

# The Influence of Religion on Entrepreneurial Behavior: A Review on the Roles of Emotion and Religious Motivation

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## Abstract

Entrepreneurship plays an influential role in economic growth. However, in today's digitalized world, entrepreneurial journey is perceived as increasingly challenging than before, as the world is becoming increasingly dynamic and full of uncertainties. One of the ways entrepreneurs choose in dealing with this difficulties and challenges in their entrepreneurial journey is to resort to religion. Religion was found to be significantly related to emotion regulations, motivation and behavior. In entrepreneurship field, previous studies on entrepreneurial behavior were mostly focused on personality and psychological traits. Very little attention has been paid to the role of religion in influencing entrepreneurial behavior, particularly on emotion and religious motivation. The objective of this conceptual paper is to discuss the role of emotion and religious motivation in influencing entrepreneurial behavior. The paper provides discussion and suggestions for future studies on entrepreneurial behavior, guidelines for practitioners, learning institutions and policymakers.

**Keywords:** Religion, Entrepreneurial Behavior, Emotion, Religious Motivation, Values

## Introduction

Entrepreneurship has become an engine of growth in many if not most developed and emerging economies (Audretsch, 2009; Ayyagari, Demirguc-Kunt, & Maksimovic, 2014; Nishantha & Pathirana, 2014). Entrepreneurial behavior a crucial ingredient in entrepreneurship, have always been among the subject of interest for researchers since entrepreneurs possess the characteristics or behaviors that enabled them to take risks, leverage (limited) resources and turn an idea into viable and profitable business.(Bird & Schjoedt, 2009; Gartner, 1985; Kirkley, 2016; Lukes, 2012). Scholars found psychological and

sociological factors to be linked with entrepreneurs behavior. (Carlsson et al., 2013; Nesselroade & Molenaar, 2016).

Earlier studies focused on the influence of personality traits (Brandstatter, 2011; Caliendo, Fossen, & Kritikos, 2014; Kolb & Wagner, 2015; Rauch & Frese, 2007) and psychological traits (Chen, Chang, Wang, & Chen, 2017; Frese & Gielnik, 2014; Kirkley, 2016; Omorede, Thorgren, & Wincent, 2014) on entrepreneurial behavior. However these studies on personality traits were found to be inconclusive (Botsaris & Vamvaka, 2012) thus scholars have then examined psychological traits (Gregoire, Corbett, & McMullen, 2011; Omorede et al., 2014).

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in studies related to the roles of emotion and motivation in entrepreneurship (Baron, 2008; Baron, Robert, & Tang, 2011; Bautista, García, Puente, & Mazagatos, 2015; Cardon, Foo, Shepherd, & Wiklund, 2012). According to researchers, values shape motivational goals and guides what is important to people (Schwartz, 2013) and in turn become the foundational inputs to psychological process which involves an interconnection between cognition, emotion and motivation, leading to behaviors (O'Shea, Buckley, & Halbesleben, 2017). Thus values play a fundamental role in forming entrepreneurial behavior (Kirkley, 2016; Krueger, 2007; Tomczyk, Lee, & Winslow, 2013). One of the important sources of values is religion (McFarlane, 2011; Ratten, Ramadani, Dana, & Gerguri-Rashiti, 2017; Saroglou, Delpierre, & Dernelle, 2004). In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, where environment are becoming more dynamic, global with full of uncertainties (Karakas, 2010b), interest in religion is growing worldwide (Weaver & Stansbury, 2014; & Stansbury, 2014). There have been a noticeable shift where people are increasingly desiring to integrate faith with behaviors, daily activities or workplace (Miller & Ewest, 2010; Miller, 2007; Miller & Ewest, 2015). In other words, their daily activities are most probably driven by religious values.

Past literatures found that religion is integrated in behaviors in many ways. Religion influence people to observe socially desirable manners (Gervais & Norenzayan, 2012), enhance organizational commitment (Walker, 2013), cope with sad event or anxieties (Soenke, Landau, & Greenberg, 2013), regulate emotions during turbulent time (Barhem, Younies, & Muhamad, 2009), work hard towards perfections (Karakas, 2010), forgive others (Byrne, Morton, & Dahling, 2011) and behave ethically (Wong, 2008; Vitell, 2009). However, despite the vast evidence on significant positive impacts of religion on behavior (Karakas, 2010), and the views on the significant roles of emotion in entrepreneurship (Baron, 2008; Cacciotti, Hayton, Mitchell, & Giazitzoglu, 2016), not much has been done on the impact of religion on entrepreneurial behavior (Gumusay, 2015), particularly which include the discussions on the psychological process related to emotion and motivation.

Therefore, this conceptual study attempts to provide valuable insights on how religion might influence entrepreneurial behavior by focusing on the components of emotion and religious motivation behind the behavior. Since religion is also related to emotion regulation (Vishkin, Bigman, & Tamir, 2014; Vishkin, Bloom, & Tamir, 2018) as well as positive (Miller-Perin & Mancusco, 2015) and intense experiences of emotions (Burriss & Petrican, 2011) it seems beneficial to see how religion can provide some explanations on entrepreneurial behavior through the roles of emotions and religious motivations.

### **Entrepreneurial Behavior**

In general, entrepreneurial behavior can be simply be understood as actions and activities of individuals in entrepreneurship for example; taking advantage and acting upon opportunities, acquisition of new knowledge and skills, creating new products, managing resources and identifying new markets or customer (Bird & Schjoedt, 2009; Gartner, Carter, & Reynolds, 2010; Van Dam, Schipper, & Runhaar, 2010).

Entrepreneurial behavior has become the focus of analysis in entrepreneurship research (Campbell & Mitchell, 2012). This can be the results from a shift of research trend in entrepreneurship, from a theoretical focus towards a more practical one (Dorin & Alexandru, 2014), from macro-oriented towards a micro-oriented one (Balog, Baker, & Walker, 2014; Carlsson et al., 2013) which concerned with individuals' values and behavior, the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities, the modes of action used to exploit the opportunities (Low & MacMillan, 1988; Scott & Venkataraman, 2000), and the building of competitive advantage (Liu, Yu, & Wu, 2019).

In addition, studies on entrepreneurial behavior in entrepreneurship research is growingly significant. In behavioral studies, the focus of scholars is more on individual as the primary unit of analysis, who is perceived as complex in nature. This is because individuals' behavior were found to be influenced by complex factors such as the combination of genetic, conditioning histories, education and environmental influences (Nesselroade & Molenaar, 2016). Entrepreneurial process models today are seen as a more subjective and dynamic concept, focusing on what entrepreneurs actually do or entrepreneurial behavior (Nielsen & Lassen, 2012). Therefore, knowledge of entrepreneurial behavior at the individual level is important for further development of future theories in entrepreneurship (Wiklund, Davidsson, Audretsch, & Karlsson, 2011) and the knowledge requires understanding of psychological process, which contains the interactions of key psychological components such as cognition, emotion and motivation (O'Shea et al., 2017; Toates, 2004)

### **Psychological factors and Entrepreneurial Behavior**

Psychology involves scientific study of mental processes, emotions and behavior (Noor, 2012). In entrepreneurial context, a great deal of previous research supported that psychological factors strongly affects the entrepreneurs' behavior (Agorastos, Demiralay, & Huber, 2014; Bautista et al., 2015; Frese & Gielnik, 2014; Kato & Wiklund, 2011; Omoredede et al., 2014). Based on a literature review on 1,648 papers in the area of entrepreneur's psychology by Omoredede et al., (2014), researches on cognition has attracted the largest interest of scholars while researches related to emotion were predicted to grow significantly. This finding is consistent with findings of past studies by Cardon et al., (2012), which revealed that over the last few years research in emotions and entrepreneurship has made great progress. Moreover, emotional experience has been also found to be strongly associated with cognitive factors (Cacciotti & Hayton, 2015; Hendricks & Buchanan, 2015; Lazarus, 1982; Miller-Perin & Mancuso, 2015; Pedersen et al., 2011).

### **Emotion and Behavior**

There is lack of consensus in the definition of emotion (Evers, Fuller, Runehov, & Sæther, 2016). However, for this study, emotion is referred to entrepreneurial emotion which is 'the affect, emotions, moods, and/or feelings of individuals or a collective that are antecedent to,

concurrent with, and/or a consequence of, the entrepreneurial process' (Cardon et al., 2012, pg.1). Emotion was perceived as more intense than affect (Fredrickson, 2001). However, the term emotion has also been used interchangeably with the term affect (Cardon et al., 2012).

The roles of emotion in relation to behavior have been widely investigated (Evers et al., 2016; O'Shea et al., 2017). The strength of the intention-behavior relationship was found significantly related to the extent to which individuals link their intentions with emotion (Keer, Conner, Van den Putte, & Neijens, 2014). Emotions influence decision-making, memory, cognitive information processing and attention (Baron, 2008). The interconnection between cognition and emotion can be supported by 'Affect Infusion' model developed by Joseph Forgas (Forgas, 2012) which implies that the strength of emotion affects individuals' judgements and decision (Bautista et al., 2015; Forgas, 2008; O'Shea et al., 2017). In addition, positive emotions can trigger more ideas and actions related to coping strategies and consequently strengthen one's resilience against stress (Gloria & Steinhardt, 2014).

In entrepreneurial context, the roles of emotions have become increasingly important (Nielsen & Lassen, 2012). In facing entrepreneurial challenges, entrepreneurs might face unstable emotions such as fear of failure or frustrations which can adversely affect behavior (Cardon et al., 2012). Deficiency and excess of emotions can cause people to lose control of their behavior such as the condition of people excitedly taking on mortgages that they can't afford or people fear to invest due to previous negative experiences (Loewenstein, 2010). This phenomenon has encouraged a lot of studies on emotion regulations which is one of the fastest growing areas within psychology (Gross, 2015). Regulated emotions can strengthen motivation which leads to behavior (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010).

### **Motivation and Behavior**

Motivation can generally be understood as the 'driving force behind behavior' (Madsen, 1974, as cited in Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981, p.276). The driving forces contain the combinations of energies which initiate, direct and sustain behavior toward a goal. Thus, the stronger the motivation, the higher the possibility the behavior will be executed (Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981).

It is important to boost up the motivation of an entrepreneur to make him/her performing certain entrepreneurial behavior. The link between entrepreneurs' motivation and entrepreneurial behavior can be explained by 'theory of action' proposed by Atkinson and Birch in 1978, which implies that the intensity and persistence in the behavior depends on the intensity of the motivation to perform that action, compared with the force of the motivation to perform other actions (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2012). Thus, and there is a need to understand motivational states and the factors which form, influence and strengthen entrepreneurs' motivation.

Parker et al., (2010) proposed that there are three motivational states which may influence behavior; (1) 'can do' which refers to self-efficacy perceptions, the perceived costs of an action and control appraisals leading to behavior (2) 'reason to' refers to the internal driving force to engage in a behavior or the 'why' of an action, such as the activity itself is enjoyable, and intrinsically interesting and, (3) 'energized to' refers to affect-related motivational states, such as 'can do' or 'reason to' state activated by affect or emotion.

The third state of motivation ('energized to') is perceived as a stronger form of motivation compared to the other two states of motivation as it is strengthened by emotions coming from the heart. Based on a research carried out by Lacey and Lacey, in 1978, from the Institute of HeartMath, it is the heart that sends a meaningful message to the brain which could alter a person's behavior. The concept of functional 'heart brain', introduced by Armour in 1991, implies that the heart has its independent nervous system where the electrical component of the heart's field is 60 times greater in amplitude than in the brain's field. Moreover, the heart's magnetic component is 5000 times greater than the brain's magnetic component (Salleh & Ahmad, 2008).

Therefore, a motivation attached with emotions can be a stronger driver of entrepreneurial behavior. Past studies has shown that emotion is powerful in influencing evaluation process and responses in a complex situation in entrepreneurship (Michl, Welpel, Sporrle, & Picot, 2009), the motivation for a particular course of action (Fredrickson, 2001) and moral judgment (Bankard, 2015). The significant role of emotions in strengthening motivations which lead to behavior, has also been explained by religion-related psychological studies (e.g. Abu-Raiya, 2014; Dueck & Johnson, 2016).

### **The Relevance of Religion in Entrepreneurship**

The term 'religion' has been defined in many ways (Belzen, 2010; Sweetman, 2001). Generally, religion can be referred as 'beliefs, practices, and rituals related to the sacred' (Koenig, 2008, pg.3). Studies related to religion continues to attract scholars' interest (Woodhead, 2009) as the number of world adherents of religion is growing (Pew Research Centre, 2017) and the interest in practicing religion in all aspects of life is rising (Miller & Ewest, 2013, 2015). Moreover, in this 21st century, the world is becoming more and more dynamic, competitive, full of chaos and uncertainties, leading to the situations whereby religion and spirituality were essential for internal strength and survival (Karakas, 2007, 2010).

The growing interest in religion can be seen from several phenomenon such as the rejections on the secularization theory (Berger, 1999; Marranci, 2010), the choice of philosophical preference that instils religious and spiritual beliefs (Ewest, 2015), a shift toward a new management paradigm which increasingly value spirituality in management studies (Bouckaert, 2010; Karakas, 2010b), an emergence of the phenomenon of theological turn which calls for research on spiritual and religious practices in organisations (Dyck, 2014), increasing awareness to act beyond materialism (Bakar, Lee, & Hashim, 2013; Chowdhury & Fernando, 2013; Donnelly, Ksendzova, & Howell, 2013; Lu & Lu, 2010) and a remarkable growth in Islamic participation and values since the 1970s (Carvalho, 2009). However, despite these phenomenon, some management scholars are still denying the central role of religion in the study of management and organization (Tracey, 2012; Tracey, Phillips, & Lounsbury, 2014). Little attention has been paid to the question of how religion's influence manifests in the workplace (King, 2008).

Religion is value-loaded, which influence psychological process and guide behavior (Balog et al., 2014). Past studies showed that religiosity contributes to positive consequences in term of psychological well-being, through the ways that religion becomes the source for meaning and purpose in life, hope, optimism, self-esteem and self-control or self-regulation (Abdel-

Khalek, 2014; Koenig & Shohaib, 2014). In an empirical study, Vishkin et al., (2014) found that religion influences processes of self-regulation through activities such as cognitive reappraisal, distraction of one-self from negative temptations, social support, ritual practices, and the setting of emotion goals. Thus, studies on religion in management field or in workplace seem highly relevant and a lot of researches is still needed on certain insufficiently explored perspectives such as the influence of religion on actor's behavior (Gundolf & Filser, 2013)

Previous studies in entrepreneurship have reported positive psychological impacts of religion on entrepreneurial behavior (Bellu & Fiume, 2004; Berthold & Ruch, 2014; Judge & Douglas, 2013; Nwankwo, Gbadamosi, & Ojo, 2012; Yaacob & Azmi, 2012). However, there has been lack of detailed discussions on how or in what ways religion influence entrepreneurial behavior in different contexts. It is important to consider the differences in individual, social, cultural and institutional contexts while studying religious practices and entrepreneurial behavior (Belzen, 2010; Welter, 2011). Beside contextual factors, insights into how religion is connected to certain psychological components, particularly on emotions and motivation are also important.

### **Religion and Emotion**

Emotion plays a fundamental role in religion. A focus on emotion in studying religion can lead to better understanding about how people attach themselves to God, build relationships with other people and nature (Corrigan, 2007). According to Kirkpatrick (2005, as cited in Evers et al., 2016, p.9). 'There is no such thing as religion without emotion' which implies that there is inseparable link observed between religion and emotion. Moreover, greater religiosity is related to more intense experiences of emotions (Burriss & Petrican, 2011).

In other words, emotions bind the relationship between a human being and his God. A religious person who was considered as 'being bounded' or 'being attached' to God, was observed as fulfilling certain criteria. The criteria were described as first, having proximity maintenance between man and God through specific ritual activities such as prayers. This ritual involved fundamental emotions related to a sense closeness to God. Second, having God as a safe haven or the place one is likely to turn to during stress. Third, relying on God's traits such as loving supportive, guiding, protective for well-being or to be free from worries and depression. Fourth, believing God as stronger, wiser, omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient leading to reduction of fear (Evers et al., 2016). Hence, attachment to God seems mainly bounded by emotions.

Furthermore, a large number of evidences in the psychology of religion conducted since the past two decades, showed that religion contributes to positive emotions (Abdel-Khalek, 2014; Abu-Raiya, 2014; Cunningham, 2014; Dein, 2013; Pirutinsky, 2013; Skinner, 2010). A systematic review of 100 studies carried out by Koenig, McCullough, and Larson (2001) revealed that religious beliefs and practices are related to positive emotions in term of providing a sense of well-being, satisfaction with life, and happiness. Moreover, religious practices can also generate tranquillity, joy and compassion (Miller-Perin & Mancusco, 2015; Silberman, 2009). The intensity of the experiences of emotions was also linked to greater religiosity (Burriss & Petrican, 2011). In addition, a study conducted by Van-Cappellen, Toth-Gauthier, Saroglou, & Fredrickson (2014), indicated that awe, gratitude, love, and peace, were

the positive emotions that mediate the relationship between religion/spirituality and well-being. In another study carried out by Leslie, Morton, Jerry, and Martin (2017) emotions mediate the relationship between religious engagement (e.g. church activity) and the decrease in mortality risk.

In entrepreneurship field, emotions generated from religiosity were found significant for entrepreneur's resilience and well-being. A literature review of 30 articles on influences of spirituality and religiosity within the field of entrepreneurship showed positive impacts of religion on well-being of entrepreneurs in term of strengthened motivation, responsible business behavior, physical health & psychological well-being as well as employees' well-being (Balog et al., 2014). An empirical study conducted Pargament et al. (1990), proposed that religious coping efforts are useful in response to negative events. Religious coping behavior can help entrepreneurs dealing with emotions such as grief, aroused from the experience of failure which can hinder entrepreneurs' ability to be resilient and move forward (Shepherd, 2003). In addition, the spirituality of entrepreneurs were deepened as they actively engaging with failure and ultimately able to transform failure into positive life outcomes (Singh & Corner, 2015). In sum, motivation can also be built or strengthened by religion and this kind of motivation can be termed as religious motivation, which can lead entrepreneurs to move on, learn from failure and achieve well-being.

### **Religious Motivation**

As mentioned in the previous section, motivation is referred to something which drives behaviors. It is underpinned by a specific set of values which are part of the set of deep beliefs. These values influence the way an individual think, makes decisions and behave (Dodd & Gotsis, 2007; Krueger, 2007; Salwa, Shahbudin, & Jusoff, 2013; Saroglou et al., 2004; Tomczyk et al., 2013) and become the foundation for entrepreneurial behavior (Kirkley, 2016). Values has been considered as a central concept in the social sciences as expresses what is important to people and guides how people perceive different acts, people, objects and events as more or less valuable (Schwartz, 2015). Thus, combinations of certain values can form goals which can motivate behavior.

The values underlying religious motivation are values which come from religion. Those religious values guide selection and evaluation of actions, policies, people, and events (Schwartz, 2015). For instance, a religious entrepreneur with religious motivation might choose measures of success that have specific relevance for spiritual and religious values such as having the ability to give back to their communities although they do not earn much profit (Balog et al., 2014). Moreover, the religious values held by a highly religious person might cause the entrepreneur to decide on something which forgoes their short-term commercial interests (Dodd & Gotsis, 2007).

One of the most well-known concept of religious motivation is the one developed by Allport and Ross (1967) known as Religious Orientation Scales (ROS) which has been found to be a useful instrument to measure religious influences on human behaviors (Donahue, 1985). ROS has been well accepted by many scholars to be used in various religious contexts (Lavric & Flere, 2011) such as in Christian and Islam (Ghorbani & Watson, 2006). Based on ROS, the influence of religion on behavior can be classified into two different categories due to the different motives or driving forces behind the behavior. ROS classifies religious motivation in

term of intrinsic vs extrinsic religious motivation (Allport & Ross, 1967). People with intrinsic religious motivation submit himself totally to the religion, comply with religion in every aspect of their life, and aimed for an emotionally deeper, more meaningful relationship with God (Darvyri et al., 2014). In contrast, people with extrinsic religious motivation perform religious activities to achieve other than religious motives, such as pursuing some self-serving end, comfort, self-esteem, social support, monetary rewards, security and status (Masters & Knestel, 2011).

In sum, the form of religious motivations depends on the entrepreneur's chosen values learnt from religion. These religious values become the input for cognitive process, and might trigger or strengthen emotion. A strong belief in God together with the emotions of love or fear of God, can have a profound impact on entrepreneurial behavior such as to continue business during a difficult time or to be ethical at all time. Therefore, it can be said that, what influence entrepreneurial behavior can be explained by the interrelationships among cognition, emotions and motivation which is presented in the form of conceptual framework in this study.

### Conceptual Framework on How Religion may Influence Entrepreneurial Behavior

In this section, how religion may influence entrepreneurial behavior is presented in a conceptual framework, shown in figure 1 below. Religious knowledge, beliefs or values can be learned from scriptures, educational institutions or social interactions. They enter the cognitive process and interact with emotions (coming from the sense of attachment to God) and energize motivation. Consequently, the interconnecting cognition, emotions and motivations may transform inputs (e.g. religious beliefs, environments and etc) into entrepreneurial behavior. The stronger the emotions in relation to the 'attachment to God', the stronger the motivation and the higher the possibility of certain behavior will be executed. This interconnection is consistent with the idea of A-CEM-A model introduced by O'Shea et al., (2017) whereby cognition, emotion and motivation are interconnecting among each other and emotions can enhance motivation (Parker et al., 2010). The nature of religion together with these three interconnecting key psychological variables may contribute to more explanation on entrepreneurial behavior of religious adherents.

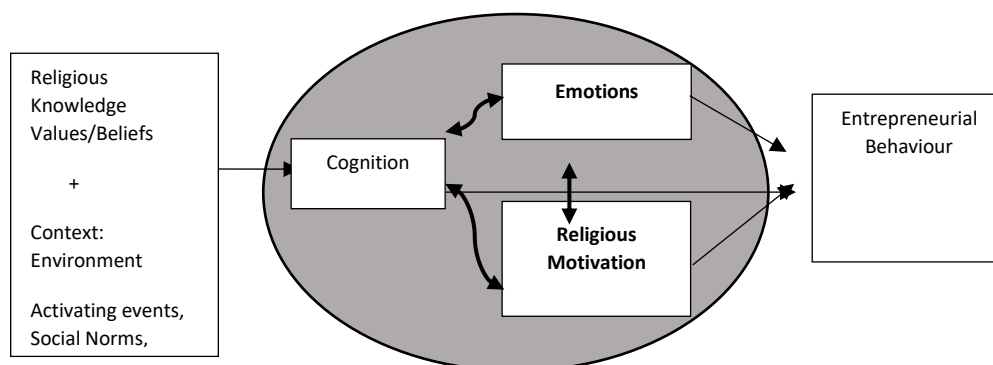


Figure 1

In addition, it is important to note the significance of contextual factors in studying entrepreneurial behavior (Welter, 2011). The actual practice of religion might not be the same



in different historical, institutional, and socio-cultural contexts (Berghammer & Fliegenschnee, 2014; Karakas, Sarigollu, & Kavas, 2014; Syed & Metcalfe, 2015). Moreover, the influence of religious values on each individual might also vary as they were shaped by different individual socio-historic 'life-worlds' (Forster & Fenwick, 2015). Thus, findings from the study in one culture could not be generalized to other cultures (Belzen, 2010; Belzen & Hood, 2006). Therefore, future studies on entrepreneurial behavior need to consider different cultural contexts.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

There is a crucial need for more resilient and ethical entrepreneurs with the advent of more challenging, globalised and digitalized environment. Research interest on religion and entrepreneurial behavior is evident considering the impact of religion on behavior and well-being. In this study, the significant roles of emotions and religious motivation was highlighted. Religion as one of the significant sources of values, are loaded with emotions which attach oneself to God and other creations. The cognition, imbued with religious values, interacts with emotions, might be transformed into energized religious motivation leading to certain form of entrepreneurial behavior. In other words, emotions from being religious strengthen the motivation for a particular course of action.

In today's dynamic business environment, the motivation of the entrepreneurs must be strong enough to survive in a difficult situation since the entrepreneur might lose hope and quit, or ignore some religious values and practices for the sake of survival. In order to survive and remain ethical in entrepreneurship, powerful energy to drive the entrepreneurs' behavior towards their goal is needed. This present study contributes to enhance our understanding on the roles of emotions and religious motivation in entrepreneurship. It helps to highlight the significance of religious education as one of the possible inputs for strategies to be considered by policy makers in developing internal strength, resilience and ethics of entrepreneurs. The religious educational content and teaching methods which able to touch the emotions of entrepreneurs can give better impact on entrepreneurs' motivations and behavior.

Further studies on the impacts of religion on entrepreneurial behavior would be a great help in understanding how religion is integrated in entrepreneurship, management and workplace. Empirical studies on religiosity, emotions and religious motivations as antecedents of entrepreneurial behavior in different contexts would be a fruitful study (Gursoy, Altinay, & Kenebayeva, 2017) as the outcomes might also vary depending on contextual factors such as the characteristics of the society (Diener, Tay, & Myers, 2011). The findings would also be useful for the efforts of developing the measurement scales of religiosity and religious motivation in the context entrepreneurship.

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