

# Impact, Challenges, and Prospects of Networking on Social Entrepreneurship in Pakistan

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## Abstract

Social entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in addressing societal challenges and promoting sustainable development, particularly in Pakistan, where it holds significant potential for economic empowerment, social protection, poverty alleviation, and economic growth. Despite this potential, the full impact of social entrepreneurship is often limited by a lack of understanding and inadequate networking. This study examines the challenges that social entrepreneurs in Rawalpindi, the third largest city in Punjab province, and Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, face in establishing effective networks and how these challenges affect their contribution to sustainable development. A quantitative research approach was employed, with data gathered from 100 social entrepreneurs selected via snowball sampling. The data, collected through a self-administered questionnaire, was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to evaluate reliability and explore statistically significant relationships through chi-square tests. The findings indicate that various networking challenges, such as insufficient partnerships with fellow social entrepreneurs, weak connections with corporate organizations, limited engagement with government bodies, inadequate international collaboration and mentorship, and underutilization of social networking platforms, significantly hinder social entrepreneurial activities. This research offers valuable insights into the specific networking barriers that impede the effectiveness of social entrepreneurs in Pakistan, providing a foundation for stakeholders to develop targeted interventions that enhance the role of social entrepreneurship in advancing sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Networking, Pakistan, Social Change, Social Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Development.

## Introduction

In Pakistan, social entrepreneurship (SE), which integrates business strategies with social development goals, is still relatively new but gaining significant traction among business leaders and community-focused individuals. This emerging field offers a unique opportunity to embed social missions into commercial activities, driving sustainable development across the nation (1). It is particularly crucial in addressing societal issues such as education, healthcare, and food security by leveraging business models for financing and marketing to aid marginalized populations. Despite its long history in Europe and the United States, SE remains nascent in Pakistan, primarily due to a lack of governmental and academic support and limited public awareness. SE requires collaboration and partnerships to connect with diverse stakeholders and address resource gaps (2). In Pakistan, a developing nation, sustainable SE is vital for driving economic growth

and promoting sustainable development. SE creates social enterprises (SEs) by social entrepreneurs, to drive positive social impact and economy, but these initiatives often face challenges like inadequate infrastructure, funding, skilled labor, and government support. Additionally, limited access to networks hinders collaboration, knowledge sharing, and potential funding sources. Social entrepreneurs in Pakistan rely on collaboration and partnerships, but their effectiveness remains underexplored (3). SE is vital for addressing societal challenges and promoting sustainable development in Pakistan. However, social entrepreneurs need strong networks to overcome obstacles and achieve lasting impact. The success of SE is often hindered by inadequate networking. Networking provides access to funding, mentorship, and knowledge sharing, helping SEs overcome resource challenges and drive collaboration and innovation (4).

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In Pakistan, networking is a crucial factor for the success of SEs, as it enables partnerships, resource acquisition, and long-term sustainability. Social entrepreneurs depend on their networks for access to funding, mentorship, and collaboration. However, the absence of a well-established networking infrastructure presents significant challenges, particularly for nascent ventures, which often struggle to gain recognition and trust from donors and investors due to limited portfolios and affiliations. Entrepreneurs without strong ties to influential networks are at a disadvantage, as organizations with connections to established figures face fewer obstacles in securing resources. This lack of network support hinders the growth and scalability of new or less connected SEs in Pakistan. So, economic growth can be driven by enhancing both social and economic dimensions, with SEs crucial for fostering social change and prosperity. However, there is limited research on the challenges and opportunities faced by SEs in Pakistan. Policymakers view SEs as crucial for poverty alleviation and driving social change but understanding and support for SEs in Pakistan remain limited (5). Though SE is a growing field in Pakistan, but many enterprises face challenges, including limited access to networks and investors due to a lack of awareness, hindering their ability to secure funding. However, there are positive signs, with a trend towards innovation and expansion, as many SEs plan to grow. This growth highlights the need for improved access to appropriate financial resources and collaboration with the government, particularly in education and healthcare (6).

