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**Social entrepreneurship and its contribution to the decrease of gender inequality in
Africa in the last decade**

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1. Abstract

Several successful social enterprises are now operating in healthcare, education, and rural development in Africa. Women are acting in this field more than men in several African countries. Indeed, women are contributing to the rise of the field of Social Entrepreneurship (SE) in Africa. Is Social Entrepreneurship a tool for minimizing gender gap in Africa? That is the question this work project aims to analyze. To understand the relation between SE and gender gap, interviews with Tunisian Social entrepreneurs have been conducted. Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship, Gender gap, Women empowerment, Africa.

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3. Introduction:

Social entrepreneurship has been viewed as a creative and appealing strategy to respond more effectively to complex social issues since its inception. Social entrepreneurship activities, focusing on issue solving and social innovation, have blurred the lines between the public, private, and non-profit sectors (Defourny & Nyssens, 2013). It has promoted hybrid models of activity that can be both for-profit and non-profit. (Tsakas & Moukaddem, 2019) Social entrepreneurship is a new field that provides young people with the opportunity to create long-term societal and economic value. Indeed, youth are the main actors in social entrepreneurship field in Africa. In fact, numerous studies reveal that today's youth are extremely motivated to effect constructive social change (United Nations, 2020). Social entrepreneurship has the potential to engage youth in initiatives that will help them achieve key social goals such as job creation, poverty reduction, inclusion, and integration. Social enterprises founded by young people that are dedicated to serving the common good can directly contribute to the achievement of several sustainable development goals (Holt and Littlewood, 2014) (United Nations, 2020). According to some studies, this is the fastest expanding sector globally, and potentially the only one that is creating gainful employment worldwide (Shukla, 2006).

Globally, social entrepreneurship has been recognized as a new type of entrepreneurship whose primary goal is to create social wealth rather than economic profit (Cheney, 2005). The focus on social development rather than profit is one of the most robust features of social entrepreneurship. This type of entrepreneurship has also been demonstrated to have significant economic implications on growth, poverty reduction, and social development on a large scale. In addition, SE contributed a lot in promoting gender equality through various aspects worldwide.

"Social entrepreneurship has different facets and varies according to the socioeconomic and cultural environment" (Mair & Marti, 2006). In the African context, social entrepreneurship addresses social issues such as poverty, unemployment, drug usage, poor health, sanitation, and lack of education. Several successful social enterprises are now operating, including healthcare, education, employment, and rural development. Several literature reviews will be studied on this subject in Africa and its contribution to decreasing the gender gap to strengthen the research and to analyze the outcome in a more general African context in order to compare it with a more specified analysis on the field of social entrepreneurship in Tunisia. It will be established in a way that set the stage for future research.

Gender equality is a vital development goal that is required for women and men to participate equally in society and the economy; and contribute to the creation of more sustainable impact in Africa (World Bank Group, 2014). The gender gap in Africa is still high in several countries. Improvements of the quality of lives of women and men by providing knowledge and financial resources to both, are necessary to these regions. Women in Africa are more likely than men to work in less productive or profitable industries, in low-pay or unpaid family jobs, or in the informal wage sector (World Bank Group, 2014). The minimization of gender inequality in Africa is a key factor for the development of Social Entrepreneurship. Indeed, it is one of the biggest challenges that social enterprises are facing in Africa in this last decade.

Furthermore, the last decade was mainly the period in which several social enterprises were created and operated in this field. In these last ten years, social entrepreneurship has witnessed a tremendous rise in Africa. In fact, social entrepreneurship is gaining growing interest over the last decade, garnering a wave of attentiveness from a diverse range of fields (Phillips et al., 2014). This research will focus on SE during the last decade to analyze the current situation from a closer perspective in the most adequate timeline to get the most relevant results.

The following is a description of the research structure: The research starts by reviewing the current state of the field of social entrepreneurship, concentrating on several African cases that addresses the relationship between the gender gap and social entrepreneurship. Then, the literature study will be strengthened by analyzing the case of Tunisia. Interviews will be conducted with seven women entrepreneurs operating in Tunisia. Analyses collected from the existing secondary data assessed from African cases will be crossed with the semi-structured interviews obtained. Finally, similarities and differences between the Tunisian case's specificity and the African general case will be outlined.

4. Literature Review:

As written in the introduction, this thesis will present the analysis of relevant literature research to analyze the influence of social entrepreneurship on the decrease of gender inequality in Africa. The research paper will provide an analysis of literature regarding specific research question: Is Social Entrepreneurship contributing to the decrease of the gender gap in Africa?

