

From Bonds to Bridges: Exploring Social Capital's Role on Migrant Entrepreneurs' Identity Construction

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Abstract: This paper contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by illustrating the significance of social capital in shaping the identity of migrant entrepreneurs throughout various stages of the entrepreneurial process. The novelty of this research lies in highlighting the adaptability of the social capital role in constructing the migrant entrepreneurs' identities, enabling them to overcome challenges encountered in emerging contexts. By employing a thematic-content analysis method strengthened by narratives, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how migrant entrepreneurs interpret and enact their social capital in constructing their entrepreneurial identities. Our results reveal that EI construction is a dynamic process that ME navigate through the strategic use of SC. This involves the cultivation of both bonding and bridging social networks that provide crucial resources, emotional support, and access to diverse opportunities. Our results highlight that ME are engaged in a complex process of identity negotiation, where they must balance the preservation of their origin's cultural identity with the necessity to adapt to the entrepreneurial identity valued in the host country. This process involves a sophisticated interplay of adopting, adapting, and sometimes resisting the norms and expectations that define the entrepreneurial landscape they are operating within.

Keywords: Social capital, Immigrant entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurial identity, Identity construction, Emergent context

1. Introduction

Although the entrepreneurship literature has already embraced the role of social capital (SC) in investing and embedding valuable resources for entrepreneurs, meanwhile the association between identity construction (IC) and SC remains largely unexamined, particularly in studies of migrant self-employment. Indeed, entrepreneurial identity (EI) research acknowledges the centrality of context for both constructing and enacting EI. As Radu-Lefebvre et al., (2021) noticed, EI research should revolve around two overreaching themes: the interplay of EI and temporal context; and the mechanisms for (re)constructing and losing EI. Drawing on these insights, this paper aims to explore the role of SC in shaping the IC of ME throughout the different stages of their adventure abroad. The following question guide our study: How does SC structure the IC of ME during the different phases of the entrepreneurial process?

Current research into the EI construction of ME has revealed several gaps that offer opportunities for further exploration. There is a notable lack of longitudinal studies that track the evolution of EI over time, which could provide deeper insights into the dynamic changes these identities undergo in response to varying economic and social conditions (Eimermann and Kordel, 2018). Thus, we aim to investigate the migrant entrepreneurial trajectory regarding the relevance of SC, on one hand and the EI construction, on the other hand. To do so, we deploy a qualitative design through in-deep interviews with 32 ME who made career transitions from developed and developing contexts to an emergent one. We draw upon narratives that synthesize the migrant entrepreneurial story with regard to SC and IC. Our aim is to capture the temporal evolution of ME' EI with conjunction of the SC accumulated over time by embracing a longitudinal approach that is appropriate for understanding "who entrepreneurs are? And "who they might want to be?".

The study begins by establishing the theoretical foundation, discussing key concepts of SC and identity within the framework of migration and entrepreneurship. A comprehensive literature review will then synthesize existing research, highlighting the gaps that this study intends to address. Our methodology section outlines the data collection methods employed, as well as the sample description and the research design. Following this, we present and interpret our findings, which reveal how ME leverage SC for their IC. The discussion section contextualizes these findings within broader theoretical and practical implications, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between SC and migrant EI in an emergent context. Concluding remarks summarize the key insights, acknowledge the limitations of the current study, and propose directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Entrepreneurial Identity Construction Among Migrant Entrepreneurs

ME often reconstruct their identities to align with the host country's entrepreneurial norms and expectations, a transformation that is crucial for both their business success and social integration. This identity reconstruction is viewed as a dynamic process, heavily influenced by continuous interactions within their networks, which facilitate their integration into new economic and social environments. Eimermann and Kordel (2018) discuss how international lifestyle ME in new migration destinations utilize their transnational networks to negotiate identity and entrepreneurial practices in response to local conditions. Similarly, McKeever et al., (2015) highlight how these interactions help ME navigate and integrate into new settings by leveraging SC in ways that reshape their EI. Radu-Lefebvre et al., (2022) further enrich this understanding by highlighting EI as either a "Property" or a "Process". In the "Property" perspective, EI is seen as a stable set of characteristics that entrepreneurs bring into their new ventures, influencing decision-making and resource acquisition. Conversely, the "Process" perspective views EI as continuously negotiated and evolving through social interactions and contextual engagements. This perspective underscores the fluid nature of identity among ME as they adapt to new cultural and business environments, actively shaping and reshaping their identities in response to changing circumstances.

