



## **Social Entrepreneurship Bridging Gender Gap: Evidence from Pakistan**

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to provide empirical evidence of the role of Social Entrepreneurship (SE) in bridging the Gender Gap. The unprecedented rise in the social and economic issues in developing countries, like Pakistan, has fostered efforts to achieve a new organizational model under SE to counter the said issues. SE is a new way of offering an innovative and creative solution to the problems of societies. In this paper, the authors have examined the role of SE in overcoming the GG in society, which is otherwise left unaddressed. A qualitative study is conducted by adopting the hermeneutic view of reality. The data is collected by conducting a semi-structured interview with social entrepreneurs working in Pakistan. For validating the findings, the secondary source of data is collected from the published reports by the British Council consulting on the role of SE in Pakistan. Findings revealed that SE is contributing to reducing the GG in Pakistan through increased women empowerment and employment. It is helping to create more opportunities for women in the field and overcoming the social issues of the country.

**Keywords:** Social entrepreneurship, women's employment, gender gap

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### **1. Introduction**

Enterprises are a pivotal part of any economy. They play a role in resource mobilization, wealth generation, and job creation by fostering the economy (Santo, 2012). They also contribute to regional development by the rejuvenation of existing socio-productive fabric, promoting innovative processes, and relaunching the regional territories. Considering their contributions, the range of policies are aiming for enhancing social entrepreneurial activities (Álvarez, et al., 2012; Gupta, et al., 2020). In recent years, social entrepreneurship (SE) has grabbed the attention and recognition of scientific scholars and public authorities (Dilli & Westerhuis, 2018). Experts divulge two significant advantages of SE. SE provides innovative solutions to social problems and issues, which are becoming multifarious daily. Secondly, this sector has the advantage of blurring the boundaries prevailing amongst the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors by giving natal to a hybrid enterprise. This is further supported by a means of value creation by focusing on social as well as economic aspects (Alter, 2004). These enterprises are also considered a solution to the funding problem existing in the non-profit sector, as well as to the financial risk taken by these enterprises (Bansal, et al., 2019). After a detailed study, several scholars have developed a consensus that SE holds primary importance in the current era for many economic and social issues (Hota et al., 2020; Douglas, 2010).

Correspondingly, despite the SE growth, gender's relevance to conceptualization and field analysis is marginalized,

even though social enterprises are supposed to tackle such kinds of social problems. Although both genders can be equal beneficiaries of social enterprises, there is a lack of a gender-aware framework to analyze the unvoiced assumptions that can guide these concepts and study in the context of SE (Brush et al., 2009). The gap is surviving for identifying the role of SE in embarking on the social issue, which will be studied here. Researchers suggested that the existing societal gender orders may also be replicated in the activities of an enterprise considering different social, political, and economic contexts (Gawell and Sundin, 2014). More efforts are being contributed by scholars to understand ways of having gender equality. There is an increased research tendency to measure techniques or tactics for the provision of women's entrepreneurship because the gap between men and women initiating their occupations is quite high (Minniti, 2010). This inferiority difference becomes more significant with increased socio-economic development in the country (Coduras and Autio, 2013). Furthermore, these differences are attributed to different motivational factors that guide men and women differently. Researchers have found that men are more focused on goal achievement, and most of the time their motives are driven by economic benefits. In contrast, women are more socially responsible and driven by social values (Urbano et al., 2014).

SE has existed all these years athwart the world (Roberts and Woods, 2005). There were many illustrations such as Florence Nightingale; she was the pioneer who fought for the improvement in hospital conditions during the Crimean War in the nineteenth century, her efforts ensued in a diminution of the mortality rate from 40% to just 2%. In Pakistan, Roshaneh Zafar founded the Kashf Foundation, through this podium Zafar fought for the economic condition of Pakistani women by providing a platform for micro-credit institutions for thousands (Dearlove, 2004). In addition to this, Fowler (2000) has provided a case study of a foundation from Colombia, which was started in 1911, with a schema of fashioning and devoting the generated revenues to social value creation.