4.1. Contextual Insights on Social Entrepreneurship

A social enterprise, in essence, is a business model that prioritizes social concerns over profit to create a "fairer economy." In recent years, political and economic players, the press, as well as academics have become increasingly interested in Social Entrepreneurship (Dey, 2006). They all extol the virtues of these new entrepreneurial activities aimed at generating social value. Health care, sustainable development, and the distribution of products and services to the poorest regions are just a few areas where Social Entrepreneurship brings benefits and

progress (Janssen et al., 2012). By developing a social enterprise that works for equality and aid to the underprivileged, social entrepreneurship contributes to the preservation of human rights. Since its inception, social entrepreneurship has been perceived as an innovative and appealing approach to better meeting complex social needs.

4.2. Gender Inequality: The Case of Africa

Women and girls are more vulnerable to poverty, violence, and abuse than men all around the world. They are more likely to be malnourished and uneducated, especially in the poorest areas, where they lack the opportunity to attend school or work (British Council, 2017). Women in Africa frequently do not find their place in society due to a lack of information and education. Compared to the position of men in African society, women are struggling more to have their independence. They are also less likely to own enterprises or occupy positions of leadership, and they earn 75 percent less on average than men (British Council, 2017). The key to achieving women's status is to ensure that women have greater impact on social, economic, and political status, particularly in areas where they are most affected (Anunobi, 2002). According to Statista report on the average gender gap closed worldwide by regions in 2021, we found that “the Sub-Saharan Africa region” and “the Middle East and Africa region” have one of the most considerable gender gap percentages worldwide. The regions were divided and classified as follows (8 regions): “Western Europe”, “North America”, “Latin America and the Caribbean”, “Eastern Europe and Central Asia”, “East Asia and the Pacific”, “Sub-Saharan Africa”, “South Asia” and finally the “Middle East and North Africa”. The “Middle East and North Africa region” had the most significant gender gap with 60.9 percent, followed by “South Asia” and “Sub-Saharan Africa” regions, which have closed respectively 62.3 and 67.2 percent of their gap (Statista, 2021).

This means females were on average 39.1 percent less likely to have the same opportunities as males in the region of “Middle East and North Africa”. On the other hand, the “Sub Saharan” region's females were on average 32 percent less likely to have the same opportunities as males in the region (Statista,2021).

4.3. Women Empowerment through Social Entrepreneurship: The Case of Africa

It's reasonable to inquire about how social companies might help to create a fairer economy by empowering women and girls. Social businesses can empower female clients, employees, or business owners who have a real stake in the future, whereas traditional intervention concentrates on women beneficiaries (British Council, 2017). According to Kevin McKague and Sarah Harrison, health social enterprises in Africa that collaborate with community health workers are quickly expanding. Gender inequalities in the workplace, have significant public health and equity implications (McKague & Harrison, 2019). Indeed, in Africa, social entrepreneurship has ramifications for gender equality. Gender refers to the socially created roles, obligations, rights, expectations, and power interactions (Lorber, 1991). Gender equality refers to women and men having equal access to opportunities, freedoms, and resources in order to live the lives they value (McKague & Harrison, 2019).

Social enterprises are used to support women's empowerment in multiple powerful ways: the first one is being a source of funding for women's rights; It can also be used to provide training or employment opportunities for women to gain knowledge and leadership in the community. Social entrepreneurship was founded as a means of empowering women economically through micro-entrepreneurship, which gives women a level of financial

independence that protects them from the risks that can befall an African woman living in a disadvantaged location. Finally, SE helps women by acting as a catalyst for finding affordable items and services (British Council, 2017).

The social enterprise sector is proven to help empower women through its impact, not only on women in need but also for women social entrepreneurs, leaders, and employees (British Council, 2017). Even though social entrepreneurship has played a limited part in women's empowerment to yet, research shows that it has a lot of potential for women. The gender gap in social entrepreneurship worldwide is substantially lower than the gender gap in traditional entrepreneurship, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (British Council, 2020). In other words, women engage in social entrepreneurship much more than they undertake commercial entrepreneurship. This is understandable since we actively see women acting in the social entrepreneurship chain, whether as leaders or employees, when we look at multiple articles. Women's organizations are rising in number and prominence as African women are fighting for greater rights, opportunities, and economic resources. Some have had remarkable success in boosting women's political and economic empowerment. (Anunobi, 2002). Social enterprises are now acting in some cases as women's organizations that were seen in the 2000's.

Several studies have found that social entrepreneurship is literally a tool used by both men and women to fight against gender inequality, according to a report published by the British Council in 2020, social entrepreneurship improves women's employability. Indeed, the increasing use of sport, in Uganda was as a tool to achieve gender and development objectives focusing on women employability through the field of sports. Mixing sports with social entrepreneurship was a very efficient idea to empower women there (Hayhurst, 2012). This can

be an efficient tool for women to be empowered in the field of SE. In fact, the gender gap in social entrepreneurship in Mombasa, Kenya, for example does not appear to be as large as it is in commercial entrepreneurship (British Council, 2020). Women outweigh men in running social enterprises in Mombasa, in contrast to commercial entrepreneurship. This has the potential to benefit not only women but society as a whole by decreasing the gender gap. According to this report, employed women earn roughly 60% of what their male counterparts earn globally (British Council, 2020). This report discusses some of the issues that Kenyan women confront in their daily lives: Lack of Access to business finance, credit facilities, and most importantly, knowledge and business networks. There is also another critical factor which is the lack of education.

5. Problem and Research Question

In the African context, Poverty, unemployment, drug use, poor health sanitation, and a lack of education are examples of societal concerns addressed by social entrepreneurship. Several effective Social Enterprises are now in operation, including those in healthcare, education, employment, and rural development. As a result, various literature studies on this topic in Africa and its contribution to closing the gender gap were conducted.

The research will focus on women empowerment through Social Entrepreneurship contributing to the decrease in gender inequality: The case of Tunisia. This chapter will provide an analysis of literature regarding specific research questions: Is Social Entrepreneurship contributing to the decrease of the gender gap in Tunisia? Is Social Entrepreneurship contributing to women empowerment in Tunisia?

There is a belief that these two questions are linked and will provide new insights into the Tunisian case. The main question is if Tunisian women entrepreneurs feel empowered in this field in Tunisia or not. This research will focus on the criteria that help women feel empowered if it is the case. As a Tunisian student living my first 23 years in Tunisia, having studied in public and private institutions, I can attest that the new generation confirms day after day that it will provide Tunisia with enormous economic and social hope. These young people have a tremendous potential to become great entrepreneurs.

Regarding Social Entrepreneurship in Tunisia, I am in the proper position to confirm that the Tunisian youth have understood that change will only come from projects that generate a tangible social impact, encouraging a fair economy for everyone. Given the number of problems that appear in many African cases: poverty, social discrimination, economic and political instability, Tunisia, and the new generation have several problems that must be solved as soon as possible, creating the massive potential for improvement.

The concentration of young people on initiatives and businesses that have a social impact, rather than projects that only generate profits, as well as the development in the number of social companies, give optimism to this situation in terms of raising citizen awareness of various issues, to create and develop a suitable environment for improvement. The thesis will start by describing the actual situation of the implementation of Social Entrepreneurship in Tunisia, and this will be according to social entrepreneurs in Tunisia.

Then, it will discuss the challenges that women social entrepreneurs face concerning the position of women in this field. The thesis hypothesis is that Tunisian women are adopting

social empowerment to create a more equitable and fair economy or a better environment, both of which have enormous potential and reduce the gender gap. Instead of constructing a scientific model based on measured and quantified data, the qualitative method will be used to test the hypothesis.

6. Data and Methodology

In the next section, practical and qualitative research involving primary and secondary data collection and analysis will be done to corroborate or deny what has been discussed above.

The first section was intended to address the issue by analyzing the literature review and the current reality of entrepreneurship in Tunisia and additional sources such as press articles, laws, and publications on social entrepreneurship and its impact on the gender gap. The project's second stage attempts to gather data from seven women Tunisian social entrepreneurs. Semi-structured in-depth interviews will be used to confirm the results. The methodology will be based on the Gioia Methodology that aims to attain qualitative rigor, which will "encourage the presentation of research findings in a way that reveals the linkages among data, emergent concepts, and the resultant grounded theory" (Gioia et al., 2012). Therefore, the outcome will be compared to the previous literature on the African general context.

Unfortunately, because many of these social companies choose to postpone their activities or function at a plodding pace due to covid-19, the connection with them was even more difficult than previously. As a result, I could not conduct the ten interviews with social entrepreneurs that I had intended. On several occasions, this scenario hampered the progress of my

investigation. Consequently, only seven interviews were finally done. Most of these interviews took place on social media, using Messenger, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom. These interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes each.

Data Type	Methods	Quantity
Primary	Open-ended semi-structured in depth interviews collected from Tunisian social entrepreneurs.	7 interviews
	Observations on the social entrepreneurship actual situation in Tunisia.	More than 70 observations of websites, Facebook, Instagram, Linked of social enterprises and employees accounts.
Secondary	Collection of data related to Gender gap worldwide, and especially in Africa.	± 13 articles, books, research papers, reports, statistical data platforms, interviews.
	Collection of data related to Social Entrepreneurship worldwide, and especially in Africa	± 20 reports, articles, research papers, legislative information.
	Collection of data related to the empowerment of African women through Social Entrepreneurship.	± 12 reports, articles, interviews, books.

7. Research Methodology

In this study, the qualitative research method was applied. This method necessitates direct interaction with the field to gather various perspectives related to the topic at hand. This methodology can lead the research to reveal new, unexpected, but relevant topics that were not

addressed in the theoretical part of the research. The study involves an in-depth empirical analysis using an inductive approach. To facilitate our findings in a logical and structured way, we chose to use the Gioia methodology, which is based on the article Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology (Gioia et al., 2012). The reason for choosing and using the Gioia methodology is based on the need to use a method that meets the rigorous requirement of qualitative data analysis in its entirety. In addition, this method has a well-defined process flow in a systematic way, through which we can refine the data concretely, without compromising its quality and authenticity.

The aim of doing this inductive research was to achieve "qualitative rigor." Therefore, the analysis is based on the research questions using "multiple data sources" as input, which leads to credible data interpretations that persuade readers that the results are plausible and justifiable.

The purpose of the Gioia technique was to "provide an approach that allowed for the systematic presentation of both a 1st-order", i.e., an analysis employing informant-centric terms and codes and a 2nd-order" analysis", i.e., one using researcher-centric concepts, themes, and dimensions. This involved performing the data coding on the raw data and then developing a comprehensive compendium based on raw data, termed first-order analysis. Moreover, the first-order data analysis which is the Comprehensive Compendium can be further filtered into the second order themes, by maintaining a systematic approach in the data analysis process.

This study drew on multiple data sources, including archives, laws, and media documentation. Semi-structured interviews are at the heart of this research, aiming to acquire retrospective and real-time experiences from social entrepreneurs actively working in this field. Throughout this

research, I conducted a series of open-ended semi-structured interviews with 7 Tunisian women social entrepreneurs who have been active in this field for 1 to 3 years. This methodology assumes that the research's informants are "knowledgeable agents," They know what they are trying to do and can explain their thoughts, intentions, and actions. These social entrepreneurs' ages range from 22 to 26, with entirely different educational backgrounds. Several contacts were established with bright young Tunisians working in the field of Social Entrepreneurship. Seven semi-structured interviews were scheduled. Although the number is not very large, the information gathered valuable. Four interviewees are founders of purely Tunisian social organizations, such as "Lellethom", "Barbecha", "Camech" and "Chabeb ID," while the other two have worked in the field of social entrepreneurship for at least two years inside Tunisians social enterprises and they were participants in several events that took place within the enterprise. One of them is operating in an incubator called "Afkar Incubator."

Afkar is an initiative dedicated to catalyzing individuals with great ideas for social change and is acting very closely to the Social Entrepreneurship field in Tunisia. Indeed, this method allowed for more in-depth information from the respondents by obtaining open-ended interviews. Semi-structured interviews enabled the collection of qualitative data that was reliable and comparable. The interview is more or less lengthy and requires considerable concentration but gives us some flexibility and freedom while talking with the interviewees and following up based on the interviewer's responses. Therefore, I was able to go over each topic, with each respondent. Mainly, all the interviews have a similar general structure for all respondents. In the second stage, the fact of having general structure was beneficial to analyze all the data gathered according to this structure and the questions' guide.

8. Findings & Discussion

8.1 Social entrepreneurship and its contribution to the decrease of gender inequality in Africa in the last decade: The case of Tunisia

Due to the increased awareness of social entrepreneurship in Tunisia over the previous decade, this study focused on Social Enterprises in Tunisia. Four of the participants own social firms, and three have worked and operated in the field of social entrepreneurship for at least a year. First, a database of potential participants was created using the Mediterranean School of Business's alumni network, the author's personal networks, and LinkedIn profiles. Email, LinkedIn and WhatsApp messages were used to send invitations to participants. Therefore, 10 invitations to participate in the study were sent, only 7 answered back.

The data from the interviews were used to create the Data Structure 1, which resulted in the generation of 22 quotes summarized into 16 first-order concepts. These were then divided into five second-order themes and three aggregate dimensions, summarizing the study's findings in Data Structure 2. The dimensions indicate the three fundamental levels that characterize women's current position in leadership and management of social enterprises, as well as beneficiaries of social ventures in the field of social entrepreneurship. Finally, the relationship between social entrepreneurship and the gender gap is described in the third dimension. Therefore, it is critical to investigate each dimension before presenting the results.

Data Structure 1.

Quotes

First orders concepts

"I love my job, that's it, I can't say no more. "
 "I'm very happy about the beginning of my career."
 "I feel that I'm earning money for helping people, for me it's a dream, I can't realize that. "
 "I think that I made the right choice "



-Feeling of making the right choice.
 -Job satisfaction.

"I never felt under-estimated but sometimes I feel the gender gap in terms of salary, but not only in SE field:"
 "I never felt the gender gap in Tunisia, particularly in this field."
 "No never. hahah, now when I think about that, I think there is no men in the team, let me think... only the coach. We are all girls."



- Opinion of interviewees on gender gap in workplace (Social enterprises)
 -Denying the fact that they feel the gender gap in workplace.
 -Bringing awareness on gender gap in general (no specific opinion for SE)

"Of course I feel empowered in the social entrepreneurship field. "
 "...SE is a solution to many social issues, among them the decrease of Gender gap... that leads to achieve women empowerment of course."
 "I noticed that in these 3 last years several social enterprises focused on women in rural areas... and it's working well. "
 "Several women found a job. SE is a solution for many poor regions in Tunisia. It's there where we can feel the gender gap. "



- Focus on women's empowerment
 -Strong relation between SE and women's empowerment

"We are not only targeting women, but I think the way SE is focusing on solving women's problem is due to the inequalities between genders in poor regions of Tunisia ".
 "We created 15 jobs opportunity, 15 tailors, all women."
 "We created 360 jobs positions, most of them were for women. not all of them"



-Creating several job positions
 -Focus on women's employability

"The jacket was sold for 50 Tunisian Dinars, 40 were given to the employees."
 "I gave money more than I earned in the first year. The idea was not about earning, it's all about giving."
 "The beneficiaries of the projects are very happy about everything including their salary, they love what they are doing. You are more than welcome to come and ask them."



-Focus on solving a social problem more than earning money
 -Highlighting the satisfaction of the beneficiaries on the projects
 -Highlighting the fact that financial difficulties can occur in the first years in the leadership level

"SE is very powerful tool to decrease gender gap. Social entrepreneurs know exactly what I mean."
 "We are not the only ones providing jobs to women in poor regions. Most of the Tunisians social enterprises are contributing to the decrease of gender gap."



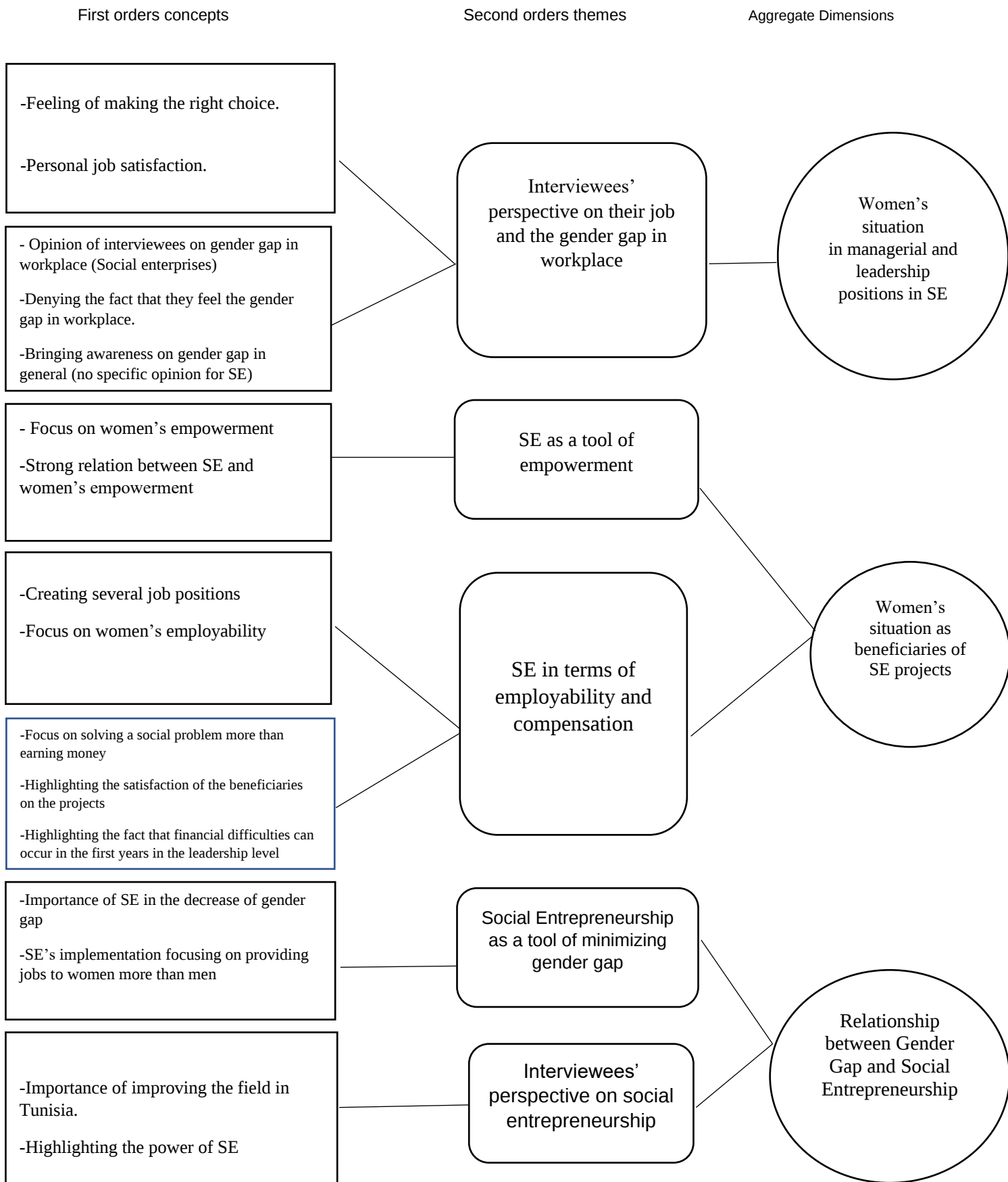
-Importance of SE in the decrease of gender gap
 -SE's implementation focusing on providing jobs to women more than men

"This field is still underrated in Tunisia despite the rise of the social ventures."
 "Many young, graduated students understood that this field is a powerful tool in order to build a fairer economy."



-Importance of improving this field in Tunisia.
 -Highlighting the power of SE

Data Structure 2.



8.1.1 Women's situation in the field of SE in managerial and leadership positions:

The interview began with introductory questions for the interviewees about their social enterprises or the social enterprises where they worked. The interview then moved to questions prompting the interviewee to say why they chose to have a career in social entrepreneurship and what they think of their jobs. All participants gave positive answers about their current jobs. For example, Zeineb stated, "After two years acting in the social entrepreneurship fields, I believe that I made the right choice." Responses like this one were also given by other participants. Sabine also stated, "I am very happy about the beginning of my career." Several positive responses were received confirming that women operating in social entrepreneurship in Tunisia are satisfied in their daily job tasks. Social entrepreneurship was, for the participants, a tool to feel financially free while being close, handling the recurring social problems affecting Tunisia.

For most of the participants, it was a natural process, which started as a hobby. The common point of the answers obtained is that all the participants have already volunteered in several NGOs such as "Leo Club" and the student organization "Enactus". This experience has turned from a hobby and volunteering into a part-time or full-time job. Ines said: "I was doing my undergraduate degree at the Mediterranean School of Business, and I had the course of Social Entrepreneurship. This subject allowed me to think much more about my career, and specifically to do what I love rather than what I am studying. "

As the interviews progressed and the issue of the gender gap in leadership positions in social entrepreneurship was discussed, a small laugh was received at the starting of the answer of Ines. She said: "No, never. haha, now when I think about that, I think there are no men in the team, let me think... only the coach. We are all girls". Most of the responses were similar to Ines' answer. Farah said: "I never felt the gender gap in Tunisia, particularly in this field. I am speaking about my personal experience."

Only one participant stated that she felt the gender gap at the beginning of her career, not precisely in the social entrepreneurship field. The response was received by Zeineb describing the gender gap in a general way: "I never felt under-estimated but sometimes I feel the gender gap, for example in terms of salary, but not only in SE, in general." However, 6/7 of the participants stated that they did not feel the gender gap at the managerial and leadership level in the SE field in Tunisia.

8.1.2 The situation of women as beneficiaries of SE in Tunisia

During the interviews, participants were confronted with a question asking about the relationship between SE and women's empowerment. The participants mentioned the term empowerment of women in rural areas several times even though the question did not focus on the location or regions where SE is applied in Tunisia. Here, participants seek to describe where they intend to narrow the gender gap citing the poorest regions of Tunisia. The gender gap in the field is seen in the employee level, especially in rural areas when there is a lack of education for women. Several social ventures are located there, to empower women in society and to create a fairer economy. Different responses were provided when the question changed from "Do you feel the gender gap in your business when you work?" to "Is social entrepreneurship a

tool to help close the gender gap?" Zeineb said on this topic, "I have noticed that in the last three years, several social enterprises have focused on women in rural areas...and it is working well. "Farah also said, "Several women have found employment. SE is a solution for many poor areas in Tunisia. This is where we can feel the gender gap. "

Most responses confirmed that there is a strong link between SE and the empowerment of women. Furthermore, most of them confirmed that social entrepreneurship is a potent tool that plays a significant role in empowering women in Tunisia, especially in the poor areas.

Continuing the interview with a question about employability in the companies where they operate by asking about the gender of the beneficiaries of social entrepreneurship in Tunisia, 2 of the interviewees confirmed that they do not target only women; they just operate in certain situations that need to be addressed. Ines said, "We don't target only women, but I think the way SE focuses on solving the problem of women is due to the gender inequalities in the poor regions of Tunisia." Focusing on women according to them is a necessity and not a choice given the situation of women in the poor regions of Tunisia. Farah added on this subject: "We have created 15 job opportunities, 15 tailors, all women. We chose our team to be only composed of women, because of the difficult situation of uneducated women in Tunisia, especially after 10 years of Revolution, the situation has worsened even more. "All of the interviewees helped women more than men by providing them financial independence despite their lack of education.

In terms of the financial situation of the social enterprises and the remuneration of the project beneficiaries undertaken by our interviewees, two questions were asked: "Is SE profitable for you?" and "Are the project beneficiaries satisfied with their income?".

Many different answers were given, but the goal of creating social enterprises was the same for all interviewees. Ines said about this, "The project beneficiaries are very happy with everything, including their salary, they like what they do. You are welcome to come and ask them questions". She also added, "We built our business with one goal in mind: to give people in need a new chance to be a part of society in these difficult times." According to the participants, most people who got help and benefited from a job due to social enterprises are satisfied with their income. Ines said, "The jacket was sold for 50 Tunisian dinars, 40 were given to the employees. Most of the employees benefiting from the jobs provided by our social enterprise ask us to provide the same employment opportunity to their relatives. "The responses confirm that the women benefiting from these opportunities are very satisfied with their income.

Regarding the profitability of social ventures, according to the responses received by all participants, the first year was tough financially, as Zeineb stated: "I gave more money than I earned in the first year. The idea was not to earn money, but to give it. "

This study aimed to understand if there is a strong relationship between social entrepreneurship and the gender gap in Tunisia, it seems to be the reality within this sample.

8.1.3 Relationship between Social Entrepreneurship and Gender Gap

Based on the responses to the question "Does social entrepreneurship contribute to the decrease of the gender gap in Tunisia? Most of the answers were positive. Participants confirmed that SE is a very strong tool for Tunisian women and all women in the world. Yasmine said, "SE is a powerful tool for closing the gender gap. Social entrepreneurs know

exactly what I mean." This confirms that many social entrepreneurs know that SE is a tool to fight gender inequality and discrimination against Tunisian women. Zeineb stated: "We are not the only ones providing jobs to women in poor areas. Most of the new Tunisian social enterprises are contributing to the minimization of the gender gap. Most of the successful Tunisian social enterprises cited by participants focused on women or provided employment opportunities for women, especially in western Tunisia, due to the lack of opportunities resulting from lack of education and even the simple necessities.

These social activities lead women to become essential actors in society, given the impossibility of public institutions to deal with all social problems. All the responses confirm and affirm that the gender gap is reduced in the case of social entrepreneurship, and it is also clear that the participation of social entrepreneurs in the fight against the gender gap is influenced by the level of development of the situation of women in this country.

8.2 Differences and Similarities between SE in Tunisia compared to the African Case

8.2.1 Similarities

Social entrepreneurship in Africa is rising these recent years in all the continent, there are many similarities linking countries in Africa over the years. The lack of education, infrastructure and resources is increasingly seen in recent years. The African continent is characterized by serious social problems in all areas. These serious social problems must be solved as soon as possible. These characteristics are the cause of creating opportunities for establishing social enterprises. (Holt et al., 2014) The poor governance that is rampant in most African countries is a common cause for all African social entrepreneurs to realize these common African challenges. Starting

and growing a business in Africa is often more challenging than in other regions of the world, due to a lack of infrastructure, relative costs, and bureaucracy resulting in more complex problems leading to an unfair economy. (Holt et al., 2014). Slavery and post-colonial interactions inevitably have substantial implications for African countries, and this is one of the common characteristics of the African continent. This has had an economic and social impact on African countries, making it difficult for them to maintain a strong economy. According to Herbst, the colonial period was relatively brief in the context of the continent's total history, yet there is evidence that it left substantial impacts. National boundaries were established by colonizers, leaving almost all countries with major social issues. (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2012) (Herbst, 2000).

For social entrepreneurship academics, the African environment appears to have some fascinating traits. Recurring social and economic difficulties generate needs that can be exploited by businesses that have at least some social goals. What most African countries have in common is that the same social difficulties result in the same opportunities for businesses to operate by solving a societal problem. (Holt et al., 2014) The rise of SE in most African countries can be attributed to plenty of socioeconomic issues. These businesses can range from for-profit ventures that target niche markets to more socially conscious ventures that address the high prevalence of acute needs linked with extreme poverty, institutional voids, and vulnerable environmental resources (Holt et al., 2014).

Similarities were seen regarding women's situation in Africa, women are struggling more than men in African society. Lack of education is a key common factor for almost all the African countries. Opportunities are not the same for men and women resulting in several societal

problems affecting the empowerment of women. As seen in the literature review, the regions that are most affected by the gender gap are in Africa. The gender gap index doesn't differ too much between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa (Statista, 2021). Women in African countries are struggling to find a place in society in order to be autonomous. This problem was the cause of creation of thousands of social ventures operating all over Africa, fighting the gender gap.

Lack of education for women is also a common feature in African societies resulting in an unfair economy. Yasmine said regarding this subject: "We are targeting women without an educational level. These are our targets." As a response to the interviewee, more clarification was requested to the participant. She added: "Those are for me the ones that struggle the most." We can understand from all the data collected that these common features regarding the lack of education for women is one of the important social problems that was targeted.

In terms of women's empowerment, the same methods were applied to strengthen women's position in the societies such as training, employment opportunities, resulting in the independence of women that protects them from discrimination especially for women living in a disadvantaged location. According to the interviewees, the gender gap in social entrepreneurship in Tunisia is lower than the gender gap in traditional entrepreneurship, which is the same case for African countries.

