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# The Contribution of Social Capital to Entrepreneurial Activities' Success: Across-Country Field Study in the Light of Social Capital Theory

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**Abstract**
The present study aims to examine the role of social capital dimensions (i.e., social relationships, information possession, supplementary capitals, and social obligations) in entrepreneurial activity success. The study used a questionnaire form and the snowball sampling technique to collect data from youth entrepreneurs from three Arab countries. In total, 186 youth entrepreneurs of the UAE, 120 from Egypt, and 107 from Oman and across services (i.e., tourism and hospitality sector), commercial, manufacturing, agricultural, and other sectors. Structural equation modelling was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that social capital dimensions positively and significantly contribute to youth entrepreneurial activities across the three research settings (i.e., UAE, Egypt, and Oman). Theoretically, this research uses social capital theory to quantify measures of social capital and examine its contribution to successful entrepreneurship. Few studies have examined entrepreneurial youth activities and their relationship with social capital dimensions. There is a lack of empirical research on entrepreneurship from a social capital perspective. In practice, it provides guidelines for the entrepreneurship responsible authorities in developing countries that encourage young people to start entrepreneurial activities. It provides youth with relevant training to equip them to build and leverage social capital to support their businesses.

**Key Words:** social capital, entrepreneurship, developing countries, youth projects, UAE, Egypt, Oman

**JEL Classification:** L26, Z13, M13

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## 1. Introduction

The definitions of social capital have induced debate regarding the concept's usage (Brunie, 2009; Corrêa et al., 2021). This is because it is derived from the concept of capital (Bourdieu, 1983), and other concepts, such as human, cultural, symbolic, and social capital, branched out from it (Bourdieu, 1985). It became one of the main concepts in the social sciences and humanities (Bourdieu, 1983) due to its positive and transformational effect on the youth, society, and institutions and its substantial value for policymakers (May & Jones, 2018; Naderi et al., 2019), and its major role in supporting social and economic development projects (Wulandhari et al., 2022).

Social capital supports entrepreneurship in various sectors across both developed and developing countries (Polyakova & Vasilyeva, 2016). Therefore, it got the attention of politicians and economists, local and global economic and social institutions, and civil society institutions (Aspinwall, 2021) as it provides new and diverse job opportunities for youth, enhances their independence and responsibility, enables them to participate in community development, and eliminates discrimination and inequality (Hassan et al., 2023). Small and medium-sized entrepreneurship projects represent (mostly entrepreneurial businesses) approximately 90% of the total companies in the world's economies, providing 40-80% of the total job opportunities, and employing 50-60% of the workforce in the world, in about 420-510 million projects in the emerging markets (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2022). Carvajal and Didier (2024) confirmed that SMEs account for 9 out of 10 businesses globally, employ more than 50% of the workforce, and contribute to 40% of the GDP. Entrepreneurship projects are numerous, employable, and the least costly in providing job opportunities (Vassiliadis et al., 2015), the wide users of modern technology, and investment in the local raw resources (Roman & Fellnhofer, 2022; Strapchuk et al., 2025; Zhao, 2024).

In the tourism context, social capital plays a vital role in shaping relationships among various stakeholders (i.e., tourists, residents, and entrepreneurial businesses) (Aminudin & Jamal, 2024). In addition, Prayitno et al. (2024) found that social capital fosters sustainable tourism development. García-Villaverde et al. (2021) depicted that social capital is a predictor of the innovativeness of firms in the tourism context. In the agri-business context, Khazami & Lakner (2022) showed that social capital is very important for entrepreneurs, as it facilitates them in obtaining the necessary resources for their business and minimizes the problems they face through networks formed with stakeholders, funders, and relevant entities.

Despite the extant studies emphasizing the contribution of social capital in empowering SMEs' success (i.e., Bassani, 2007; Bourdieu, 1983; Chichevaliev et al., 2023; Ferri et al., 2009; Hallam et al., 2018; Nichols, 2021; Solanki et al., 2023), reviewing relevant literature, this research will benefit academics in a number of ways. First, there is a strong need for academic research on the impact of social capital dimensions on the success of entrepreneurial projects among youth and students, rather than among SMEs (Corrêa et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2023), especially in the Arab world. Second, there are difficulties in conceptualizing and measuring social capital intangible dimensions and its effect on youth projects' success (Crowley & Barlow, 2022; Ferri et al., 2009) rather than focusing only on social networks construct (Belay, 2023) and on individual SMEs level rather than regional or national levels (i.e., comparative studies among countries) (Cox et al., 2022), and therefore, fulfilling these research gaps, this study will help explore the contribution of social capital dimensions in supporting entrepreneurship projects. It develops quantitative, validated measures of social capital dimensions to assess their effect on the success of youth entrepreneurial projects. It also compares results from three Arab countries that invest heavily in preparing youth to engage in entrepreneurial activities to decrease unemployment and develop national economies (i.e., UAE, Egypt, and Oman). For entrepreneurs, this research improves the overall understanding of the effects of social capital dimensions on the success of youth entrepreneurial projects and how this success could encourage youth to contribute to their society's development. Understanding the importance and dimensions of social capital, entrepreneurs will use their networks to secure funding, exchange information, and share expertise that helps develop their businesses, accelerate growth, solve problems, and save time and effort by accessing creative solutions

and advice for business success. Dimensions of social capital include social relationships, information possession, supplementary capital, and social obligations. Social relationships are a vital dimension of social capital, serving as valuable assets that foster the growth of SME entrepreneurial activities and contribute to their success (Machalek & Martin, 2015). Information possession is a form of social capital that enables entrepreneurs to establish fundamental principles and conduct feasibility studies for their ventures (Coleman, 2000). Supplementary capitals are forms of human and natural resources that influence the success of entrepreneurial projects (McDaniel et al., 2022). Social obligations represent the liabilities that affect the success of a new business and must be adhered to in order to succeed (Kostakis & Tsagarakis, 2022). The study attempts to answer the main research question: What is the role of social capital dimensions in the success of youth entrepreneurial activities? The structure of the current study includes a literature review, conceptual framework, methodology, findings, and discussions.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Entrepreneurship

The shift from macroeconomics to microeconomics has led to classifying individuals as either producers or consumers (Bloemmen et al., 2015; Dutta, 1994). The look of economists focuses on large business entities and the merging and acquisition of small and medium-sized entities (Johnstone & McLeish, 2022; Zdolsek Draksler & Sirec, 2021). With the economic crises and shocks and the high unemployment rates, it became clear to decision-makers in the major industrialized countries the importance of entrepreneurial projects in the economic system as a driving force for the birth of a new economic renaissance (Crowley & Barlow, 2022), especially with the emergence of successful experiences and the positive effects of the role of entrepreneurship and youth projects in the growth of the global economies. Thus, the concept of entrepreneurship starts to disseminate, incubating and supporting small projects, and the terms of outsourcing, downsizing, franchising, and subsidiaries have flourished (Ma & Cheok, 2022). It is believed that entrepreneurship creates new jobs and brings economic benefit to all members of society (Kurek & Rachwał, 2011).

