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Article in *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship* · June 2020

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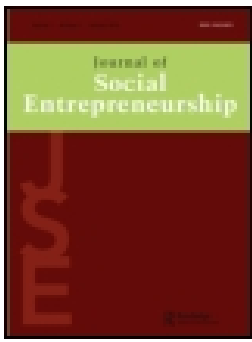
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To cite this article: Nader Naderi, Ehsan Khosravi, Hossein Azadi, Faranak Karamian, Ants-Hannes Viira & Halil Nadiri (2020): Barriers to Developing Social Entrepreneurship in NGOs: Application of Grounded Theory in Western Iran, Journal of Social Entrepreneurship, DOI: [10.1080/19420676.2020.1765409](https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2020.1765409)

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ARTICLE



## Barriers to Developing Social Entrepreneurship in NGOs: Application of Grounded Theory in Western Iran

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### ABSTRACT



The most appropriate type of entrepreneurship to achieve the goals of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is social entrepreneurship (SE). However, the NGOs face many barriers in their SE that should be studied. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to assess the barriers to development of SE in NGOs of Kermanshah province in Western Iran using a qualitative paradigm along with the method of grounded theory. Using purposeful and theoretical sampling, 12 cases were selected. The techniques used for data collection were open questionnaires (unstructured), individual depth interviews, and taking notes. The findings showed that the most important barriers to the development of SE in NGOs of Kermanshah province include cultural-social, economic, educational, infrastructure, communication-information, management, psychological, legal-policy, and supportive barriers. These barriers have resulted in the phenomenon of SE underdevelopment among NGOs of Kermanshah province. Moreover, these barriers have played a major role in the failure of the process of solving the social problems of the province of Kermanshah, which eventually has led to the underdevelopment of its status. These barriers should be controlled, adjusted, or even eliminated. Finally, based on the findings and in order to overcome these barriers, some recommendations were presented.

### KEYWORDS

NGOs; social entrepreneurship; barriers; grounded theory

## Introduction

Nowadays the developing countries are facing numerous problems, especially economic, social, and bio-environmental ones. These problems, which illustrate the government constraints, indicate that it is necessary to pay attention to

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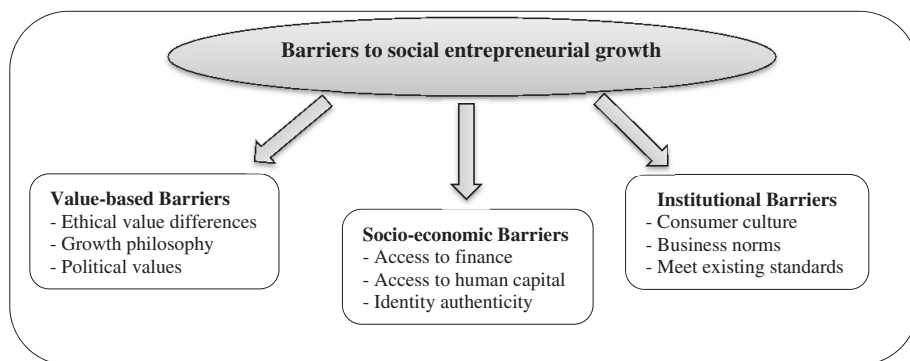
non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to achieve development in these countries (Matei and Matei 2011; Dai and Spires 2018; Nelson-Núñez and Cartwright 2018). Whenever the NGOs are present in countries and regions, there is more possibility that cooperative approaches be considered for problem-solving which will result in the reduction of social, cultural, economic, and bio-environmental problems among people (Lukaszczuk and Williamson 2010; Carreño 2016). The growing number of NGOs established over the years and the deterioration of global economic conditions have led to a decrease in the number of funding available to NGOs to represent their communities, carry out projects, and remain viable (Rhoden 2014). An NGO is a non-governmental organisation that is usually created by volunteers and ordinary citizens, and its main purpose is not to make an economic profit. These kinds of organisations cover a large scope of activity, and they are working in different fields in the world (Reibaldi and Grimard 2015; Lukaszczuk and Williamson 2010). By employing state-of-the-art management strategies through social entrepreneurship (SE), NGOs will become sustainable if they are prepared for business strategy, wider projects, management of human resources, investor relations, and client relationship management (Norman and Carmen 2020; Rhoden 2014; Hudcova, Chovanec, and Moudrý 2018).

In recent years, though SE has advanced as a field of study, it is hampered by many unanswered, but profound questions (Aldiabat and Le Navenec 2018). The SE literature is full of theories, debates, and alternate viewpoints. Although this may indicate a safe and vigorous discipline, it may also raise concerns about the area's credibility and importance, and doubts about where it is heading (Canestrino et al. 2020; Morris, Santos, and Kuratko 2020). In recent years, social enterprises have gained attention primarily due to their ability to tackle pressing global issues (Terziev and Nichev 2017; Morris, Santos, and Kuratko 2020; Sahasranamam and Nandakumar 2020). It is attributed to the ability to find solutions to the challenges of a society in terms of creating sustainable employment, promoting social and occupational integration, delivering social services, and enhancing the quality of life, including reducing poverty and social exclusion (Canestrino et al. 2020; Terziev and Nichev 2017). In recent years, SE has become a trendy development. The definition has become increasingly evident in commercial markets, academic discourses, and policymaking, often illustrated by success stories around the globe in various fields (health, education, finance, culture, etc.) (Huybrechts and Nicholls 2012). There are many concepts of SE (Sahasranamam and Nandakumar 2020) addressing non-commercial social needs (Petrella and Richez-Battesti 2014), promoting social change by creative solutions (Ney et al. 2014), meeting social needs (Zaki 2012), generating social value by market-based interventions (Facca-Miess and Nicholas 2014; Saebi, Foss, and Linder 2019), and participating in conceptual and social alignment. In terms of indicative and practical viewpoints, social enterprises can be compared with commercial enterprises. Depending on the normative viewpoint, pro-social motives are seen as a distinctive attribute of the promoters of social enterprises (Sahasranamam and Nandakumar 2020). The SE is undertaken by public organisations, private organisations, or civil society, known as NGOs (Adeyeye 2016). There are many hopes in Iran that NGOs play the role of a gateway to economic creativity, public participation, and social progress, or at least serve as suitable substitutes for public services at the national level. NGOs in Iran play a

