



**Linnæus University**

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## **Master's Thesis**

### **Motherhood and Entrepreneurship**

*Exploring the entrepreneurial identity of 'Mompreneurs' in the Middle East.*



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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this specific study is to discover how mothers in the Middle East perceive their entrepreneurial identity based on the results and our interpretation of the mothers' narratives, to fill the gap that was discovered in mompreneurship identity research area in the Middle East.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A Qualitative Research Design using the ‘Abductive reasoning’ method was implemented. And the philosophical approach of this study is the ‘Interpretive Epistemology’ based on the interpretation of narratives and life experience of seven interviewed samples of mothers who own businesses ‘mompreneurs’ from the Middle East. Semi-structured interviews in the form of internet-based interviewing were used. And in order to analyze the result a narrative analysis approaches, William Labov Approach and the Dialogic performance analysis approach were utilized.

**Findings** – the findings in this study showed that the results of the majority of samples identified themselves as being totally Mompreneurs and they appreciate their role as a mother and a business owner. And that they have several motivations such as (Forced, Intrinsic, classic and work-family) which classified them under certain typologies of the entrepreneurial identity (Solution -seeker, Self-actualized, Informed, Bonafide and Missionary identity). However, no certain motivation was considered to be the dominant. And the results indicate that, three samples that were motivated by (Forced Factors) falls under the same typology of solution seeker Identity. And the other three samples that were motivated by (Intrinsic and Classic motivations) falls under the typology of Informed Entrepreneur, restricted to the understanding of the samples taken from the Middle East. In Addition, the results also indicated that the mompreneur identity was not directly affected by gender, as reflected by theories where masculinity is related to entrepreneurship.

**Research limitations/contribution** – This study was limited by several factors unexpected situation of the spreading of (CORONAVIRUS) which limited samples size, and canceled the in-person meetings for interviews. Therefore, the results were only Restricted to our samples and might not be taken as general outcomes. The contribution of our findings will be opening the door for further studies on a broader scale to cover a wider range of motivations, and a wider range of identity theories that would reflect the identities of mothers in the context of the Middle East.

## Keywords

Women Entrepreneurship, Identity, Mompreneurship, Entrepreneurial Identity, Mompreneurial Identity, Middle East.



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“I could not do anything without your support my beloved husband *Muhammad Wannous* and the love of my two kids *Yousef and Yehia*, and for them I always move forward and their love is my power and inspiration” Yumna Ali.

“Even though I was lonely, your support and love from far distance was my light, and you encouraged me to do my best and succeed. to you Farshid” Naghmeh Nekouie



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

‘Women entrepreneurship’ started to emerge in the late 1970s and the research field of women entrepreneurship has developed enormously since then (Yavad and Unni, 2016). Many feminist theories contributed to the development of women's entrepreneurial research for the last 25 years (Hurley, 1999). And during the last decades, women have presented themselves as responsible citizens, whose businesses were based on what they value, these women began taking noticeable actions by their worth and convictions, which drove these women toward entrepreneurial activities and self-employment (Byrne, Fattoum and Diaz Garcia, 2019). However, the journey has not been easy, and women entrepreneurial activities seemed not to be noticeable at that time since most of the literature about entrepreneurship was mainly focusing on ‘male entrepreneurs, such focus remained until the publication of the first academic paper on ‘female entrepreneurship’ by EB Schwartz in the ‘Journal of Contemporary Business’ in 1976. Afterwards, more publications about women entrepreneurship started to be published, and women entrepreneurship concept became more popular, it even developed as a rich subject for researchers due to the influence that women entrepreneurial activities have over the economy and society (Zerwas, 2019).

Aside from publications and back to the early 1980s, women on the real ground were not identified as business owners, and their activities were mainly concentrated in the service sector ‘care and retail’ (Pettersson, et al., 2017) And the ignorance of women entrepreneurship dates back to the early societies that were more likely to follow a certain social composition, in which the man was the breadwinner and the woman was the housewife who took care of the



family (Ahl, 2006). There was a dominant discourse in the society where men had dominated businesses and governmental positions, and women had dominated their homes (Buttner, 2001). Further, the entrepreneurship policies were mainly male-oriented, and women were positioned as either inadequate or as being able to make only womanly contributions in society (Pettersson, et al., 2017). Such discourse created a gender-role classified society especially within women entrepreneurship, which leads to the signals from women's businesses being underestimated and considered less favorably than those of men (Eddleston, et al., 2016). However, regardless of the existing gender distinctions, women entrepreneurs' activities are developing nowadays, and their categorization is considered as one of the fastest-growing entrepreneurial populations in the world, and has therefore received much consideration from researchers (Foss, et al., 2019). However, in recent decades, the extent of gender discrimination has fallen, and accordingly women's contribution to the development of their countries, and entrepreneurship has risen, and women-owned businesses are playing a more dynamic role in the society and the economy (Arasti, et al., 2012).

Later, in the 1990s, a subcategory of women entrepreneurship emerged and developed to what is nowadays named as the 'mompreneurs' or 'Mumpreneurship' in some literature (Froger, 2010 cited in Richomme-Huet and Vial, 2014, p.18). Many definitions and descriptions of what a 'Mompreneur' is were suggested to describe the woman who is willing to balance her motherhood tasks along with being an entrepreneur, and who took the initiative to become self-employed and run her businesses while caring the responsibility for her children (Jean and Forbes, 2012). Many women business owners balanced the role of 'motherhood' and the role of 'entrepreneurship', and their motivations are their desire to create a better environment for their family and overall, their community (Nel, Maritz and Thongprovati, 2010).



However, during undertaking a combination of roles such as ‘working woman and a mother’, women create an ‘Identity’ to balance such multiple roles where there is a link between their roles taken (Lewis, 2016). These mothers sometimes have to fight against the societal norms and traditions to be entrepreneurs according to Minniti (2013) Therefore understanding a mother's identity is crucial, as in many societies, women go against cultural norms to become entrepreneurs.

The identity reflects the “sets of meaning” or “standards” that classify how people see themselves in the society, make sense of themselves, and how they reflect their identity characteristics to their surroundings. Identity is as well linked to patterns of behavior within a social environment (Burke, 2006). It has been acknowledged that individual identities vary by how individuals think others see them, and that individuals identify themselves as independent entities regardless of their role (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). And even though identity is individual it also manifests itself in the membership of a social group (Jones, et al., 2019). The process of identity recognition involves the reflection of individuals over their experiences, socialization, and social norms as part of their community, which influences the individual’s sense of belonging and thus the entrepreneurial identity (Jones, et al., 2019).

Additionally, many factors can also impact the identity of people, according to studies, several factors influence the likelihood of starting a business among women (Holienka, Pilková and Jancovicová, 2016). Factors which are initiated from the image people draw about themselves such as goals and ambitions or external environment of the entrepreneur which control and direct the identity of entrepreneur extensively. Therefore, it can be said that entrepreneurial identity is affected by internal and external factors (Jones, et. al., 2019).



Moreover, the factors include motivations that guide mothers to become entrepreneurs, unconditional love of motherhood is a strong motivation which leads them to want to become entrepreneurs and innovatively develop more suitable products for their babies (Nel, Maritz and Thongprovati, 2010). In a study mentioned by Arasti (2007) on 105 academic women entrepreneurs, the results presented that the most motivating factors that encourage them was self-satisfaction and needs for power while the financial needs and security needs came in second place. This was an inspiration to seek something extra beyond motherhood and to find the identity that matches their experience, and at the same time flexible enough to complement their new identities as mothers (Ashe, Treanor and Leung, 2011).

In terms of external factors, culture, entrepreneurial behavior, and the entrepreneurial identity are linked within a set of factors that are dramatically affected by the culturally specific behaviors and beliefs as Jones, et al. (2019) mentioned. Further, Jones, et al. (2019) discussed that cultural factors, such as norms, play an important role in shaping entrepreneurial behavior, for example, it can determine to which extent these roles entrepreneurs can be included in the society. It also explains gender roles, and the value attributed to the family as well. And thus, leads to gender-specific role distribution with limited chances for women entrepreneurs to pursue economic opportunities. Ladge, Eddleston and Sugiyama (2019) argue that gender has a profound impact on entrepreneurial identity and may explain why some women business owners make more accomplishments in their entrepreneurial career than others.





Understanding a mother's identity is crucial, as in many societies, women go against cultural norms to become entrepreneurs according to Minniti (2013). Many studies have reflected that cultural norms can influence individuals' motivations towards entrepreneurship (Jones, et al., 2019). And that the entrepreneurial identity is studied as a combination of both social and role identity, since entrepreneurs wish to build their businesses to create role identity to articulate their social identity (Powel and Baker, 2014). Hence, it is interesting to discover how these working-mothers perceive themselves and their roles in society as women and mothers. and what is their entrepreneurial identity in many aspects? Women, in the Middle East which is the focus of this study, are expected to work in female occupations where their 'priority' is to be at home and in charge of child-caring, and that women's participation in public life should not come at the expense of this primary objective (Sayed, 2002 cited in Erogul, Rod and Barragan, 2019, p.321). Thus, within the specific reflection of internal and external factors, this study focuses on analyzing how mothers in the Middle East perceive their entrepreneurial identities concerning their self-identity, as well as how gender aspects of cultural context influence these perceptions.

Therefore, to categories the entrepreneurial identity, it helps to focus on the typologies which distinguish the entrepreneurs and classify their existing identity reflected internal and external factors. Such 'Typology of women entrepreneurial identities' was presented by Owalla (2017). Further, several studies suggested that there is a strong link between entrepreneurial identity and entrepreneurial actions and outcomes, and studies indicate that identity has consequences for entrepreneurial behavior, and that dissimilarities in types of entrepreneurial identity may influence behaviors of the entrepreneur in dissimilar ways. Where different reasons and with different motivations may encourage Individuals to engage in entrepreneurial activity and thus develop different entrepreneurial identities (Alsos, et al., 2016).



## 1.2 Problem discussion and Purpose

In previous research related to mompreneurship, understanding the Identity of mothers as women entrepreneurs have been challenged and examined to show how mothers are ‘self-identified’ when they fulfill their roles as entrepreneurs and mothers (Duberley and Carrigan, 2013). Similarly, in entrepreneurship, studies show the perceptions of the entrepreneur identity as being important to one’s identity and can lead to specific entrepreneurial choices (Owalla, 2017). In literature, the choices made by mumpreneurs to leave their careers to have a child is a ‘dramatic’ change from their identities as working women (Ahl, et al., 2016). However, according to Yitshaki & Kropp (2016), no sufficient studies have been undertaken to discover how exactly entrepreneurs' decisions stem from how mothers identify themselves in society regarding their motivations as well as gender segregation impact. And more specifically, in the culture of the Middle East, a research gap was found within the entrepreneurial identity of ‘mompreneurs’. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to understand ‘mompreneurs’ perceptions of their entrepreneurial identity with focus on motivations and gender impact. And for this purpose, the following questions will be addressed.

*RQ1: How do Mompreneurs in the Middle East perceive their entrepreneurial identity?*

*RQ2: ‘How the entrepreneurial identity of mothers is perceived to be affected by gender distinction’ in the Middle East.*

Answering these questions is interesting, especially by knowing the fact that very few entrepreneurship studies have introduced mompreneurs motivations for entrepreneurship in the Middle East.



In summary, Entrepreneurship has developed during decades, and women entrepreneurs become an interest in many researches after being neglected for a while because of gender discourse. Mompreneurship has emerged as a subcategory of women entrepreneurship and a certain identity of mothers who chose to take entrepreneurship as a work-life choice is taken. An identity which is a “set of meaning” about how they reflect their identity characteristics to their surroundings is linked to patterns of behavior within a social environment. There are many factors, internal and external, that contribute to shaping the entrepreneurial identity and affect it. To discover the nature of the entrepreneurial identity within a specific culture, the focus is laid on specific factors that shape the entrepreneurial identity, and specifically those reflected by gender. Identity is not only individual, it is also established within the membership of a social group. In reflection to the middle east, gender is reflected to be traditional, and gender segregation plays an important role in shaping the entrepreneurial identity. This thesis will shed light on the motivations that led to the identity recognized by several mothers, who might be categorized under certain typologies as entrepreneurs, within a specific social construction based on how they narrate their entrepreneurial experiences.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter reviews the entrepreneurial identity theories, and how they are related to the identity of entrepreneurs, and thus to mompreneurs' identity. It is covering definitions and interpretations about identity, the entrepreneurial identity, mompreneurs identity in previous literature. And how the internal and external factors is affecting the identity, in addition to Identity typologies that they might fall in. Such theories are utilized as guidance for drawing the



directions to lead the research to the sufficient analysis that covers the understanding of the identity of mompreneurs.

## 2.1 Identity

“An identity is the set of meanings that define who one is; an occupant of a particular role in society, several particular groups, or claims particular role in the society” (Burke and Stets, 2009, P4).

Identity can influence individuals' attitudes towards behavior. Further, humans change their actions and behaviors to make their perceptions balance with their roles in the society, and this is done by maintaining their stable environment in the face of disturbance (Orser, Elliott and Leck, 2011). Furthermore, identity for human beings is inconsistent, it does not only reflect the control of the behavior that the individual shows, but it is also the control of perceptions of what the individual has (Burke and Stets, 2009). Identities also create standards that are connected to forms of behavior within a social environment, and that Identity is transacted at a group or individual level, where the creation of self is purposeful. Therefore, clearly in theories, Identity is a combination of three aspects: the social identity, the role identity, and the self-identity based on (Brush and Gale, 2014). The identity of an entrepreneur predicts the entrepreneurial behavior, which is linked to the idea that identity is a future-oriented construct, where our behavior is affected not only by who we are but also by who we want to become (Watson, 2013 cited in Alsos, et al., 2016)

The *Social Identity* theories refers to an individual's awareness that he/she belongs to a certain social group based on a certain age, ethnicity, sex, and social members where the individual shares some sensation or value being originated from such connection (Owalla, 2017). For instance, individuals



have social identities according to their belonging to a specific category: the identity of men, women, children, Swedish, African, and so on. In social identity theory the identity is activated depending on the interaction between the individual of the perceived group, and the situation they fit together (Stryker and Burke, 2000). Identities distinguish individuals according to their position in society, both the individual and society are linked in the concept of identity. Jones, et al. (2019) further argue that Identity is not a consistent concept because it changes according to many factors, and even though it is personal, it is defined in membership of a social group and is subject to interpretation based on culture, beliefs and societal norms. Social identity provides a focus on which different types of entrepreneurial identities can be acknowledged about differences in social motivation, and in the frame of reference as an entrepreneur (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011 cited in Alsos, et al., 2016).

Furthermore, *Role identity* theories refers to the identity of the individual as it was based on the positions or roles the individual occupies in a society such as being a parent, a student, a farmer, a doctor, a barber, etc, with significance and potentials allied with the role the individual occupies and its performance. In role identity theory, the identity is activated depending on the level of commitment to the specific role (Stets and Burke, 2000) and they also mention that Individuals make meaning of themselves in a way that applies to their role in the society; as students, spouse, worker or a parent with the roles that they might occupy, and within these roles.

*Self-identity* can be viewed as a combination of individuals' traits, values, and beliefs, which is not consistent and changes throughout time. It means simply 'who I am', what are my personality characteristics, what beliefs I carry, and what I value in my life (Brush and Gale, 2014). Stets and Burken (2000) mention that there is a significance of performing identities that creates the



person's *self-identity* in its uniqueness. There is a simultaneous blend of both the social-identity and self-identity aspects of one's identity which happens whenever identity creation is done (Watson, 2008 cited in Owalla, 2017). In social identity and role identity theories, Identities are being shaped either through a process of self-categorization as part of the social identity, or occupation identification as part of the role identity theory according to Stets and Burke (2000).

Further, social identity focuses on types of incidents in which identity may be activated, while role identity focuses on the role they occupy (Stryker and Burke, 2000). Thus, Identity is a social construction that creates and specifies the 'relationships of similarity and difference' which leads to creating and defining the 'self-identification' (Lewis, 2016).

The *Entrepreneurial Identity* Entrepreneurship can be understood as a socialized process that gives meaning to actions taken that create an identity (Ashe, Treanor and Leung, 2011). The 'Entrepreneurial Identity' is not something that someone owns or possesses, it is more of a process of becoming undertaken in a lifetime project, for certain time and space, and designed by the choices made in historical and cultural circumstances (Erogul, Rod and Barragan, 2019). Besides, the entrepreneurial identity is a combination of both social and role identity, and theories of identity suggest that people might have several identities because they live in multiple roles, and are connected with multiple social groups, for instance, a woman can be in both a teacher role and a mother role, or a man can have both a father role and a doctor role (Powel and Baker, 2014). Besides, the fact that how much individuals are engaged in entrepreneurial activity is driven by the entrepreneurs' combination of their social and role identities, which indicates that 'who they are' leads to 'what they do' (Owalla, 2017).



Vesalainen and Pihkala (1999) argue that entrepreneurial identity is the central concept, as it is attached to the values people receive in society and work-related experiences, education, and motivations, so it reinforces and changes the entrepreneurial identity based on the situation. Moreover, the entrepreneurial identity stems from the entrepreneurial intentions of individuals aiming to establish a new enterprise.

To understand how gender is affecting identity, it is important to introduce the ‘*Social constructionist and poststructuralist feminist*’ theory discussed by Ahl (2006). Which is concerned with how masculinity and femininity are created, and how they affect social principles. In this theory, gender refers to masculinity or femininity and is an outcome of background, upbringing, and social interaction. Moreover, it can be different depending on the period and place. According to this theory, each culture has its own proper rules for gender behaviors, social constructionist feminist work studies investigate and challenge such rules. The rules about gender go beyond men and women and include professions and entrepreneurship as well according to Ahl (2006). Therefore, the mompreneurs concept is hugely affected by gender behavior norms. Ashe, Treanor and Leung (2011) further mentions that there is a fundamental problem reflected in making direct comparisons between men and women’s entrepreneurial identities, it is that women are often judged against measures and norms that are based on ‘masculinity’ which positions women to fail. As a result, a specific form of identity is required from women to be accepted in the ‘masculine’ social fields they have to embark to reflect the dominant norm which positions them as credible according to Ahl and Marlow (2012). For example, studies show that motherhood is often associated with normative femininity with the ‘domestic sphere’ and ‘biological reproduction’ (Ashe, Treanor and Leung, 2011).



In a study on the *typology* of women entrepreneurial identities which were built on previous studies on founder typologies (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011; Powell and Baker, 2014 cited in Owalla, 2017). The study was conducted to categorize women's entrepreneurial identities about their perception of self-identity and based on the result, typologies of women's entrepreneurial identities were created, such typologies are; First, Solution seeker Entrepreneurs who are motivated by the desire to find a solution to a personal problem, the need for financial resources, and to their need to keep themselves occupied and to remain active. The entrepreneurial identity for this category can be considered as secondary to the entrepreneur's self-identity as it is activated in conditions when an entrepreneur needs to find a solution to a specific problem. Second, Self-actualized Entrepreneurs who are motivated by their will for creativity, or seek independence or autonomy, to try out something new and challenging, it feels like the right fit.

These types of entrepreneurs are triggered by their internal personal values, and in their pursuit of self-fulfillment. The Third Type is Bonafide Entrepreneurs where they are motivated by their view of entrepreneurship as an inborn trait or something natural, talent or lifelong dream and it is being activated by the desire to remain true to oneself, The Fourth is Missionary Entrepreneurs are motivated by their desire to make a difference in society and to make a social impact. Therefore, their entrepreneurial identity can be activated and triggered by the external socio-economic environment which directs them in the pursuit of a solution to the societal or environmental problem. The Informed Entrepreneurs are the fifth type where they are motivated by their expertise in a given field, training, or previous practical experience, previous work experience. And Finally, the Transition Entrepreneurs are motivated by their interest in business, a part-time basis mainly due to their need for a safety net.





In summary, In Identity theories ‘social identity, role identity, and self-identity’ the concept of entrepreneurial identity is regarded as the combination of social and role identity which leads to the formation of the self-identity of entrepreneurs and Identity is recognized by the individual's role and social setting. Thus, analyzing entrepreneurial identities provides perceptions on the meanings associated with entrepreneurial behavior, and contributes to our understanding of mompreneurship. The Entrepreneurial Identity is socially processed by a combination of role and social identity and people might combine several identities that are related to multiple roles that they occupy in multiple social groups In social identity and role identity theories, Identities are being shaped either through a process of self-categorization as part of the social identity. Further, the entrepreneurial Identity is categorized in different typologies such as Solution seeker, Self-actualized, Bonafide, Missionary, Informed, and Transition Entrepreneurs.

The following section will discuss the concept of ‘Mompreneurship’, then the entrepreneurial identity of mompreneurs along with factors that have influence on it will be discussed. These, factors encompass internal and external factors that influence on their identity and change their perception of entrepreneurial identity is about self-identity.

## 2.2 Mompreneruship

Jean and Forbes (2012) clarify that mompreneurship’s definition is as diverse as the women who create the entrepreneurial actions. Mompreneurship according to Ekinsmyth (2011, p.104) is viewed as a:

“form of entrepreneurship driven largely by the desire to achieve ‘work-life harmony’ through an identity orientation that blurs the boundary between the roles of ‘mother’ and ‘businesswoman’”.



The combination of ‘Mothers and Entrepreneurship’ is when many mothers are motivated to re-establish control over the quality of their work, and their inflexible environment and to satisfy their desire to play a role of a good mother (Foley, et al., 2017). Christopher (2012) has also elaborated that it is well established that motherhood is vital to the feminine triumph of ‘female gender’ in his research he focuses on how mothers explain their motherhood responsibilities and employment decisions, and how they identify these decisions and makes sense of their choice in light of what they think they should be doing. And, he explores that modern mothers of young children have tried to build characters of the good mother within the inclusion of employment options and not without them, which means that modern mothers do not separate employment from good mothering identity.

### 2.3 The Entrepreneurial Identity of Mompreneurs

Richomme-huet and Vial (2014) explain that there are two points of view about the identity of Mompreneurship:

*1. Mothers are totally identified as mompreneurs, and they appreciate the fact that they own two roles as being both as mothers and businesswomen, and this term matches their reality perfectly.*

*2. Mompreneurship is unprofessional and they should only stick to their motherhood identity, which means that mothers are not allowed to accept another role in society other than motherhood. However, regardless of any contradictory viewpoints, critics of the concept of mompreneurship could not stand in the way of mothers and mompreneurship exists and continues to grow as an alternative.*



Identities of working mothers are reoriented according to Ekinsmyth (2011) to the direction of business-related activities, which is a way to understand the type of role equivalence needed, which would be flexible enough to accommodate motherhood whilst fulfilling their identity-related needs. Their inspiration is the unselfish desire to be able to both support their family and to be more productive for their community, in which strong motivation leads them to use entrepreneurship as a path to meet their desire to maintain a business career with their desire to fulfill a particular version of being a good mother as Duberley and Carrigan (2012) states it, and according to them the meaning of discovering the mompreneurs' identity means discovering how they interpret, reflect upon and think about what they do, how they express themselves in the coexistence of entrepreneurship and 'motherhood'.

Role Identity has created conflicts from society since mothers used to have a role of motherhood, but entrepreneurship adds another role. Duberley and Carrigan (2013) argue that many mothers who have created a new entrepreneurial identity went through a period of role conflict in which establishing their identities as new mothers created tension with their old roles in large as full-time employees. And, Nel, Maritz and Thongprovati (2010) conducted a study to explore how mompreneurs constructed their identities, and how mompreneurs' identity is classified beyond just being a mother, the results indicated that maintaining work-life balance puts more meaning into their lives, creates self-satisfaction, freedom, independence and self-esteem and they enjoy such stimulation more than motherhood alone.

Duberley and Carrigan, (2012) in their study on mompreneurs conducted interviews to explore those women's role identities, knowing the contradictory discourse, the conflict they experience in the society and challenges that impact their identity due to the mixture of roles, the results indicated that while good motherhood had significant importance to those mothers, they did not



identify themselves as 'full-time' and 'stay at home' mothers, instead they clarified their identity as mothers who set up a business as a means of developing a new career. Therefore, their identity was a mixture of motherhood and work and not one of them. And, these mothers' identity was not affected by the conflicts from their role's combination where they have adapted their identity according to changes. However, the combined identity is not always easy since the findings of Duberley and Carrigan (2013) also Lewis (2016) discussed such conflict which shows as mothers have more commitment in their social tasks, where having a baby exemplifies a standard shift of their identities as both women and workers. Such shifting creates 'role conflict' as it encounters shifts in priorities, motivations, and behavior also, and those mothers become oriented to this new identity. Duberley and Carrigan (2012) also suggest that women argued the existing tensions between these two identities which put upon them by themselves and others and they strived to hide the tensions between intensive mothering and entrepreneurship through self-exploitation and limiting business size, and these factors influencing them.

## 2.4 The Entrepreneurial Identity

In this section, the factors that influence the construction of the entrepreneurial identity of the individuals, in general, will be clarified first. then, the factors specifically mompreneurs will be elaborated.

As previously discussed, the entrepreneurial identity is a combination of social and role identity which can distinguish the entrepreneurial identity of the individuals. Besides, there are extra factors that impact and change the entrepreneurial identity as well. According to Owalla (2017), different factors inevitably have great influences on what entrepreneur's experience and what constitutes their mindsets which leads them to a unique entrepreneurial



identity. The Factors originate from either image people draw about themselves in their mind and perception they possess from the surrounding which has an impact on entrepreneurial desires, goals and ambitions and identification as an entrepreneur or external environment of the entrepreneur which control and direct the identity of entrepreneur extensively. Therefore, it can be said that the entrepreneurial identity of individuals is affected by internal and external factors.

Falck, Heblich and Luedemann (2012) mentions that a significant part of literature in the field of entrepreneurial identity argues that background can be recognized as an element which affects entrepreneurial behavior since in their research it was noticed that children with entrepreneurial background from their families have higher levels of entrepreneurial desire and they are more likely to become entrepreneurs themselves. Falck, Heblich and Luedemann (2012) argue that people at younger ages who do not have any job experience and yet are intended to become entrepreneurs are driven towards entrepreneurship based on their identity, which is influenced by parents' and peers' entrepreneurs. In another study conducted by Pfeifer, Šarlija and Zekić Sušac (2016) indicated that students who perceive entrepreneurship as an interesting profession for the future life, who identify themselves as adequate to be able to perform entrepreneurial movement and activities, who look forward to receiving positive evaluations from family members or other people have a stronger level of entrepreneurial intentions and identity. Thus, students with higher levels of entrepreneurial identity have greater strength of self-value and higher entrepreneurial outcome expectations.

