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Religious Value of Entrepreneurial Imaginativeness: Scale Measurement Development and Validation

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ABSTRACT: Purpose − This study seeks to refine the concept of value as applied to entrepreneurial imaginativeness by incorporating religious values. The Religious Value of Entrepreneurial Imaginativeness (RVEI) is introduced to address the absence of transcendental or divine values in prior research on value and entrepreneurial imaginativeness. Existing literature has predominantly focused on transactional motives and worldly objectives, thereby neglecting spiritual needs. A literature review covering the period from 1990 to 2020 was conducted, with particular emphasis on entrepreneurial imaginativeness.

Method − A qualitative approach was employed to review articles relevant to the study's objectives. Harzing's Publish or Perish (PoP) application facilitated the identification of pertinent sources. Articles were selected exclusively from Scopus (97 articles) and Google Scholar (115 articles). Following a rigorous screening process, seven articles were included in the final analysis.

Finding: The analysis indicates that the concept of value in existing literature emphasizes business values and does not incorporate religious values, particularly those rooted in Islamic principles.

Originality: This study addresses a theoretical gap by integrating religious values into the concept of entrepreneurial imaginativeness, thereby offering a more holistic perspective. The inclusion of religious values is particularly significant for organizations offering religion-based products, as it provides a unique and inimitable feature. Such differentiation is believed to foster strong competitive advantage through values that transcend transactional motives. Without this integration, the use of terms such as 'sharia' risks remaining superficial or merely a label.

Implications − Future studies can be developed by examining the relationships among RVEI, its antecedent and consequence variables.

KEYWORDS: Enterprepreneurship, Value Creation, Religious Value, Imaginativeness

INTRODUCTION

The longevity of a business largely depends on the entrepreneur's ability to implement continuous improvement (Sudarti & Wasitowati, 2021), demonstrate imagination and creativity in identifying new opportunities (Widodo & Nuhayatie, 2020), and effectively develop new products or ventures (Kier & McMullen, 2020; Liang et al., 2017). Innovative individuals are better equipped to respond to dynamic environments and generate ideas that confer competitive advantage (Sudarti et al., 2022). However, such innovation is contingent upon the entrepreneur possessing entrepreneurial imaginativeness (EI) (Roundy, 2021). The capacity to recognise opportunities and anticipate future developments is critical to business success (Ramoglou, 2021).

EI refers to the ability to consider multiple possibilities (Grant, 2012) and the cognitive capacity to transform imagination into explicit new ideas (Chen et al., 2022). The entrepreneur's skill in articulating compelling narratives about envisioned products, technologies, and organizations can determine the realization of innovative goals. McMullen and Kier (2017) categorize EI into three dimensions: creative, social, and practical imaginativeness. EI may be shaped by innate talent (Yusuf, 2009), spiritual experiences (Elias et al., 2022), and cognitive processes (Kier & McMullen, 2020).

Although research on EI has been conducted, several studies remain conceptual and lack empirical validation regarding EI's contribution to new product idea generation (Chiles et al., 2021; McMullen & Kier, 2017). Empirical investigations into EI are still limited. For example, Widodo and Nuhayatie (2020) found that creative and practical imaginativeness positively influence the development of product novelty, whereas social imaginativeness does not. Kier and McMullen (2020) demonstrated that variations in individual EI levels within a team lead to differences in the quality of novel product ideas generated.

Further development of EI research is warranted, as empirical evidence regarding its impact on new product idea generation remains scarce. Additionally, the entrepreneurial mindset for innovation has not yet been integrated with religious values, particularly within an Islamic context. As a result, entrepreneurs often prioritise product development without considering broader interests such as employees, society, and the environment. Integrating Islamic values, specifically Al Itsar—which emphasises prioritising others over oneself in acts of kindness and benefit (Hasnahwati, 2021; Hidayati & Sunaryo, 2019)—is necessary. The concept of Al Itsar is referenced in the Koran (Surah Al Hasyr, verse 9) and in hadiths, which highlight the virtue of assisting others. Incorporating spiritual elements and Islamic values aims to expand and complement the EI framework, rendering it more comprehensive and oriented toward societal and environmental well-being.

This study aims to develop a new conceptual model that addresses the limitations of previous research and existing gaps in the study of entrepreneurial imaginativeness, particularly in the context of new product development informed by Islamic principles, specifically al itsar entrepreneurial imaginativeness. The proposed model encompasses creative, social, and practical dimensions of imaginativeness.

The urgency of this research lies in the growing need for a more holistic entrepreneurial framework that incorporates not only economic and transactional motives but also spiritual and religious values. In an era where business activities are often dominated by profit-oriented objectives, the absence of transcendental values can lead to a lack of ethical foundation and social responsibility. This is especially significant in industries or societies where religion plays an integral role in shaping values and behaviour. By integrating religious values into entrepreneurial imaginativeness, this study addresses both a theoretical and practical gap, aiming to foster sustainable business practices that benefit not only entrepreneurs but also society and the environment as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurship Theory

Entrepreneurship theory has evolved significantly over the past century, with contributions from economists, sociologists, and psychologists. Early classical economic theories, such as those by Cantillon and Say, positioned the entrepreneur as a risk-bearer and coordinator of resources. Later, Joseph Schumpeter (1934) revolutionized thinking by introducing the concept of the entrepreneur as an innovator and agent of creative destruction, emphasizing innovation as the driving force behind economic development. Schumpeter's perspective remains central to modern entrepreneurship discourse, where entrepreneurs are seen as creators of new combinations, whether in products, markets, processes, or organizational forms.

Schumpeter said that economic change can be caused by abstract factors, one of which is innovation. Innovation is an entrepreneur's ability to be an inventor and an innovator, and to understand the conditions of psychological and social change. Ability is what causes entrepreneurs to always produce new products (Sweezy, 1943). Schumpeter's theory reveals that innovation is necessary to avoid a circular flow or a deep, static state of the economy. He introduced "new combination", which refers to the introduction of new products, new production methods, new markets, or new sources of standard materials, that can change circular flow into dynamic economic development (Hagedoorn, 1996).

Beyond Schumpeter, other theorists have expanded the framework of entrepreneurship. Kirzner (1973) highlighted the role of alertness to opportunities and arbitrage in market processes, while Drucker (1985) positioned entrepreneurship as a discipline that can be taught and systematically practiced. More recent theories have integrated psychological factors, such as the influence of personality traits, motivation, and cognitive processes (e.g., the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen, 1991). These perspectives recognize that entrepreneurial action is shaped by both internal factors (such as innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking) and external contexts (such as institutions, culture, and networks).

In addition, social entrepreneurship and institutional theory have broadened the scope of entrepreneurship to include ventures that pursue social change, not just economic gain. The resource-based view (Barney, 1991) and effectuation theory (Sarasvathy, 2001) further enrich our understanding of how entrepreneurs utilize resources and make decisions under uncertainty.

Despite these advances, most mainstream entrepreneurship theories tend to focus on economic motives and tangible resources, often neglecting the influence of spiritual, ethical, and religious values in shaping entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors (Bakashaba & Bindeeba, 2025). In many societies, particularly those with strong religious traditions, these values play a critical role in motivating entrepreneurs, guiding ethical decision-making, and fostering community-oriented business practices. As such, integrating religious and transcendental values into entrepreneurship theory is essential for providing a more holistic and contextually relevant understanding of entrepreneurial behavior. An entrepreneur is a challenging individual who steps outside routine activities, can seize existing opportunities, and can innovate and succeed in building a new business order (Betta et al., 2010). Entrepreneurs can also be understood as those who implement change (new combinations) that drive economic development (Willard, 1993). An entrepreneur is a power source that is not tangible, such as competence, knowledge, and experience, and can influence and inspire others to do the same job or collaborate on a project (Petrucci & Milanesi, 2022). Entrepreneurial creativity and imagination are forces at play in entrepreneurship and can even defeat the sophistication of AI (artificial intelligence) (Townsend & Hunt, 2019). The presence of entrepreneurs in a country is essential to reducing unemployment levels. Even if a country has more than 7% of its population as entrepreneurs, it can become a developed country.