### 1.1 The Problem of Study and Research Question

Pakistan upgraded to the status of an emerging market in 2017 but still, the country is plunged into various issues such as a lack of jobs and increased gender inequalities in the field. According to Bayeh (2016), for a sustainable economy, there is an immense need for gender equality by promoting women's empowerment. These issues are said to exist in Pakistan for a prolonged time and have remained unaddressed. Various initiatives have been taken to overcome these burdening issues, however, all of these produced abysmal results. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics provided the latest Labor Force Survey 2020-21. Some of the key figures revealed in the statistics related to the unemployment of men and women are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Unemployment Rates by Area (Source: Pakistan Bureau Statistics, 2021, p.52)

Area	2018-2019 (%)			2020-2021 (%)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Pakistan	6.9	5.9	10.0	6.3	5.5	8.9
Rural	6.4	5.5	8.5	5.8	5.1	7.4
Urban	7.9	6.5	17.1	7.3	6.0	16.4

Table 1 shows that it is pragmatic that Pakistan is unable to provide any favorable conversion to the unemployment level prevailing in the country. The level instead is further declining, over the years. This is an alarming state of affairs because the economic vicissitudes will result in crafting concerning issues for the government in the specific panorama. Looking further, the gap between males and females is depicted in Table 1. More unemployment is manifest among females as compared to males, with a very high proportion in the urban areas.

Looking into the contribution of SE to the global economy, this study is intended to judge the impact of SE social issue prevailing in Pakistan which is the gender gap. The difference in males and females working in the field has created problems in the organizational as well as personal setup. To analyze the role of SE, this study will address the following questions:

*RQ:* How does SE impact the gender gap in the occupational sector?

## 2. Literature Review

The research technique identified in the previous chapter aimed to derive the main areas upon which to focus on the literature review. The guiding dynamic of this literature review puts focus on the emerging SE field. Various researchers have provided a critical perspective on the core theme or idea behind SE. SE is a diversified business model, which is elaborated in detail in a literature review by providing a critical review of the literature.

SE is a concept initiated 30 years ago, which has evolved and developed differently in past decades. Even though there is a lack of agreement among the researchers on the definitional landscape of SE. The domain of SE has rapidly developed following the seminal work conducted by Waddock and Post (1991). In broader terms, SE is based on hybrid practices, implemented across the spectrum of goals, which are designed to address societal issues by availing market opportunities. However, this concept has remained imprecise followed by uncertain boundaries (Hota et al., 2020). Klarin and Seseno (2023) conducted a systematic literature review and revealed that SE is affected by the policy and nature of the enterprise. They revealed that the social enterprises have different goals and agendas that result in the varying outcomes from them. One researcher's group considers SE as a not-for-profit initiative for the sake of hunting down funding through alternative strategies for the sake of social value creation (Austin et al., 2006). The second researcher's group considers it an initiative of commercial entities as socially responsible businesses involved in cross-sector partnerships (Sagawa and Segal, 2000). The third researcher's group reviews SE as a source for alleviating social issues and further catalyzing social transformation (Alvord et al., 2004). In the last few decades, the concept of SE has been defined in different ways by giving prominence to various dimensions. The vast dimensions selected were useful for researchers to look into SE in their area of interest. There are wide concepts that are merged into SE as presented in Figure 1.