In the 1990s, entrepreneurship gained the attention of educational institutions, government organisations, business companies, and society, emphasizing its importance to the national economy, particularly in developing countries. It is highlighted that entrepreneurship contributes effectively and most prominently to economic growth through the dissemination of knowledge (Aparicio et al., 2022), opening up various job opportunities and contributing to society's development (Chichevaliev et al., 2023; May & Jones, 2018; Zhao et al., 2022).

This became clear in the writings about entrepreneurial capitalism as a new pattern of the modern international economy capable of achieving sustainable economic growth and prosperity (Geroski, 1995; Hallam et al., 2018; Hartwig & Krämer, 2019; Trubnikov, 2021; Zhang & Fung, 2006).

Global reports point out that young people are more likely to start entrepreneurial projects compared to older ones and that the decision of starting a new business is an individual and personal choice, and that social and cultural norms are among the crucial factors contributing to the success of entrepreneurial activities (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2023). Hoffman et al. (2005) assured that one factor that contributes to the improved performance of entrepreneurial projects is social capital, which helps in connecting social networks and identifying information sources required to improve the work procedures of these projects. Zhang and Fung (2006) confirmed that providing natural, physical, and human capital does not guarantee the success of entrepreneurial projects without social capital that facilitates business start-up procedures, strengthens supplier connections, and improves production networks nationally and regionally. Previous studies focus on the social network dimension only despite

the multi-dimensions of the concept (Belay, 2023; Zhang & Fung, 2006). The following sections provide details on the associations between social capital and entrepreneurship.

### 2.2 Social capital theory and entrepreneurship

According to the social capital theory, social relationships are capital that support the growth of SME entrepreneurial activities and reinforce their success (Machalek & Martin, 2015). The previous literature ensures the importance of the association between social capital and the development of entrepreneurship projects, especially in Western societies (Akdere, 2005; Dutta & Sobel, 2018; Gannon & Roberts, 2020). However, in the Arab societies, the relationship is still unclear for many entrepreneurs. It is also found that most studies in this area address the role of social capital in the social development of societies (i.e., Barrena-Martínez et al., 2020; Belay, 2023; Corrêa et al., 2021; Karalis Noel & Finocchio, 2022; Leung et al., 2021; Sahasranamam et al., 2021; Solanki et al., 2023).

It is argued that social capital is part of intellectual capital (Young, 2012). It includes two main aspects: the capital aspect and the social aspect. The capital aspect implies that social capital is accumulatively formed over long time. As for the social aspect, it is represented in everything derived from socialization, such as friendship, cooperation, tolerance, solidarity, mutual respect, and a sense of common interest (Bourdieu, 1985). Reviewing the definitions of social capital, it is found that there are two categories of definitions: The first looks at building social capital, which is the structural dimension of the concept, and the second highlights the functions of social capital (the functional dimension). There is almost agreement among various researchers that Bourdieu was the first to define social capital as the sum of the actual resources owned by an individual from a network of social relations and mutual recognition. It is believed that social capital does not depend on the network of social relations only but requires the individuals to modify the available relations as well (such as neighbourhood, friendship, work, etc.) into necessary and elective relations that include mutual obligations, and the individual feels on his own (feelings of gratitude, respect, and friendship) that is, social relations between individuals must be based on mutual and positive trust (Bourdieu, 1983).

The concept of social capital evolved in Coleman's work who described the types of social relations between individuals in the family and local community, focusing on the social structure in which social capital appears (Coleman, 2000). He also indicated that there is a set of elements or forms through which social capital is manifested, namely: (1) *Commitments and expectations*. "If the individual (A) does something for (B), he will exchange it for him in the future. This establishes an expectation on (A) and a commitment on the part of (B) to maintain this trust". He emphasized the importance of two components in building this form of capital, social and actual needs. The social is the level of trust in the social environment, and the actual needs are the person's needs of help or assistance. (2) *Information possession*: is a form of social capital, latent in the social relations, and is important in providing a basis for actions and behaviours. (3) *Effective standards and sanctions*: when standards are in effect, this constitutes a type of social capital that supports society's achievement. According to Putnam (1995), physical capital denotes the material aspects, while human capital looks at the characteristics of individuals, and social capital describes the links between individuals and social networks and standards of reciprocity, quality, and trust. Naderi et al. (2019) believe that the social networks and ties that individuals have form an important resource of success for entrepreneurial activities and affect their performance and creativity. Cox et al. (2022) cite that social capital helps entrepreneurs through enabling them to access information, advice, and innovativeness promotion. Most previous studies referred to three dimensions of social capital: structural, cognitive, and relational (i.e., Crowley & Barlow, 2022; Nasrolahi Vosta & Reza Jalilvand, 2014; Shi et al., 2015). Different from previous studies, and based on Coleman's (1988) social capital components, this study explores the role of social relationships, information possession, social obligations, and complementary forms of capital in reinforcing the success of youth entrepreneurial projects. The authors have also discussed the determining effect of cultural aspects on limiting the success

of youth projects. The following sections show these components and their relationships with entrepreneurship.

### 2.3 Social relationships and entrepreneurship

Previous research emphasizes that social relations are the basic source for the formation of social capital (i.e., Akdere, 2005; Bassani, 2007; Claridge, 2018; Hoffman, 2005; Manning, 2017; Solanki et al., 2023). The strength and cohesion of these social relationships play a vital part in determining the balance and size of social capital. The Trust and cooperation values of a social network may constitute vital aspects of social capital formation. In addition, these concepts focused on the bases of social capital rather than its consequences. As for the functional dimension of the social capital, it is defined as the ties, social relations, values, and norms of group members that help them achieve their goals (Bourdieu, 1985). Lin et al. (2001) see social capital as the resources inherent in social networks, which are accessed and used by actors to facilitate their actions.

