

Thriving For Success: Hadhrami Entrepreneurs' Establishment in Diaspora, Evidence from Malaysia

Mohd Zain Mubarak^{1*}, Mohd Rafi Yaacob², and Ateerah Abdul Razak³

¹ Faculty of Language Studies and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia

² Faculty of Business and Entrepreneurship Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia

³ Pusat Pemikiran Keamanan dan Kesejahteraan Insan (PEMIKIR), Faculty of Language Studies and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia

* Mohd Zain Mubarak, corresponding author. Email: mzain@umk.edu.my

Submitted: 31 July 2023. Accepted: 8 January 2024. Published: 26 January 2024

Volume 32, 2024. pp. 464–480. <http://doi.org/10.25133/JPSSv322024.028>

Abstract

Arabs of Hadhramaut are a subethnic group indigenous to the Hadhramaut region in South Arabia's eastern Yemeni province. They are renowned for their reputation as successful businesspeople in Arabic countries and Southeast Asia, including Indonesia and Malaysia. This study investigates and unfolds what factors contribute to the success of Hadhrami entrepreneurs and how they are firmly embedded and merged to create a vibrant and competitive business. A score of Hadhrami entrepreneurs in Kelantan, Johor, and Penang were interviewed to get valuable information on the aim of the study. According to the study's results based on a thematic analysis, familial education and environment play a significant role in fostering interest and encouraging Hadhramis to be involved in business. This factor was bolstered by personality traits such as self-reliance, the ability to recognize opportunities, tenacity, and self-assurance, as well as religious factors such as faith in the provision of sustenance, adherence to spiritual values such as honesty, trust, and responsibility as a Muslim entrepreneur. As far as Hadhrami entrepreneurs were concerned, the study concluded that a nexus of family upbringing factors, the right personality, and strong religious beliefs are paramount for their success.

Keywords

Entrepreneur; entrepreneurship; family; Hadhrami; personality; spirituality

Introduction

Entrepreneurs are typically risk-takers, proactive individuals with a propensity for success who are also exceptionally motivated and goal-oriented (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2007; McClelland, 2010). This globally recognized definition is founded on the work of Western scholars who defined an entrepreneur as an individual who participates in commercial or entrepreneurial endeavors, demonstrates ingenuity and creativity in identifying and capitalizing on opportunities, and is prepared to assume risks in the pursuit of expanding and strengthening his company (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2007).

Conversely, from an Islamic perspective, an entrepreneur is an individual who demonstrates specific knowledge and abilities, strives to enhance the economy both personally and collectively through economic undertakings, and is cognizant of his responsibilities as the caliph of *Allah* [Arabic for God] (Mubarak, 2014). In society, especially in economic development and how it relates to individual personality, life, and livelihood, entrepreneurs have characteristics that influence their thoughts and accomplishments in entrepreneurial activities. This includes the entrepreneur's attitude and state of mind. Nevertheless, the literature regarding Hadhrami, who attained commercial success within and beyond Yemen—their country of origin—is scarce, and few studies delve into the determinants of their business success (Sultan & Al-Lail, 2020). Consequently, this research aims to discern the knowledge lacuna about the determinants of Hadhrami entrepreneurs' success.

This study focuses on the three elements, family, personality, and spirituality, contributing to the entrepreneur's success. These factors are selected because the family plays a vital role in helping individuals gain experience in the business field (Mubarak, 2020). Furthermore, it has been established that spirituality significantly correlates with an entrepreneur's likelihood of success. Spirituality is a form of developable intellect and can be regarded as a coping mechanism, particularly in entrepreneurship and decision-making. A spiritual and resilient entrepreneur possesses the key to extraordinary levels of sustainable lifelong performance and personal fulfillment (Margaça et al., 2020).

Moreover, this research centers on the family dimension due to the profound interconnection between family and business and the potential influence that family considerations may have on achieving a business (Webb et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is stated that personality traits have demonstrated reliability as predictors of business establishment and achievement (Muñiz et al., 2020). Therefore, this reflects the significance of investigating three factors: the religious family environment has been shown to shape an individual's personality into one with excellent manners and character and a strong desire to learn (Kurniawanti & Kumalasari, 2020).

Literature review

Hadhrami's historical context in the realm of entrepreneurship

In general, Arabs originating from the Hadhramaut region (also referred to as Hadhrami) who migrated to the Gulf States, Africa, and Southeast Asia are recognized for their entrepreneurial prowess and exceptional levels of commitment (Saleh & Manjunath, 2022). History has

recorded that the migration of the Hadhrami Arab community to Southeast Asia cannot be separated from the spread of Islam and commerce (Subchi, 2019). Hadhrami is well-known among Yemenis due to their propensity for trading and demand for commercial success over others (Saleh & Manjunath, 2022). The Hadhrami are widely dispersed people known for seeking better lives and seizing opportunities through entrepreneurship. This is evident in historical stories of missionary journeys and commercial voyages by ships amongst Hadhramaut to China, Southeast Asia, and possibly India.

Hadhrami were renowned for their diligence, independence, asceticism, abstinence, dislike of showmanship, honesty, and commitment to upholding morals and ideals. Successful Hadhrami entrepreneurs included Ba Wazir Trading Company in Kenya (Bang, 2019), Salim Ahmed Ben Mahfouz, Abdullah Ahmed Baqshan, Bamawada, Bakhashab and Bin Laden in Saudi Arabia (Sultan & Weir, 2010). The famous Al-Kaff Hadhrami family in Singapore created bequests to support food distribution to needy local families every Thursday or Friday (Carapico, 1998). The al-Kaff, al-Saqqaf, al-Junaid, and Bin Talib families played a prominent role in commerce in Singapore. The first appearance of Hadramiyyin in Singapore occurred during Raffles, spearheaded by Muhammad bin Harun al-Junayd, a Hadhrami merchant from Palembang (Subchi, 2019). In Batavia (modern-day Jakarta), a group of wealthy Hadhrami entrepreneurs and property owners established the 1901 Jamiyyat Al-Khayr (Benevolent Society), whose main aim was to lay the foundation for a more modern type of education style on Western curriculum, which included subjects such as mathematics, history, geography, and English alongside more traditional Islamic subjects (Sultan & Weir, 2010). The image of Hadhrami who migrated and their position can be seen through the statement from Burton, a 19th-century British orientalist, who stated that "It is generally said that the sun does not rise upon a land that does not contain a man from Hadhramaut" (Burton, 2011, p. 17).

The arrival of Arab Hadhrami traders to Malaysia in the 19th century played a vital role, and this period can be referred to as the Hadhrami emigration 'diaspora' (Alatas, 1997). With the high status and respect accorded to the Arabs, many Hadhrami traders came to trade, marry, and settle down with the local Malay community (Latiff, 2014). Commerce enables them to enjoy a better standard of living than others. Compared to the Chinese ethnic group, the Hadramiyyin engaged in commerce with their fellow citizens and foreigners. However, in comparison to the Chinese, their interactions with indigenous communities are generally more amicable, particularly in predominantly Muslim nations (Subchi, 2019).

Arab-Hadhramaut society was widely recognized for its diaspora members who visited and resided in countries where they conducted business. Recent research by Ummah and Suprihatin (2020) indicated that the economy is the most prevalent reason individuals travel internationally. The trade pattern of the Hadhrami people usually started with insignificant capital. As time passed, they gathered more capital while working as shopkeepers for established Hadhrami merchants before building their businesses (Ummah & Suprihatin, 2020). Typically, Hadhrami entrepreneurs are characterized by their establishment of cooperative unions to endure economic downturns; they strive for continuity in their entrepreneurial endeavors by remaining united, anticipating the worst-case scenario, and refusing to concede being the source of any commercial crisis (Saleh & Manjunath, 2022).

The correlation between entrepreneurial success and the importance attributed to personality, family, and spirituality

Significant determinants of Hadhrami's business success are righteous disposition, focus on enterprise, and steadfast religious commitment. Unsurprisingly, due to such factors and their work ethic, the Hadhrami have been accepted by people in the host countries, including Nusantara in Indonesia (Ummah & Suprihatin, 2020). Evidence showed that the Hadhrami were the first Arabs to migrate to the Malay Archipelago. They engaged in trade simultaneously and blended into the Malay societies before and after the emergence of Islam (Saleh & Manjunath, 2022). This suggests that they actively took part in local entrepreneurial endeavors. Due to their reputation for integrity and altruism, traced back to their Islamic upbringing, traders from the Hadhramaut region have made a name for themselves as successful commercial entrepreneurs since their arrival on the shores of the Malay Archipelago (Sultan & Weir, 2010).

Since the old era, traders from the region of Hadhramaut have created a name for themselves as successful business entrepreneurs by having integrity and altruistic credentials connected with their Islamic upbringing (Sultan & Weir, 2010). In Malaysia, at the end of the 18th century, the Hadhrami played a vital role in the shipping industry. They became the owners of large ships that could load 150 to 500 tons. Their ships surpassed Chinese vessels' size and capability of traversing greater distances (Subchi, 2019). Additionally, their vessel transported many Muslims who aspired to perform the Hajj in Makkah. In addition to their involvement in the maritime industry, they made substantial investments in real estate, particularly in the Penang region (Freitage & Clarence-Smith, 1997).

The primary determinant of the Malays' reverence for the Arabs was a sense of obligation towards the community, which had significantly impacted and contributed to the formation of their civilization and history through Islamization. Regarding the Arabs, their authority and regard were further bolstered by their diligence, authenticity, and dedication to effecting societal transformation within the Malay community and their adeptness at assimilating and integrating themselves seamlessly into the community (Othman, 2006).

When considering the diverse facets of their contribution to the historical development of the Malay States during this period, the Arabs were relatively prominent compared to the Chinese or the Indians, who also began migrating to Malaya in the late nineteenth and early century. Arab religious scholars, particularly their earliest generations, and Arab entrepreneurs were prominent figures in Malay society (Othman, 2006). The British intervention in the Malay States enhanced the Arabs' emergence as one of the most recognized entrepreneurs representing the Muslims in business activities, apart from the Indian Muslims, with their business interests well-established in Penang and Singapore (Othman, 2006). One of the earliest and the most prosperous Arabs who made his fortune in trading ventures in Singapore when it was put under British administration was Sayyid Abdul Rahman al-Sagoff (Alsagoff, 1963).