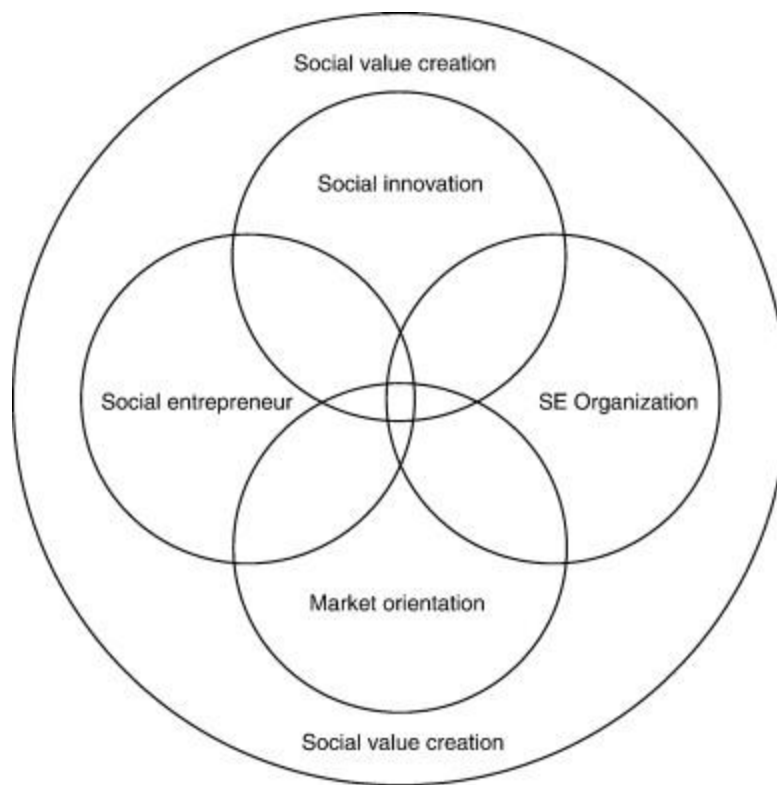


Figure 1: SE as a cluster of concepts (Source: Choi and Majumdar, 2014)

According to Alvord et al. (2004), “Social Entrepreneurship creates innovative solutions to immediate social problems and mobilizes the ideas, capacities, resources, and social arrangements required for sustainable social transformation (p. 262)”. A broader definition was presented, which focused on three important factors, by Mair and Marti (2006). They stated that “A process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue

opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs (p.37)". From the definitions, it is evident that SE is about resolving social problems by looking into innovative ideas and ways. Different organizations or entities, public or private, and individuals or groups are involved as social entrepreneurs. The literature conducted on SE has exponentially grown, reporting a 750% increase in research from 1991 to 2009 (Short et al., 2009), while this number tripled from 2008 to 2010 as compared to 2005 to 2007 (Lehner and Kansikas, 2013). According to Bull (2008), despite much research work, still, the characteristics of social enterprises are still lacking. Some researchers have stated that the driving factors of SE are like those observed among commercial entities. Researchers have argued that the formation of SE is influenced by different factors. A group of researchers recommended that the welfare state's size influences social enterprise creation (Elkington and Hartigan, 2008), some argued that the social problems prevailing in the country result in its creation (Zahra et al., 2008), and some others referred toward the tax and legal regimes offered (Elkington and Hartigan, 2008). According to some researchers, the most important is the role of socioeconomic development in the creation of social enterprises (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001). Problems have been identified despite some conceptual studies being conducted, case studies, and descriptive ones (Bacq et al., 2011). They believed that SE is a process that results in creating social value because of offers solutions to societal problems prevailing in the environment. These solutions are offered by considering innovative strategies, which include the resources' combination, opportunities' exploitation for initiating social change, fulfilling social needs, and social goods and services development. Similarly, researchers added that SE is directed toward the creation of social value (Hota, et al., 2020). Austin et al. (2006) supported the argument by adding that social value creation aims to improve society by removing hurdles to social inclusion. To boot, they added that SE through social value is directed toward assisting others in need to mitigate the undesirable side effects. Not to mention, Mair and Marti (2006) added that the purpose of SE is social value creation as a primary agenda while economic value creation is necessary along with it. Chaves et al., (2011) further added that from the social perspective, social value covers the broader scope by dealing with complicated issues related to society and the environment. These researchers, through their findings, have identified that the core agenda of SE is to serve society by offering social values. These social values are required to address the social and environmental issues creating hurdles in socio-economic development.

According to researchers, the rate of entrepreneurship can be determined through various factors by categorizing them into the demand and supply aspects (Verheul et al., 2002). The researchers revealed that the need for entrepreneurship is dependent on different factors related to demand that influence a particular context by looking into the product market and capacity to carry. On the other side, supply factors include the characteristics of the individual involved as an entrepreneur and the size of the labor market (Wennekers et al., 2002). According to Zahra et al. (2008), the unsatisfied needs of the social impact on the demand for SE and the relation are predicted to be directly related to each other.

Few studies have been conducted on social enterprises in the context of developing countries (Elkington and Hartigan, 2008). These studies have revealed that SE has a significant potential to address the voids of institutions. Some researchers related SE with emancipation's vehicle means of empowerment, and tools for social change (Datta and Gailey, 2012; Haugh, and Talwar, 2014). Haugh and Talwar (2014) proposed the SE model as an emancipatory SE model by conducting a case study in Gujarat, India based on women's cooperation. Increased the issues and problems faced by people, many issues have been raised and models are developed by converting the concept of SE into different types such as community entrepreneurship, collective entrepreneurship, and others (Ratten and Welpe, 2011; Somerville and McElwee, 2011; Datta and Gailey, 2012; Haugh, and Talwar, 2014).

The literature review looks into the gender gap in entrepreneurship in terms of the gender role theory (Wood and Eagly, 2012). According to the theory, it is revealed that societal norms determine which activities are acceptable for men and which for women. The difference lies in the behavior of the individual is reflected to have an impact on the trends. Researchers stated that males are dominant, and success-oriented toward achievements while females are fostering nurturing and affiliative behavior. The division of labor forces is also reflected through the inherited temperamental sex differences among them. Looking into the greater motor activities or surgency such jobs are preferred for male members and effortful control, and self-regulatory activities are linked with female members (Else-Quest et al., 2006). Fernández-Guadano, and Martín-López (2023) conducted a study on the social enterprises operating in the Spain where they observed that the social enterprises are more likely to be established by women

then men. Previously, Wood and Eagly (2012) stated that by considering proximal mediators, the division of labor is yielded by the men's and women's psychology that people observe in their societies. Applying the theory, gender role theory, scholars have hypothesized in the literature that the gender gap prevailing in society can be reduced by SE has been witnessed in entrepreneurship because of the increased number of women associated with it (Minniti, et al., 2005; Harding and Cowling, 2006; Bosma and Levie, 2010).

Andrea Baldwin (2009) conducted a study on creativity, social benefits, and job creation through SE. According to the study conducted by him, SE is about paying off by maximizing the economic and social value by blending the non-profit agendas with corporate social responsibility. Emerson and Bonini (2003) in their study revealed this blended value proposition that it is because of the growth in the investment being made in Socially Responsible Investment (SRI). SRI challenges the traditional view of the value that is purely economic or social. He added that the investors and enterprises are directed toward maximizing the values by the overall equation. Qureshi et al. (2023) observed that the social enterprises are more likely to hire women for the job due and also stated that social enterprises can help to mitigate the exclusion of women from the society.

The equality or full representation of men and women has been highlighted in traces of history, which is also declared as the eighth Millennium Development Goal (MDG). Researchers have contributed their efforts for years to discuss and analyze the gender factor in the commercial entrepreneurship context. Previous research has stated that in all developed countries with high income, despite maximum women's participation, men are likely more into entrepreneurial activities (Minniti et al., 2005). Instead of referring to socioeconomic factors such as income, education, and age, the difference between men and women being entrepreneurs is because of subjective or perceptual differences lies there. Stated researchers that women are observed to be more pessimistic about the opportunities available; they are fewer risk-takers, afraid of failure, and lack the self-confidence to be qualified (Langowitz and Minniti, 2007; Minniti and Nardone, 2007). Furthermore, the research conducted on the relationship between SE and gender is observed to be limited in terms of descriptive reports available (Harding and Cowling, 2006; Bosma and Levie, 2010).

The researchers have conducted research by focusing on women only related to assessing their entrepreneurial role. The findings have revealed that women play a key role in entrepreneurial activities. According to Allen et al., (2008), the gender gap exists in the entrepreneurial activities being carried out in terms of the economic development observed. The gender gap is being reported by Allen et al. (2008) as a significant one across the world. A study provided by GEM for 18 countries over a period from 2002 to 2010 revealed that women's entrepreneurial activities are observed to be overall low as compared to their counterparts' males at the different developmental stages. Furthermore, they added that the involvement of women in entrepreneurial activities is lower among the developed areas as compared to women from developing areas.