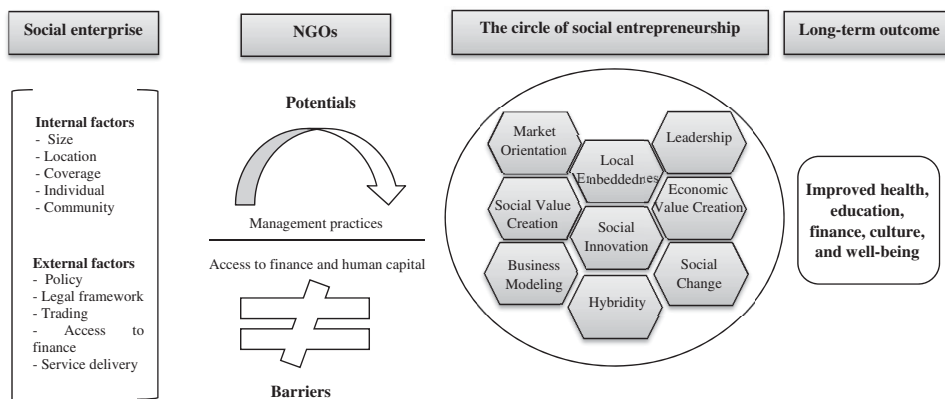
very important role in the development process, from the delivery of goods and services to the role of acceleration, resource mobilisation, innovation, analysis, and protection (Moqeeemim 2012). There are more than 20,030 NGOs in different cultural, social, and charity fields in Iran (Mehrnews 2018a). SE is needed for the NGOs to be successful because using SE models and their institutionalisation among NGOs can result in sustainable employment and reduction of social harm and their control. Unfortunately, the NGOs face barriers for the establishment and development of SE which limit mainstreaming and orientation in social activities for creating social values and becoming a fortune of economic issues. For example, one can consider the lack of participation of society and government in solving social problems due to various barriers such as weakness in community culture, weakness in policy-making, weakness in awareness about the benefits of SE, and so on. This study seeks to identify these barriers in the Iranian context. If these barriers are recognised and controlled or even removed, one may hope that the solutions for social problems are accelerated.

SE includes social value development practices and does not take place in a vacuum like other reform driven practices. Rather, it emerges in a dynamic sense of political, cultural, social, and local and global changes. While some countries have adopted social support laws, they are inefficient and counterproductive and there are still many barriers in the way of social entrepreneurs to be addressed (Razavi et al. 2014). There are several barriers to market entry which prevent social enterprises from exploiting market opportunities, including value-based barriers (such as ethical value, growth philosophy and political value), socio-economic barriers (such as access to finance and human capital), institutional barriers (such as consumer culture) and not understanding or being able to meet existing standards. Such barriers will probably restrict the attempts of expansion of social enterprises. Low public perception of social enterprises involves external obstacles to its development (Davies, Haugh, and Chambers 2019). Figure 1 provides a diagrammatic framework which describes the barriers to social entrepreneurial growth.

Indeed, many developed NGOs have adopted a SE format to develop a market-oriented approach to reduce dependence on grants. Such enterprises are those aimed at (a) developing sustainable business models that recognise people's needs (Schneider and Claub 2017; Sengupta, Sahay, and Croce 2018; Chou 2018), (b) designing end-to-



**Figure 1.** Barriers to social entrepreneurial growth. Adapted from Davies, Haugh, and Chambers 2019.



**Figure 2.** The conceptual model of social entrepreneurship.

end value services to people, (c) building non-traditional alliances (Sengupta, Sahay, and Croce 2018), (d) creating new leadership and corporate culture that stimulates social mission (Sengupta, Sahay, and Croce 2018), (e) combining market orientation and social value creation, and (f) achieving scalability (Sengupta, Sahay, and Croce 2018; Helene, Paromita, and Subhasis 2018).

Figure 2 demonstrates a cluster of sub-concepts coming under the concept of SE that has been completed by the authors based on a literature review. Not all these sub-concepts would necessarily be applicable in all SE conditions since in different contexts and under different conditions, any of these sub-concepts may exist and partly contribute to a social enterprise. If social enterprise is seen as having the potential to be a successful and sustainable operation, there is no question that a greater understanding of the obstacles and causal mechanisms used (or even assumed) in social enterprise work is required. These are what we took into account in the conceptualisation of the SE concept in Figure 2. We hypothesize that, all social enterprises will impact factors such as the unequal distribution of wealth, employment, products and services, and market orientation, all of which are known as essential social determinants of entrepreneurship, in one way or another. A social enterprise's ability to fulfil its social mission probably depends on a number of internal and external factors (size, location, scope, legal structure, policies, etc.). A social enterprise is a fundamental element for meeting the social needs through the activities of NGOs, yet, the NGOs face barriers for the establishment and development of SE which limit mainstreaming and orientation in social activities for creating social value.

Few studies have been carried out about the barriers of SE. Some researchers have described institutional complexity as a barrier to SE (Mair and Marti 2009; Mair, Martí, and Ventresca 2012; Muñoz and Kibler 2016; Sud, VanSandt, and Baugous 2009). The multiple, sometimes conflicting, demands of the organisation create restrictions on entrepreneurial social activities (Dorado and Ventresca 2013; Gundry et al. 2011; Khan, Munir, and Willmott 2007; Mair, Martí, and Ventresca 2012; Muñoz and Kibler 2016; Nicholls 2010; O'Neil and Ucbasaran 2016). In any organisations or institutions, the SE may face crises such as lack of infrastructure resources (Shahverdi, Ismail, and Qureshi 2018), institutional barriers (Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010; Mair and Marti 2009; Puffer, McCarthy, and Boisot 2010; Ute, Uhlaner, and Stride 2015), normative barriers

(Muñoz and Kibler 2016), cultural barriers (Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010), total dependence on public finance, lack of supportive structures, lack of professional training, lack of proper statistics, and so on (ISEDNET 2017; Shahverdi, Ismail, and Qureshi 2018).

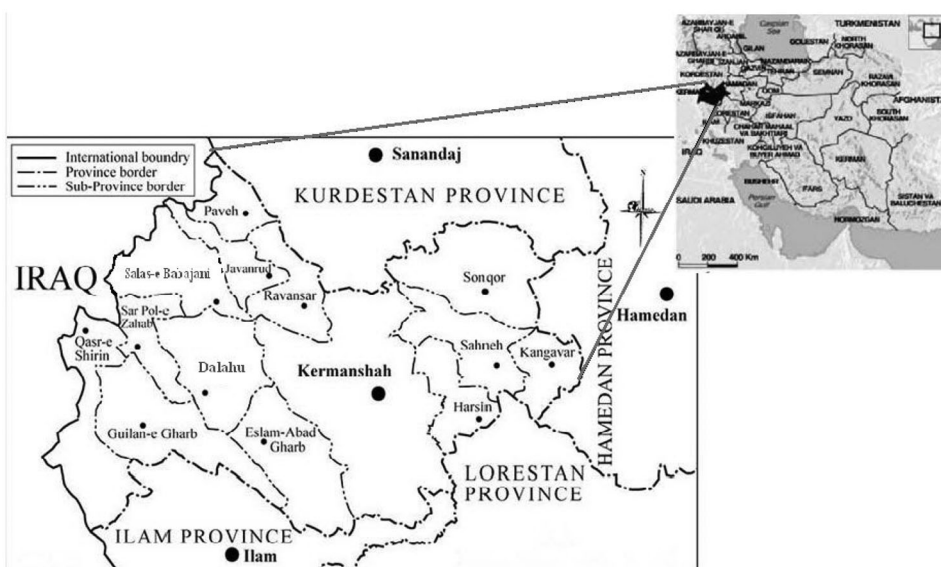
Davies, Haugh, and Chambers (2019) found that the obstacles to growth for social enterprises are related to gaps in beliefs, business models, and cultural norms. We theorise three strategic approaches for overcoming obstacles to growth: decision-making based on values, exploiting social purpose, and anchoring. The findings of the study conducted by Pelucha et al. (2017) suggested that there is a lack of a consistent approach to social enterprises in the climate of the Czech Republic, and the legislative framework is inflexible and thus limits the creation of SE. This question affects the overall political climate, which considers SEs to be a largely marginal phenomenon that is mainly concerned with the integration of marginalised groups. In their findings, Razavi et al. (2014) reported that the key barrier that hampers SE growth is the attenuation of the active involvement of individuals in altruistic social obligations due to contextual factors and causative relations. Social responsibility can, however, be adopted by individuals through applying a set of initiatives and strategies, which lead to the creation of entrepreneurial activities.

Despite the growing literature on the role of SE in addressing socio-cultural issues around the world, the goal of analysing barriers has not been achieved through a qualitative approach. Most importantly, research on SE barriers in the context of NGOs, in which the main tasks and goals are aligned with SE, has not yet been carried out around the world. However, significant attention needs to be paid to this issue and the necessity to research in this field is therefore very vital and tangible. On the one hand, if SE is to be developed in NGOs, these organisations must first identify the barriers to the development of SE. On the other hand, in order to strengthen the development of SE in NGOs, strategies must be used to address these barriers. Hence, the article adds significant contributions to the current debate on the development of SE among NGOs by identifying barriers and strategies to address these barriers in NGOs. Moreover, not only in Kermanshah province (Western Iran) but also in all parts of Iran, no studies have been carried out on this issue. The reason for choosing the province of Kermanshah is its first rank among other provinces of Iran in terms of high socio-cultural problems such as poverty, illiteracy, divorce, addiction, etc., especially in recent years (Statistical Center of Iran 2019). Also, Kermanshah province has a large number of active NGOs (more than 12,500), especially in the field of socio-cultural affairs (Irannews 2018). This means that the NGOs failed to carry out their missions well due to the barriers. Hence, those barriers must be recognised, controlled, and even eliminated to pave the way for the NGOs to solve the above-mentioned problems in Kermanshah province. Based on what was said, the purpose of this study is to assess the barriers of developing SE in NGOs of Kermanshah province.

## Research method

### *Study site*

Kermanshah province is one of the 31 provinces of Iran, located in Western Iran (Figure 3). Kermanshah province with an area of 24,640 square kilometres, is the 17th



**Figure 3.** The study site of Kermanshah province, located in the middle of the western part of Iran.

province of Iran in terms of the size. According to the census of 2017, the latest census of Iran, the population of Kermanshah province is 1,952,434 people (Statistical Center of Iran 2018). Kermanshah consists of 14 districts, including Dalahu County, Gilan-e Gharb County, Harsin County, Eslamabad-e Gharb County, Javanrud County, Kangavar County, Kermanshah County (the province's capital) ( $34^{\circ}18'N$   $47^{\circ}4'E$ ), Paveh County, Qasr-e Shirin County, Ravansar County, Sahneh County, Sarpol-e Zahab County, Salas-e Babajani County, and Songor County (Governorate of Kermanshah Province 2019) (Figure 3). Kermanshah province has many social problems. For example, in the past three years, it has been ranked first in the whole of Iran regarding the unemployment issue (Statistical Center of Iran 2019). According to the Iran Civil Registration Organization (2019), Kermanshah province has the highest divorce rate after Tehran province (capital of Iran). Besides, Kermanshah Province is not in a good position in terms of other social problems such as economic issues, business environment, poverty, developmental extent, etc. (Mehrnews 2018b).

### **Study design**

The Straussian Grounded Theory (SGT) was used to perform the analysis. SGT is an open tool for the extraction and incorporation of concepts from data collected into a theory (Thai, Chong, and Agrawal 2012). SGT aims to create a theory or a model that can direct behaviour and practices (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Therefore, there is a reciprocal relationship between data collection, interpretation, and theory. With its origins in symbolic interactionism, GT can navigate dynamic and ever-changing social environments and to build conceptual frameworks and hypotheses that can explain the phenomenon under research (Corbin and Strauss 2008). In the GT method, the data is systematically gathered and analysed throughout the research process (Noble and Mitchell 2016). The general purpose of the GT is to construct theories to better



understand the studied phenomenon. The phenomenon is the main axis and the result that the researcher is seeking to investigate and analyse. In this research, the phenomenon refers to the barriers of SE development in NGOs in Kermanshah province. Hence, the purpose of this research is to assess the barriers of developing SE in NGOs using GT of Kermanshah province (west of Iran).

### ***Setting and participants***

The population studied in this study includes all members of the NGOs in Kermanshah province, Iran. Selection of study participants began with purposive sampling and then progressed to theoretical sampling (more details in data collection). Theoretical saturation was reached after 12 interviews (in January 2018). Therefore, enrolment of participants, including additional members of NGOs, was discontinued because we did not observe any new themes or information.

### ***Data collection***

This research used semi-structured interviews as the principal method for collecting data. This approach encourages participants to express sensitive personal experiences in a relaxed environment and allows interviewees to explore interesting lines of inquiry flexibly before moving on to the next subject (Gill et al. 2008). Our sampling followed the GT approach and proceeded in two steps. Therefore, purposeful and theoretical sampling techniques were conducted (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Then, we applied purposeful sampling to ensure full variety in the collection of participants. Secondly, we used theoretical sampling, a technique focussed on the emergence and saturation of the definitions, categories, and subcategories used to establish a theory of substance (Butler, Copnell, and Hall 2018; Corbin and Strauss 2014). Data collection was not time-discrete but was performed in conjunction with data analysis before the researchers determined a saturation point was reached. Theoretical sampling has been used for saturation of data. This strategy is focussed on the development and saturation of definitions, categories, and sub-categories used to establish a substantial theory (Saunders et al. 2018). Then the first question to be asked in this study, in the analysis phase, is: what sample size is appropriate? The ‘theoretical saturation’ definition (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998) responds to the question. Theoretical saturation occurs in data collection when: (a) “there appears to be no new or applicable data for a category, (b) the category is formed for its component characteristics and dimensions, and (c) there are strong and established relations between categories” (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 212). In other words, when data collection (i.e. interview) provides no new data (Douglas 2003; Goulding 2002; Bryman 2012), the researcher arrives at “data saturation” where further interviews deliver data repetition, i.e. no new data emerge. That could require interviews of 10, 20, 30, or more. By avoiding theoretical saturation, the researcher risks developing a hypothesis based on inadequate trends or themes, and the result might be based on lack of reliability and/or validity.

There is no specific number of interviews that is required for achieving theoretical saturation. The most significant factor is that the sample size is based on the issue of

study (Sobal 2001; Bernard 2012). A wider spectrum of studies would need much more data and therefore more data collection, requiring more interviews and alternate sources. This means for the researcher a lot of work. Therefore, Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest at the beginning or after three or four interviews, reducing the emphasis of study. With the first few interviews, the researcher will narrow the scope and the numbers of interviews by making use of the nature of the phenomena (Kwortnik 2003; Saunders et al. 2018).

The complexity or vulnerability of the phenomenon being investigated is another factor which can decide the sample size (Sobal 2001). The less sensitive the essence of the project is, the better it is (e.g. strategic organised execution and work satisfaction) for participants to talk about it. The researcher's ability, experience, or expertise also affect the sample size. More experienced and professional interviewers would require fewer participants to direct and disclose data (Morse 2015). The researchers' level of ability, typically learned through experience, helps the participant to speak easily, and gives the participant an atmosphere of trust (Patton 2014).

The researcher's knowledge of this field will offer the researcher insights that allow him/her to bypass unnecessary details and formulate questions that direct the interview more effectively. Information of the researcher may come from two sources: a study of literature, which may be restricted in the case of new phenomena, or personal experience. Please note that the authors of this article are specialised in the field of entrepreneurship and have an acceptable level of experience and expertise in this field. Therefore, the element that defines the sample size is based on the theoretical saturation principle. The research started simultaneously with data collection, leading the questions for the next data collection session (Corbin and Strauss 2008). The other data sources obtained in this analysis included recorded interviews, observational field observations, and reports or memos from the researchers. Information on the interview was collected via digital recording as well as field notes. All interviews were conducted in Persian, the participants' native language, and the interview sessions lasted between 40 to 75 minutes.

### ***Data analysis***

All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researchers. Data were simultaneously analysed at the time of collection. This method of constantly comparing and contrasting data and results was used in all steps of the constant comparative analysis. Correct use of constant comparison in the GT leads to emerging categories, a higher level of data abstraction, and the combination of several related concepts (Gandomani and Nafchi 2016). In this study, the data collected were analysed using a three-phase analytical method. In the first step, called transparent or substantive coding, transcripts from the participants, and notes from the researchers were read several times to extract codes. Codes for the creation of definitions, categories, and subcategories were incorporated and refined during the research team's weekly meetings. In the third and last phase, by selective coding via saturation of the concepts, categories, and subcategories, a core category was identified, and then, other categories were linked to it (Khoshnami et al. 2017). This allowed us to articulate the casual conditions, meaning,

circumstances, strategies, and implications that occurred. Lastly, this has helped us to develop a conceptual model based on the responses of the participants. Conceptual modelling provides the ability for researchers to systematically understand the phenomena under study (Shannak and Aldhmour 2009). The research team sampled and directed questions throughout the data analysis process and constantly compared the accumulating structure with the evidence that was accumulating. All stages were checked several times and re-checked, following the recommendations of the GT approach. Finally, a coding paradigm or a framework of barriers to SE development was introduced.

### ***Trustworthiness***

Our study's trustworthiness was assessed using the four parameters suggested by Schwandt, Lincoln, and Guba (2007): creditworthiness, conformability, transferability, and dependence. The triangulation strategy guaranteed legitimacy. In addition to semi-structured interviews, field notes and long involvement in the topic both give credibility (Mohajan 2018). Moreover, triangulation of the study team participants helped to take into account multiple viewpoints while performing the tests (Richards and Hemphill 2018). Peer cheques were conducted through weekly meetings of research teams during which we and experts discussed and reviewed emerging data and data analysis within our community. Member tests were carried out by providing participants with a description of the interviews examined and extracted codes so that we could request and integrate their input and correction ideas. In fact, in some cases where participants disagreed with extracted codes, additional details were sought, and coding procedures were revised. More work was considered on the new codes. In this analysis, data conformability was achieved, as well as the compilation of ideas and concepts from other researchers. Data transferability was supported by providing a detailed description of the subject, the participants, data collection, and data analysis (Schwandt, Lincoln, and Guba 2007). Dependency is ensured by the current text, which gives other researchers extensive knowledge to reproduce and expand the analysis.

### ***Results and discussion***

Following the transcription of the gathered data via open coding procedure, all items related to the study subject were extracted. We could identify 56 key concepts related to the barriers of SE among the NGOs in Kermanshah province. Considering the nature of the extracted barriers and the relationship among them, we prepared a classification in which each barrier was identified via a code. This classification helped us to locate the related concepts in a category labelled in codes from A to B (Table 1).

### ***Causal conditions***

Based on the results, among the NGOs in the study area, 56 key concepts for the barriers of SE have been identified that could be framed into three categories: causal conditions, contextual conditions, and intervening conditions. The social-cultural barriers,

**Table 1.** Summary of the categories.

Categories Code	Categories	Concepts
A	Causal Conditions	
	Cultural-social barriers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cultural weakness in the community of NGOs in accepting SE.</li> <li>2. The weakness of the spirit of community participation in solving social problems.</li> <li>3. The decrease in the motivation of NGOs' members because of the lack of attention by the officially related organisations.</li> <li>4. The decrease in the social movement of NGOs' members because of the lack of movement by their audience society.</li> <li>5. Lack of public information about the concept, goals, and duties of NGOs regarding the social entrepreneurial measures.</li> <li>6. Lack of attention of official bodies (Provincial Government) to NGOs and their problems.</li> <li>7. Low confidence in NGOs by the related official organisations.</li> <li>8. Lack of awareness of NGOs about the attraction of credits and budget or the existence of useful and working plans.</li> <li>9. Some NGO members' lack of knowledge about the concept of SE.</li> </ol>
B	Contextual Conditions	
	B <sub>1</sub> - Inappropriate economical and financial structures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of liquidity of NGOs.</li> <li>2. Low level of provincial government's financial support.</li> <li>3. Lack of timely payment of funds.</li> <li>4. Lack or low level of funding from other relevant government agencies, especially in recent years.</li> <li>5. Some NGOs' lack of financial reliance on non-governmental sources.</li> <li>6. The inability of averting financial risk for social entrepreneurial activities.</li> </ol>
	B <sub>2</sub> - Inappropriate educational structures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of skills training related to social entrepreneurial actions for members and managers.</li> <li>2. The weakness in the knowledge of the members of the NGOs to engage in SE at the community level.</li> <li>3. Non-practicality of educational programmes held by the governorate.</li> <li>4. The mismatch of the training with members' needs for SE.</li> </ol>
	B <sub>3</sub> - Inadequate infrastructural structures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of a suitable place for conducting programmes and training classes.</li> <li>2. Lack of facilities and equipment necessary for NGOs' SE measures.</li> </ol>
	B <sub>4</sub> - Inappropriate communication- information structures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parallel work and lack of coordination among the NGOs of the province.</li> <li>2. Lack of timely response to the correspondence of the NGOs or organisations.</li> <li>3. Lack of knowledge of employers' capacities and plans of departments that are potential to be transferred to the NGOs.</li> <li>4. Failure to provide proper and appropriate SE counselling for SE measures by the responsible entities.</li> </ol>
C11	Intervening Conditions	
	Micro level agencies: 1- Managerial barriers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of proper analysis of the current status of social issues and planning to eliminate them.</li> <li>2. The NGOs' lack of specific operational programmes to respond to social issues.</li> <li>3. Lack of proper participatory management in solving social problems of society.</li> <li>4. Management based on relationships rather than management based on criteria.</li> <li>5. Failure to address real social entrepreneurial activities due to the managers' lack of understanding of SE goals.</li> <li>6. Lack of necessary managerial competencies in the field of SE among officials and members of the NGO.</li> </ol>

*(continued)*

**Table 1.** Continued.

Categories Code	Categories	Concepts
C12	Micro level agencies: 2- Psychological barriers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of self-confidence among the members of the NGOs about their abilities and capacities.</li> <li>2. People's low trust in NGOs.</li> <li>3. Government's low trust in the NGOs and considering merely the ceremonial aspect of the NGOs.</li> <li>4. Lack of motivation due to exercising discrimination among the NGOs (by the government).</li> <li>5. Lack of metamorphic social activities which will lead to not-completing the job.</li> </ol>
C21	Macro level agencies: 1- Legal-policy obstacles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ceremonial, formal, and public nature of the measures rather than being a sustained and continuous social activity.</li> <li>2. NGOs are limited to symbolic programmes, and they do not do their real mission.</li> <li>3. Lack of specific rules.</li> <li>4. Neglecting the category of NGOs in macro policies.</li> <li>5. Lack of a participatory policy.</li> </ol>
C22	Macro level agencies: 2-Participatory- supportive barriers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Non-assignment of activities and projects by the government to the NGOs.</li> <li>2. The execution of the connections rather than the criterion in supports.</li> <li>3. Lack of cooperation among various organisations.</li> <li>4. Lack of proper organisation of the NGOs by the departments.</li> </ol>
D	Action/interaction strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reducing the number of SE actions by NGOs.</li> <li>2. Reducing the quality of SE measures.</li> <li>3. Reducing the level of SE measures at the provincial level.</li> <li>4. Negligence of SE by the NGOs.</li> </ol>
E	Consequences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of development of SE among the NGOs in Kermanshah province.</li> <li>2. The pervasiveness and increasing trend of social problems at the level of the studied community.</li> <li>3. Failure to solve social problems.</li> <li>4. Achievement of the highest rank in the country in social problems, including unemployment, poverty, divorce, and so on.</li> <li>5. The strangulation of future generations in the vicious circle of social dilemmas.</li> <li>6. Migration of people from the province to the capital and other metropolitan areas.</li> <li>7. Lack of development of the studied province.</li> </ol>

Source: Findings of the study.

for the members of the NGOs, were among the main factors that led to the emergence of the phenomenon of non-development of SE in the NGOs. The causal conditions in this study included cultural-social barriers. The social-cultural barriers, for members of the NGOs, were among the main factors that led to the emergence of the phenomenon of non-development of SE in the NGOs. One of the sub-categories in this section included the “cultural weakness in the society of NGOs in accepting SE”. Interviewees believed that admitting SE as a social activity whose economic dimension is neglected would be difficult and mentioned it as a cultural problem. In this regard, the interviewee no. 1 stated that:

... It is difficult to acknowledge that there is a social dimension to entrepreneurship. We are unable to accept such things culturally since more entrepreneurship in the economic environment has been raised by economists. We expect, therefore, more of an economic activity than a social activity ...

