



Take A Break: A Typology Of Immigrant Enterprise Growth Strategies In Non-Traditional Entrepreneurship Settings

Item Type	Article (Accepted Version)
UoW Affiliated Authors	Haq, Muhibul
Full Citation	Yasin, N., Hafeez, K., Haq, Muhibul , Haq, F., Zahoor, N. and Samar, N. (2026) Take A Break: A Typology Of Immigrant Enterprise Growth Strategies In Non-Traditional Entrepreneurship Settings. Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies, AOP. pp. 1-27. ISSN Online: 2053-4604
DOI/ISBN/ISSN	https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-09-2025-0568
Journal/Publisher	Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies Emerald
Rights/Publisher Set Statement	<p>Emerald's Green open access policy Our green open access route offers all Emerald journal authors or book chapter authors the option to make their research immediately and openly available upon official publication, free from payment. https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/publish-with-us/author-policies/author-rights</p> <p>This author accepted manuscript is deposited under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC) licence. This means that anyone may distribute, adapt, and build upon the work for non-commercial purposes, subject to full attribution. If you wish to use this manuscript for commercial purposes, please visit Marketplace https://marketplace.copyright.com/rs-ui-web/mp</p>
License	CC BY NC 4.0
Link	https://www.emerald.com/jeee/article-abstract/doi/10.1108/JEEE-09-2025-0568/1337490/Take-a-break-a-typology-of-immigrant-enterprise?redirectedFrom=fulltext



**TAKE A BREAK: A TYPOLOGY OF IMMIGRANT ENTERPRISE
GROWTH STRATEGIES IN NON-TRADITIONAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP SETTINGS**

Journal:	<i>Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies</i>
Manuscript ID	JEEE-09-2025-0568.R1
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Immigrant entrepreneurs, Growth model, mixed embeddedness, capital

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

TAKE A BREAK: A TYPOLOGY OF IMMIGRANT ENTERPRISE GROWTH STRATEGIES IN NON-TRADITIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SETTINGS

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines how Asian immigrant entrepreneurs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) pursue enterprise growth in a non-traditional, migrant-majority Gulf economy. By integrating the mixed embeddedness perspective with forms of capital and risk orientation, we develop a typology of growth strategies that extends the dominant breakout–breakthrough continuum.

Design/methodology/approach: We conducted 66 semi-structured interviews with first-generation immigrant entrepreneurs from China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, and a group of transnational Asians. Using Template Analysis, we explored how variations in human, social and financial capital interact with risk orientation to shape growth choices.

Findings: Four distinct strategies emerged, differentiated by capital configurations, risk propensities and market focus. Breaking Back and Breaking Through, prevalent among South and East Asian entrepreneurs, relied on strong co-ethnic social capital but modest financial and human capital and were concentrated in enclave and low-value-added sectors. Breaking Beyond, typical of transnational Asians from developed economies, and Breaking Out, common among Iranian, Turkish and Afghan entrepreneurs, involved greater financial investment and higher risk-taking to serve mainstream and high-value markets.

Originality/value: The study advances immigrant entrepreneurship research by offering a capital–risk typology that extends mixed embeddedness in a Gulf context. It shows that, unlike Western settings where enclaves often signal marginalisation, Dubai’s multicultural and policy-driven environment enables diverse strategic pathways. The findings sharpen theory on mixed embeddedness and provide guidance for policymakers on how institutional conditions and visa regimes can foster the growth of immigrant enterprises.

Keywords: immigrant entrepreneurship; growth strategies; mixed embeddedness; capital; risk orientation; UAE

1. INTRODUCTION

Immigrant entrepreneurship has long attracted scholarly and policy attention, with immigrant communities often playing a prominent role in new business creation (Kelly, 2018). Yet much of what we know about this phenomenon is shaped by OECD contexts, particularly the United States, Canada, Australia, and Europe, where structural disadvantage and enclave-based trajectories feature prominently in explanations of immigrant entrepreneurial activity (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Ram, 1992; Yasin & Hafeez, 2024). This Western-centric lens leaves important questions unanswered about how immigrant entrepreneurs operate in emerging economies, where

1
2
3 demographic structures, institutional regimes, and policy incentives differ markedly (Mosbah &
4 Wahab, 2021; Verver et al., 2019).
5
6

7 The United Arab Emirates (UAE) presents a particularly distinctive context, with
8 immigrants outnumbering citizens by nearly nine to one and more than 200 nationalities
9 represented. Immigrant-owned firms are central rather than peripheral to the economy (GMI,
10 2023). Dubai, in particular, has cultivated a cosmopolitan business environment through tax-free
11 zones, flexible visa schemes, and initiatives such as the Golden Visa, while also presenting
12 context-specific challenges related to financial access, regulatory compliance, and cultural
13 navigation (Hafeez et al., 2016; Yasin, 2022; Yasin & Poulin, 2025). These characteristics make
14 the UAE an ideal setting for examining how immigrant entrepreneurs strategise for growth in a
15 non-traditional Western host economy.
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27

28 Existing research highlights breakout and breakthrough strategies as dominant pathways for
29 immigrant entrepreneurs in Western settings (Ram & Hillin, 1994; Basu, 2011), but these concepts
30 remain largely unexamined in emerging economies such as the UAE. To address this gap, the
31 study explores how Asian immigrant entrepreneurs in Dubai mobilise different forms of capital
32 and risk orientations to shape their enterprise growth strategies in a non-traditional, emerging
33 economy context.
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41

42 The study identifies four distinct growth strategies that extend the conventional breakout–
43 breakthrough continuum, illustrating how capital configurations and risk orientations interact
44 within Dubai's opportunity structures. By situating immigrant entrepreneurship within an
45 emerging economy, this research contributes in two key ways. Theoretically, it extends mixed
46 embeddedness by integrating entrepreneurs' capital configurations with their risk orientations to
47 explain strategic differentiation within the same institutional environment. Empirically, it shows
48 how policy-led migration regimes and multicultural demographics shape opportunity structures in
49 ways distinct from Western contexts. These insights respond to calls for more context-sensitive
50 entrepreneurship research beyond OECD settings (Sithas & Surangi, 2021; Dabic et al., 2020) and
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

offer implications for policymakers seeking to support immigrant entrepreneurship as a driver of sustainable economic development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Agency, Structure, and the Early Foundations

The theoretical foundations of immigrant entrepreneurship have historically revolved around the agency–structure debate. Early work often attributed entrepreneurial activity to the cultural predispositions of immigrant communities (Werbner, 1984; Basu & Altinay, 2022). In contrast, structuralist perspectives emphasised the constraints of host economies, where limited employment opportunities, racism, marginalisation, and blocked mobility pushed immigrants into self-employment, particularly South Asian immigrants in the UK (Aldrich et al., 1986; Jones et al., 1994; Ram, 1992; Barrett et al., 2003; Light & Rosenstein, 1995). Studies have repeatedly shown that immigrants must negotiate these disadvantages due to gaps in human capital, weak institutional knowledge, and restricted social networks (Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990; Al Ariss, 2010). Discrimination and xenophobia further exacerbate these challenges (Al Ariss, 2010).

While foundational, this debate reflects the realities of OECD contexts where immigrants are minorities. In emerging economies such as the UAE, immigrants make up the majority of the labour force and often access opportunities through state-led migration policies. This raises questions about whether the agency–structure binary remains sufficient for understanding immigrant entrepreneurship outside Western contexts.

2.2 Forms of Capital and Risk in Immigrant Entrepreneurship

Beyond structural explanations, scholars have increasingly highlighted the role of capital in shaping entrepreneurial activity. Ram et al. (2008) and Vershinina et al. (2011) emphasise the interplay of human, social, and financial capital, offering a more holistic account of immigrant incorporation. This builds on Sanders and Nee's (1996) classical formulations, which linked capital resources to labour market integration. Push factors, including discrimination, networks,

and socio-demographic differences, have also been foregrounded (McEvoy & Hafeez, 2009b; Elo et al., 2018; Yasin & Hafeez, 2023).

Risk has been treated unevenly within this literature. Some studies suggest that immigrants adopt risk-averse strategies in host societies to minimise business failure (Kushnirovich et al., 2018), whereas others highlight their capacity to take on risk as an extension of the migration act itself (Eduardsen & Marinova, 2020). Recent evidence from the UAE shows that entrepreneurial behaviour is strongly shaped by fear of failure and risk aversion, indicating that risk propensity plays a significant role in growth decisions even in opportunity-rich environments (Alnassai, 2023). Studies of ethnic entrepreneurs in the UAE further reveal marked variation in personal and environmental attributes across immigrant groups, suggesting that risk orientation interacts with differentiated capital profiles in patterned ways (Elmassah et al., 2022). These divergent findings indicate a gap: while internationalisation and risk have been systematically reviewed, less is known about how immigrant entrepreneurs in emerging economies assess and operationalise risk alongside different forms of capital.

2.3 Mixed Embeddedness and Enclave Dynamics

A major shift in theorising came with Kloosterman et al.'s (1999) mixed embeddedness framework, which combined ethnic resources with the politico-institutional and regulatory context of host economies. This model explains how immigrants identify opportunities in low-value-added sectors or abandoned markets. Yet it has also been criticised for reinforcing a view of immigrant entrepreneurs as bound to structurally marginalised niches.

Within this tradition, distinctions emerged between "middleman minorities" who leveraged ethnic resources to trade across groups (McEvoy & Hafeez, 2009a) and enclave entrepreneurs embedded in co-ethnic markets (Drori et al., 2009). While Portes and Jensen (1987) viewed enclaves as routes to advancement, Aldrich et al. (1986) argued that structural barriers confined Asians in Britain to such spaces. Ram and Hillin (1994) highlighted the

1
2
3 importance of breaking out of ethnic enclaves into mainstream markets, a strategy later
4
5 challenged by Basu (2011), who proposed "breakthrough" strategies targeting alternative but
6
7 parallel markets. More recent studies link breakout potential to capitals such as host-language
8
9 proficiency, education, and gender (Daniels et al., 2019; Yasin, 2010).

10
11
12 While influential, the breakout–breakthrough debate remains narrow. It fails to capture
13
14 alternative trajectories, such as entrepreneurs retreating into lower-risk activities ("breaking
15
16 back") or leveraging transnational capital to access new opportunities ("breaking beyond"). This
17
18 underlines the need to revisit mixed embeddedness in light of the diverse strategies observed in
19
20 emerging economies.
21
22

23 **2.4 Transnational and Returnee Entrepreneurs**

24
25 Globalisation and digital technologies have expanded opportunities for cross-border
26
27 entrepreneurship. Increased connectivity and social media reduce mobility costs and enhance
28
29 human mobility (Hafeez et al., 2018;2019; Zapata-Barrero & Rezaei, 2020). Transnational
30
31 entrepreneurs (TEs) often rely on diasporic networks to initiate ventures (Drori et al., 2009;
32
33 Arroiteia & Hafeez, 2021; Yasin & Hafeez, 2023), but must still negotiate structural barriers,
34
35 high transaction costs, and unfamiliar consumer bases (Honig & Arsenault, 2020). Many thus
36
37 operate at the lower end of supply chains (McEvoy & Hafeez, 2009a,b).
38
39
40

41
42 Recent studies call for more research on how local structures shape transnational activity
43
44 (Laure et al., 2022). Kushnirovich et al. (2018) add nuance to the concept of "risk homeostasis,"
45
46 suggesting immigrants may limit entrepreneurial risk after taking the initial risk of migration.
47
48 Nonetheless, highly skilled "new argonauts" (Wadhwa, 2007) demonstrate that
49
50 transnationalism enables entry into technology-intensive sectors. In the U.S., 23.5% of high-
51
52 tech firms founded between 1995 and 2005 had at least one immigrant founder (Wang & Liu,
53
54 2015).
55
56

57
58 Returnee entrepreneurship also adds complexity. Migration can provide socio-economic
59
60 resources such as skills, networks, and capital that support business creation upon return

(Riano, 2023). Immigrants who return to launch ventures do so through a layered process shaped by institutional constraints, social ties, and individual motives, which recent reviews synthesise into a coherent two-stage model of return and entrepreneurial entry (Silva et al., 2025). Yet little is known about how these trajectories intersect with non-Western institutional environments such as Dubai, where immigrants are often long-term but non-citizen residents rather than returnees.

A more explicit theoretical distinction is needed between geographically bounded immigrant entrepreneurship and transnational founding that relies on the portability of human and financial capital (Arroteia & Hafeez, 2020). Research on high-skill transnational entrepreneurs shows that globally mobile founders leverage education, savings, and professional experience acquired across multiple countries to establish ventures that are only partially embedded in their host contexts (Wadhwa et al., 2007). This stream highlights capital mobility as a defining mechanism: human capital accumulated abroad, financial capital transferred across jurisdictions, and social capital distributed through diasporic networks (Yasin, 2022; Yasin et al., 2024). Dubai's highly digitalised commercial environment makes this omission especially significant, as digital ecosystems increasingly shape how immigrant entrepreneurs coordinate activity and scale across borders.

2.5 Gaps and Emerging Directions

Based on the reviewed literature, several limitations are identified. The agency–structure debate and early capital frameworks were largely developed in Western settings where immigrants are disadvantaged minorities. While mixed embeddedness has advanced understanding of institutional constraints, its reliance on breakout and breakthrough strategies underestimates the diversity of immigrant growth trajectories. Third, risk orientation remains underexplored, especially regarding how immigrants mobilise different capitals in emerging economies. Finally, while transnational and returnee literatures illustrate mobility and global networks, few studies investigate how these dynamics manifest in Gulf economies, where

immigrant entrepreneurship is central to the national economy (Yasin & Poulin, 2025).

Recent scholarship shows that digitalisation is reshaping how entrepreneurs coordinate activity, access markets, and reorganise business models across borders. Work on the digital economy highlights how online platforms, data-driven tools, and virtual coordination mechanisms create new forms of entrepreneurial agency that are not tied to physical ecosystems or local networks (Meyer et al., 2023). Related research on digital business model innovation demonstrates how founders now reconfigure value creation and risk management through digitally enabled practices that permit greater mobility, experimentation, and cross-border reach (Trischler & Li-Ying, 2023). This emerging body of work highlights a broader shift toward digitally mediated entrepreneurship. Yet, these dynamics have not been examined in relation to immigrant entrepreneurs in the UAE, where mobility regimes, capital configurations, and opportunity structures differ markedly from Western digital ecosystems.

Addressing these gaps requires a broader examination of immigrant enterprise growth strategies in Dubai through the lens of mixed embeddedness, enriched by integrating risk orientation and multiple forms of capital. This represents a critical step toward contextualising immigrant entrepreneurship in non-traditional, emerging economies.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Context

According to the UAE Government of National Statistics (2022), the country's population grew from 4.1 million in 2005 to over 10 million in 2021. UAE citizens remain a demographic minority of approximately one million, while the remainder are immigrants (GMI, 2023). More than 200 nationalities live in the UAE, and population growth has been driven by expansion across multiple economic sectors. The largest immigrant groups include Indian (2.77 million), Pakistani (1.28 million), Bangladeshi (0.75 million), and Filipino (0.56 million) nationals (GMI, 2023).

For this study, the focus was on six Asian communities that are demographically

1
2
3 significant and well represented in entrepreneurial activity: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi,
4
5 Afghan, Turkish, and Chinese. During fieldwork, a further category emerged, labelled
6
7 "Transnational Asians," referring to entrepreneurs from developed Asian economies who
8
9 strategically mobilise cross-border capital and networks. The migration histories of these groups
10
11 are varied. The Indian and Pakistani presence expanded significantly after UAE independence
12
13 in 1971, while the Iranian and Afghan communities trace their settlement in the Gulf back to the
14
15 late 1800s. Entrepreneurial activity is considerable across these communities. The Pakistani
16
17 Business Council reports approximately 600 registered companies; there are around 83,000
18
19 Indian companies (The Economist, 2023) and 6,000 Chinese companies (DMCC, 2022).
20
21
22

23 **3.2 Research Design**

24
25 The study adopted a qualitative design in order to capture the experiences and strategies of
26
27 first-generation Asian immigrant entrepreneurs in depth. Semi-structured interviews were
28
29 chosen because they allow respondents to articulate nuanced perspectives while enabling
30
31 comparability across cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interview guide was informed by
32
33 existing literature and aligned with the research objectives (see Table 1).
34
35
36

37 **[Table 1 Here]**

38
39 Data collection took place between September 2021 and April 2023, resulting in 66
40
41 interviews. Participants included nine entrepreneurs from China, eight from Pakistan, ten from
42
43 India, eight from Bangladesh, seven from Afghanistan, seven from Turkey, eight from Iran,
44
45 and nine categorised as Transnational Asians. Most businesses were small- to medium-sized
46
47 enterprises employing fewer than 50 staff. They were concentrated in the residential and tourist
48
49 districts of Dubai, as well as in the border areas of Sharjah and Ajman.
50
51
52

53
54 The interviews ranged from 20 to 40 minutes in length and were conducted in Urdu,
55
56 Hindi, Malayalam, Turkish, English, Pushto, and Chinese to ensure inclusivity and semantic
57
58 accuracy. Across the sample, 41 interviews were conducted in South Asian languages, 9 in
59
60 Turkish, 8 in English, 5 in Pushto, and 3 in Chinese. All non-English interviews were conducted

1
2
3 by bilingual researchers, with support from translators familiar with the relevant business and
4
5 cultural contexts. Meaning was checked collaboratively during and after the conversation, and
6
7 key segments were cross-verified in English before transcription to ensure semantic equivalence
8
9 and cultural sensitivity. This multilingual, team-based procedure enhanced the reliability and
10
11 validity of the data and supported consensus-building during later stages of coding (Kluge, 2000;
12
13 Patton, 2022; Ponterotto, 2005).

16 **3.3 Sampling and Access**

17
18 Participants were recruited through a criterion sampling approach to ensure relevance to the
19
20 research questions (Creswell et al., 2007; Patton, 2002). The inclusion criteria required that all
21
22 participants be first-generation Asian immigrants, own a registered business in the UAE, and
23
24 have been operating their enterprise for at least 5 years. Access to participants was facilitated
25
26 by drawing on Buchanan et al.'s (1988) research access model, which proved particularly useful
27
28 in approaching immigrant enclaves such as Bur Dubai, Al-Mankhool, Al Karama, Deira,
29
30 Satwa, International City, and Rolla, as well as the industrial areas of Sharjah and the outskirts
31
32 of Ajman (see Figure 1).
33
34
35

36
37 **[Figure 1 Here]**

38
39 Risk orientation was assessed by asking participants to rate their risk on a 3-point scale,
40
41 where 1 indicated low risk, 2 moderate risk, and 3 high risk. This measure was not designed as
42
43 a formal psychological test but rather as a conversational tool to prompt reflection and provide
44
45 a comparative sense of how individuals viewed their willingness to take risks relative to their
46
47 capital resources. The measure was therefore treated as exploratory and used as a basis for
48
49 discussion rather than as a definitive instrument. To reflect risk as a socially situated and
50
51 interpretive phenomenon rather than a fixed psychological trait, the risk-orientation scale was
52
53 used as a conversational device that anchored participants' own meanings of uncertainty within
54
55 their capital and class positions.
56
57
58
59

60 To strengthen the credibility of the risk orientation measure, we triangulated the self-

1
2
3 rated 1–3 scale with observable indicators drawn from the interview material. These included
4
5 the size of initial investment, willingness to take on debt, the number and timing of branch
6
7 openings, sectoral entry choices, and exposure to market volatility during 2021–2023.
8
9 Participants who identified as low- or moderate-risk takers typically aligned with low-capital
10
11 sectors, small or incremental expansions, and avoidance of financially uncertain markets.
12
13 Conversely, participants who self-identified as high-risk demonstrated consistency by making
14
15 large capital outlays, relocating to premium districts, or diversifying into unfamiliar sectors.
16
17 This alignment between stated risk orientation and observed behaviour provided a validity
18
19 check, supporting the analytical use of the conversational scale.
20
21
22

23
24 To ensure that the analysis captured established strategic behaviour rather than short-
25
26 term survival tactics, we set a minimum operating period of five years. This threshold reflects
27
28 the point at which most businesses in the UAE have moved beyond the start-up phase, reduced
29
30 early volatility, and begun to form more stable approaches to growth. The focus of the study is
31
32 on enterprise expansion rather than new venture creation, and including very early-stage firms
33
34 would have introduced substantial heterogeneity in strategic maturity. This design choice
35
36 ensured that the typology was grounded in cases in which strategic intent, resource
37
38 mobilisation, and market positioning had sufficiently developed to be analytically comparable.
39
40

41
42 Data collection continued until additional interviews yielded no new themes, indicating
43
44 theoretical saturation at 66 cases. Supplementary Table 3 provides a consolidated overview of
45
46 all 66 instances, allowing readers to see the variation in capital configurations, sectors, and
47
48 strategy assignments that underpin the typology.
49
50

51 **[Supplementary Table 3 Here]**
52

53 **3.4 Data Analysis**

54
55 The data were analysed using Template Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which was
56
57 selected for its combination of the flexibility of inductive coding with the discipline of a
58
59 structured framework. This approach was particularly appropriate given the heterogeneity of
60

1
2
3 participants across nationalities and sectors, as it enabled comparison while remaining sensitive
4
5 to context-specific meanings (Haq & Yasin, 2025).
6

7 Analysis proceeded in three stages. During the first stage of data reduction, all interviews
8
9 were transcribed verbatim and repeatedly read by the research team. An initial coding template
10
11 was constructed based on sensitising concepts from the literature on mixed embeddedness and
12
13 forms of capital, alongside inductive codes that emerged directly from the data. This template
14
15 was iteratively refined as new categories surfaced, ensuring that the analysis remained
16
17 grounded in participants' accounts rather than being imposed a priori.
18
19

20
21 In the second stage, data display, the coded material was organised into thematic clusters
22
23 that reflected both the different types of capital and the varying risk orientations described by
24
25 participants. This organisation enabled systematic exploration of how these dimensions
26
27 interacted to shape entrepreneurial growth strategies. Patterns and contrasts across ethnic
28
29 groups were mapped visually, allowing the research team to identify the four distinct strategic
30
31 types that comprise the typology presented in this paper.
32
33

34
35 The final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, involved collective interpretation
36
37 of the themes. To strengthen reliability, triangulation was achieved by comparing findings
38
39 across communities, sectors, and geographical locations. Member checking was carried out
40
41 with selected participants to validate interpretations and refine emerging insights, while peer
42
43 debriefing sessions with academic colleagues provided critical feedback on coding decisions
44
45 and thematic coherence. These strategies ensured that the analysis was both credible and
46
47 theoretically robust, grounding the typology in the lived experiences of the entrepreneurs
48
49 studied.
50
51

52
53 The coding template evolved through six cycles. Raw inductive codes were first
54
55 generated, then grouped using sensitising concepts from the literature. Cross-case comparison
56
57 removed overlap and clarified boundaries. The four strategy types emerged in Cycle 4 and were
58
59 repeatedly tested against discrepant cases. Peer debriefing strengthened consistency across
60

1
2
3 groups. The final template includes only codes that clearly mapped onto the four strategies,
4
5 ensuring a transparent link between first-order codes, second-order themes, and the typology
6
7 (See Supplementary Table 4B).
8

9 10 [Supplementary Table 4B Here]

11
12 Ethical protocols were followed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained
13
14 from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through the use of
15
16 pseudonyms. Interview materials were securely stored, and member checking was used to
17
18 confirm the accuracy of interpretations. Formal ethical clearance was granted in the UAE in
19
20 2021 under approval number CD343430R2.
21
22

23 24 **3.5 Defining the Four Strategy Types: Necessary and Sufficient Criteria**

25
26 We developed explicit necessary and sufficient criteria for each of the four strategy types. These
27
28 criteria emerged from iterative coding, cross-case comparison, and repeated team-based
29
30 verification during Template Analysis. They specify the minimum conditions that must be
31
32 present for a case to belong to a given category, the decisive indicators that distinguish one
33
34 strategy from another, and the exclusion conditions that prevent overlap. The criteria ensure that
35
36 each strategy type reflects a coherent pattern of capital mobilisation, risk orientation, market
37
38 positioning, and temporal orientation, grounded in the empirical material.
39
40

41
42 *Type 1: Breaking Back:* This type captures entrepreneurs who treat Dubai as a temporary
43
44 platform for capital accumulation while prioritising long-term investment in their home
45
46 countries. Necessary conditions include a short planning horizon in the UAE, modest financial
47
48 commitment to the local venture, and heavy reliance on co-ethnic trade and labour networks.
49
50 The sufficient condition is that the entrepreneur has already established, or is actively
51
52 developing, current or future businesses in the home country, funded by earnings generated in
53
54 Dubai. Cases are excluded if the entrepreneur targets mainstream markets in the UAE or invests
55
56 substantial financial capital locally.
57
58

59
60 *Type 2: Breaking Beyond:* This type reflects transnational entrepreneurs with high levels

of human and financial capital who extend existing overseas ventures into Dubai. Necessary conditions include significant professional experience, access to substantial investment resources, and a willingness to assume considerable financial risk. The sufficient condition is that the UAE venture functions as an internationalised extension of a business founded abroad and targets affluent consumer groups in high-value sectors. Cases are excluded if they rely on enclave networks or focus primarily on co-ethnic clientele.

Type 3: Breaking Through: This type describes entrepreneurs with modest human and financial capital who pursue incremental growth within ethnic enclaves by replicating small-scale enterprises. Necessary conditions include labour-intensive business activities, extensive dependence on co-ethnic kinship networks for labour and credit, and a customer base dominated by co-ethnic groups. The sufficient condition is that business expansion occurs through the duplication of similar microenterprises rather than through diversification or sectoral upgrading. Cases are excluded if entrepreneurs target Emirati or tourist markets or display the higher risk tolerance characteristic of Types 2 or 4.

Type 4: Breaking Out: This type includes entrepreneurs with moderate levels of human and financial capital who pursue growth by engaging mainstream consumer markets. Necessary conditions include a diversified customer base that extends beyond co-ethnic groups, host-country language skills, and a strategic intention to expand into sectors that attract a wider demographic. The sufficient condition is clear evidence of crossing ethnic boundaries through sectoral upgrading, location choice, and customer diversification. Cases are excluded if they remain confined to enclave markets or display the high capital intensity typical of Type 2.

4. FINDINGS

The majority of the enterprises in our study were micro-sized, operating in small-scale manufacturing, services, wholesale, and retail. This pattern reflects the types of immigrant-owned businesses long documented in European contexts (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Yasin & Hafeez, 2022), yet with distinctive local inflections in the UAE.

1
2
3 South Asian participants, particularly Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani entrepreneurs,
4
5 were heavily clustered in the tourist bazaars of Bur Dubai, Deira, and Karama, as well as in the
6
7 industrial zones of Sharjah and Ajman. The enclave effect was strongly visible in these districts,
8
9 where entrepreneurs employed co-ethnics, served co-ethnic customers, and remained spatially
10
11 concentrated (Portes & Jensen, 1987; Yasin, 2014; Yasin & Hafeez, 2022). Chinese businesses
12
13 were almost exclusively located in Dragon Mart, Afghan-owned enterprises concentrated in the
14
15 Al-Quoz Industrial Area, and Turkish ventures were more geographically dispersed. In contrast,
16
17 the so-called Overseas Asian, or "transnational," entrepreneurs located their operations in
18
19 affluent districts such as Jumeirah, The Palm, and Downtown Dubai, highlighting a spatial
20
21 divide between enclave-based and globally oriented enterprises.
22
23
24

25
26 From analysis of the 66 interviews, four distinctive enterprise growth strategies emerged,
27
28 shaped by ethnic background, sectoral positioning, and the forms of capital and risk orientations
29
30 available to entrepreneurs (See Table 2).
31
32

33 [Table 2 Here]

34
35 These strategies represent "breaking back," "breaking beyond," "breaking through," and
36
37 "breaking out" (see Table 2 and Figure 2). Together, they represent a typology that extends
38
39 beyond the conventional "breakout" and "breakthrough" models dominant in the literature,
40
41 offering a more nuanced account of immigrant enterprise growth in the UAE. To support
42
43 transparency and replicability, Supplementary Table 3 summarises key characteristics of all
44
45 sixty-six cases and their assigned growth strategy types. Furthermore, Supplementary Table 4
46
47 presents the coding template and data structure that underpinned the identification of the four
48
49 strategy types.
50
51
52

53 [Figure 2 Here]

54 55 56 **4.1 Type 1: Breaking Back – Low Human and Financial Capital, High Co-Ethnic Social** 57 58 **Capital**

59
60 The first strategy identified is "breaking back," which describes entrepreneurs who establish

1
2
3 businesses in the UAE as temporary ventures while simultaneously building enterprises in their
4
5 home countries. The temporal orientation of this group echoes patterns found in recent return-
6
7 mobility literature but is distinct because participants remain UAE residents rather than returnees.
8
9 For many Type 1 entrepreneurs, the pressures described here were intensified during the 2021–
10
11 2023 recovery, when labour mobility and household income patterns had not fully returned to
12
13 pre-pandemic levels. Breaking Back diverges from breakout–breakthrough because it is not a
14
15 host-market growth strategy at all.
16
17

18
19 A total of 22 participants pursued this strategy, predominantly in labour-intensive sectors such
20
21 as electronics and home appliance retailing, home decoration, and textile wholesale. These
22
23 businesses were concentrated in International City (mainly Chinese) and Deira (largely Indian),
24
25 where dense ethnic networks and accessible trade links facilitated operations. Their activities
26
27 focused on importing products manufactured in China and India, which were then sold in the
28
29 UAE but not marketed as "ethnic products." Businesses largely employed co-ethnic staff, with
30
31 Chinese firms specialising in electronics, Bengali firms in textiles, and Indian firms spanning a
32
33 broader range of goods.
34
35

36
37 The orientation of these entrepreneurs was distinctly short-term. One Bangladeshi retailer
38
39 (3BD) explained: *"I only invested the bare minimum needed, so if things do not work out, I can*
40
41 *close the shop or sell it to someone else and return to Bangladesh."* While this temporal mindset
42
43 was echoed by a Chinese entrepreneur (1CH): *"This is all short-term. I am here to make money,*
44
45 *not for tourism or long-term living. I will stay here for maybe 7–8 years and use the money to*
46
47 *start a few more businesses in China. I already started two in Guangzhou... Being Chinese helps*
48
49 *as I can trade easily with Chinese suppliers. One is a restaurant, and the other is a travel agency."*
50
51
52

53
54 For these entrepreneurs, UAE-based businesses provided capital accumulation and trade
55
56 opportunities but were not platforms for permanent settlement or local growth. Although they
57
58 held average levels of human, financial, and social capital, their priority was to expand operations
59
60 in their home countries rather than to duplicate enterprises in the UAE.

Risk orientation in this group was generally low to moderate, shaped by limited financial investments and the ability to exit quickly. As one Indian music academy owner described:

"After starting my academy here, I started another academy in India. Then, to further grow it, I started selling Indian musical instruments here in Dubai... I do not lose anything if I close the company and return to India, which I may do at any time. It was important to be smart and only invest as much as was needed to get the job done, pack up, and leave anytime."

Overall, the "breaking back" strategy highlights how certain immigrant entrepreneurs treat Dubai as a staging ground for generating profits and transferring resources to home-country ventures, rather than as a place to embed deeply within the host economy. This strategic posture features the role of co-ethnic social capital and trade networks in enabling short-term, low-commitment entrepreneurship with a darker side of trade offs in psychological contracts (Yasin et al 2025a,b).

4.2 Type 2: Breaking Beyond– High Human and Financial Capital; High-Risk Takers

The second strategy, "breaking beyond," refers to first-generation transnational entrepreneurs who expanded businesses founded abroad into the UAE. **Breaking Beyond is not a progression from enclaves but a transnational scaling logic.** Unlike enclave-based firms, these entrepreneurs positioned themselves in high-value sectors and affluent urban locations, signalling both confidence and capacity to compete in mainstream and luxury markets. They came from diverse Asian backgrounds but shared characteristics of high human capital, significant financial resources, and a willingness to assume substantial risks.

While their co-ethnic social capital in Dubai was relatively limited, they compensated by mobilising global diaspora networks and international market experience, consistent with work on transnational entrepreneurship in high-value sectors (Zapata-Barrero & Rezaei, 2020; Arroiteia & Hafeez, 2022). **Several Type 2 entrepreneurs pursued branch duplication to stabilise income streams and avoid dependence on a single location. Branch duplication emerged as a risk-hedging response during the 2021–2023 recovery period, when uncertainty about tourist volumes and**

1
2
3 supply chains remained high. This strategy allowed them to spread risk while maintaining
4
5 familiar operational routines.
6

7
8 Our sample included nine such entrepreneurs, aged 28 to 65, who operated medical and
9
10 dental clinics, pharmacies, luxury and sports car rental services, e-commerce ventures, and villa
11
12 rental companies. Their enterprises were concentrated in affluent districts such as Jumeirah, The
13
14 Palm, and Downtown Dubai, and were often internationalised extensions of businesses based in
15
16 the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and Hong Kong. As one participant (1TNA), a former software
17
18 engineer, explained: *"Since I started, I invested millions of pounds in purchasing and leasing
19
20 luxury sports cars that we offer on short-term rental, primarily to tourists and the locals. By
21
22 background, I was a software engineer in the States and saved up quite a sum of money. I decided
23
24 to invest it in the land of opportunity [Dubai], and guess what? It has been going well!"*
25
26
27

28
29 These entrepreneurs frequently leveraged skills and savings from unrelated professions to
30
31 pursue opportunities in Dubai, highlighting both flexibility and opportunism. As 2TNA recalled:
32
33 *"I graduated with my architecture degree and owned a basic fish and chips shop in the UK as a
34
35 side hustle; do you get me? If it is not Corona, the UK taxes will kill you quicker. It was doing
36
37 OK... but guess what, brother? There is a greater demand here in Dubai, especially among
38
39 expats. I can charge five times more than in the UK as it is a novelty product."*
40
41

42
43 The capital requirements of these ventures were substantial, often running into millions
44
45 of dirhams. One participant (9TNA) reflected on the scale of personal investment required to
46
47 establish a luxury villa rental business: *"To start this business, I invested 2 million Dirhams
48
49 outright in 2000 to purchase the first villa... The villa cost one million, but then I had to spend
50
51 significantly more upfront to install swimming pools for each one, luxury beds, and other
52
53 furniture. But then we also had to get a license for this type of work. So yeah, I invested everything
54
55 I had into it because I knew it would do well. If not in Dubai, then where else would someone pay
56
57 this much?"*
58
59
60

For these entrepreneurs, the pursuit of growth was closely tied to wealth maximisation,

1
2
3 even when it involved extreme risk-taking. Their ventures were directed at high-spending
4 segments of the market, particularly tourists and Emiratis, rather than co-ethnic clientele, as
5
6
7
8 8TNA reflected on a strategic relocation from mid-market to luxury properties: *"Only tourists*
9
10 *and local Emiratis can pay such prices for these luxury rental villas, which are very special and*
11 *ultra-high-end. Also, Palm Jumeirah is one of the most expensive areas in Dubai. We decided to*
12 *sell our four villas in the Springs area that we used to rent to tourists and buy one of these on the*
13 *Palm...one of the best decisions I made in my life."*
14
15
16
17
18

19 In summary, the "breaking beyond" strategy illustrates how transnational Asian
20 entrepreneurs leveraged accumulated education, global professional experience, and significant
21 financial resources to penetrate Dubai's most lucrative markets. Their cases highlight the
22 intersection of high human and financial capital with elevated risk orientations, producing growth
23 trajectories distinct from those of enclave-bound or returnee entrepreneurs.
24
25
26
27
28
29

30 **4.3 Type 3. Breaking Through Low Human and Financial Capital-Low Risk Taker, High** 31 **Co-Ethnic Social Capital** 32 33

34 The third strategy, "breaking through," characterises entrepreneurs who develop businesses
35 incrementally within low-value-added sectors by relying heavily on co-ethnic social capital.
36 This strategy was most common among Pakistani entrepreneurs, with some Indian
37 representation, and was concentrated in retail, barber shops, mobile phone sales and repairs,
38 takeaways, and kiosks. These ventures were typically labour-intensive, required modest
39 financial investment, and served predominantly co-ethnic clientele. Thirteen participants, aged
40 23 to 55, described pursuing this path, with businesses concentrated in Deira, Bur Dubai, Al
41 Quoz, and Karama.
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52

53 The challenges of this strategy were emphasized by 1IND, who explained the relentless
54 demands of small-scale entrepreneurship: *"Owning your own business is not a joke. It is very*
55 *hard work. The guys and I are on our feet for nearly 12 hours daily, almost every day, serving*
56 *customers. If we close for a day, our customers will go elsewhere, and our competitors are*
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 *always waiting for that opportunity to take our loyal customers."*

4
5 Growth within this category was enabled less by financial capital and more by the mobilisation
6
7 of family and kinship networks. As 5PK noted: *"I was able to grow this business because my*
8
9 *cousin came from Pakistan, and he could work at the other shop and manage it while I worked*
10
11 *in this one... If it were not for my cousin, I would not have been able to manage the following*
12
13 *business we decided to open last year."*

14
15
16 For many of these entrepreneurs, duplicating small-scale enterprises became a survival
17
18 tactic rather than a vehicle for substantial expansion or wealth maximisation. One young
19
20 Pakistani barber (PAK 13) described how his family expanded cautiously within ethnic
21
22 enclaves: *"I own three salons in the Bur Dubai area. I own this shop, the one next to the Bur*
23
24 *Dubai Metro Station. My customers are 90% Indian and Pakistani. Not many Arabs, but we*
25
26 *sometimes get tourists when they visit Meena Bazaar. My uncle and I own these stores; we*
27
28 *started with the first one in 2018."*

29
30
31
32 The pandemic highlighted the fragility of this growth strategy. As 1PK reflected: *"We*
33
34 *started our first shop just before Corona. Business was hit badly, but we opened a second branch*
35
36 *on a busier road to balance the losses. Now, when one shop struggles, the other covers the*
37
38 *shortfall, and both are doing well in 2023."*

39
40
41
42 Low levels of human and financial capital, weak language skills, and reliance on borrowed
43
44 resources from kin limited the options for breaking out into more lucrative markets. As 7PK
45
46 explained: *"I barely speak Arabic or English and came with little money borrowed from*
47
48 *relatives. To expand, I had to borrow again, so I avoided big risks and only built businesses in*
49
50 *trades I already know."*

51
52
53 Overall, the "breaking through" strategy reflects how entrepreneurs compensate for
54
55 limited human and financial resources by leveraging dense co-ethnic networks. Their approach
56
57 produces incremental survival-driven growth, but risk aversion and structural barriers limit their
58
59 ability to diversify beyond low-value sectors or mainstream markets.
60

Type 4: Breaking Out: Moderate Human and Financial Capital - Low to Moderate Risk Takers, Low Social Capital

The "breaking out" strategy was observed among entrepreneurs who targeted non-co-ethnic customers, particularly Emiratis and tourists, by offering a mix of ethnic and non-ethnic products and services. This group included 22 participants from Afghanistan, Turkey, and Iran, operating across various sectors, including Persian restaurants, automobile repair, and logistics. Unlike enclave businesses, breakout ventures were not confined to a single location but were dispersed across Dubai's luxury and tourist hubs, including Downtown, Dubai Marina, and Jumeirah, as well as in industrial zones such as Al-Quoz and parts of Sharjah. The expansion decisions of Type 4 entrepreneurs reflected the favourable conditions that followed regulatory reforms and the tourism rebound after 2021 (F. Haq et al., 2023; Okasha et al., 2023).

Although many in this group initially lacked Arabic proficiency, over time, Iranians and Afghans in particular developed fluency and adapted to local cultural norms, facilitating deeper integration. As one Turkish participant (6TK) explained: *"I have been doing business here for many years. I started as a technician, then a manager, and now I run my own restaurant. All my customers are Arabs or tourists, and we only speak Arabic and English here."* These entrepreneurs typically held moderate levels of human capital, combining education, host-country language skills, and technical expertise. They also mobilised more substantial financial capital than enclave-bound entrepreneurs and employed a diverse workforce. One Afghan restaurateur (4AFG) noted: *"This restaurant has been famous in Dubai for Persian food for over 33 years. All the staff are Pakistani or Iranian, but the customers are Arabs."*

Breakout entrepreneurs emphasised integration into mainstream markets and sustained expansion. As an Iranian auto-service owner (2IR) recounted, *"We specialize in Japanese cars. Most customers are Emiratis. I started small, but over the years, we bought three buildings next to each other and kept expanding."* For many, breakout strategies were a necessity, given the

1
2
3 smaller size of their ethnic communities in the UAE. Their businesses required greater financial
4
5 commitment and carried higher risks, but they were viewed as essential to survival and long-term
6
7 growth. As one Iranian participant (4IR) reflected: *"I knew no one here, but I had to take the risk.*
8
9 *I borrowed against my house back home and invested everything into this business."*
10
11

12
13 The breakout strategy reflects how entrepreneurs with moderate human and financial
14
15 capital, but limited social capital, pursue growth by embedding themselves in mainstream
16
17 consumer markets. Their cases illustrate how integration, sectoral diversification, and
18
19 calculated risk-taking enable immigrant businesses to thrive beyond co-ethnic enclaves.
20
21 Overall, the four strategies identified in this study of breaking back, breaking beyond, breaking
22
23 through, and breaking out show that immigrant enterprise growth in Dubai cannot be reduced
24
25 to the conventional breakout–breakthrough continuum.
26
27

28
29 Instead, growth trajectories reflect the interplay of capital configurations, risk
30
31 orientations, and market positioning. "Breaking back" entrepreneurs leverage co-ethnic
32
33 networks while treating Dubai as a temporary staging ground for capital accumulation;
34
35 "breaking beyond" actors deploy global experience and financial muscle to penetrate luxury
36
37 markets; "breaking through" entrepreneurs rely on kinship networks to replicate survival-
38
39 focused microenterprises within ethnic enclaves; and "breaking out" participants achieve
40
41 integration into mainstream Emirati markets through language acquisition, moderate capital,
42
43 and calculated risk.
44
45
46
47
48

49 **Across the 66 cross-sectional cases, participants' narratives suggested that movement**
50
51 **from 'breaking through' toward 'breaking out' was the most commonly aspired pathway, often**
52
53 **framed as a desired shift from enclave dependence to more mainstream markets. In contrast,**
54
55 **'breaking back' and 'breaking beyond' were described as more stable orientations rather than as**
56
57 **steps in a sequence. As the study captures entrepreneurs at a single point in time, we cannot**
58
59 **empirically observe such transitions, but these accounts provide initial indications of possible**
60

directional shifts that future longitudinal research could examine more directly.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Reinterpreting Enclaves in the UAE

Drawing on the mixed embeddedness perspective (Kloosterman et al., 1999), the findings demonstrate both continuities and departures from established theories of immigrant entrepreneurship. Type 3 ('breaking through') parallels the classical profile of Asian immigrant enterprise in OECD settings, but within a demographic context where immigrants form the majority, these enclaves function differently (Portes & Jensen, 1987; Yasin, 2022). Similarly, Type 4 ("breaking out") shares structural features with enclave enterprises but, crucially, extends into mainstream markets with higher purchasing power (Ram & Hillin, 2002). Contrary to much of the extant literature, these enclaves in Dubai do not constitute segregated or marginalised "ghetto economies" (Yasin et al., 2024). Rather, they reflect the UAE's diverse, multicultural social fabric, where enclaves can serve as springboards for integration rather than sites of exclusion.

5.2 Capital, Risk, and Entrepreneurial Agency

The findings also highlight how entrepreneurs mobilise different forms of capital to compensate for structural vulnerabilities. Type 3 ("breaking through") and, to a lesser extent, Type 1 ("breaking back"), sustained cash-strapped enterprises by leveraging co-ethnic human and social capital. Practices such as accepting lower wages, working longer hours, taking fewer holidays, or securing extended credit from co-ethnic suppliers enabled these firms to survive during financial downturns. Payment in home-country currencies, such as Pakistani or Indian rupees, further illustrates how co-ethnic networks were strategically deployed to mitigate resource scarcity.

However, growth trajectories were uneven. In Dubai, Asian communities form the ethnic majority, while Emiratis with disproportionately higher purchasing power constitute the

1
2
3 minority. This demographic inversion alters the dynamics of embeddedness: enclaves are not
4 sites of marginalisation but integral to the national economy, underpinned by multiculturalism
5 as a policy foundation.
6
7

8
9 Type 1 ("breaking back") entrepreneurs illustrate this further. They cannot be neatly
10 classified as returnee immigrant entrepreneurs; instead, they embody a temporal, transitory
11 approach to business. Migration to the UAE generated resources and experiences that were
12 reinvested into home-country ventures, creating "backup plans" and highlighting a transient
13 mindset absent from the settler orientations often reported in Western contexts (Riano, 2023;
14 Yasin, 2022).
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22

23 **5.3 Transnationalism, Capital Intensity, and Market Reach**

24 Type 2 ("breaking beyond") demonstrates that capital-intensive ventures are not restricted by
25 ethnic identity or minority status. These entrepreneurs targeted affluent Emirati and tourist
26 clienteles in sectors such as luxury cars, villas, and healthcare, where structural barriers did not
27 constrain success but were instead enabled by high levels of human and financial capital, as
28 well as strong risk-taking propensities. These findings align with prior research on transnational
29 entrepreneurs operating in high-value sectors (Zapata-Barrero & Rezaei, 2020; Arroiteia &
30 Hafeez, 2022).
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41

42 **Despite superficial similarities to enclave and survival models documented in Western**
43 **contexts, Types 1 and 3 unfolded within institutional conditions that provided opportunities for**
44 **access rather than exclusion. Here, opportunities were shaped less by marginalisation and more**
45 **by regulatory openness, flexible business registration rules, and a wider multicultural market**
46 **structure. Importantly, many in this category also spoke Arabic and adapted culturally,**
47 **emphasizing how forms of human capital intersect with access to opportunities.**
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55

56 **5.4 Extending Mixed Embeddedness in Emerging Economies**

57 Immigrant entrepreneurship research in advanced post-industrial economies has often
58 portrayed Asian immigrants as structurally disadvantaged and "pushed" into entrepreneurship
59
60

(Ballard, 1989; Dahya, 1974; Goli & Rezaei, 2005; Hjarnø, 2006; Kalra, 2000; Syed et al., 2006; Taj, 2014; Vinogradov & Gabelko, 2010). These accounts emphasise racialisation, blocked mobility, and the creation of low-value enterprises. Studies of Pakistani immigrants in Europe (Yasin & Hafeez, 2022) and Polish immigrants in the UK (Vershina et al., 2011) similarly stress how intra-ethnic variation and immigrant waves shape motivations and constraints. Entrepreneurship is frequently interpreted as a collective ethnic project (Wood et al., 2012; Basu, 1998; Metcalf et al., 1996; Rafiq, 1992).

In contrast, the UAE case illustrates that these assumptions are not universally valid. Our findings show that immigrant entrepreneurs in Dubai mobilise agency in diverse ways, shaped by their access to capital and their willingness to take risks. Enclaves here are not marginalised, exclusionary spaces but integral and legitimate components of the economy, embedded within a state-led vision of multiculturalism and economic openness (Verver et al., 2019).

5.5 Contributions and Implications

This study extends the mixed embeddedness perspective by linking institutional opportunity structures to the capital portfolios and risk orientations of immigrant entrepreneurs, showing how these factors jointly shape how opportunities are perceived, interpreted, and acted upon within the same regulatory environment. While the model highlights how institutional structures shape opportunities, it has not systematically incorporated the heterogeneity of capital configurations within immigrant groups. Our typology demonstrates that the same institutional setting can generate divergent growth strategies depending on how entrepreneurs combine or lack human, financial, and social capital.

At the policy level, the findings suggest that institutional openness in contexts such as Dubai can mitigate the exclusionary dynamics observed in Western economies. Rather than restricting immigrant enterprise to marginalised niches, supportive visa regimes, ease of business registration, and multicultural demographics create varied pathways for growth. This stresses the importance of moving beyond Western-centric assumptions and recognising how

1
2
3 immigrant entrepreneurship unfolds in emerging economy contexts.

4
5 This study advances immigrant entrepreneurship theory by extending the mixed-
6 embeddedness perspective (Kloosterman et al., 1999). The findings show that growth strategies
7 in Dubai are not adequately captured by the traditional breakout–breakthrough dichotomy (Ram
8 & Hillin, 1994; Basu, 2011). Instead, the capital–risk typology developed here demonstrates how
9 entrepreneurs' trajectories diverge depending on their configurations of human, financial, and
10 social capital, together with their willingness to assume risk. This makes clear why mixed
11 embeddedness requires a capital–risk extension: the same institutional opportunity structure
12 generates four distinct strategies only once capital heterogeneity and risk orientation are taken
13 into account. While 'breaking through' reflects incremental replication within co-ethnic, low-
14 value sectors, 'breaking out' involves deliberate entry into mainstream markets with broader
15 consumer bases. These distinctions clarify why the two additional strategies identified in this
16 study cannot be reduced to the breakout–breakthrough continuum and require an extension of the
17 capital–risk framework to mixed embeddedness.

18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35 The findings further show how contextual variations in the host economy reshape
36 entrepreneurial agency. Unlike Western settings, where enclaves are often depicted as ghetto
37 economies (Portes & Jensen, 1987; Ballard, 1989; Syed et al., 2006), the UAE's demographic and
38 institutional configuration enables enclaves to function as hubs of opportunity rather than
39 exclusion (cf. Yasin et al., 2024). This challenges universalist assumptions about disadvantage
40 and marginalisation (Verver et al., 2019) and demonstrates the need to theorise immigrant
41 entrepreneurship within the context of specific institutional arrangements, demographic
42 structures, and policy incentives.

43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53 By integrating capital and risk orientation into a mixed embeddedness framework, the
54 study provides a theoretically grounded mechanism to explain variation within a shared
55 opportunity structure. This provides a lens that can be applied to other non-Western, rapidly
56 globalising economies and highlights the importance of intra-ethnic differentiation and strategic

1
2
3 heterogeneity (Vershina et al., 2011; Yasin & Hafeez, 2022), thereby moving the field beyond
4
5 broad categorisations of immigrant groups.

6
7 The empirical patterns show that support for immigrant entrepreneurs in Dubai must align
8
9 with the differentiated constraints revealed across the capital–risk typology. The four strategy
10
11 types do not face a shared problem set; they operate within distinct institutional and resource
12
13 environments. Practical interventions are therefore most effective when they are matched to the
14
15 risk position and capital endowment associated with each type.

16
17
18 For breaking-back (Type 1), the most binding constraints stem from visa rules and
19
20 restricted operational mobility. These firms often operate with thin margins and depend on small
21
22 family units, yet residency regulations prevent them from formalising this labour and limit their
23
24 ability to move goods across administrative zones. These structural frictions create a persistent
25
26 gap between the regulatory architecture and the everyday practices of low-capital entrepreneurs.
27
28 More flexible visa allocations, short-term work permissions, and smoother licence portability
29
30 would reduce this misalignment and support gradual formalisation.

31
32
33 For Type 2, they face a different constraint profile centred on informational asymmetries
34
35 and weak contractual safeguards. Their reliance on handshake agreements, limited
36
37 documentation, and uneven regulatory understanding exposes them to payment delays, unreliable
38
39 partners, and compliance errors. Addressing this requires capability-oriented interventions.
40
41 Focused training on basic contract literacy, supplier screening routines, and cash flow
42
43 management would target the specific operational weaknesses that emerged across these cases.

44
45
46 For breakthrough-oriented entrepreneurs (Types 3 and 4), the primary constraints are
47
48 financial rather than regulatory. These businesses often demonstrate viable concepts and stable
49
50 demand, but their growth is slowed by limited access to credit, lack of recognised collateral, and
51
52 banking systems that struggle to accommodate cross-border or family-based ownership
53
54 structures. Financial instruments that recognise alternative credit histories, coupled with advisory
55
56 support on formalisation, would open growth pathways currently blocked by the mismatch
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 between entrepreneurial practice and institutional expectations.
4

5 Language proficiency cuts across all types, but unevenly. Among Types 1 and 2, limited
6 proficiency in Arabic and English contributes to misinterpretation of regulatory requirements and
7 delays in compliance. Among Types 3 and 4, linguistic limitations constrain negotiation in
8 mainstream markets and reduce the scope for partnerships beyond co-ethnic circles. Embedding
9 language and regulatory navigation support within business service centres would address these
10 patterned frictions and reduce avoidable transaction costs.
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18

19 Well-being pressures, particularly acute among Type 1 entrepreneurs, shape behaviour
20 and planning horizons. Heavy workloads, long operating hours, and extended family separation
21 narrow strategic vision and discourage long-term investment. Introducing mentoring networks,
22 peer support, and basic advisory services would counter these pressures and promote business
23 continuity. These implications highlight that immigrant entrepreneurship in the UAE is structured
24 by identifiable institutional and resource configurations, not generic narratives of informality or
25 cultural habit. Policies that reflect the differentiated constraints mapped through the capital–risk
26 typology would reinforce the contribution immigrant firms make to the UAE's diverse and
27 expanding economy.
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38

39 6. CONCLUSIONS

40
41 This research contributes to the underexplored field of immigrant entrepreneurship in non-
42 traditional settings by examining Asian entrepreneurs in the UAE. In doing so, it provides a
43 contextualised understanding of how institutional structures, demographic diversity, and
44 transnational networks shape entrepreneurial trajectories in an emerging economy (Mosbah &
45 Wahab, 2021; Yasin, 2022; Yasin & Hafeez, 2022). Consistent with Drori et al. (2009), the study
46 illustrates that immigrant enterprises cannot be analysed in isolation from the social structures,
47 institutions, and processes that define host economies. Instead, the UAE's Asian entrepreneurial
48 phenomenon highlights the importance of context-sensitive approaches in advancing immigrant
49 entrepreneurship theory.
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 The findings reveal that SME growth strategies among Asian immigrants in Dubai are not
4
5 confined to the well-established breakout–breakthrough continuum (Ram & Hillin, 1994; Basu,
6
7 2011). Instead, there is marked intra-ethnic differentiation across communities—including
8
9 Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Afghan, Bangladeshi, Iranian, and Turkish entrepreneurs (Vertovec,
10
11 2009) with strategic choices shaped by access to human, financial, and social capital as well as
12
13 risk orientation. The typology developed in this study: breaking back, breaking through, breaking
14
15 out, and breaking beyond extends the literature by capturing overlooked pathways, particularly
16
17 the roles of transnational entrepreneurs (Type 2) and temporary, return-oriented entrepreneurs
18
19 (Type 1). These strategies highlight not only ethnic entrepreneurial variation but also the transient
20
21 and transnational logics that distinguish Gulf contexts from Western empirical settings.
22
23
24

25
26 The study advances the field theoretically by extending mixed embeddedness
27
28 (Kloosterman et al., 1999) through explicit integration of capital and risk-taking propensity. This
29
30 conceptual model illuminates how immigrant enterprises become embedded within institutional
31
32 environments while simultaneously leveraging cross-border resources. Empirically, the findings
33
34 show that Dubai's multicultural and policy-driven context reframes immigrant enclaves from sites
35
36 of exclusion (Portes & Jensen, 1987; Ballard, 1989; Syed et al., 2006) into arenas of opportunity.
37
38 Thus, the UAE context challenges the generalisability of Western assumptions that immigrant
39
40 entrepreneurship is driven predominantly by disadvantage or racialisation (Yasin & Hafeez,
41
42 2022; Verver et al., 2019).
43
44
45

46
47 The study's limitations stem from its exploratory scope, modest sample size, and focus on
48
49 selected Asian communities. Other nationality groups in the UAE, including Filipinos, Africans,
50
51 Arabs (such as Egyptians, Lebanese, Jordanians, and Palestinians), and the growing population
52
53 of Caucasian immigrants (also known as expats, including British, American, German,
54
55 Australian, Russian, South African, and Ukrainian immigrants) were deliberately excluded.
56
57 These groups also qualify as first-generation immigrant entrepreneurs under UAE regulations,
58
59 and their absence narrows the empirical base of the typology. A further limitation concerns the
60

1
2
3 cross-sectional design; because the data capture entrepreneurs at a single point in time, the
4
5 analysis cannot determine whether, how, or when individuals move between strategy types.
6
7 Longitudinal research would be required to examine how shifts in capital, institutional conditions,
8
9 and risk preferences unfold over time.

11
12 The exclusion of firms with fewer than five years of operation reflects an analytical focus
13
14 on growth rather than early-stage survival. This threshold aligns with the Global Entrepreneurship
15
16 Monitor definition of established business activity (ventures older than 42 months), and our five-
17
18 year cut-off provides a conservative standard for identifying stable firms in the Dubai context.
19
20 Relatedly, risk orientation is assessed qualitatively because risk is interpreted subjectively and
21
22 positioned socially, shaped by entrepreneurs' class location, migration histories, and available
23
24 forms of capital (Knight, 1921; Sarasvathy, 2001). A qualitative assessment is therefore more
25
26 appropriate for capturing how actors understand and act on uncertainty, rather than treating risk
27
28 as a fixed psychometric trait.
29
30
31

32
33 Despite these limitations, the study highlights why the UAE continues to attract
34
35 immigrant SMEs. The findings carry implications for academics, policymakers, and practitioners.
36
37 For scholars, the typology demonstrates the need to move beyond the binary of breakout and
38
39 breakthrough to include additional strategies shaped by risk orientation and capital mobilisation.
40
41 For policymakers, the typology clarifies the strategic heterogeneity among "Asian entrepreneurs"
42
43 and suggests that targeted financing, language training, and flexible residency schemes, such as
44
45 the Golden Visa, could support business continuity and expansion. Attention to worker well-
46
47 being in low-capital, low-risk enterprises is essential, as such ventures often involve long hours,
48
49 low pay, and limited mobility.
50
51

52
53 Future research can broaden and deepen these findings by comparing them with those of
54
55 non-Asian immigrant groups in the UAE to determine whether the capital–risk patterns observed
56
57 here are specific to South Asian entrepreneurs or reflect broader immigrant dynamics. Studies
58
59 across different GCC countries may further illuminate how institutional arrangements shape
60

entrepreneurial possibilities. There is also scope for research centred on female immigrant entrepreneurs, whose strategies and constraints may differ from those documented here. Longitudinal designs would allow examination of whether individuals move between strategy types as capital endowments and institutional contexts evolve.

Future quantitative research could operationalise the four strategy types by translating their core dimensions into measurable indicators. Human, financial, and social capital can be captured through established survey metrics, while risk orientation can be proxied through behavioural indicators such as investment size, branching patterns, and sectoral upgrading. This would allow larger studies to test the distribution of the strategies and assess transitions as capital endowments or institutional conditions change. At a societal level, future research can explore how differentiated growth strategies shape multicultural integration and economic participation in emerging economies where immigrant-majority populations create distinctive opportunity structures compared to Western settings.

REFERENCES

- Alnassai, J. M. I. A. (2023). A Study on the Barriers to Entrepreneurship in the UAE. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 16(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm16030146>
- Al Ariss, A. (2010). Modes of engagement: Migration, self-initiated expatriation, and career development. *Career Development International*, 15(4), 338–358.
- Aldrich, H. and Waldinger, R. (1990) Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 16, 111-135.
- Aldrich, H. E., Cater, J., Jones, T., McEvoy, D., & Velleman, P. (1986). Asian residential concentration and business development: An analysis of shopkeepers' customers in three cities. *Social Forces*, 14(1), 52–64.
- Arroteia, N. and Hafeez, K. (2021), "The internationalization of TechnoLatinas from a resource-based perspective," *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 27(3).
- Barrett, G., Jones, T., & McEvoy, D. (2003). United Kingdom: Severely constrained entrepreneurialism. In R. Kloosterman & J. Rath (Eds.), *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Venturing Abroad in the Age of Globalization* (pp. 101–122). Berg Publishers.
- Basu, A. (1998). An Exploration of Entrepreneurial Activity among Asian Small Businesses in Britain. *Small Bus Econ* 10, 313–326.
- Basu, A. (2011). From "break out" to "breakthrough": Successful Market Strategies of Immigrant Entrepreneurs in the UK *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 15, 1–23.
- Basu, A., & Altinay, E. (2002). The interaction between culture and entrepreneurship in London's immigrant businesses. *International small business journal*, 20(4), 371-393.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). New York, USA: Greenwood

- Publishing Group.
- Bourdieu, P., & Bourdieu, P. (2002). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (11th print). Harvard Univ. Press.
- Brown, D., Foroudi, P., & Hafeez, K. (2019). Marketing management capability: the construct and its dimensions: An examination of managers' and entrepreneurs' perceptions in a retail setting. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 22(5), pp.609-637.
- Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative Research Designs: Selection and Implementation. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35(2), 236–264.
- Czinkota, M., Khan, Z., & Knight, G. (2021). International business and migrant-owned enterprise. *Journal of Business Research*, 122, 657–669.
- Dabic, M., Vlacic, B., Paul, J., Dana, L.-P., Sahasranamam, S., & Glinka, B. (2020). Immigrant entrepreneurship: A review and research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 113, 25–38.
- Dahya, B. (1974). The nature of Pakistani ethnicity in industrial cities in Britain. *Urban Ethnicity*, 77(118), 116-128.
- Dalziel, M. (2008). Immigrants as Extraordinarily Successful Entrepreneurs: A Pilot Study of the Canadian Experience. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 21(1), 23–36.
- Daniel, E. M., Henley, A., & Anwar, M. N. (2019). Contemporary ethnic minority entrepreneurship in the UK: A quantitative exploration of breakout and entrepreneurial quality. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 25(7), 1410–1432. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-01-2019-0021>
- DMCC (2022). DMCC Doubles Number of Chinese Companies Over the Last 5 Years, Underpinned by Robust UAE-China Relations. Retrieved June 23, 2023, from <https://mediaoffice.ae/en/news/2022/September/14-09/DMCC-Doubles-Chinese-Companies-Over>
- Drori, I., Honig, B., & Wright, M. (2009). Transnational Entrepreneurship: An Emergent Field of Study. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 33(5), 1001–1022.
- Economist (2023). Indian firms are flocking to the United Arab Emirates. Retrieved June 23, 2023, from <https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2023/04/27/indian-firms-are-flocking-to-the-united-arab-emirates>
- Elmassah, S., James, R., & Mostafa Bacheer, S. (2022). Ethnic entrepreneurial success factors: Evidence from the United Arab Emirates. *Heliyon*, 8(6), e09639. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09639>
- Elo, M., Sandberg, S., Servais, P., Basco, R., Cruz, A. D., Riddle, L., & Täube, F. (2018). Advancing the views on migrant and diaspora entrepreneurs in international entrepreneurship. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 16(2), 119–133.
- GMI (2023) *United Arab Emirates (UAE) Population Statistics 2023*. Retrieved June 23, 2023, from <https://www.globalmediainsight.com/blog/uae-population-statistics/>
- Hafeez, K., Foroudi, P., Dinnie, K., Parahoo, S. (2016). The Role of Place Branding and Image in the Development of Innovation Clusters. The Case of Dubai, *Journal of Brand Management*. 23(4), pp. 383-402.
- Hafeez, K., Foroudi, P., Nguyen, B., and Alghatas, F. (2019). Knowledge Sharing by Entrepreneurs in a Virtual Community of Practice (VCoP). *Information Technology & People*. 32(2), 405-429.
- Hafeez, K., Foroudi, P., Nguyen, B., Gupta, S., & Alghatas, F. (2018). How do entrepreneurs learn and engage in an online community of practice? A case study approach. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 37(7), 714–735.
- Hafeez, K., Malak, N., & Zhang, Y. (2007). Outsourcing non-core assets and competencies of a firm using the analytic hierarchy process. *Computers & Operations Research*, 34(12),

- 3592-3608.
- Hafeez, K., Zhang, Y., & Malak, N. (2002). Core competence for sustainable competitive advantage: a structured methodology for identifying core competence. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, 49(1), 28-35.
- Hafeez, K., Zhang, Y., & Malak, N. (2002). Determining a firm's key capabilities using the Analytic Hierarchy Process. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 76(1), 39-51.
- Honig, O. A., & Arsenault, J. T. (2020). Who Succeeds in the Competition for Regional Dominance in the Contemporary Middle East? *Middle East Policy*, 27(4), 30-47.
- Jones, T., McEvoy, D., & Barrett, G. (1994). Raising capital for the ethnic minority small firm. In A. Hughes & D. J. Storey (Eds.), *Finance and the Small Firm* (pp. 145–181). Routledge.
- Kelly, S. (2018, March). Entrepreneurial Strategies May Be Key to Higher Education's Survival, in *Book of Proceedings-6th International Conference on Innovation and Entrepreneurship* (pp. 191-198).
- Khan, Z., & Lew, Y. (2018). Post-entry survival of international new ventures in developing economies: A dynamic capability perspective. *International Business Review*, 27(1), 149-160.
- Kloosterman, R., Van Der Leun, J., & Rath, J. (1999). Mixed embeddedness: (In)formal Economic Activities and Immigrant Businesses in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23(2), 252–266.
- Kluge, S. (2000). Empirically Grounded Construction of Types and Typologies in Qualitative Social Research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(1), Article 1.
- Knight, F. H. (1921). Risk, uncertainty, and profit. Houghton Mifflin.
- Light, I., & Rosenstein, C. (1995). Race, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship in Urban America. *Aldine de Gruyter*.
- McEvoy, D. and Hafeez, K (2009a) Ethnic enclaves or middleman minority? Regional patterns of ethnic minority entrepreneurship in Britain. *Int J. Business and Globalization (IJBG)*, Volume 3, Issue 1, 2009, pp. 93-110.
- McEvoy, D. and Hafeez, K (2009b) Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship in Britain; *Management & Marketing* (2009) Vol. 4, No.1, pp. 55-64
- Metcalf, H., Modood, T., & Virdee, S. (1996). *Asian self-employment: The interaction of culture and economics in England* (No. 824). Policy Studies Institute.
- Meyer, N., Ben Said, F., Alkathiri, N. A., & Soliman, M. (2023). A scientometric analysis of entrepreneurial and the digital economy scholarship: State of the art and an agenda for future research. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 12(1), 70. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-023-00340-w>
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage.
- Mosbah, A., & Wahab, K. B. A. (2021). Limitations of immigrant entrepreneurship research. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, 29(1), 42.
- Kushnirovich, S., Heilbrunn, L. Davidovich (2018). Diversity of Entrepreneurial Perceptions: Immigrants vs. the Native Population. *European Management Review*, 15 (3), pp. 341-355.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two Decades of Developments in Qualitative Inquiry: A Personal and Experiential Perspective. *Qualitative social work*, 1(3), 261-283.
- Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative Research in Counselling Psychology: A Primer on Research Paradigms and the Philosophy of Science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 126-136.
- Portes, A., & Jensen, L. (1987). What is an ethnic enclave? The case for conceptual

- 1
2
3 clarity. *American Sociological Review*, 57(3), 768–770.
- 4 Fairlie, M. Lofstrom, H (2015). Immigration and entrepreneurship. *Handbook of the*
5 *Economics of International Migration*, 1 (2015), pp. 877-911
- 6 Rafiq, M. (1992). Ethnicity and enterprise: A comparison of Muslim and non-Muslim owned
7 Asian businesses in Britain. *New Community*, 19(1), 43-60.
- 8 Ram, M. (1992). Coping with Racism: Asian Employers in the Inner-City. *Work, Employment*
9 *& Society*, 6(4), 601–618.
- 10 Ram, M., & Hillin, G. (1994). Achieving 'Breakout': Developing Mainstream Ethnic Minority
11 Businesses. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 1(2), 15-21.
- 12 Ram, M., Theodorakopoulos, N., & Jones, T. (2008). Forms of capital, mixed embeddedness,
13 and Somali enterprise. *Work, Employment and Society*, 22(3), 427–446.
- 14 Riano, Y. (2023). Migrant Entrepreneurs as Agents of Development? Geopolitical Context and
15 Transmobility Strategies of Colombian Migrants Returning from Venezuela. *Journal of*
16 *International Migration and Integration*, 24(2), 539–562.
- 17 Rodgers, P., Stokes, P., Tarba, S., & Khan, Z. (2019). The role of non-market strategies in
18 establishing legitimacy: The case of service MNEs in emerging economies.
19 *Management International Review*, 59(4), 515-540.
- 20 Sanders, J. M., & Nee, V. (1996). Immigrant Self-Employment: The Family as Social Capital
21 and the Value of Human Capital. *American Sociological Review*, 61(2), 231.
- 22 Sarasvathy, S. D. (2001). Causation and Effectuation: Toward a Theoretical Shift from
23 Economic Inevitability to Entrepreneurial Contingency. *Academy of Management*
24 *Review*, 26(2), 243–263. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.4378020>
- 25 Sithas, M., & Sarangi, H. (2021). Systematic Literature Review on Ethnic Minority
26 Entrepreneurship: Citation and Thematic Analysis. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural*
27 *Studies*, 8(3), Article 3.
- 28 Silva, B. G., Andriese, N. C., & Combs, J. G. (2025). Return Migrant Entrepreneurship: A
29 Systematic Review and Future Research Agenda. *Entrepreneurship Theory and*
30 *Practice*, 10422587251322402. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10422587251322402>
- 31 Trischler, M. F. G., & Li-Ying, J. (2023). Digital business model innovation: Toward
32 construct clarity and future research directions. *Review of Managerial Science*, 17(1),
33 3–32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-021-00508-2>
- 34 UAE Government (2022). *Population and demographic mix—The Official Portal of the UAE*
35 *Government*. Retrieved June 23, 2023, from [https://u.ae/en/information-and-](https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/preserving-the-emirati-national-identity/population-and-demographic-mix)
36 [services/social-affairs/preserving-the-emirati-national-identity/population-and-](https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/preserving-the-emirati-national-identity/population-and-demographic-mix)
37 [demographic-mix](https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/preserving-the-emirati-national-identity/population-and-demographic-mix)
- 38 Vandor, P., & Franke, N. (2018). Immigrant entrepreneurship: Drivers, economic effects, and
39 policy implications. *Demographics and Entrepreneurship: Mitigating the effects of an*
40 *aging population*, 363-478.
- 41 Vershinina, N., Barrett, R., & Meyer, M. (2011). Forms of capital, intra-ethnic variation, and
42 Polish entrepreneurs in Leicester. *Work, employment and society*, 25(1), 101-117.
- 43 Vertovec, S. (2009). *Transnationalism*. London, England: Routledge.
- 44 Verver, M., Passenier, D., & Roessingh, C. (2019). Contextualizing ethnic minority
45 entrepreneurship beyond the West: Insights from Belize and Cambodia. *International*
46 *Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 25(5), 955–973.
- 47 Vinogradov, E., & Gabelko, M. (2010). Entrepreneurship Among Russian Immigrants In
48 Norway And Their Stay-At-Home Peers. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*,
49 15, 461-479.
- 50 Wadhwa, V., Saxenian, A., Rissing, B. A., & Gereffi, G. (2007b). America's New Immigrant
51 Entrepreneurs: Part I. *Social Science Research Network*.
- 52 Wood, G. J., Davidson, M. J., & Fielden, S. L. (2012). Minorities in entrepreneurship: An
53 international review.
- 54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 Yasin, N. (2014). *A cross-national comparative study of immigrant entrepreneurship in the*
4 *United Kingdom, Denmark, and Norway: A qualitative investigation of business start-*
5 *up experiences* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Huddersfield).
6 Yasin, N. (2022). Cold grass or hot sands? A comparative study of immigrant Punjabi–
7 Pakistani entrepreneurs in London and Dubai. *Strategic Change*, 31(4), 387–396.
8 Yasin, N., & Hafeez, K. (2023). Three waves of immigrant entrepreneurship: a cross-national
9 comparative study. *Small Business Economics* 60(1), 1281–1306.
10 Yasin, N., Hafeez, K., and Salamzadeh, A. (2024). A cross-country comparative ethnographic
11 analysis of immigrant enclave entrepreneurship. *Qualitative Market Research*.
12 Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-11-2023-0164>
13 Yasin, N., & Poulin, M. (2025). Developing a nation of entrepreneurs: The integral role of
14 immigrant entrepreneurship for the United Arab Emirates Vision 2030. In *Immigrant*
15 *Entrepreneurship, Religion, and Ethnicity*. Routledge.
16 Yasin, N., Abaido, G. M., & Nair, G. (2025). Riding through a global pandemic: A case study
17 of Kremdu LLC in the UAE. In E. Beaumont (Ed.), *Cases on start-ups and enterprise*
18 (pp. 17–27). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035312092.00009>
19 Zapata-Barrero, R., & Rezaei, S. (2020). Diaspora governance and transnational
20 entrepreneurship: The emergence of a new global social pattern in migration studies.
21 *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(10), 1959–1973.
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

APPENDIX

Table 1. Interview Guide

S.No	Thematic Classification of Interview Questions	Theme/Capital	Questions
1	Demographic	DP.	What is your age?
		SC.	What is your nationality/ethnicity?
		DP.	When did you arrive in the UAE?
		IE.	Where do you live?
		HC.	What is your level of education?
		HC.	What experience did you have before starting your own business?
2	Business Enterprise and	BP.	When did you start your first business in the UAE?
		HC, FC.	Did you own or manage a business before migrating to the UAE?
		IE, BP.	What type of businesses do you have, and where are they located?
		IE, BP.	Please explain the types of products and services you offer.
		BP.	How many employees work in your firm?
		MOT	Why did you start your business in the UAE?
		SC, BP.	Who are your customers, and what is their profile?
		SC, BP.	Why did you choose to target these customers?
		SC, IE, BP.	Why did you choose this location for your business?
3	Growth Reason for Migrant SME	B	How did you decide to grow this business or expand your portfolio?
		B	Did you consider other growth options? If so, please explain how you chose this option.
		B	What were your challenges for business growth?
		B, BP.	As an extension of the growth strategy, who are your new customers? What is their profile?
4	Risk Orientation	RO.	Which risks did you undertake when expanding your business? Prompt: What are the properties of financial, social, and human capital?

		RO.	Do you consider yourself a high-risk, medium-risk, or risk-averse individual? (1-3) Explain why.
		RO.	Did your risk of undertaking this option pay off?
5	Future Plans	RO.	What are your plans for your business and/or portfolio of businesses?
		RO.	Do you intend to continue such growth strategies?
6	Ethics and Confidentiality	-	Do you agree that we should use extracts of this interview for publication?
		-	Do you confirm that your data will be used in an anonymized, pseudonymized format for research purposes?
B=Break Strategy, B.P.= Business Profile, D.P.= Demographic Profile, F.C.= Financial Capital, H.C.= Human Capital, I.E. = Immigrant Enclave, MOT=Motivation, R.O.=Risk-taking Orientation, SC=Social Capital			

Source: Authors' own work

Table 2. Comparative Overview of the Four Strategy Type

Dimensions	Breaking Back	Breaking Through	Breaking Out	Breaking Beyond
Human Capital	Modest education; limited host-country language skills; sector experience from home country.	Modest education; skills tied to low-value, labour-intensive trades; limited Arabic and English.	Moderate education; acquired or developing Arabic/English; technical or managerial capability.	High education; international professional experience; often trained in advanced economies.
Financial Capital	Minimal investment to reduce exposure; low-cost, low-risk ventures.	Limited capital; reliance on family loans, informal credit, and small-scale reinvestment.	Moderate capital; ability to fund sectoral upgrading and location improvements.	High capital; significant investment needed for luxury, medical, or internationalised sectors.
Social Capital	Strong co-ethnic networks for labour and trade; ties to home-country suppliers.	Dense kinship networks; reliance on co-ethnic staff, suppliers, and customers.	Diverse networks; mixed-ethnic staff and suppliers; emerging mainstream connections.	International networks; limited enclave reliance; connections across global diasporas.
Risk Orientation	Low to moderate; businesses designed for easy exit; emphasis on capital preservation.	Low; strong aversion to unfamiliar sectors; duplication used to minimise risk.	Moderate; calculated risk-taking linked to mainstream market entry.	High; willingness to invest heavily and accept financial exposure.
Market Focus	Primarily co-ethnic or price-sensitive customers; no mainstream targeting.	Co-ethnic customers in enclave districts; highly localised demand.	Emirati, Arab expatriate, and tourist markets; higher purchasing power.	High-spending Emirati and international clients; premium and luxury segments.
Sector Profile	Low-margin retail, wholesale, electronics, home appliances.	Barbershops, kiosks, mobile repair, food takeaways, small retail.	Restaurants, auto services, logistics, mid-range hospitality.	Luxury villas, medical services, e-commerce, sports cars, premium rentals.
Spatial Location	Deira, International City, low-rent enclaves.	Deira, Bur Dubai, Al Karama, Al Quoz; dense enclaves.	Jumeirah, Dubai Marina, Downtown, and mixed-industrial areas.	The Palm, Jumeirah, Downtown; high-end business districts.
Temporal Orientation	Short-term presence in UAE; long-term focus on home-country ventures.	Long-term survival in UAE; no strong transnational plans.	Long-term embeddedness in UAE; growth tied to local integration.	Long-term transnational orientation; UAE is one node in a wider portfolio.
Growth Mechanism	Profit extraction for home-country investment; low-cost operations.	Replication of low-value micro-enterprises within enclaves.	Diversification and mainstream market expansion; sectoral upgrading.	Capital-intensive scaling across borders; premium market penetration.

Source: Authors' own work

Supplementary Table 3: Full Case Overview Table (n=66)

Case ID	Nationality	Sector	Years in UAE	Employees	Language	Visa Type	Approx. Capital (AED)	Strategy Type
CH1*	Chinese	Electronics retail	12	4	Chinese	Investor	150,000	Breaking Back
CH2	Chinese	Electronics retail	10	3	Chinese	Investor	120,000	Breaking Back
CH3	Chinese	Home appliances	11	5	Chinese	Investor	180,000	Breaking Back
CH4	Chinese	Home decoration	8	4	Chinese	Investor	130,000	Breaking Back
CH5	Chinese	Electronics wholesale	14	6	Chinese	Partner	220,000	Breaking Back
CH6	Chinese	Retail (Dragon Mart)	9	3	Chinese	Investor	100,000	Breaking Back
CH7	Chinese	Phone accessories	7	3	Chinese	Investor	90,000	Breaking Through
CH8	Chinese	Fashion retail	6	2	Chinese	Employee-sponsored	80,000	Breaking Through
CH9	Chinese	Small restaurant	10	6	Chinese	Investor	250,000	Breaking Back
IN1*	Indian	Retail store	15	5	Hindi	Investor	120,000	Breaking Back
IN2*	Indian	Music academy + retail	13	4	Hindi	Investor	160,000	Breaking Back
IN3	Indian	Electronics retail	12	5	Hindi	Investor	140,000	Breaking Back
IN4	Indian	General trading	10	6	Hindi	Partner	200,000	Breaking Back
IN5	Indian	Jewellery kiosk	8	3	Hindi	Investor	130,000	Breaking Back
IN6	Indian	Restaurant	11	8	Hindi	Investor	250,000	Breaking Back
IN7	Indian	Grocery store	7	3	Hindi	Investor	90,000	Breaking Back
IN8	Indian	Retail (bazaar)	6	3	Hindi	Investor	80,000	Breaking Through
IN9	Indian	Takeaway outlet	5	4	Hindi	Employee-sponsored	70,000	Breaking Through
IN10	Indian	Barber shop	9	5	Hindi	Investor	95,000	Breaking Through
PK1*	Pakistani	Retail	9	4	Urdu	Investor	120,000	Breaking Back
PK2	Pakistani	Trading	12	5	Urdu	Partner	140,000	Breaking Through

1									
2									
3	PK3*	Pakistani	Barber (3 salons)	7–9	10	Urdu	Investor	150,000	Breaking Through
4									
5	PK4	Pakistani	Mobile repair	8	3	Urdu	Investor	75,000	Breaking Through
6									
7	PK5*	Pakistani	Kiosk / small retail	10	3	Urdu	Employee-sponsored	70,000	Breaking Through
8									
9									
10	PK6	Pakistani	Takeaway food	6	4	Urdu	Investor	85,000	Breaking Through
11									
12	PK7*	Pakistani	Retail (survival expansion)	12	5	Urdu	Investor	110,000	Breaking Through
13									
14	PK8	Pakistani	Auto repair	14	7	Urdu	Investor	220,000	Breaking Out
15	BD1	Bangladeshi	Textile wholesale	14	5	Bengali	Investor	140,000	Breaking Back
16	BD2*	Bangladeshi	Textile retail	10	4	Bengali	Investor	110,000	Breaking Back
17	BD3	Bangladeshi	Tailoring	9	6	Bengali	Employee-sponsored	90,000	Breaking Back
18									
19									
20	BD4	Bangladeshi	Grocery shop	12	3	Bengali	Investor	100,000	Breaking Back
21	BD5	Bangladeshi	Garment trading	8	4	Bengali	Investor	130,000	Breaking Back
22	BD6	Bangladeshi	Textile stall	7	2	Bengali	Employee-sponsored	70,000	Breaking Through
23									
24									
25	BD7	Bangladeshi	Grocery	6	3	Bengali	Investor	75,000	Breaking Through
26									
27	BD8	Bangladeshi	Fabric retail	5	2	Bengali	Investor	65,000	Breaking Through
28									
29									
30	AF1	Afghan	Grocery	14	4	Pushto	Investor	110,000	Breaking Back
31	AF2*	Afghan	Persian restaurant	33	15	Pushto	Investor	300,000	Breaking Out
32	AF3	Afghan	Restaurant	20	12	Pushto	Investor	280,000	Breaking Out
33	AF4	Afghan	Food wholesale	18	10	Pushto	Investor	320,000	Breaking Out
34	AF5	Afghan	Transport/logistics	12	8	Pushto	Partner	250,000	Breaking Out
35	AF6	Afghan	Restaurant	10	7	Pushto	Investor	200,000	Breaking Out
36	AF7	Afghan	Cafe & shisha	9	6	Pushto	Investor	180,000	Breaking Out
37	TK1	Turkish	Restaurant	17	14	Turkish	Investor	350,000	Breaking Out
38	TK2	Turkish	Café bakery	15	12	Turkish	Investor	280,000	Breaking Out
39									
40									
41									
42									
43									
44									
45									
46									

1									
2									
3	TK3	Turkish	Casual dining	12	10	Turkish	Investor	260,000	Breaking Out
4	TK4	Turkish	Dessert shop	10	8	Turkish	Investor	220,000	Breaking Out
5	TK5	Turkish	Grill restaurant	13	11	Turkish	Partner	300,000	Breaking Out
6	TK6*	Turkish	Restaurant (tourist area)	9	9	Turkish	Investor	240,000	Breaking Out
7	TK7	Turkish	Marina café	8	7	Turkish	Investor	230,000	Breaking Out
8	IR1	Iranian	Auto services	19	18	Farsi	Investor	400,000	Breaking Out
9	IR2*	Iranian	Auto repair	16	12	Farsi	Investor	320,000	Breaking Out
10	IR3	Iranian	Persian restaurant	18	15	Farsi	Investor	350,000	Breaking Out
11	IR4*	Iranian	Food/retail	14	9	Farsi	Investor	250,000	Breaking Out
12	IR5	Iranian	Logistics	11	8	Farsi	Partner	220,000	Breaking Out
13	IR6	Iranian	Coffee shop	9	7	Farsi	Investor	180,000	Breaking Out
14	IR7	Iranian	Restaurant	13	10	Farsi	Investor	260,000	Breaking Out
15	IR8	Iranian	Small trade	8	5	Farsi	Investor	150,000	Breaking
16									Through
17									
18									
19	TNA1*	Transnational Asian	Luxury cars	7	15	English	Investor/Golden	2,000,000	Breaking Beyond
20									
21	TNA2*	Transnational Asian	Luxury villas	10	12	English	Investor	3,000,000	Breaking Beyond
22									
23	TNA3	Transnational Asian	Medical clinic	9	20	English	Professional	1,800,000	Breaking Beyond
24									
25	TNA4	Transnational Asian	Dental practice	8	12	English	Professional	1,500,000	Breaking Beyond
26									
27	TNA5	Transnational Asian	E-commerce	6	8	English	Investor	900,000	Breaking Beyond
28									
29	TNA6	Transnational Asian	Pharmacy	11	10	English	Professional	1,200,000	Breaking Beyond
30									
31	TNA7	Transnational Asian	Boutique hotel	12	25	English	Investor	3,500,000	Breaking Beyond
32									
33	TNA8	Transnational Asian	Specialty food chain	9	18	English	Investor	2,200,000	Breaking Beyond
34									
35	TNA9	Transnational Asian	Villa rentals	15	14	English	Investor	2,500,000	Breaking Beyond
36									
37									
38									
39									
40									
41									
42									
43									
44									
45									
46									

Note*= quotations represented in the text.
Source: Authors' own work

Supplementary Table 4A: Coding Template

First-Order Concepts (Participant-Centric Codes)	Second-Order Themes (Researcher-Generated)	Aggregate Dimensions	Exemplar Segments
"I only invested the bare minimum so I can close the shop anytime."	Short planning horizon in UAE	Breaking Back (Low capital, short-term logic)	BD3: "I can leave anytime. I invested just enough to keep the shop running."
"I already opened two shops back home using money from here."	Home-country growth focus	Breaking Back	CH1: "This is temporary. I started two businesses in Guangzhou from the profits here."
"My cousin came from Pakistan to help me open the second shop."	Kinship-based labour mobilisation	Breaking Through (Enclave replication)	PK5: "If it wasn't for my cousin coming, I couldn't manage a second shop."
"We opened another branch so one can cover the losses of the other."	Risk-hedging through duplication	Breaking Through	PK7: "Corona ruined the first shop, so we opened another one on a busier road."
"Most customers are Emiratis or tourists — that's where the money is."	Crossing ethnic boundaries	Breaking Out (Mainstream integration)	IR2: "Our customer base is mainly Emirati. That shaped how we expanded."
"I borrowed against my house and invested everything here."	Moderate capital, calculated risk	Breaking Out	IR4: "I had to take the risk and borrow everything to start."
"I invested millions into villas on the Palm because tourists pay premium prices."	High capital intensity	Breaking Beyond (Transnational expansion)	TNA2: "We sold four villas in the Springs and bought one on the Palm. Best decision."
"I used my engineering savings from the UK to open a luxury rental business here."	Cross-border capital mobilisation	Breaking Beyond	TNA1: "I saved in the States and invested everything in Dubai's luxury market."

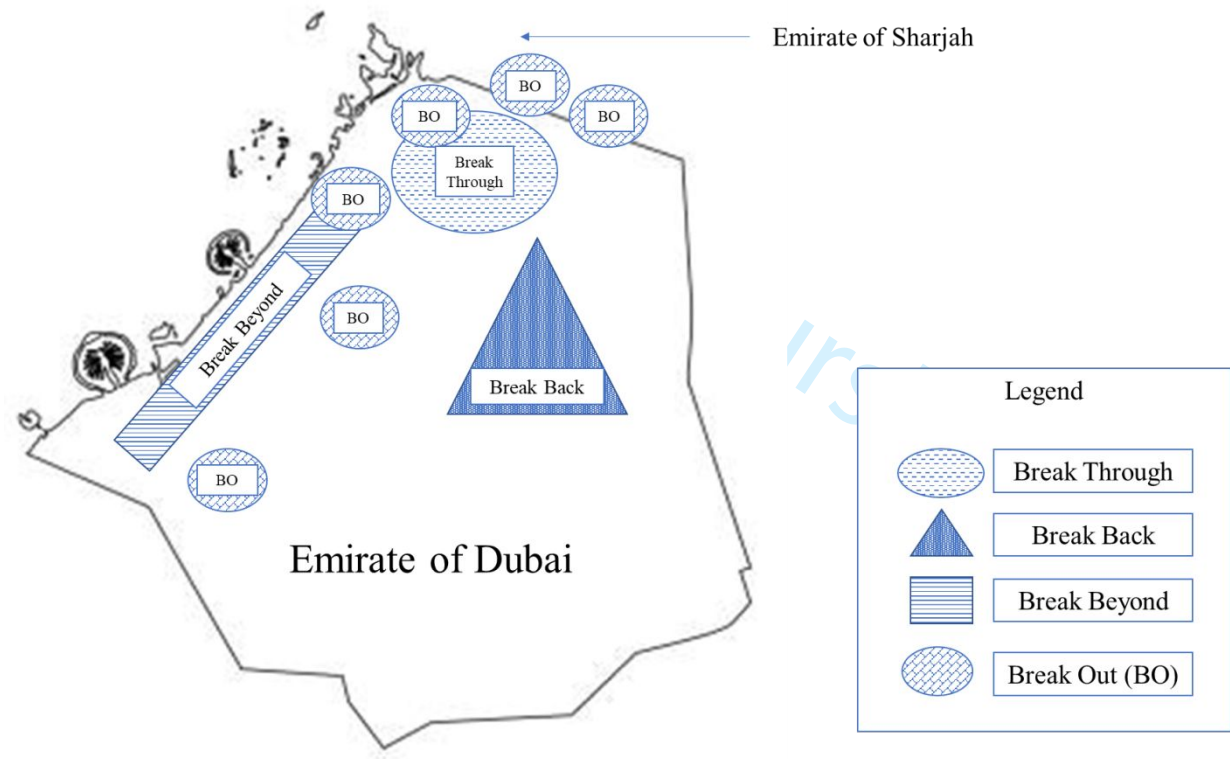
Source: Authors' own work

Supplementary Table 4B: Template Refinements Audit Trail

Cycle	Purpose	What Changed	Example of Refinement
1. Open Coding	Generate initial descriptive codes directly from transcripts. Stay close to participants' language.	Large pool of raw codes created with no structure or categories.	Initial codes included: "send profits home", "duplicate shops", "borrowed against house", "no Arabic", "premium district customers".
2. First Coding Template	Begin grouping codes using sensitising concepts from capital, risk orientation, and mixed embeddedness.	Similar codes merged; vague codes clarified; broad codes labelled under capital–risk–market–temporal headings.	"Exit anytime" + "temporary stay" = <i>short-term orientation</i> . "Cousin labour" + "relative help" = <i>kinship labour mobilisation</i> .
3. Template Refinement (Cross-Case Comparison)	Compare codes across nationalities and sectors; remove overlaps; test negative cases.	Split broad codes; refined boundaries; differentiated types of language skills, capital, and risk.	"Language skills" split into <i>customer-facing proficiency vs. basic functional use</i> .
4. Linking Codes to Emerging Strategy Types	Align refined codes with the four strategy pathways; check necessary/sufficient conditions.	Codes consolidated under the four strategic patterns; exclusion rules added to prevent overlap.	Codes around "minimum capital", "short-term orientation", "home-country growth" = grouped into <i>Breaking Back</i> .
5. Peer Debriefing & Adjustments	External review for consistency; reconcile discrepancies; confirm that types are distinct.	Some codes re-labelled or reallocated; borderline cases reviewed; small definitions tightened.	Early "returnee logic" removed after reviewers noted it didn't fit UAE residency patterns.
6. Final Template Consolidation	Lock final coding structure; select exemplar quotes; verify alignment with typology.	Only codes that cleanly mapped onto the four types were retained; exemplar quotes finalised.	"Risk-taking propensity" and "capital intensity" remained separate to distinguish <i>Breaking Out vs. Breaking Beyond</i> .

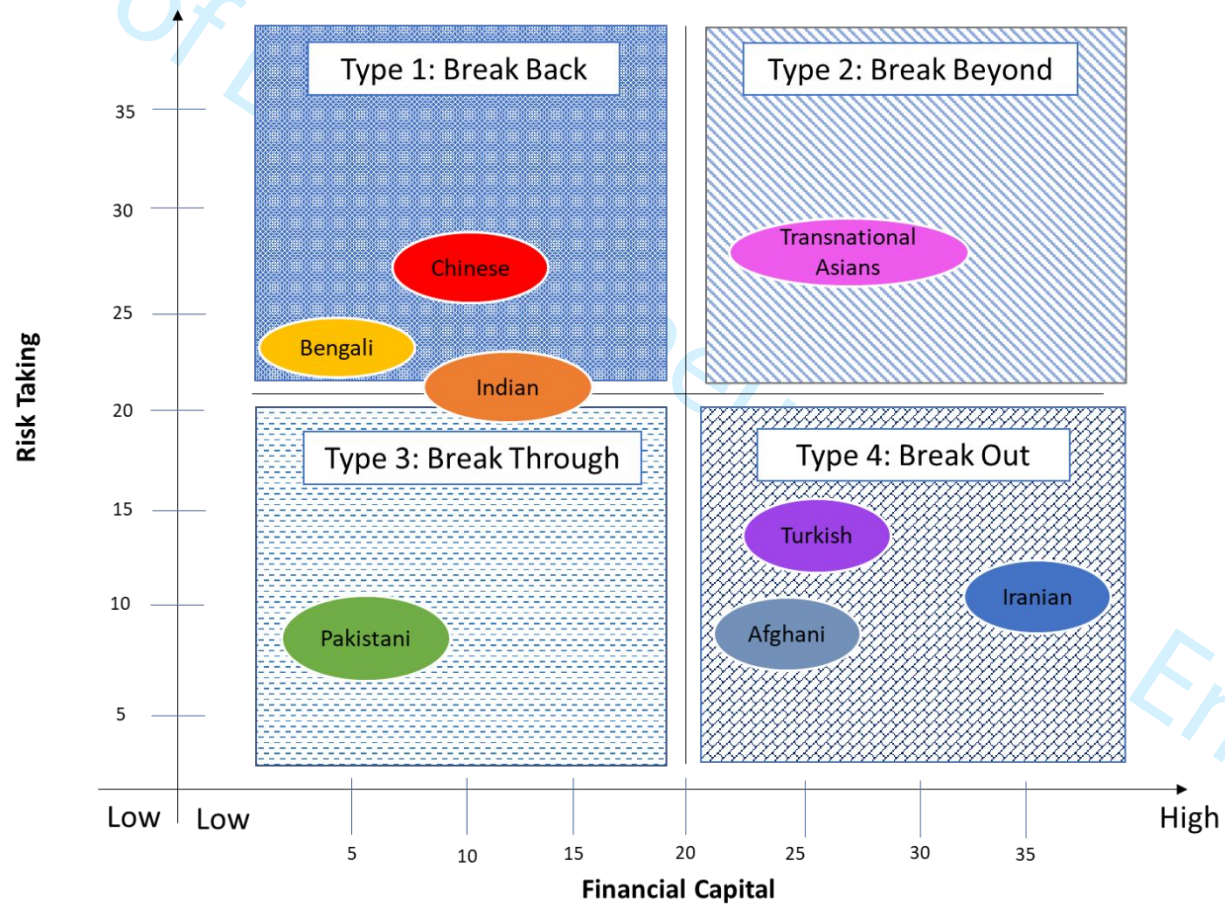
Source: Authors' own work

Figure 1. Spatial Concentration of IEs by Strategy Type



Source: Authors' own work

Figure 2. Typology of the Asian Immigrant Growth Strategies in the UAE



Source: Authors' own work

1
2
3 14-Oct-2025
4

5
6 Manuscript ID JEEE-09-2025-0568 entitled "**Take a Break: A Typology of Immigrant Enterprise Growth Strategies in Non-Traditional Entrepreneurship Settings**" which you submitted to the Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies, has
7 been reviewed. The comments of the reviewer(s) are included at the bottom of this letter.
8
9
10

<p>11 Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author: 12 Reviewer: 1 13 14 Recommendation: Major Revision 15 16 Comments: 17 Good first attempt. Please revise the manuscript, and it should 18 be much informative and presentable. 19 20</p>	<p>We sincerely thank Reviewer 1 for taking the time to review our manuscript and for the constructive feedback provided. We appreciate your acknowledgment of our initial submission as a good first attempt. In response to your recommendation, we have undertaken a comprehensive revision of the paper to enhance its clarity, depth, and overall presentation. We are grateful for your feedback, which has been instrumental in improving the quality and contribution of our work.</p>
<p>21 Additional Questions: 22 1. Originality: Does the paper contain new and significant 23 information adequate to justify publication?: A four-type growth 24 strategy ("breaking back / through / out / beyond") extends 25 beyond the classic breakout/breakthrough lens and is set in a 26 non-OECD Gulf context, which is comparatively under-studied. 27 Hence, it does have new information. 28 Feedback 1: Right now, the four labels are compelling but 29 partly overlapping in practice. Specify necessary and sufficient 30 criteria for assigning cases to each type. 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46</p>	<p>F1: We have now developed explicit necessary and sufficient criteria for each of the four strategy types. These criteria were derived through iterative cross-case comparison, team-based coding verification, and a review of all coded material. They define the minimum conditions required for case assignment, the decisive indicators that distinguish the four types, and the exclusion conditions that prevent overlap. We added a new subsection titled "3.5 Defining the Four Strategy Types: Necessary and Sufficient Criteria" which outlines the criteria in a clear and systematic way. This subsection clarifies the underlying structure of the typology and makes the case assignment procedure fully transparent. These criteria also guide the revised Findings section, ensuring that each type aligns with consistent analytical boundaries.</p> <p>F2: We have now addressed it directly in two places. In Section 5.1, we inserted an explicit statement showing why two of our</p>

<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25</p> <p>Feedback 2: You argue beyond breakout/breakthrough, it means show where your types cannot be reduced to either and why mixed embeddedness needs a capital–risk extension.</p>	<p>strategy types cannot be reduced to the established breakout–breakthrough continuum. We clarify that Type 1 (“breaking back”) is driven by a short-term, return-oriented logic and therefore falls outside a host-market upgrading trajectory, while Type 2 (“breaking beyond”) reflects transnational capital deployment rather than movement from enclave to mainstream. This addition makes clear where and why the classical continuum is insufficient for explaining the strategic heterogeneity observed in a Gulf economy.</p> <p>In Section 6.1, we added a concise theoretical signpost explaining why mixed embeddedness requires a capital–risk extension. The revision emphasises that the same institutional opportunity structure in Dubai produces divergent growth strategies only once entrepreneurs’ human, financial, and social capital endowments—and their risk orientations—are taken into account. By making these mechanisms explicit, the manuscript now clearly demonstrates that mixed embeddedness alone cannot account for the four strategies identified, thereby strengthening the theoretical contribution and addressing the reviewer’s request in full.</p>
<p>26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46</p> <p>2. Relationship to Literature: There is a good command of classic work (agency/structure; mixed embeddedness; enclave debates) and a clear statement of gaps around risk orientation and emerging-economy contexts.</p> <p>Feedback 1: Integrate 2022–2025 advances on immigrant entrepreneurship in the Gulf, transnationalism, and risk propensity to reinforce novelty.</p>	<p>F1: We revised the Relationship to Literature section to incorporate recent Gulf-focused and transnational scholarship published between 2022 and 2025, as requested. We have added in yellow all references at the end of our manuscript. First, we added Silva et al. (2025) to contextualise “breaking back” entrepreneurs within contemporary returnee and two-stage mobility models, clarifying how temporary and circular orientations intersect with capital–risk decisions. Second, we integrated Yasin and Poulin (2025) to anchor the UAE within current debates on migrant enterprise and national economic vision, strengthening the emerging-economy framing. Third, we included Elmassah (2022) and Alnassai (2023) to provide UAE-</p>

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

Feedback 2: Define it theoretically (beyond geography/income status) and dialogue with work on high-skill transnational founders and capital mobility.

specific empirical evidence on entrepreneurial heterogeneity and risk aversion, directly supporting our argument that risk propensity is under-examined among immigrant entrepreneurs in the Gulf. These additions collectively bring the literature review up to date and reinforce the novelty of the capital–risk typology in this institutional context.

F2: We have fully addressed this point by adding an explicit theoretical clarification in Section 2.4 that distinguishes geographically bounded immigrant entrepreneurship from forms of transnational founding shaped by the portability of human, financial, and social capital. To do this, we incorporated work on high-skill transnational founders, drawing particularly on Wadhwa et al. (2007)), whose studies explain how globally mobile entrepreneurs leverage education, savings, and professional experience acquired across multiple countries to establish ventures that are only partially embedded in host economies. We also engaged with recent work on capital mobility (as in the case of Techno-latinas - Arroteia & Hafeez, 2021), showing how cross-border deployment of financial and human capital differentiates “breaking beyond” entrepreneurs from enclave-bound and return-oriented strategies. This addition directly addresses the reviewer’s concern by making the theoretical mechanism explicit rather than implied, and by situating our Type 2 cases within the established tradition of high-skill transnational entrepreneurship. The manuscript now clearly articulates how cross-border capital flows and professional mobility underpin the strategic logic of these entrepreneurs, thereby strengthening the theoretical contribution beyond geographic or income-based classifications.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

3. Methodology: I appreciate fully that this is qualitative.
3.F1: The 5 years in business inclusion criterion systematically excludes fragile/early ventures and over-represents survivors, shaping your typology toward more established patterns. Justify this choice, test robustness by discussing how inclusion of less than 5-year firms might alter type frequencies and be explicit in limitations.

Feedback 2: Provide a case table listing for each interview: sector, years in UAE, employees, nationality, language, visa/residency status, estimated start-up capital, and assigned type.

Feedback 3: A self-rated 1–3 conversational scale is not defensible on its own. Triangulate with observable indicators, and report how the conversational scale aligned/misaligned with those indicators. Triangulation is important for this method.

Feedback 4: Include a figure/appendix with the coding template, exemplar coded segments, and an audit trail of template refinements.

3.F1: The five-year criterion is intentional and tied directly to our focus on established growth strategies rather than early-stage survival behaviour. In the UAE, the first few years are marked by high churn, visa uncertainty, and experimental activity, which would have added considerable noise and weakened the formation of a coherent typology. We have clarified this in the Methods and added a brief note in the Limitations on how very young firms might differ.

F2: . We have now added a consolidated case overview in Supplementary Table 3 summarising all sixty-six participants, including nationality, sector, years in the UAE, visa type, language of interview, and assigned strategy type. In the manuscript, we signpost this addition at the end of the Sampling section and again at the start of the Findings section to ensure transparency and ease of reference. This strengthens the audit trail and supports clear linkage between cases and the four strategy types.

F3: We have added a short paragraph in the Methods explaining how we triangulated the self-rated scale with observable indicators such as investment size, sector entry, branch expansion, and debt behaviour. This alignment confirmed that participants' stated orientations matched their reported actions, which supports the use of the conversational scale.

F4: Supplementary Table 4A presents the complete coding template in a structure, including first-order concepts, second-

<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24</p> <p>Feedback 5: You note multilingual interviewing and translators. Specify how many interviews per language, translator training, any back-translation, and how semantic equivalence was ensured across languages beyond “key statements checked.”</p>	<p>order themes, aggregate dimensions, and exemplar coded segments taken directly from the manuscript. Supplementary Table 4B documents the six-cycle refinement process used in developing the template, detailing how codes were merged, clarified, or redefined across iterative stages. We have signposted both additions in the Data Analysis section and at the start of the Findings to guide readers. These additions strengthen the audit trail and make the analytic pathway from raw data to the four strategy types fully transparent.</p> <p>F5: We have added a short paragraph in the Methods specifying the number of interviews conducted in each language, the role of bilingual researchers, and the procedure used to ensure semantic equivalence. Translators supported Urdu, Hindi, Malayalam, Turkish, Pushto, and Chinese interviews. Meaning checks were carried out collaboratively, and key segments were cross-verified in English to confirm accuracy. This clarification has been added to the Methods section.</p>
<p>25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33</p> <p>4. Results: Overall, can have better depth and explanation.</p> <p>Feedback 1: Some decisions (in temporal dynamics) reference pandemic-era conditions and subsequent recovery (e.g., risk-hedging via multi-branch duplication). Make the time marker 2021–2023 analytically visible in the results (pre-/post-reforms, tourism rebound) to avoid over-generalization.</p>	<p>F1: We have incorporated explicit time markers into the Results section to clarify that several strategic decisions—such as branch duplication, risk-hedging and market repositioning—were shaped by the 2021–2023 recovery period following the pandemic and post-2021 reforms. These additions make the temporal context analytically visible and prevent over-generalisation of patterns that were specific to that recovery window.</p>
<p>34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46</p> <p>5. Implications for research, practice and/or society: Overall, clear.</p> <p>Feedback 1: When recommending visa flexibility or training, point to specific observed constraints by type. Quote or summarize data that directly motivate each lever.</p>	<p>F2: We have revised the Practical Implications section (6.2) to anchor each recommendation in the specific constraint patterns observed within each strategy type. The revised text now makes explicit which constraints are associated with Types 1, 2, 3 and 4, and each policy lever is directly motivated by these</p>

	empirical patterns. In line with the reviewer's guidance, we summarise the relevant data within the Implications section to maintain flow while still demonstrating the evidence that motivates each intervention.
<p>6. Quality of Communication: Overall, clear.</p> <p>Feedback 1: Please reduce repetition. The breakout/breakthrough critique appears multiple times; compress to one tight analytic section and one short reminder in the discussion.</p> <p>Feedback 2: Keep the four labels but ensure each subsection header aligns exactly with the criteria you formalize.</p>	<p>F1: We agree that the breakout/breakthrough critique was previously over-repeated. We have now confined the full analytic treatment to Section 2.3 Mixed Embeddedness and Enclave Dynamics, where we explain the limits of the breakout–breakthrough continuum and position our capital–risk typology in relation to it. Elsewhere, we retain only two brief positioning reminders: one sentence in Section 6.1 Theoretical Implications and a single clause in Section 7 Conclusions. Repeated and extended references in the Introduction, Findings, and earlier versions of the Discussion have been removed, so that the argument now appears once in full and only lightly signposted later.</p> <p>F2: We have strengthened the theoretical positioning as requested. The revised Theoretical Implications section now makes explicit how the capital–risk typology advances mixed embeddedness by showing how variation within a shared institutional opportunity structure emerges only when differences in human, financial, and social capital, together with risk orientation, are incorporated. We have also clarified the conceptual boundaries between “breaking through” and “breaking out” by distinguishing enclave-based replication from deliberate entry into mainstream markets. These revisions directly address the reviewer's concerns and sharpen the contribution.</p>

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

<p>Reviewer: 2</p> <p>Recommendation: Minor Revision</p> <p>Comments: This paper makes a valuable contribution to immigrant entrepreneurship scholarship by examining an understudied context and developing a theoretically grounded typology. The</p>	<p>We sincerely thank Reviewer 2 for the thoughtful and encouraging feedback. We are pleased that you found the paper to make a valuable contribution to immigrant entrepreneurship scholarship through its examination of an understudied context and theoretically grounded typology. We also appreciate your recognition of the methodological rigor and practical insights of the study.</p>
---	--

<p>research is methodologically rigorous and presents practical insights relevant to policymakers and practitioners.</p>	<p>We have carefully addressed the minor revisions suggested and ensured that the manuscript has been strengthened accordingly. Specific amendments are outlined in our detailed response table. We believe these refinements further enhance the clarity, coherence, and contribution of the paper. We are grateful for your constructive engagement and positive assessment, which have been invaluable in improving the overall quality of the manuscript.</p>
<p>1. Theoretical positioning: Strengthen the discussion of how the capital-risk typology specifically advances mixed embeddedness theory, potentially including a conceptual model or framework diagram.</p>	<p>We strengthened the theoretical positioning by adding a clear statement in Section 6.1 that situates the capital–risk typology as an extension of mixed embeddedness, clarifying that it adds a way of differentiating entrepreneurial strategies within the same institutional setting based on capital configurations and risk orientation. We also note that Figure 2 already serves as the conceptual representation of this contribution, illustrating how the four strategy types relate to capital and risk profiles across the three ethnic groups. These revisions provide the requested clarification of theoretical advancement.</p>
<p>2. Definitional clarity: Provide clearer conceptual boundaries between "breaking out" and "breakthrough" strategies to avoid potential confusion.</p>	<p>We have clarified the boundaries between the two strategy types in both the Methods and Findings. In Section 3.5, we now provide explicit necessary and sufficient criteria for each type, including clear exclusion conditions, which removes any ambiguity. “Breaking Through” is defined as enclave-based, low-capital, kinship-supported replication, whereas “Breaking Out” is defined by mainstream market engagement, language adaptation, sectoral upgrading, and moderate capital deployment. These distinctions are reinforced in the Findings through revised narrative descriptions and are further supported empirically through the full case overview table (Supplementary Table 3). The updated coding template (Supplementary Table 4A) and refinement audit trail (Supplementary Table 4B) also show how these categories</p>

	were differentiated during analysis. Collectively, these additions provide clear conceptual separation between the two strategies.
3. Methodological transparency: Add more explicit discussion of the limitations associated with the risk orientation measurement and sampling criteria.	We have strengthened methodological transparency in two places. In the Methodology, we now clarify that the risk-orientation measure was treated as an interpretive, qualitative assessment rather than a psychological scale, consistent with work that conceptualises entrepreneurial risk as subjective, socially situated, and structured by class position and capital constraints (Knight, 1921; arasvathy, 2001). In the Limitations section, we explicitly acknowledge the exploratory nature of this assessment and note that our five-year sampling threshold aligns with, and is more conservative than, GEM's definition of established businesses (>42 months). Together, these revisions provide the transparency requested without altering the study's design or analytical focus.
4. Comparative analysis: Include a summary table comparing the four strategy types across key dimensions (capital, risk, markets, sectors).	We have now added a comprehensive comparative table (Table 2) that summarises the four strategy types across the key dimensions you identified. The table compares human, financial, and social capital, risk orientation, market focus, sector profile, spatial location, temporal orientation, and the primary growth mechanism. This table appears in the Findings section immediately after the introductory paragraph that presents the typology. The comparative table makes the distinctions between the four strategy types clearer and strengthens the internal coherence of the typology (See new Table 2).
5. Temporal dynamics: Expand discussion of whether and how entrepreneurs transition between strategy types over time. These revisions would strengthen an already solid contribution. The paper is well-positioned for publication following these minor enhancements.	We appreciate this suggestion. Because the study is cross-sectional, the data do not allow us to observe when or how entrepreneurs transition between the four strategy types. Introducing such claims would risk overstating the evidence. We have therefore added a clear statement in the Limitations

	and Future Research section acknowledging that temporal drift cannot be assessed within the current design. We also note that a longitudinal approach would be required to examine how shifts in capital bases, institutional conditions and risk preferences influence movement between strategy types over time.
<p>Additional Questions:</p> <p>1. Originality: Does the paper contain new and significant information adequate to justify publication?: The paper presents a notable contribution to immigrant entrepreneurship literature by examining Asian entrepreneurs in the UAE, representing an understudied non-traditional host economy context. The development of a four-part typology - "breaking back," "breaking through," "breaking out," and "breaking beyond" - extends the conventional breakout-breakthrough dichotomy that has dominated the field. The integration of risk orientation with forms of capital (human, financial, social) within the mixed embeddedness framework offers a fresh theoretical lens.</p> <p>However, the originality would be strengthened by more explicitly positioning the theoretical contribution. The authors should consider expanding the discussion of how their capital-risk typology specifically advances mixed embeddedness theory beyond existing variations. Additionally, clarifying the conceptual boundaries between "breaking out" and "breakthrough" strategies would enhance theoretical precision.</p>	We have strengthened the positioning of the theoretical contribution as requested. The revised Theoretical Implications section now makes explicit how the capital–risk typology advances mixed embeddedness by explaining variation within a shared institutional opportunity structure—an aspect not addressed in existing extensions of the framework. We also clarified the conceptual boundaries between “breaking through” and “breaking out” by distinguishing incremental, enclave-based replication from deliberate entry into mainstream markets. These additions sharpen the theoretical precision and directly address the reviewer’s concerns.
<p>2. Relationship to Literature: The literature review demonstrates comprehensive coverage of immigrant entrepreneurship scholarship, appropriately contextualising the study within agency-structure debates, capital theory, and mixed embeddedness frameworks. The authors effectively</p>	To address the suggestion to engage more directly with diaspora and transnational entrepreneurship, we expanded the literature review to incorporate recent work that examines how migrant founders mobilise cross-border resources and networks. In particular, we draw on Yasin and Hafeez (2023),

<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18</p> <p>synthesise Western-centric literature while identifying gaps in emerging economy contexts. Minor enhancement could include engaging more deeply with recent work on diaspora entrepreneurship and incorporating scholarship on Gulf state migration policies. The discussion of transnational entrepreneurship could benefit from referencing emerging literature on digital nomadism and virtual entrepreneurship, particularly relevant given Dubai's positioning as a global business hub.</p>	<p>who demonstrate how successive “waves” of migrant entrepreneurs build and renew transnational linkages across multiple host countries. We also strengthened the discussion of digital and virtual forms of entrepreneurship by integrating verified recent work on digitally mediated business models. Meyer et al. (2023) show how digital infrastructures and platform-based coordination reshape entrepreneurial mobility, while Trischler (2023) highlights how digital business-model innovation enables founders to operate across locations with reduced territorial constraints. Together, these additions clarify how contemporary diaspora and transnational entrepreneurship increasingly intersect with digitalisation, and they allow us to position the UAE case more clearly within these global developments.</p>
<p>19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46</p> <p>3. Methodology: The qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews with 66 first-generation Asian entrepreneurs is methodologically sound and appropriate for exploring nuanced entrepreneurial strategies. The use of Template Analysis effectively balances inductive and deductive approaches. The multilingual interview approach and translator use demonstrate cultural sensitivity and enhance validity.</p> <p>The risk orientation measurement could be refined. While the authors acknowledge the three-point scale as exploratory rather than psychometrically validated, they should consider discussing limitations more explicitly. Additionally, the sampling approach, while purposeful, could benefit from clearer justification of why five years of operation was chosen as the minimum criterion.</p>	<p>We have expanded our methodological clarification in two locations. First, we now explicitly acknowledge in the Methodology and Limitations that the risk-orientation measure is an interpretive, qualitative device rather than a psychometric scale. This aligns with long-standing work that conceptualises entrepreneurial risk as subjective, socially situated, and shaped by actors' capital positions and lived constraints (Knight, 1921; Bourdieu, 2000; Sarasvathy, 2001). Second, we have strengthened the justification for the five-year inclusion criterion. We note that our focus is on growth strategies rather than start-up behaviours, and that firms younger than this would introduce substantial variation in strategic maturity. We also clarify that this threshold is consistent with, and more conservative than, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) definition of established businesses (>42 months). These additions make the rationale and limitations transparent while maintaining the coherence of our research design.</p>

<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18</p> <p>4. Results:</p> <p>The four-strategy typology is clearly articulated with compelling empirical evidence from participant quotes. The spatial analysis linking strategy types to geographical concentration patterns adds valuable depth. Each strategy type is well-substantiated with appropriate examples and theoretical grounding.</p> <p>The presentation could be enhanced by including a comparative table summarising the key characteristics of each strategy type (capital requirements, risk orientation, market focus, typical sectors). Additionally, the discussion of strategy transitions - whether entrepreneurs move between types over time - deserves more attention.</p>	<p>We have addressed this in two ways. First, we have clarified the differences between the four strategy types through the necessary and sufficient criteria presented in Section 3.5 and through the full case overview table (Supplementary Table 3), which together provide a clear comparative summary across capital intensity, risk orientation, market focus, typical sectors, and temporal logics. Second, we have added a dedicated paragraph at the end of the Findings section discussing the dynamics of transition between types. This paragraph clarifies that movement from “Breaking Through” to “Breaking Out” is the most common pathway, while transitions from “Breaking Back” and “Breaking Beyond” are far less frequent. These additions strengthen the presentation of the typology and align with the reviewer’s request.</p>
<p>19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32</p> <p>5. Implications for research, practice and/or society: The paper effectively bridges theory and practice, offering valuable insights for policymakers and support agencies. The practical recommendations regarding targeted interventions for different entrepreneur types are well-grounded in the findings. The discussion of visa policies, language training, and access to finance demonstrates clear policy relevance.</p> <p>The research implications could be strengthened by providing more specific directions for future quantitative testing of the typology. Society-level implications regarding multicultural integration and economic development in emerging economies could be elaborated further.</p>	<p>We strengthened the research implications in two ways. First, we added explicit directions for future quantitative testing of the typology, specifying how the four strategies can be operationalised through measurable indicators of human, financial, and social capital, as well as behavioural proxies of risk orientation (Conclusion). Second, we expanded the society-level implications by outlining how differentiated growth strategies shape multicultural integration and economic participation in migrant-majority emerging economies such as the UAE.</p>
<p>33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46</p> <p>6. Quality of Communication:</p> <p>The paper is well-written with clear structure and appropriate academic tone. The progression from literature review through methodology to findings flows logically. Technical terminology is used appropriately without excessive jargon.</p> <p>Minor improvements could include streamlining some lengthy</p>	<p>We streamlined the longer paragraphs in the literature review to tighten the narrative and conducted a full terminology audit to ensure consistent use of “immigrant entrepreneurs” throughout, retaining alternative terms only when used in cited sources or participant quotations.</p>

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

paragraphs in the literature review section and ensuring consistency in terminology (e.g., "immigrant entrepreneurs" vs "migrant entrepreneurs" vs "expatriate entrepreneurs").	
---	--

Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies