in their endeavours.
10. Improve the involvement of entrepreneurial societies and organisations in the advancement of female entrepreneurial efforts by encouraging them to adopt a supportive culture and being open to adapt to current and differing female entrepreneurial needs.

Finally, about the motherhood level, the study suggests the following recommendations:

11. Create awareness on the vital role women entrepreneurs play at the national, and highlight its impact on the economy, the society and particularly the family household.
12. Provide appropriate child caring centres cater to the current needs and requirements of mothers that are entrepreneurs, to ease their motherhood guilt, which can, in turn, ease their domestic responsibilities and offer them the necessary focus they need to concentrate on running and developing their business.
13. Encourage, promote and champion the culture of partnership between men and women as partners in the household, society, and the nation by highlighting and publicising shared responsibilities among male and female citizens of the country, through advertising campaigns or awards initiated for that purpose.

All the above recommendations are implementable by policymakers and appropriate entities as part of a national strategy to improve and develop the state of female entrepreneurship and reinforce its essential contributions.

7.5 RESEARCH REFLECTION

This research has focused on investigating the institutional context of female entrepreneurs and its effects on their entrepreneurial undertakings, in light of a feminist perspective. The combination of these theories within the suggested Institutional and Feminist Female Entrepreneurship Model, namely the IFFEM framework, which is a gender-aware model geared towards female entrepreneurship, succeeded in shedding light on the issues that might have been affecting female entrepreneurs continually but have not been identified with the traditional male-centred models of investigation.

The results show that the regulatory setting is one of the major influencers on female entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the availability and ease of access to the existing initiatives can either facilitate or further complicate their entrepreneurial journeys, depending on the measures set for implementation and execution. As the literature previously mentioned, female entrepreneurs are subjected to the same influences at the macro and meso level as male entrepreneurs. However, the effects of these influences are magnified given the additional difficulties and duties that they are assigned through their gender role (De Vita et al., 2014).

It is no secret that the female entrepreneurs bear, in addition to their business responsibilities as venture owners, their duties as mothers and caregivers, in charge of most if not all, domestic duties. The reality is that the prevailing culture still positions the women as solely responsible for domestic and child caring duties in the family construct. The results of this study show that the societal assigned gender roles and responsibilities to females affect their entrepreneurial spirit, both positively and negatively. On the one hand, it pushes them into entrepreneurship to achieve some flexibility between family and work life, but on the other hand, when the pressures of motherhood and societal assigned gender roles are at their highest, the businesses of female entrepreneurs suffer from decreased attention and neglected growth prospects to develop. However, the results have shown that availability of supporting opportunities from their families, husbands and childcare options ease these difficulties for the female entrepreneurs and allow them a better opportunity to focus on their businesses in comparison with their Western counterparts.

Therefore, this research confirms that the contextual embeddedness of female entrepreneurship is highly apparent and significant for the female entrepreneurs (Meunier et al., 2017; Welter, 2011), and further highlights the exact areas of influence that need attention from researchers, policymakers and the female entrepreneurs themselves to further advance the development of female entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the findings of this research further confirm the appropriateness of the IFFEM framework advanced for this

study, combining a feminist perspective with institutional theory and a gender-aware lens for the study of female entrepreneurship, provided rich, insightful and meaningful findings unachievable with traditional male-centred methods of investigation.