The functional dimension of social capital is characterized as productive as other forms of capital, and works to achieve certain goals, which cannot be achieved in the absence of it. Social capital is represented in the different social identities, which are united by a common denominator, and through the common denominators between members of the same group arises the so-called social structure, and this structure helps in the development of society and strengthens the social relations network horizontally and vertically (Coleman, 2000). While Putnam sees social capital as features of social life represented in networks and centres on trust, cooperation, and exchange among them, so that they invest these resources in achieving their entrepreneurial goals (Ferri et al., 2009; Kanazawa & Savage, 2009; Putnam, 1995). It is defined as any feature of social relationships that leads to psychological, social, and economic benefits.

The social capital theory argues that social relationships are resources to support the promotion of highly valued skills (Akdere, 2005; Claridge, 2018), that can be used for achieving targeted results (Bizzi, 2015). Social relationships in organisations are equated with social capital. It revolves primarily around the relationships maintained by actors (Bizzi, 2015).

We theorize that the success of entrepreneurs is based on their capability develop social relationships (Corrêa et al., 2021; Goxe et al., 2022). It is predictable that there will be differences between entrepreneurs in the level of benefits from membership in large social networks (Corrêa et al., 2021; Eleanor Shaw, 2009). Social relations help entrepreneurs identify the type of informal networks, build trust and mutual understanding among entrepreneurs, and cooperate between entrepreneurs and take advantage of the main competitive advantages in today's network economy (Jin & Youn, 2022; Zhao et al., 2022). Knowledge and social relations enable entrepreneurs to establish and benefit from joint cooperation in reconciling the internal and external labour markets of the enterprise, and to improve its organisational effectiveness and build social capital and use it to support entrepreneurship (Lesser, 2000). Hassan et al. (2023) depict that social relationships help entrepreneurs overcome expected obstacles, access finance, markets, knowledge, and resources. Crowley and Barlow (2022) mentioned that social relationships help entrepreneurs to develop cooperation and trust among their social network actors, and Nasrolahi Vosta and Reza Jalilvand (2014) consider social relationships as a fundamental factor of entrepreneurial activities' success. The above-mentioned discussion has led to the formulation of the first research hypothesis as follows:

*H1. Social relationships contribute to entrepreneurial activity success.*

### 2.4 Information possession and entrepreneurship

Knowledge and information possession help entrepreneurs to develop basic principles, prepare a feasibility study for their projects (Coleman, 2000), and benefit from cooperation with experts and peers

in achieving project objectives, avoiding risks, and increasing competitiveness (Coleman, 2000; Koehne et al., 2022; Hamitouche et al., 2024). The knowledge management and entrepreneurship literature are, in part, coherent with findings on broadening the knowledge perspective for entrepreneurship. Thus, the key knowledge employed to develop the company mostly comes from the personal experience of the actors (Scuotto et al., 2022). Information management through information technologies is also a source of knowledge for entrepreneurs based on the type of entrepreneurial activity (Ganotakis et al., 2021). Entrepreneurial opportunities in developing countries are strongly correlated with the adoption of information technologies, in addition to using innovative ways to manage knowledge of activities and support the activity's success (Elgarhy & Abou-Shouk, 2023; Rawhouser et al., 2022). Another source of entrepreneurial information and knowledge is the education that provides relevant information of entrepreneurial activities (van Ewijk & Weber, 2021). Hoffman et al. (2005) mentioned that social networks can collect information through information channels and use it to improve the entrepreneurial performance. Zhang and Fung (2006), Zhao et al. (2022) depicted that social capital facilitates entrepreneurial information access and exchange, which in turn helps entrepreneurs to realize entrepreneurial opportunities (Cox et al., 2022; Manning, 2012; Shi et al., 2015) and projects implementation (Nasrolahi Vosta & Reza Jalilvand, 2014). Hence the second hypothesis is formed as follows:

*H2. Information possession contributes to the success of entrepreneurial activity.*

### 2.5 Supplementary capitals and entrepreneurship

Social power and social status influence the success of entrepreneurship (Koehne et al., 2022). The experience of the project founders affects their decision to internationalize, and it varies according to their beliefs, and of course, these variations influence the strategic decisions (De Cock et al., 2021). Eco-entrepreneurs navigate and negotiate the constraints of developing their organisations through blending personality traits and innovations that assist entrepreneurs to create a strong policy framework for their business (Potluri & Phani, 2020). The social, cultural, and symbolic capitals of youth and training programs contribute to the growth and success of entrepreneurial activity (Philip et al., 2022). May and Jones (2018) define social capital as the accumulative sum of cultural and economic capital. Cultural capital is the motivations that affect entrepreneurs' decisions and business management processes. This cultural capital is, in turn, a supportive facet of social capital that helps entrepreneurial businesses to succeed (Tan et al., 2024). Lloyd (2019) pointed out that cultural capital is a powerful resource that helps entrepreneurs access technical expertise that benefits business success and development. Symbolic capital is a form of social capital that refers to the social recognition, prestige, honour, and respect of others. Symbolic capital enhances entrepreneurs' credibility among stakeholders and helps form collaborations and access to resources needed for business success (Lewis, 2024; Karp & O'Mahony, 2025).

The significance of cultural, social, and symbolic capital for young people is emphasized. Social capital gains are evident in relationships, increasing social consistency, and symbolic capital is expressed through social power and status (Philip et al., 2022). Recent investigations pointed to the value of cultural capital and the recognition of its forms to bring benefits to distinguished entrepreneurs in societies (Xie, 2022). It is believed that economic and symbolic capital positively influence entrepreneurs' orientation towards achievement (Korkeila & Hamari, 2020). Supplementary capitals, including human and natural resources, influence the success of entrepreneurial projects (McDaniel et al., 2022).

Hence, the third hypothesis is formed as follows:

*H3. Supplementary capitals contribute to the success of entrepreneurial activity.*