The environment plays a dominating role during the process of an individual's decision-making related to the establishment of a company (Shinnar, Giacomini, and Janssen, 2012). Various studies have been conducted to study the participation level of men and women. These studies are directed toward collecting a sample from different countries grouped under the development level. The consensus has been found among the studies that a decrease in the level of development in the country results in a decrease in the gender gap (Minniti et al., 2005; Kobeissi, 2010). These facts are supported by two factors. First, it is considered that the economies have a fragile economic system and carry a high level of unemployment, job insecurities, and low wages resulting in women contributing and escaping poverty. This is done by turning into self-employment as per the need (Kobeissi, 2010). Secondly, when the efficiency level is low, then it reduces the existing entry barriers, which helps in the creation of new start-ups and companies. However, there are negative consequences for the individual directed toward establishing a company in a less developed country. Furthermore, it is added that access to training is not considered good, it makes it difficult to have business relations with others, or usually, the commercial infrastructure is deficient (Kobeissi, 2010).

Minniti et al. (2005) conducted a study to determine the relationship between economic development with women's entrepreneurship. They revealed that it is a fact that when the development level of the country is low, the number of women coming forward to establish a business goes higher. The relation among variables is predicted to be non-linear. Specifically stated here, the percentage of women owning a business is higher in less developed countries, and when development increases, the female presence in the business market goes down. There is a turning point

when the presence of females in business goes higher with the economies observed at the high stages of development (Acs et al., 2005). The literature further added that it is possible to witness countries with a smaller gap between men and women coming forward in businesses because the higher development and more opportunities promote female entrepreneurship.

Previous studies have been conducted to determine how gender and SE have been linked by acquiring a sample from developing countries. The findings have shown a low gender gap within the developing countries in SE as compared to commercial (Harding and Cowling, 2006). According to their reports, researchers have revealed that the gender gap also exists within SE as men are into being social entrepreneurs as compared to women. However, researchers also added that the gender gap existing in SE is smaller than the one existing in commercial entrepreneurship (Bosma and Levie, 2010; Harding and Cowling, 2006). A study was conducted by Bacq et al., (2011) in Belgium and Netherlands, where they concluded that more men than women were involved in SE. Kachlami (2014) found that a higher proportion of males in the workforce region is directed toward contributing to the creation of more social ventures. According to the 2015 GEM report, male and female social entrepreneurs are observed to have an equal number of employees hired along with focusing on volunteers.

It is revealed from the literature that SE is a diversified business model, which is a hybrid form of a public, private, and not-for-profit business. Researchers have provided different definitions of SE by focusing on innovation, opportunities, resources, and change agents. Looking at the literature, SE has acted as a diversified agent according to the situation and purpose for which it is formulated. Previous research has provided evidence that SE can result in overcoming many social and economic issues including the gender gap.

### **3. Methodology**

The study aims to explore the role of SE in addressing the social issue of the gender gap. In its essence, this research work is carried forward as exploratory research, which is directed toward exploring the impact of SE on the concerning factor of Pakistan's economy: gender. The philosophical assumption is related to the development of knowledge related to a particular area. This process sounds like a complex phenomenon, but it describes the fact in an effective way that almost every researcher is contributing their efforts to expand the knowledge in a particular area. Daniel and Sam (2011) stated that for management or business research, philosophical assumptions play a pivotal role as they determine the nature of the investigation. In the research, the adopted philosophical assumptions are influenced by the consideration of practical aspects.

In this research, the researcher has adopted a hermeneutic view of reality. This is believed that SE emerged from social and historical construction back in the 19th century. This leads to the belief that SE has been developed because of the willingness of people to do something good for the people or society. Several researchers contributed their efforts to developing and interpreting the SE phenomenon resulting in its emergence as a notion. Therefore, this study is carried forward as an interpretative one where the researcher gave a detailed understanding of SE through collected data. Nicolas and Rubio (2016) in their research work on the role of social enterprises in the gender gap and economic development used a similar methodology for the collection of evidence from the field. Researchers have agreed to the fact that qualitative data collection is required until a point of saturation is met. This situation refers to the collection of data leading toward acquiring a few significant insights at a particular level. This study is conducted by taking two types of data collection, namely, primary as well as secondary. The primary data collection is made in the form of in-depth interviews related to the identified research problem. The secondary data is collected related to the current prevailing situation of social enterprises, which are available in the form of reports generated by the British Council. These reports are designed primarily in the Pakistan context. The data collected from both sources are available in qualitative form, which is analyzed using software designed for content analysis. For the collection of the sample, the purposive sampling method was followed. This will help in meeting the sample size recommended by the other researchers in their work.

