

# The Relationship Between Social Capital And The Social Media Usage Experience Of New Immigrants

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## Abstract

*Social capital refers to the value derived from our social connections and networks. These networks, whether established online through social media platforms or offline through personal and professional associations, hold great significance in the world today. As the internet undergoes rapid development, social media has become increasingly integrated into our daily lives, significantly impacting the communication and social connections. By 2022, Taiwan had welcomed over 570,000 new immigrants, a community that has now become an integral part of Taiwanese society. Our study employs in-depth interviews and textual analysis to explore how the usage experience of social media may enhance the acquisition of social capital among new immigrants in Taiwan. This article aims to examine whether the experiences of Taiwanese new immigrants in utilizing online communities contribute to the acquisition of valuable information, the expansion of diverse interpersonal networks, and further the accumulation of various forms of social capital.*

**Keywords:** Social Capital; Social Media; New Immigrants; Usage Experience; Social Network Sites.

## 1. Introduction

Social capital, a concept denoting the value derived from interpersonal connections and networks, holds significant importance in contemporary society, exerting potential influence on opportunities, resources, and overall well-being.

In the context of immigration, social networks play a pivotal role, constituting a supportive framework and serving as a valuable information source for newcomers. Upon relocating to a new country, individuals frequently rely on their pre-existing social networks for guidance, advice, and emotional support. Moreover, these networks contribute to the establishment of a sense of belonging and identity for immigrants, especially in instances where they may encounter isolation or marginalization within their new environment. As the internet undergoes rapid advancement, social media is increasingly assimilated into our daily lives, wielding substantial influence on the dynamics of immigration.

By 2022, Taiwan has welcomed a substantial influx of over 570,000 new immigrants, a demographic that has since become an integral component of Taiwanese society. Against this backdrop, our study employs a methodological approach encompassing in-depth interviews and textual analysis. The primary objective is to scrutinize the nuanced ways in which the usage experience of social media may augment the acquisition of social capital among new immigrants in Taiwan.

Taiwanese new immigrants predominantly utilize mobile phones as their primary medium to access social networks. Social media platforms play a pivotal role, facilitating information-seeking activities and the maintenance of connections with friends and family members. These usage experiences on social networking sites contribute significantly to the accumulation of bonding, bridging and linking social capital.

Concerning bonding social capital, individuals uphold their original cultural interpersonal relationships, actively seeking connections with those who share their cultural background

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in Taiwan. This process fosters the cultivation of new connections within the community. On the other hand, in the realm of bridging social capital, new immigrants adapt to their novel environment by providing information from their own native language into Chinese. This adaptation extends to various domains such as job-seeking, addressing work-related or daily challenges, emotional expression, and entertainment.

However, it is crucial to note the existence of age-related disparities in these usage behaviors. Additionally, our study reveals that many participants underscore the value of utilizing social networking sites for transnational communication with their families and relatives in their home country, providing a profound sense of emotional support. Furthermore, diverse experiences within different virtual communities offer varied forms of emotional support to users.

The utilization of social networking sites by new immigrants transcends mere communication and contact with others; it serves as a testament to the profound influence of social media in the generation of social capital within Taiwan. In conclusion, the findings of this study hold valuable implications for initiatives aimed at supporting new immigrants, offering insights that can guide future research endeavors in this field.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Social capital**

Social capital refers to the value derived from our social networks and the relationships established within them. These networks can exist in both online and offline settings, encompassing social networking sites as well as personal and professional connections. In today's interconnected world, understanding social capital is crucial, as it can have a significant impact on our opportunities, resources, and overall well-being. In the digital age, social networking sites play a pivotal role in shaping and utilizing our social capital, which necessitates exploring the intersection between social capital and online platforms.

Gittell and Vidal (1998) have classified community-level social capital into two distinct categories: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. This taxonomy shares similarities with Granovetter's (1973) theory of strong ties and weak ties within networks. Recent scholarly endeavors have concentrated on the dynamics of interactions among individuals, communities, and public institutions across multiple levels, resulting in the conceptualization of these relationships across hierarchical boundaries as "linking social capital" (Halpern, 2005). In essence, considering the frequency and depth of interactions within a social network (comprising individuals and organizations) as a continuum from "strong links" to "weak links," social capital can be broadly classified into three types.

1. **Bonding Social Capital:** The first type is characterized by shared identity and homogeneous multidimensional relationships among members. It fosters close contacts and strong mutual commitments, such as familial connections, friendships, or organizational affiliations.
2. **Bridging Social Capital:** The second type involves the formation of weaker, more distant, and cross-sectional social bonds among diverse individuals, including peers, colleagues, or civic and religious organizations within the community.
3. **Linking Social Capital:** The third type encompasses connections between individuals or organizations across established boundaries and statuses. Representing a vertical connection, it facilitates interactions between community members and entities, such as individuals, communities, markets, or public organizations, that directly or indirectly impact the community. This form of social capital encourages individuals or organizations to transcend existing boundaries and acquire resources by establishing connections with entities at different levels.

## 2.2 Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites (SNS) play a pivotal role in the formation and development of social capital (Hoda et al. 2023; Duffy-Bregmen and Hooper 2022; Wang et al. 2022). According to Henry Ofori, SNS usage contributes significantly to the establishment of both online-bonding and online-bridging social capital(Ofori and Kang 2022). The frequency and intensity of SNS utilization are key determinants of social capital, with a notable emphasis on bridging social capital(Le et al. 2022). It is important to recognize that different SNS platforms may exert varying influences on the initiation and progression of social capital. The level of social trust and network density within SNS directly influences social identity and sustained participation behavior. Active engagement on SNS positively correlates with social commerce purchase intention, whereas passive behavior demonstrates a negative influence. Proficiency in computer-mediated communication (CMC) emerges as a determinant of SNS use and significantly impacts social capital. These findings have profound implications for both theoretical frameworks and practical applications, offering valuable insights for the development of effective strategies in the formation and utilization of social capital(Son et al. 2016; Phulari et al. 2010).

These virtual communities play a vital role in fostering both bonding and bridging social capital. Additionally, SNS enable users to maintain connections with members of previously inhabited communities, leading to the cultivation of sustained social capital. The utilization of SNS has been associated with various social capital outcomes, including enhanced social support and access to valuable information and resources. However, the relationship between SNS use and social capital is intricate and contingent on specific behaviors and strategies employed by users. Strategies such as self-disclosure, relationship maintenance, resource mobilization, and privacy protection on SNS have been identified as crucial factors influencing the acquisition of social capital( Steinfield et al. 2012; Sciandra 2011; Hongning et al. 2016).

## 2.3 Social Networking Sites, Social Capital and Immigration

Social networks wield a substantial influence on individuals' inclinations toward both international and local migration. At the same time, close social networks abroad, comprised of friends and family, emerge as pivotal determinants propelling intentions for international migration. The expansive nature of social media transcends physical constraints of time and space, facilitating cross-cultural communication. Milbourne and Wilkinson (2015) categorize social media connections into three distinct types:

1. **Psychological Connections:** Social media platforms, notably Facebook, serve as spaces where individuals are more inclined to express their emotions. Facebook's categorization of relationships—such as friends, acquaintances, partners, family members—significantly shapes the psychological connection between individuals and their network.
2. **Alternative Connections:** The proliferation of social media friendships and the capacity of distant friends to provide self-esteem and perceived satisfaction are notable factors. Virtual networks, exemplified by platforms like Facebook, gradually supplant offline modes of interpersonal communication, influencing offline relationships and fortifying individuals' interpersonal networks.
3. **Internet Social Connections:** With increasing user proficiency in Internet utilization, a deeper immersion in Internet culture ensues. The extent of an individual's involvement in online activities correlates with the impact of digital communities on their real-life experiences.

This nuanced exploration of social networks and social media interactions provides valuable insights into the multifaceted dynamics shaping individuals' migration intentions and the evolving landscape of interpersonal relationships.

Oh (2016) has conceptualized immigrant-community website uses and its relationship with social capital. He centers his investigation on five key American social institutions—namely immigration, welfare, education, housing, and finance—employing a focus on married Korean-American women within the prominent online community "MissyUSA," the largest of its kind among Korean-American women in North America. Within this virtual space, members collaboratively share comprehensive information regarding the intricacies of these social institutions, aiding each other in navigating the complexities of American society.

Oh's examination unveils the formation of two distinct forms of social capital within the "MissyUSA" community: social resources and social support. For certain members, characterized as inquirers or information seekers, this community functions as a crucial source of information (social resources) pertaining to the regulations of American social institutions. Additionally, it serves as a network of social supporters (respondents or information providers) for those seeking information. Notably, Oh identifies these social supporters as instrumental guiders (information describers, expositors, confirmers, and advisors) and emotional supporters (companions, encouragers, and critics).

What elevates the significance of Oh's study is the distinct identification of these social supporters based on their roles as both sources of information and emotional pillars. Oh's research delineates the functions of immigrant community websites into two primary categories:

1. The provision of social resources, as conceptualized in this context, pertains to the role of the community website in furnishing information. Oh contends that through processes of information exchange and interaction, users of immigrant community websites can augment opportunities for interaction among unfamiliar internet users. This, in turn, has the potential to cultivate offline and real-life connections, thereby enhancing the likelihood of users establishing weak links with each other and acquiring bridging social capital.
2. Conversely, Oh posits that immigrant social networking sites fulfill another vital social function—social supports. Here, social supports encompass the emotional assistance conveyed by users through posting, replying, or private communication on social networking sites. Members of these platforms may express companionship and encouragement to foster emotional interaction and mutual support among themselves. Oh maintains that this form of emotionally supportive communication can extend to immigrant community websites, providing a bonding social capital function akin to strong interpersonal relationships. This, in turn, facilitates users' access to emotional support within the virtual community.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

This article endeavors to scrutinize whether the engagement of immigrants in Taiwan in online communities contributes substantively to the acquisition of valuable information, the cultivation of diverse interpersonal networks, and the accumulation of various forms of social capital. To comprehensively comprehend the social capital acquisition process of new immigrants and their utilization of social media, this study conducted interviews with immigrants originating from several key countries, including China, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

Consider that one of our researchers also enjoys an immigrant-family background and recognizing the potential cognitive differences arising from the use of quantitative research methods, this study opted for a qualitative research approach. Grounded in in-depth interviews with 30 new immigrants, this research employed text analysis as the subsidizing method. The collection of data was executed by extracting information shared by research subjects on social media platforms in Taiwan, enhancing the depth and richness of the dataset.

#### **3.1 Qualitative Research Method**

Within the confines of this study, the frequency and depth of interactions among members of social networks, encompassing both individuals and organizations, are conceptualized as constituting a continuous spectrum. Social capital, in this context, is systematically categorized into three types, ranging from "strong connections" to "weak connections." Leveraging Oh's proposed framework, this paper endeavors to analyze whether immigrants' usage behaviors on social networking websites facilitate the acquisition of social resources and social supports, thereby allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of social networking website experiences on the accumulation of social capital. The paper further delves into an exploration of users' acquisition and accumulation of bonding social capital, bridging social capital and linking social capital.

This study endeavors to identify suitable research target groups through two distinct methods, ultimately culminating in the determination of the research targets:

- Exploration within associations of new immigrants in Taiwan, where recommendations from these associations will guide the identification of suitable candidates.
- Engagement with new immigrants in their respective online communities in Taiwan to identify appropriate interviewees.

As previously noted, immigrants in Taiwan hail from diverse origins such as China, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Consequently, participant selection is guided by the following two conditions:

- A minimum residency duration of one year in Taiwan.
- Proficiency in using social networking sites within the Taiwanese context.

To gain a comprehensive insight into the cross-cultural adaptation experiences of immigrants in Taiwan and the impact of their social networking behaviors on social capital, this study has delineated three interview categories encompassing the following areas:

- Personal background information.
- Patterns and frequency of social networking site usage, including behaviors and motivations associated with such usage.
- The influence of online communities on daily life.

A semi-structured interview schedule was meticulously crafted by the researcher to align with the research objectives and the primary categories outlined in the study. The interview questions were pre-formulated, and the sequence of questions was not rigidly practiced. Instead, the interview process adhered to a conversational approach, affording flexibility in both the sequence and content of the questions. Throughout the interviews, the researcher guided respondents to elaborate on their responses, providing nuanced reasons and details. Follow-up questions were also posed to enhance the depth of the interview data and unveil novel insights.

In the end, a total of 30 new immigrants in Taiwan, comprising 6 males and 24 females, had participated our interviews. The youngest respondent was 22 years old, while the eldest was 48, with an average age of 34.8. In terms of educational attainment, 7 respondents completed middle schools, 8 completed high schools, and 15 completed college or above degree. The information of the interviewees is detailed in the table below, including gender, age, educational level, duration of stay in Taiwan, and employment status.

**Table 1.** Basic information of interviewers

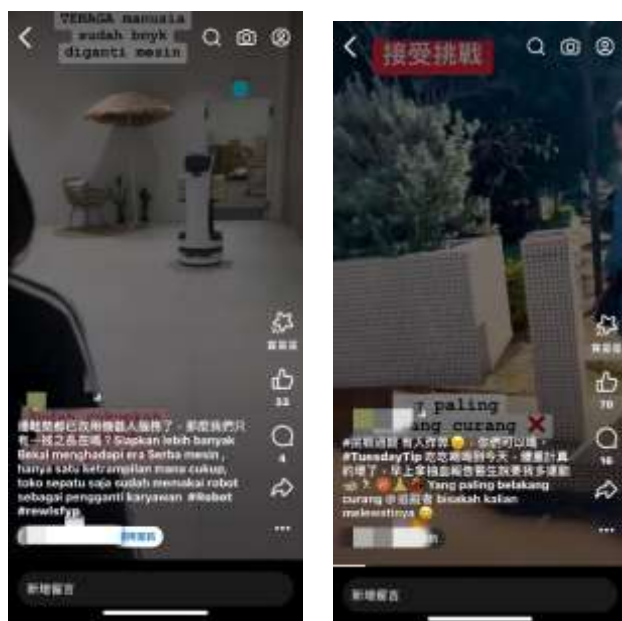
<b>Code</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Time in Taiwan(Years)</b>	<b>Education</b>
<b>P1</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>High school</b>
<b>P2</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>College</b>

<b>P3</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>High school</b>
<b>P4</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P5</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Middle school</b>
<b>P6</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P7</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Middle school</b>
<b>P8</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Middle school</b>
<b>P9</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P10</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>High school</b>
<b>P11</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P12</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>High school</b>
<b>P13</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P14</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>High school</b>
<b>P15</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P16</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P17</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P18</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Middle school</b>
<b>P19</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P20</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Middle school</b>
<b>P21</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Middle school</b>
<b>P22</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Middle school</b>
<b>P23</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>High school</b>
<b>P24</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P25</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>High school</b>
<b>P26</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P27</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P28</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>High school</b>
<b>P29</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>P30</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>College</b>

### 3.2 Text Analysis

This study employs text analysis as a supplementary research method. Through the collection of textual, audio, and video data posted by new immigrants on social networks, a comprehensive understanding of their behaviors and objectives in using social networks can be attained. Users engage in unrestricted discourse within the community, facilitating the exchange of messages and open discussions. Notably, users not only generate content but also share various types of texts through community functions, such as links, photos, and videos. These supplementary texts serve as valuable indicators of diverse social contexts. Consequently, utilizing community posts and comments as the focal point of research and employing text analysis will not only facilitate a more profound analysis but also enable an exploration of users' social backgrounds and their accrual of cultural capital.

**Figure 1.** The Vlog of an immigrant



#### 4. Results

Taiwanese new immigrants predominantly utilize mobile phones to access their social networks. Social media platforms enable them to seek information and maintain connections with friends and family.

**Table 2.** Social networking sites used by Taiwanese immigrants

Country	Social Networking Sites
China	RED、Tik Tok、IG、Facebook
Vietnam	Facebook、IG、Tik Tok
Indonesia	Facebook、IG、Tik Tok
Others	Facebook、IG、Tik Tok

#### 4.1 Bonding Social Capital

##### 4.1.1 Maintaining Established Interpersonal Relationships of the Original Culture

For new immigrants in Taiwan, the significance of social networking resides in its capacity to connect family members and relatives in the home country, along with family members and friends residing in host country or elsewhere. Despite physical separation from friends and relatives, daily text and voice communications, coupled with interactive posts, enable them to stay informed about each other's lives and sustain intimate relationships.

##### 4.1.2 Current Interpersonal Relationships

As new immigrants reside in Taiwan for extended durations, their proficiency in the Chinese language steadily improves. Most new immigrants in Taiwan are tended to adopt a bilingual approach in presenting their social networking sites content, simultaneously engage and communicate with friends and relatives of both the host and home countries. Rather than establishing separate community pages in distinct languages, newcomers take pride in their ability to communicate effectively in two languages.

In an overarching context, over 90% of our interviewees and study participants indicated

engaging extensively and frequently with family members and close friends in their home countries through instant messages provided by social networking sites. The utilization of social networking sites, encompassing texting, video messaging, audio-visual communication, and picture posting, facilitates interactions and communication between immigrants and their family members. This is further accentuated by the evolution of internet, wi-fi and various wearable devices. The synergistic effect of these technological advancements enables immigrants to experience instantaneous connectivity through social networking sites, fostering the opportunity for emotional support and attachment anytime and anywhere.

## **4.2 Bridging Social Capital**

The establishment of connections among individuals who share common interests, such as colleagues or community groups, functions as a mechanism, facilitating the integration of external resources and the exchange of information. Furthermore, it promotes interaction and connection between disparate groups of individuals or organizations. The efficacy of community website utilization in assisting immigrants to access bridging social capital depends significantly on the websites' capacity to furnish users with external information and resource support. This can be further dissected into two components: the cultivation and expansion of dominant cultural norms through interpersonal interactions and information gathering, as well as the utilization of social networking platforms for the purpose of socializing and acquiring information.

### **4.2.1 Cultivating and Expanding Interpersonal Relationships within the Mainstream Culture**

#### **1. Extending Offline Interpersonal Connections**

Upon their arrival in Taiwan, immigrants who encountered fellow immigrants in their work and daily lives opted to utilize social networking platforms to maintain contact. Notably, social networking sites emerged as a crucial tool for real-time communication, interaction, and mutual assistance. In instances where opportunities arose to meet individuals from their home countries outside of work and daily routines, most interactions and contacts transpired through social networking sites.

#### **2. Developing New Relationships in Unfamiliar Cultures**

Upon arrival in Taiwan, most of our interviewees initially turned to social networking sites to connect with friends from their home countries. Furthermore, they proactively sought out fellow countrymen in Taiwan to establish interpersonal relationships within their new environment. The interviewees highlighted that language barriers on social networking sites led to a reduced inclination to add Taiwanese friends. Besides, if they engaged with Taiwanese individuals, they tended to use LINE, a Japan-based communication app popular in many Asian countries, rather than social networking sites.

While most new acquaintances were immigrants or migrant workers from similar backgrounds, they were also individuals the interviewees had not previously known. The utilization of social networking sites facilitated their acquaintance and connection-building. Consequently, the experience of using social networking sites allowed the majority of our interviewees in this study to transform initially imperceptible interpersonal relationships into weakly connected relationships within their daily lives. In this context, the experience of using social networking sites has also heightened users' prospects of acquiring social capital.

#### **3. Virtual Communities**

Furthermore, the engagement with virtual communities on social networking platforms can serve as a source of emotional support and solace for immigrants. However, the size of virtual community members and the extent of their influence not only impact the level of engagement and frequency of sharing and responding to emotional posts but also have



adverse effects on the acquisition of social capital when the number of virtual community members exceeds 500 or more.

Moreover, gender-based disparities are evident in the utilization of social networking sites to establish new connections and heterosexual relationships among male and female users. While more than 70% of male interviewees reported experiences in using social networking sites to connect with new individuals and establish heterosexual interpersonal relationships, over 50% of female respondents not only lacked similar experiences but also exhibited cautious and distrustful attitudes towards using social networking sites for meeting new people. This cautious approach hampers the potential for both male and female users to obtain bridging social capital.

#### **4.2.2 Information Seeking Channels**

Another avenue for acquiring social capital is through the channels immigrants employ to gather information in both their professional and personal lives. As immigrants navigate the unfamiliar terrain of Taiwanese society, their constant quest for information to adapt to the cross-cultural environment becomes apparent. The use of online social networking sites has proven to be instrumental in obtaining valuable information relevant to immigrants' lives. When posing inquiries related to immigrant life in online communities, inquirers typically receive helpful insights from other users who share similar experiences. Thus, the experiences of immigrants with online communities contribute to accessing valuable information, intangible social resources, and consequently enhance the likelihood of gaining social capital.

##### **1. Job Opportunities**

Social media platforms serve as a conduit for individuals to explore potential job prospects. They can discover employment opportunities through existing social connections within the mainstream culture or by seeking advice from compatriots in shared communities. Additionally, the sharing of job opportunities through social media posts enables colleagues to assist one another in finding employment.

##### **2. Seeking Answers to Job-Related Concerns and Experiences**

Interview findings highlight immigrants' limited knowledge regarding their rights and labor laws in Taiwan, often compounded by potential language barriers. Consequently, upon entering Taiwanese workforce, they may find themselves tolerating mistreatment, threats, and grievances without access to proper assistance. Faced with these challenges, they turn to community networks to obtain relevant information related to their job concerns and interests.

##### **3. Responses to Life's Challenges**

In cases where individuals encounter life challenges, they proactively seek assistance through community websites. Engaging in independent postings, private consultations with friends, or posing inquiries within social clubs are all viable avenues for seeking aid. The internet serves as a platform that enables immigrants to effectively communicate and interact, facilitating the resolution of diverse issues such as Chinese translation, locating specific addresses, or finding familiar cuisine of their hometown. Consequently, social networking sites platform aid in their acclimation to life in Taiwan.

##### **4. Recreational and Entertainment Content**

Community websites serve as a medium through which immigrants access leisure-related information. By utilizing social networking sites platform, they can readily follow their preferred individuals and engage with captivating content. For example, Facebook offers an abundance of movies, music, and amusing videos on a daily basis, providing migrants with a convenient way to unwind and alleviate stress induced by their work obligations.

### 4.3 Linking Social Capital

Interpersonal connections or associations at various societal levels, such as the state or larger communities, are considered vertical links that possess the ability to assist individuals, organizations, or communities in surpassing the constraints imposed by existing hierarchical structures. By fostering connections across different levels, individuals can obtain valuable information and resources from the formal system. Therefore, assessing whether the utilization of community websites enhances immigrants' access to interconnected social capital involves examining whether their usage enables them to establish connections across varying levels.

In Taiwan, due to the current emphasis placed by the government and numerous organizations on the rights of new immigrants, accessing interconnected social capital through the information search process has become a relatively straightforward endeavor for new immigrants. Under the joint endeavors of the government and civil society to promote the provision of care and counseling services to newcomers, individuals can discover pertinent resources and support on the internet for addressing various aspects of their lives. These aspects may include learning Chinese language, adapting to the new environment, seeking assistance for familial issues, or fulfilling employment-related needs. By establishing a channel of communication and support from mainstream culture, newcomers can effectively cultivate interconnected social capital.

## 5. Discussion-Social Capital in the Context of Migration

Social capital plays a pivotal role in comprehending migration dynamics and its profound impact on host societies. Specifically, migration social capital encompasses the advantages garnered by international migrants through their social networks, effectively mitigating the costs and risks associated with international relocation. In broader terms, social capital significantly contributes to the integration and overall well-being of immigrants, offering indispensable support networks and resources to navigate the multifaceted challenges inherent in the migration process. Most existing studies predominantly focus on the acquisition and utilization of offline social capital by migrants.

The advent of the Internet has ushered in transformative changes to the landscape of interpersonal communication, challenging conventional notions of communal boundaries. Traditional societies heavily relied on direct, face-to-face interactions for the flourishing of interpersonal relationships—an area extensively examined for its role in cultivating mutual trust and providing essential social support. Contrarily, sustained face-to-face engagements within a community have demonstrated their efficacy in fostering profound trust among members, encouraging altruistic behaviors, and facilitating more effective collective issue resolution.

However, the internet has redefined the scope and conceptualization of community. While traditional communities were anchored in specific geographical territories, fostering shared identity and collective imagination through frequent physical interactions, the rise of the internet has given birth to virtual communities. These groups primarily engage in computer-mediated communication on online platforms, transcending specific geographical boundaries. Despite the absence of physical proximity, virtual communities successfully cultivate a sense of familiarity, facilitate knowledge exchange, demonstrate a remarkable degree of mutual care, and construct shared identities within the virtual realm. This evolution challenges traditional notions of community, shifting the focus from geographical proximity to digitally mediated connections as the foundation for communal belonging and interaction.

In the contemporary era of social media, the role of online ethnic networks stands on par with offline ethnic networks—families, friends, etc.—in aiding immigrants in their adjustment to a new country. Surprisingly, this critical aspect has received scant attention in the academic field of international immigration, a gap that this study seeks to address

comprehensively.

## **6. Conclusions-Enhancing Social Capital for Immigrants**

Social capital, constituted by conditions such as norms, trust, networks, and reciprocity, serves as a fundamental framework in understanding the immigrant experience. Centered on the perspective of social networks, this study delineates pertinent factors fostering bridging and bonding social capital among immigrants in Taiwan. Additionally, it delves into strategies aimed at developing and promoting social capital. Key findings from this research underscore the distinct dynamics of bonding, bridging and linking social capital in the context of immigrant experiences.

### **1. Bonding Social Capital:**

In the realm of bonding social capital, over 90% of interviewed immigrants maintain high-frequency interactions and communication with relatives and friends in their home country through the use of social networking sites. This daily engagement transcends borders, providing emotional support and comfort crucial for immigrants navigating life in the host country Taiwan.

### **2. Bridging Social Capital:**

This study identifies that the utilization of social networking sites significantly contributes to the acquisition of bridging social capital among new immigrants. More than 80% of our interviewees reported using these platforms to obtain valuable information related to their immigrant life in the host country. Furthermore, approximately 80% of interviewees noted that their experiences in using social networking sites facilitated the expansion of heterogeneous interpersonal relationships, aiding in knowing new friends.

However, gender disparities in usage behavior within these platforms were observed. Over 80% of male interviewees used social networking sites to meet new friends, while over 50% of female interviewees exhibited a cautious and distrustful attitude, refraining from using these platforms to expand interpersonal relationships.

### **3. Linking Social Capital**

Our research proves that online communities function as catalysts for connected social capital. In Taiwan, the burgeoning attention towards the development and rights of new immigrants has led to the emergence of online communities as potent facilitators of connected social capital. Various associations, societies, and interest groups seamlessly converge across the digital landscape. Importantly, the research highlights a hybrid nature in the interpersonal interactions of immigrants, involving both online and offline dynamics. New immigrants, through initial online exchanges, often progress to offline social interactions, creating meaningful connections and friendships in real life.

These research findings shed light on the nuanced dimensions of social capital acquisition among immigrants, emphasizing the role of digital platforms and online communities in fostering a sense of connectedness and support: there are boundaries and status connections.

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