Pfeifer, Šarlija and Zekić Sušac (2016) additionally found out that gender works as a factor influencing the entrepreneurial behavior, because male students in their research showed higher entrepreneurial intentions, unlike women. Also, attitudes for entrepreneurship in social and cultural conditions



are clearer in women entrepreneurs than in men (Manzanera-Román and Brändle, 2016). Women entrepreneurs also display several sophisticated characteristics that distinguish them from their male equivalents especially that they are more customer-oriented, they have milder management styles, they tend to value the human capital and cultural aspects of their business more, and they give more importance on the quality of the product or service they provide. Further, women enter the entrepreneurial arena because of a complex mix of constraints and opportunities, of external pressures and inner ambitions (Wankel, 2008).

The literature about women entrepreneurship discusses a range of motivations why mothers in specific choose entrepreneurship as a career path. Several factors influence the likelihood of starting an entrepreneurial business among mothers, for example, self-confidence, knowing someone who has recently started a business, and awareness of good business opportunities have positive impacts on it. whilst, fear of failure is considerably negatively related to the odds of starting an opportunity-driven business (Holienska, Pilková and Jancovicová, 2016).

## 2.5 External Factors Influencing the Entrepreneurial Identities of Mompreneurs

The studies in this field examined the influence of context i.e. business, spatial, social, and institutional (Welter, 2011) on entrepreneurial identities. Falck, Hebllich and Luedemann (2012) discovered that the organizational structure and social expectations had a great impact on entrepreneurial identities. The findings of Nielsen and Lassen, (2012) about identity research emphasize the fact that identity is not just a phenomenon constructed from how individuals characterize themselves but are built in the interactions with the expectations, beliefs, roles, routine, and meanings of the social context. Eroglu, Rod and



Barragan (2019) in this vein clarifies that the 'Entrepreneurial Identity' is not something that someone owns or possesses, it is more of a process of being undertaken in a lifetime project, for certain time and space, and designed by the choices made in historical and cultural circumstances. The process of identity realization according to Newbery, et al. (2018) involves individuals revealing their experiences and how those experiences constructed their sense of self and identity considering that socialization and social norms part of a community influence an individual's sense of belonging and the entrepreneurial identity is specific to culture according to Jones, et al. (2019).

In other words, the entrepreneurial identity is part of an individual's own identity where there are bigger contextual factors that influence the behavior of this individual (Newbery, et al., 2018). Furthermore, many studies have reflected that culture can influence the individuals' motivations in addition to values and beliefs, and through them the entrepreneurial potential is created. It is commonly acknowledged that institutional forces also reflect on these cultural values (Hayton, George and Zahra, 2002) and most of the entrepreneurial activities are embedded in a social and cultural form (Krueger, Liñán and Nabi, 2013). However, in this study, the cultural factor will be specifically on gender in reflection to the 'Social constructionist and poststructuralist feminist' theory discussed by Ahl (2006).

Entrepreneurship has been traditionally associated with gender, this refers basically to the qualities that an entrepreneur should possess which are conventionally understood to be gender-based (Manzanera-Román and Brändle, 2016). And that gender has an impact on the entrepreneurial processes based on different concepts between men and women (Brush, de Bruin and Welter, 2009). According to Eddleston, et al. (2016) the entrepreneurial activities of women with strong performance are more likely to be critically scrutinized and not seen as indicative of their ability due to



contradiction with stereotyped expectations of entrepreneurship. In contrast, the performance of men is less likely to be inspected since a strong performance is consistent with gendered expectations. Some mothers may feel to be less identified as entrepreneurs for fear of being judged for not serving as full-time caregivers (Ladge, Eddleston and Sugiyama, 2019). Therefore, Ladge, Eddleston and Sugiyama (2019) suggest that reframing gender identity through a female advantage for entrepreneurship is strongly needed and it can establish a stronger positive link to entrepreneurial identity.

Such gender discourse of women as being mainly suited for childcare, this means that society arranges institutions that are more likely to suit and favor such gender social arrangement and a common assumption that men and women vary in important respects which these kinds of variances have social effects (Ahl, et al., 2016; Eddleston, et al., 2016). As mompreneurship identity struggles to remain solid as reflected by the good mother explained by Ahl, et al. (2016) there is a role conflict in 'working women' as 'mothers' attempting to achieve their role in an equal way either psychologically, socially and behaviorally in a way that stimulates their behaviors towards opportunity discovery. And there are influences of cultural constructions on such ideal 'working mother identity' and on how employment fits into the notions of good mothering (Christopher, 2012).

## 2.6 Internal Factors Influencing Entrepreneurial Identities and Mompreneurship

Fauchart and Gruber (2011) and Powell and Baker (2014) highlighted that studying motivations of entrepreneurs as internal factors can define the individual's entrepreneurial identity. Motivations that drive entrepreneurs are related to both positive and negative factors since motivation, On the one hand, can encourage the likelihood of starting an entrepreneurial business among





women, for example, self-confidence, pride, knowing someone who has recently started a business, and awareness of good business opportunities have positive impacts on it. On the other hand, fear of failure is considered to be negatively related to the odds of starting an opportunity-driven business (Holienka, Pilková and Jancovicová, 2016). An example of positive encouragement for starting a business is the desire to be independent, to be one's boss, successful in business, while negative motivation concerns discrimination at the alternative job and discomfort (Despotovic, et al., 2018).

Jean and Forbes (2012) have further categorized the entrepreneurial motivational factors into four categories:

*First*, Classic motivators, which consist of independence and freedom tendencies, control over one's life, the need for higher challenge in life, the need to have higher financial ambitions and financial opportunity, an explored business opportunity, and the desire to become one's, own boss. Further, Arasti (2007) argued that the internal factor that draws women entrepreneurs is the ambition and inclination to improve how they view themselves, their families, and their ventures.

*Second*, Work-family motivators include the desire to be at home with family, have a more flexible working life, and to have more time for the family. which is similar to Foley, et al. (2017) where it is suggested that family-driven motivation attracts mothers who choose entrepreneurship to adjust family care. Similarly, in a study of Despotović, et al. (2018) shows that women are more likely than men to decide to leave their workplace after having a child/children and some of them choose not to return. Further, mothers have a naturally intimate relationship with their babies according to Nel, Maritz and Thongprovati (2010) where motherhood begins from the prenatal period until giving birth, which this intimacy and closeness signifies the mother's desire to



spend more quality time with their child/children, and hence justifies their need to adjust work and family and become mompreneurs.

*Third*, forced motivators included unhappiness with prior work or imbalance between work and family, health problems, and the desire for more stability. And since the traditional workforce does not allow them to have such significant flexibility, mothers can apply several strategies to adjust their work-family life, and they can pursue social acceptance about childcare while pursuing a career and the cost and availability of childcare can be the highest influence. Similarly, Mompreneurship opens the opportunity to fulfill the desire of being a good mom as well as an independent businesswoman (Holienska, Pilková and Jancovicová, 2016).

Finally, Intrinsic motivators factors are having the passion to use specific skills, to do something independently ‘just for me’, and to create something for their children or the desire to help other people through their abilities.

As a result, ‘Mompreneurship’ offers a new option available to women, who are generally limited by a choice between career and family. The motivational factors that drive mothers to choose self-employment or entrepreneurship either because of their family responsibilities or because they have recognized a business opportunity (Jean and Forbes, 2012). Combining motherhood and work has been an effective solution for mothers according to Richomme-huet and Vial (2014).

Furthermore, Wankel (2008) also described that the experience of motherhood can drive women to choose entrepreneurship basically because of their family responsibilities, while they continue to be under the influence of their societal and structural demands, or because they have recognized business as an opportunity. And the identities of women became more recognized, the need



for role equivalence became clearer mumpreneurs became more engaged with opportunity exploitation. Their practices became clearer as they started to create a kind of process of structuring their personal, family and business lives for the pursuit of both opportunity and identity, in other words, developing the business opportunity that would energize their identity (Lewis, 2016).

However, apart from motivations, other factors can influence on entrepreneurial identity such as entrepreneurial background from families, age, and education based on Falck, Hebllich and Luedemann (2012). Therefore, it is motivating to look at the entrepreneurial identity within the interconnection between internal and external factors and its influence of gender on identity as many research in the area of 'masculinity and femininity' highlighted, the gendered nature of entrepreneurial identities is reflected on the entrepreneur role identity (Owalla, 2017). This would help to understand 'how women construct their entrepreneurial identities in an interrelated 'social networks' within the internal and external factors such as 'gender and cultural context. And that the social construction is utilized to help to explore how identities are constructed and resisted in different networks (Erogul, Rod and Barragan, 2019).

To conclude, mothers who create entrepreneurial actions are categorized under momprenurship. Those mothers are motivated to control their work and family roles by using possibilities to maintain motherhood and fulfilling their role identity related to their work. Maintaining the harmony between roles is difficult, and in many cases, role identity conflict has been created from society at least which made them face many challenges where the new identity created a role conflict that mothers will have to find solutions for. Mompreneurs to establish such identity went through a set of variables that formed their momprenurship, based on many internal and external factors that contribute to formulating the entrepreneurial identity. Gender is also



considered as a fundamental element that shapes the entrepreneurial behaviors and thus in shaping the characteristics of the entrepreneurial identity embedded by certain cultural norms, where there is a discourse of women's role in the society assisted for childcare only. There are four categories in which Mothers are motivated towards entrepreneurship those are the Classic, work-family, forced, and intrinsic motivators. As a result, 'Mompreneurship' offers a new option available to women, who are generally limited by a choice between career and family, the intersection of internal and external factors on identity is helpful to understand how women shape their entrepreneurial identities in an interrelated social network.

## 2.7 The Entrepreneurial Identity in the Middle East, Highlighting on Gender.

Based on the results by the Global Gender Gap Report by Schwab (2018) The Middle East region continues in its progress from the year 2017 reflects an overall gender gap of less than 40% for a third consecutive year. However, the region continues to be ranked as the last globally on the overall Index, behind South Asia. Overall, the performance of countries across the Middle East region in terms of gender is somewhat more conflicting than in other world regions. According to (Mondiale, 2007) the law regulations that rule families in the Middle East can influence economic legislation, as women are sometimes considered 'legal minors' on the basis that men are responsible for the family. Women's prime role is then being mothers, and it is related to the 'family' thus, they face barriers inside and outside the labor markets which creates social empowerment. Mondiale (2007) also suggested that, despite the empowerment of women especially in the social and political spheres, their entrepreneurial participation remains the lowest of any region.



Mondiale (2007) explains that women are still constrained by several social norms that control their participation in the labor market, which controls their employment choices. Moreover, gender attitudes toward working women in the Middle East are not favorable than in other regions, there are noticeable gender differences in some countries that is reflected by the different treatment of firms based on their principal owner's gender (Mondiale, 2007).

The global interest in women's entrepreneurship has encouraged several studies to identify the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the Middle East according to Mondiale (2007). Women entrepreneurs tend to be the 'minority' since it is observed that their share in the Middle East is far lower than in the other middle-income regions of East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe and Central Asia. About 40% of female businesses are individually-owned however the 60% are male-owned firms (Mondiale, 2007). Further, the results of studies discussed show that the proportion of men starting a business is higher than that of women, implying that the motive is that 'starting business' is more important to men than to women. However, to create a different world and the limited opportunities to get jobs exceeds that of women, the percentage of women entrepreneurs in the Middle East is nearly 4% when compared to the rest of the world based on women entrepreneurs monitored and there are no sufficient records for the number of women entrepreneurs engaged in small and medium scale enterprises within the country (Mathew, 2010). And thus, leads to gender-specific role distribution with limited chances for women entrepreneurs to pursue economic opportunities.

Andersson, et al (2007) also reflects that the cultural routines and norms influence the responsibilities, tasks, and the capacity that entrepreneurs could be obliged to carry out besides setting up their own business. However, regardless of the existing gender discrimination which has a dramatic



influence on entrepreneurial behaviors of women, Wankel (2008) explains that it is generally accepted that entrepreneurs share several common characteristics such as creativity, enthusiasm, innovation problem-solving ability. Mostly, it is assumed that all entrepreneurs have equal access to resources, participation, and support, and thus equal chances to succeed within the entrepreneurship ecosystem (Wankel, 2008).

Women add up to over 40% of the world-wide labor force and on top of that, they bring their valuable and productive skills and talents to the labor market and control \$20 trillion in annual customer expenditure based on the study of (Foss, et al., 2019). There is a fundamental problem reflected with making direct comparisons between men and women's entrepreneurial identities, it is that women are often judged against measures and norms that are based on 'masculinity' which positions women to fail (Ashe Treanor and Leung, 2011).

To conclude, what we are going to achieve in this study is to understand how mothers in the Middle East perceive their entrepreneurial identity. Entrepreneurial identity is a mixture of social identity and role identity. Mothers' social identity is their gender, age, ethnicity, etc, while their role identity is the business they wish to pursue. For instance, a woman who desires to become an entrepreneur will shape an entrepreneurial identity according to what profession she\he wants to establish. However, it is more complicated than it seems since the entrepreneurial identity is not a solo concept and is influenced by internal and external factors. For instance, a mother of a child who is surrounded in a very strict society whose viewpoint on mothers is gendered base might not see herself as an entrepreneur because the society sees her that way which has influenced the way she views herself. Or a mother whose eagerness to become an entrepreneur is her wish to gain freedom, has a different entrepreneurial identity as her internal motives impact her identity. Thus, in this study we are going to find out how mothers in the Middle East



understand their entrepreneurial identity and to explore this, their motivations will be evaluated in the first stage, and then the gender discrimination as an external factor will be found out in their narratives from their own stories to see if their entrepreneurial identity has been affected by any discrimination in their culture.