SEs have the potential to address Pakistan's social challenges, but the country lacks substantial academic research on the critical role of networks and collaborations within its rapidly evolving SE sector. This study examines the significance of networks and the influence of networking obstacles on the sustainability of SEs in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan, an area that has received less attention compared to neighboring regions. Specifically, the research will investigate the influence of various networking factors, including partnerships, government support, online platforms, local and international connections, and mentorship, on the overall success and social impact of these enterprises. By identifying these

barriers, the study aims to inform stakeholders on developing interventions to foster stronger networks within the SE ecosystem, to accelerate Pakistan's progress towards sustainable development.

### **Social Entrepreneurship (SE)**

In recent years, SEs have gained attention from policymakers, opinion leaders, and researchers. SE, while lacking a universally accepted definition, generally involves identifying societal needs and developing viable solutions, thereby creating social and economic value. Social entrepreneurs focus on mission-oriented impacts and seize opportunities to drive change. By blending business principles with social responsibility, SE fosters sustainable projects and societal benefits. Ultimately, this approach helps societies flourish by addressing critical needs and creating resources for development (7).

According to Mair *et al.*, SE encompasses diverse activities: individuals creating positive change, for-profit ventures with social missions, innovative philanthropists, and nonprofits adopting business practices (8). SE research, however, is a newer field with limited opportunities for scholarly exchange. Social entrepreneurs tackle social issues through innovative business models. They prioritize social value creation, with economic benefits as a secondary outcome. The business model provides solutions for organizational sustainability, a challenge for social entrepreneurs due to uncertain market conditions and limited value delivery scope. It focuses on creating, delivering, and capturing value, reflecting how an enterprise meets customer needs profitably. Social entrepreneurs, driven by social justice, may or may not be market-oriented, but they utilize business principles and social innovation to address issues like poverty and environmental degradation (9).

### **Comparative Analysis of Business Entrepreneurship and Social Entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurs tackle social issues for positive change, using profits to fuel their mission. Business entrepreneurs target markets for profit and profit itself is the main metric for success. Table 1 explores the key differences between the two.

**Table 1:** Key Distinctions between Business and Social Entrepreneurship (10, 11)

Feature	Business Entrepreneurship	Social Entrepreneurship
Goal	Capture a market securely	Fill a market gap and create positive social change
Objective	Build a business and earn a profit	Create solutions for social change
Profit Motive	Maximize shareholder value	Advance social aims; profit for sustainability
Risk	Basic business risk	Basic business risk + social impact risk
Social Problems	Indirect links	Direct solutions
Feedback	Established market sources	Creative methods needed
Competition	“Win” over competitors	“Win” for society by solving a problem
Growth	Competitive for one company	Collaborative for social impact
Capital	Robust financial services	Unpredictable and fragmented financing
Nature/Founders	Typically individual	Can be individual or collective
Focus	Market-driven	Social problem-driven
Performance	Profit	Social impact
Value Creation	Economic	Social (economic value is a secondary outcome)

Table 1 highlights key differences between business and SE, analyzing goals, objectives, profit motives, risks, and other factors. It contrasts the market-driven, profit-focused nature of business

entrepreneurship with the social problem-driven, impact-focused approach of SE. While distinct, these ventures share some commonalities. Table 2 explores these similarities.

**Table 2:** Key similarities between business and social entrepreneurs (3, 12)

Similarities	Description
Visionary	Both dream big and have a strong belief in their ideas.
Risk-Takers	Both are willing to take chances. Business entrepreneurs risk their financial capital, while social entrepreneurs may take on additional risks in tackling social issues.
Creative	They are imaginative and resourceful in developing new ideas and processes.
Enthusiastic	They are passionate and dedicated to achieving their goals.
Team Builders	Both build and lead effective teams.
Relationship Builders	They understand the importance of relationships. Business entrepreneurs leverage relationships to generate profits, while social entrepreneurs build relationships to create social change.

Table 2 shows several key similarities between business and social entrepreneurs. Both types of entrepreneurs are visionary and enthusiastic about their ventures. They are willing to take risks and are creative problem-solvers. Additionally, they are skilled at building strong teams and fostering relationships, which are essential for success in any entrepreneurial endeavor. However, their motivations and the focus of their relationships may differ.

### **The Network Approach to Social Entrepreneurship: Importance of Networking**

Organizational networking is a powerful tool for social entrepreneurs. It grants them access to social capital; the benefits gained from positive

relationships. These connections can be transformed into valuable resources. Additionally, networks can lend credibility to new ventures that haven't yet established a reputation. Legitimacy is earned when an organization's actions are seen as appropriate within a social framework. This perception of trustworthiness and meaning is crucial for audiences to understand and engage with the organization (13). Forming strong networks is vital for the success of SEs, as they provide essential resources, partnerships, and support that empower entrepreneurs to overcome challenges, address poverty, and seize opportunities. In Pakistan, social entrepreneurs use various networking tactics, from informal connections to formal alliances with NGOs,

industry, universities, and government. Cross-sector collaborations are vital for fostering innovation and sustainability in the social enterprise sector in Pakistan (14). SEs use their networks to expand into new markets. However, Pakistan requires more research and public awareness to better understand its challenges and opportunities (15). Therefore, social entrepreneurs benefit from building connections with others. These networks can be formal collaborations with other organizations or simply close relationships with people who share similar goals. By connecting with experienced individuals or entities from various backgrounds, social entrepreneurs can gain valuable knowledge and insights. This expanded knowledge helps them develop their ventures further, identify new opportunities, and operate more efficiently. Networking also reduces costs, opens doors to new possibilities, and fosters the sharing of valuable knowledge (16).

Robust social networks are vital for launching any social enterprise. Effective social networks can help connect SEs to essential resources like permits, professional advice, funding, and investors. This can maximize the use of local resources and improve the chances of success for these ventures (17). Additionally, building connections between businesses, non-profits, and the public can boost social good. SE aims to enhance corporate social responsibility (CSR) by transforming companies into more effective drivers of positive social change. These partnerships create networks where organizations work together for shared benefit (18). As a result, social entrepreneurs can benefit from building strong networks. Comparable to multinational corporations, SEs commonly encounter resource limitations in accomplishing their organizational goals. By establishing collaborative connections with other entities and individuals, social entrepreneurs can acquire access to novel resources, knowledge, and support. Moreover, networks can assist SEs in cultivating the trust and credibility that are essential for their success (19). For instance, an Indian study of 63 SEs found strong networks boosted marketing (32% effect) and other areas like human resource, risk, community, and social value creation, with an 18% effect on financial independence. This highlights networking's importance for SEs' success,

particularly new ones, in achieving their social goals as collaborative networks with organizations, corporations, and governments, along with peer networks, are crucial for fostering opportunities for the success of SEs (20). So, SEs often collaborate to access diverse resources that complement their own. This leverages their existing networks and relationships to gain additional resources and create greater value. As SEs, especially new ones, typically have limited resources, partnerships allow them to expand their capabilities and achieve greater impact (21).

### **The Importance of Digital Platforms for SEs Networking**

Social entrepreneurs use digital platforms for crowdfunding and resource access (22). Digital technologies have enhanced social entrepreneurs' visibility and growth opportunities by connecting them with broader networks and funders, especially through crowdfunding. This shift helps social ventures attract diverse funders and strengthen their networks (23). Digital technology enables businesses to expand their reach and networks, creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs, including innovation financing (24). A study developed a framework of 12 propositions to explore how social networking sites (SNSs) influence entrepreneurs' ability to build social capital. The findings highlight that SNSs provide unique advantages for expanding and managing networks, emphasizing the need to understand online social capital (25). Another study in India explored how SEs can leverage technology to address sustainable development goals in peri-urban areas lacking basic amenities. By utilizing digital technologies, SEs can broaden their reach, forge partnerships, and drive sustainable transformations (26).

### **Comparative Perspectives: Pakistan's Social Entrepreneurship and Networking**

SEs are gaining traction in Asia, with increasing activity in social start-ups and finance, though quantitative data on their impact is limited. Comparing Pakistan with Bangladesh, where effective networking has fostered notable SEs like Grameen Bank and BRAC, can provide valuable insights into successful hybrid models that achieve a dual bottom line (27). The "BRAC model" integrates enterprises, development programs,

and investments, forming a synergistic network vital for social enterprise success. Its emphasis on strong internal networks fosters sustainability and self-sufficiency (28). Furthermore, In Bangladesh, SEs have flourished through strong networking, especially with microfinance institutions. The institutional network, based on social network theory, consists of interconnected focal and principal networks that facilitate effective collaboration and growth (29). Similarly, India has leveraged government initiatives to strengthen SEs by connecting them with investors and incubators. Through partnerships with SEs, the government addresses complex social issues and drives economic growth, exemplified by programs like the Common Service Centre (CSC) scheme (30). Additionally, In India, 78% of SEs plan to expand, and 73% aim to grow their customer base. Government initiatives like the National Skill and Entrepreneurship Policy have linked SEs with impact investors. These SEs serve 150 million beneficiaries, with 80% reinvesting surplus, highlighting the role of collaborative networks (31). Comparing Pakistan with other countries highlights the need for stronger networking strategies. Unlike India, where SEs benefit from government-private partnerships, Pakistan's limited government support and complex regulations hinder social venture growth (32). A study on CSR in India and Pakistan shows stark differences. In India, the 2013 Companies Act mandates firms with sales over 10 billion rupees (\$131 million) to allocate 2% of profits to CSR, fostering strong networks between businesses and social entrepreneurs. In contrast, Pakistan lacks legal frameworks and awareness around CSR, limiting its potential to build strategic networks for SE (33).

### **Networks throughout the Enterprise's Life Course**

Building strong relationships is also essential for social entrepreneurs. Early on, they create networks to find help, learn new things, and build business ties. This helps them confirm their ideas, plan their ventures, and ultimately launch their businesses. These connections provide them with the tools they need to get started. While entrepreneurs may have some ideas and skills, they depend on their networks to fill in the gaps, such as knowledge, support, or ways to sell their products or services. These networks are flexible

and can be used depending on the specific needs of the business (34). Networks are a constant companion for entrepreneurs. Beyond launch, these connections fuel idea generation and information gathering, crucial for spotting new opportunities. This reliance persists – entrepreneurs tap networks for business insights, advice, and problem-solving throughout the company's life cycle. Finally, as ventures mature, founders' networks transform into inter-organizational networks, lessening reliance on direct founder involvement (35). As ventures mature, resource needs expand. Their established reputation unlocks doors, attracting resources from previously distant contacts. Even seasoned businesses crave growth fuel. Their credibility empowers them to leverage weak ties, offering a wellspring of fresh ideas and resources for continued expansion (36).

### **Networking Success: Definition and Measurement**

Networking success in SEs involves establishing and maintaining stakeholder relationships that yield benefits such as increased funding, mentorship, partnerships, and market access. It also includes forming connections that provide access to essential resources, knowledge, and support. This success is assessed by how effectively networks promote collaboration, resource exchange, and community development, with various networks fostering SE growth, innovation, and opportunities while minimizing costs and risks (37).

### **Challenges Faced by Social Enterprises (SEs)**

Newly formed businesses face significant challenges in establishing legitimacy, especially when they lack existing models. Building trust with stakeholders, navigating competition, and securing institutional support are crucial for these pioneering ventures (38). Although SEs often operate in established sectors like education and healthcare, they frequently innovate within these fields. For instance, for most of the twentieth century, commercial businesses, public organizations, and private charities operated as distinct entities within the private, public, and non-profit sectors, respectively. However, over the last thirty years, the distinctions between these sectors have increasingly blurred, leading to the

emergence of "hybrid organizations" that integrate elements of various forms. SEs, which merge business and charity, struggle to gain legitimacy and resources because they do not conform to traditional, institutionalized norms. As a result, these enterprises face unique challenges in securing recognition and support from resource providers. Their hybrid nature complicates their ability to fit within established social categories of business and charity (39).

Therefore, SEs struggle to secure traditional investments and generate initial cash flow, relying on diverse income sources like sales, grants, donations, and social impact loans. Limited resources and funding competition drive entrepreneurs to differentiate their offerings. Stakeholder cooperation can reduce competition among social ventures and increase the ability to address shared problems effectively (40). Also, Social entrepreneurs prioritize social good over profit, while commercial ventures focus on financial gain. However, both create societal benefits. SEs reinvest surpluses back into their mission, limiting investor returns compared to traditional businesses (41). So, SEs aim to address societal issues through entrepreneurial principles for positive impact. However, social entrepreneurs encounter challenges such as limited public awareness, inadequate partnerships and networking for funding, and confusion about social work, which hinder their goals (42).

## Methodology

This study used a quantitative research design to examine social and economic processes by analyzing numerical patterns (43), which encompasses methodologies such as questionnaires, structured observations, or experiments. This quantitative study investigated the influence of networking-related challenges on the contributions of SEs toward sustainable development in two major Pakistani cities in Rawalpindi, the third-largest city in Punjab province, and Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. Primary data were collected through a survey questionnaire administered to a sample of 100 social entrepreneurs operating in these two major Pakistani cities. In addition to the primary data collection, the study also leveraged a range of secondary sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and other authoritative academic materials, to contextualize the research.

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was designed and administered to gather data from 100 social entrepreneurs, who were founders of SEs in these cities. Due to the nascent stage of SE in Pakistan, a specific regulatory framework and established database for SEs are lacking, making the population indeterminate. Therefore, snowball sampling, a convenience method also known as the chain referral technique, was employed. Snowball sampling helps researchers efficiently and cost-effectively access hard-to-reach populations by leveraging connections between participants (44). Given the emerging status of SEs in Pakistan and the lack of a specific regulatory framework, researchers employed a snowball sampling approach due to the unknown population size and the absence of a comprehensive database of social entrepreneurs (45). While snowball sampling effectively accesses hard-to-reach populations, it can introduce biases. To mitigate this, the study sought a diverse sample of social entrepreneurs across sectors like education, health, and community development, using eligibility criteria from Dzomonda's study that required at least 12 months of operation, a focus on social objectives without personal profit, and registration or intent to register with the Social Development Department, as well as engagement in income-generating activities (46).

The first section of the questionnaire collected demographic data, including age, gender, education, geographic area, type of socioeconomic organization, and ownership structure. The second section identified the challenges perceived by the surveyed social entrepreneurs. The questionnaires were distributed to 100 social entrepreneurs operating in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Stringent ethical standards were upheld during data collection from participants, utilizing a self-administered questionnaire developed from reviewed literature that included closed-ended questions. To ensure the questionnaire's validity, a pilot test with a smaller sample like the target population was conducted. Collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 22.0 to assess reliability and identify statistically significant relationships through chi-square tests. Participants had experience ranging from one to several years in venture creation. Table 3 presents the demographics of the 100 social entrepreneurs in the study.

**Table 3:** Overview of Surveyed Social Entrepreneurs' Characteristics

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group	18-30	15	15.00%
	31-40	44	44.00%
	41-50	32	32.00%
	51-60+	9	9.00%
Gender of Respondents	Male	77	77.00%
	Female	23	23.00%
Educational Background	Matric and Under	15	15.00%
	FA/FSC/A-Level	35	35.00%
	Bachelors/Masters	24	24.00%
	Professional/Vocational	22	22.00%
	PhD	4	4.00%
Area of Operation	Rawalpindi (RWP)	60	60.00%
	Islamabad (ISB)	40	40.00%
Socioeconomic Organization Type	NGOs	11	11.00%
	NPO	38	38.00%
	Profit-Driven Entrepreneurship	25	25.00%
	Multi-Sector Hybrid	17	17.00%
	Others	9	9.00%
Enterprise Established	1-2 years	28	28.00%
	3-4 years	40	40.00%
	5-6 years	10	10.00%
	7-8 years	11	11.00%
	9-10+ years	11	11.00%
Ownership Structure	Sole Proprietorship	32	32.00%
	Partnership	17	17.00%
	Corporation	6	6.00%
	Non-Profit	35	35.00%
	Others	10	10.00%

### Age Group

A good representation of young entrepreneurs (18-30 years old) is present at 15%, while the largest group 44% falls between 31-40 years old in the survey. This suggests a strong presence of established social entrepreneurs with experience, alongside a promising number of emerging ventures. A significant portion 32% falls within the 41-50 age range, highlighting the involvement of mid-career individuals. While a smaller group 9%, of experienced social entrepreneurs over 51 years old are also represented.

### Gender of Respondents

The data reveals that male social entrepreneurs currently represent the majority at 77%. However,

the presence of 23% of female entrepreneurs is notable and underscores the significant role women play in driving social change through entrepreneurship.

### Educational Background

The educational background is varied. Social entrepreneurs with basic or secondary education (Matric and Under) account for 15%, while a significant portion 35% possess FA/FSC/A Level qualifications, highlighting the role of higher secondary education in the survey. A strong presence of 24% is noted among those with university degrees (BA/Masters), and social entrepreneurs with specialized skills and training relevant to their ventures are represented by the

22% with Professional/Vocational Qualifications. A small but valuable contribution comes from those with the highest level of academic qualification (PhD) at 4%. The findings suggest that SE is not exclusively pursued by individuals with university degrees, but rather draws upon diverse educational backgrounds.

### **Area of Employment**

The data in Table 3 shows a near-even split between SEs operating in Rawalpindi and Islamabad at 60% and 40% respectively. This suggests a presence of SEs in both major cities.

### **Socioeconomic Organization Type**

The SEs surveyed represent a diverse mix of motivations and approaches. Not-for-Profit Organizations (NPOs) make up the largest group 38%, followed by those with a multi-economic sector hybrid SE structure 17% and Profit-Driven Entrepreneurs 25%. This reflects a mix of motivations and approaches within the SE landscape. Interestingly, a smaller portion 11% operate under the NGO structure. SEs with a hybrid profit-generating model of 25% demonstrate innovative approaches to financial sustainability.

### **When was it Established?**

A significant portion of SEs surveyed 40% have been established within the last 3-4 years. This suggests a growing and dynamic SE sector in the region. There is a presence of both relatively new ventures (28% established within 1-2 years) and well-established organizations (11% operating for over a decade or more 9-10+ years). SEs with a mid-range operational history (5-8 years) constitute a noteworthy portion of 21%.

### **Ownership Structure**

The structure of ownership within an organization shapes the locus of control, the decision-making processes, and the diversity of stakeholder participation. Sole Proprietorships 32% are the most common ownership structure in the survey, reflecting individual leadership in many SEs. Collaboration between multiple owners (partnerships) is evident in 17% of the cases. The data shows a smaller presence of SEs with a corporate ownership structure of 6%. The finding that NPOs are the most common organizational type 38% aligns with the high percentage of non-profit ownership structures 35%. The "Others" category, encompassing 10% of ownership

structures includes Limited Liability Companies and Worker Cooperatives.

The key findings are based on the responders' characteristics presented in Table 3, the demographics of SEs in Rawalpindi and Islamabad reveal diversity. Younger males lead established ventures, but education backgrounds and business models vary. The data presented in Table 4, examines the demographic characteristics of the surveyed enterprises, using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests to elucidate the prevalence of networking challenges faced by social entrepreneurs and the nature of their impact.

## **Results**

The study identified several significant challenges faced by social entrepreneurs in Pakistan:

### **Insufficient Partnerships with Fellow Social Entrepreneurs**

Many social entrepreneurs reported difficulties in forming collaborative partnerships with other SEs in their region.

### **Weak Connections with Corporate Organizations**

Establishing connections with corporate organizations proved challenging for many SEs.

### **Limited Engagement with Government Bodies**

SEs often face difficulties in engaging with government bodies for support, funding, and policy advocacy.

### **Inadequate International Collaboration and Mentorship**

Opportunities for international collaboration and mentorship were limited, restricting the ability of SEs to learn from best practices and expand their networks beyond national borders.

### **Underutilization of Social Networking Platforms**

While social media platforms offer valuable opportunities for networking, many SEs were not fully utilizing these tools.

These challenges limited SEs' ability to access funding, mentorship, market opportunities, and collaboration, thus hindering their contribution to sustainable development.



**Table 4:** Statistical Analysis of the Surveyed Enterprise

Statement	Demographics of the Respondents						Descriptive Statistics		Chi-square Statistics			Total Number
	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Strongly Agree and Agree %	Mean	Std Dev	$\chi^2$	df	p-value	
Is the lack of networking hindering my social goals?	45	32	9	5	9	77.00%	2.01	1.251	55.714	28	.001	100
Would partnering with corporations benefit my work?	48	18	11	16	7	66.00%	2.16	1.361	55.974	28	.001	100
Is government support crucial for success?	40	24	17	12	7	64.00%	2.22	1.284	57.268	28	.001	100
Lack of online platforms hinders collaboration?	49	24	12	7	8	73.00%	2.01	1.275	56.173	28	.001	100
Absence of local events limit partnerships?	35	29	11	14	11	64.00%	2.37	1.376	55.587	28	.001	100
International collaboration is essential for growth.	34	26	15	16	9	60.00%	2.40	1.341	59.058	28	.001	100
Mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs is beneficial?	51	17	5	17	10	68.00%	2.18	1.459	56.357	28	.001	100

## Discussion

A comprehensive analysis was conducted using frequency distribution, descriptive statistics, and chi-square tests.

### Lack of Networking Hindering Social Goals

The first hypothesis examined whether the lack of networking hinders the ability of social entrepreneurs to achieve their social goals. The results indicated that 45% of respondents strongly agreed, and 32% agreed with this statement, totaling 77% agreement. The mean score was 2.01 with a standard deviation of 1.251, suggesting a consensus towards agreement with some variation in responses. The chi-square value ( $\chi^2$ ) was 55.714 with 28 degrees of freedom (df) and a p-value of 0.001. This low p-value indicates a statistically significant relationship, confirming that the lack of networking indeed hinders the achievement of social goals.

### Partnering with Corporations Benefiting Work

For the second hypothesis, 48% of respondents strongly agreed and 18% agreed that partnering with corporations would benefit their work, with a total agreement of 66%. The mean score was 2.16, and the standard deviation was 1.361, reflecting a moderate level of agreement with some variation. The chi-square test yielded a value of 55.974, 28 degrees of freedom, and a p-value of 0.001, indicating a significant relationship and confirming that corporate partnerships are beneficial for SEs.

### Importance of Government Support

The third hypothesis examined the importance of government support and collaboration. Here, 40% of respondents strongly agreed and 24% agreed, with a total agreement of 64%. The mean score was 2.22, and the standard deviation was 1.284, indicating moderate agreement and some variability in responses. The chi-square value was 57.268 with 28 degrees of freedom, and the p-value was 0.001, signifying a statistically significant relationship. This underscores the crucial role of government support in the success of SEs.

### Impact of Lack of Online Platforms

The fourth hypothesis tested whether the lack of online platforms hinders social entrepreneurs

from connecting with potential collaborators. With 49% strongly agreeing and 24% agreeing, the total agreement was 73%. The mean score was 2.01, and the standard deviation was 1.275, indicating strong agreement with slight variability. The chi-square value was 56.173, the degrees of freedom were 28, and the p-value was 0.001. This significant p-value confirms that the absence of online platforms adversely affects collaboration opportunities.

### Absence of Local Networking Events

The fifth hypothesis considers whether the absence of local networking events limits partnership opportunities. Here, 35% of respondents strongly agreed and 29% agreed, resulting in 64% agreement. The mean score was 2.37, and the standard deviation was 1.376, reflecting slight agreement and variability in responses. The chi-square test showed a value of 55.587, with 28 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.001, indicating a significant relationship. This confirms that the lack of local networking events does limit the formation of beneficial partnerships.

### Importance of International Collaboration

The sixth hypothesis assessed the necessity of international collaborations for the growth of SEs. Here, 34% of respondents strongly agreed and 26% agreed, totaling 60% agreement. The mean score was 2.4, with a standard deviation of 1.341, showing moderate agreement and some variability. The chi-square value was 59.058, the degrees of freedom were 28, and the p-value was 0.001, indicating a statistically significant relationship. This suggests that international collaboration is essential for the growth and sustainability of SEs.

### Benefit of Mentorship from Experienced Entrepreneurs

Finally, the seventh hypothesis evaluated whether access to mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs benefits SEs. With 51% strongly agreeing and 17% agreeing, the total agreement was 68%. The mean score was 2.18, and the standard deviation was 1.459, reflecting moderate agreement with some variability. The chi-square test yielded a value of 56.357, degrees of freedom were 28, and the p-value was 0.001, indicating a significant relationship. This confirms that

mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs is highly beneficial for SEs.

