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Promoting Social Entrepreneurial Intention in Food Industry: The Roles of Social Capital and Creativity

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ABSTRACT

Today, food security has become one of the main concerns for key stakeholders, including businesses, governments, and educational institutions. Therefore, identifying the drivers of social responsibility development—such as social entrepreneurship—in the food industry can effectively contribute to achieving sustainable development. However, the entrepreneurship literature in the field of social entrepreneurship development in the food industry is weak, especially in the context of Iran. To fill this gap and assist policymakers, the present study was conducted to investigate the impact of social capital and creativity dimensions on Social Entrepreneurship Intention (SEI) among food industry owners. The statistical population in this study consisted of all food industry entities (n=1208) in Ilam Province (western Iran). The research samples included 415 food industry owners in western Iran, who were selected using a random stratified sampling method with proportional assignment. The findings indicated that the SEI status of the participants was at a moderate level. The modeling results indicated that strong and weak social connections and interactions play a decisive role in the development of SEI. Among the dimensions of creativity, only the originality dimension facilitates the SEI development process, while the usefulness dimension does contribute positively to this process. Therefore, by developing bridging and bonding social capital and promoting the innovative ideas and initiatives of people working in the food industry, we can witness the development of social entrepreneurship and, as a result, achieve sustainable food security in society.

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1. Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) summoned all economic actors to put their efforts into eradicating poverty, protecting the Earth, and ensuring that all individuals benefit from peace and social well-being by 2030 (Chitsazan et al., 2017; Thirapongphaiboon, 2018). For this purpose, social entrepreneurship has thus far been introduced as a key policy tool to address social and environmental concerns, such as poverty and food inequalities, and to encourage sustainable development (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Bozhikin et al., 2019; Chandra et al., 2021; Rahdari et al., 2016; Saebi et al., 2019; Siegner et al., 2018). In this business model, profitability is not the primary goal, rather, there are attempts to achieve sustainable development (Dentchev et al., 2016; Kushwaha & Kumar Sharma, 2017), which has drawn global attention to social enterprises as they play an important role in generating positive social and environmental effects through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Rahdari et al., 2016; Shiri & Jafari-Sadeghi, 2022). In the UN declaration, special attention is given to food industries to ensure sustainable production and consumption, as they directly and significantly impact society, the environment, and the economy (Shiri & Jafari-Sadeghi, 2022; Thirapongphaiboon, 2018). Indeed, food industries can take measures to develop sustainable food security through their CSR initiatives and the implementation of environmental management practices (Beigi et al., 2024; Musa & Chinniah, 2016; Rahdari et al., 2016; Rahim & Raman, 2015; Shiri & Jafari-Sadeghi, 2022).

Even though social entrepreneurship has grown into a popular model in Europe and the United States to avoid food wastage and achieve sustainable development (Aliaga-Isla & Huybrechts, 2018; Dey, 2006; Thirapongphaiboon, 2018), this concept is relatively new in Asia: It is not well-known, there is no common understanding of it, and policymakers in governmental and educational institutions do not adequately advocate for it. For this reason, Asian countries are confronting problems regarding the development of social entrepreneurship; therefore, removing the stumbling blocks that hinder this progress demands a systematic analysis of social entrepreneurship to broaden knowledge and awareness among its potential advocates (Yin Ip et al., 2018). Social issues as well as social entrepreneurship, particularly in the food industry, have not been highly regarded in Iran as a developing country (Shiri & Jafari-Sadeghi, 2022; Shiri et al., 2022). To the best of the authors' knowledge, no studies examining social entrepreneurship in the Iranian food industry have been identified in the literature reviews. In this regard, statistics indicate the poor status of Iran (ranked the last out of 58 countries) regarding the Social Entrepreneurship Index (GEM, 2015a); however, economic entrepreneurship in Iran has been ranked 23rd out of 60 nations, indicating an improved status (GEM, 2015b). The aforementioned statistics imply that social entrepreneurship in Iran has not been considered an approach to attaining sustainable development, while economic goals have been the top priority of entrepreneurship development in this country.

