



**The Institutional Influence on Social Entrepreneurship in The Middle East:
The Case of Egypt.**

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2025

**A Thesis Submitted to Nottingham Trent University in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

Abstract

This study explores how institutional contexts influence social entrepreneurship in Egypt—an emerging market characterised by prolonged political uncertainty, high levels of informality, and institutional frameworks. Using institutional theory and the concept of necessity-driven innovation—defined as innovation compelled by a lack of alternatives rather than market opportunity—the study examines how social entrepreneurs navigate and respond to environmental constraints. Drawing on qualitative data from multiple case studies, the research identifies how institutional voids, normative pressures, and cognitive framings intersect to shape entrepreneurial agency. Egypt presents a unique context compared to other emerging economies due to its legacy of state-dominated development, entrenched inequality, and hybrid formal–informal systems. These features create distinct institutional logics that challenge conventional models of entrepreneurship. The findings extend institutional theory by highlighting how social entrepreneurs in constrained settings reinterpret and reconfigure institutional boundaries to foster innovation with social impact. Practically, the study provides insights for policymakers and development agencies aiming to harness necessity-driven entrepreneurship as a tool for resilience and inclusive development. This contribution is particularly relevant in post-crisis recovery contexts where institutional instability persists.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial orientation, necessity-driven innovation, institutional theory, Egypt.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CIC	Community Interest Company
EFB	Egyptian Food Bank
EO	Entrepreneurial Orientation
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
LMF	Life Makers Foundation
MEA	Middle East & Africa
MEK	Misr El-Kheir Foundation
MENA	Middle East & North Africa
NIE	New Institutional Economics
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIE	New institutional economics
RCO	Resala Charity Organisation
SE	Social Enterprise

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Declaration

The researcher is registered as a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree and is submitting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for this degree. The researcher has not been registered for any other research award. The findings, propositions, and conclusions presented in this thesis are the original work of the researcher and have not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for any other academic or professional award.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to Professor Dr. Amon Simba, my principal supervisor at Nottingham Trent University, for his extraordinary dedication, exceptional guidance, and inspiring mentorship throughout my doctoral journey. Dr. Simba is a truly remarkable academic and mentor whose profound expertise and strategic insights have shaped this thesis in ways I could not have imagined. His ability to challenge my ideas, encourage critical thinking, and provide unwavering support has elevated this research to its fullest potential. Dr. Simba's steadfast belief in my abilities and his tireless commitment to my progress have been a constant source of motivation. I am profoundly grateful for his meticulous attention to detail, his transformative feedback, and his genuine investment in my success. It has been an honour and privilege to work under his supervision, and I will always hold his contributions to my development in the highest regard.

I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Yan Wang, my second supervisor at Nottingham Trent University, for her invaluable support, insightful guidance, and thoughtful contributions. Dr. Wang's expertise and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping this research, and her ability to provide constructive feedback with clarity and precision has greatly enriched my work. Her steady support and keen insights have not only enhanced the academic rigour of this thesis but have also given me the confidence to navigate the complexities of this journey. I am deeply thankful for her dedication and the time she invested in ensuring the quality of this research.

Special acknowledgement is extended to Dr. Wenyu Zang, Dr. Steve Brown, Dr. Diego Morris, and Mumin Abubakre for their invaluable roles during the formative stages of my doctoral journey at Nottingham Trent University. Their mentorship and guidance provided a solid foundation for this thesis and were instrumental in shaping the direction of my research. Although some of them have since moved to other academic institutions, their early contributions and influence on this work remain deeply appreciated. I am sincerely grateful for their support and wisdom during those critical initial stages. I wish them continued success in their future endeavours.

Finally, I am deeply appreciative of Nottingham Trent University for providing the resources, facilities, and academic environment that made this research possible. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to the participants of this study, whose time, insights, and generosity have been integral to the completion of this thesis.

Dedication

To Allah, whose boundless support, guidance, and mercy have been my constant source of strength throughout my life and journey.

To my beloved wife, Nada Karam, and my sons, Omar and Marwan, whose love, patience, and unwavering support have been my anchor. Nada, your constant encouragement and belief in my potential have been my motivation through the most challenging moments, and Omar and Marwan, your smiles and presence have reminded me of the joys of life and why this journey matters. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine, for without your patience and support, this would not have been possible. You are, and always will be, my greatest blessing.

To the cherished memory of my parents, who passed away in 2022. You were the light of my life and the reason I stand here today. Your kindness, wisdom, and unconditional love have shaped who I am, and your sacrifices have paved the way for every success I have achieved. I deeply wish you could be here to witness this moment, which is a testament to the values and principles you instilled in me. This is for you, with love and eternal gratitude.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1 Chapter Overview

Social entrepreneurship represents a strategic blend of conventional business practices and a mission-driven approach to addressing societal challenges. Unlike commercial entrepreneurship, which prioritises profit maximisation, social entrepreneurship emphasises creating social value by addressing global socio-economic and environmental issues (Dees, 1998; Mair & Marti, 2006). The economic contributions of entrepreneurship are well documented, often driving innovation, employment, and resilience (Audretsch, 2003; European Commission, 2003). Furthermore, in response to rising socio-economic disparities and global crises, social entrepreneurship introduces a transformative paradigm by fostering impact-orientated and sustainable business models that transcend profit motives (Bornstein, 2004; Nicholls, 2006a). Social entrepreneurship has been defined as “*the practice of using entrepreneurial strategies to develop innovative solutions for complex social issues*” (Dees, 1998). It is essential to distinguish between NGOs and social enterprises. NGOs typically operate on donor funding and adhere to charity-based models of service delivery. In contrast, social enterprises employ market-based strategies to achieve social objectives while ensuring financial sustainability. Although both aim to address societal challenges, this study is explicitly focused on the latter (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Doherty et al., 2014; Kerlin, 2020). It has garnered interest across sectors, including non-profit organisations, private enterprises, and government institutions, owing to its potential to address grand challenges in which traditional sectors have fallen short (Saebi et al., 2019). Social enterprises vary widely in scope, ranging from community-focused initiatives to large-scale international entities addressing issues such as education, healthcare, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability (Mair & Marti, 2006; Dacin et al., 2010).

Although there was a rise in interest in social entrepreneurship in the 1970s and 1980s, it wasn't until the 1990s that the field received academic recognition (Nicholls, 2006a), thanks to factors like globalisation, technological advancements, and a greater awareness of social injustices. Recognising the inefficacy of traditional approaches in addressing persistent socio-economic challenges, policymakers and communities increasingly endorsed innovative models that combine the pursuit of social impact with economic sustainability. These models, exemplified by social enterprises, offer a transformative shift by integrating entrepreneurial strategies with societal value creation. Organisations such as Ashoka, the Skoll Foundation, and the Schwab Foundation have played pivotal roles in funding and recognising social ventures (Drayton, 2002; Dacin et al., 2010). Noteworthy examples, such as the Grameen Bank and BRAC in Bangladesh, underscore the transformative potential of social entrepreneurship, particularly in poverty reduction, healthcare, and education (Yunus, 2008; Smillie, 2009). Despite this progress, social entrepreneurship remains an evolving field, with ongoing debates surrounding its definitions, methodologies, and impact measurement

(Bacq & Janssen, 2011). Scholars have noted the diverse range of activities within social entrepreneurship, all aimed at creating positive societal impacts (Zahra et al., 2009). Regulatory environments and societal needs influence how these activities operate within various legal and structural frameworks (Dees, 2007; Nicholls, 2008).

Balancing social and financial objectives represents a core challenge for social enterprises. Unlike traditional businesses, social enterprises must align financial sustainability with social impact goals, often creating internal tensions (Thompson et al., 2000; Bacq & Janssen, 2011). Achieving this balance frequently requires innovative strategies, including impact investing, blended financing, and community-centred funding models (Bugg-Levine & Emerson, 2011). Concurrently, social impact measurements have become central to evaluating and communicating organisational effectiveness. Conversely, conventional profitability metrics inadequately capture the multidimensional goals of social enterprises, necessitating frameworks that address complex social outcomes (Dart et al., 2010; Kroeger & Weber, 2014). These frameworks tend to emphasise stakeholder engagement, multidimensional accountability, and transparency, factors that are crucial for maintaining trust and support among funders, beneficiaries, and the wider community (Kanter & Summers, 1987; Williams & Taylor, 2013). Institutional factors are pivotal in shaping the viability and trajectory of social entrepreneurship. Institutional theory offers a robust lens for examining how both formal and informal structures constrain or enable entrepreneurial action. Drawing on North's (1990) distinction between codified and informal rules, and Scott's (2014) emphasis on regulative, normative, and cognitive structures, the theory provides a foundation for analysing how social entrepreneurs navigate institutional complexity. Institutional theory views human behaviour as structured by shared rules, norms, and belief systems that shape how actors perceive their options and make decisions (Scott, 2014). Institutions may be formal—codified laws, policies, and enforcement structures—or informal—norms, customs, traditions, and religious expectations (North, 1990). In the context of social entrepreneurship, these institutions create both constraints and opportunities by shaping access to legitimacy, resources, and public trust. The literature suggested that these institutions collectively shape opportunities and constraints for social enterprises, affecting their capacity to innovate, gain legitimacy, and achieve impact (Urbano & Guerrero, 2013). In emerging markets like Egypt, institutional deficiencies such as regulatory ambiguity, fragmented policy frameworks, and socio-cultural resistance present significant challenges for social entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, such constraints can also inspire adaptive strategies, as social entrepreneurs creatively navigate these barriers to deliver social value (Desa, 2012; Haugh & Talwar, 2016).

In this context, Egypt serves as an exemplary case for investigating the complex interplay between institutional factors and social entrepreneurship. The country faces persistent socio-economic challenges, including high unemployment, particularly among youth; disparities in access to education and healthcare; and structural inefficiencies such as bureaucratic hurdles (Roudi, 2011; Littlewood & Holt, 2018; World Bank, 2020).

Additionally, the aftermath of the Arab Spring has spurred a wave of entrepreneurial energy, particularly among young people, leading to ventures addressing issues such as women's empowerment, cultural initiatives, and job creation (Anderson, 2014). Despite this momentum, Egypt's social entrepreneurship ecosystems remain underexplored, with limited research on how social enterprises operate within fragmented institutional frameworks (MedUp et al., 2019). Accordingly, this research endeavours to address this discrepancy in the literature by examining how formal and informal institutions influence the establishment, growth, and sustainability of social enterprises in Egypt. Egypt's dual economy, characterised by institutional hybridity, high informality, and limited state capacity, makes it an under-explored yet theoretically rich setting for examining social entrepreneurship in emerging markets. These conditions reveal institutional tensions that shape entrepreneurial agency and innovation (Fawzy, 2018; El-Haddad, 2020). By exploring how social entrepreneurs navigate regulatory impediments, leverage cultural norms, and develop adaptive strategies, the study aspires to provide a nuanced understanding of the institutional factors moulding social entrepreneurship in emerging markets. The findings aspire to contribute to academic discourse and provide practical recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders endeavouring to create more supportive environments for social enterprises in Egypt and analogous contexts. Thus, the ultimate objective is to advance sustainable economic development while driving transformative social impact in these regions.

1.1 Research Aims

This study investigates how institutional arrangements in Egypt influence the strategies and practices of social entrepreneurs, contributing to institutional theory and offering practical insights for development actors operating in constrained environments.

1.1.1 Research Objectives

- To examine the influence of formal institutional factors, such as legislative frameworks, regulatory policies, and administrative practices, on the establishment, growth, and operational capacity of social enterprises in Egypt.
- To analyse the impact of informal institutional factors such as cultural values, social beliefs, and community expectations on the public perception and legitimacy of social entrepreneurship within Egyptian society.
- To compare the institutional environment for social entrepreneurship in Egypt with those in developed economies, highlighting unique challenges and opportunities for social enterprises in emerging markets.
- To identify and critically evaluate the adaptive strategies that social entrepreneurs in Egypt employ to navigate regulatory and cultural constraints, establishing and sustaining their ventures despite institutional challenges.

- To provide policy recommendations aimed at developing a supportive institutional framework for social entrepreneurship in Egypt and other similar countries in the emerging economies.

The structure of these objectives necessitates a holistic approach to examining the institutional factors shaping social entrepreneurship in Egypt. Each objective addresses a specific dimension of the institutional environment—formal, informal, comparative, strategic, and policy-oriented—ensuring a thorough and multidimensional understanding of this complex phenomenon within the context of an emerging market. Their interconnectedness enables an in-depth exploration of the intersections among these dimensions. Building on this foundation, the study aspires to deliver a nuanced analysis of Egypt's social enterprise landscape. Furthermore, the objectives aim not only to uncover the challenges encountered by social entrepreneurs but also to propose actionable strategies and policy recommendations to cultivate a more enabling environment for social enterprises in Egypt and comparable contexts. The research questions outlined below, derived from these objectives, guide the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, ensuring a systematic and coherent investigation into the regulatory, cultural, strategic, and policy-related factors influencing social entrepreneurship.

1.1.2 Research Questions

- How do formal institutional factors, such as laws, policies, and regulatory frameworks, influence the establishment, growth, and operational practices of social enterprises in Egypt?
- In what ways do informal institutional factors, including societal norms, cultural beliefs, and community values, impact the legitimacy and public perception of social entrepreneurship in Egypt?
- What are the primary institutional challenges and opportunities that differentiate the environment for social entrepreneurship in Egypt from those in developed economies?
- What adaptive strategies do social entrepreneurs in Egypt utilise to surmount institutional barriers and garner community support?
- How can policymakers in Egypt and other emerging economies develop a supportive institutional framework that promotes the growth and sustainability of social entrepreneurship?

1.2 Research Context: The Case of Egypt

Egypt faces several persistent socio-economic challenges, including high rates of illiteracy, inadequate healthcare services, over a quarter of the population living on less than two dollars per day, insufficient job creation for youth, a widening wealth-poverty gap, and a declining public education system for its youth (Cooper et al., 2007; Seda & Ismail, 2019). Despite the long-standing recognition of these issues, neither the

government, the private sector, nor social enterprises have devised sustainable solutions. Following the Arab Spring in 2011, Egypt experienced significant political turmoil, leaving its highly centralised government without the necessary resources and capacity to effectively address deeply entrenched problems. Similarly, the private sector in Egypt has faced significant challenges due to prolonged political and economic instability, resulting in a slow recovery. Consequently, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have emerged as the most viable actors for addressing the nation's pressing socio-economic challenges. As of 2022, Egypt had approximately 52,000 registered NGOs, receiving an estimated annual inflow of 9.5 billion Egyptian pounds in grants and donations (Egypt Today, 2022). Despite this substantial presence and activity, the desired social impact remains elusive. Recent evaluations by international development agencies indicate that Egyptian NGOs continue to face critical barriers to achieving sustainable outcomes. These include fragmented and overlapping initiatives, limited state partnership, and a persistent dependence on short-term donor funding (UNDP, 2023; OECD, 2022; USAID, 2021). Reports also point to a lack of institutional memory, inadequate scalability, and minimal evidence-based adaptation, all of which hinder the sector's long-term effectiveness. Nevertheless, Egypt's substantial population of approximately 102 million, alongside its enduring cultural, political, and military influence, continues to affirm its regional prominence within the Middle East and North Africa (Geopolitical Monitor, 2023). Similarly, the private sector has faced prolonged challenges due to political and economic instability, resulting in a slow recovery. This has positioned non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as the most viable actors to address Egypt's pressing socio-economic challenges.

Moreover, Egypt's social entrepreneurship ecosystem continues to attract investment from international organisations, with initiatives supported by entities such as Ashoka, the Fairtrade Foundation, and PwC (Fakoussa, 2020). Additionally, programs like the *"Innovation Factory,"* launched in partnership with Alwaleed Philanthropies and Ashoka Arab World, have been pivotal in empowering social entrepreneurs by providing training, mentorship, and financial awards (Alwaleed Philanthropies, 2023). These collaborative efforts have significantly contributed to the development and sustainability of social enterprises in the country. Egypt's economic performance has exhibited signs of improvement, with the country achieving a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of approximately \$393.8 billion in 2023 (Country Economy, 2023). However, GDP alone is an insufficient measure of societal prosperity, as it fails to reflect the equitable distribution of benefits across the population (World Bank, 2023). Rising inequality in wealth distribution continues to exacerbate poverty, which persists despite indicators of economic recovery (World Bank, 2023). This disparity underscores the need for inclusive and sustainable social entrepreneurship practices to bridge the gap between economic growth and social well-being. As illustrated in Table 1: Egypt's Economic and Regional Comparison, the country ranks third in regional GDP but falls significantly to 13th in GDP per capita, underscoring the pressing need for innovative social interventions to address these structural inequalities (World Bank, 2023). These findings highlight the critical role of social entrepreneurship in fostering more equitable development and enhancing societal prosperity.

Table 1: Egypt's Economic and Regional Comparison

Country	GDP Rank (Region)	GDP Per Capita Rank
Saudi Arabia	1st	6th
United Arab Emirates	2nd	3rd
Egypt	3rd	13th
Tunisia	10th	11th
Jordan	12th	9th

Source: World Bank. (2023). *Enterprise Surveys: Egypt 2022 Country Profile*. Retrieved from <https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/en/data/exploreeconomies/2022/egypt> (Accessed 10 May 2024).

1.3 Contributions

This research makes a significant contribution to the field of social entrepreneurship by examining how institutional factors shape social enterprise activity in emerging economies, with a particular focus on Egypt. It provides a comprehensive analysis of formal and informal institutions, highlighting the interplay of regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and societal expectations that influence social enterprises in regions where traditional support structures are limited. The study's implications extend across theoretical, methodological, and practical domains, offering advancements in academic discourse, policy development, and practical applications. The study's implications extend across theoretical, methodological, and practical domains, offering advancements in academic discourse, policy development, and practical applications for social enterprises.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive exploration of how institutional factors shape social entrepreneurship in Egypt. The structure is designed to ensure a logical progression, transitioning from foundational concepts and theoretical underpinnings to empirical findings, critical discussion, and practical implications. This systematic approach facilitates a coherent and thorough examination of the research questions.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction establishes the foundation by exploring the concept of social entrepreneurship and its relevance to addressing Egypt's socio-economic challenges. It highlights the influence of institutional factors, identifies gaps in the literature, and situates the study within institutional theory. The chapter outlines the research aims, objectives, and questions, providing a roadmap for the thesis structure.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents an extensive interdisciplinary review, covering social entrepreneurship, institutional theory, and emerging market studies. It begins with the evolution of social entrepreneurship and its distinction from traditional for-profit ventures, followed by a detailed examination of institutional theory, focusing on formal and informal institutions as defined by North (1990) and later expanded by DiMaggio and Powell (1991). The chapter contextualises Egypt within the Middle Eastern region, highlighting institutional and socio-economic factors impacting social entrepreneurship, identifying gaps, and establishing the study's relevance.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological framework, explaining the choice of a qualitative, case study approach as the most suitable for capturing social entrepreneurs' experiences in Egypt. It details the data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews, and discusses the pilot study that refined the interview guide and enhanced validity and reliability. This chapter addresses ethical considerations to ensure compliance with academic standards and participant confidentiality. This chapter provides a rigorous roadmap of the data collection and analysis process, supporting the study's findings.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings, thematically organised to address each research question and objective. It offers a detailed account of how formal institutions, such as regulatory policies, and informal institutions, including cultural values and societal expectations, shape social entrepreneurship in Egypt. It explores adaptive strategies used by social entrepreneurs to navigate institutional challenges, highlighting resilience and innovation. Direct participant quotations enrich the data, capturing the lived experiences of Egyptian social entrepreneurs within their institutional context.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 synthesises the empirical findings with the theoretical framework from the literature review, discussing implications through the lens of institutional theory. It analyses how the interaction between formal and informal institutions influences social entrepreneurial activity and highlights the study's theoretical contributions, especially regarding the application of institutional theory in emerging markets. Comparisons with literature on developed economies are drawn to emphasise Egypt's unique institutional challenges and opportunities. Practical implications are also provided, offering recommendations for policymakers and practitioners aiming to support social entrepreneurship.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature across theoretical, methodological, and practical dimensions. Theoretically, it advances institutional theory by contextualising it within an emerging market setting. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of qualitative, multi-case analysis for studying under-researched phenomena in resource-constrained environments. Practically, it provides actionable insights for social entrepreneurs and policymakers aiming to foster social innovation in institutional voids. A comprehensive consolidation of these contributions is presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2 Chapter Overview

Social entrepreneurship has garnered significant scholarly attention over the past few decades, driven by an increasing recognition of its capacity to address pressing societal challenges through innovative and sustainable approaches (Dees, 1998; Nicholls, 2017; Zahra et al., 2021). Broadly conceptualised as the deliberate pursuit of social value creation through entrepreneurial means, the field operates at the intersection of commercial imperatives and social objectives (Leadbeater, 1997; Dees, 2001; Stevens et al., 2015). Foundational works, such as those by Dees (1998) and Drayton (2002), have laid the theoretical groundwork for the discipline by emphasising the dual mission of achieving social impact and financial sustainability. More recent studies have extended this discourse by exploring emerging trends, such as digital innovation and hybrid financial models, which enhance the operational capacity and resilience of social enterprises in resource-constrained environments (Gupta et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2022). Building on these foundational contributions, one of the persistent challenges in the field is the ambiguity surrounding its conceptual boundaries, particularly the distinction between social and commercial entrepreneurship. This lack of definitional clarity impedes the establishment of a unified theoretical framework and complicates the implementation of supportive policies (Dacin et al., 2010; Nicholls, 2017). Policymakers and practitioners often struggle to align operational frameworks with inconsistent definitions, limiting the scalability of social entrepreneurship initiatives, particularly in regions with weak institutional support (Peredo & McLean, 2006). Furthermore, the absence of a shared understanding of goals, success metrics, and legal classifications hinders the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder collaborations involving governments, NGOs, and private sector actors, as highlighted in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Smith et al., 2016; Zahra et al., 2021).

In response to these challenges, hybrid financial models have gained prominence as a means of addressing resource constraints while ensuring sustainability. These models, which integrate philanthropic and commercial funding streams, support the dual mission of social enterprises by navigating complex funding environments (Williams et al., 2022). For instance, the adoption of crowdfunding platforms and social impact bonds has created innovative pathways for resource mobilisation, particularly in underfunded regions, while maintaining the social mission of these enterprises (Hossain et al., 2023; Roberts & Brown, 2023). By leveraging these models, social enterprises can achieve scalability and financial resilience, enhancing their ability to address systemic challenges. Alongside financial innovations, technological advancements further augment the capacity of social enterprises to deliver social impact. Innovations such as digital platforms, blockchain, and artificial intelligence have been transformative, enabling social enterprises to improve operational efficiency, increase transparency, and expand their reach to underserved populations (Gupta et al.,

2020; UNDP, 2023). For example, Nafham, an Egyptian e-learning social enterprise, exemplifies the transformative potential of technology in addressing systemic challenges. Nafham provides free, curriculum-aligned educational content to underserved students through digital platforms, addressing educational inequities across Egypt and the wider Arab world (UNHCR, 2022). By employing a crowd-sourcing model and partnering with schools, Nafham has reached millions of users, showcasing the critical role of technology in enhancing access to quality education.

Nevertheless, financial and technological innovations alone are insufficient to address systemic barriers, as institutional contexts remain a critical lens through which the adaptability and operational dynamics of social enterprises can be understood. This is particularly salient in regions characterised by systemic inequalities or institutional voids (Mair & Marti, 2009; Bruton et al., 2010). Structural configurations, including regulatory frameworks and cultural norms, significantly influence the strategies, behaviours, and societal contributions of social enterprises (Scott, 2014; Urbano et al., 2017). The interplay between institutional voids and entrepreneurial adaptations highlights the resourcefulness of social enterprises in leveraging informal networks and community-based partnerships to overcome systemic barriers (Santos, 2012). In regions such as the Middle East, where institutional challenges are particularly pronounced, aligning organisational practices with cultural values is essential for achieving legitimacy and fostering community support. While recognising these contributions, critical gaps persist in synthesising contemporary insights into a cohesive narrative that advances both theoretical and practical understanding. Future research should prioritise the intersection of digital innovation, hybrid financial models, and institutional contexts to develop nuanced, context-specific strategies for advancing social entrepreneurship. These dimensions are particularly relevant in developing economies such as the Middle East, where structural challenges and socio-political dynamics necessitate innovative and adaptable solutions (Zahra & Wright, 2016; UNDP, 2023). The interplay between institutional voids and entrepreneurial ingenuity underscores the capacity of social enterprises to leverage informal mechanisms and community partnerships to overcome systemic challenges (Urbano et al., 2017; Santos, 2012). In conclusion, this chapter critically examines the extant literature on social entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on its evolution, theoretical foundations, and emerging research directions. By integrating seminal and contemporary works across multiple disciplines, this review offers a comprehensive analysis of the field. It highlights existing limitations and underscores opportunities for advancing scholarship, particularly in relation to institutional and contextual dimensions. These considerations are especially pertinent for regions such as the Middle East, where innovative and context-specific solutions are essential to addressing deeply embedded structural challenges. While NGOs and social enterprises both address societal challenges, this study focuses on social enterprises—organisations that pursue social impact through financially sustainable, often market-based, strategies. Unlike NGOs, which typically depend on donor funding, SEs adopt hybrid models that require navigating both mission and market logics (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Kerlin, 2020).

2.1 Comparative Models of Social Entrepreneurship

To move beyond descriptive listing, the most widely cited conceptualisations of social entrepreneurship are synthesised in Table 2. These include Dees (1998), who emphasises social mission and entrepreneurial behaviour; Zahra et al. (2009), who classify SEs into opportunity- and necessity-driven types; and Defourny & Nyssens (2010), whose European model focuses on hybrid governance and embeddedness in the social economy. The synthesis reveals important divergences in how SE is defined, legitimised, and institutionally supported.

Table 2: Comparative Synthesis of Conceptual Models of Social Entrepreneurship

This table synthesises three influential models of social entrepreneurship—Dees (1998), Zahra et al. (2009), and Defourny & Nyssens (2010)—by comparing their emphasis on mission, innovation, hybridity, scalability, and institutional anchoring. This structured comparison highlights theoretical complementarities and distinctions, enhancing conceptual clarity in the literature review.

Dimension	Dees (1998)	Zahra et al. (2009)	Defourny & Nyssens (2010)	Focus	Implications
Mission Orientation	Primacy of social mission	Varies by SE type (e.g., social bricoleur, social constructionist)	Embedded in social economy tradition	Why the enterprise exists	Influences legitimacy and accountability expectations
Innovation	Emphasised as key driver	Emphasised, particularly for social constructionists	Less central, more emphasis on collective governance	How value is delivered	Shapes donor/investor appeal
Hybridity	Implied but not theorised explicitly	Acknowledged in typologies	Core focus – hybrid organisational forms and governance	How social and economic logics are balanced	Affects governance and scaling potential
Scalability	Entrepreneurial scale and replication encouraged	Varies – bricoleurs less scalable	Scalability less emphasised	How growth is approached	Determines sustainability models

Institutional Anchoring	Not deeply discussed	Touches on context-dependence	Deeply rooted in European welfare and cooperative traditions	Where the model originates	Contextual transferability and relevance
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Source: Compiled by the author, based on Dees (1998), Zahra et al. (2009), Defourny & Nyssens (2010)

The synthesis of key definitions reveals an epistemological divide between Global North and Global South perspectives on social entrepreneurship. The matrix serves not only to map conceptual variations but also to anchor this study's analytical lens. The construct of necessity-driven innovation emerges as particularly salient in contexts like Egypt, where entrepreneurship is often a response to systemic exclusion rather than market opportunity (Ramani et al., 2017). Similarly, hybrid models—which combine market logics with social missions—are indispensable for navigating the institutional ambiguity and legitimacy challenges found in MENA economies (Battilana & Lee, 2014). As such, the study draws on the definition by Defourny & Nyssens (2010) while extending it through context-sensitive dimensions. Western models, such as those by Dees (1998) and Zahra et al. (2009), emphasise market-based innovation, individual entrepreneurial agency, and scalability. In contrast, emerging scholarship from the Global South points to collective governance, social embeddedness, and informal legitimacy as core features of social enterprise (Santos, 2012; Ramani et al., 2017). For the Egyptian context—characterised by informal institutions, religious norms, and collectivist culture—the framework by Defourny & Nyssens (2010) offers a better fit. Its emphasis on hybrid organising and rootedness in social economy traditions aligns with Egypt's dual economy and moral discourses. However, even this model requires adaptation, as it is grounded in European welfare-state assumptions that differ from Egypt's socio-political reality. This highlights a broader limitation in applying Global North models uncritically to MENA contexts. A contextualised understanding of institutional embeddedness is thus essential to theorising social entrepreneurship in Egypt.

2.2 The Evolution of Social Entrepreneurship

The evolution of social entrepreneurship reflects its transformation from early philanthropic and charitable activities to a multifaceted, hybrid field addressing complex societal challenges. Historically, the "*Emergence Phase*" of social entrepreneurship, before the 1970s, was characterised by non-profit organisations engaged in addressing immediate societal needs through voluntary or charitable efforts (Wallace, 1999). The "*Foundation Phase*," beginning in the 1970s, introduced the term "*social entrepreneur*," first coined by Joseph Banks in "*The Sociology of Social Movements*" (1972). Banks described social entrepreneurs as individuals leveraging managerial and leadership skills to address societal issues unrelated to traditional commercial entrepreneurship

(El Ebrashi, 2013). During this period, cooperative organisations embodying mutual support and solidarity emerged within the “*social economy*” in France (Borzaga & Defourny, 2004). These developments marked a shift from purely philanthropic efforts to more structured models focused on organisational innovation. The 1990s represented the “*Recognition Phase*” of social entrepreneurship, with institutional support and academic interest further legitimising the field. Key organisations such as Ashoka (founded in 1980 by Bill Drayton), the Schwab Foundation (1998), and the Skoll Foundation (1999) played a pivotal role in institutionalising social entrepreneurship by providing financial backing and fostering visibility (Drayton, 2002; Dacin et al., 2010). This period also marked the emergence of hybrid models, which combined profit-making strategies with charitable governance to address systemic social challenges (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). Seminal contributions, such as Dees (1998), described social entrepreneurs as “*change agents*,” bridging the gap between innovation and social impact. By the 2000s, the “*Expansion Phase*” saw a surge in scholarly interest, focusing on scalability, impact measurement, and the integration of diverse stakeholders (Zahra et al., 2009). Most recently, the “*Institutionalisation Phase*” has witnessed the integration of social entrepreneurship into government policies, educational programs, and technological innovations (Saebi et al., 2019).

Despite this growth, the definitional ambiguity surrounding social entrepreneurship remains a critical challenge. Scholars have long debated its boundaries, with some emphasising social value creation as the primary goal, while others highlight the integration of economic sustainability as equally essential. For example, Dees (2001) defined social entrepreneurs as “*entrepreneurs with a social mission*,” focusing on the primacy of social objectives, whereas Tracey & Jarvis (2007) stressed market-based approaches to achieving social goals. Zahra et al. (2009) further expanded this discourse by framing social entrepreneurship as activities aimed at enhancing social wealth through innovation and opportunity exploitation. Such diversity in definitions reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the field but also underscores the absence of a unifying framework (Choi & Majumdar, 2014; Morris et al., 2021). Institutional and cultural contexts exacerbate these definitional challenges. In emerging economies, for instance, social entrepreneurship often arises in response to institutional voids, where regulatory frameworks and socio-political constraints necessitate innovative, context-specific solutions (Zahra & Wright, 2016; Saebi et al., 2019). These voids drive the need for flexible business models that can adapt to local conditions while pursuing social impact. Certifications such as the B-Corp and the Social Enterprise Mark have attempted to provide standardised metrics for aligning social and financial goals, yet their applicability in diverse institutional contexts remains limited (Nicholls, 2010). For emerging economies like Egypt, alternative metrics need to account for informal economies, cultural dynamics, and regulatory gaps. Locally adapted frameworks could include community-led impact assessments or region-specific certifications that balance global standards with local realities. While these certifications are widely adopted in developed economies, their relevance to emerging markets is constrained by differing legal, cultural, and economic conditions. This highlights the challenge of balancing universal standards with the need for culturally and institutionally sensitive frameworks. This study contributes significantly to understanding

social entrepreneurship in Egypt by addressing how scalable hybrid models can overcome institutional constraints. It highlights the adaptability of social entrepreneurship in resource-constrained environments, providing a framework for aligning social impact with financial sustainability. This focus on Egypt not only fills a gap in regional studies but also demonstrates how culturally sensitive models can serve as templates for other emerging economies. Typologies of social entrepreneurship have been proposed to address the field's inherent diversity, offering frameworks to categorise its varied forms and practices. These typologies illustrate the breadth of approaches within the field, ranging from mission-centric models prioritising social objectives to hybrid frameworks balancing commercial and social goals. Table 2 summarises key typologies developed by scholars, highlighting their significance and application.

Table 3: Social Entrepreneurship Typologies

Social Enterprise Typologies	For-Profit/Non-Profit	Author(s)	Significance/Application
Social entrepreneurship blends elements of for-profit and non-profit models.	Both	Dees et al. (2002), Urbano et al. (2010)	Highlights flexibility in operational models, enabling enterprises to blend commercial and charitable activities.
Social entrepreneurship involves individual efforts aimed at achieving sustainable development goals.	Non-Profit	Seelos and Mair (2004)	Emphasises the role of individual leadership and vision in fostering societal impact.
Social entrepreneurship is mission centric.	Non-Profit	Alter (2006)	Reinforces the importance of prioritising social objectives over profit motives.
Social entrepreneurship is a distinct category within commercial entrepreneurship.	For-Profit	Austin et al. (2006), Bacq and Janssen (2011)	Distinguishes social entrepreneurship from purely profit-driven ventures.
Social entrepreneurship is often equated with sustainable	Both	Cohen and Winn (2007), Felinhofer et al. (2014), Hockerts and Wüstenhagen	Links environmental sustainability with social value creation, broadening the scope of social entrepreneurship.

entrepreneurship or ecopreneurship.		(2010), Schaltegger and Wagner (2011)	
Leveraged non-profit and hybrid non-profit business models.	Non-Profit	Elkington and Hartigan (2013)	Demonstrates pathways for scaling impact while maintaining alignment with social goals.
Combines innovation, sustainability planning, and the creation of social value.	Both	Battilana et al. (2018)	Highlights the strategic integration of innovation and sustainability in achieving impact.
Integrates innovative business models to address social problems while ensuring financial sustainability.	Both	Saebi, Foss, & Linder (2019)	Stresses the need for innovative solutions to balance economic and social objectives.
Defined as the practice of creating social impact through the hybrid use of commercial and social activities.	Both	Kannampuzha & Hockerts (2019)	Explores hybrid models to navigate resource constraints and enhance scalability.
Focuses on systemic problem-solving by integrating commercial and social goals.	Both	Barbera-Tomás et al. (2020)	Showcases systemic approaches to address complex societal challenges.
A dynamic and evolving concept with varying typologies depending on the institutional and cultural context.	Both	Morris et al. (2021)	Emphasises adaptability and context-specific strategies for navigating diverse environments.

Source: This work has been adapted and compiled from multiple studies on the definitions of social entrepreneurship

The typologies outlined in Table 2 demonstrate the adaptability of social entrepreneurship across diverse institutional contexts. These typologies not only address the definitional divide but also provide a roadmap for understanding the varied approaches to integrating social and financial goals. They underscore the potential of social entrepreneurship to navigate and overcome systemic challenges in both developed and emerging

markets. For instance, mission-centric models, as described by Alter (2006), focus exclusively on achieving social objectives, while hybrid models integrate commercial and social goals to ensure financial sustainability (Saebi et al., 2019). More recent frameworks, such as those by Barbera-Tomás et al. (2020), emphasised systemic approaches to addressing complex societal challenges, showcasing the potential of social entrepreneurship to create transformative impact. These classifications underscore the interdisciplinary and context-sensitive nature of the field, reflecting its capacity to address systemic barriers through innovative and hybrid practices. A deeper challenge lies in aligning these typologies with practical implementation. The definitional divide complicates how policymakers and practitioners interpret and operationalise social entrepreneurship. For example, while some typologies, such as those by Dees et al. (2002), suggested flexible approaches for blending for-profit and non-profit elements, others focus on more rigid mission-centric definitions (Alter, 2006). This diversity creates obstacles for developing standardised legal and financial frameworks, particularly in regions where institutional support for social enterprises is nascent. As highlighted by Kannampuzha & Hockerts (2019), hybrid models remain the most adaptable typology for emerging economies, offering innovative solutions for resource mobilisation and scalability. Nevertheless, cultural sensitivity and localised implementation strategies are essential to ensure their success (Nicholls, 2010; Zahra & Wright, 2016). In summary, the evolution of social entrepreneurship reflects a progression from philanthropic efforts to hybrid and interdisciplinary practices that integrate social and economic objectives. While progress has been made, challenges persist in operationalising these frameworks, particularly in emerging economies. Balancing cultural sensitivity with scalable models remains a key focus for future research and policy interventions. The typologies presented here highlight the diverse approaches within the field, offering valuable insights for advancing both academic discourse and practical implementation.

2.3 Defining social entrepreneurship?

Social entrepreneurship has risen to prominence within academic discourse for its capacity to address critical societal challenges, including job creation, social equality, and other systemic issues, prompting organisations to integrate social objectives into their operational frameworks (Leadbeater, 1997; Dees, 1998; Wallace, 1999; Kannampuzha & Hockerts, 2019; Huda et al., 2019). Unlike traditional entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs prioritise philanthropic objectives over immediate financial returns, creating a dual imperative that intertwines social benefit with economic sustainability (Emerson & Twersky, 1996; Barbera-Tomás et al., 2019). While all forms of entrepreneurship inherently contribute to social functions, social entrepreneurship is distinguished by its explicit focus on generating social benefit rather than financial profit (Barberá-Tomás et al., 2019). This entanglement of social and commercial goals challenges the traditional boundaries of entrepreneurship (Schramm, 2010). For this study, Schramm's definition is adopted due to its holistic and integrative perspective on the interplay of these dual goals. A social enterprise is fundamentally a business that aims to improve

society while also pursuing financial sustainability (Urbano et al., 2010). Social enterprises often adhere to traditional principles while innovating to address social challenges (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Dees, 2012). Social entrepreneurship, therefore, integrates the core principles of social and entrepreneurial activity to optimise societal benefits (Drayton, 2002; Mamabolo & Myres, 2019). This dual orientation—integrating social and entrepreneurial activities—has led to an extensive body of literature exploring its evolution and varied perspectives. Scholars examine the phenomenon across individual entrepreneurs, firms, and ventures, demonstrating its interdisciplinary relevance and adaptability (André & Pache, 2016; Bacq et al., 2016; Bacq & Alt, 2018; Hota et al., 2019). To develop a comprehensive understanding of social entrepreneurship, it is crucial to synthesise these perspectives. Scholars have advanced a range of definitions of "*social entrepreneurship*," "*social entrepreneurs*," and "*social enterprises*," each reflecting unique vantage points (Peredo & McLean, 2006; Short et al., 2009; Kannampuzha & Hockerts, 2019). The lack of a unifying theoretical foundation presents practical difficulties, as it forces social entrepreneurs to navigate uncharted territories with minimal guidance. Efforts such as the Social Enterprise Mark in the UK or the B-Corp certification globally offer templates for creating standardised metrics that align social and financial objectives, potentially mitigating these challenges in emerging markets (Zahra et al., 2009; Nicholls, 2010). Global certifications like B-Corp provide a structured approach to balancing profit and social impact, but their applicability in developing regions remains limited due to regulatory and cultural differences (Nicholls, 2010). This is especially evident in developing regions, where the absence of established frameworks necessitates innovative and often ad hoc approaches to align entrepreneurial activities with societal needs (Zahra & Wright, 2016; Saebi et al., 2019).

Early definitions of social entrepreneurship primarily focused on non-profit organisations, emphasising their contribution to societal improvement (Wallace, 1999; Lasprogata & Cotton, 2003). In contrast, "*social enterprise*" increasingly refers to for-profit firms governed by charitable principles (Mair & Marti, 2006). Initially framed within the non-profit sector, the term has evolved to encompass hybrid models that integrate profit-driven strategies while addressing societal challenges (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Mair & Martí, 2006). A notable example is Muhammad Yunus's pioneering work in microfinance through the Grameen Bank, which combines financial sustainability with social objectives. This model has inspired a range of hybrid social enterprises in emerging economies, particularly addressing poverty and financial inclusion. Certo and Miller (2008) defined social entrepreneurs as individuals or organisations engaging in entrepreneurial activities driven primarily by social objectives. This broadening of scope underscores the inherently interdisciplinary nature of the field, which continues to evolve as new dimensions and challenges emerge. The literature reveals a steady expansion in scholarly research on social entrepreneurship (Zahra et al., 2009; Gupta et al., 2020). Recent studies have delved into specific dimensions of the field, including entrepreneurial identity (Dufays et al., 2014), the significance of networks (Huybrechts, 2014), and organisational legitimacy (Phillips et al., 2015). These targeted investigations underscore the field's growing complexity and relevance. Additionally,

broader syntheses have been undertaken to position social entrepreneurship as a distinct academic domain (Choi & Majumdar, 2014; Sassmannshausen & Volkmann, 2018; Hota et al., 2019). Table 3 provides a summary of notable prior studies, illustrating the breadth of research themes and methodological approaches. To avoid redundancy, the table has been consolidated to highlight distinct objectives and contributions.

Table 4: A Summary of Prior Studies on Social Entrepreneurship

Author(s)	Study Overview	Application (Developed/Emerging Economies)	Purpose of Study	Conclusions
Gregory Dees (1998)	Defined the core meaning of social entrepreneurship, emphasizing mission-driven innovations.	Both	To provide a foundational definition for social entrepreneurship.	Highlighted that social entrepreneurship combines business innovation with a focus on creating social impact, distinguishing it from purely profit-oriented ventures.
Peredo and McLean (2006)	Explored community-based social entrepreneurship.	Emerging Economies	To focus on the collective efforts of communities in driving social entrepreneurship.	Community-based enterprises can address local social problems through collective action and resource pooling, particularly in resource-scarce environments.
Johanna Mair and Jeffrey Robinson (2006)	Defined SE as innovative resource use to	Both	To expand the theoretical	Emphasized the innovative approaches

	solve social problems.		understanding of SE.	social entrepreneurs use to create sustainable solutions to complex societal issues.
David Bornstein (2007)	Documented real-world cases of social entrepreneurs driving societal change.	Both	To showcase practical applications of SE.	Social entrepreneurs can bring about systemic change by combining passion with innovative business models to address critical social challenges.
Muhammad Yunus (2007)	Pioneered microfinance and the concept of social business.	Emerging Economies	To demonstrate the potential of innovative financing in alleviating poverty.	Microfinance enables marginalized populations to access capital, fostering entrepreneurship and economic self-sufficiency in underdeveloped regions.
Zahra et al. (2009)	Categorized SE into different forms: social bricoleurs, social constructionists,	Both	To highlight the diversity within SE.	SE manifests in diverse ways, from grassroots problem-solving to systemic

	and social engineers.			transformations, depending on institutional and cultural contexts.
Geoff Mulgan (2006, 2010)	Focused on the relationship between social innovation and SE.	Both	To explore how innovation drives SE.	Social innovation is a crucial enabler of SE, helping ventures address systemic challenges and scale their impact effectively.
Alex Nicholls (2006, 2010)	Explored theory-building and empirical analysis in SE.	Both	To provide theoretical and practical frameworks for SE research.	SE operates at the intersection of market and non-market systems, requiring robust frameworks to capture its multidimensional impact.
Santos (2012)	Proposed a value-creation theory for SE.	Both	To establish a theoretical foundation emphasizing social value over profit.	Advocated for a value-first approach, where social entrepreneurs prioritize addressing societal needs over financial returns.

Lehner and Kansikas (2012)	Identified and codified relevant articles on SE.	Both	To classify and analyse existing literature on SE systematically.	Established key trends and gaps in SE research, encouraging a more unified approach to future studies.
Lehner and Kansikas (2013)	Presented SE literature as a pre-paradigmatic field lacking an established epistemology.	Both	To critique the fragmented nature of SE literature.	Called for the development of a cohesive framework and epistemology for SE research.
Turner, Crook, and Miller (2014)	Assessed current construct measurement in SE.	Both	To evaluate the robustness of SE research methodologies.	Identified inconsistencies in measurement constructs and advocated for standardized approaches.
Nicolopoulou (2014)	Identified crosscurrents shaping the maturation of SE as a field.	Both	To evaluate the maturity of SE as an academic discipline.	Emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of SE and the need for holistic frameworks.
Newbert and Hill (2014)	Examined the progression of SE research toward a paradigmatic foundation.	Both	To promote paradigm development in SE.	Proposed pathways for building theoretical frameworks to guide SE research.
McKenny (2014)	Provided a reference for	Both	To simplify access to SE	Delivered a comprehensive

	scholars conducting SE research.		research tools and frameworks.	guide that could serve as a starting point for new researchers.
Lee, Battilana, and Wang (2014)	Reviewed empirical research on social enterprises.	Both	To assess the state of empirical SE research.	Highlighted key trends, challenges, and opportunities in empirical SE studies.
Kraus et al. (2014)	Explored SE definitions and identified influential publications.	Both	To clarify SE definitions and highlight impactful research.	Proposed refined SE definitions and showcased pivotal contributions to the field.
Gras, Moss, and Lumpkin (2014)	Assessed the prevalence of empirical research in SE.	Both	To evaluate the empirical focus of SE studies.	Concluded that empirical research in SE is growing but requires greater methodological rigor.
Dufays and Huybrechts (2014)	Reviewed the role of social networks in SE.	Both	To explore the interaction of social networks with SE practices.	Demonstrated that social networks are critical for resource mobilization and legitimacy in SE.
Choi and Majumdar (2014)	Proposed a conceptual framework to address definitional	Both	To resolve ongoing debates about what constitutes SE.	Offered a novel framework integrating various SE perspectives,

	ambiguities in SE.			facilitating structured research and debate.
Phillips et al. (2015)	Conducted a systematic review of social innovation and SE literature.	Both	To synthesize research trends in social innovation and SE.	Showed the overlap between social innovation and SE while emphasizing the need for clear distinctions.
Burga and Rezanian (2015)	Reviewed accountability literature in SE.	Both	To analyse the scope of accountability research in SE.	Highlighted the importance of transparency and ethical accountability in SE practices.
Rey-Marti et al. (2016)	Provided guidance for new SE researchers.	Both	To help newcomers navigate SE research.	Developed a roadmap for future SE studies based on identified gaps and opportunities.
Goncalves, Carrara, and Schmitt (2016)	Analysed global SE literature.	Both	To assess the evolution of SE research globally.	Revealed regional disparities in SE research focus and called for more inclusivity in research topics.
Hossain, Saleh, and Drennan (2017)	Synthesized constructs from	Both	To distil core constructs from prior SE research.	Provided a consolidated view of

	major SE studies.			constructs that can guide future studies.
Sassmannshausen and Volkmann (2018)	Reviewed SE research to establish its academic significance.	Both	To highlight the growing importance of SE research in academia.	Positioned SE as a critical and distinct research area with multidisciplinary implications.
Szijarto et al. (2018)	Evaluated social innovation contexts in SE.	Both	To explore how social innovation shapes SE.	Demonstrated that social innovation can amplify SE impact when aligned with local needs.
Hota et al. (2019)	Examined ethics in SE literature.	Both	To integrate ethical considerations into SE research.	Highlighted the importance of ethics in decision-making processes within SE.
Smith et al. (2020)	Evaluated technology's role in shaping modern SE.	Developed Economies	To assess the impact of technology on SE evolution.	Found that technology enhances scalability and efficiency but requires careful alignment with social goals.
Johnson et al. (2021)	Explored gender and inclusivity in SE practices globally.	Both	To investigate inclusivity trends in SE.	Emphasized the need for inclusive SE models that

				address systemic inequalities.
Williams et al. (2022)	Assessed hybrid financial models for SE sustainability.	Both	To explore the impact of hybrid financial models on SE.	Concluded that hybrid models provide financial stability while supporting social objectives.
Roberts and Brown (2023)	Investigated emerging market conditions influencing SE strategies.	Emerging Economies	To understand how emerging market conditions shape SE practices.	Identified adaptive strategies for SE in resource-constrained and institutionally ambiguous environments

Source: This work has been adapted and compiled from multiple studies.

Furthermore, the review of the relevant literature revealed several emerging research areas in social entrepreneurship. Early studies laid the foundation for understanding its broader implications on political and economic systems. For example, Wallace (1999) emphasised the capacity of social enterprises to blend profit-making activities with charitable governance, initiating a link between economic systems and societal improvement. Building on these foundations, Dees (1998) highlighted the transformative role of social entrepreneurs as agents of change, addressing institutional gaps and creating social value. Researchers such as Lasprogata and Cotton (2003) explored the non-profit dimension, focusing on societal betterment achieved through charitable organisations, while Peredo and McLean (2006) framed social entrepreneurship as entrepreneurial activity explicitly motivated by social purpose. As the field matured, Mair and Marti (2006) underscored the dual mission of social enterprises, combining commercial endeavours with advancing social causes. Zahra et al. (2009) expanded the discourse by examining processes aimed at exploiting opportunities for social value creation, further enriched by Defourny and Nyssens' (2010) insights on the hybrid nature of social enterprises. This progression reflects the discipline's gradual shift towards addressing institutional voids and socio-political constraints (Brandsen & Karré, 2011; Santos, 2012), especially in emerging economies where constrained institutional settings necessitate innovative approaches (Nega & Schneider, 2014). More recent studies have highlighted strategic aspects of social enterprises. For instance, Nguyen et al. (2015) and Roy and Karna (2015) explored strategic frameworks employed by social enterprises to maximise their impact, focusing on value creation. George and Reed (2016) expanded on these ideas by examining specific

mechanisms through which social enterprises influence political and economic systems, including policy advocacy and community engagement. As a result, social entrepreneurship has evolved into a well-established academic field, transitioning from foundational concepts to addressing multifaceted challenges such as hybrid financial models, institutional voids, and strategic frameworks.

2.4 The Social Entrepreneurship in the Middle East

Despite the growing global interest in social entrepreneurship, the field remains relatively nascent in the Middle East (Jamali & Lanteri, 2016). The socio-economic challenges highlighted during the Arab Spring, including unemployment and inequality, have underscored the need for innovative approaches to development in the region. With over 456 million people in the Arab world as of 2023, and nearly 60% under the age of 30, the region continues to face a significant youth bulge, presenting both a demographic challenge and an opportunity for transformation (World Bank, 2023). Gender disparities and youth unemployment represent critical challenges for social entrepreneurship in the Middle East. Women face systemic barriers such as limited access to financial resources, restrictive cultural norms, and exclusion from decision-making networks (Jamali & Sidani, 2012). For instance, youth unemployment, with rates exceeding 25%, exacerbates socio-economic inequalities, necessitating scalable and inclusive social entrepreneurship models (World Bank, 2023). Moreover, initiatives such as SE Factory in Lebanon and microfinance programs targeting women exemplify the potential of social enterprises to address these demographic challenges effectively (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2016; SE Factory Report, 2023). SE Factory offers coding bootcamps tailored for underserved communities, equipping participants with technical and soft skills to secure competitive employment (SE Factory Report, 2023). This initiative highlights the role of social enterprises in creating scalable solutions to youth unemployment in the region. The urgency of creating sustainable employment opportunities, particularly as the region grapples with a youth unemployment rate of approximately 25%, which is among the highest globally (ILO, 2023). Nevertheless, harnessing the entrepreneurial potential of MENA's youth necessitates the creation of permanent employment opportunities, driven by private sector expansion and development (Jamali & Lanteri, 2016). Social entrepreneurship, which combines the strengths of private enterprise with state-sponsored social initiatives, is increasingly recognised as a driver of positive socio-economic change in the region. This unique combination highlights the dual mission of social enterprises—balancing financial sustainability with social value creation (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). To contextualise this discussion, Table 4 summarises key statistics pertaining to social entrepreneurship and the socio-economic environment within the Middle East.

Islamic Social Finance and Legitimacy in the MENA Region

In the Middle East, Islamic social finance instruments such as *zakat* (obligatory almsgiving), *waqf* (charitable endowments), and *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) constitute long-standing mechanisms of wealth redistribution and community care (Abdelrahman, 2020; Khafagy, 2019). These practices are deeply rooted in the moral and religious fabric of Muslim-majority societies and shape societal expectations regarding the legitimacy of social ventures. Social enterprises that align with Islamic ethical finance principles often experience enhanced community trust and social embeddedness, especially in more religious or conservative areas. By bridging the gap between market-based solutions and religiously inspired social obligation, such enterprises navigate hybrid legitimacy more effectively. This alignment supports acceptance, resource mobilisation, and collaboration with faith-based actors, thereby strengthening their institutional resilience in constrained environments.

Table 5: Key Statistics on Social Entrepreneurship in the Middle East

Indicator	Value
Total population (2023)	456 million
Youth population (under 30)	Nearly 60%
Youth unemployment rate	Approximately 25%
Population below poverty line (non-oil exporting countries)	Over 30%
GDP per capita (North Africa and Levant)	Below \$8,000
GDP per capita (GCC countries)	Over \$30,000
Female labour force participation	Approximately 20%
Number of active social enterprises	Over 100

Source: World Bank (2023), ILO (2023), UNDP (2023), IMF (2023).

By tackling pressing societal issues such as illiteracy, unemployment, and public health, social entrepreneurship establishes a new foundation for socio-economic development in the region (Abdou et al., 2010). Numerous start-ups and NGOs have emerged to address these challenges, particularly in informal and formal education, skills training, and life skills development. Post-COVID, digital platforms have become critical enablers of socially impactful innovation in Egypt. Initiatives such as Nafham, which delivers crowdsourced educational content, represent technology-driven SE models that bridge access gaps and enhance scalability (GIZ, 2022). Despite their relevance, such digital models remain underrepresented in SE theory, especially in the Global South. For example, organisations like Ruwwad Al Tanmeya and Alfamar have demonstrated how social enterprises can address structural challenges through education and women's empowerment (UNDP, 2023). Ruwwad Al Tanmeya, operating in Jordan, empowers youth through its 'Youth

Scholarship Fund,' which combines financial aid with mandatory community service, promoting a culture of civic engagement and addressing educational disparities (Ruwwad Annual Report, 2023; UNDP, 2023). Meanwhile, Alfano applies a venture philanthropy approach, providing funding and capacity-building support to social enterprises across the Arab region, ensuring both financial sustainability and measurable social impact. These efforts are geographically diverse, with varying focuses depending on the socio-economic context of each country. Gender dynamics and intersectionality have received limited attention in mainstream SE theory, yet they are crucial for understanding inclusion and agency in the MENA context. Women social entrepreneurs often face layered constraints—from cultural norms to legal restrictions—that shape their access to resources and legitimacy (El Solh, 2021; Sholkamy, 2016). Intersectional SE frameworks are necessary to recognise how gender, class, and geography intersect to influence entrepreneurial trajectories. This study addresses these dimensions by exploring how female-led enterprises negotiate institutional barriers in Egypt. However, key gaps remain, particularly in scaling these initiatives beyond their immediate regions and ensuring their long-term sustainability in challenging institutional environments. Drawing lessons from successful models in developed economies, such as the UK's Community Interest Company (CIC) framework, could offer practical insights for creating regulatory structures that accommodate the hybrid nature of social enterprises. These frameworks effectively balance social and economic objectives while providing legal protections and access to targeted funding mechanisms (Nicholls, 2010).

In contrast, MENA region initiatives such as Egypt's Waqf (Islamic endowment) system provide culturally embedded solutions but lack formal legal recognition akin to CICs (Nicholls, 2010; El Ebrashi, 2013). This limits scalability and access to formal funding, necessitating the creation of hybrid legal frameworks to address these gaps (Nicholls, 2010; El Ebrashi, 2013). The region confronts deep-rooted challenges, such as gender discrimination, limited access to quality education and healthcare, and persistently high unemployment rates. Over 30% of the population in non-oil-exporting MENA countries lives below the poverty line, and income disparities remain stark (World Bank, 2023). For instance, GDP per capita in North Africa and the Levant remains below \$8,000, compared to over \$30,000 in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (IMF, 2023). Social entrepreneurship offers a compelling alternative for addressing these systemic issues (Jamali & Sidani, 2012). Recent studies identify over 100 active social enterprises in MENA, with increasing participation from women and younger entrepreneurs who are leveraging digital tools and innovative business models to address social challenges (UNDP, 2023). For example, Souk El Tayeb in Lebanon revitalises local agriculture by promoting organic farming and supporting local producers through a farmers' market (Hossain et al., 2017; UNHCR, 2022). This initiative not only fosters environmental sustainability but also preserves Lebanon's culinary heritage, highlighting the cultural potential of social enterprises. For example, the adoption of digital platforms such as mobile apps and e-learning tools has allowed these enterprises to expand their reach and improve operational efficiency (Hossain et al., 2017; UNDP, 2023). Moreover, the integration of blockchain technology and artificial intelligence in healthcare and education-focused enterprises exemplifies the role of

technology in amplifying social impact. Blockchain and AI technologies have become game-changers for social enterprises in developing economies by improving transparency, operational efficiency, and outreach. Blockchain is increasingly used to ensure accountability in resource allocation and impact measurement. For example, initiatives in refugee camps in Jordan have leveraged blockchain to track food distribution, minimising corruption and ensuring equitable access (Hossain et al., 2017). Similarly, AI-powered tools are enhancing educational access by providing personalised learning experiences tailored to individual student needs, as demonstrated by platforms like Nafham. These technologies also enable predictive analytics, empowering social enterprises to anticipate challenges and optimise their interventions in healthcare, education, and financial inclusion (UNDP, 2023; Hossain et al., 2017). Table 5 provides a detailed breakdown of the number of social enterprises by country, as well as the primary sectors in which they operate.

Table 6: Social Enterprises in the Middle East by Country and Sector

Country	Estimated number of social enterprises	Key sectors covered
Egypt	Approximately 30	Education, Healthcare, Women's Empowerment
Jordan	Around 20	Education, Environmental Sustainability
Lebanon	About 15	Healthcare, Community Development
Palestine	Around 10	Youth Employment, Education
Saudi ARABIA	Approximately 25	Technology, Women's Empowerment
UAE	Around 20	Technology, Environmental Sustainability
Morocco	Approximately 15	Agriculture, Women's Empowerment
Tunisia	About 10	Education, Healthcare

Source: UNDP (2023), ArabNet (2023), and regional reports on social entrepreneurship.

2.5 The Institutional Context and Social Entrepreneurship

This study's primary contribution lies in the development of a conceptual framework tailored to the unique dynamics of social entrepreneurship in developing economies. Institutional contexts, characterised by regulatory frameworks, socio-political structures, and cultural norms, play a critical role in shaping the opportunities and constraints faced by social entrepreneurs. Developed economies, often benefitting from institutional stability, well-defined legal frameworks, and accessible financial resources, create enabling environments for social enterprises (Mair & Marti, 2009; Scott, 2014). Conversely, developing economies like Egypt face institutional voids, such as weak regulatory enforcement, limited funding mechanisms, and fragmented policy environments, which hinder social entrepreneurship's growth potential (Bruton et al., 2010;

Urbano et al., 2017). These disparities underscore the need for region-specific frameworks that address the unique challenges and opportunities of social entrepreneurship in emerging markets. For instance, Egypt's regulatory framework for social enterprises is still insufficiently developed and lacks precise legal definitions or classifications for social entrepreneurship. Consequently, many social enterprises must register as non-profit organisations, private businesses, or charitable foundations, each imposing distinct operational limitations. For instance, India's section 8 companies framework offers legal recognition and funding pathways for social enterprises, serving as a potential model for MENA countries (Townsend & Hart, 2008). Moreover, non-profit organisations may face restrictions on income-generating activities, while private businesses must navigate complex taxation and compliance requirements that are not aligned with social objectives. These constraints highlight the critical role of regulatory frameworks in either enabling or hindering social entrepreneurship (Roy & Karna, 2015; Morris et al., 2021).

Comparatively, developed economies, such as the United Kingdom, have introduced targeted legal structures like the Community Interest Company (CIC), which effectively combine social and commercial objectives. These frameworks provide social enterprises with tailored funding mechanisms, tax benefits, and legal protections, thereby enhancing scalability and sustainability (Nicholls, 2010). The absence of similar frameworks in Egypt limits the ability of social enterprises to formalise their operations, access capital, and scale their impact. Moreover, socio-political challenges in Egypt, such as economic instability, high unemployment rates, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, further exacerbate the institutional barriers faced by social entrepreneurs. Despite these challenges, Egyptian social entrepreneurs exhibit resilience through innovative strategies, such as resource bricolage, international partnerships, and leveraging informal networks to circumvent institutional constraints (Zahra et al., 2009; Santos, 2012). These adaptive practices highlight the resourcefulness of social enterprises in emerging markets but also emphasise the need for more supportive institutional frameworks. The role of cultural norms and societal expectations also differentiates the institutional contexts of developed and emerging markets. In Egypt, communal support and philanthropy are deeply embedded cultural values that often align with social enterprises' missions, offering a foundation for community-driven initiatives. The deeply embedded cultural norms of philanthropy in the region can serve as a foundation for innovative hybrid models that align traditional values with entrepreneurial practices (El Ebrashi, 2013). However, these same norms can create tension between traditional charitable models and hybrid approaches integrating commercial strategies. Understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for developing frameworks that resonate with local contexts while enabling the scalability and sustainability of social enterprises. This section synthesises key research themes identified throughout the study, concurrently highlighting critical research gaps that underpin the proposed framework. By emphasising regulatory ambiguities, institutional voids, and cultural dynamics, this study ensures the framework is both robust and firmly grounded in broader social entrepreneurship discourse. Building on this foundation, the subsequent

subsections delve into the core components of social entrepreneurship, including entrepreneurial orientation, social innovation, human traits, business strategies and institutional environment.

2.5.1 Entrepreneurial Orientation

Social entrepreneurship inspires entrepreneurs to address pressing societal challenges while simultaneously balancing financial and social objectives (Mair & Marti, 2006). Most prior studies on entrepreneurial orientation have focused on developed economies, with only limited attention given to the context of developing economies, highlighting the critical need to explore under-researched institutional settings that challenge conventional entrepreneurial approaches (Dwivedi & Weerawardena, 2018). These studies often employ a resource-based perspective and hybridity model to elucidate the dual objectives of social entrepreneurship (Bacq & Alt, 2018; Dwivedi & Weerawardena, 2018). Hybridity represents institutional forms that integrate social and economic goals, challenging traditional profit-oriented organisational models while addressing societal needs (Mair & Marti, 2006; Wilson & Post, 2013). Hybridity is thus integral to the success of social enterprises that balance a commercial profit model with a microeconomic social mission (Grassl, 2012). Social entrepreneurship frequently gains momentum during economic downturns, either as a means of ensuring personal employment security during periods of unemployment or as a for-profit venture initiated by non-profit organisations in response to reduced government support (Murphy & Coombes, 2008; McMullen, 2018). Core concepts such as wealth generation, community empowerment, and transformative societal influence underpin the broader discourse on social entrepreneurship (Di Domenico et al., 2010). Consequently, social entrepreneurs continually navigate a tension between financial gain and broader societal benefits while ensuring sustainability (Bacq & Alt, 2018; Lamy, 2019).

Entrepreneurship theories also emphasise the importance of entrepreneurs' ability to identify, investigate, and act proactively to address societal gaps effectively (Mair & Marti, 2006; Carter et al., 2013; Cherrier et al., 2018). Moreover, social and commercial entrepreneurship share common features, including a focus on innovation, a willingness to experiment, and strategies aimed at sustainability, expansion, and customer service that benefit stakeholders on multiple levels (Weerawardena & Mort, 2006; Zahra et al., 2009; Katre & Salipante, 2012). Recent studies have identified five core characteristics of social entrepreneurs: creative problem-solving, proactive action, operational efficiency, a focus on social good, and a readiness to embrace risks (Dwivedi & Weerawardena, 2018). While social entrepreneurs belong to the broader family of entrepreneurs, scholars continue to debate whether the traits of commercial entrepreneurship are essential for social innovation or whether unique attributes define social entrepreneurs (Dees, 1998; Mendoza-Abarca et al., 2015). Moreover, cultural values, norms, and belief systems often hinder commercial entrepreneurship through bureaucratic constraints, whereas social enterprises have greater potential to effect cultural

transformation by addressing systemic inequalities and fostering inclusivity (Puumalainen et al., 2015; André et al., 2018). While commercial and social entrepreneurs pursue distinct goals, studies indicate that for-profit entrepreneurs are increasingly aware of their social responsibilities (Garriga & Mele, 2004; Van de Ven et al., 2007). In contrast, altruism rather than profit drives social entrepreneurs (Dacin et al., 2010). This altruism fuels social enterprises to prioritise societal well-being over financial objectives, reflecting empathy and a commitment to addressing social challenges (Sakarya et al., 2012; Littlewood & Holt, 2018). Trust emerges as a pivotal enabler in social entrepreneurship, distinguishing it from commercial entrepreneurship, as social enterprises address market failures and unanticipated activities (Pathak & Muralidharan, 2016). Furthermore, individual and societal problem-solving interventions augment the potential of social entrepreneurship (Hockerts, 2017). For instance, social entrepreneurs demonstrate a high level of empathy for societal needs and an unwavering determination to address them through innovative solutions (Kibler et al., 2018; Gawell, 2013). Some scholars argued that social enterprises must generate income to optimise their positive societal impact (Haugh, 2007; Dees, 2012). However, the dual missions of social enterprises often conflict, as resource competition limits the scale of both economic and social goals (Gupta et al., 2009). Nonetheless, adhering to their social mission enables social enterprises to attain both financial and societal success. Thus, achieving equilibrium between monetary objectives and broader social impact emerges as a central determinant of success in social entrepreneurship (Haugh, 2007; Dees, 2012). Due to their propensity for innovation and risk-taking, social entrepreneurs serve as catalysts for socioeconomic transformation (Dees, 1998). They identify pressing issues and endeavour to develop innovative solutions that transcend traditional business practices (Sullivan, 2007). While studies have compared entrepreneurship across dimensions such as mindset, gender differences, and priorities, the literature lacks adequate opportunities to examine how social enterprises harmonise their social and financial goals. This gap underscores the necessity for targeted research to illuminate how social enterprises navigate institutional complexities while striving for scalability and inclusivity in developing markets. The dual aims of social enterprises, therefore, serve as a pivotal foundation for analysing their role in emerging economies.

2.5.2 Social Innovation

Innovation is essential to the building and growth of any entrepreneurial activity (Schumpeter, 1934; Tushman & Anderson, 2004; Zahra et al., 2009). It is widely regarded as a precursor to change and revitalisation for the enduring success of any organisation (Tushman & Anderson, 2004). Specifically, innovation drives the evolution of business models, enabling enterprises to adapt to societal challenges while pursuing sustainability. For instance, if an enterprise's primary goal is to remain solvent, any entrepreneurial act must encompass the capacity to break new ground. Innovation not only allows businesses to operate more efficiently but also addresses societal issues, thus boosting productivity (Duvnas et al., 2012). Consequently, it serves as a

cornerstone of entrepreneurial activities, including social entrepreneurship (Austin et al., 2006; Mair & Martí, 2006). A review of the literature revealed no consensus on the term "*social innovation*." As the "*social*" aspect becomes increasingly associated with innovation, researchers have questioned the distinction between "*innovation*" and "*social innovation*" (Phillips et al., 2015). This distinction is crucial, as "*social innovation*" emphasises value creation for society rather than economic returns alone, aligning with the broader missions of social enterprises. According to Philips' studies, the term "*social innovation*" was first used in 1998 by Kanter in her assessment of how private organisations transitioned from corporate social responsibility to corporate social innovation. This transition enabled organisations to develop concepts and technologies that benefitted new markets and communities. The amplification of social impact through innovative entrepreneurial development is crucial to fully leveraging the effects of technologically enabled social innovations (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009; Chavez et al., 2017). Social entrepreneurship also introduces incremental innovations that offer unparalleled advantages. For example, employee-focused social innovation addresses cultural issues within firms, while leader behaviour significantly influences innovation through intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Casson & Della, 2007). Social entrepreneurs often adopt original approaches to solving societal problems, particularly during times of scarcity, when both human and financial constraints spur social inventions (Austin et al., 2006; Bhatt & Altinay, 2013). However, these constraints may also inhibit creativity, restricting the potential for solutions to enhance welfare systems. Consequently, donors increasingly promote innovation and social orientation when projects shift their focus to broader societal benefits (Austin et al., 2006; Bhatt & Altinay, 2013).

While social enterprises can act as catalysts for innovation, they cannot guarantee social benefits. The realisation of these benefits often hinges on contextual factors such as institutional support and community engagement. The effectiveness of social innovation often depends on the influence of individual entrepreneurs (Ramani et al., 2016). As providing social value and conducting economic activity within society are widely regarded as defining features of social entrepreneurship, innovation emerges as its primary characteristic (Ratten, 2013). However, despite its critical role, the potential of social innovation remains underexplored in the context of emerging economies, particularly regarding its scalability and adaptability. There is significant scope for further research into technology adoption models, novel approaches to product management, and new ways of articulating ideas. Furthermore, recent studies have overlooked promising areas for investigation, including social entrepreneurs' beliefs, the roles of regulatory frameworks, the value created by social enterprises, and organisations' stated goals and missions (Phillips et al., 2015; Katunga & Lombard, 2016; Pasricha & Rao, 2018). One area of growing interest is hybridity in social enterprise business models. While several publications over the past decade have focused on hybridity, it has not yet reached its full research potential (Wilson & Post, 2013; Doherty et al., 2014). The hybrid nature of social enterprises, which integrate both social and commercial goals, presents unique challenges, particularly in emerging economies. For instance, the need to balance economic viability with societal impact often forces social enterprises to adopt

innovative operational frameworks. These challenges, driven by resource constraints and complex market environments, warrant further investigation to explore how hybrid models can effectively balance economic sustainability with societal impact. Lessons from hybrid models in emerging markets reveal the critical importance of integrating culturally resonant practices with scalable frameworks. For instance, India's Section 8 Companies framework successfully formalises social enterprises, granting them access to tailored funding mechanisms while preserving their social missions (Townsend & Hart, 2008). Similarly, microfinance-driven social enterprises in South Asia have demonstrated how leveraging local networks and cultural norms fosters community trust and participation. These insights highlight the potential of adopting hybrid regulatory models, which blend commercial efficiency with social accountability, to scale impact in regions like the Middle East where institutional frameworks are underdeveloped (Bruton et al., 2010; Zahra & Wright, 2016)

2.5.3 The Human Traits

Past research has focused on identifying the commonalities between successful social entrepreneurs and demographic factors, including individual persona, gender equality, intrinsic motivators, cultural connections, competence, and leadership capabilities (Dees, 1998; Johnson, 2003; Van Ryzin et al., 2009). The ability of an entrepreneur to generate novel ideas, implement innovative processes, and identify possibilities for both personal and community growth is pivotal to fostering social innovation. However, as entrepreneurs navigate the transition between the roles of social and commercial entrepreneurship, numerous challenges arise (Fowler, 2000; Sserwanga et al., 2014). For example, personal attitude and resilience are stronger influencers of entrepreneurial success than humanitarian orientation, technical knowledge, or expertise (Dees, 1998; Fowler, 2000; Tshikovhi & Shambare, 2015). The self-perception and cultural context of social entrepreneurs, often understood through the lens of empathy, significantly impact their contributions to social enterprise development (Mody et al., 2016; Glaveli & Geormas, 2018). However, these contributions are rarely acknowledged. Even though entrepreneurial traditions vary significantly between countries, most social entrepreneurs have a sincere desire to make a positive difference in the world. For example, individuals residing in rural areas and on the societal periphery are more inclined to support non-profits over commercial enterprises (Williams, 2007). Social entrepreneurs' passion stems from enthusiasm, vitality, and determination to address social challenges (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016). The statistical differences between leaders of commercial and social enterprises' values and motivations serve to highlight this. Commercial leaders frequently have self-interest as their driving force, whereas social entrepreneurs prioritise societal improvement (Henderson et al., 2018). Social entrepreneurs also display attributes such as altruism, integrity, trust in others, and empathy, setting them apart from their commercial counterparts (Lortie & Cox, 2018). For example, social enterprises typically collaborate with a greater number of stakeholders upon inception than commercial start-ups, further complicating and expanding their operational processes (Raith & Starke, 2017).

Nonetheless, financial constraints often mean that social enterprises pay below-market wages, limiting their talent pool (Zahra et al., 2009). Additionally, not all stakeholders within social enterprises perceive social goals as avenues for financial profit (Battilana & Dorado, 2010). As a result, it is challenging to comprehend the dual objectives of social and financial goals that shape the motivations of people who engage in social entrepreneurship.

Social entrepreneurship transcends institutional boundaries and functions across diverse capacities (Pache & Santos, 2010). While collaborative efforts are vital for success, leadership remains the foundation of growth in social enterprises (Maak & Stoetter, 2012). Nevertheless, leaders in social enterprises must address societal challenges with an adaptive mindset and innovative approaches, a topic increasingly gaining academic attention. However, securing funding is crucial to the success of social enterprises (Mair & Marti, 2006; Doherty et al., 2014). A lack of experience within the leadership team, particularly in non-profit management, can impede growth (Rossignoli et al., 2018). This further reinforces the need for leadership education and capacity-building programs tailored to social entrepreneurship contexts. The term "*social entrepreneurship*" refers to starting a business with the explicit goal of solving societal problems or improving communities (Selsky & Parker, 2010). Many academic studies have examined social entrepreneurs' efforts to increase their societal impact, drive social transitions, pursue social objectives, and create social value. Scholars have consistently highlighted economic inequality, well-being, training, and job losses as pressing social issues. However, less attention has been given to subfields such as using social entrepreneurship to address issues like discrimination against women, threats to their security, and their lack of societal agency (Ortbal et al., 2016; Gupta et al., 2020). For a comprehensive discussion on gender disparities and youth challenges in social entrepreneurship, refer to Section 2.1.2. For example, in developing countries, financial services and small business loan programs targeting women have been instrumental in fostering social enterprises. Such targeted initiatives have demonstrated that female-owned social businesses are twice as likely to qualify for funding programs compared to their male counterparts (Chant, 2014; Bull, 2018). This underscores the need for further exploration of gender issues in emerging economies.

2.5.4 Business Strategy

Most studies on business strategy are grounded in resource dependency theory and have primarily focused on result-driven productivity, business transactions, managing business across cultures, and strategies aimed at maximising shareholder profit (Dees, 1998; Gupta et al., 2020). Consequently, these approaches may impede the understanding of entrepreneurial strategies employed by social enterprises, which prioritise societal goals over profit maximisation. This distinction highlights the need for innovative strategies that balance social and commercial imperatives. Several scholars contend that social enterprise business models should prioritise

delivering their stated social mission while simultaneously fostering societal benefits (Grassl, 2012; Clark et al., 2018). By aligning their assets, processes, and priorities, social enterprises demonstrate a unique capacity to address multifaceted societal challenges. Such organisations require leaders driven by a sense of purpose (Grassl, 2012). Incorporating welfare improvement, productivity models, and income-generating potential into their business strategies further enhances the prosperity of communities, nations, and global societies (Angeli & Jaiswal, 2016). The hybrid model of social enterprise, which integrates commercial business practices and social missions, has received significant scholarly attention (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Mair et al., 2012). This approach blurs the boundaries between the commercial and social sectors, creating innovative organisational forms that navigate contradictory institutional logics (Tracey et al., 2011). However, hybrid organisations face significant tensions arising from competing institutional pressures. Private sector firms are driven by profit maximisation, governmental organisations are constrained by bureaucratic regulations, and non-profit entities depend heavily on external funding sources (Billis, 2010). These tensions highlight the complexity of hybrid organisations, requiring strategic adaptations to balance their dual objectives effectively. Research further suggests that integrating social enterprises into governance frameworks can yield hybrid systems that amplify their societal impact (George & Reed, 2016).

Social entrepreneurship requires extensive financial support, collaboration, and coalitions to amplify its impact, raise capital, and drive societal change (Sud et al., 2009; Montgomery et al., 2012). In this context, networking has emerged as a pivotal strategy, fostering critical connections that underpin entrepreneurial success (Shaw & Carter, 2007). Collaborative networks facilitate the mobilisation of resources and ideas, enabling social enterprises to address societal issues innovatively. Social enterprises that leverage internal and external network bricolage can enter untapped markets and generate new revenue streams (Gordon et al., 2018). Network bricolage refers to the creative and resourceful use of existing social and organisational networks to address challenges and seize opportunities. These efforts often result in the creation of new markets, products, and services, underscoring the transformative potential of social entrepreneurship. As such, social entrepreneurship functions as a networked system in which stakeholder collaboration is pivotal to achieving strategic objectives. For social enterprises to achieve sustainable growth, it is essential to strategically diversify into new markets, expand existing ones, implement additional management layers, and secure further funding (Gupta et al., 2020). This process necessitates a thorough analysis of competitors and the development of innovative competitive strategies. Unlike traditional firms, social enterprises face competition not only from commercial entities but also from non-profits and other socially oriented organisations (Dees, 1998). Despite the growing body of literature on social enterprise strategies, research often remains Western-centric, overlooking the contextual challenges specific to emerging markets such as institutional voids, cultural dynamics, and resource constraints (Short et al., 2009; Torri, 2009; Doherty et al., 2014). Institutional voids refer to the absence or inadequacy of formal market-supporting institutions, which necessitate alternative mechanisms for resource mobilisation and operational sustainability. The experiences

of Egyptian social enterprises, such as Misr El-Kheir and the Egyptian Food Bank, provide critical insights into how challenges specific to emerging markets are navigated in practice. These organisations illustrate how informal networks, and religious institutions compensate for the lack of formal regulatory support by leveraging community-based partnerships and philanthropic networks, fostering resilience in challenging environments (Abdou et al., 2010). Such cases offer an important counter-narrative to the predominantly Western-centric discourse, highlighting the need to consider regional contexts in social enterprise strategy development. Over the past decade, research has demonstrated that social enterprise business models aim to create and exploit opportunities for their primary target audience and the broader community (Yunus et al., 2010; Wilson & Post, 2013). By analysing corporate strategies for resource allocation, competitor management, and product innovation, this research contributes to understanding the distinctive challenges of social enterprise operations in under-represented regions. Social entrepreneurship involves collaboration among non-profit, for-profit, and public sector organisations, collectively creating value through their initiatives (Austin et al., 2006). The long-term sustainability of these enterprises hinges on their ability to balance profitability with societal contributions (Yunus et al., 2010; Agafonow, 2014). However, most studies have predominantly relied on samples from Europe and the United States, with limited attention to developing countries and only isolated cases in emerging economies (Short et al., 2009; Torri, 2009; Doherty et al., 2014). In response to these gaps, this study critically examines corporate strategies for resource allocation, competitor management, and product innovation to uncover actionable insights into how social enterprises navigate the distinctive challenges and opportunities within the complex environments of emerging economies.

2.5.5 Institutional Environment

Challenges to social entrepreneurs arise in many forms and at all stages of an organisation's existence (Baumol, 1990; Goyal et al., 2016; Bhatt et al., 2019). Notably, key barriers include insufficient funding, governance issues, and the constraints imposed by legislative and environmental factors, which often exacerbate the challenges faced by social entrepreneurs in emerging markets (North, 1990; Jung et al., 2016; Sulphey & Alkahtani, 2017; Biddulph, 2018). The new institutional economics (NIE) approach, pioneered by North (1990), provides a valuable framework for understanding the role of national institutions in shaping entrepreneurial activities. Baumol (1990) underscores how societal structures influence entrepreneurial behaviour, asserting that national cultures and institutions can foster cross-border entrepreneurship (Dheer, 2017). Among the earliest contributions to this field, Whitley (1999) extended Baumol's research by introducing the concept of the national business system, derived from NIE. This framework identifies the distinctive attributes of national organisational forms and explains how entrepreneurial movements vary across regions (Bowen & De Clercq, 2008; Kshetri, 2009). For instance, in emerging markets, the NIE framework provides insights into the interplay between formal institutions and informal practices, shaping social

enterprise models and strategies. Institutional voids, such as weak regulatory enforcement and fragmented policy environments, significantly hinder social entrepreneurship in emerging economies like Egypt (Bruton et al., 2010; Urbano et al., 2017). These voids necessitate innovative strategies, such as leveraging informal networks and resource bricolage, to navigate operational barriers (Desa, 2012). For additional insights on institutional challenges in developing regions, refer to Section 2.1.2, which discusses their interplay with gender and youth demographics. Studies also show that the hybridity of social enterprise business models affects how these organisations collect and allocate economic resources (Doherty et al., 2014). Although this hybridity enables social enterprises to leverage diverse sources of legitimacy (Hamaoui & Jamison, 2008; Pontikes, 2012), it often poses challenges for investors. The dual missions of achieving social impact and financial returns can lead to conflicting priorities, complicating investment decisions (Brandesen & Karré, 2011; André & Pache, 2016). Consequently, financial sustainability remains a critical hurdle for social enterprises (Doherty et al., 2014).

Institutions play a pivotal role in fostering entrepreneurial activity by creating mechanisms for collaboration and cooperation (North, 1990, 2005). These mechanisms include informal norms, ethical standards, and formal regulations such as constitutions and economic laws (Bosma et al., 2016). However, the institutional and regulatory environments in which social enterprises operate often create significant barriers. For example, unforeseen shifts in institutional contexts can disrupt operations and undermine organisational stability (Grohs et al., 2015; Eti-Tofinga et al., 2018; Ozeren et al., 2018). While institutional context is pivotal for establishing social enterprises, researchers have not adequately explored its role in shaping social entrepreneurship processes (Bacq & Janssen, 2011). One notable limitation in the existing landscape is the lack of institutional protection for social entrepreneurs, especially in developing economies. Many overcome these constraints through bricolage, creatively reworking available resources to address institutional gaps (Desa, 2012). However, even with such ingenuity, social entrepreneurs often lack the financial resources, technical knowledge, and institutional support necessary to seize entrepreneurial opportunities effectively (Shane, 2003; Desa & Basu, 2013). The choice of organisational forms for social initiatives often reflects the founder's response to institutional uncertainty (Townsend & Hart, 2008). For instance, in countries such as India, overlapping and conflicting institutional logics create complex operational environments for social enterprises (Bontis et al., 2018). These complexities highlight the need for tailored frameworks that align institutional attributes with the specific objectives of social entrepreneurship. National wealth inequality and income mobility also influence social entrepreneurship. Emerging technologies such as blockchain and AI offer innovative solutions for navigating institutional voids, particularly in developing economies. For instance, blockchain enhances trust in philanthropic efforts by ensuring transparent reporting, while AI-driven insights can guide policymakers in addressing systemic challenges like poverty and unemployment. The integration of these technologies within hybrid regulatory frameworks, as seen in some South Asian models, could provide a roadmap for mitigating institutional constraints in the Middle East (Hossain et al., 2017; Zahra et al., 2009).

While wealth inequality can enhance opportunities for social enterprise, low-income mobility can impede them (Herrington & Kew, 2014). Legal provisions and supportive policies are therefore critical to fostering the growth of social enterprises. Moreover, focusing on country-specific institutional conditions, particularly in emerging markets, is essential for uncovering the enablers and barriers to social entrepreneurship. For instance, contrasting Egypt’s regulatory ambiguities with the UK’s well-established Community Interest Company model offers valuable insights into potential policy innovations. Table 6 illustrates the geographic distribution of social entrepreneurship studies, highlighting the disproportionate focus on developed economies. This imbalance underscores the urgent need for more research in developing regions, particularly the Middle East, where unique institutional and cultural factors critically shape social entrepreneurship.

Table 7: Distribution of Social Entrepreneurship Studies Across Continents

Continent	Number of Studies	Contribution %
North America	80	30
Europe	70	26
Asia	50	20
Africa	25	10
Australia	15	6
South America	10	4
Others	10	4
Total	260	100

Source: Adapted from Gupta et al. (2023), Bosma et al. (2023), and Zahra et al. (2024)

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework for this study draws upon institutional theory, aiming to bridge understandings of social entrepreneurship across developed and emerging market contexts. It synthesises key dimensions from the literature, focusing on entrepreneurial orientation, social innovation, human traits, business strategy, and the institutional environment (Nicholls, 2006; Battilana & Lee, 2014). These dimensions are contextualised within institutional theory, ensuring a cohesive and comprehensive lens for analysing social enterprises. The institutional context in which each of these dimensions exists interacts to influence the actions and outcomes of social enterprises. This framework explicitly situates social entrepreneurship within its institutional context, highlighting the dual influence of external structures and internal attributes on social enterprise performance (Zahra & Wright, 2016). Particularly in emerging markets, institutional voids create a reliance on innovative and context-specific strategies. Future studies could examine how digital innovations and hybrid financial

models mitigate challenges posed by institutional voids, particularly in under-researched regions like the Middle East (Zahra & Wright, 2016). Such institutional gaps have a significant impact on the strategies that social entrepreneurs use, necessitating an entrepreneurial orientation characterised by risk-taking, initiative, and innovation. Social innovation becomes essential in such settings, where enterprises must devise locally tailored solutions to address specific community needs in the absence of formal support systems (Zahra et al., 2008; Mair & Martí, 2009). The framework emphasises the role of human traits in social entrepreneurship, focusing on intrinsic qualities such as resilience, adaptability, and commitment, which are indispensable for sustaining enterprises in volatile environments. This is particularly relevant in the Middle East, where institutional voids and cultural dynamics demand exceptional leadership and perseverance. Business strategy, in this framework, encompasses hybrid models and community-focused approaches that enable social enterprises to balance social missions with financial viability (Austin et al., 2006; Khanna & Palepu, 2010). In contrast, social enterprises in developed economies benefit from regulatory clarity, well-established networks, and a variety of funding channels, which allow them to efficiently scale and expand impact within a supportive environment (Nicholls, 2006; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). By examining these situations side by side, the framework demonstrates how structural and cultural factors distinctly influence entrepreneurial outcomes, offering valuable insights for policymakers to implement more effective reforms. Additionally, this comparative approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how social entrepreneurship interacts with institutional contexts, particularly in developing nations characterised by significant structural limitations (Mair & Martí, 2009). The framework addresses critical research gaps, such as the scarcity of empirical studies specific to contexts like Egypt, by proposing linkages between institutional constraints and the operational challenges faced by social enterprises.

The framework integrates five interrelated dimensions drawn from institutional and SE literature. Regulative, normative, and cognitive dimensions reflect Scott's (2014) tripartite model of institutions, offering a structured lens for understanding the formal and informal rules that shape social entrepreneurial behaviour. These pillars are widely adopted in research on institutional theory and are especially relevant in regions marked by weak institutional coherence, such as the Middle East. Entrepreneurial agency is incorporated to capture the proactive role of social entrepreneurs in navigating institutional voids, resource constraints, and conflicting expectations (Mair & Martí, 2009; Zahra et al., 2008). Finally, hybrid logics—defined as the simultaneous pursuit of social and commercial missions—are essential to understanding how these ventures reconcile competing demands (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Jay, 2013). Together, these five dimensions offer a cohesive and context-sensitive framework to analyse social entrepreneurship under institutional ambiguity. Their selection reflects both their theoretical robustness and practical salience in prior empirical studies on social enterprises in emerging economies. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework developed for this study, integrating five key dimensions drawn from institutional and social entrepreneurship literature. These include: (1) the regulative, normative, and cognitive pillars of institutions as theorised by Scott (2014), which provide a

structured lens for understanding how formal rules, social norms, and cognitive assumptions shape organisational legitimacy; (2) entrepreneurial orientation, reflecting the proactive, innovative, and risk-taking behaviours required to initiate and sustain ventures in constrained environments (Zahra et al., 2008); (3) social innovation, denoting novel and context-sensitive solutions to unmet needs, often emerging in response to institutional voids (Mair & Martí, 2009); (4) human traits, such as resilience and adaptability, which are essential for navigating institutional complexity in volatile contexts; and (5) hybrid business strategies, referring to organisational models that simultaneously pursue social and commercial goals (Battilana & Lee, 2014). These five elements are not static; they dynamically interact within the broader institutional environment and are influenced by external pressures. The selection of these five elements—entrepreneurial orientation, social innovation, human traits, business strategy, and institutional environment—was guided by both theoretical robustness and empirical salience in emerging markets literature. These dimensions consistently appeared in foundational and regional studies as critical for navigating institutional voids (Zahra et al., 2009; Mair & Martí, 2009; Battilana & Lee, 2014). Entrepreneurial orientation and social innovation are well-established constructs in social entrepreneurship research. Human traits such as resilience and adaptability emerged from multiple case-based studies in constrained contexts. Business strategy reflects the operationalisation of hybrid models essential for financial viability. Finally, the institutional environment acts as the meta-layer structuring opportunities, constraints, and legitimacy across all other dimensions. Alternative dimensions such as impact measurement or network structure were reviewed but excluded due to limited relevance in Egypt's fragmented and informal entrepreneurial landscape. Therefore, these five were selected as the most context-sensitive and analytically coherent for understanding how social enterprises respond to institutional complexity

In particular, the framework reflects how institutional pressures—coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphism as conceptualised by DiMaggio and Powell (1991)—shape how social enterprises pursue legitimacy, structure their operations, and make strategic decisions. Coercive pressures emerge from state regulation and donor compliance; normative pressures stem from professional expectations and societal norms; and mimetic pressures arise in response to uncertainty, prompting organisations to emulate familiar or successful models. To complement this structural perspective, Figure 2 introduces a preliminary Institutional Adaptation Model, grounded in more recent extensions of institutional theory. It builds on the notion of institutional entrepreneurship, which explains how actors effect change by mobilising resources and challenging dominant norms (Battilana et al., 2009); institutional logics, which capture the coexistence of competing cultural belief systems within a field (Thornton et al., 2012); and institutional bricolage, which describes how actors recombine available cultural, symbolic, and material resources to navigate institutional voids (Di Domenico et al., 2010). The model outlines three key adaptive mechanisms employed by social entrepreneurs in such contexts: reinterpretation—reframing dominant expectations to suit local realities; resistance—strategic circumvention of incompatible or obstructive institutional pressures; and hybridity—the

integration of multiple logics (e.g., philanthropic, commercial, religious) within a single organisational form. These mechanisms are particularly salient in Egypt, where institutional contradictions and regulatory fragmentation necessitate flexible, creative, and context-specific responses. The model is elaborated further in Chapter 4 as an analytical tool for interpreting the empirical findings.

To further strengthen the theoretical sensitivity of the framework, especially within the Egyptian context, this study integrates three recent extensions of institutional theory. First, institutional entrepreneurship explains how actors initiate change within constraining environments by leveraging resources, networks, and discursive framing to introduce new practices and norms (Battilana et al., 2009). Second, the concept of institutional logics is particularly relevant in Egypt's dual economy, where social enterprises must navigate competing value systems—such as religious charity, market-driven sustainability, state regulations, and community-based expectations (Thornton et al., 2012). Third, institutional bricolage provides a valuable lens for understanding how entrepreneurs creatively recombine available norms, symbols, and resources to operate effectively in fragmented or underdeveloped environments (Di Domenico et al., 2010). These three extensions illuminate how social entrepreneurial agency operates under institutional contradiction, ambiguity, and hybridity—thereby complementing the study's conceptual model. Drawing more explicitly on North's (1990) foundational distinction, formal institutions refer to codified laws, state regulations, and enforcement mechanisms, while informal institutions refer to norms, customs, traditions, and belief systems. These informal structures often carry greater influence in contexts like Egypt, where regulatory enforcement is weak and informal networks shape legitimacy and access. Additionally, DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) theory of institutional isomorphism helps explain why social enterprises in such environments may conform to prevailing expectations. Their three isomorphic mechanisms—coercive (from legal or political mandates), normative (from professional or societal norms), and mimetic (copying successful models under uncertainty)—are especially relevant. In Egypt's fragmented institutional context, mimetic and normative isomorphism are visible as social enterprises often mirror NGO structures or adapt religious-charity models to gain acceptance. These theoretical foundations clarify how institutional pressures shape hybrid strategies and legitimacy-seeking behaviour among social entrepreneurs.

Moreover, DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) three mechanisms of institutional isomorphism are particularly relevant in the Egyptian policy context:

- **Coercive isomorphism:** Arises from legal mandates, government regulations, and donor compliance. In Egypt, this includes state licensing requirements, restrictive legal classifications for NGOs and enterprises, and bureaucratic reporting structures that constrain organisational flexibility.
- **Normative isomorphism:** Emerges from shared norms and expectations among professionals, sector peers, and global development networks. Social enterprises in Egypt often adopt international

reporting standards, transparent governance practices, and mission language aligned with Western donors to secure legitimacy and funding.

- **Mimetic isomorphism:** Occurs when organisations face uncertainty and imitate models perceived as successful or legitimate. In the Egyptian context, social enterprises frequently emulate NGO structures, Islamic charitable models (e.g., waqf), or global social innovation incubators to reduce perceived risk and gain public or institutional trust.

These three mechanisms interact with Egypt's fragmented institutional landscape, shaping the strategic behaviours, legitimacy pathways, and structural choices of social entrepreneurs operating under institutional ambiguity. These three mechanisms interact with Egypt's fragmented institutional landscape, shaping the strategic behaviours, legitimacy pathways, and structural choices of social entrepreneurs operating under institutional ambiguity.

- **Legitimacy pathways:** Social enterprises in Egypt often seek legitimacy from multiple institutional actors—state agencies, donors, religious authorities, and local communities—each with distinct normative expectations. This results in a need to strategically frame organisational identity to align with multiple, and at times competing, logics (Battilana et al., 2009; Mair et al., 2012).
- **Structural choices:** Regulatory ambiguity and bureaucratic inefficiency frequently discourage formalisation. Many social enterprises adopt hybrid organisational structures (e.g., NGOs with income-generating arms) to maintain operational flexibility. Informal institutions—such as kinship networks, religious affiliation, and community-based trust—often play a larger role than formal laws in shaping organisational structure and access to resources (North, 1990; Khanna & Palepu, 2010).
- **Strategic positioning:** In the face of uncertainty, Egyptian social enterprises frequently imitate institutional models perceived as legitimate, such as donor-funded NGOs, Islamic charitable models (e.g., waqf), or global social innovation incubators. This reflects mimetic isomorphism and helps mitigate perceived legitimacy risks (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Littlewood & Holt, 2018).
- **Adaptation and hybridity:** Social entrepreneurs often blend multiple institutional logics—including market efficiency, religious obligations (e.g., zakat), and developmental mandates—to create hybrid strategies that resonate with both funders and communities. This hybridity helps them navigate contradictions and fulfil diverse stakeholder expectations (Thornton et al., 2012; Pache & Santos, 2010).
- **Donor and policy alignment:** International donor norms and national development strategies, such as Egypt Vision 2030, act as normative pressures that influence governance, program design, and impact evaluation. These pressures shape both strategic choices and external accountability mechanisms (Nicholls, 2010; MedUp, 2019).

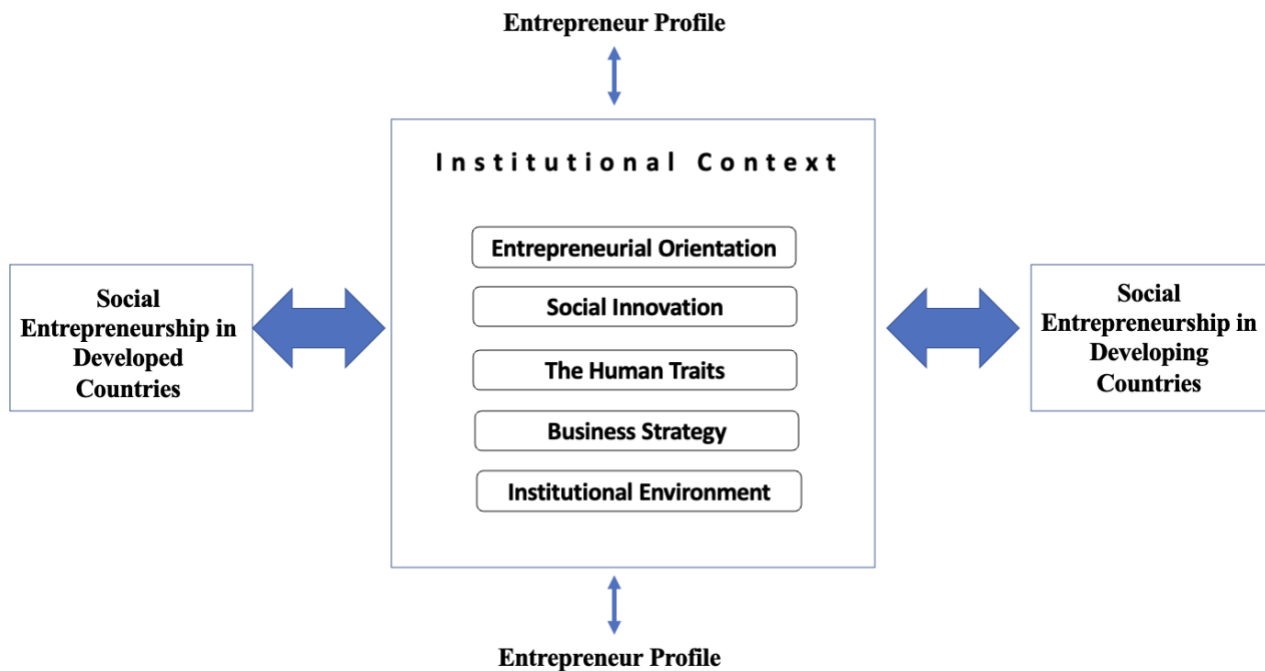
Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for this study, synthesising five interrelated dimensions drawn from institutional and social entrepreneurship literature: (1) the regulative, normative, and cognitive pillars of institutions (Scott, 2014); (2) entrepreneurial orientation; (3) social innovation; (4) human traits; and (5) hybrid business strategies. These elements interact within the institutional environment to shape the behaviours, constraints, and opportunities available to social enterprises. The model emphasises how institutional pressures—coercive, normative, and mimetic (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991)—influence organisational legitimacy, strategic decisions, and structural adaptations in the Egyptian context.

To guide the empirical analysis, Figure 2 presents a preliminary Institutional Adaptation Model, grounded in recent extensions of institutional theory. It draws from institutional entrepreneurship (Battilana et al., 2009), institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012), and institutional bricolage (Di Domenico et al., 2010) to conceptualise how social enterprises respond to institutional complexity through three adaptive mechanisms:

- Reinterpretation – reframing institutional expectations to align with organisational values and resources.
- Resistance – strategic defiance or circumvention of conflicting institutional demands.
- Hybridity – combining competing logics, such as charity and market rationalities, within a single organisational form.

This model will be further refined in Chapter 4, where it is used as an analytical lens to interpret empirical findings on how Egyptian social entrepreneurs navigate regulatory ambiguity, plural value systems, and structural voids.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework for the Study



Source: Compiled by author

This chapter critically reviewed the existing literature on social entrepreneurship, focusing on its theoretical foundations, contextual applications, and evolving challenges. By integrating key perspectives from institutional theory, entrepreneurial orientation, and hybridity, the review highlighted critical gaps in understanding the role of institutional environments, particularly in emerging markets such as the Middle East. It underscored the need for region-specific frameworks that address the unique challenges faced by social enterprises in volatile and under-researched settings. A key outcome of this review was the development of a conceptual framework that synthesises dimensions such as entrepreneurial orientation, social innovation, institutional environment, human traits, and hybrid business strategies. This framework not only bridges theoretical gaps but also provides a robust foundation for guiding the empirical investigation outlined in the subsequent chapters. The next chapter, Methodology, details the research design and methods used to explore the proposed conceptual framework and address the gaps identified in the literature. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the study seeks to validate the theoretical insights presented here and generate actionable outcomes for advancing social entrepreneurship in emerging markets.

Figure 1 illustrates the interaction between the institutional environment (regulative, normative, and cognitive elements) and entrepreneurial orientation. These institutional layers exert distinct forms of pressure—coercive (e.g., government mandates and funding criteria), normative (e.g., cultural expectations and social sector

norms), and mimetic (e.g., imitating perceived best practices)—that shape strategic decisions in social enterprises (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). For instance, in contexts of uncertainty, organisations may adopt familiar NGO structures to gain legitimacy (mimetic isomorphism) or frame their mission to align with societal values (normative conformity). These mechanisms directly influence key organisational choices such as governance structures, stakeholder alignment, and hybrid funding strategies. By integrating these pathways, the framework clarifies how institutional complexity informs entrepreneurial adaptation. While Figure 1 outlines the structural pressures influencing social entrepreneurship, it does not fully capture the dynamic strategies used by entrepreneurs to adapt to institutional tensions. The development of Figure 2 builds directly upon the conceptual framework in Figure 1 by translating structural dimensions into actionable mechanisms observed in empirical practice. While Figure 1 identifies the foundational institutional pressures—regulative, normative, and cognitive elements—that influence entrepreneurial behaviour, Figure 2 conceptualises how social entrepreneurs strategically respond to these pressures in real-world contexts. Specifically, Figure 2 introduces three adaptive mechanisms—reinterpretation, resistance, and hybridity—that represent behavioural outcomes of prolonged interaction with coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphic forces (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). These adaptations were observed across cases where formal rigidity, cultural expectations, or uncertainty necessitated creative workarounds or hybrid structuring. Thus, Figure 2 does not replace Figure 1 but operationalises it—shifting the focus from structural influence to agentic response within the Egyptian institutional ecosystem. To address this, Figure 2: Institutional Adaptation Model extends the framework by illustrating three adaptive responses—reinterpretation (reframing dominant expectations), resistance (strategic defiance or workaround), and hybridity (combining conflicting logics). This model draws on institutional entrepreneurship theory (Pache & Santos, 2010) and serves as a dynamic lens for analysing how social entrepreneurs in Egypt exercise agency in the face of institutional complexity.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the research methodology employed to investigate how institutional dynamics shape the strategies and operations of social enterprises in Egypt. Specifically, the chapter explores the interaction between formal mechanisms (e.g., regulations and policies) and informal systems (e.g., cultural norms and social networks) that influence entrepreneurial decision-making in this unique institutional environment. The aim of this chapter is to establish a robust methodological framework that not only facilitates a nuanced understanding of these interactions but also contributes to both theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of social entrepreneurship. This chapter is structured as follows: First, it elaborates on the philosophical underpinnings of the study, including epistemological, ontological, and axiological considerations, and justifies the adoption of a qualitative methodology. Next, it discusses the research strategy, focusing on the case study approach, semi-structured interviews, artefact analysis, and triangulation techniques. Thematic analysis is employed to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns (themes) within qualitative data, providing a systematic yet flexible approach to understanding the multifaceted dynamics at play in social enterprises. By focusing on recurring themes, this methodology ensures a comprehensive exploration of socio-cultural patterns and institutional influences, balancing theory-building with contextual sensitivity. Finally, it addresses ethical considerations, including informed consent, data security, and cultural sensitivity, ensuring adherence to the highest academic and ethical standards (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019).

3.1 Methodology

This exploratory study adopts a qualitative research paradigm, which aligns well with an interactionist approach. Considering that the main goal of this research is to understand the institutional factors influencing the social entrepreneurship landscape in Egypt, this approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of the underlying mechanisms that define social entrepreneurship practices in the Arabic-speaking context. By engaging closely with participants, the study gained valuable insights into how social entrepreneurs in Egypt navigate and organize their social environments, including their methods of activity reporting and maintaining accessible records for regulatory authorities. This process was particularly instrumental in addressing research objective 4, which aimed to identify and critically evaluate the adaptive strategies employed by social entrepreneurs to navigate regulatory and cultural constraints. Moreover, the interactionist approach, as described by Guba and Lincoln (1996), was operationalised through an abductive research process. This iterative method allowed the study to integrate existing theoretical frameworks with fieldwork observations, facilitating the generation of patterns that illuminate the dynamic interactions within Egypt's social

entrepreneurship ecosystem (Perry, 1998; Farquahar, 2012; Gray, 2016). By addressing these dynamics, the study also contributed to fulfilling research objectives 1 and 2: examining the influence of formal institutional factors such as legislative and regulatory frameworks and analysing the impact of informal institutional factors such as cultural values and community expectations on the perception and legitimacy of social entrepreneurship in Egyptian society. Ultimately, this methodological approach provided a nuanced understanding that is essential for comparing Egypt's institutional environment for social entrepreneurship with those in developed economies (research objective 3) and for formulating actionable policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the institutional support for social enterprises in Egypt and similar emerging markets (research objective 5).

3.1.1 Philosophical Approach

The philosophical foundation of this study is firmly situated within the constructivist paradigm, which posits that knowledge is neither static nor objective but is co-constructed through the dynamic interplay of individuals' experiences, actions, and contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Constructivism fundamentally departs from positivism's notion of an objective, universal reality, arguing instead that multiple, socially and culturally situated realities exist. These realities are shaped and reshaped by historical, institutional, and individual influences. This paradigm is particularly well-suited to the study's aim of understanding the complex and nuanced interactions between institutional structures and entrepreneurial agency in Egypt. Given the fragmented and dualistic institutional environment in emerging economies like Egypt, the constructivist approach enables an exploration of the subjective interpretations and adaptive strategies employed by social entrepreneurs (North, 1990; Scott, 2014).

Ontology: Ontology, concerned with the nature of reality, serves as the cornerstone of this study's philosophical orientation. In line with the constructivist paradigm, the research adopts a relativist ontological position, which asserts that realities are socially constructed and therefore multiple, contextually dependent, and dynamic (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Lincoln et al. 2018). This position contrasts sharply with the realist ontology of positivism, which assumes a single, observable reality independent of human perception. In the context of this study, the relativist ontology is critical for understanding the lived realities of social entrepreneurs in Egypt, who operate within an environment characterised by overlapping formal and informal institutional frameworks. For example, institutional voids gaps in formal regulatory or support structures are not universally experienced as constraints. Instead, entrepreneurs may perceive and interpret these voids as opportunities for innovation and adaptation, particularly within trust-based informal networks. These differing interpretations underscore the multiplicity of realities that constructivism seeks to capture (Khanna & Palepu,

2010; Puffer et al., 2010). By adopting a relativist ontological stance, this study foregrounds the subjective and context-specific nature of institutional dynamics. It moves beyond generalised or deterministic explanations to examine how individual entrepreneurs navigate, reinterpret, and reshape institutional structures in ways that reflect their unique experiences and social realities.

Epistemology: The study's epistemological position is rooted in interpretivism, which aligns closely with constructivist principles. Interpretivism posits that knowledge is not discovered in a vacuum but is instead co-created through the interaction between the researcher and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Flick, 2018; Blaikie & Priest, 2019). This epistemological stance prioritises understanding over measurement, focusing on the meanings, interpretations, and perspectives of individuals as they engage with their environments. This interpretivist approach is particularly significant in capturing the rich, context-specific realities of social entrepreneurship in Egypt. For instance, bureaucratic inefficiencies and regulatory constraints, which might traditionally be viewed as barriers to entrepreneurial activity, are often navigated through informal, trust-based networks. These networks offer an alternative lens for understanding institutional dynamics, highlighting the importance of subjective interpretations in shaping entrepreneurial strategies. By employing interpretivism, the study seeks to uncover how social entrepreneurs make sense of, and respond to, fragmented institutional environments (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012). Moreover, the epistemological commitment to co-constructed knowledge ensures that the research process remains participatory and dialogical. Semi-structured interviews, for instance, were designed to elicit detailed narratives from participants, allowing their experiences and interpretations to shape the study's findings. This emphasis on meaning-making aligns with the study's broader objective of understanding the nuanced interplay between formal and informal institutional structures.

Axiology: The study's axiological stance its recognition of the role of values in research is an integral component of its philosophical foundation. Axiology in the constructivist paradigm acknowledges that research is inherently value-laden and that the researcher's positionality, biases, and reflexivity play a central role in shaping the research process (Tracy, 2020). This study embraces these axiological commitments by prioritising the voices, values, and lived realities of social entrepreneurs in Egypt. The value-laden nature of this research is particularly evident in its focus on social entrepreneurship, a field intrinsically tied to ethical considerations and value-driven objectives. Social entrepreneurs in Egypt are not merely navigating institutional voids; they are actively seeking to address social challenges, foster community development, and promote sustainable change. By centring their perspectives, the study underscores the importance of ethical engagement and reflexivity in ensuring that participants' experiences are authentically represented (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Tracy, 2020).

Abductive approach

Abduction combines elements of deductive reasoning (testing existing theories) and inductive reasoning (deriving insights from data) to refine and extend theoretical frameworks (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This iterative approach is well-suited to the study's exploration of the dynamic interactions between institutional structures and social entrepreneurship in Egypt. By continuously refining the theoretical framework in response to emerging data such as the unexpected role of informal networks in navigating institutional voids the approach allows for a deeper understanding of how context-specific factors influence entrepreneurial strategies in a fragmented institutional landscape. Hammersley (2005) highlighted that abduction is not strictly a matter of logical deduction or induction but involves developing explanatory ideas based on a close examination of specific cases. Similarly, Thomas (2011) emphasized that abduction relies on making informed judgments to propose the best explanation for observed phenomena. For example, while the initial research design drew on established theories of institutional voids and social entrepreneurship (Mair & Martí, 2006; Scott, 2014), empirical findings from interviews and artefact analysis revealed the unexpected prominence of informal networks in mitigating institutional challenges. These insights prompted refinements to the theoretical framework, ensuring that it more accurately reflected the lived realities of participants. This iterative process underscores the flexibility and responsiveness of abductive reasoning, allowing the study to remain grounded in empirical evidence while contributing to theoretical advancements. In conclusion, the philosophical approach underpinning this study grounded in constructivism and informed by interpretivist epistemology, relativist ontology, and value-sensitive axiology provides a robust framework for exploring the interplay between institutional structures and entrepreneurial agency in Egypt. By prioritising the co-construction of meaning, the study captures the complexity and multiplicity of entrepreneurial strategies in a fragmented institutional landscape. The integration of abductive reasoning ensures that the research remains theoretically rigorous and empirically grounded, offering valuable insights for both academic scholarship and practical applications in the field of social entrepreneurship.

Pilot Study

The data analysis for this study was conducted with rigour and depth to uncover the nuanced institutional dynamics influencing social entrepreneurship in Egypt. Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was undertaken to ensure the methodological tools were fit for purpose. Conducted with three social entrepreneurs, the pilot study tested the semi-structured interview guide and artefact selection process, evaluating the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the interview questions. It also assessed the feasibility of sampling and data collection strategies and identified potential cultural and logistical challenges (Patton, 2015). Key findings included the need for more specific prompts in interviews and the necessity for bilingual flexibility, as

participants preferred conducting interviews in Arabic. Cultural norms regarding trust and authority also shaped the interview process, with participants offering more detailed responses in informal settings (Van Nes et al., 2010). The insights gained from the pilot study significantly strengthened the main study's design and execution. Refinements to the interview guide, including follow-up prompts and bilingual flexibility, enhanced participant engagement and data quality. Adjustments to the interview strategy, such as incorporating more conversational prompts, ensured a more effective data collection process. Logistical challenges, such as scheduling conflicts, were addressed by offering flexible interview times and virtual options. While the data from the pilot study were excluded from the final analysis, its role in refining the research framework was crucial. The iterative insights from the pilot study ensured that the study's methodology was culturally sensitive and effective, leading to richer, more detailed narratives during the main study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Pilot testing revealed several areas where refinement was necessary to improve the clarity, relevance, and theoretical sensitivity of the interview protocol. Initial pilot questions were sometimes too abstract or lacked grounding in participants' institutional realities, which led to superficial or generalised responses. Based on feedback, the questions were reworded to enhance accessibility, ensure alignment with key constructs such as institutional logics and hybridity, and encourage deeper reflection on adaptive practices. These changes also improved the sequencing and thematic coherence of the interview flow. To illustrate this refinement process, a comparative table is included in Appendix C, showing the original pilot questions alongside the final revised set. This contributes to methodological transparency and illustrates the responsiveness of the research design to empirical and contextual insights (Turner, 2010).

3.2 Research Strategy

The research strategy for this study adopts a qualitative framework with a focus on multiple case studies to explore the institutional dynamics shaping social entrepreneurship in Egypt. This design strategy ensures an in-depth and contextually rich exploration of how social enterprises adapt to and navigate the complexities of their institutional environment. By integrating multiple qualitative methods, the study captures a comprehensive picture of the interplay between formal and informal structures, contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical insights (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Yin, 2018). The study is structured to provide a detailed, contextually grounded understanding of how social enterprises navigate institutional challenges while leveraging available opportunities. For example, the research investigates how entrepreneurs compensate for gaps in regulatory frameworks by relying on informal support systems such as community networks and trust-based relationships. This focus on adaptive strategies aligns with the study's broader aim of uncovering actionable insights for practitioners and policymakers in emerging economies (North, 1990; Scott, 2014). This section elaborates on the case study approach, the use of semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method, and artefact analysis. It also highlights triangulation as a methodological strategy to enhance

the robustness and credibility of the findings. These methods, employed within the broader constructivist and abductive reasoning framework, ensure that the study remains both systematic and responsive to the unique dynamics of the Egyptian context (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flick, 2018).

3.2.1 Case Study

The study employs a case study design as its central research strategy, aligning seamlessly with the constructivist and qualitative framework underpinning the research. Case studies are particularly effective for examining complex, context-dependent phenomena that require in-depth exploration, such as the interplay between formal and informal institutional dynamics in social entrepreneurship (Yin, 2014). This approach supports the study's goal of uncovering the adaptive strategies employed by social entrepreneurs within Egypt's fragmented institutional landscape. By focusing on the lived experiences of social entrepreneurs, the case study design provides an in-depth understanding of how formal and informal institutional structures intersect to influence entrepreneurial practices. For instance, the research explores how social entrepreneurs leverage informal community networks to address gaps in formal regulatory frameworks, a dynamic that is often underexplored in broader quantitative studies. The decision to adopt a case study design is further justified by its capacity to accommodate the exploratory objectives of the research. Social entrepreneurship in Egypt exists within a highly dynamic and underexplored institutional landscape, marked by significant variability and complexity. The case study approach enables the researcher to capture the nuanced ways in which social entrepreneurs navigate these challenges, offering insights that are both contextually rich and theoretically significant (Stake, 1995). A case study approach offers the flexibility required to delve deeply into these intricacies, capturing context-specific insights that might otherwise be overlooked. Case selection followed a theoretical sampling logic, seeking cases that could exemplify institutional navigation and strategic hybridity within Egypt's social entrepreneurship sector (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). This approach aimed to maximise conceptual insight rather than represent statistical generalisability. To enhance the richness and transferability of findings, maximum variation sampling was also employed, selecting cases that varied across key contextual variables such as sector focus (e.g., education, healthcare, employment), legal structure (e.g., NGO, company, hybrid), and geographical location (e.g., Cairo, Upper Egypt, Delta). This dual strategy ensured a broad spectrum of institutional conditions, enabling comparative analysis and greater theoretical refinement (Patton, 2002).

Moreover, this design aligns closely with the iterative processes inherent in abductive reasoning, enabling a continuous interplay between data collection, analysis, and theoretical refinement (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This adaptability is particularly crucial for a study situated in an environment characterised by institutional fluidity, where traditional research designs may fall short in addressing emerging insights. While the case

study design offers substantial benefits, it is not without its limitations. One of the primary critiques of case study research is its perceived lack of generalizability. Because case studies often focus on specific contexts and populations, their findings may not be statistically representative of broader phenomena (Yin, 2014). To address this, the study emphasizes analytic generalization, linking its findings to theoretical constructs in institutional theory rather than attempting to generalize to all social enterprises in Egypt. Through analytical generalization, the study contributes to advancing institutional theory by identifying how informal networks mitigate institutional voids, offering insights applicable to other emerging economies with similar conditions. For example, the study extends institutional theory by highlighting the role of informal networks in compensating for institutional voids, offering insights that may be applicable to other emerging economies with similar institutional challenges (Scott, 2014; Mair & Martí, 2006). This theoretical contribution underscores the value of case studies in advancing knowledge, even when statistical generalizability is not feasible.

3.2.2 Interview

Semi-structured interviews serve as the primary data collection method in this study. This method aligns with the study's constructivist and interpretivist philosophical foundation, emphasizing the co-construction of meaning and the exploration of participants' subjective experiences. By allowing for open-ended questions and follow-up probes, semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to capture nuanced insights into how social entrepreneurs navigate institutional dynamics (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Patton, 2015). This method is particularly suited for exploring the subjective meanings and experiences of participants, offering flexibility to probe deeper into areas of interest while maintaining consistency across interviews. For example, questions were designed to elicit participants' reflections on how they adapt their operations to overcome regulatory inefficiencies, providing insights that are both contextually rich and theoretically significant.

Participant Selection Criteria

In this study, the term 'participants' refers exclusively to individuals who took part in the semi-structured interviews conducted during the primary data collection phase. The majority of participants were founders, co-founders, or executive directors of social enterprises, selected based on their central roles in decision-making and institutional engagement. To ensure contextual depth and triangulation, the sample also included a smaller subset of ecosystem stakeholders—including incubator managers, donor agency officers, and policy support actors—whose perspectives helped illuminate systemic institutional dynamics in the Egyptian social enterprise landscape. This multi-role sampling strategy is consistent with best practices in qualitative research aiming to explore both actor-level and system-level interactions (Guest et al., 2013; Tracy, 2010).

The selection of participants for this study was guided by a carefully designed framework aimed at capturing the complex interplay between institutional factors and the functioning of social enterprises within the Egyptian context. The focus was on social enterprises operating within the Greater Cairo region, a critical hub for social entrepreneurship in Egypt. Greater Cairo, with its blend of urban and semi-urban areas, provides a diverse institutional environment that significantly shapes the activities of social enterprises. This geographical focus enabled the study to explore variations in institutional constraints and opportunities across different localities, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the social entrepreneurship landscape (North, 1990; Gadalla et al., 2019). To ensure a diverse representation, the study included social enterprises with annual turnovers ranging from less than 5 million Egyptian Pounds (EGP) to less than 10 million EGP. This financial criterion facilitated the inclusion of both small and medium-sized enterprises, allowing the analysis to uncover how institutional factors influence organisations of varying scales and operational capacities. Such an approach aligns with prior research that highlights the nuanced impact of institutional frameworks on enterprises of differing sizes (Abdel-Wahab et al., 2017).

The study also encompassed social enterprises from a variety of industries, including healthcare, education, environmental sustainability, and poverty alleviation. This sectoral diversity was pivotal for identifying both common institutional challenges and those unique to specific industries. By examining the experiences of enterprises across different sectors, the research was able to highlight the interplay between industry-specific demands and broader institutional constraints (Elkington & Hartigan, 2008; Abdelzaher & Abdelzaher, 2021). An additional selection criterion was the number of employees. Social enterprises with a minimum of five employees were included to ensure the analysis focused on organisations with sufficient structural stability. This criterion was essential for capturing the internal dynamics of these enterprises, particularly in their capacity to navigate institutional challenges. The inclusion of structurally stable organisations ensured that the findings were grounded in robust examples of organisational resilience and adaptability, building on prior studies that emphasise the role of organisational capacity in overcoming institutional constraints (Elkington & Hartigan, 2008). By employing these selection criteria, the study was able to offer a nuanced and contextually rich exploration of how institutional factors shape the operations of social enterprises in Egypt. The methodological rigour underlying these choices underscores the study's commitment to providing both depth and breadth in its analysis, contributing valuable insights to the academic discourse on social entrepreneurship in emerging economies.

This purposive sampling strategy ensured the inclusion of participants who could provide rich, relevant data aligned with the research objectives. This targeted approach ensured the selection of participants with diverse experiences, enhancing the study's ability to capture variations in institutional challenges and entrepreneurial strategies across different contexts. These criteria ensured that the selected participants provided insights

reflective of the diverse institutional landscape in Greater Cairo, aligning with the study's objectives of capturing context-specific challenges and strategies. In addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling was employed to identify additional participants through referrals from initial interviewees. This approach leveraged the interconnected networks of social entrepreneurs, which are particularly prominent in the Egyptian context, to broaden the scope of the study and ensure diversity in perspectives (Noy, 2008). While snowball sampling risks homogeneity in participant selection, this was mitigated by ensuring referrals included participants from varied industries and institutional contexts, thus broadening the diversity of perspectives captured. The interviews were conducted over a three-month period, with each session lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Questions were designed to explore participants' perceptions of institutional influences, their strategies for navigating challenges, and their reflections on the role of social enterprises in addressing socio-economic issues. The semi-structured format allowed for follow-up questions and probing, ensuring depth and richness in the data collected. For instance, participants were asked to describe specific instances where informal networks played a critical role in overcoming bureaucratic obstacles, revealing both the challenges and opportunities embedded in the institutional environment. Specific examples and detailed narratives illustrating these challenges are elaborated in Chapter 4 of the findings.

3.2.3 Artefacts

Artefact analysis is a critical component of this study's qualitative methodology, complementing semi-structured interviews by providing additional layers of contextual understanding. Artefacts provided unique insights into institutional structures that were not always explicit in participant narratives, such as how formal policies and media framing influence entrepreneurial strategies. Artefacts refer to documents, organizational reports, media content, policy briefs, and other materials that reflect both the institutional environment and the entrepreneurial practices of participants. By analysing these materials, the study gains insight into the structural and cultural factors that shape the operations of social enterprises in Egypt (Bowen, 2009). These artefacts were identified through a combination of participant referrals, publicly available records, and observations during field visits, ensuring a diverse and representative collection. For example, organizational reports revealed how social enterprises frame their strategies and objectives in response to institutional voids, while media articles highlighted the public discourse surrounding entrepreneurial activities. These artefacts provided a contextual backdrop that enriched the primary data collected through interviews (Yin, 2018). The selection of artefacts followed a purposeful sampling strategy, prioritising materials that were directly relevant to the participants' entrepreneurial activities or that illuminated the broader institutional context. The focus on purposeful sampling ensured that artefacts captured key institutional dynamics, such as the reliance on informal networks to address gaps in formal regulatory support. This strategic approach also ensured consistency with the study's constructivist framework, which emphasizes the importance of contextually

grounded insights (Creswell & Poth, 2017). For instance, organizational reports were analysed to understand how social entrepreneurs articulate their missions and objectives in the context of institutional voids, while policy documents and media articles provided insight into the formal and informal regulatory environment shaping social entrepreneurship in Egypt.

The analysis of artefacts was conducted using thematic analysis, guided by the same interpretive framework applied to interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Key themes and patterns were identified, focusing on how artefacts reflected the duality of formal and informal institutions and their impact on entrepreneurial practices. For example, the analysis revealed recurring themes, such as the strategic use of community trust to navigate institutional inefficiencies and the framing of entrepreneurial initiatives as solutions to socio-economic challenges. These findings often corroborated interview narratives, highlighting the interplay between formal structures and informal practices. In some cases, artefacts offered additional details or perspectives not directly captured in participant interviews, enriching the overall understanding of the institutional landscape. The integration of artefact analysis with interview data was achieved through triangulation, which enhances the validity and reliability of qualitative findings (Flick, 2018). Triangulation allowed the study to cross-validate themes emerging from different data sources, ensuring the robustness of its conclusions. For instance, while interviews frequently highlighted the challenges posed by regulatory inefficiencies, artefacts such as policy briefs provided concrete examples of inconsistencies in regulatory frameworks, further substantiating these narratives. Triangulation involved comparing themes emerging from interviews with insights gleaned from artefacts to identify convergences and discrepancies. This triangulated approach ensured that the findings were not only robust but also deeply contextualized.

Data Triangulation

Triangulation was adopted as a central methodological strategy in this research to ensure credibility, robustness, and a comprehensive understanding of the institutional influences on social entrepreneurship. This strategy aligns with the study's constructivist and qualitative framework, emphasizing the co-construction of meaning and the integration of diverse perspectives to provide a holistic understanding of complex phenomena (Flick, 2018). By integrating data from multiple sources, including semi-structured interviews, artefacts, and observations, triangulation mitigates the risks of relying on a single method and enhances the validity and reliability of the findings. The application of triangulation in this study was twofold. Data triangulation involved cross-validating insights from different sources to ensure consistency and coherence while also identifying potential discrepancies or alternative interpretations. For instance, participants' narratives about regulatory inefficiencies were corroborated with evidence from policy documents and organizational reports, which provided tangible examples of systemic gaps. Social media content offered additional perspectives on

how social enterprises engage with stakeholders and build legitimacy within their communities. By drawing on multiple sources, data triangulation provided a layered and holistic understanding of how social enterprises navigate institutional voids in Egypt (Bowen, 2009; Yin, 2018). Methodological triangulation integrated different qualitative methods within the research design. Semi-structured interviews provided detailed narratives of participants' lived experiences, while artefact analysis offered objective evidence that contextualized and validated these narratives. Observations enriched the analysis further by capturing contextual dynamics that were not explicitly articulated in interviews or artefacts, such as participants' interactions with institutional actors. This interplay between methods minimized potential biases inherent in individual methods, contributing to the reliability and depth of the study's findings (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The effectiveness of triangulation lies in its ability to enhance the depth and breadth of the research. For example, while interviews revealed participants' subjective perceptions of regulatory barriers, artefacts, such as policy briefs, offered concrete evidence of policy inconsistencies. These findings were further substantiated by observations, which highlighted the practical challenges participants faced in engaging with formal institutions. By combining these insights, the study provided a dynamic and multi-faceted analysis of the institutional environment. Moreover, triangulation addressed the limitations of single method approaches by validating findings through multiple lines of evidence. This methodological rigor is particularly critical in qualitative research, where subjectivity and interpretation play significant roles. By incorporating diverse data sources, the study mitigated potential biases, such as recall bias and researcher bias, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. The use of triangulation also aligns with best practices in case study research, as articulated by Yin (2018), who emphasizes the importance of combining multiple sources of evidence to build robust and credible conclusions.

3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of data for this study was grounded in a rigorous and systematic approach, utilizing thematic analysis as the primary methodology. This approach enabled the exploration of the nuanced institutional and socio-cultural dynamics shaping social entrepreneurship in Egypt, ensuring the findings were rooted in participants' lived experiences while contributing to broader theoretical discourse.

3.3.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed as the analytical framework for this study due to its flexibility and depth in identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data. While the Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2013) could have provided a structured process for deriving categories from raw data through a more systematic, grounded theory approach, it was determined that thematic analysis was more

suiting to the exploratory nature of this study. The thematic approach allowed for a broader and more adaptable analysis, essential for understanding the socio-cultural and institutional dynamics of social entrepreneurship in Egypt, where the complexity of the context and the diversity of participants' experiences required flexibility in the analytical process. This method provided a robust mechanism to move beyond surface-level descriptions and uncover the underlying complexities of social entrepreneurship in an emerging economy. The process of thematic analysis began with a detailed familiarisation phase, which involved immersion in the raw data, including verbatim interview transcripts, observational notes, and relevant artifacts. This phase was critical for ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the dataset and for laying the foundation for subsequent analytical stages. During this phase, key ideas and initial impressions were noted, forming the groundwork for further coding. The second stage involved systematic coding, where segments of data were labelled to capture significant features relevant to the research questions. This process was conducted inductively, allowing the data to guide the identification of codes rather than imposing pre-existing theoretical frameworks. Codes were organized into an initial list and subsequently refined to ensure clarity, consistency, and relevance. For example, participants' references to informal networks were coded as "*trust-based collaborations*," while mentions of challenges navigating bureaucracy were captured under "*regulatory inefficiencies*." In the third stage, the focus shifted to identifying overarching themes by clustering related codes. Themes were constructed to reflect broader patterns and interpretative insights that captured the essence of participants' experiences. For instance, the theme "*community embeddedness*" emerged from codes related to trust, local legitimacy, and resource-sharing practices, highlighting the socio-cultural dynamics integral to entrepreneurial success in fragmented institutional settings. This iterative process involved constant comparison between the data and emerging themes to ensure their alignment with the underlying narratives.

The fourth phase involved reviewing and refining themes. Initial themes were scrutinized for coherence, relevance, and distinctiveness, ensuring they accurately reflected the data and contributed to answering the research questions. Themes that were overly broad or ambiguous were redefined or merged, while those lacking sufficient data support were discarded. For example, "*informal networks*" and "*adaptive strategies*" were integrated under a broader theme of "*navigating institutional voids*" to better encapsulate the interplay between socio-cultural and institutional factors. The penultimate stage involved defining and naming themes. Each theme was carefully articulated, capturing its core while distinguishing it from others. Descriptions were enriched with representative quotes and contextual examples to demonstrate their grounding in the data. This stage also involved situating the themes within existing theoretical frameworks to facilitate abductive reasoning, whereby emergent findings were linked to established concepts in social entrepreneurship literature. Finally, the themes were synthesised into a coherent narrative, forming the basis of the study's findings. This narrative highlighted key socio-cultural and institutional dynamics influencing social entrepreneurship in Egypt, such as the role of trust-based relationships in overcoming regulatory inefficiencies and the innovative potential arising from institutional voids. Thematic analysis, with its systematic yet flexible nature, ensured

that the research findings were both contextually rich and theoretically robust. This methodology not only uncovered the socio-cultural subtleties often overlooked by structured approaches but also provided actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners. By illustrating the significance of informal networks and community legitimacy, the study underscores the need for culturally sensitive policies that leverage these dynamics to support social entrepreneurship. The rigour of this analytical approach reinforces its contribution to advancing academic discourse and addressing practical challenges in emerging economies.

Reflexivity and Methodological Challenges

This methodological innovation enhances the depth and breadth of data analysis, offering a replicable framework for exploring institutional dynamics in other contexts (Patton, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006). For practitioners and policymakers, the use of thematic analysis provides actionable guidance on leveraging socio-cultural dynamics and informal networks to address institutional voids (Nowell et al., 2017). For instance, governments could collaborate with community leaders to formalize trust-based networks through participatory planning initiatives, creating hybrid models of institutional engagement that benefit both entrepreneurs and communities. In contexts beyond Egypt, such as rural settings with limited formal institutions, this framework could guide policymakers in leveraging community networks to foster social innovation. By formalizing informal support systems, these initiatives could enhance both local entrepreneurship and community resilience. Reflexivity was a critical component of the analytical process, ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was achieved through several practices, including engaging peer researchers to challenge interpretations, maintaining detailed documentation of coding decisions, and journaling to identify potential biases. These measures ensured that the analysis was aligned with the study's objectives and that the findings accurately reflected the complexities of the data (Tracy, 2010). The integration of reflexivity into the research process underscores the commitment to methodological rigor and transparency, further enhancing the reliability and validity of the study's contributions to the field of social entrepreneurship (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with a strong commitment to ethical standards, adhering to university protocols and established research ethics guidelines, as outlined by Silverman (2014), Bryman (2016), and Creswell & Poth (2017). Ethical approval was obtained prior to the commencement of the research, ensuring compliance with institutional and international standards. The approval process included the submission of detailed research plans, participant consent forms, and data security protocols, all rigorously evaluated to safeguard participant welfare and the integrity of the research. Key ethical documentation—including the participant information

sheet (Appendix 2), consent form (Appendix 3), and evidence of email communications with participants (Appendix 4) demonstrates the study's adherence to these ethical guidelines. The research followed best practices in ethical inquiry, ensuring that the study was conducted with the utmost respect for participants' rights and well-being. These ethical principles were especially critical given the study's focus on institutional voids and entrepreneurial strategies, topics that could involve sensitive or potentially controversial issues. To ensure participants' comfort and security, the study employed strategies such as confidentiality assurances, culturally sensitive question phrasing, and iterative feedback processes. For example, participants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses, which was crucial in encouraging candid discussions about institutional challenges.

3.4.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent was a cornerstone of the research process. Participants were provided with a detailed participant information sheet (Appendix 2), outlining the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Before interviews commenced, participants signed a consent form (Appendix 3), explicitly agreeing to participate and acknowledging their rights, including the ability to withdraw at any time without consequences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2017). Special attention was given to the framing of sensitive questions, such as those addressing regulatory compliance. For instance, instead of directly asking about conflicts with authorities, participants were invited to discuss how institutional regulations influenced their operational strategies. This approach encouraged open dialogue while maintaining a culturally appropriate and respectful tone. To further protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used for both individuals and organizations, ensuring anonymity and minimizing any potential risks. Participants were also reminded of their right to skip questions they found uncomfortable, fostering a safe and respectful interview environment.

3.4.2 Data Security, Confidentiality, and Cultural Sensitivity

This study prioritized data security and confidentiality in compliance with the general data protection regulation (GDPR) and established best practices in qualitative research. Digital data, including audio recordings and transcripts, were encrypted and securely stored on password-protected devices. Physical documents, such as signed consent forms, were stored in a locked, university-managed cloud server accessible only to the researcher. Confidentiality measures extended to the reporting phase, where identifying details were removed from transcripts and findings to ensure anonymity. Email communications with participants, detailing participation procedures and addressing ethical concerns, were carefully documented to maintain transparency and accountability (Appendix 4). Cultural sensitivity was an integral part of the research design.

Recognizing the socio-cultural nuances of the Egyptian context, the researcher adopted a conversational and respectful tone during interviews, allowing participants to express their perspectives freely. This culturally sensitive approach offers practical insights for conducting ethical research in emerging economies, where socio-political dynamics require heightened awareness and adaptability. For example, questions about regulatory challenges were framed to reflect participants' experiences without appearing judgmental or confrontational. This approach not only enhanced the quality of the data but also built trust between the researcher and participants. An iterative feedback process further strengthened the study's ethical framework. Participants were invited to review their interview transcripts, providing them with an opportunity to redact or clarify any statements they felt might compromise their privacy or safety. This iterative process ensured the accuracy of the data while reinforcing participants' trust in the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). By adhering to these ethical considerations, the study safeguarded participants' rights and ensured the credibility of its findings. These measures were particularly crucial given the sensitive nature of the research topics, which required a delicate balance between obtaining rich data and respecting participants' boundaries. The rigorous ethical approach adopted in this study not only enhanced its methodological integrity but also demonstrated a commitment to the highest standards of qualitative inquiry.

3.5 Conclusion

Chapter 3 has outlined the research methodology and methods employed in this study to explore the institutional dynamics shaping social entrepreneurship in Egypt. The chapter began by establishing the philosophical underpinnings of the research, grounded in a constructivist paradigm that emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge and the importance of context in understanding complex phenomena (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Creswell & Poth, 2017). The qualitative framework, combined with abductive reasoning, provided a robust approach to addressing the study's objectives (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Yin, 2018). The research strategy, centred on a multiple case study approach, was justified for its ability to capture the depth and complexity of the institutional environment in Egypt (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018; Tracy 2020). Semi-structured interviews and artefact analysis were employed as primary data collection methods, supported by a triangulated strategy to ensure validity and reliability (Flick, 2018). The chapter also detailed the pilot study, which played a crucial role in refining the research tools and ensuring their cultural and methodological suitability. The data analysis strategy utilized thematic analysis, offering both structured theoretical insights and emergent socio-cultural patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). This method approach allowed for an iterative refinement of theoretical frameworks, ensuring that the findings were both contextually grounded and theoretically significant. For instance, themes such as "*adaptive strategies for institutional voids*" and "*institutional resilience*" emerged from the analysis, contributing to the broader discourse on institutional theory (Mair & Martí, 2006; Scott, 2014). Furthermore, the chapter emphasized the

ethical considerations underpinning the research. Informed consent, data security, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity were prioritized to safeguard participants' rights and ensure the credibility of the study (Silverman, 2014; Saunders et al., 2019). These measures were particularly critical given the sensitive nature of the research topics and the socio-cultural nuances of the Egyptian context. The iterative feedback process, where participants reviewed their interview transcripts, further enhanced the ethical rigor and trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015).

In summary, this chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the methodological framework and research design, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives and the unique challenges of the research context. By combining rigour with contextual sensitivity, the methodology set the foundation for generating meaningful insights into the interplay between institutional structures and entrepreneurial agency in Egypt. This methodological rigor ensures that the findings presented in Chapter 4 are both credible and impactful, bridging the gap between theoretical discourse and practical implications in social entrepreneurship. Building upon the robust methodological framework presented in this chapter, the next chapter will delve into the research findings. Chapter 4 will present an in-depth analysis of the data, revealing key themes and insights into how social entrepreneurs navigate institutional challenges and leverage opportunities within the unique Egyptian context. These findings will not only address the research questions but also contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of institutional dynamics in emerging economies.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4 Chapter Overview

This chapter delineates the results derived from both within-case and cross-case analyses of four prominent social enterprises in Egypt. The examination of these enterprises offers valuable insights into the impact of Egypt's institutional context on entrepreneurial endeavours. This research integrates multiple significant themes, including entrepreneurial orientation, social innovation, human traits, business strategies, and the institutional environment. This section presents a conceptual framework illustrating the temporal changes of these factors and their impact on the strategic development and operational performance of social enterprises in Egypt. The framework that Yin (2009) provides for case study analysis informs the organisation of the study's findings, which intricately connect the lived experiences, strategic decisions, and adaptive processes of the enterprises under investigation. The narrative approach played a vital role in clarifying how social entrepreneurs in Egypt navigate the complex institutional environment, managing their dual goals of social impact and financial sustainability (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

The analysis of each case study highlights the strategic approaches employed by social enterprises in tackling the unique socio-economic and institutional challenges faced by Egypt. Every enterprise utilises unique strategies that embody its entrepreneurial mindset and innovative methods for tackling social challenges. The characteristics of leaders and their capacity to promote social innovation are intricately linked to these strategies. The institutional environment, which consists of legal frameworks, economic conditions, and cultural norms, has a big impact on how businesses operate and how successful they will be in the long run. Eisenhardt's (1989) within-case analysis framework serves as a foundation for a thorough examination of the distinctive qualities and strategic methodologies of each social enterprise. This thorough examination offers significant understanding of the interplay between social entrepreneurship and institutional elements, drawing on the perspectives of Huberman and Miles (1994) and highlighting the necessity of grasping context-specific dynamics. This research demonstrates the ways in which businesses leverage entrepreneurial orientation and social innovation to tackle challenges and capitalise on opportunities within the context of the Egyptian institutional framework. Upon conducting a comprehensive review of individual cases, the results further elucidate a cross-case analysis. This approach identifies similarities among the four businesses, especially in terms of their capacity to balance institutional limitations with their business goals. The primary focus revolves around the strategic significance of human characteristics like leadership, adaptability, and resilience, alongside the essential role of external support networks in addressing institutional challenges. The results emphasise the significant impact of the institutional setting on the range and effectiveness of social innovation, drawing attention to both supportive and limiting elements within the Egyptian context. The findings indicate that the institutional context significantly impacts social entrepreneurship in Egypt. The findings contribute to

a deeper understanding of social entrepreneurship within the Middle East and establish a foundation for subsequent investigations into the impact of institutional contexts on entrepreneurial results.

4.1 Case-by-Case Analysis

This section offers a detailed analysis of four key social enterprises: Life Makers Foundation (LMF), Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK), Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), and Resala Charity Organisation (RCO). Each case is examined individually to gain a deep understanding of the unique characteristics and challenges these organisations face in generating social value and ensuring financial sustainability. The aim is to provide insight into the specific factors shaping each enterprise, following Stake's (2005) approach, before making broader generalisations. The analysis of each case highlights the enterprise's mission, operational strategies, institutional influences, and approaches to achieving dual social and financial goals. This case-by-case breakdown facilitates the identification of patterns within each organisation, clarifying how these enterprises balance their dual objectives (Eisenhardt, 1989). Each case is analysed individually to build a comprehensive understanding of the internal and external factors influencing their success. The subsequent Cross-Case Synthesis section will identify and discuss emerging patterns and shared challenges across the organisations, building on this analysis. Table 7 presents an overview of the four social enterprises selected for this research.

Table 8: An Overview of The Companies Featured in This Study

Category/ Organisation	Life Makers Foundation (LMF)	Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK)	Egyptian Food Bank (EFB)	Resala Charity Organisation (RCO)
Origins	A youth-led volunteer organisation.	A group of Egyptian philanthropists founded it.	Established by Dr. Moez El Shohdi and philanthropists.	It was established as a charity organisation.
Social Activity	The organisation is actively involved in youth development, education, health,	The organisation focuses on human development through initiatives in health, education, scientific research, social	Aims to eliminate hunger in Egypt through sustainable feeding programs and food waste reduction initiatives.	Engages in a variety of social activities, including healthcare, education, orphan support, services for people with disabilities, and blood donation services.

	livelihood, food security, and disaster response throughout Egypt.	solidarity, and life aspects.		
Year Founded	2011	2007	2006	1999
No. of Interviews	5	3	3	5
Mission	Empower youth to contribute to community development and address social issues in Egypt.	Contribute to human development and improve the quality of life for the underprivileged in Egypt.	Provide food security for all Egyptians through sustainable food distribution and waste management.	Promote social solidarity through a wide range of charitable activities, including healthcare, education, and social support.
Target Beneficiaries	Egyptian youth and vulnerable communities.	Underprivileged communities across Egypt.	Food-insecure populations across Egypt.	Vulnerable populations across Egypt.
Operational Model	Donations and grants fund volunteer-driven projects.	project-based, focusing on sustainable development.	The centralized collection and distribution of food.	Community-based, with branches across the country.
Scale of Impact	Extensive presence across Egypt.	The organisation has a national reach and engages in diverse projects across multiple sectors.	The company operates nationwide with a network of food distribution centres.	Extensive reach with multiple community service branches.
Sustainability Initiatives	Focus on long-term impact projects and continuous training.	Investment in long-term projects such as education and research.	Focus on reducing food waste and sustainable	Implementing projects with a focus on social and economic empowerment.

			feeding programs.	
Innovation	Programs for education and development are incorporating technology.	Developing innovative solutions for health and education.	Partnerships with restaurants and food producers for waste reduction.	Emphasising community involvement in all initiatives.
Funding Sources	Donations, grants, and partnerships with NGOs.	Private donations, corporate partnerships, and government support.	Donations, corporate partnerships, and fundraising events.	Local businesses provide donations, grants, and support.
Partnerships	Collaborations with educational institutions and international NGOs.	Partnerships with academic institutions and the corporate sector.	Collaboration with local businesses and international organisations.	Collaborations with local communities and international NGOs.
Impact Measurement	Regular assessment of project outcomes and community feedback.	Monitoring and evaluation systems across all projects.	Impact assessments focused on food security improvements.	Regularly measuring the impact of various social initiatives.
Challenges	High dependency on volunteer retention and funding stability.	Balancing diverse project areas and ensuring long-term sustainability.	Managing food supply chain logistics and donor fatigue.	Ensuring consistent funding and community engagement.

Source: Compiled by the author.

4.1.1 Case 1: Life Makers Foundation (LMF)

Timeline of Key Events

- **2003:** To alleviate suffering and protect human life and rights, the Life Makers Foundation (LMF) launched as a voluntary movement. Starting as a grassroots initiative, it quickly gained traction throughout Egypt.
- **2011:** Under registration number 839, LMF officially registered as an Egyptian national youth-led, voluntary, non-governmental organisation (NGO). The foundation focused on youth development, working across various sectors including education, health, livelihood, food security, and disaster response in 24 Egyptian governorates.
- **2013:** LMF began expanding its operations by collaborating with other NGOs and international organisations to extend their reach beyond Egypt, particularly in response to humanitarian needs and disasters.
- **2015:** The foundation underwent a significant organisational restructuring to enhance its operational efficiency. This included the establishment of a new board of trustees and the introduction of more rigorous governance practices.
- **2016:** The LMF formed key partnerships with international aid organisations, enhancing its capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance and development programs. This year also marked a shift in LMF's strategic direction, with a focus on sustainable development alongside its emergency relief efforts.
- **2018:** The foundation appointed a new CEO to guide it into a new era of growth. The new leadership brought with it a wealth of experience in NGO management and international development, focusing on expanding LMF's partnerships and scaling its programs across more regions.
- **2019:** LMF launched several large-scale education and health initiatives in partnership with the Egyptian government and international NGOs. LMF designed these initiatives to provide long-term support to underserved communities, with a particular focus on youth and women's empowerment.
- **2020:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, LMF ramped up its health and food security programs, distributing essential supplies and supporting vulnerable populations. New partnerships with global health organisations supported the foundation's robust response.

- **2022:** The foundation continued to strengthen its governance framework by introducing additional policies aimed at improving transparency and accountability across all operations. This year also saw the expansion of LMF's operations in neighbouring countries, addressing regional humanitarian crises.
- **2023:** LMF enters strategic partnerships with several European and Middle Eastern organisations to co-develop programs focused on education, healthcare, and disaster relief. These partnerships significantly expanded the foundation's impact and operational footprint.
- **2024:** LMF continues to lead significant development projects across Egypt and the broader region. With a focus on sustainability, the foundation has launched new initiatives aimed at building resilient communities and ensuring long-term development outcomes. Additionally, LMF has refined its corporate governance further, ensuring stronger oversight and alignment with international standards.

This timeline highlights LMF's journey from a grassroots movement to a significant player in the humanitarian and development sectors, both within Egypt and internationally.

An overview of LMF's activities:

LMF is a prominent youth-led, voluntary non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Egypt with a rich history of mobilising the best of the human spirit to alleviate suffering and protect human life and rights. LMF began in 2003 as a grassroots initiative, quickly gaining traction across Egypt due to its focus on addressing pressing social issues. Initially a voluntary movement, it officially registered as an Egyptian national NGO in 2011 under registration number 839. Since then, LMF has been working across various sectors, including education, health, livelihood, food security, and disaster response, operating in 24 Egyptian governorates. Over the years, LMF has evolved significantly. In 2013, the foundation expanded its operations through collaborations with other NGOs and international organisations, extending its reach beyond Egypt, especially in response to humanitarian needs and disasters. A pivotal moment came in 2015, when LMF undertook a significant organisational restructuring to enhance operational efficiency. This restructuring included establishing a new board of trustees and introducing more rigorous governance practices. In 2016, LMF formed key partnerships with international aid organisations, increasing its capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance and development programs. This period marked a strategic shift toward sustainable development, complementing its emergency relief efforts. The leadership change in 2018—with the appointment of a new CEO—further propelled LMF into a new era of growth, focusing on expanding partnerships and scaling its programs across more regions. LMF continued to progress in 2019 by initiating large-scale education and health programs in collaboration with the Egyptian government and international NGOs, with a specific focus on youth and women's empowerment. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic led LMF to enhance its health and food security initiatives,

backed by new collaborations with global health organisations. The foundation further strengthened its governance framework in 2022 by introducing policies aimed at improving transparency and accountability. This period also signified LMF's expansion into neighbouring nations, which addressed regional humanitarian emergencies. By 2023, LMF had established strategic partnerships with various European and Middle Eastern organisations to jointly create programs centred on education, healthcare, and disaster relief, thereby expanding its influence and operational reach. In 2024, LMF will remain at the forefront of major development projects throughout Egypt and the wider region, focusing on sustainability and introducing new initiatives to foster resilient communities and secure long-term developmental outcomes. Enhancements to the foundation's corporate governance ensure improved supervision and adherence to international standards. Table 8 provides an overview of the research participants, including their titles and organisational affiliations.

Table 9: The Leadership and Management Participants of LMF

Name	Designation	Background and Experience	Relationship to Social Entrepreneurship
Mr Hamed Ibrahim	Deputy CEO	12 years of experience	Extensive experience in managing and leading social initiatives, contributing to the strategic direction and sustainability of social entrepreneurship projects.
Ms Sara Kamal E	Manager, Evaluation and Follow-up; Head of Development for Upper Egypt	18 years of experience	Plays a crucial role in evaluating and monitoring social projects, particularly in Upper Egypt, ensuring their alignment with social entrepreneurship goals.
Mr Mohamed Gamal	Projects Director	5 years of experience	Oversees the implementation and management of social projects, driving the organisation's mission and impact through effective project execution.
Ms Heba Qotb	Communication and Partnerships, Senior Officer	5 years of experience	Facilitates partnerships and communication strategies that support social entrepreneurship by engaging stakeholders and expanding the organisation's reach and impact.
Mr Aly Ahmed Drewa	Operations Director	9 years of experience	Applies quality improvement and PMP skills to design and execute social entrepreneurship projects that address community needs and foster development.

Source: Compiled by the author.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

The entrepreneurial orientation of Life Makers Foundation (LMF) within Egypt's social entrepreneurship sector provides compelling insights into the adaptive and innovative behaviours that distinguish social enterprises in emerging markets. LMF's strategic approach extends beyond established theories by illustrating how social enterprises navigate financial sustainability, social impact, and organisational adaptability in complex, resource-constrained settings. Key participants' insights reveal LMF as a model of proactive social engagement and financial pragmatism, which challenges traditional entrepreneurial frameworks and provides a nuanced approach suitable for emerging economies. A defining characteristic of LMF's entrepreneurial orientation is its hybrid model for achieving financial sustainability, which strategically merges revenue generation with social mission objectives. As the Deputy CEO explains, *"We didn't wait for an opportunity; when we saw one, we went for it. We created companies to generate revenue to fund our social projects."* This proactive stance not only diverges from Covin and Slevin's (1989) individualistic emphasis on risk-taking and proactivity but also introduces an alternative pathway for social enterprises in emerging markets to lessen dependency on external funding through diversified income streams. By creating for-profit subsidiaries, LMF operates as both a market actor and a social change agent, expanding Battilana and Lee's (2014) hybrid organising concept by showcasing its contextual adaptability within Egypt's socio-economic landscape.

LMF's orientation also demonstrates a critical shift in volunteerism, in which volunteers evolve beyond labour resources to play integral roles in the organisation's strategic direction. As the Projects Director emphasises, *"Volunteers are more than just manpower; they are leaders in their communities. They are the driving force behind most of our projects."* This volunteer-led, decentralised model builds on Austin et al.'s (2006) resource mobilisation theories and further embeds decision-making authority at multiple organisational levels. This collective leadership approach diverges from Miller's (1983) model of centralised innovation, underscoring that in emerging markets, community-driven leadership and resource flexibility are indispensable for achieving sustainable impact and organisational growth. Moreover, LMF exemplifies significant adaptability in navigating regulatory and institutional barriers, a necessary capability within Egypt's intricate bureaucratic environment. The Operations Director remarks, *"Bureaucracy is a major challenge in Egypt, but we've learnt to navigate it effectively,"* highlighting LMF's strategic approach to engaging with these constraints. This idea aligns with DiMaggio's (1988) framework for institutional entrepreneurship, but it goes further by demonstrating that, in non-Western settings, social businesses need to build partnerships with the government and use external networks to overcome institutional challenges. LMF's solution to these problems shows an expanded entrepreneurial orientation model that values relationship-based, community-focused strategies more than high-risk, competitive actions that are common in Western entrepreneurial orientation paradigms.

Long-term partnerships are also fundamental to LMF's entrepreneurial strategy, diverging from the transactional and short-term models typically emphasised in social entrepreneurship literature (Bloom & Smith, 2010). As the senior officer of communication and partnerships explains, *"Our partnership with Samsung has been ongoing for nine years because we've built a relationship based on mutual benefit and shared goals."* This trust-based collaboration with corporate partners underscores the significance of alignment, transparency, and shared values, presenting a refined perspective on partnership dynamics within entrepreneurial orientation theory. Unlike the Western preference for outcome-focused, short-term partnerships, LMF's approach suggests that social enterprises in emerging markets can achieve long-term impact and resilience by establishing relationships that fulfil both operational and social objectives (Seelos & Mair, 2007).

Further, LMF's consistent pattern of decentralised decision-making and volunteer empowerment reveals a strategic approach to community-centred leadership—a particularly essential trait in Egypt's diverse, resource-limited environment. The Manager of Evaluation and Follow-Up underscores this dynamic, noting, *"Our volunteers are not just executing tasks; they are part of the decision-making process, which makes them invested in the outcomes."* This decentralised approach deepens community-based innovation theories (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006), showcasing how volunteer leadership can enhance organisational agility and community impact. By creating a framework that decentralises decision-making at all levels, LMF demonstrates how social enterprises can cultivate adaptive, locally informed strategies that respond to diverse regional needs. These findings challenge assumptions that strategic direction and innovation must stem from top leadership, instead presenting a view of sustainable growth driven by empowered, community-based stakeholders. The entrepreneurial spirit of LMF significantly contributes to entrepreneurial orientation frameworks by questioning the usual pillars of creativity, risk-taking, and initiative, instead emphasising collaboration with the community, utilising long-term financial models, and aligning with national priorities. These findings extend entrepreneurial orientation theory by revealing that, in non-Western contexts like Egypt, adaptability, partnership-building, and community engagement are foundational to success. LMF's approach to balancing social and financial objectives offers a localised framework that highlights the resilience needed to navigate complex institutional landscapes, offering essential contributions to entrepreneurial orientation literature within social enterprises. This examination of LMF's entrepreneurial orientation provides critical contributions to the academic understanding of entrepreneurial orientation in emerging markets. The organisation's hybrid financial strategies, volunteer-driven leadership, adaptability within bureaucratic structures, and long-term partnerships collectively challenge established entrepreneurial orientation theories by showcasing a model that is both community-centred and sustainable. These insights deepen the body of social entrepreneurship literature and offer practical guidance for social enterprises aspiring to scale and sustain impact in resource-constrained settings. Through LMF's example, this study broadens the scope of entrepreneurial orientation,

adapting its principles to Egypt's unique socio-economic dynamics and offering an advanced perspective on social entrepreneurship in emerging markets.

Social Innovation

The Life Makers Foundation (LMF) presents an innovative model of social entrepreneurship that challenges established theories and conceptualisations of social innovation, particularly within resource-constrained settings. Through its decentralised volunteer structure, strategic partnerships, and financially sustainable projects, LMF embodies a dynamic approach that redefines the boundaries of social innovation in Egypt. A defining feature of LMF's strategy is its commitment to empowering volunteers to lead and shape projects independently. As the Projects Director highlighted, *"We have the largest volunteer network in Egypt, with thousands of volunteers running their initiatives independently across different governorates."* This decentralised, volunteer-driven model prioritises grassroots engagement over central control, challenging the hierarchical structures commonly emphasised in Western models of social innovation (Dees, 2007). LMF's reliance on volunteer leadership not only reshapes resource mobilisation but also positions volunteers as primary agents of change who design, fund, and manage initiatives. This approach introduces a fresh dimension to the literature on social innovation, illustrating how human capital—rather than financial capital—can drive impactful projects in contexts where resources are limited. Further challenging traditional theories, LMF's hybrid approach to partnerships illustrates how social enterprises can thrive through strategic collaborations. As the operations director noted, *"Our partnership with local and international organisations allows us to scale projects that would otherwise be impossible with just volunteer resources."* This approach departs from the traditional view of social enterprises as isolated agents of change, often limited by donor dependency or internal constraints (Austin et al., 2006).

In contrast, LMF integrates government, corporate, and international partnerships to sustain and amplify its impact. Unlike conventional nonprofit models that heavily depend on external funding, LMF demonstrates how social enterprises in low-resource environments can maintain financial independence while fulfilling social objectives. By embedding community participation and shared responsibility, this multidimensional partnership strategy pushes beyond established frameworks, providing a model applicable across diverse socio-political landscapes. LMF's adaptability to Egypt's socio-political context adds another significant contribution to social innovation theory. As the Evaluation and Follow-Up Manager explained, *"Our focus isn't just on raising money; we look at the long-term impact of these projects and ensure they're creating real change in communities."* This approach contrasts with traditional models that often evaluate social impact through immediate outputs rather than sustained outcomes (Mulgan, 2006). In adapting its project designs to meet the demands of Egypt's regulatory and socio-economic landscape, LMF reveals an aspect of social innovation that is highly context-responsive and resilient. This adaptability is especially relevant for emerging

markets, where economic and regulatory conditions can fluctuate rapidly, requiring a flexible approach to project design and implementation.

Another core component of LMF's model is its emphasis on long-term financial sustainability, challenging the binary of nonprofit versus for-profit social enterprises prevalent in existing literature (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001). As the Operations Director emphasised, *"We were among the first organisations to receive permission to establish business subsidiaries for our social projects—a move that revolutionised sustainability."* This integration of business ventures within a nonprofit framework offers a fresh perspective on financial sustainability in social innovation. Rather than relying solely on donations, LMF leverages a hybrid model that combines entrepreneurial ventures with social objectives, creating a sustainable funding source that secures its projects long-term. By aligning social goals with self-sustaining revenue streams, LMF provides a replicable framework for other social enterprises in emerging markets, advancing the discourse on hybrid social enterprises and financial resilience. LMF's model also emphasises community-based innovation, adding to its unique position in Egypt's social entrepreneurship landscape. As the Communications and Partnerships Officer described, *"We are built on the core idea of providing real volunteer opportunities for Egyptian youth, where they can contribute to solving community problems and become active citizens."* This community-centred approach contrasts with the more common top-down models of social innovation, which often position organisations as the main change agents (Mair & Marti, 2006). By shifting the locus of innovation to local communities, LMF ensures that projects reflect local needs and priorities, embedding social innovation within the communities themselves. This not only enhances sustainability but also enriches the literature on social entrepreneurship by demonstrating the effectiveness of locally embedded, community-driven models. In conclusion, LMF's model challenges traditional social innovation frameworks by combining decentralised volunteer management, cross-sector partnerships, financial sustainability, and community-centred impact. Unlike the incremental adjustments frequently highlighted in Western literature, LMF pursues transformative social innovation that addresses systemic barriers facing marginalised communities. Its adaptable, community-embedded, and financially resilient approach redefines social innovation in a way that is both relevant and practical for emerging markets, providing fresh perspectives that enrich the field of social entrepreneurship. These findings offer valuable insights for scholars and practitioners alike, suggesting that a multidimensional, hybrid approach may be the most effective way to achieve sustainable social impact in resource-constrained environments.

Human Traits

The research on human traits within the Life Makers Foundation (LMF) offers insights that advance conceptual frameworks within social entrepreneurship by illustrating unique, context-specific strategies. Findings from LMF reflect a highly adaptive organisational culture, where human traits such as decentralisation, trust, and

adaptability serve as foundational pillars, showcasing how these characteristics interact to sustain social impact in Egypt's complex environment. In contrast to Cornforth's (2014) hierarchical models commonly found in social enterprises, LMF's decentralised leadership emerges as a primary driver of adaptability and engagement. The Projects Director emphasised that the foundation's empowerment of volunteers exemplifies a participatory model that is uncommon in traditional social enterprises: *"Volunteers lead the majority of our activities and even have the authority to veto projects."* This structure fosters autonomy among volunteers, who represent the organisation throughout Egypt and adapt projects to meet local needs. By positioning community knowledge as a strategic leadership tool, LMF introduces a locally empowered, context-responsive model, subverting conventional hierarchical frameworks. This divergence from Western-centric, top-down leadership models reflects a novel approach—leveraging localised insights to drive effectiveness and sustainability across diverse settings. LMF's organisational flexibility not only aligns with but also extends beyond existing theories of social entrepreneurship. This adaptability integrates community-based leadership, allowing the organisation to dynamically respond to changing social and economic conditions. The Deputy CEO noted this adaptability, saying, *"We started as a grassroots volunteer organisation focused on literacy, but over time, we expanded into large-scale projects like 'Hayat Kareema.'"* Unlike static growth models, LMF's scaling approach embodies a fluid, strategic response to immediate needs while pursuing long-term goals, thereby challenging traditional frameworks that prioritise linear, growth-centric models (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009). This strategic fluidity offers a valuable extension to current theories, underscoring how emergent, community-driven leadership fosters resilience in complex environments.

Trust is a central element in LMF's partnerships, reshaping its role within social enterprise frameworks. Whereas Austin et al. (2006) framed trust as secondary in social enterprises, LMF redefines it as a core organisational value. As the senior officer of communication and partnerships explained, *"We build the foundation on trust with our partners, whether they are corporate or governmental entities. We make sure to maintain these relationships through regular updates and transparency."* This deep-seated trust reinforces LMF's operational stability and suggests that confidence can function as a strategic asset for scalability and sustainability in resource-limited settings. By foregrounding trust as integral rather than peripheral to sustaining impact, LMF catalyses collaboration across diverse sectors, particularly under shifting regulatory and economic landscapes. This adaptive resilience enriches Dees' (1998) social enterprise model, adding a previously underexplored dimension to the human traits' framework. LMF further introduces a hybrid approach to balancing social and financial objectives, moving beyond conventional nonprofit models. The Operations Director noted this resourcefulness, stating, *"We rely heavily on partnerships with corporate and governmental entities. Our relationship with Samsung, for example, ensures that we have the resources to execute our large-scale projects."* This model achieves financial sustainability not only through donations but also through strategic alliances that support income-generating initiatives. While Western models often draw a clear distinction between nonprofit and for-profit frameworks (Dees, 1998), LMF's blended strategy

challenges this binary, suggesting that hybrid financing models may be essential in emerging markets to navigate economic volatility. The adaptability and strategic flexibility of LMF reveal a more localised conception of human traits within social enterprises. While existing literature often emphasises adaptability, LMF's capacity to mobilise thousands of volunteers across Egypt exemplifies flexibility applied through community co-creation rather than individual entrepreneurial risk-taking. The Operations Director elaborated on this, noting, *"Life Makers has around 20,000 volunteers across Egypt, and this widespread network allows us to have a presence in every village, addressing needs directly."* This expansive volunteer network serves as both a resource and a scalability strategy, presenting an alternative to the financially intensive scaling models commonly emphasised in the literature (Teece et al., 1997).

By anchoring scalability within local communities, LMF redefines adaptability as a collective, community-oriented human trait, broadening its scope in social enterprise literature. LMF's commitment to long-term social change is also evident in its continuous impact evaluation. As the Manager of Evaluation and Follow-Up explained, *"We evaluate the impact of each project, not just in terms of financial outcomes, but in terms of whether it actually creates change in the community."* This emphasis on measurable social impact over short-term financial gains adds a new dimension to social entrepreneurship accountability. In contrast to models that prioritise financial outcomes (Santos, 2012), LMF proposes measuring sustainable success based on the depth of community impact, especially in underserved areas. This holistic approach to accountability challenges existing models and presents a multidimensional view of impact measurement—one that prioritises the social return on investment in complex environments. Furthermore, LMF's adaptability during the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates its dynamic capabilities. The Manager of Evaluation and Follow-Up reflected on this period, noting, *"During the pandemic, we shifted to remote work and reorganised our teams to ensure projects continued smoothly. This flexibility helped us manage despite the constraints."* This ability to pivot and maintain project momentum challenges assumptions that formal structures are essential for resilience. Instead, LMF demonstrates how decentralised, volunteer-led structures can effectively adapt to crises by presenting an agile resilience model grounded in community leadership and rapid responses. In conclusion, findings from LMF challenge existing theories by illustrating how human traits such as decentralisation, trust-building, and adaptability drive sustainable impact in social enterprises. Through community-based leadership, trust as a strategic asset, and adaptive resourcefulness, LMF offers a novel framework for social entrepreneurship, especially in emerging markets. This research extends current literature by providing a nuanced perspective on how social enterprises in complex environments like Egypt can leverage human traits to navigate socio-economic challenges while sustaining long-term impact. These insights provide a fresh conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship, prioritising localised strategies and community-driven models over traditional, top-down approaches, thereby advancing the discourse on sustainability within social enterprises.

Business Strategies

The examination of business strategies within Life Makers Foundation (LMF) offers groundbreaking insights into social entrepreneurship in emerging markets, particularly within Egypt's complex socio-economic environment. LMF exemplifies a nuanced model that integrates volunteer-driven initiatives, revenue-generating ventures, and strategic partnerships. These approaches collectively redefine sustainability within social enterprises, challenging traditional frameworks that often treat social and financial goals as separate, or even competing, objectives. LMF's strategies extend our understanding of dynamic social enterprises by introducing localised adaptability that has significant implications for theory and practice. A central pillar of LMF's approach is its reliance on volunteerism, positioning volunteers not only as operational support but as core strategic actors within the organisation. The Deputy CEO stated, *"The volunteers themselves participate in everything, from research to financial management. It's not just about executing tasks; they take ownership."* This participatory governance model aligns with theories of dynamic capability (Teece, 2014) and extends them by demonstrating that a motivated volunteer base can serve as both human capital and a strategic asset, especially within resource-constrained environments. This approach challenges the assumption within existing literature that social enterprises require paid staff or professional management to scale effectively (Dees & Anderson, 2006). Instead, LMF shows that volunteer-driven governance fosters deep community engagement by positioning volunteers as strategic stakeholders who contribute to organisational sustainability through relational and social capital (Putnam, 2000).

Further, LMF introduces an additional layer of sustainability through its revenue-generating ventures, an aspect often underdeveloped in traditional social enterprise models. According to the Operations Director, *"We recognised that depending on donations alone wouldn't ensure sustainability, so we started ventures like agricultural projects that provide both jobs and revenue."* This hybrid model reshapes the discourse on financial autonomy within social enterprises, challenging the notion that philanthropic support must be the primary financial lifeline. Instead, LMF's model adds to the theory of hybrid social enterprises by showing that having a social mission and being financially independent can coexist, making Battilana and Lee's (2014) hybrid theory more applicable to emerging economies. By integrating revenue-generating activities into its mission, LMF contributes a model of financial resilience that aligns social and economic value creation, promoting the potential for self-sustaining impact. LMF's governance structure and strategic partnerships further enhance this model's adaptability and resilience. Partnerships with entities such as the European Union are not merely transactional; rather, they serve as cornerstones of LMF's strategy to scale and sustain its projects. As highlighted by the Manager of Evaluation and Follow-Up, *"Our evaluation and follow-up are not just about ensuring the success of projects but also about maintaining donor trust, which is crucial for our sustainability."* This governance approach, emphasising transparency and accountability, advances Ebrahim's

(2019) perspective by positioning governance not only as an internal accountability mechanism but as a strategic asset for external partnerships and sustained donor confidence. LMF's model suggests that governance in social enterprises, especially in the Egyptian context, is instrumental in building long-term relationships that extend beyond immediate financial support, creating a steady base for future growth.

Moreover, LMF's decentralised operational model represents a radical departure from the centralised management structures commonly advocated in social entrepreneurship literature. The Project Director explained, *"We have decentralised our operations, especially in regions like Sohag, where local teams identify needs and implement projects with minimal oversight from the central office."* This decentralisation fosters community-based governance and underscores the importance of local agencies within organisational leadership. In contrast to Western-centric models that prioritise centralised control for consistency, LMF's strategy showcases the effectiveness of regional empowerment, enabling the organisation to respond dynamically to local socio-economic conditions. This approach reframes the idea of contextualised leadership within social enterprises, adding new dimensions to Dacin et al.'s (2011) discussion of organisational adaptability in diverse environments.

LMF's emphasis on trust-building through community partnerships further complicates simplistic portrayals of community engagement as merely supportive or symbolic. The senior officer of communication and partnerships elaborated, *"Our volunteers are the key to our operations. They are not just helping; they are leading our projects and becoming ambassadors for the foundation."* This unique approach repositions community co-creation as an essential strategic component rather than peripheral support, challenging theories that limit volunteer involvement to mere operational functions (Cornforth & Spear, 2010). By fostering volunteer leadership, LMF provides a model in which community members become embedded in strategic operations, transforming relational capital into a source of organisational resilience. These findings collectively introduce new theoretical insights into the adaptability and sustainability of social enterprises in emerging markets. By interweaving volunteer leadership, revenue-generating projects, and strategic partnerships, LMF has developed a hybrid model that is both economically self-sustaining and responsive to local needs. This model, as noted by a Senior Participant, *"is unique because we blend volunteerism with business strategy. This combination, which allows us to grow while staying true to our mission,"* exemplifies a synthesis of grassroots engagement and formal business practices, exemplifying the flexibility necessary for social enterprises to thrive under resource constraints. In summary, Life Makers Foundation's business strategies present a refined perspective on social entrepreneurship that challenges and extends traditional frameworks, particularly those focused on Western-centric models. By demonstrating that financial sustainability, social impact, and community involvement are not only compatible but mutually reinforcing, LMF's approach provides new insights into how social enterprises can achieve resilience and scalability. These results add a lot to the body of research on social entrepreneurship by giving a more complex picture of

governance based on volunteers, decentralised operations, and hybrid financial strategies designed for emerging markets. They also add important new layers to the academic discussion on long-term social innovation.

Institutional Environment

The institutional environment within which social enterprises operate profoundly impacts their success and sustainability, shaping both opportunities and constraints. Much of the existing literature, including foundational works by North (1990) and DiMaggio & Powell (1983), positions institutions as external barriers that organisations must work around. However, insights from the Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK) provide a nuanced perspective that reframes these institutional constraints as potential resources. MEK's approach suggests that, especially in emerging markets like Egypt, institutional relationships can serve as valuable assets rather than obstacles. As the senior officer observed, *"We collaborate with different ministries, which helps us optimise resources and scale our projects effectively."* This restructuring of institutions challenges the conventional view, suggesting that social enterprises can leverage institutional constraints for resource optimisation and scalability rather than viewing them solely as limitations. This fresh insight extends our understanding of how institutional partnerships may offer strategic value within socio-economically complex environments. Contrary to the binary view in social entrepreneurship literature, which often classifies organisations as either charity-based or profit-driven (Dees, 1998), MEK embodies a hybrid model that seamlessly blends income-generating activities with charitable initiatives. This integrated approach enables MEK to achieve financial sustainability without compromising its social mission. The project senior manager explained, *"We don't just rely on donations. We invest in projects that generate income, like our women's empowerment programs that produce goods for sale."*

This dual strategy challenges the rigid categorisation of social enterprises into "non-profit" or "for-profit" frameworks, highlighting a fluid continuum where organisations adapt their financial structures to secure sustained impact. MEK's model thus introduces an innovative framework for examining social entrepreneurship in resource-constrained settings, revealing the advantages of flexibility in navigating both charitable and market-driven approaches. Additionally, MEK's ability to innovate under regulatory constraints presents an alternative to the prevailing assumption that restrictive environments inherently suppress creativity. Scholars like Zahra et al. (2009) argue that stringent regulations often reduce social enterprises' operational flexibility, pushing them toward rigid structures. Yet, MEK's Director of scientific research & Innovation provided a contrasting view, stating, *"We have some autonomy to act within the regulations, but even within these restrictions, we find ways to innovate."* This insight reveals how restrictive environments can foster dynamic capability building as organisations develop tailored adaptive strategies to operate effectively within these constraints. By showing that regulatory environments can catalyse innovation rather than stifle it, MEK's

experience broadens the scope of the dynamic capability literature and offers a new perspective on the relationship between regulatory frameworks and adaptive responses in emerging markets.

The findings challenge the notion that external pressures solely drive accountability and financial transparency in MEK's institutional strategy. Conventional literature, such as Ebrahim et al. (2014), often presents transparency as a response to mandates from donors or governmental bodies. However, MEK's approach indicates that accountability is deeply embedded within its internal organisational culture. As the senior officer emphasised, *"We ensure strict financial oversight because it's necessary for maintaining donor trust and public accountability."* This internalised commitment to transparency suggests that financial oversight is not merely a response to external demands but also a deeply rooted organisational norm that enhances credibility and trust. This finding challenges the view that accountability in social enterprises is purely externally imposed, offering instead a perspective where inherent organisational values play a central role in fostering accountability. In further contrast to Western-centric models that emphasise high-tech, market-oriented solutions for social entrepreneurship (Santos, 2012), MEK embraces localised innovation strategies rooted in indigenous knowledge and cultural preservation. The senior officer shared an example: *"We initiated a project in a small village to revive traditional weaving crafts. It provided jobs and kept the cultural heritage alive."* This approach emphasises community-driven, culturally embedded solutions over technology-focused models, demonstrating that in emerging markets, innovation can take the form of sustaining and revitalising local traditions. MEK's focus on culturally embedded practices challenges the prevailing narrative that innovation must be highly scalable and market oriented. Instead, it advocates recognising diverse forms of innovation that prioritise social impact and community engagement over rapid growth, thereby contributing to a more inclusive understanding of social innovation.

Finally, MEK's proactive approach to navigating institutional environments highlights an often-overlooked level of agency in social enterprises. While traditional frameworks suggest that social enterprises in emerging markets are primarily reactive to institutional pressures, MEK's strategic engagement with government bodies illustrates a more dynamic interaction. As the project senior manager noted, *"Working with government policies can be a challenge, but we've built strong relationships that allow us to navigate these issues more smoothly."* This insight indicates that social enterprises can actively shape their institutional environments through strategic partnerships and networks rather than merely adapting to external constraints. MEK's experience contributes a new dimension to the discourse on institutional agency in social entrepreneurship, proposing that social enterprises in emerging markets may have greater capacity to influence their environments than previously acknowledged. In conclusion, MEK's way of dealing with institutions goes beyond what has been taught in academia. It does this by seeing institutional limitations as chances to work together, by combining charitable and market-oriented activities, and by using indigenous knowledge as part of its strategy for innovation. By positioning social enterprises as dynamic actors capable of adapting to and

even influencing their institutional contexts, MEK broadens our understanding of how social enterprises operate in emerging markets. This case gives a more complex and situation-based view of the institutional environment in social entrepreneurship. It emphasises how important it is to have locally tailored strategies, the ability to adapt, and entrepreneurial agency to successfully navigate complex and changing institutional landscapes.

4.1.2 Case 2: Misr El Khair Foundation (MEK)

Timeline of Key Events

- **2007:** The establishment of the Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK), a non-profit development organisation with the goal of comprehensive human development. The foundation focuses on addressing key societal challenges in Egypt, including unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, and disease. Its primary strategic areas include health, education, scientific research, social solidarity, and integrated development.
- **2008-2010:** MEK rapidly expanded its presence across Egypt, building partnerships with local NGOs and community development associations. Early projects of MEK focused on supporting health initiatives and alleviating poverty in underserved regions.
- **2013:** MEK launched several large-scale initiatives targeting health and education, including the establishment of schools, training centres, and medical convoys. The foundation began to build its reputation for excellence in tackling poverty and promoting education.
- **2015:** MEK achieved a significant milestone by becoming a major player in health services, with an expanded focus on preventing and treating critical diseases. The foundation's work extended to establishing dialysis units and medical convoys.
- **2017:** MEK strengthened its governance and operational structures, enhancing financial transparency and aligning itself with international standards. This restructuring was pivotal for further enhancing the organisation's outreach and scaling its projects.
- **2019:** MEK expanded its efforts toward scientific research and innovation. This involved collaboration with higher education institutions and the establishment of research centres aimed at promoting innovative solutions for Egypt's most pressing challenges, including education, health, and poverty.
- **2020:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, MEK scaled its health services, providing medical aid and supporting vulnerable communities through various social solidarity initiatives.

- **2022:** MEK introduced more advanced governance practices, emphasising transparency and accountability in its operations. It also expanded its scope to include regional humanitarian crises and increased efforts in capacity-building for local NGOs.
- **2023:** The foundation expanded its partnerships with international organisations, such as the UN and European entities, further establishing itself as a leader in humanitarian work in Egypt and the region.
- **2024:** MEK continues to implement comprehensive development projects, with a focus on sustainability and human development across multiple sectors. Its strategic initiatives include tackling regional humanitarian crises and scaling efforts in scientific research and innovation.

An overview of MEK's activities

Established in 2007, the Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK) is a prominent non-profit organisation in Egypt that focuses on human development. MEK has dedicated itself to addressing significant social issues in Egypt, such as unemployment, illiteracy, poverty, and disease, since its establishment. The organisation has implemented wide-ranging programs in education, healthcare, social solidarity, and scientific research, working across Egypt's most vulnerable communities. Throughout its existence, MEK has established a broad network of collaborations with local NGOs and international entities, solidifying its role as a significant contributor to national and regional development. MEK's initiatives have extended beyond Egypt, addressing wider regional humanitarian challenges and advocating for sustainable development solutions. MEK has made significant strides in scientific research and innovation, contributing to the development of Egypt's knowledge economy. By partnering with educational institutions, MEK nurtures a new generation of innovators and supports national efforts to solve challenges in health, education, and economics. Recently, MEK has enhanced its governance and transparency measures, guaranteeing that its initiatives adhere to international standards and efficiently support communities in need. MEK's primary focus continues to be human development, striving to empower individuals from vulnerability to self-sufficiency through education, health, and social inclusion initiatives. This structured overview of MEK highlights the foundation's critical role in driving development and its long-term commitment to building a self-reliant society in Egypt and beyond. Table 9 provides an overview of the research participants, including their titles and organisational affiliations.

Table 10: The Leadership and Management Participants of MEK

Name	Designation	Background and Experience	Relationship to Social Entrepreneurship
Eng Mostafa Reda	Project Senior Manager	10+ years of experience at Misr El Khair	Senior project management experience in social entrepreneurship, ensuring successful implementation of projects that benefit communities.
Dr Nagwa ElSayed	Director, Scientific Research & Innovation	12+ years of experience at Misr El Khair	Leads innovation and research initiatives that drive the organisation's impact through innovative solutions for social entrepreneurship.
Ms Asamaa Moaz	Senior Officer – Operations	10+ years of experience at Misr El Khair	Supports the organisation's goals by managing and executing social entrepreneurship projects that aim to solve community challenges.

Source: Compiled by the author.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

The entrepreneurial orientation of organisations operating within Egypt's social entrepreneurship space presents new, context-specific insights that expand upon existing conceptualisations of entrepreneurial behaviour. Participants' insights show that these organisations are not just adhering to conventional theories of entrepreneurial orientation but also breaking new ground by creating cutting-edge models that address the socioeconomic difficulties of emerging markets. A notable theme across these cases is the blending of entrepreneurial orientation with social impact and financial sustainability. The project senior manager at Misr El-Kheir Foundation explained, *“The foundation has a hybrid business model where part of the donations goes towards funding projects that generate continuous income, ensuring long-term sustainability.”* This approach exemplifies how these organisations transcend traditional models of donor dependence by incorporating income-generating activities into their operations. While traditional EO literature, such as Covin and Slevin (1989), highlights risk-taking and proactivity, MEK's hybrid model challenges these norms by integrating financial sustainability into social entrepreneurship. This shift suggests that social enterprises in

emerging markets like Egypt innovate not only through new services but also through sustainable financial mechanisms—something rarely emphasised in Western-centric EO frameworks. Adaptability also plays a critical role in challenging traditional EO models. The senior officer at MEK explained that they “*build strong partnerships with donors and entities to reduce implementation costs,*” a strategy that prioritises resource efficiency over the individualistic, competitive mindset typically associated with entrepreneurship. According to Lumpkin and Dess (1996), EO is the ability to take risks in uncertain situations. However, these results suggest that in Egypt's social enterprises, EO is about sharing risks together and using community-based networks to make the business more sustainable. This change from high-risk, high-reward strategies adds a new dimension to EO theory, especially in non-Western settings where strong community ties and government partnerships are necessary for success. The Director of Scientific Research and Innovation further highlighted how MEK aligns its entrepreneurial activities with national priorities, stating, “*Our foundation's adaptability allows us to respond to challenges quickly and effectively, which is critical in a fast-changing social and economic environment.*” This approach diverges from market-driven EO theories, which tend to focus solely on profit maximisation and market responsiveness. MEK's strategy illustrates that social enterprises in emerging markets may align their entrepreneurial efforts with broader social frameworks, such as education and youth development, to achieve long-term impact. These challenges established EO frameworks that prioritise market success above all else, emphasising instead the importance of aligning entrepreneurial orientation with national development goals.

Another key insight from these cases is how innovation operates within the organisations. MEK encourages decentralised decision-making and fosters innovation across all levels of the organisation. As the project senior manager remarked, “*There is freedom to innovate; any employee can submit proposals to a dedicated department, which reviews and implements innovative ideas, rewarding creativity.*” This contrasts with Miller's (1983) focus on centralised leadership driving innovation. Instead, MEK's model reveals a democratisation of innovation, in which grassroots input fosters continuous improvement—an emerging paradigm in social entrepreneurship. By cultivating entrepreneurial orientation at every organisational level, this approach challenges the hierarchical models typically discussed in the literature. Moreover, these organisations introduce new methods for scaling their impact. Rather than following traditional market expansion strategies, they adopt a community-specific approach to scaling. As the project senior manager observed, “*We tailor our projects and services to the specific requirements of each governorate in Egypt,*” suggesting that growth in social enterprises may not focus on broad market reach but rather on deepening their impact within localised contexts. This approach to scaling based on context challenges the traditional one-size-fits-all expansion model, adding complexity to the conceptualisation of entrepreneurial orientation in social enterprises. In regions like Egypt, scaling is more about establishing resilience and relevance within local communities than focusing solely on market dominance. From a theoretical point of view, the results question the usual traits of an entrepreneur, like being innovative, willing to take risks, and proactive. They do this by

showing how important it is for social enterprises in emerging markets to build partnerships, work with the community, and make sure their goals are in line with government goals. These insights expand the scope of entrepreneurial orientation theory, particularly in non-Western settings that prioritise collaboration and adaptability over the competitive, individualistic approaches prevalent in Western literature. The focus on social entrepreneurship in Egypt highlights the need for entrepreneurial orientations to evolve by prioritising community engagement and sustainable financial models over aggressive market competition. Thus, this study introduces a new perspective to the scholarly understanding of entrepreneurial orientation. The organisations under scrutiny do not simply duplicate current theories; they introduce novel behavioural patterns that combine social impact with financial innovation, underscore strategic partnerships, and adjust to Egypt's distinctive socio-economic circumstances. This provides a fresh perspective to the literature, challenging established theories and offering a more nuanced view of how entrepreneurial orientation manifests within the context of social entrepreneurship in emerging markets.

Social Innovation

The Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK) stands out as an exemplar of social innovation, providing an approach that not only addresses the immediate needs of Egyptian society but also redefines the conceptualisation of social innovation within resource-constrained environments. The foundation's emphasis on income generation, local partnerships, and long-term sustainability challenges the existing literature's more traditional views on charity and social enterprises. MEK's strategic adaptability is evident in its continuous program adjustments to align with emerging trends like digitalisation and climate change, surpassing the incremental changes commonly discussed in social entrepreneurship literature. Complementing these narratives, the enterprise's 2022 Instagram campaign offered curated visual content highlighting community stories, accreditation milestones, and high-profile collaborations. Artefact analysis revealed a deliberate emphasis on symbolic legitimacy, with posts targeting regulators and donors during a period of heightened scrutiny. This use of digital artefacts illustrated how social enterprises construct public legitimacy narratives to navigate institutional ambiguity (Boin, 2009). This strategic repositioning was substantiated by artefact analysis of MEK's 2021 Annual Report, which explicitly introduced new outcome-based performance indicators and a redesigned theory of change. These documents mirrored the organisation's evolving emphasis on digital transformation, climate responsiveness, and income generation—corroborating the interview data regarding strategic shifts. Additionally, media artefacts, including a televised campaign launched in early 2022, framed MEK's initiatives in language aligned with donor priorities, such as “resilience,” “innovation,” and “impact.” These sources collectively demonstrate how MEK engages in legitimacy work by aligning its public narrative and institutional artefacts with the changing expectations of external stakeholders (Hodder, 2000; Boin, 2009). The Director of Scientific Research and Innovation emphasised that *“we adapt our strategy every three years to reflect new trends, such as climate change and digital transformation.”* This ability to pivot and adapt in a

volatile socio-economic environment introduces a fresh layer of understanding about the role of dynamic capabilities in social enterprises, particularly in developing markets.

Unlike existing models that often prioritise stability in strategic planning, MEK's approach underscores the need for ongoing recalibration in emerging economies, challenging established Western-centric frameworks. This contrasts with the views of scholars like Dees (2007), who promote steady-state planning in social entrepreneurship. Additional evidence for MEK's innovative approach lies in its focus on utilising local networks and informal partnerships to create impact. One participant, the project senior manager, noted that *"our projects don't end when the funding stops; we find ways to keep them going through entrepreneurship and partnerships."* This directly challenges the conventional understanding of sustainability in social enterprises, which typically focuses on long-term donor dependency or social business models. MEK's hybrid approach, blending philanthropic capital with income-generating activities, extends current theoretical frameworks by demonstrating how social enterprises in the emerging market can achieve sustainability without compromising their social mission. This contrasts with the work of Nicholls (2010), who suggests that many social enterprises struggle to balance their social and financial goals. MEK's reliance on co-creation with communities also sets it apart from traditional models of social entrepreneurship, which often position the enterprise as the main agent of change. As the senior officer remarked, *"We don't just hand out food and clothes; we work on income-generating projects... to help people stand on their own."* The community-centric empowerment model shifts the innovation locus from the organisation to the communities themselves, unveiling a deeply embedded form of social innovation in local knowledge and practices. Scholars like Mair and Marti (2006) have highlighted the importance of community engagement, but MEK's model goes further by placing communities at the centre of the innovation process, thus challenging the traditional top-down narratives in social innovation literature.

The adaptability of MEK's approach in navigating regulatory and economic challenges, an area often underexplored in social innovation theory, is particularly compelling. The Director of Scientific Research and Innovation emphasised that *"collaboration with government entities and local communities is key to ensuring our projects have a lasting impact."* This illustrates MEK's ability to work within, rather than against, Egypt's complex regulatory environment, a factor that adds nuance to the existing literature on institutional challenges faced by social enterprises. The literature has not fully theorised the dual strategy of embedding projects within governmental frameworks and simultaneously working with informal networks, which provides new insights into the strategic manoeuvres available to social enterprises in emerging markets. Furthermore, MEK's emphasis on education and entrepreneurship as crucial areas of social innovation challenges the prevailing discourse, which frequently prioritises short-term relief efforts over lasting societal change. As the project senior manager noted, *"We don't just rely on donations; we create income-generating projects that can stand on their own."* This reflects a shift away from traditional charity models to one that seeks to transform the

structural conditions of poverty through innovation. In contrast to the incremental social innovations often described in the literature, MEK is engaging in disruptive innovation by addressing the root causes of societal challenges, such as unemployment and lack of access to quality education. This aligns with the work of Schumpeter (1934), who argued that true innovation is disruptive rather than incremental, but MEK extends this theory into the domain of social entrepreneurship. MEK's approach also brings new insights into how social enterprises can scale their impact. While many organisations struggle with scaling their operations without losing their social missions, MEK has found a balance through its hybrid funding model and strategic partnerships. The senior officer emphasised that *"by engaging with the government and other entities from the outset, we ensure sustainability beyond our intervention."* This represents a departure from the literature that often describes scaling as a linear process driven by either market forces or donor funding (Bloom & Smith, 2010). MEK's model demonstrates that scaling in social innovation can be multidimensional, involving not only financial growth but also deep integration with local communities and government structures. In conclusion, MEK's model of social innovation extends the boundaries of what we know about social enterprises in emerging markets. Its focus on sustainability, community co-creation, and adaptability in a volatile socio-economic environment challenges the dominant Western-centric models and provides a new framework for understanding social innovation in the emerging economies. The insights gleaned from MEK's operations offer a valuable contribution to both theory and practice, showing how social enterprises can navigate complex regulatory environments, leverage informal networks, and foster long-term impact through disruptive, rather than incremental, innovation. These findings not only challenge existing frameworks but also offer new pathways for future research in the field of social innovation and entrepreneurship.

Human Traits

The research on human traits within social enterprises, specifically in Egypt, reveals critical insights that not only build on existing theories but also challenge traditional conceptions in the field of social entrepreneurship. The findings from the Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK) demonstrate how these organisations exhibit human traits through a unique blend of adaptability, resourcefulness, and inclusive decision-making processes shaped by the local context. Senior Officers and Managers at MEK highlight how these traits are ingrained in their organisational culture. MEK demonstrates a dynamic capability for adapting to evolving social and economic challenges, which is pivotal in a volatile environment like Egypt's. This adaptability extends beyond conventional Western-centric frameworks for social entrepreneurship, which often emphasise scalability and financial sustainability as primary objectives (Dees, 1998). In contrast, MEK's ability to pivot rapidly in response to shifting regulatory landscapes, as noted by the Director of Scientific Research, challenges this traditional focus: *"One of our strengths is the ability to shift focus quickly when the economic or social landscape changes, like when we moved from focusing on private sector partnerships to targeting international projects."* This illustrates the organisation's flexibility, which goes beyond mere risk-taking and reflects a

profound understanding of local economic realities. This dynamic adaptability reveals a new dimension to human traits—one that prioritises strategic fluidity over the static growth models typically highlighted in social entrepreneurship literature. In terms of decision-making, MEK displays a decentralised approach that fosters innovation at all organisational levels, contrasting with the more hierarchical models frequently discussed in the literature (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). The project senior manager explained, *"We give autonomy to our project leaders so they can make decisions on the ground, which allows us to act faster and be more effective."* This reflects a participatory leadership model that challenges the traditionally top-down approaches to decision-making in social enterprises. This decentralisation not only enhances operational efficiency but also encourages localised innovation—a crucial component in addressing specific community needs in diverse Egyptian governorates. By empowering their employees, MEK provides a counterargument to existing theories, suggesting that decentralised leadership is an essential trait for social enterprises operating in complex, resource-constrained environments.

Furthermore, MEK's innovative approach redefines the understanding of human traits within the social enterprise context by blending social impact with financial sustainability. The organisation has recently adopted hybrid models that partially reinvest donations into income-generating projects. *"We have started to shift towards hybrid models where we invest part of the donation into income-generating projects,"* stated the senior officer at MEK. Traditional nonprofit models typically allocate funds solely for charitable purposes, marking a significant departure from this approach. This move introduces a new theoretical layer to the concept of sustainability in social enterprises by blending philanthropy with entrepreneurial innovation. It adds complexity to the binary view of nonprofit versus profit-driven entities and suggests that hybrid models may be particularly effective in emerging markets, where economic volatility demands new approaches to financial sustainability. A key contribution of MEK's approach to human traits lies in its long-term focus on sustainability through collaboration. Instead of relying solely on donations, MEK emphasises partnerships with local authorities and communities to ensure the ongoing success of its projects. *"We always make sure our projects are sustainable, so we partner with local entities to maintain them long after we've completed the initial implementation,"* said the director of scientific research. This challenges existing frameworks, which often prioritise short-term impact or scalability. MEK's approach suggests that localised, trust-based relationships, rather than rapid growth or expansion, may better achieve long-term sustainability in social entrepreneurship. This insight challenges widely accepted models of scaling social impact (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009), offering a fresh perspective that highlights the importance of local partnerships and community involvement in sustaining social projects. The resourcefulness demonstrated by MEK also reveals new insights into how social enterprises can navigate financial constraints in emerging markets. The project senior manager commented, *"Even when we face limitations, like funding or resource constraints, we always find ways to maximise the impact by collaborating with external partners."* The strategic use of external partnerships highlights the crucial role of collaboration in surmounting resource constraints, a topic underexplored in

current social entrepreneurship literature. MEK's ability to form alliances with both governmental and non-governmental actors shows how human-centric strategies can transcend typical financial barriers, highlighting the role of social capital and networks in sustaining and scaling social enterprises.

In contrast to existing literature that often emphasises individual entrepreneurial traits like risk-taking and proactivity (Miller, 1983), the findings from MEK suggest that human traits in social enterprises are more deeply tied to collective, community-oriented behaviours. MEK's reliance on grassroots partnerships and localised decision-making reflects a new pattern in social entrepreneurship that prioritises community co-creation over individualistic, entrepreneur-led innovation. This is evident in their approach to productive community projects; as the senior officer emphasised, *"We focus on productive projects that provide jobs and income for people rather than just giving them aid."* This reflects a more sustainable and empowering model of social entrepreneurship that moves beyond traditional notions of aid-based interventions. In conclusion, the findings from MEK add new dimensions to the Human Traits framework by demonstrating how social enterprises in emerging markets, like Egypt, navigate unique challenges through localised strategies, decentralised decision-making, and innovative financial models. These insights challenge Western-centric models of social entrepreneurship and offer fresh perspectives on how human traits such as adaptability, collaboration, and resourcefulness are critical for sustaining social impact in resource-constrained environments. Through these contributions, the research extends the existing literature, offering a more nuanced understanding of how social enterprises can thrive in volatile and complex socio-economic landscapes.

Business Strategies

The examination of business strategies in social enterprises, particularly within the context of Egypt, offers profound insights into how organisations are adopting innovative approaches that challenge traditional social entrepreneurship frameworks. In this research, organisations like the Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK) exhibit a hybrid approach to business strategies that transcends the often-discussed balance between financial sustainability and social impact. The findings shed light on a complex interplay of factors, such as governance, community engagement, and strategic partnerships, all deeply ingrained in Egypt's socio-economic fabric and providing new insights into the academic discourse on social entrepreneurship. A distinctive feature emerging from this study is the way MEK and similar organisations navigate financial sustainability. Contrary to the established body of literature that often emphasises the struggles of social enterprises to balance financial objectives with social missions, these findings demonstrate an innovative blend of revenue-generating ventures with philanthropic activities. The project senior manager at MEK pointedly noted, *"We have a hybrid model where we take donations and invest them in projects that generate revenue, which allows us to sustain our social projects."* This hybrid model introduces a new dimension to the discourse on business strategies in

social enterprises by showing how organisations can generate surplus revenues to reinvest in their core charitable work. It challenges the conventional notion that social enterprises must rely primarily on external funding or donations, offering instead a model of financial autonomy. Several participants emphasise that MEK's approach to governance and transparency pushes the boundaries of trust-building in the social enterprise sector. While governance is often discussed in terms of accountability, in the Egyptian context it serves as a strategic tool to fortify partnerships and ensure long-term sustainability. The Director of Scientific Research and Innovation emphasised, *“Governance is crucial—without accountability, we cannot build trust with our donors or ensure the success of our projects.”* This insight expands on the importance of governance beyond mere accountability mechanisms and positions it as a cornerstone of strategic business planning. It suggests that the relationship between transparency and long-term sustainability may be more intertwined than previously considered in existing literature.

Additionally, these organisations' strategic partnerships reveal a unique form of adaptability that previous studies have not sufficiently explored. MEK's operational strategy deeply embeds its partnerships with both government bodies and private sector organisations, going beyond mere collaborations for funding or resource sharing. As one senior participant explained, *“We always focus on partnerships with the private sector and government entities, which helps reduce costs and ensures our projects have a wide reach.”* This approach challenges Western-centric models of social enterprise, which often frame partnerships within narrow scopes of funding or knowledge transfer. In the Egyptian context, these partnerships are more dynamic, serving as crucial pillars in the scalability and sustainability of projects. The reliance on informal networks and the leveraging of government-owned resources indicate a new pattern of behaviour that dominant social entrepreneurship frameworks have not adequately captured. Furthermore, these findings challenge the existing literature by uncovering the role of community co-creation in business strategy. The engagement with local communities is not a passive form of stakeholder involvement but an active strategy for sustainability. The senior officer at MEK emphasised, *“We establish robust partnerships with funding bodies and those who can assist us in reducing our costs, such as utilising ministry spaces for student training instead of purchasing venues.”* This example shows how social enterprises in Egypt are leveraging indigenous knowledge and local networks to achieve cost efficiency and greater impact. It suggests that community involvement in business strategies goes beyond the symbolic or operational—it is an integral part of the financial and strategic planning process. This shifts the traditional narrative that views community engagement as merely a tool for gaining legitimacy or support; instead, it is a core business function.

In terms of academic contributions, this research provides a critique of existing models that overly focus on social innovation in Western markets. By showing how social enterprises in Egypt are innovating within constrained environments, particularly through governance and partnership models, the findings extend the applicability of social entrepreneurship theories to emerging markets. The emphasis on resource efficiency,

through the strategic use of government-owned spaces and community-driven initiatives, introduces a new lens through which to view market entry strategies in underserved areas. The Director of Scientific Research and innovation pointed out, *“Our foundation gives us the freedom to innovate, allowing us to make changes as needed without being held back by rigid structures.”* This flexibility in decision-making and adaptation offers a fresh perspective on how social enterprises can remain agile while addressing pressing social needs. The notion that these organisations are merely risk-takers or innovative is too simplistic. What emerges from the analysis is a more nuanced understanding of how social enterprises in Egypt are weaving together various forms of capital—financial, social, and institutional—to create long-term strategies that are both scalable and adaptable. These findings reveal distinctive patterns of behaviour that challenge traditional business strategies in social enterprises, particularly in Western-dominated frameworks that often overlook the significance of local knowledge and the socio-political environment. In conclusion, this study contributes new insights into how social enterprises in Egypt are developing innovative business strategies that challenge existing literature on social entrepreneurship. These organisations are not only responding to social and economic challenges, but they are also actively reshaping the way we understand business strategies within social enterprises. Their use of hybrid models, strategic partnerships, and governance mechanisms offers a fresh perspective that extends beyond the traditional boundaries of social entrepreneurship literature. This research, therefore, adds valuable new dimensions to the discourse, particularly in how social enterprises in emerging markets can achieve financial sustainability while addressing complex social issues.

Institutional Environment

The institutional environment in which social enterprises operate has long been established as a key determinant of their success. However, the findings from the Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK) reveal nuances that challenge some prevailing understandings in the literature, offering fresh insights into how organisations navigate complex socio-economic contexts like Egypt. These insights compel us to re-examine some of the long-held assumptions about the interplay between institutional constraints and social entrepreneurship, particularly in emerging markets. Both governmental oversight and financial pressures have an impact on the institutional environment in which MEK operates. The existing literature, particularly works by scholars such as North (1990) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), emphasises that institutions are often barriers that social enterprises must work around or circumvent. Yet MEK’s strategies complicate this understanding. As the senior officer at MEK emphasised, *“We collaborate with different ministries, which helps us optimise resources and scale our projects effectively.”* This reveals that rather than merely viewing institutions as restrictive, MEK finds ways to work with them, using institutional partnerships as a key resource for scaling impact. This perspective adds a new layer to the discussion of institutional environments, suggesting that in some cases, institutional constraints are not only obstacles but also opportunities for collaboration and resource optimisation. One of the key innovations in MEK's approach is its hybrid model of balancing social objectives

with financial sustainability, which moves beyond the binary framing in much of the existing literature. Traditional theories of social entrepreneurship often depict a dichotomy between charity-based models and profit-driven enterprises (Dees, 1998). MEK's approach, however, reveals a more nuanced strategy that includes both income-generating activities and charitable donations. As the project senior manager noted, "*We don't just rely on donations. We invest in projects that generate income, like our women's empowerment programs that produce goods for sale.*" This hybrid model, which blends charitable activities with market-oriented strategies, suggests a new framework for understanding financial sustainability in resource-constrained environments. This finding challenges the often-rigid categorisation of social enterprises into "non-profit" and "for-profit" models and urges us to consider how these organisations fluidly navigate both spheres to achieve long-term sustainability.

Moreover, MEK's ability to innovate within these institutional constraints challenges the conventional wisdom that highly regulated environments stifle innovation. Scholars such as Zahra et al. (2009) have suggested that regulatory frameworks in emerging markets often limit the creative potential of social enterprises, forcing them into rigid operational modes. Yet, MEK's Director of scientific research and Innovation provided a different view, stating, "*We have some autonomy to act within the regulations, but even within these restrictions, we find ways to innovate.*" This finding compels us to reconsider the impact of institutional regulations, not solely as limiting but also as structures within which organisations can adapt and innovate. This observation adds new insight into the dynamic capability-building literature, suggesting that even in the face of restrictive environments, social enterprises can develop innovative responses tailored to their specific institutional contexts. The importance of financial oversight and transparency at MEK also introduces new considerations in the literature on accountability in social enterprises. While existing research often portrays financial transparency as a mandate from external actors like donors or government entities (Ebrahim et al., 2014), MEK's narrative underscores the pivotal role of internal organisational norms around transparency. As the senior officer emphasised, "*We ensure strict financial oversight because it's necessary for maintaining donor trust and public accountability.*" This internalised commitment to transparency challenges the idea that accountability measures are merely externally imposed, and it shows how such practices are embedded in the organisational culture to foster trust. This nuanced understanding of financial oversight adds a new perspective to discussions about the role of accountability in social entrepreneurship, where organisational culture may be as influential as external pressures.

Furthermore, MEK's localised innovation strategies present a fresh challenge to Western-centric models of social entrepreneurship. The traditional literature often privileges market-based solutions and technological innovations (Santos, 2012), overlooking the value of indigenous knowledge and community-driven approaches. The senior officer highlighted MEK's focus on reviving traditional crafts in rural areas as a form of economic empowerment, saying, "*We initiated a project in a small village to revive traditional weaving*

crafts.” The project not only created jobs but also preserved cultural heritage, indicating a distinct approach to innovation. This strategy challenges dominant Western models that often prioritise high-tech, scalable solutions and instead presents a case for community-based, culturally embedded forms of innovation. This finding adds to the expanding body of literature that supports the acknowledgement of alternative forms of innovation in emerging markets, where local practices and knowledge systems often serve as the foundation for solutions. Furthermore, MEK’s adaptive strategies within the institutional environment challenge the prevailing notion that social enterprises in emerging markets are primarily reactive to institutional pressures. Rather, MEK’s proactive engagement with institutional actors and its strategic use of these relationships to scale its impact suggest a more sophisticated and dynamic interaction with the institutional environment. The project senior manager noted, *“Working with government policies can be a challenge, but we’ve built strong relationships that allow us to navigate these issues more smoothly.”* This indicates that MEK does not merely adapt to external pressures but also shapes its institutional environment through strategic partnerships and networks. This finding calls for a rethink of the relationship between social enterprises and their institutional contexts, proposing that these organisations may have more agency in shaping their environments than previously acknowledged. In conclusion, the case of MEK introduces several new insights that challenge and extend existing theories of the institutional environment in social entrepreneurship. MEK adds significant value to the academic discourse by demonstrating the reframing of institutional constraints as opportunities for collaboration, highlighting the fluidity between charitable and market-oriented strategies, and emphasising the role of indigenous knowledge in innovation. These findings not only broaden our understanding of how social enterprises operate in emerging markets but also contribute to a more nuanced conceptualisation of the institutional environment that is attentive to local contexts and adaptive strategies.

4.1.3 Case 3: Egyptian Food Bank (EFB)

Timeline of Key Events

- **2006:** The Egyptian Food Bank (EFB) was founded by Moez El Shohdi and a group of philanthropists. The foundation's main objective was to end hunger in Egypt by providing food to vulnerable groups like elderly people, orphans, and households run by women. The organisation initially focused on food collection from hotels and restaurants to address waste while redistributing it to those in need.
- **2008:** EFB expanded its focus beyond food distribution by implementing development and capacity-building programs aimed at helping unemployed individuals gain the skills needed to enter the workforce. This shift marked the beginning of EFB's integrated approach to addressing the root causes of hunger, particularly poverty and unemployment.

- **2010:** EFB launched the "Wasteless Egypt" initiative, aimed at reducing food waste through formal partnerships with hotels and restaurants. These efforts ensured the collection, processing, and distribution of untouched food to those in need, thereby tackling hunger and minimising waste.
- **2012:** EFB established formal protocols with the Egyptian Hotel Association to manage surplus food from hotel buffets. This formalisation helped optimise the collection and redistribution processes, ensuring a consistent food supply year-round.
- **2015:** To replicate EFB's model in countries across the Middle East and Africa, we established the Food Banking Regional Network (FBRN). This was a strategic step toward scaling EFB's approach to food security and poverty alleviation across the region.
- **2016:** EFB partnered with the Ministry of Education to include lessons on food waste and volunteerism in school curricula. This initiative aimed to educate younger generations on the importance of reducing food waste and supporting social causes.
- **2018:** EFB saw a leadership transition and the appointment of a new executive team to steer the organisation's growth. The new management focused on expanding EFB's impact both within Egypt and regionally, with an emphasis on sustainability and operational efficiency.
- **2020:** EFB ramped up its operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing emergency food aid to millions of people affected by the economic crisis. This period also saw the formation of new partnerships with international organisations to meet their growing needs.
- **2021–2022:** EFB expanded its sustainable funding model by investing in agriculture and other for-profit ventures, allowing the organisation to support its feeding programs without solely relying on donations. These ventures enabled EFB to continue providing food to underserved communities while also promoting long-term sustainability.
- **2023:** EFB further solidified its volunteer network, which grew to more than 64,000 participants, and continued expanding its programs aimed at reducing poverty and hunger. The organisation also strengthened its collaborations with global entities to ensure long-term sustainability.

An overview of EFB's activities

In 2006, the establishment of the Egyptian Food Bank (EFB) aimed to address hunger and food insecurity. Initially concentrating on food distribution, the Egyptian Food Bank (EFB) swiftly broadened its mission to

encompass wider development objectives, including job training and capacity building, with the aim of addressing the underlying causes of hunger. By creating sustainable feeding programs and fostering partnerships with the hospitality industry, EFB has been able to redirect surplus food to those in need while reducing food waste. Over time, EFB developed a comprehensive model based on six interrelated pillars: food distribution, development and capacity building, food waste reduction, volunteer engagement, investment for sustainability, and regional expansion. These pillars have allowed EFB to achieve significant results in Egypt and beyond, impacting millions of people each year. A pivotal moment in EFB's growth was the establishment of the Food Banking Regional Network (FBRN), which enabled the organisation to share its model with other countries in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. This expansion has allowed EFB to replicate its success across the region, providing food security solutions to countries facing similar challenges. EFB's leadership has played a critical role in its continued success. The organisation's ability to adapt to changing circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrates resilience and commitment to its mission. By investing in sustainable ventures and strengthening its volunteer network, EFB has ensured that it can continue to combat hunger and promote long-term development in Egypt and beyond. Table 10 provides an overview of the research participants, including their titles and organisational affiliations.

Table 11: The Leadership and Management Participants of EFB.

Name	Designation	Background and Experience	Relationship to Social Entrepreneurship
Mr Mohsen Sarhan	CEO	20+ years of experience.	With extensive experience in social entrepreneurship, he leads the organisation, ensuring strategic direction and impactful initiatives that address hunger and food security.
Mr Bahaa El Reedy	CEO Advisor, Technical Operations	15+ years of experience.	The organisation offers technical guidance and operational expertise to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of social entrepreneurship initiatives.
Ms Shimaa Nabil	Head of External Affairs	12+ years of experience.	Oversee external relationships and collaborations, advancing social entrepreneurship initiatives

			by involving stakeholders and broadening the reach.
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Source: Compiled by the author.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

The findings from the Egyptian Food Bank (EFB) present a novel perspective on entrepreneurial orientation within social enterprises, particularly in emerging markets like Egypt. Existing literature often conceptualises entrepreneurial orientation as comprising innovation, risk-taking, and proactivity (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Covin & Slevin, 1991). However, the case of EFB reveals a unique set of behaviours and strategies that challenge these dominant frameworks and offer fresh insights into how social enterprises function in resource-constrained environments. Not only does EFB's entrepreneurial orientation deviate from Western-centric models, but it also highlights the ways in which community engagement, regulatory navigation, and cross-sector collaboration redefine entrepreneurial activities within the context of Egypt's socio-economic landscape. EFB's entrepreneurial orientation extends beyond traditional theories of innovation and proactivity by focusing heavily on community-based entrepreneurial models. As the Head of External Affairs at EFB emphasised, *"We work with local farms, creating sustainable systems that serve both our goals and the local economy."* This local engagement fosters a symbiotic relationship between EFB and the communities it serves, going beyond the typical top-down, donor-driven social enterprise models. Community co-creation and engagement, therefore, become critical elements of EFB's entrepreneurial orientation, challenging existing research that often views social enterprises as driven primarily by external factors such as donors and government policies (Mair & Martí, 2006). EFB's ability to blend community empowerment with operational efficiency presents a new paradigm in entrepreneurial orientation, where grassroots partnerships drive both social impact and financial sustainability. Additionally, EFB's approach challenges the notion that social enterprises in emerging markets are merely reactive or incremental in their innovations. The organisation's proactive strategies, such as integrating advanced technologies into food distribution systems, signal a disruptive form of entrepreneurial orientation that is often not associated with social enterprises in the MENA region. The CEO advisor of EFB illustrated this when stating, *"We had to integrate advanced technologies into our operations to ensure that every donation reaches the right people at the right time."* Such technological adoption and data-driven decision-making represent a radical departure from the incremental innovations typically observed in resource-constrained environments. This proactive stance not only challenges the conventional wisdom of reactive innovation but also demonstrates how social enterprises can act as disruptive innovators (Christensen, 1997) in the face of economic and logistical constraints.

One of the most intriguing insights from the EFB case is the organisation's adaptability when navigating Egypt's regulatory environment. Much of the existing literature on social enterprises discusses the regulatory

hurdles that often hinder entrepreneurial activities (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014), yet EFB's experience shows that these constraints can also be opportunities for innovation. As the CEO of EFB explained, *"Navigating Egypt's regulatory framework is a challenge, but we have learnt to adapt and thrive despite the constraints."* Instead of succumbing to bureaucratic red tape, EFB has leveraged these regulatory challenges to drive innovation, creating hybrid models that integrate both private-sector efficiency and social impact objectives. This adaptability provides a fresh perspective on how social enterprises can not only survive but thrive in restrictive regulatory environments, adding a new layer to our understanding of entrepreneurial orientation in emerging markets. Furthermore, EFB's entrepreneurial orientation highlights the importance of developing dynamic capabilities in environments characterised by economic volatility. While the literature often discusses entrepreneurial orientation in stable economies, there is little research on how social enterprises dynamically build their capabilities in response to fluctuating economic conditions (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). EFB's ability to scale its operations despite Egypt's economic uncertainties exemplifies this capability. The Head of External Affairs stated, *"Even in times of economic hardship, we have found ways to innovate, such as adjusting our programs to meet the changing needs of the population."* This ability to continuously innovate despite economic downturns suggests that entrepreneurial orientation in such contexts is not only about taking risks but about managing them in ways that preserve both social impact and financial viability.

This insight challenges the traditional risk-taking dimension of entrepreneurial orientation by showing how social enterprises in volatile markets must exercise caution and adaptability. The EFB case also forces us to reconsider the role of cross-sector collaboration in entrepreneurial orientation. Traditional theories of entrepreneurial orientation often emphasise competition, but EFB demonstrates that collaboration—particularly with government entities and private sector partners—is key to scaling impact. As the CEO advisor noted, *"We rely on partnerships, from governmental bodies to the private sector, to scale our impact and maintain financial sustainability."* These partnerships allow EFB to navigate the complexities of Egypt's socio-political landscape, suggesting that in emerging markets, entrepreneurial orientation must be understood as being intrinsically tied to collaborative networks rather than competitive market behaviour. This finding adds nuance to existing conceptions of entrepreneurial orientation by highlighting the importance of cross-sectoral synergies in driving both social and economic outcomes. In conclusion, the findings from EFB present a significant extension to existing theories of entrepreneurial orientation. The organisation's focus on community co-creation, proactive technological innovation, regulatory adaptability, dynamic capability building, and cross-sector collaboration provides a new framework for understanding how social enterprises operate in emerging markets. These insights challenge the dominant, Western-centric models of entrepreneurial orientation and offer a more complex, context-specific understanding of entrepreneurial behaviour in resource-constrained environments like Egypt. EFB's approach demonstrates that entrepreneurial orientation in such contexts is not merely about innovation, risk-taking, or proactivity; it is about strategically navigating social, economic, and regulatory challenges to achieve sustainable social impact. These findings

contribute to the growing literature on social entrepreneurship in emerging markets and offer valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners.

Social Innovation

The Egyptian Food Bank (EFB) provides a compelling and fresh perspective on social innovation within social entrepreneurship, especially in emerging markets like Egypt. The organisation demonstrates a model that challenges traditional conceptions of charity by embedding sustainable, community-driven strategies in its operations. Through the lens of its leadership, the EFB embodies a unique blend of social innovation that not only conforms to existing frameworks but also expands our understanding of social enterprises in resource-constrained environments. This case reveals new insights into how entrepreneurial social organisations can balance short-term assistance with long-term impact, offering fresh contributions to the literature on social innovation. The notion that innovation often requires substantial financial and technological resources poses a fundamental challenge to traditional literature on social innovation, particularly that rooted in Western models. Contrary to this, EFB shows that social innovation can emerge through indigenous knowledge, informal networks, and highly localised solutions. For example, the CEO of the organisation notes, *“In Egypt, you can't rely on traditional models. We've had to be creative, like setting up livestock programs with local women. It's about making the most of limited resources.”* This directly challenges the resource-intensive models of innovation proposed by scholars such as Dees and Anderson (2006), who emphasise the importance of leveraging financial capital for social innovation. Instead, EFB illustrates how social enterprises can thrive even in resource-constrained settings by focusing on community empowerment and low-cost innovations. A significant new insight from this research is EFB's use of cross-sector collaboration as a vehicle for scaling social innovation. Traditional models of social entrepreneurship often focus on internal organisational capabilities or market-based solutions (Bornstein, 2007).

However, the EFB demonstrates that partnerships with both governmental and private entities are essential in driving large-scale social impact. The Head of External Affairs underscores this point, stating, *“Without collaboration between government, the private sector, and NGOs, it's impossible to reach our goals. Our partnerships are key to scaling our impact and ensuring sustainability.”* This finding not only challenges the prevailing literature that primarily emphasises the role of the entrepreneur as the central actor (Austin et al., 2006) but also presents a new paradigm that co-creates innovation through cross-sector partnerships. This approach, deeply embedded in the Egyptian context, reveals how social enterprises in emerging markets might scale differently from their counterparts in developed economies. Moreover, the organisation's focus on data-driven decision-making introduces a novel layer to its existing conceptualisation of social innovation. While data-driven strategies are often considered essential in the corporate world, they are less frequently associated with social entrepreneurship (Nicholls, 2010). However, the CEO's advisor at the EFB emphasises the

significance of measurable impacts. *“We don’t just hand out food. We analyse the needs, the resources, and the impacts. We measure everything to ensure we are truly making a difference.”* This insight suggests that social enterprises can—and perhaps should—incorporate robust performance metrics into their models to ensure scalability and sustainability. The EFB’s focus on measurement and efficiency invigorates existing theories, demonstrating that pragmatic, data-driven strategies can propel social innovation, even in resource-constrained contexts. This stands in contrast to earlier models, which often prioritise vision and mission over operational metrics (Zahra et al., 2009).

Another critical contribution of this research is how the EFB navigates and adapts to the volatile economic and regulatory environment in Egypt. While much of the literature on social innovation in developed countries focuses on regulatory support and the availability of financial incentives (Mair & Martí, 2006), the EFB operates in an environment where such institutional supports are lacking. The CEO advisor illustrates the organisation’s ability to adapt to these challenges, stating, *“The economic situation in Egypt is volatile, and we have to adapt constantly. This requires innovative thinking and flexibility to ensure that we can keep delivering on our mission.”* This finding reveals a gap in the current literature, as it highlights how social enterprises in emerging markets must often adopt more flexible, adaptive strategies to remain viable. This offers a critique of static, one-size-fits-all models of social innovation that do not account for the complexities of regulatory and economic constraints in non-Western contexts. Furthermore, the EFB’s approach to creating long-term solutions, such as their community livestock program, challenges the short-term, relief-focused models that dominate discussions of food banks and social aid organisations (Seelos & Mair, 2005). The Head of External Affairs comments, *“Our focus is not just on providing meals but on finding innovative ways to produce food locally. Our farm initiatives have made us less dependent on external donations.”* This insight reveals a pattern of sustainability and self-reliance that contrasts sharply with the dependency models often associated with food aid programs. The organisation’s initiatives not only provide immediate relief but also empower communities by giving them the tools and resources they need to achieve long-term food security. This adds a crucial new dimension to the discourse on social innovation, highlighting how organisations can transition from relief to sustainable development. In conclusion, the findings from the EFB offer substantial new contributions to the literature on social innovation, particularly within the context of emerging markets. This research challenges traditional models of social entrepreneurship by demonstrating that innovation can occur in resource-constrained environments using indigenous knowledge, informal networks, and cross-sector collaboration. Additionally, the organisation’s focus on data-driven decision-making and long-term sustainability introduces new insights into how social enterprises can measure and scale their impact in volatile environments. By offering these fresh perspectives, this research extends the boundaries of what we know about social innovation and provides new frameworks for understanding how social enterprises operate and thrive in emerging markets like Egypt.

Human Traits

The Egyptian Food Bank (EFB) offers a profound case study that challenges the existing literature on human traits in social entrepreneurship, especially in contexts characterised by volatility and resource scarcity. Traditional discussions, notably Dees (2001) and Mair & Martí (2006), have often emphasised traits like risk-taking, proactiveness, and innovation. However, what emerges from EFB's operations is a more nuanced understanding of how human traits manifest in a socially entrepreneurial setting, particularly in the Egyptian socio-economic environment. The organisation's ability to blend empathy, adaptability, and long-term vision stretches beyond Western-centric models and reveals new layers of human traits essential for social enterprises operating in developing economies. The CEO at EFB emphasises the importance of community engagement—a trait not merely seen as an add-on to their operations but as the core of their strategic and decision-making processes. The Head of External Affairs notes that they consistently integrate local knowledge, demonstrating their deep-rootedness in the community. *“Our success comes from listening to what people need and responding to those needs in a practical way.”* This goes beyond the traditional literature that prioritises innovation or risk-taking in entrepreneurial contexts (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Instead, it highlights a more community-centred approach, where empathy and inclusivity are central to operational sustainability. In essence, EFB showcases that human traits like empathy and collaboration can drive social innovation, thereby challenging the dominant narratives that equate entrepreneurial success primarily with individual risk-taking or disruption. Moreover, resilience, often discussed as an aftereffect of navigating crises in entrepreneurship (Bullough & Renko, 2013), emerges at the forefront of EFB's strategy. The CEO advisor captures this by noting, *“In an environment where financial resources are tight, we must innovate constantly to keep the mission alive.”*

This perspective highlights that resilience involves more than just enduring hardship but also fostering an organisational mindset that integrates flexibility and strategic adaptation into daily operations. Such insights contribute to a broader rethinking of human traits, demonstrating that in contexts like Egypt, resilience is not reactive but proactive—a strategic tool that allows organisations like EFB to thrive despite limited resources. This challenges the conventional wisdom, which tends to view resilience primarily as a response to unforeseen difficulties, and expands the dialogue on resilience as an integral, forward-looking trait in social enterprises. Another point of divergence from the existing literature is how EFB views sustainability through a lens of long-term empowerment rather than short-term impact. Current research often explores the tension between social impact and financial sustainability (Battilana & Lee, 2014), but EFB adds a new dimension by emphasising empowerment. As the Head of External Affairs remarked, *“Our goal isn't just to provide meals; we aim to build lasting solutions for food security in Egypt.”* This approach underscores that social entrepreneurs in contexts like Egypt must prioritise building systems of empowerment—whether through sustainable agriculture or community-based food programs—over the immediate distribution of resources. In

doing so, EFB challenges the narrow focus on balancing financial and social goals found in the literature and offers a new perspective on how social enterprises can foster long-term resilience by embedding empowerment in their operational DNA.

Furthermore, authors like Zahra et al. (2009) have widely discussed the role of adaptability in social entrepreneurship, framing it as a necessary response to the unpredictable nature of markets. However, EFB's adaptability is not just a reactive measure but a fundamental organisational trait. The CEO emphasised, *"The biggest challenge we face is maintaining the trust of the people we serve, year after year. People need to believe in us, and that requires continuous, tangible results."* This highlights a pattern of adaptability grounded in accountability and transparency, both of which are vital to maintaining trust. Trust, as a human trait, becomes a form of currency that sustains social enterprises over time—a perspective often overlooked in discussions centred on financial or market-oriented adaptability. One of the most compelling contributions of EFB to the broader literature is its focus on data-driven decision-making. While traditional entrepreneurial models emphasise the value of intuition or risk-taking (McClelland, 1961), EFB incorporates a more analytical approach to ensure long-term impact. As the CEO noted, *"If we don't measure the impact of our programs carefully, we won't know what's working. We rely on data to drive our decisions and improve what we're doing."* This emphasis on data introduces a new dimension to the human traits' framework, particularly in social entrepreneurship. It suggests that accountability and data-driven thinking should be considered integral human traits, especially in resource-constrained environments where efficient resource allocation is critical. EFB's case also redefines the notion of entrepreneurial leadership within social enterprises. Whereas much of the literature (e.g., Gartner, 1988) tends to focus on the visionary, often individualistic, nature of entrepreneurial leaders, EFB's leadership is more distributed and community oriented. The CEO advisor's comment, *"The real challenge is not the lack of resources; it's how to get the most out of what we have by working smarter,"* reflects a leadership style that prioritises collective problem-solving over heroic individualism. This adds a fresh perspective to the discourse on leadership in social entrepreneurship, shifting the focus from individual traits such as charisma or decisiveness to the effective cultivation of collective resilience and adaptability by leaders.

In conclusion, the findings from EFB not only challenge existing frameworks on human traits within social entrepreneurship but also expand them. Traits like adaptability, empathy, resilience, and data-driven thinking emerge as critical for the success of social enterprises in contexts like Egypt. These insights force us to re-evaluate the importance of traits typically linked to entrepreneurial success, such as risk-taking and innovation, by emphasising that in emerging markets, collaboration, inclusivity, and strategic resilience often lead to sustainability. By using this lens, EFB contributes significantly to the academic discourse, highlighting the need to recontextualise human traits in social entrepreneurship to align with the socio-economic realities of the emerging economies.

Business Strategies

The Egyptian Food Bank (EFB) exemplifies a novel approach to business strategies within the context of social entrepreneurship. Their strategy seamlessly integrates philanthropy and sustainability, meeting immediate social needs through innovative, revenue-generating ventures that support long-term goals. This strategic blend pushes against the conventional dichotomy of charity and profitability, proposing a new model where these elements coexist synergistically. The focus on leveraging multiple financial streams, particularly self-sustaining projects, reflects a forward-thinking approach. The CEO advisor emphasised, *“We leverage food donations, but we also create self-sustaining projects like livestock breeding to ensure long-term support.”* This challenges traditional assumptions in the literature that social enterprises must either choose between social impact or financial sustainability (Dees, 1998; Austin et al., 2006). EFB offers a new paradigm for social enterprises operating in resource-constrained environments by demonstrating the simultaneous achievement of both. Moreover, EFB’s approach to adaptability introduces a fresh perspective to the discourse on social entrepreneurship. Traditionally, entrepreneurial literature positions adaptability as a reactive measure to external conditions. However, EFB showcases proactive adaptability—strategic foresight allows the organisation to anticipate and plan for challenges before they manifest. The Head of External Affairs stated, *“We had to rethink our school feeding program due to rising costs, but our goal of ensuring children receive nutritious meals remains unchanged.”* This proactive stance contrasts with the reactive strategies often highlighted in existing frameworks, such as those proposed by Sarasvathy’s effectuation theory (2001), which emphasises adaptive responses to unpredictable environments. In EFB’s case, adaptability is not just a reaction to instability but a pre-emptive strategy that ensures resilience.

This nuanced approach offers a new dimension to how we understand adaptability in social enterprises, particularly in volatile economic environments. EFB’s strategy also redefines the role of informal networks in business strategies. While previous research has acknowledged the importance of networks in social entrepreneurship (Mair & Martí, 2006), EFB elevates this concept by positioning them as a cornerstone of their operational model. The CEO advisor mentioned, *“We leverage informal networks and community-based initiatives to expand our reach beyond traditional charity models.”* This deliberate integration of informal networks into business strategy extends beyond merely leveraging community ties—it turns these networks into an integral part of how the organisation scales its operations. In doing so, the EFB challenges existing frameworks that often place formal partnerships at the centre of growth strategies (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010). Instead, their model suggests that in environments like Egypt, informal networks are not just supplementary but essential to achieving scalability and sustainability.

Furthermore, EFB’s strategic use of trust-building mechanisms adds a new layer to our understanding of stakeholder relationships in social enterprises. While many perceive trust as an implicit aspect of social

entrepreneurship, EFB actively cultivates long-term relationships with both donors and beneficiaries at the core of their strategy. As the CEO stated, *“The core of our work is to ensure that people trust us year after year.”* This extends beyond traditional notions of accountability and transparency and challenges the assumption that trust is a passive outcome of responsible behaviour. Instead, EFB demonstrates that trust can be a deliberate and central component of strategic planning, offering new insights into how social enterprises can foster resilience and sustainability by nurturing trust-based relationships over time. This strategic cultivation of trust advances the conversation about social enterprises' relational dynamics, suggesting that building long-term credibility can be as crucial as financial sustainability. Additionally, EFB's financial prudence offers new insights into resource optimisation within social enterprises. The CEO articulated, *“Every penny counts; we aim to get the best price and maximise impact without compromising quality.”* This meticulous approach to financial management challenges the traditional view that social enterprises, by virtue of their mission, can afford to prioritise social impact over financial efficiency (Lumpkin et al., 2013). EFB's strategy demonstrates that rigorous cost management is not just compatible with social objectives but essential for maximising social impact. EFB's strategy challenges the dichotomy often presented in social entrepreneurship literature, which views financial considerations as secondary to mission-driven goals, by shifting the focus from purely social objectives to a more holistic view of financial and operational efficiency.

In terms of contribution to theory, EFB's approach adds new layers to the business strategy framework within social entrepreneurship. Their integration of entrepreneurial innovation with social welfare challenges traditional models that separate these domains. The CEO's quote, *“We need to make sure that we're not just feeding people but helping them become independent in the long run,”* highlights a strategic focus on long-term empowerment rather than short-term relief. This approach suggests that social enterprises can, and perhaps should, aim for systemic change by empowering beneficiaries to become economically independent, thereby reducing dependency over time. This redefines the role of social enterprises from being merely providers of temporary relief to catalysts for sustainable, long-term development. EFB's strategy also offers a distinctive take on scalability. While many social enterprises struggle with scaling due to financial constraints, EFB's model of using revenue-generating projects allows them to scale without compromising their mission. The Head of External Affairs remarked, *“The social impact remains our priority, but we must constantly evolve to ensure that we're financially stable and able to continue our work.”* This balance between scaling and mission preservation challenges the existing literature, which often treats scalability and mission drift as inevitable trade-offs (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009). EFB's approach shows that the organisation can achieve scalability without diluting the core mission if it incorporates financial sustainability into its strategic planning. In conclusion, EFB's business strategies challenge several existing frameworks within the field of social entrepreneurship. Their integration of philanthropic and entrepreneurial elements, proactive adaptability, strategic use of informal networks, and meticulous financial management all contribute new insights to the literature. EFB does not merely align with existing knowledge; it extends and enriches it, offering a model that

redefines how social enterprises can achieve both social impact and financial sustainability in challenging environments.

Institutional Environment

In examining the institutional environment through the lens of the Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), it becomes clear that the traditional conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship in resource-constrained environments requires substantial rethinking. The prevailing literature often assumes that social enterprises thrive when institutional support structures, such as clear regulations, government assistance, and financial frameworks, are robust (Mair & Martí, 2009; Tracey, Phillips, & Jarvis, 2011). However, the findings from EFB challenge this assumption, revealing that survival and innovation are not necessarily contingent on stable institutional support but rather on the organisation's ability to create flexibility within rigid systems. *"We've had to innovate around outdated legislation, creating systems that work for us, even if the existing laws don't support them,"* stated the Head of External Affairs. This insight directly challenges conventional models that advocate for the evolution of legal frameworks prior to significant social progress. These findings offer a new perspective on institutional entrepreneurship in contexts like Egypt, where governmental inefficiencies and bureaucratic complexities dominate. In contrast to Western-centric models that highlight the role of institutions as facilitators, EFB illustrates how organisations must often act despite these structures and not because of them. The CEO advisor of EFB noted, *"We are always working around multiple layers of government red tape, trying to align our work with conflicting policies."* This highlights the significant challenge social enterprises face in navigating multiple layers of conflicting institutional demands. This pattern suggests that the institutional environment in such contexts is more of a barrier than a catalyst for innovation, requiring organisations to develop unique adaptive capabilities that are less prominent in the existing literature. The literature often highlights collaboration to scale social enterprises (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010), yet it has not fully explored the role of informal networks as a crucial survival mechanism in fragmented institutional environments. The CEO emphasised this point, stating, *"We always rely on the trust of our donors; the systems that should support our work often fail us."* In an institutional environment where formal support is absent, trust-based relationships and community co-creation become essential elements for scaling and maintaining social impact. This extends current knowledge by demonstrating that institutional entrepreneurship in environments like Egypt hinges not on formal institutional structures but on informal trust networks, redefining how we understand the scalability of social enterprises in emerging markets. These insights challenge the dominance of formal institutional theories (North, 1990) by introducing community-driven adaptability as a new layer within institutional entrepreneurship, applicable to both local and global discussions of social innovation.

The dynamic nature of Egypt's economic and political landscape further complicates how social enterprises like EFB approach financial sustainability. While Dees (1998) commonly understands financial viability as a central challenge for social enterprises, EFB's ability to adapt to fluctuating market conditions provides a nuanced understanding of achieving financial sustainability under unpredictable circumstances. *"Financial sustainability is always a challenge when the game rules keep changing, but we have learnt to pivot quickly,"* the technical advisor explained. This showcases a form of dynamic capability building, where the organisation continuously repositions itself to stay relevant despite the volatility of the institutional environment. In this sense, the existing literature's emphasis on stable, long-term financial planning is not applicable; instead, organisations in similar contexts must adopt short-term, flexible financial strategies that allow for rapid adaptation. The findings also highlight the importance of cross-sector collaborations, not just for resource sharing but for navigating the bureaucratic and institutional gaps that exist within Egypt's fragmented system. The Head of External Affairs remarked, *"Collaboration with external partners is key to our survival, especially when the formal institutional environment doesn't provide enough support."* This demonstrates that collaboration is not merely an avenue for scaling or increasing impact but a necessary survival strategy for overcoming institutional inefficiencies.

The literature on social entrepreneurship collaboration (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006) tends to focus on partnerships as a means of expanding reach, but these findings add a new layer, suggesting that in some institutional environments, collaboration is not just a strategy for growth but a fundamental operational requirement. Furthermore, EFB's approach to social innovation provides new insights into how social enterprises develop market-based solutions in highly constrained environments. Instead of relying on technological innovations, which are often central to the social innovation discourse (Mulgan, 2006), EFB focuses on process innovations that allow the organisation to circumvent regulatory and institutional hurdles. The CEO emphasised, *"We are bridging gaps in the regulatory environment that don't account for the specific needs of charity organisations like ours."* This illustrates how innovation in social enterprises in Egypt takes on a different form, focusing on institutional navigation rather than product or service innovation. These results add a new dimension to our understanding of social innovation by talking about regulatory innovation. This is the idea that businesses have to keep changing their methods to work with or get around the current institutional framework. In summary, the case of the Egyptian Food Bank challenges traditional theories on institutional environments and social entrepreneurship. The organisation's reliance on informal networks, community co-creation, and process innovation in the face of institutional fragmentation provides a new framework for understanding how social enterprises operate in volatile and unsupportive environments. Rather than conforming to pre-existing knowledge, these findings expand our understanding of institutional entrepreneurship, positing that survival in these contexts hinges primarily on the capacity to foster flexibility and adaptability within the current institutional structures, rather than relying on their gradual evolution. This

presents a significant contribution to both the academic literature and the practical understanding of social enterprises in emerging markets.

4.1.4 Case 4: Resala Charity Organisation (RCO)

Timeline of Key Events

- **1999:** Sherif Abd Al Azim, a professor of engineering at Cairo University, founded Resala as a student-driven initiative. The movement began with a focus on encouraging volunteerism among students and fostering community engagement through social service. The primary goal was to create a sense of belonging and positivity within the local communities by engaging youth in charitable work.
- **2000:** The initiative was officially registered as a charitable organisation with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Over the following years, Resala expanded rapidly, growing from a university project to a nationwide charity organisation. It provided critical services such as caring for orphans, aiding the blind, deaf, and people with special needs, and supporting families in financial need.
- **2005:** Resala's activities grew significantly during this period, expanding its volunteer network to over 60 branches across Egypt. The organisation began offering a wide range of services, including medical convoys, literacy programs, and second-hand clothing drives, serving millions of Egyptians.
- **2010:** By this time, Resala had established itself as one of the largest and most influential volunteer-based organisations in the Arab world, with over 200,000 volunteers participating in various activities. Resala's expansion included the development of training centres for computer skills and literacy, as well as special programs for children with cancer and individuals with disabilities.
- **2015:** Resala further diversified its services, introducing initiatives aimed at street children and addressing addiction recovery. The organisation increased its efforts to tackle complex social challenges, such as reintegrating former addicts into society and providing rehabilitation opportunities for children at risk of delinquency.
- **2020:** In response to the growing social and economic challenges in Egypt, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, Resala amplified its services to support families in need through emergency aid, medical assistance, and community support programs.

- **2023:** Today, Resala continues to operate more than 60 branches across Egypt, mobilising more than 1.5 million volunteers. The organisation runs more than 30 different activities, including blood donation drives, poverty alleviation programs, and educational support for children and adults alike. It has cemented its position as one of the most influential and widespread non-profit organisations in the region.

An overview of RCO's activities

Resala Charity Organisations (RCO) began as a small volunteer movement at Cairo University in 1999, aiming to foster volunteerism and social responsibility among students. Under the leadership of Professor Sherif Abd Al Azim, Resala rapidly expanded, becoming a legally recognised charity just a year later. The vision of mobilising volunteers to address Egypt's most pressing social challenges has driven Resala since its founding. Over the years, Resala's impact has grown significantly. It offers a broad range of services, from caring for orphans and the disabled to providing educational programs and medical care. The organisation also plays a key role in raising awareness about societal issues, such as poverty and illiteracy, through its volunteer network, which spans more than 60 branches and engages over 1.5 million volunteers. Resala's success lies in its adaptability and ability to mobilise a diverse array of volunteers. It has built a reputation for innovation, particularly in programs aimed at addressing hunger, illness, and unemployment. Additionally, Resala's initiatives have extended to caring for marginalised groups, including people with disabilities and street children, by providing them with rehabilitation and reintegration support. As of 2023, Resala is one of the largest and most impactful charitable organisations in Egypt, continuing to expand its reach and service offerings in response to evolving societal needs. Table 11 below illustrates the leadership and management participants of RCO. Table 11 provides an overview of the research participants, including their titles and organisational affiliations.

Table 12: The Leadership and Management Participants of RCO

Name	Designation	Background and Experience	Relationship to Social Entrepreneurship
Eng. Abdellaha El Samaan Ali	Executive Director	Associated with Resala since 2012 (12 years of experience).	Oversee the execution of social entrepreneurship initiatives, ensuring successful operations and impactful charitable programs.
Mr Ahmed Mohamed Abo El Magd	Sector Head, Bachelor of Quality Control	Associated with Resala since 2011 (13 years of experience).	Manage sector operations with a focus on quality control, enhancing the efficiency and

			effectiveness of social entrepreneurship projects.
Dr. Ashraf Hamdy	Director of Upper Egypt – Follow-up & Quality, Dentist Background	Associated with Resala since 2010 (14 years of experience).	Ensure project quality and follow-up in Upper Egypt, applying both medical and managerial expertise to social entrepreneurship efforts.
Eng. Mohamed Ashraf Ramadan	Director of Delta Region	Associated with Resala since 2010 (14 years of experience).	Oversee regional projects, ensuring alignment with the organisation's mission and advancing social entrepreneurship in the Delta Region.
Eng. Wael Zayed	Executive Director	Associated with Resala since 2007 (17 years of experience).	Lead the organisation with extensive experience, driving Resala's mission to create sustainable social impacts through entrepreneurship.

Source: Compiled by the author.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

The entrepreneurial orientation of the Resala Charity Organisation (RCO) provides a robust and transformative approach to understanding how social enterprises can function effectively in resource-constrained environments, challenging existing frameworks and advancing new knowledge. Traditionally, entrepreneurial orientation is viewed through the lenses of risk-taking, proactivity, and innovation (Miller, 1983). However, RCO's operations transcend these characteristics by incorporating deeper community involvement and volunteer-driven innovation, offering new insights into how such organisations thrive in environments like Egypt, where financial resources are limited but human capital and community networks are abundant. The executive director highlights RCO's decentralised model as a departure from conventional social enterprise structures: *“We empower each branch to operate independently because they understand the needs of their communities better than we do at the central level.”* This autonomy challenges traditional top-down models of entrepreneurship in social enterprises, particularly those proposed by scholars such as Zahra et al. (2009), who argue that central control is necessary to maintain coherence in organisational strategy. RCO demonstrates that decentralised decision-making fosters flexibility and responsiveness, resulting in an agile organisation capable of adapting to diverse community needs across different regions. This decentralised approach adds

new layers to the entrepreneurial orientation framework by illustrating how bottom-up innovation can fuel organisational sustainability and scale. Additionally, the organisation's reliance on volunteers as key drivers of innovation challenges conventional literature, which frequently emphasises financial capital as the primary resource for scaling (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006). The Director of Delta Region emphasised this novel approach, stating, *“Volunteers are the foundation of everything we do; without them, our work would not be sustainable.”* This insight challenges current frameworks that prioritise financial resource mobilisation and highlights the potential of human capital—specifically volunteerism—as a powerful resource in achieving social impact. The ability to leverage volunteers in ways that foster creativity and problem-solving reshapes our understanding of entrepreneurial orientation, introducing a model where human capital drives innovation in ways that financial resources alone cannot.

Furthermore, the literature has underexplored the intricate link between RCO's entrepreneurial orientation and community co-creation. The notion of co-creation is essential to understanding how social enterprises in Egypt, particularly RCO, engage with their communities not just as beneficiaries but as active participants in the innovation process. The sector head highlighted this relationship, saying, *“It's not just about charity; it's about creating a sense of community ownership where everyone helps.”* This contrasts with the traditional narrative of social enterprises as entities that deliver solutions to communities. Instead, RCO demonstrates that innovation can emerge from within the community itself, challenging established views of organisations as the sole innovators. By embedding leadership development into its volunteer programs, RCO adds another layer to the entrepreneurial orientation framework. The executive director noted, *“Volunteers come as ordinary people and leave as leaders.”* This emphasis on enhancing human capital is consistent with but goes beyond Teece's (2007) exploration of the ideas of dynamic capability development. While Teece's framework highlights how organisations must build, integrate, and reconfigure internal competencies to address rapidly changing environments, RCO goes a step further by embedding leadership and innovation within the community itself. This model suggests that entrepreneurial orientation is not solely about internal organisational capabilities but also about nurturing leadership within the broader community, thereby creating a network of innovators who sustain the organisation's mission over the long term.

The localised innovation model that RCO uses challenges conventional, Western-centric notions of entrepreneurial orientation. Western frameworks often emphasise the need for financial scalability and market dominance (Dees, 1998). However, RCO's operations in the Delta region and Upper Egypt reveal that social enterprises in emerging markets must prioritise community engagement and human capital over financial growth. As the Director of Upper Egypt explained, *“We have specialised services for prosthetic support, which cater directly to the people in this region.”* This adaptation to regional needs demonstrates that entrepreneurial orientation in resource-constrained environments requires a tailored approach, one that values regional specificity and community-driven solutions. This shift introduces new dimensions to the entrepreneurial

orientation literature, emphasising the need for adaptability in diverse socio-economic contexts, particularly in emerging markets. Moreover, RCO's entrepreneurial orientation offers a new perspective on sustainability. The organisation has developed a model that achieves sustainability through community involvement and local partnerships rather than relying on continuous financial inflows. As the Director of Delta Region noted, *"We coordinate with local businesses for donations in kind, such as food, clothes, and medicine, which helps us stretch our resources and provide more to those in need."* This reliance on in-kind donations and community partnerships challenges traditional economic models that assume financial capital is the sole driver of sustainability. RCO's model introduces an alternative pathway where community resources and informal networks become critical elements of an organisation's sustainability strategy, adding a new dimension to our understanding of entrepreneurial orientation in social enterprises. In conclusion, RCO's entrepreneurial orientation offers fresh insights that challenge and extend existing knowledge in the field. Through decentralised decision-making, volunteer-driven innovation, community co-creation, and localised solutions, RCO provides a model that reshapes our understanding of how social enterprises can thrive in resource-constrained environments. This narrative demonstrates that human capital and community involvement, rather than financial scalability, can drive entrepreneurial orientation in social enterprises, offering significant contributions to academia. It invites scholars and practitioners to reconsider the centrality of financial resources in driving innovation and sustainability, highlighting instead the power of community networks and volunteerism in shaping the future of social entrepreneurship.

Social Innovation

In the evolving discourse of social entrepreneurship, the Resala Charity Organisation (RCO) exemplifies a pioneering approach to social innovation that transcends traditional models. Existing literature often frames social innovation within the dichotomy of financial capital and institutional resources as the key drivers of impact (Mulgan, 2006; Nicholls & Murdock, 2012). However, RCO challenges this framework by demonstrating that human capital, in the form of volunteerism and localised governance, can serve as more sustainable mechanisms for fostering social change. The findings from interviews with key leaders in RCO offer a new dimension to understanding social innovation, particularly within emerging markets like Egypt, where financial resources are limited, and socio-economic challenges are immense. Central to RCO's innovation model is the development of volunteers as future leaders. This emphasis on capacity building presents a challenge to Western-centric models of social innovation that typically prioritise external funding or top-down leadership. *"We train volunteers to become leaders,"* states the executive director, emphasising the organisation's long-term sustainability vision. This approach shifts the focus from immediate social relief to cultivating a sustainable, self-sufficient leadership base. Traditional literature on social entrepreneurship often highlights the need for financial sustainability (Dees, 1998), but RCO's model illustrates how investing in human capital and empowering volunteers can be a more enduring driver of social impact. RCO's

decentralised governance model presents another key finding that challenges conventional theories of social innovation, which often underscore the importance of central leadership (Westley & Antadze, 2010). According to the Director of the Delta Region, *“Our branches operate independently to adapt to local needs, but they all work toward the same central goals.”* This decentralised structure not only facilitates innovation at the grassroots level but also enables the organisation to remain agile and responsive to the distinctive socio-economic conditions of each region. Mulgan (2006) argues that rigid, top-down control is often necessary for scaling social innovation, but this adaptability refutes his argument. RCO shows that local autonomy, which empowers branches to create customised solutions for their communities, can achieve scalability.

Moreover, RCO’s reliance on cross-sector partnerships introduces a fresh perspective on how social enterprises can navigate resource constraints. While traditional models often focus on financial sustainability through institutional partnerships (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006), RCO leverages these collaborations not merely for funding but for logistical support and knowledge exchange. The Director of Upper Egypt elaborates, *“The National Coalition and similar partnerships provide us with critical logistical support, allowing us to reach more people with fewer resources.”* This insight broadens our understanding of social innovation by highlighting the role of strategic partnerships as enablers of innovation rather than simply as financial backers. This expands the scope of social innovation theory by illustrating how partnerships can mitigate operational burdens while enhancing the organisation's capacity for community engagement and service delivery. One of the most compelling insights from the research is that RCO prioritises sustainability over short-term relief. The sector head notes, *“We don’t just distribute aid; we aim to create sustainable systems that address the root causes of the issues we’re tackling.”* Traditional charity models, often criticised for perpetuating dependency rather than fostering independence, face challenges from this philosophy (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). RCO redefines the role of social enterprises in addressing systemic social issues by focusing on sustainable, community-driven solutions. This finding challenges the established dichotomy between social impact and financial sustainability, implying that the strategic cultivation of human and social capital can lead to long-term solutions. Additionally, RCO’s model of volunteer-driven leadership development challenges the prevailing notion that leadership in social enterprises must emerge from formal, hierarchical structures (Sundin, 2011). The executive director remarks, *“Volunteerism is at the heart of everything we do. In addition to helping, it empowers people to own the process.”* This insight offers a fresh perspective on leadership in social enterprises, emphasising the distribution of leadership throughout the organisation and its integration into the community. This approach to leadership development provides a more nuanced understanding of how social enterprises can create lasting impact by decentralising authority and cultivating leaders from within.

The findings of this research extend the existing body of knowledge on social innovation by challenging the primacy of financial capital and centralised leadership in driving social change. RCO’s emphasis on human

capital, volunteer-driven leadership, and cross-sector partnerships presents a more contextually relevant model for social innovation in resource-constrained environments. RCO shows that community engagement and localised governance can sustain social innovation, in contrast to Western models that often view it through the lens of financial sustainability. By framing social innovation as a community-led and volunteer-driven process, RCO offers new insights into how social enterprises can scale and sustain their impact in emerging markets like Egypt. In contrast to established frameworks, such as Mulgan's (2006) theory of systemic social innovation or Dees' (1998) model of social entrepreneurship, which emphasise financial resources and institutional support as cornerstones of success, RCO's approach reframes these concepts to highlight the power of social capital. The organisation's ability to navigate socio-economic volatility and resource scarcity challenges these existing frameworks, suggesting that social innovation in emerging markets requires a fundamentally different set of drivers. *"We adapt our programs continuously, responding to the immediate needs of the community and the resources available,"* the executive director explains, underscoring the organisation's ability to remain flexible and resilient in the face of changing circumstances. This adaptability offers a fresh contribution to the literature by showing how social enterprises can thrive in dynamic environments by leveraging informal networks, community leadership, and strategic partnerships. Ultimately, RCO's model challenges established theories of social innovation by demonstrating how human capital, decentralised decision-making, and cross-sector collaboration can drive sustainable social change. These findings offer a new perspective on the role of social enterprises in emerging markets, suggesting that community empowerment and localised governance are key to achieving lasting impacts in resource-constrained environments. Through its unique approach, RCO contributes significantly to the academic discourse on social innovation, offering new insights that extend beyond the traditional focus on financial capital and institutional support.

Human Traits

The Resala Charity Organization's (RCO) research on human traits is a strong challenge to the existing literature in the field of social entrepreneurship. Specifically, it asks how human capital, leadership, and decentralised organisational structures work in places with few resources. Research frequently underscores the importance of striking a balance between financial sustainability and social impact (Austin et al., 2006; Zahra et al., 2009), emphasising the crucial role of financial resources in an organisation's ability to initiate and maintain change. However, Resala provides a different narrative—one where human traits such as empathy, adaptability, and trust drive organisational success and render financial capital secondary to the effectiveness of human capital. The organisation thrives through a decentralised structure, enabling local branches to operate independently. The Director of the Delta Region notes, *"Each branch operates with a level of autonomy, allowing them to adapt their strategies to the specific needs of their communities."* This underscores a crucial realisation: the Delta Region leverages trust and local knowledge to customise strategies that address specific

community requirements. Here, we challenge existing literature that tends to centralise decision-making in social enterprises (Leadbeater, 1997). Resala demonstrates that trust and decentralisation enable local branches to innovate and adapt in ways that a top-down approach might hinder. This structure reflects a new dimension of social entrepreneurship—one that goes beyond prescribed strategic frameworks to enable local leadership to foster community-driven solutions. Moreover, reliance on volunteers as a core driver of Resala's operations challenges dominant frameworks in social entrepreneurship that often prioritise the role of financial capital (Dees, 1998). The executive director emphasises, *"The heart of our organisation is our volunteers; without them, we wouldn't be able to accomplish what we do. They are the true driving force behind Resala."* This assertion invites a re-evaluation of social enterprise resource strategies. While previous studies have largely focused on external funding and revenue generation as critical components for organisational growth (Boschec, 2001), Resala's model reveals the power of human capital—specifically volunteerism—to sustain impactful operations without a heavy reliance on financial resources.

Furthermore, resilience, a key trait of Resala's organisational identity, offers a new lens through which to understand how social enterprises can persist in volatile environments. Contrary to prevailing notions that emphasise structured planning and risk management (Kickul & Lyons, 2012), Resala's leaders consistently highlight their ability to adapt in response to financial constraints. One director stated, *"Even when we face financial difficulties, we never stop. We adjust our plans, reduce costs, and make sure that we continue serving the people."* This quote demonstrates the intertwining of the organisation's resilience and its ability to make real-time strategic adjustments, providing a more fluid and adaptive model of social enterprise sustainability. Such adaptability offers new insights for the field, suggesting that strategic improvisation, rather than rigid planning, may be more effective for social enterprises in emerging markets. Another significant contribution to the literature comes from Resala's approach to leadership development, which occurs organically through volunteer engagement. Volunteers are not only contributors but are trained to take leadership roles within the organisation. The Director of Upper Egypt's Follow-up and Quality states, *"We heavily invest in our volunteers because they are the foundation of our success. Without their commitment and passion, we wouldn't be able to operate."* This organic leadership development deviates from the structured leadership pipelines typically discussed in social entrepreneurship literature (Thompson, Alvy, & Lees, 2000). Resala's experience suggests that leadership within social enterprises can emerge naturally from communities, challenging the assumption that formal training and leadership programs are necessary to cultivate effective leaders. Resala also redefines how social enterprises can engage with communities through informal networks. As the executive director noted, *"We believe in the power of informal networks and relationships to foster trust and facilitate change."* This demonstrates how social capital, in the form of informal relationships, can serve as a critical resource for overcoming institutional challenges, such as regulatory barriers or financial shortages. Traditional social entrepreneurship models that focus on formal networks and partnerships (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010) may overlook the importance of these more nuanced, trust-based relationships that allow organisations like Resala

to navigate complex social and regulatory environments. Furthermore, the organisation's decentralised financial management further challenges existing frameworks. The executive director highlights, *"We don't centralise our financial management; each branch has full autonomy. This allows them to operate efficiently based on local needs."* This presents a significant shift from models that advocate tight financial controls at the centre of social enterprises (Dees, 2007).

Resala's decentralised model, grounded in trust, enables a more flexible and responsive financial strategy, which is particularly useful in navigating local socio-economic conditions. In terms of extending existing knowledge, Resala's approach to sustaining its operations without reliance on significant financial capital or rigid hierarchical structures suggests a new paradigm for social entrepreneurship in resource-constrained environments. The organisation's emphasis on community co-creation, volunteer-driven leadership, and trust-based decentralised decision-making makes a fresh contribution to the literature, presenting a viable alternative to the dominant financial-centric models. By focusing on human capital as the primary resource, Resala opens new avenues for research into how social enterprises in emerging markets can scale and sustain impact through leveraging human traits rather than external financial inputs. In conclusion, Resala's operational model challenges established theories and provides new insights into how human traits such as resilience, empathy, trust, and adaptability can drive social entrepreneurship success. By prioritising human capital over financial capital, embracing decentralised governance, and cultivating leadership organically through volunteerism, Resala offers a new framework for understanding social innovation and organisational sustainability in emerging markets. This approach does not merely align with existing research; it pushes the boundaries of what we know, calling for a re-evaluation of how social enterprises can operate and thrive in contexts where traditional financial resources are limited.

Business Strategies

The Resala Charity Organisation (RCO) offers a significant contribution to the field of social entrepreneurship, particularly within the theme of business strategies, by challenging conventional models and introducing innovative practices that align with Egypt's dynamic socio-economic environment. Unlike traditional business strategies that heavily rely on financial capital, RCO's focus is on human capital, specifically the strategic use of volunteers to drive both operations and leadership development. As the executive director emphasised, *"Our strength lies in our volunteers. They are not just contributors; they are the engine driving our fundraising and operations."* This humanistic approach shifts the focus from financial sustainability as the primary driver of scalability to a model where community engagement and volunteerism take centre stage. These challenges established literature, which often highlights the necessity of financial capital in scaling social enterprises (e.g., Dees, 2001; Austin et al., 2006). The reliance on volunteers not only reduces operational costs but also creates a robust leadership pipeline. As the Director of Delta Region noted, *"We have a structured system where*

volunteers can grow within the organisation, taking on more responsibilities as they develop.” This approach adds a fresh perspective to our understanding of leadership in social enterprises, which typically revolves around formalised, paid roles. RCO cultivates a more sustainable and adaptive model by decentralising leadership and embedding it within the volunteer structure, training volunteers as future leaders, and integrating them into the organisation’s decision-making processes. This directly challenges existing frameworks that prioritise hierarchical and formal leadership structures (Bornstein & Davis, 2010).

Additionally, RCO’s business strategies emphasise financial transparency and trust as essential components of sustainability. The executive director highlighted this by stating, *“Financial transparency is key to maintaining trust with our donors. We ensure complete accounting of every penny and ensure our donors understand the impact of their contributions.”* Unlike other organisations that may encounter difficulties in fostering long-term donor trust, RCO shows that systematic transparency can sustain trust, even in a volatile economic environment such as Egypt’s. This reinforces a shift from traditional models, where financial sustainability is often pursued through institutional donors or grants, to one where localised, community-driven funding sources are cultivated through trust and transparency (Leadbeater, 1997). RCO’s decentralised approach, where branches have significant autonomy to tailor strategies to their local contexts, introduces a new understanding of scalability in social enterprises. As the Director of Upper Egypt noted, *“Each branch has autonomy in decision-making, allowing them to respond swiftly to the needs of their local communities.”* This decentralisation challenges the prevailing notion that scaling social enterprises requires central control (Bradach, 2003). Instead, RCO demonstrates that decentralised models can enhance agility, enabling the organisation to respond to diverse socio-economic conditions across Egypt while maintaining coherence in its overarching mission. This adaptive model suggests that social businesses should rethink how they can grow, especially in places with limited resources where centralised operations might make it harder to be responsive and come up with new ideas locally (Mair & Martí, 2006).

One of the more disruptive elements of RCO’s strategy is its approach to partnerships. Rather than relying solely on external funding, RCO forms strategic alliances with local businesses, NGOs, and governmental entities to expand its operational capacity. As the sector head stated, *“Our relationships with national programs like Haya Karima allow us to tap into governmental resources, expanding our reach significantly.”* This collaborative approach challenges the Western-centric model, which often emphasises competitive, market-based strategies as the primary route to scaling social enterprises (Thompson, 2008). Instead, RCO focuses on cross-sector collaboration, leveraging partnerships to access resources and scale impact—a model not extensively explored in the existing social entrepreneurship literature, particularly within emerging markets. By developing a community-driven innovation model where volunteers are both the labour force and strategic leaders, RCO further challenges traditional social entrepreneurship paradigms. As noted by the executive director, *“We build on community participation and allow volunteers to lead in their areas of*

strength. This makes our strategy dynamic and inclusive.” The focus on community co-creation marks a significant shift from the traditional top-down methods prevalent in social enterprises, which typically concentrate leadership and innovation at the top. RCO’s model suggests that innovation can emerge from the community level, driven by the direct engagement and leadership of volunteers. This approach offers a fresh perspective on how social enterprises can sustain and scale their impact by integrating human capital and grassroots leadership into their core business strategies (Dacin et al., 2011).

What RCO's strategies reveal is a broader pattern of localisation and adaptability. By giving autonomy to branches and decentralising decision-making, RCO illustrates a norm in the Egyptian social entrepreneurship landscape, where localised solutions are critical for addressing diverse community needs. This pattern underscores the importance of adaptability in resource-constrained environments, where flexibility in strategy is often more effective than rigid, centralised control (Santos, 2012). RCO's model adds a layer of sustainability, not extensively explored in existing literature, through its reliance on volunteerism and integration of community members as key stakeholders in decision-making processes. In conclusion, RCO’s business strategies represent a significant departure from existing social enterprise models, offering a fresh lens through which we can understand how organisations can sustain and scale their impact in emerging markets. Through decentralisation, community-driven innovation, strategic partnerships, and an emphasis on human capital, RCO challenges the dominant frameworks of financial scalability and offers new insights into how social enterprises can thrive in resource-limited environments. These findings contribute to the literature by offering a new conceptualisation of business strategies in social entrepreneurship, particularly in the context of the MENA region, and open new avenues for future research on decentralised leadership and volunteer-driven scalability in social enterprises.

Institutional Environment

The Resala Charity Organisation (RCO) presents a compelling case for navigating Egypt's complex institutional environment, challenging existing frameworks of social entrepreneurship, particularly regarding how organisations thrive within resource-constrained environments. Traditional literature, such as Zahra et al. (2009), tends to emphasise formal institutional structures as critical for organisational sustainability. However, insights from the RCO participants demonstrate that, in emerging markets such as Egypt, informal community-based networks and decentralised governance models can play a significant role, challenging the more rigid and formalised conceptualisations of organisational structures. The executive director of RCO provides a clear example of this departure from conventional thought. He emphasised, *“We have a centralised plan for the year, but each branch tailors it based on local needs. This flexibility allows us to be both structured and adaptable.”* This localised autonomy challenges the existing literature on hierarchical management and formal planning, suggesting that decentralised operations can be more effective in dynamic social contexts. In Egypt,

where socio-economic conditions vary drastically across regions, RCO's model of localised decision-making proves critical for success, contrasting with Western-centric models that advocate for more rigid, centralised control. One of the more intriguing insights emerging from RCO's approach is its reliance on volunteerism. The Delta Region Director stated, "*Volunteers are not just helpers—they are key to everything we do. Without them, Resala wouldn't function at the scale it does.*" This challenges the established thought within the field, which often views financial capital as the primary constraint for scaling social enterprises (Battilana & Lee, 2014).

RCO illustrates that human capital, cultivated through volunteerism and community involvement, can substitute for financial resources in enabling large-scale impact. This shift in focus from financial to social capital invites a re-examination of frameworks that prioritise monetary assets for understanding organisational sustainability. The literature well documents the role of government partnerships in social entrepreneurship, particularly in lowering entry barriers and operational constraints (Dees & Anderson, 2003). Yet, RCO's nuanced relationship with governmental entities offers new dimensions to this discourse. The Director of Upper Egypt's Follow-up and Quality highlighted, "*Working with government entities through the National Alliance has opened doors for us, reducing bureaucratic obstacles that would otherwise slow us down.*" This demonstrates how informal networks can complement formal partnerships, allowing social enterprises to bypass regulatory inefficiencies. In contrast to the rigid separation between state and non-state actors that some authors emphasise (Seelos & Mair, 2005), RCO's blending of formal and informal strategies suggests a more symbiotic relationship between government and social organisations in emerging markets. Moreover, the sector head reinforced this by stating, "*We have a central plan for the year, but each branch tailors it based on local needs.*" This further contributes to a new understanding of the institutional environment, where localised governance and flexibility prove essential for navigating rapidly shifting socio-economic conditions. Rather than adhering strictly to a top-down or bottom-up model, RCO's hybrid approach shows how a blend of both governance styles can better support resilience in resource-constrained environments.

Perhaps the most significant contribution RCO offers to the literature is its approach to volunteer engagement and retention. The executive director noted, "*Our volunteers progress through various levels, taking on more responsibilities as they go.*" This structured system of internal promotion not only enhances operational efficiency but also fosters a sense of ownership among volunteers. This challenges the traditional narrative that social enterprises, particularly in resource-limited contexts, struggle with maintaining a skilled workforce. RCO's ability to build leadership from within through volunteerism introduces a new dimension to the discourse on social enterprise sustainability, suggesting that internal capacity-building can replace the need for external professional resources (Santos, 2012). RCO's operations, therefore, extend beyond the conventional frameworks that emphasise financial and professional capital. Instead, the organisation demonstrates how social capital, through volunteerism and community engagement, can serve as a primary resource for driving

social change. This finding adds a new layer to the understanding of social entrepreneurship, particularly in emerging markets, where financial constraints often limit growth potential. By leveraging informal networks, decentralised governance, and volunteerism,

RCO offers a model of resilience that challenges the Western-centric focus on financial and institutional support as key drivers of sustainability. These insights significantly extend existing knowledge about the institutional environment by showing how social enterprises can thrive through adaptive, localised strategies that leverage informal networks and community engagement. In contrast to much of the literature that emphasises financial sustainability as the main challenge for social enterprises (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Santos, 2012), RCO demonstrates that human capital, cultivated through volunteerism, can be equally crucial to overcoming resource constraints. The organisation's ability to blend formal and informal mechanisms by combining government partnerships with decentralised volunteer networks contributes fresh perspectives on how social enterprises can effectively navigate resource-constrained environments, particularly in emerging markets. In conclusion, the narrative from RCO contests conventional theories of the institutional environment by illustrating that social capital can be as vital as financial capital in sustaining social enterprises. The organisation's dependence on community-based volunteerism, its capacity to modify governance frameworks to suit local circumstances, and its strategic alliances with both formal and informal entities enhance the understanding of how social enterprises can prosper in emerging markets. This not only broadens the theoretical framework for social entrepreneurship but also provides practical insights for other organisations operating in analogous contexts.

4.2 Cross-case findings

This section provides a thorough cross-case analysis, carefully developed from an extensive assessment of four notable Egyptian social enterprises: Life Makers Foundation (LMF), Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK), Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), and Resala Charity Organisation (RCO). Each organisation represents adaptive social enterprise; it shows how human characteristics, business strategies, social innovation, entrepreneurial orientation, and institutional environment come together to impact organisational practices in environments with limited resources. Each organisation is distinct in its beginnings and main goals. The five thematic pillars constitute a comprehensive analytical framework, facilitating the examination of entrepreneurial processes that empower each organisation to effectively navigate and strategically exploit the complexities of Egypt's institutional environment.

4.3 Institutional Adaptation Model Development

The institutional adaptation model developed in this study offers an innovative and empirically grounded framework for explaining how social enterprises in emerging markets, particularly Egypt, navigate institutional voids and resource constraints. Synthesising insights from the cross-case analysis of four prominent Egyptian social enterprises—Life Makers Foundation (LMF), Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK), Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), and Resala Charity Organisation (RCO)—the model integrates five critical themes: entrepreneurial orientation (EO), social innovation (SI), human traits, business strategies (BS), and institutional environment (IE). This cohesive framework not only challenges and extends prevailing theories, including institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), but also introduces new perspectives on the adaptive strategies used by social enterprises operating in resource-constrained institutional environments. Unlike conventional models, this framework is not merely an extension of existing theories but represents a significant departure by offering a context-specific understanding tailored to the realities of social enterprises in Egypt. By integrating these five critical themes, the model makes a substantial contribution to academic discourse on social entrepreneurship, particularly in emerging markets, by presenting a holistic, adaptive framework for organisational sustainability.

Entrepreneurial Orientation: A Community-Centred Approach

The first critical component of the model reconceptualises entrepreneurial orientation (EO) by shifting the focus from traditional theories of competitive aggressiveness, risk-taking, and proactiveness (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996) to a community-centred orientation. In Egypt, where resource scarcity is a constant reality, EO emphasises the significance of social capital. For example, the success of social enterprises like the Misr El-Kheir Foundation and the Egyptian Food Bank arises not from competition but from community engagement and collaborative networks. These organisations thrive by fostering trust-based relationships with local communities, volunteers, and NGOs, which allows them to overcome the limitations imposed by weak formal institutions. This approach extends institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; North, 1990; Amon Simba, 2020) by highlighting how social enterprises in Egypt use relational capital to mitigate risks and reduce competition for limited resources. In contrast to Western entrepreneurial models (Schumpeter, 1934; Kirzner, 1973), which reward individual risk-taking, Egyptian social enterprises demonstrate that resilience is fostered through collective approaches, ensuring long-term organisational stability and success. This community-driven reconceptualisation of EO challenges the traditional assumptions of entrepreneurial competitiveness, showcasing how collaborative risk-sharing enhances sustainability in resource-constrained environments. The following sections provide an in-depth discussion of each theme, illustrating how they collectively shape the resilience and innovation of social enterprises in Egypt's complex institutional landscape.

Social Innovation: Needs-Driven and Context-Specific

The second component, social innovation (SI), focuses on necessity-driven innovation rather than technological advancements. In Egypt, where institutional voids and financial constraints are pervasive, social innovation emerges as an adaptive response to urgent community needs. For example, the Egyptian Food Bank innovated by mobilising local community resources and volunteer efforts to address food insecurity through cost-effective solutions. These innovations, driven by necessity, contrast with traditional models of market-driven innovation, where technology often plays a central role. This model extends concepts of bottom-of-the-pyramid innovation (Prahalad & Hart, 2002) and frugal innovation (Radjou et al., 2012) by demonstrating how social enterprises in resource-constrained institutional environments leverage local knowledge to develop cost-effective and scalable solutions. It challenges prevailing theories of institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; North, 1990; Simba, 2020), emphasising the adaptive mechanisms necessary for navigating challenges in emerging markets, as opposed to the adaptive mechanisms observed in developed economies. In contrast, the social innovation observed in Egypt highlights the importance of culturally appropriate and locally sustainable solutions that respond to social needs rather than market competition.

Hybrid Financial Models: Balancing Social Impact and Financial Sustainability

A key aspect of the institutional adaptation model is the role of hybrid financial models, which enable social enterprises to balance social impact with financial sustainability. In Egypt, where access to traditional funding sources such as government grants and private investments is limited (Kerlin, 2006; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010), social enterprises like the Misr El-Kheir Foundation and Resala Charity Organisation have embraced hybrid financial strategies. These strategies diversify revenue streams by combining philanthropic donations with commercial partnerships and fee-based services, thereby increasing financial resilience in the face of economic volatility. This model extends the work of Smith et al. (2013) on hybrid organisations, demonstrating that hybrid financial models are not merely reactive responses to resource constraints but proactive, strategic tools for long-term sustainability. In the Egyptian context, where formal financial institutions are weak, these hybrid models provide the flexibility needed to adapt to shifting economic conditions and changing donor behaviour. By integrating both social and financial objectives, the model challenges the assumption that social enterprises in emerging markets must depend solely on philanthropy or foreign aid (Bornstein, 2007). Instead, the diversification of financial streams emerges as a crucial strategy for ensuring both economic viability and social impact.

Institutional Adaptability: Thriving Amid Institutional Voids

The fourth element, institutional adaptability, examines how social enterprises in Egypt thrive amid institutional challenges, recognising that Africa possesses its own distinct institutions, which often require adaptation rather than being entirely void of structure (Simba, 2020; Khanna & Palepu, 2010). This perspective challenges the concept of institutional voids by acknowledging that Africa's institutions, though different from those in developed markets, are not absent but rather distinct and necessitate context-specific adaptations. For example, organisations like the Life Makers Foundation have developed decentralised leadership structures and informal governance mechanisms to bypass bureaucratic inefficiencies. These adaptive structures enable swift responses to socio-political changes, ensuring operational continuity. This element of the model challenges and extends both institutional theory (North, 1990) and strategic contingency theory (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), offering new insights into how social enterprises proactively build internal capacities to thrive despite institutional voids. The model emphasises the importance of informal governance, community-led initiatives, and agile decision-making, demonstrating how these factors contribute to resilience in the face of political instability, economic shocks, and changing public policy landscapes.

Feedback Loops and Human Traits

A distinctive feature of the model is its emphasis on the feedback loops between its components. Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) drives social innovation (SI), which informs business strategies (BS) and influences the development of hybrid financial models. These financial models, in turn, enable the organisation to maintain institutional adaptability, reinforcing EO and SI in future cycles. Moreover, human traits—such as resilience, creativity, and leadership—act as mediators, influenced by EO, SI, and BS. These traits are shaped by the community-centred EO and necessity-driven SI and simultaneously drive entrepreneurial and strategic actions. This dual role enriches the model by positioning human traits as both drivers and outcomes of the adaptive process, thus enhancing the organisation's capacity for sustainable growth. The interconnected nature of these elements' contrasts with traditional linear organisational models (Mintzberg, 1979; Chandler, 1962), offering a more dynamic, cyclical perspective.

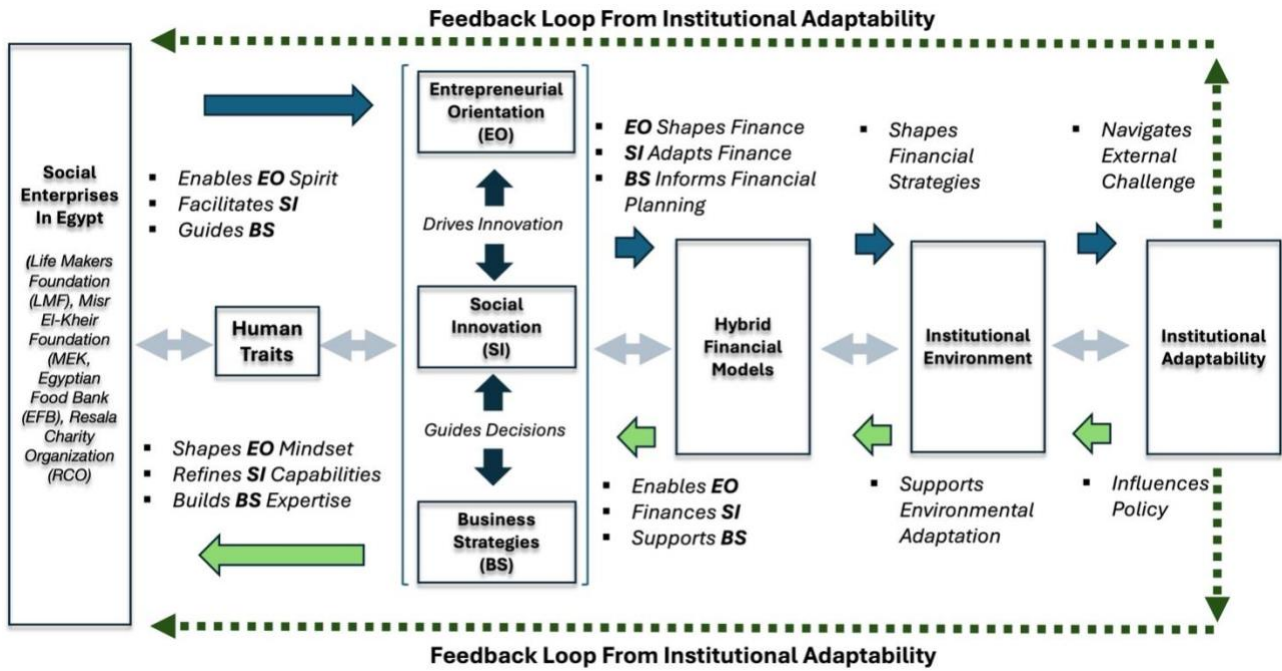
4.4 Synthesis of Cross-Case Findings

The analysis reveals distinct strategic behaviours based on funding type. For instance, organisations with strong donor backing (e.g., Cases B and D) exhibited higher formalisation and alignment with international impact metrics, whereas those with grassroots or self-generated funding (e.g., Case A) displayed greater operational flexibility but struggled with scalability. These patterns align with resource dependency theory,

where financial control structures shape legitimacy strategies and operational constraints (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). A second axis of differentiation emerged between religious-affiliated and secular social enterprises. Case C, rooted in Islamic social finance norms (e.g., sadaqah, waqf), prioritised community reciprocity and embedded legitimacy, while secular organisations adopted broader development framings. This contrast illustrates how institutional logics influence both mission framing and public trust (Greenwood et al., 2011). Finally, differences in regulatory pressures were also salient. Enterprises engaged with international actors (Cases B and D) often faced dual compliance systems—local laws and international donor standards—while locally embedded organisations (Case A) responded more to informal norms and regional power dynamics. This duality reflects hybrid isomorphic pressures and regulatory complexity in transnational settings (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

The Institutional Adaptation Model makes significant contributions to the fields of social entrepreneurship and innovation. It reorients the concept of entrepreneurial orientation (EO), broadens the understanding of social innovation (SI) in resource-constrained environments, and demonstrates how hybrid financial models can be strategically employed to ensure financial sustainability. Furthermore, the model enhances institutional theory by illustrating the critical role of informal governance mechanisms in navigating institutional voids. The accompanying diagram, titled *Figure 3: Institutional Adaptation Model for Social Enterprises*, visually represents these interactions, highlighting the feedback loops and reinforcing the interconnectedness of EO, SI, business strategies (BS), hybrid financial models, institutional adaptability, and human traits. This visual aid complements the model's dynamic and adaptive nature, illustrating how these elements interact to drive organisational success in complex environments.

Figure 2: Institutional Adaptation Model for Social Enterprises



Source: Compiled by author

This section concludes the cross-case findings and offers a comprehensive overview of the institutional adaptation model. The subsequent chapters will explore the implications for theory, practice, and policy and outline the contributions of this research, its limitations, and future research directions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5 Chapter Overview

The present study addresses a significant gap in the literature on social entrepreneurship, particularly in the context of emerging markets such as Egypt, where institutional voids, resource constraints, and socio-economic challenges significantly influence entrepreneurial strategies (Defourny & Nyssens, 2017; Teasdale, 2012). This study expands on existing theoretical frameworks, mainly developed within Western contexts, by exploring entrepreneurial orientation (EO), necessity-driven social innovation, and hybrid financial models. The results present a new model of social entrepreneurship that works in environments with limited resources. This model offers an alternative to traditional theories like those by Covin & Slevin (1989) and Lumpkin & Dess (1996), which focus on entrepreneurial orientation (EO) as a framework involving risk-taking, proactiveness, and competitive aggression and are mainly made for market-driven economies. This study, however, expands this understanding to include community-centric approaches suitable for resource-constrained environments. A significant contribution of the study is extending the concept of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) to account for the specific socio-economic and institutional dynamics of emerging markets. Rather than redefining EO, this study offers a nuanced, context-specific interpretation that highlights how social enterprises adapt to unique challenges such as perceived institutional gaps and resource constraints. This involves understanding EO not just through traditional risk-taking and competitive behaviour but also through community engagement, informal network usage, and collaboration, which are more appropriate in contexts like Egypt. In resource-constrained contexts, EO extends beyond risk-taking and competition to prioritise collaboration, community engagement, and informal networks. Empirical evidence from LMF illustrates how decentralised leadership and grassroots partnerships enable social enterprises to navigate institutional voids effectively, expanding Simba's (2021) argument for context-sensitive entrepreneurship.

This reconceptualisation aligns with recent scholarship on context-sensitive entrepreneurship in emerging markets. However, the findings suggest that community engagement, collaboration, and the strategic use of informal networks shape EO in resource-constrained settings such as Egypt. This reconceptualisation is in line with Simba's (2021) research, which highlights the significance of context-sensitive entrepreneurship, especially in environments where institutional and social constraints are prominent. Artefact analysis served as a critical lens for validating and contextualising the interview data. For instance, organisational websites and social media channels often echoed claims made during interviews regarding social mission and innovation practices. In other cases, inconsistencies between formal strategy documents and spoken narratives revealed institutional tensions or legitimacy work. This triangulation added interpretive depth and enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings, particularly in understanding how SEs position themselves across conflicting institutional logics (Hodder, 2000; Boin, 2009).

5.1 Development of Propositions

This study advances theoretical understanding of social entrepreneurship, particularly in resource-limited non-Western contexts, by integrating these findings with existing research on the subject. The study uses information from many situations to offer insights that enhance the academic field and promote scholarly discourse on the intricate relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, social innovation, and adaptive tactics in emerging economies. This cross-case study clarifies common conceptualisations among the instances, establishing a solid basis for further empirical research and theoretical enhancements in social entrepreneurship studies.

5.1.1.1 Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation in the context of social enterprises traditionally encompasses risk-taking, innovation, and proactivity (Miller, 1983; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). However, these dimensions must be reinterpreted in resource-constrained environments like Egypt to address unique institutional, economic, and social challenges. This cross-case analysis, synthesising insights from the Life Makers Foundation (LMF), the Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK), the Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), and the Resala Charity Organisation (RCO), reveals that entrepreneurial orientation in Egypt blends decentralised leadership, network-driven innovation, and adaptability. This adapted entrepreneurial orientation not only provides a fresh perspective on social entrepreneurship in emerging markets but also challenges existing Western-centric models by emphasising collective rather than competitive strategies. Across all organisations, long-term, trust-based partnerships and community engagement emerged as essential to their entrepreneurial strategies, demonstrating a significant deviation from the competition-driven focus often seen in traditional entrepreneurial orientation literature (Covin & Slevin, 1989). Unlike financially dominant Western models, these Egyptian social enterprises depend on local, collaborative networks to secure resources and drive innovation. As LMF's senior officer of communication and partnerships explained, *"Our partnership with Samsung has been ongoing for nine years because we've built a relationship based on mutual benefit and shared goals."* Similarly, EFB's Head of External Affairs stated, *"We work with local farms, creating sustainable systems that serve both our goals and the local economy."* These relationships provide essential operational resources and underscore the importance of social capital, a concept less emphasised in mainstream entrepreneurial orientation literature. The study shows that network-driven entrepreneurial orientation in Egypt replaces financial capital with relational capital. While this aligns with Mair and Martí's (2006) insights, it extends the argument by highlighting how long-term interdependence is crucial for achieving impact. Decentralised leadership, a recurring theme, exemplifies another divergence from traditional entrepreneurial orientation models that typically emphasise centralised control (Miller, 1983). All studied organisations

empower local leaders and volunteers to make decisions based on their direct knowledge of community needs, thereby enhancing adaptability and responsiveness. RCO's executive director noted, *"We empower each branch to operate independently because they understand the needs of their communities better than we do at the central level."* Similarly, LMF's Projects Director described how, *"Volunteers are more than just manpower; they are leaders in their communities. They are the driving force behind most of our projects."*

This decentralised model challenges existing entrepreneurial orientation frameworks that prioritise top-down decision-making by reflecting an inclusive approach that distributes leadership. By integrating local voices into decision-making, these organisations demonstrate that decentralisation not only fosters innovation but also strengthens alignment with community priorities. This supports research on grassroots leadership (Battilana & Lee, 2014) while offering new insights for social enterprises in emerging markets. The analysis also shows that these organisations' innovation stems from necessity and community-specific solutions, rather than market competition. In contrast to entrepreneurial orientation models that prioritise innovation for competitive advantage (Covin & Slevin, 1991), these organisations innovate primarily to address logistical and resource constraints. EFB's CEO advisor illustrated this approach: *"We had to integrate advanced technologies into our operations to ensure that every donation reaches the right people at the right time."* MEK's project senior manager added, *"There is freedom to innovate; any employee can submit proposals to a dedicated department that reviews and implements innovative ideas, rewarding creativity."* Such employee-driven innovation demonstrates a decentralised approach where new ideas come from all levels. This builds on theories of inclusive innovation (Austin et al., 2006) and questions the entrepreneurial orientation literature that often asserts innovation originates from centralised leadership (Miller, 1983). Institutional constraints, particularly regulatory challenges, significantly influence entrepreneurial behaviour across these organisations, requiring adaptability that transcends traditional risk-taking. Egyptian social enterprises must carefully navigate bureaucratic processes, encouraging a form of entrepreneurial orientation grounded in risk management and compliance. LMF's Operations Director stated, *"Bureaucracy is a major challenge in Egypt, but we've learnt to navigate it effectively."* EFB's CEO reinforced this adaptability: *"Navigating Egypt's regulatory framework is a challenge, but we have learnt to adapt and thrive despite the constraints."* These insights suggest a form of entrepreneurial orientation that balances risk-taking with institutional navigation—a necessity in emerging markets where regulatory volatility can obstruct organisational growth (DiMaggio, 1988). These organisations demonstrate that institutional resilience, rather than solely financial ambition, shapes entrepreneurial orientation in resource-constrained environments by prioritising adaptability over high-risk behaviour.

This analysis highlights the crucial role of volunteerism and community-driven leadership, which redefines the mobilisation of human capital within social enterprises. Volunteers in these organisations contribute not only as operational support but also as leaders and innovators, fostering a culture of inclusivity that contrasts

starkly with financially driven entrepreneurial orientation models. RCO's Director of Delta Region highlighted this approach: *"Volunteers are the foundation of everything we do; without them, our work would not be sustainable."* The Manager of Evaluation and Follow-Up at LMF elaborated, saying, *"Our volunteers not only execute tasks but also participate in the decision-making process, thereby investing in the outcomes."* By empowering volunteers as leaders, these organisations demonstrate that entrepreneurial orientation in resource-limited environments prioritises human capital as a core resource, reinforcing the importance of relational and community capital in sustaining operations (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). Moreover, these organisations reveal an alternative scaling strategy that is distinct from conventional market expansion models, which focus on broad market reach. Instead, they adopt a localised approach that prioritises community impact over market dominance. MEK's project senior manager described this approach, stating, *"We tailor our projects and services to the specific requirements of each governorate in Egypt,"* while EFB's Head of External Affairs emphasised adaptability in response to economic volatility, stating, *"Even in times of economic hardship, we have found ways to innovate, such as adjusting our programs to meet the changing needs of the population."* These approaches suggest that scaling in Egyptian social enterprises is not about competition, but about resilience within local communities, reflecting an entrepreneurial orientation model that measures success by relevance and adaptability rather than market expansion. The cross-case analysis underscores that entrepreneurial orientation in Egypt's social enterprises diverges from traditional Western frameworks, which emphasise competitive risk-taking and market-driven innovation. Instead, these organisations embody a form of entrepreneurial orientation characterised by collaborative networks, decentralised leadership, and community-driven innovation. This finding aligns with recent calls to adapt entrepreneurial orientation theory to non-Western contexts (Teece et al., 1997; Pache & Santos, 2010), suggesting that emerging market environments require entrepreneurial behaviours that prioritise collective resilience over individualistic ambition.

Proposition 1: Entrepreneurial orientation in social enterprises is characterised by decentralised leadership, community co-creation, and network-driven innovation rather than risk-taking and market competition.

This idea combines what we learnt from the cross-case study and challenges the common entrepreneurial orientation view. It suggests that for social businesses in emerging markets, social capital and adaptability are more important than taking financial risks. By highlighting collaborative innovation, institutional adaptability, and community-centred leadership, this study offers a nuanced framework for entrepreneurial orientation that recognises the distinctive requirements of social enterprises in contexts like Egypt. In conclusion, this analysis adds to the entrepreneurial orientation literature by presenting a model of entrepreneurial behaviour that aligns with the needs of emerging markets. These organisations redefine entrepreneurial orientation by prioritising community engagement, volunteer-driven leadership, and localised scaling, shaping it through collective strategies rather than competitive ones. Future research could investigate how these patterns manifest across

other emerging economies, providing a broader understanding of entrepreneurial orientation in global social entrepreneurship.

5.1.1.2 Social Innovation

Social innovation in Egyptian social enterprises reflects unique approaches that prioritise adaptability, community empowerment, and cross-sector collaboration—differing significantly from traditional Western models. Examining the Life Makers Foundation (LMF), the Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK), the Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), and the Resala Charity Organisation (RCO) reveals consistent themes in how these organisations navigate institutional challenges, leverage human capital, and implement community-driven solutions. This integrated analysis underscores the distinctiveness of these organisations in Egypt's resource-constrained environment, demonstrating how social innovation can emerge without reliance on financial capital or hierarchical governance models. The role of innovation as a tool for social transformation emerged prominently across all four organisations, though their approach to innovation differs from conventional models that emphasise technological advancements or rapid scalability (Dees & Anderson, 2006). In contrast, innovation here is inherently community-driven, responding to local needs and resource limitations. The CEO of EFB illustrated this point, saying, *“In Egypt, you can’t rely on traditional models. We’ve had to be creative, like setting up livestock programs with local women. It’s about making the most of limited resources.”* This highlights how EFB adapts by creating low-cost, sustainable projects. Similarly, MEK employs income-generating initiatives to guarantee enduring impact, even after depleting initial funds. MEK’s project senior manager noted, *“Our projects don’t end when the funding stops; we find ways to keep them going through entrepreneurship and partnerships.”* These insights challenge traditional social innovation theories that prioritise rapid market expansion, highlighting a model where impact grows through locally embedded sustainable practices (Bornstein, 2007). Volunteerism as a central resource marks another critical theme, positioning human capital—not financial capital—as the driving force behind social innovation. This is especially evident at RCO, where volunteer-led projects are key to the organisation’s impact. The executive director emphasised, *“We train volunteers to become leaders. Volunteerism is at the heart of everything we do.”* This approach not only empowers volunteers but also expands organisational capacity without the costs associated with a paid workforce.

Similarly, LMF's decentralised model reflects this reliance on volunteerism. As the Operations Director shared, *“The power of our organisation lies in our volunteers. We don’t have to hire paid staff; our volunteers work out of passion, which helps us scale our impact significantly.”* These insights reveal a fundamental difference from traditional frameworks, which often assume that professional, salaried staff are necessary for sustainable impact (Dees, 1998). Instead, these organisations leverage community volunteers, showing how human capital can foster social innovation through decentralised, community-driven efforts. Cross-sector partnerships are a

crucial enabler of social innovation, with each organisation actively collaborating with governmental and private entities to enhance its impact and scale. MEK exemplifies this approach with partnerships that integrate emerging trends into their strategy. The Director of Scientific Research & Innovation explained, *“We adapt our strategy every three years to reflect new trends such as climate change and digital transformation.”* These partnerships not only provide MEK with external knowledge but also ensure their initiatives remain relevant in a dynamic environment. EFB’s reliance on partnerships similarly showcases the role of collaboration in achieving scale, especially in resource-limited settings. The Head of External Affairs at EFB explained, *“Without collaboration between government, the private sector, and NGOs, it’s impossible to reach our goals. Our partnerships are key to scaling our impact and ensuring sustainability.”* Unlike the competitive, market-driven models of entrepreneurial orientation seen in traditional literature (Covin & Slevin, 1989), these findings reveal how collaboration—rather than competition—enables Egyptian social enterprises to navigate regulatory and economic challenges effectively.

Sustainability, as a core philosophy rather than merely a goal, drives the organisations’ operations, challenging traditional relief-focused models. MEK and EFB each prioritise initiatives that empower communities to maintain their impact independently. EFB’s Head of External Affairs commented, *“Our focus is not just on providing meals but on finding innovative ways to produce food locally. Our farm initiatives have made us less dependent on external donations.”* By fostering self-reliant communities, EFB challenges dependency models that dominate the literature on aid organisations (Seelos & Mair, 2005). Similarly, RCO’s sustainable systems approach departs from conventional charity models that are criticised for perpetuating dependency. The sector head of RCO noted, *“We don’t just distribute aid; we aim to create sustainable systems that address the root causes of the issues we’re tackling.”* This shift underscores the importance of community empowerment over temporary relief, suggesting that long-term solutions are more viable when social enterprises prioritise capacity building within communities. Adaptability to institutional challenges is essential for sustainability, particularly given Egypt’s complex regulatory and economic landscape. MEK and EFB each demonstrate how adaptability strengthens their ability to navigate these challenges. The CEO advisor at EFB highlighted, *“The economic situation in Egypt is volatile, and we must adapt constantly. This requires innovative thinking and flexibility to ensure that we can keep delivering on our mission.”* Similarly, RCO’s decentralised governance model, which grants branches autonomy, enables the organisation to effectively address diverse regional needs. The Director of the Delta Region at RCO explained, *“Our branches operate independently to adapt to local needs, but they all work towards the same central goals.”* These observations challenge static models of social innovation, suggesting that in emerging markets, the ability to pivot and respond to institutional constraints is a core element of long-term impact. Data-driven decision-making not only improves adaptability but also enables these organisations to measure impact and ensure efficient use of resources. EFB’s data-oriented approach to program planning is noteworthy. The CEO’s advisor emphasised, *“We don’t just hand out food. We analyse the needs, the resources, and the impacts. We measure everything*

to ensure we are truly making a difference.” This incorporation of metrics and analysis in social innovation challenges earlier models that often prioritise vision over operational precision (Zahra et al., 2009). EFB’s model shows that even in resource-constrained contexts, data-informed strategies can help maximise impact. Institutional theory was applied across cases to explain how different organisational strategies emerged in response to Egypt’s unique combination of formal institutional weakness and strong informal norms (North, 1990). For example, Case A relied on religious legitimacy and informal partnerships to overcome regulatory opacity, while Case C aligned with donor standards to mimic global SE models (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). These variations reflect different forms of isomorphic adaptation depending on the institutional environment. Necessity-driven innovation in this study is defined as adaptive, resource-constrained problem-solving that emerges in response to institutional exclusion rather than opportunity-seeking. It involves improvisation, bricolage, and strategic informality, particularly evident in Cases B and D. This form of innovation is not solely product-based but includes organisational processes that reflect survival-oriented entrepreneurship in constrained environments (Ramani et al., 2017).

Proposition 2: Human capital, cross-sector collaboration, and decentralised leadership drive social innovation in social enterprises, rather than financial capital and market competition.

This proposition challenges traditional entrepreneurial orientation theories, which emphasise hierarchical leadership and competitive market behaviour as drivers of innovation (Covin & Slevin, 1989). Instead, the findings here suggest that human capital—embodied in volunteer networks—alongside cross-sector partnerships and adaptability, forms the foundation of sustainable social innovation. Each organisation’s experience reinforces that financial capital, while beneficial, is not essential to creating lasting impacts in emerging markets. In conclusion, this cross-case analysis reveals that social enterprises in Egypt have developed unique, contextually relevant models of social innovation that contrast with traditional Western frameworks. By focusing on volunteerism, collaboration, and sustainability, these organisations redefine what it means to create social impact under resource constraints. These findings offer fresh insights into the potential for social innovation within emerging markets, where the drivers of impact often extend beyond financial resources and align more closely with community needs and institutional realities. Future research should examine how similar patterns might manifest in other emerging economies, potentially expanding the theoretical frameworks for social entrepreneurship to account for diverse, globally situated practices.

5.1.1.3 Human Traits

In examining how human traits shape social entrepreneurship in Egypt, this cross-case analysis highlights foundational elements that redefine resilience and sustainability in resource-constrained environments. Through an in-depth examination of Life Makers Foundation (LMF), Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK), Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), and Resala Charity Organisation (RCO), this study uncovers how attributes such as trust, adaptability, resilience, and empathy serve as core drivers of success. Unlike traditional Western models, which emphasise financial capital and hierarchical leadership (Dees, 1998; Austin et al., 2006), these Egyptian organisations rely on community-based strategies, volunteerism, and decentralised governance. This approach offers a distinctive framework for understanding social impact in emerging markets, where adaptability and human-centred traits often eclipse financial dependency. Integrating perspectives from organisational leaders and members, this analysis presents shared patterns that transcend single-case observations, revealing a unified approach to social entrepreneurship that is uniquely adapted to Egypt's socio-economic landscape. This synthesis adds a new dimension to the social entrepreneurship literature, suggesting that collaborative governance and community engagement, rather than external resources, embed resilience and adaptability deeply in Egypt's social enterprises. These insights align with Mair and Marti's (2006) work on collaboration and extend beyond individual organisations to highlight collective strategies across cases. Trust emerges as a foundational element across all four organisations, fostering both internal cohesion and external partnerships. The Deputy CEO of LMF articulates this well, stating, *"Our volunteers are involved in the decision-making process and even financial management, which fosters a deep sense of ownership and trust within the organisation."* MEK's Director of Scientific Research echoes this sentiment, stating, *"We trust our project leaders to make decisions on the ground, which enables us to respond quickly to changing circumstances."* EFB's Head of External Affairs further supports this view, noting, *"Building trust within the community is crucial to our success; people need to know we are here for them consistently."* RCO's executive director highlights the centrality of trust, adding, *"The heart of our organisation is our volunteers; without trust in each other and in our mission, we wouldn't be able to accomplish what we do."* These insights collectively underscore trust as a fundamental mechanism that enables both innovation and responsiveness, challenging the notion that formal structures are essential to organisational success.

Adaptability, too, is essential, allowing these organisations to remain flexible in the face of Egypt's shifting regulatory and economic landscape. MEK's Senior Officer states, *"Our ability to shift focus quickly when the social or economic landscape changes has been critical to our success."* EFB's CEO advisor reinforces this adaptability, noting, *"In an environment where financial resources are tight, we must innovate constantly to keep the mission alive."* Similarly, RCO's Director of Upper Egypt's Follow-up and Quality adds, *"Even when resources are scarce, we adapt by cutting costs or finding alternative solutions to ensure we meet our goals."* This adaptability highlights a shared organisational ethos that challenges the prioritisation of structured growth

and strategic planning, as proposed by Teece et al. (1997). Instead, these organisations present a model where flexibility is central to sustained impact, particularly in environments marked by economic volatility. Volunteerism and human capital emerge as cornerstones in sustaining operations, contrasting with frameworks that prioritise financial capital as the foundation of success (Boschec, 2001). As LMF's Operations Director states, *"Our network of 20,000 volunteers allows us to be present in every village across Egypt, directly addressing local needs."* EFB's Community Outreach Coordinator adds, *"Our volunteers are more than just workers; they are part of the community, which means they know exactly how to engage with and support people in meaningful ways."* RCO's Volunteer Coordinator emphasises, *"Volunteers bring a level of passion and commitment that financial resources simply can't replace."* In these organisations, human capital through volunteer networks sustains operations while aligning each organisation closely with community needs. This shift suggests that in resource-limited settings, human capital may be as valuable, if not more so, than financial resources for social enterprises, challenging traditional frameworks that emphasise external funding as a requisite for growth.

Resilience, often treated in literature as a reactionary trait, is demonstrated proactively in these organisations, integrated into both strategic planning and daily practices. EFB's CEO advisor asserts, *"In an environment where financial resources are tight, we must innovate constantly to keep the mission alive."* RCO's Director of Upper Egypt's Follow-up and Quality adds, *"Even when we face financial difficulties, we find ways to cut costs and continue serving the people."* MEK's project manager further emphasises this resilience, explaining, *"Our ability to adjust our strategies in times of hardship is what keeps us going. Without resilience, we'd have no way to adapt."* These views frame resilience as more than just a response to adversity; instead, they demonstrate it as a core component of organisational identity, challenging the notion that resilience is only a reactive measure (Bullough & Renko, 2013). In these Egyptian social enterprises, resilience emerges as an essential, forward-looking capability that underpins strategic flexibility in response to persistent challenges. Empathy emerges as a guiding trait influencing decision-making and community engagement. EFB's Head of External Affairs remarks, *"We listen to what the community needs and make sure our programs respond to those needs in practical ways."* At MEK, the project senior manager explains, *"We focus on productive projects that provide jobs and income for people rather than just giving them aid."* RCO's Community Liaison Officer adds, *"Our approach is about understanding and meeting people where they are, which builds stronger, lasting relationships."* LMF's Engagement Coordinator reiterates this view, stating, *"It's not enough to provide resources; we need to understand each community's unique struggles and support them in a way that resonates."* These statements underscore empathy as a central principle in decision-making, challenging entrepreneurial models that prioritise innovation or risk-taking as drivers of success. Instead, empathy and inclusivity take precedence, indicating that community-centred approaches are crucial for lasting impact. The decentralised structures across these organisations further enhance their ability to operate effectively within Egypt's diverse socio-economic contexts. RCO's Director of the Delta Region explains, *"Each branch*

operates with a level of autonomy, allowing them to adapt their strategies to the specific needs of their communities.” LMF’s Deputy CEO notes similarly, *“We trust our local branches to make decisions, knowing they understand the unique challenges of their regions.”* EFB’s Regional Coordinator highlights this autonomy by stating, *“Our teams in different regions know best how to address their community’s needs; we empower them to act accordingly.”* MEK’s local partnerships manager also underscores this, adding, *“By decentralising, we allow each region to develop initiatives that align with local values and priorities, making our impact more meaningful.”* This autonomy aligns with the literature on decentralised governance (Leadbeater, 1997) and demonstrates that in social enterprises, community-specific knowledge and decision-making autonomy are crucial for innovation and responsiveness. The analysis of these cases reveals interconnected patterns that demonstrate how social enterprises in Egypt sustain impact through an alternative set of core human traits. Rather than relying on financial capital or formal structures, these organisations leverage decentralised governance, volunteer-driven operations, and community-centred adaptability to challenge prevailing Western frameworks.

Proposition 3: Social enterprises leverage human traits such as trust, adaptability, resilience, and empathy to sustain their operations and achieve long-term impact, challenging traditional models that prioritise financial capital and hierarchical leadership.

By illustrating how trust, adaptability, resilience, and empathy enable organisations to thrive in complex environments, this study provides a new framework for social entrepreneurs in emerging markets. These findings challenge established models by suggesting that decentralised governance, reliance on volunteers, and local empowerment are more effective than hierarchical or financially driven approaches. This analysis lays a foundation for future research to explore these human traits as primary enablers of social impact in resource-limited settings.

5.1.1.4 Business Strategies

The business strategies of social enterprises in Egypt, represented by Life Makers Foundation (LMF), Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK), Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), and Resala Charity Organisation (RCO), illustrate a novel approach to balancing social impact and financial sustainability within resource-constrained and institutionally fragile environments. Through examining these cases, a distinct model emerges, combining volunteer-driven leadership, hybrid financial models, and strategic partnerships. This analysis synthesises data across organisations, challenging traditional frameworks for social entrepreneurship and contributing fresh perspectives to the literature on emerging markets. Volunteers play a central role in all four organisations, fostering a decentralised leadership structure that prioritises community engagement and local adaptability. Unlike traditional frameworks that emphasise hierarchical leadership, these organisations rely on volunteers

as their primary agents in operations and decision-making, promoting grassroots leadership that enhances organisational resilience. RCO's executive director underscores this approach: *"Our strength lies in our volunteers. They are not just contributors; they are the engine driving our fundraising and operations."* LMF mirrors RCO's reliance on a volunteer-driven model, with the Deputy CEO stating, *"The volunteers themselves participate in everything from research to financial management. It's not just about executing tasks; they take ownership."* These models challenge existing literature that often suggests professional leadership is essential for scalability (Dees & Anderson, 2006), highlighting instead that social enterprises can foster sustainability through community-centred, volunteer-based frameworks. Decentralised leadership in these organisations not only fosters adaptability but also enhances each organisation's capacity to address specific local needs swiftly and effectively. The Director of Upper Egypt at RCO reinforces this by stating, *"Each branch has autonomy in decision-making, allowing them to respond swiftly to the needs of their local communities."* This autonomous approach allows organisations to tailor their services to socioeconomic variations within Egypt, countering the conventional wisdom that centralised control is necessary for scaling social enterprises (Bradach, 2003). LMF's Project Director echoes this sentiment, noting, *"We have decentralised our operations, especially in regions like Sohag, where local teams identify needs and implement projects with minimal oversight from the central office."* By enabling local decision-making, these organisations leverage indigenous knowledge, bolster community-based innovation theories, and demonstrate the effectiveness of decentralisation in resource-constrained contexts.

The organisations' adoption of hybrid financial models demonstrates an innovative approach to achieving both financial sustainability and social impact, departing from the traditional dichotomy that views social enterprises as either mission-driven or profit-oriented (Dees, 1998). MEK exemplifies this approach, as the project senior manager explains: *"We have a hybrid model where we take donations and invest them in projects that generate revenue, which allows us to sustain our social projects."* Similarly, EFB combines philanthropy with revenue-generating initiatives. According to EFB's CEO advisor, *"We leverage food donations but also create self-sustaining projects like livestock breeding to ensure long-term support."* These strategies align with and extend dynamic capability theory by demonstrating that financial sustainability can coexist with social missions, particularly in emerging markets where resources are scarce (Teece, 2014). LMF's Operations Director further emphasises this hybrid model, stating, *"We recognised that relying solely on donations won't ensure sustainability, so we started ventures like agricultural projects that provide both jobs and revenue."* These findings contribute to the literature by indicating that social enterprises in developing countries, often facing limited consistent funding sources, could benefit greatly from hybrid financial models.

Furthermore, the organisations' proactive adaptability challenges existing models that generally frame adaptability as a reactive strategy in social enterprises (Sarasvathy, 2001). EFB illustrates a proactive approach to managing economic volatility, with the Head of External Affairs explaining, *"We had to rethink our school*

feeding program due to rising costs, but our goal of ensuring children receive nutritious meals remains unchanged.” EFB demonstrates a nuanced approach to resilience in the face of socio-economic instability, extending the applicability of effectuation theory by strategically integrating proactive adaptability into business models in volatile contexts. Strong emphasis on trust-based relationships reinforces EFB's adaptability, with the CEO stating, *“The core of our work is to ensure that people trust us year after year.”* This insight aligns with social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), yet EFB demonstrates that trust is not merely a byproduct of transparency but an active component of strategic planning. All organisations integrate trust-building mechanisms, particularly through governance and transparency, marking a strategic departure from Western models that often assume trust as a natural outcome of responsible behaviour. MEK's Director of Scientific Research and Innovation notes, *“Governance is crucial—without accountability, we cannot build trust with our donors or ensure the success of our projects.”* Similarly, RCO's executive director underscores this point, stating, *“Financial transparency is key to maintaining trust with our donors. We ensure complete accounting of every penny and ensure our donors understand the purpose of their contributions.”* These statements suggest that in the Egyptian context, where institutional oversight may be limited, trust-building requires deliberate, transparent governance practices. This emphasis on accountability challenges existing social capital literature, positioning trust not only as an ethical principle but as a strategic imperative for sustaining long-term donor relationships.

The role of community partnerships also emerges as a core theme, underscoring how collaboration with local stakeholders strengthens an organisation's ability to deliver impact efficiently and sustainably. MEK's partnerships with private and governmental entities illustrate this strategy, with a senior participant explaining, *“We always focus on partnerships with the private sector and government entities, which helps reduce costs and ensures our projects have a wide reach.”* This approach challenges the Western-centric notion that social enterprises scale primarily through competitive market strategies (Thompson, 2008), presenting an alternative model where cross-sector collaboration provides critical resources and operational reach. RCO's sector head highlights a similar strategy, stating, *“Our relationships with national programs allow us to tap into governmental resources, expanding our reach significantly.”* This collaboration with government and community actors suggests that, in Egypt, scaling is less about competition and more about co-creation, demonstrating the potential of community partnerships as a fundamental pillar in business strategies for social enterprises in emerging markets. In addition to these strategic partnerships, these organisations incorporate community involvement directly into their operating frameworks, particularly as a cost-efficiency measure. MEK's senior officer remarked, *“We build strong partnerships with funding bodies and those who can help us reduce our costs, like using ministry spaces for student training instead of paying for venues.”* This integration of community resources supports the co-creation of impact and enables these organisations to maximise resource efficiency. RCO's executive director shares this sentiment, noting, *“We build on community participation and allow volunteers to lead in their areas of strength. This makes our strategy*

dynamic and inclusive.” By involving community members as active participants and leaders, these organisations enhance both sustainability and local support, contributing to social capital and demonstrating a practical model of scalability that aligns with indigenous knowledge and community-based resource management.

Proposition 4: Social enterprises sustain and scale their impact by integrating volunteer-driven leadership, hybrid financial models, and informal network-based partnerships into their core business strategies.

This adaptation to local socio-economic conditions serves as a model for other emerging markets, providing a scalable framework that merges local leadership with revenue-driven strategies for resilience. In conclusion, the business strategies adopted by LMF, MEK, EFB, and RCO offer a distinct perspective on social entrepreneurship in Egypt. By leveraging decentralised, volunteer-driven leadership, hybrid financial models, and community-rooted partnerships, these organisations challenge existing social entrepreneurship frameworks and provide new insights into sustainable business strategies. This cross-case analysis contributes to the academic discourse on social enterprises in emerging markets by proposing that organisations in such contexts can achieve scalability and sustainability without compromising social missions. By offering a localised, adaptable approach to impact generation, these findings provide both a theoretical contribution to the literature on social entrepreneurship and practical insights for organisations navigating similar environments.

5.1.1.5 Institutional Environment

The institutional environment is crucial to the success of social enterprises, particularly within resource-constrained settings like Egypt. Through a cross-case analysis of four Egyptian social enterprises—Life Makers Foundation (LMF), Misr El-Kheir Foundation (MEK), Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), and Resala Charity Organisation (RCO)—shared themes emerge that illuminate how these organisations adapt to and thrive within complex institutional landscapes. Each enterprise's reliance on informal networks, decentralised governance, and trust-based relationships challenges conventional models that emphasise formal structures as prerequisites for growth. The case of Egypt demonstrates the effectiveness of these localised, flexible strategies in addressing bureaucratic and financial constraints and offers new insights into the adaptability of social enterprises in emerging markets. Informal networks are essential for each organisation, compensating for institutional gaps and providing the agility needed to navigate Egypt's slow bureaucratic systems. Traditional frameworks often emphasise formal and legal structures as critical for organisational stability (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Yet, these Egyptian social enterprises challenge this view, showing that informal networks allow them to sidestep bureaucratic bottlenecks, making it possible to access resources and expand operations quickly. As one LMF executive noted, *“We rely heavily on our community networks. The formal channels are*

often too slow or bureaucratic, so we build partnerships with local leaders and organisations to get things done.” This perspective aligns with MEK's approach, where cross-sector partnerships optimise resources and scale impacts. A senior MEK officer commented, *“Our success depends on the partnerships we build with local communities and other organisations. Without these networks, it would be impossible to achieve our goals.”* Similarly, EFB demonstrates the significance of these informal networks in circumventing regulatory obstacles, with the Head of External Affairs noting, *“We work through our community partners, who understand the local bureaucracies, helping us get resources where they're needed without delays.”* At RCO, informal partnerships also extend to collaborations with government bodies to mitigate bureaucratic hurdles. As an RCO leader emphasised, *“Working with government entities through the National Alliance has opened doors for us, reducing bureaucratic obstacles that would otherwise slow us down.”* Together, these insights highlight that Western-centric theories prioritise formal contracts and legal frameworks, while Egyptian social enterprises depend on trust-based and community-focused networks as vital enablers of agility and resilience.

Decentralised governance structures are another defining feature across these organisations, allowing each entity to operate flexibly and adapt to local needs. Decentralisation emerges not as a structural choice but as a response to socioeconomic variations across Egypt's regions. LMF empowers volunteers at the local level to manage projects autonomously, which, as the Deputy CEO explained, *“allows each regional office to propose and implement projects that meet local needs. This flexibility is key to our success, especially in underserved areas like Upper Egypt.”* Similarly, the executive director of RCO noted, *“We have a centralised plan for the year, but each branch tailors it based on local needs. This flexibility allows us to be both structured and adaptable.”* This approach supports the adaptive governance models proposed by Mulgan et al. (2006), which advocate flexible, decentralised structures for social enterprises as they scale. EFB adds more complexity to the decentralised model. As the Head of External Affairs at EFB remarked, *“We've had to innovate around outdated legislation, creating systems that work for us even if they aren't supported by the existing laws.”* This adaptability highlights that in fragmented regulatory environments, decentralisation is essential, not only for efficiency but also for resilience. MEK's Director of Scientific Research and Innovation echoed this sentiment, explaining, *“We have some autonomy to act within the regulations, but even within these restrictions, we find ways to innovate.”* Together, these observations reveal that decentralised governance allows these social enterprises to navigate and adapt to shifting institutional constraints, offering a flexible operational model that contrasts with hierarchical systems typically favoured in Western contexts.

Another foundational theme across organisations is trust-based relationships, which serve as essential substitutes for formal contracts and legal assurances that Egypt's regulatory environment may inconsistently enforce. The senior officer for communication and partnerships at LMF explained that their partnerships are based on *“trust and transparency. We keep our partners updated on every project's progress, which helps us maintain long-term relationships.”* In a setting where legal protections may be insufficient, trust enables social

enterprises to forge long-term partnerships and secure the stability needed to sustain operations. This perspective challenges the traditional focus on formal contracts, as described by scholars like Ebrahim et al. (2014), by showing how trust-based relationships function as alternative institutional mechanisms that foster resilience and adaptability. Trust also serves as a growth mechanism for EFB; as the CEO advisor shared, *“We always rely on the trust of our donors, but the systems that should support our work often fail us.”* The Delta Region Director at RCO emphasised, *“Trust is at the core of everything we do, from our volunteers to our partners. Without it, we wouldn’t function at the scale we do.”* Trust is thus both a functional asset and a cultural necessity, serving as the foundation of relationships with donors and community members alike. These insights suggest that the development of trust-based relationships can replace formalised institutional structures for sustaining organisational resilience—a concept that challenges traditional academic perspectives on the need for robust legal and contractual frameworks to ensure social enterprise sustainability. In addition to interviews, artefact-based triangulation provided further insight into how social enterprises in Egypt construct and perform legitimacy. In several cases, promotional materials and social media archives corroborated stated commitments to community co-creation and grassroots engagement. However, discrepancies also emerged—for example, some organisations publicly emphasised innovation in their artefacts, while internally admitting to limitations in capacity or outdated practices. These mismatches between discourse and operational reality reflect the complex legitimacy work required in an ecosystem where formal recognition is weak, but normative expectations remain high.

This further deepens the understanding of how Egyptian social enterprises curate their legitimacy across fragmented institutional spaces. Adaptability is a key factor in these organisations’ resilience, as underscored by each one’s commitment to adjusting to evolving institutional conditions. MEK’s Director of scientific research and Innovation reflected on this adaptability, noting, *“We have some autonomy to act within the regulations, but even within these restrictions, we find ways to innovate.”* This aligns with the literature on organisational resilience (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2005), which suggests that flexibility is essential for navigating volatile environments. Yet, the decentralised, trust-based structures in these cases extend this concept, showing that continuous adaptability is not just advantageous but imperative in fragmented, evolving regulatory environments like Egypt’s. At RCO, volunteerism further bolsters adaptability, offering an alternative to financial resource constraints. The Delta Region Director described volunteers as *“the backbone of everything we do, not just helpers. Without them, Resala wouldn’t function at the scale it does.”* This reliance on volunteer-driven human capital contradicts Western models that prioritise financial resources as the primary means of scaling impact (Battilana & Lee, 2014). It demonstrates that in emerging markets, where financial constraints are common, social capital can provide the structural and operational capacity for growth.

Financial adaptability also proves essential to the sustainability of these organisations. MEK’s hybrid model, which combines income-generating activities with traditional charitable donations, demonstrates that social

enterprises can achieve financial resilience through diversified strategies. The senior project manager at MEK explained, *“We don’t just rely on donations. We invest in projects that generate income, like our women’s empowerment programs that produce goods for sale.”* This hybrid approach moves beyond the dichotomy between charity and profit-driven models (Dees, 1998), illustrating that in complex environments, organisations must fluidly navigate both realms for financial stability. The Technical advisor at EFB added, *“Financial sustainability is always a challenge when the rules of the game keep changing, but we have learnt to pivot quickly.”* This short-term, flexible financial planning contrasts with traditional models’ emphasis on long-term stability, highlighting the need for continuous adaptation to market and regulatory shifts. An emerging insight is the need for government intervention to prevent redundancy in service provision and ensure efficient allocation of resources. Participants across the organisations expressed frustration with overlapping efforts and a lack of centralised beneficiary data. The CEO advisor of EFB noted, *“We are always working around multiple layers of government red tape, trying to align our work with conflicting policies.”* RCO’s Director of Upper Egypt’s Follow-Up and Quality reinforced this observation by suggesting, *“The government should help social enterprises specialise in their strengths and create a shared database of beneficiaries to avoid duplicating efforts.”*

Proposition 5: The Egyptian government should facilitate the specialisation of social enterprises by area and maintain a centralised beneficiary database to enhance social impact and prevent duplication.

Based on collective observations, this concise proposition suggests that government-led coordination could optimise the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in Egypt by reducing redundancies and focusing resources. This insight not only contributes a fresh dimension to the literature but also provides actionable policy recommendations for supporting social enterprises in emerging markets. In conclusion, this cross-case analysis demonstrates that Egyptian social enterprises leverage informal networks, decentralised governance, and trust-based relationships to navigate and thrive in restrictive institutional environments. These strategies challenge conventional models that emphasise formal structures, offering new insights into the adaptability of social enterprises in emerging markets. Echoing Battilana et al. (2009), several social entrepreneurs in this study demonstrate characteristics of institutional entrepreneurs—challenging norms, reframing missions, and mobilising new legitimacy anchors. Despite operating within restrictive fields, they engage in boundary-spanning actions that contribute to slow but tangible field-level transformation. This suggests that social entrepreneurs in Egypt not only adapt to institutional voids but also participate in incremental institutional change, positioning them as active agents of reform rather than passive actors within a constrained system.

Table 7.1 – Institutional Comparison of Social Entrepreneurship in Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE

To contextualise the Egyptian case within the broader MENA landscape, Table 7.1 offers a comparative institutional snapshot. This synthesis draws on previous academic and policy analyses (Stephan et al., 2015; Bruton et al., 2010; UNDP Arab States, 2021; OECD, 2020), highlighting how divergent levels of institutional support, regulation, and recognition shape the emergence and evolution of social enterprises across the region.

Dimension	Egypt	Jordan	UAE
Legal Recognition	No legal form for SEs; operate as NGOs or LLCs	Social enterprises recognised under NGO or not-for-profit company law	SEs framed under national innovation and impact agendas; not formally recognised but promoted
Regulatory Environment	High informality; restrictive NGO laws; inconsistent state engagement	Hybrid models allowed; more NGO-state cooperation	Centralised regulation; top-down encouragement via policy instruments
Donor/Ecosystem Support	Fragmented, donor-driven; limited incubator access outside Cairo	International NGO and donor collaboration with government; active support organisations	Strong state-backed innovation hubs; high-resource incubators and accelerators

Sources: Adapted from Stephan et al. (2015); Bruton et al. (2010); UNDP Arab States (2021); OECD (2020); UAE Ministry of Economy (2023); Jordan Ministry of Social Development Reports (2022); Ashoka Arab World Ecosystem Mapping (2020).

To consolidate the theoretical implications of the cross-case analysis, the following table maps the study’s key empirical findings to core concepts in institutional theory. This alignment highlights how Egyptian social enterprises navigate institutional voids, exercise entrepreneurial agency, and adapt hybrid strategies to achieve both legitimacy and sustainability within constrained environments. The comparative lens reveals that Egypt’s social entrepreneurship field is not just institutionally underdeveloped but normatively overburdened—where informal credibility, moral framing, and external donor discourse often replace formal governance and recognition. These ecosystem features demand a level of improvisation and boundary navigation that is qualitatively different from SE ecosystems in Jordan, the UAE, or Lebanon.

Table 7.2 – Mapping Key Findings to Institutional Theory Concepts

Key Finding	Institutional Theory Concept	Explanation
Use of informal networks to navigate bureaucratic barriers	Institutional Voids (Khanna & Palepu, 2010)	Informal ties compensate for weak or absent formal institutions in resource-constrained environments.
Adaptive strategies to evolving regulations and socio-economic conditions	Bricolage (Di Domenico et al., 2010)	Improvisational use of available resources reflects entrepreneurial bricolage in uncertain institutional contexts.
Blending donations with income-generating activities	Hybridity (Battilana & Lee, 2014)	Organisations integrate social and commercial logics to achieve sustainability within constrained systems.
Long-term volunteer-led decentralised governance	Legitimacy (Suchman, 1995)	Social legitimacy is built through community trust, transparency, and participatory leadership.
Alignment with donor language and practices in some organisations	Isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)	Mimicry of global SE norms and practices supports survival within dominant institutional expectations.
Community-led innovation and inclusive scaling	Institutional Entrepreneurship (Battilana et al., 2009)	Entrepreneurs act as change agents within constrained fields, reframing norms and mobilising legitimacy.

Source: Developed by the researcher based on primary data and adapted from institutional theory literature (Khanna & Palepu, 2010; Di Domenico et al., 2010; Battilana & Lee, 2014; Suchman, 1995; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Battilana et al., 2009).

5.2 Mapping Empirical Propositions to Institutional Theory

The five propositions generated through cross-case analysis in this study serve not only as empirical contributions, but also as theoretical validations of the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2. These propositions are grounded in recurring themes that emerged across diverse organisational settings, and they reflect the dynamic interplay between institutional pressures and entrepreneurial agency in Egypt's hybrid social enterprise landscape. The conceptual framework (Figure 1) identified five key structural dimensions influencing social entrepreneurship: the institutional environment, entrepreneurial orientation, social innovation, human traits, and hybrid business strategies. These dimensions were drawn from institutional theory (Scott, 2014; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), entrepreneurship research (Zahra et al., 2008), and social

enterprise studies (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Mair & Martí, 2009). However, this framework primarily outlined the environmental pressures and foundational capabilities shaping SE behaviour, without fully capturing how entrepreneurs navigate contradictions and respond adaptively.

To address this, Figure 2 introduced a second-level conceptual model: the Institutional Adaptation Model, which highlights three core mechanisms—reinterpretation, resistance, and hybridity—as adaptive strategies used by social entrepreneurs to survive and thrive under institutional ambiguity. This dual-framework structure reflects the shift from structural constraint (Figure 1) to agentic response (Figure 2), aligning with the broader theoretical evolution from institutional determinism to institutional entrepreneurship (Battilana et al., 2009; Thornton et al., 2012; Di Domenico et al., 2010). The table below presents an explicit mapping between the empirical propositions, their underlying themes, and the corresponding theoretical constructs drawn from institutional theory. This mapping reinforces the study’s theoretical contribution by clarifying how localised entrepreneurial behaviours—though contextually specific—correspond with broader academic models.

Table 13: Mapping of Propositions to Institutional Theory Constructs

Empirical Proposition	Theme	Mapped Construct	Theoretical Source
Proposition 1: Social enterprises demonstrate a context-specific EO rooted in community trust, informal networks, and adaptive resilience.	Entrepreneurial Orientation	EO under institutional voids	Zahra et al. (2008); Mair & Martí (2009)
Proposition 2: Social innovation in Egypt is primarily necessity-driven, using bricolage and informal knowledge to reconfigure resources.	Social Innovation	Institutional bricolage; Necessity-driven innovation	Di Domenico et al. (2010); Pache & Santos (2010)
Proposition 3: Founder traits such as moral legitimacy, informal influence, and cultural embeddedness substitute for regulatory support.	Human Traits / Institutional Norms	Cognitive and normative legitimacy; Informal institutions	Scott (2014); North (1990); Suchman (1995)
Proposition 4: Strategic choices reflect hybrid models that align with both donor expectations and local legitimacy norms.	Hybrid Business Strategy	Hybrid logics; Dual legitimacy-seeking	Battilana & Lee (2014); Jay (2013)
Proposition 5: Social enterprises in Egypt engage in institutional adaptation through	Institutional Adaptation	Institutional entrepreneurship;	Battilana et al. (2009);

reinterpretation, resistance, and blending of logics.		Institutional logics; Adaptive agency	Thornton et al. (2012)
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Source: Developed by the author based on the integration of cross-case propositions with institutional theory literature, including Scott (2014), DiMaggio & Powell (1991), Battilana et al. (2009), Thornton et al. (2012), and related empirical studies on social entrepreneurship in emerging markets.

Together, these propositions offer a layered explanation of how structural conditions (e.g., institutional fragmentation, regulatory ambiguity, normative expectations) shape entrepreneurial choices, and how entrepreneurs, in turn, respond through adaptive and hybrid strategies. The Egyptian context demonstrates that institutional logics are not merely constraints but are also recombined, reframed, or resisted through locally embedded strategies (Pache & Santos, 2010). This interplay between structure and agency not only validates but extends the application of institutional theory to under-researched, resource-constrained environments. In particular, the use of reinterpretation (e.g., reframing compliance language to suit community discourse), resistance (e.g., bypassing formal registration through informal legitimacy), and hybridity (e.g., combining NGO structures with market activities) reflects the complexity of institutional navigation in Egypt. These mechanisms, originally theorised in high-income contexts, are here reinterpreted through grounded empirical data to reflect the realities of informal ecosystems and fragmented legitimacy pathways (Mair et al., 2012; Littlewood & Holt, 2018). This mapping reinforces the study's central contribution: that social entrepreneurship in the Middle East cannot be fully understood through Western-centric institutional models alone. Instead, a grounded, adaptive, and locally informed application of institutional theory is essential to explain how social enterprises operate, survive, and scale within fragmented institutional environments.

5.3 Contributions

The study makes several important contributions to the field of social entrepreneurship, particularly in the context of emerging markets. First, it offers a contextualisation of entrepreneurial orientation (EO), particularly within resource-constrained environments, highlighting how social enterprises adapt EO to include community engagement, collaboration, and informal networks. The findings provide a clear example of this adaptation, where decentralised governance structures are employed to effectively allocate resources, bypass bureaucratic hurdles, and leverage local community knowledge to meet immediate needs. This extends EO frameworks, illustrating how these elements are redefined in the context of emerging markets. Second, the study broadens the understanding of social innovation by highlighting the importance of necessity-driven innovation in emerging markets. This challenges existing assumptions that social innovation is primarily market-driven or technologically disruptive (Mulgan et al., 2006). The findings demonstrate that in resource-constrained environments such as Egypt, social innovation emerges from the reconfiguration of existing resources to meet pressing social needs. This local, community-driven approach offers a more nuanced understanding of social

enterprises' operations in emerging markets and emphasises the crucial role of resource reallocation in fostering innovation (Bocken et al., 2019). Third, the study provides significant insights into hybrid financial models, revealing how social enterprises in Egypt blend philanthropic donations with commercial activities to achieve financial sustainability and social impact. This challenges the binary classification of organisations as either for-profit or non-profit (Battilana & Lee, 2014) and supports the growing body of literature on blended finance in the emerging economies (Nicholls, 2020). By illustrating how hybrid models can be strategically employed to navigate "*perceived institutional gaps*," this approach highlights their relevance, particularly in African contexts. In such settings, the term "*perceived institutional gaps*" has been critiqued as less applicable due to the presence of informal yet effective mechanisms (Mair & Marti, 2009; Khanna & Palepu, 2010). This study contributes to this debate by offering a perspective that acknowledges the complexity of these environments and highlights how social enterprises navigate these nuanced institutional landscapes. Furthermore, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how social enterprises achieve financial sustainability in resource-constrained environments. Finally, the study extends institutional theory by emphasising government intervention in promoting specialisation and reducing inefficiencies in the social enterprise sector. This finding enriches the literature on government intervention in social entrepreneurship, emphasising the critical role of coordinated action in emerging markets for optimising resource allocation and preventing duplication. The study's practical recommendations for policymakers—specifically fostering collaboration among social enterprises and preventing service duplication—are critical for maximising the social impact of limited resources in these environments. This thesis provides a practitioner-grounded perspective on how social enterprises innovate, adapt, and survive under conditions of institutional fragmentation, offering practical implications for founders, incubators, and policy intermediaries operating in resource-constrained ecosystems

5.4 Research Implications

The study's findings carry significant implications for both conceptual understanding and practical application. In a theoretical sense, the study contributes to existing frameworks in Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), providing a clearer understanding of its relevance in the context of emerging markets. This study situates EO within socio-economic challenges, demonstrating how social enterprises adapt their entrepreneurial behaviour beyond traditional Western-centric frameworks., social innovation, and hybrid financial models by providing a perspective specific to emerging markets and grounded in real-life experiences. By extending the concept of EO as community-centred and collaboration-focused, emphasising the necessity-driven nature of social innovation, and exploring the strategic role of hybrid financial models, this study paves the way for new research in social entrepreneurship. Future studies could investigate the applicability of these findings in other emerging markets. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa, where informal networks play a similarly significant

role, comparative studies could reveal variations in governance structures and localised funding mechanisms. In contrast, in Southeast Asia, where digital infrastructure is more developed, hybrid financial models may integrate crowdfunding platforms or mobile payment systems more extensively. Such regional comparisons would provide valuable insights into how socio-economic conditions influence the strategies of social enterprises. Moreover, the concept of necessity-driven innovation warrants additional exploration, especially in other resource-constrained environments where comparable socio-economic factors may influence innovation strategies. In practical terms, the study provides several crucial recommendations for policymakers and development agencies. Policymakers in emerging markets should concentrate on establishing regulatory frameworks that bolster the expansion of hybrid financial models, diminish bureaucratic obstacles, and enhance institutional flexibility. Government incentives, such as tax breaks or streamlined registration procedures, to incentivise social enterprises to embrace hybrid financial models that harmonise commercial and social goals. Furthermore, development agencies and international organisations could utilise the study's findings to develop capacity-building programs that concentrate on enhancing institutional adaptability and fostering specialisation within the social enterprise sector. Employing a cross-sectional design in this study enabled a thorough exploration of how social enterprises navigate institutional gaps and resource limitations at a specific point in time. However, this design does not capture how their strategies evolve in response to external factors. A longitudinal study would provide a dynamic perspective on the adaptability and sustainability of entrepreneurial orientation (EO), social innovation strategies, and hybrid financial models, particularly as organisations respond to regulatory shifts, economic instability, or changes in donor funding. While future research could benefit from such longitudinal insights, this study employed a case study methodology to conduct an in-depth analysis of how specific social enterprises operationalise their strategies. Future studies could extend this work by adopting comparative case studies across different regions to examine how local socio-economic and institutional contexts shape the strategies of social enterprises.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6 Chapter overview

This thesis addresses a significant gap in the academic literature by examining the dynamics of social entrepreneurship in the Egyptian context, an emerging market characterised by institutional voids and resource constraints. Egypt offers a compelling case for exploring the strategies social enterprises employ to navigate these challenges. Employing a qualitative, multi-case study methodology, the research investigates how Egyptian social enterprises adapt entrepreneurial orientation, drive necessity-driven social innovation, and implement hybrid financial models to achieve social and financial sustainability in resource-constrained environments. The study contributes to the understanding of social entrepreneurship in the emerging economies by offering unique insights into the role of informal mechanisms and community-centred adaptability within socio-economically constrained settings. It also extends theoretical frameworks, including institutional theory and entrepreneurial orientation (Covin & Slevin, 1989; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), by emphasising the interplay between institutional voids and resource limitations in shaping entrepreneurial practices. The following sections synthesise the study's key findings, discuss its theoretical and practical contributions, and propose targeted recommendations for social enterprises and policymakers operating in similar emerging market contexts.

6.1 Comparative Institutional Environments for Social Entrepreneurship in MENA

While this study focuses on Egypt, the findings gain depth when situated against comparable institutional environments across the MENA region. Social entrepreneurship ecosystems in countries such as Jordan, Tunisia, and the UAE share overlapping regional pressures yet differ significantly in terms of legal recognition, donor infrastructure, and government support. These differences shape how social enterprises access resources, formalise operations, and gain legitimacy. The table below offers a comparative summary of the institutional frameworks relevant to social entrepreneurship across four MENA countries, highlighting Egypt's relative constraints and opportunities.

Table 14: Comparative Institutional Ecosystems for Social Entrepreneurship in MENA

Dimension	Egypt	Jordan	Tunisia	UAE
Legal Recognition for SEs	No formal legal status; SEs register as NGOs or companies	No specific SE law; SEs use NGO or company routes	Law No. 30 (2018) formally recognises SEs with tax/financing provisions	No SE-specific law; SEs often operate as SMEs under business licences
Regulatory Environment	Restrictive NGO laws; vague classifications for hybrid entities	Relatively enabling; clearer licensing for NGOs and micro-enterprises	Formalised hybrid entity status; improved SE classification	Very streamlined for commercial entities, but limits on NGO-type work
Donor & Grant Infrastructure	Strong international donor presence; high dependency	Robust donor ecosystem (e.g., EU, UNDP); stable support mechanisms	Strong EU-backed SE programs (e.g., EU4Youth, Lab'ess incubator)	Low donor dependency; relies on CSR/private capital
Support Ecosystem	Fragmented; mostly informal or donor-led incubators	Government-affiliated support (e.g., Ministry of Digital Economy)	Active incubator/accelerator scene with public-private collaboration	Extensive incubators, accelerators (e.g., Dubai SME, Hub71)
Access to Finance	Limited; reliant on grants and informal networks	Microfinance and donor-led impact funds emerging	Better access through EU channels and social finance funds	Strong VC/angel ecosystem, but focused on tech-oriented SMEs
Institutional Constraints	Regulatory ambiguity; high informality; politicised NGO sector	Less politicised; clearer compliance norms	Progressive reforms post-2011; relatively enabling	Commercially supportive, but restricts non-profit/advocacy activities

Source: Compiled by the author from secondary literature and ecosystem reports including MedUP! (2019), ILO (2022), UNDP Arab SE Landscape Report (2020), Euromed SE Policy Briefs (2021), and country-specific policy reviews.

This comparative table illustrates that Egypt’s social entrepreneurship sector operates within a more restrictive and informal institutional framework compared to Tunisia and the UAE. While Tunisia benefits from formal legal recognition and donor-aligned programming, and the UAE offers commercial facilitation and funding, Egypt remains donor-reliant with limited structural support. These regional comparisons not only validate the findings of institutional pressure and bricolage in Egypt but also highlight potential policy learning opportunities for enhancing the local SE ecosystem.

6.2 Consolidated Contributions of the Study

This section presents an integrated overview of the study’s theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions. These insights are consolidated here to improve clarity and narrative flow, in line with the thesis structure. Methodologically, the study contributes to qualitative research in emerging markets by applying multi-case design, artefact triangulation, and context-sensitive thematic analysis. This approach enhances the rigour and transferability of qualitative insights in institutional void contexts. This research advances both theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of social entrepreneurship, particularly in resource-constrained environments like Egypt. By systematically analysing the strategies employed by the four case study organisations, the study elucidates three core themes: entrepreneurial orientation (EO), necessity-driven social innovation, and hybrid financial models. These insights are summarised in Table 12: Summary of Theoretical and Practical Contributions, providing a comprehensive overview of the study's implications for both academia and practice.

Table 15: Summary of Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Key Theme	Theoretical Contribution	Practical Implication	Case Example
Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)	Redefines EO by emphasising community engagement, trust-building, and informal networks in emerging markets.	Social enterprises should adopt a community-centric EO to foster resilience and local partnerships.	Resala Charity Organisation (RCO) mobilising grassroots support.
Necessity-Driven Innovation	Highlights innovation driven by reconfiguration of existing resources, distinct from high-tech models.	Focus on low-cost, practical, and locally adaptive solutions to address immediate societal needs.	Egyptian Food Bank (EFB) using surplus food donations and volunteers.

Hybrid Financial Models	Demonstrates the effectiveness of blending philanthropic funding with revenue-generating activities.	Social enterprises should diversify funding sources to ensure financial resilience and sustainability.	Misr El Khair (MEK) combining donor funding with vocational training income.
Informal Governance Mechanisms	Extends institutional theory by showing the role of informal systems in bypassing regulatory inefficiencies.	Leverage community partnerships, volunteer networks, and decentralised decision-making.	Life Maker Foundation (LMF) using informal systems to navigate challenges.

Source: Compiled by author

Advancing Entrepreneurial Orientation Theory

Traditional EO frameworks, such as those outlined by Covin and Slevin (1989) and Lumpkin and Dess (1996), have been predominantly developed in Western, market-driven contexts that prioritise competitiveness and risk-taking as core dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation. Recent studies, including Simba (2021), argued for the adaptation of EO to localised settings where community collaboration and trust-building are critical. This thesis builds on these arguments by demonstrating that Egyptian social enterprises adopt a community-centric EO, where collaboration, grassroots partnerships, and informal networks form essential pillars of entrepreneurial strategy. This adaptation challenges the universal applicability of traditional EO and expands its conceptualisation to reflect the realities of resource-constrained and institutionally void environments.

Highlighting Necessity-Driven Social Innovation

This research underscores the distinct nature of social innovation in the emerging economies, particularly in contexts where technological resources are limited. Egyptian social enterprises innovate by creatively reconfiguring existing resources to address pressing societal needs. For instance, EFB has developed a scalable, community-driven approach to food security by leveraging volunteer networks and surplus food donations. Unlike high-tech innovation models predominant in developed economies (Mulgan et al., 2006), this study positions necessity-driven innovation as a critical framework for social enterprises in resource-constrained settings. Here, innovation emerges from immediate societal demands rather than technological advancements, demonstrating the adaptability and creativity of grassroots solutions (Bocken et al., 2019).

Expanding Hybrid Financial Models

The adoption of hybrid financial models emerges as a critical strategy for achieving financial sustainability while maintaining a social mission. By blending philanthropic donations with revenue-generating activities, social enterprises in Egypt bridge the gap between for-profit and non-profit approaches. For example, MEK combines donor funding with income from vocational training programs to ensure operational resilience. This approach challenges traditional classifications of organisations, demonstrating that hybrid models are particularly effective in contexts where conventional funding sources are unreliable (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Nicholls, 2020). This study contributes to the growing body of literature on hybrid organisations by highlighting how such models enable social enterprises to balance competing priorities of financial sustainability and social impact.

Extending Institutional Theory

The study provides new insights into institutional theory by examining how informal governance mechanisms facilitate organisational adaptability in the face of institutional voids. Egyptian social enterprises often rely on decentralised decision-making, local partnerships, and community volunteers to bypass bureaucratic inefficiencies and deliver services effectively. LMF's use of informal governance structures, for instance, has allowed it to navigate regulatory complexities and maintain legitimacy in underserved communities. By incorporating informal systems into institutional theory, this research expands our understanding of how organisations in emerging markets respond to weak or absent formal structures, offering a nuanced perspective on the role of informal networks in organisational success (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The findings have significant implications for practitioners and policymakers. Social enterprises are encouraged to adopt community-centric EO, prioritise necessity-driven innovation, and leverage hybrid financial models to enhance their sustainability. Policymakers, on the other hand, are urged to create an enabling environment by addressing institutional voids, streamlining bureaucratic processes, and fostering the integration of digital technologies. These recommendations aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that social enterprises can thrive despite systemic challenges. The practical contributions for social enterprises and policymakers are discussed in detail, along with specific recommendations, in the subsequent sections.

6.3 Recommendations for Social Enterprises

This research provides actionable strategies for social enterprises in Egypt and similar contexts to enhance their sustainability and social impact. These recommendations, grounded in the empirical findings and theoretical frameworks developed in the study, are summarised as follows.

Adopt a Community-Centric Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

In resource-constrained environments, social enterprises should adopt a community-centric entrepreneurial orientation (EO) that prioritises collaboration, community engagement, and informal networks over competition and risk-taking (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). For instance, the Life Maker Foundation (LMF) adopts decentralised leadership to engage with grassroots partners and empower community-led decision-making. By mobilising local volunteers and collaborating with smaller community-based organisations, LMF has successfully circumvented bureaucratic delays to deliver targeted financial services to underserved populations. Similarly, the Resala Charity Organisation (RCO) builds trust through long-term community partnerships and leverages informal networks to mobilise local resources effectively. These organisations demonstrate how a community-centric EO—characterised by trust-building, local collaboration, and adaptability—can help social enterprises thrive in resource-constrained and institutionally void settings (Simba, 2021). Such an approach not only enhances the legitimacy of social enterprises but also ensures they are equipped to respond effectively to evolving community needs.

Embrace Necessity-Driven Innovation

Necessity-driven innovation emerges as a critical strategy for social enterprises addressing societal challenges in environments marked by resource constraints. Unlike traditional high-tech innovation models, which are often associated with developed economies, organisations in emerging markets focus on reconfiguring existing resources to meet immediate community needs (Bocken et al., 2019). A clear example is the Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), which developed a scalable and low-cost food security program by creatively utilising surplus food donations from businesses and mobilising extensive volunteer networks. This innovative model allows EFB to distribute food efficiently to vulnerable communities without relying on costly technologies. Another example is MEK's vocational training initiative, which creatively repurposes local materials and informal community knowledge to deliver practical skills training for unemployed youth. These organisations highlight the importance of locally adaptive, grassroots solutions to innovation, demonstrating that creativity in addressing immediate community demands can yield scalable and impactful outcomes (Mulgan et al., 2006).

Leveraging Informal Governance Mechanisms

In regions where formal governance systems are weak or inefficient, social enterprises can achieve agility and effectiveness by leveraging informal governance mechanisms. This includes forming partnerships with local organisations, mobilising community volunteers, and embracing decentralised decision-making structures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). For example, LMF strategically relies on community volunteers to bypass regulatory bottlenecks and deliver microfinance services to underserved areas where formal financial systems

are inaccessible. Similarly, RCO has cultivated strong informal networks with grassroots organisations and local leaders to ensure its services reach the most vulnerable populations without delay. These informal governance mechanisms foster trust, responsiveness, and legitimacy, enabling social enterprises to overcome operational barriers and adapt quickly to regulatory uncertainties. Such approaches are especially valuable in emerging markets where formal institutions fail to address the needs of marginalised communities effectively.

Expanding Capacity-Building Initiatives

Capacity-building initiatives are essential for the long-term sustainability and growth of social enterprises operating in resource-constrained environments. In this context, leadership development plays a central role in ensuring resilience and operational efficiency. For instance, the MEK vocational training centre offers leadership programs for its trainers and beneficiaries, equipping them with competencies such as financial management, conflict resolution, and stakeholder engagement. These skills enable participants to address on-the-ground challenges effectively while fostering community-driven solutions. In addition, organisations like LMF integrate leadership development into their operations, empowering community leaders to take ownership of financial initiatives and become change agents in their local areas. Such initiatives not only strengthen the leadership capacity of social enterprises but also enhance the resilience and adaptability of these organisations in dynamic and uncertain environments (Nicholls, 2020).

6.4 Recommendations for Policymakers

Policymakers play a crucial role in fostering the growth and sustainability of social enterprises. Based on the findings of this research, several policy recommendations are offered to support social enterprises in addressing socio-economic challenges.

Access to Citizen Data:

Policymakers should establish regulatory frameworks that facilitate access to citizen data, enabling social enterprises to optimise resource allocation and service delivery. In contexts like Egypt, where fragmented data systems often limit effective outreach, centralised and secure databases can help identify and serve vulnerable populations more efficiently. For instance, data on social insurance, banking, and demographic information can enable organisations like EFB to target food insecurity initiatives with greater precision. However, while data accessibility can enhance the impact of social enterprises, it raises significant ethical concerns related to data privacy, security, and misuse. Policymakers must implement stringent safeguards to protect citizens' privacy and prevent exploitation of sensitive information. These measures should include robust data

protection laws, clear guidelines for ethical data use, and transparency requirements for organisations handling citizen information (Battilana et al., 2017). For example, anonymising personal data and ensuring its use aligns with social objectives will build trust between social enterprises and the communities they serve. Additionally, regulatory oversight and community engagement can foster responsible data practices, ensuring that access to citizen data translates into equitable and impactful service delivery without compromising individual rights.

Promoting Specialisation in Priority Sectors

Policymakers should incentivise specialisation in sectors that align with critical societal needs, such as food security, education, and workforce development. By promoting specialisation, governments can optimise resource allocation and amplify the impact of social services. Specialisation leads to more efficient and effective social outcomes, as seen in Resala Charity Organisation's success in targeted interventions (Bruton et al., 2015). Governments can provide tax incentives, financial support, and streamlined regulatory frameworks to encourage enterprises to focus on these priority areas.

Supporting hybrid financial models

Policymakers can enhance the financial sustainability of social enterprises by facilitating the adoption of hybrid financial models that integrate revenue generation with philanthropic funding. Key measures include providing tax incentives, streamlining regulatory processes, and expanding access to blended finance opportunities. These policies are essential in supporting social enterprises in emerging markets where traditional funding sources are often unreliable or insufficient to meet the demands of their social missions. This approach is particularly valuable in environments where traditional funding sources are unreliable or difficult to access (Nicholls, 2020). By supporting hybrid models, governments can help social enterprises achieve financial sustainability while pursuing their social missions.

Integrating social entrepreneurship into education

Policymakers should advocate for the integration of social entrepreneurship into educational curricula. By embedding social entrepreneurship in K-12 and higher education, governments can foster entrepreneurial mindsets among young learners and prepare them to address societal challenges. As Mulgan et al. (2006) highlight, social entrepreneurship education is crucial for developing the next generation of social entrepreneurs who can drive sustainable change in their communities.

Adopting Digital Technologies for Transparency and Reach

The adoption of digital technologies is critical for enhancing the scalability, transparency, and financial sustainability of social enterprises in resource-constrained environments. In Egypt, where access to traditional financial systems and infrastructure can be limited, digital tools such as mobile banking, crowdfunding, and blockchain provide innovative solutions for overcoming systemic barriers (Nicholls, 2020). For example, mobile banking allows social enterprises like MEK to facilitate payment systems for vocational training programs in rural areas, ensuring timely and transparent financial transactions. Similarly, crowdfunding platforms enable organisations like RCO to mobilise funding from local and international donors, mitigating the unpredictability of traditional philanthropic sources. However, scalability remains a significant challenge in the Egyptian context due to infrastructural limitations, digital illiteracy, and limited internet access in rural areas. Social enterprises must address these barriers by implementing digital solutions that are both cost-effective and contextually adaptive. For instance, leveraging low-bandwidth mobile applications can ensure that communities with limited connectivity remain engaged, while capacity-building initiatives can bridge the digital literacy gap among stakeholders. Comparatively, other emerging markets, such as those in Southeast Asia, have adopted similar digital strategies but often benefit from better-developed digital infrastructure and government support. For social enterprises in Egypt, scaling digital solutions requires close collaboration with policymakers to improve internet access, streamline regulatory frameworks, and provide financial incentives for adopting technology. These tailored strategies can enable Egyptian social enterprises to expand their reach, optimise service delivery, and achieve sustainable growth despite systemic challenges.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

Despite the contributions of this research, certain limitations need to be acknowledged, as they offer important context for the interpretation of the findings and suggest areas for future investigation. One key limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to track how social enterprises evolve over time. A longitudinal approach would offer a more dynamic perspective on how these enterprises adapt their strategies, including their entrepreneurial orientation, financial models, and social innovations, in response to shifting socio-economic and regulatory conditions. Longitudinal studies would provide a dynamic understanding of the long-term sustainability of social enterprises, offering insights into how hybrid financial models and social innovations adapt to evolving socio-political and economic conditions. Creswell and Poth (2018) highlight the importance of longitudinal research in understanding the temporal dynamics of organisational strategies, which would be highly beneficial in the context of social enterprises.

Second, the study's focus is on Egypt as a single-country case study. While Egypt provides a compelling case of social entrepreneurship operating within institutional voids and resource-constrained environments, it aligns with findings from other studies in the emerging economies, such as those conducted by Bruton et al. (2015) in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, the unique socio-political and cultural factors in Egypt—such as its reliance on informal networks and decentralised leadership—limit the full generalisability of the findings. Future comparative research is needed to test the applicability of these insights across regions such as Southeast Asia, Latin America, and other parts of Africa, where institutional voids may manifest differently. This would help refine the theoretical frameworks presented in this study and enhance their broader relevance. Third, the narrow sample size of four social enterprises also limits the breadth of the study. While the selected cases provide rich, in-depth data, they may not fully represent the diversity of social enterprises in Egypt or other emerging markets. Future research could expand the sample to include smaller or less prominent social enterprises, which may employ different strategies and face distinct challenges compared to the larger organisations studied here. This would help capture a more comprehensive view of social entrepreneurship in resource-constrained settings. Yin (2009) suggests that increasing the sample size in case study research can enhance the robustness and generalisability of findings. Fourth, while the study focuses on external institutional challenges, such as regulatory gaps and resource constraints, and does not fully address internal organisational dynamics, such as leadership styles, internal culture, and governance structures. These internal factors are crucial for the success and sustainability of social enterprises, particularly in resource-constrained environments. For example, leadership traits and organisational culture can influence decision-making, strategy implementation, and employee engagement. Future research should explore these dimensions to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to the success or failure of social enterprises. Lastly, while this study provides valuable insights into hybrid financial models and necessity-driven innovation, it may not account for all types of innovation or financial structuring within social enterprises. Other models, such as those relying on technological innovations or market-based disruptions, may be more effective in certain sectors or contexts. Further research could explore alternative financial models and types of innovation, expanding the scope of social entrepreneurship research. Battilana et al. (2017) argue that social enterprises often use diverse strategies and structures, and a more comprehensive investigation of these approaches would enhance our understanding of how different types of innovation and financing can contribute to social impact.

6.6 Future Research Directions

This research paves the way for further studies to deepen the understanding of social entrepreneurship in resource-constrained environments. A promising avenue for future research is the adoption of longitudinal studies that track the evolution of entrepreneurial strategies, hybrid financial models, and social innovations

over time. A promising avenue for future research is the adoption of longitudinal studies that track the evolution of entrepreneurial strategies, hybrid financial models, and social innovations in social enterprises. Longitudinal studies offer a valuable opportunity to observe how social enterprises adapt their strategies over time in response to shifting socio-economic conditions, regulatory frameworks, and external funding sources. This approach can generate deeper insights into the resilience and adaptability of these organisations, especially in dynamic and resource-constrained environments. It also facilitates an understanding of how necessity-driven innovation evolves in response to changing community needs and institutional pressures. Longitudinal studies are vital for capturing the dynamic processes within organisations, particularly those operating in fluctuating environments such as social enterprises (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By tracking these enterprises over extended periods, future research could provide valuable insights into the long-term sustainability of their strategies, offering a more dynamic view of resilience and adaptability in response to external pressures. This approach would also facilitate a deeper understanding of the evolution of necessity-driven social innovations and how they continue to address changing community needs.

Additionally, future research could explore the role of digital platforms in facilitating social entrepreneurship, particularly in the post-COVID context. Initiatives such as *Nafham* in Egypt and *Edraak* in Jordan exemplify how technology can reduce delivery costs, enhance scalability, and expand user engagement. These tech-enabled SEs operate through digital infrastructure to deliver social value while navigating resource constraints. Comparative research in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon could provide insight into how digital platforms support legitimacy, stakeholder interaction, and innovation in fragile institutional environments (George, Haas, & Pentland, 2012). Although this study is focused on Egypt, its findings have broad implications for social entrepreneurship in other emerging markets facing similar institutional challenges. The frameworks for community-centred entrepreneurial orientation (EO), necessity-driven innovation, and hybrid financial models developed in this study can be adapted and applied to other regions in the emerging economies, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, where institutional voids and resource constraints are common. Social enterprises in these regions could benefit from adopting the frameworks explored in this study, particularly in fostering community engagement, supporting adaptable governance structures, and leveraging hybrid financial models. Unlike traditional NGOs—which typically rely on external grants or donations to deliver social services—social enterprises pursue blended value creation, combining social missions with income-generating business activities to ensure long-term sustainability in resource-constrained environments. Moreover, a comparative legal perspective offers valuable potential for future inquiry. For example, Tunisia's 2020 law granting official recognition to social enterprises marks a significant regulatory shift in the region. In contrast to Egypt's ambiguous legal framework, Tunisia provides structured legal support that affects investor confidence, operational clarity, and public legitimacy. Future research could examine how varying regulatory architectures across North Africa and the Levant—such as Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, and Jordan—shape the growth, credibility, and funding capacity of social enterprises (OECD, 2020). Practitioners

can also apply these models to improve the resilience, operational flexibility, and financial sustainability of their organisations. This research offers practical strategies for addressing key challenges and fostering the long-term success of social enterprises in resource-constrained environments.

Second, comparative case studies across different regions offer another important avenue for research. While this study provides critical insights into social entrepreneurship in Egypt, its findings highlight the need for comparative research across other emerging markets to examine the transferability of strategies such as community-centric EO, necessity-driven innovation, and hybrid financial models. For instance, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa face similar institutional voids and resource constraints but may demonstrate distinct responses shaped by different cultural, socio-political, and economic conditions (Bruton et al., 2015). A comparison with social enterprises in Kenya or Uganda, where informal networks and community-driven models are also prevalent, could reveal region-specific adaptations in leveraging trust, mobilising local resources, and addressing governance challenges. Similarly, emerging markets in Southeast Asia, such as Vietnam and the Philippines, often operate within rapidly changing regulatory frameworks and benefit from stronger digital infrastructure. In these contexts, social enterprises might employ hybrid financial models that integrate crowdfunding or mobile banking more extensively than those in Egypt. Comparing how organisations in these regions scale digital solutions amidst institutional voids could deepen our understanding of how technology can support resilience and impact in resource-limited settings (Nicholls, 2020). Furthermore, countries in Latin America, such as Brazil and Colombia, face unique challenges linked to inequality, decentralised governance, and socio-political instability. Examining social enterprises' approaches to necessity-driven innovation in these contexts could uncover new strategies for creatively addressing systemic societal challenges while navigating volatile environments. By conducting cross-regional studies, future research can identify patterns, regional nuances, and best practices that enhance the theoretical generalisability of findings and inform tailored strategies for social enterprises operating in diverse emerging economies contexts.

Third, investigating the role of leadership and organisational culture in the success of social enterprises is another promising research direction. Leadership traits, motivations, and personal characteristics play a significant role in shaping the strategies and outcomes of social enterprises, particularly in patriarchal societies where gender dynamics may influence entrepreneurial behaviour. Future research should explicitly address how institutional norms—such as family roles, mobility expectations, and religious identities—intersect with gender to shape opportunities for female social entrepreneurs. In Egypt and similar patriarchal contexts, women often face distinct legitimacy barriers, reduced access to networks, and limitations in securing resources. Case studies from Upper Egypt and Southern Lebanon, using ethnographic or longitudinal methods, could reveal strategies that women use to navigate institutional constraints while leading mission-driven ventures (Bastian, Sidani, & El Amine, 2022). In such contexts, understanding how gender influences

leadership in social enterprises could yield valuable insights into the leadership dynamics and organisational success in resource-constrained environments. This area of research is particularly relevant in settings like Egypt, where societal and cultural norms strongly impact leadership decisions (Simba, 2021). Future research could focus on the intersection of gender dynamics and leadership, particularly in emerging markets where these factors shape the behaviour and effectiveness of social entrepreneurs.

Another promising avenue lies in exploring the intersection between religious networks and social entrepreneurship. In Egypt, religious institutions play a key role in supporting social enterprises, providing financial resources, volunteers, and legitimacy. Researching how religious networks contribute to the sustainability and community engagement of social enterprises could reveal new governance models and operational strategies. These networks may offer alternative funding sources and engagement models that support the long-term social impact of these enterprises. The role of religion in social entrepreneurship has been widely discussed (Teasdale, 2012), yet there remains limited research on how these networks specifically help overcome resource constraints and support mission-driven organisations. Future studies could provide insights into these alternative governance structures and their effect on the sustainability of social enterprises, further contributing to the growing literature on hybrid governance in social entrepreneurship (Nicholls, 2020). Finally, the role of digital technologies in enhancing the scalability and transparency of social enterprises warrants further exploration. The use of technologies such as mobile banking, crowdfunding, and blockchain has gained attention in recent years for its potential to improve transparency, financial resilience, and engagement with stakeholders in social enterprises. Digital tools offer social enterprises the opportunity to scale their operations, streamline their processes, and enhance financial sustainability, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Nicholls, 2020). As digital platforms become increasingly integrated into the operations of social enterprises, future research could explore the specific impact of these technologies on the ability of enterprises to navigate financial and institutional challenges. Additionally, exploring how these technologies can help expand the reach and impact of social enterprises in resource-limited contexts would provide further insights into their potential role in overcoming barriers to social impact. Research in this area could thus contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how technology can enhance social entrepreneurship in emerging markets. Building on the above themes, several research questions emerge for scholars seeking to expand the field:

- How do digital SEs in Egypt and Jordan establish platform-based legitimacy amidst institutional ambiguity?
- What has been the impact of Tunisia's SE legislation on startup formation, donor engagement, and legitimacy compared to countries without such laws?
- How do gendered institutional logics shape the leadership journeys of female SE founders in regions such as Upper Egypt and Southern Lebanon?

These questions provide concrete entry points for further research and highlight how regional and

institutional variation informs the development of contextually grounded social entrepreneurship models.

In conclusion, this thesis has advanced understanding of social entrepreneurship in emerging markets, focusing on the Egyptian context as a case study. By redefining entrepreneurial orientation (EO) as a community-centric model, highlighting the role of necessity-driven innovation, and demonstrating the efficacy of hybrid financial models, this research addresses significant gaps in existing literature. The study has shown that social enterprises in resource-constrained environments can achieve both social and financial sustainability through adaptive, locally grounded strategies that challenge traditional entrepreneurship frameworks. Beyond its theoretical contributions, the study provides actionable insights for practitioners and policymakers to foster social innovation, improve governance mechanisms, and build resilient funding models. While the research is contextually grounded in Egypt, its findings have broader relevance to other emerging markets in the emerging economies, particularly regions facing institutional voids and socio-economic challenges. Future research that explores these insights through longitudinal and comparative approaches will further enhance our understanding of social entrepreneurship's role in sustainable development. Ultimately, this thesis underscores the transformative potential of social enterprises as agents of change, capable of addressing systemic societal challenges through innovation, collaboration, and adaptability. By bridging theory and practice, the study lays a foundation for more inclusive, impactful, and contextually relevant social entrepreneurship frameworks that can drive meaningful change in resource-constrained settings.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Theme	Research Question
Entrepreneurial Orientation	- How do you balance social value with monetary gains in your decision-making processes, and what specific strategies do you use to maintain your social mission at the forefront?
	- How do social enterprises in Egypt develop unique value propositions and unique selling points (USPs) through strategic initiatives to distinguish themselves from similar organisations in the country?
Social Innovation	- Can you provide examples of initiatives, programs, or practices that encourage employees to think innovatively and explore new approaches to solving social challenges?
	- How do you measure the impact of your innovative practices on the community and organisation?
	- How do social enterprises in Egypt adapt their business strategies to changing regulatory and economic environments?
Human Traits	- In what ways does your leadership style influence the achievement of your organisation's social and financial goals? Can you share specific examples?
	- How does education and training in social entrepreneurship contribute to developing key skills and capabilities among aspiring social entrepreneurs? How does experiential learning play a role in their success?
	- As an executive or leader within your organisation, what key motivational factors drive you to ensure sustainability and growth? Can you describe specific instances where these factors were pivotal?
Business Strategies	- How do you manage country partnerships and collaborations to achieve your dual mission? What key factors contribute to successfully harmonising social and financial objectives in your social entrepreneurship endeavours?
	- How do you overcome resource limitations to foster growth and sustainability in your social enterprise?
	- Does succession planning play a role in your organisation's strategy implementation? If so, how does it impact the continuity and effectiveness of your strategies?

Institutional Environment	- How do social entrepreneurs navigate and overcome institutional and regulatory challenges in their operating environments? What strategies do they employ to adapt to shifting political, economic, and social circumstances?
	- Could you share instances where country regulations have either facilitated or impeded your organisation's growth and success? How did you respond to these regulatory challenges?
	- What types of institutional support systems (e.g., incubators, accelerators) are available for social enterprises in Egypt, and how effective are they?
	- Can you provide examples of how corporate governance practices have impacted decision-making processes in your social enterprise?
	- What role does power and its distribution play in shaping the strategic direction and daily operations of your social enterprise?

Appendix 2: Evolution of Interview Questions Aligned to Final Themes

To ensure alignment with the study's theoretical focus and improve contextual relevance, the initial pilot interview guide was refined through a small-scale pilot phase. Revisions were made to improve clarity, prompt deeper reflection on institutional dynamics, and better capture constructs such as hybridity, legitimacy, and institutional bricolage.

The table below compares the initial pilot questions with the final revised interview questions used in the study, grouped under the research themes. Each change is justified with an explanation of how it enhanced the question's alignment with the research objectives and theoretical framework.

Theme	Initial Pilot Question	Final Revised Question	Rationale for Change
Entrepreneurial Orientation	How do you define your organisation's mission?	How do you balance social value with monetary gains in your decision-making processes, and what specific strategies do you use to maintain your social mission at the forefront?	Refined to reflect hybridity and strategic tension central to institutional theory.
Entrepreneurial Orientation	What makes your organisation unique?	How do social enterprises in Egypt develop unique value propositions and unique	Shifted from general uniqueness to strategic positioning within local context.

		selling points (USPs) through strategic initiatives to distinguish themselves from similar organisations in the country?	
Social Innovation	What does innovation mean to your organisation?	Can you provide examples of initiatives, programs, or practices that encourage employees to think innovatively and explore new approaches to solving social challenges?	Moved from abstract inquiry to concrete illustrations of internal innovation culture.
Social Innovation	How do you measure the outcomes of your work?	How do you measure the impact of your innovative practices on the community and organisation?	Made more specific by focusing on innovation-related outcomes.
Social Innovation	How does the external environment affect your strategy?	How do social enterprises in Egypt adapt their business strategies to changing regulatory and economic environments?	Reframed to contextualise innovation within environmental adaptation.
Human Traits	Describe your leadership style.	In what ways does your leadership style influence the achievement of your organisation's social and financial goals? Can you share specific examples?	Made outcome-driven to probe leadership's strategic influence on dual mission.
Human Traits	What kind of education helped you most as a social entrepreneur?	How does education and training in social entrepreneurship contribute to developing key skills and capabilities among aspiring social entrepreneurs? How does experiential learning play a role in their success?	Expanded to examine experiential learning and professional capability-building.
Human Traits	What motivates you to keep going?	As an executive or leader within your organisation, what key motivational factors drive you to ensure sustainability and	Linked motivation explicitly to sustainability and strategic resilience.

		growth? Can you describe specific instances where these factors are pivotal?	
Business Strategies	How do you grow your enterprise?	How do you manage country partnerships and collaborations to achieve your dual mission? What key factors contribute to successfully harmonising social and financial objectives in your social entrepreneurship endeavours?	Rewritten to foreground dual mission logic and partnership strategies.
Business Strategies	How do you manage limited resources?	How do you overcome resource limitations to foster growth and sustainability in your social enterprise?	Focused on growth and sustainability through resource adaptation.
Business Strategies	What are your future plans?	Does succession planning play a role in your organisation's strategy implementation? If so, how does it impact the continuity and effectiveness of your strategies?	Reframed around institutional structuring and long-term strategy continuity.
Institutional Environment	What challenges does the regulatory environment pose?	How do social entrepreneurs navigate and overcome institutional and regulatory challenges in their operating environments? What strategies do they employ to adapt to shifting political, economic, and social circumstances?	Expanded to explore both challenge and adaptation strategy across institutional layers.
Institutional Environment	Have any laws helped or hurt your operations?	Could you share instances where country regulations have either facilitated or impeded your organisation's growth and success? How did you respond to these regulatory challenges?	Clarified focus on response mechanisms to external institutional constraints.
Institutional Environment	Do you get support from local actors?	What types of institutional support	Improved specificity and alignment with

		systems (e.g., incubators, accelerators) are available for social enterprises in Egypt, and how effective are they?	formal institutional enablers.
Institutional Environment	How is your organisation managed?	Can you provide examples of how corporate governance practices have impacted decision-making processes in your social enterprise?	Made governance explicit and decision-focused, supporting legitimacy inquiry.
Institutional Environment	Who has power in your organisation?	What role does power and its distribution play in shaping the strategic direction and daily operations of your social enterprise?	Clarified to explore internal logics and structural power dynamics.

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title

The Impact of Institutional Context on Social Entrepreneurship in the Middle East: The Case of Egypt.

1. Invitation and brief summary

We are inviting you to take part in a research study that aims to explore "The Impact of Institutional Context on Social Entrepreneurship in the Middle East: The Case of Egypt". The study is being conducted by Tamer Mohamed Karam El Sayed Aboelela in partnership with Nottingham Business School. The project has received funding from Nottingham Trent University.

The primary objective of this research is to understand the influence of institutional factors on the development and success of social entrepreneurship initiatives within the context of Egypt. Social entrepreneurship refers to the innovative efforts taken by individuals and organizations to address social challenges, create positive change, and improve the well-being of communities. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Before you decide whether to take part, we kindly ask you to read the following information carefully.

If you choose to participate, you may be asked to share your experiences, insights, and perspectives through interviews, surveys, or focus group discussions. Your valuable input will contribute significantly to enhancing our understanding of social entrepreneurship in Egypt and the factors that either facilitate or hinder its growth and impact. Please rest assured that all information provided by participants will be treated with strict confidentiality. Any data used for research purposes will be anonymized to safeguard your privacy.

If you are considering giving consent on behalf of another person or are consulting someone to provide their opinion on inclusion in the study, we will address any specific concerns related to this scenario to ensure that everyone involved is well-informed and comfortable with their participation. Participating in this study is an opportunity to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of social entrepreneurship and its significance within the unique context of Egypt. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Nottingham Trent University or any other involved organization.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. Your involvement will play a vital role in shedding light on the impact of institutional context on social entrepreneurship in Egypt, ultimately contributing to positive social change.

2. Legal Basis for processing personal data

NTU will be responsible for all the data collected during this study. The University undertakes research as part of its function for the community under its legal status. Data protection allows us to use personal data for research with appropriate safeguards in place under the legal basis of public tasks that are in the public interest. A link to our Research Privacy Notice is available: <https://www.ntu.ac.uk/policies/research-privacy-notice> and the details for the DPO is provided below:

NTU's Data Protection Officer

Nottingham Trent University

Address: 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ

Email: DPO@ntu.ac.uk

Please contact the Data Protection Officer if:

- o You have a question/query about how your data is being used by NTU;
- o You would like to report a data breach (if you believe that your data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately);
- o You would like to raise a complaint about how your personal data is being used by NTU.

3. Who has reviewed the study?

All University research is reviewed to ensure that participants are treated appropriately, and their rights respected. This project has been considered by Nottingham Trent University's Schools of Business and Business Research Ethics Committee and has met with a favourable ethics opinion.

Further information can be found at: <https://www.ntu.ac.uk/research/research-environment-and-governance/governance-and-integrity>

4. Why have I been asked to participate? You have been approached about this study.

You have been asked to participate in this study because your insights and experiences as a social entrepreneur or a top executive in a social enterprise are crucial to understanding the impact of institutional context on social entrepreneurship in the Middle East, with a specific focus on Egypt. Your valuable input will help researchers gain deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by social entrepreneurs in the region. Your participation will contribute to creating a well-informed analysis, leading to positive social change. Participation is voluntary, and all information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality. Thank you for considering being part of this research. Your involvement is highly valued and essential to advancing the field of social entrepreneurship in Egypt and beyond.

5. Do I have to take part? Taking part in this research is voluntary.

If you would prefer not to take part, you do not have to give any reason. If you change your mind you should contact up to 2 days after the interview date.

6. What will taking part involve?

Taking part in this research study will involve participating in an interview that will be conducted at your office or remotely via video conference tool (Microsoft Teams), and it is expected to last approximately 60 minutes. During the interview, we will explore various research questions related to social entrepreneurship, focusing on several key aspects.

Firstly, we will delve into the concept of "Entrepreneurial Orientation," aiming to understand

how individuals and organizations in the social entrepreneurship domain exhibit entrepreneurial traits, take calculated risks, and seize opportunities to create positive social impact. Secondly, we will examine "Social Innovation" and how it plays a pivotal role in driving positive change. Understanding how social entrepreneurs foster innovation to address social challenges is crucial to advancing the field and generating impactful solutions.

Next, we will explore "Human Traits," recognizing the significance of individual characteristics, skills, and experiences in driving social entrepreneurship. Your insights will shed light on the personal attributes that contribute to successful social ventures. Furthermore, we will discuss "Business Strategies" employed in the realm of social entrepreneurship. This includes exploring how social enterprises develop sustainable business models that integrate social objectives with financial viability.

Lastly, we will analyze the "Institutional Environment" and its influence on social entrepreneurship in Egypt. This involves understanding the broader societal, economic, and political factors that either support or hinder the growth and effectiveness of social ventures.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We do not anticipate that there are any risks in taking part. You will not be under any pressure to answer questions or talk about topics that you prefer not to discuss, and you can choose to halt or withdraw from the interview at any point.

8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Participating in the research study "The Impact of Institutional Context on Social Entrepreneurship in the Middle East: The Case of Egypt" offers valuable benefits to both participants and the broader research community. Social entrepreneurs and top managers can actively contribute to advancing knowledge in the field by sharing their experiences, insights, and perspectives. Their valuable input will enrich the understanding of social entrepreneurship within the context of Egypt, helping researchers identify trends and best practices.

Furthermore, engaging in this study presents networking opportunities, enabling participants to connect with fellow social entrepreneurs and researchers in the academic and social entrepreneurship community. This collaboration fosters knowledge exchange and potential future partnerships, creating a more connected and supportive environment for social entrepreneurs. While there are no direct personal benefits, the significance of participants' contributions lies in the potential positive societal impact. The study's findings will inform policymakers and organizations, allowing for more effective policies and support programs that foster sustainable social ventures and drive social change.

In conclusion, participating in this research study not only benefits individual participants but also holds the promise of contributing to a deeper understanding of social entrepreneurship in Egypt and influencing impactful strategies and policies for the broader social entrepreneurship community.

9. How will my confidentiality be protected?

We usually prefer to record the interview, with your consent. This allows us to accurately reflect what is said. The recording will be transcribed (written out), with any names or identifying information removed. Additionally, if appropriate, we will use pseudonymisation, a process of

replacing personal identifiers with fictitious names, to further safeguard your identity. Data will be stored on NTU secure servers and only members of the research team will have access to recordings, transcripts and observation notes during the project using their NTU login details.

Furthermore, any direct quotes we use in publications, the thesis, or reports will be anonymized, ensuring that they cannot be linked to you. Your privacy and confidentiality will be rigorously maintained throughout the research process.

Confidentiality will only be breached in situations where there is a genuine concern for your or someone else's safety or well-being. In such cases, the researcher must report this information to the appropriate agency that can provide assistance and support.

Rest assured that your participation in this research study will be treated with the utmost respect for confidentiality, and all necessary measures will be taken to protect your identity and data. Your trust and willingness to share your experiences are highly valued, and we are committed to conducting this research ethically and responsibly.

10. What will happen to my data during the study and once the study is over?

During the study, NTU will be responsible for securely managing all data collected. Once the research is completed, all sensitive information, including interview, video, and audio recordings, as well as personal details such as names and contact information, will be promptly and permanently destroyed to safeguard your confidentiality. However, we will retain the research data necessary for verifying and validating our findings. These essential data will be deposited in the university's Institutional Repository (IRep) a reputable research data archive. This repository will preserve the data for a minimum of ten years, ensuring its accessibility for future reference and potential follow-up studies.

Moreover, any data that has been anonymized and cannot lead to the identification of the participants will be made publicly available. This includes analyzed data and interview transcripts, with any personal identifiers removed. Making this anonymized data accessible to the public serves to promote transparency and openness in research. By sharing anonymized data openly, researchers, businesses, governments, charities, and the general public will have the opportunity to use it for various purposes while acknowledging the University and the research team as the original creators. This will foster collaboration, knowledge exchange, and potential advancements in the field of social entrepreneurship and beyond.

11. How will the data be used?

The data obtained from the interview will be utilised to enhance the findings of the report, thesis, journal articles, and presentations, all of which will be made accessible to the public. If you are interested, copies of any resulting publications will be available on request.

12. Who can I contact if I have any questions or concerns about the study?

Please contact the researcher via any of the below contact information

- NAME: Tamer Mohamed Karam ElSayed Aboelela
- DEPARTMENT: Management
- EMAIL ADDRESS: tamer.aboelela2021@my.ntu.ac.uk

- ADDRESS: Nottingham Trent University, 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ
- RESEARCH SUPERVISOR: DR. AMON SIMBA
- SUPERVISOR OFFICE: +44 (0)115 848 2203
- TELEPHONE: 201000555535

If you want to speak with someone who is not directly involved in this research, or if you have questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Dr Amanda Hay, Senior Lecturer in HRM and Organisational Behaviour at Nottingham Business School at 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ. You can contact them at +44 (0)115 8486118 or send an e-mail to amanda.hay@ntu.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Consent Form

NTU HTA TEMPLATE 003 - Consent



Nottingham Trent
University

Trial	
Site Number:	
Enrolment Identification Number for this trial:	

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Study Title	The Impact of Institutional Context on Social Entrepreneurship in the Middle East: The Case of Egypt.
Short Title	The Social Entrepreneurship in Egypt
Name of Investigator	Tamer Mohamed Karam Elsayed Aboelela

Please Initial
Each Box

- 1) I confirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

- 2) I, agree to participate as a volunteer in the above study. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. However, I acknowledge that the data obtained from the interview will be utilized to enhance the findings of the report, thesis, journal articles, and presentations, all of which may be made accessible to the public. Even if I choose to withdraw, any data collected before the specified deadline, 12 October 2025, may still be utilized and analyzed as part of the research. Therefore, it is important for me to understand that setting a withdrawal deadline is a possibility.

- 3) I understand from the participant information sheet (Dated 1st Jan 2024 Version 1.0), which I have read in full, and from my discussion(s) with Tamer Mohamed Karam Elsayed Aboelela that this will involve me [provide details of investigation in this space, including the procedure involved and time commitment expected of participant]

- 4) It has also been explained to me by Tamer Aboelela that the risks and side effects that may result from my participation are as follows: Scheduling the interview does not pose any specific risk unless there are unforeseen events of significant impact or electricity outages.



- 5) I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and, where I have asked questions, these have been answered to my satisfaction. _____
- 6) I undertake to abide by University regulations and the advice of researchers regarding safety. ☐
- 7) I understand that any personal information regarding me, gained through my participation in this study, will be treated as confidential and only handled by individuals relevant to the performance of the study and the storing of information thereafter. Where information concerning myself appears within published material, my identity will be kept anonymous. ☐
- 8) Consent for storage and use in possible future research projects: ☐
- I agree that the sample (s) I have given, and the information gathered about me can be stored by (name of custodian) at the (name of host institution) for possible use in future projects of a similar nature. I understand that some of these projects may be carried out by researchers other than (name of study team) who ran the first project, including researchers working for commercial companies.
- 9) I confirm that I have completed the health questionnaire and know of no reason, medical or otherwise that would prevent me from partaking in this research. ☐
- 10) (If appropriate) I agree to my General Practitioner being informed of my participation in the study. / I agree to my General Practitioner being involved in the study, including any necessary exchange of information about me between my GP and the research team. ☐
- _____

The following are OPTIONAL and your choice will not affect study participation

- 11) I understand that my samples will be collected and stored at Nottingham Trent University under the HTA Research Licence. I agree to my samples being held for future ethically approved research. ☐

Participant name and signature		Date	
Independent witness name and signature		Date	



Primary Researcher name, contact details and signature	Tamer Mohamed Karam El Sayed Aboelela <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DEPARTMENT: Management ▪ EMAIL ADDRESS: tamer.aboelela2021@my.ntu.ac.uk ▪ ADDRESS: Nottingham Trent University, 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ ▪ RESEARCH SUPERVISOR: DR. AMON SIMBA ▪ SUPERVISOR OFFICE: +44 (0)115 848 2203 ▪ TELEPHONE: 201000555535 	Date	
--	--	------	--

*When completed: 1 for participant; 1 for researcher site file; 1 to be kept in medical notes (if appropriate).

If you want to speak with someone who is not directly involved in this research, or if you have questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Dr Amanda Hay, Senior Lecturer in HRM and Organisational Behaviour at Nottingham Business School at 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ. You can contact them at +44 (0)115 8486118 or send an e-mail to amanda.hay@ntu.ac.uk

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- o You would like to raise a complaint about how your personal data is being used by NTU

NTU Research Privacy Notice (RPN)


The Research Privacy Notice outlines what NTU does with personal data and how we protect personal data and the rights of research participants during research activities in accordance with UK GDPR/ Data Protection Act 2018. For more information regarding the RPN, please click on the following link: <https://www.ntu.ac.uk/p...research-privacy-notice>


Appendix 5: Evidence of email communications

NTU: Research Invitation

 **Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)** <tamer.aboelela2021@my.ntu.ac.uk>

To: Hamed.Ibrahim@lifemakers.org

 PARTICIPANT INFOR... 141.8 KB

 Participation Consen... 196.7 KB

[Download All](#) · [Preview All](#)

Dear Mr Hamed,

Thank you for confirming your participation in our research study on social entrepreneurship in the Middle East.


To schedule a convenient time for the interview, please use the following link: [Schedule Your Interview](#).

Attached are two documents outlining the research scope and objectives, along with a consent form that requires your signature.


Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.


Best wishes,

NTU: Research Invitation

 **Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)** <tamer.aboelela2021@my.ntu.ac.uk>

To: Heba.qotb@lifemakers.org

 PARTICIPANT INFOR... 141.8 KB

 Participation Consen... 196.7 KB

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Dear Ms Heba,

Thank you for confirming your participation in our research study on social entrepreneurship in the Middle East.

To schedule a convenient time for the interview, please use the following link: [Schedule Your Interview](#). PS Thursday 1-3 is available, but not visible on the schedule page. If it fits your schedule. I'd be pleased to make the interview shortly.

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Best wishes,

NTU: Research Invitation

This Year

A

Appointlet
Scheduled: Ashraf Hamdy - Resear... 21/08/2024
Dr Tamer, This Research interview - Microsoft Te...

DS

Dr. Sherif AbdelAzim
NTU: Invitation to Participate in So... 18/08/2024
Dear Dr. Tamer, It is an honor to be part of your st...

Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)

NTU: Research Interview 15/08/2024
Dear Ms Magda, Thank you for confirming your p...

Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR), Bahaa...

NTU: Research Interview 08/08/2024
Dear Mr Bahaa, I hope you're well. Many thanks f...

SN

Shaimaa Nabil, Bahaa El Reedy

Research interview - Microsoft Tea... 07/08/2024
Shaimaa Nabil Corporate Partnerships senior Man...

Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)

NTU: Research Interview 07/08/2024
Dear Eng Abdallah, Thank you for confirming your...

Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)

NTU: Research Interview 07/08/2024
Dear Mr Bahaa, Thank you for confirming your pa...

BE

Bahaa El Reedy

Research interview - Microsoft Tea... 07/08/2024
Bahaa El Reedy Technical Advisory +2012020118...

Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR), Moham...

NTU: Research Interview

Aboelela,...
Monday, 5 Augu...

PDF

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Dear Mr Ahmed,

Thank you for confirming your participation in our research study on social entrepreneurship in the Middle East.

To schedule a convenient time for the interview, please use the following link: [Schedule Your Interview](#).


Attached are two documents outlining the research scope and objectives and a consent form that requires your signature.

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

199


NTU: Research Invitation

This Year




Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
NTU: Research Interview
07/08/2024
Dear Mr Mohamed, Hope all is well. Many thanks...

Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
Dear Mr Mohamed, Hope all is well. M... 07/08/2024




Mohamed Gamal
Dear Dr. Tamer, I am very pleased to... 07/08/2024


Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
Dear Mr Mohamed, Thank you for con... 01/08/2024




Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
NTU: Research Interview
05/08/2024
Dear Mr Ahmed, Thank you for confirming your p...




Hamed Ibrahim
Research interview - Microsoft Tea... 03/08/2024
(no message preview)




Mohamed Gamal
Research interview - Microsoft Tea... 03/08/2024
(no message preview)



Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
NTU: Research Interview
01/08/2024
Dear Eng Asmaa, Thank you for confirming your p...




Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
NTU: Research Interview
01/08/2024
Dear Eng Mostafa, Thank you for confirming your...



Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)

Re: NTU: Research Interview



Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
To: Mohamed Gamal

Wednesday, 7 August 2024, 12:21 AM

Dear Mr Mohamed,

Hope all is well.

Many thanks for your support. It was a pleasure speaking to you.

Best wishes,


From: Mohamed Gamal
<mohamed.gamal@lifemakers.org>
Date: Wednesday, 7 August 2024 at 12:21 AM
To: Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
<tamer.aboelela2021@my.ntu.ac.uk>
Subject: Re: NTU: Research Interview

Dear Dr. Tamer,


200

NTU: Research Invitation


This Year

>



Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
NTU: Research Invitation
01/08/2024
FYI From: Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR) <tamer.ab...




Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
NTU: Research Invitation
31/07/2024
Dear Ms Heba, Thank you for confirming your par...




Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
NTU: Research Interview
30/07/2024
Microsoft Teams Need help? Join the meeting no...

>



Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
NTU: Research Interview
30/07/2024
Microsoft Teams Need help? Join the meeting no...




Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
NTU: Research Invitation
30/07/2024
Dear Mr Hamed, Thank you for confirming your p...




Appointmentlet
Scheduled: Hamed Ibrahim - Resea...
30/07/2024
Dr Tamer, This Research interview - Microsoft Te...

>


Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
Social Entrepreneurship Interview...
29/07/2024
Microsoft Teams Need help? Join the meeting no...




Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
NTU: Invitation to Participate in Re...
29/07/2024
Dear Ms Sara, Thank you for confirming your part...




Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)

NTU: Research Invitation



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Wednesday, 31 J...

To: Heba.qotb@lifemakers.org



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Dear Ms Heba,

Thank you for confirming your participation in our research study on social entrepreneurship in the Middle East.


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Attached are two documents outlining the research scope and objectives, along with a consent


201

NTU: Research Invitation


This Year




NTU: Invitation to Participate in Re... 29/07/2024
Dear Dr Aliaa, Thank you for confirming your parti...




Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR) 29/07/2024
NTU: Invitation to Participate in Re...
Dear Ms Randa, Pleasure speaking with you today...



Appointment
Scheduled: Nagwa ElSayed - Rese... 09/07/2024
Dr Tamer, This Research interview - Microsoft Te...



Appointment
Scheduled: Asmaa Moaz - Researc... 09/07/2024
Dr Tamer, This Research interview - MS Teams w...




Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR) 04/07/2024
Social Entrepreneurship Research
Microsoft Teams Need help? Join the meeting no...

Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR) 04/07/2024
Microsoft Teams Need help? Join the...


Heba Hussein
Social Entrepreneurship Research Heba...

Inbox

Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR) 03/07/2024
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Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR) 03/07/2024
Social Entrepreneurship Interview
Microsoft Teams Need help? Join the meeting no...





Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR) 25/06/2024
Social Entrenpreneurshin Interview:


Accepted: Social Entrepreneurship Res...




Google Calendar <calendar...
on behalf of




Heba Hussein <hebagadga...
To:  Aboelela, Tamer 2021 (PGR)
Thursday, 4 July 2024 at 2:12 am




Thursday, 4 July 2024 at 9:00 a...



Accepted



This event occurs in the past.



invite.ics
4 KB

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Preview

Heba Hussein has accepted this invitation.

202

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03/07/2024



25/06/2024



07/06/2024

Inbox

07/06/2024

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06/06/2024

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06/06/2024

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29/05/2024



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