



Journal of Arts and Sociological Research (JASR)

Reinvigorating Entrepreneurial Leadership Education through the use of Religious Values with Particular Reference to Nigeria

Aminu Malam Yakbubu Umar (PhD)

Department of Islamic Studies, Federal University of Education, Kontagora, Niger State, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: ayakubu633@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70382/ajasr.v7i6.016>

Abstract

Entrepreneurial leadership is a critical factor for sustainable economic development and social progress in Africa. This paper explores the potential for reinvigorating entrepreneurial leadership education in Africa by integrating religious values, with a specific focus on Nigeria. The paper will be developed on the premise that, given Nigeria's rich religious diversity, incorporating ethical teachings from major religious traditions—such as Christianity and Islam can enhance the development of responsible and community-oriented entrepreneurs. The paper discusses the key religious values that resonate with entrepreneurial education. These religious values include, but are not limited to, integrity, accountability, justice, service to the community, promise, honesty and trust. By embedding these values into entrepreneurial training programs, educational institutions can foster a new generation of leaders who prioritize ethical practices and social responsibility. Questions to be answered include; what is entrepreneurial leadership education? What are the factors affecting leadership in Nigeria? What are the examples of religious values? How can religious values be integrated to energize entrepreneurial education in Nigeria for developmental transformation? This paper concludes by outlining the implications of integrating religious values into entrepreneurial leadership education in Nigeria. It highlights the potential for driving positive change not only in business practices but also in broader societal development, ultimately contributing to economic growth and social cohesion across Africa.

Keywords: Reinvigorating, Entrepreneurial leadership education, Africa, Religious values

Introduction

The importance of entrepreneurship in growth and development cannot be over-emphasized. This is because; for any society to develop, such society has to depend on the availability of human resources with entrepreneurial qualities to a certain extent. This, therefore, makes it imperative for each society to focus on moulding and equipping potential entrepreneurs for the expected tasks. Similarly, values Systems of societies provide a code by which individuals belonging to a particular society live and these socially accepted behaviours of the society are held in high esteem (Kalkan, 2012). On the other hand, Business value formation is influenced by the socio-cultural and personal background factors including but not limited to; age, ethnicity, religion and education of the individual. (Alwis, 2003) Therefore, the moulding of the entrepreneur is found to be deeply rooted in the socio-cultural factors surrounding people in society. Conversely, religion has a particular role it plays in determining whether or not an individual(s) in a specific society, with a value system peculiar to it, becomes an entrepreneur.

Given Nigeria's income level and the history of extensive development efforts over the last 60 years, overall social indicators are low. Nigeria ranked 158 out of 189 countries on the UN Human Development Index (Berkley Centre for Religion, 2020). Despite rich resources and entrepreneurial verve, Nigeria is one of the world's poorest countries, Widespread, deeply embedded corruption and weak governance affect most sectors and government institutions, including health, education, and security services. The opportunity for religion to contribute to development lies principally with the high

degree of religiosity of the Nigerian population and interest among religious leaders in interfaith cooperation. The religious landscape of Nigeria is diverse and dynamic, with numerous distinct communities and religious leadership that have influence well beyond the country's borders.

Nigeria boasts a diverse religious landscape, with Christianity and Islam being the two dominant faiths. Both religions place a strong emphasis on moral conduct, social justice, and community engagement. Drawing from the teachings of Christianity and Islam, entrepreneurial leadership programs in Nigeria can integrate lessons on servant leadership, social entrepreneurship, ethical business practices, and inclusive growth strategies. By aligning educational content with religious values that resonate with local communities, these programs can enhance their relevance and impact. By integrating religious values into entrepreneurial leadership education, Nigeria can nurture a new generation of business leaders who not only possess the skills and knowledge to succeed but also uphold ethical principles that contribute to the country's economic and social development.

Thus, entrepreneurial leadership education plays a crucial role in the economic development of any region, especially in Africa where entrepreneurship is a significant driver of growth. However, entrepreneurial leadership education in Africa faces numerous challenges, including cultural and ethical issues (Adeniyi-Wilson, 2017). This paper aims to explore the potential benefits of incorporating religious values into entrepreneurial leadership education in Africa, focusing specifically on Nigeria by

leveraging the rich cultural and religious heritage of Nigeria. This paper argues that reinvigorating entrepreneurial leadership education with religious values can have a transformational impact on the mindset and practices of aspiring entrepreneurs in the region.

Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Education, Leadership and Religion

Entrepreneurship is essential because it has the potential to raise living standards and generate money, not just for entrepreneurs but also for connected firms. Entrepreneurs also contribute to change through innovation, as new and improved goods enable the creation of new markets. Start-ups, regardless of their small sizes, play a crucial role in economic development. This is because they create jobs, which implies lower unemployment rates and lower unemployment indicates a more refined and developing economy. Because of innovations, new jobs, and bringing competitive dynamics into the corporate environment, start-up entrepreneurship is critical. (Jamil, 2023).

If entrepreneurship is the focus point for the growth and development of the economy, then it is highly necessary to invest in entrepreneurial education. Knowledge is the driving force of social and economic transformation. The mortality of companies is related to the lack of knowledge. According to Sebrae (2014) as quoted in Arnault (2022), the reasons for the "cause of death" of companies are linked to (1) lack of prior planning, (2) business management and (3) entrepreneur behaviours. Thus, targeted leadership education of the entrepreneur is essential to reduce the mortality of companies and to provide opportunities for the increase of new-trained entrepreneurs. In this context, the relevance of entrepreneurial education is justified as a key point for the achievement of economic development and the fight against poverty, in addition to providing essential skills and equipping with techniques and tools, making it possible to face adversity, especially for individuals who seek to or are already residing in other countries (Arnaut, 2022).

Entrepreneurship education has been defined as "a set of institutionalised teachings that informs, trains, and educates anybody interested in contributing to socio-economic development through a project to encourage entrepreneurship awareness, firm formation, or small business development. (Jamil, 2023). In another perspective, Arnault (2022) opined that Entrepreneurship education can be understood as the creation of a service or product that produces economic value and directs self-employment, in addition to developing new capacities and skills that are crucial to running the enterprise. (Arnaut, 2022).

On the other hand, religion has had a significant influence on all societies, as an agent of social change and a community's progressive civilization. Religion teaches unity, tolerance, compassion, love, justice, humility, sacrifice, trustworthiness, service to humanity, etc. Therefore, religious belief and spiritual values influence the behaviour of individuals and communities and are linked to social, political and economic development, such as entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial behaviour represents a set of actions which allows individuals or groups of people to explore and identify possible ways to innovate and/or improve upon the existing commercial ideas to create a product or service that can compete in the market effectively. The characteristics of entrepreneurial behaviour include being visionary, taking calculated risks, taking chances, tolerance of ambiguity (ability to deal with

uncertainty), affordable losses (exploring if an idea is worth pursuing or not), mitigating risks (understanding and measuring all risks), etc. Both religion and entrepreneurship provide collaborative platforms that enable local resources to be leveraged in creative ways to address urgent local problems

Entrepreneurship cuts across all religions and also exists in diverse socio-cultural contexts, each of which represents a symbol of global entrepreneurial behaviour. Religion inevitably affects positively, personal values like honesty, perseverance, bravery, foresightedness and general ethical standards (Abidin, 2015). Religion is one of the factors that determine the basic values and beliefs of people. Hence, religion is vital in determining the extent to which individuals take entrepreneurship as a career or not (Garba, 2013). The theory of Max Weber which draws its clues mainly from the philosophy of the Protestant religion agrees with the fact that generally, religiosity breeds an entrepreneurial mindset and consequently, risk-takers. This theory emphatically holds Religion as the driving force of entrepreneurship. The theory further explains that the entrepreneurs become role performers in line with the expectations of the society; such expectations are purely products of their religious beliefs, taboos and customs. Religious values build the need for achievement in individuals based on the premise that a person's life is measured by his result. This means that, whatever a person does in life, finally calculates as part of his positive or negative scores depending on the outcome of the decision taken. One of the components of society is religion and historical evidence has proven that most religions positively influence entrepreneurship. This is evident in most of the globally accepted religions, through their doctrines and ethics of spirituality, where followers are motivated towards working hard to earn a means of survival (Klay, 2003). Convincingly, religion drives individuals into entrepreneurial activities because, religions preach handwork, being steadfast in doing right, desire to earn more, the power of wealth acquisition etc (Lucky, 2011). Most religious traditions, in one way or the other, address the interplay between entrepreneurship and religion.

Reinvigorating Religious Values for Entrepreneurial Leadership Education in Nigeria

Religion plays a central role in shaping societal norms, values, and behaviors in many African countries, including Nigeria. With a predominantly religious population, Nigeria offers a unique context where religious values deeply influence various aspects of life, including business practices. Integrating religious values into entrepreneurial leadership education can tap into existing belief systems and cultural practices to instil ethical principles, social responsibility, and resilience among aspiring entrepreneurs.

Also, ethical leadership is essential for building trust with stakeholders, fostering long-term relationships, and ensuring sustainable business practices. Religious teachings often emphasize virtues such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and stewardship which are qualities that are fundamental to effective leadership. By incorporating these values into entrepreneurship education programs, aspiring leaders can develop a strong ethical foundation that guides their decision-making processes and shapes their interactions with employees, customers, suppliers, and the wider community.

As stated earlier, Entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a key driver of economic growth and development. In Africa, we witness great cases of youth unemployment; therefore,

fostering a positive entrepreneurial attitude is essential for creating sustainable livelihoods and driving innovation. Entrepreneurial leadership education to equip individuals with the skills, knowledge, positive values and mindset needed to identify opportunities, take calculated risks, and navigate the challenges of starting and growing a business is therefore, essential.

Examples of Religious values

Some examples of religious values include the following; hard work, honesty, transparency, self-reliance, emphasizing the importance of learning, perseverance, innovation, honesty, integrity, compassion, stewardship, fairness, consistency, truthfulness, fulfilling promises, commitments, avoiding conflict of interest, etc. These values are essential for successful entrepreneurship as they foster a strong work ethic, build trust with customers and stakeholders, and promote transparency in business dealings.

How it can be done

Integrating religious values into entrepreneurial leadership education in Africa, especially in Nigeria, can be a powerful approach to reinvigorating the entrepreneurial spirit and fostering ethical leadership. Here's how this can be approached:

- i. **Identify Common Religious Values:** Nigeria is a diverse country with various religious beliefs, primarily Christianity and Islam. However, both religions share common values such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and stewardship. These values can form the foundation of entrepreneurial leadership education.
- ii. **Integrate Ethical Teachings into entrepreneurship courses/curriculum:** Religious teachings often emphasize ethical behaviour in business dealings. These teachings can be integrated into entrepreneurship courses to emphasize the importance of honesty, fairness, and accountability in business practices.
- iii. **Use Case Studies and Examples from the Lives of Biblical or Quranic figures:** Use case studies and real-life examples from religious texts or stories that illustrate entrepreneurial leadership qualities. These can be from the lives of biblical or Quranic figures known for their leadership and entrepreneurial skills.
- iv. **Involvement of Community/ religious leaders:** Encourage students to engage with their religious communities and leaders to understand how religious values translate into practical business ethics. This can involve guest lectures, field trips to religious institutions, or collaborative projects with local religious organizations.
- v. **Provide Mentorship and Role Models:** Provide mentorship programs where successful entrepreneurs who embody religious values can mentor aspiring business leaders. These role models can demonstrate how one can succeed in business while upholding ethical principles.
- vi. **Encourage Interfaith Dialogue:** Given Nigeria's religious diversity, promote interfaith dialogue and collaboration in entrepreneurial leadership education. This fosters understanding and respect among students from different religious backgrounds and encourages them to find common ground in their business endeavours.
- vii. **Introduction of Research and Publications on Religious Values and Entrepreneurship:** Encourage research on the intersection of religious values and

entrepreneurship, particularly in the Nigerian context. Publish findings in academic journals and disseminate them widely to contribute to the body of knowledge in this field.

viii. **Provide Policy Advocacy:** Advocate for the integration of religious values in entrepreneurship education at the policy level. Work with government agencies, educational institutions, and religious bodies to incorporate these values into curricula and training programs.

ix. **Continuous Evaluation and Improvement:** Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of integrating religious values into entrepreneurial leadership education through feedback from students, alumni, and industry partners. Adapt and refine the curriculum based on these evaluations to ensure relevance and impact.

Challenges for Reinvigorating Religious Values for Entrepreneurial Leadership Education in Nigeria

While integrating religious values into entrepreneurial leadership education presents numerous opportunities for enhancing ethical decision-making and social impact among future entrepreneurs in Nigeria, it also poses challenges related to:

- i. **Diversity of beliefs.** Nigerians practice four main types of religion, viz; Traditional religion, Islam and Christianity. Each of these major divisions has its sectarian diverse beliefs and practices that distinguish them from one another. There are different traditional beliefs in the country as diversified as the number of tribal and ethnic divisions amounting to over 250, Muslims- followers of Islam, are divided according to theological and philosophical schools including Sunni, Shi'a, Salafi, Sufi, Qur'aniyyun etc. Similarly, the Christians in Nigeria are divided into three major Sects Catholics, Protestants and Pentecostals. Blessed with divergent believers who hold different beliefs, it would be a herculean task to identify common values and beliefs to be inculcated among the entrepreneurs who also hold such beliefs. Balancing respect for different faith traditions while promoting universal ethical principles requires careful curriculum design, rigorous orientations and training, stakeholder engagement, and dialogue.
- ii. **Secular nature of the country.** The constitution of Nigeria declared the country as a secular nation. This means the country should not be influenced by any religious belief, by implication; it has not held any religion as official religion that influences running its affairs. Any attempt to inculcate religious values in the minds of its entrepreneurs may be tantamount to breaching the provision of the constitution.
- iii. **Poverty.** Nigeria has the world's largest population of people who are considered poor. An estimated 50% of the population is counted as poor (88 million people), while an additional 18% are near poverty. Many religious and faith-inspired actors and organizations, national and international, focus on reducing poverty in Nigeria, though they often treat poverty as a symptom of broader corruption, injustice, and poor investment in Nigeria's enormous oil wealth (Marshall, 2020). This is another challenge in any attempt to revamp entrepreneurial leadership using religious values as the saying goes, a hungry man is an angry person

- iv. **Corruption.** A study by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace cites corruption as the single greatest obstacle preventing Nigeria from achieving its enormous potential. Corruption drains billions of dollars a year from the country's economy, stymies development, and weakens the social contract between the government and its people. Nigerians view their country as one of the world's most corrupt and struggle daily to cope with the effects. Corruption in Nigeria is not always clear-cut or limited in focus, but rather different facets are interconnected, involving a range of behaviours that cleave across virtually every sector in society: government, the economy, education, media, political parties, defence and policing, the judiciary, health care—in short, every aspect of life (Marshall, 2020). The government of Nigeria and its development partners have identified fighting corruption as a leading priority.
- v. **Violence.** Different forms of violence and conflict affect many regions of Nigeria. Causes World Faith Development Dialogue 11 are disputed, including notably different views on the roles that religious beliefs and identities and religious leaders play both in fueling tensions and in conflict resolution and peace building. these patterns of violence have ricochet effects, for example with violent attacks against Muslims in the south presented as retaliation for violence against Christians in the North. Climate change, ethnic and interreligious tensions, poor governance and corruption, and limited employment opportunities are other likely culprits. Also, Conflicts over natural resources, such as between farmers and herders in Nigeria's Middle Belt and the management of oil resources in the Niger Delta, are among the enormous challenges facing the country (Marshall, 2020).

Recommendations

To reinvigorate entrepreneurial leadership education in Nigeria using religious values, it is recommended that educational institutions should incorporate these values into their curricula for the training of entrepreneurs. For the success of such inculcation, the following recommendations are hereby given:

- 1 Integrate religious texts into entrepreneurship courses to illustrate entrepreneurial concepts such as hard work, perseverance, innovation, and ethics.
- 2 Encouraging student organizations based on religious affiliations to provide a platform for students to network, learn from each other's experiences, and develop skills relevant to entrepreneurship. These organizations can also serve as incubators for start-ups that align with their religious beliefs.
- 3 Affiliating religious institutions with educational institutions to collaborate and offer joint programs like workshops, seminars or conferences that promote entrepreneurship while reinforcing religious values.
- 4 Boosting research on the intersection of religion and entrepreneurship emphasizing how religious values can be leveraged to promote successful entrepreneurship while addressing cultural challenges. This research could inform curriculum development and pedagogical approaches at educational institutions.

- 5 Building mentorship programs. Pair students with successful entrepreneurs who share their religious beliefs, and provide valuable guidance and inspiration for students pursuing entrepreneurship while reinforcing important values. These mentors could also serve as role models for students by demonstrating how their faith has influenced their business practices.
- 6 Identification of case studies based on Nigerian entrepreneurs who have successfully integrated religious values into their businesses to provide practical examples for students seeking to do the same.
- 7 Encouraging dialogue between entrepreneurs and faith leaders. This can help bridge the gap between business practices and spiritual principles

Conclusion

In conclusion, reinvigorating entrepreneurial leadership education in Africa through the use of religious values, particularly in countries like Nigeria with deep-rooted religious traditions, holds immense potential for nurturing a new generation of ethical leaders who are committed to driving positive change through entrepreneurship. By leveraging the moral direction provided by religious teachings, educational institutions, policy-makers, businesses, civil society organizations, and religious leaders can collaborate to create holistic and culturally relevant entrepreneurship programs that empower individuals to build businesses that not only generate profits but also contribute to the well-being of society at large.

References

- Abidin, U. S. (2015). *Proceedings of ICIC2015 – International Conference on Empowering Islamic Civilization in the 21st Century e-ISBN: 978-967-13705-0-6 3656-7*. Malaysia: Abidin, Universiti Sultan Zainal.
- Adeniyi-Wilson, O. O.-L.-A. (2017). Adeniyi-Wilson Religion and Entrepreneurship In Africa: An Empirical Analysis Of The Role Of Religion In Entrepreneurial Success In Nigeria And South Africa. *Adeniyi-Wilson, O., Ojo-Lanre, O., & Oladipupo-Ajayi, T. (2017). Religion And Entrepreneurship In Africa: An Empirical Analysis Of The Role Of Religion Journal Of Business Research*, 85, 366–375.
- Alwis, W. D. (2003). The impact of the socio-cultural background of the entrepreneur on management and business practices of selected small and medium scale businesses in Sri Lanka. *Alwis, W. D., and Senathiraja, R. (2003). The impact of socio-cultural background of the entrepreneur on management and business pr In 9th International conference on Sri Lanka p. 28-30., (pp. 28-30).*
- Arnaut, D. (2022). From a Traditional to an Entrepreneurial University: Entrepreneurial Education and Opportunities. *Handbook of Research on Enhancing Innovation in Higher Education Institutions*, 24 DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2708-5.ch007 Chapter 11.
- Berkley Center for Religion, p. &. (2020, February). *Policy brief on the impact of ethnic and religious diversity on Nigeria's development priorities*, Retrieved June 07/06/2024, 2024, from Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs: <https://www.partner-religion-development.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/the-impact-of-ethnic-and-religious-diversity-on-nigeria-s-development-priorities.pdf>
- Garba, A. S. (2013). Garba, A. An Exploratory Study on the Constraints for Entrepreneurial Activity: A Case of Micro and Small Enterprises in Kano. *Garba, A. S., Mansor, S. A., & Djafar, F. (2013). An Exploratory Study on the Constraints for Entrepreneurial Activity: A Case of Micro and Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 18(4), 97.
- Jamil, M. I. (2023). An Overview and Synthesis of Entrepreneurial Theories for Start-Ups and MSMEs in the Era of Industry. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6403-8.ch001.
- Kalkan, M. &. (2012). *The Psychology of Entrepreneurship*. Edited by Thierry Burger-Helmchen. Ondokuz Mayıs University.
- Klay, R. &. (2003). The relations of god's providence to market economics and economic theory". *Klay, R. & Lunn, J. (2003). "The relations of god's Journal of Markets & Morality*, 6(2), 541-64.
- Lucky, E. O. (2011). Entrepreneurial performance and firm performance. Are they synonymous? A PhD experience. *Lucky, E. O. I. (2011). Entrepreneurial performance and firm performance International Journal of Business and Management Tomorrow*, 1(2), p.1-6.
- Marshall, K. (2020, February). *Policy brief on the impact of ethnic and religious diversity on Nigeria's development priorities*, Retrieved June 07/06/2024, 2024, from Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs: <https://www.partner-religion-development.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/the-impact-of-ethnic-and-religious-diversity-on-nigeria-s-development-priorities.pdf>