

The Strength of Islamic Values in Mentoring Entrepreneurs among Lecturers: A Qualitative Study

Noraini Hashim* & Hariyaty Ab Wahid

Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

Email: noraini1378@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a study on the strength of Islamic values in mentoring start-up entrepreneurs by lecturers. This study explored how attachment to Islamic values can be a support for mentors in the mentoring process. This qualitative research employed an in-depth, semi-structured interview protocol, as validated by four inter-raters, with Cohen's Kappa rating of 1.00. The purposive sampling method was used, specifically targeting PolyCC academics who have been identified as the top 15 candidates in the Best Entrepreneurship Mentor Award category in the Ministry of Higher Education Entrepreneurship Award (MEA) 2021 and the finalists in the PolyCC Academia Award: Category Outstanding Entrepreneurship Mentor Award 2022. The data collected from the interviews were subjected to a thematic analysis using the ATLAS.ti 9 software in order to uncover recurring themes, patterns, and relationships among different aspects within the data. The empirical finding in this study showed that Islamic values have greatly helped lecturers become good mentors in guiding and supporting the development of entrepreneurs at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The main message was that adherence to Islamic values could improve the mentoring process of entrepreneurs by lecturers. This study was focused on the values of mentors and not entrepreneurs, thus the resulting implications could help universities and organisations develop mentoring programmes that incorporate Islamic values to improve entrepreneurial mentoring processes.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, mentorship, mentor's competencies, lecturers, Islamic values

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the chronology of the phenomenon of lecturers becoming mentors for start-up HEI entrepreneurs began in 2012 when HEIs introduced the Ministry of Higher Education Entrepreneurship Award (MEA), which was adapted from the United Kingdom (UK). In 2015, the Best Entrepreneurial Mentor Award category was introduced in this competition. Starting from this, HEIs have set a key performance indicator (KPI) that lecturers would become mentors or entrepreneurship educators, starting with 900 lecturers in 2019, 2,500 lecturers in 2021, and 4,000 lecturers by 2025. Entrepreneurship is a crucial aspect of economic development and mentoring plays a significant role in the success of entrepreneurs. Mentoring is the process of guiding and supporting entrepreneurs beginning from the conception of a business idea to product development and business growth. A mentor's role is to provide guidance, support, and knowledge to entrepreneurs to help them navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship. However, mentoring is a complex process that requires specific skills and knowledge. Thus, this study aimed to explore the strength of Islamic values among lecturers for mentoring entrepreneurs. The motivation behind this research was to understand how lecturers who highly value the Islamic way of life can be good mentors and how Islamic values can contribute to the mentoring process. Mentoring is a crucial aspect of entrepreneurship, and it is essential to understand

how mentors can improve their mentoring process to help entrepreneurs succeed. The main part of the research questions were what and how would the Islamic values of the lecturers help their entrepreneurship mentoring process. In conclusion, this paper will present a new perspective on how Islamic values among lecturers can improve the mentoring process of entrepreneurs. The contribution of this study is based on its focus on the mentor's values rather than the entrepreneur's. A conceptual framework was obtained, which highlighted the factors and skills required for a mentor to have when guiding entrepreneurs. The following sections of this paper will present a literature review, the theoretical framework, research methodology, findings, and results and discussion.

Entrepreneurial Mentors in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

The competence of entrepreneurial mentors in higher education institutions (HEIs) is positively associated with the emergence of entrepreneurs (Svensson, 2021; Jukka et al., 2021) and the sustainability of student start-up businesses. Effective entrepreneurial mentors can play an important role in supporting and guiding student entrepreneurs as they develop and grow their businesses (Ludzinska, 2023; St-Jean & Jacquemin, 2022; Hartmann et al., 2022; Poskanzer, 2022; Dost, 2021; Svensson, 2021; Lee & Park, 2020). In the context of globalisation, education for innovation and entrepreneurship is the focus of leading universities in China (Lv, Zhang, Georgescu, Li, & Zhang, 2022). Therefore, mentors need to have the right experience (Morland, Scott, & Thompson, 2021), skills, knowledge (Lv et al., 2022; Mei & Symaco, 2020), and attitude (Trilaksono et al., 2022; Guo, 2020). HEI entrepreneurship centres also need to focus on high-quality mentor groups (Mouammer & Bazan, 2021) to ensure entrepreneurial mentoring is successful. The literature review conducted in this study has shown that mentor support is focused on the individual (mentee) and not on the task.

The mentor will guide the mentees to develop themselves and their tasks (as entrepreneurs) by making their own choices. The mentor will not give answers to the mentee's questions about life, but instead, will help the mentee find a solution or answer that suits him or her. The successful mentoring of entrepreneurs was found to be positively related to the competence of lecturers in entrepreneurship education (Lewicka & Bollampally, 2022; Iwu et al., 2021). This is especially relevant in the mentoring of novice entrepreneurs, where the competence of the lecturer is an important factor in entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour (Lewicka & Bollampally, 2022; Setiawan et al., 2022; Ismail, 2022; Nugraha et al., 2020), the goal of becoming an entrepreneur (Nugraha et al., 2020), and the students' beliefs (Lewicka & Bollampally, 2022). Empirical research studies have proven that when students trust their mentors (lecturers), their entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour can be developed (Lewicka & Bollampally, 2022; Ismail, 2022; Nugraha et al., 2020).

Islamic Values in Mentoring

Islamic psychospirituality is a theory that operates concepts such as soul, heart and self as the basis of Islamic theory and practice of human psychology (York Al-Karam, 2018:). This theory is a guidance or mentoring approach that combines spiritual and religious aspects sourced from the Quran and Hadith (Rahman et. al, 2023). For the purposes of this research, Islamic psychospirituality refers to spiritual practices and concepts in the lecturer's soul when carrying out his responsibilities as an entrepreneur mentor, namely *ihsan*, *istiqamah*, *taqat*, *muraqabah* and *tawakal*. Islamic values, such as social responsibility, community development, resourcefulness, fairness, and honesty are believed to have influenced the success of entrepreneurial mentoring programmes (Koubaa, 2015). Entrepreneurs who continuously practice Islam based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, and embody these values are more likely to succeed in their ventures (Koubaa, 2015). In addition, adhering to the Muslim lifestyle, striving through the lawful channels of *Syara*, appreciating Islamic values, and distributing properties to the needy (*infaq*) are some of the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs from the Islamic perspective.

Mentoring programmes can also play a role in promoting these values. A good formal mentoring programme requires both parties to discover the relationship and assess its suitability (Memon et al., 2015). Mentors can use a conceptual model to understand the types of entrepreneurs that would need mentoring support and the types of skills these entrepreneurs would need at each stage of the mentoring relationship (Memon et al., 2015). In summary, Islamic values are believed to have a

positive impact on the success of entrepreneurial mentoring programmes. Entrepreneurs who embody these values are more likely to succeed in their ventures, and mentoring programmes can help promote these values by providing tailored support to entrepreneurs based on their needs and stages of development.

In terms of epistemology, Islamic psychospirituality is sourced from two main sources, namely al-Quran and al-Sunnah. This knowledge is also enriched by benefiting from the experiences of pious people from the past such as al-Ghazali, Abu Talib al-Makki, Ibn Qayyim al-Jauzi, and others (Muhamad Afiq, Abd Razak, and Zainal Abidin Mohd Syukri, 2020). Islamic psychospiritual guidelines for counselors during the Covid-19 pandemic aim to provide a comprehensive psychospiritual preparation that is in line with spiritual values in Islam, which includes basic human elements (Rahman et al, 2023) has a concept that is very similar to research findings this. Islamic Psychospirituality is a therapeutic approach that combines psychological and spiritual elements, based on Islamic religious principles that follow the Sharia. The goal is to achieve balance within the individual's self, soul, and spirit. This approach differs from the western psychological approach which focuses more on intellectual and sensory aspects (Rahman et al, 2023).

The review of previous studies has revealed a research gap concerning the role of Islamic values among lecturers in entrepreneurship mentoring. While existing studies emphasised the skills and knowledge of the mentor, there is a limited number of research on how Islamic values can contribute to the mentoring process. Mental and physical strengthening is the strengthening of attitudes that should be experienced by the pious (Ma'arif, Ahmadi, Dzikrulloh, & Muna, 2023). In Malaysia, lecturers would reject entrepreneur mentor portfolios because they feel they are not qualified (KPT, 2020), and lack training and experience (Rizal et al., 2020). Lecturers also feel that they are not given the appreciation that commensurate with their duties as mentors of entrepreneurs and see mentoring entrepreneurs as unimportant for their career development (KPT, 2020). Therefore, this study aimed to fill this gap by exploring how Islamic values are used in mentoring entrepreneurs by lecturers, while acting as start-up entrepreneur mentors at HEIs based on the following objectives:

- To explore the values/belief of lecturers in entrepreneurship mentoring and
- To explore how these values/belief contribute to the sustainability of students' businesses.

These objectives were constructed to answer the following research questions:

- Research Question 1 (RQ1): What motivates individuals to conscientiously discharge their obligations as mentors?
- Research Question 2 (RQ2): How can the mentor's religious beliefs be integrated into mentoring to contribute to the sustainability of the mentee's business?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is presented in Figure 1. This framework highlighted the competencies that a mentor must possess for guiding entrepreneurs, with an additional construct of the mentor's values, specifically Islamic values. This framework was based on the literature review and the research questions of how would Islamic values among lecturers help their entrepreneurship mentoring processes. This conceptual framework consisted of three main components, namely the mentor's values, the mentoring process, and the entrepreneurial outcomes. The mentor's values component included Islamic values, such as social responsibility, community development, resourcefulness, fairness, and honesty. The mentoring process component included the skills and knowledge required for effective mentoring, such as communication, feedback, and guidance. The entrepreneurial outcomes component included the impact of mentoring on the development of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, as well as the success of the entrepreneur. This framework proposed that incorporating Islamic values into the mentoring process can enhance the mentor's effectiveness in guiding entrepreneurs. The mentor's values can provide a strong foundation for the mentoring relationship, which can lead to better communication, feedback, and guidance. The mentoring process, in turn, can help entrepreneurs develop the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their ventures. Overall, this conceptual framework has provided a basis for understanding the role of Islamic values in entrepreneurship

mentoring by lecturers. It has also highlighted the importance of incorporating Islamic values into the mentoring process to enhance the mentor’s effectiveness in guiding entrepreneurs.

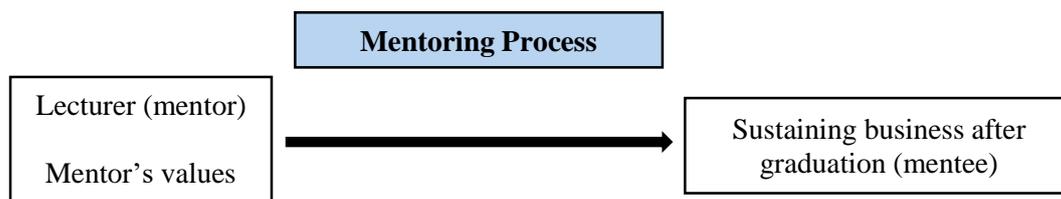


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Role of Islamic Values in Entrepreneurship Mentoring by Lecturers

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study conducted several semi-structured interviews to collect data. An interview protocol that included the Protocol and Structured Interview Questions with 27 open questions has been evaluated by four experts, consisting of three content experts and one qualitative expert. The Cohen’s kappa value for interview protocol is 1.00, which indicates high validity and reliability. The number of informants for this study was seven, since data saturation was achieved. This study chose the purposive sampling method to select informants among the Malaysian Polytechnic and College Community (PolyCC) lecturers. They were the finalists in the Ministry of Higher Education Entrepreneurial Award (MEA), Category D: Outstanding Mentor Entrepreneurship Award 2021 and in the PolyCC Academia Award: Category Outstanding Mentor Entrepreneurship Award 2022. The unit of analysis for this study was the lecturers who were entrepreneurs’ mentors at HEIs. The triangulation of this study was done through interviews with the informants’ mentees. The validity and reliability of the analysed data were reviewed, evaluated, and confirmed through peer assessment and member check. The peer assessment was performed by a lecturer who served as a mentor for entrepreneurs at a public university, which was an essential step in the validation of new ideas (Carminati, 2016). The data were analysed using ATLAS.ti 9 based on thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study has interviewed the seven selected informants. Their demographic backgrounds were analysed to provide a comprehensive overview of the research sample. Table 1 presents a detailed breakdown of the demographic backgrounds of the informants.

Table 1 *Informants’ Demographic Background*

No.	Code	Academic Background	Length of service	Position	Number of mentees	Competencies/Professional Certification
1	Info1	Hotel & Tourism	> 30	Lecturer	5–10	No
2	Info2	Business	> 20	Lecturer and Head of Entrepreneurial Centre	5–10	No
3	Info3	Banking	> 20	Lecturer and Head of Entrepreneurial Centre	10–20	Yes

continued

4	Info4	Business	> 20	Lecturer and Head of Entrepreneurial Centre	> 20	Yes
5	Info5	Business	> 20	Lecturer and Head of Entrepreneurial Centre	> 20	Yes
6	Info6	Accounting	> 30	Lecturer	5–10	Yes
7	Info7	Business	> 20	Lecturer and Head of Entrepreneurial Centre	> 20	Yes

To answer research question 1 (RQ1): What motivates individuals to conscientiously discharge their obligations as mentors? Within the coding process, 95 open codes were identified and subsequently grouped into 14 axial codes. Among these, two selective codes emerged, highlighting the significant impact of “Relationship with Allah” and “Relationship with humans”. The overarching theme that emerged from the analysis was “Islamic Values”.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The emerging theme from the analysis based on RQ1 was Islamic Values, which consisted of “Hablul Minna Allah” and “Hablul Minan Nas” that demonstrate sincerity, consistently prioritising trust and accountability, while being driven by a belief in God’s eventual reward in the hereafter. This theme elucidated the mentors’ dedication through the lens of their faith, exemplifying commendable attributes, such as sincerity, trust, and accountability. Their actions were rooted in the belief in God’s eventual reward in the hereafter. This observation implied a deep integration of Islamic principles in their mentoring roles, while revealing how spiritual convictions have motivated their diligence in guiding and supporting others. The Qur’an emphasises the importance of noble values, such as human dignity, humility, and tawakal that emphasise quality, managing perfectly, and magnifying the values of truth.

“Anyone seeking glory, all glory belongs to Allah. Good words rise to Him, and righteous deeds elevate it. Those who scheme harm will face a severe punishment, and the schemes of such individuals will ultimately be destroyed.” (Al-Fathir:10)

Strong religious faith forms the solid foundation for guiding Muslims to align themselves with the will of the Almighty. This unwavering trust and assurance could have compelled Muslims mentors to understand their role as both servants and custodians, entrusted with carrying out the divine decrees of Allah SWT. As a result, this perspective has cultivated the attributes of personal piety (taqwa) within them, leading them towards benevolence and charity. This principle finds resonance in the teachings of the Qur’an.

“And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine. And if anyone puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him. For Allah will surely accomplish His purpose: verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion.” (Al-Talaq:3).

To answer research question 2 (RQ2): How can the mentor’s religious beliefs be integrated into mentoring to contribute to the sustainability of the mentee’s business? This study has also explored the integration of a mentor’s religious beliefs into mentoring, with a specific focus on how this integration could contribute to the sustainability of the mentee’s business. Through an intricate coding process, this study has identified 109 open codes, which were subsequently organised into 16 axial codes. Among these, five selective codes have emerged, thus shaping the investigation. The overarching theme that has emerged was the incorporation of religious principles, encapsulated in the concepts of “Reda” (contentment), “Tawakal” (reliance on God), and Manageable.

Reda

Reda refers to the genuine and sincere preparation to undertake a task or action. In the Islamic context, reda may also refer to the concept of voluntarily accepting and submitting to the leadership and authority of leaders. It involves showing loyalty, respect, and submission to the rightful leaders as a sign of faith. In this study, informants showed that they were very respectful and obedient to their leaders, and they have accepted and taken responsibility for their duties. In some of their statements, these informants discussed adopting a leadership position as the Head of their respective Entrepreneurship Unit and the sense of responsibility that came with this position. They intended to perform more and better in response to this responsibility. Their stance paralleled the concept of reda, in which some individuals willingly assume a leadership position and are committed to carrying out their responsibilities to the best of their ability.

“It started with responsibility because when I was appointed as the Head of the Entrepreneurship Unit, it came with responsibility there. When it comes to responsibility, of course, we’ll do more and better.” (Info3)

“When I get the position of the Head of Entrepreneurship Unit...aa ooo okay. It’s chosen that I’m appointed here, with responsibility. Just accept and let’s do it.” (Info4)

The willingness to assume a leadership position can be viewed as a form of obedience to the authority that appointed or recognised the individual for that role. Regarding reda, obedience and acceptance are aimed at spiritual or religious authorities. Some of these lecturers were dedicated to doing more, which better aligned with the concept of submission to the duties and responsibilities of leaders.

“Honestly, when I was...actually, I was forced to go to this competition. I’ve met the Director already...I said I don’t want to. I don’t want to be in this category. I said I promised my commitment to help students win. But the time of the meeting also decided that I had to go in, and I had no choice. I’m in, too.” (Info2)

“Actually, I do not want that, but because I respect the boss...I do as well...I’m the one following orders.” (Info1)

“As heavy as it is, after that my boss said, you can’t reject it. I must go in, too. It’s got to be in this category, too. Being a college representative. Mhm. Yeah, we did, finally we did.” (Info4)

Reda also refers to being content, satisfied, and accepting of God’s plans, even in terrible situations. Faith and the notion that Allah’s wisdom and designs are beyond human comprehension underpin this level of serenity. These mentors were strongly content and accepting, which meant that they were accepting of their circumstances, whether good or bad. They were surrendering to Allah and accepting that everything happened for a reason. The belief that Allah’s wisdom is unlimited and all-encompassing is central to the concept of reda. Even if they do not understand why certain events happen, they believe Allah knows best.

Embracing reda demands patience and endurance, especially in difficult times. The notion that being satisfied and accepting of Allah’s will, especially in the face of adversity, will be rewarded in the afterlife is central to reda. This notion motivates positivity and acceptance, and these mentors believed that reda can bring inner peace and tranquillity. People can attain peace with Allah by surrendering to the divine will and letting go of earthly ambitions. In this case, these informants have accepted every situation with a positive outlook, while continuing to fulfil their responsibilities diligently, as demonstrated in the following excerpts:

“Think of this as our investment for the afterlife. In your opinion, what does this time investment entail? You don’t have to spend a full day with the students, but this is an investment for the afterlife. We should put in a little more effort here, if we want to assume

we can make more reward, right? Perhaps this is not a wealthy world for us. However, when that individual succeeds the next day, he will recall that we instructed him in this manner. With Allah's willing, we did it the proper way. That's quite a large reward right there.” (Info3)

“Right now, I have a life in this world, and I want to give something. If I do something good, let the reward go to the person who gets it...my late father, mother, and grandfather. Because there are many things for me. I do a lot here, even it is exhausted and hard...Ah now, I'm here, I say, I'm a good child, a pious child is what I wish, I could share the rewards with my late parents by doing all this work.” (Info7)

“Frankly speaking, I want to be a positive person. So, those who feel sad is because if you follow our track, there are indeed people who say something. But it's because I am a very positive person. If you want me, I follow. If you don't want me, I don't follow you. So, there are no people saying things that can cause me to feel hurt because I said your business is yours, my business is mine. I don't care what people say. It entered the heart. We are humans. Don't want to survive, take it out! Don't keep it, get it out. If you save it in your heart, it will get stuck later. My life is Allah. Allah is ahead.” (Info6)

Tawakal

Tawakal signifies surrendering and placing trust in God's will after making the effort and supplication. It also refers to having faith in the wisdom behind events or circumstances, and the conviction that everything occurs for a reason. It is related to having faith in Allah's promises and divine providence, and believing in and expressing gratitude for Allah's blessings. Tawakal would result in greater dedication to one's work upon acting with the conviction that sincerity will yield positive results, and doing one's best while having faith and trust in the outcome. The belief that events and circumstances are governed by a higher power or a divine plan is at the heart of this philosophy. It encourages these mentors to have faith in the wisdom of any events, even if they do not instantaneously comprehend their purpose. It is about having faith that obstacles and blessings are part of a greater plan that would ultimately lead to personal development and happiness. A strong belief in Allah's promises is an essential aspect of the spiritual journey of those who follow Islamic teachings. This entails the belief that Allah's guidance and blessings are constant, and that one's faith in these promises can provide comfort and assurance during difficult circumstances. The expression of gratitude for Allah's favours is another fundamental aspect of this philosophy.

Gratitude encourages individuals to concentrate on the positive aspects of their existence, thus resulting in an upbeat disposition. Recognising and appreciating these gifts would cultivate feelings of contentment and modesty. This philosophy stresses the importance of devoting oneself wholeheartedly to one's endeavours. Individuals can create a positive impact, if they approach their work with sincerity and determination. This concept is consistent with the notion that genuine endeavour will yield positive results, even if they are not immediate or obvious. By maintaining a positive attitude, these mentors have been closely related to having faith and trust. They were more likely to approach life with sincerity and a sense of purpose when they believed that their actions and intentions were guided by a higher purpose. Subsequently, this approach then has an impact on how they interacted with others and performed their responsibilities as mentors and as lecturers. Having tawakal contributed to their personal development and resiliency. These mentors have navigated adversity with a greater sense of strength and determination whenever they view obstacles as opportunities for development and change. In conclusion, it is a holistic approach that incorporates religious beliefs, personal development, and a sense of purpose, with the goal of guiding individuals towards a fulfilling and purposeful entrepreneurship journey. The following informants further confirmed the outcomes of this approach:

“Remember, it's not us, we don't just choose. Allah chooses. That's right. If Allah does not choose...that's how it was when I first was the Head of the unit, It feels like ...oh Allah...bammmm! It feels like, I've only been sitting here for two years. I still don't

understand the system, I don't want to understand what kind of things it has, but thinking back, Allah has arranged it, Allah has arranged it, there must be a reason." (Info4)

"And one more thing, because if you follow the way as we know, we give one for Allah, Allah will give ten for us. Understand the concept. But when Allah has chosen, if Allah does not choose, there is nothing, we will not get it. You must see what our capacity is, and what we do. Ah, now just show me the results. Just do your best. Yes. Allah knows. My intention is that, oh Allah, I want to finish what I've started. Oh Allah, make it easy, make it easy." (Info4)

"Have you ever had a job as good as this? At one time, I had a hundred pieces order for tudung, you know, to make it. Ooh, that's when we feel saturated and exhausted. I am grateful that Allah gave me to be a lecturer. Be grateful for how much my salary is a day, I want to get two thousand, oh Allah, I'm tired, I need to wake up at four in the morning to prepare the order, but as a lecturer, no...I'm not that exhausted." (Info4)

"I'm angry, but I tell them, why I did it. If you want to write a comment, or complain to the Minister, go ahead, I don't care, because I do this work sincerely. Allah is with me." (Info1)

"Ummm, students who come here are special. Because the academics are lacking. They really need skills. Just what is it like in terms of this mentor, they must work a little more than the lecturer, their mentor, how does they have to be? That's where we must understand them first and our technique must vary a bit with that student. That's why I want to find a match because there is strength... we must find the students' strength, must use their strength to give them a bigger challenge so that they can see that the world is bigger, and what they need to pursue. With Allah will..." (Info2)

"Because I feel, I have a strong feeling, willing to help. So, it's like with a student, I want to help that student. So, especially if we know that they are from poor families, right? I want to help them, so they can see the way they can get something. My willing...willingness to help is very strong. After that, I'm the type of person who works or when I do something, I must do it well and it must be finished. I don't...I won't do it halfway. So, if we aim for example there is a competition, I join. Once I say we're in, we must put together a strategy so that we can win until the end. We do the best, Allah does the rest." (Info3)

Manageable

The elements of good document management, which include being neat, clean, organised, well-planned, high-quality, and easily accessible can be related to Islamic teachings on the importance of organisation and cleanliness. In Islam, cleanliness is considered half of the faith, and Muslims are encouraged to keep their surroundings clean and tidy (Rahman, Sungit, & Rashed, 2022). The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has also emphasised the importance of order and organisation in various aspects of life, including managing one's time, wealth, and relationships. Through observation during the interview sessions, this study found that these lecturers have very neat and clean workstations. They have kept accurate and well-organised records of planning, reports of mentoring, and other important documents related to mentoring. This approach is related to the Islamic principle of accountability and transparency linked to the element of high-quality document management. The element of well-planned document management can also be related to the Islamic concept of tawakal or reliance on Allah. While Muslims are encouraged to plan and prepare for the future, they are also reminded that ultimate success comes from Allah. Therefore, these informants have well-planned document management systems that they managed, accompanied by their trust in Allah and willingness to adapt to changing circumstances. Overall, the elements of good document management can be seen as being consistent with Islamic values of cleanliness, organisation, accountability, and reliance on Allah. By following these principles, these mentors have managed their documents effectively and in accordance with their positions as

mentors and lecturers. Apart from these observations, the following excerpts conveyed Info7's belief in relation to this matter.

“Well, I have a clean workplace, I really like to be clean. I like to work in a clean area, when it's really busy, or it's full, but then, when I'm done with work, I'll be sure to tidy up. I like neat work.”
(Info7)

“I'm really a documentation person, if I want to do it, I really like to do documentation. Yes, I am a documentation person. It's true that if you make me make beautiful make-up. It's organised like that, right?”
(Info7)

In addition, six of the seven informants have a filing system that was easy to reach. The files were labelled and prepared neatly and uniformly. These files included complete planning and reporting files. The discernible themes that have arisen from this thematic analysis included *reda* (contentment), *tawakal* (reliance on God), and *manageable*, which signified the genuine readiness for action, succeeded by submission and unwavering faith in God after making sincere efforts and supplications. These findings showed how these mentors have drawn from these religious tenets to guide their mentees in their business endeavours. They have fostered qualities of dedication, resilience, and trust, which could ultimately contribute to the sustainability and success of their mentees' business ventures.

People are believed to possess certain characteristics in management that align with Islamic values. These characteristics can be important because they can help individuals stay focused on their planned activities and prioritise strategic management. Other studies have also identified additional characteristics of Islamic management, including honesty, willingness to work hard, keeping promises, and maintaining orderly administration (Ishaq & Abbass, 2020; Machmud & Hidayat, 2020). These traits have contributed to the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Islamic context (Ishaq & Abbass, 2020; Lisnawati & Ahman, 2019; Machmud & Hidayat, 2020).

In the Qur'an, al-Sajdah, verse 24, is often cited to support this understanding:

“And We appointed, from among them, Leaders, giving guidance under Our command, so long as they persevered with patience and continued to have faith in Our Signs.”
(Al-Sajdah:24)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has delved deeply into the intricate nexus between religious values, mentorship, and entrepreneurial sustainability. Through the lens of Research Question 1 (RQ1), this study has uncovered the fundamental drivers that fuelled the unwavering dedication of the mentors towards fulfilling their roles. Notably, two selective codes, namely “Relationship with Allah” and “Relationship with humans” have emerged as the key influencers. These codes converged to form the overarching theme of Islamic Values, which portrayed how these mentors' commitment was deeply intertwined with their faith, as characterised by their sincerity, trust, and accountability. Their steadfast actions found their roots in the belief in an ultimate divine reward, thereby showcasing the profound integration of Islamic principles into their mentoring practices.

Further enriching the narrative was Research Question 2 (RQ2), which explored the intricate integration of the mentors' religious belief into their mentoring processes, particularly in relation to enhancing the sustainability of their mentees' businesses. Consequently, three selective codes were crystallised, culminating in the thematic prominence of *reda*, *tawakal*, and *manageable*. These principles embodied the mindset of dedicated preparedness, followed by a humble surrender to divine will after earnest endeavour and supplication. These findings underscored how these mentors have artfully weaved these religious tenets into their guidance, thus fostering qualities of dedication, resilience, and trust among their mentees. This approach, in turn, has significantly contributed to the enduring success and sustenance of their mentees' entrepreneurial endeavours.

Empirically, this research offered a novel insight into the confluence of spirituality, mentorship, and business sustainability. The emergence of Islamic Values as a guiding principle in mentoring could provide a rich ground for further theoretical exploration. Theoretically, this study has expanded the horizons of existing mentorship literature by incorporating the dimension of religious values as a potent driver. A new foundation has been laid for future research to explore similar integrations across diverse cultural and religious contexts, thus adding depth to the conceptual underpinnings of mentorship.

Economically, the implications of this study are noteworthy. The infusion of *reda*, *tawakal*, and manageable principles into mentoring practices could help cultivate mentees who are not only adept in business strategies but are also equipped with strong values and resilience. This, in turn, could potentially lead to sustainable business practices and positively impact the economic landscapes by fostering ethical entrepreneurship.

However, this study has several limitations. It was deeply contextualised within the framework of Islamic values, which could potentially limit its generalisability to other religious or cultural contexts. While the themes of Islamic Values, namely *reda*, *tawakal*, and manageable offered profound insights, they may not be universally applicable across diverse belief systems. Moreover, this study's qualitative nature, although rich in depth, may lack the statistical robustness of quantitative research. This calls for a cautious interpretation of the findings and highlights other avenues for further quantitative validation.

In essence, this research offers a compelling narrative of the interplay between religious values and mentorship in the realm of entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, its reach and applicability warrant further exploration. The empirical, theoretical, and economical benefits are undeniable, as they set the stage for continued inquiry and refinement of these insights. The limitations of this study, judiciously acknowledged, invite future researchers to delve deeper into the interconnections between faith, mentorship, and business sustainability. They could foster a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics that could shape the entrepreneurial landscape. As the journey continues, the tapestry woven by this research opens new avenues, inspiring scholars to uncover, interpret, and harness the profound implications of spirituality in mentorship and entrepreneurship, especially at HEIs.

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