

## **A Comparative Study on Gender and Entrepreneurship Development: Still a Male's World within UAE cultural Context**

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### **Abstract**

*The study probes the issue of gender equality regarding entrepreneurship development within the UAE cultural context. The question which poses itself is whether female entrepreneurs get equal treatment and opportunities as their male counterparts. In addition, the study investigates the primary reasons behind few female entrepreneurs compared with their male counterparts in the UAE. In the outset, the study will also compare and contrast the characteristics, motivation, management and marketing tools used by both male and female entrepreneurs and critically explore the effect of gender on time invested in running the business and entrepreneurship practices in the UAE context. In this context, the author of the present research is interested in conducting a survey on entrepreneurs in the United Arab Emirates to investigate the differences and similarities between male and female entrepreneurs and whether gender is a key factor on the differences and similarities between entrepreneurs. The methodology adopted in preparing this paper is based on self-completion questionnaires with 125 entrepreneurs, irrespective of their gender, in the UAE. The study is limited to the UAE and the study results may be useful for regional policy makers and government to promote various programmes to encourage entrepreneurship in the UAE.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Gender, SMEs, UAE

### **Introduction**

Little information is available from the current literature on the reasons why Emirati women are reluctant to penetrate the entrepreneurship arena. In addition, some light will be thrown to highlight the current situation of Emirati entrepreneurs, especially women participation in entrepreneurship development in the UAE and the challenges they face compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, the study explores the level of support Emirati entrepreneurs received from government institutions, non-government institutions and social network (i.e. family, relatives, entrepreneurs meeting face-to-face to obtain advice, service and moral supports). The comparison would also include their motivation to start-up a business, type of industry, management knowledge and marketing skills; and the effect of gender on time invested in running the business and entrepreneurship practices in UAE context.

The Emirati society is influenced by the Islamic religion as other Arab countries. In this respect, women's role is confined to a socially constructed one such as child bearing, child rearing and looking after their husbands (i.e. household chores). In this respect, women entrepreneurs face negative attitude towards them that creates a hurdle for them and, in turn, makes it difficult for the society to accept women in business. Until now, people could not conceptualize the idea that women are competent and capable of running a business successfully. Thus, it is difficult for Emirati females to make use of their entrepreneurial talents compared with their male counterparts.

### **The problem of the research**

The study probes the issue of gender equality regarding entrepreneurship development within the UAE cultural context. The question which poses itself is whether male and female entrepreneurs are equally treated to start-up and to sustain their business' activities. In addition, the study will investigate and critically examine the reasons behind the phenomena of few female entrepreneurs compared with their male counterparts in UAE. It will also compare and contrast the characteristics, motivation, concentration on types of industry, challenges and difficulties, effect of gender on the choice of marketing tools to distribute their products and support provided by government organizations.

In the outset, the study would examine critically the effect of gender on management practices and in running the business within UAE context.

### **The significance of this research**

The significance of this study lies on examining the differences and similarities between female and male entrepreneurs when starting-up and sustaining their businesses in UAE business environment. In addition, the study highlights the support they receive from government institutions programs initiated to expand their small businesses. The aim of this study is to throw some light on understanding the reasons behind the phenomena of few female entrepreneurs in the UAE, the challenges Emirati male and female entrepreneurs are facing, similarities and differences between male and female entrepreneurs in UAE, the support provided by government and non -government institutions for both male and female entrepreneurs and the impact of male dominance in obstructing female entrepreneurs' efforts to establish new business.

### **Research Questions**

1. Why are there few female entrepreneurs in the UAE?
2. Are there differences and similarities between male and female entrepreneurs in the UAE?
3. Are there any differences in the support provided by the government, NGOs and Network to male and female entrepreneurs in the UAE?
4. Does male dominance a key factor obstruct female entrepreneurs' effort to start- up and sustain their businesses?

### **Research Objectives**

The main objectives of this study are

- To identify the main reasons behind the phenomena of few female entrepreneurs
- To examine the similarities and differences between male and female entrepreneurs in running their businesses.
- To identify whether gender has any effect on government and non -government institutions support provided for entrepreneurs.
- To examine whether a male dominance is a vital factor in hindering female entrepreneurs' effort to establish new businesses.

### **Hypotheses**

H (0): There are significant differences between male and female entrepreneurs that affect their ways to start up and to sustain their businesses.

H (1): There are no significant differences between male and female entrepreneurs that affect their start-up and sustainability of their businesses.

H (0): Both male and female entrepreneurs are satisfied with the equal treatment and support they received from government and non- government institutions.

H (2): Both male and female entrepreneurs are not satisfied with the treatment and support they received from government and non- government institutions.

H (0): Male dominance is not a key factor that obstruct female entrepreneurs' effort to start up a business

H (3): Male dominance is a key factor that obstruct female entrepreneurs' effort to start up a business

### **Methods**

The primary data of this study would be collected from both male and female entrepreneurs operating their businesses in the different Emirates in UAE randomly. A self- completion questionnaire distributed to collect the primary data; and the secondary data of published record of governmental and non-governmental institutions sources will be utilized. The data collected will be processed by the relevant statistical tools using SPSS as a sophisticated technique to present the study in a comprehensive way to help decision makers to propose solutions for entrepreneurship development and to promote female contribution in economic development in UAE.

### **Literature Review**

It is important to define the term "Entrepreneurship".

According to Hisrich and Shepherd: "Entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic, and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal stratification and independence" (2008, p.8). Thus, for people who initiate these risks and carry out their dreams to start their own business, they are referred back to them by the phrase 'Entrepreneurs'.

A small business is privately owned and operated, with a small number of employees and with relatively low volume of sales. Small businesses are privately owned either as corporations, partnerships and/or sole proprietorships (Moore et al, 2010). The legal definition of "small" varies by country and by industry. In the United States, the Small Business Administration establishes small business size standards on an industry-by-industry basis, but generally specifies a small business as having fewer than 100 employees. In the European Union, a small business generally has fewer than 50 employees. However, in Australia, a small business is defined by the Fair Work Act 2009 as one with fewer than 15 employees. By comparison, a medium sized business or mid-sized business has fewer than 500 employees in the US, 250 in the European Union and fewer than 200 in Australia.

A company that employs fewer than 100 people is usually considered as a privately owned corporation. Small businesses fuel local economic growth and innovation. A 'small business' is a separate and distinct business entity, including cooperative enterprises and non-governmental organizations. It is managed by one or more owners and predominantly carries on business in any sector or subsector of the economy.

A small business is the one which has a small number of employees, profit and/or revenue. They are often managed by the owners and few specialists. Some definitions distinguish between businesses with fewer than 10 employees, which are micro-businesses with 10-49 employees and classified as small businesses.

The SMB is an abbreviation of small and medium-sized businesses which sometimes seen as small and medium size enterprises. A business of 100 employees or less is generally considered as small, whereas those with employees' between 100-999 are considered as medium-sized ([searchcio-midmarket.techtarget.com](http://searchcio-midmarket.techtarget.com)).

In today's business the field of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities promote economic growth and development. Small Businesses in US create two out of every three new jobs and contribute by 39% in the Gross National Product (GNP) and more than half of the nation's technological innovation.

Therefore, small and medium size businesses are used as instruments to increase the level of employment and GDP.

### **United Arab Emirates and the SMEs**

In the United Arab Emirates, the most recent comprehensive data on SMEs was collected from the 1995 census of establishments. The categories in the census explained that enterprises consisting of 50-249 employees are considered medium size and 250 employees and more according to Western definitions of both medium and large size enterprises. On the basis of this definition, in 1995 there were approximately 82,000 SMEs in the United Arab Emirates which employed 636,000 people or 86 percent of the private enterprise workforce. Since 1995 there has been an avalanche of initiatives in the United Arab Emirates aimed at encouraging private business investment especially foreign investment. Notably, both the free zones in Dubai and other emirates have targeted foreign investors and freelancers. In 2000, some indications of the growth of SMEs may be drawn from a survey of establishments in Dubai's "onshore" environment (i.e. excluding the free zones). Employment in micro and small enterprises in the Emirate of Dubai increased from 150,963 persons in 1995 to approximately 230,000 in the areas covered by the 2000 survey.

The United Arab Emirates has paid increasing attention to entrepreneurship contribution to economic growth. The sector of small and medium enterprises has significant contribution to economic growth in terms of earnings and employment. In fact, UAE government design a comprehensive and consistent approach of council of Ministers and entity governments to entrepreneurship and SMEs in the form of government support strategy to entrepreneurship and SMEs as a priority. Therefore, the UAE government provides financial support and other logistics to small business enterprise. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in market economies are the engine of economic development. Entrepreneurial flexibility, adaptability and reaction to challenges would contribute to sustainable growth and employment generation in a significant manner.

In fact, SMEs have strategic importance for each national economy due to a wide range of reasons. Logically, governments show an interest in supporting entrepreneurship and SMEs.

### **UAE Entrepreneurs and small businesses**

The survey in UAE conducted by Tanmia on small businesses owned by male and female entrepreneurs indicated that while there are good prospects for UAE nationals to be employed in the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector, there are many obstacles to be resolved. These are: Lack of knowledge on advantages of penetrating into small business field, inadequate business knowledge and skills, unfavourable attitudes related to self-employed and risk taking. In addition, the study showed that the major support to Emirate entrepreneurs to enter business environment is related to the provision of business training to acquire adequate business skills (Haan, 2001). Moreover, the characteristics of Emirati entrepreneurs are: they predominantly males, at the age of early thirties, the majority are well educated, 70% work in the public sector, motivated to gain extra income and/or to sustain family business.

### **Marketing and small business**

Entrepreneurs always face challenges when they starting-up their businesses. They should concentrate their efforts and work on marketing their businesses daily. Some common marketing techniques used by small business include: networking, word of mouth, customer referrals, yellow pages directories, television, radio, outdoor (roadside billboards), print, email marketing and internet. TV as electronic media could be quite expensive and is normally intended to create awareness of a product or service. Regarding marketing of products, many small business owners find it more feasible and easy through internet advertising on niche sites is time consuming.

Creating a business Web site has become increasingly feasible with many programs available for beginners. A Web site can provide significant marketing facilities for small business when marketing through the Internet and other channels are selected. In addition, social media has proven to be very useful channels for many small businesses. In fact, small business provides better customer cares; however, when a company becomes large it is hard to provide a good customer service.

### **Gender and Emirate Entrepreneurs**

#### **a. UAE Women Entrepreneurs and Businesses**

A survey carried out by Tanmia showed that the main characteristics of entrepreneurs are young age, worked some time in government institutions and devoted their efforts and time to one business activity. Some research carried out in the UAE claimed that Emirati women are involved in small-scale economic activities. All their ventures are related to home-based enterprises where they received little support (Baud and Mahgoub, 1999; Haan, 2002; Haan, 2003). An earlier research carried out by Haan (2002) found out that among a number of home-based micro-enterprises operating with a special license in Dubai, women entrepreneurs were found to be relatively young and well-educated. Many of them had received some business training and had experience working in the private/ or government sector before indulging in business venture. Haan (2004) claimed that Emirati women entrepreneurs have rating in business activities as follows: 47% in trade, 20% in manufacturing and 17% in business service. Although these percentages were gathered from limited number of Emirati Women Entrepreneurs, nevertheless it highlights clearly the most prominent range of business activities they involve in (Haan, 2004). In addition, Emirati women entrepreneurs are also known by the phrase ‘women of small business’ who have spread their own business activities into two segments: Traditional activities, such as: dress making and tailoring (Erogul and McCrohan, 2008, Nelson, 2004, Haan, 2004).

They experience difficulties in marketing their products and inadequate demand. Also, they experience difficulty with their small capital which serves to reduce their potential market. (Nelson, 2004, Buttner, 1993). The second activities are Modern activities, such as hairdressing, beauty Saloon, Interior decoration and Painting (Erogul and McCrohan, 2008; Haan, 2004). Thus, women’s organizations usually provide some support to women entrepreneurs in particular, those who are engaged in traditional activities. This support often has social and cultural, rather than an economic objective (Haan, 2004). It is commonly known that Emirati women Entrepreneurs play a vital role in accelerating the process of economic development. Haan (2004) claimed that there is little support available especially one which focuses on women managed small enterprises (WESs). They are offered little assistance to help them to overcome the hurdles they face for example, Mohammed Bin Rashid establishment for young business leaders (MREYBL) focuses on providing some facilities, such as office spaces for women.

Apart from this there exists few, if any, support services directed to support Emirati women entrepreneurs specifically (Hann, 2004).

Generally speaking, running a small business requires focus on every day operations and planning. However, to avoid challenges entrepreneurs should develop a proper plan for the future of their businesses. As in the prospect of the 21st century plenty of changes have affected small businesses. In fact, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. is expected to head for a shortage of 3 - 6 million workers by 2012; immigration provides little comfort with other countries facing similar talent crunches so that retaining citizens would be given top priority. This means that small businesses should be able to compete aggressively for talents and to learn how to make use of their employees' full potential.

## **Gender and Entrepreneurship**

### **a. Female entrepreneurs and management**

The development of management as a field has impacted on the research effort which has moved beyond personal characteristics to business characteristics. It focuses on the nature of management differences between genders when own and manages their business. Early studies examined Emirati female way of management when owning a firm. This drew on contemporary debates within the mainstream of small firms' literature to focus on issues such as, employment relations, generic small business management issues and broad descriptions of management processes. In addition, recent studies examined contemporary issues of women in management and owning enterprises. However, the field has become more specialised and focuses on a number of distinctive themes. Along the same line, Emirati male entrepreneurs face some challenges within the UAE when starting-up their businesses. These are: applications rejected from banks on the basis that banks are sceptical on lending risk, inadequate documentation, short operational track records, absence of verifiable credit histories, communication gaps between SMEs and financial institutions, clarifications about the terms of the SMEs products ([ameinfo.com](http://ameinfo.com)).

### **b. Gender and Performance**

In reporting firm performance by gender, the question which poses itself is whether the type of industry makes a difference in gender performance.

Differences in reported firm performance by gender: Does industry matter?

Globally there is a tremendous increase in the number of female owned businesses. However, research findings indicate that firms' performance in male-owned firms is higher than that in female-owned businesses (Hisrich and Brush, 1984). Some studies are also indicating that gender has an effect on small businesses' performance in countries around the globe. Comparatively, small businesses owned by female entrepreneurs operate differently from those owned by male entrepreneurs. The difference in performance could be attributed to individual differences or to differences in industrial sector. Businesses owned by females have much in common with that owned by their male counterparts. However, a prominent difference between genders in relation to the type of their business operations is mainly associated with the business sector itself. Women concentrate their business mainly in service and retailing sectors which are considered as traditionally of high number female employment.

## **Support of government and non-government Organizations**

In the UAE many organizations are established to support entrepreneurs to start-up their business. These include specialized government agencies, business incubators, science parks and some NGOs (Reynolds et al, 2005).

In the UAE, there are two types of institutions that support entrepreneurs. The first type includes government institutions such as: Khalifa Fund to Support and Develop Small & Medium Enterprises, Mohammed Bin Rashid Establishment for Young Business Leaders (SME), Saud Bin Saqer Program to support youth projects and Ruwad establishment. The second type is non-government institutions such as: Emirates Business and Management Consultants (EBMC), Dubai Business Consultancy and Jumeira International institution. They also have strategies, mission and vision to achieve certain goals. They provide small and medium enterprises the necessary support to improve the growth of the economy and to provide more job opportunities. The UAE government supports SMEs by issuing rules and regulations to facilitate for Federal Authority to be responsible for developing the SMEs in country. In addition, to establish specialized institutions such as khalifa Fund, Mohammed bin Rashid (Dubai SMEs) and others to create new businesses, inspiring entrepreneurial spirit among UAE nationals to raise their awareness of business opportunities and spread business knowledge among entrepreneurs.

This is to assist and support enterprises owned by UAE nationals through providing best practices and also marketing opportunities (sme.ae). Moreover, Emirati entrepreneurs are supported by RUWAD which helps them initiate new ideas. The support is through training, counselling and finance. Some of the objectives of RUWAD program are: to support small and medium-size enterprises established in the emirate of Sharjah to create conducive environment for pioneering individuals who need advice, consultations, financial and technical support to motivate Emirate entrepreneurs to invest in new venture. In addition, to provide them the opportunity to act as liaisons between the government and the private sector to remove the obstacle that hinders the development of leading projects and to encourage scientific and technical research. This could be achieved by setting funds to start-up and to expand small and medium enterprises. These programs also support the SMEs through exemption from license for three years and the guarantee from the bank that required by the Ministry of Labour.

Therefore, the UAE government gives high attention to develop and maximize its usefulness (dubib.com). In addition, many financial institutions in the UAE provide supports to small and medium-size enterprises, for example banks, Khalifa fund to support and develop small and medium-size enterprises, Mohammed Bin Rashid Establishment for Young Business Leaders (SME), Saud Bin Saqer Program for youth projects support and, Ruwad establishment. They provide entrepreneurs with loans to start-up their business ventures. In addition, it is possible for an entrepreneur in the UAE to get fund from organizations other than banks. These institutions provide entrepreneurs with substantial facilities such as, education, financial support and government procurement activities (sme.ae). In addition, they provide integrated and comprehensive programs to meet investors' needs and requirements of seeking to start-up or to expand investments. This includes training, development; data and consulting services and a number of marketing-focused initiatives (sme.ae).