The development of social entrepreneurship faces numerous challenges, particularly regarding entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors, which underscores the importance of identifying the determinants of social entrepreneurship development in Iran (Zarinjoi Alvar, 2020). It is worth noting that individuals' desires and motivations for entrepreneurial activities are not the same, even if macro facilitators, such as government-supportive laws and sociocultural norms, make their best attempt to encourage them to undertake traditional and social entrepreneurship (Hasangholi Pour et al., 2019). Therefore, a valuable approach to elucidating entrepreneurial behavior is intention, which is associated with motivational factors shaping behavior and accounts for the efforts and plans for implementation (Entrialgo & Iglesias, 2016). In other words, intention is assumed to be the best predictor of entrepreneurial behavior, as such behavior is not easy to observe (Ajzen, 1991; Entrialgo & Iglesias, 2016). In recent years, some researchers have further established that behavior can be predicted by keeping an eye on intentions, especially when the behavior is deemed unusual (Krueger et al., 2000). While many studies have been conducted on the predictors of entrepreneurial intention (Badpa & Shiri, 2022; Chen & He, 2011; Giacomin et al., 2022; Liñán & Chen, 2009; Shiri & Badpa, 2024; Shiri et al., 2022; Liñán & Santos, 2007; Mirakzadeh et al., 2014; Sequeira et al., 2007; Shiri et al., 2016; Shiri et al., 2017; Shiri et al., 2022), the background of social entrepreneurial intention (SEI), as an approach to establishing social welfare and justice in society, is still underdeveloped (Chandra et al., 2021). From this perspective, the present study aims to fill the gaps by identifying the factors affecting SEI in the Iranian food industry.

In this respect, the review of the related literature proves that creativity is one of the main propellers of social entrepreneurship (Leadbeater, 1997; Smith et al., 2014). Given their public and private philanthropic activities, social entrepreneurs grapple with countless limitations in terms of access to resources, such as a lack of funds or the absence of legal-executive support, along with stringent regulations due to their fields of action, which can consequently hinder creativity and innovation (Bason, 2011; Mulgan, 2007; Walker & Jeanes, 2001). Considering the importance of creativity in social entrepreneurship, the literature review indicates that few studies have thus far been conducted on the relationship between creativity and SEI (Yin Ip et al., 2017, 2018). Moreover, the limited research on student populations has yielded inconsistent results. For example, Yin Ip et al. (2017) found that only originality had a significant positive effect on SEI among the major dimensions of creativity. In another study, it was concluded that both dimensions of creativity (i.e., originality and usefulness) had a significant positive effect on SEI (Yin Ip et al., 2018). The contradictory findings of these studies encourage further research in other societies to shed light on the role of creativity in SEI development. Although many studies have so far investigated the role of social capital in entrepreneurship (Agarwal et al., 2020; Gedajlovic et al., 2013; Khoshmaram et al., 2017a,b; Khoshmaram et al., 2020; Mirakzadeh et al., 2014; Shiri et al., 2022), only a few cases have addressed this concept in entrepreneurial intention in general (Chen & He, 2011; Liñán & Santos, 2007; Sequeira et al., 2007) and SEI in particular (Chen et al., 2020; Yin Ip et al., 2017, 2018). Most studies have additionally been conducted on student populations, so the implications and generalizability of their results for companies and other individuals are limited.

In addition, differences between countries, arising from discrepancies in their political structures, social environments, and economic development patterns, can help distinguish the factors affecting SEI (Chan et al., 2011; Hsu & Wang, 2018). However, the relationship between creativity, dimensions of social capital, and SEI in the food industry remains unclear. While there are studies on social entrepreneurship (Agarwal et al., 2020; Bacq & Alt, 2018; Bozhikin et al., 2019; Chandra et al., 2021; Hockerts, 2017; Macke et al., 2018; Rahdari et al., 2016), no in-depth research has questioned the effects of social capital and creativity dimensions on SEI among food industry owners. Regarding this background, the present study aims to investigate the effects of social capital and creativity on SEI to enhance the literature on entrepreneurship and provide solutions for achieving sustainable food security.

Therefore, this study can make significant contributions to the development of theoretical and applied knowledge of the SEI determinants in the food industry. First, it is conducted in Iran, thereby raising awareness of social entrepreneurship in a developing country that has not prioritized social welfare and justice in companies. Second, reviews indicate that social entrepreneurship has not yet attracted the interest of researchers and policymakers in this field, despite the significant role of the food industry in reducing poverty and establishing social justice by achieving sustainable food security. Third, this study complements the literature on entrepreneurship by explaining the role of social capital and creativity dimensions in SEI development within the food industry, as contradictory results have been obtained in the limited previous research regarding the effects of these variables. Finally, the study results provide appropriate guidance for food industry owners and policymakers to utilize the findings to promote social entrepreneurship and achieve sustainable food security in society.

2. Literature Review

2-1. Social Entrepreneurial Intention

Social entrepreneurship, such as other social concepts, has not been universally defined. In this regard, Alvord et al. (2004) describeed social entrepreneurship as "innovative solutions for important social issues, leading to the mobilization of ideas, capacities, resources, and social arrangements needed for sustainable social transformations" (p. 262). Social entrepreneurs are individuals with social missions and visions who take action to integrate practical and scientific methods to stimulate positive social change (Macke et al., 2018). Social entrepreneurship refers to exploiting opportunities and developing entrepreneurial activities to address social problems (Bacq & Janssen, 2011; Rahdari et al., 2016). In view of that, SEI can be regarded as an action by which a person intends to start a business to create social change in society (Zakaria & Bahrein, 2018). In other words, SEI includes an individual's desire to launch a business to advance social change through innovation (Hsu & Wang, 2018).

2-2. Creativity and Social Entrepreneurial Intention

At the individual level, creativity contains a person's beliefs and perceptions of their ability to be creative. Creativity represents a person's self-efficacy, enabling entrepreneurs to start innovative businesses by combining existing resources and generating new ideas (Laguía et al., 2019). Researchers argue that the dynamic interactions between individuals' cognitive characteristics can motivate them to identify and exploit opportunities, affecting their entrepreneurial intentions (Krueger et al., 2000). Among the cognitive characteristics, many studies have identified creativity as one of the key components of entrepreneurship (Shi et al., 2020), as entrepreneurs must be able to generate ideas, seize opportunities, and practice innovation (Fillis & Rentschler, 2010; Pereira et al., 2018). This is of utmost importance among social entrepreneurs, as they seek to develop creative mechanisms to overcome environmental obstacles (Dacin et al., 2010; Shaw & Carter, 2007). Social entrepreneurs are agents of change who devise creative solutions to the most intractable problems in society, making creativity an integral part of their personality traits (Tiwari et al., 2017).

Creativity can be further evaluated by two dimensions: originality and usefulness (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). In this context, originality implies novelty, unusualness, unexpectedness, and uniqueness, while usefulness denotes appropriateness, effectiveness, practicality, compatibility, value, and flexibility (Yin Ip et al., 2017). Additionally, originality refers to the ability to create original, new, or unique thoughts, behaviors, or things. In contrast, usefulness represents the capacity to generate appropriate, effective, or valuable thoughts, behaviors, or things (Lin et al., 2014). Therefore, an entrepreneur must possess these characteristics, as identifying and choosing the right opportunities for new investments is vital (Ardichvili et al., 2003). In this regard, various studies have demonstrated the significant effect of creativity on entrepreneurial intention (Chia & Liang, 2016; Shi et al., 2020; Otadi et al., 2022; Zampetakis & Moustakis, 2006). Therefore, the following hypotheses regarding the relationship between the dimensions of creativity and SEI were addressed:

H_1: Originality has a significant positive effect on SEI among food industry owners.

H_2: Usefulness has a significant positive effect on SEI among food industry owners.

2-3. Social Capital and Social Entrepreneurial Intention

Social capital refers to the actual and potential resources associated with having a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships characterized by familiarity, mutual recognition, and group membership (Bourdieu, 1986). To measure social capital, many researchers have reflected on two dimensions: bonding and bridging (Chia & Liang, 2016; Khoshmaram et al., 2017a, b; Putnam, 2000; Williams, 2006). In this context, bridging refers to the weak links between individuals, connecting them with various networks and providing access to new perspectives (Khoshmaram et al., 2017a, b; Ramezanpour et al., 2014). On the other hand, bonding indicates strong relationships with family members and close friends that may provide emotional support or access to scarce resources (Greve & Salaff, 2003; Khoshmaram et al., 2017a, b). Some researchers have further acknowledged that social capital facilitates entrepreneurial activities in various ways, such as finding business opportunities and developing entrepreneurial intentions (De Carolis & Saparito, 2006; Mehdizadeh et al., 2021; Khoshmaram et al., 2017a, b; Lechner & Dowling, 2003; Mirakzadeh et al., 2014; Ramezanpour et al., 2014; Sequeira et al., 2007). For example, Sequeira et al. (2007) found that bridging and bonding could help entrepreneurs bolster their entrepreneurial intentions by acquiring more entrepreneurial resources, thereby boosting their self-confidence (Karimi et al., 2016; Sharma, 2014). Therefore, social capital plays a leading role in ensuring appropriate social relationships (Liñán & Santos, 2007) to start successful entrepreneurial businesses (Khoshmaram et al., 2017a, b) which are also important in launching social businesses that address social problems (Moradi et al., 2018; Valizadeh & Karimi Gougheri, 2018; Yin Ip et al., 2017). As leverage, it also contributes to forming intentions and social entrepreneurship behaviors (Ma et al., 2019). In this regard, Yadegar et al. (2014), Yin Ip et al. (2017), Hsu and Wang (2018), and Chen and Zhou (2020) investigated the effects of the social capital dimensions (viz., bridging and bonding) on SEI. They concluded that entrepreneurs could obtain valuable resources from their social networks (including bridging and bonding), which could help them improve SEI. Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

***H*$_3$:** Bonding has a significant positive effect on SEI among food industry owners.

***H*$_4$:** Bridging has a significant positive effect on SEI among food industry owners.

2-4. Social Capital and Creativity

This section addresses the theoretical limitations of social network theory as it applies to individual creativity. Social network theory implicitly assumes that social interactions influence creativity identically for all individuals in all circumstances. We argue that the extent to which individuals take advantage of their social ties (such as bonding and bridging) may vary depending on individual characteristics, based on the componential model and the investment theory of creativity (Kim et al., 2016). Based on Kim et al.'s (2016) call for future research, this study extends the assumptions of social network theory, suggesting that social capital dimensions may impact individual creativity in various circumstances. The relationship between social capital and creativity is a fascinating area of study. Studies indicate that interactions and social connections between people can be effective as one of the main factors in fostering creativity (Oussi & Chtourou, 2020; Rahimi et al., 2021). For instance, having a strong network can provide diverse ideas and perspectives, enhancing creative thinking. High-quality relationships can foster a supportive environment where individuals feel safe to share and develop creative ideas. Shared goals and values can align efforts towards innovative outcomes (Oussi & Chtourou, 2020; Rahimi et al., 2021). Liu (2013) argued that coworkers who maintain good social connections based on mutual trust, cooperation, and resource exchange help foster creativity in the workplace (Liu, 2013; Sozbilir, 2018). Additionally, research has indicated that dimensions of social capital can significantly impact creativity. In this context, various studies have demonstrated that the dimensions of social capital positively and significantly affect creativity (Baraderan et al., 2016; Sozbilir, 2018; Viseh & Nasrollahi, 2015). Therefore, the following hypotheses regarding the relationship between social capital and creativity dimensions are proposed:

H$_5$: Bonding has a significant positive effect on originality among food industry owners.

H$_6$: Bridging has a significant positive effect on originality among food industry owners.

H$_7$: Bonding has a significant positive effect on usefulness among food industry owners.

H$_8$: Bridging has a significant positive effect on usefulness among food industry owners.

In accordance with the relevant literature and research hypotheses, the proposed model was established, as presented in Figure 1.

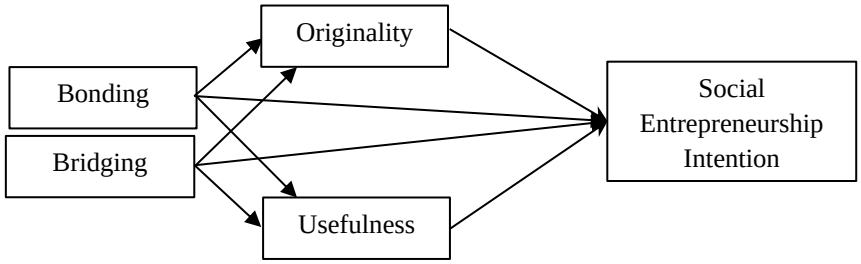

Fig. 1. Proposed Research Model

3. Research Methods

3-1. Research Design

The present study falls under the category of quantitative research in terms of its nature and is classified as applied research regarding its purpose. This study is categorized as descriptive-correlational research concerning data collection and analysis, conducted using the structural equation modeling approach and the partial least squares method. Data and information in the present study were collected and analyzed cross-sectionally.

3-2. Statistical Population and Sampling

The statistical population in this study consisted of all food industry participants (n=1208) in Ilam

Province (western Iran). The sample size was determined to be 384 individuals, using the Krejcie and Morgan table (1980). Considering the dispersion of the statistical population, the completion and return rates of the questionnaires were likely to be low. For this purpose, 450 questionnaires were distributed among the members of the statistical population through proportional, stratified random sampling. Finally, 415 questionnaires (92% return rate) were completed and collected through continuous follow-up.

3-3. Instrument

The primary data collection tool was a questionnaire consisting of three sections. The first part was related to the respondents' demographic characteristics (i.e., age, gender, level of education, etc.). The second and third parts consisted of scales to measure SEI, creativity (its dimensions of originality and usefulness), and social capital (its dimensions of bonding and bridging). To this end, the scale developed by Yin Ip et al. (2017) was implemented. Accordingly, we employed 8 items to measure SEI, 7 items for originality, 5 items for usefulness, 5 items for bonding, and 5 items for bridging, using a five-point Likert scale (from 1= very little to 5= very much). To assess the validity of the research tool in Iran, one of the researchers first translated it into Farsi, and then, another researcher retranslated it into English. Upon examining the original and translated versions of the questionnaire, no significant differences were observed.

3-4. Methods of Analysis

In order to analyze the data, the SPSS (ver. 25) software package was used for descriptive statistics, and the SmartPLS (ver. 3) software was employed for structural equation modeling (SEM). For descriptive statistics, the indices of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were utilized to describe the research variables. Regarding the SEM, the measurement model evaluation was conducted to check the validity and reliability of the research tool, and the structural model was used to test the research hypotheses.

4. Results

4-1. Descriptive Statistics

The study results revealed that the average age of respondents was 34.73 years, with a standard deviation (SD) of 8.21 years and an age range of 18 to 69 years. Moreover, the majority of participants (80.8%) were men, while only 19.2% were women. The study findings also revealed that 39.7% of the participants, with the highest frequency, had high school diplomas or lower education, while only about 3%, with the lowest frequency, were holding master or higher degrees (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variables		F	Percent	Mean	SD
Gender	Female	79	19.20	-	-
	Male	333	80.80	-	-
Education	Diploma and below	162	39.70	-	-
	Associate degree	111	27.20	-	-
	Bachelor's degree	121	29.70	-	-
	Master and above	14	3.40	-	-
Age		-	-	34.73	8.21
SEI		-	-	3.47	0.83
Originality		-	-	3.19	0.73
Usefulness		-	-	3.32	0.83
Bonding		-	-	3.39	0.91
Bridging		-	-	3.41	0.84

According to Table 1, the mean SEI was 3.47, with a SD of 0.83. The mean±SD values of bonding and bridging in the statistical population were also 3.39±0.91 and 3.41±0.84, respectively. Examining originality and usefulness as the creativity dimensions recruited in this study correspondingly demonstrated that the mean scores of these variables were 3.19±0.79 and 3.32±0.83, respectively. Accordingly, the participants were at the moderate level in terms of SEI, social capital (viz., the dimensions of boning and bridging), and creativity (i.e., the dimensions of originality and usefulness).

4-2. Structural Equation Modeling

The first-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to validate the research measurement models (namely, SEI, bonding, bridging, originality, and usefulness). Upon importing the measurement models of the latent variables into SmartPLS (ver. 3) software and removing two items from the SEI, two items from the bridging dimension, and one item from each of the bonding dimensions, usefulness and originality, optimal goodness of fit was achieved. The results obtained from the measurement model evaluation of the latent research variables are presented below.

Table 2. The Goodness of Fit Indices of the Proposed Model

indexes	SRMR	D_LS	D_G	NFI	RMS_Theta
Benchmark values	<0.10	>0.05	>0.05	>0.80	≤0.12
Research results	0.065	1.179	0.397	0.81	0.12

Based on Table 2, the model for measuring the latent research variables had optimal goodness of fit. The results in Table 3 indicated that the items of the latent research variables were unidimensional, as the factor loadings used to measure the latent research variables were greater than 0.70 and significant at the 1% significance level. In addition, Table 3 indicated that the latent variables in the proposed research model had acceptable composite reliability and convergent validity, with values higher than 0.60 and 0.50, respectively. The research results regarding the discriminant validity of the latent variables in the proposed model were also significant (Table 4), as the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent variable in the research model was greater than their correlation. In general, the results of the measurement model evaluation of the latent variables in the proposed model denoted their optimal goodness of fit, one-dimensionality, validity, and reliability. Therefore, the SEM was assessed to test the research hypotheses in the proposed model.

Table 3. Factor Loading, T-Values, Composite Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Latent variables	Indicators	Factor loading	t-value	α	Rho_A	CR	AVE
SEI	SEI1	0.73	28.48**	0.85	0.85	0.89	0.57
	SEI3	0.75	31.81**				
	SEI4	0.80	41.36**				
	SE15	0.79	35.96**				
	SEI6	0.72	25.25**				
	SEI7	0.71	24.52**				
Bonding	Bonding1	0.84	44.63**	0.83	0.84	0.89	0.67
	Bonding2	0.85	49.17**				
	Bonding4	0.79	33.52**				
	Bonding5	0.79	34.01**				
Bridging	Bridging1	0.82	41.58**	0.70	0.70	0.83	0.63
	Bridging3	0.76	25.87**				
	Bridging4	0.79	35.61**				
Originality	Originality1	0.74	28.53**	0.84	0.85	0.89	0.56
	Originality2	0.74	31.17**				
	Originality4	0.74	30.40**				
	Originality5	0.79	37.31**				
	Originality6	0.75	29.03**				
	Originality7	0.74	27.92**				
Usefulness	Usefulness1	0.80	38.72**	0.79	0.80	0.87	0.62
	Usefulness3	0.79	30.73**				
	Usefulness4	0.75	26.09**				
	Usefulness5	0.80	41.73**				

** Significance at the 99% confidence level

Table 4. The Results of the Discriminant Validity for the latent Variables

Latent variables	1	2	3	4	5
1- Bonding	0.82				
2- Bridging	0.62	0.79			
3- Originality	0.51	0.60	0.75		
4- SEI	0.58	0.65	0.74	0.75	
5- Usefulness	0.49	0.72	0.72	0.60	0.79

The diagonal elements of the square AVE table and the lower diagonal elements represent the correlation coefficients among the research constructs.

The path model of the SEI predictors was also illustrated by the standardized factor loadings (Figure 2) in the significance mode (Figure 3). The results of the path model evaluation (Table 5) are reported as follows:

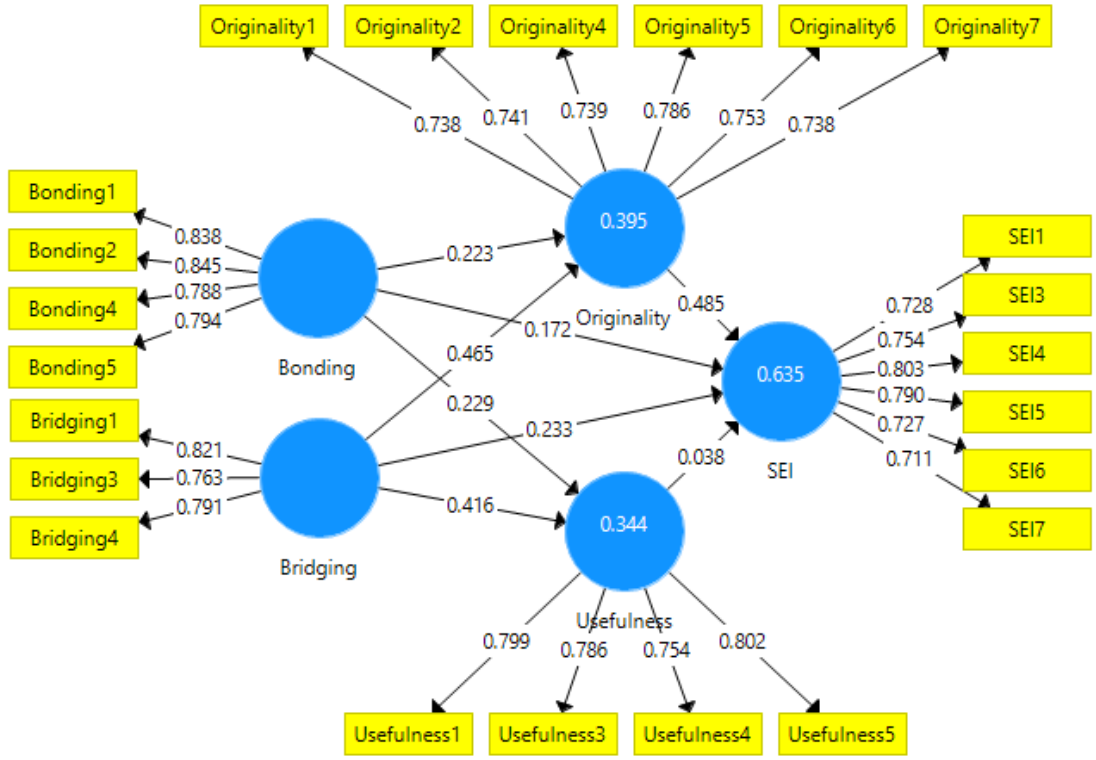

Fig. 2. Experimental Research Model in Standard Mode

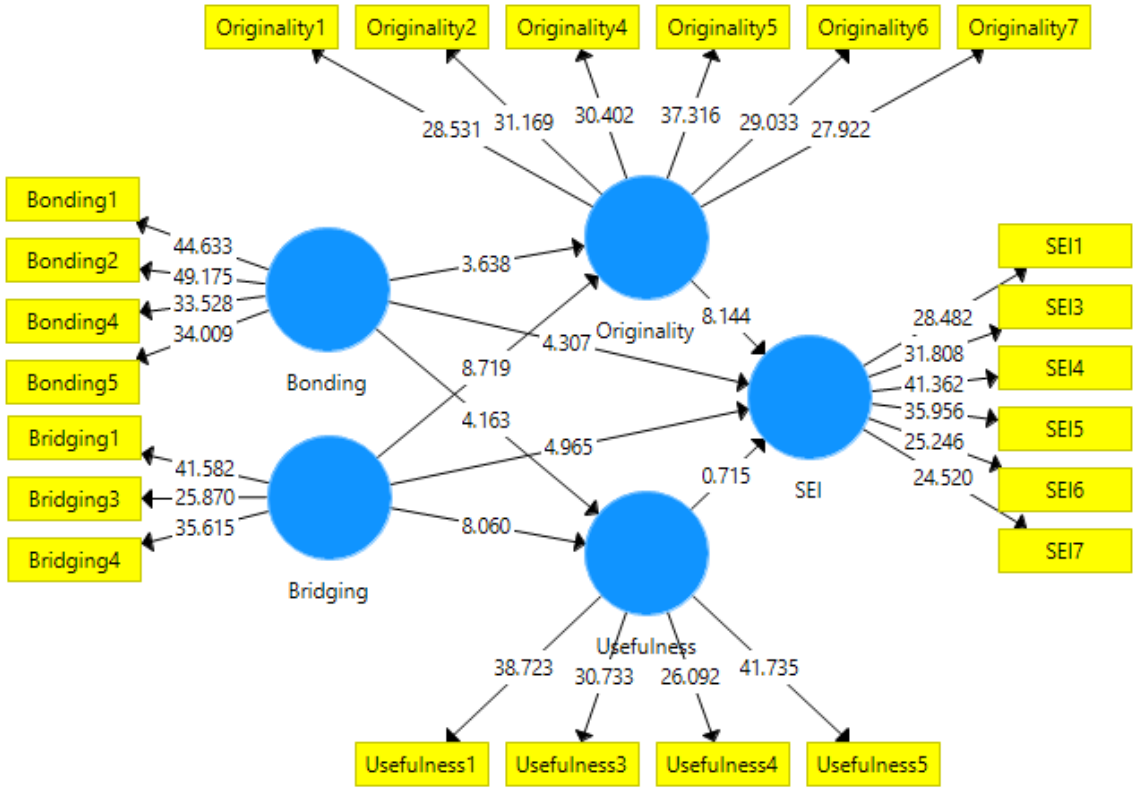

Fig. 3. Experimental Research Model with T-Value

Table 5. Values of Structural Model Evaluation Indices

Predictor	Direct Effects		Indirect Effects		Total Effects		f^2	R^2	Q^2
	β	t-value	B	t-value	β	t-value			
Originality	0.49	8.1142**	-	-	0.49	8.14**	0.27	0.63	0.34
Usefulness	0.04	0.72	-	-	0.04	0.72	0.00		
Bridging	0.23	4.97**	0.24	6.46**	0.47	12.18**	0.07		
Bonding	0.17	4.30**	0.12	3.63**	0.29	6.71**	0.05		

** Significance at the 99% confidence level

The effects of originality, bridging, and bonding on SEI among food industry owners in Ilam Province, western Iran, were significant and positive at the 1% error level (Table 5). Moreover, Table 5 presented that the latent variable of usefulness did not have a significant effect on SEI in the statistical population. Both dimensions of social capital had a significant positive effect on SEI, while only originality, among the dimensions of creativity, was significant. Consequently, the first, third, and fourth research hypotheses were accepted, while the second one was rejected.

Moreover, the coefficient of determination of the SEI variable in the food industry owners, based on the proposed predictors, i.e., the dimensions of creativity and social capital, was equal to 0.63, which could be considered high and significant. In this regard, the effect size of originality was highly strong, and that of the bonding and bridging variables was moderate. Finally, the results of the structural model evaluation indicated that the predictive power of the proposed research model was 34%, which is considered high. The SEI development model in the food industry exhibits strong predictive power, particularly with respect to the dimensions of creativity and social capital.

5. Discussion

The study findings established that originality, as one of the dimensions of creativity, had a significant positive effect on SEI among food industry owners, while usefulness did not. These results were in agreement with those reported by Zampetakis (2008), Olufunso (2010), Chia and Liang (2016), and Yin Ip et al. (2017), acknowledging that SEI could be influenced by originality, as social value creation is the main mission accomplished by social entrepreneurs (Peredo & McLean, 2006), while wealth and profitability are merely tools to achieve their goals (Trivedi, 2010). Typically, originality refers to a person's ability to create thoughts and take actions that are novel or unique in a specific sociocultural context (Yin Ip et al., 2018). In this regard, originality is vital for raising public awareness and taking action by offering unexpected and unique products or services; however, it is possible that usefulness may not be as important (Yin Ip et al., 2017). Therefore, the significant positive effect of originality and the lack of a significant effect for usefulness on the respondents' SEI appear completely logical. In other words, entrepreneurship is unlikely if unique and innovative actions and thoughts are absent. One of the standard features of entrepreneurs, distinguishing them from non-entrepreneurs, is their different perspective on surrounding events and happenings. Notably, profitability is not necessarily discussed in different types of entrepreneurship, especially in social entrepreneurship, where social value creation is the priority of a social entrepreneur, regardless of its economic profitability.

The study results additionally confirmed that both dimensions of social capital, i.e., bonding and bridging, had significant positive effects on SEI among food industry owners. These findings were consistent with those in Liñán and Santos (2007), Sharma (2014), Chia and Liang (2016), Yadegar et al. (2004), and Valizadeh and Karimi Gougheri (2018). They were based on the claim that entrepreneurship is a process within a variable network of social relationships, hindering or facilitating entrepreneurs' connections with resources and opportunities (Khoshmaram et al., 2020; Mirakzadeh et al., 2014). In other words, communication in different social networks helps individuals obtain material and spiritual support, knowledge and information, as well as resources that facilitate fulfilling entrepreneurial goals. For example, individuals become more determined to move toward entrepreneurship than ever before when they believe that there are people around them who can help in starting a business or solving possible problems in their career path in case of material or spiritual support. Additionally, the presence of individuals in different social networks and the establishment of

extensive communication with various communities enhances their intentions for value creation by recognizing the differences among various regions and people.

6. Conclusion and Implications

The present study aimed to investigate the effects of social capital and creativity dimensions on SEI to develop the related literature on entrepreneurship and provide solutions to achieve sustainable food security. The study results indicates the significant role of social capital dimensions, namely bonding and bridging, and originality, as one of the dimensions of creativity, in developing SEI among food industry owners. Therefore, it is possible to develop SEI in society by focusing on these social characteristics and personality traits. Moreover, the present study had good theoretical and practical implications. The study results significantly enhance the SEI literature, particularly in food industries within the context of Iran, a developing country that has not given much attention to CSR. In addition, policymakers in governmental and educational institutions can utilize the study results to formulate plans and adopt measures for the development of SEI in food production and distribution companies, thereby attaining sustainable food security across societies. Considering the positive role of originality in the development of SEI, it is suggested to establish laws and regulations to support individual and group initiatives, such as material and intellectual property, hold training courses aimed at fostering creativity among food industry owners, and encourage them to present diverse ideas appropriate to the activities of these companies to create social entrepreneurship activities. Given the influence of bridging, as one of the dimensions of social capital on the development of SEI, it is recommended to form clusters of companies and food industries to establish social entrepreneurship networks and associations among food industry owners. Regarding the role of bonding in SEI formation and development, measures such as cultivating a culture among families can be implemented to help them appreciate entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, as well as to encourage and support entrepreneurial activities within the family to achieve this goal.

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