### 3 Methodology

As it was discussed earlier, and in order to serve the purpose of this study which is to fill the gap that was discovered in entrepreneurship identity research area in the Middle East, a ‘Qualitative Research Design’ using the ‘Abductive reasoning’ methods are obtained, and for the discussion of such problematic research area, narratives and life experience are taken into consideration for this study. The philosophical approach of this study is the ‘Interpretive Epistemology’.

According to Donald, et. al. (2005, P 17) “Interpretivists hold the view that the social world cannot be understood by applying research principles doubted from the natural sciences and propose that social sciences require a different research philosophy: 1) the social world is constructed and is given meaning subjectively by people. 2) the research is part of what is observed. 3) the research is driven by interest”.

According to Bryman and Bell (2018) ‘Epistemology’ deals with questions such as what knowledge is, what counts as knowledge, how knowledge claims are justified and nature of explanations. Theory in research guides and influences the collection as well as analysis of empirical data. However, describing the nature of the interrelation between theory and empirical research is absolutely not a straightforward matter as Bryman and Bell (2018)



explained. Theory and empirical data's interrelation can be viewed from different ways and is related to the method aiming to achieve the results. The realities of these 'mompreneurs' cannot be understood without relating it to their social interaction and that their realities are interpreted through their social interactions.

### 3.1 Qualitative Research Design: An Abductive reasoning approach

The 'Qualitative Research Design' is associated with studies of reasoning, when the problem is 'Open-ended' and the research is 'Process-oriented' (Goddard and Melville, 2004). Therefore, this study is formed to apply the qualitative design based on the complexity of the open-ended problem that is faced when trying to recognize mothers' entrepreneurs' sense-making in the Middle East within the existing literature. Further, to be able to link and understand 'identity' under the existing theories, the 'qualitative research' was best suited for investigating, understanding, and interpreting this study research question of Mompreneurs identity in the Middle East. Furthermore, because 'identity' is an aspect that is understood through human beliefs, attitudes, views, feelings, experiences, values, opinions, thoughts and knowledge (Bryman and Bell, 2018). According to Polkinghorne (2005) the aim of qualitative research is to clarify live experiences of humans through considering the individual characteristics of the human experience in order to facilitate the investigation of these experiences. Furthermore, the contribution of multiple participants enables researchers to provide accounts from different perspectives about a certain experience as Polkinghorne (2005) stated.

This study implies the 'Abductive Approach' which is used to understand a complex and sometimes 'puzzling field' (Dorst, 2011). The 'value' that this research is expected to create is based on 'What' we know from the existing theories about identity of mompreneurs, and 'How' are such theories embedded in the cultural context. Which leads to the statement of fact that





this research follows the “What + How leads to Value” . Abductive reasoning to create logical ‘frames’, where a ‘frame’ is associated with applying a certain working principle and will create a specific ‘value’ according to Dorst (2011, P.523) such ‘frames’ can be a simple or a multistep process depending on how familiar the researcher is with the problem, and the context surrounding the problem situation rather than only to concentrate on the problem itself.

This research would contribute in gathering as much information as possible about Mompreneurs identity, which emerged based on this new perspective of identity in the Middle East. Regarding the exploration of mompreneurs’ identity and sensemaking in the Middle East, this study shall contribute with the best explanation by beginning with what we know about the existing theories, and then the discovered outcomes will be the value that is added to the theories available. Moreover, the small samples enable the researchers to collect data on a deeper level of the individual’s life story and self-viewing, which then clear conclusions will be revealed (Stake, 2005).

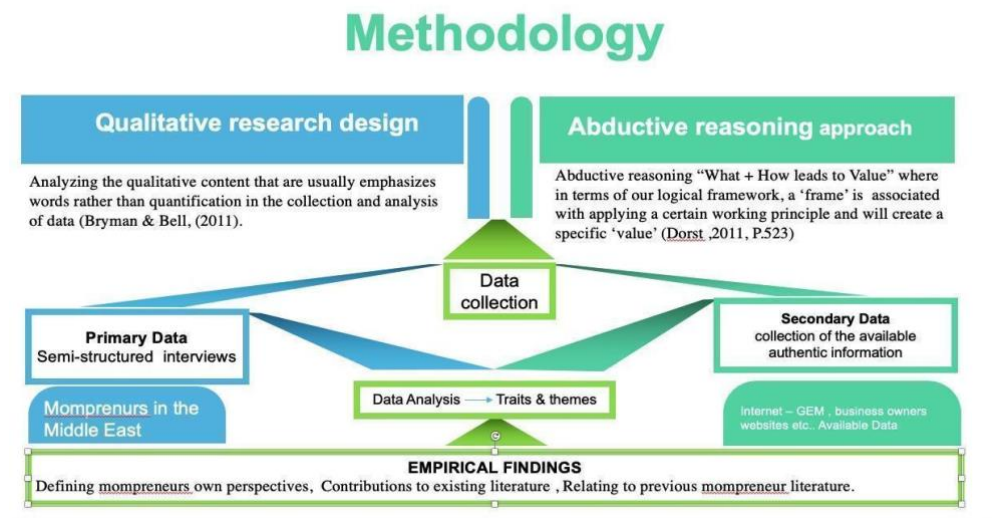


Figure 1: Methodology plan for “mompreneurs” research - by the authors (15/03//2020)



## 3.2 Methodology plan

In this section a clear demonstration is given about how the empirical information is collected and processed, how data sampling is implemented, how selection of participants is determined, what are means used for data collection and methods used for data analysis.

### 3.2.1 Selection of participants

Contributors to this study are selected among women entrepreneurs in the Middle East who are mothers as well as business owners. Since this research is planned to be conducted in a solid, transparent and interpretive way, we have to set our participants criteria in the way that will serve the aim of thesis research. Choosing samples was based on ‘homogeneity’.

In Interpretative and Phenomenological Analysis methods, the preference for homogenous samples work best in coupling with its philosophical foundations and analytical processes (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009 cited in Reiger, 2012). Such homogeneity is represented in this study as a fundamental selection criterion of samples. Plus, the demographic homogeneity is conveyed by a demographic commonality such as (specific age range, gender, ethnic or socio-economic group). In this study, it is considered that the participants are mothers who share a specific age group between 35-45. And, their educational background is also a shared selection criterion since the level of education a person has increases the probability of choosing entrepreneurship as a career option and also affects how the chosen business performs, and college graduates, compared to high school graduates are twice as likely to become entrepreneurs (Kim, Aldrich and keister, 2006). No specific scheme is set to analyze the relationship between the participants’ marital and entrepreneurship at this level. Whichever the marital status of the



participants; married, divorced till the end of the list, those women as discussed are selected to focus more on their entrepreneurial experience as mothers in this research. Yet, the study is focusing on samples that are all drawn from the same location which is the Middle East with a common geographical homogeneity.

| Criteria of selection / Initials | Marital status | Age / children | Location | Business Type  | Position          | Education level                           | Interview duration |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------|--|-------------------|---|--------------------|
| Farnoosh. N.                     | Divorced       | 41 / 2         | Iran     | Beauty Salon – for 15 years.   | Owner             | Bachelor in biochemistry – Kerman         | 35 Min             |
| Vaheedeh. H                      | Divorced       | 33 / 1         | Iran     | Coffee shop – for 6 years  | Owner             | Bachelor in electric engineering – Tehran | 40 Min             |
| Nassem. S                        | Married        | 37 / 1         | Iran     | Photography – for 6 years  | Owner             | Masters in Art - Kerman                   | 35 Min             |
| Kara .A,                         | Divorced       | 39 / 3         | Kuwait   | Kids clothing – online shop for 7 years  | Owner             | Bachelor in Information Technology        | 60 Min             |
| Layla. M                         | Married        | 31 / 2         | Kuwait   | Beauty Center – for 6 years  | Owner             | Bachelors in Business Administration      | 45 Min             |
| Noor .M                          | Married        | 48 / 3         | Syria    | Kindergarten- for 11 years   | Teacher and owner | Bachelors in education                    | 45 Min             |
| Sana. A.                         | Married        | 42 / 2         | Syria    | Architecture office since 2004 - and Occasions Sweets shop for children since 2017 | Owner             | Master’s in Electrical Engineering        | 55 Min             |

Table 1: ‘facesheet’ Participants Selection Criteria “mompreneurs” research - by the authors (15/03//2020)

To perform this research, we have engaged basically ‘Seven mothers’ entrepreneurs that we could have contact with across three different countries of the Middle East. A careful consideration was that they would provide the most in-depth and fruitful narratives possible. Thus, a certain selection criterion demonstrated in ‘table 1’ was implemented, and the selection of these participants was based on their age group, business nature, education, duration of their business, the success of their business, and finally transparency and reliability that could be observed through personal connections or personal networks.



Those mothers were able to tell their own stories in which we analyzed to investigate the possibility of gaining entrepreneurial knowledge, answering research questions and identifying traits that contribute to identity realization of these entrepreneurs. These stories and experiences of mompreneurs were gathered through narrative interviewing which is the most suitable type for the exploring the entrepreneurial identity of mother's entrepreneurs in the middle east mentioning that narrative interview is considered the most appropriate approach for identity discovery based on La pointe (2010) compared to the traditional interviews, where narrative interviews are more of an unstructured conversations that provide a situation for discovering the identity of narrators through their stories .

### **3.2.2 Primary Data Collection- Qualitative interviewing**

The collection of primary data was conducted over the period of one month, and it was planned to be collected based on physical meetings with the selected samples by 'Qualitative interviewing' which is according to McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl (2019) a useful tool for data-collection in order to address a number of research questions. Thus, it is preferable to use qualitative interviews especially when the researcher struggles to understand the perspectives of the interviewee's, rather than creating a general understanding of large groups of people.

However, due to the constraints that were put on travelling and physical meetings corresponding to the spreading of "*coronavirus*" worldwide, and, to the precautions that were set by the World Health Organization on travelling between countries:



“With the information currently available for the novel coronavirus, WHO advises that measures to limit the risk of exportation or importation of the disease should be implemented, without unnecessary restrictions of international traffic”. (*WHO, 2020*)

Since the only available medium was through a video-call software via the internet. There are however many points in favor of this kind of interviewing as Hanna (2012) demonstrates. Although online interviews have some risk comparative to face-to-face interviews where respondents are more likely to drop out, the online interviews create a certain type of relationship, there mutual trust that can be built up. This trust would make it easier for a longer-term commitment to the interview, and to go back to the interviewees for further information as addressed by the author. This type of interviews also offers a viable alternative to face-to-face interviews, especially that it allows to ignore some of the details associated with physical interaction, this ignorance allows the researcher to ‘stay at the level of text’ and avoid imposing contextual information on the data (Hanna, 2012).

Skype software, further as an advanced video meeting medium on the internet is the most feasible alternative to face-to-face interviews. With the use of Skype, the researcher can easily record both the visual and audio interaction of the interview that can be downloaded and analyzed easier. and to a certain limit, this kind of interview is still considered as face-to-face interviewing where the visual element still exists, however without facing the difficulties of physical meeting and commuting (Hanna, 2012).

### 3.3 Narrative interviewing- Story telling

“Narration is a common mode of communication, people tell stories to entertain, to teach and to learn, to ask for an interpretation and to give one” Czarniawska (2004, p 10).



According to the author, 'Qualitative interviewing' in this study is based on a 'Narratives or storytelling approach' which allows the researcher to move from the field of practice to the field of research gradually by observation of stories and how they are made. Where the researchers start by collecting stories, provoke the story telling, interpret them (what do they say?), analyze the story (how do they say it?) deconstruct the story (unmake them) then put them together with their own story that was built based on the understanding then finally, setting them against other stories collected (Czarniawska, 2004).

Narratives focus on storytelling from the perspective and interpretation of interviewees, how they understand entrepreneurship in this case and in general how they see the world. The aim is to accept the narrative from their points of view since the stories represent their identity and how they make sense of their identity in fact. Ricoeur (1965) has argued that people can build their identity by means of stories and narratives they share, while connecting past to the present and the future.

As it was elaborated previously, narrative storytelling/interviewing is chosen as the most suitable option in order to let interviewees freely open up to discussion and make sense of their own identity through telling their entrepreneurial stories. Polkinghorne (1988) clarify that the narrative interview has great value and importance since it allows individuals to express the experiences which have established their identity and how to give meaning to their own narratives and stories. Further, narratives unfold many choices for theoretical specifications and potential contributions in the domains of social capital, feminist theory and intersectional approaches, (Ljunggren, Sundin, and Tillmar, 2016).



In a similar vein, Söderberg (2006) also contextualizes that a narrative always has a recognizable voice which reflects upon the specific perspective of narrators about a selected number of events. Hence, in this study through narratives or storytelling, the interviewees who are both mothers and entrepreneurs express their perspectives and we aim to understand their actuality of the stories and spread it to others. Söderberg (2006) also mentioned narrative interviewing, where it is the interviewer's responsibility to lead the conversation with any guided or structured questioning, we will prepare follow up questions in order to be able to track the conversation and prevent it when it completely goes off road. In order to get as much information as necessary for the study, narratives will be told in participants' mother tongue and further will be translated to English. All data will be gathered and recorded, and the transcripts will be reviewed diligently later.

## **Semi- Structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviewing has become extremely prominent methods of data gathering within a feminist research framework based on Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018) which this study has carried out. According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018) The goal of this style of interviewing is to create the understanding and hence ease of data processing. The Semi -Structured interview questions are rather more general in their frame, variable but also consistent to what the goal behind the questions is. Thus, the interviewees' replies can be easily handled and gathered into themes and categories. Semi structured - interviews contain mainly questions that are variously referred as 'open' and the interviewer follows a script to a certain extent (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018). Yet, it is important that we concentrate on gaining an authentic understanding of the world views of these participants of the Middle East as their social setting, and of the people who have shared attributes within



this setting. And our questioning will need to cover the areas that we need but from the perspective of interviewees (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018).

### **How are these interviews conducted?**

There are some practical details explained by Bryman and Harley (2018) that are taken into consideration as guidelines before interviewing the participants. Despite the time consumption of video calls and the conditional availability for interviews over the internet, the selected participants were comfortable to share their time and contribute openly to the depth of this study. And this was formed in a friendly manner since all participants found comfort in sharing their personal life experiences through these calls.

Since the narrative or storytelling approach is obtained each video call meeting was more like an introductory discussion to get to know each other and to create comfort to discuss thoroughly about their narratives. It is amazing how effective it was to draw a baseline of what the interviews are going to look like later. Then the interviews accelerated to a larger discussion and questions became deeper and related more to their professional life, where participants were similarly relaxed and the in- depth narratives were told freely. The calls were recorded and transcribed for accuracy and provide the basis of the empirical analysis.

The total time estimated for interviews was between 30-60 minutes for each participant involved, which is a total of 6 hours of meetings. All meetings were recorded and saved for analysis. These mothers shared their perspectives of identity creation through telling stories about their success that took place within their cultural and social surroundings. Thereafter, we tried to find meaningful understanding and connecting patterns in what they reveal.





During conducting the interview, a permission is taken to record since qualitative researchers nearly always tape-record and then transcribe the interviews to ensure that the interviewees' answers are captured in their own terms. Additionally, it was useful to have a 'facesheet' of information of a general kind (name, age, gender, etc.) and a specific kind (type of the business, position in the business, number of years since starting the business, number of coworkers ...etc.) as demonstrated earlier in Table 1, because such information is useful for contextualizing people's answers based on Bryman and Bell (2018).

The use of 'Memo writing' technique also was a practical tool that encounters less coding and hence less time, and since it is so important to keep track and record of our analysis, memo writing can be the first step of data analysis in the research process starting with the first interview, and since Memo writing is the most suited for being much easier and controllable with the time limit that we have and can also it can be themed up easier. Documenting these notes with dates and important details have facilitated 'memory refreshing' to the time the interview was placed, and 'flashback' every possible moment when this part of the study is revisited for the purpose of auditing. The encryption of the texts and the translation of the narrative was done manually with attention to observe the best suited narratives to this study direction.

### **Documentations**

In order to enrich this study, the collection of supportive statistical data was needed as well besides to the primary resource of data. where Internet resources can be a resource of a great deal of national and cross-national official statistical information. These data gathered were processed under a secondary analysis of official statistics, this secondary analysis offers the opportunity for researchers to collect suitable and supporting data that are



presented in a statistical form that are later used without charge but offers the prospect to explore research questions without having to go through the process of collecting the data yourself (Bell, Bryman and Harley ,2018).

The analysis gives access to good-quality data, such as that available from the internet like those collected from GEM ‘General Entrepreneurial Monitor’ and used as a source of many of the data that are treated as high quality. According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018) such data increases the opportunity for cross-cultural analysis with bigger attention to the processes associated with globalization and to cultural differences. As a resource for Secondary data is GEM “the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor was taken as the secondary data resource in addition to professional and personal profiles through some media tools such as LinkedIn were used to build a conception and background of our participants.

### 3.4 The Narrative Analysis Approach

“Narrative analysis is an approach to the elicitation and analysis of language that is sensitive to the sense of temporal sequence that people, as tellers of stories about their lives or events around them, detect in their lives and surrounding episodes and inject into their accounts” (Bryman and Bell ,2015, P541)

Riessmann (2007) elaborates that narrative analysis includes a family of methods for interpreting storied form of texts, and the attention is on the sequences of action and the investigator focuses on particular actors, in particular social places and at particular social times

Furthermore, narrative analysis questions and pays deep attention on several criteria, such as intention and language of the teller, how and why the stories



and the incidents are told rather than only focusing on the content referable from language, identifying the audience of the story, purpose of the story, the succession of events in the story and the cultural resources the story is influenced by. In other words, the attention moves to the details of narrates with in depth consideration to the particularities and context. Besides, narrative analysis relies on the given reports that are kept and treated analytically as units rather than divided into categories in which the in order and structural features that are characteristics of narratives are eliminated. Thus, in order to achieve a fruitful analysis of the stories a combination of various narrative analysis methods should be combined and implemented which each approach provides a different way of knowing a phenomenon and each lead to unique insights. Although narrative analysis is case centered, it can generate categories or general concepts as in other cases based on Riessmann (2007).

The 'Narrative Analysis focuses on keeping a story unbroken and intact by speculating from the case itself rather than from themes and in this method, the content of speech should be on the major and exclusive concentration of the investigator and more attention should be paid to what the narrator is telling than to how or why is it told according to Riessman (2008). However, in this approach there is minimal focus on how a narrative is spoken or the local context and therefore, other approaches can be implemented to stories as well.

In the study of mompreneurs in the Middle East and in order to explore how mothers identify themselves in the Middle East, investigators conducted and recorded 'seven' in depth interviews with mompreneurs across the Middle East through non-face to face calls. They were asked a question that 'how do you identify and make sense of yourself as a mother and as a self-employed woman in the society' and individuals communicated their stories and revealed the events and incidents from the beginning of the journey, which placed them



on the path of mompreneurship until now and within the narrates they attempted to establish points of reference between self, work and society. For every interview, reports were quoted extensively and in order to analyze what has been told, researchers zoomed in to identify the fundamental assumptions in each account and then naming or coding them.

In this method however, the biographical account does not fracture into categories as grounded theory coding would do, but it is interpreted as a whole and then biographies are compared as they were represented. Then, some long segments are chosen from the written report with our interpretation and references to prior theory. Therefore, in this analysis of current study, any particular phrases or specific mentions about mompreneurship were carefully noted, especially phrases and terms such as identity, independence, work-life balance, guilt, pride, liberty, freedom, children, pressure and opportunity. Afterwards, the collected data was compiled concerning cultural influence of the Middle East to females in order to identify if national cultural dimensions are considered as supportive or hindrances for women entrepreneurs' phenomena to develop.

In addition, and while noting the narratives many key words and phrases related to the possession of children and any challenges or changes in the life of mothers regarding that were identified and considered. Through the analysis of narratives, it was noted if the term mompreneur itself in its own right induces any kind of positive, negative or neutral emotions or feelings as well. Women narrated that Childcare responsibilities could make it very difficult to be compatible with a workplace tough environment, but self-employment created a more flexible lifestyle and women could choose their own hours more desirable. Additionally, having an established business could encourage adding more children, particularly if the business was started at home and could simplify childcare for mothers.



However, and in order to come up with a more precise analysis, another relevant approach was implemented. The ‘Approach of William Labov’ is used when the narrative is split into structural components and separate clauses so that the investigator will be able to determine the applicability of each clause in the overall narrative, and at the end, the different segments hold an account together according to Riessman (2008). This approach keeps the narrative segments of longer exchanges intact and will allow the reader to analyze the internal structure easier and to understand the relationship of different components better and to follow the narratives easily and to determine what the important parts are. In this study each report was split into many clauses while transcriptions were read and organized. For instance, in one of the reports this method was applied as follows:

I was working in a company as sales manager  
and was very successful  
and had considerable respect from others  
but was difficult to leave my child in the morning  
and was holding so much guilt

This method keeps the structure completely undamaged and allows the investigators to follow the story in a more structural way.

The ‘Dialogic\performance analysis Approach’ addressed by Riessman (2008) is a broad and varied interpretive approach applied to oral narratives which requires close attention to the social circumstances of the production and interpretation of narrative. In other words, this method of analysis focuses on the direction of the statements, when and why they are stated and what the purpose is. It makes selective use of elements of the two previous methods and adds other dimensions. It is an interactive dialog between speaker and listener



which interrogates how speech is produced and performed. Therefore, this approach requires careful reading of contexts, influence on establishment and social circumstances on the production and interpretation of narrative. In other words, the two former methods cross-examine what is spoken and how, but this method focuses on the direction and purpose of statements.

Riessman (2008) further elaborates that stories are social objects telling us about society and culture as well as a person or group and the narrator is not considered the final authority, but the investigators can question particular words, listen to voices, identify hidden debates speakers presume and local gaps in personal narrative. Thus, in this method narratives are performed by the tellers and in order to examine narratives as performance, the listener must include itself as the direct and immediate audience for it. and the speaker's experiences engage the listener emotionally as if they are both reliving the events and identifying what is happening.

This approach was carefully applied in the current study of mompreneurs' identity in the context of the Middle East. The interviewees throughout their dialogic performance positioned us as witnesses to their pains, prides, honors and so on. The tales were interpreted while readers were part of the interpretive process by including their own identities and bringing cultural filters to interpretation. However, interpretations must be linked to the information in the text and indicates how it is organized, according to Riessman (2008).

## Evaluation of the study

The essence of Qualitative interpretive research is based on interpretation of social reality through the subjective viewpoints of the embedded participants within a particular context where the reality is placed and therefore, these interpretations are hugely contextualized, and might not be applicable to other



contexts. Thus, because interpretive research is based on a different set of ontological and epistemological assumptions about social phenomenon evaluative criteria such as reliability, internal validity, and generalizability do not apply in a similar manner to the positivist research. Hence, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest and provide a relevant set of criteria for judging the goodness of interpretive research namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Bhattacharjee (2012) elaborates each concept as follows:

*Dependability.* Interpretive research is considered dependable or authentic if two researchers studying similar phenomena at different times arrive at similar conclusions and results which this dependability in interpretive research equals to that of reliability in positivist research. To ensure dependability, interpretive researchers must provide sufficient details about their phenomenon of under study and the social context in which it is embedded to allow readers to independently confirm their interpretive assumptions.

*Credibility.* the research is credible if the interpretation in the study is found to be believable for the readers and is parallel to internal validity in functionalistic research. a researcher can meet the high level of credibility in the study by the active and improved engagement in the field. for instance, by showing accurate data collection methods and data are analyzed, maintaining the transcription of interviews as records and so on which allow the reader to trust the process and the results of the study.

Angen (2000) in similar vein explains that the interpretive validity depends on the connection within the community that is concerned with what is the research about and the adequacy of terms that are used to categorize a certain phenomenon. interpretive validity also focuses on the accuracy of descriptions earned by the people engaged including intention, cognition, affect, belief,



evaluation and everything that is reflected by the participants perspectives, as well as their narrower sense, in other words enquiring the participants truth. Therefore, this study represented to a high extent such interpretive validity through the focus on accuracy which is the truth said by participants, then evaluating it and framing the results that were found based on the “quotes” said by the participants themselves.

*Confirmability.* an interpretive research can be considered confirmable if the study’s participants agree with the assumptions and inferences stemming from the results of the study by the researcher. This concept is similar to the notion of objectivity in functionalistic research.

*Transferability.* it is related to the generalization of the results and this notion is similar to that of external validity in functionalistic research. The researcher to reach the high level of transferability must provide full and detailed information of the research context and write a rich description of the whole process from acquiring data to interpreting and revealing results so that readers can independently evaluate whether findings are transferable to other contexts or not.

### 3.5 Evaluating Ethical issues

Ethical issues might occur within different steps of the research. In this section these ethical issues that might happen between researcher and participants are explained commencing to our research area will be assessed according to Diener and Crandall (1978) cited in Bryman and Bell (2011, p.128) who break down the ethical issues into four areas for example: “*harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception*”.





First, 'harm to participants can involve several factors such as "physical harm; hindrance of self-esteem; stress; harm to career prospects or future employment. Therefore, any activity that threatens participants' physical and mental health should be concerned by researchers. This issue of harm is addressed by keeping anonymity and confidentiality of records as Bryman and Bell (2015) suggested. In some cases, some participants do not request anonymity and they may not wish to keep the data confidential. Regarding this study, anonymity and confidentiality of names, stories contents and records are subject to permission for publicity as might be requested by participants the interviews are recorded by the interviewee's based on permission and allowance for mentioning the names and identity was also given. Therefore, this project does not contain any physical or mental harm to participants.

Second, the 'invasion of privacy' is related to all methods used during the study where researchers do not allow to infect participants' privacy in any stage of research according to Bryman and Bell (2015). In this study permission is needed to reveal the identity of the interviewees and their narratives.

Third, 'Deception' which is associated with dishonesty about the aim of the research and, in this project the intention of the research is fully explained to the participants. According to Zalan and Lewis (2004) qualitative data's validity and reliability depends on trust. Therefore, in this study, in order to keep the trustworthiness of the research data, the trust between researcher and participant is formed prior to the interview by sharing transparency and openness for the aim of this study and the use of the narratives.



### 3.6 Criteria for evaluating the qualitative research

Rocco (2010) introduced a set of criteria for evaluating qualitative studies, starting by evaluating how well expressed is the problem, if the literature is relevant and supported in the study, if the type of methods used for data collection tools, and steps to ensure are effectively described and relevant to literature, how adequate is the explanation of sampling strategies and sample description, data analysis process described in detail. Findings include sets of definitions, sufficient data from sufficient participants to support these sets, is the discussion meaningful for the significance and implications of the study and paying attention to structure such as use of headings, succinctness, editing, and formatting. In an attempt to fulfill such criteria, this study followed the evaluating measures to an acceptable extent that is reflected through this research.

### 3.7 Delimitation of the study

Within the available choices that we have, we set some boundaries for the study such as the internal and external factors which influences on the results that could be more various than what our study was based upon. The study will choose to underline motivations as internal factors. However, there are more factors that could be considered, such as age, education, marital status, background and so on. The same boundaries are set for the external factors where there are several factors that could be underlined as external, such as; context. However, only gender theory was implemented in this study. Plus, Sampling was only chosen to be from three countries in the Middle East. However, the context of the Middle east is wider and could contain more countries.



## 4 Empirical Material

### 4.1 Mompreneurs' Narratives

As it was discussed previously in the literature, the entrepreneurial identity is a combination of both social and role identity, which varies according to how people view themselves, what motivates them, how a society views them and how a society also limits their activities. Theories of identity suggest that people might have several identities because they live in multiple roles and are connected with multiple social groups, for instance, a woman can be in both a teacher role and a mother role, or a man can have both a father role and doctor role (Powel and Baker, 2014). Therefore, in this study, the entrepreneurial identity of Mompreneurs will be discovered based on how they see themselves, how they are influenced by their own motivations and how they are also motivated by the view of society. The logic is shaped between what has been recognized by the previously discussed 'Identity theories', and the narratives of our samples of Mompreneurs.

All of the narratives began in much the same way. The conversation was open-ended, and mostly beginning with commonly opening discussion and then followed by their experiences, past recalls about their work and family until we reach the start point of their self-employment decision. The narration process followed the same structure and form, they were asked the same questions in the same open discussion way. Starting with introducing themselves, their Business type, their motives and their journey of becoming an entrepreneur.

The discussion followed by motives and influences that led them to move toward their new business path and how their identity formed within their societies. Whether there are external or internal factors that influence their



entrepreneurial identity. Several interpretations were elaborated by participants and some had to say about challenges as a woman and perhaps a mother in the society. The narratives related to the participants mentioned below are marked by the first name and family initials.

## Narrative 1

### **Layla.M. Beauty Center- Kuwait.**

**About Layla:** 31 years, Arab national lives in Kuwait as an expat, a mother of two kids, and she is managing a beauty center.

**A flashback:** Having graduated from business school made her think of starting her career with a normal employment in a general trading company in administration. Her journey with finding her entrepreneurial identity started when she got pregnant with her first child, Layla was only entitled for a 70 days maternity leave, and after the end of the maternity leave she can only get a few more months based on the ruling regulation.

“I can't leave my child in the nursery at the age of a few months! And I cannot sit at home without any salary, I need both, to take care of my baby and to work”.

Based on Layla, she was receiving a good salary and fixed benefits from the company she was working for. However, the company she worked in had two other male employees and she felt *unsafe* at work.

“I believe that the company would prefer to have male employees who do not take maternity leaves “

And since she had no other source of income, therefore she had to maintain her work and struggle with her role as a mother.



“I remember when I was running home to my mother who looked after my first child every now and then to check on my baby, breastfeeding was not possible which affected me emotionally, and I had to finish my duty late sometimes”.

Layla trusted herself, she had the expertise of a hair stylist, she also participated in a practical course for beauty care, it showed from the way she expresses herself that she was confident of the expertise she has got. especially that she was providing some beauty services to her close social network.

“I am a hair styling and makeup professional ... I am so proud of myself.....My friends always address me as someone who they love to visit on every occasion to fix their look, and I have put all my work on Instagram, people loved my work and found all the support and gained a good reputation, I have this talent...”

Her social network helped her to think seriously about her new decision in the same occasion she said

” my husband supported me as he worked in cosmetics sales and encouraged me and helped me to take this step”

**The journey of becoming a mompreneur:** Layla started her own business, she has found this happy balance between work –life since she controls her time to take care of her baby and not to lose her identity as a working female who is an effective person in society. Having her business idea grow had supported her financial status, she said:

“I was able to gain money independently and support myself financially and build a good customer reputation within my society.....I am self-dependent “.



She builds a stronger personality, more independence and balance. She gets to know more people and make new friends and be socially open.

“Now I gave birth to my second girl just four months ago and I am so proud that I own my time, resources and I am so confident and independent.

When the call was going to end, Layla reflected that she is more satisfied by having the role of a mother and an entrepreneur.

“I am certainly satisfied now for being a mother and a business owner, i can maintain my expertise and do something that I love, and at the same time not to feel that I’m not a mother.

Mompreneurship in this case is reflected as providing a solution to Layla’s problem since she had to find a balance between her work and her family life.

## **Narrative 2**

**Sana. A. Two businesses; Consultancy Agency for Electrical engineering’ and ‘assortments Sweets shop’ - Damascus, Syria.**

**About Sana:** 41 years old, Syrian woman, lives in Damascus-Syria. A mother of two kids, as well as, managing two businesses. ‘Consultancy Agency for Electrical engineering’ and ‘Assortments sweets’ shop.

A flashback: Sana started her career in the form of normal employment, she worked in a teaching position at the university of Aleppo. With this type of work, the teacher requires full attendance and engagements at the university. She added also that there were several circumstances as she named it that affected her decision to leave her work.



“War and difficult life conditions pushed me, at that time, to move a lot and change my living location, basically I couldn't leave my kids also and I need to keep working”

where she stressed on her ambitious future that she cannot let her career stop at that point.

**Her journey of becoming a mompreneur:** She had the entrepreneurial spirit inside her as she expressed it. She had the expertise to succeed in starting up her first business having got a Master's degree in Electrical Engineering allowed her to start up her own business, a consultancy agency for electrical engineering.

“My Education and expertise encouraged me and, financially, I had no problem”. And that” Starting up this business was a great support for me financially and socially”.

Sana found the opportunity to do something more, she opened her second business that was based on opportunity discovery, she noticed that her business is highly required in the market. She had the idea of starting her own sweets shop.

“I realized that Damascus lacks this kind of quality chocolates for children and I have created my own line”

She also mentioned that her kids were inspiring her and helping her.

“My kids love chocolate, we all do, they also help me to prepare the orders and choose the assortments as well”.

She had the experience in managing her own business, and she had the support from her friends that she used to meet on daily and special social occasions.



“We women meet a lot in every social occasion, and many of my friends encouraged me to start my own business after they noticed my passion in sweets arrangements”.

Sana’s society puts certain pressure, within a specific social setting, and as a woman entrepreneur and a mother, she is an ambitious person and she wanted to improve how society views her and how she shows herself to her family, and their business. Further, she was proud of herself, confident and self-independent.

“I remember that others were suppressing me, making judgments and trying to pull me back, but I was so proud and trusted myself”.

However, she had succeeded in her business. Entrepreneurship in this case is reflected as expressing creativity and trying to find something new and challenging as reflected in Sana’s narratives.

### **Narrative 3**

#### **Noor .M, Kindergarten- Latakia, Syria.**

**About Noor:** 48 years old, Syrian woman, lives in Latakia-Syria. A mother of three kids, and managing a kindergarten for 200 students.

**A Flashback:** Noor is a bachelor’s degree holder in education, she started her business 11 years ago, she started her career path similarly as many of graduate students did in her time. She started her career as an elementary school teacher, after a period of time, teaching was not giving her exactly what she wanted as she expresses it.

“I wanted something different, I wanted to build my own experience and put my own contribution in the education system”





She was so ambitious, self-motivated as she expressed herself to have *pride* and *self-confidence*. She wanted to make a change for the good of society.

“No one at that time ever thought the way I did, I wanted to change education of little children and to apply different strategies, and I want to start with my own kids”.

**The journey of becoming a mompreneur:** Noor decided to switch her life and become an entrepreneur, her great determination and support by her husband who was also a teacher and her ambition of teaching her own small children. However, ‘Education bureaucracy’ as she called it had suppressed her motivations and hindered her from implementing what she was believing in from the regular teaching. Thus, she realized that becoming an entrepreneur is her best solution.

“I realized that opening my own kindergarten is something that would help me to improve education the way it should be away from the from the Education bureaucracy, and this would be a start point for a new way of teaching, so it was the moment”

She was financially dependent on her work in teaching, therefore she could not save enough to start her business.

“I have no money to start my own business at that time”.

As a result, she had to get relocated to another country for the period of two years before she could come back and start her business with enough finance. It was not surprising that Noor ‘never heard’ about ‘entrepreneurship’ because she didn't acknowledge entrepreneurs and especially a mompreneur.

Entrepreneurship in this case is reflected as a desire to make a difference in society and make a social impact as reflected in Noor's narratives.



#### **Narrative 4**

##### **Kara . A, Kids clothing – online shop- Kuwait.**

**About Kara:** 39 years old, Arab national woman lives in Kuwait, a mother of three kids, she owns an online business for selling kid clothing online for 7 years. Kara holding a Bachelor degree in information technology could not, as she said, keep a stable job for a long time.

**A Flashback:** She moved from one job to another, every time she got pregnant she decided to leave her job because nursing a newborn baby after delivery for only 70 days was not enough for her to fulfil her motherhood needs. Based on the Article (24) of Kuwait labor law “entitled for a 70 days maternity leave and after the end of the maternity leave, the employer may give the working woman, at her request, an unpaid leave for a period not exceeding four months to take care of the baby”

....“Ohh!.....I love kids but with every pregnancy I experience fear, what should I do when I deliver my next baby?”.

Her essential struggle was nursing her kids and keeping a fixed job and that was not possible. Basically, she was in an *'endless loop'* as she called it and she needed to do something that would give her the required stability of taking care of her kids and being financially supported, especially after she got divorced and she must depend on herself.

“I can't work full time because of my kids and I'm divorced with no support, I should do something”.



**The journey of becoming a mompreneur:** She started by explaining her passion in shopping that brought the opportunity of discovering that she could start her own business.

“I see online shopping as a great freedom, many choices and good prices. One day I was checking online some retail shops to buy clothes for my kids and, and I decided that my passion in online shopping should be my business”.

She was proud of her accomplishments, and she wanted to be independent. In her social environment being a divorced mother brings many challenges. She reflected her narratives transparently, and explained many social factors that were pushing her to become an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurship in this case is reflected as seeking independence and autonomy by seeking self-fulfillment Kara’s narratives.

## Narrative 5

### **Farnoosh. N. Interior design, Iran**

**About Farnoosh:** She is a 39 years old woman and mother of a 7-year-old daughter living in Iran, she has found her own way to become an entrepreneur by starting up her own interior design company called ‘Stretch Selling’. Her university degree in Electrical Engineering. She lives and works in Iran.

**A flashback:** Farnoosh is an independent woman ‘as she expressed herself’ who began her first job when she graduated from college at the age of 18, and worked in different companies as a salesperson (irrelevant to her degree), then gradually found her way up to the managerial level in the last companies she worked as an employee. Through 13 years of work, she gained *rich experiences* both in terms of skills and abilities and in terms of familiarity with the people and customers as she made very good connections with them.



“I am very skillful and confident in my field of work so I am quite certain that running my own business can fulfill my financial desires more and I will become rich”.

She articulated herself as a ‘*very ambitious* woman who always seeks growth and development’. and motherhood did not change the way she thinks about herself.

**The journey of becoming a mompreneur:** In 2014 she made the decision to become an entrepreneur. She felt that she could be more ‘*Independent*’ considering the fact that she was very confident about her ‘*abilities*’ and ‘*skills*’.

“I had personal growth motivation and I was quite sure that I could grow personally and financially and become more independent which is exactly what my spirit is fitted to”

said Farnoosh and she is very satisfied with the new situations since she can manage her time based on her own priorities without being stuck in a company’s time schedule and she repeated that asking for leave from somebody else or overall *being controlled* by the company was very annoying before. In addition, she mentioned that she never liked ‘*hierarchical work environments*’ where she might be questioned from the superior position for small decisions, for example to ask for a leave and for coming a bit late or leaving the company a bit early.

In addition, she mentioned the fact that she was not entirely happy with a new male colleague.

“The new sales manager intended to control the situation in his hands since he had a higher educational background compared to me”



she continued that there is a sort of *male dominance* in the culture of Iran which makes men feel superior, which was annoying for her as an independent woman.

She does not identify herself as a mother whose only responsibility is to look after the family and do housewife chores. She views herself as both mother and entrepreneur who has competencies and capabilities and deserves to create the life she wants.

“I am not doomed to stay at home and take care of my family, I want to use my abilities and become a successful entrepreneur, I deserve it”.

She believes that there is sort of *gender discrimination* in Iran since there are no sufficient facilitators for the women who want to work. lack of childcare facilities is one of them. She noted *lack of childcare welfare in the company* as a factor of becoming an entrepreneur as well. Therefore, in this case the gender discrimination has been a driving factor for her to become entrepreneur rather than being employee.

## **Narrative 6,**

### **Nasim. S, Photographer, Iran**

**About Nasim:** a 37-year-old woman, a mother of one kid who owns a photography studio in a city in Iran (Kerman) and has begun her business at an early age when she was 27. She graduated from art university in Iran.