#### **Non-government organizations support of small & medium business**

In fact, non-government institutions such as banks and other financing companies rely on the fact that the SMEs are supportive engines to the UAE economic growth. Moreover, there are many non government institutions which provide advices for the entrepreneurs in the UAE such as Emirates Business and Management Consultants (EBMC), Dubai Business Consultancy and Jumeira International. In fact, the business environment in the UAE is conducive for business venture due to the financial support small business enterprises would provide to entrepreneurs.

#### **Methods of Data Collection**

The primary data for this study was collected randomly from male and female entrepreneurs operating their businesses in the different Emirates. A self- completion questionnaire was distributed for respondents working in Dubai Transportation Authority (RTA), Business women Council in Sharjah, Etisalat and Du, Young Merchants' Exhibition and Bride's exhibition in Dubai and on- line. The sample size was 125 Emirati respondents of those who owned businesses, irrespective of their gender. The questionnaire was designed based on Likert Scale. The actual number of the questionnaires collected from respondents was 100. The questionnaire targeted to collect information on respondents' attitudes which refer to people's beliefs and thinking (i.e. the rational and the emotional part). Thus, our selection to the respondents was based on gender and geographical location from different Emirates. While the secondary data was collected from authentic public sources: governmental and non-governmental institutions. The data collected was processed by the relevant statistical tools using SPSS as a sophisticated technique to present the study in an easy way to help decision makers to draw the right policies and strategies to propose solutions for entrepreneurship development in the UAE.

This research was designed with high consideration to research ethical standards, recommendations within the scope of the study, findings presented clearly with no ambiguity and conclusions thoroughly justified.

#### **Data Analysis**

The findings of this study show that the answer of the respondents to each question would be analysed in two parts. The first part shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents (see table 1). The second part deals with the analysis of the different aspects related to respondents as entrepreneurs and the effect of gender on these aspects.

#### **Respondents**

Data was collected from 100 entrepreneurs from different Emirates in the UAE. Table (1) shows the demographic characteristics of the sample.

The majority of male and female entrepreneurs were age (25-34) years old (43%) and (39.5%) respectively, held Bachelor degree (42.1%) and (46.5%) respectively, business location in Dubai and RAK (24.6%) and (25.6%) respectively.

**Table (1) Demographic characteristics:**

	Males		Females		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Age:						
18-24	12	21.2	16	37.2	28	28.0
25-34	25	43.9	17	39.5	42	42.0
35-44	16	28.1	8	18.6	24	24.0
45&above	4	7.0	2	4.7	6	6.0
Level of Education:						
High school	20	35.1	15	34.9	35	35.0
Bachelor	24	42.1	20	46.5	44	44.0
Master	6	10.5	1	2.3	7	7.0
PhD	2	3.5	2	4.7	4	4.0
No Education	5	8.8	5	11.6	10	10.0
Business Location:						
Abu Dhabi(AD)						
Dubai	9	15.8	2	4.7	11	11.0
Sharjah	14	24.6	9	20.9	23	23.0
Ajman	11	19.3	7	16.3	18	18.0
Um Alquain	8	14.0	8	18.6	16	16.0
RAK	3	5.3	4	9.3	7	7.0
Fujairah	8	14.0	11	25.6	19	19.0
	4	7.0	2	4.7	6	6.0
Concentration on Industry:						
Manufacturing	7	12.3	2	4.7	9	9.0
Trading	21	36.8	16	37.2	37	37.0
Business service	9	15.8	5	11.6	14	14.0
Insurance	2	3.5	1	2.3	3	3.0
Real estate	8	14.0	3	7.0	11	11.0
Fashion	0	0.0	15	34.9	15	15.0
Transportation	3	5.3	0	0.0	3	3.0
Construction	7	12.3	1	2.3	8	8.0
Motivation:						
Additional income	33	57.9	18	41.9	51	51.0
Independence	11	19.8	9	20.9	20	20.0
Job satisfaction free time	9	15.8	4	9.3	13	13
Marketing tools:	4	7.0	12	27.9	16	16
Family & friends Network	14	24.6	22	51.2	36	36.0
Internet	12	21.1	14	32.6	26	26.0
Direct marketing	14	24.6	2	4.7	16	16.0
Magazines and newspapers	17	29.8	5	11.6	22	22.0
Hours worked:						
1-4	10	17.5	30	69.8	40	40.0
5-8	47	82.5	12	27.9	59	59.0
5	0	0.0	1	2.3	1	1.0

The majority of Emirati male entrepreneurs own business and their activities spread all over different industries except fashion. On the contrary, Emirati female entrepreneurs own businesses which are highly concentrated in trade and fashion sectors. The majority of male entrepreneurs in the sample of the study have chosen the trade sector as their first choice to start up their own business (36.8%), business services (15.8%) and real estate industry (14%), while the majority of the Emirati female entrepreneurs in the sample limit their choice to trade industry (37.2 %) and (34.9%) in the fashion sector respectively. Some researchers argued that gender differences in the type of business are attributed to socialization and cultural barriers. Women tend to work in certain occupations and industries because these occupations and industries are more socially acceptable for women; women face obstacles working in other industries and occupations. In addition, some businesses are not easily accessible to people due to their lack of appropriate educational background. This is particularly the case for businesses that rely heavily on technology. It is attributed to gender concentration in certain fields of educational speciality; whereas males focus on science and mathematics, females focus on humanities. Thus, women are less likely than men to be found in engineering or science (Brush et al., 2006); they often lack the education of science that would help them start up businesses that need technical skills.

In fact, there are different motives for entrepreneurs, irrespective of their gender, to start- up their own business. One of these motives, among others, is earning additional income to raise their standard of living. Emirati female entrepreneurs indicated that their first motive to start-up a business is to earn more income and because they have free time. Similarly, the majority of male entrepreneurs (57.9%) are motivated by the desire to increase their income level as first priority, and to gain independence. In fact, this is attributed to the socially constructed role in the Arab society that males are considered as bread winners whereas women have to look after their families. The findings of the study show that the majority of the male respondents (54.4%) strongly agreed that male entrepreneurs possess organizational ability, whereas the majority of female entrepreneurs (58%) agreed that women are confident in their abilities to organize.

The finding of the study also shows that there is a difference between male and female entrepreneurs in terms of family's and friend's support. The majority of Emirati female respondents (39.5%) receive support from their families to start up their businesses. Nevertheless, (34.9%) of female entrepreneurs in the sample indicated that in some cases, women do not receive the necessary support from their fathers, brothers and husbands because they are not in favour of women independence, the finding shows that (35.1%) of male entrepreneurs were not supported by their families at all. The majority of male respondents were working and have a good financial position to start-up their own business without any support from their families.

Regarding business rules and regulations which are supposed to be applied equally to both male and female entrepreneurs, (49.1%) of male entrepreneurs disagreed and argued that there are differences in as far as the implementation of business regulations between genders are concerned. Female entrepreneurs receive preference and more facilities to abolish the barriers compared to their male counterparts. On the other hand, (79%) of female entrepreneurs received legal treatment and equal opportunities equal to their male counterparts. Comparatively, Emirati women face more difficulties entering business domain than men. According to the finding of the study, the majority of male respondents disagree that women face more difficulties than men when starting up their businesses. Similarly, the majority of the female respondents disagree that women face more difficulties than men; (i.e. when there is a problem arises, both males and females, irrespective of their gender, would pass through the same experience).

The finding of the study also shows that Emirati male entrepreneurs faced more competition in their business compared to their female counterparts. This could be attributed to two main reasons: first, male entrepreneurs run their business activities on a wide spectrum within different industries for example, construction, manufacturing and real estate. In addition, the majority of the female respondents either work in public sector or stay at home as housewives so, the rate of women entrepreneurs who face a high degree of competition is lower than their male counterparts. The finding of the study shows that business women are involved in a limited type of business activities. The finding also highlights that male entrepreneurs agree that they face challenges as their female counterparts; (40.4 %) of male respondents strongly agreed that these challenges do exist, and (37.2%) of female respondents strongly agreed that they face challenges too.

### **Genders and Marketing tools**

In terms of *marketing tools*, the finding shows that (29.8%) of male use magazines and newspapers, direct marketing; family and friends equally, whereas the majority of the female entrepreneurs (51.2%) depend on family, friends and networks to distribute their products (see appendix 1-b).

The data collected shows that women are more sensitive to risk venture than men across a wide variety of settings. The greater risk aversion of female entrepreneurs is thought to make them less willing to trade potential gain for risk, which leads them to prefer businesses with lower failure probabilities than those preferred by male entrepreneurs. (30.2%) of female entrepreneurs accept work under high risk activities while the majority of male entrepreneurs prefer to take the risk venture willingly and go through risk ventures by 50.9%. Therefore, male entrepreneurs pursue business opportunities that involve more risk than that pursued by female entrepreneurs. Finally, the greater risk aversion of male entrepreneurs also leads them to engage in greater amounts of risk minimizing activity; whereas female entrepreneurs focus more on minimizing risk than male entrepreneurs in the business organizing process.

Regarding the first hypothesis

H (1): There are no significant differences between male and female entrepreneurs that affect their start-up and sustaining their businesses.

Based on the findings of this study, this hypothesis is rejected.

### **Gender and non government organizations support**

The finding of this study shows that non government organizations (NGOs) have no significant support for Emirati entrepreneurs. (48%) of Entrepreneurs in the survey, irrespective of their gender, were not supported by NGOs to start up their businesses. In fact, 5% of the respondents agreed that NGOs support them, which is a very minor percentage. On the contrary, male and female entrepreneurs received support from government institutions. The findings of the study show that there is no significant difference between Emirati male and female entrepreneurs regarding the support provided by UAE government. The difference between genders appears to be quite low; (35%) of male and (34%) of female entrepreneurs supported by the government institutions in starting up their own business. This encouragement is interpreted as a sort of facility to build association for removing the barriers Emirati entrepreneurs experienced in their businesses. Whereas, (5.3%) of male entrepreneurs did not receive any support from government institutions (see table 1).

H (2): Both male and female entrepreneurs are not satisfied with the treatment and support received from government and non- government institutions.

In as far as hypothesis (2) is concerned, the first part is accepted and the second part is rejected.

### **Difficulties and challenges facing Emirati entrepreneurs**

There are several problems Emirati male and female entrepreneurs face when starting-up their business. One of the problems, among others, is related to the difficulty to obtain the trade license for their businesses. Accordingly, the majority of male respondents (38.6%) agreed that they faced difficulty to get the trade license. Similarly, the majority of female entrepreneurs (41.9%) had difficulty to obtain the trade license. Comparatively, male entrepreneurs find it more difficult to obtain the trade license than their female counterparts. The second challenge is related to the difficulty to recruit workers. The result shows that both male and female respondents, irrespective of their gender, faced difficulty to recruit workers for their businesses and became a source of challenge for them. The majority of male entrepreneurs (47.4%) agreed that they faced some difficulties hiring foreign employees. This problem occurs due to the large number of businesses and the long procedures they have to follow to hire foreign employees. Similarly, (62.8%) of female entrepreneurs face the same difficulty as their male counterparts.

### **Work -Family balance**

The study found that the majority of the female respondents (51.2%) devoted less time to business operations so that they can strike the balance between their family's commitments and their business' commitments.

On the contrary, male entrepreneurs (45.6%) assume that family's issues are not part of their responsibilities due to the socially constructed role. Culturally, males are responsible of their families and taking the role of bread winners. Therefore, based on this division of labour between genders women have to strike the balance between their family duties and their work commitments. Regarding the time male and female entrepreneurs devoted to business operations, the findings of the study explain that the majority of male entrepreneurs (82.5%) spend longer hours (5-8 hours) every day, whereas the majority of female respondents (69.8%) spend almost half of this time (1-4 hours).

### **Entrepreneurs and HR policies**

The finding of the study shows that female and male entrepreneurs who are in favour of hiring Emirati employees are equal in percentage to those who are neutral. Also, the finding of the study shows that both male and female entrepreneurs, (54.4%) and (44.2%) respectively, provide health insurance to their employees. However, female entrepreneurs restrict the provision of health insurance to their employees to the type of business activities. In addition, the finding of the study explains that entrepreneurs, irrespective of their gender, need to hire a number of skilled employees.

According to the findings of the study (86.1%) of the female respondents indicated that they have similar business traits as their male counterparts. According to female entrepreneurs, the evidence is shown by the success they achieve, challenges they overcome and the big responsibilities to boost up their business performance. On the contrary, (82.5%) of the male respondents disagreed on this assumption that women entrepreneurs have similar traits as their male counterparts. In addition, the study highlights the society's preference that business should be owned by men and women are not eligible to own businesses. (40.4%) of the female respondents disagreed that the society prefers males to own businesses of any kind compared with female entrepreneurs. They claimed that the UAE society prefers and supports women entrepreneurs more than men to own businesses related to a specific type of business activities. (51.2%) of the female respondents agreed that the UAE society prefers males to own businesses because it trusts males' abilities more than females' to run particular activities. Nevertheless, the UAE society prefers woman to own business associated with the domain of feminine activities.

The finding of the study shows that the majority of male respondents (47.7%) agreed to share their businesses with females based on equal authority and decision making. On the contrary, the majority of the female respondents (55.8%) believe that males would not accept partnership with females because of their perception of females and they want to maintain their social dominance and independence.

Regarding the third hypothesis:

H (3): Male dominance is a key factor in obstructing female entrepreneurs' efforts to start-up a business
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It is accepted due to the socio-cultural barriers.

### **Discussion**

This study is an exploratory situation of Emirati women entrepreneurs compared with their male counterparts. The objective of this review is to present a comparative analysis on the current situation of gender in business in the UAE. The aim is to identify and critically examine the similarities and differences between genders in business in the UAE. In addition, it shows broadly the similarities in characteristics and motivation between women and men entrepreneurs when starting-up their businesses. On the other hand, marketing techniques and the effect of gender were discussed to explain whether female entrepreneurs are different from male entrepreneurs or similar to them and in which way they differ from them. In the outset, finance and lending issues were highlighted to identify whether banks followed different lending policies or a unified policy. In addition, other broad themes are described which include issues related to women own business and family-life balance.

Generally speaking, the difference between male and female entrepreneurs in running their business in the UAE is shaped by gender as cultural issue. There are some differences highlighted that show the effect of gender in shaping the differences in particular areas. These are: motivation to start-up a business, type of industry, family support, Human Resource practices, and government bodies applying rules and regulations related to the provision of a trade license. Male and female entrepreneurs are motivated to increase their income. However, each has a different drive to seek additional income which is stemmed from the cultural context of the UAE which is influenced by the Islamic culture.

Male entrepreneurs are motivated to seek extra income because of the socially constructed role as bread winners besides to achieve independence. Male and female entrepreneurs differ in their selection and choice of the appropriate type of industry. Male entrepreneurs are opted to invest in the field of trading as a first choice. Similarly, women entrepreneurs select trading as their first priority; however they have concentrated their investment in traditional products, such as perfumes and fashion. Moreover, women entrepreneurs focus their investment also on crafts which is traditionally preferred by society and dictated by culture. Furthermore, an entrepreneur finds it easy to obtain a trading license in the UAE. Comparatively, women entrepreneurs obtain trading license easier than their male counterparts. This may be attributed to two main reasons: the first reason is related to the government's policy which aims to encourage females to participate in the field of entrepreneurship. Secondly, female entrepreneurs concentrate their trading on traditional products so that they would create new jobs for other females. Although male and female entrepreneurs receive support from the UAE government to start up their businesses to contribute in economic development, nevertheless they face difficulties to obtain trade licence. This could be attributed to the practices rather than to the rules and regulations issued by government institutions.

Female entrepreneurs obtain support from families; friends and network, whereas male entrepreneurs do not receive such kind of support due to cultural and traditional conventions that males are suppose to be independent. Regarding the distribution of products, entrepreneurs in the UAE choose different channels of distribution. Female entrepreneurs concentrate their efforts to distribute their products through family, friends and network, whereas male entrepreneurs rely mainly on magazine and newspapers as their first choice, family and friends as their second means of distribution.

### **Conclusion**

Based on this study, we conclude that there are some differences and similarities between male and female entrepreneurs in the UAE. In the outset, both male and female entrepreneurs face some difficulties, however to a different degree. In addition, the main motive for entrepreneurs, irrespective of their gender, to start up a business is to earn additional income. However, women entrepreneurs are also driven to start-up their business because they have free time, whereas males are looking for independence as a second motive for them to start- up a business.

The study also concluded that female entrepreneurs allocate less time to their business operations so that they can strike the balance between the two commitments. In fact, this might be attributed to the socially constructed role based on the assumption that women have to look after their families and household chores. On the contrary, male entrepreneurs are considered the bread winners of the family, besides, male and female entrepreneurs face some difficulties due to the type of the industry. Male entrepreneurs own businesses across different types of the industry, whereas females own businesses mostly concentrated in trade and fashion sectors. The differences and similarities between male and female entrepreneurs regarding the support they received (from government, NGOs, Network, i.e. a family); Emirati male and female entrepreneurs perceive the application of rules and regulations differently. Nevertheless, Emirate entrepreneurs, irrespective of their gender, receive support from the government in terms of training and other logistics. In fact, the UAE government encourages entrepreneurship development due to its effect on the economic growth. On the contrary, they do not receive support from non-government organizations (NGOs).

To conclude, gender issue is vital to explain the different perception of male entrepreneurs to female entrepreneurs' gains on the light of their own experience. This reflects genders' perceptual differences. Moreover, the majority of businessmen locate their businesses in the Emirate of Dubai, whereas the majority of businesswomen locate their businesses in the Emirate of RAK. In addition, gender affects entrepreneurs' choice of the marketing tools to distribute their products. To sum up, gender is a critical factor that influences and determines entrepreneurs' activities and choice in the UAE.

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