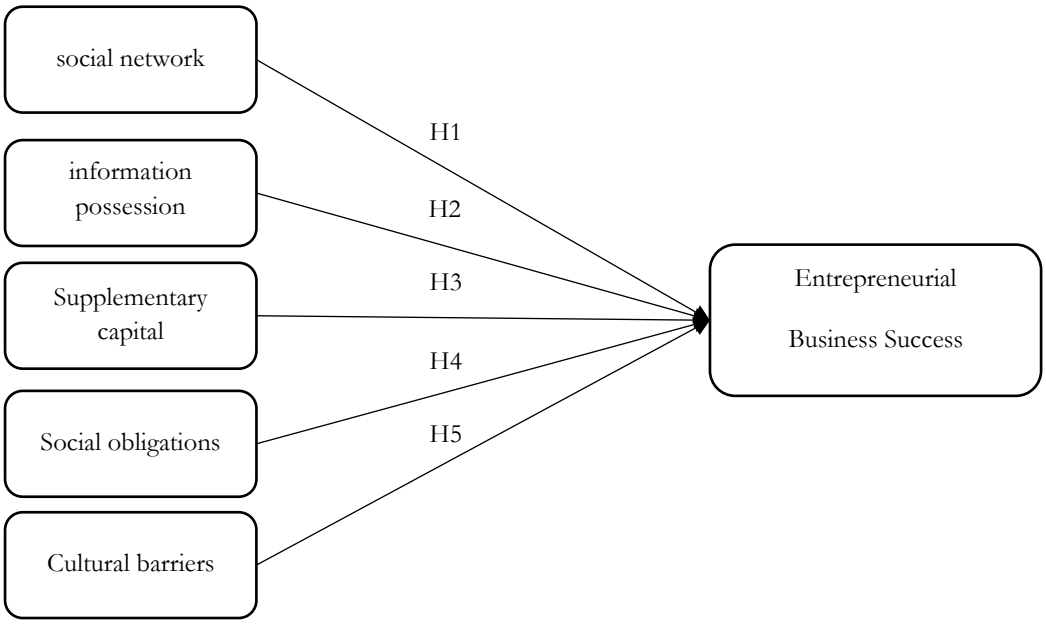
### 2.6 Social obligations and entrepreneurship

Obligations, trust, and norms control the entrepreneurial processes (Hadjielias et al., 2021). Many entrepreneurs adhere to the social contexts that determine costs, drivers, and ventures and the critical obligations mean the potential negative outcomes of failure (Lenz et al., 2021). Social obligations help entrepreneurs to select the required community and expand it. Given the social challenges faced by entrepreneurs, this may impact business success (Yetis Larsson et al., 2019). Social obligations and proactiveness support the quality of relationships and lead to enhanced performance for entrepreneurship (Nguyen et al., 2020). Hoffman et al. (2005) claim that following the social obligations could benefit the reputation of entrepreneurial activity and trust. Therefore, entrepreneurs have to carefully consider the social obligations and expectations of their societies to improve their reputation and increase their trust (Manning, 2012). Kungwansupaphan and Leihaothabam (2016) confirmed that the strength of social capital's effect on entrepreneurial activities is due to following the social and cultural obligations of the society. Corrêa et al. (2021) and Claridge (2018) asserted the importance of realizing the social obligations by entrepreneurs to strengthen their social network scope and effectiveness. Hence, the next proposition is formed as follows:

*H4. Social obligations contribute to the success of entrepreneurial activity.*

## 2.7 Cultural barriers and entrepreneurship

Figure 1. **Research Proposed model**




Source: Authors

Abou-Shouk et al. (2023) depicted that realizing work environmental and cultural aspects is substantial for a successful work environment. Hallam et al. (2018) focused on the cultural aspects of the performance of small businesses and their social systems through the social rules and shared meanings. They highlighted the impact of cultural factors on the social networks. Zhao et al. (2022) refer to culture as an important component of social capital that affects entrepreneurial activity performance. Furthermore, Shi et al. (2015) highlighted the impact of socio-cultural aspects on the success of entrepreneurial projects. Halilem et al. (2022) emphasize that gender disparities could affect entrepreneurship activities in certain cultures. In other societies, cultural diversity influences the growth of entrepreneurship. Cheng et al. (2022) found that cultural diversity significantly hampers the

undertaking of entrepreneurial activities. The impact of cultural diversity varies by region, industry, occupation, and entrepreneurial behaviour.

Digitization has allowed those with entrepreneurial skills, abilities, and knowledge to directly reach consumers in cultural industries. According to the assumptions of cultural entrepreneurship theory, many entrepreneurship activities are discontinued due to the lack of digital IT skills among entrepreneurs (McMullen et al., 2021). Dijkstra et al. (2022) clarified that entrepreneurs face cultural challenges in entrepreneurial organisations by developing products that may cause cultural problems. Despite this, cultural obstacles remain a determinant to the growth and progress of entrepreneurs, especially in developing societies. The capability to manage cultural dimensions remains challenging for entrepreneurs when launching their businesses and continuing in a culturally distinctive environment (Liu et al., 2021). Kang and Xiong (2021) see that institutional and cultural barriers hinder young people's approach and attitude towards entrepreneurship. Hence, the fifth hypothesis is formed as follows:

*H5. Cultural barriers influence the success of entrepreneurial activity.*

Figure 1 summarizes the causal relationships between social capital dimensions and the success of entrepreneurial activities.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1 Research method

This research builds on the social capital theory to measure the role of social capital dimensions (i.e., social relationships, information possession, supplementary capitals, and social obligations) in supporting the success of entrepreneurship projects. It also measures the effect of cultural barriers on the success of these activities in the UAE, Egypt, and Oman. The study deductively adopts the quantitative method to collect primary data using an e-survey from relevant respondents in the three countries.

#### 3.1.1 Sample

Authors have targeted youth entrepreneurial activities of different types (i.e., services (tourism and hospitality), commercial, manufacturing, agricultural, and other activities) in the UAE, Egypt, and Oman. In the UAE, authors accessed relevant formal entities to get information about entrepreneurship activities. Authors used the snowball sampling technique to access young entrepreneurs in the UAE and collected 186 responses. As for Egypt, the authors accessed the Medium, Small and Micro enterprises Development Agency have successfully collected 120 responses. Using the statistics of the Omani SMEs Development Authority, authors collected 107 responses from young entrepreneurs. In total, 413 responses were collected and used for data analysis.