The construction of EI is significantly influenced by intersectionality, where gender, ethnicity, and class converge to shape the individual experiences of ME. Ozasir Kacar and Esser (2019) highlight how Turkish migrant women in the Netherlands experience their entrepreneurial journeys through the lens of these intersecting identities, influenced by the broader socio-political tensions and policies of the host country. These external factors create complex opportunity structures that either enable or restrict the entrepreneurial activities and identity construction processes of migrants. Empirical studies such as those by Smith et al., (2023) and Giazitzoglu and Korede (2023) provide insights into how ME navigate identity conflicts and manage the dual pressures of aligning with cultural norms of their communities while also adapting to the mainstream market expectations. These studies highlight the role of adaptive identity strategies in overcoming the challenges posed by dual cultural expectations. Furthermore, the entrepreneurial environment of the host country, including market conditions, societal norms, and regulatory frameworks, plays a pivotal role in shaping the entrepreneurial identities of migrants.

2.2 Social Capital Role in Constructing Migrant Entrepreneurs' Identities

SC is pivotal in entrepreneurship, especially for migrants who navigate unfamiliar and new economic landscapes. Putnam (2000) defines SC as the aspects of social organization, like trust, norms, and networks, which enhance the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions. SC for ME refers to the cumulative assets derived from networks of relationships that these entrepreneurs can mobilize to access various resources, information, and support systems necessary for business initiation and growth in a new environment. SC for ME includes two dimensions:

- Bonding SC: Strong ties within one's own ethnic or cultural community, providing emotional support, trust, and cooperative norms that facilitate mutual assistance among community members (Putnam, 2000; Light & Dana, 2013; Kleinhempel et al., 2022);
- Bridging SC: Weaker, more diverse ties that extend beyond one's immediate community to include a broader range of contacts across different social, ethnic, or economic groups. These ties are crucial for accessing new opportunities, broader markets, and resources outside the ethnic enclave (Putnam, 2000; Kleinhempel et al., 2022).

Explaining how SC influences the entrepreneurial activities of migrants was the subject of recent studies that focus on different aspects of migrant entrepreneurship, converging on the importance of both intra-community (bonding) and inter-community (bridging) SC and addressing various contexts from forced migration to diverse migrant experiences in different geographical settings. For example, Williams and Krasniqi (2018) explored how forced migrants utilize both human and SC to engage in entrepreneurial activities, particularly focusing on Kosovan migrants. Their findings suggest that SC, especially from host country networks, plays a pivotal role in enabling entrepreneurial endeavors among migrants. Moreover, Ljungkvist et al., (2023) noticed that transnational entrepreneurs often rely on complex networks that span multiple countries to access resources, information, and markets. This transnational SC not only facilitates business operations in the host country but also strengthens connections with the country of origin, supporting bi-directional flows of capital, goods, and information. Yet arguably, the research conducted by Kleinhempel et al., (2022) critically examines the role of

SC at various stages of the entrepreneurial journey, focusing on its impact on venture creation across different European regions. Their findings reveal that SC significantly influences the formal establishment of ventures, indicating its crucial role in mobilizing external resources and accessing necessary networks during the early stages of business setup.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative design to comprehensively explore how SC shapes the EI of ME throughout the entrepreneurial process. Bruner's (1991) approach to understanding human cognition and behavior through narratives provides a powerful methodological framework for investigating our research question. Bruner emphasizes that narratives are essential tools through which individuals interpret their experiences and the world around them. In the following paragraphs, we will describe how we implemented the narrative method to collect data and outline the characteristics of our sample.

3.1 Data Collection: Selecting Narrative Methods

Bruner's seminal paper "*The narrative construction of reality*. Critical inquiry (1991)", discusses how individuals use narratives not just to tell stories but to make sense of their lives and construct their reality. Bruner argues that narratives are an essential part of human thought and are fundamental in how people understand the world and themselves. Using Bruner's framework, we explored how entrepreneurs narrate their journey, which in turn can reveal the underlying values, beliefs, and experiences that drive their business actions. To do so, collecting data through narratives involves several key principles, three of them were used in this research that we summarize as follows:

- Narrative interviews: Before conducting our narrative interviews, an initial contact with our participants was made via email or phone, followed by a detailed information sheet about the study's objectives. We conducted 32 in-depth semi-structured interviews in order to encourage ME to tell their stories in a natural, unrestricted manner. This format helps to capture the richness of their experiences and the personal significance they ascribe to those experiences. We asked open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses, enabling participants to construct and reconstruct their narratives during the conversation.