8.2.2 Differences

Even though there are parallels in SE in Africa, social entrepreneurship differs from one country to another the other. Several factors must be taken into consideration: The poverty rate, education rate, and gender gap rate are all key factors in establishing a good social initiative.

The characteristics of the environment, i.e., the setting in which the venture operate may have an impact on social enterprises, according to Bacq and Janssen. (Holt et al., 2014). The environment is responsible for creating the social needs resulting in several social opportunities that social entrepreneurs can benefit from. (Santos, 2012). Environmental factors are likely to influence not just the creation of social enterprises, but also many of the characteristics of these ventures. (Holt et al., 2014).

Africa is home to the world's greatest intact assemblages of large mammals, which wander freely in many nations, and its living organisms account for roughly a quarter of the world's biodiversity. Mixing Tourism with Social entrepreneurship will surely differ between African countries. Tunisia has for example, very strong features in Tourism such as having snow in the north, and Sahara in the south at the same period providing several and different kinds of tourism from the north to the south. Other countries have other features helping them to combine Tourism with Social Entrepreneurship. These environmental characteristics can help social entrepreneurship providing social issues through the Tourism field. Africa's environmental characteristics encompass everything from mangroves to deserts, Mediterranean and tropical forests to temperate, subtropical, and highland grasslands and savannahs, as well as snow-capped mountains (Holt et al., 2014). These many different characteristics can confirm that Social Entrepreneurship differs from one country to the other. Africa, on the other hand, is witnessing unparalleled rates of population increase, urbanization, and agricultural expansion, creating tremendous problems in balancing human well-being with economic and environmental prosperity (A.S et al., 2005).

Social enterprises have a main objective of providing solutions to a societal problem. The problems differ from one country to another, the percentage of Health institutions' issues vary

between the African countries. Social ventures are very different and are depending on the current social and economic situation of a country. According to Acemoglu and co-authors, in comparison to non-British ex-colonies, former British colonies in the developing world are more successful, have better property rights, and have more developed financial systems. Societal problems differ and have their own characteristics.

9 Limitations & Future Research

Time was one of the limitations, as it would have allowed for the inclusion and reorganization of more interviews and contacts, and an increase in the quality of the sample. In addition, the lack of ability to generalize and replicate results is common to the use of qualitative methods and is present in this study. Moreover, most of the social ventures owned by the interviewees are new, they operated less than 2 years.

This thesis can be considered as one of the few studies focusing on social entrepreneurship and its direct impact on gender inequality. As outlined and discussed in this paper, SE is a powerful tool for minimizing the gender gap in Africa. However, future research could focus in more detail on why the gender gap is lower in the social entrepreneurship field compared to other fields.

The present study was conducted on a sample of Tunisian individuals only. The purpose was to take the example of Tunisia and compare it to the rest of the continent, but it would also be highly relevant to include people from different countries, cultures and social habits who may evaluate and approach this experience differently. As a result, this could be a potential

constraint that prevents the research findings from being applied to individuals from diverse geographical places to have a wider, all-encompassing analysis. This element could be a beneficial factor in future research to provide further information.

10 Conclusion

In this work project, the proposed objective was to analyze the contribution of the field of social entrepreneurship in minimizing the gender gap in Africa. The qualitative research method used, and the respective analyses led to the conclusion that social entrepreneurship is indeed linked to the contribution to the minimization of the gender gap in Africa in several ways. The analysis of the case, choosing Tunisia as an example, could pave the way for further research and discussions.

Similarities and differences were analyzed between the Tunisian case and the African one. What is common to all African countries is that social entrepreneurship is a powerful tool used to minimize the gender gap in Africa. Differences were also analyzed in terms of reasons behind the launch of social ventures across the continent. The environment of the countries differs, generating different social needs, which in return generates different social ventures.

Despite the differences in the cases studied, the same general process is applied in social entrepreneurship for all African countries. The situation of women in Africa is complicated in almost all countries. The struggle to minimize the gender gap is common, however, what differs is the way it is done in each country. It depends on several characteristics of the countries, their history, and the economic and social situation.

All Tunisian participants interviewed, both as employers and employees, confirmed that SE in Tunisia is one of the most robust tools to fight the gender gap. As already cited in the literature, the gender gap in social entrepreneurship worldwide is substantially lower than the gender gap in traditional entrepreneurship, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020, British Council). Nevertheless, several participants confirmed that the gender gap at the managerial and leadership level within SE is not felt in Tunisia. As the main conclusion, social entrepreneurship contributes to decreasing the gender gap in Africa. Therefore, the African governments should focus more and invest in this powerful tool to lower the gender gap and promote women's empowerment.

Considering the above-mentioned advantages, this study strongly encourages young African students to engage in the subject of social entrepreneurship and to take a deeper look at the benefits it may bring to African countries. The study also advises African business schools to offer mandatory social entrepreneurship courses to their students due to its importance in the continent, and globally, its utmost contribution to the world.

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