Personality Traits and Entrepreneurial Imaginativeness

Imaginativeness is one of the Big Five personality traits (openness to experience) in psychology (Goldberg, 1992). Personality traits are characteristic personality forms resulting from a combination of emotional, cognitive, and motivational differences. Personality is developed by parenting, congenital factors, socialisation, education and values / beliefs that can influence how individuals respond to the environment and make decisions (Nga & Ken Yien, 2013); (Murugesan & Jayavelu, 2017). Entrepreneurship can work well if a business opportunity is imagined (Witt, 2007); with the use of active imagination, they can generate ideas and source new power and markets (Chiles et al., 2010). Besides creative imagination, social skills are also a determining factor in catching opportunities (Suddaby et al., 2015). Imaginativeness is essential for creating something new in the business world. Creating a new product or business is a complex, involved process that involves interaction among various parties (partners, customers, and other business environments).

Additionally, Entrepreneurial Imaginativeness is the ability to consider many matters and possibilities (Grant, 2012), a skill that combines ideationally relevant knowledge with tasks across three domains: creative, social, and practical (Alexander S. Kier & McMullen, 2017). Entrepreneurial imaginativeness consists of three dimensions: creative, social, and practical (Alexander S. Kier & McMullen, 2017). Creative imagination is the ability of an individual to think in ways that make them innovative and inventive, and to possess originality in producing products. Social imaginativeness is an individual's ability to create products that consider others' needs and empathy. Meanwhile, practical imaginativeness is an individual's ability to plan products and their implementation. Entrepreneurs use creativity to transform knowledge and motivation into a viable, accepted idea that third parties can adopt. Social imaginativeness is used to translate ideas with consideration of others' basic concerns. Meanwhile, practical imaginativeness is used to assess the idea's future feasibility and to anticipate obstacles and potential problems (Havenvid & Rocca, 2017). Entrepreneurs with high entrepreneurial imagination will have a strong ability to identify opportunities and ideas. Therefore _ that , a new product idea can be improved if high entrepreneurial imaginativeness (Kier & McMullen, 2018).

Al Itsar as an Islamic Religious Value

In life and society, values, ethics, and morals must be prioritized—especially those sourced from religion. Humans cannot live in isolation as individualists; therefore, they must consider the interests of others and help one another. Islam teaches the importance of supporting each other with kindness and piety, as emphasized in Al-Maidah verse 2. The Prophet Muhammad SAW also stated, as narrated by Imam Ahmad and Abu Daud, that being stingy is forbidden because it destroys and severs brotherhood among people (Putri et al., 2022).

One way to develop Islamic values is through helping, giving, and donating, which is a form of religious value. The religious value rule, delivered by Sheikh Izzazdin, stated that no one can put others first in matters of worship (iitsar); thus, no one can iitsar in using water for thaharah, closing intimate, and occupying the shaf front, because the goal is worship. In other rules, it is mentioned that putting others first in matters of worship is makruh; meanwhile, in other problems, putting others first is preferred.

Based on the rules above, it can be concluded that the concept of religious value is highly recommended in matters of business transactions. These Islamic values can be interpreted as social behaviour that provides treatment to others as he would treat himself Alone (F. Hidayati, 2016). Al-itsar can also be defined as a feeling in the heart that leads someone to put others first and himself in the path of goodness and benefit, in personal nature (Hasnahwati, 2021). Whereas Ibn Qayyim define *al itsar* as an attitude in life that puts others first and leaves behind what is needed (Putri et al., 2022). Al Itsar is a moral, praiseworthy, and noble trait.

The concept of al Itsar is different from altruism. Altruism is an action done voluntarily by which somebody or a group of people helps others without expecting anything in return, except possibly feeling a sense of doing good. Whereas it is an attitude and behaviour in demand, mainly to sympathise and empathise with others; however, able to sacrifice and give something of value for others, though he is also moderate in need, simply because of his God. Al-itsar contains a number of possible values developed, such as caring (caring for the rights and welfare of others), sharing (willingness to share), cooperation (willingness to work together), helping (willingness to help), and generous behaviour (donating & generosity). Honesty in action, behaviour, and speech (honesty), simplicity (parsimony), and sincerity without expecting rewards (Hidayati, 2016). The concept of al Itsar can be developed in life every day, like selling and buying (Agustuliani & Majid, 2016), so that it can grow brotherhood (Shofiana, 2021), increase reputation, more from that, *al itsar can* also be done guard vertical and horizontal relationships as form contract man to the almighty creator (Nugroho, 2023), (Efendi, 2015).

Al Itsar Entrepreneurial Imaginativeness; a New Concept

One of the success factors for a business is the continuous development of innovative products. Creativity in developing a new draft product can be accepted by consumers; it becomes an inevitability that the manufacturer must own. Creativity can be formed from three components, namely quality talent, wikicapital (originated capital from networking results), and culture (Yusuf, 2009). Creativity can also appear through cognitive factors (Warnick et al., 2021). Powerful imaginative ones will form ideas and images of a product (Thompson, 2018). Imagination is an important matter in entrepreneurship for producing novelty (Elias et al., 2022). Entrepreneurial imaginativeness consists of three dimensions: creative, social, and practical (Alexander S. Kier & McMullen, 2017). The ability to work with others differs when implementing his imagination, which influences the quantity and quality of ideas generated (Kier & McMullen, 2018).

The ability to generate ideas, or creativity, can be cultivated not only through experience; a spiritual approach or religious values can also create space for suggestions grounded in imagination and entrepreneurship (Chiles et al., 2021). Individuals should also understand others' feelings to generate new product ideas (Geher et al., 2017). The process of generating product ideas can also involve other people, producing more varied and useful ideas for many people (Kier & McMullen, 2020).

Therefore, individuals can generate ideas and implement religious values. Al Itsar, as a teaching of Social Sufism, emphasises the importance of guarding horizontal relationships (between creatures on earth) and vertical relationships (between man and the creator) (Efendi, 2015). The concept of religious value emphasises that the main objective of action is not to gain reputation but to embody a contract with the Supreme Owner of Power, his God, and to operate within a managerial paradigm (Nugroho, 2023).

With this, the concept of entrepreneurial imaginativeness can be integrated with that of religious value, resulting in religious-value entrepreneurial imaginativeness. This can be defined as the ability to generate ideas or design new products or businesses based on knowledge, while prioritising the interests and benefits of many people (such as employees, society, and others) as well as the environment, rather than focusing solely on oneself.

METHODS

This study is an explanatory study carried out to develop a draft new business idea (al Itsar entrepreneurial imaginativeness) as an integration of al Itsar and entrepreneurial concepts and imaginativeness. The study was conducted through the following stages:

Literature studies were conducted by searching for relevant references on the theme, using sources such as Google Scholar. The collected data were synthesised to develop a framework-based submission draft. Face validity was evaluated in three discussion forums to ensure the draft met established criteria. Once the draft was considered satisfactory, experts in marketing, religion, and methodology were invited to participate in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to refine the definition, research constructs, and the draft questionnaire. Data collection was carried out using the finalized questionnaire, which was distributed offline to respondents. The resulting data were analysed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in SPSS to identify new factors or dimensions, and the analysis results formed the basis for drawing study conclusions.

Measurement

The aim of this study is to create a new concept integrating two ideas: entrepreneurial imaginativeness and al itsar. The concept of entrepreneurial imaginativeness, as described by S. Kier & McMullen (2017), comprises three dimensions: creative, social, and practical. The concept of religious value is based on Hidayati (2016). Based on the results of the FGD with experts, it was agreed that the three dimensions of entrepreneurial imaginativeness (S. Kier & McMullen, 2017) would be used, and that the values of religious value include monotheism, prioritising the interests of others, and considering environmental sustainability, which formed the basis for generating new indicators. Each dimension of entrepreneurial imaginativeness was then aligned with the values of religious value to produce several indicators as follows:

Table 1. Al-Itsar indicators of entrepreneurial imaginativeness

Indicators	**Indicators**
I often think to create work new with more prioritize interest other parties	EI1
I often think to develop existing products _ There is become better	EI2
I often think to produce product new original	EI3
I often think to produce products that have characteristic typical	EI4
I often think to produce more from one type product	EI5
I often think to develop routine product	
I often think to operate businesses that don't damage environment	EI7
I often think to operate businesses that don't copy other people's work	EI8
I often think to operate business that can help other parties	EI9
I often think to operate building business _ connection Good with competitor	EI10
I often think to operate business that can welfare employee	EI11
I often think to operate business with use friendly ingredients _ environment	EI12
I often think to anticipate obstacle business	EI13
I often think to anticipate lack of capital	EI14
I often think for using the proceeds business For development business	EI15
I often think to involve Lord in solve problem business	EI16
I often think to discuss with fellow businessman in solve problem	EI17
I often think to involve Lord in planning business	EI18

Indicators: We then included a statement in the questionnaire, rated on a 1-10 scale (very disagree - strongly agree), for batik entrepreneurs in Central Java, Indonesia. We chose batik entrepreneurs as respondents for several reasons: first, batik is a product that requires imagination and creativity in production, as it features a variety of motifs and patterns. Second, batik motifs are not easily created, so they are prone to duplication or plagiarism; however, according to several businessmen, this is normal because they leave it to God, and that, in turn, pushes them to be more creative.

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to respondents. Of these, 194 were returned, and 165 were deemed complete and suitable for analysis. The respondents comprised 131 men and 33 women; the majority were over 45 years old (64.2%), and most had a high school education or equivalent (66.1%). Among the batik entrepreneurs surveyed, the majority (82.4%) had more than 10 years of experience in the batik industry, and over 80% employed more than five people. Entrepreneurs who sold more written-and-stamped batik than printed batik reported a monthly turnover exceeding IDR 15 million (>50%).

Data Analysis

Factor analysis can be performed if the EFA results indicate that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value is above 0.5 and the Bartlett's test is significant ($p < 0.05$). We also used the Sampling Adequacy (MSA) measures to evaluate the proposed indicators. Fulfil the condition value > 0.5. Based on the EFA test results, we obtained a KMO value of 0.539 and a significant Bartlett's test ($p = 0.028$). Whereas from the MSA value, of the 18 indicators that were rigorous, only 11 indicators met the condition of an MSA value (Table 2)

Table 2. MSA Indicator Values

Indicators	**MSA value**
I often think to create work new with more prioritize interest other parties	0.560
I often think to develop existing products _ There is become better	0.554
I often think to produce product new original	0.591
I often think to produce products that have characteristic typical	0.518
I often think to produce more from one type product	0.558
I often think to develop routine product	TM
I often think to operate businesses that don't damage environment	0.502
I often think to operate businesses that don't copy other people's work	0.529
I often think to operate business that can help other parties	TM
I often think to building good business _ connectionwith competitor	0.533

I often think to operate business that can welfare employee	TM
I often think to operate business with use friendly ingredients _ environment	TM
I often think to anticipate obstacle business	0.569
I often think to anticipate lack of capital	0.510
I often think for using the proceeds business for business development	TM
I often think to involve Lord in solve problem business	TM
I often think to discuss with fellow businessman to solve problem for the sake of interest together	TM
I often think to involve Lord in planning business	0.521

*TM: no fulfil condition

Table 2 shows that of the 18 al itsar indicators proposed for entrepreneurial imaginativeness, only 11 indicators can be used to measure these variables. Of the 11 indicators that meet conditions, they are grouped into several factors or dimensions as follows:

Factor 1	**Factor 2**	**Factor 3**	**Factor 4**	**Factor 5**
I often think foroperate businesses that don't damage environment I often think for operate building business _ connection Good with competitor	I often think for produce products that have characteristic typical. I often think for anticipate obstacle business I often think for anticipate lack of capital	I often think for produce product new original I often think for produce more from One type product I often think for operate businesses that don't copy other people's work	I often think for create work new with more prioritize interest other parties I often think for develop existing products _ There is become better	I often think for involve Lord in planning business

DISCUSSION

Imagination is an important matter in entrepreneurship for producing novelty (Elias et al., 2022). However, when developing deep ideas or creating novelty, an entrepreneur considers not only personal profit but also elements of divinity and environmental care. Results of tests carried out against all Itsar indicators _ entrepreneurial imaginativeness demonstrated that there are 11 new indicators divided into five possible factors explaining itsar entrepreneurial imaginativeness. The first factor consists of an explanation of inner entrepreneurial abilities to think and develop new products without harming the environment and to build good relationships with competitors. The first factor is very relevant in the business world, such as in batik, because there is seldom conflict among batik-producing entrepreneurs; they sometimes overlook environmental sustainability and produce waste. Islam forbids causing destruction to the environment, as mentioned in the Koran Surah Ar-Rum verse 41. Islam also teaches the importance of guarding vertical relationships with the Creator and horizontal relationships (with other creatures) (Efendi, 2015).