Indonesia and Malaysia are among the countries where the Hadhrami have a significant presence as traders, prosperous businesspeople, or influential figures in law, religion, and politics (Saleh & Manjunath, 2022). Syed Mokhtar al-Bukhari (Forbes, 2023), a Malaysian business tycoon and philanthropist, and his family trace their roots to Hadhramaut (Mohanlall, 2012). In Malaysia, the Hadhrami group has undergone the process of social contact (amalgamation–assimilation–acculturation) with the local community and culture,

assimilating them into the local environment and way of life. According to a well-known Malaysian sociologist, Baharuddin (2012), the assimilation process (as experienced by the Hadhrami Arab community in Malaysia) does not indicate that the minority group will lose its ethnic identity. Many Hadhrami established a new existence in Malaya despite not bringing possessions and arriving with nothing. As merchants or entrepreneurs, the Hadhrami community plays an essential role in the economic development of the archipelago, including Malaysia. Even today, the entrepreneurial spirit and economic dominance of the Hadhrami Arab community in various business fields are readily apparent. The Hadhrami Arabs, an ethnic group with a more primordial history and civilization than the Malay, are superior in commerce and business.

The Hadhrami Arab ancestry community has maintained its business-oriented traditions with unwavering determination from generation to generation. It is their conviction that the sustenance is widely disseminated via commercial operations. Indeed, it has evolved into a tradition wherein Hadhrami families (including the initial and subsequent generations) endeavor to cultivate an entrepreneurial ethos in their descendants. Although the Hadhrami community does indeed include civil servants and professionals, the predominant occupation of its members is in the business sector. The business-active members of the Hadhrami community consider entrepreneurship to be the pinnacle of professions due to its independence from external influences.

Numerous studies have identified a positive correlation between an individual's entrepreneurial background and the entrepreneurial aspirations of their family members (Wu & Wu, 2008). Furthermore, research is underway to determine the significance attributed to entrepreneurial endeavors within the Hadhrami community residing in Yemen. It measures the degree of entrepreneurial aspiration exhibited by the adolescents living in the Hadhrami community (Saleh & Manjunath, 2022). The findings of this study revealed that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control have a substantial effect on the entrepreneurial intention of Hadhrami youth.

Subsequent generations have succeeded across diverse fields, including entrepreneurship and business (Latiff et al., 2016). They are influential in the majority of Malaysian states at present, including Bajrai in Johore and Penang and Al-Khatiri and Barawas in Kelantan. Nonetheless, there is a lack of writing and investigation concerning the Hadhrami in Malaysia, particularly their arrival in Malay land. Furthermore, the Hadhrami exhibit a deficiency in the establishment of educational institutions and the study of genealogy.

Several studies have been conducted by Latiff et al. (2016) and Othman (2006) on the arrival and assimilation process of Arabs. Moreover, Latiff and Othman (2013) uncovered the historical account of the Sayyid lineage. Subsequently, Latiff et al. (2018) further explored the influence of Arabs on the evolution of education in Malaya. Thus, it proves the scarcity of research related to the three factors which are the focus of this study. The three components are selected because, historically, they are closely related to the success of entrepreneurs, as discussed in the previous section. Consequently, this study aims to explore the factors contributing to Hadhrami entrepreneurs' success and how they firmly embedded and merged to create a vibrant and competitive business.

This study develops these research objectives: What secret or specialty has made them well-known in business? This inquiry will shed light on the attributes that entrepreneurs possess and those that contribute to their achievements in business. In this study, their distinct personalities and religious affiliations will also be investigated.

Research methodology

Three predetermined codes were utilized to collect data for this study: personality, family, and spirituality. These three predetermined themes are selected to assist researchers in concentrating on particular facets of the data pertinent to their objectives. In addition, the current study used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), an experiential methodology that centers on how individuals interpret and comprehend their experiences. The technique was chosen to uncover meaning by focusing on participants' streams of consciousness, such as their thoughts, feelings, and memories (Noon, 2018). The current study revolved around the meaning, understanding, and process of the Arab-Hadhrami community's culture, particularly regarding entrepreneurship, using face-to-face interviews for field data gathering. Interpretation relies heavily on intuition, the internal knowledge acquired through interaction between the researcher and the subject of the study (Lebar, 2012).

This study emphasized the cultural theory derived from ethnic entrepreneurship theory (Voléry, 2017). The theory posits that certain ethnic and immigrant groups possess culturally determined characteristics, including self-employment orientation, commitment to labor, affiliation with a robust ethnic community, economic prosperity, risk tolerance, and adherence to social value systems (Masurel et al., 2004). This concept assumes significance in furnishing data collection instruments during the interview. Exploring entrepreneurial culture is facilitated by in-depth interviews with informants who divulge information and experiences about familial background, customary behaviors, engagement in entrepreneurial endeavors, strategies or activities associated with entrepreneurship, and analogous subjects.

Research participants

Like other qualitative studies, this study utilized purposive and chain samples (i.e., snowball) to recruit informants from Arab-Hadhrami communities in Malaysia, which involved the states of Kelantan, Penang, and Johor. Both techniques were deemed suitable for the study as they ensured that the informants involved were credible and closely associated with the Hadhrami community. After all, their willingness to participate was primarily facilitated when they were introduced and suggested by their close networks.

In total, ten individuals participated in this investigation voluntarily. The rationale for selecting informants from these three states in the country is that Kelantan represents the eastern region and holds considerable importance due to the scarcity of research and publications on the Hadhrami community in this state, specifically regarding entrepreneurship. Penang and Johor represent the northern and southern regions, respectively, and are renowned for the earliest history of the Arab community's settlement and development in Malaysia, particularly among the Hadhrami (Othman, 2006). The interviews took place at the location designated by the informant. Subsequently, every interview was transcribed verbatim per the statements made by the participants.

Research instruments

The researcher formulated protocols for the qualitative interviews following the study objectives and a review of the relevant literature. The interview query was developed based on research conducted by Mubarak (2020). Additionally, it is stated that entrepreneurial

success correlates with possessing a high religious practice and a positive personality (Margaça et al., 2020; Mubarak, 2020; Muñiz et al., 2020). It has been discovered that the family environment significantly influences one's ability to achieve success in the business sector (Kurniawanti & Kumalasari, 2020; Webb et al., 2015). Following this, the research is extended to a distinct population, the subject of the present investigation concerning entrepreneurial personality and spirituality. These were evaluated by a social science expert for their content and structure. The interview queries were all open-ended. The compilation of inquiries was customized to suit the context of each category of key participants.

Data collection and procedures

Data were collected from March 2022 until May 2022. In-depth interviews were used to gather the data, and the inclusion requirements were that the interviewees must have a) at least ten years of business experience, b) come from a Hadhrami family, and c) be willing to participate. The participants employed pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and confidentiality (Allen & Wiles, 2016). Before gathering data, all ethical protocols were followed, and the researcher received ethical clearance from the Unit of Human Science Ethics Committee of the University of Malaysia Kelantan (Ref: UMK.B01.08.02.01800-2/3/11JILID 2(78)).

The concept of migrant entrepreneurs introduced by Masurel (2004) and studies related to the Hadhrami entrepreneurship culture conducted by Mubarak (2020) were the basis for constructing interview questions. Before the interview, the participants were given the prepared interview instructions. The duration of the interviews was 40 to 60 minutes. As stated by Aldiabat and Le Navenec (2018), data was gathered per Charmaz's (2014) criteria until it was saturated for each group of stakeholders. At that point, an assessment of code and meaning saturation was made. For validation, data-collecting sources were triangulated (Carter et al., 2014). Subsequently, the data were analyzed manually, using the thematic analysis method, commonly employed in qualitative research, by identifying patterns in the data and categorizing them according to the related themes.

Results and discussion

The results were derived from interviews with ten Hadhrami business proprietors, consisting of two from Penang (Badjenid), four from Kelantan (al-Kaff, Barawas, al-Amudi), and four from Johore (Bajrai, Hedrah), and they are prominent Hadhrami clans. The in-depth interviews ranged from forty to sixty minutes, and each informant was interviewed according to a protocol derived from the literature review's thematic analysis. The list of informants is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: List of Informants

No.	Informants	Age	Business
1.	Mohamad	45	F&B; Clothes
2.	Hasan	61	Law Firm
3.	Yusuf	58	Clothes
4.	Badri	61	Clothes/Textile
5.	Azim	53	Clothes/Hotel
6.	Aidid	47	Clothes/Textile

No.	Informants	Age	Business
7.	Salmi	85	Catering
8.	Alif	68	Fishing Equipment
9.	Ajib	58	Clothes/Textile
10.	Arham	38	Hardware

The findings section will encompass a discussion of the three primary themes that pertain to Hadhrami's entrepreneurial culture, as determined through an analysis of the interview data. The themes are interpreted by the researchers per the informant interviews. Additionally, it demonstrates that distinct qualities and individuality, unique to each family, exist among Hadhrami entrepreneurs.

Family

When examining the entrepreneurial culture, the informants assert that the family of Hadhrami and the surrounding environment are inextricably linked. Research has identified a positive correlation between an individual's entrepreneurial heritage and the entrepreneurial aspirations of their family members (Hattab, 2014; Wu & Wu, 2008). Disclosure of familial and environmental circumstances significantly influences the development of interest and the promotion of business involvement. Hadhrami, according to research sources, is a clan or nation that inherited the lifeblood of commerce, as stated in:

The Hadhrami family's business culture cannot be denied. I believe that 80% of them will be business-minded. He is flesh and blood, and we were raised in that environment.

(Mohamad, 45-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

Throughout history, merchants and clerics comprised the initial Hadhrami immigrants to the Malay world (Latiff, 2016). Regarding merchants, *da'wah* [inviting people to Islam] occurred in conjunction with business operations, while clerics operated enterprises to finance their *da'wah* endeavors. Therefore, irrespective of the scale and type of enterprises, it can be asserted that most Hadhrami lineages and progeny stem from clerics and business-owning families. Alif and Ajib shared their family history.

I was born here in Kg. Arabic. In Singapore, the family on my father's side traded gold and gemstones, which were easily traded at the time. I have even traded precious stones in Thailand. My father used to trade in both textiles and precious stones – Malaysia and Singapore to Thailand. My father used to trade cloth in the Malay Market in the 1950s. There are numerous families in commerce on my father's side of the family in India.