**A Flashback:** Nasim confessed that she has been into photography since high school. She was very passionate about portrait photography and was taking any opportunity to take portraits; the grades of the photography courses in the school were always higher than those of other courses. Graduating from



university, she decided to obtain more practical experiences by working in a studio with a professional photographer and immediately began working.

Six years of work in that studio turned her into a very ‘*experienced photographer*’ as she explained herself, since she has been familiar with not only taking photos but also how the whole business works. Besides, she had made a good *reputation* in her city and so many people knew her and admired her for her good job.

“I learned the job from zero to hundred and there were many people who considered me a professional photographer”.

**The journey of becoming a mompreneur:** She felt that more *success* was awaiting her if she took steps further and ran her own photography studio. However, she had her own worries to begin whether it would work. yet, Nasim acknowledged that experience, *connection* and admiration of people made her very *confident* and many of her friends *persuaded* her to do her own business and work independently.

She further explains that she did not face many challenges on her journey to become self-employed, except the unprofessional behavior of her previous employer who denied to write for her work experience letter which she was required to have to be able to register her own business. She believed this behavior is due to unequal behavior of *society* towards *women* which allows men to put women’s abilities down. However, based on her admittance, that that was the only challenge in this regard and other male friends were very supportive and could easily get along with a female entrepreneur “*I did not confront any gender inequality in my path*” she said. Nevertheless, this inequality did not impact on her viewpoint about herself, she was not discouraged to become a mompreneur and accept another role in addition to the mother role.



she further shared her feelings as she was very *proud* of herself because at that time she was the only photographer who owned a Studio and she considered herself a *role model* for other women living in Kerman city and her bravery encouraged other women to break the limiting norms of the society.

“This job filled me with more confidence, power, pride and independence and the number of women photographers who opened their own Studio escalated by my movement”.

### **Narrative 7**

#### **Vaheedeh. H, Coffee shop, Iran**

About Vahideh: 33-year old, divorced Iranian woman and mother to a 9-year-old daughter as well as being the owner of a coffee shop in a small city in Iran called Sirjan. Her educational background is accounting.

**A Flashback:** Her work journey started as a kindergarten teacher and took 7 years, then after she got divorced she suffered shortage in *finance* and life expenses were higher than what she was earning and it was not easy to manage life financially. Therefore, the idea of a coffee shop business started.

**The journey of becoming a mompreneur:** her *family situation such as being a divorced woman* made her struggle to find a second income due to male dominance in Iran even though she was not confident enough to think of running a business herself.

However, she was very good at baking, cooking and as a traditional Iranian housewife she was very hospitable which these features assisted her from the beginning of the process till end. A coffee shop called ‘coffee-gallery’ was



opened specialized for different artistic activities such as theatre performances, painting gallery, architecture exhibition and so on. The visitors and customers were a part of society who knew art and were interested in them to some extent. She managed the business all alone with difficulties as she mentioned.

“It was very hard to start a business despite your low-confidence but for the sake of the family and my child, I had never thought of myself being an entrepreneur and dealing with customers specially men in such a small city”.

She explained that she used to see herself a mother whose main role is to be a good mother and stay at home since this is what a good mother is supposed to do, but due to the current situation she had to work. However, her viewpoint about herself changes after she becomes a mompreneur.

My *self-confidence* increased dramatically, and I could trust my abilities for the first time in my life. I was not the shy woman as I used to be and was communicating with a lot of people on a daily basis. Moreover, my child’s self- confidence was rising too since she was with me there and her communicational skills went up. Therefore, I was more determined than before to continue my business and improve it.

“Now I feel that a good mothering does not contradict with entrepreneurship”.

To summarize, the narration of those mompreneurs lead to more understanding of their attitude and their motivations for engaging in entrepreneurial activities. And a better recognition of those mothers’ perceptions regarding their entrepreneurial identities, and how they view themselves regarding their social and role identity in the society they reside in, which is the Middle East. In the following section a narrative analysis is performed in order to reflect those mompreneurs narratives to the entrepreneurial identity, motivations and





external factors found in literature. It's expected that such analysis results would be also interrelated with the typology of entrepreneurial identity.

#### 4.2 Narrative Analysis and discussion

In this section the analysis is undertaken based on the understanding of the narratives and their interpretation, in reflection to the existing theories and studies discussed in the theoretical framework.

The narratives of the mothers will be analyzed in order to reach an answer to the two research questions. Mompreneurs' perception of the Entrepreneurial Identity. The first research question *'how do Mompreneurs in the Middle East perceive their entrepreneurial identity?'* will be answered. As it was elaborated, the entrepreneurial identity of individuals includes both social and role identity which indicates that how much individuals are engaged in entrepreneurial activity is driven by 'who they are' that finally leads to 'what they do' according to Owalla (2017). In order to discover the entrepreneurial identity of mompreneurs, we need to discover how they interpret, reflect upon and think about what they do and how they express themselves in the coexistence of entrepreneurship and 'motherhood' Duberley and Carrigan (2013) states.

Moreover, as it was elaborated in the literature, the entrepreneurial identity is not formed in the solo and there are internal and external factors which influence the way people view and identify themselves. However, the focus will be on the motivations as internal factors since most of the literature talks about motivations as factors that have a huge impact on the entrepreneurial identity of people (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011) and studying the motivations of entrepreneurs as internal factors can change the individual's entrepreneurial identity (Powell and Baker, 2014). Therefore, in this section the entrepreneurial identity of the seven interviewed samples will be analyzed



according to their narratives and the motivations which impacted them and the identity they obtain will also be discussed.

## **Narrative 1 Analysis**

Her Entrepreneurial Identity: She was a woman who has created a new entrepreneurial identity after she went through a role conflict. This conflict was because her role as a mother has limited her role as an employee. Which is related to what Duberley and Carrigan (2013) argue that many mothers who have created a new entrepreneurial identity went through a period of role conflict in which establishing their identities as new mothers created tension with their old roles in large as full-time employees. Despite the conflict she faced, she identified herself as a mother who is totally a mompreneur too, and she appreciates the fact that she owns two roles as being both a mother and a businesswoman and this term matches her reality perfectly.

She was motivated towards holding the entrepreneurial Identity by the following motivation categories that were discussed by Jean and Forbes (2012): Work-Life Balance was her motivation which is considered as Forced motivators where she faced the unhappiness with her prior work, and imbalance between her work and her family and she has the desire for more stability since the work does not offer her flexibility. Therefore, entrepreneurship gave her a chance to fulfill her desires to manage her life easier and be able to maintain the balance between motherhood and work. As Holienka, Pilková and Jancovicová (2016) stated that the new entrepreneurial Identity of mothers make them to be able to fulfill the desire of being a good mom as well as being an independent businesswoman. In addition, Social networks surrounding her played an important role in how she found courage to overcome her fears of risk and to step in the process of having an entrepreneurial Identity.



In reflection to identity, we can say that Narrative 1 in her attempt to find a solution to her struggle and thinking about how to get the balance between her uncontrollable conditions at work and her new condition of being a mother fits in the typologies introduced by Owalla (2017) as Solution seeker Entrepreneur, where Mompreneurs who are categorized under this type are the ones who choose entrepreneurship as a solution for solving the specific problems. Problems might be financial issues, unhappiness with prior job, work life balance, and etc.

## **Narrative 2 Analysis**

Her Entrepreneurial Identity: She was a woman who had the entrepreneurial spirit inside her. She had the expertise to succeed in starting up her first business and the same way for her second, and the entrepreneurial choice was her priority. After becoming a mother, her motherhood role did not interrupt her to pursue her real spirit of her Entrepreneurial Identity. Thus, she has totally identified herself as mompreneur and she appreciates the fact that she owns two roles as being both as mothers and businesswomen, and this matches her desire as Duberley and Carrigan (2013) mentioned in their studies about mompreneurs identity. She did not identify her-self as a 'full-time mom', instead she was clear that her identity as a business woman exceeded her mother role but did not ignore it. She was motivated towards holding the entrepreneurial Identity of a mompreneur by the following motivation categories that were discussed by Jean and Forbes (2012):



Expertise in Consulting: Her motivation for becoming a mompreneur is following the Intrinsic motivators factors where she has the passion to use her specific skills and experience, to do something independently by starting her consultancy office, and then to create something for her children through finding her ability to manage her two businesses that fulfilled her ambition. Because she has the entrepreneurial experience, which as a result motivated her to discover an opportunity, which is in according to Nielsen, et al. (2017) that some people have certain attributes that make it more likely than others that they will find or create the opportunity and pursue It through organizing a business and transit the opportunity into entrepreneurship. And based on GEM (2019/2020) there are few people who rarely see opportunity and few who rarely act when they do see opportunity. However, she found out that there is a market demand which is the absence of a certain type of sweets assortments. She built trust in this opportunity and reacted to the demand by creating her own line of assortments with specific ingredients that were on demand by many people, and thus started to build her own entrepreneurial identity as an owner to the business.

Plus, she has the motivation to independently manage her own work and that is how she discovered her business opportunity, which falls under the category of the Classic motivators which consist of independence and freedom tendencies, control over one's life, the need for higher challenge in life, the need to have higher financial ambitions and financial opportunity, an explored business opportunity, and the desire to become one's own boss. According to Nielsen, et al. (2017) some people have certain attributes that make it more likely than others that they will find or create the opportunity and pursue It through organizing a business and transit the opportunity into entrepreneurship. She had the expertise to succeed in starting up her first business having got a Master's degree in Electrical Engineering allowed her to start up her own business, a consultancy agency for electrical engineering



In reflection to the identity presented by Owalla (2017), and When interpreting her narratives and how she expresses herself, Informed Entrepreneurs where she is motivated by her expertise in a given field, and her previous practical experience in engineering, and her previous entrepreneurial experience. She wanted to use her expertise in her own way and her expertise gave her confidence not to hesitate and start her business.

### **Narrative 3 Analysis**

Her Entrepreneurial Identity: She was certain about her identity as a mompreneur, and she appreciates the fact that she owns two roles as being both as mothers and businesswomen. Her identity was a mixture of motherhood and work and not only one of them. She also Therefore according to Richomme-huet and Vial (2014) Her Mompreneur identity is where she is totally identified as mompreneur, and she owns two roles as being both as mothers and businesswomen and this term.

Just similar to Narrative 2, She was motivated towards holding the entrepreneurial Identity by Classic motivators which consist of independence and control over her own life, the need for higher challenge in life where she will make something for her society where she explored her business opportunity. Expertise in teaching: She was also motivated by the Intrinsic motivators factors where she used her specific experience as a teacher, to do something independently by starting a Kindergarten, and then to create something for her children which fulfilled her need of a mompreneur under the categories discussed by Jean and Forbes (2012) earlier.



Although she is in such a case following the categorization of an Informed Entrepreneur where she is motivated by her expertise as a teacher, she decided to open a kindergarten to use her expertise. In addition, she fit more under the are motivated by their desire to make a difference in society and to make a social impact. Therefore, their entrepreneurial identity can be activated and triggered by the external socio-economic environment which directs them in the pursuit of a solution to the societal or environmental problem. where she wanted to change the way kid education was implemented, and she has the passion to create a social change, where she wants to have an impact on society. As she contributed in opening one of the first kindergarten in her area and thus contributed in the development of her society. Missionary entrepreneurs according to Owalla (2017) are motivated by their desire to make a difference in society and to make a social impact. Therefore, their entrepreneurial identity can be activated and triggered by the external socio-economic environment which directs them in the pursuit of a solution to the societal or environmental problem.

## **Narrative 4 Analysis**

Her Entrepreneurial Identity: She identified herself totally as a mother whose main role is being a mother, but she had to accept another role other than being a mother and work. However, entrepreneurship was her solution for staying at home with her children because of her marital status, and society did not support her. which is in accordance to Duberley and Carrigan (2013) where many mothers who have created a new entrepreneurial identity went through a period of role conflict in their identities as new mothers that created tension with their old roles in large as full-time employees fits with her situation.



The fact that she was struggling financially, and her mother's role was forcing her to be with her kids, her strongest motivation to solve her problem was to start a business, where she found another way to manage her life. Forced motivators in this case pushed her towards entrepreneurship as Jean and Forbes (2012) mention that Forced motivators included unhappiness with prior work or imbalance between work and family, health problems and the desire for more stability and since the traditional workforce does not allow them to have such significant flexibility.

Therefore, her entrepreneurial identity falls under the Solution Seeker Entrepreneur category based on the classification of Owalla (2017) where entrepreneurs are motivated by the desire to find a solution to a personal problem, and the need for financial resources is the need for this case.

## **Narrative 5 Analysis**

Her Entrepreneurial Identity: She was a very independent woman who did not place herself in only one limiting role as a mother and had more expectation from herself. She sees herself a woman who can and should achieve her goals while having a family is not an obstacle for her on the path of becoming an entrepreneur, she believes that she deserves to succeed more and gain greater accomplishments because she has outstanding abilities. Motherhood encouraged her other than restricting her to start working on her own. Therefore, according to Richomme-huet and Vial (2014), these types of mothers are totally identified as mompreneurs, and they appreciate the fact that they own two roles as being both as mothers and businesswomen and this term matches their reality perfectly.



Moreover, there are certain motivations that have an impact on her viewpoint about who she is and what she does which will be discussed as follows:

Rich experiences from previous jobs made her a confident woman who was trusting her abilities and wished to use her skills. Jean and Forbes (2012) name these intrinsic motivators where factors such as the passion to use specific skills are categorized into this type. She was also Seeking Independence and entrepreneurship was the solution for her since she could be more independent. This fits into Classic motivators according to Jean and Forbes (2012), which consist of independence and freedom tendencies, control over one's life and the desire to become one's own boss.

Work life balance was her other motivation towards entrepreneurial decision because entrepreneurship could give her more flexible time and she could manage her schedule the way she wants. It is categorized under Work-family motivators that include the desire to be at home with family, have more flexible working life and to have more time for the family.

It can be understood from her narrative that the main factor for her choice of entrepreneurial decision was independence seeking which can be categorized under the typology of self-actualizer presented by Owalla (2017) where entrepreneurs under this category desire independence, freedom and autonomy in order to express their self-identity.

### **Narrative 6 Analysis**

Her Entrepreneurial Identity: she was very happy with the fact that she has the capability of becoming an entrepreneur and was proud of it. Her entrepreneurial identity was not an unprofessional reality of her life, instead it





gave her more meaning to her life since she could even change the life of other women in her society. Therefore, according to Richomme-huet and Vial (2014) these mothers are totally identified as mompreneurs, and they are grateful that they possess two roles as being both as mothers and businesswomen. Moreover, she has motives which had an impact on her entrepreneurial identity.

Expertise in Photography: photography was her favorite major since the high school period and she upskilled herself in this major by working as an employee. Now she considers herself an expert who can open her own business and succeed. Thus, she possesses Intrinsic motivation based on the classification of Jean and Forbes (2012), where factors such as the passion to use specific skills is the desire to become an entrepreneur. Based on her motivation for becoming an entrepreneur, we could classify her identity under the typology of informed entrepreneurs shown by Owalla (2017) where Mompreneurs in this category are motivated to become entrepreneurs due to the expertise in a specific field they built through either study or work experiences.

## **Narrative 7 Analysis**

Her Entrepreneurial Identity: She was identified with the idea that a good mother stays at home and spends as much time as needed with her kids, she thought that mothers should not accept another role in society other than motherhood. According to Richomme-huet and Vial (2014) Mompreneurship for some women is unprofessional and they should only stick to their motherhood identity. She assumed that entrepreneurial identity would create a conflict from the combination of roles. However, there were factors that pushed her to become an entrepreneur even though she did not eagerly wish to become one.



Financial issue was her strongest motivation to overcome her fear and start a business, she felt that her salary does not pay the bills and she has to look for another way to manage her life. Forced motivators in this case pushed her towards entrepreneurship as Jean and Forbes (2012) mention that Forced motivators included unhappiness with prior work or imbalance between work and family, health problems and the desire for more stability and since the traditional workforce does not allow them to have such significant flexibility. In addition, her entrepreneurial identity is Solution Seeker Entrepreneur based on the classification of Owalla (2017) where these entrepreneurs are motivated by the desire to find a solution to a personal problem. The need for financial resources is the need for this case.

The following Table demonstrates the summary of how these narratives are categorized based on (Motivation to entrepreneurship, recognition of entrepreneurship identity and entrepreneurial identity typologies). And we can thus interpret based on the results that the majority of samples identified themselves as being totally Mompreneurs and they appreciate their role as a mother and a business owner. And that they have different motivations (Forced, Intrinsic, classic and work-family) for those Mompreneurs who have Forced motivations ended to be under the typology of a Solution-Seeker entrepreneur which could reflect the following results

First, Three out of seven samples are motivated by forced motivations and they are under Solution -seeker entrepreneurs. which reflect that the samples of mothers who have Forced motivations to entrepreneurship were seeking a certain solution they are struggling with, so they all fall under the Solution -seeker entrepreneurs.



Second, three samples have Intrinsic motivations and they are Informed Entrepreneurs. The samples of Mothers who have Intrinsic motivations fall under the typology of Informed Entrepreneurs. Which could reflect that mothers who are motivated by their experiences, skills and expertise are motivated towards using their expertise in their entrepreneurial activity. This might result that the main driver was Intrinsic motivators.

| Narrative   | Motivation to entrepreneurship                  | Identity of a mother or, a Mompreneur | Entrepreneurial Identity typology |
|-------------|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Narrative 1 | Forced motivations                              | Identified herself as a Mompreneur.   | Solution--seeker Entrepreneur     |
| Narrative 2 | Intrinsic motivations and Classic motivations   | Identified herself as a Mompreneur    | Informed Entrepreneur             |
| Narrative 3 | Intrinsic motivations and Classic motivations   | Identified herself as a Mompreneur    | informed Entrepreneur             |
| Narrative 4 | Forced motivations                              | Identified herself as a mother.       | Solution-Seeker entrepreneur      |
| Narrative 5 | Classic motivations and Work-family motivations | Identified herself as a Mompreneur.   | Self-actualizer Entrepreneur      |
| Narrative 6 | intrinsic motivation                            | Identified herself as a Mompreneur.   | informed entrepreneur             |
| Narrative 7 | Forced motivators                               | Identified herself as a mother.       | Solution-Seeker entrepreneur      |

Table 2. The Mompreneurs 'Narrative analysis - by authors 17.06.2020

The study can be demonstrated in the following figure.

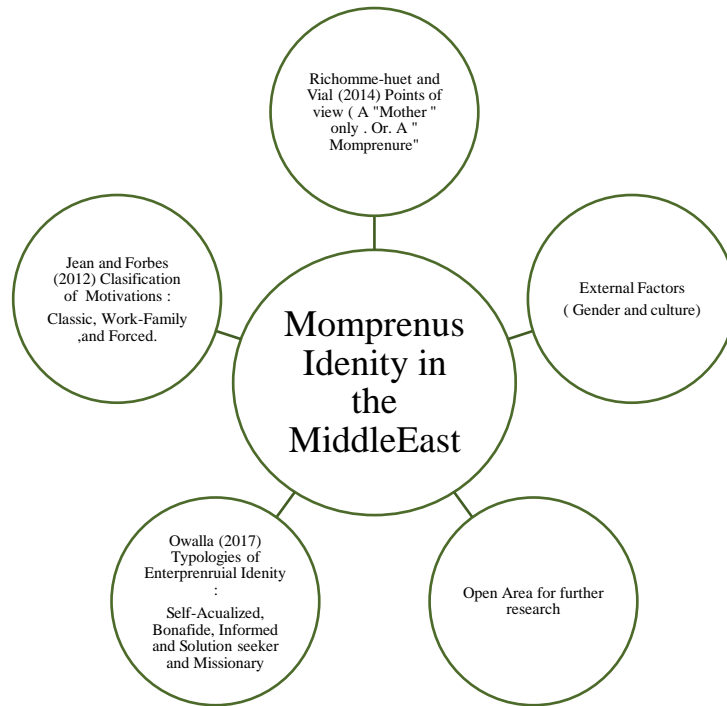


Figure 2. Understanding the Momprenuers's Identity in the Middle East, created by authors 20.05.2020

#### 4.3 Contextual influence of gender role on Momprenuers's entrepreneurial identity

In this section the second question of the research will be answered: 'How the entrepreneurial identity of mothers was affected by gender distinction' in the Middle East. As it was discussed previously, according to the social constructionist and poststructuralist feminist theory each culture has their own proper rules for gender behaviors and the rules about gender go beyond men and women and include professions and entrepreneurship as well according to Ahl (2006). For instance, as Mondiale (2007) mentioned, the law regulations



that rule families in the Middle East consider women as 'legal minors' on the basis that men are responsible for the family. Women's prime role is then being mothers, and it is basically related to the 'family'. Therefore, mothers are meant to stay at home and not to work. However, In this study the cases were not affected by this attitude of the society since five out of seven narratives considered themselves as Mompreneurs without any conflict in their identities. The view of the society that limits the activity of Mothers under the cover of the family where mothers' main role is to stay at home and take care of the children and husband was not discovered as a contradictory factor for the identity of mompreneurs in this study. Thus, the cases did not believe in relating femininity and masculinity to entrepreneurial behavior, instead they related independence, confidence, expertise, and freedom to the entrepreneurial identity. Their entrepreneurial activities are not restricted by how society views them and what the culture of the Middle East expects from them. The identity of an entrepreneur was added to their identity of motherhood and even motherhood encouraged some of them to become an entrepreneur.

## 5 Conclusion

The purpose of this specific study was to discover how mothers in the Middle East 'understand' their entrepreneurial identity based on the results and our interpretation of the mothers' narratives. In addition, the impact of the social constructionist and poststructuralist feminist theory, which mentions that some culture including Middle east have their own rules for gender behaviors related to entrepreneurial activities according to Ahl (2006) were evaluated as well.



To reach the result of the study, in addition to entrepreneurial identity theory, the influence of motivations as internal factors, and gender discrimination as an external factor were assessed through the stories of cases in the narratives. According to the literature, Entrepreneurial identity is made of both social and role identity which also indicates that people might have several identities, and thus several role identities could be occupied by individuals.

The study builds on previous research about what is Identity (Burke and Stets 2009; Orser et. al, 2011; Burke and Stets, 2009; Brush & Gale, 2015) and explaining the Role Identity (Watson, 2013; Stets & Burke, 2000) and the social Identity (Brush & Gale, 2015; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Jones and Ratten ,2019) that are interrelated to the recognition of entrepreneurial identity that people take (Brush & Gale,2015; Stets & Burken,2000; Watson, 2008 cited in Owalla 2017; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Lewis,2016).

Further, even though identity is personal, it happens in the interaction with other people, therefore, it is influenced by several factors as Internal and External Factors. Internal factors include motivations (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011 cited in Alsos, et.al,2016) which are recognized to lead to the Entrepreneurial Identity combined with the influence of Gender (Ahl ,2006; Ahl ,2012; Mondiale, 2007; Brush, 2009, Welter ,2009)) as an external factor. And the Entrepreneurial Identity (Ashe et al., 2011; Erogul, et. al, 2019; Vesalainen and Pihkala ,1999) lead towards the understanding of the Mompreneurs' Identity (Duberley and Carrigan, 2013; Jean and Forbes,2012; Foley, et al., 2017). The Typologies of the Entrepreneurial Identity (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011 cited in Owalla,2017) classify women under different identities according to what motivates them.



The methodology utilized in this study is ‘Abductive Approach’ (Dorst, 2011) where we have organized their narratives (Czarniawska, 2004; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Polkinghorne, 1988; Söderberg, 2006) and connected what they have said to what we have read from previous research. The discussion of the research focused extremely on cases that are limited to certain contexts within the middle east.

Using the theories and methodologies we explained above, the research questions were answered. RQ1: How do Mompreneurs in the Middle East perceive their entrepreneurial identity? and RQ2 ‘How the entrepreneurial identity of mothers was affected by gender distinction’ in the Middle East which fits into understanding of existing theories and studies in the theoretical framework. Question one’s answer is that according to our samples, the majority of mothers in the Middle East view themselves as mompreneurs whose primary role is not only motherhood and that they are not limited to this role. Their entrepreneurial identity was not considered a taboo that they should avoid or they should not take it if they wish.

Further, as it was said before, that entrepreneurial identity of individuals is affected by the motivations they have, the cases were categorized according to the various motivations they owned and we could conclude that a certain type of motivation was not considered as a dominant. A certain motivation made the mothers be categorized under the same typology, where we could categorize motivations under the classification of the typologies presented by Owalla (2017) that were described. This way we could specify their entrepreneurial identity more clearly.

The results showed that mompreneurs who are motivated by forced factors fall under the category of solution seeker entrepreneurial identity which can be interpreted that the mothers whose difficulties in life force them to be an



entrepreneur actually have the solution seeker entrepreneurial identity. Furthermore, the intrinsic motivations build the informed entrepreneurial identity, meaning that an individual with a certain type of skill or expertise view themselves as people who wish to use their skills to create something new for themselves in order to manifest their capability.

The results regarding the second question also showed that even though in the culture of the Middle East, where the entrepreneurial activities of the people are related to the concept of femininity and masculinity according to the social constructionist and poststructuralist feminist theory, our samples except two, were not affected by the norm of the society since five mothers were totally satisfied with the entrepreneurial role and did not show any conflict rising from their femininity and the limitation which exist in the society they reside in. Two of the cases argue that a good mother's main responsibility is to stay at home and look after the family. However, the results were unexpected regarding the literature and gender theories discussed by different authors in the culture of the Middle east.

## 6 Limitation of the Study

This study was limited by several factors: the result of the study is built based on the seven cases from the Middle East in which the sample size is considered small, and the results cannot be generalized to the vast population of the Middle East. However, due to the limited time due the unexpected situation (CORONAVIRUS) since this research is taking place in parallel with the spread of virus worldwide and since there are strict restrictions placed on flights and travelling we could not conduct face to face interviews especially those in the infected areas. it was not possible to include more cases thus





having more participants to this research. Thus, Further studies could be carries with more participants for the same purpose of the study.

## 7 Research Future contribution

The contribution of our findings will be opening the door for further studies on a broader scale to cover a wider range of motivations, and a wider range of identity theories that would reflect the identities of mothers in the context of the Middle East. This study will be by adding to the existing research about momprenurship within the context of the Middle East. It might also contribute with its results into momprenurship identity further research, or on a narrower scale on more motivations and typologies research in motherhood entrepreneurship with a concentration on the Middle east. The significance of this study is that the areas chosen to cover a variety of characteristics of respondents from different entrepreneurial backgrounds will bring more reliable and fruitful results since entrepreneurship motivations of a number of entrepreneurial women will be evaluated in the Middle East where the gap is.



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