

Entrepreneurship Challenges: The Case of Jordanian Startups

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Abstract

This study aims to understand and explore the key challenges facing entrepreneurs in Jordan. This study attempted to identify the problems specific to small and medium companies and to develop the most prominent solutions to help companies improve their conditions.

This study relied more on collecting information through interviews with the sample under study. Interviews were conducted with four companies specialized in several fields, including information technology, consulting, training and e-marketing.

This study also relied on secondary sources by referring to the previous collected literature. This study found many obstacles facing entrepreneurs in Jordan, the most important of which are financial and logistical support, the challenge of distributing work, owning operating experiences, obtaining information, commercial relations and networking. One of the main results in this study is that women face great challenges in relation to financing and investment opportunities.

Finally, the study found many proposed solutions that are expected to be applied to improve the business environment, the most important of which is the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship activating pilot projects and stimulating investment in them and relying on the development of technical knowledge of individuals

1. Introduction

This research specializes in studying the challenges of entrepreneurship, specifically the challenges facing Jordanian youth when they enter this field. The interest of many young people to establish their personal projects has increased in recent years, especially with the deterioration of the economic situation, the increase in unemployment rates and the lack of job opportunities. Young people realize that the road is not easy and that it is full of difficulties when it comes to their personal projects.

Jordan is considered a small and difficult competitive environment as it is full of obstacles when it comes to entrepreneurship compared to other countries. Entrepreneurs demand the government to constantly find solutions related to emerging and medium companies. The challenges vary between financing, investment, human resources, the ability to attract customers and network with important sectors.

1.1 Problem Statement

The main problem under study lies in the size of the challenges and obstacles facing entrepreneurs in Jordan. This study tries hard to search for these problems through data and information collection methods in order to find appropriate solutions to these challenges in the future.

The success of small and medium enterprises is an essential part of the success of the country's economy. Countries depend in their economy on developing projects, as they always try to finance

projects and increase investment rates in them because they realize that they are the future. Countries are interested in promoting developing projects, increasing investment opportunities, and pushing the wheel forward. They also contribute to reducing unemployment opportunities by employing manpower in them.

1.2 Research Questions

In each study, there are many questions that are answered in order to reach the final results. This study is based on answering the following questions:

1. What are the most prominent challenges facing the entrepreneurship environment in Jordan?
2. What are the difficulties that entrepreneurs face before starting their businesses?
3. What are the challenges facing entrepreneurs during running their businesses?
4. What are the key solutions to these challenges?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of the literature review is to provide a research background regarding the main topic under study. This study discusses the entrepreneurship challenges or the challenges that face the startup companies in Jordan.

This chapter consists of four main sections, the first is the introduction, the second is the entrepreneurship definition, the third is the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Jordan and the last is the challenges that face the companies in Jordan.

2.2 Entrepreneurship Definition

Entrepreneurship is considered one of the main business branches which has witnessed huge development in the late years (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2016). The science of entrepreneurship is usually concerned with the early stages of companies. Startup companies are companies which have been in the market for less than three years or that is still looking for fund or investment opportunities in its initial stages.

One of the researchers defined entrepreneurship as the science that is concerned with studying the development of companies' work, starting from the first foundational stages to advanced businesses (Mehtap, 2014)

One of the researchers classified entrepreneurship into two main types, the first type, which aims at purely economic profit, and the second type is societal entrepreneurship, which attempts to develop services and products that has greater interest to society and improve the quality of people's life in the short, medium and long term (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2016).

Many researchers tried to dig deeper into the term entrepreneurship, as some of them specialized in studying the qualities and characteristics of a successful entrepreneur. Many researchers have concluded that there has been a development in the concept of entrepreneurship during the past years in particular.

The origin of the term entrepreneurship dates back to the fifties of the nineteenth century. Many researchers believe that the term entrepreneurship is closely related to the term business administration. The science of entrepreneurship has developed very dramatically over the past few years. Several researchers have made different proposals regarding the origins of the science of entrepreneurship.

One of the researchers believes that the first business incubator appeared in the early 1980s, which provided a suitable environment for managing business related to small and medium-sized companies (Mehtap, 2014).

Many countries have implemented the same strategy that the United States followed by adopting business incubators to help emerging and medium-sized companies in a way that ensures the provision of support and networking with major companies and other various famous services (Weldali, 2020).

Many universities in various countries of the world have included the specialization of entrepreneurship among their university specializations due to the expansion of specialization and the urgent need to understand it by individuals and companies. Many studies have mentioned that the term entrepreneurship is closely related to the term creativity. Entrepreneurship is usually associated with technological and technical developments, as most accelerators look for companies that have a different product or service specifically related to technology (Kreitmeyr, 2019).

There are many examples of companies that started as pioneering companies and have become today one of the most important and largest companies in the world. The pace at which entrepreneurship companies usually go varies, as some companies move and grow quickly, while others need more time to develop and achieve their goals.

The emergence of the Internet has greatly affected the topic of entrepreneurship. Many companies have started turning to the electronic platform as one of the opportunities through which they can increase their sales and related investment opportunities. Companies have not only relied on the Internet to market products, but have mainly relied on it to work and search for solutions that help them sustain their business and find new opportunities and innovative ways to accomplish tasks.

2.3 Entrepreneurship & Start-up Companies in Jordan

Previous studies showed that the business sector has developed significantly in Jordan during the past years. The Jordanian government has taken many incentive measures with the aim of trying to increase the demand for entrepreneurship and emerging projects by strengthening the system for supporting companies. The business environment and Jordanian companies are specifically affected by several measures, the most important of which are the general economic situation in the country, the development of infrastructure, and the general technical development (Alawamleh et al., 2019). Based on

a recent survey with the participation of more than 230 entrepreneurs, it was found that most of them have a good level of education in addition to having a good experience compared to others (Weldali, 2020). Based on another recent survey that was conducted targeting start-ups in Jordan, it was found that 62% of the companies have more than ten years of experience in the business field (Mehtap, 2014).

Entrepreneurs in Jordan try to work in appropriate groups as part of their business processes and in order to reach the skills that will enable them to continue to develop.

Another study targeted many emerging entrepreneurship companies in Jordan. This study found that most entrepreneurs aspire to increase their sales despite the many economic conditions that surround them.

The Jordanian government has tried to legislate many regulations and policies that help entrepreneurs.

Many government agencies, such as the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, have tried to encourage and support the entrepreneurial sector in Jordan by reducing the fees for establishing and registering companies. The Jordanian government has issued many legislations in cooperation with the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce and others with the aim of supporting companies' infrastructure and finding new incentive solutions (Kreitmeyr, 2019)

Studies have shown that there are many companies that support the business sector in Jordan. Studies have indicated that all these institutions are divided into several basic sections, the most important of which are business incubators, business accelerators and institutions that support technology companies (Weldali, 2020).

One of the examples of financial supporters companies in entrepreneurship field in Jordan is Oasis500. Oasis500 is considered a funding company which focuses its investment in startup companies who are in their initial stages. Also there is Queen Rania Center for Entrepreneurship is one of the examples of incubators who aim to develop the technological infrastructure in Jordan. One of the goals of Queen Rania Center for Entrepreneurship is to enhance the networking between several startups.

Recently, telecommunications companies have exploited the increasing demand on entrepreneurship from individuals, companies and government. Thus several companies have launched platforms that support the ecosystem of entrepreneurship, innovation and startup companies. Zain Telecommunication Company launched Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC). Orange company has also launched the Business Incubation Growth (BIG) (Jordan Times, 2018)

Shamal Start is one of the famous lending business accelerators in Jordan. Shamal Start is popular with the digital fabrication including different manufacturing processes including robotics, assembly and 3D printing.

2.4 Entrepreneurship Challenges in Jordan

There are many challenges that face the Jordanian start-ups and entrepreneurs at specific. This section focuses on identifying the main challenges which was reported by companies and individuals in general (Al-Hawary and Al-Saysneh, 2020). One of the big challenges of the entrepreneurship in Jordan is the large taxation rates as reported by the companies and individuals in Jordan. Depending on a recent report of the World bank, the biggest problem for many start-ups is the taxes rates by 73%.

A recent study (Kreitmeyr, 2019) aimed to investigate the challenges and problems that face entrepreneurs in general, it is found that governing investments is one of the biggest challenges that faces entrepreneurs in Jordan. Depending on a report in 2019 Jordanian entrepreneurs perceive taxes as the key barrier facing their business (73%), followed by laws governing investments in startups (62%), excessive government formalities (58%), obstacles related to customs law and regulations (55%), and social security (52%) (Mehtap, 2014).

A study by Ács et al. (2017) compared the overall performance of entrepreneurship and innovation between Jordan and Arab countries. A radar chart of the comparison is shown in figure 1.

3. Methodology

The third unit of this study is the methodology. The study methodology aims to clarify the methods and methods that will be followed during the study in order to reach the final results.

Study methodologies differ from one study to another, but many studies are similar in methodologies (Alawamleh, 2012). In this study, we try to highlight the type of study, the methods used in data collection, the methods used in the analysis, the method of conducting the study and the philosophy on which this study will be based.

The methodology part consists of many sections, the most important of which are the type of study, the special sources in the study, the method of data and information collection, and an overview of the analysis that will be used later.

3.1 Type of the Study

There are two main types of studies, the first type is quantitative studies and the second type is qualitative studies. Quantitative studies are defined as studies that rely more on numbers or measurements. Qualitative studies are defined as those studies that are expressed through descriptive speech (Bani Ismail, 2012).

Each type of study has its own way of collecting data and information. Quantitative studies usually use questionnaires mainly and depend on converting questions into numbers to facilitate the calculation of their own measures.

Qualitative studies are based on interviews with individuals through open discussions and focused meetings (Alawamleh et al. 2020). Qualitative studies do not rely mainly on numbers, unlike quantitative

studies. It is expected in this study to rely more on qualitative studies as a main type of study.

3.2 Study Sources

Researchers are usually interested in studying and knowing the sources of information in any research or study they conduct. There are two main sources for obtaining data in studies, these sources are known as primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources are defined as the sources in which the researcher is highly relied upon through the information he collects through questionnaires, surveys, personal interviews, group interviews, dialogues, discussions and focus groups. Many studies rely on primary sources as an essential part of the study sources (Alawamleh et al. 2018).

The second type is secondary sources. Secondary sources are defined as the references and tools that the researcher uses to know the findings of the latest studies related to the same topic of study (Alawamleh et al. 2019). There are many examples of secondary sources that are usually used in the previous literature chapter, the most important of which are scientific journals, reliable sources, the Internet, master's theses and academic references (Alawamleh et al. 2020).

It is expected in this study to rely on the two main types that were mentioned previously. It is expected that this study will depend mainly on the primary sources collected by the researcher and secondary sources by referring to the most prominent previous literature, reviewing and summarizing them.

3.3 Instrument Used in Data Collection

The instrument used in data collection is one of the main sections in the literature review. This section discusses the tools that are intended to be used in data collection. Since this research uses the qualitative type, it is intended to depend on face to face interviews with the targeted sample under study.

An interview is used in this study to help in data collection. The interview consists of three main parts. The first part is the general questions part. The general part consists of four main question which as the interviewee about the company nature and the number of years in the business so far.

The second part focuses on understanding the challenges faced by the startup companies. This section tries to compare the situation of startups pre and post COVID19 pandemic. Moreover the second part asks the interviewee about the best and worst years from the initiation of the startup.

The third and the last section discuss the Jordanian government role to enhance and attract the startups. The third section consists of four main questions; the first question asks the respondent if the Jordanian government has done good steps towards helping start-ups and economy. The second question is about the steps that the government should do in the future to improve, enhance and attract more start-ups. The last question aims to discover the proposed solutions that can improve the eco system of entrepreneurship and start-ups in Jordan.

3.4 Targeted Sample

The sample under study is defined as a group of people who are targeted during this study. The sample is usually considered part of the whole or of the larger group. Usually, it is preferable that a sample be chosen so that it is random and represents the population as a whole.

The sample under study includes entrepreneurs of both genders who have already started their own personal projects and who qualify as startup owners. Startup companies are companies that range in age from a few months to approximately three years. Startups need all kinds of support in this period to be able to continue their business. Examples of the support that startups try to obtain are logistical support, technical support, and financial support through investment opportunities, networking, and others.

This study attempts to reach the answers you are looking for and answer the main study questions by interviewing four different experts who own startup companies to try to identify the nature of the challenges they face and the impact of the Corona pandemic on their businesses.

3.5 Analysis Used in the Study

There are several analyzes that are used in studies. The methods and types of analyzes differ according to the methodology that is followed and depending on the method of data collection that is usually used.

The most prominent statements or the most In this study, it is expected to rely on a qualitative study using personal in depth interviews to try to answer the 14 main questions and reach the expected final results.

Prominent words and phrases that express and describe the situation are relied on in qualitative studies.

4. Analysis And Results

The analysis part aims to discuss the results of the interviews that were conducted with the sample under study. There are many questions to be analyzed in this part including the background part and the evaluation part.

This study focuses mainly on the issue of challenges faced by Jordanian women in the field of entrepreneurship and innovative projects.

Many previous studies have attempted to identify the most important difficulties and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in different environments. Some studies have found that there are differences between the difficulties faced by women in the Arab world in general and Jordan in particular with regard to the issue of small and medium entrepreneurial projects.

This part of the study focuses on analyzing the most prominent opinions reached by the researchers by discussing the results of the appetizers that were made with the study sample represented by female entrepreneurs.

As stated in the methodology, there are fourteen questions that try to focus on knowing the difficulties and challenges that women face in the entrepreneurship sector.

4.1 Background

This study conducted interviews with four people, who are women from startup companies in Jordan, with the aim of asking about the main challenges they face during their work in the entrepreneurship sector in Jordan.

Companies are exposed to many types of difficulties, some of which may be financial and the other organizational, and sometimes difficulties are related to lack of support and resources.

4.2 Interviews Analysis

The second part focuses on analyzing the answers of the individuals who were targeted during the study. This part attempts to summarize the findings of the researcher in general.

4.2.1 First Interview – Information Technology (IT) company

The first interview took place with one of the start-up companies working in the IT sector in Jordan. One of the important questions in this study is related to the size of the company. A company is one of the small start-up companies that are still operating at a small level. A company was founded three years ago, almost a year before the start of the Corona pandemic.

The work in the company is divided between different genders, and the company is trying hard to sustain its business in an easy and fast way. A female co-founder in A was asked about the difficulties that the company faces during its work, she revealed that there are many issues related to work. For example, the company faces great financial difficulties, especially in its early stages, and the company faces problems in organizing its expansion plan in markets outside Jordan. Moreover, the company is trying hard to network with other companies in order to expand the work.

According to the co-founder of the entrepreneurship company, despite the great challenges before the Corona pandemic, the issue remains easier than what is during and after the pandemic, as the closures that occurred in many sectors greatly affected the work and led to many losses and a decline in profits in general

The co-founder was asked about the best years in business since establishment, and it answered that the best years are the beginning years, especially before the Corona pandemic due to the closures that took place and that affected the company, especially in terms of marketing.

The third section focuses on the role of the Jordanian government in supporting the entrepreneurship sector. Entrepreneurs answered that Jordan, through the Ministry of Digital Economy and

Entrepreneurship, has taken many measures to support startups, but these measures are not enough.

4.2.2 Second Interview – Training and Consulting Company

The second interview took place with one of the training and consulting companies in Jordan. The second company is considered a company specialized in the field of entrepreneurship, as it started its business during the last year.

This company (B) is considered small in size, with only four employees. The employees are distributed within several specializations and at different ages.

The second part of the study attempted to identify the most important challenges the company faces. During the interview with one of the female entrepreneurs in the company, it became clear that there are many difficulties that the company faced during its work, one of which is the issue of licenses, approvals and choosing the type of company for the purposes of registration.

One of the most prominent difficulties that the company faced is the financial issues related to the capital, as companies in Jordan suffer greatly from the lack of investment during the start of their work. The company faced difficulties related to market studies, as it was not able to understand customers the right way at the beginning.

When talking about the most prominent difficulties that the company faced during the Corona period, it is clear that companies in general have gone through harsh periods due to closures and as a result of the great fear that occurred among customers and clients.

The same interview indicated that there are many challenges facing female entrepreneurs in Jordan. One of the key challenges is having operational experience, as women entrepreneurs in general suffer from poor technical experience to manage the project, which leads them to resort to help from other people in order to sustain the business.

Based on the interview, it became clear that one of the most important challenges is the programs for developing entrepreneurship and sustainability and expanding the project in the future. One of the girls considered that obtaining information in the information entrepreneurship sector may be difficult and a great challenge, no less important than obtaining financial support.

4.2.3 Third Interview – Market Research Company

The third interview took place with one of the companies specialized in market research studies. The company (C) is considered small in size and is trying to denounce the provision of market studies services for small and medium companies. Based on the interview with the female entrepreneur; the sector of entrepreneurship in Jordan suffers from many challenges.

The interview indicated that the number of female entrepreneurs working in the field of entrepreneurship constitutes less than a quarter of the total number of entrepreneurs. She also explained that there is often

a partner for women working in the field.

The entrepreneur considered that one of the most important challenges facing women in the entrepreneurship sector in Jordan is financial support, as few entrepreneurial companies are incubated and their work is accelerated. Another important challenge is the lack of sufficient confidence, as many projects run by women fail during the first years of their work due to fear of failure or legal accountability that pushes women to enter the courts in the event that they incur any financial sums in the event of the failure of the project, which is considered one of the most important challenges the big societal challenges.

During the study, the researcher indicated that a large number of women start their businesses from home, which is what they already did before going to the license, as the nature of the work does not require the presence of huge office equipment or decoration and meeting rooms at the beginning, and it can be done remotely and from anywhere without the need for many complications.

4.2.4 Fourth Interview – Social Media Marketing Company

The fourth interview took place with one of the social media marketing companies. The company (D) is considered medium-sized and focuses on providing marketing and consulting services on social media. The company activates advertising campaigns by focusing on developing work proposals and future marketing plans. The company has signed many special contracts with companies which enabled it to grow and develop, especially during a period that came with a significant increase in reliance on the establishment of e-marketing. During the interview, the researcher indicated that there are many obstacles facing female entrepreneurs in Jordan. The most prominent of these obstacles is the subject of financial support and investment in companies.

The interview also indicated that there are many challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Jordan. One of the most prominent difficulties is the issue of appropriate networking with companies, where the leading companies need to help in the process of networking to reach the right customers, and this is one of the problems that faced the e-marketing company during the work.

4.3 Discussion

After completing the analysis of the interviews with the study sample, this section attempts to summarize the most prominent findings of the study. The study showed that there are many difficulties that business companies in Jordan suffer from.

The results of the study indicated that entrepreneurs face big problems, most notably in the issue of financing their projects, and this was also mentioned in previous studies. According to (Kreitmeyr, 2019) the key challenges faced by entrepreneurs are represented in the weakness of financial funding and real investment opportunities.

One of the most difficult difficulties related to the work of business companies is the lack of practical experience in the business sector, where the study also indicated that more than 60% of companies fail

as a result of poor experience and skills. One of the most prominent challenges faced by entrepreneurs is the high project costs and rents, which lead to project suspension. Logistics services constitute a major obstacle for entrepreneurs because understanding the market is essential in this field.

The entrepreneur needs programs that help develop and develop his capabilities to reach high levels of work, and communication and knowledge of public relations is one of the biggest things that are required of the entrepreneur.

Familiarity with the regulations, laws and techniques of government institutions and departments is one of the most important obstacles facing entrepreneurs in Jordan, as the study indicated that the legal environment is one of the challenges for entrepreneurial projects, as it sometimes requires going through many long procedures that entrepreneurs are ignorant of. One study indicated that few people working within start-up companies have experience in property rights and business registration.

The companies' knowledge of these matters is essential, which helps to sustain business, achieve gains and legal protection

5. Conclusion

This study attempted to answer many questions, the most important of which are related to the challenges facing the entrepreneurship sector in Jordan. This study summarized the key difficulties faced by this sector and tried to clarify the details of the work and what are the expected solutions to improve this sector. This study relied on the qualitative methodology by focusing on the interviews that took place with the study sample.

This study concluded that there are many challenges facing entrepreneurs in Jordan. The most prominent of these challenges is having the operating experience and starting the project, as young entrepreneurs face many problems including the skills and experience required in the market. The challenge of expanding the business is considered one of the challenges facing any entrepreneur, which stands in the way of expanding and obtaining more returns for the business.

The expansion stage is one of the most important stages in the plan of any business project. The interviews with the study sample indicated that access to financial services and investment opportunities is one of the biggest challenges faced by Jordanian entrepreneurs in particular. It is difficult for an entrepreneur to build relationships and networks on a large scale without the help of business incubators and accelerators.

Finally, the interviews indicated that the techniques and knowledge of the legal environment, labor laws and intellectual property rights are one of the biggest obstacles facing entrepreneurs in Jordan.

6. Recommendations

In each study there are many recommendations. The key recommendations of this study include the following:

1. The necessity of activating the entrepreneurship sector through the issuance of laws that encourage the start of projects and facilitate business development
2. Business accelerators and business incubators invest and spend more on pilot projects because they are the future.
3. Entrepreneurs should develop their technical skills and skills related to the legal environment and the necessity of having operational experience.
4. Focusing on networking and building large sustainable partnerships that help open up internal and external horizons.

Abbreviations

Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC).

Information Technology (IT).

Business Incubation Growth (BIG)

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Availability of data and material

Not applicable

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Figures

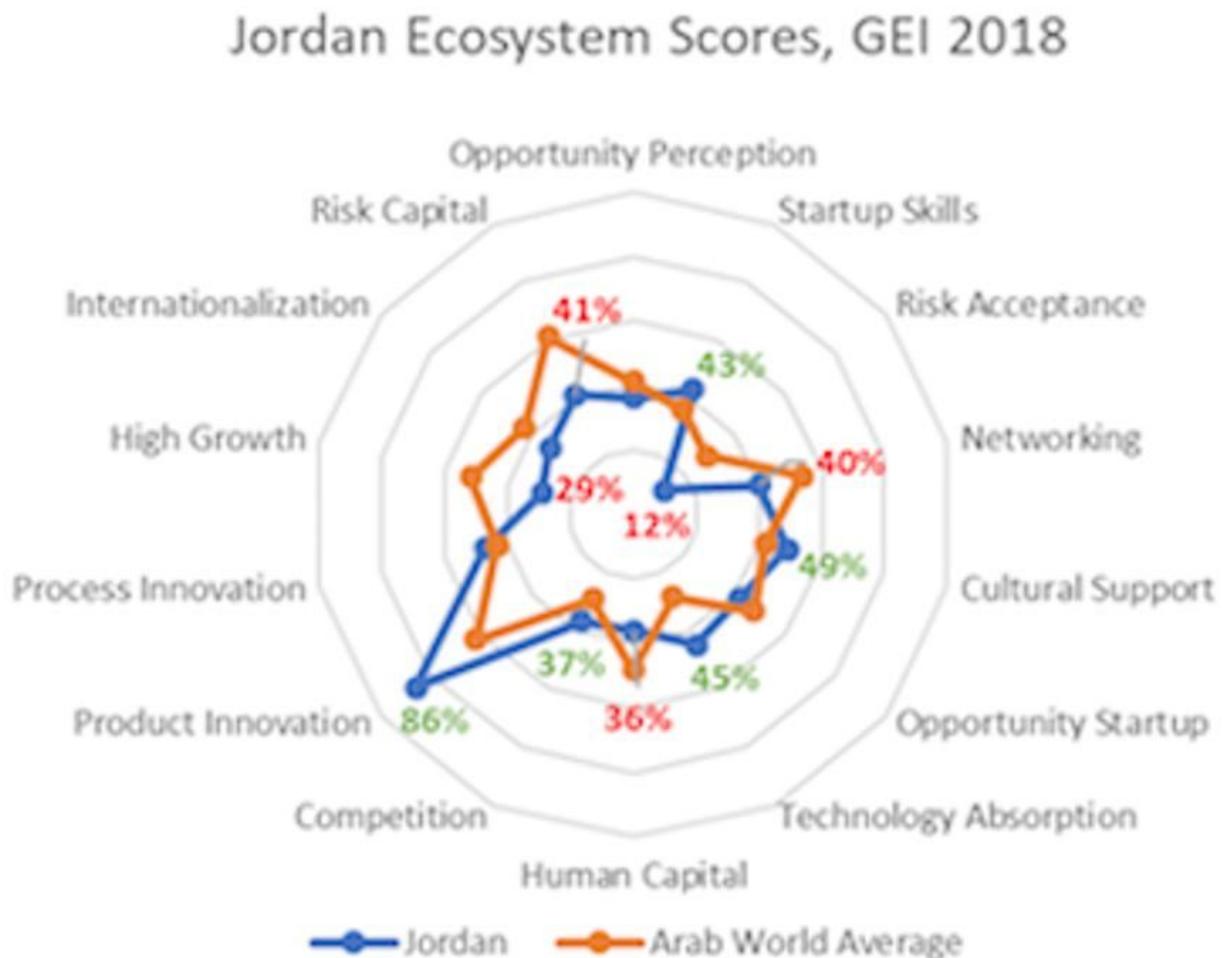


Figure 1

Radar chart that compares between Jordan and Arab World in Entrepreneurship and Innovation (Ács et al. (2017))