(Alif, 68-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

My father is an entrepreneur. Ten years later, he and his brother-in-law conducted business in the villages at the Sunday market while living in Batu Pahat. He then established a store. When I was younger, I frequently accompanied him to the store when I was not in school. When there is no school on Fridays and Saturdays, we like to go to the store. The six siblings, except for the girl, are all involved in commerce.... I can't wait until Friday because I need to go shopping.

(Ajib, 58-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

The quotes show the experience of the research participants raised in a business family environment. They have grown up in a family business milieu, which has become ingrained in their souls due to their participation in the business. This kind of business culture firmly underpinned the Hadhrami family and community in Malaysia in business, particularly in the early generations who ultimately succeeded in educating their offspring – the second and third generations who became the informants for this study – to continue and conduct business as the continuation of their legacy. This is also in line with a previous study that mentions that individual achievements are impacted by their family environment (Siregar & Marwan, 2020). Badri, Yusuf, and Ajib possess this:

When I was young, during school breaks and on Sundays, my father instructed me to come to the shop to become accustomed to business, the merchandise, and the clients. At 17, I don't believe I've learned anything, and neither do we want to. I've been accustomed to business since I was young, so my interest is already piqued.

(Badri, 61-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

I've worked in the shop since I was a child and there since I was 13. Before we owned a store, I worked in a factory after school. When we opened our business in 1968, my father instructed me to manage it. I believe this was a forced assignment. If I do not comply, I will be flogged. Furthermore, I am the oldest sibling.

(Yusuf, 58-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

The children can now conduct commerce. This issue begins with early training; we must bring children to the store to cultivate an entrepreneurial character. Without training, interest is lost. For me, we must uphold this legacy. As with this store, it is under my child's name. As a consultant, I have control while we are still present. If not well managed, this business will incur losses.

(Ajib, 58-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

From the in-depth interview, it could be interpreted that an upbringing in a business environment influences the development of a child's inclination and interest in business. The cultural and traditional practices of the Hadhrami community serve as evidence that familial support and encouragement extend to individuals engaged in entrepreneurial pursuits (Mubarak, 2020). What Aidid shared below can provide some insight:

Then, on Jalan Dato' Pati, a retail lot tenant desires to vacate. Herein lies the opportunity to earn additional funds. There is a high expense for renting there. I believe the location is dear, but the business opportunities there are substantial. My father suggested I purchase the shop. The spouse's family is also supportive. They agreed to aid me.

(Aidid, 47-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

Aidid was fortunate because his wife, who assisted and accompanied him in transporting religious products to the northern portion of the peninsula, also possessed an entrepreneurial spirit. Even his wife's business-oriented family in Kelantan is of Arab-Hadhrami descent.

At the time, I had recently gotten married. On my honeymoon with my wife, I brought items to Grik, Kuala Kangsar, and Penang. I did not believe

my wife could fit in the old automobile. She assisted me in packing my business items. Her parents also permitted me to encourage her even further. His family also consists of businesspeople.

(Aidid, 47-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

The Hadhrami community is, in general, characterized by an entrepreneurial ethos. According to the findings of this research, which surveyed ten informants, most of them reported that their fathers, belonging to the first generation of Hadhrami, implemented a strict and systematic approach to raising children. Based on the research, the initial generation of Hadhrami in Malaysia was conscientious of this; throughout their upbringing, they subjected, instructed, and disciplined their children in business-related subjects (Latiff & Othman, 2013). The study proves that most informants acknowledged that their fathers had educated them with strictness and high discipline. This occurs either in daily self-discipline or, as mentioned previously, in assisting with family business matters. Consequently, this type of family-oriented approach aids and influences informants to become disciplined and persistent as they navigate the business world under their respective fields and goals. In this regard, the following statements from Alif are relevant:

This fishing store has existed for twenty-two years. I own this store personally. This store was formerly owned by older individuals. Even though the shophouse is not rented, I am the owner and have a savings account. Later, when you want to pay taxes and repair various items, you'll need a fund for this structure. Now, I am the owner of three stores. It was previously available for rent to others. My son currently leases from me. The monthly rent is \$1,600, subject to change. If you give it away for free, the spirit of doing business will eventually dissipate. This responsibility is necessary for him to understand how to manage the enterprise.

(Alif, a 68-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

The preceding discussion demonstrates that familial relationships and environments have a substantial role in the entrepreneurial community's participation in Hadhrami circles. Since infancy, the family's influence and environment are where their souls and minds bring them to make business an integral part of their lives.

Personality

Entrepreneurial skills are essential and cannot be separated from the characteristics of the entrepreneur. As previously discussed, this trait is typically fostered at the beginning of life through exposure, practice, and the surrounding environment. Naturally, the tradition or history of a family involved in business will produce family members who are also engaged in business. Hadhrami places a great deal of importance on religious education for their children without neglecting the goal of acquiring knowledge so they can obtain qualifications to seek a specific job of their interest upon completing their studies. Many Hadhrami religious knowledge is a crucial foundation, and they are confident that their livelihood does not depend on academic credentials and securing a permanent position but their hearts instead on enterprise. For instance, Alif describes:

When my children were young, I took them to the store with me. The interest developed naturally as he grew older, and I did not force my

children to build it. Business must be conducted this way; if the father does not bring his children into the store, interest will wane. He diligently studied, and my responsibility was complete. It's acceptable if he wants to engage in business but does not use his degree. We have been conducting business for many years. We are familiar with the business environment. If he chooses to conduct commerce, that is his decision. He'll know what's best for him, and I'm not compelling him to do anything.

(Alif, 68-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

Despite possessing academic credentials that qualify them for employment in sectors such as education and others, many Hadhrami generation members choose to operate their enterprises or engage in independent work. In this study, informants such as Mohamad, Azim, Aidid, and Arham hold a bachelor's degree in their respective fields but opt to pursue a business career. If they lack enthusiasm, resolve, and expertise in the field of business, given that venturing into the business realm is an uncertain venture filled with obstacles. Arham, a man in his 30s, stated,

I've been in the business for thirteen years. Importantly, if you want to do something, you must be interested. That is the most significant factor. Second, we must take discipline seriously when we enter it. Some like to experiment; many acquaintances attempt to do business in various fields but fail because they prefer to follow current trends. He desires to succeed because he sees others prospering. But when he does, he lacks the ability to effectively manage it, resulting in many problems in the future.

(Arham, 38-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

In their souls, business, and family life are compatible because of the family milieu. They develop an interest in entrepreneurship and the ability to identify and seize business opportunities with intelligence. Arham described his experience as follows.

None of our siblings are interested in government employment. We appreciate doing business. My mother established a clothing store near the Bakri Batu 5 Mosque in 2002. Thus, we both conducted business with my mother at the time. When I was in the fifth grade. From then on, I began assisting my mother. Dad also helps during his leisure time. I was transporting these items in a van without a license at the time. On my initiative, I sold merchandise at the night market without parental coercion. I will use the van after school hours and holidays to conduct business. I conduct commerce on Sundays at the Muar area Sunday market.

(Arham, 38-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

After completing my education, I also worked for Fujitsu Company, Maxis. This is where I amassed capital, all combined to collect 70–80,000 dollars, and then I launched a store. I opened this store at 28 with the money I had saved while working. At the time, my father advised me to be independent if I wanted to succeed in business. And Praise be to Allah, the two eldest siblings got married with our own money.

(Arham, 38-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

This study found that some informants could generate a reasonable income and divide their time between school and business for ten years. For example, Azim makes a weekly trip to

Kuala Lumpur to deliver customer-ordered products. This requires the initiative to locate a market and the skill to execute the business, even if only part-time.

At the age of 15, I began my own business at school. I sell every type of item that can be sold. After school, I go to the night market. The desire to conduct business inevitably arose when I was at the morning market on my day off.

(Azim, 53-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

When I was 17, I was able to purchase three motorcycles on my own. I also own a C20 van, and the sale proceeds were used to buy mine. This is the result of my business vigilance. I take the transport to Kuala Lumpur on Sundays to sell items. I can make a profit of RM500 once I depart. Moreover, I can earn RM2,000 per month if I attend every week. "I have a strong work ethic, and my mind is always searching for more information.

(Azim, 53-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

Informants possess a positive business intuition and independence due to their early development and environment. The individual in question operated his own business while still in school and assisting his family's enterprise. This is not an anomaly for Hadhrami; on the contrary, it is the norm. Consider the entrepreneurial mindset and abilities they have cultivated and honed since their youth; many find business valuable insight in their later years. Consequently, Azim's success and stability in business endeavors are predictable outcomes. His offspring have also succeeded in their respective industries and adopted his demeanor or approach. This is what he proudly explains:

Children also conduct commerce. They own a restaurant, a batik store, and a jewelry store. We believe our offspring are more capable than us. The 26-year-old has seven residences, a Range Rover, and two Mercedes, all of which he manages on his own.

(Azim, 53-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

According to the informants' research, customers' needs and demands-satisfying product sales is one of the most fundamental business skills and practices they have developed since early childhood. While conducting business, one must possess the ability to capitalize on opportunities and surmount challenges and qualities such as perseverance, forgiveness, guts, and resilience. Furthermore, they would have the astuteness to capitalize on favorable business conditions during specific times of the year, including Hajj, school vacations, Ramadan, and Eid. Nevertheless, this approach does not indicate that their operations are predicated solely on the seasons; opportunities are consistently sought throughout the year. The fundamental or fixed business continues to function normally, not deferring or relinquishing business based on a single business form. Particular proprietors of companies in Hadhrami employ this tactic to expand their enterprises, as shared by Azim:

This enterprise is subject to seasonal fluctuations. When the batik season arrives at Pak Lah's time, we seize the opportunity because batik is not something we are unfamiliar with. Since the establishment of our business in the past, we have always stocked items for religious use. There are individuals who specialize in a particular item. However, when a problem arises, it will be difficult for him to maintain his business. Thus, we

examine the current season. Hajj season is the season of school openings and celebrations. It signifies we sell products that people want and are seeking.

(Azim, 53-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

As a result, specific sources of information, including Azim, concentrate primarily on wholesale operations instead of retail. As a result, the acquired seasonal business has the potential to yield significant profits, which can be utilized to fund the establishment of a subsequent enterprise with the funds generated. One of their tactics for expansion and sustenance in commerce is as follows.

Alongside the attributes above and proclivities for entrepreneurship, many Hadhrami in high-ranking positions and permanent employment assist their entrepreneurial families. An individual's business acumen and inclination towards conducting business are profoundly rooted and solidified due to their rearing (Mubarak, 2014). Engaging in volunteer work constitutes an integral component of their motivation. As an illustration, the children support the family's hospitality enterprise during occasions that demand reservations, such as those shared by the children of Salmi.

