

Abstract

Challenges and Obstacles Facing Women's Entrepreneurship in Kuwait[†]

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1. Objectives

This paper explores women's entrepreneurship in Kuwait in terms of sustainability, as defined by the United Nations (UN). The focus of this study is not only on inequality but also on exploring the role of women's entrepreneurship in a country's economic growth. The focus is explicitly on Kuwaiti institutions that promote entrepreneurship, particularly women's entrepreneurship. We explore whether the term "the Valley of Death" is more prevalent in women's entrepreneurship in Kuwait, which offers one of the biggest opportunities to grow in the post-oil-boom Kuwaiti economy [1–6].

2. Methodology

This is a primarily qualitative research based on 10 in-depth interviews with Kuwaiti female entrepreneurs. The guiding methodology is an interview setting and processing technique called Vancouver School of Doing Phenomenology. The Kuwaiti baby clothing company B Cocoon was used as the leading case to develop a model in 12 steps for entrepreneurship development. The remaining 11 cases will be used to validate and adjust this model, which is intended to guide future female entrepreneurs in Kuwait and other places in the world [7–10].

3. Results

This study aims to construct, validate, test, and develop two entrepreneurial developmental and financial models to provide guidance for the steps to overcome the Death Valley phenomenon—the greatest obstacle to entrepreneurial growth. We have put forth two primary models based on the leading case used in this study—the case of Kuwaiti female-owned B(aby) Cocoon, which is a successful clothing line that has gone through all the 12 steps of the model. The remaining cases will be used to test, validate, adjust, and modify the models, as well as locate their barriers to growth and propose steps to remedy their predicaments [11–13].

4. Implications

According to a report published by the Kuwaiti Investment Authorities, "Kuwait in transition, towards a post-oil economy", it is argued that the current welfare state model, which heavily relies on oil, is outdated. It is suggested that the growth of small/medium-sized private sector companies should be promoted through a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship. It is crucial to identify the obstacles and opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to ensure the long-term and sustainable development of the Kuwaiti economy, particularly for women's entrepreneurship in Kuwait [14–16].



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5. Originality Value

Shedding a light on these gender-based inequalities in startup funding is of particular importance, as most entrepreneurship fails because of a lack of access to entrepreneurial finance. Foregoing opportunities that might lie in female-founded entrepreneurship ventures is a matter of national importance, as a country like Kuwait needs this growth in order to transition from its oil-based economy. Approaching gender-based inequalities in startup funding is still new in Kuwait. Hence, this topic deserves more attention for the sake of equality and sustainable economic growth.

6. Contributions

Women's entrepreneurship is regarded as one of the most promising strategies to grow the Kuwaiti economy past the oil boom, especially for Kuwaiti institutions that promote women's entrepreneurship. Access to entrepreneurial finance is particularly important, as, according to our interviews, this is where there is the greatest need for change. Both public and private banks and financial institutions should develop programs to fully utilize the potential of women's entrepreneurship for their institution, as well as the country's future economic growth.

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