Guest et al. (2006) provided further guidance for collecting data, where he revealed that when the research aims to study commonalities among the homogenous study group, then 10-12 interviews are enough to be collected and address the purpose of the research. The sample size selected for the conducting of the study is fifteen. The researcher has approached fifteen social entrepreneurs. The data is collected in qualitative form through interviews and published documents related to SE, which is directed toward content analysis through MAXQDA. The

interviews' transcripts are processed through coding where themes were derived as per literature and facts found to be appropriate and useful. For validating the findings of the study, the secondary source of data provided by the British Council report on Pakistan's SE was used. This method of validity is proposed by Nahid Golafshani (2003), who recommended measuring the validity of qualitative studies by using the triangulation method. He supported the argument by quoting Mathinson's (1998) findings, which state: "Triangulation has raised an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [to] control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology." (p. 13)

#### 4. Findings

The section is disseminated into two main sections, primary data analysis and the other is secondary data analysis. The primary data was collected through structured interviews with fifteen (15) participants who were engaged in running social enterprises in Pakistan. The collected data was in narrative form, which was directed toward thematic analysis. It helped in categorizing themes from the conducted interviews, which were further narrowed down to the codes for analysis of the interview transcript. During the literature review, researchers presented three models for SE. Therefore, the researcher inquired about the interviewees regarding their model of social enterprises. The interviewees revealed that twelve out of fifteen participants were having for-profit social enterprises, which means that they were generating revenues for profit. On the other side, three respondents were associated with the social enterprises developed for the not-for-profit. This shows that two models proposed by researchers were approached by the researcher while the hybrid form of social enterprise was missing.

The collection of primary data was followed by a few questions from interviewees to understand their opinions related to the role of SE in bridging the gender gap prevailing in Pakistan. A research problem statement has stated a fact from Bureau statistics that more females are unemployed as compared to males, which has increased the overall gender gap in the field. The interviewee's responses provided the following themes related to the role of SE in bridging the gender gaps:

- SE has reduced the prevailing gender gap in the workforce by offering equal opportunities to males and females.
- SE provides equal representation.
- SE promotes the participation of women.
- The nature of social entrepreneurial work facilitates the working of females.

According to most of the interviewees, SE has contributed to overcoming the gender gap prevailing in our country. Interviewees responded that SE is creating a positive impact on the gender gap in the country. The social entrepreneurs that are involved in the field for the hiring of the workforce and creating opportunities in the field observe a significant balance between the male and female hiring ratio. According to one of the interviewees, "SE has addressed a series of social issues and provided numerous opportunities for women and men of our society to create means of earning for fulfilling their both ends needs."

These were some of the reviews found important to understand why SE is playing a role in gender factors in our country. Most of the respondents also stated that the opportunities created by social enterprises have helped in the equal representation of our men and women. The term equal representation is used in a context where men and women have been provided with equal opportunities to work. The trend of working among women in fieldwork was lacking in the old days, which is observed in our surroundings for different reasons. The majority of interviewees mentioned that SE resulted in the high-level participation of women. This is mainly because social enterprises initiate projects according to the social issues and problems in society. There is a lack of appropriate working opportunities for all females, which is addressed by SE by offering opportunities to work and providing an environment to comfortably work. However, like any other situation, social entrepreneurs did not agree with all the facts.

On inquiring about the role of SE in offering equal opportunities to males and females, interviews provided the following responses:

- SE ensures that the nature of the job offered is doable by men and women.
- SE is witnessed to promote the women's working culture.
- Social enterprises have a diversified workforce based on gender.
- SE bridged the prevailing gender gap in the workforce.