Even though each child has a job and earns a salary, they are incredibly helpful. However, they assist me with catering. I am a lecturer at USM [Universiti Sains Malaysia], but I help when there is an occasion. We Arabs conduct business without humiliation or remorse, regardless of our pleasure in doing so. We do not believe we have any remorse.

(Salmi, 85-year-old female entrepreneur in Penang)

The results of the preceding discussion reveal the characteristics of Hadhrami entrepreneurs, including a keen interest in business, the ability to recognize and exploit opportunities, tenacity, courage, confidence in their ability to survive in business, and a commitment to business, even through volunteerism.

The term spirituality describes the religious factor among the informants, primarily about a belief in God. There is no doubt that the informant's involvement in the business has been highly influenced by family education, environment, and deep attachment to spirituality. The informants are not only intrigued but also courageous and confident that Allah SWT will provide for them through more blessed and profitable returns when underpinned by Islamic teachings that they firmly adhere to and practice. Through in-depth interviews, the study shows all informant are distinguished by their steadfast adherence to religious values. They are aware of the role played by their grandparents, who came to the archipelago to preach and propagate Islam. As a result, the Hadhrami have a strong instinct in their small souls to adhere to religious values and be devoted, as was the case with previous generations. Among the intriguing aspects associated with this is Aidid's sharing:

Our great-grandmother, who immigrated to this country, is indeed a businesswoman. Still, in her heart, she seeks to advance Islam, using business as a platform so that she can be devoted.

(Aidid, 47-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

Sincerity and dependability are fundamental concepts that govern achievement in commerce. As per the findings of this research, Hadhrami entrepreneurs consider trust to be the primary determinant of prosperous enterprises. Conducting business with *Amanah* [integrity] earns

the respect of the Malay community and others. Indeed, they concur that trust, not capital, is the most essential element in launching a business. Without a doubt, capital is a fundamental requirement for any fledgling enterprise. However, by adhering to the principle of establishing trust and honesty as cornerstones, they can cultivate confidence and expand the business to its fullest potential. The following statements from Azim help to elucidate this:

In business, trust is first, and capital is second. The Hadhrami lineage inherits this trait and is also part of their culture. Integrity and reliability are the most essential qualities in business. No problem exists, for instance, if people believe he will give you something. Trust is vital; if we trust someone, their trust aids us greatly. Initially, there was no capital to conduct business, but the Jaafar Rawas Company provided a guarantee. I was credited RM1,000 for an item. I agreed to pay within seven days. However, I attempted to sell for two days before paying directly. Consequently, he desires to make various offers without requiring upfront payment. But we must be vigilant and always have faith in progress.

(Azim, 53-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

The study informant exhibited a significant degree of preoccupation with Sharia law and religious behavior. They prioritize the connection with Allah and the merits gained through benevolence, prayer, and philanthropy, among other things. All of the study's informants referenced this, as evidenced by the statements in Ajib and Alif.

The devotional component is the most vital aspect of this enterprise; you must attend to it. Since He provides sustenance, we must continually perform the Dhuhā prayer [at the time of sunrise]. Historically, individuals engaged in commerce predominantly to ensure their survival. Blessings hold greater significance than material prosperity for individuals who strive to achieve the love of Allah and lead a blissful life.

(Ajib, 58-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

Every month, diligent effort, supplication, and almsgiving for the impoverished should be incorporated into our routine; these aspects should not be disregarded. We should not anticipate a loss when engaging in sadaqah [charity given voluntarily to please God]; on the contrary, they may even acquire more. While experiencing a sense of destitution, we can confidently obtain further sustenance by donating alms.

(Alif, 68-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

I've accumulated extensive experience within this industry. Interest is a vital component. Both alcohol and flirtation with women are prohibited behaviors. Three items should be avoided: alcohol, women, and gambling. Consequently, we must behave truthfully in all that we do.

(Alif, 68-year-old male entrepreneur in Johore)

The desire of some Hadhrami entrepreneurs to reach the pinnacle of their success by establishing a unique platform for philanthropy is a recurring theme. For instance, In1 manages the *tahfiz* [Islamic school or madrasah mainly dedicated to Quran memorization] center that his late father established. Aidid also addressed this issue in the following statement:

...there is someone who can inform me of something. We must remember and carry on his ideals. Consequently, I believe that achieving that goal is also my objective. I intend to establish a school, God willing.

(Aidid, 47-year-old male entrepreneur in Kelantan)

It is evident from the preceding discourse that Hadhrami's entrepreneurial character is grounded in his spiritual nature. In addition, spiritually motivated entrepreneurs enjoy greater satisfaction, commitment, productivity, flexibility, and innovation and remain in business for an extended period (Raco et al., 2019). They are highly confident in God's providence and only need to exert maximum effort. Blessings become a significant source of motivation that infuses every action with integrity and reliance. The relationship with the Creator is intimate in the soul and comprehension of one's duty as a servant and in terms of each individual's indirect contribution to society and religion.