#### 3.1.2 Data collection and analysis

A questionnaire designed based on extant research was used to collect data from young entrepreneurs. It consists of 6 main constructs. Three items were used to measure first construct (i.e., the social networks) (Moser & Ashforth, 2022; Nishio et al., 2021). Three items were used to measure information possession (Kang & Xiong, 2021; Rosado-Cubero et al., 2022; Ilomo & Mwantimwa, 2023), four items to measure supplementary capitals (Kang & Xiong, 2021; Rasool et al., 2022; Rosado-Cubero et al., 2022; Zaman et al., 2022), three items to measure social obligations (Kostakis & Tsagarakis, 2022), six items to measure cultural barriers (Cheng et al., 2021; da Fonseca & Campos, 2021; Khalid et al., 2022), and four items to measure the entrepreneurial activity success (Ben Youssef et al., 2021; Edwards et al., 2020; Estrin et al., 2016; Lang & Fink, 2019; Zhou et al., 2017). The scale was built on a five-point

Likert scale. The questionnaire items were carefully checked and tested on a sample of respondents from each country to check its construct and face validity concerns. In addition, the questionnaire was sent to a panel of academics to check its validity and to measure the relevant dimensions. Comments on re-wording, rephrasing, formatting, and additions were carefully considered and added to the final version of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire form, in addition to the cover letter explaining the aim of the research, respondents' rights and privacy concerns, it also included questions about the entrepreneur demographics (gender, age, education, marital status, employment, and monthly income), and the entrepreneurial activity (sector, age, number of employees and source of finance). Data were collected between March and May 2024. PLS-SEM was used to test the research hypotheses presented in the research model. It is a statistical technique used to analyze frameworks with latent variables and reveal valid and reliable findings (Abou-Shouk, Bayoumy, et al., 2023; Abou-Shouk, Elbaz, et al., 2021; Abou-Shouk & Eraqi, 2015; Abou-Shouk, Zoair, et al., 2022; Aburumman, Abou-Shouk, et al., 2023; Salah & Abou-Shouk, 2020). WarpPLS software ver. 8 was used for data analysis procedures. The significance level used in analysis is 5%. Validity and reliability issues were carefully presented in Tables 3-5 to ensure the reliable results were deducted from this study.

### 3.2 Research Settings

Egypt, the UAE, and the Sultanate of Oman (i.e., the research settings) give more attention through their governments to entrepreneurship. The United Arab Emirates ranked first in the GEM Index in 2022, moving from the fourth rank globally in 2021 and is described as the best environment for founding businesses (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2022). This incubator environment for entrepreneurship in the UAE has been greatly enhanced (The Ministry of Economy, 2022). The UAE government pays attention to entrepreneurial education and creativity to encourage graduates to set up their own projects and assign authorities to help youth entrepreneurs start up their business and provide all consultancies and support to reinforce these projects in terms of feasibility studies, technical aspects, financing, and marketing contexts.

As for Egypt, the culture of entrepreneurship has spread in Egypt because of the interest of the Egyptian government and the One Million Entrepreneurs Campaign - qualifying one million entrepreneurs by 2030 - within Egypt's Vision 2030. The nature of the Egyptian production pattern, the culture of self-affirmation, especially among Egyptian youth, the efforts of donors, funders and the efforts of many private sector institutions and NGOs contributed to spread the culture of entrepreneurship and encourage Egyptian graduates to start up their own businesses. (Salam, 2021). Accordingly, the Egyptian environment has become the fastest incubating and supportive environment for the growth of entrepreneurship in the East and North Africa, and its rank in the regional and global entrepreneurship indicators has begun to rise. Egypt was ranked 32 out of 54 countries in the GEM index for the year 2019-2020, especially in terms of the availability of financing for youth projects, the legislative environment, tax incentives and other tax, training, and innovation opportunities (Hart et al., 2020).

Entrepreneurship is selected by 75.6% of Egyptians to be their desirable career, of which 65.8% of Egyptian adults think they are skilful to start up their entrepreneurial activity (Ismail et al., 2022). The number of real entrepreneurship enterprises in Egypt reached about 1.7 million, representing 44.6% of the total number of official enterprises in the private sector. The number of workers in these enterprises is about 5.8 million workers. Most of them are concentrated in the wholesale and retail trade and manufacturing industries (Hart et al., 2020).

Moving to Oman, the report of the International Entrepreneurship Monitor confirmed that the Omani economy is driven by innovation and entrepreneurship based on the "Oman Vision 2040". The Omani economy is heading towards economic diversification with an increase in the role of the non-oil sectors, depending on the diversity of sources related to technology, knowledge, and innovation. The

registered number in the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development is approximately (35000) enterprises, of which approximately (10000) are pioneers and have a leadership card issued by the authority to entrepreneurs (Al-Balushi, 2017). The report showed that the total entrepreneurship activity in its early stages in the Sultanate of Oman doubles more than twice between 2019 and 2020, rising from 6.7% to 16% (Hart et al., 2020). Therefore, these three countries were selected to be the research settings for this study.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the outline of the research respondents. It is shown that the male respondents are dominant in the three samples (69.4% for the UAE, 70.8% for Egypt, and 56.1% for Oman). Most respondents in the three samples are aged between 30 and 39 years (UAE: 77.4%, Egypt: 37.5%, and Oman: 43.9%), and the age category of 20-29 years old ranks second among the three samples (UAE: 18.3%, Egypt: 21.8%, and Oman: 25.2%). The majority of respondents have a university educational qualification 59.1% for the UAE, 43.4% for Egypt, and 54.2% for Oman), followed by secondary education (34.4%, 25.7%, and 29.9% for the UAE, Egypt, and Oman, respectively). Most respondents are married (56.1% for the UAE, 68.3% for Egypt, and 72% for Oman). The category of monthly income varies between the three countries, as for the UAE, 30.6% of respondents have a monthly income of more than 2000 US$, while 29.6% range from 500 to 1000 US$, and the rest have an income between 1100 and 2000 US$.

Table 1. **Profile of research respondents**

| | | UAE (%) | Egypt (%) | Oman (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 69.4 | 70.8 | 56.1 |
| | Female | 30.6 | 29.2 | 43.9 |
| Age | 20-29 | 18.3 | 21.8 | 25.2 |
| | 30-39 | 77.4 | 37.5 | 43.9 |
| | 40-49 | 2.1 | 21.6 | 22.4 |
| | 50 and over | 2.3 | 19.2 | 8.5 |
| Education | Read/ write | 3.8 | 7.5 | 9.3 |
| | Preparatory | 2.7 | 23.3 | 6.5 |
| | Secondary | 34.4 | 25.7 | 29.9 |
| | University | 59.1 | 43.5 | 54.2 |
| Marital status | Single | 33.33 | 14.2 | 5.6 |
| | Married | 65.1 | 68.3 | 72.0 |
| | Divorced | 1.6 | 8.3 | 12.1 |
| | Widow | - | 9.2 | 10.3 |
| Monthly income | 500-1000 $ | 29.6 | 88.3 | 26.2 |
| | 1100-1500 $ | 19.4 | 5.8 | 52.3 |
| | 1600-2000 $ | 20.4 | 2.5 | 15.9 |
| | More than 2000 $ | 30.6 | 3.3 | 5.6 |
| Employment | Public | 31.7 | 32.5 | 29.9 |
| | Private | 59.7 | 53.3 | 47.7 |
| | Unemployed | 8.6 | 14.2 | 22.4 |

Source: Authors

For Egypt, the largest category of monthly income falls between 500 and 1000 US$ (88.3%). Meanwhile, the largest category of monthly income in Oman is between 1100-1500US$ (52.3% followed by 26.2% with income ranging between 500 and 1000 US$ monthly. Most respondents work in the private sector in the three samples (UAE: 59.7%, Egypt: 53.3%, and Oman: 47.7%), showing that most entrepreneurs belong to the private sector (Table 1).