Interviewees thought that SE provides equal opportunities for males and females. This shows an understanding that SE is all about creating means for both men and women to avail and display their potential and skills. Some of the interviewees thought that SE provided more opportunities for women. This is because, in the majority of cases, social enterprises are working to overcome social issues. There are differences in the opinions of interviewees because of the difference in an operation carried forward by them. On the other side, some of the interviewees stated that SE is about there being a small level of gender gap existing within the sector. According to the interview conducted, the researcher observed that few participants did not agree with the statement of having a positive overcome of the gender gap within the sector. According to them, an increase in SE is the result of efforts contributed by the dominating group in society. The interviewees said that SE is based on the diversified nature of jobs. According to them, in social enterprises, like other sectors, there are different kinds of jobs being offered in the administrative section. On the other side, in the field, there are many jobs available. Each job demands different skills and SE needs a high level of diversity in the particular context. An interviewee also added that SE lacks equal opportunities for both men and women. According to him, SE does not support jobs that give opportunities to both of them.

The majority stated that SE results in creating more opportunities for women to come forward. SE is witnessed to be all about overcoming the issues and hurdles that have affected social life and economic stability in the region. Based on the information gathered, it is revealed SE is also providing equal representation for men and women. The reason for emphasizing the information on women's representation is that in the commercial sector, men are dominating. Different reasons were underlined as, an interviewee said, "SE provides a less challenging environment, there are more opportunities for the individual to come in. That's the reason we have observed more females coming forward and the environment is provided where they can show their strengths".

SE has ensured gender diversity by developing entrepreneurial skills. This is one of the most favorable factors of SE as men and women differ in managing the business. According to the interviewees, SE is creating skills among individuals that can help to manage the business. This helps in developing an effective and appropriate model of business so individual and responsible citizens to contribute collectively. Furthermore, SE is all about overcoming the prevailing social issues and problems in society. This is the reason that SE is more affiliated with the uplift of the women segment of our society. In commercial entrepreneurship, the majority are ruled by men. Looking into the professional sector, only a few women managed to reach the top positions while the majority of the posts are held by men based on their experience and overcoming all glass barriers. One of the interviewees said that SE lacks gender diversity. This was because of his opinion that SE is a not-for-profit sector, which is involved in society for the sake of development. More field-oriented projects are involved by moving out to remote areas. Looking into the justification and reasons provided by him are justified in the context where enterprises are sitting in metropolitan areas and sending out their teams to remote areas. However, according to majorities' opinions SE has promoted gender diversity in its entities. It has provided equal opportunities for men and women to come forward.

The reason for addressing gender factors is mainly because, in Pakistan's society, more women are unemployed. This is confirmed back by the statistics provided by the Bureau of Pakistan. The question was adopted from previous studies inquiring whether SE allowed women to come forward or not.

The majority of the interviewees stated that SE is a preference for women to work in. According to them, they said that SE is not like other commercial entities, but they exist for a social cause. Along with generating profit, SE helps in social uplift, which attracts more women as compared to men. There are different factors in support of it. For instance, the interviewees said that women have less pressure to head the family, they do not create earnings mainly for running their family, and some said that few women work only to get some activity to do.

SE is also related to human behavior. This is again because of the soft corner among women that directs their attention toward considering this particular means. Some interviewees stated that SE has accommodated more

women than commercial entrepreneurship because of the less challenging environment here. Some other features quoted by interviewees where diversity is offered and provides better career opportunities for women. Only one was there saying that in SE there is a lack of women participation. This can be because of the nature of the business the particular social entrepreneur has been involved in. This is because as mentioned SE is all about a high level of gender diversity.

Looking into the recommended strategy of Creswell (2007), this study was directed toward a triangulation study. According to Creswell, to validate the findings of the qualitative study, it is required to be compared to another source of data collection. Therefore, the researcher used the secondary source of data by analyzing the published reports on SE in Pakistan by the British Council. The presented data in the report has been summarized and compiled by the researchers on behalf of the organization. One hundred and forty-three social enterprises were surveyed by the British Council, which presented a comparative analysis for two years. The facts quoted in the report are elaborated in detail by focusing on the gender gap.

The report was designed to analyze the involvement of women in the SE sector. According to the findings, it was revealed that social enterprises operating in Pakistan are more likely to be run by women than mainstream enterprises. In the survey conducted by the British World Bank (2013), it was revealed that thirty enterprises out of a total of one hundred and forty-three are run by women. This is compared to twelve percent of female participation in ownership of mainstream businesses, and six percent of mainstream firms with a female top manager (World Bank, 2013). The enterprises run by females are relatively older on average as compared to those run by males, with fifty-seven percent having started since 2010, compared to sixty-one percent for male-run social enterprises (World Bank, 2013).

Furthermore, this sector is also reported to hire more women in number as compared to mainstream businesses. The report stated that social enterprises in Pakistan are hiring four times as many women as mainstream enterprises. The report added that forty-two percent of the workers hired are women full-time while forty-nine percent are working on a part-time basis in social enterprises. This is reported higher as per the World Bank report, which states that eight percent of women are employed in mainstream enterprises. Further addition in the report is that female social enterprises are involved in hiring more females. In women-led survey enterprises, fifty-six percent were women while only forty percent were part of men-led social enterprises. It was further added that men-led social enterprises were large organizations, which were hiring more men with an average of thirty-six staff while female-led social enterprises had twenty-one average staff.

## 5. Conclusions

SE is the most emerging field, which is in the phase of transformation and there is no universal way of defining SE. The research revealed different facts regarding the role of SE in overcoming the provided social and economic issues prevailing across the globe. SE is not a new concept but has existed across history in different forms. The increase in the concerning issues and failure of governing authorities increased the emphasis on SE for offering better options to overcome the issues. In the research, the researcher has looked critically into previous studies, which have revealed different facts related to SE and its contribution. The literature has provided theoretical support for the relation of SE with gender based on previously developed theories. The findings of the research have shown that social enterprises exist in Pakistan, with a high level of diversity behind their mission and agenda. The findings provided different factors, which directed the individuals toward the SE infrastructure development. Looking into the prevailing relationship between SE and gender, it was discovered through the study that SE has successfully overcome gender differences in the country. This sector has provided an equivalent representation of men and women with a statistic of 51% and 49%. The primary data analysis from social entrepreneurs has revealed that they have seen an equal representation of men and women. Looking in a comparative mode, SE has a higher representation of women as compared to business enterprises. Analyzing the acquired interview, coded information has reflected in the majority that SE is all about overcoming many social challenges including the gender gap. 88% of the responses from interviewees were focused on the fact that SE has reduced the gender gap in the country. The secondary source of data also backed the findings of the primary source. The report stated that social enterprises in Pakistan are hiring four times as many women as mainstream enterprises. The report added that 42% of the workers hired are women

full-time while 49% are working on a part-time basis in social enterprises. This is reported higher as per the World Bank report, which states that 8% of women are employed in mainstream enterprises. Findings from both sources show that SE has resulted in overcoming the gender gap, which aligns with the findings of Nicolas and Rubio's (2016) study, which was conducted in different regions excluding Pakistan. This shows that like other countries, Pakistan is witnessing similar trends of vicissitudes as a result of the development of SE in the country.

Based on a study conducted, it is concluded that SE is a way of socio-economic development. There is a need to understand the problems and issues that lie with the development of this sector at the government level. The gender gap is a most concerning issue, which is positively addressed through SE. The issue is getting worse in Pakistan with every passing year, which is required to be controlled for the prospering future of the country. The research has provided empirical evidence of the positive contribution of SE in this domain. There is much more to explore in the context of SE and Pakistan is far behind as there are many opportunities that can be grabbed through social enterprises.

### 5.1 Limitations and Future Study Recommendations

This study was a cross-sectional study. It looked into the research problem and acquired facts through structured interviews and secondary data. The findings have presented a well-elaborated justification regarding the role of SE in gender in Pakistan. However, like any other research, this research has its limitations, which are mainly associated with the selection of methodology and area of study. This study has a smaller sample size due to time and budget constraints. Also, the study is based on the social enterprises operating in Islamabad, Lahore, and Peshawar. Looking into the report of the British Council in secondary data, social enterprises existing across Pakistan were not approached by research because of a lack of access.

Based on the research's findings and limitations of this study, there are some potential gaps that could be filled in the future studies. It is recommended that research findings provided a valuable role of social enterprises in bridging the gender gap, but a study is recommended to understand the impact on the performance of these enterprises. It could be addressed by comparing the performance with different diversity statistics. Other recommendations for future study are to understand why women prefer social enterprises and men do not. The study should be conducted to identify factors that reduce men's participation in this sector as compared to women.

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