### **Interpretation of Statistics**

The statistical analysis of the study on the impact of networking challenges on SE in Pakistan reveals critical insights. The mean scores, ranging from 2.01 to 2.4, reflect the central tendency of responses on a five-point Likert scale, with lower means closer to 2 indicating stronger agreement among respondents. This suggests that participants largely concurred with the statements presented in the questionnaire. The standard deviation values, spanning from 1.251 to 1.459, measure the variability of responses. These values suggest moderate variability, indicating that while there is some disagreement, most respondents tend to agree on the statements, highlighting a consensus. High chi-square values, ranging from 55.587 to 59.058, with a degree of freedom (df) of 28, indicate that the observed frequency distribution significantly deviates from what would be expected by chance. This deviation underscores the strong relationship between the variables studied and the networking challenges faced by social entrepreneurs. The df reflects the number of categories minus one, used in the chi-square calculation, further validating the robustness of the statistical analysis. The p-value of 0.001 across all tested variables indicates a statistically significant result. This means there is strong evidence against the null hypothesis, and the observed relationships are unlikely to have occurred by chance. This significance level confirms that the networking challenges identified in the study, such as lack of partnerships, corporate connections, government support, and effective online platforms, all of which significantly hinder social entrepreneurs' contributions to sustainable development in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

### **Conclusion**

The study underscores the importance of networking, particularly traditional and underutilized digital networks, in the success of social enterprises in Pakistan. This study provides valuable insights into the significant challenges faced by social entrepreneurs in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, focusing on the impact of networking challenges on their contributions to sustainable development. The findings underscore the crucial role networking plays in enabling social

entrepreneurs to achieve their goals and create value. Key barriers identified include a lack of partnerships, inadequate connections with corporate entities, limited government support, and insufficient online platforms. These obstacles severely limit social entrepreneurs' potential and hinder their capacity to access vital information, resources, and collaboration opportunities. Addressing these challenges is key to building a thriving SE ecosystem, enabling social entrepreneurs to access funding, form partnerships, and scale their ventures. Government support and collaboration are identified as essential for the success of SEs. The study also finds that many social entrepreneurs in Pakistan underuse digital networks, vital for accessing resources and collaboration. The absence of dedicated online platforms and local networking events further restricts opportunities for collaboration and growth. International collaborations and mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs are found to be crucial for the sustainability and development of SEs. Statistical analysis supports these conclusions, with mean scores indicating strong agreement on the negative impact of networking challenges, and high chi-square values confirming the statistical significance of these findings.

### **Recommendations and Policies**

#### **Establish Networking Platforms**

To address the lack of networking opportunities, it is recommended to create dedicated online platforms for social entrepreneurs. These platforms should facilitate information sharing, collaboration, and partnership opportunities, enabling entrepreneurs to connect with potential collaborators, mentors, and resources.

#### **Foster Corporate Partnerships**

Encouraging partnerships between SEs and corporations can provide mutual benefits. Corporate entities can offer resources and market access, while SEs can help corporations fulfill their social responsibility goals. Policies should be formulated to incentivize such partnerships, perhaps through tax benefits or recognition programs.

#### **Enhance Government Support**

Government support is crucial for the success of SEs. It is recommended that the government develops policies to provide financial aid, grants, and training programs for social entrepreneurs.

Additionally, creating a conducive regulatory environment that reduces bureaucratic hurdles can further facilitate their growth.

#### **Organize Local Networking Events**

Regular local networking events should be organized to bring together social entrepreneurs, investors, corporate partners, and government representatives. These events can serve as a platform for knowledge exchange, partnership formation, and showcasing successful social enterprise models.

#### **Promote International Collaboration**

International collaborations can provide social entrepreneurs with access to global best practices, funding opportunities, and broader markets. Government policies should promote and support participation in international social enterprise forums, exchange programs, and partnerships with international organizations.

#### **Provide Mentorship Programs**

Access to mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs can significantly benefit SEs. Establishing formal mentorship programs where seasoned entrepreneurs provide guidance and support to emerging social entrepreneurs can help them navigate challenges and enhance their impact.

#### **Develop Education and Training Programs**

Educational institutions should incorporate SE into their curricula, offering specialized training programs. This will equip future social entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their ventures.

#### **Policy Implications**

The findings from this study imply that targeted interventions and supportive policies are essential to overcoming networking challenges faced by social entrepreneurs in Pakistan. By addressing these challenges, stakeholders can significantly enhance the capacity of SEs to contribute to sustainable development. Implementing these recommendations will strengthen the SE network and promote social and economic progress in Pakistan.

#### **Abbreviations**

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences,  
SEs: Social Enterprises,  
SE: Social Entrepreneurship,  
CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility.

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As the sole author, I undertook and carried out all necessary components of this research.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The author affirms there is no conflict of interest.

#### **Ethics Approval**

Not applicable.

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