We begin the interview with a broad, open-ended question designed to encourage the participant to start telling her/his story. We asked her/him to describe how she/he started her/his business and to recount a significant event in her/his life that push her/him to launch her/his business outside her/his home country. After the initial step, the participant narrates her/his story with minimal interruption, we listened actively and intervened only sparingly, mainly to encourage the participant to elaborate or clarify points.

- Storytelling sessions: We organized three storytelling sessions where some of our ME (19) shared their experiences in a more informal or communal setting. Our objective was to provide insights into the collective narrative and shared meanings within the community of ME established in an emergent context.
- Document analysis: We collected personal documents such as letters, diaries, autobiographies, or even social media posts that contain narrative content. These sources can provide authentic, unsolicited expressions of personal narratives (Bruner, 1991). Analyzing such documents helped us understand how ME represent their identities and experiences over time.

3.2 Sample Description: A Panel of 32 Migrant Entrepreneurs

This study targets ME who have launched their businesses outside their home country, establishing themselves in Tunisia, within the last ten years. This population is chosen because of the unique challenges and opportunities they face in integrating into a new business environment, making them ideal candidates for studying the impact of SC on EI construction. We excluded from our sample the entrepreneurs who have not started a business but are only in the planning stages, the migrants who have lived in the host country for more than ten years, as their experiences might differ significantly from more recent migrants in terms of SC integration and businesses that are not independently owned and operated by the migrant (e.g., franchises, branch of a family business not directly managed by the migrant).

We have approached the Agency for the Promotion of Industry and Innovation (APII) as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to recruit our participants. Additionally, we utilized the Facebook social media platform, including the Expats in Tunisia page, and consulted associations like Terre d'Asile in Tunisia to broaden

our sample. As a consequence, our sample contains 32 ME, this number is determined based on the principles of qualitative research, where the aim is to reach data saturation (Miles and Huberman, 2003).

3.3 Research Design: The Thematic-Content Analysis Method

Narrative interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim to capture the full detail and nuances of the narratives. The analysis of these interviews can be done through various methods, including thematic analysis, structural analysis, or a narrative inquiry approach. We utilized the thematic content analysis method to generate themes and sub-themes, aiding our understanding of the specificities of each story and how ME enact their SC in constructing their entrepreneurial identities. To do so, we relied on the methodology developed by Miles and Huberman (2003) to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within data.

4. Results

After exploring the typologies of SC involved in the migrant entrepreneurship experience in an emerging context, and the various initial and emerging identity profiles of the ME, we selected themes that correspond to the components of our coding grid, which are derived from the literature review. Ultimately, three general themes were identified:

- Contextualization of the use of SC by ME;
- The typologies of SC present in the entrepreneurial trajectory of ME;
- The initial and emerging identity profiles of ME.

According to Bertaux (2016), this process involves identifying the logic of the trajectory, therefore, we opt for sequential analysis of syntheses, described as "a processive approach that shows how to group individual trajectories by examining the flow of events and states specific to the life of each individual" (Miles and Huberman, 2003: 315-316). The entrepreneurial trajectory of the ME in our sample can be structured around three essential stages: the pre-project stage, launch, and operationalization.

Table 1: Social capital and entrepreneurial creation stages by migrant entrepreneurs

Stages	Description
Pre-project stage	19 out of 32 interviewed ME decided to start a business in Tunisia following a meeting or an invitation from a trusted person, or a business opportunity. The others (13) moved to Tunisia due to political instability in their home countries. Once there, they took advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities that arose.
Project startup phase	All 32 ME succeed to start their projects, despite initial difficulties in the migrant entrepreneurship experience in Tunisia. This was possible thanks to the help provided by and through the SC they solicited or already had. This phase lasts on average one year and culminates in the project's implementation. All 32 ME managed to launch their projects thanks to the contribution of existing (28 ME) or solicited (4 ME) SC.
Operationalization of the project	After the project startup, ME envisage three scenarios: The first involves minor crises or recurring daily difficulties. The second involves a major crisis that may hinder project development. The third scenario sees no crises at all. During this stage, 18 ME had an easy start due to their SC, using various relationships to navigate challenges.

As outlined in the table 1, the stages of the migrant entrepreneurship process in Tunisia highlight the importance of SC from the first phase of the process to an end that results in either the creation of a sustainable business or the abandonment of the project. In order to better understand how SC shapes the identities of ME, we will begin our results' analysis by contextualizing the use of SC by the ME of our sample.

4.1 Contextualizing the use of Social Capital by Migrant Entrepreneurs

The entrepreneurial experience of the interviewed ME appears to be divided into several parts. The contribution of SC as an assistant in the majority of cases is validated, but it varies from one case to another; it turns out that there is sometimes a strong representative of this variable that significantly influences the progress of the creation process and even its realization and sustainability. In other cases, we notice that SC consists of networks of strong and weak, acquired or solicited relationships that extend a helping hand to ME in their entrepreneurial journeys within an emergent context.

The recourse to SC stems from a specific context unique to each ME. Generally, encountering a problem or difficulty spurs the development of a network of relationships or the search for a resource through held or acquired SC. 26 narratives have revealed that difficulties related to business creation (mainly access to information), are one of the main reasons for resorting to SC. Furthermore, it is observed that the language

barrier, particularly the lack of knowledge of the Tunisian dialect, has caused numerous problems for the majority of participants. Finally, we note that negative emotions are very frequently mentioned by ME. These difficulties act as primary triggers pushing ME in Tunisia to pay particular attention to SC; without it, the business creation process in Tunisia could be seriously hindered.

Table 2: Data structure for the contextualization of social capital for migrant entrepreneurs

First-order concepts	Second-order themes	Verbatims
Project execution difficulties	-Institutional complexities and obstacles -Access to information - Lack of proficiency in Arabic language and Tunisian dialect	<i>"When you are in your own country, you know the rules; in Tunisia, if you don't know the rules, the risks increase. This is compounded by the language issue and cultural differences"</i> <i>"It took me 8 months to establish myself, it's very complicated in Tunisia"</i> <i>"Administrative paperwork is extensive in Tunisia, with many procedures to fulfill, and it takes a considerable amount of time to complete everything that is needed. Sometimes, I was tempted to abandon the process"</i> <i>"We know little about the Tunisian market for renting an office, for fitting out, and for furnishing and acquiring office equipment"</i> <i>"The prerequisites are first of all the language... the Tunisian dialect"</i>
Emotional regulation	Negative emotions (fear, loneliness and isolation)	<i>"When you come to Tunisia and you don't have SC, you feel you don't have a pillar, you don't have a relay, you can't move forward with your project. It's a loneliness mixed with excessive uncertainty and anxiety"</i> <i>"I come with French beekeeping experience and the first thing I hear here is: 'it's not like that here!' and it's depressing!"</i>

4.2 Typologies of Social Capital in the Entrepreneurial Trajectories of Migrant Entrepreneurs

In order to identify the extent of SC in the evolution of the ME' identity, we focus on the intervention of different forms of SC, as specified by Putnam (2000), during the various phases of the business creation process. Our findings indicate that ME predominantly utilize bridging SC while overlooking the bonding aspect. In the following table, we summarize the data structure related to the use of bonding and bridging SC by ME.

Table 3: Data structure of the typologies of social capital used by migrant entrepreneurs during their entrepreneurial trajectories

First-order concepts	Second-order themes	Verbatims
Bonding social capital	- Strong ties with own's community (family, friends; foreigners and other ME);	<i>"I followed my husband, trusting him and also his partner. I left everything behind: my job, my family, and I came to a country that was unknown to me"</i> <i>"There is also a young person who comes from France and who has studied management here and who also helps to organize all this"</i> noticed a French ME who adds <i>"My French migrant friend who was a beekeeper provides us with wax, propolis, and other products from the hive, and in return, I give him my essential oils"</i> <i>"I can say this very clearly: I believe that without my wife, I would not have been able to endure. When you arrive as a migrant, there is a welcoming environment, but you do not arrive alone; you arrive with who you are, and she is an integral part of who I am. I cannot imagine achieving anything here without her by my side. It is evident. She provides emotional support, but not only that..."</i>
Bridging social capital	- Getting the support of local communities in terms of procedures, norms, etc.;	<i>"Local contacts are a prerequisite for the success of project initiation"</i> <i>"Our local partner prepared a workspace suited to our activities and provided us with equipment at the best quality-price ratio"</i> <i>"Initially, when I arrived, I had no particular idea about taking care of all this, but there were two young women at that time... it was my first Tunisian acquaintance; they are still with me in this lab"</i>

First-order concepts	Second-order themes	Verbatims
	- Cultural convergence	"Our Tunisian partner prepared the ground, gave us information, introduced us, and explained the culture, language, and knowledge, this is was particularly insightful for us" "A wonderful partnership with a dynamic, ambitious, and competent Tunisian who understands your approach and can easily adapt and communicate with you. Just the relationship we needed!" "The intellectual level, their training in biology in Tunisia and my studies in pharmacy in France only brings us closer and facilitates communication between us. We speak the same language and use the same codes" "At our first meeting, I was impressed by 'D's vision and the quality of his work. I felt that we had many common goals and values. We exchanged ideas, discussed challenges in our fields, and realized that we could achieve much more together" "For me, it's very important that there's reciprocity in mutual enrichment: she brings as much to me as I bring to her" "In addition to commercial success, 'D' and I form a sincere friendship, and we support each other in our personal and professional challenges. Our collaboration inspires other entrepreneurs in Tunisia and beyond, demonstrating the benefits of a successful partnership based on complementarity and shared values" "She brought a local touch and a deep understanding of the Tunisian market, and we brought our French expertise" "SC is about meeting, working together, and enriching exchanges with one another, where we can count on each other. When it's time to get to work, the group gets going and we achieve something"
	- Reciprocity and trust	

4.3 Initial and Emerging Identity Profiles of Migrant Entrepreneurs

The conceptual generation of the theme "identity profiles" primarily allows us to discern an initial identity for ME, reflecting their identity traits at the time they decide to migrate and engage in entrepreneurship in Tunisia, that is, at the beginning of the experience. Subsequently, various emerging identities appear throughout the entrepreneurial journey, displaying characteristics that vary according to individuals and contexts.

Table 4: Data structure of the identity profiles (initial and emergent) of migrant entrepreneurs

First-order concepts	Second-order themes	Verbatims
Initial identity characteristics	- Name change; -Professional trajectory;	"I was called (a French name)" "I chose pharmacy because it's a liberal profession. I did not want to work within a hierarchy; I want to take risks, but not too many" "I had succeeded in creating and developing several successful businesses in France" "I resigned from my job as a journalist"
Emerging identity characteristics	- New first name; -Mastery of the Tunisian dialect; - Behavioral change.	"I am now called 'A' an Arabic name very much appreciated in Tunisia, and I am proud of it. I adore my new name" "Today I am called (a Tunisian name) and I am happy with it; it allows me to feel Tunisian" "The language, Tunisian, was not a big obstacle for me; socializing allowed me to improve the Tunisian dialect day by day" "I make myself very small and let 'D' handle things" "I become a chameleon and adapt" "Certainly, I feel that I have changed because it does shape you to be here, to also be confronted"

5. Discussion: How Migrant Entrepreneurs Construct Their Identities With the Help of Social Capital?

Our findings indicate that throughout the entrepreneurial journey in Tunisia, the identity of ME is in continuous flux, this notion is supported by Smith et al., (2023, p.1), who suggest that an entrepreneur's identity, in general, is closely tied to, and even shaped by, the unpredictable entrepreneurial journey with its ups and downs. Three categories of emerging identities arise from our analysis:

- Personal identity, which is "the person's unique sense of the self" (Postmes and Jetten, 2006: 260);
- Relational identity, which evolves over a prolonged series of interactions between the individual and their environment, thus presenting itself as a dynamic system (Kunnen and Bosma, 2006);
- Entrepreneurial identity, which comprises the behaviors and elements that characterize individuals when they perform entrepreneurial functions (Wagenschwanz, 2020). This identity is crucial for entrepreneurs throughout their journey, confronting them with the persistent question of "who am I" and it forms a strong bond between the entrepreneurs and their business, establishing a profound connection between the entrepreneur's identity and the often-unpredictable fluctuations of the business (Karagozoglu, and Wincent, 2019).

These three identities are in constant change, and the research results allow for a better understanding of their evolution throughout the three stages of the migrant entrepreneurship process in Tunisia. Each type of identity is composed of a set of components. Following the comparative analysis, we have identified for personal identity components such as first name, profession, and religion. For entrepreneurial identity, we have emphasized entrepreneurial skills. Given that entrepreneurial identity addresses the question of what the entrepreneur does rather than who they are (Smith et al., 2023: 2), we have attributed to the initial state of the 32 ME the notion of "initial identity," which encompasses the three aforementioned forms of identity: personal, entrepreneurial, and relational. This framework helps illuminate the existing dynamics throughout the migrant entrepreneurship process in Tunisia.

A significant element in the IC of ME appears to be the desire for continuity, this element consistently emerges in the discourse of our interviewees, who often mention their origins (family, first name, initial entrepreneurial skills, former profession), indicating that a connection to one's origins marks the beginning of the ME' identity formation process and that there is a willingness of ME to maintain continuity with their previous identity. Indeed, this idea is also shared by Christensen and Newman (2024), who emphasize in their research the importance of the initial identity associated with the migrant entrepreneur's previous life. They rely on acculturation psychology and the foundational identity theory to suggest that newly arrived migrants reflect on prioritizing their identity linked to their past and the level of connection they wish to establish in their new community.

Thus, the IC among the interviewed ME gains momentum from this "initial identity" and follows a surge of negative emotions such as fear, loneliness, and anxiety, as expressed in the collected narratives. Indeed, while crises and challenges related to creation are triggering events, it is also important to consider the concerning psychological state and negative emotions identified in the thematic analysis and confirmed during the comparative analysis. Thus, each time ME encounter a difficulty during the entrepreneurial process, they are plunged into an identity crisis that particularly affects their initial entrepreneurial identity. Subsequently, throughout their entrepreneurial journey in Tunisia, the encounter with inherent obstacles and challenges to the project, both during the project launch phase and during its operationalization, compels ME to rely on others, thus immersing them in a continuous process of identification. It is through this dynamic that the identities of ME are constructed and distinguished, and new ME' identities emerge. In this vein, we highlight the effort made by ME to preserve or develop the initial EI, of which the initial entrepreneurial skills represent the indicative characteristics of the ME identity change. Therefore, if these factors evolve negatively, ME must react in association with their network to address this imbalance. This idea aligns with the findings of Urban et al., (2022) on the importance of professional and entrepreneurial experience in predicting entrepreneurial success and thus the importance of preserving the EI in case of imbalance during a crisis. Thus, if the EI is threatened by the onset of crises and difficulties related to the entrepreneurial project or difficult access to information, or managing negative emotions following these issues, it is important to understand how ME manage these difficulties, as identity threats can harm the progress of their entrepreneurship, or even lead to the total abandonment of their business. To overcome these challenges, ME resort to or solicit adequate SC for the situation, they undertake a process of identity work that triggers the process of their IC.

Identity work, being the process by which the individual construct her/his own identity over time and through various contexts (Rostron, 2022), implies that humans are capable of consciously engaging in self-doubt and are consequently able to shape and redefine their own identity. We find that various variables of personal identity have been adjusted to facilitate integration and connection to Tunisians or migrants in Tunisia within the framework of a self-defined identification. Among these variables, we mention:

- The language;
- First name;
- Family;
- and behavior change.

6. Conclusion

The results of the sequential synthesis analysis conducted on the ME in Tunisia and its relationship with SC show that the role of SC in this experience begins very early in most cases, serving as a motivational factor, whether Tunisian or foreign, for migration and entrepreneurship during the pre-project stage. This corresponds to a migrant entrepreneurship of opportunity. This idea aligns with that of Foroozesh et al., (2018), who emphasize the importance of certain factors related to the migrant, such as SC, during all the stages of business creation in the host country through the guarantee of a presence and long-term support of family members, their relational network, and the resources at their disposal. This is the principle of "bounded solidarity" as described by Parsons (1949). We also identify some ME who are compelled to migrate to Tunisia due to the political, social, and economic instability caused by war in their country of origin (Syria, Lybia). In this case, the ME does not require SC to be motivated to migrate.

When ME encounter few or no obstacles in their entrepreneurial journey, they do not need to mobilize SC. These entrepreneurs do not show affinity towards local actors (self-referential identification) and do not seek to associate with them (self-defined identification). This is disidentification, which is associated with negative evaluations (Pratt, 2000). Furthermore, having a minimum of SC in the absence of crises during the operationalization of the entrepreneurial project results from ambivalent identification characterized by simultaneous positive and negative evaluations (Pratt, 2000), where ME choose to exploit their network of relationships and identify only with the positive elements while rejecting the negative aspects of SC.

In this study, we have elucidated the significant role that SC plays in shaping the EI of ME. Our findings reveal that both bonding and bridging social capital are indispensable in providing emotional support and practical business advantages, which are crucial for the integration of migrants into new market environments. This dual aspect of SC not only fosters personal growth but also facilitates access to vital resources and networks that enhance business operations and market reach.

Despite its contributions, this research has limitations, primarily related to its specific context. A comparative analysis across various emerging contexts would be more informative. We recommend expanding the analysis to include other emerging contexts by examining additional dimensions of SC that may differently influence the EI of ME. Additionally, future research could benefit from a quantitative design that integrates personality traits as a moderating variable between SC and IC among ME.

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