Regarding the entrepreneurial activity in the three samples, Table 2 depicts the most activities belong to the services sector (i.e., tourism and hospitality sector) (50% for the UAE, 33.33% for Egypt, and 36.1% for Oman). This is followed by commercial activities (UAE: 24.7%, Egypt: 12.5%, and Oman: 19.1%). The UAE has some activities in agriculture (8.5%), manufacturing 8.2%), and other sectors (8.6%/). Egypt has also 30% of entrepreneurial activities in the sample belong to agriculture, 15% to manufacturing, and 9.2% to various activities. Oman has 25.3% of entrepreneurial activities in agriculture, and 15.8% in manufacturing, and 3.7% in various activities. The largest age category of entrepreneurial activity in the UAE ranges from 1 to 5 years (83.3%), while the largest category in Egypt and Oman is 6-10 years (40% and 43% respectively). Entrepreneurial activities in the three samples employ between 1 and 5 employees (75.3% for the UAE, 83.3% for Egypt, and 75.7% for Oman) reflecting the small size of entrepreneurial activities. As for the source of finance, it is mostly coming from public institutions (71.5% for the UAE, 58/3% for Egypt, and 74.8% for Oman), reflecting the support of governments for entrepreneurial activities (Table 2).

Table 2. **Description of entrepreneurial activities**

| | | UAE (%) | Egypt (%) | Oman (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Type of activity | Services | 50.0 | 33.3 | 36.1 |
| | Commercial | 24.7 | 12.5 | 19.1 |
| | Manufacturing | 8.2 | 15.0 | 15.8 |
| | Agricultural | 8.5 | 30.0 | 25.3 |
| | Others | 8.6 | 9.2 | 3.7 |
| Age of activity | 1-5 years | 83.3 | 21.7 | 29.9 |
| | 6-10 | 10.2 | 40.0 | 43.0 |
| | 11-15 | 0.5 | 15.0 | 16.8 |
| | 16-20 | 5.9 | 17.5 | 4.7 |
| | More than 20 | - | 5.8 | 5.6 |
| Number of Employees | 1-5 | 75.3 | 83.3 | 75.7 |
| | 6-10 | 15.6 | 10.0 | 20.6 |
| | 11-15 | 1.6 | 2.5 | 2.8 |
| | 16-20 | 2.2 | 4.2 | .9 |
| | More than 20 | 5.4 | - | - |
| Finance | Government | 71.5 | 58.3 | 74.8 |
| | Personal | 16.1 | 5.0 | 6.5 |
| | Credit | 3.8 | 32.5 | 16.8 |
| | Other | 8.6 | - | 1.9 |

Source: Authors

### 4.2 Measurement models

The research measurement models present the validity and reliability of scales employed in this study. Table 3 shows that all variables have a reliable threshold exceeding 0.7, reflecting reliable scales. As for the validity, the value of average variance extracted (AVE) for the three variables exceeds the cut-off value of 0.5, representing the convergent validity of the used scale (Table 2)(Fornell & Larcker, 1981).VIF values are less than 3.3, referring to the absence of serious collinearity problems.

Table 3. **Measurement models**

| |
|---|
| Social networks (SNs): CR= 0.902, CA=0.837, AVE=0.755, VIF=2.4<br>SN1: I have significant SNs in my local community<br>My SNs support my projects' success<br>I cooperate and exchange expertise with other entrepreneurs in my field |
| Information and entrepreneurial knowledge possession (EK): CR= 0.921, CA=0.871, AVE=0.796, VIF=1.6<br>EK aids me during my project's initial stages<br>EK significantly helped me prepare the feasibility study of my project<br>My academic EK of market analysis enabled me to choose the appropriate project for the local community |
| Supplementary capital (SC): CR= 0.894, CA=0.823, AVE=0.738, VIF=3.1<br>My personal ambitions and beliefs motivated me to move towards entrepreneurship projects<br>The societal environment contributed to my orientation towards entrepreneurship projects<br>Role models in my community encouraged me to go towards entrepreneurship projects<br>I have gained a new social status because of my successful project |
| Social structure obligations (SOs): CR= 0.896, CA=0.824, AVE=0.748, VIF=2.6<br>I was highly committed to implementing the elements of the approved feasibility study for my project<br>The surrounding social structure supports the success of my project<br>Various social welfare services support and succeed my project |
| Cultural barriers (CBs): CR= 0.947, CA=0.963, AVE=0.693, VIF=1.6<br>Customs and traditions of society sometimes lead to rejecting some types of entrepreneurship projects<br>The spread of a culture of bias (class and education) could affect the success of entrepreneurial projects<br>Gender bias is a significant factor affecting entrepreneurial projects' success<br>Low social status and traditional beliefs is a determinant of entrepreneurial projects' success<br>Fear of failure is negatively affecting entrepreneurial projects' success<br>Lack of trust in digital and technological capabilities could affect entrepreneurial projects' success |
| Entrepreneurial business success (BS): CR= 0.914, CA=0.874, AVE=0.726, VIF=2.1<br>Social capital affects the success of my entrepreneurship projects<br>The social networks help marketing and selling the products of my entrepreneurial projects<br>Social capital helps me to communicate effectively with the beneficiaries of my entrepreneurial project<br>Social capital helps me in facilitating administrative procedures related to entrepreneurship projects |

*Note: CR: composite reliability, CA: Cronbach's alpha*

Source: Authors

Tables 4 and 5 present other validity indicator values. Table 4 shows that inter-construct correlations, and Table 5 shows that HTMT values are below 0.85 (Kock, 2022), which presents evidence of discriminant validity of the scale employed in this research.

Table 4. **Inter-constructs correlations**

| Constructs | SN | IP | SC | SO | CB | EB |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social network (SN) | (0.869) | | | | | |
| Information possession (IP) | 0.286 | (0.892) | | | | |
| Supplementary capital (SC) | 0.723 | 0.304 | (0.824) | | | |
| Social structure obligations (SO) | 0.523 | 0.561 | 0.691 | (0.859) | | |
| Cultural barriers (CB) | -0.475 | -0.052 | -0.507 | -0.259 | (0.833) | |
| Entrepreneurial Business Success (EB) | 0.656 | 0.325 | 0.634 | 0.546 | -0.500 | (0.852) |

Source: Authors

Table 5. **HTMT Ratios**

| Constructs | SN | IP | SC | SO | CB |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Information possession (IP) | 0.266 | | | | |
| Supplementary capital (SC) | 0.841 | 0.295 | | | |
| Social structure obligations (SO) | 0.620 | 0.615 | 0.831 | | |
| Cultural barriers (CB) | 0.530 | 0.073 | 0.544 | 0.313 | |
| Entrepreneurial Business Success (EB) | 0.761 | 0.303 | 0.734 | 0.641 | 0.547 |

*Note: SN: Social network*

Source: Authors

### 4.3 Structural relationships and multi-group analysis

The structural model results summarized in Table 6 provide indicators of the causal relationships among the research model constructs. For example, it is revealed that the success of entrepreneurial activities in the samples is affected by the contribution of social network relationships ($\beta$=0.30, $p<0.05$, and the first hypothesis is supported). In addition, information possession is also a predictor of entrepreneurial activity success in the three samples ($\beta$=0.16, $p<0.05$, and H2 is supported). Furthermore, the supplementary capitals have also contributed to entrepreneurial activities' success ($\beta$=0.12, $p<0.05$, and H3 is accepted). Social structure obligations have also affected the success of entrepreneurial activities ($\beta$=0.15, $p<0.05$, and H4 is supported). These results confirm that the social capital dimensions (i.e., social network relationships, information possession, supplementary capitals, and social structure obligations) have significantly affected the success of entrepreneurial activities. On the other hand, it is revealed that cultural barriers constitute a significant challenge to entrepreneurial activities' success ($\beta$=-0.24, $p<0.05$, and the H5 is supported). The social capital dimensions and cultural barriers explain 56% of the variance in entrepreneurial activities success.

Table 6. **Hypotheses-testing summary**

| Hypotheses | β | P | $R^2$ | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social network- entrepreneurial business success (H1) | 0.30 | <0.05 | 0.56 | Accept |
| Information possession- entrepreneurial business success (H2) | 0.16 | <0.05 | | Accept |
| Supplementary capital- entrepreneurial business success (H3) | 0.12 | <0.05 | | Accept |
| Social structure obligations - entrepreneurial business success (H4) | 0.15 | <0.05 | | Accept |
| Cultural barriers- entrepreneurial business success (H5) | 0.24 | <0.05 | | Accept |

Source: Authors

The multi-group analysis was used to highlight any possible differences among the three research settings (i.e., UAE, Egypt, and Oman). Results revealed that the only significant differences are found in in the effect of social network on business success between the UAE and Egypt samples ($T=2.02$, $p<0.05$), and the effect of cultural barriers on business success between Egypt and Oman ($T=1.77$, $p<0.05$). The main justification for these differences is the cultural differences between the involved countries, as UAE and Oman are more culturally conservative compared to Egypt.

## 5. Discussion

The current study aims to examine the contribution of social capital dimensions to the success of entrepreneurial activities in the UAE, Egypt, and Oman. It explores how entrepreneurs use social capital to reinforce their success and expand their start-up businesses. Findings revealed that there is a significant contribution of social capital dimensions to successful entrepreneurial activities. It is found that one critical aspect that influences the entrepreneurial activities is the social networks with the actors of the

activity they work within. The new entrepreneurial activities, in particular, try to benefit from the social networks to promote their products/ services and expand their market share to support their survival in the market, mostly starting as small and medium-sized activities. Social networks are the core of social capital, and they represent resources that entrepreneurs can use to add value to their products and services and exchange the relevant information with the target market. This finding is important to tourism entrepreneurs. Social networks help tourism entrepreneurs to form their personal and professional networks to access useful resources from industry players, market insights, customers, governmental authorities, local communities, and suppliers that contribute to business growth and success, and enable possible collaborations and partnerships in an interlinked industry, including hotels, airlines, tour operators and other actors. This finding is in agreement with Crowley and Barlow (2022), whose results were based on individual-level data collected from 428 regions in 37 countries between 2010 and 2016, and claimed that social networks help entrepreneurs build trust and cooperation with their customers to achieve the target entrepreneurial goals. It is also agreed with Naderi et al. (2019), with their results of Iranian respondents who believe that social networks form an important resource of success for entrepreneurial activities and affect their performance and creativity.

The second dimension of social capital that supports the success of entrepreneurial activities is information possession. One crucial gain of social capital and social networks is enabling access to relevant information required to support the entrepreneurial activity. Collecting information of the target market and customers on the idea of the entrepreneurial activity, the information of setting up the new business, procedures, and licensing, in addition to the required information of the market segment, and the feedback on the introduced product/ service is essential to succeeding in business. Furthermore, the information and knowledge required for a concrete feasibility study and financing requirements will help entrepreneurs to reinforce the success of their activity. Social capital and social networks act as a catalyst to help entrepreneurs to know their market needs, competitors, and procedures to improve their business and expand it. This information is very important to tourism and service entrepreneurs, particularly accurate and timely information on changeable customer needs and market trends that could help entrepreneurs to respond proactively to customer needs, decrease uncertainty, and increase the competitiveness of their entrepreneurial activities. Possessing information about tourist expectations and desires will help improve visitor experience and satisfaction, forming brand trust and increasing the loyal customer base of the business. This finding is in line with the UK-based study of Zhao et al. (2022) who pointed that social capital facilitates accessing information that helps entrepreneurs to identify their entrepreneurial opportunities, Cox et al. (2022), who concluded based on a dataset of 68 nations that cooperation with experts and collecting technical information would help entrepreneurs to avoid potential risks.

Moving to the third dimension, other supplementary capitals would help entrepreneurs to support their business success. According to the theory of social capital, supplementary capitals include capitals that are crucial for business success. These capitals include the social power, international experience of entrepreneurs, social, cultural, and symbolic capital, trained human resources, and other natural resources that form a base for successful entrepreneurial activity. In tourism, human, social, and cultural resources are equal in importance to financial resources that support entrepreneurial success. Skilled labour, educated and trained, could increase customer satisfaction and enhance business reputation required for business growth. Cultural dimension, including cultural resources, heritage, and traditions, is a powerful asset when entrepreneurial activity considers it in presenting their services. Considering the local aspect in service provision could reinforce business success. This finding is supported by other studies, including De Cock et al. (2021) findings from Belgium, and Philip et al. (2022) findings from North America, who all emphasized the importance of these capitals for successful entrepreneurial activity. Meanwhile, Xie's (2022) results from China highlighted the risk of the absence of cultural capital, such as awareness, knowledge, and skills needed by entrepreneurial institutions to support their business success.

The last dimension is the social obligations. Responsibilities and liabilities of the new business will determine its potential for success. Adhering to social obligations will help entrepreneurs to select their successful activities, estimate its cost and required ventures to succeed. The adopted innovation strategy and its role in improving business performance are dependent on adhering to social obligations. This finding strongly applies to tourism entrepreneurs who have to consider social context, cultural system, and cultural respect. Considering the cultural sensitivity and the environmental responsibility, the ethical practices, and entrepreneurial business will align with community needs, moral values, and gain local support for their business. This finding is concurrent with the studies of Hadjielias et al. (2021) in Cyprus, Lenz et al. (2021) in Australia, and Nguyen et al. (2020) in Vietnam, who shed the light on the role of social obligations, trust stories, and intellectual property strategies in promoting and improving the success of the entrepreneurial activity.

The present study has also highlighted the negative role of cultural barriers that may form challenges for young entrepreneurs to adopt specific activities and the role of gender in selecting the type of activity. Some societies focus on males or females to set up specific activities, which may contradict the society's traditions. Cultural varieties may affect the success of the activity, and specific societies do not accept some ideas, while others are selective, and locals avoid unprestigious activities. This finding is concurrent with the findings of Halilem et al. (2022) in Canada, Cheng et al. (2022) in China, and Zhao et al. (2022) in Western Australia, who highlighted gender, cultural verities, and cultural challenges as barriers to the success of entrepreneurial activities. This finding is very important in the tourism context. Differences in social norms, beliefs, and social contexts could hinder business growth, especially if the business does not consider the cultural values, religious values, or moral aspects. This may reduce social acceptance of the entrepreneurial activity instead of community support.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1 Conclusions and implications

The present study aimed to examine the role of social capital dimensions in the success of entrepreneurial activities. It developed the research model on the theoretical base of the social capital theory (social relationships, information possession, supplementary capitals, and social obligations) that have critically contributed to the success of entrepreneurial activities. The study used a questionnaire form to collect data from three Arab countries: The UAE, Egypt, and Oman, and accessed various sectors, including services, commercial, manufacturing, agricultural, and other sectors, to collect data from entrepreneurs to achieve the research aim. Structural equation modelling technique was used for data analysis purposes, and findings revealed that the social capital dimensions are significantly contributing to the success of the entrepreneurial activities in different sectors and across the three research settings. The findings confirmed that entrepreneurs use and employ the social capital aspects to support, promote, expand, and reinforce their business activity success in the market.

This study has a twofold contribution to both theory and practice. For the theoretical contributions, the current research fills the gap of examining the role of social capital dimensions in entrepreneurial activities' success and particularly in the developing countries context, which is too far behind the developed countries in this research area. Furthermore, it uses the assumptions of the social capital theory and quantitative measures to examine the contribution of social capital in successful entrepreneurship activities. It collected data from three countries and across different sectors and used a rigorous data analysis technique to reveal valid and reliable findings. The used research model can be used by other scholars to investigate the role of social capital constructs in building social networks and supporting business performance, promotion, and expansion in the global market. In sum, the current study fulfils research gaps through (1) measuring the impact of social capital dimensions on

entrepreneurial projects success among youth and students rather than SMEs, (2) providing a valid and reliable quantitative measurement of the intangible dimensions of social capital and its effect on youth projects' success, and (3) introducing comparisons among three Arab countries rather than focusing on individual SMEs on a national level.

For managerial implications, this study revealed that social networks are a crucial component in supporting entrepreneurship activities. It is a source for interactions and information required to support newborn entrepreneurial activities. Therefore, entrepreneurs should be aware of how to form, build, use, and employ social networks to serve their entrepreneurial businesses and receive the experience and technical knowledge of social network's actors to benefit their business. Entrepreneurs could use their personal and professional networks to build partnerships and find business growth venues. They should use these networks to build brand reputation and enhance market credibility in order to sustain competitive advantages.

In addition, entrepreneurs need to know the relevant information needed to support their new product/ service ideas, the feedback on these products, and how to develop them to meet the demand side needs, and this can be easily achieved through the channels of social networks and actors. Entrepreneurs having accurate, timely, and reliable information will decrease uncertainty and make correct decisions. Owing information about market analysis will help entrepreneurs innovate their business outputs (i.e., products and services). Furthermore, having the timely and accurate information will decrease business risk and improve risk management synergies.

Add to this, recognizing the social obligations and other social capital would help entrepreneurs to perform better when planning their activities or strategically expanding them, and how to use the social resources to succeed. Engaging stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, and the local community, contributes positively to increasing competitiveness and improving the firm's reputation, customer loyalty, and local market positioning.

As for the entrepreneurship responsible authorities, they need to train and qualify entrepreneurs to build and employ social capital dimensions to support their business and invite youth to become members in these authorities' networks to receive updated support and identify entrepreneurial opportunities. Providing the technical support and financing sources is not a guarantee of the success of new entrepreneurial activities. The findings of the study revealed how significant is to use social capital dimensions in promoting and supporting entrepreneurship for youth projects and young entrepreneurs. Initiatives of increasing the awareness of social capital components and how useful is to use it to support their business is another duty on the shoulders of relevant authorities. Educational institutions also have a role in expanding the culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, and in employing social networks to set up new businesses and support their potential for success. The media also has a role in promoting entrepreneurship and encouraging youth to start up their business and engage relevant authorities to offer their support to young entrepreneurs. Young entrepreneurs should benefit from new technologies and creative solutions to improve the production and marketing capabilities of their businesses.

### 6.2 Limitations and future research

The current study did not go beyond the exploration of the effect of social capital dimensions on entrepreneurial activity success. It did not differentiate among the three included countries or sectors involved. It also did not investigate the demographic aspects of entrepreneurs and the geographical spread of the activities and the culture prevailing in the research communities. The authors used snowball sampling to collect data due to the lack of lists about young entrepreneurs. Therefore, future research is called for to examine the above-mentioned limitations to help achieve a better understanding of social capital contribution to the success of entrepreneurial projects, particularly youth projects. Qualitative research could also be useful in interpreting in depth the role of social capital in supporting youth projects and reinforcing their survival and success. Studies that test the differences among sectors are also

encouraged in addition to the effect of culture on the role of social capital dimensions in fostering business success.

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