These findings are in line with those of Muñoz and Kibler (2016) and Dacin, Dacin, and Matear (2010). The interviewees stated that the society, because of its cultural weakness, has not cooperated with the NGOs to solve the social problems with an entrepreneurial approach, and this fact has resulted in the low motivation among the members of NGOs which has consequently resulted in the low participation of the members. They also stated that for various reasons such as lack of information etc., the concept of NGO, as well as its goals and missions, is obscure and unknown to the society, especially for its social entrepreneurial actions. This issue causes the NGOs to face problems in involving the society in their SE. In Iran, religion is one of the most important factors that has been used to motivate people to do charity and good deeds. Unfortunately, for various reasons, religious motives are declining in communities and especially among young people, and this, along with other factors, has caused people to become rather indifferent to social issues.

Among other issues that the interviewees emphasised, the lack of attention of public servants and governors (governorates) to the problems of NGOs in their actions, especially in the field of SE, was mentioned. They also pointed to the lack of cooperation and participation of other agencies and public organisations and their low level of confidence in NGOs as barriers to the SE for NGOs. Some interviewees pointed to the lack of awareness of how to attract credit and budget for SE measures. Today, the motivation for social work in Iran is low. This is because individuals working in the administrative body of the government do not have a deep understanding of social enterprises and have little expertise, if any, of social entrepreneurship and do not have a background in social work or knowledge. They could not, therefore, call society's attention to social issues. Another factor that could explain the lack of interest in social activities is the lack of a successful model in this respect. In the current study, lack of incentives for participation due to the nature of SE and lack of economic motivation was other issues mentioned by the interviewees. The insufficiency of cultural programmes and inefficiency in introducing norms and customs and social values are other reasons the society has become insensitive to social questions. The institutions responsible are also partly responsible for their insufficient cultural policies (Razavi et al. 2014).

## ***Contextual conditions***

### ***Inappropriate fundamental economic structures***

They are the specific conditions in which processes, interactions, and strategies of action/reaction are made; in fact, the circumstances in which the phenomenon occurred. In this research, the contextual conditions are formed from a few sub-categories that include substandard economic structures, inappropriate educational structures, inappropriate infrastructural structures, and inadequate communication infrastructures.

The majority of the interviewees referred to economic problems as a context for the lack of development of SE. They pointed to the lack of liquidity of the NGOs as a barrier to SE. They also referred to the low level of financial support from the governorate to the SE measures of the NGOs in that regard. They also pointed to the lack of timely provision of the required budget as a barrier to SE. Members of the NGOs also stated items such as shortage or lack of financial support from other relevant government agencies, especially in recent years. The other point was the NGOs' lack of financial reliance on non-state sources. They said that they had the problem of attracting non-governmental resources for SE. Finally, they stated that the nature of SE is always risky, and one type of risk is a financial risk. They continued that in the event of financial problems, the NGOs would not be capable of doing any social entrepreneurial activities. These findings are in line with those of Toma, Grigore, and Marinescu (2014) in that more than ever in history, economic development and entrepreneurship have become strongly interconnected.

### ***Inappropriate educational structures***

Among other barriers that the interviewees referred to were inappropriate educational structures. In this regard, we can mention the lack of skills training related to SE actions for NGO members and managers. The interviewees stated that members and managers are weak in SE skills, and this has caused problems for entrepreneurial social actions. Therefore, another important factor, which has a direct impact on motivating people towards social activities is advanced knowledge. Most of the research and studies in this area are purely theoretical in Iran, and empirical evidence is very scarce. Besides, the lack of knowledge in this area is also due to a lack of knowledge management. The interviewees stated that this could be partly due to the weakness in the knowledge of members of the NGOs about the SE at the community level. Unfortunately, in Iran, the heads and managers of social enterprises do not have a proper understanding of social issues. In this regard, other barriers include the lack of applicability of the educational programmes held by the governorate, the mismatch between training and the needs of members for SE measures, and the lack of capacity-building for NGOs by the relevant organisations. The results of this section are in line with the findings of Pcolinska (2014), Ucieklak-Jez and Kulesza (2014), and ISEDENET (2017). In their studies, these researchers pointed to educational factors as a barrier to SE. In other words, one of the decisive factors in SE actions is the empowerment of the NGOs' members in social entrepreneurial actions. These members of the NGOs will be empowered only through appropriate training and should be trained in SE. Measures to cultivate the SE for college students include (a) the establishment of

research platforms for social innovation and social enterprises, (b) the construction of a curriculum system for social enterprises and social entrepreneurship education, and (c) the establishment of a practical teaching system to set up various types of social enterprises (Li and Yuan 2020).

### *Inadequate infrastructural structures*

Among other barriers that the interviewees referred to were infrastructure barriers. They pointed to the lack of suitable places to hold educational programmes and classes, as well as the lack of facilities and equipment needed for SE activities in NGOs. The interviewee no. 8 has stated this point as follows:

... At a stage of our work, we contracted with a government agency to start an entrepreneurial activity in the social field. We agreed that it provides us with an office to get started. We had a great motivation to get started.... They encouraged us to stay there and gave us a lot of promises, and they said that they would provide us with a building and equipment. But they have not given us anything since then ...

In this regard, Pcolinska (2014), Ucieklak-Jez and Kulesza (2014), ISEDENET (2017), Azmat, Ferdous, and Couchman (2015), and Mair and Marti (2009) have considered the lack of supportive structures as a barrier to SE. In other words, no social entrepreneurial action can be taken in the vacuum. And there is a need for a set of minimum facilities to help them achieve their predetermined goals (e.g. socially-based projects, programmes, and actions of SE). The subjectivity of the growth of global enterprise infrastructure and its importance among all members of international economic relations are growing. However, despite the value and significance of such infrastructure, it does not meet modern international business requirements as to quantitative (growing deficit) or qualitative (quick ageing) characteristics. This is a major scientific and practical issue since the level of development of transnational entrepreneurship and the rate of growth of the global economy are reduced without the appropriate infrastructure (Morozova, Popkova, and Litvinova 2019).

### *Inappropriate communication-information infrastructures*

Inappropriate communication-information infrastructures were another barriers that the interviewees referred to. In this regard, they pointed to issues such as parallel work and lack of coordination among the province's NGOs, organisations' failure to respond timely to the correspondence of the NGOs, lack of awareness about employers' capacities and the plans of organisations appropriate to be done by the NGOs, and lack of proper and appropriate SE counselling for SE activities. This result is in line with the findings of Villar, Grande, and Sandoval Jr (2011) whose results showed that communication is one of the criteria for measuring the social impact of social enterprises and has an important role in the success of social enterprises.

### *Intervening conditions*

#### *Micro intervening conditions*

**Management barriers.** Intervening terms include all the broad and limiting factors that influence an individual's strategies (Corbin and Strauss 2008). It can be



investigated in macro and micro aspects by intervening factors at the macro level, comprehensive factors outside the region and at the society level, and micro-level factors within the studied group, on the other hand, which influence the strategies of the individual. Here, the respondents talked about micro (management and psychological barriers) and macro factors (legal-policy barriers and supportive barriers) that played a role in creating the phenomenon.

One issue that the respondents emphasised was management barriers. They pointed to barriers such as the lack of proper analysis of the current status of social issues and planning to eliminate them, lack of specific operational programmes in the NGOs for responding to social problems, lack of proper participatory management in solving community's social problems, management based on relationships rather than criteria (relationships instead of rules), failure to address real social entrepreneurial activities due to community managers' lack of understanding of SE (a great deal of costs are allocated to useless tasks), and lack of necessary managerial competencies in the field of SE among managers and members of the NGOs.

***Psychological barriers.*** Another issue stated by the respondents was psychological barriers. They pointed to lack of self-confidence among the members of the NGOs about their abilities and capacities, the weakness of people's trust in the NGOs, the weakness of the government's trust in the NGOs along with the purely formal status of the NGOs, lack of motivation among the NGOs due to discriminatory attitude of public authorities in the government, lack of motivation among the members of the NGOs for social entrepreneurial actions, and lack of strong will and quitting the tasks by the NGOs. Regarding the psychological barriers, interviewee No. 5 stated that:

... In one case, for example, about 500 people voluntarily collected and formed an NGO; they were willing to accomplish this task. However, the public agencies' false promises have motivated them since they were not concerned with NGOs as soon as their work was done...

### ***Macro intervening conditions***

The legal-policy barriers were another issue mentioned by the respondents. They mentioned barriers such as formal and public nature of the measures, limitation of NGO tasks and their lack of mission, absence of definite rules, neglecting the status and role of NGOs in macro policies, and lack of a participatory policy. In Iran, most of the rules on social efforts are outdated or not up to date. In practice, there are always problems with law enforcement. The respondents referred to the support barriers as another issue in this field. The studied community referred to issues such as the non-allocation of government activities and projects to NGOs, the dominance of relations rather than support rules, the lack of cooperation between organisations and agencies, and the lack of proper organisation of NGOs by the responsible departments. It is worth mentioning that political factors are one of the main barriers to social participation. Social issues are considered mainly from a political and security point of view. This could hinder the impact of non-governmental organisations and pose problems for the involvement of social entrepreneurs.

### **Action/interaction strategies and consequences**

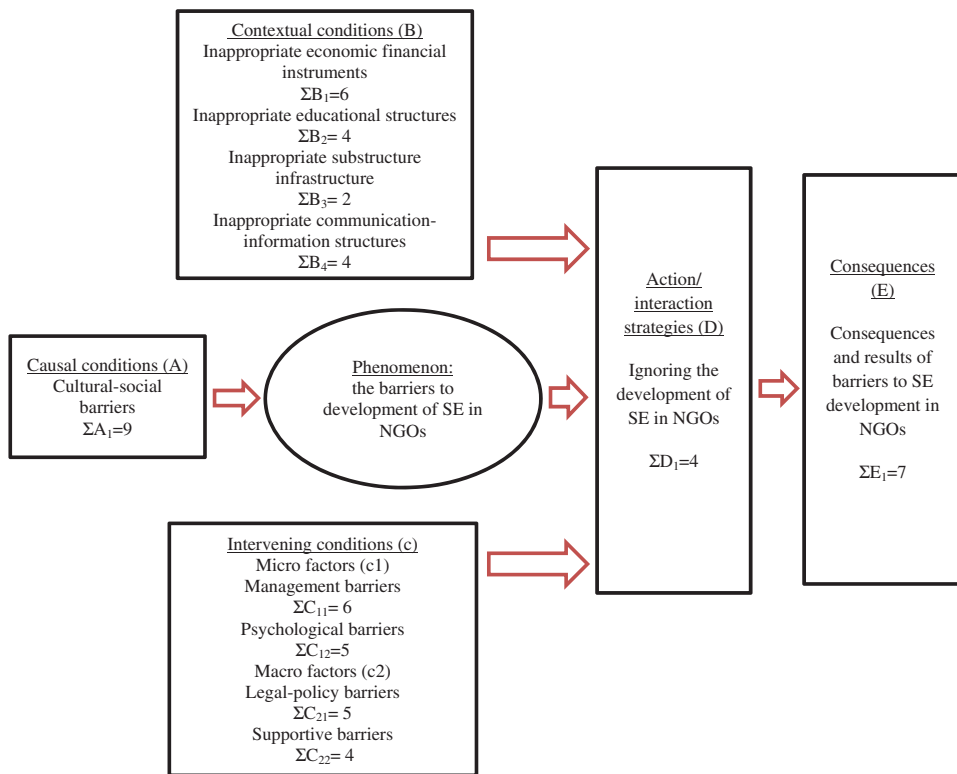
Strategies include actions/reactions of the studied community against the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In this study, the strategies include reduction of SE by NGOs, reduction of the quality of social entrepreneurial actions, reduction of the scope of SE activities at the provincial level, disregard for SE by the NGOs, and the lack of appreciation to the entrepreneurial actions to solve social problems of the society. Consequences are the results of actions/reactions. In this regard, the respondents pointed to factors such as the lack of SE development in NGOs of Kermanshah province; the pervasiveness and increasing trend of social problems in the studied community; failure to overcome social problems; achieving the highest rank in the country in social problems including unemployment, poverty, divorce, and so on; future generations' challenge in the vicious circle of social problems; immigration of people from the province to the capital (Tehran province) and other metropolitan cities; and finally, the lack of development of the studied province. Considering the above issues, the conceptual model of the fundamental theory is evident in [Figure 4](#).

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

There is no doubt that the development of SE in the NGOs of Kermanshah province is indispensable for its development, and the requirements for the development of SE in NGOs must be provided. One of these requirements is to identify the barriers challenging the NGOs and provide solutions for controlling, modifying, and even removing them. The findings of this study showed that in their entrepreneurial activities, the NGOs face various barriers, including cultural-social, economic, educational, infrastructural, communication-information, management, psychological, legal-policy, and supportive barriers.

The first barrier is the cultural-social barrier. This means that the cultural weakness among the members of the NGOs in accepting SE has reduced the participation of members in the field of SE. The second barrier is the economic barrier. This means that NGOs have a problem in providing adequate funding for their SE programmes, projects, and activities. The third barrier is the educational barrier, meaning that for SE within the NGOs, members must first have the necessary training in SE as a prerequisite to be empowered in this regard. The fourth barrier is the infrastructure barrier. That is, in order to implement SE programmes by NGOs, the appropriate infrastructure (such as facilities, equipment, and suitable location for holding programmes) should be provided for NGOs. The fifth barrier, the communication-information barrier, is due to the lack of a proper communication network between the active NGOs as well as the lack of communication between the NGOs and related organisations. Thus, in Iranian context, one of the main problems, which hinders individuals from doing entrepreneurial activities is the lack of statistics and information system. Lack of knowledge, failure to provide statistics to the people may make people uninterested in engaging in these activities.

Unfortunately, NGOs are not aware of each other's entrepreneurial activities. Finally, NGOs are unsuccessful in solving social problems through SE. The next barrier is the management barrier. In this sense, the NGOs are not able to properly analyse the



**Figure 4.** The paradigm model of the phenomenon of barriers to the development of SE in NGOs.

current state of social problems because of managerial weakness. Another barrier is the psychological barrier. That is, the psychological motivation of the NGOs for SE activities has reduced for various reasons, including distrust and low level of participation by related organisations and people in NGOs' activities. Another barrier is the legal-policy barrier which means that policies are carried out without regard to the NGOs. In other words, NGOs are not legally able to operate freely in the field of SE, and their participation in solving social problems through entrepreneurial activities is reduced due to inappropriate policies. Another barrier is a supportive barrier. This means that different related organisations do not support the NGOs in the field of programmes, projects, and SE activities and do not cooperate with them.

These barriers have resulted in the phenomenon of SE underdevelopment among NGOs of Kermanshah province. These barriers have played a major role in the failure of the process of solving the social problems of the province of Kermanshah which eventually has led to its underdevelopment. As a result, the rate of social problems in the province of Kermanshah is increasing day by day, while no action is taken to deal with it through SE, especially by the NGOs. This has led to a repeating circle, which further increases the social problems of the province compared with the country's average. In this context, when a society is sensitive to social issues, social demands are more easily identified and this leads to the development of promising ideas within the society. We need to use skilled, qualified personnel with social skills in the

management areas to accomplish this. Another aspect that directly affects the aforementioned problem is awareness of experts. In Iran, theoretical as well as practical knowledge is yet to be obtained in this field. To do this, we need to take into account the preparation needed to institutionalise the subjects and principles of social entrepreneurship for various social groups. To solve social problems, these barriers should be controlled, adjusted, or even eliminated. Hence, based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are presented:

- Social cultural barriers: Institutions are formed by culture and social relations, and human, social, and cultural capital is often an antecedent to the acquisition of financial capital. Therefore, enhancing teamwork collaboration and achieving social mobility in the community are suggested.
- Economic barriers: The government and its agencies should take their financial support, and give grants or loans with a very low rate of interest. Policymakers should also pay particular attention to low-income individuals whose financial situation may dissuade them from pursuing entrepreneurial efforts. Such policies should involve these people and increase their participation in entrepreneurship programmes.
- Educational barriers: Training courses should be organised to enhance the skills of NGO members and managers in entrepreneurial activities.
- Infrastructure barriers: Appropriate places and necessary equipment and facilities should be provided for the NGOs by the state centres and the authorities of the NGOs.
- Communication-information barriers: Communication and coordination links should be established among NGOs to prevent duplication and provide accurate notification and clarification of existing plans.
- Management barriers: Training courses in management skills for members and managers of NGOs should be organised.
- Psychological barriers: Courses should be organised to train the actors of social capital and its role in SE.
- Legal-policy barriers: Effective and transparent policies should be launched with the active participation of NGOs.
- Supportive barriers: Proper organisation of the NGOs in their activities, elimination of the related social problems, and promotion of cooperation between government agencies and NGOs can be regarded as proper activities in solving supportive problems.

Social problems remain a major challenge for developing countries, and SE understanding, especially by NGOs, is recognised as a solution to social problems in many societies by this research. There is a need for scholars to build on this research to deepen the understanding of SE as a solution to social problems. The data collected and explored in this research points towards a theme that requires further research. Therefore, this study suggests that future researches design a Structural Equation Model (SEM) for SE development in NGOs with a quantitative approach to its acceptance as a theory and its testing in different societies to generalise it to the whole

society. To this end, a model that can be cited for solving social problems is available to different countries. In this way, the implications for promoting social welfare with SE development are provided.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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