The first factor can be called **horizontal relationship imaginativeness**. It concerns how an entrepreneur thinks about managing his business. An entrepreneur must have strong cognitive abilities to predict future business conditions so can mitigate risk if something undesirable happens. The second factor can be called **itsar managerial imaginativeness.** The third factor concerns an entrepreneur's cognitive ability to create a truly original product and avoid plagiarising others' work. Acts of plagiarism violate applicable laws and public norms. Therefore, an entrepreneur must be able to think creatively and imaginatively to generate original ideas. The third factor is an entrepreneur's inventiveness. The fourth factor concerns an entrepreneur's ability to think about how to innovate products for the benefit, not only for personal interest. Entrepreneurs must understand others' feelings when developing a new product idea (Geher et al., 2017). The fourth factor can be described as **the problem of innovative imaginativeness**. The fifth factor explains how a passionate entrepreneur can plan a business without forgetting that God is the decider of all decisions. As religious people, we will not be free from dependence on God. The business world is not free from various problems, such as those involving consumers, competitors, and suppliers. Problems sometimes drive people far from the Lord. Therefore, an entrepreneur must be able to plan a sound business to reduce the risk of business failure. However, everything that occurs beyond the plans that have been made is entrusted to Allah. The fifth factor can be called **monotheism and planning imaginativeness.**

In summary, the development of a new concept of entrepreneurial imaginativeness—namely religious value entrepreneurial imaginativeness—relies on the integration of Islamic values into the framework. Research results show that the intervention of Islamic values (religious value) produces five dimensions or factors: horizontal relationship imaginativeness, religious value managerial imaginativeness, religious value invention imaginativeness, maslahah innovation imaginativeness, and tauhid planning imaginativeness. We believe that if these five dimensions are possessed by entrepreneurs, they will generate new ideas, create original products, and foster healthy competition among businesspeople, since everything is based on religion and God's provisions.

CONCLUSION

This study has successfully developed and validated the concept of Religious Value of Entrepreneurial Imaginativeness (RVEI), which integrates religious values—particularly the Islamic value of al-itsar—into the entrepreneurial imaginativeness framework. The main findings demonstrate that incorporating religious values provides a more holistic and transcendental perspective on product development and entrepreneurial innovation, extending beyond transactional motives and worldly objectives. The five primary dimensions identified—horizontal relationship imaginativeness, itsar managerial imaginativeness, itsar invention imaginativeness, maslahah innovation imaginativeness, and tauhid planning imaginativeness—can strengthen entrepreneurial competitiveness by creating unique and sustainable value.

Furthermore, this research emphasises the importance of integrating spiritual values into entrepreneurial activities to not only produce innovative products but also to generate broader benefits for society and the environment. The integration of these spiritual elements transforms entrepreneurship from being purely profit-oriented to serving higher social and ethical purposes. This comprehensive approach supports the creation of products and businesses that are distinctive in the marketplace and contribute positively to the well-being of various stakeholders.

Future research can broaden the empirical examination of this concept across different contexts and explore the relationships among RVEI, its antecedents, and its consequences. By doing so, a deeper understanding of how religious values influence entrepreneurial imaginativeness can be achieved, potentially leading to the wider adoption of value-driven entrepreneurship that aligns commercial success with spiritual fulfilment and societal advancement.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the promising results and theoretical contributions of this research, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, this study was conducted on a homogeneous sample, which limits the generalisability of the findings across broader contexts. Second, as this research introduces a novel concept, the Religious Value of Entrepreneurial Imaginativeness (RVEI), further empirical testing is necessary to gain more robust and comprehensive results. Future studies are encouraged to examine the application of RVEI in different entrepreneurial settings and with more diverse subjects, using empirical methods to validate and refine the concept.

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