7.6 CONTRIBUTIONS TO METHODOLOGY

This research adopted an interpretivist phenomenological feminist approach in obtaining its data, through conducting semi-structured interviews with some female entrepreneurs. The qualitative approach adopted for this study has enabled the researcher to identify the personal thoughts and the special circumstances of the female entrepreneurs that would have otherwise remained uncovered with the adoption of quantitative analysis (Mordi et al., 2010). The use of the feminist method in approaching the interview subjects and conducting the interviews required ethical treatment of the interviewees and handling of their data. The researcher provided the interview participants with the opportunity to warm-up to the researcher, allowing the interviewees to express themselves more confidently and comfortably, and thereby opening up about events and circumstances that they would have otherwise been reluctant to share. Obtaining a comprehensive picture of the surrounding institutional, social and personal factors that shape the experience of the female entrepreneur necessitates reverting to techniques that allow for gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomena of study. This method of investigation enforcing the interpretivist research paradigm encourages gaining meaningful hands-on data rather than statically observed facts as achievable through quantitative analysis (Silverman, 2004). Also, the feminist method of investigation provided the opportunity for their voice to be heard alongside examining the concept of female entrepreneurs. Furthermore, investigating the background areas at the meso, macro and motherhood levels allowed the collection of rich and unprecedented information which allowed the researcher to properly relate with the experiences, obstacles, achievements and heartaches of the female entrepreneurs as intended through the IFFEM framework. This method of investigation can now be confidently extended to study female entrepreneurs in other countries or regions, as well as specific industries both nationally and across nations.

7.7 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

No research is without limitations, and as is the case with all research efforts, this thesis has encountered some limitations discussed in the following section. First, data on female entrepreneurs are scarce and obtaining reliable data is difficult to acquire. Also, the statistics obtained tend to be outdated for the most

part due to the lack of new officially reported data. Furthermore, the literature on female entrepreneurs in Bahrain is also rare, and this makes the possibility to contrast and evaluate results with other related works almost impossible. Hence, the researcher has reverted to comparing the results with other literary works that may bear dissimilarity in terms of the context. Regarding the methodology employed, the qualitative methodology used has been traditional of qualitative interview data, which has previously been associated with researcher bias, because it mainly depends on the researcher's analysis, as has been mentioned in the methodology part in Chapter Four above. Another drawback of this study is that the research investigation covered only one country, namely the Kingdom of Bahrain, and was not extended to investigate other countries or regions simultaneously. In addition, the sample size of interviewed female entrepreneurs could be increased to include more females and report on more female entrepreneurial experiences.

7.8 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The importance of this research is threefold. First, it responds to the literary calls to use qualitative methodologies to study female entrepreneurship, to shift away from traditional positivist and quantitative techniques, which are no longer capable of contributing meaningful and novel information to the literature. Second, it reports on female entrepreneurs and their experiences in an Arab Muslim state, because information on female entrepreneurship is traditionally linked to studies in the Western context. Furthermore, data is scarce on female entrepreneurs in the MENA region and especially about an Arab Muslim country. The significance of this thesis is therefore in providing new and rich information on the study of female entrepreneurship in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Third, the study focuses on the contextual embeddedness of female entrepreneurship and by combining feminism and gender-aware perspectives with an institutional approach. As such, this research sets the study on female entrepreneurship apart by distinguishing it with a female-centred perspective rather than the traditionally used male-centred perspective. This consequently aids in gaining deeper insights into the real journeys of female entrepreneurs and the difficulties and opportunities they encounter.

Here also the research identifies significant areas of focus for researchers, policymakers and female entrepreneurs themselves, regarding challenges, opportunities and particularities of female entrepreneurship, and as such can provide valuable insights on where to focus efforts and attention to increase the performance of female entrepreneurial ventures. By identifying them and grouping them at the levels of the meso, macro and motherhood, this research confirms the importance of institutional effects,

and enforces the delicateness of the motherhood duties imposed on women because of the gender identity. This thesis takes a step forward in the way to empowering women and emphasizing they are as strong and significant a part of society as men, and as such more attention needs to be given to enforcing their pivotal roles in society. No other study in the Middle East has focused on all three levels of analysis as in-depth as this study has, and as such, this thesis is regarded as a pioneer in that regard.

Furthermore, although this investigation took place in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the results of this study can be extended to expand the knowledge on female entrepreneurship in other nations, and its implications further considered in other regional settings. This is true because the obtained research findings report on the essence of female entrepreneurship and address female entrepreneurial matters that are context-initiated but are nonetheless permanently integrated into the natural weaving of the female entrepreneurial fabric, and consequently generalisable no matter how specific they are.

7.9 FUTURE RESEARCH

While this thesis advances a new model for the study of female entrepreneurship in context, namely the IFFEM, it only paves the way for future studies on female entrepreneurship that can provide a comprehensive 360-degree view of the female entrepreneur and her struggles. One of the many applications of this model would be to use it for the study of female entrepreneurs in different country settings, and different regional settings. It would be interesting to see whether the findings obtained at the country level still hold at the regional level and whether the identified influencing factors affect different settings differently. Moreover, a further extension of the research model can incorporate a fourth element, namely the micro-environment of the female entrepreneurs to capture more elements that are directly concerned with the entrepreneur's personal nature and competencies thereby expanding the investigation to take place at the micro level in addition to the currently investigated meso, macro and motherhood levels. Also, the research objectives can be extended to include comparisons across nations, regions or industries and to report on the similarities or differences between female entrepreneurs in other nations or in between countries and industries (Meunier et al., 2017; Welter, 2011). Nonetheless, the study of female entrepreneurship is still in its early stages, and a lot is still to be learned about the way female entrepreneurs perceive, interpret and react to the various societal, regulatory, financial and domestic influences that they are subjected to during their entrepreneurial journeys. The reality is the working environment of female entrepreneurs is not flat, linear and straightforward, but rather it is a mixture of very complex elements and

circumstances that can render the entrepreneurial journey into a draining experience for most women entrepreneurs.

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX 1. DEMOGRAPHICS OF INTERVIEWEES

Table 3: *Demographics of interview sample participants. M: Married; S, Single, Yes: Y, N: No.*

Interviewee	Business Venture	Years in Business	Age	Marital Status	Children	Bahraini National
1. FMG	Kids' Gym activities center	10-15	35-45	M	2	N
2. HSB	Activity box	0-5	35-45	M	1	N
3. AAZ	Kids soft clay activities center	0-5	35-45	M	1+2 Step-Children	Y
4. FJL	Chef/ restaurateur	0-5	25-30	D	3	Y
5. GJC	Kids Arts Activities	0-5	35-45	M	2	Y
6. GSD	Interior Decorator	0-5	35-45	M	2	Y
7. BWE	Professional Storyteller	0-5	25-30	M	4	Y
8. MHN	Parental & Kids guidance	0-5	30-35	M	2	Y
9. VSO	Language Center	6-10	35-45	M	3	N
10. STB	Baker	0-5	30-35	M	-	Y
11. JMW	Mommy spa	0-5	35-45	M	1	Y
12. SMG	Clearing Agency	10-15	45-55	M	4	Y
13. NHC	Events Management Agency	0-5	35-40	M	-	Y
14. JBP	Preschool Owner	Over 25	Over 55	M	2	N
15. LOM	Osteopath	5-10	Over 55	M	1	N
16. SBA	Organic Clothes Maker	0-5	30-35	M	2	N
17. MGS	Gift & Stationary Shop	5-10	Over 55	M	3	Y
18. MKK	Children's Activities	0-5	35-40	M	5	Y
19. RWD	Swimming Skills	0-5	35-45	D	1	N
20. OLM	Music & Arts School	15-25	35-45	M	2	N
21. BEM	Events & Media Agency	10-15	35-45	D	1	Y
22. SBE	Baby Items Shop	0-5	30-35	M	3	N
23. NOC	Online Clothes Shop	0-5	25-30	M	1	Y
24. SPS	Online Stationary Shop	0-5	25-30	M	-	Y
25. JHP	Healthy Pizza Concept	0-5	35-45	M	1	Y
26. HDD	Nutrition Center	0-5	35-45	M	2	N
27. MMS	Makeup & Beauty Shop	15-25	35-45	S	-	Y
28. YBS	Luxury Salon	5-10	25-30	S	-	Y
29. HBN	Cosmetic Hospital Owner	0-5	30-45	M	-	Y
30. NFS	Flowers & Chocolates Shop	15-25	Over 55	M	2	Y
31. HJC	Cargo & Customs Clearing	15-25	35-45	M	4	Y
32. LRI	Baker	0-5	35-45	M	1	N
33. SBC	Café Owner	0-5	35-45	M	1	N
34. SLS	Preschool owner	15-25	45-55	M	1	N
35. APP	Professional Photographer	5-10	30-35	S	-	Y
36. RBJ	Kids Activities Center	0-5	30-35	M	2	Y
37. MHG	Coffee & Dates Business	5-10	Over 55	W	2	Y
38. IAF	Online Food Business	5-10	Over 55	M	3	Y
39. MPS	Pet Grooming Shop	0-5	45-55	W	-	N
40. SHC	Health Card	5-10	35-45	S	-	Y
41. BDS	Ladies Boutique	10-15	45-55	M	3	Y
42. EMF	Accounting Firm	5-10	35-45	S	-	Y
43. LBA	Organic Clothes Maker	0-5	30-35	M	2	N
44. ACS	Commercial Services	Over 25	Over 55	M	4	Y

APPENDIX 2. ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

Ethical Approval Letter



College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
United Kingdom
www.brunel.ac.uk

15 May 2017

LETTER OF APPROVAL

Applicant: Mrs. Hala Hatoum
Project Title: Female Entrepreneurship
Reference: 5965-LR-May/2017- 7229-2

Dear Mrs. Hala Hatoum

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.

Please note that:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Knowles', written over a horizontal line.

Professor James Knowles

Chair

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London

APPENDIX 3. LETTER OF INVITATION TO INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS



Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Date:

Dear Madam,

Subject: Female Entrepreneurship: Insights from the Kingdom of Bahrain

I am a doctoral researcher at the School of Business, Brunel University, United Kingdom the under the supervision of Dr. Chima Mordi. My research aims to investigate the factors that enhance the development of female entrepreneurship, as well as the factors that impede it. As a progression from that, I am also investigating the interplay between these various factors and how this interaction affects female entrepreneurial development. Finally, my research aims to identify the deeper insights that the female entrepreneurs have about their entrepreneurial experiences by shedding the light on their perceptions about their entrepreneurial journeys.

Participants will be selected to participate in the study based on their gender (females) and status as female business owners currently operating their businesses. The findings of this study are intended to benefit female entrepreneurs and ambitious females contemplating entrepreneurship as an occupational choice, as well as different academics and practitioners/policy makers in the field of female entrepreneurship. It is expected that the results of the study can be useful not only in the context of the Kingdom of Bahrain but in other regions as well.

I plan to conduct one-to-one in person interviews with women entrepreneurs who are interested to participate in the study. Participants will be kindly asked to answer a few questions regarding their experience as female entrepreneurs during the interview lasting around 45-90 minutes.

The Participant Information Sheet will be sent out to the female entrepreneurs accepting the invitation to participate in this study. It contains information about my research, its purpose and objectives and the ethical measures that I will enforce in conducting the interviews and later storing and analyzing the collected data. It will also serve as your guide on any information related to your participation in the study, and guarantee my commitment to the highest standards of integrity, professionalism and ethical principles in undertaking this investigation. It will also give you a closer idea about my research and will constitute the basis for our interview discussion. To be able to focus my full attention on our discussion, I will use an audio recorder during the interview, and later transcribe our discussion myself. I would like to assure you that the audio recording and transcribed information will remain confidential and private at all times, and that I will take all necessary measures to withhold the participants' identities as well as any information that can give that

away. The information obtained during the interview process and the findings reached afterwards will be privately and securely kept and stored on a Brunel server, password protected and used strictly for the purpose of this research, and destroyed when no longer required. In addition, pseudonyms will be assigned to the participants to keep their identities unrecognizable. After finalizing the study, I will gladly provide you with the executive summary of the results, if you so request.

I guarantee to all participants that their personal information all collected research data, audio recordings, transcripts, and notes will be solely for the purpose of this study and will remain private and securely stored on a Brunel server, password protected, and destroyed when no longer required. Participant identities will not be revealed and will be replaced by pseudonyms. In addition, all electronic communications (such as e-mails) will be stored on a Brunel server, password protected, and destroyed when no longer required.

In the event you agree to participate in this research, an email will be sent to you along with the Participant Information Sheet. After that we can proceed to schedule the time, date and place for the interview at your convenience.

I would gladly respond to any questions or concerns you have regarding my research or the study procedures before making your decision regarding participation. Kindly contact me **Hala Hatoum** via email: Hala.Hatoum@brunel.ac.uk to get answers to your questions.

I highly appreciate you taking the time to read this information and considering to participate in this study. Kindly note that in case you decide to take part in this study, your contribution will leave an important academic and practical impact and will aid in advancing the current knowledge about female entrepreneurship for concerned academics and practitioners alike.

I am looking forward to receiving your feedback and hoping you will agree to participate in this study.

Yours truly,

Hala Hatoum
Doctoral Researcher
School of Business
Brunel University

APPENDIX 4. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Participant Information Sheet



Brunel Business School
Research Ethics

1. Title of Research: Female Entrepreneurship: Insights from the Kingdom of Bahrain.

2. Invitation Paragraph:

‘I am extending an invitation for you to take part in a research study. Before deciding whether you would like to participate or not, it is necessary that you understand what the research is about and how it will be conducted. Please take some time to become familiar with the nature of the research and what it entails by reading the following information carefully, and feel free to discuss it with others if you wish. I am available to respond to all of your concerns so please ask me if there is anything ambiguous and still unclear, or if you would like more information. Kindly take your time to decide whether you would like to participate or not.
Thank you for reading this.’

2. Researcher: Hala Hatoum on Doctor of Philosophy, Business School, Brunel University

3. Contact Email: Hala.Hatoum@brunel.ac.uk

4. Purpose of the research:

The study aims to look at the factors that enhance or impede female entrepreneurship development and to gather information on the perception of the female entrepreneurs themselves through their entrepreneurial journeys. Although the topic of Female Entrepreneurship has garnered increased attention in recent times, different contexts may present different challenges or opportunities to the female entrepreneur, and the interplay between the varying factors that they face has not been fully explored yet. To that extent, this study will investigate female entrepreneurial experiences highlighting the factors that have helped or hindered their entrepreneurial advancement, and shedding the light on their perceptions throughout their entrepreneurial journeys. It is expected that the results of this study will help pinpoint the areas that need most attention in female entrepreneurship, namely those that have either a positive or a negative effect on female entrepreneurial development, and as a result open the way for academics and practitioners to adapt their research efforts and policies, respectively, to enhance and improve opportunities and outcomes for aspiring women entrepreneurs. Since the study is being conducted as part of the Doctor of Philosophy requirements, the duration of the study is three years long, but the duration of each interview would be between 45-90 mins.

5. Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been approached to participate in the study because you are a female entrepreneur operating your business in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The research is about gaining insights on the experiences of female entrepreneurs, their perceptions on the entrepreneurial process, and identifying the factors that enhance or impede the development of female entrepreneurship. The study will be conducted in the context of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

6. Do I have to take part? Voluntary nature of participation and confidentiality.

It is important that the participants feel at ease while participating in the interviews. Hence, I will personally make sure that they are fully aware that participation is fully voluntary and that they hold the right to withdraw from the study at any point if they wish to. This will be formally presented to them in a written statement through the Participant Information Sheet, communicated to them in advance of obtaining their participation approval. In addition, the participant information sheet will include a written section whereby I personally guarantee that the data and records of this study will be stored safely and securely in password protected files accessible only by me, the researcher, for research purposes, and that they do not risk showing their identities at any point during the study or afterwards as I will not include any information that can lead to their identities being revealed. In fact, I will immediately assign pseudonyms to each participant after conducting their interview and refer only to their pseudonyms in case of any reference to their data.

7. What will happen to me if I take part? What is involved: The study will be conducted by using semi-structured interviews. I will be meeting with the female entrepreneurs personally to conduct the investigation. As such each participant in the study will be asked to undergo a one-on-one interview session with the researcher. The research questions are open-ended and allow for the interviewee to elaborate within the areas that they deem relevant. The design of the questions employed takes into consideration the topic of investigation, namely female entrepreneurship, starting off with a few related questions namely on factors that hinder or enhance their entrepreneurship experience and building upon them according to the direction the interview is proceeding in. This will allow me to probe for additional information that can describe their entrepreneurial perceptions.

8. What do I have to do? Participants will be asked to sit through an interview with me, the researcher, and answer a few questions about their entrepreneurial experience and their perceptions as entrepreneurs.

9. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? From the part of the participant, the study only entails undergoing the interview with me, the researcher. I personally guarantee the confidentiality of all research participants and as explained in point 6. Above, will take all necessary actions to guard their privacy and that of their information. Hence, there are no activities that contain any risks to the study participants.

10. What if something goes wrong? The person to be contacted if the participant wishes to complain is the Chair of the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

11. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential? Yes it will. As explained in point 6 above, I will take all necessary measures to keep the participants information and identities private safe and secure at all times.

12. What will happen to the results of the research study? I will be personally conducting the research, and will keep the results of the study anonymous and confidential, even once they are published as there will be no references to the original participants in the interviews, or their data, as they will be assigned pseudonyms and their contributions kept confidential. If you would like to view the results of the study, I will gladly provide you with a copy of the executive summary at the end of the investigation.

13. Who is organising and funding the research? I am undertaking this research as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in the Business School at Brunel University. I am funding my study personally, and all investigations it entails.

14. What are the indemnity arrangements? Brunel University provides appropriate insurance cover for research which has received ethical approval, comprising this research study.

15. Who has reviewed the study? The College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has reviewed this study.

16. Include a passage on the University's commitment to the UK Concordat on Research

Brunel University is committed to the highest standards of moral practices and ethical research. To that end, the university has adopted the Universities UK Concordat to enforce the integrity of all research activities, and is dedicated to maintaining the effective practice of transparency, honesty, openness, accountability and objectivity as guiding pillars of conducting research, on the institutional and researcher level. As such, Brunel University ensures good research practices are employed by embedding them within its research strategy as well as any related policies and procedures.

17. Integrity: I, the researcher, hereby confirm to maintain the highest standards of honesty, professionalism and integrity throughout the research, and to portray the utmost ethical values and moral principles in handling the personal information and data of the study participants as well as the results of the study.

18. Contact for further information and complaints. For further information or complaints please contact:

Hala Hatoum
Email: Hala.Hatoum@brunel.ac.uk.

Dr. Chima Mordi
Email: Chima.Mordi@brunel.ac.uk

APPENDIX 5. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



Female Entrepreneurship: Insights from the Kingdom of Bahrain

Interview Questions:

- What are the factors faced by female entrepreneurs that impede or deter the development of female entrepreneurship in the Kingdom of Bahrain?
- What are the factors faced by female entrepreneurs that enhance or encourage the development of female entrepreneurship in the Kingdom of Bahrain?
- How do women entrepreneurs perceive the interplay between these factors and its effect on their entrepreneurial experiences?

APPENDIX 6. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



Participant Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. You are kindly requested to complete this form before proceeding with the interview process.

Please tick the appropriate box

	YES	NO
Have you read the Research Participant Information Sheet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who have you spoken to?		
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:		
• at any time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• without having to give a reason for withdrawing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• (where relevant, adapt if necessary) without affecting your future care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(Where relevant) I agree to my interview being recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(Where relevant) I agree to the use of non-attributable direct quotes when the study is written up or published.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you agree to take part in this study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of Research Participant:	
Date:	
Name in capitals:	

Researcher name:	Signature:
Supervisor name:	Signature: