

**Assessing Networks as Engines of Social Change for Women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region: A Focus on Women's Entrepreneurship Efforts**

by

Rania Mohamed Kamel Marwan

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Auburn University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama  
August 7, 2021

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Approved by

Kelly Krawczyk, Chair, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science  
Dr. Mitchell Brown, Co-Chair, Professor, Department of Political Science  
Dr. Jill Crystal, Professor, Department of Political Science  
Dr. Kathleen Hale, Professor, Department of Political Science  
Dr. John Brooks, Assistant Professor, Professor, Department of Political Science  
Dr. Peter Weber, Assistant Professor, Department of Consumer and Design Studies

## Abstract

Efforts are being made in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to increase the educational attainment of women and reduce gender inequalities. However, this has not translated into an increase in economic participation of women in the region, an incidence labeled by the World Bank as the “MENA paradox.” A closer look at the tools used to enhance the capacities of female entrepreneurs in this part of the world is required. The third sector plays a significant role in helping empower women in the MENA region. One way this occurs is through networks made up of different NGOs. However, these NGO networks are under-investigated due to their fluid nature. There is consensus among scholars of the importance of networks, though there is a lack of understanding as to how exposure to network activities is related to building the capacity of network members. This study is based on the theory that networks enhance the capacities of female entrepreneurs in the MENA region. A mixed methods approach is used to assess the relationship between exposure to NGO networks and increased capacities of female members of networks in the MENA region. Tools of data collection include an online survey instrument and semi-structured interviews with members of NGO networks. The study examines four networks in the MENA region. Non-probability purposive sampling is utilized. Bivariate analysis is used in the quantitative analysis to understand the relationship between exposure to network functions and perceived capacities of members. The qualitative portion of this study used structured focused comparison of selected interview cases.

## Acknowledgements

*First and foremost, I thank God for having the opportunity to fulfill my dream of doing my Ph.D.*

*To my father, I know you are watching from heaven with a big smile on your face*

*To my mother, thank you for always being my greatest supporter*

I am deeply grateful for the support and guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Kelly Krawczyk, her knowledge, patience and relentless support pushed me to sharpen my thinking and immensely improve my work. I would like to thank my Co-Chair Dr. Mitchell Brown for always telling me what I needed to know upfront, it is something that I truly valued, and helped me develop in my journey. I would like to thank all my committee members; Dr. Jill Crystal, for sharing her immense knowledge in the MENA region, and for her support and direction. I would like to thank Dr. Kathleen Hale for guiding me in connecting all the pieces together. I would also like to thank Dr. John Brooks for helping me polish my writing and to have a critical perspective. My immense gratitude goes to Dr. Ghada Labib, the Deputy Minister for Administrative Reform in Egypt. She valued my research and helped open all the closed doors. I would like to thank Mrs. Bassant Helmi, Founder and Managing Director of the Berlin-based non-profit association Global Project Partners (GPP). Helmi patiently endured my endless emails and phone calls, and never failed to share her immense knowledge of networks in the MENA region. Her support and guidance were invaluable in helping me finish this dissertation. To my three best friends in this whole world Nour, Haya and Aly. I am truly blessed with being your mother. Your support and encouragement during this journey are one of the main reasons I was able to complete this dissertation. Words fall short in describing what you mean to me. Last but not least, I would like to thank my husband, and lifelong partner for not only putting up with me doing another doctoral degree, but for actually pushing and supporting me during my lowest moments. I simply could not have done it without you. Thank you, my love!

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the rationale for research, objectives, main arguments, and the research questions. The main purpose of this dissertation thesis is to examine networks in the MENA region as tools of enhancing the capacities of female members of these networks. The study focuses on four non-governmental networks in the MENA region that serve female entrepreneurs. They represent the universe from which the study sample was drawn. The four networks are the Association of Organization of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFEAMME)<sup>1</sup>, Ouissal (German-Arab Mentoring Project)<sup>2</sup>, World Association of Women Entrepreneurs (FCEM)<sup>3</sup>, and Vital Voices. AFAEMME is a network that consists of 59 member organizations spanning 24 Mediterranean countries. Ouissal (German-Arab Mentoring Project) is a program designed to include 40 German, Tunisian, and Moroccan female entrepreneurs who work together on business plans in a mentor/mentee relationship. FCEM is an international network serving women globally; however, this research study only targets members of FCEM from the MENA region. Vital Voices<sup>4</sup> in the MENA region is another international network that empowers women in the region by providing resources, addressing human rights issues, and building the capacities of women business leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.afaemme.org/present/news/mena-oecd-women%E2%80%99s-economic-empowerment-forum>

<sup>2</sup> <https://land-der-ideen.de/en/project/ouissal-german-arabic-mentoring-programme-264>

<sup>3</sup> <https://fcem.org/fr/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://old.vitalvoices.org/what-we-do/regions/middle-east-and-north-africa>

Each network in the sample is primarily concerned with empowering women through support of their entrepreneurial initiatives by offering services that help women improve their businesses. Given that the literature confirms the importance of networks and their positive influence on problem solving, this research study seeks to provide further understanding of how exposure to network functions affects the perceived capacities of individual female members of these four networks. It is anticipated that the exposure to network functions enhances the perceived capacities of its members; highlighting the importance of how the third sector plays a key role in reducing the gap between high education attainment and low economic participation among women in the MENA region.

### **Motivation of this study**

This study is inspired by scholarly work on collaborative governance. Globalization and the decline of traditional, formal, institutional, and political systems coupled with the rise of formal and informal associations of interests is the motivation for consideration of networks that employ collaborative strategies, specifically those that cater to female entrepreneurs in the MENA region. Literature describes public agencies as qualitatively different from their private counterparts in their adaptive ability to operate in citizen networks to advance public value (Bryson et al. 2014). There seems to be scholarly consensus that networks have the unique characteristic of bridging informational gaps and asymmetries (Agranoff 2007; Hale 2011; Castells 2008; Ansell and Gash 2008 and Emerson et al. 2011). Research is needed to determine whether the ‘network bridging characteristic’ applies to women’s NGO networks in the MENA region.

## **1.2 Background to the Research**

The role of women in the MENA region has changed with waves of globalization. According to Metcalfe (2008), entrepreneurial development increased among women in Jordan, Egypt, and Bahrain specifically. Globalization has also resulted in the creation of jobs in the public sector that are more favored by women (Adler 2004; Dalacoura 2019). However, globalization has intensified gender inequalities in relation to salaries, government representation, and public administration roles (Metcalfe 2008). In this case, women are considered to be the losing party; the wage discrimination in the MENA region is considered to be the highest in the world at 40% (Dalacoura 2019). Dalacoura (2019) acknowledges that the region has shown more significant improvements in women's health and education than in employment rates. Improvements have not translated into labor force participation. The share of women in the workforce in this region is considered to be the lowest in the world (Dalacoura 2019). Approximately four out of every five women in the MENA region are absent from the labor force, and therefore, unemployment is higher among women than men (Dalacoura 2019).

### **Problem Statement**

The term 'MENA paradox' was labeled by the World Bank to reflect the discrepancy between rising female educational attainment and the corresponding low economic participation of women in the region. In Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, female literacy rates exceed most of those from other developing regions (World Bank 2012). Moreover, according to the 2016 Global Gender Gap Index, which ranks countries on the basis of economic participation, 15 MENA countries fall into the lowest 20 out of a total of 144 countries. Between 1990 and 2013, the share of women participating in the workforce increased only from 19% to



23% across the MENA region. Concurrently, female participation in the workforce declined in Egypt, Morocco and Syria.

Contrary to the statistics, women in the region aspire to be employed. According to a study involving Jordanian females, 92% indicated that they planned to work after graduation and 76% intended to work full time (Assad et al. 2018). An emerging trend by which women in the region are empowered to become economically and politically active is occurring through the formation of networks (Browne 2015). However, the literature on networks in the MENA region lacks information on the effects of these networks on their members. Further investigation about networks in regions other than the United States will provide information regarding the effectiveness of NGO networks as tools for bridging information and asymmetries.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is significant for a number of reasons. First, the Arab Spring is primarily based on economic roots and the inability of the political systems to provide the basic economic means to conduct trade, sparked by Bouazizi setting himself on fire in Tunisia. The motto of the Arab Spring was the call for: “bread, freedom and social justice.” This study focuses on how the role of the third sector, following the Arab Spring, in addressing this problem through networks.

Second, there is an association between the services provided by networks to its members and their corresponding improved capacities in the MENA region (Browne 2015). According to Browne’s (2015) report on networks serving women in the MENA region, more than half of the female members in the MENA Businesswomen’s Network, located in Jordan, have formed partnerships, and more than 90% of members reported that they have experienced business benefits as a result of membership in the network. Moreover, Browne (2015) reports that a rights network like Karama, which focuses on advocacy and capacity building of Arab women as

leaders in regional and international contexts, have provided recommendations that were adopted into constitutions. In turn, many of the recommendations were made to states by international organizations like the UN.

Third, understanding more about the impact of networks is a recommendation made by major studies conducted in the MENA region (UNDP Assessment Report 2015; IFC and CAWTAR 2007). An important observation is that a key piece of information is missing concerning the effect of networks on their female members, although the report by Browne (2015) describes the different type of networks and the services offered to women in the MENA region. This research attempts to address the gap in the knowledge on the performance of these networks.

Finally, the literature on networks is relatively new and the growing field lacks theory building as it pertains to networks in the MENA region. Many third-sector theories are based on Western societies, which is pointed out by Flanigan, Asal and Brown (2014). The authors point out that most third sector theories are based on the assumptions of developed economies with democratic political systems and on cultural traditions that are completely different from what is present in the MENA region (Flanigan, Asal and Brown 2014). That being said, this study does not call for considering western theories as not applicable to the MENA region, but rather, trying to understand the different premises that should be considered when using western theories to explain phenomena in the region. The authors stress the need for more cross-disciplinary research when investigating the third sector in the MENA region. This research will also help address this gap.

### 1.3 Objective, argument and research questions

The objective of this study is to address gaps in our knowledge by focusing on NGO networks targeting the Middle East and North Africa region and assessing how exposure to these networks affects the perceived capacities of the individual members of the network, if at all. To understand the effect of NGO networks on the capacities of their female members, four networks are examined specifically in relation to the network functions performed and the ability to create ties. Network functions include training and coaching, whereas creating ties refers to the ability to form partnerships and connect with other people.

In response to the identified gaps, particularly with regard to the effect of networks on the capacities of the individual members, the main research question is: **To what extent does exposure to network activities affect the perceived capacities of the network's individual members?** To expand this question, two guiding research themes are used based on my theory. The first research theme is *the relationship between network functions and the individual capacities of members*. The second research theme is *the relationship between individual capacities and organizational success*.

**To address these themes the following subsidiary research questions are addressed:**

**Theme 1: *The relationship between network functions and the individual capacities of members***

To what extent do management, technological, and networking activities performed by the network affect the perceived individual capacities of their members? This is further broken down into the following questions:

- What is the relationship (if any) between the number of hours spent per week in training by the network member and their perceived individual capacities?

-To what extent does exposure to network activities affect the perceived leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills of its members?

**Theme 2: *The relationship between individual capacities and organizational success***

To what extent does the exposure to network activities affect the individual member's perceived long-term organizational success? This is further broken down into the following questions:

**- To what extent does the exposure to network activities affect the perceived individual member's ability to better serve clients, gain more organizational legitimacy, and acquire more resources?**

To answer the research questions, a mixed methods approach was adopted to assess the relationship between exposure to networks and increased capacities of female members of NGO networks in the MENA region, if any. The literature review explores the different definitions of networks; creating an understanding of the concept of network governance from both an international and internal network governance perspective. The important concepts of networks and policy, functional advantages of networks, and their relationship to capacity building are reviewed in this literature. The research goal is ultimately to understand network management, to try to create a more solid framework of what network management entails in the MENA region, and to discover what its perceived effect is on its members, if any.

#### **1.4 Research Rationale**

The formation of networks is cyclical, as confirmed by previous scholars including Emerson et al. (2011). Collaboration is a strategy adopted by networks to enhance interaction between relatively autonomous organizations (Imperial 2005). Collaboration, in this case, involves working together, rather than separately, to achieve public value. Emerson et al. (2011)

proposed a framework for collaborative governance which includes the networked interactions that take place between non-governmental organizations to address policies at the local level. The framework proposed by Emerson et al. (2011) explains the collaborative dynamics that take place between networks. The authors identify the drivers of collaborative behavior, which, in the case of this study, are relevant with regards to network formation (Emerson et al. 2011). They describe the collaborative dynamics and the impacts of these collaborations that are cyclical in nature, with the main purpose of dealing with a problem, resolving conflict, or adding value (Emerson et al. 2011). The authors also describe the outcome as either intentional or unintentional change that transform an undesirable event (Emerson et al. (2011).

I propose a framework for network formation at the micro level focusing mainly on how exposure to networks positively influences the capacities of its individual members. I concur with scholars (Emerson et al. 2011; Klijn and Koppenjan 2012; Borgatti and Foster 2003) that there are drivers that encourage the formation of networks. Figure 1 summarizes these drivers as environmental conditions that include addressing specific issues, fragmentation of agencies, and salience of a problem (Emerson et al. 2011). This drives the formation of networks that are both formal and informal in their interactions as described by Imperial (2005). However, for the purpose of this study, the focus will be on formal network interactions.

Network formation is described as consisting of both network management functions and networking activities. Klijn and Koppenjan (2012) discuss the distinction between the former and the latter, highlighting the difference between the utilization of management strategies and the creation of ties respectively. Network management functions include training provided by the network in fields such as IT, accounting, legal services, and business plan development. On the other hand, the networking activities refer to the opportunities to create partnerships and make

connections as a result of network participation. The overall effect of being in a network results in short-term and long-term outcomes. Short-term outcomes are theorized as the increased individual capacities of female members, the increased number of contacts that they are able to form because of being a member of the network, and their improved utilization of technology. This is eventually translated into increased organizational success and is reflected in her ability to better serve her clients, and an improved ability to acquire more resources. The proposed model is cyclical in the sense that, upon the evaluation of the outcomes, drivers push towards the formation of another network to address the issue under investigation.

### **1.5 Research Method**

To analyze the effect of exposure to networks in relation to the perceived capacities of their members, a mixed methods approach was used. The main theoretical independent variable is exposure to networks directed towards improving the capacities of female entrepreneurs in the region. The individual capacities of members are measured in the short run by change (if any) in their perceived leadership, communication and interpersonal skills, the change (if any) in the number of contacts that they are able to form as a result of being a member of the network, and change (if any) in their improved use of technology when performing organizational functions. This is translated into long-term organizational success in the form of members' perceived abilities to better serve their clients and their perceived ability to better acquire resources.

Data was collected using primary data collection methods. A survey instrument was used to assess the perceived change in individual capacities of members of networks, if any. In addition, interviews were conducted with female entrepreneurs in the region to gauge the training efforts and other capacity building techniques employed by the network. Data collection took place from July of 2020 to January of 2021. Bivariate analysis was used to measure the effect of

exposure to networks on the individual network member's capacities. In addition to the survey questionnaire, structured focused comparison of selected interview cases was administered as the qualitative component of this research design. The main purpose of the interview questions was to elicit responses that paralleled the original data in order to confirm the causal hypothesis.

## **1.6 Limitations**

The concept of networks is a relatively new one in the MENA region and one in which several international organizations, such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) (UNIDO report 2015), as well as the IFC and CAWTAR report (2007) have listed in their recommendations as a means of empowerment of female entrepreneurs in the region. The literature on networks is still a relatively new and growing field. There are few quantitative analyses addressing the effect of networks on individual members. This study is especially valuable because there is no data in the MENA region that attempts to evaluate networks. The most common data available in the region assesses how conducive the environment in the region was in allowing for sustainable growth of female entrepreneurs (UNIDO report 2015). However, it should be noted that this study has four important limitations.

One limitation of this study is that it is difficult to rule out reverse causality. This can be explained by the fact that collaborative dynamics is an iterative process (Emerson et al. 2011). The network activities take the form of a repeated pattern that is driven by the existence of the right leadership, the salience of an issue, and the inability to achieve a desired outcome (Emerson et al. 2011). These drivers push toward the formation of networks that attempt to address these issues. The network produces a subsequent impact, which could be physical, environmental, social, economic, or political (Emerson et al. 2011). According to Emerson et al. (2011) the

network process is cyclical, where adaptations occur and new challenges and opportunities emerge.

Another limitation of the study is the sampling technique used. Purposive sampling has low external validity. One way to mitigate this was to complement the design with a thick analysis of contrasting cases of female members who showed improvement, according to the program records, against those who dropped out or were not members in the first place. The purpose was to compare the same causal hypothesis across all cases. In this case, the researcher can then have empirically grounded causal explanations and ensure non-spuriousness (Geddes 2003).

The third limitation was the reliance on perceived capacities of individual members as the dependent variable in the study. Perceived capacities are latent constructs, and not without their problems of validity and reliability; however, measuring latent constructs is a common and accepted practice. The perceived capacities of individual network members could be used as a benchmark against which future researchers could actually compare their findings to. Future studies could include program evaluations of networks that include both process and outcome evaluations, which could be cross-examined with the perceived capacities of individual female members to determine if there is a correlation between the perceived capacities and the actual capacities.

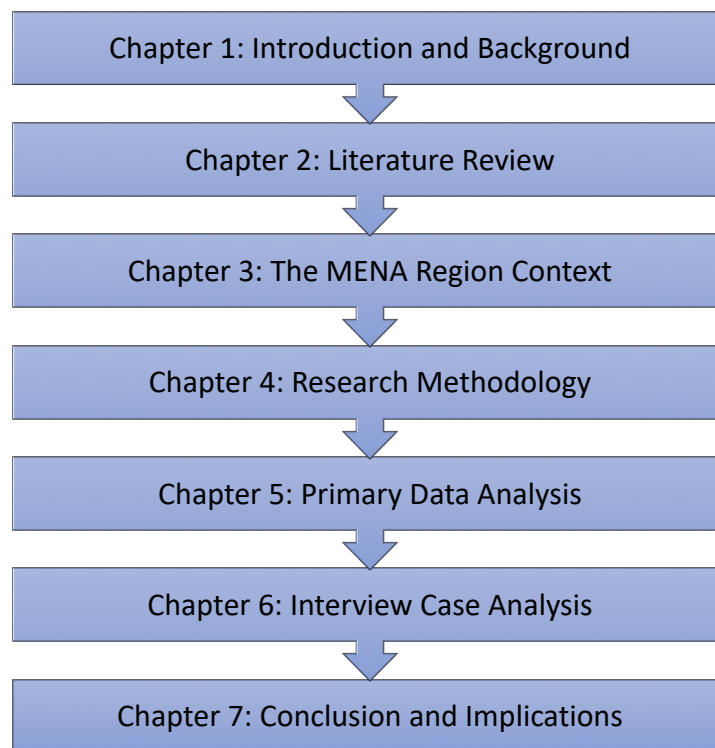
The fourth limitation is the inability to make conclusions about causality because the data analysis is limited to bivariate. Given the small sample size, with 145 respondents who filled out the survey, a future recommendation is to expand the sample size and run multivariate regression to be able to present conclusions about causality.



## 1.7 Outline of the Thesis

This study comprises seven chapters. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the structure and the content of the chapters. The chapters are: the Introduction and Background (Chapter 1), the Literature Review (Chapter 2), The MENA Region Context (Chapter 3), Research Methodology (Chapter 4), Primary Data Analysis (Chapter 5), Interview Case Analyses (Chapter 6), Conclusion and Implications (Chapter 7).

**Figure 1.1 Thesis Structure and Content**



## 1.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter provided the background for the thesis. The research problem, questions, and objectives were outlined. The rationale for the research was explained, followed by a description

of the methodology. The limitations of this study were discussed. The organization of the thesis is shown in Figure 1.1.

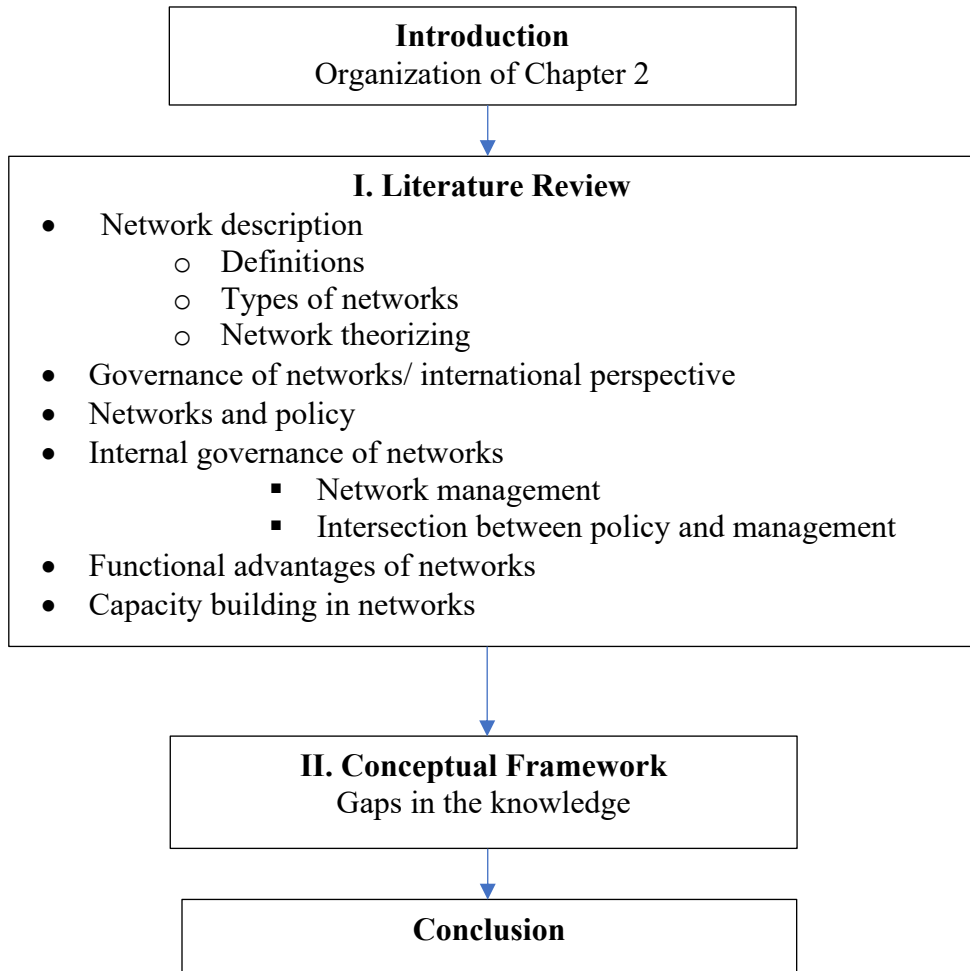
## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This research study investigates the scholarly work on networks and the shift towards formal and informal associations of interests that result in collaborative strategies intended to cut through government bureaucracies. In the end, the ultimate goal of networks is to serve the needs of its members. The literature confirms that networks result in bridging informational asymmetries (Agranoff 2007; Hale 2011; Castells 2008; Ansell and Gash 2008 and Emerson et al. 2011). This study investigates whether or not the ‘network bridging characteristic’ applies in other regions of the world; specifically, the MENA region, by assessing its effect, if any, on the perceived capacities of its individual members. The ultimate goal is to create a more solid framework of what network management entails in the MENA region and what the perceived effect on its members is, if any.

This chapter is divided into two parts; the literature review followed by the conceptual framework of the study. Figure 2.1 depicts how the chapter is organized. Part I of the literature covers the main themes of this study: network description, governance of networks from an international perspective, networks and policy, internal governance focus, functional advantages of networks, and capacity building in networks. Part II depicts the conceptual framework of this study and the justification of its selection.

**Figure 2.1 Organization of Chapter Two**



## **Part I. Literature Review**

### **2.2 Network Description**

#### *2.2.1 Definitions*

Networks are organizational arrangements that do not follow the typical hierarchical organizational structures. They are unique and, to a certain extent, based on high degrees of coordination given that multiple stakeholders are involved. In the most basic language, Newman (2003) describes the study of networks in social science as pertaining to an understanding of the relations between people in human society.

Bolgatti and Halgin (2011) provide the basic definition of networks as actors with a certain set of ties and argue that the definition of any network is determined by its actors and the type of ties involved. The ties interconnect, creating a path that further links more indirectly connected stakeholders. The pattern of ties determines the structure of the network (Borgatti and Halgin 2011). Isett et al. (2011) provide a holistic categorization of the use of the term ‘network’ in public administration literature, identifying three ways in which the term is used. The first way involves the use of the term ‘network’ as a metaphor to describe an organizing concept. In this case the term is used to reflect this concept, while not necessarily operating under a structure or a corporate entity (O’Toole 1997).

The second way to describe networks is by observing the methodological approach used to describe them; referring in this case to what is known as social network analysis (Isett et al. 2011). Social network analysis focuses on the structural dynamics of networks and the interactions among them rather than the results (Isett et al. 2011; O’Toole and Meier 2004). The third way to describe networks is by how they deliver the good or service in a coordinated fashion; the concept of collaborative governance falls under this stream (Isett et al. 2011). Although there is serious overlapping in the three streams, for the purpose of this research

association is made toward the description employed by O'Toole (1997, 45) that defines networks as “structures of interdependence involving multiple organization or parts thereof, where one unit is not merely the formal subordinate of the others in some larger hierarchical arrangement”; in other words, the first stream described by Isett et al. (2011).

### *2.2.2 Types of Networks*

Networked arrangements in general are primarily based on establishing interactive relationships between the different actors in the network. Networks can be of different size and structure; they can be as small as two organizations connected by a mutual relationship to a more complex arrangement of interdependent organizations with varying functions (Meier and O'Toole 2003).

Isett et al. (2011) determine three main streams of research on networks: policy networks, collaborative networks and governance networks. Research on policy networks is the oldest in the current literature on the topic. Policy networks involve several actors including public agencies, legislative offices, and private sector organizations that have a common policy focus and are interested in affecting public policy decisions that directly affect themselves (Isett et al. 2011). Collaborative networks, on the other hand, are more focused on providing or producing a common good or service that cannot be offered at an individual organizational level (Isett et al. 2011). In collaborative networks, government agencies, for-profits and nonprofits work together to offer a collective public good, service, or value. They range from formal to informal entities, publicly or self-managed (Isett et al. 2011). The third stream of literature described by Isett et al. (2011) is governance networks. Governance networks combine the collaborative production of goods or services with collective policy making. The main focus of these organizations is the

coordination process that takes place to achieve a common goal rather than the policies generated or the products or services produced (Isett et al. 2011).

Newman (2003) identifies four general types of networks in the real world that are more encompassing in scope: social networks, information networks, technological networks, and biological networks. In this research study, social networks are the most relevant and important. Newman (2003) defines these as networks in which a set of people or groups interact with each other in some sort of a pattern. Newman (2003) refers specifically to collaboration networks as a type of a social network and provides a clear definition of the term. He refers to collaboration networks as those in which participants engage with each other under a common group membership (2003). Newman (2003) makes an important conclusion based on statistical analysis of networks; they are far from random in their behavior. This is supported by statistical evidence in the form of high clustering coefficients and highly skewed degree distributions, especially in social networks (Newman 2003). Networks are not confined to a specific discipline, but rather transcend these boundaries and are investigated in multiple disciplines, making their investigation all the more difficult. That is why, when it comes to understanding the different network theories, a lot of confusion is involved.

### *2.2.3 Network Theorizing*

The study of organizational networks is drawn from theories on social capital that are concerned with the relationships between individuals (Provan and Lemaire 2012). The concept of social capital is one that is strongly related to the focus of networks: the creation of social connections. Social capital is formed when the relationships that take place between individuals result in a desired action (Seibert et al. 2001). Theories of social capital are used to model social systems, such as networks, and have been empirically tested by social network researchers.

Putnam and Goss (2002) acknowledge that social capital at the individual and at the societal (civic society) levels are beneficial and are considered a valuable asset. Coleman (1988) argues that social capital is a public good in the sense that the actions of individuals results in benefits to the public. Coleman's (1988) view of social capital combines the rational choice theory, where the individual utility maximization is emphasized, and the social structure of relationships among individuals. In other words, individuals will form social relationships as long as this ensures that they benefit from doing so.

Putnam's (2002) perception of social capital was more at the aggregate level to include cities, states or nations. Putnam (2002) viewed social capital as the networks, norms and trust that result in mutual benefits. Putnam (2002) mentions the different classifications of social capital by theorists which are not mutually exclusive. The different classifications allow for a better understanding and evaluation of social capital.

The first classification is formal versus informal social capital. The former refers to a structured organization of relationships, whereas the latter is more informal; however, in both types, networks are formed that can result in both private and public benefits. The second classification is thick versus thin social capital (Putnam 2002). As the term implies, thick refers to deep ties formed between individuals, whereas thin refers to casual ties, as simple as a head nod. Putnam (2002) reiterates that both types elicit reciprocity. The third classification is the inward looking versus outward looking social capital (Putnam 2002). This refers to whether the goal is to inwardly promote members or there is an outward goal of promoting public goods in general. Putnam (2002) highlights that neither form is superior than the other.



The fifth classification is bridging versus bonding social capital (Putnam 2002). The former is focused on connecting people who are not alike; whereas the latter focuses on connecting people who are alike (Putnam 2002). According to Putnam, social capital is the connections formed among individuals resulting in the formation of reciprocity and trustworthy relationships.

Skocpol (1995) in her book *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* explains how in the late nineteenth century relationships formed among women in clubs and associations played an important role, that bureaucracies failed to do, in exercising power over the state. These women were able to influence legislative action across the country in a time where they were banned from electoral politics. According to Skocpol (1995) the relationship among these women was reinforced by common values that they shared as a result of being mothers, or what Putnam would classify as bonding social capital.

Three approaches to conceptualizing social capital have emerged: the weak tie theory, the structural holes approach, and the social resources theory (Seibert et al. 2001). The weak tie theory is concerned with the nature of ties and suggests that weak ties between entities are more likely to contribute to valuable information and resources (Seibert et al. 2001). Empirical results show mixed support for the weak tie theory (Seibert et al. 2001). The structural holes approach is concerned with the structure of the network, where open networks provide opportunities for valuable information to be shared (Seibert et al. 2001). In other words, disconnected parties in the network provide the greatest opportunities for sharing of new and valuable information. Finally, the social resources theory is concerned with the ties that lend access to valuable resources within the network (Seibert et al. 2001). These theories describe the nature and structure of the ties within networks that generate access to social resources, as well as the nature of the social resources within the network (Seibert et al. 2001).

Borgatti and Halgin (2011) point out how confusion exists in network theories. They make an important distinction between network theory and theory of networks. Network theory is about the consequences of network variables. Theory of networks refers to the processes that explain why networks have the structures that they do; referring to the background of network properties (Borgatti and Halgin 2011). This research study is concerned with network theory and the consequences of network variables as it examines how exposure to network activities affects individual members in terms of perceived enhanced organizational capacities. The capacities investigated in this study include leadership skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, utilization of technology, and institutional learning. Networks are also viewed from a global perspective involving different types of relationships with different actors and levels of operation to overcome global challenges.

### **2.3 Governance of Networks from an International Perspective**

The importance of NGOs has increased with the waves of globalization. In the MENA region specifically, civil society played an important role in allowing the voices of men and women to be heard and it was particularly attractive to women as a more culturally accepted venue (OECD 2014). Networks comprised of different NGOs are therefore another mechanism for empowering women and enhancing gender equality. NGO networks that stimulate female labor participation and strengthen entrepreneurship help build the capacities of human capital in the region (Browne 2015).

Based on Castell's (2008) discussion, networks form in order to deal with globalization, and the capacities of these networks allow them to deal with the increased challenges of globalization. According to Castells (2008), networks can be constitutionally formed by states, such as the European Union (EU), The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and

the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (Castells 2008). Networks can have multipurpose focuses or a more defined focus, such as trade (Castells 2008). Castells (2008) describes other forms of networks, such as the ones formed by the state to deal with global issues, which are generally comprised of international and supranational organizations. The third form of networks categorized by Castells (2008) occurs when the state decentralizes power toward local or regional governments and NGOs, promoting their decision-making abilities in civil society.

Castells (2008) makes an important connection between globalization, capacity, and networks, tying together these pieces while highlighting how networks affect societies. He points out that networks possess capacities that allow them to connect and disconnect that which serves the purpose of the network. This characteristic is essential given the waves of globalization that have proliferated the use of cutting-edge technologies. These technologies transcended geographical boundaries to reach developing countries without the knowledge of how to utilize them. Networks are thus used to bridge these obstacles. Castells (2008) outlines the different governance crises that result from the gap between global issues versus issues at the nation-state. Among these is the crisis of equity including the inequality between existing social groups within countries, coupled with the lack of the governmental capacities to address them. Castells (2008) points out that this is where non-governmental actors become important; building networks of action and organization to address these issues.

Governance of networks from an international perspective can also be discussed according to their level of operation. An important distinction that Stone (2008) makes, for example, is the difference between intergovernmental networks and global public policy networks. The former operates at an informal level between government officials and their counterparts in different

countries. On the other hand, the latter has more diverse actors: NGOs, business, civil society actors, governments, and international organizations all acting across country boundaries. Stone (2008) describes transnational policy networks as advocacy networks that are value-oriented and support a certain cause pushing towards influencing public debate. The relationship between networks and policy is perceived to be one of the oldest in the literature about networks and is a primary concept at the national level, specifically in the American governing structure.

## **2.4 Networks and Policy**

Given the fluid nature of what a network actually is, and in reference to O'Toole's (1997) metaphorical definition of networks as an organizing concept, Hale (2011) points out how this network defining concept is embedded in the American governing structure. She describes the intergovernmental system of federal, state, and local institutions serving various goals is, in fact, a network of interdependent relationships that include public and nongovernmental organizations (Hale 2011). The idea of policy networks was introduced as early as 1974 by Hecllo and Wildavsky; referring to networks as a "cluster of personal relationships between major political and administrative actors in a policy area" (Marin and Mayntz 1991, 29). Other studies have described networks as part of the policy system used to address a specific policy area and as reliant on both formal and informal hierarchical relationships (Marin and Mayntz 1991).

Klijn and Koppenjan (2012) identify a dilemma in network research in which the scholarly historical traditions of network analysis each examine different types of networks. The first tradition focuses on the relation between the state and interest groups and their influence on policy making. The second tradition is concerned with problems in the coordination of public services. The last tradition addresses policy problems by focusing on horizontal coordination between interdependent actors. In each of these three traditions the term network is used,

contributing to confusion in the term's definition (Klijn and Koppenjan (2012)). A common characteristic among the three traditions is the emphasis on horizontal coordination mechanisms among actors. Moreover, outcome and performance are based on the interaction that takes place between the different stakeholders.

Klijn and Koppenjan (2012) divide the literature on networks from the past forty years into three different types of research traditions: research on policy networks, research on inter-organizational service delivery and policy implementation, and research on managing networks. Research on policy networks is focused on ways in which actors take part in decision making within policy networks. It is traced back to the scholarly discussions by Dahl and continues forward in the research done on agenda-setting by famous scholars such as Kingdon. In the recent literature, this has developed into discussion of policy communities and policy networks (Klijn and Koppenjan 2012).

Research on inter-organizational service delivery and policy implementation has its origins in organizational theory. It is based on the assumption that organizations are dependent on other organizations for acquiring resources for their survival (Klijn and Koppenjan 2012). As a result, organizations resort to interacting with other organizations through the formation of networks. Under this tradition, networks are considered to be a means of service delivery and implementation (Klijn and Koppenjan 2012). Research on network management predominantly originates from public administration (Klijn and Koppenjan 2012). There is an important distinction that needs to be made between network governance and network management; the former refers to the coordination between multiple associations within the network, and the latter refers to the coordination of network activities by network managers.

## 2.5 Network Governance

Networks constitute complex relationships between different organizations, which makes their governance a challenge. Governance, in this case, is defined as the level of control and coordination between the different organizations with different degrees of autonomy (Imperial 2005). The existence of multiple associations under one network requires a high degree of coordination to synchronize between the different autonomy levels of each association. This is referred to as network governance. Popp et al. (2014) identify three types of governance structures within networks: shared governance, lead organization and network administration organization. Provan and Kenis (2008) describe shared governance as that which involves the participation of each organization within the network in the governance process. This results in a decentralized form of governance where organizations and their members are collectively responsible for the decision-making process. The second type of governance is lead governance which involves a single lead organization that takes charge of the network maintenance and survival (Provan and Kenis 2008). The decision-making process is undertaken by the lead organization that also coordinates the activities of the member organizations (Provan and Kenis 2008). The third type of governance is the network administrative organization (NAO), involving an autonomous administrative organization responsible for governing the network (Provan and Kenis 2008). This autonomous entity is not a member organization that is solely responsible for the governance of the network (Provan and Kenis 2008).

Network governance thus refers to the interorganizational control and coordination within networks. Jones et al. (1997) point out that there are several terms used to refer to network governance including “network organization, networks form of organization, interfirm networks, organization networks” (Jones et al. 1997, 913). The authors argue that network governance

refers to an organic informal relationship between organizations within the network, as opposed to regular contractual ones based on hierarchy and the market (Jones et al. 1997). They propose a definition which they argue to be more comprehensive than other definitions offered by scholars. Jones et al. (1997) refer to network governance as that which “involves a select, persistent, and structured set of autonomous firms (as well as nonprofit agencies) engaged in creating products or services based on implicit and open-ended contracts to adapt to environmental contingencies and to coordinate and safeguard exchanges. These contracts are socially—not legally—binding” (2007, 914). The authors emphasize the word “select” to point out that a network does not include the whole industry. They also choose the word “persistent” in their definition to assert a repeated pattern that takes place in a networked relationship (Jones et al. 1997). This is later confirmed by Newman (2003); empirically showing that network behavior is far from random. The definition brings to light the uniqueness of networks, and how they are issue specific.

In other words, a network serving female entrepreneurs is quite different from one focused on enhancing the political participation of women, and is completely different from one concerned with mitigating violence against women. The only common factor is women as a minority group, thus attracting the formation of these networks. This is echoed by Provan and Sebastian (1998) as they reiterate what is mentioned by many network scholars; that people joining networks have multiple needs that cannot be provided for by the fragmented nature of separate agencies. There is an assumption that an integrated network of service delivery is the solution.

Klijn and Koppenjan (2012) elaborate more on network governance by focusing on the main concepts of the governance network theory. They propose that the theory is based primarily on

interdependence between actors which drives and sustains networks. This concept has been repeated by many scholars (Emerson et al. 2011; Newman 2003; Imperial 2005; Jones et al. 1997). They further explain that, as a result of the different approaches used by the different actors involved, the interactions between the different actors are complex, which is further reflected in the policy outcomes (Klijn and Koppenjan 2012). Another concept of the theory is the institutionalization of the interactions through the formation of a pattern of rules and social relations (Klijn and Koppenjan 2012).

Imperial (2005) also describes the different types of relationships that can be based on communication, passing of information or the exchange of goods, services, or resources (Imperial 2005). Emerson et al. (2011) refer to these activities as the collaborative dynamics that take place within networks, resulting in an outcome that moves in a cyclical fashion. This outcome drives the formation of new networks that address new emerging problems. Newman's (2003) reference to collaboration networks as a structural arrangement, and Imperial's (2005) reference to collaboration as a strategy within network relationships both point to collaboration as a means to an end. This is the ultimate improvement to control and coordination among the different organizations in the network (good governance), but not a cure for governance problems. This further reinforces Emerson's et al. (2011) notion that the formation of collaborative networks is a cyclical process where networks address issues and produce outcomes that highlight other problems that need to be addressed; resulting in the formation of other issue specific networks.

On the other hand, Imperial (2005) refers to collaboration as a strategy used to enhance the governance of interorganizational networks. An important distinction that is made between collaboration and other interorganizational relationships is that collaborating organizations are



relatively autonomous and are persuaded to work together (Imperial 2005). Therefore, there is some degree of negotiation, politics, and bargaining involved. As a consequence, the interactions that take place rely heavily on communication and establishing relationships that are both personal and organizational (Imperial 2005). The burden of maintaining such high levels of communication within a network falls on network managers, who are exposed to more challenges than those related to managing a single organization.

### *2.5.1 Network Management*

Milward and Provan (2006) point out that network managers are responsible for the coordination of network activities and represent their organizations within the network. In this case, they have dual loyalties; both to their organization and to the overall network (Milward and Provan 2006). As they perform the network management tasks they have dual goals and objectives representing both their organization and the network, while also ensuring that the goals and objectives are not contradictory. Milward and Provan (2006) determine that the management tasks performed in public networks are management of accountability, management of legitimacy, management of conflict, management of governance structure, and management of commitment.

Klijn and Koppenjan (2012) point out an important distinction in the conceptual difference between networking and network management that is of relevance to this study. Network management involves utilizing network management strategies, whereas networking refers to the creation of ties. The authors point out that not all networking is necessarily network management. They make the distinction that network management is not about increasing connections, rather it is about connecting with the right type of people such as politicians or parent organizations in the case of schools. The authors list the network management strategies

that include creating and changing network arrangements for better coordination, introducing new ideas, and reliance on negotiating skills so that actors are able to come up with new and creative solutions (Klijn and Koppenjan 2012).

Popp et al. (2014) discuss the concept of network management by addressing key issues in management which are leadership, network managers, and network structures. Leadership in networks is not the typical leadership position occupied by a single individual, rather it is more organic, referring to types of leadership that describe this situation such as servant leadership which is more shared, relational, and dynamic (Popp et al. 2014). Kamensky and Burlin (2004) describe managers as sometimes serving as leaders, catalysts, and cheerleaders with different roles in each network. In terms of network managers, a key difference that is depicted in these managers is the challenge they face when trying to strike a balance between network and organizational needs (Popp et al. 2014; Milward and Provan 2006). The structure of networks, on the other hand, are a key factor in determining how they are managed. In this case, this refers to the ties, patterns, and structure and nature of the relationships within the network (Popp et al. 2014). Hale (2011) ties together the concept of networks creating synergies and the dual role of governance of networks and managing of network activities by developing network organizational informational positions that drive the dynamics of interaction within networks. These information positions of the actors within the network guide the process of information dissemination and flesh out the role of networks as catalysts for policy innovation.

### *2.5.2 Intersection between Policy and Management*

This cycle of network performance and creation of public value has also been addressed by Hale (2011). Hale focuses on information networks, specifically those formed as collaborations between national nonprofit information networks and drug court professionals, evaluating their

contribution to policy innovation. She finds that engagement in these information networks improves policy implementation, producing better policy outcomes (Hale 2011). Furthermore, Hale (2011) concludes that these networks are able to affect policy implementation efforts through the relationships, tools, and processes that they provide. Hale (2011) also examines what these networks bring in terms of ideologies and values that impact policy outcomes. Hale (2011) proposes a typology of information positions of the actors involved in the information network. These information positions that range from passive bystanders to active challengers of policy issues within the network represent the different ideologies that the actors bring to the network, providing the dynamics for the information dissemination process and creating synergies. The dynamics that take place between the different information positions allow for the provision of a rich body of information to administrators who access it and act as a catalyst for the spread of an innovation (Hale 2011). Kamensky and Burlin (2004) argue, on the other hand, that for networks to navigate across the different ideologies, 'management' is the wrong description of the process that takes place, because it implies hierarchical relationships. Kamensky and Burlin (2004) describe the process as sometimes involving the use of formal partnerships, informal linkages, collective action, and sometimes contractual relationships to advance policy goals.

Utilization of network management strategies and connection with the right types of people result in functional advantages that are considered to be unique only to networks. The following section discusses the functional advantages of networks.

## **2.6 Functional Advantages of Networks**

There are common functional advantages that typically surface when the topic is networks. This includes three terms that are used interchangeably in relation to networks: coordination, collaboration, and cooperation. Isett et al. (2011) point out three important observations that

need to be considered; the first is that these terms are not synonymous. Coordination refers to the procedural function that may or may not occur in networks. Collaboration refers to actors working together to achieve a common goal, whereas cooperation refers to working together to primarily achieve one's individual goal. The second observation is that these functions are not limited to networks; they can occur outside of the network arrangement (Isett et al. 2011). The third observation is that these functions do not automatically occur in a network formation; conversely networks may facilitate completely different functions such as enhancing social exchange or reducing transaction costs (Isett et al. 2011).

In contrast with Isett et al's. (2011) analysis of the functional advantages and the terminologies used in association with networks, Provan and Kenis (2008) describe the functional advantages of networks as inherent in their structural formation, or what Provan and Kenis (2008) describe as a form of multi-organizational governance. They identify the various potential advantages of networks, including better coordination in public and private sectors, improved learning, better use of resources, improved capacity to deal with complex problems, enhanced competition and better service to clients (Provan and Kenis 2008).

Agranoff (2006) points out another important functional advantage of network arrangements as mechanisms of resource pooling and knowledge creation. These advantages are what make networks unique and sought after. They deliver different forms of public value to their constituents through expanding the resource base, specifically in the form of increased knowledge. Agranoff (2006) asserts that sustained network involvement depends on its performance, and performance is contingent upon adding to public value. Popp et al. (2014) categorize the functions of networks under three main characteristics: information diffusion and

knowledge exchange, network learning, and innovation. Popp et al. (2014) also point out that networks usually have multiple functions at the same time.

While most scholars focus on the proposed benefits of networks, Andrews and Edwards (2004) warn that the outcomes of networked arrangements are not necessarily always positive; networks can also limit the collective achievement of goals in advocacy organizations if they are narrow and isolated, thus restricting the mobilization of advocacy. Moreover, networks are plagued with accountability problems pertaining to their informal structure (2004). Popp et al. (2014) concur that there are challenges in networks associated with the difficulty of achieving consensus among different entities within the network; this is exacerbated by the fact that the network is comprised of entities having differing organizational cultures. Popp et al (2014) disagree with the popular literature that describes them as having coordination synergies, pointing out that the exact opposite takes place. Popp et al (2014) add that creating trusting relationships in networks is time consuming and difficult.

There are other scholars that focus solely on the undesired outcome of networks. O'Toole and Meier (2004), for example, focus on the negative political implications of networks. They point out that networks can direct politicians to shine the light on problems that are not the most pressing just to dodge costly and difficult problems that need immediate attention. Another negative aspect of networks is the addition of actors for the purpose of shifting the balance of power and directing policy outcomes in a desired direction (O'Toole and Meier 2004). O'Toole and Meier (2004) argue that most research done on networks is focused on the belief that engagement in networks results in a positive-sum outcome while ignoring the possibility that the interactions between multiple organizations with competing goals can result in the emphasis of certain goals at the expense of others. This begs the question of whether networks actually result

in a positive-sum outcome, which in some cases is seen as improved capacities of its members; and if the opposite is true, what are the characteristics of networks that effect such change? The following section discusses the capacity building efforts of networks.

## **2.7 Capacity building in Networks**

In order to assess networks, it is important to understand the desired outcomes generated from the formation of networks. In most cases this is understood as capacity building. Devita (2001) point out that the term capacity building is a sizeable term that is widely used across different disciplines. Devita (2001) frames the understanding of the concept in terms of nonprofit organizations as their ability to achieve their missions and enhance the quality of life of the people they serve. Devita (2001) emphasizes the latter goal as based on building relationships among the communities that the nonprofits are serving. Devita (2001) points out that the literature on capacity building can be divided among three bodies: 1) sustainable development, 2) civil society and social capital, and 3) organizational development and management theory. The focus of this study is on the definition of capacity building in relation to the organizational development and management theory

Balboa (2014) frames the meaning of capacity by focusing on understanding the scope of the term. Balboa (2014) identifies the scope of the term capacity as dependent on the actor's goals, discipline, and the scale of the sphere the actor is addressing. The actor's goals can range from educating students in college, versus raising environmental awareness in a certain community. The implication of capacity varies according to the discipline as well; building capacities at the international state sovereignty level differs from building capacity at the micro organizational level. The implication of capacity building differs on the operating sphere as well; this includes the global, national, local, organizational and individual spheres (Balboa

2014). Balboa (2014) poses an important concept that is relevant to the study, and that is 'bridging capacity.' Bridging capacity is defined as the ability to effect change from the global to the local levels (Balboa 2014). Since all of the networks under investigation in this study have an international component with the goal of effecting change among women in the MENA region. An important aspect that needs to be considered when the capacity of their members is investigated is whether or not they are able to bridge capacity.

Honadle (1981) defines capacity building as the enhancement of an organization's ability to do what it has to do. Honadle (1981) points out the lack of conceptual precision in this definition and proposes a framework that helps to precisely define the concept of capacity. The framework describes definitional, administrative, institutional, and organizational components of capacity. The administrative practices conducive to capacity are usually what is referred to as POSDCORB, a term coined by Gulick comprised of administrative activities of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. Honadle (1981) makes an important distinction between administration and good administration. She refers to the latter as one that involves capacity; meaning the use of efficient technology. Honadle (1981) describes capacity building as institutionalizing strengths in an organization, and this generally happens overtime. In other words, it becomes a part of the organization's system.

The organizational components that describe capacity are the indicators or benchmarks used to evaluate capacity within an organization. Honadle (1981) gives a summary of these organizational components as the need to form links with other organizations, the ability to solve problems, coordinating abilities between different functions, and mechanisms developed to achieve institutional learning. These organizational components provide conceptual precision with regard to fleshing out the capacity building activities performed by networks with the

ultimate goal of enhancing the capacities of its members. In this study improved perceived individual capacities of members is operationalized as their ability to perform POSDCORB functions in their respective organizations, as well as their ability to lead, communicate and engage with their employees.

The meaning of capacity is also clarified by Castells (2008), who views capacity through the lens of globalization, as facilitating the formation of networks and global governance. Castells (2008) categorizes capacities as technological, institutional and organizational. Technological capacities include the availability of information and the ease and speed of transferring it (Castells 2008). This includes, not only information, but the speed of transporting people, which has facilitated the formation of global networks through the ability of transporting information and individuals at the same time.

One tool that is used to accelerate the ease and speed of transferring information is the media. The media is a recurring topic in all the literature concerning networks and can be viewed as a means to reinforcing technological, institutional, and organizational capacities of networks, thereby helping global civil society to achieve its goals and evaluate its effectiveness. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) (2007) have focused their efforts on strengthening female entrepreneurship in the MENA region by improving media networks that facilitate communication and provide the right image and information with regards to female entrepreneurship in the region. They consider it one of their primary goals, second only to strengthening the regional networks that advocate for female entrepreneurship in the MENA region. Media is confirmed as strategic tool that propels goal achievement of networks.



Institutional capacities refer to the process of deregulation and the easing of rules and regulations by nation states (Castells 2008). Organizational capacities refer to the use of networks to allow for a more flexible and interactive organizational relationship across borders (Castells 2008). According to Castells (2008), technological, institutional, and organizational capacities have assisted in the formation of global networks and can be used to assess the effectiveness of networks in achieving their goals.

However, based on the literature, it is important to note that nongovernmental networks cannot be assessed in isolation of their context. Balboa (2014), for example, argues that transnational non-governmental networks work well in the international context. They transfer their policy goals to the local arena, yet when it comes to implementing goals at the street level, they often fail in making lasting changes. This is mainly because the typical intervention that they are aiming to achieve is not context specific. Balboa (2014) investigates this paradox concerning the influence of these networks at the global, national and local levels. She affirms that although their choice of policies allows the network to work at the local level, the network lacks the ability to exercise lasting change (Balboa 2014). This is mainly because of the inability to distinguish between the different spheres that they operate in: global, national, and local, and the corresponding capacity related to each sphere. Each sphere has political, administrative, and technical capacities that should be taken into consideration (Balboa 2014). Knowledge of the contextual environment is paramount when evaluating networks. In this research study, a closer look is taken at the institutional environment of four country cases in the MENA region; Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, and Egypt. Chapter 3 describes the contextual environment of these countries in relation to the formation of networks serving female entrepreneurs in the MENA region.

A clear understanding of the different capacities associated with each sphere is required, along with the knowledge that the capacities are contingent upon each other. Balboa (2014) asserts that understanding the capacities relevant to the political, local, and national spheres rests in the hands of network leadership, which in turn should have the necessary skills to bridge capacities and exert lasting changes at the local level. Stone (2008) also touches on the importance of leadership in global networks. She points out that leadership skills required for transnational managers are different from skills needed elsewhere (Stone 2008). Stone (2008) articulates three important characteristics that should be present in transnational leaders/managers: knowledge of different languages, knowledge of legal and political context related to the policy, and knowledge of the modes of communicating and policy deliberation. This can be compared to Balboa (2014) who defines the necessary leadership traits that should exist concurrently in each individual in order to bridge capacities across the three spheres as: inter-cultural and cross-cultural understanding, devotion to acting as an intermediary between the different spheres, and power to be able to change how the work is done (Balboa 2014). This is especially relevant with regards to non-profit organizations and their ability to collaborate through the formation of networks with the goal of achieving synergy with regards to capacity building of its members. It also sheds light on the possibility that a positive-sum might not always be the outcome if the leaders of networks do not take into consideration the culture in which they are operating, the regulatory environment of the country housing the network, and the optimal modes of communication within the network. Both Balboa (2014) and Stone (2008) concur that this is the way to bridge capacities from the global perspective to the local level.

It is evident that the third sector plays a vital role in the formation of networks; specifically targeting marginalized groups in society. The concepts of nonprofits, networks, and

empowerment through capacity building are recurrently investigated by researchers. Balboa (2014) and Stone (2008) address the subject from the role of the leader by explicating how she can bridge capacities from the global perspective to the local level when given certain conditions. Other scholars discuss the relationship between the third sector and empowerment from the concept of power (Abdelrahman 2004). Both teams of scholars agree that knowledge of the contextual environment, whether in relation to the discussion of networks (Balboa 2014; Stone 2008) or in relation to the understanding of empowerment (Abdelrahman 2004), is paramount for conceptual precision of the variables under investigation.

## **Part II. Conceptual Framework of the Study**

This study is based on the hypothesis that exposure to networks enhances the capacities of individual members of the network under investigation. The logical mechanism by which this hypothesis is proposed is based on the literature that supports this causal mechanism. Provan and Kenis (2005) mention that the functional advantages of networks include improved learning, better use of resources, and improved capacity to deal with problems. Agranoff (2006) describes the functions of networks as mechanisms of resource pooling and knowledge creation. Emerson et al. (2011) describe the collaborative dynamics that take place in networks as taking the form of face to face or virtual meetings, public and private partnerships, or cross-organizational networks to resolve a conflict, deal with a problem, or add value. Emerson et al. (2011) define the outcome of this networked arrangement as any intentional or unintentional changes that alter a current undesirable situation. Honadle (1981) provides a more precise conceptualization of capacity building, which is used in this study to operationalize the dependent variable. Honadle (1981) classifies capacity building into short-term organizational and administrative changes and long-term institutional learning. In this study the dependent variable is categorized into short-

term outcomes in the form of the perceived change in individual capacities of members that leads to long term organizational success. The literature stops at explaining the outcome of networks and lacks empirical evidence on gauging the effect of exposure to network functions and whether or not they actually affect the capacities of their members. This study will attempt to address this gap in our knowledge.

There is lack of knowledge as to how networks, specifically serving the MENA region, affects the capacity building of its members at the individual and organizational levels. The literature also lacks theory building with regards to networks in the MENA region. Much of the third-sector theories are primarily based on western societies, which is pointed out by Flanigan, Asal and Brown (2014). The authors point out that most third sector theories are based on assumptions of developed economies with democratic political systems and on cultural traditions that are completely different from what is present in these regions (Flanigan, Asal and Brown 2014). The authors stress the need for more cross-disciplinary research when investigating the third sector in the MENA region. This study will attempt to address this gap by focusing on networks targeting the Middle East and North Africa region; assessing how exposure to these networks affects the perceived capacities of the individual members of the network. The following figure is the proposed conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 2.2 describes the proposed conceptual framework of the network formation cycle. The formation of networks is cyclical as confirmed by previous scholars including Emerson et al. (2011). Collaboration is a strategy adopted by networks to enhance interaction between relatively autonomous organizations (Imperial 2005). Collaboration, in this case, is about working together to achieve public value. Emerson et al. (2011) propose a framework for collaborative governance which includes the networked interactions that take place between non-

governmental organizations to address policies at the local level. The framework proposed by Emerson et al. (2011) explains the collaborative dynamics that takes place between networks. The authors identify the drivers of the collaborative behavior which, in the case of this study, are relevant with regards to network formation (Emerson et al. 2011). They also describe the collaborative dynamics and the impacts of these collaborations that are cyclical in nature with the main purpose of dealing with a problem, resolving conflict, or adding value (Emerson et al. 2011). They also describe the outcome as either intentional or unintentional change that transforms an undesirable event (Emerson et al. (2011).

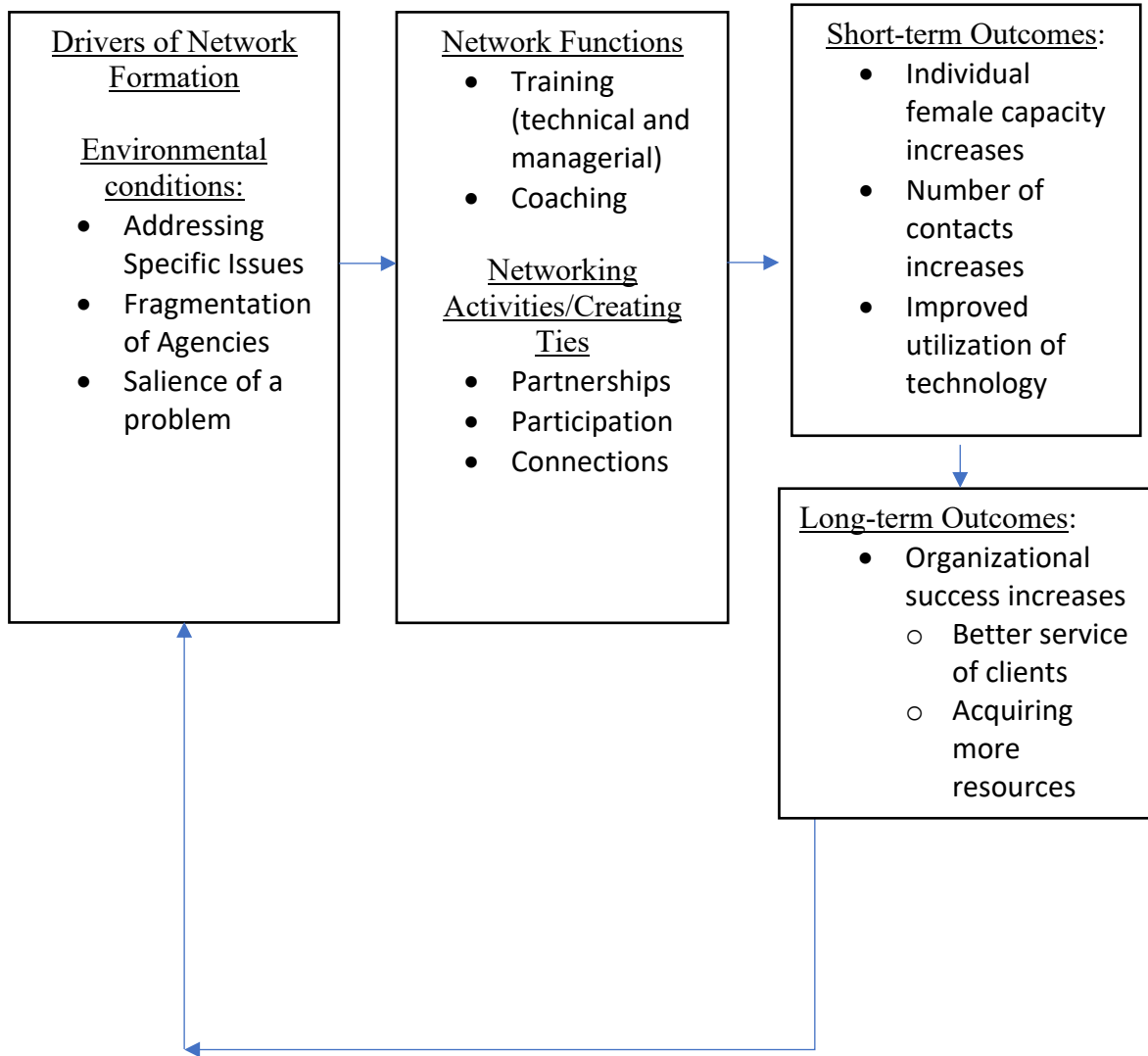
I propose a framework for network formation at the micro level focusing mainly on how exposure to networks actually makes a difference in building the capacities of its individual members. I concur with scholars (Emerson et al. 2011; Klijn and Koppenjan 2012; Borgatti and Foster 2003) that there are drivers that encourage the formation of networks. Figure 2.2 summarizes these drivers as environmental conditions that include addressing specific issues, fragmentation of agencies, and salience of a problem (Emerson et al. 2011). This drives the formation of networks that are both formal and informal in their interactions as described by Imperial (2005). However, for the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the formal network interactions.

Network formation is described as consisting of both network management functions and networking activities. Klijn and Koppenjan (2012) discuss the distinction between the former and the latter, highlighting the difference between the utilization of management strategies and the creation of ties respectively. Network management activities include the training performed by the network such as IT training as well as other types of training such as accounting, legal services, or business plan development. On the other hand, networking activities refer to the

opportunities to create partnerships and make connections as a result of network participation. These network activities result in outcomes that are categorized into short and long-term outcomes. Short-term outcomes are theorized as the increased individual capacities of female members in the form of their improved ability to lead, communicate with their subordinates and engage with them at the organizational level, as well as their ability to perform POSDCORB functions in their respective organizations. Short-term outcomes are also theorized as the increased number of contacts that they are able to form as a result of being a member of the network, and their improved utilization of technology. This is eventually translated into increased organizational success reflected in her ability to better serve her clients and in her improved ability to acquire more resources. The proposed model is cyclical in the sense that, upon the evaluation of the outcomes, drivers push towards the formation of another network to address the issue under investigation.

**Figure 2.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The Relationship Between Network Activities and Outcomes



## **2.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of the literature written on networks; starting from the multiple definitions, the different types of networks, and the theories proposed in relation to networks. Since the concept of networks is multidisciplinary, this chapter attempts to provide structure to the plethora of information about the concept under investigation. The chapter starts at the macro view of governance of networks from an international perspective, networks, and policy and moves to a closer focus on the internal governance of networks, network management, and the interaction between policy and management. The chapter closes by proposing the logical mechanism of the proposed conceptual framework of the research by making the link between the functional advantages, capacity building efforts of networks, and the hypothesized outcomes examined in this research.



## CHAPTER 3: THE MENA REGION CONTEXT

### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the context in which the networks under investigation are set. It focuses on four countries in the MENA region; Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, and Egypt. This chapter outlines the institutional environment in these countries depicted in the public-private partnerships (if any), regulatory barriers, government financial and nonfinancial barriers/incentives, and the structure of civil society sector (CSS) in each country. It is important to point out that there are other countries in the sample of networks investigated, that are not covered in this literature. The following section provides background information on the MENA region in terms of geography, demographics, and the general political and economic state in the region. This is followed by a closer look at the contextual environment of the countries investigated.

### 3.2 Background Information on the MENA Region

#### 3.2.1 Geography

Countries in the MENA region are mostly grouped together by geography. Some refer to religion and language as a common factor among these countries (Information about the MENA region). The MENA region extends from Morocco in northwest Africa to Iran in southeast Asia and down to Sudan in Africa (Chen 2020). The countries include Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Palestine, and Yemen. Sudan and Ethiopia are sometimes included.

### *3.2.2 Demographics*

The MENA region has been characterized as a population comprised mainly of youth (Huang et al. 2013; CAWTAR 2007; Moghadam 2013). The age range of 20 percent of the population is between 15 and 24 years, while 50 percent of the population is under 25 (Balakrishnan et al. 2013). The official language is Arabic. The majority of the population is Muslim, whilst other religions include Christianity and Judaism. It is home to people of different ethnic backgrounds including, but not limited to, Arabs, Kurds, Persians, Azerbaijanis, and Turks (Information on Demography of the MENA region). Educational attainment rates between males and females in the MENA region show a higher rate of improvement among females than males in terms of enrollment rates and overall educational attainment, indicating a tightening of the gender gap in education that has prevailed since the 1960s and 70s (Karshenas et al. 2016).

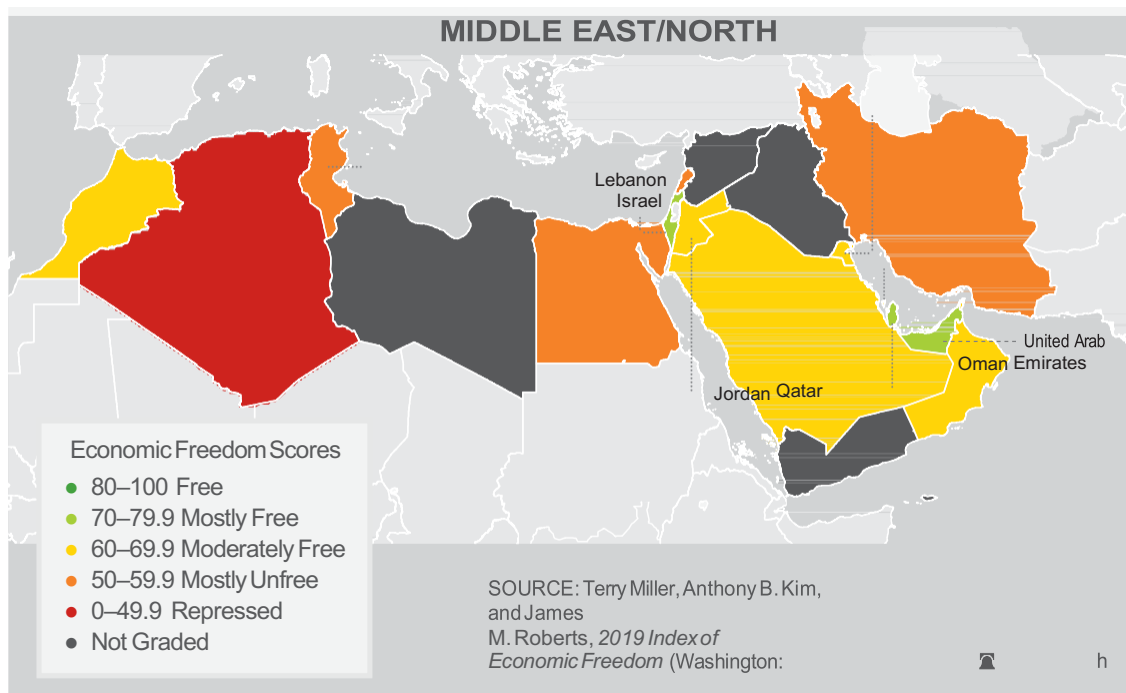
### *3.2.3 Political and Economic State of the Region*

The majority of countries in the MENA region have very little economic freedom. According to the Heritage Foundation economic freedom is measured using multiple factors that are combined into four broad categories: rule of law, government size, regulatory efficiency, and open markets (Miller et al. 2019). Within these broad categories, countries are assessed on a scale from 0 to 100. According to the index, countries in the region are not considered to be free. They fall between ‘moderately free’ and ‘mostly unfree’ (Miller et al. 2019).

Several countries in the MENA region have been struggling since 2011 as a result of the Arab Spring revolutions and the demand of citizens for more freedoms. Miller et al. (2019) point out two important observations in the region; the first is that having the world’s largest oil reserves is not associated with high levels of economic freedom. The second observation is that the Arab Spring is gradually transforming into the “Arab Winter,” characterized by more

repressive authoritarian regimes (Miller et al. 2019, 61). According to the 2019 index, the scores for economic freedoms have dropped for Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Lebanon. Other countries have remained suspended in the 2019 index as a result of persisting violence and unrest (Miller et al. 2019). Exports of crude oil generation are unable to offset the lagging trade flow in the region; mainly due to institutional problems and the lack of growth of the private sector (Miller et al. 2019). The average unemployment rate in the region is more than 25 percent (Miller et al. 2019). This percentage is expected to become much higher than that given the global COVID 19 pandemic. The average female participation in the labor force slightly increased from 22 percent between 1980 and 1985 to 28 percent between 2005 and 2010 in contrast to the increase in female education (Karshenas et al. 2016).

**Figure 3.1 MENA Region Economic Freedom Scores**



Source: Economic Freedom 2019 index  
[https://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2019/book/index\\_2019.pdf](https://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2019/book/index_2019.pdf)

### 3.3 Case Selection

The case selection of countries is based on the most different systems (MDS) of comparative analysis (Lim 2006). The idea is to find commonalities among the differences existing among the countries chosen. In this case I hypothesize that, given the variation among the institutional environments of these countries as depicted in the regulatory barriers/incentives, government barriers/incentives, public-private dialogue, and the role of the civil society, a pattern emerges that is conducive towards the engagement of women in networks within these countries and that subsequently leads to their perceived improved capacities as a result of their membership. Algeria and Egypt are to a certain degree top-down statist economy, while Lebanon is more market-oriented and Tunisia has mixed features of a centralized economy coupled with private economic freedoms.

This section takes a closer look at the contextual environment of the countries examined in this study. The focus is on whether there is public-private dialogue going on in efforts to enhance the process of deregulation. Castells (2008) refers to this process as institutional capacities that facilitate the formation of global networks. Research shows that among the four countries investigated; Egypt and Tunisia have an ongoing public-private dialogue that eases the institutional capacities in order to assist entrepreneurs starting businesses. On the other hand, the remaining two countries are on either side of the continuum. Algeria has a one-way dialogue where the public sector is basically talking to itself. Lebanon, on the other hand, has a passive government, and the private sector is mostly in charge.

The following subsection focuses on the contextual environment of the four countries from which the case interviews were conducted; Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, and Lebanon. In the

following sections the words startups and SMEs will be used interchangeably to refer to businesses that are just starting and the institutional environment that surrounds them.

### *3.3.1 Tunisia*

#### *Regulatory Barriers/Incentives*

In April 2018 the Ministry of Communication Technologies and Digital Economy passed the ‘Start Up Act’ which provides tax benefits and administrative ease of regulations for Start Ups (GPP Report 2018-2019). The policy passed by the Tunisian government helped coin the term Start Up instead of the confusion surrounding what the term actually means. The law states that a Start Up is an enterprise that has been established for not more than eight years, has a revenue of less than 4.7 million sterling pounds, and has less than 100 employees (GPP report 2018-2019). Moreover, two thirds of the enterprise is owned by individuals, investors, or foreign Start Ups. The benefits that the law provides include paid leave to owners for a period extended to 12 months funded by the government, free patent registration fees, tax benefits, and financial facilities (GPP report 2018-2019).

According to the World Bank’s *Doing Business Index* (2020), 190 economies are ranked according to their regulatory performance. The index addresses questions that are related to the government’s process of deregulation in order to enhance investment activity, such as what are the regulation policies directed towards enhancing the private sector? (Doing Business 2020). Tunisia ranks 78 out of 190 countries in the Doing Business Index (Doing Business 2020). It is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in comparison to the other 14 countries in the MENA region covered by the index. According to the index, Tunisia’s score has fallen as a result of deterioration in the country’s fiscal health, and because of lower scores in trade freedom, business freedom, labor freedom, and monetary freedom (Doing Business 2020). Despite what seems to be a movement in the right

direction with the passing of the Start Up Act, this has yet to be translated into development of the institutional capacities of the country, not to mention also the political instability that the country is going through and the strong labor unions that exercise a lot of power and pressure on the state.

The Tunisian government has implemented other reforms that serve to enhance the institutional capacities of the country including the formation of the Individual Freedoms and Equality Committee with the goal of reaching complete equality between women and men in areas of inheritance and violence against women (Women, Business and the Law 2020).

#### *Government Barriers/Incentives*

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM Tunisia) 2012 assesses the contribution of entrepreneurship in economic growth on a national annual basis (Belkacem and Mansouri 2012). The report evaluates factors that affect entrepreneurship in the country and ranks financial support as the first constraint to entrepreneurial activity. According to the report self-financing and informal financing are considered to be the main sources of funding for small businesses (Belkacem and Mansouri 2012). Although the Start Up Act does address this issue, the implementation of the policy requires a higher degree of coordination among the different governmental institutions to ensure that all of the policy's benefits are reaped (El Shazly 2019). The GEM report also indicates that there are different sources of funding for businesses and that there is an expanding role of business incubators that provide support to new businesses that are not necessarily financial (Belkacem and Mansouri 2012).

#### *Public- Private Dialogue*

Public-private dialogue is one of the indicators that the policies instituted by the government to facilitate investment is actually implemented, and their benefits are reaped

(Hallward 2013). The spark of the ‘Arab Spring’ upheavals started in Tunisia and resulted in the ousting of President Ben Ali eight years ago. The country is still working toward democracy, though it remains to be seen. One of the promising laws that was passed in Tunisia’s new constitution in 2014 was the “Local Authority Code,” which focuses on decentralization of power to local levels (GPP report 2018-2019; Yerkes and Muasher 2018). There is skepticism with regards to the ability of the Tunisian government to effect change in a deeply seated centralized power system, specifically the fear of restructuring old power scenarios as the easiest path and lack of local human capacities to effect change at the local levels (Yerkes and Muasher 2018). The implementation of this law still remains to be seen, but despite the skepticism of the people toward decentralization intentions of the government, there seems to be a dialogue going on between government and local actors, including the private sector and civil society.

### *Civil Society Role*

The role of civil society is evident in the southern areas of the country, which have struggled since the revolution. Association Femme et Citoyennette (AFC, Kef) and Hilfswerk International Tunisia (HWI, Tataouine) have worked in these areas to increase political awareness and enhance political participation (GPP report 2018-2019).

The relationship between the civil society sector (CSS) and the state can best be described by looking at the power relationships prior to the ousting of Ben Ali in 2011. Ben Ali’s administration largely consisted of his own relatives (Boose 2012). The power sources were not dependent on an extensive corrupt system of bribery as depicted in the other Arab states (Boose 2012). This contributed to the ease of dismantling and fragmentation of the governmental institutions following the revolution and the soft movement towards the formation of democratically functioning institutions (Boose 2012). As Pierson (2011) explains, the

institutional arrangements set out prior to the revolution were relatively healthy and were expanded upon in a path dependent manner in an attempt to move towards more democratic institutions.

The Tunisian civil society can be explained using Salamon's social origins model (2017). Although the social origins theory is a one that is based on western societies, however, the dimensions of the theory are not restricted to democratic political systems and western culture traditions as noted by (Flanigan, Asal and Brown 2014). The theory is dynamic in the sense that it is primarily based on path dependent patterns in society, religious amplifiers or filters that play a role in forming the structure of civil society in a country. The dimensions of the theory are not static, and have the advantage of explaining social change across time.

Tunisia's healthy and uncorrupt institutional set up, prior to the revolution, contributed to the existence and persistence of an already powerful civil society sector in the country. This was amplified by the existence of a strong labor movement and a healthy class division with a large middle class (Boose 2012). The Tunisian strong civil society is seen as the catalyst that is driving the country towards a more democratic state.

### 3.3.2 Egypt

#### *Regulatory Barriers/Incentives*

The Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) directed strategies that would encourage new businesses to move from the informal to the formal sector. Policies included providing a two-year grace period for enterprises earning annual revenues up to 10 million Egyptian pounds to submit their certified financial statements (El Shazly 2019).

Egypt ranks 114 out of 190 countries in the Doing Business Index (Doing Business 2020). Among the policies adopted by Egypt to ease the startup of businesses were the



improvements to the electricity supply through installation of automated systems to measure electricity outage and the implementation of an online system to allow for filing of corporate and value added taxes (Doing Business 2020). However, this should not be taken in isolation of the high inflation rates associated with the floating of the Egyptian pound against the dollar, causing an increase in the amount and number of taxes imposed on businesses as a result of the inflation.

### *Government Barriers/Incentives*

One of the recent policies instituted by the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) is credit facilities offered to micro, small, and medium enterprises in the form of a four-year program providing 7 billion Egyptian pounds (El Shazly 2019). CBE encouraged banks to facilitate financing to micro, small, and medium enterprises by removing principal loan amounts required for these enterprises. However, the government has been criticized for lowering the interest rates on loans while keeping the loan approval requirements strict, such as rigid credit guarantees (El Shazly 2019). Unstable currency and the constantly changing central bank policies with regards to loans discourages investment.

The Social Fund for Development (SFD) is another governmental institution that provides financial assistance to small and medium enterprises, with a special focus on female entrepreneurs (Mahrous 2019). According to a study conducted by the World Bank, the impact of microlending offered by the SFD is associated with more expenditure and less poverty in metropolitan areas and in Upper Egypt (Khandker 2009).

### *Public-private dialogue*

There is an ongoing public-private dialogue that serves small businesses in Egypt. This has been evident since 1998 when the Egyptian government instituted a national policy to support small and medium enterprises by providing support services that range from micro

finance to network support of businesses called business incubators (Elseoud et al. 2019). Network incubators involve multiple organizations, including public, private, and nonprofit organizations, offering services to businesses that facilitate coordination processes through the different institutions (Elseoud 2019). The public-private dialogue is evident in the different policies instituted by the government; for example, the CBE provides incentives for public and private banks to lend to SMEs with minimal interest rates (Elseoud et al. 2019).

### *Civil Society Role*

The literature on NGOs that serve female entrepreneurs in the region lists several associations and councils that perform this service. This includes the National Council for Women (NCW), as well as the Women Business Development Center (WBDC) which is a subsidiary of the NCW that provides financial, technical, and legal counseling to women (Mahrous 2019).

The relationship between the civil society sector (CSS) and the state in Egypt can best be described using Salamon's social origins model (2017). Historically, Egypt has undergone several changes that have contributed to the landscape of power relationships among the different social classes and actors, starting from Mohammed Ali's rule (1805-48) where the state was the sole provider of services to the people (Abdelrahman 2004). The situation persisted under Nasser's highly centralized authoritarian bureaucracy (Abdelrahman 2004). Sadat and Mubarak's era directed the country towards greater domestic inequity (Abdelrahman 2004). This led to multiplication in the CSS. The relationship of civil society and government is realized as the latter exercising greater control over the former, forcing the other to collaborate under its set conditions. This could be labeled as 'controlled collaboration' and it is based on the fact that this is the only way that the sector could survive, given the political landscape of the country. During

the Mubarak era, a lot of the NGOs were religiously based, specifically operated by the Muslim brotherhood. Although there were a lot of filters in the form of laws restricting the activities of the NGOs, such as law 32 of 1964 (Langolar 2004). Interestingly during the Mubarak era, and despite the evidence of Islamic NGOs violating law 32, however the government refrained from dissolving them because they offered much needed social services (Langolar 2004). This completely changed during the Sisi era with the classification of the Muslim brotherhood as a terrorist organization. The regulatory environment governing NGOs is designed intentionally to constrain NGO activity, or what Salamon et al (2017) would label as filters that shape the civil society in Egypt into an autocratic relationship between government and civil society.

### *3.3.3 Algeria*

#### *Regulatory Barriers/Incentives*

The Algerian government issued laws with the purpose of enhancing small and medium enterprises in the country such as the law of promotion of SMEs in 2001 (Baghdad 2019). However, despite the government's attempt to create a regulatory environment that was conducive to the creation and formation of new enterprises, the government has been unable to shift away from the centralized and controlled state (Baghdad 2019). Baaziz (2019) attributes the economic structure of Algeria to the restrictive environment for entrepreneurs. The economic structure of Algeria is highly dependent on hydrocarbons; it represented 95.2% of the country's exports in 2016 (Baaziz 2019). As the price of oil fell, the country faced the challenge of diversifying its sources of income and instituting reforms that would enhance its private sector (Baaziz 2019). Despite Algeria's attempts to pass acts that would promote the private sector such as the New Investment Act and the Customs Act in 2016, as well as the Public-Private partnership Act in 2017, efforts have not translated into improvements in the business

environment for entrepreneurs (Baaziz 2019). According to the Doing Business Index, Algeria ranked 157 out of 190 countries (Doing Business 2020) and 166 out of 199 countries in terms of ease of setting up a new business (Baaziz 2019).

### *Government Barriers/Incentives*

In an economy that is seen as centralized statist socialism, access to finance is highly restricted by the government. Small businesses suffer because of difficulty in accessing finance and an outdated bureaucratic banking system that is not e-friendly (Baaziz 2019), to the extent that it is easier for entrepreneurs to carry cash around in bags or garbage bags known as “chikara,” rather than have it circulate through the banking system in what could take up to one month (Baaziz 2019). There are other public agencies that provide funding to startups such as the ANSEJ, which financially supports young people starting their own businesses (Baaziz 2019). However, corruption remains a significant barrier to the development of businesses.

The country also has restrictive regulations that obstruct the formation of new businesses, such as the high costs and exhaustive procedures of obtaining licenses, permits, and land (Bouazza et al. 2015). This is coupled with unfair competition from the informal sector which manages to evade taxes, licensing, and registration costs (Bouazza et al. 2015; Baaziz 2019).

### *Public-Private Dialogue*

The public-private dialogue in Algeria can be seen as one sided where the government is controlling everything. D'Ignoti (2017) describes the entrepreneurship environment in Algeria as unfavorable and attributes this to the reliance of the country on energy as the main source of income while other endeavors are placed aside. D'Ignoti (2017) also describes the widespread government presence in all sectors of the country and considers it restrictive and counterproductive to the enhancement of the entrepreneurial environment in the country.

### *Civil Society Role*

Civil society in Algeria can be described in close relation to the role of women in the political structure of the country. The political liberalization of the country from France involved women in strong roles as both activists and fighters (Lorch and Bunk 2016). The war of independence from France is considered the impetus that steered the civil society towards a strong sector with a powerful female base (Lorch and Bunk 2016). The issue of promoting women's rights has been used as a tool to legitimize the regime and gain popular support.

The rise of the civil society sector (CSS) in Algeria can also be described using Salamon's social origins model (2017). Algerian women played a central role in the war of independence from France in the late 1980s. Independence was gained by the Front de Libération National (FLN), which had women advocating for freedom along with the Algerian armed forces (Lorch and Bunk 2016). This was followed by reforms that resulted in a multi-party system and free elections that then led to the rise in power of the Islamist Salvation Front (FIS) (Lorch and Bunk 2016). The military took over in 1992 to prevent the FIS from rising to power, which led to the black decade, or civil war, that extended from 1992 to 2002 (Lorch and Bunk 2016). The period from the 1980s to the 90s is referred to as the political liberalization process and is used as a gender politics tools to legitimize the current regime.

The power sources in Algeria across time include the FLN with a strong women base since the 1980s and the armed forces. The existence and persistence of these institutions were amplified by gender politics exemplified in the narrative of liberation war and the preservation of women rights. This led to the development of patterns of civil society that hold the same narrative despite variations in their political loyalties.

### *3.3.4 Lebanon*

#### *Regulatory Barriers/Incentives*

Lebanon has regulatory constraints with regards to starting a business. Haider (2013) characterizes the process of starting a business as exhaustive with too many procedures and too many institutions involved including the commercial registry, Ministry of Finance, and National Social Security Fund. The number of procedures that are required to start a business was 39 total in 2017, which required a total of 368 days to complete (Malaeb 2018). Lebanon is ranked as having the worst performance with regards to acquiring construction permits in the MENA region, signaling a total of 244 days to obtain the permits, according to the Doing Business Reports (2017). Furthermore, any attempts to institute policies of deregulation, specifically with regards to business startups, is derailed due to political reasons where the centralized path dependent pattern prevails.

#### *Government Barriers/Incentives*

The Lebanese government is exerting efforts to support entrepreneurs in the country, yet it is considered by many people minimum efforts, and that the government should focus on being more active towards supporting entrepreneurs (Atalla 2019). In 2013 the Banque du Liban issued Circular 331 which offers financial support to business startups and interest free loans for up to seven years (Ziade et al. 2017). According to Atallah (2019) the Circular 331 is believed to improve the entrepreneurial environment of the country. However, Baz (2017) describes the economic environment in the country as one that is plagued with red tape, conflicting licensing decisions and legislations, high taxes and tariffs, as well as a lack of clear intellectual property rights. According to the Doing Business Index, Lebanon ranks 143 out of 190 countries (Doing Business Index 2020).

Malaeb (2018) attributes the poor performance of the government in supporting SMEs to the absence of a national policy that addresses these businesses, which results in fragmentation of the services that are offered to them. According to Malaeb (2018), policy initiatives directed towards funding SMEs are strong in Lebanon as a result of a strong banking sector, on the other hand, non-financial obstacles are considered to be a problem (Malaeb 2018). Non-financial obstacles for SMEs in Lebanon include political instability, which is ranked according to the World Bank as the strongest obstacle (Malaeb 2018). This is in contrast to what Helou (2019) mentions with regards to the clientelist nature of Lebanese politics that transcends all sectors. For example, in the Lebanese banking sector 15 out of 20 had board chairs that were linked to politicians (Helou 2019). Moreover, businesses that were connected to politicians had higher rates of defaults on loans (Helou 2019). According to Stel and Naude (2016), corruption and political instability are the biggest obstacles to doing business in Lebanon

Other obstacles include the poor communication among the different government agencies, which results in costly procedures for conducting business (Malaeb 2018). This further results in the spread of corruption and the enlargement of the informal sector (Malaeb 2018).

### *Public- Private Dialogue*

Lebanon has a large private sector compared to the public sector (Atallah 2019; Moghadam 2013). The public sector is perceived by the Lebanese people as incompetent, and they believe that services are better performed by the private sector and civil society (Atallah 2019). This is further exacerbated by the sectarian divisions that further weaken the ability of the government to serve the people (Zahar 2005). On the other hand, with regards to start ups, the private sector is hesitant to help and prefers not to take the risk and invest in already successful businesses (Atallah 2019). Evidently, there is a lack of overarching policy that would

allow for coordination between the different public and private agencies, facilitating the institutional environment for business startups in the country. Currently and following the recent Lebanese protests, access to finance is a problem. Banks shut down for two weeks following Lebanon's recent protests; something that has not happened even during the civil war between 1975-1990 (Global Banks 2019).

### *Civil Society Role*

Civil society in Lebanon can be understood in light of the political regime and the institutional structure of the country. Civil society in Lebanon contributes to the deepening of the sectarian lines in the country, rather than eliminating them, as they follow the political agenda of the sect to which they are affiliated (Sika 2018; Altan-Olcay 2012). The laws governing civil society in the country are considered less restraining compared to countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Palestine (Sika 2018). International donors are a main source of funding for CSOs in Lebanon (Altan-Olcay 2012).

The civil society sector (CSS) in Lebanon can also be described using Salamon's social origins model (2017). Political instability in the country coupled by sectarian divisions and a weak government led to the fragmentation of the different governmental agencies. This division and fragmentation, amplified by discretion in the laws governing CSOs, widespread corruption and international aid flowing into these organizations, led to a CSO structure that mirrors the national political divisions, as well as one that is highly controlled by international agendas. Since the establishment of the religious party Hezbollah in 1985, its stance on the Lebanese sectarian government has changed from a strong opposer to accepting and to some degree reinforcing the sectarian status quo (Daher 2017). Despite its stance on the sectarian government, Hezbollah has large networks of organizations that provide services for the public



with the purpose of popularizing the party as the personification of Islam (Daher 2017). These institutions and organizations, supported by Hezbollah, contribute to the divisive landscape of the Lebanese civil society; creating a separate Shiite identity that is different from the larger Lebanese society (Daher 2017).

Civil societies in the four countries mentioned above cannot be viewed in isolation of the political and institutional environment in which they are embedded. The pattern of civil society that emerges in each country is contingent upon the network of relationships that exist among the state, civil society, and the private sector of this country and, in some cases, the role of international organizations in the country. One could almost say that social transformation in any society is dependent upon the network of relationships that take place. This study focuses on the transformations that take place at the individual level among women who become members of networks. The following section describes the different types of networks that serve women in the region.

### **3.4 Background Information on Networks Serving Women in the MENA Region**

According to the Governance, Social Development, Humanitarian, Conflict (GSDRC) Helpdesk Research Report conducted on women in the MENA region, networks in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have been involved in issues related to women's political and economic participation, women's rights, and the role that women play in peace building (Browne 2015). In the GSDRC report, a network is informally defined as "a grouping of one or more organizations or individuals, with a degree of formality, united with a mission statement, vision, or issue-based" (Browne 2015). The report analyzes international or cross-country networks, including those that span more than one nation state, but excluding global networks with a regional extension in MENA (Browne 2015). The report allows for a distinctive view of the type

of nation state networks existing in the region, their most salient issues, their strategies of networking, and their funding sources.

The GSDRC research report finds that a large number of women's networks exist in the region, ranging in size and impact (Browne 2015). The most salient activities of these networks are related to enhancing women's entrepreneurship and developing women as business owners and business leaders, peacebuilding, and limiting violence against women. Other, less salient areas of specialization include research networks, rights networks, and women's health networks (Browne 2015). Mentoring and face-to-face activities are the most popular strategies employed in these networks (Browne 2015). Their funding sources mainly come from membership fees and block grants from international or national funders (Browne 2015).

The MENA-OECD investment program (2009) recommends building networks to enhance women's entrepreneurial growth in the region. The report, however, does not provide information about the effectiveness of these networks apart from the statements presented by the networks themselves with regards to their perceived accomplishments. A noticeable gap in the literature and one which this study attempts to address is the assessment of the regional effect that networks have on capacity building of its members.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) (2007) Report provides a summary of the collaborative effort between the IFC in the World Bank and CAWTAR. It highlights the needs of female entrepreneurs in five countries in the MENA region; Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia and UAE. It is an attempt to address the obstacles facing women in the region. The report emphasizes the importance of enhancing entrepreneurship in the region characterized by a high population of youth and high unemployment, and hence the need for job creation. The joint project focuses on two issues: the

first is capacity building of all organizations involved (centers, businesswomen associations, and journalists). The second is strengthening the regional networks of all stakeholders involved to advocate for women's entrepreneurship. The second goal has been reinforced by CAWTAR through its focus on improving media networks that facilitate communication and provide the right image and information on female entrepreneurship in the region.

There are considerable networks serving women in the MENA region spanning a variety of goals to include women's political representation, media networks to facilitate the transfer of information, and networks developing the capacities of women as business owners. These networks are primarily focused on the capacity building efforts of its members through the utilization of certain tools and processes. Networks are evidently an important organizational tool in the MENA region, which means researchers should further examine if they yield positive-sum outcomes.

### **3.5 The Networks in the Sample**

#### **Femmes Chefs D'Entreprises Mondiales (FCEM)**

FCEM is a nonprofit organization that brings women entrepreneurs from all over the world. It was founded in France in 1945; spreading across five continents. The network addresses the needs of women entrepreneurs by focusing on two levels of operation; national associations and individual members. At the national association's level, the needs of women entrepreneurs are addressed through these member associations in their respective countries. In the MENA region, there are three members associations that address the needs of their members at the local level. The associations are Association of Algerian Women Entrepreneurs (SEVE) in

Algeria, Chambres Nationale des Femmes Chefs D'Entreprises (CNFCE) in Tunisia, and Association of Businesswomen in Morocco (AFEM) in Morocco.

At the individual level, the activities that the network offers ranges from sharing experiences among members, providing possibilities for joint ventures, to forming international connections with other members from different parts of the world (Information on FCEM). This is primarily done through yearly assemblies performed in a different country each year. Members gather under a specific theme, such as 'Female Global Networking' and 'Economy, Communication and Social Responsibility' (Information on FCEM). FCEM has strategic alliances with international organizations such as the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) located in the D.C. area, the Clinton Global Initiative, and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) (Information on FCEM). They have a steering committee formed of 13 women from across the globe. They do not have a specific working model that guides their operating activities (Information on FCEM). FCEM's activities are primarily based on tourism based conferences organized on a yearly basis.

### **The Association of Organizations of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFAEMME)**

AFAEMME was founded in 2002 in Barcelona (Spain) with the purpose of providing a networking platform for female entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean and Euro-Mediterranean region (Information about AFAEMME). It describes itself as a coordinator of non-profit organizations across different countries. Members of AFAEMME are associations, federations,

foundations, and networks of businesswomen (Statutes of AFAEMME). The primary objective of the organization is to address the needs of their members at both the organizational and personal levels (Statutes of AFAEMME).

According to the statutes listed in their website, the activities that the network offers range from offering general and specific training for its members, supporting public and private initiatives that serve the goals of the organization, as well as making strategic connections with international bodies (Statutes of AFAEMME). They have projects in the different member countries; one of the projects that targets the MENA area is the ‘Young Women as Job Creators’ that includes Albania, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, and Palestine (Information on AFAEMME).

The main funding resources of AFAEMME are membership fees, grants, subsidies, and contributions from public and private institutions, donations and other investments (Statutes of AFAEMME). AFAEMME has collaborations, partnership agreements, commercial agreements with public and private institutions in different countries to support its goals (Information on AFAEMME).

### **Vital Voices Global Partnership**

Vital Voices is a non-profit organization established in 1997 that focuses on identifying and partnering with women around the globe who demonstrate potential for leadership. The headquarters of Vital Voices is in Washington D.C. The organization recruits women activists, entrepreneurs, and innovators to join its network. They invest in training and empowering them to become leaders and entrepreneurs in their own societies. It is important to understand that this organization was the byproduct of the U.S. government initiative with the goal of advancing women as a foreign policy goal. This initiative was launched by the First Lady of the United

States, Hilary Clinton, and the U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright (“Vital Voices”). The activities of Vital Voices target Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa (“Vital Voices”).

The areas that they concentrate their work in are economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, promoting human rights and ending gender violence, advancing political leadership and leadership development (Vital Voices Global Partnership). They have four programs that they utilize to invest in women leaders around the globe. These programs are: Signature Programs, Individualized Investments, Global Network Activation and Thought leadership (Vital Voices Global Partnership).

Vital Voices focuses on enhancing the capacities of its members by basing its activities on a member-based leadership model that they use on all its members (Vital Voices Global Partnership). The model starts with identifying a purpose that guides the leader, establishing strong roots within the leader’s community, bridging unlikely ties, dealing with problems through bold actions and bold ideas, paying it forward by sharing with others (Vital Voices Global Partnership).

### **Ouissal German-Arab Mentorship Program**

Ouissal is a mentorship program initiated by the Euro-Mediterranean-Arab Association (EMA e.V.) and sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in Germany (BMZ) in 2013 (Information on Ouissal). The program is focused on improving the socio-economic status of women in their home countries. The program targets 40 female entrepreneurs from Tunisia and Morocco over a period of one year. There is a predetermined selection criterion that is used to select participants in the program. An interview is made, as

well, with program candidates to determine their possible needs and to match them with German mentors (Interview with Ouissal).

The program is divided into three phases; it starts with a kickoff meeting where the Moroccan and Tunisian participants meet with their German mentors (Information on Ouissal). The word ‘tandem’ is emphasized on their website to describe the unique relationship between the mentors and mentees that is based on mutual trust and common ethics (Information on Ouissal). Phase 1 is extended over a period of four days where milestones are set, and informal get-togethers are organized (Information on Ouissal). Phase 2 is the regular virtual meetings that deal with working on the business plan and the development strategies. Phase 3 is the informal midterm gatherings, where networking and sharing of information takes place between participants (Information on Ouissal). In the final phase 3, participants meet in Berlin, Germany to present their projects, and extend their networking to include a larger scope of other female entrepreneurs (Information on Ouissal). Ouissal is a very structured program that is based on a specific activity, which is mentorship.

### **3.5.1 Information on the Networks in the Sample**

Table 1 describes the networks examined in the sample in terms of their primary constituency, purpose and number of members.

**Table 3.1 Summary of Networks under Investigation**

Name of Network	Primary Constituency	Purpose	No. Of Members
<b>Femmes Chefs D'Entreprises Mondiales (FCEM)</b>	Non-profit organizations focused on promoting businesswomen.	Female empowerment through exchange of business ideas, formation of partnerships, mentorship.	-120 different countries -5 million members from 5 continents -Member countries from the MENA region include Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.
<b>The Association of Organizations of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFAEMME)</b>	Non-profit organizations focused on promoting businesswomen.	Gender equality projects, ground-breaking research, a networking platform for businesswomen and women entrepreneurs from all over the Mediterranean and a Euro-Mediterranean organization.	-59 member organizations from 24 Mediterranean countries -Member countries from the MENA region include Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia.
<b>Vital Voices</b>	Partnering with women who demonstrate leadership. Mainly activists, innovators, and entrepreneurs.	Economic empowerment, entrepreneurship, promoting human rights and ending gender-based violence, advancing political, leadership development.	Egypt, Palestine, UAE, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, Libya, Tunisia (Not clear the number of members in the MENA region)
<b>Ouissal (German-Arabic mentoring project)</b>	The program selects a total of 40 German, Tunisian and Moroccan female entrepreneurs to work together in a mentor-mentee relationship over a one-year period.	Business planning and strategies. Networking, and sharing cultural experiences through virtual mentoring, webinars, and face to face meetings.	40 female entrepreneurs from Tunisia and Morocco.



### **3.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provides background information on the MENA region in terms of geography, demographics, and the general political and economic state in the region. A closer look is taken at the contextual environment of the countries investigated: Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria and Lebanon and how understanding the relationships between the state, the private sector, and the CSO of the country shapes our understanding of how change is effected in societies. This is followed by a closer look at the networks that serve women in the region, and a brief summary of the networks investigated in this research.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods used for this study. As mentioned in chapters 1 and 3, this study aims to analyze the changes in perceived capacities (if any) in female entrepreneurs who join nonprofit networks in the MENA region. The research aims to provide a better understanding of what nonprofit network management is in the region, while investigating the effect of the networks on the perceived capacities of their members.

The chapter is divided into two parts: the research methods used with justification, and the data collection. The first part consists of the research design and the procedures, research tools and selection of cases, as well as the limitations of the methods used. The second part discusses the data collection. The research questions and hypotheses evolve from the literature review and are based on the theory that exposure to networks enhances the capacities of female entrepreneurs in the MENA region.

Given the objective of this study, the guiding research question is: **to what extent does exposure to network activities affect the capacities of the network's individual members?**

To flesh out this question, the following sub-research questions are:

- *What is the relationship (if any) between the number of hours spent per week in training by the network member and their perceived individual capacities?*
- *To what extent does exposure to network activities affect the perceived leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills of its members?*
- *To what extent does the exposure to network activities affect the perceived individual member's ability to better serve clients, gain more organizational legitimacy, and acquire more resources?*

To answer these questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

$H_0$  There is no relationship between spending up to 10 hours per week in training activities by the network members and their improved perceived individual capacities.

$H_1$  There is a relationship between spending up to 10 hours per week in training activities by the network members and their improved perceived individual capacities.

$H_0$  Exposure to business network activities is not likely to improve the perceived leadership, interpersonal and communication capacities of its female members.

$H_2$  The greater the exposure to business network activities, the more likely female members are to improve their perceived leadership, interpersonal and communication capacities.

$H_0$  Exposure to business network activities is not likely to improve the members perceived ability to serve their clients.

$H_3$  The greater the exposure to business network activities, the more likely members perceive improved ability to serve their clients.

$H_0$  Exposure to business network activities is not likely to improve the members perceived ability to gain organizational legitimacy.

$H_4$  The greater the exposure to business network activities, the more likely members perceive improved ability to gain organizational legitimacy.

$H_0$  Exposure to business network activities is not likely to increase the members perceived ability to acquire more resources for her organization.

$H_5$ : The greater the exposure to business network activities, the more likely members perceive improved ability to acquire more resources for her organization.

## **4.2 Research Design**

This research study utilizes a mixed methods approach. The quantitative portion aims to assess the effect of the exposure to business network activities on the capacities of female network members in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The study examines four networks that serve female entrepreneurs in the MENA region. They represent the universe of organizations from which the study sample is drawn. The unit of analysis in this research study is the individual female members of the MENA region networks. The four networks are

the Association of Organization of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFAEMME),<sup>5</sup> Ouissal (German-Arab Mentoring Project),<sup>6</sup> World Association of Women Entrepreneurs (FCEM)<sup>7</sup> and Vital Voices.

AFAEMME is a network that consists of 59 member organizations spanning 24 Mediterranean countries. Ouissal (German-Arab Mentoring Project) is a program designed to include 40 German, Tunisian, and Moroccan female entrepreneurs working together on business plans in a mentor/mentee relationship. FCEM is an international network serving women globally; however, this research study will target only members of this network who are in the MENA region. Vital Voices<sup>8</sup> in the MENA region is another international network that empowers women in the region through providing resources, addressing human rights issues and building the capacities of women business leaders.

All the networks in the sample are primarily concerned with empowering women through supporting their entrepreneurial initiatives by offering activities that help these women improve their businesses. Given that the literature confirms that networks are important and beneficial means of addressing problems, this research study seeks to further understand how network exposure affects the capacities of individual female members of these four networks.

Each of the four networks mentioned above has between 400 to 600 members, with the exception of Ouissal which has 40 members throughout the life of its program. Based on my

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.afaemme.org/present/news/mena-oecd-women%E2%80%99s-economic-empowerment-forum>

<sup>6</sup> <https://land-der-ideen.de/en/project/ouissal-german-arabic-mentoring-programme-264>

<sup>7</sup> <https://fcem.org/fr/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://old.vitalvoices.org/what-we-do/regions/middle-east-and-north-africa>

research on networks serving the MENA region, I selected specific networks for this study utilizing a non-probability purposive sampling technique to be able to draw rich information in relation to the topic under investigation. An online survey was administered to the members of each network in collaboration with the Global Project Partners e.V. (GPP), via their online digital portal in February of 2020. GPP is a non-profit association located in Berlin, Germany. One of its primary activities is to build networks comprised of different actors, that aim to improve economic, social and political relations between developing countries and Germany.<sup>9</sup> They are concerned with network research in the region and are a vital supporter of the implementation of this research.

#### **4.2.1 Theoretical Independent Variable**

In this study, the main theoretical independent variable is exposure to network activities directed towards improving the capacities of female entrepreneurs in the region. Networks engage in common activities with the primary goal of enhancing the capacities of their members. They provide business training that takes the form of seminars in specific topics, non-formal advice, or individual consultation/coaching. They provide a platform for networking that offers opportunities for developing short-term connections, or long-term partnerships that benefit its members (Wanjohi 2010). Networks also offer an opportunity, through their training and development goals, for their members to participate in the activities provided, and thus enhance their interpersonal and communication capacities. The ultimate goal of any network is to improve the capacities of its members, yet whether this actually happens or not is still a

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.global-project-partners.de/index.php/en/>

debatable issue. There are scholars who believe that networks do not result in a positive-sum outcome (Andrews 2004; O'Toole and Meier 2004).

To measure the main theoretical independent variable (exposure to network activities), the following indicators are used in this study: management, technological, and network activities. The proxies for the three indicators are described in Table 4.1 below. Each proxy is measured at the individual member level.

#### **4.2.2 Dependent variable**

The dependent variable in this study is the individual member's perceived changed capacities (if any) as a result of network participation. This is categorized according to Honadle's (1981) framework for conceptual precision of capacity building into temporal short-term and long-term changes. According to Honadle (1981), short-term changes in capacity building can be divided into organizational capacities and administrative capacities. Honadle (1981) further classifies organizational capacities as interpersonal, communication, and leadership skills. On the other hand, she classifies administrative capacities as the operational functions of organizations coined by Gulick as POSDCORB; planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. She further distinguishes between administration and good administration; pointing out that the latter involves the improved utilization of technology (Honadle 1981). I concur with Honadle (1981) that there needs to be conceptual precision of what capacity building really means. However, I disagree in the distinction that she makes between organizational and administrative capacities, as there are definitely overlapping functions between both. I also find that Honadle's (1981) distinction between administration and good administration as relying solely on the use of technology to be conceptually imprecise, as there are many other variables that could result in referring to

administration as good, and not necessarily involving the use of technology, such as better selection criteria when hiring staff.

In this study, I will examine the effect (if any) of the main theoretical variable, which is exposure to network activities, on the change (if any) on individual members' capacities. Please refer to Figure 1, the conceptual framework of the study in Appendix A. The individual capacities of members are measured in the short run in the form of the change (if any) in their perceived leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills, the change (if any) in the number of contacts that they are able to form as a result of being a member of the network, and a change (if any) in their improved use of technology when performing organizational functions. This is translated in the long run into organizational success; in the form of their perceived ability to better serve their clients, and their perceived ability to better acquire resources.

#### **4.2.3 Country Contextual Environment**

The literature describes capacities that facilitate the formation of global networks. These capacities include institutional capacities, which refers to the process of deregulation, and making the rules and regulations easier by nation states (Castells 2008). Balboa (2014) also brings to attention the importance of the contextual environment when evaluating networks. Both Balboa (2014) and Stone (2008) concur that if the leaders of networks did not take into consideration the culture that they are operating in, the regulatory environment of the country where the network is located, and the optimal modes of communication within the network, a positive-sum outcome might not always be the outcome. Both Balboa (2014) and Stone (2008) point out that being a part of a network requires a certain type of knowledge that is parallel with the fluid nature of the network arrangement.

The literature supports that the country contextual environment is important when assessing networks. The survey instrument collects information with regards to the member’s country of origin, the regulatory environment of the member’s country of origin, level of education, and financial and non-financial government incentives offered (See Table 4.1). This information is used in the descriptive statistics in chapter 5 as well as the qualitative portion in chapter 6. There are opportunities for future research to perform multivariate regression; however, due to data limitations, this was not performed in this study.

Data was collected using primary data collection methods. A survey instrument was used to assess the perceived change in individual capacities of members of networks, if any. In addition, interviews were conducted with female entrepreneurs in the region to gauge the training efforts and other capacity building techniques employed by the network.

**Table 4.1 Operationalization of Variables**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Components of the Variable</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
<i>Main theoretical Independent variable:</i>			
<b>Exposure to network activities</b>	Management	Does the network provide opportunities for training?	-Yes/No?
		How many hours per week you spend in these activities?	-Less than 10 hours? -Between 10 and 20 hours? -More than 20 hours?
		Please select the training activities provided by the network	-Seminars? -IT training? -Individual consultation/instruction? -Legal and accounting services? -Business plan development training?
		<u>Rate the following statements:</u>	<i>Ordinal, rated on a 5-point Likert scale</i>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training needs and objectives are achieved by the network</li> <li>- There was learner's involvement in the planning and design of the training program</li> <li>- There are opportunities in the workplace for the person you wish to learn from to meet formally (e.g. meetings, workshops, and seminars)</li> </ul>	
	Technological	Has the network improved your knowledge of technology when performing organizational functions	-Yes/No?
	Networking	<u>Rate the following statements:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participating in the network helped you develop new partnerships with others</li> <li>-You have more organizational linkages/connections as a result of participating in the network</li> <li>-You have been invited to participate/join task forces due to your participation in the network</li> <li>You have been invited to participate/join forces due to your participation in the network, more than prior to joining the network</li> </ul>	<i>Ordinal, rated on a 5-point Likert scale</i>
<i>Dependent Variable</i>			
<b>Perceived change in individual</b>	Capacity building efforts	<u>Rate the following statements:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participating in the network improved your ability to direct and energize people</li> </ul>	<i>Ordinal, rated on a 5-point Likert scale</i>

<p><b>capacities of members</b></p>		<p>-Participating in the network improved the process of exchanging information with other coworkers in your organization</p> <p>-Participating in the network improved your ability to communicate and understand other coworkers</p>	
		<p><u>Rate the following statements:</u></p> <p>-Participating in the network improved your ability to create a plan of the things to be done and the methods to perform them</p> <p>-Participating in the network allowed for the development of a formal structure that describes the arrangements of subdivisions and the flow of work and authority</p> <p>-Participating in the network improved your ability to deal with staff members of your organization in relation to hiring, training, and work environment</p> <p>-Participating in the network improved your decision-making process and your ability to lead your organization</p> <p>-Participating in the network improved your ability to connect all the different parts of the work towards achieving the organization's objectives.</p> <p>-Participating in the network improved your ability to keep key executives informed as to what is happening within the organization</p> <p>-Participating in the network improved your ability to perform fiscal planning and</p>	

		maintaining of accounting records	
		<u>Rate the following statements:</u> -Participating in the network allowed you to better serve your clients -Participating in the network allowed your organization to gain more legitimacy. -Participating in the network increased your ability to acquire more resources	<i>Ordinal, rated on a 5-point Likert scale</i>
		<u>Rate the following statements:</u> -The network effectively responds to the needs, shared interests and capabilities of its participants -Your organization benefits from participating in this network -The network facilitates collaboration strategies that allow for better coordination, problem solving and institutional learning	<i>Ordinal, rated on a 5-point Likert scale</i>
<b>Level of education the women</b>	Level of education	What is your level of education?	<i>-Primary?</i> <i>-Secondary?</i> <i>-Technical?</i> <i>-University Degree?</i>
<b>Regulatory environment for the individual member's country of origin</b>	Perceived regulatory barriers in the country of origin	Regarding your own organization, what do you believe to be the main regulatory barriers that you face?	<i>-Unstable legal environment?</i> <i>-High level of taxation?</i> <i>-Procedural difficulties in starting a business?</i> <i>-Other?</i>

<b>Financial and non-financial incentives provided for the individual member's country of origin</b>	Perceived financial and nonfinancial incentives provided by the government of country of origin	Regarding your own organization, what do you believe are the main financial and nonfinancial incentives provided by your government for further development of your business?	<i>-Access to credit?</i> <i>-Government grants?</i> <i>-Government loans?</i> <i>-Low cost of loans?</i> <i>-Business counseling?</i> <i>-Training programs?</i>
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### 4.3 Data Collection Methods

Two types of data collection methods are used in this study as outlined below.

#### 4.3.1 Survey Instrument

An online survey was administered with the help of Global project Partners (GPP), a non-profit organization located in Germany that specializes in the formation of networks serving the MENA region. The survey was posted on their digital platforms on July 2020. The survey was also posted on the Womenpreneur initiative digital platforms in October 2020. Womenpreneur is a network that empowers women in the MENA region; this nonprofit is located in Belgium. The survey was also disseminated with the help of the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), as well as with the help of the heads of the four networks under investigation. A total of 145 surveys were completed by the end of January 2021, when data collection closed for the survey.

Brown and Hale (2014) point out that offering promotional incentives for participating in surveys has been proven to increase response rates. Based on that, and in collaboration with the GPP, a promotional incentive was offered to participants in the form of a free ticket to Berlin to attend one of the conferences organized by the GPP. This was achieved by administering an anonymous raffle through Qualtrics.

The main objective of the survey instrument was to collect data in relation to the variables under investigation. Several sources were used to construct parts of the questionnaire; to capitalize on the advantages of using already tested questions, and to increase the confidence that the questions would be good indicators of the variables under investigation. The survey instrument is divided into five sections; the first section gathers data about the main theoretical independent variable; exposure to network functions; specifically, management and technological. The first section of the survey addresses whether or not the network provides opportunities for training, the number of hours spent in training, the type of training offered, gauging the network's effort in meeting the training needs of its members, and assessing its efforts in improving the member's utilization of technology. For questions 1, 3 and 6 see United Nations Industrial Development Report, MENA project Questionnaire.<sup>10</sup> For questions 4, 5, 7, and 8 see Wanjohi (2010).<sup>11</sup>

The second section focuses on the theoretical independent variable, networking. An ordinal three-point Likert scale question is constructed to gauge the respondent's ability to formulate partnerships, engage with other network members, and make connections with them (Tran 2013).<sup>12</sup> The third section consists of two three-point Likert scale questions. The questions are constructed to gauge the respondent's change (if any) in her perceived individual capacity as a result of joining the network. Individual capacities, such as changes in leadership skills, interpersonal skills and communication skills are addressed in the questions. Moreover, changes

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<sup>10</sup> United Nations Industrial Development, Assessment Report, MENA project Questionnaire, *Promoting Women Empowerment for Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development in the MENA Region* (Milan Expo 14 October 2015);

<sup>11</sup> Wanjohi, Maina D., "An Evaluation of Capacity Building Initiatives on Project Sustainability in Non-Governmental Organizations: A Case of Liverpool VCT Youth Program, Nairobi," University of Nairobi, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Tran, Jacqueline "Community-Based Participatory Research for Building Community-Based Organizational Capacity: A Programmatic Assessment," University of California, Los Angeles, 2013.

in perceived administrative functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting are also addressed.

This section is based on Honadle's (1981) definition of capacity building as including an administrative and organizational aspect. The fourth section consists of a three-point Likert scale question that gauges the respondent's perceived overall organizational success as a result of joining the network, adapted from Wanjohi (2010). Organizational success is operationalized as the perceived respondent's ability to better serve clients, acquire more resources and gain more legitimacy as a result of joining the network. The fifth section consists of two questions that gauge the government regulatory environment and incentives offered in the respondent's country of origin. The two questions were adapted from Esisal (2009). The sixth section is demographic data. The questions in the survey are not only closed-ended, but there are some opened-ended questions to allow more freedom to participants in answering the questions. Appendix A includes the online survey that was used.

To pretest the questions in the survey questionnaire, two female entrepreneurs were recruited with the help of the CEO of the GPP, to answer the survey. The recruitment of the pilot participants was based on choosing female entrepreneurs who are members of an operating network that can be evaluated. This was followed up with a cognitive interview that addressed issues in relation to the clarity of the questions, and whether there were any confusing response categories. Moreover, the two participants were asked if there was anything that should be added to the survey questionnaire. Both participants concurred that the questions and the response categories were clear, and that nothing needed to be added.

Method of Analysis

Bivariate analysis is used to measure the relationship between the effect of exposure to networks on the individual network member's capacities. Kendall Tau B test is used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between network training and the perceived individual capacities of members, specifically leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills. Kendall's Tau-B test is also used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between networking as a service offered by the network to its members and the perceived overall success of members in their respective organizations. The overall success of members is operationalized as the ability to better serve clients, gain organizational legitimacy, and acquire more resources. Chi-square test is used to measure the relationship between the number of hours spent in training in the network and the perceived individual capacities of members; specifically, in relation to planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting skills.

Appendix C includes the codebook for the variables. It demonstrates the variable shorthand, the full name and description, the questions that generated it, as well as the variable coding for the closed ended questions (Brown and Hale 2014). The main purpose of the codebook is to provide the guidelines used to enter the numeric values into the database. For the open-ended questions, they were used in the thick description of the descriptive statistics.

#### **4.3.2 Interviews**

In addition to the survey questionnaire, structured focused comparison of selected interview cases is administered as the qualitative component of this research design. Structured focused comparison refers to the use of as many cases as possible that measure the same causal factors and outcomes the same way in each case, as well as the use of cases other than the ones from which the hypothesis was drawn (Geddes 2003), in order to confirm the hypothesis. Key

informant interviews were conducted among female entrepreneurs in the MENA region. Two types of female entrepreneurs were invited; those who are members in the networks under investigation, compared against those who are not members in any network or have dropped their membership. The independent and dependent variables listed in table 4.1 were analyzed in all interviews. The main purpose is to rule out any possibility of spuriousness and make sure that exposure to network membership is the main reason why female entrepreneurs' capacities change, if at all; ruling out the possibility of confounding variables. A total of 25 interviews were conducted. It is important to note that some of the interviewees were members in more than one of the networks under investigation. This was a great opportunity for the researcher to address the research questions in relation to the overall effect of the network on the member's organization, and understand more about the characteristics of an effective network.

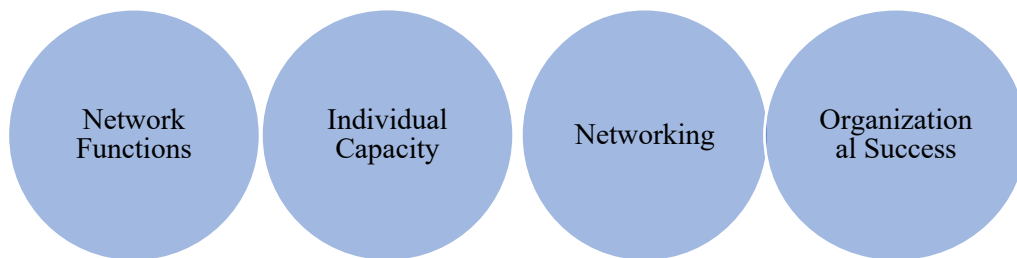
The administration of the interviews commenced on June 6, 2020. Appendix B shows the semi-structured interview protocol questions for network members and network non-members. The questions, open and closed ended, are meant to extract information with regards to four main themes: Network functions, individual capacities, networking, and organizational success. The main purpose of the interview questions is to elicit responses that are parallel to the original data, to confirm the causal hypothesis. The interviews opened with a brief introduction of the researcher and the study that was conducted. The researcher ensured to the participants the confidentiality of the information that they provided; reiterating that there are no individual identifiers. This was followed by individual demographic questions to identify the level of education of the participant, the number of years in business and her operating sector. The same questions were asked of all interviewees, and all the interviews were conducted in English. The interviews took between 45 to 50 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded, and all the



data was coded with participant identification numbers to ensure the anonymity of participants. Figure 4.1 represents the preliminary themes that were proposed prior to conducting the interviews.

I follow Brown and Hale's (2014) stages of coding qualitative data. The first stage is a review of the data to make sure that the initial themes are sufficient in describing the data. At this revision stage, additional themes are added. The second stage focuses on the frequency of the generated themes, identifying possible patterns that describe relationships. The third stage focuses on creating data displays in the form of listing of themes and summaries of common phrases to be used in the thick descriptions of identified relationships (Brown and Hale 2014). Chapter 6 goes in depth in analyzing the three stages as the qualitative portion of this study.

**Figure 4.1 Preliminary Themes**



#### **4.4 Research Limitations**

The concept of networks is a relatively new one in the MENA region, and one in which several international organizations, such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) (UNIDO report 2015), as well as the IFC and CAWTAR report (2007) have listed in their recommendations as ways by which female entrepreneurs can be empowered in the region. The literature on networks is still a relatively new and growing field, and one where there are few quantitative analyses of the effect of networks on individual members within

the network. This study is especially valuable because there is no data in the MENA region that attempts to evaluate networks. The most common data available in the region is that which assesses how conducive the environment in the region is, to allow for sustainable growth of female entrepreneurs in the region. However, it should be noted that this study does have four important limitations.

The first limitation of this study is that it is difficult to rule out reverse causality. This can be explained by the fact that collaborative dynamics is an iterative process (Emerson et al. 2011). The network activities take the form of a repeated pattern that is driven by the existence of the right leadership, by the salience of an issue, and by the inability to achieve a desired outcome (Emerson et al. 2011). These drivers push towards the formation of networks that attempt to address these issues. The network produces a subsequent impact, which could be physical, environmental, social, economic, or political (Emerson et al. 2011). According to Emerson et al. (2011) the network process is cyclical, where adaptations occur, and new challenges or opportunities emerge. Honalde (1981), as well, points out that the capacity building process is iterative. So, despite the existence of the supporting literature that defines an association between networks and improved entrepreneurial capacities, the same literature also supports the idea that enhanced capacities are associated with the formation of networks pertaining to the cyclical nature of the collaborative dynamics and capacity building.

A second limitation of the study is the sampling technique used. Purposive sampling has low external validity. One way to mitigate this is to complement the design by thick analysis of contrasting cases of female members who showed improvement according to the program records against those who dropped out or were not members in the first place. The purpose is to compare the same causal hypothesis across all cases. In this case, the researcher can then have

empirically grounded causal explanations and ensure non-spuriousness (Geddes 2003). A third limitation is the small survey sample size. It was very difficult to gather raw data amidst the COVID pandemic, and the raffle incentive was not very attractive to respondents, given that all countries were closing at the time of the survey dissemination.

A third limitation is the reliance on the perceived capacities of individual members as the dependent variable in the study. However, this could be used as a benchmark against which future researchers could actually compare their findings with. Future studies could include program evaluations of networks that include both process and outcome evaluations, which could be cross examined with the perceived capacities of individual female members to see if there is an actual match between the perceived capacities versus the actual capacities.

The fourth limitation is the inability to make conclusions about causality because the data analysis is limited to bivariate. Given the small sample size, 145 respondents who filled out the survey, a future recommendation is to expand the sample size and run multivariate regression to be able to present conclusions about causality. These multivariate regressions could also include the control variables that measure the contextual country environment.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter summarizes the research design, methodology, data collection methods and limitations of the study. The study uses mixed methods to assess the relationship between exposure to networks and increased capacities of female members of networks in the MENA region. Tools of data collection include an online survey instrument and semi-structured interviews with members of networks under investigation. A total of 145 surveys were filled online using Qualtrics software, and 25 in-depth interviews were conducted with members of the networks. Chapter 5 focuses on analyzing the quantitative data.

## CHAPTER 5: PRIMARY DATA ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the quantitative portion of this study. As mentioned in chapter 4, the quantitative portion aims to assess the effect of the exposure to business network functions on the capacities of female network members in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The main objective of this chapter is to understand the effect of exposure to network functions on the capacities of its members, if any.

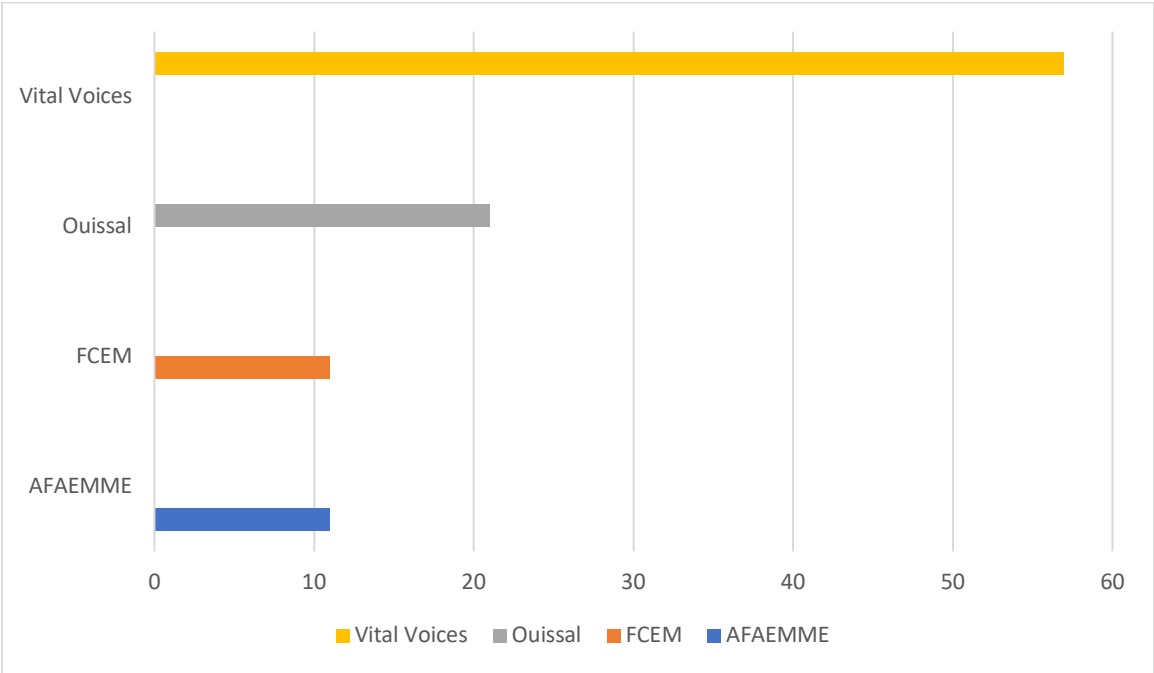
The chapter is divided into three parts: demographic statistics of the sample, descriptive statistics of the online survey items, and bivariate analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a better understanding of the landscape of nonprofit networks serving female entrepreneurs in the MENA region. The overarching research question of this study is **to what extent does exposure to network functions affect the perceived capacities of the network's individual members?**

### 5.2 Demographic Statistics

The online survey instrument is divided into six sections; Appendix C includes the codebook for the categories of the variables. It demonstrates the item's shorthand, the full name and description, the questions that generated it, as well as the variable coding for the closed and open-ended questions. A total of 145 online surveys were filled out. Table 5.1 shows the demographic statistics of the respondents. 57% of the respondents were from Vital Voices network, this is parallel to the in-depth interviews that were conducted, which depicted an eagerness of Vital Voices interview candidates to share their positive experience as a result of being a member in the network. The researcher observed a collective determination of members

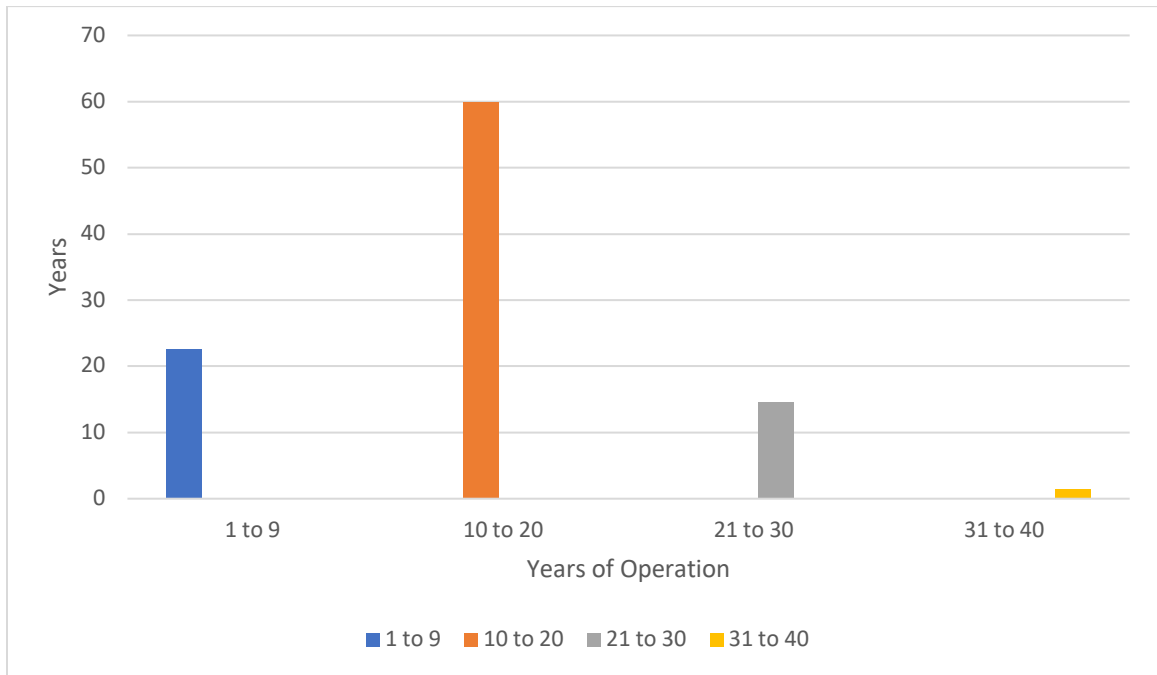
of this network to pay it forward by responding to the interview invitations and sharing their experience. See Figure 5.1

**Figure 5.1 Network Distribution**



The majority of the respondents held a university degree (97%), were married (86%) and were in the age bracket between 42 to 53 years old (70%). The latter information is parallel to the in-depth interviews that were conducted, which revealed that many of the entrepreneurs started their own businesses after quitting their regular jobs and decided to try it on their own. 60% of the respondents had 10 to 20 years of operation in their business. This was followed by 22.7% of the respondents having just started their business with 1 to 9 years of operation (see Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2 Years of Business Operation**



The majority of the respondents' businesses were in the services sector (85.5%). This aligned with the in-depth interviews, which depicted interview candidates in business consultation, tourism, translation, and publishing and technology. Eighty percent of the respondents started their businesses by themselves, as opposed to operating an already existing family business. Three-point five percent of the respondents reported 'Other' as a response option, which included a combination of owning and renting their businesses. The majority of the respondents reported 'Other' in response to their country of origin (56%) as opposed to the response items already listed. This was an interesting observation that aligned with the in-depth interviews conducted, where a respondent noted that although Vital Voices, which represents the network the majority of respondents were members in, is an excellent network in terms of the services it offers to its members, however, they tend to recruit members from certain countries, mainly Palestine. Respondents noted that this is mainly based on political reasons. This is an

observation that was not further investigated in this research but remains to be subject for further investigation in future research. The demographic distribution of respondents with the percentages and frequencies is depicted in table 5.1.

**Table 5.1 Demographic Distribution of Respondents**

<b>Demographic Survey Items</b>	<b>Percentage (Frequency)</b>
<b>Level of education</b>	
Primary	1% (1)
Secondary	1% (1)
Technical	1% (1)
University Degree	97% (143)
<b>Age</b>	
18-29	3% (4)
30-42	23% (33)
42-53	70% (102)
54 and above	4% (6)
<b>Status</b>	
Single	8% (11)
Married	86%

	(125)
Divorced	4% (6)
Widow	-
No response	2% (3)
<b>Number of years in business</b>	
1-9	22.7% (33)
10-20	60% (87)
21-30	14.5% (21)
31-40	1.4% (2)
No response	1.4% (2)
<b>Business sector</b>	
Agriculture	-
Manufacturing	3.5% (5)
Services	85.5% (124)
Trade	-
Handicraft	2% (3)
Other	7.6% (11)
No response	1.4% (2)



<b>Business acquisition</b>	
Started yourself	80% (116)
Family business	14.5% (21)
Inherited	-
Husband's business	-
Other	3.5% (5)
No response	2% (3)
<b>Business ownership</b>	
Own	45.5% (66)
Rent	46.2% (67)
In home	2.1% (3)
Co-rent	0.7% (1)
Other	3.5% (5)
No response	2% (3)
<b>Country of origin</b>	
Algeria	7% (10)
Egypt	18.6% (27)

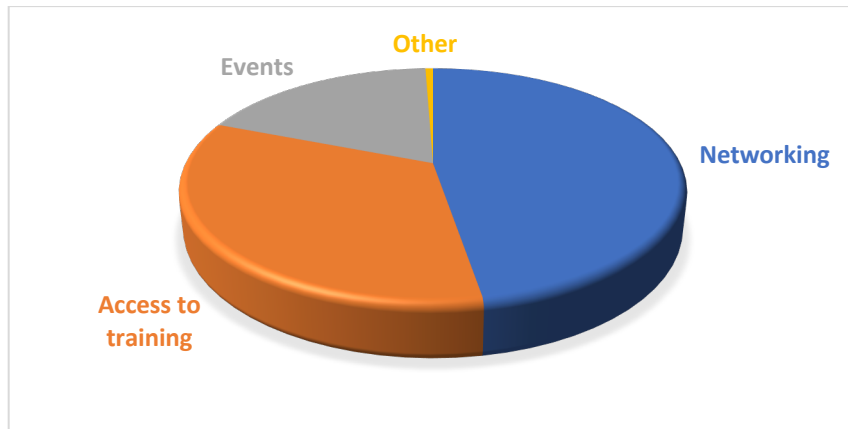
Lebanon	9% (13)
Tunisia	8% (12)
Other	56% (81)
No response	1.4% (2)

**5.3 Descriptive Statistics of Survey Items**

*5.3.1 Section 1: Training and Development*

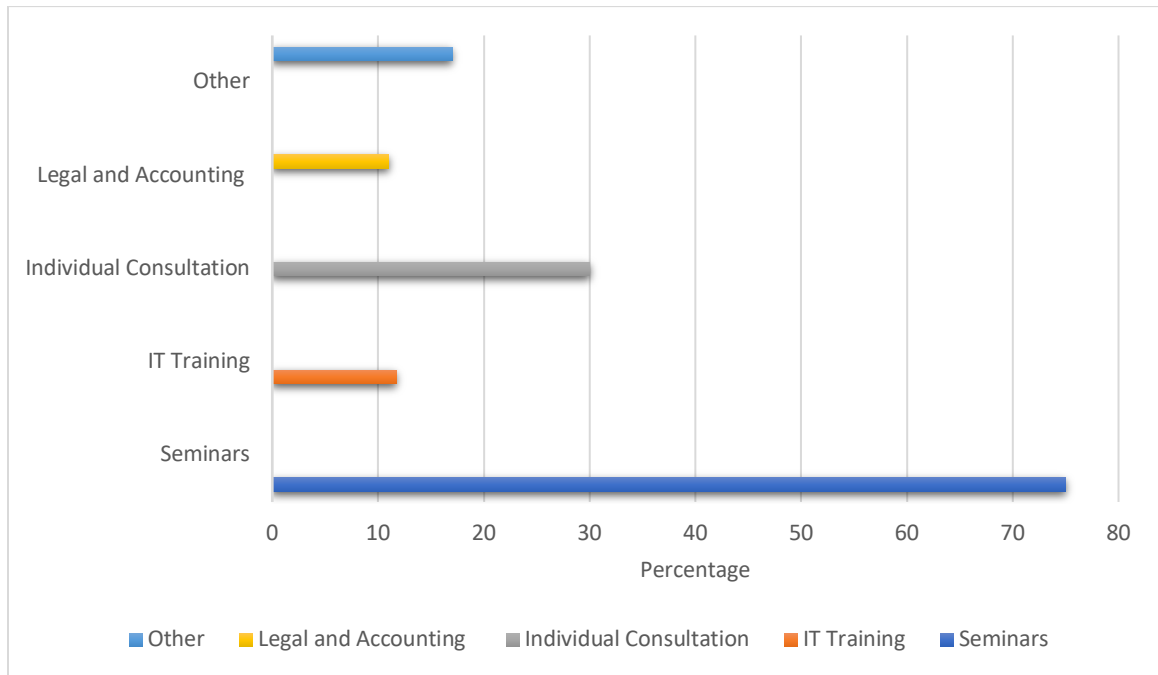
Table 5.2 shows the descriptive statistics of survey items in relation to section 1 of the survey; training and development. As mentioned earlier the majority of respondents were active members of Vital Voices network (57%). In response to question 3 in relation to joining the network, 97.2% mentioned networking as the main reason, followed by access to training. This aligned with the in-depth interviews, where respondents mentioned networking as one of the main reasons they decided to become a member in a network. Four point 1 percent of respondents mentioned ‘Other’ reasons for joining the network, mainly attending conferences. 92% of the respondents mentioned that the network provided opportunities for training, as opposed to 8% mentioning that it did not. See Figure 5.3

**Figure 5.3 Reason for Joining Network**



In response to question 4 in relation to the type of training offered by the network, 75% mentioned seminars, this was followed by individual consultation and instruction (30%). Seventeen percent of respondents picked ‘Other’ as their option for this question as well. This included a variety of responses such as: webinars, annual conferences, online training and workshops and some mentioned the topics covered in training that are related to organizational structure, board sustainability, training on recruitment, and learning from business ladies in different territories. See Figure 5.4

**Figure 5.4 Training Offered by Networks**



In question 6 respondents were asked to rank the training they received from best to worst on a 5-point scale; where 1 is best and 5 is worst. Twelve percent of respondents who chose seminars ranked it as # 1. Thirty-nine-point three percent of respondents who chose IT training ranked it as # 3. Forty-one-point four percent of respondents who chose individual consultation, ranked it as # 2. Thirteen-point eight percent of respondents who chose legal and accounting, ranked it as # 4. Eight-point nine percent of respondents that chose 'Other' ranked it as # 1. In the 'Other' option, respondents determined training activities such as webinars, conferences, and mentoring. This question really varies depending on the network and the unique functions each offers. This was really parsed out in the qualitative portion; understanding more about the type of training offered in each network as well as gauging its effect on its members.

In response to question 7 in relation to the number of hours spent in the network, 87% of respondents mentioned that they spent less than 10 hours of training in the network. Approximately 67% of respondents mentioned that the network improved their knowledge of technology. Question 9 gauges the overall training offered by the network on a 3-point scale; agree, neutral and disagree. The majority of respondents (60.6%) agreed to the statements that described the training offered by the network as meeting training needs and involved respondents in the planning and designing of the programs offered. However, 55% of respondents were neutral with regards to whether the network provided opportunities to meet formally with the person you are learning from. Table 5.2 presents the survey items related to each question in this section, with the corresponding frequency of response and percentage.

**Table 5.2 Section 1 Training and Development**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Percentage (Frequency)</b>
<b>Q2: The network that the respondent is most active with</b>	
AFAEMME	11% (16)
FCEM	11% (14)
Ouissal	21% (33)
Vital Voices	57% (82)
<b>Q3 Why did you become a member? (mark all that apply)</b>	
Networking	97.2% (141)

Access to training	69% (100)
Protection of rights	15.2% (22)
Participation in events	38% (55)
For social services	10.3% (15)
Member of the family is a member	4.1% (6)
Other	4.1% (6)
<b>Q4 Did the network provide opportunities for training?</b>	
Yes	8% (11)
No	92% (134)
<b>Q5 Please select the training activities provided by the network</b>	
Seminars	75% (109)
IT training	11.7% (17)
Individual consultation/instruction	30% (43)
Legal and accounting	11% (16)
Other	17% (25)

<b>Q6 please rank the above training activities</b>						
	No response	1 (Best)	2	3	4	5 (Worst)
Seminars	<b>Percentage (Frequency)</b> 66% (95)	12% (18)	-	11% (16)	11% (16)	-
IT training	13% (19)	9.6% (14)	6.2% (9)	39.3% (57)	13.7% (20)	17.9% (26)
Individual consultation/instruction	46.9% (68)	3.5% (5)	41.4% (60)	1.4% (2)	1.4% (2)	5.5% (8)
Legal and accounting	64% (93)	8.9% (13)	3.5% (5)	2.8% (4)	13.8% (20)	6.9% (10)
Other	85% (123)	8.9% (13)	0.7% (1)	0.7% (1)	3.5% (5)	1.4% (2)
<b>Q7 How many hours per week do you spend in training?</b>						
Less than 10 hours	87% (126)					
Between 10-20 hours	9% (13)					
More than 20 hours	1.4% (2)					
<b>Q8 Has the network improved your knowledge of technology?</b>						
Yes	66.9% (97)					
No	33.1% (48)					
<b>Q9 Please rate the following statements according to the Likert scale listed</b>						
Statement	Percentage (Frequency)					
	Agree	Neutral		Disagree		

Training needs and objectives are achieved by the network	60.6% (88)	31.7% (46)	7.6% (11)
There was a learner's involvement in the planning and design of the training program	60.6% (88)	26.9% (39)	11% (16)
There are opportunities in the workplace for the person you wish to learn from to meet formally (e.g. meetings, workshops and seminars)	40% (58)	55% (80)	4.1% (6)

Table 5.3 analyzes Question 9 in terms of the measures of central tendency: the mean and the median, and the measure of spread; the standard deviation. As mentioned earlier Question 9 assesses the training offered by the network through an ordinal 3-point Likert scale with 1=agree, 2= neutral and 3= disagree. The training is assessed through three statements related to the training offered by the network. The first two statements received a typical median answer of 1.00=agree. The statements refer to whether the training objectives were achieved, and whether the respondent was involved in the planning and design of the training offered. The third statement received a median answer of 2=neutral. This statement refers to whether there were opportunities to learn through formal meetings.

**Table 5.3 Training Assessment**

Questions	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Mdn	Max
<b>Q9: Training assessment</b>						
Training needs achieved	145	1.47	0.64	1.00	1.00	3.00
Involvement in planning and designing of program	145	1.48	0.71	0.00	1.00	3.00
Opportunities to learn through formal meetings	145	1.63	0.58	0.00	2.00	3.00



### 5.3.2 Section: 2 Networking

Section 2 of the survey gauges networking as a function offered by the network. This is done through an ordinal three-point Likert scale question that is constructed to gauge the respondent's ability to formulate partnerships, engage with other network members, and make connections with them as a result of being a member in the network. Table 5.4 shows the descriptive statistics of this section. Eighty-point seven percent of respondents agreed that participating in the network helped them develop new partnerships with others. Seventy three percent of respondents agreed that they have more organizational linkages/connections as a result of participating in the network. Fifty-seven-point two percent of respondents agreed that they have been invited to participate/join task forces due to their participation in the network. Fifty one percent of respondents agreed that they have been invited to participate/join task forces due to their participation in the network, **more** than prior to joining the network.

Table 5.5 analyzes question 10 in terms of the measures of central tendency: the mean and the median, and the measure of spread; the standard deviation. For all the statements the typical median answer is 1.00, which is equivalent to 'agree' on the 3-point Likert scale. The standard deviation is lower than the mean across all statements which indicates that the values are close to the mean in the set.

**Table 5.4 Section 2 Networking**

<b>Q10 Please rate the following statements according to the Likert scale listed</b>			
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Percentage (Frequency)</b>		
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Participating in the network helped you develop new partnerships with others	80.7% (117)	16.6% (24)	1.4% (2)

You have more organizational linkages/connections as a result of participating in the network	73% (106)	20.6% (30)	4.8% (7)
You have been invited to participate/join task forces due to your participation in the network	57.2% (83)	25.5% (37)	15.9% (23)
You have been invited to participate/join task forces due to your participation in the network, more that prior to joining the network	51% (74)	22% (32)	24.8% (36)

**Table 5.5 Networking Assessment**

Questions	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Mdn	Max
<b>Q10: Network assessment</b>						
Developing new partnerships	145	1.18	0.45	0.00	1.00	3.00
Organizational linkages and connections	145	1.29	0.58	0.00	1.00	3.00
Connecting due to participation in network	145	1.56	0.77	0.00	1.00	3.00
Connecting more than prior to joining the network	145	1.70	0.87	0.00	1.00	3.00

### 5.3.3 Section 3: Perceived Assessment of Individual Capacity

Table 5.6 presents the descriptive statistics of section 3 of the survey. It is formed of two three-point Likert scale questions. The questions are constructed to gauge the respondent's change (if any) in her perceived individual capacity as a result of joining the network. Individual capacities, such as changes in leadership skills, interpersonal skills, and communication skills are addressed in question 11. Moreover, table 5.7 presents the descriptive statistics in relation to changes in perceived administrative functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting, and are also addressed in question 12.

Seventy-seven-point two percent of respondents agreed that participating in the network improved their ability to direct and energize people (leadership skills). Sixty-point seven percent agreed that participating in the network improved the process of exchanging information with other coworkers in their organization (Communication skills). Sixty-nine-point six percent of respondents agreed that participating in the network improved their ability to communicate and understand other coworkers (interpersonal skills).

Question 12 gauges the respondents' perceived changes in terms of performing organizational functions. Fifty-five-point nine percent of respondents agreed that participating in the network improved their ability to create a plan of the things to be done and the methods to perform them. Fifty-eight-point six percent agreed that participating in the network allowed for the development of a formal structure that describes the arrangements of subdivisions and the flow of work and authority in their respective organizations. Forty-seven-point six percent agreed that participating in the network improved their ability to deal with staff members of their organization in relation to hiring, training, and work environment. Fifty-five-point nine percent agreed that participating in the network improved their decision-making process and their ability to lead their organization. Fifty-seven-point nine percent were neutral in terms of the statement that participating in the network improved their ability to connect all the different parts of the work towards achieving the organization's objectives. Sixty two percent marked neutral to the statement that participating in the network improved their ability to keep key executives informed as to what is happening within the organization. Forty two percent were neutral with regards to the statement that participating in the network improved their ability to perform fiscal planning and maintaining accounting records.

Table 5.8 analyzes questions 11 and 12 in terms of the measures of central tendency: the mean and the median, and the measure of spread; the standard deviation. In terms of perceived individual capacity changes as a result of joining the network, the median typical answer is 1.00, which is equivalent to ‘agree.’ The standard deviation is lower than the mean, which shows the spread of the datapoints around the mean.

In terms of perceived change in organizational capacities, Q12 gauges this through 7 statements on a 3-point Likert scale. The typical median answer for respondents in relation to statements concerning improved planning, organizing, and directing is 1.00 which is equivalent to ‘agree.’ However, for statements in relation to improved staffing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting, the typical median response is 2.00 which is equivalent to ‘neutral.’

**Table 5.6 Section 3 Perceived Assessment of Individual Capacity**

<b>Q11 Please rate the following statements according to the Likert scale listed</b>			
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Percentage (Frequency)</b>		
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Participating in the network improved your ability to direct and energize people (leadership skills)	77.2% (112)	15.7% (23)	4.1% (6)
Participating in the network improved the process of exchanging information with other coworkers in your organization (Communication skills)	60.7% (88)	28.9% (42)	7.6% (11)
Participating in the network improved your ability to communicate and understand other coworkers (Interpersonal skills)	69.6% (101)	20.7% (30)	6.9% (10)

**Table 5.7 Perceived Assessment of Individual Capacity**

<b>Q12 Please rate the following statements according to the Likert scale listed</b>			
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Percentage (Frequency)</b>		
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Participating in the network improved your ability to create a plan of the things to be done and the methods to perform them	55.9% (81)	32.4% (47)	10.3% (15)
Participating in the network allowed for the development of a formal structure that describes the arrangements of subdivisions and the flow of work and authority	58.6% (85)	29.6% (43)	10.3% (15)
Participating in the network improved your ability to deal with staff members of your organization in relation to hiring, training and work environment	47.6% (69)	46.2% (67)	4.8% (7)
Participating in the network improved your decision-making process and your ability to lead your organization	55.9% (81)	37.9% (55)	4.8% (7)
Participating in the network improved your ability to connect all the different parts of the work towards achieving the organization's objectives	33.8% (49)	57.9% (84)	6.2% (9)
Participating in the network improved your ability to keep key executives informed as to what is happening within the organization	28.3% (41)	62% (90)	7.6% (11)
Participating in the network improved your ability to perform fiscal planning and maintaining accounting records	40% (58)	42% (61)	16.5% (24)

**Table 5.8 Perceived Assessment of Individual Capacity**

Questions	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Mdn	Max
<b>Q11: Perceived capacity personal skills</b>						
Leadership skills	145	1.21	0.56	0.00	1.00	3.00
Communication skills	145	1.41	0.67	0.00	1.00	3.00
Interpersonal skills	145	1.32	0.64	0.00	1.00	3.00
<b>Q12: Perceived capacity organizational skills</b>						
Better organizational planning	145	1.52	0.70	0.00	1.00	3.00
Improved organizing	145	1.49	0.70	0.00	1.00	3.00
Improved staffing	145	1.54	0.61	0.00	2.00	3.00
Improved directing	145	1.46	0.61	0.00	1.00	3.00
Improved coordinating	145	1.68	0.62	0.00	2.00	3.00
Improved reporting	145	1.75	0.62	0.00	2.00	3.00
Improved budgeting	145	1.74	0.75	0.00	2.00	3.00

*5.3.4 Section 4: Perceived Overall Organizational Success*

Table 5.9 presents the descriptive statistics of section 4 of the survey. It is formed of two three-point Likert scale questions that gauge the respondent’s perceived overall organizational success as a result of joining the network. Question 13 measures the perceived overall organizational success through three statements in relation to the respondent’s ability to better serve clients, gain more legitimacy and acquire more resources as a result of joining the network. Question 14 assesses the perceived overall network success in enhancing the capacities of its members through three statements that gauge the overall performance of the network in relation

to responding to member’s needs, member benefits from joining the network, and the network facilitating institutional learning.

In question 13, 60.6% of respondents agreed that participating in the network allowed them to better serve your clients. Fifty-eight-point six percent agreed that participating in the network allowed their organization to gain more legitimacy. Sixty-three-point five percent agreed that participating in the network increased their ability to acquire more resources. In question 14, 71.7% agreed that the network effectively responds to the needs, shared interests, and capabilities of its participant. Seventy-four-point five percent agreed that their organization benefits from participating in this network. Fifty-four-point five percent of respondents agreed that the network facilitates collaboration strategies that allow for better coordination, problem solving, and institutional learning.

Table 5.11 analyzes questions 13 and 14 in terms of the measures of central tendency: the mean and the median, and the measure of spread; the standard deviation. In question 13 the typical median answer across the three statements is 1.00, which is relevant to ‘agree.’ In Question 14, as well, and across the three statement the median typical response is 1.00, which is equivalent to ‘agree.’

**Table 5.9 Section 4 Perceived Overall Organizational Success**

<b>Q13 Please rate the following statements according to the Likert scale listed</b>			
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Percentage (Frequency)</b>		
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Participating in the network allowed you to better serve your clients	60.6% (88)	33.8% (49)	3.5% (5)
Participating in the network allowed your organization to gain more legitimacy	58.6% (85)	35.9% (52)	3.5% (5)

Participating in the network increased your ability to acquire more resources	63.5% (92)	28.9% (42)	5.5% (8)

**Table 5.10 Perceived Overall Organizational Success**

<b>Q14 Please rate the following statements according to the Likert scale listed</b>			
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Percentage (Frequency)</b>		
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
The network effectively responds to the needs, shared interests and capabilities of its participant	71.7% (104)	20.6% (30)	5.5% (8)
Your organization benefits from participating in this network	74.5% (108)	18.6% (27)	4.8% (7)
The network facilitates collaboration strategies that allows for better coordination, problem solving, and institutional learning	54.5% (79)	35.2% (51)	8.3% (12)

**Table 5.11 Assessment of Perceived Overall Organizational Success**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Mdn</b>	<b>Max</b>
<b>Q13: Perceived Capacity Overall Organizational Success</b>						
Better serving clients	145	1.39	0.59	0.00	1.00	3.00
Improved organizational legitimacy	145	1.41	0.60	0.00	1.00	3.00
Improved resource acquisition	145	1.38	0.62	0.00	1.00	3.00
<b>Q14: Perceived Capacity-Overall network success</b>						
Network responds to member needs	145	1.30	0.60	0.00	1.00	3.00
Member organization benefits from network	145	1.26	0.58	0.00	1.00	3.00
Network facilitates institutional learning	145	1.50	0.68	0.00	1.00	3.00



### *5.3.5 Section 5: Government Regulatory Environment and Incentives*

The fifth section consists of two questions that gauge the government regulatory environment and incentives offered in the respondent's country of origin. Question 15 gauges the respondent's perceived regulatory barriers in the country of origin. 4 option items were listed in the survey. The items listed in this question included unstable legal environment, high level of taxation, and procedural difficulties in starting a business. Forty-eight-point three percent of respondents chose procedural difficulties in starting a business as their answer. This aligned with the in-depth interview, where interview candidates described the difficulties, they faced in starting their business; however, this varied depending on their country of origin. This question had an open-ended section, some of the comments included 'unstable political situation which affects the economy,' 'dealing with all governmental bodies with high level of corruption,' and 'unfair competition from male owned businesses.'

Question 16 gauges the respondent's perceived financial and non-financial incentives provided by the country of origin. The stated items included government incentives such as: accessing credit, low cost on loans, government grants and government training programs. An interesting observation is that majority of respondents chose 'Other' as an option (32.4%). This option allowed for open ended input from the respondents, some of the comments were 'none of the above,' and 'no incentive for women led businesses.'

**Table 5.12 Section 5: Government Regulatory Environment and Incentives**

Questions	Percentage (Frequency)
<b>Q15 Regarding your own organization, what do you believe are the main regulatory barriers for further development of your business (check all that apply)</b>	
Unstable legal environment	24% (35)
High level of taxation	44% (64)
Procedural difficulties in starting a company	48.3% (70)
Other	7.6% (11)
<b>Q17 Regarding your own organization, what do you believe are the main financial and nonfinancial incentives provided by your government to further develop your business (check all that apply)?</b>	
Accessing credit	31% (45)
Low cost loans	13.8% (20)
Government grants	16.6% (24)
Government training programs	2.8% (4)
Other	32.4% (47)

#### **5.4 Bivariate Analysis**

In this section of the chapter, bivariate analysis of survey items is performed to measure the strength of association and the direction of the relationships between the theoretical independent variables and the dependent variable.

5.4.1 *The Relationship between the Number of Hours in Training and the Perceived Individual Capacities*

To gauge the relationship between the number of hours spent in training in the network and the perceived individual capacities of members, Chi-square test is used to test the following proposed hypothesis:

$H_0$  There is no relationship between spending up to 10 hours per week in training activities by the network members and their improved perceived individual capacities.

$H_1$  There is a relationship between spending up to 10 hours per week in training activities by the network members and their improved perceived individual capacities.

Chi-square test is used to see if there is a relationship between the number of hours spent in training in the network, specifically up to 10 hours, as this response category in the survey represented 87% of the respondents, and the perceived individual capacities of members in relation to their improved ability to plan, organize, staff, direct, coordinate, report and budget. Table 5.13 presents the results of the Chi-square test for the items.

**Table 5.13 The Relationship between the Number of Hours in Training and the Perceived Individual Capacities of Network Members (Chi-Square Test)**

Survey Item	$\chi^2$ value	p-value
Perceived individual capacity (Planning)	79.8	p<0.0001***
Perceived individual capacity (Organizing)	4.54	p=0.209
Perceived individual capacity (Staffing)	16.5	p=0.001***
Perceived individual capacity (Directing)	9.02	p=0.03***
Perceived individual capacity (Coordinating)	1.26	P=0.74
Perceived individual capacity (Reporting)	1.25	P=0.74
Perceived individual capacity (Budgeting)	72.5	p<0.0001***

IV is up to 10 hours member spends in training in the network, DV is the change in the member's perceived planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting skills

\*  $p \leq 0.1$

\*\*  $p \leq 0.05$

\*\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

n=145

Table 5.13 the chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between spending up to 10 hours in training in the network and the perceived capacities of individual network members. The perceived capacities of individual members was measured by their ability to perform POSDCORB functions, in the form of better planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting in their respective businesses. The relationship between these variables was significant in relation to staffing, directing and budgeting functions only. In other words, spending up to 10 hours of training in the network was more likely to improve the network member's perceived capacities of planning, staffing, directing and budgeting functions with p-values less than 0.05.

The chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant association between spending up to 10 hours of training in the network and the network member's perceived capacities of organizing, coordinating and reporting. Their respective p-values is greater than 0.05.

#### *5.4.2 The Relationship between Network Training and Three Perceived individual Capacities*

To assess the relationships among ordinal items of the survey, Kendall's tau's coefficient is used to assess the strength and direction of statistical associations, given the small sample size.

To test the following proposed hypothesis:

$H_0$  Exposure to business network activities is not likely to improve the perceived leadership, interpersonal and communication capacities of its female members.

$H_2$  The greater the exposure to business network activities, the more likely female members are to improve their perceived leadership, interpersonal and communication capacities.

Kendall's tau's coefficient is used to assess the statistical association between achieving training needs and objectives within the network and three items that measure the perceived individual capacities of members; leadership skills, communication skills and interpersonal skills. Table 5.14 summarizes the results.

**Table 5.14 The Relationship between Network Training and Three Perceived Individual Capacities of Network Members  
(Kendall's Tau-B Correlations)**

Measure	Training needs	Perceived leadership skills	Perceived communication skills	Perceived interpersonal skills
Training needs	1.00			
Perceived leadership skills	0.54***	1.00		
Perceived communication skills	0.67***	0.69***	1.00	
Perceived interpersonal skills	0.52***	0.81***	0.69***	1.00

IV is achieving training needs and objectives in the network, DV is the change in the member's perceived leadership, communication and interpersonal skills.

\*  $p \leq 0.1$

\*\*  $p \leq 0.05$

\*\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

n=145

Table 5.14 shows positive and significant relationship between achieving training needs and objectives in a network and improved perceived leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills among members. The proposed null hypothesis is rejected; the greater the exposure to business network activities, specifically in relation to achieving training needs and objectives, the more likely female members perceive they are able to improve their leadership, interpersonal, and communication capacities.

#### 5.4.3 The Relationship between Networking and Perceived Overall Organizational Success

To gauge the relationship between networking as a service offered by the network to its members and the perceived overall success of members in their respective organizations,

Kendall's Tau's coefficient is used to assess the statistical association and test the following proposed hypotheses:

$H_0$  Exposure to business network activities is not likely to improve the members perceived ability to serve their clients.

$H_3$  The greater the exposure to business network activities, the more likely members perceive improved ability to serve their clients.

$H_0$  Exposure to business network activities is not likely to improve the members perceived ability to gain organizational legitimacy.

$H_4$  The greater the exposure to business network activities, the more likely members perceive improved ability to gain organizational legitimacy.

$H_0$  Exposure to business network activities is not likely to increase the members perceived ability to acquire more resources for her organization.

$H_5$ : The greater the exposure to business network activities, the more likely members perceive improved ability to acquire more resources for her organization.

The relationship between networking, specifically the survey item in relation to making informal connections, is examined against the dependent variable change in perceived capacities in the form of the respondent's improved overall organizational success. The latter is operationalized as the ability to better serve clients, acquire more resources, and gain more organizational legitimacy. All variable items were measured using an ordinal 3-point scale. Table 5.15 presents Kendall's tau-B correlations.

**Table 5.15 The Relationship between Networking and Perceived Overall Organizational Success of Network Members**

**(Kendall's Tau-B Correlations)**

<b>Measure</b>	Networking (connection)	Perceived overall organizational success (serve clients)	Perceived overall organizational success (gain legitimacy)	Perceived overall organizational success (acquire resources)
Networking (connection)	1.00			
Perceived overall organizational success (serve clients)	0.58***	1.00		
Perceived overall organizational success (gain legitimacy)	0.56***	0.76***	1.00	
Perceived overall organizational success (acquire resources)	0.63***	0.69***	0.79***	1.00

IV is networking, DV is the perceived change in serving clients, gaining legitimacy and acquiring resources

\*  $p \leq 0.1$

\*\*  $p \leq 0.05$

\*\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

n=145

Table 5.15 shows positive associations between networking in the form of making informal connections and the respondent's perceived overall organizational success in relation to better serving clients, gaining legitimacy, and acquiring more resources. The associations are positive and significant with p values  $< 0.05$ . The proposed null hypotheses are rejected, the greater the exposure to networking activities, in the form of making informal connections, the more likely members perceive they are able to better serve their clients, gain organizational legitimacy and acquire more resources.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The quantitative analysis of this study highlights important aspects with regards to networks in the MENA region. There is a statistically significant relationship between spending up to 10 hours of training in networks and the improved administrative capacities of planning,

staffing, directing, and budgeting. There is a statistically significant relationship between exposure to network training functions and the perceived capacities of individual members; as described in their ability to better lead, communicate, and form relationships with their coworkers in their respective organizations. The in-depth interviews directed the analysis towards understanding more about networking as a function, specifically informal connections, as considered important to women from the region. Statistical analysis points out that there is a statistically significant relationship between networking, as a function of the networks, and the perceived members' ability to better serve their own clients, establish organizational legitimacy within their communities and acquire more resources.



## CHAPTER 6: INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 examined the relationship between perceived capacities of network members and the management, technological, and networking activities offered by the networks. Chapter 5 covered the quantitative portion of the study, inferring parameters from the unknown population of networks serving female entrepreneurs in the MENA region from the known sample investigated. Chapter 6 focuses on systematic review of in-depth interviews conducted; drawing out themes that reflect the original data.

This study is based on the hypothesis that exposure to networks enhances the capacities of individual members of the network under investigation. This is grounded in the literature that describes the functional advantages of networks as including improved learning, better use of resources, and improved capacity to deal with problems (Provan and Kenis 2005; Agranoff 2006). These functions are based on the collaborative dynamics that take place in networks as taking the form of face to face or virtual meetings, public and private partnerships, or cross-organizational networks to resolve a conflict, deal with a problem, or add value (Emerson et al. 2011). Emerson et al. (2011) define the outcome of this networked arrangement as any intentional or unintentional changes that alter a current undesirable situation. The literature stops at explaining the outcome of networks and lacks evidence of gauging the effect of exposure to network functions and whether or not they actually affect the capacities of their members. This study will attempt to address this gap in our knowledge, as well as contributing to theory building with regards to understanding more about networks in the MENA region.

The qualitative portion of this research is based on structured focused comparison of selected interview cases. Structured focused comparison refers to the use of as many cases as possible that measure the same causal factors and outcomes the same way in each case, as well as the use of interview cases other than the ones from which the hypothesis was drawn (Geddes 2003), in order to confirm the hypothesis.

Two types of female entrepreneurs were invited; those who are members in the networks under investigation, as well as those who are not members in any network or have dropped their membership. The independent and dependent variables listed in table 4.1 (see Chapter 4) were analyzed in all interviews. The main purpose is to rule out any possibility of spuriousness and make sure that exposure to network membership is the main reason why female entrepreneurs' capacities change, if at all; ruling out the possibility of confounding variables.

## **6.2 Participant Recruitment**

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study on April 21, 2020 with protocol identification number 20-010 EP 2004. Data gathering took place through key informant in-depth interviews conducted online. The interviews commenced on June 6, 2020. An information letter was sent out to network directors inviting members of the network to participate in the interviews (see appendix C). The letter provided information about the study and had the researcher's full contact information. Those interested in participating were asked to email the researcher. The study researcher made contact with the interested participants and scheduled zoom appointments at times convenient to the participants. All interviews were audio recorded for transcription purposes and all data was coded using participant identification numbers to ensure anonymity of participants.

### 6.3 Procedure

Data collection took place from June 2020 through Jan 2021. Appendix B shows the semi-structured interview protocol questions for network members and network non-members. The questions, open- and closed-ended, are meant to extract information with regards to four main themes: *network functions, individual capacities, networking, and organizational success* (see Figure 4.2). The main purpose of the interview questions was to elicit responses that are parallel to the original data, to confirm the causal hypothesis. The interviews opened with a brief introduction of the researcher and the study under investigation. The researcher ensured the participants of the confidentiality of the information that they provided; reiterating that there will be no individual identifiers. This was followed by individual demographic questions to identify the level of education of the participant, the number of years in business and her operating sector. The same questions were asked to all interviewees, and all the interviews were conducted in English. Interviews conducted took about 45 to 50 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded, and all data was coded with participant identification numbers to ensure the anonymity of participants. All interviews were transcribed by the study researcher. Appreciation was given through a thank you email, emphasizing gratitude for the time and insight provided by their participation in this study. Data collection ended January 15, 2021, yielding 25 interviews. Table 6.1 shows the distribution of the interviews across the four networks under investigation, as well as non-members.

**Table 6.1. Distribution of Interviews**

<i>Network/non-members</i>	AFAEMME	FCEM	Ouissal	Vital Voices	Non-members	n
<i>Number of interviewees</i>	3	3	4	8	7	25

#### **6.4 Coding Methodology**

Data coding was based on Brown and Hale’s (2014) stages of coding qualitative data. The first stage was a review of the data to make sure that the initial themes are sufficient in describing the data. At this revision stage, possible additional themes may be added or changed. The second stage was a focus on the frequency of the generated themes, identifying possible patterns that describe relationships. The third stage focused on creating data displays in the form of listing of themes and summaries of common phrases to be used in the thick descriptions of identified relationships (Brown and Hale 2014).

##### *Stage 1: Review of Data*

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by the study researcher following the coding scheme in table 6.2. The researcher made a list of all possible themes that emerged from the data. During this stage several themes were added to the initial themes including *business characteristics, drivers, network member selection process, characteristics of networks that work, mentors and mentees, country specific observations and non-members*. It is important to note that these themes are not exhaustive, but they represent what the researcher thought to be applicable given the scope of the study. During this stage and after initial review of the data, several themes were expanded, and others were collapsed, as working definitions of the themes were formed and relationships and patterns were more visible to the researcher.

The operationalization of the themes allowed for a better understanding of the concepts covered in the interviews and eventually lead to reframing of the themes. The first theme is *business characteristics*; referring to the characteristics of the business of the female network member. This was fleshed out into two subthemes: the sector the business is operating in and the number of years in business. Another theme is *drivers* which was fleshed out into three subthemes: drive to join (the network), drive not to join and drive to drop; referring to the respondent's reason to choose any of the three. Another theme is *member selection process*; referring to the process utilized by the network to accept members. This includes processes such as initial applications and financial membership requirements. Another theme is *network functions* which is fleshed out into four subthemes: mentors and mentees, time spent, annual conference events, and technology. The subtheme *mentors and mentees* reflects the assessment of the respondent to this relationship; gauging when there is a need for this relationship from the respondent's point of view, whether there was a mismatch between mentors and mentees, and whether the relationship resulted in perceived positive changes in the respondent's business. The subtheme *time spent* refers to the time spent by the respondent in training and its relationship to how long the respondent's business has been operating. The subtheme *annual conference events* refers to the urge to fully commit to a rigorous network training that requires commitment to participate versus attending a network that is primarily based on annual events hosted by the network as its main activity. The final subtheme *technology* refers to the respondent's relationship with technology and the network's role in strengthening this relationship.

Another theme is *networking* which is fleshed out into two subthemes: partnerships and connections. The subtheme *partnership* refers to the network's role in facilitating the formation of business partnerships as a result of being a member in the network. The subtheme

*connections* refers to network's role in facilitating the formation of connections as a result of being a member in the network. Responses reflect the connections as serving the purpose of acquiring support and information from other fellow members in relation to both business and personal inquiries; forming a bond among network members. Another theme is *perceived change in individual capacities of members* which is further fleshed out into perceived capacity changes at the personal level and at the organizational level. At the personal level refers to reports of a positive personal change as a result of being a member in the network, such as being inspired, motivated and an enhancement in the respondent's self-esteem as a result of being in the network. Reports of negative personal change also exist, where respondents state being 'frustrated' from the experience. Changes in capacities at the organizational level refers to a positive change in the respondent's skills set; in terms of leading, communicating and engaging with their subordinates. Also reports of no change in the perceived capacities of respondents is recorded as 'neutral.'

An important emerging theme, and one in response to the question of '*what are the characteristics of a functional network?*' refers to the respondent's view of the essential characteristics of a functional network that results in a positive change in the capacities of its member. Another theme in this study is *observations in relation to the respondent's country of origin*, referring to the respondent's country of origin and any observations in relation to deciding to join a network. In this theme respondents were cautious in reporting anything negative in relation to their country of origin. A final theme is the operational definition of *non-members* as the respondent reporting that she is not a member in any network and that she is either not interested to join or dropped her membership. See table 6.2 for the qualitative coding scheme.

**Table 6.2 Qualitative Coding Scheme**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Business characteristics</b>	
Sector	Respondent reports the sector her business is operating in
Age of business	Respondent reports the number of years her business has been operating
<b>Drivers to membership</b>	
Drivers to join	Respondent reports the reason for joining a specific network
Drivers not to join	Respondent reports the reason of not joining a network
Drivers to drop	Respondent reports the reason for dropping membership
<b>Member selection process</b>	Respondent reports the process utilized by the network to accept members. This includes initial applications, financial requirements. Response reflects how the network utilizes this process in addressing the needs of its members
<b>Network functions</b>	Respondent reports the different activities performed by networks; including webinars mentoring, annual conference events, seminars, training programs offered.
Mentors and mentees	Respondent reports preferring a network that is based on a mentor/mentee relationship, or describes this function based on her experiencing it. Response reflects assessment of members to this type of relationship. Response reflects when there is a need for this relationship from the respondent's point of view, whether there was a mismatch between mentors and mentees, and whether the relationship resulted in perceived changes in the respondent's business performance
Time spent	Respondent reports the amount of time spent in training. Response reflects the discouragement to spend extra hours in network activities that do not directly benefits the member
Annual conference events	Respondent reports attending annual conference and events. Response reflects the relationship between the number of years the business has been operating and the type of

	network the respondent is interested to join. It reflects the urge to fully commit to a rigorous network program that requires commitment to participate versus attending annual events hosted by the network
Technology	Respondent reports her relationship with technology and the network's role in strengthening this relationship
<b>Networking</b>	
Partnerships	Respondent reports the network's role in facilitating the formation of business partnerships as a result of being a member in the network.
Connections	Respondent reports the network's role in facilitating the formation of connections as a result of being a member in the network. Responses reflect the connections as serving the purpose of support and information seeking from other fellow members in relation to both business and personal inquiries; forming a bond among network members
<b>Perceived change in individual capacities of members</b>	
<b>Personal level</b>	Respondent reports a positive change as a result of being a member in the network.
Positive	Responses reflect patterns of being 'inspired,' 'motivated' and an enhancement of their 'self-esteem'
Negative	Respondent reports negative change as a result of being a member in the network. Responses reflect patterns of being 'frustrated'
<b>Organizational level</b>	
Positive	Respondent reports a positive change in their skill set in terms of leading, communicating and engaging with their subordinates
Neutral	Respondent reports a no change in their skill set in terms of leading, communicating and engaging with their subordinates
<b>Characteristics of networks that work</b>	Respondent reports the essential characteristics of a network to be functional and result in a positive experience by the member. Responses point out a relationship between this theme and the age and type of the respondent's business
Focus on member needs	Respondent reports a successful network as one that focuses on the needs of its members.



	Respondent stresses the importance of assessing the needs of the potential candidate and offering activities that respond to those needs
Creating informal linkages that serve the member's business	Respondent reports a successful network as one that results in the formation of informal linkages that extend beyond the life of the network activity offered
Sector specific	Respondent reports a successful network as one that addresses the needs based on the operating sector of the member
<b>Country of origin</b>	Respondent reports her country of origin; referring to any observations in relation to deciding to join a network
<b>Non-members</b>	Respondent reports that she is not a member in any network and that she is either not interested to join, or dropped her membership

**6.5 Results**

*Stage 2: Frequency of Generated Themes*

In this stage the researcher reviewed the data one more time and developed a qualitative display of the frequency with which the themes appeared. Tables 6.3. to 6.7 in Appendix C show the frequency with which the themes appeared in each of the four networks, as well as among non-member respondents. Based on the second review of the data patterns, the following conceptual relationships were drawn from the data in relation to the overarching question of this study, which is: *how exposure to these networks affects the perceived capacities of the individual members of the network?*

The following list of conceptual relationships emerged:

1. The network selection process that is sector specific is key to perceived changed capacities.
2. In networks serving business entrepreneurs, offering programs that are sensitive to the number of years members have been in operation enhances success of network members, in other words reflection on the member's business cycle.

3. Shared governance by network leaders is key to achieving enhanced perceived capacities of their members.
4. Networking is the primary reason why women join networks. Networking in the region is more focused on making connections rather than forming formal business partnerships.
5. Networks that work are the ones that bridge capacities across national boundaries.
6. Despite the varying institutional environment among the countries under investigation, there is a pattern that is conducive towards the engagement of women in networks within these countries, which in some cases subsequently leads to their perceived enhanced capacities.

*Stage 3: Summary of Conceptual Relationships*

*1. The network selection process that is sector specific is key to perceived changed capacities.*

A pattern that emerged throughout the interviews is the *importance of the selection process*, in terms of who will become a member and how the network will address the needs of this member. An important observation that was made is that most successful networks were the ones that had a member-oriented approach when addressing the needs and the problems of its members. This was only found in Vital Voices, which aligned with the network's stated strategy on its website, which is member-oriented leadership. This also aligned with the interviews I conducted with female entrepreneurs who were non-members of any network. I asked them if they ever consider joining a network? The majority responded with a no; stressing on the networks' lack of addressing targeted skills, that are not sector oriented. One of the non-member respondents noted, "unless there is something that is based on what I really need, and one on one interaction, I would not be interested to join." She mentioned that her business is unique, as she makes handicraft art, and that it requires specialized focused training that is not readily available.

In reference to the network training she expressed “It has to be something really touching my line of work and not general,” reinforcing the strong belief that characteristics of networks that work should provide functions to businesses based on the sector they are operating in.

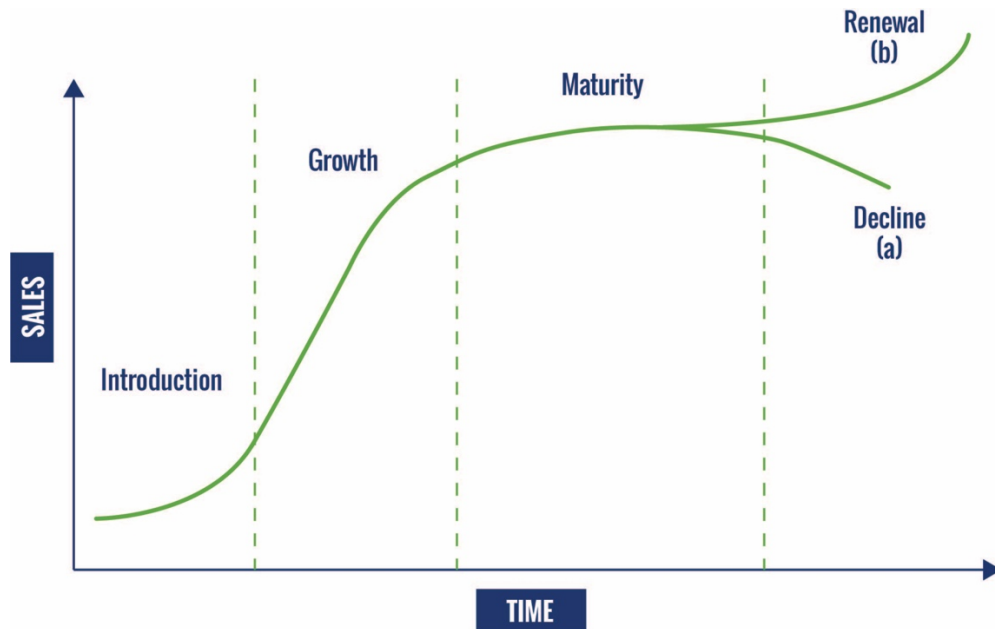
*2. In networks serving business entrepreneurs, offering programs that are sensitive to the number of years members have been in operation enhances success, in other words the business cycle.*

Another frequently generated theme is *network functions*, which refers to the different activities performed by networks; including webinars, mentoring, annual conference events, seminars, and training programs offered. An important conceptual relationship that emerged is the relationship between the type of *network function* offered by the network and the *Age of the business*, which is operationalized as the number of years the respondent’s business has been operating. It was observed that respondents who just started their business were more interested in participating in rigorous training and being involved in a mentor-mentee relationship that requires a greater number of hours invested in the network. On the other hand, respondents who have more years in their business were not interested in this type of relationship. One non-member respondent who had 10 years of operation in her business emphasized that she would not be interested in joining rigorous programs in networks as this would consume a lot of her time. She noted that she might attend a conference that would tackle issues related to her business, but that she would not be attending all speakers in the conference, only those that would benefit her business.

Another non-member respondent noted, “I think that all network functions are extremely beneficial: webinars, meetings, training activities, but for me annual events are the most important.” She emphasized, “I do not find myself in this regular kind of commitment.” This

respondent has dropped her membership, as she believes that at this stage of her business growth, she does not need the heavy training that might be needed by members who are still starting their business. She has 25 years of operation in her business, which specializes in translation serving the tech industry specifically. In response to the question ‘what are the characteristics of networks that work?’ she responded by emphasizing the importance of making the connection between the *network functions* offered by the network and the *age of the business*. This finding is parallel to the literature that emphasizes that network management involves utilizing network management strategies and that involves connecting with the right people (Klijn and Koppenjan 2012). The study researcher would like to add that network management is not only about connecting with the right people, creating and changing network arrangements for better coordination, introducing new ideas, and reliance on negotiating skills so that actors are able to come up with new and creative solutions (Klijn and Koppenjan 2012), it is also about making the connection between the functions offered by the network and the needs of the clients. In the case of this study, which focuses on networks serving business owners, this is best achieved by categorizing the member selection process based on where the business of the member is on the S curve, whether it is in the growth stage, maturity stage or declining stage (see figure 6.1). It is also best achieved by making the connection between the member selection process and the sector that the business is operating in, understanding what the network offers to its members and what type of clients it is serving is essential in assessing the effect of these networks on the capacities of its members.

**Figure 6.1 Stages of a Business Cycle**



The lack of connection between network functions offered and the age of the business of the network member was seen in the mismatch between *mentors and mentees* found among Ouissal members. Ouissal network, on paper, has a clear vision, mission and strategic orientation. However, in depth interviews with Ouissal members showed that a major problem is their inability to assess the needs of members and assign them to the right mentors accordingly. The main reason was in addition to the lack of listening to the needs of their members, there is lack of understanding from the network's perspective as to where exactly the member's business is in terms of its business life cycle. There is a failure to make the connection between the member's business life cycle and the corresponding training needs that the network should address at each stage of the growth of the business. One Ouissal member noted, "My mentor is a trainer and she worked with some other trainers, but she is at the same level as me." This respondent just started her business five years ago, she was still in the growth stage of her business, and she was paired with someone at the same level as herself. Another Ouissal

member pointed out, “one of the big problems that you have is that these sessions that go on they are predetermined already well known and sometimes they fit sometimes they don’t fit.” According to members of Ouissal network, there should be a knowledge gap between the mentor and the mentee, with the former more experienced and knowledgeable in his or her field, to achieve positive change in the capacities of the members. It is recommended by all respondents that the network invest more in recruiting their mentors, as one respondent noted, “invest more in the network by recruiting people who are specialized in their fields- you can listen to the needs of members, understand, implement and execute”

*3. Shared governance by network leaders is key to achieving enhanced perceived capacities of their members.*

The theme perceived change in individual capacities of members is further fleshed out into perceived capacity changes at the personal level and at the organizational level. At the personal level, perceived changes in capacities were frequently mentioned among Vital Voices members. This was primarily emphasized as part of the goal of the network, and that is to address the self-esteem of these women by offering workshops on public speaking. All respondents mentioned that this made a difference in how they addressed audiences and employees in their business, and that that was a life changing experience for them. One Vital Voices respondent noted, “somebody is recognizing the work that I do, somebody is opening up a global network for me to have a voice.” She further expressed, “I had a problem in public speaking, and they helped me a lot with that-they had me present in front of the camera, and they evaluated my performance; telling me what I should be doing and what I should not be doing.” On the other hand, at the organizational level, she noted, “the program gave me more knowledge to run my business better.” This is parallel to the literature that describes the functional advantage of network

arrangements as mechanisms of resource pooling and knowledge creation (Agranoff 2006). These advantages are what make networks unique and sought after. They deliver different forms of public value to their constituents through expanding the resource base, specifically in the form of increased knowledge. It is important to note here that the process of knowledge creation is primarily balanced by the leader to converge the knowledge into a concept (Nonaka 1994). In the case of the network, this refers to the form of network governance employed.

Governance of networks is definitely a challenge, since networks are formed of complex relationships between different organizations. Imperial (2005) defined governance as the level of control and coordination between the different organizations with different degrees of autonomy. Network governance thus involves the coordination to synchronize between the different autonomy levels of multiple organizations. This was evident in the interviews, one respondent who was a member in FCEM and AFAEMME networks noted about the leaders of these networks, “they do not have a vision and mission to guide the network.” She emphasized that there is no dialogue or connection between what the members, who are business owners with varying needs, want and what the network leaders are offering. All interviewee members belonging to these networks complained of a board that is not connected to its members and not considering their needs. This signified a problem in the governance of these networks.

Popp et al. (2014) identify three types of governance structures within networks: shared governance, lead organization and network administration organization. Provan and Kenis (2008) describe shared governance as that which involves the participation of each organization within the network in the governance process. This results in a decentralized form of governance where organizations and their members are collectively responsible for the decision-making process. The second type of governance is lead governance which involves a single lead

organization that takes charge of the network maintenance and survival (Provan and Kenis 2008). The decision-making process is undertaken by the lead organization that also coordinates the activities of the member organizations (Provan and Kenis 2008). The third type of governance is the network administrative organization (NAO), involving an autonomous administrative organization responsible for governing the network (Provan and Kenis 2008). This autonomous entity is not a member organization that is solely responsible for the governance of the network (Provan and Kenis 2008).

The in-depth interviews showed that AFAEMME and FCEM have a network administrative organization responsible for the governance. There is no dialogue between the leaders and the members, and hence no gauging of what the members need to advance their capacities. On the other hand, Ouissal depicts motivated leadership with a goal to really effect change among its members. The network has a well-described vision and mission on their website, the form of governance they employ is based on a network administrative organization that is an autonomous entity responsible for the governance. The in-depth interviews with Ouissal members showed eagerness of the members to be involved in the decision-making process, and eagerness by the members to have a more shared form of governance. In relation to the form of governance Ouissal employs, one respondent noted, “internally the organization structure needs to be opened up, they do have an organization structure, but there are no people. They have the resources, what they need is to open channels up and kind of make the connection happen between member and leaders, which is what networks are all about.” The leader of Ouissal needs to involve its members in the decision-making process, allowing their voices to be heard. Ouissal needs a reorientation of its strategy in governing the network; making it more inclusive of its members.



Vital Voices, on the other hand has a decentralized, shared form of governance, where organizations and their members are collectively responsible for the decision-making process. They define their approach to leadership as member oriented, and one respondent noted, “at a later point of time when they were designing a program, I was involved in helping them review the content connecting them to some trainers – I’ve stayed close to that program because I see a lot of women who graduate from the program and the impact that this program specifically has had on their businesses.” This is closely related to the concept of ‘bridging capacities’ suggested by Balboa (2014): an international network like Vital Voices is able to effect change in the MENA region, and one way they do this is by engaging locals from the region in the design and implementation of their programs.

*4. Networking is the primary reason why women join networks. Networking in the region is more focused on making connections rather than forming formal business partnerships.*

Another important conceptual relationship that was recognized from the interviews is that most respondents mentioned networking as the main driver to join a network. Networking is fleshed out into two important subthemes: making *connections* and doing direct business through forming *partnerships*. The majority of respondents acknowledged that they did not join a network to form partnerships, and most respondents did not prefer partnerships as a form of doing business. This represented possibilities for future research that focuses on the relationship between MENA regional cultural characteristics and network functions in relation to formation of partnerships and informal linkages among networks that serve businesses. This would reinforce Kamensky and Burlin’s theory (2004), as they argue that for networks to navigate across the different ideologies, ‘management’ is the wrong description of the process that takes

place, because it implies hierarchical relationships. Kamensky and Burlin (2004) describe the process as sometimes involving the use of formal partnerships, informal linkages, collective action, and sometimes contractual relationships to advance policy goals.

The majority of Vital Voices members emphasized that being a member in the network allowed them to make informal connections that serves their business in the form of asking questions related to their business and finding answers that are country specific. One member noted, “I am now very well connected with different people in different countries in the MENA region-if I go to any of these countries, I will always find a friend there that I can call and ask about anything business related or otherwise.” She further noted in reference to the network, “It helped me feel that I am not alone.” Another respondent noted on the importance of networking on the personal level, “I feel that even if the bonding does not have a direct impact on my business, it does have a direct impact on my personal life- so those women that I met in 2009 we are still very close friends, we have a WhatsApp group we speak together every month and we are always like celebrating each other’s successes, following each other’s stories and this bond extended to other women within the Vital Voices network.” Networking has definitely positively affected their perceived capacities at the personal and organizational levels. This supports the null hypothesis that states that *exposure to network activities is likely to increase the number of contacts that members engage in*. It also supports the hypothesis that *exposure to network activities is likely to improve the member’s ability to serve her clients*. It is clear however that this is not the case for all networks, and that some are able to effect change in the perceived capacities of their members and some are not. The following conceptual theme examines the unique characteristics of networks that actually work for their members.

5. *Networks that work are the ones that bridge capacities across national boundaries.*

Another theme that is generated is *characteristics of networks that work*. This includes a focus on member needs, creating functional ties that work, and paying it forward by focusing on the formation of long-term bonds between members that extend beyond the network. These characteristics lacking in two networks (AFAEMME and FCEM) and are evident in one of the networks, which is Vital Voices. As one AFAEMME member noted, “if you cross national borders not knowing what's going on, there are shortcuts that you might not be able to access if nobody helps you-this is the role of networks to form functional linkages.” She pointed out that in AFAEMME, members are a byproduct and not prioritized by the leaders, stating “we are byproducts, if we become the main product I think the whole thing will be built around more than just a social gathering -it would be more towards creating the linkages for real business, for real opportunities- this is not found. “As for Ouissal, restructuring of their workflow is required to achieve the required outcomes.

These characteristics are defined in the vision, mission, and strategy of Vital Voices, confirming the importance of these elements to network success. Vital Voices has a well-defined strategic plan that is primarily based on shared governance and most important of all, it possesses bridging capacities; effecting change from the global to the local levels (Balboa 2014). The implication of enhancing capacities among Vital Voices members was seen in the in-depth interviews. My first interview was conducted with a female entrepreneur residing in Lebanon, working in the culinary business. She spoke of how joining Vital Voices changed her life. She emphasized how their member selection process is very specific, that it allowed her to think of where her business is, and where she sees herself in the future. She described how this exercise was life changing for her, as it allowed her to look inwards and assess her situation and work towards a certain goal. Fourteen interviews later, during which the Lebanon explosion took

place, I interviewed a Jordanian female entrepreneur who is a member of Vital Voices. One of the questions I ask, is do you think networks actually make a difference? She noted, “let me give you an example; we are now raising funds for a fellow network member in Lebanon, who not only lost her restaurant to the explosion, but all of her crew were in the hospital, we are helping her rebuild.” It turns out that this Lebanese lady was my first interview. Currently, the Lebanese restaurant owner has restored her restaurant and is currently in operation. That is the power of network that transcends national borders. This interview was the strongest proof of the power of networks that transcend national boundaries. This evidence supports the hypothesis that *exposure to business network activities is likely to increase the member’s ability to acquire more resources for her organization.*

*6. Despite the varying institutional environment among the countries under investigation, there is a pattern that is conducive towards the engagement of women in networks within these countries, which in some cases subsequently leads to their perceived enhanced capacities.*

A final theme in this study is *observations in relation to the respondent’s country of origin.* Despite the varying institutional environment among the countries under investigation, there is a pattern that is conducive towards the engagement of women in networks within these countries, which in some cases subsequently leads to their perceived enhanced capacities (contingent on the existence of the above characteristics in a network).

The healthy constitutional environment of Tunisia was a driving force for women to join networks. It was observed in the interviews with the Tunisian women their sense of pride when describing the current economic climate of their country. One respondent was explaining why she was motivated to join a network and start her own business and noted, “Politically, building a

country from zero is really hard, and I was interested at the time in the question on how to build a community and how to raise the community and how to make people like collaborating together toward a specific goal.” Another Tunisian respondent noted, “I think I was inspired by revolution mainly and also with my experience abroad which was very human centric, so I wanted to bring all of this new mindset into Tunisia.”

The political landscape of Egypt in terms of the relationships between civil society and the government depicts an overpowering government that exercises high levels of control, yet Egyptians are very active and always looking to explore opportunities, specifically for women. However, there is a general observation drawn from the interviews that civil society is fragmented with a lot of organizations trying to do the same thing, there is a general lack of collaboration. However, several respondents pointed out that starting their business nowadays was much better than before. One respondent noted, “It was difficult when I started my business 25 years ago, there was a lot of challenges and bureaucracy-I see now, that things are totally different, they still face challenges, but it is much better.” Despite the contextual environment in Egypt, Egyptian female entrepreneurs remain eager to engage in a network that considers their needs as a priority. One Egyptian AFAEMME respondent complained,

“AFAEMME leaders came to Egypt and they conducted meetings with all the government entities, but they did not meet with members, not even one meeting. I was a member of a government entity; I was at the council you know the advisor of the minister, so I was there but not as the member of AFAEMME. They were trying to find new direction and new ideas, but again they were talking to government entities, not to members.”

This indicates the need for female entrepreneurs in the region and in Egypt specifically to be involved in a network that allows for shared governance to bridge capacities. This also

indicates that some networks are more political than functional when offering services to their members. As one Egyptian AFAEMME respondent noted, “The main attention is not to the members, it's more of a political thing in terms of the heads who are in charge of this organization and not actually having impactful change on the ground.”

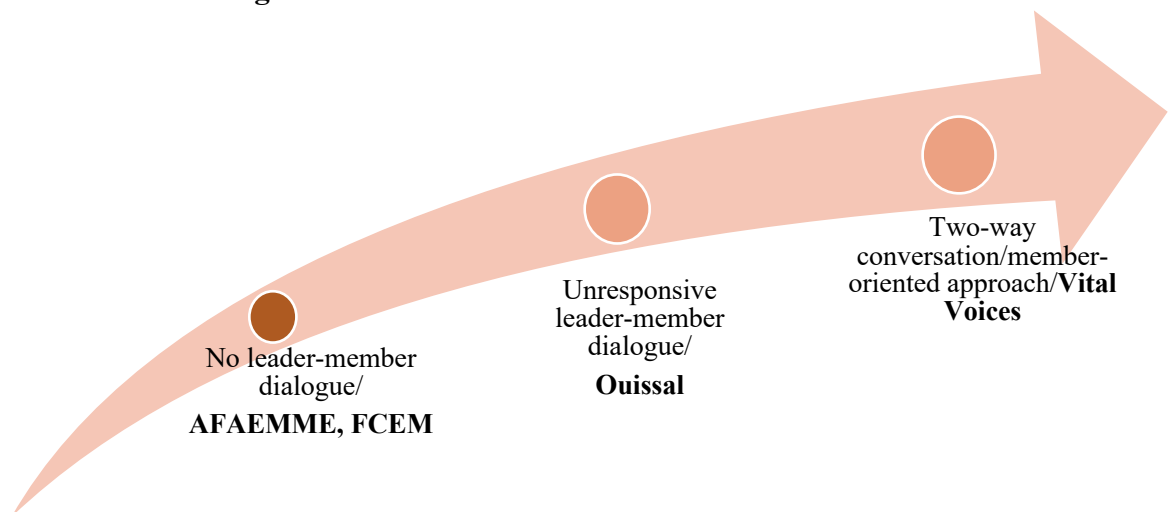
Algeria, on the other hand, depicts active women in their society, but extremely reserved and skeptical to provide any information. Despite the top-down statist economy, Algerian women are eager to join networks, with hopes of engaging with international markets that would benefit their business, however their reservation to share information was very much felt in the interviews.

Lebanon’s institutional environment is going through crisis, and this was evident in some of interviews. Civil society in Lebanon is fragmented, amplified by discretion in the laws governing CSOs, widespread corruption, and international aid flowing into these organizations. This has led to a CSO structure that mirrors the national political divisions, as well as one that is highly controlled by international agendas. However, a major observation is that Lebanese women are resilient and despite civil war and recent explosions, they always come back stronger than before. Not to mention that Lebanon is highly market oriented and joining an international network would definitely be considered as an opportunity for Lebanese women. One respondent noted the challenges she is facing as a business woman in Lebanon, “although we had losses, we are pursuing our efforts- not to mention that now we are in a very bad position because of the economy in Lebanon and of course the COVID19 which came like an icing on the cake.”

An important insight from the qualitative portion of this study is that there are three different types of networks across a continuum. AFAEMME and FCEM are large networks that are primarily based on annual events and conferences, these networks are gauged by their members

as not contributing to any changes in their perceived capacities. They depict network leaders that live in isolated islands away from their constituents and that are aging leaders with no new young blood. One member noted, “AFAEMME has no clear vision and mission that guides the organization towards better serving their members.” She further explains that benefiting the members of the network is not on the top of their list. The same description was given to FCEM network, yet relatively more active than AFAEMME, this was further reinforced by the difficulty that the researcher found in contacting the directors of the organization. On the other side of the continuum is Vital Voices, a network that is member-oriented with a clear vision and mission and strategic orientation. Ouissal is in the middle of the continuum, in terms of a lack of technicalities as to how to address the needs of their members, although they show commitment and the urge to be better. Figure 6.1 is a visual assessment of the networks examined in the study.

**Figure 6.2 Visual Assessment of Networks**



## 6.6 Conclusion

The qualitative analysis of this study provides rich information with regards to third sector networks serving female entrepreneurs in the MENA region. The emerging themes and the conceptual relationships drawn describe networks that enhance the perceived capacities of their members as having a clear vision and mission that is based on member-oriented leadership. Shared governance is the preferred mode, along with careful categorization of members based on the sector they are operating in and the number of years they have been in operation. The latter information is closely tied to the network functions that should be offered. Young startups require rigorous training, and more hours dedicated to the networks. They also require a mentor/mentee relationship that is hands-on. Older businesses in their maturity years prefer to engage in the networking functions in the form of annual conferences that serve their organization needs at this stage. Network leaders should invest time and money in recruitment of mentors based on the needs of their members. Successful networks are those that are able to bridge capacities at the regional level by engaging locals in the design and implementation of their programs. Networking in the form of informal linkages or connections is preferred in the MENA region over formal partnerships, and positively affects the perceived capacities of network members at both the personal and organizational levels.



## Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications

### 7.1 Introduction

The final chapter of this study summarizes the findings of this research and how it contributes to the existing literature, as well as the possibilities for practical applications. The research questions are presented, followed by the findings. Recommendations for future research and implications for theory, policy, and practice are offered, given the findings of the study.

### 7.2 Research Background

The divergence between the increased female educational attainment and the low economic participation of women in the MENA was labeled the ‘MENA paradox’ by the World Bank. In Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, female education ranks higher than other developing countries (Assad et al. 2018). However, according to the 2016 Global Gender Gap Index, which ranks countries on the basis of economic participation, 15 MENA countries fall into the lowest 20 out of a total of 144 countries.

Despite the figures, women in the region seek to be employed. According to a study involving Jordanian females, 92% indicated that they planned to work after graduation and 76% intended to work full time (Assad et al. 2018). Networks are considered to be an evolving trend by which women in the region are empowered to become economically and politically active (Browne 2015). However, the literature on networks in the MENA region lacks information on the effects of these networks on their members. Further investigation about networks in regions other than the United States will provide information regarding the effectiveness of networks as tools for bridging information and asymmetries.

### **7.3 Summary of the Significance of the Study**

The study is significant for a number of reasons. First, the literature on networks is relatively new and the growing field lacks theory building as it pertains to networks in the MENA region. Many of the third-sector theories are based on western societies, which is pointed out by Flanigan, Asal, and Brown (2014). The authors point out that most third sector theories are based on the assumptions of developed economies with democratic political systems and on cultural traditions that are completely different from what is present in the MENA region (Flanigan, Asal and Brown 2014). The authors stress the need for more cross-disciplinary research when investigating the third sector in the MENA region. This research sheds the light on the third sector in developing societies.

Second, there is an association between the services provided by networks to its members and their corresponding improved capacities in the MENA region (Browne 2015). According to Browne's (2015) report on networks serving women in the MENA region, more than half of the female members in the MENA Businesswomen's Network, located in Jordan, have formed partnerships, and more than 90% of members reported that they have experienced business benefits as a result of membership in the network. This study takes this one step further by outlining the characteristics of networks that effect change among their members, and by explicating the importance of networks in positively enhancing the perceived capacities of their members.

Finally, understanding more about the impact of networks is a recommendation made by major studies conducted in the MENA region. Although the report by Browne (2015) describes the different types of networks and the services offered to women in the MENA region, an important observation is that a key piece of information is missing concerning the effect of

networks on their female members. This research study addresses this gap in the knowledge and lays the ground for future research to be conducted in relation to actual change in the capacities of network members in the region.

#### **7.4 Objective, Argument and Research Questions**

The objective of this study is to address gaps in the knowledge by focusing on nonprofit networks targeting the Middle East and North Africa region and assessing how exposure to these networks affects the perceived capacities of the individual members of the network, if at all. To understand the effect of networks on the capacities of their female members, four nonprofit networks were examined specifically in relation to the network functions performed and the ability to create ties. Network functions include webinars, mentoring, annual conference events, seminars, and training programs offered by the network, whereas creating ties refers to the ability to form partnerships and connect with other people.

In response to the gaps in knowledge, particularly with regard to the effect of networks on the capacities of the individual members, the main research question of this study is: *to what extent does exposure to network activities affect the capacities of the network's individual members?* To flesh out this question, three guiding research questions are used:

- *What is the relationship (if any) between the number of hours spent per week in training by the network member and their perceived individual capacities?*
- *To what extent does exposure to network activities affect the perceived leadership, communication and interpersonal skills of its members?*
- *To what extent does the exposure to network activities affect the perceived individual member's ability to better serve clients acquire more resources and gain more organizational legitimacy?*

To answer the research questions, a mixed methods approach was adopted to assess the relationship, if any, between exposure to networks and increased perceived capacities of female members of networks in the MENA region. The literature review explores the different definitions of networks; as well as outlines the concept of network governance from both an international and internal network governance perspective. The important concepts of networks and policy, functional advantages of networks, and their relation to capacity building are also reviewed in this literature. The research goal is ultimately to understand network governance, and to try to create a framework of what network governance entails in the MENA region, and to discover what its perceived effect is on its members, if any.

## **7.5 Research Method**

To analyze the effect of exposure to networks in relation to the perceived capacities of their members, a mixed methods approach was used. The main theoretical independent variable is exposure to networks directed towards improving the capacities of female entrepreneurs in the region. The individual capacities of members are measured by change (if any) in their perceived leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills. The perceived improvement in individual capacities is also translated into members' perceived abilities to better serve their clients, to gain organizational legitimacy, and to better acquire resources. Bivariate analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of relationships, as well as structured focused comparison of interview cases.

Data was collected using primary data collection methods. An online survey instrument administered by Qualtrics was used to assess the perceived change in individual capacities of members of networks, if any. A total of 145 surveys were completed from June 2020 through January 2021. Bivariate analysis was used to measure the effect of exposure to networks on the

individual network member's capacities. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with female entrepreneurs in the region to gauge the training efforts and other capacity building techniques employed by the network. Two types of female entrepreneurs were invited in the interviews; those who are members in the networks under investigation, compared against those who are not members in any network or have dropped their membership. The main purpose was to rule out any possibility of spuriousness. The independent and dependent variables were analyzed in all interviews.

## **7.6 Key Research Findings and Contributions**

### *7.6.1 Country Case Selection*

This research study focuses on four countries in the MENA region; Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, and Egypt. The institutional environment in these countries is outlined by describing the public-private partnerships (if any), regulatory barriers, government financial and nonfinancial barriers/incentives, and the structure of civil society sector (CSS) in each country.

The case selection of countries is based on the most different systems (MDS) of comparative analysis (Lim 2006). The idea is to find commonalities among the differences existing among the countries chosen. In this case I hypothesized that, given the variation among the institutional environments of these countries as depicted in the regulatory barriers/incentives, government barriers/incentives, public-private dialogue, and the role of the civil society, a pattern emerged that was conducive towards the engagement of women in networks within these countries and that subsequently lead, in some cases, to their perceived improved capacities as a result of their membership.

Research showed that among the four countries investigated; Egypt and Tunisia have an ongoing public-private dialogue that eases the institutional capacities in order to assist

entrepreneurs starting businesses. The healthy institutional environment of Tunisia was a driving force for women to join networks. It was observed in the interviews with the Tunisian women, their sense of pride when describing their current economic climate of their country.

The political landscape of Egypt in terms of the relationships between civil society and the government depicts an overpowering government that exercises high levels of control, yet Egyptians are very active and always looking to explore opportunities, specifically for women. However, there is a general observation drawn from the interviews that civil society is fragmented with a lot of organizations trying to do the same thing, there is a general lack of collaboration. Despite the contextual environment in Egypt, Egyptian female entrepreneurs remain eager to engage in a network that considers their needs as a priority. To what extent this is actually achieved, remains to be further investigated. This was especially evident in the in-depth interviews. One Egyptian AFAEMME respondent complained that the network leaders came to Egypt and they conducted meetings with all the government entities, but they did not meet with members, not even one meeting. She observed this because she was a member of a government entity at the time and she was at the council advising the minister. She was also a member in AFAEMME network. She explained how AFAEMME was trying to find new direction and new ideas, but then they were talking to government entities, not to the actual members, and she saw this as a major flaw in the network. This indicated how keen she was as an entrepreneur in the region to be involved in a network that allowed for shared governance to bridge capacities across national boundaries.

On the other hand, the remaining two countries are on either side of the continuum. Algeria has a one-way dialogue where the public sector is basically talking to itself. Lebanon, on

the other hand, has a passive government, and the private sector is mostly in charge and right now the economy is in freefall.

Despite the Algerian top-down statist economy, Algerian women are active in their society, but extremely reserved and skeptical to provide any information. Algerian women are eager to join networks, with hopes of engaging with international markets that would benefit their business, however their reservation to share information was very much felt in the interviews. The role of women in society can be viewed through a path dependent lens, where gender politics has been persistently used as a strong political narrative. Patterns of civil society and the subsequent formation and engagement in regional networks holds the same narratives and depicts strong female presence, despite variations in their political loyalties.

Lebanon, on the other hand, has a passive government, and the private sector is mostly in charge and plagued with corruption. Lebanese politics have a clientelist nature that transcends all sectors, where the line between private and public interests is blurred. Corruption and political instability, exacerbated by sectarian divisions, are the biggest obstacles in Lebanon, and this has definitely shaped its civil society sector landscape. Currently and following the recent Lebanese protests, access to finance is a problem. Banks shut down for two weeks following Lebanon's recent protests; something that has not happened even during the civil war between 1975-1990 (Global Banks 2019).

Political instability in the country coupled by sectarian divisions and a weak government led to the fragmentation of the different governmental agencies. This division and fragmentation, amplified by discretion in the laws governing CSOs, widespread corruption and international aid flowing into these organizations, led to a CSO structure that mirrors the national political divisions, as well as one that is highly controlled by international agendas. Despite all

of that, the Lebanese interview candidates were among the strongest supporters of networks, and their reassurance of their ability, given certain characteristics of networks, to enhance the capacities of their members.

Despite the varying institutional environment among the countries under investigation, there is a pattern that is conducive towards the engagement of women in networks within these countries, which in some cases subsequently leads to their perceived enhanced capacities. Social transformation in any society is dependent upon the network of relationships that take place within this society.

#### *7.6.2 Networks Serving Women in the MENA Region*

There is a statistically significant relationship between exposure to network training functions and the perceived capacities of individual members; as described in their ability to better lead, communicate, and form relationships with their coworkers in their respective organizations. The in-depth interviews directed the analysis towards understanding more about networks in the region. Conceptual relationships drawn depict networks that work as having a clear vision and mission that is based on member-oriented leadership. Shared governance is the preferred mode, as is careful categorization of members based on the sector they are operating in and the number of years they have been in operation. The latter information is closely tied to the network functions that should be offered. Young startups require rigorous training, and more hours dedicated to the networks. They also require a mentor/mentee relationship that is hands-on. Older businesses in their maturity years prefer to engage in the networking functions in the form of annual conferences that serve their organization needs at this stage. Network leaders should invest time and money in recruitment of mentors based on the needs of their members. Successful networks are those who are able to bridge capacities at the regional level by engaging



locals in the design and implementation of their programs. Networking in the form of informal linkages or connections is preferred in the MENA region over formal partnerships, and positively affects the perceived capacities of network members at both the personal and organizational levels. Based on these findings, the proposed conceptual framework of this study is revisited in the following section.

### *7.6.3 Revisiting the Conceptual framework*

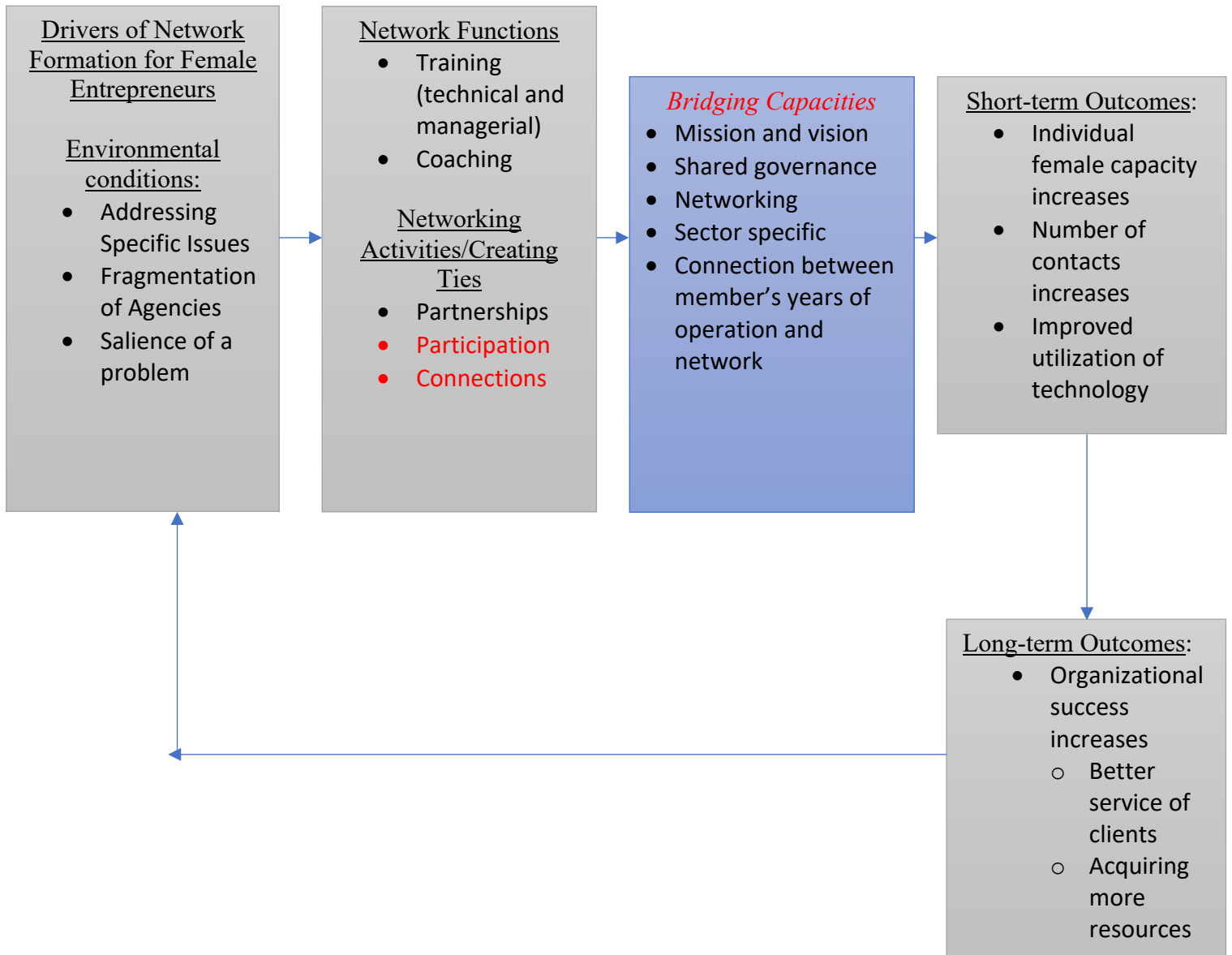
The formation of networks is cyclical as confirmed by previous scholars including Emerson et al. (2011). Collaboration is a strategy adopted by networks to enhance interaction between relatively autonomous organizations (Imperial 2005). Collaboration, in this case, involves working together, rather than separately, to achieve public value. Emerson et al. (2011) proposed a framework for collaborative governance which includes the networked interactions that take place between non-governmental organizations to address policies at the local level. The framework proposed by Emerson et al. (2011) explains the collaborative dynamics that take place between networks. The authors identify the drivers of collaborative behavior, which, in the case of this study, are relevant with regards to network formation (Emerson et al. 2011). They describe the collaborative dynamics and the impacts of these collaborations that are cyclical in nature, with the main purpose of dealing with a problem, resolving conflict, or adding value (Emerson et al. 2011). The authors also describe the outcome as either intentional or unintentional change that transforms an undesirable event (Emerson et al. (2011).

I propose a framework for network formation at the micro level focusing mainly on how exposure to networks positively influences the perceived capacities of its individual members. Network formation is described as consisting of both network management functions and networking activities. Klijn and Koppenjan (2012) discuss the distinction between the former

and the latter, highlighting the difference between the utilization of management strategies and the creation of ties respectively. Network management functions include training provided by the network in fields such as IT, accounting, legal services, and business plan development. On the other hand, the networking activities refer to the opportunities to create partnerships and make connections as a result of network participation. The key contribution of this study is that in order to bridge capacities across both regional and international boundaries, certain conditions need to be met in a network that serves female entrepreneurs of the MENA region. At the micro network level, the bridging network characteristics are a clear vision and mission, shared governance as the preferred mode of governing a network with different constituents, and emphasis on facilitating the formation of informal regional linkages, as this is something that female entrepreneurs of the region seek out. Finally, internal organizing of the network functions offered should be done in light of the sector the member is operating in and the number of years she has been operating in business. The overall effect of being in a network results in short-term and long-term outcomes in the form of increased individual capacities of female members, the increased number of contacts that they are able to achieve. At the macro MENA level, in order to bridge capacities consideration should be given to the network of relationships that take place in each country. This includes the country regulatory environment, government incentives/barriers, public and private dialogue, and at the heart of all that is civil society. Civil society in the MENA region is a channel that is used by which the voices of the masses are heard.

**Figure 7.1 Revisiting the Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The Relationship Between Network Functions and Outcomes



## **7.7 Recommendations and Implications for Theory, Policy and Practice**

Given the above findings as well as the limitations of this study, theory building and its implication in the MENA region should be done while taking into consideration the relationships that exist and persist overtime to understand how social transformations take place. The MENA region is a ‘similar but different’ set of countries, and this needs to be considered in third sector theory building. The implications of the different and similar institutional environments and political systems of these countries affect the way business is conducted in the region, as well as the organizations that try to assist businesses in the region. Networks that have the goal of bridging regional and international boundaries are best able to consider and adapt to the similar but different characteristics.

In relation to network theory and the consequences of network variables as discussed by Borgatti and Halgin (2011), this research provides initial evidence that exposure to network activities in the MENA region is associated with improved perceived capacities of its members. This research further suggests that network theory building is closely related to third sector theory; specifically, the social origins theory by Salamon et al. (2017) and the path dependent theory by Pierson (2011). The contextual environment of the network member’s country of origin plays a role in the ability of the network to effect change in the perceived capacities of its members.

The social origins theory states that patterns of civil society exist and persist over extended periods of time (path dependence) because of the power relationships that take place between social classes and actors, mediated by power amplifiers and filters that form the different societal patterns. The dimensions of civil society are determined by the dynamics (power relationships, dynamics and filters) that take place in different nations across time.

Salamon et al. 2017 test this theory across 41 countries and come up with 5 patterns under which countries can fit based on the theory: Traditional, Liberal, Welfare partnership, social democratic and statist.

Future research should consider extending this theory by focusing initially on applying it on countries in the MENA region, and see what patterns would emerge, and how many. Further research recommendation is to understand more about the nature and functions of the civil society networks that are formed across the emerging patterns and how it relates to the path dependent power relationships that take place between social classes and actors within these countries across time. Another research avenue is to understand the effect of these networks on the actual capacities of its members.

This research has implications for practice; despite the fact that bridging capacities is a nebulous term, however; framing it under a network that serves a certain target population (business female entrepreneurs) results in synergistic outcomes. Moving from the general to the specific, networks that break down their internal services based on the needs, sector, and business characteristics of their members will have a positive sum outcome. Bridging information at the policy level, as suggested by Hale (2011), is still something to be achieved in the MENA region. The formation of networks that work could be the starting point of creating shortcuts in policy implementation and possibly innovation. However, the link between networks and policy in the MENA is not currently present. There are however western examples in history of how bonding networks resulted in policy changes. This was explained in Skocpol's (1995) book *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* where women in clubs and associations were able to change the policies.

In sum, this dissertation offers increased understanding about networks in the region. There is room for future research to understand more about other types of networks in the region; such as informational, advocacy, and rights networks. Future research can further examine the connection, if any, between international networks serving the MENA region and the countries from which the members are chosen in terms of understanding the political underpinnings of this choice. Further research can investigate the concept of networks and policy innovation and implementation as well. These future research ideas should be further investigated in depth, taking into consideration the existing and persisting institutional and political relationships of the countries under investigation.

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## Appendix A

### Online Survey instrument

#### Assessing Networks as Engines of Social Change for Women in the MENA region: A Focus on Women's Entrepreneurship Efforts

The main objective of this survey is to fill the gap with regards to assessing the effect of female entrepreneurs' exposure to networks (if any), in relation to those who are members of AFAEMME, Ouissal, FCEM and Vital Voices networks serving the MENA region. I kindly thank you for taking 10 minutes of your time to fill out this questionnaire online. Your thoughts and opinions are highly valued. Confidentiality of all information is ensured and will only be used for research purposes.

#### **Section 1: Training and Development**

1. Please identify which network(s) you are affiliated with

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| The Association of Organizations of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFAEMME) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Femmes Chefs D'Entreprises Mondiales (FCEM)                               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ouissal (German-Arabic mentoring project)                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vital Voices  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Please Identify from the above the network that you are most active with

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| The Association of Organizations of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFAEMME) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Femmes Chefs D'Entreprises Mondiales (FCEM)                               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ouissal (German-Arabic mentoring project)                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vital Voices  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

---

**For all the remaining questions in this survey, please answer with respect to the network you identified in question 2**

3. Why did you become a member (mark all that apply)

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| For networking, meeting business partners, clients                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| For access to services such as training information, consultation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| For protection of interests/rights                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| For participation in events                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| For social services   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Because a member of the family is a member in the network         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify)  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
-

4. Does the network provide opportunities for training

Yes

No

5. Please select the training activities provided by the network

Seminars

IT training

Individual consultation/instruction

Legal and accounting services

Other -----

6. Please rank the above training activities according to their benefits to your organization

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

7. How many hours per week do you spend on these training activities?

Less than 10 hours

Between 10 and 20 hours

More than 20 hours

8. Has the network improved your knowledge of technology when performing organizational functions?

Yes

No



9. Please rate the following statements according to the Likert scale listed:

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Training needs and objectives are achieved by the network			
There was a learner's involvement in the planning and design of the training program			
There are opportunities in the workplace for the person you wish to learn from to meet formally (e.g. meetings, workshops and seminars)			

**Section 2: Networking**

**If you listed several networks in question 1, please use the network you identified in question 2 for the following questions.**

10. Please rate the following statements according to the Likert scale listed:

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Participating in the network helped you develop new partnerships with others			
You have more organizational linkages/connections as a result of participating in the network			
You have been invited to participate/join task forces due to your participation in the network			
You have been invited to participate/join task forces due to your participation in the network, more that prior to joining the network			

### **Section 3: Perceived Assessment of Individual Capacity**

11. Please rate the following statements according to the Likert scale listed:

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>
Participating in the network improved your ability to direct and energize people (leadership skills)			
Participating in the network improved the process of exchanging information with other coworkers in your organization (Communication skills)			
Participating in the network improved your ability to communicate and understand other coworkers (Interpersonal skills)			

12. Please rate the following statement according to the Likert scale listed:

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Participating in the network improved your ability to create a plan of the things to be done and the methods to perform them.			
Participating in the network allowed for the development of a formal structure that describes the arrangements of subdivisions and the flow of work and authority.			
Participating in the network improved your ability to deal with staff members of your organization in relation to hiring, training and work environment.			
Participating in the network improved your decision-making process and your ability to lead your organization.			

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Participating in the network improved your ability to connect all the different parts of the work towards achieving the organization's objectives.			
Participating in the network improved your ability to keep key executives informed as to what is happening within the organization.			
Participating in the network improved your ability to perform fiscal planning and maintaining accounting records.			

**Section 4: Perceived overall Organizational Success.**

13. Please rate the following statement according to the Likert scale listed:

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Participating in the network allowed you to better serve your clients.			
Participating in the network allowed your organization to gain more legitimacy.			
Participating in the network increased your ability to acquire more resources.			

14. Please rate the following statements according to the Likert scale listed:

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The network effectively responds to the needs, shared interests and capabilities of its participant.			
Your organization benefits from participating in this network.			
The network facilitates collaboration strategies that allows for better coordination, problem solving, and institutional learning.			

**Section 5: Government Regulatory Environment and Incentives**

15. Regarding your own organization, what do you believe are the main regulatory barriers for further development of your business (check all that apply)

- Unstable legal Environment
- High level of taxation
- Procedural difficulties in starting a company

Other -----

16. Regarding your own organization, what do you believe are the main financial and nonfinancial incentives provided by your government to further develop your business (check all that apply)?

- Accessing credit
- Low cost loans
- Government grants
- Government training programs

Other-----

Please tick (√) or explain where appropriate.

**Section 6: Personal Data**

**In this section you are kindly asked to provide information about yourself and your business**

17. What age category do you belong to?

- 18-29
- 30-42
- 42-53
- 54 and above

18. What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widow



19. Number of Children?

-----

20. What is your level of education?

- Primary
- Secondary
- Technical
- University Degree

21. Number of years in business?

\_\_\_\_\_

22. Number of employees you have?

\_\_\_\_\_

23. What is the sector of your business?

- Agriculture
- Manufacturing
- Services
- Trade
- Handicraft
- Other (please specify)

24. How did you acquire your business?

- Started it yourself
- Family business
- Purchased an existing business
- Inherited the business
- It is my husband's business

Other (please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_

25. Do you own your own business premises?

- Own

- Rent
- In home
- Co-rented

Other (please specify)

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26. Which is your country of origin?

- Algeria
- Egypt
- Lebanon
- Tunisia

Other (please specify)

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27. Would you like to enter a raffle for the chance to win a prize?

Yes

No

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

#### Directions

My name is Rania Marwan, I am a Ph.D. candidate at the college of Liberal Arts, Auburn University. This interview is for the purpose of my completion of my degree in Public Administration and Public Policy. My research interest is to understand the effect of exposure to networks on the perceived capacities of individual members. Please be sure that all the information that you provide in this interview will be confidential and used only for research purposes. I am going to ask you a couple of questions that serve this purpose, the estimated time of the interview will be between 45 to 50 minutes. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Protocol Questions: Version 1 (Members)</b>	<b>Protocol Questions: Version 2 (Non-Members)</b>
<b>Demographic data</b>	What is your level of education/number of years in business/the sector you are operating in? how long since you started your business, and what network are you affiliated with?	What is level of education/number of years in business/the sector the you are operating in? how long since you started your business, and whether or not you have knowledge of networks and their functions? why she has dropped her network membership, or is not in a network in the first place?
<b>Network functions</b>	What are the different activities that being a member in a network offer to you? Do you think that the activities the network performs add value to you and your organization? Why or why not?	What are the most pressing needs of your organization at this moment? Are you able to individually meet those needs as an entrepreneur, or are you feel you need external help to achieve them?

**Individual capacity**

-How many hours of training do you spend in the network?

-Identify what has changed in your organization as a result of being part of this network? Is it relevant to a specific type of training offered by the network?

-Do you perceive the network has resulted in an individual change in your capacity to lead, communicate, and engage with other individuals?

- Are there other important skills that you have acquired?

-In your opinion what is the most beneficial activity/activities offered by the network? Why or why not?

-Do you feel that there are certain individual capacities that you need, to promote your business? Do you believe that training courses in business planning, IT, legal and accounting, and consultation would contribute to your organizational success?

**Networking**

Were you able to form new partnerships, connections as a result of joining the network? Has the number of contacts you have made with other people increased as a result of being part of the network?

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Are you finding difficulty making short term connections or long-term partnerships that would serve the needs of your organization? Do you believe these partnerships would benefit your organization? If yes, in what way?

Appendix C

Coding Scheme

**Table 4.2:** Codebook for Assessment of Networks

Item Shorthand	Indicator	Full name	Item Description	Questions generated it	Item coding
<b>net_aff</b>		Network Affiliation	The network(s) that the respondent might be affiliated with	Q1: Training and Development Please identify which network(s) you are affiliated with?	1= The Association of Organizations of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFAEMME) 2= Femmes Chefs D'Entreprises Mondiales (FCEM) 3= Ouissal (German-Arabic mentoring project) 4= Vital Voices
<b>net_ac</b>		Active Network	The network that the respondent is most active with	Q2: Please Identify from the above the network that you are most active with	1= The Association of Organizations of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFAEMME) 2= Femmes Chefs D'Entreprise

					s Mondiales (FCEM) 3= Ouissal (German-Arabic mentoring project) 4= Vital Voices
<b>net_r</b>		Network Reason	The reason for joining the network	Q3: Why did you become a member? (mark all that apply)	1= For networking, meeting business partners, clients 2= For access to services such as training information, consultation 3= For protection of interests/rights 4= For participation in events 5= For social services 6= Because a member of the family is a member in the network 7=Other Column separated values where 1=present 0=not
<b>net_opp</b>	<b>Management</b>	Network Opportunities (IV)	Describes if opportunities for training are present in the network or not	Q4: Does the network provide opportunities for training?	1=yes 0=No

<b>train_act</b>	<b>Management</b>	Training Activities (IV)	Determines the type of training offered	Q5: Please select the training activities provided by the network	1=Seminars 2=IT Training 3=Individual Consultation 4=Legal and accounting services 5=other Column separated values where 1=present 0=not
<b>train_rank</b>	<b>Management</b>	Training ranking (IV)	Ranks the training offered in the network according to their importance to their members	Q6: Please rank the above training activities according to their benefits to your organization	Ordinal 1-5 1=best 5=worst
<b>train_hour</b>	<b>Management</b>	Training hours (IV)	Determines the hours per week spent on training within the network	Q7: How many hours per week do you spend on these training activities?	1= Less than 10 hours 2= Between 10 and 20 hours 3= More than 20 hour Column separated values where 1=present 0=not
<b>tech_train</b>	<b>Technology</b>	Technology Training (IV)	Determines whether the network improved the members knowledge of technology	Q8: Has the network improved your knowledge of technology when performing organizational functions?	1=Yes 0=No

<b>train_assess</b>	<b>Management</b>	Training assessment (IV)	Assesses the training offered by the network	<p>Q9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Training needs and objectives are achieved by the network</li> <li>-There was a learner's involvement in the planning and design of the training program</li> <li>-There are opportunities in the workplace for the person you wish to learn from to meet formally (e.g. meetings, workshops and seminars)</li> </ul>	Ordinal, rated on a 3-point Likert scale 1=Agree 2=Neutral 3=Disagree
<b>net_assess</b>	<b>Networking</b>	Networking Assessment (IV)	Assesses the networking opportunities offered by the network	<p>Q10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participating in the network helped you develop new partnerships with others</li> <li>- You have more organizational linkages/connections as a result of participating in the network</li> <li>- You have been invited to participate/join task forces due to your participation in the network</li> <li>- You have been invited to participate/join task forces due to your participation</li> </ul>	Ordinal, rated on a 3-point Likert 1=Agree 2=Neutral 3=Disagree



in the network,  
more than prior to  
joining the  
network

<b>cap_ind</b>	<b>Capacity building efforts</b>	Perceived Capacity-personal skills (DV)	Perceived change in individual capacities of members in relation to leadership, communication and interpersonal skills	Q11: - Participating in the network improved your ability to direct and energize people (leadership skills) - Participating in the network improved the process of exchanging information with other coworkers in your organization (Communication skills) - Participating in the network improved your ability to communicate and understand other coworkers (Interpersonal skills)	Ordinal, rated on a 3-point Likert 1=Agree 2=Neutral 3=Disagree
<b>cap_org</b>	<b>Capacity building efforts</b>	Perceived capacity-Organizational skills (DV)	Perceived change in organizational capacities of members in relation to: - planning, - organizational hierarchy	Q12: 1-Participating in the network improved your ability to create a plan of the things to be done and the methods to perform them. 2- Participating in the network	Ordinal, rated on a 3-point Likert 1=Agree 2=Neutral 3=Disagree

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<p>and work flow, -work environment, -decision making - organization al objectives, communicati on and maintaining of fiscal records</p>	<p>allowed for the development of a formal structure that describes the arrangements of subdivisions and the flow of work and authority. 3-Participating in the network improved your ability to deal with staff members of your organization in relation to hiring, training and work environment. 4-Participating in the network improved your decision-making process and your ability to lead your organization. 5-Participating in the network improved your ability to connect all the different parts of the work towards achieving the organization's objectives. 6-Participating in the network improved your ability to keep key executives informed as to what is happening within the organization.</p>
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7-Participating in the network improved your ability to perform fiscal planning and maintaining accounting records.

<b>cap_overall</b>	<b>Capacity building efforts</b>	Perceived capacity- Overall organizational success (DV)	Perceived change in overall organizational success as a result of being a member in the network. In terms of serving clients, acquiring resources, and gaining legitimacy	Q13: - Participating in the network allowed you to better serve your clients. - Participating in the network allowed your organization to gain more legitimacy. - Participating in the network increased your ability to acquire more resources.	Ordinal, rated on a 3-point Likert 1=Agree 2=Neutral 3=Disagree
<b>net_overall</b>	<b>Capacity building efforts</b>	Perceived capacity- Overall network success (DV)	Perceived overall network success in enhancing the capacities of its members	Q14: -The network effectively responds to the needs, shared interests and capabilities of its participant. -Your organization benefits from participating in this network. -The network facilitates collaboration strategies that	Ordinal, rated on a 3-point Likert 1=Agree 2=Neutral 3=Disagree

				allows for better coordination, problem solving, and institutional learning.	
<b>reg_bar</b>	<b>Contextual Information</b>	Perceived Regulatory barriers	Member perceived regulatory barrier in the country of origin	Q15: Regarding your own organization, what do you believe are the main regulatory barriers for further development of your business (check all that apply)	1= Unstable legal Environment 2= High level of taxation 3= Procedural difficulties in starting a company
<b>gov_incent</b>	<b>Contextual Information</b>	Perceived Financial and non-financial incentives	Member perceived financial and non-financial incentives provided by the country of origin	Q16: Regarding your own organization, what do you believe are the main financial and nonfinancial incentives provided by your government to further develop your business (check all that apply)?	1= Accessing credit 2= Low cost loans 3= Government grants 4= Government training programs 5=other
<b>edu</b>	<b>Contextual Information</b>	Level of Education	Member level of education	Q20: What is your level of education?	1= Primary 2= Secondary 3= Technical 4= University Degree
<b>Personal Data</b>					
<b>age</b>	<b>Demographic</b>	Member age	Member age	Q17: What age category do you belong to?	1=18-29 2=30-42 3=42-53

	<b>information</b>				4=54 and above
<b>status</b>	<b>Demographic information</b>	Marital status	Marital status	Q18: What is your marital status?	1=Single 2=Married 3=Divorced 4=Widow
<b>children</b>	<b>Demographic information</b>	Number of children	Number of children	Q19: Number of Children?	Open-ended
<b>Bus_years</b>	<b>Demographic information</b>	Number of years in business	Number of years in business	Q21: Number of years in business?	Open-ended 1=from 1 to 9 years 2=10-20 3=21-30 4=31-40 Column separated 1=present 0=not
<b>Number of employees</b>	<b>Demographic information</b>	Number of employees	Number of employees in the member's organization	Q22: Number of employees you have?	Open-ended
<b>Business sector</b>	<b>Demographic information</b>	Business sector	The sector that the member operates in	Q23: What is the sector of your business?	1=Agriculture 2=Manufacturing 3=Services 4=Trade 5=Handicraft
<b>Business Acquisition bus_acquisitions</b>	<b>Demographic information</b>	Business Acquisition	The means by which the member acquired her business	Q24: How did you acquire your business?	1=Started it yourself 2=Family business 3=Purchased an existing business 4=inherited the business 5=It is my husband's business
<b>Business Ownership</b>	<b>Demographic information</b>	Business Ownership	Whether the member owns her	Q25: Do you own your own	1=Own 2=Rent 3=In home

<b>bus_own</b>	<b>informatio</b>		business or	business	4=Co-rented
	<b>n</b>		not	premises?	
<b>Country</b>	<b>Demograp</b>	Country of	The	Q26: Which is	1=Algeria
<b>of Origin</b>	<b>hic</b>	Origin	member's	your country of	2=Egypt
<b>country</b>	<b>informatio</b>		country of	origin?	3=Lebanon
	<b>n</b>		origin		4=Tunisia
					5=Other