Research implication and limitation

This research aids in establishing the significance of Hadhrami's contributions, specifically in the realm of business. Rather than fostering economic expansion, it directs government policy toward identifying elements that stimulate and augment entrepreneurial attributes. The present investigation is centered on qualitative research. It is recommended that additional research be conducted using quantitative methods, which can generate reliable and factual outcome data that can generally be extrapolated to specific larger populations. It is also specified into three themes only, a predefined coding method.

Further research relating to entrepreneurial study can be expanded by using emergent codes. This will assist researchers to conduct a thorough investigation of the data and to convey its richness, diversity, and complexity. Additionally, they may enable researchers to uncover novel or unexpected discoveries and question established theories or presumptions.

Conclusion

The present research investigated the influence of spirituality, personality, and family on the development of entrepreneurs among the Hadhrami community in Malaysia. Hadhrami entrepreneurs possessed a unique personality and resilience due to the cultural influence they assimilated from a family-owned enterprise and the unwavering support of the Hadhrami community. It has been established that commerce is its lifeblood. A close-knit familial environment and education shaped Hadhrami's entrepreneurial mindset and character, both crucial in business. Furthermore, the spirituality deeply ingrained in the Hadhrami tradition was strengthened. Hadhrami defined entrepreneurship as dependability and faith, which he utilized to achieve business success through the guidance of God.

Acknowledgments

The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia supported the research under the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) (Ref Code: FRGS/1/2021/SS01/UMK/02/3).

References

- Alatas, S. F. (1997). Hadhramaut and the Hadhrami Diaspora: Problems in theoretical history. In U. Freitag & W. Clarence-Smith (Eds.), *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s* (pp. 19-38). Brill.
- Aldiabat, K. M., & Le Navenec, C.-L. (2018). Data saturation: The mysterious step in grounded theory method. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(1), 245-261. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.2994>
- Allen, E. S., & Wiles, J. L. (2016) A rose by any other name: Participants choosing research pseudonyms. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 13(2), 149-165, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2015.1133746>
- Alsagoff, S. M. (1963). *The Alsagoff family in Malaysia: A.H. 1240 (A.D. 1824)-A.H. 1382 (A.D. 1962)*.
- Baharuddin, S. A. (Ed.). (2012). *Modul hubungan etnik [Ethnic relationship module]*. Institute of Ethnic Studies.
- Bang, A. K. (2019, March 26). Hadramis in Africa. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.324>
- Burton, R. (2011). *First footsteps in East Africa: Or, an exploration of Harar*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139004107>
- Carapico, S. (1998). *Civil society in Yemen: The political economy of activism in modern Arabia*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511584893>
- Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5), 545-547. <https://doi.org/10.1188/14.onf.545-547>
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications Limited.
- Forbes. (2023). *Syed Mokhtar AlBukhary*. Retrieved December 7, 2023, from <https://www.forbes.com/profile/syed-mokhtar-albukhary/?sh=4b695e5c18ee>
- Freitag, U., & Clarence-Smith, W. G. (Eds.). (1997). *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars, and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s*. BRILL.
- Hattab, H. W. (2014). Impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intentions of university students in Egypt. *The Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 23(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971355713513346>
- Kuratko, D. F., & Hodgetts, R. M. (2007). *Entrepreneurship: Theory, process, practice* (7th ed.). Thomson South-Western.
- Kurniawanti, M. R., & Kumalasari, D. (2020). The study of K. H. Ahmad Dahlan's entrepreneurship values and its urgency in character strengthening. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Social Science and Character Education*, 110-115. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200130.024>
- Latiff, L. A. (2014). The Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya before the Second World War. *Sejarah*, 23(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.22452/sejarah.vol23no1.1>
- Latiff, L. A. (2016). *The role and contributions of the Hadhrami Arabs in Malaya, 1819-1969*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Malaya]. UM Student's Repository. <http://studentsrepo.um.edu.my/id/eprint/6582>
- Latiff, L. A., & Othman, M. R. (2013). Hadhrami Sayyids In Malaya, 1819-1940. *Jurnal Usuluddin*, 38, 147-170. <https://ejournal.um.edu.my/index.php/JUD/article/view/7470>
- Latiff, L. A., Tohar, S. N. A. M., & Ismail, A. (2018). Sumbangan orang Arab terhadap perkembangan pendidikan madrasah atau sekolah Arab di Malaysia [The Arab contribution to the development of madrasah education or Arab schools in Malaysia]. *Al-Hikmah*, 10(2), 35-53. <http://spaj.ukm.my/jalhikmah/index.php/jalhikmah/article/download/328/pdf>
- Latiff, L. A., Yacob, S. N. B., Ismail, A., Sulaiman, A., Sulaiman, M., & Mohd Nizah, A. (2016). Arab Hadhrami dan Arab Peranakan di Malaysia [Arab Hadhrami and Arab Peranakan in Malaysia]. *Al-Hikmah*, 8(2), 19-37. <https://spaj.ukm.my/jalhikmah/index.php/jalhikmah/article/view/237>
- Lebar, O. (2006). *Penyelidikan kualitatif: Pengenalan kepada teori dan metod [Qualitative research: Introduction to theory and Methods]*. Sultan Idris University of Education.
- Margaça, C., Sánchez-García, J. C., & Sánchez, B. H. (2020). Entrepreneurial intention: A match between spirituality and resilience. In K. Tamzini & A. Salem (Eds.), *Understanding the relationship*

- between religion and entrepreneurship* (pp. 1–24). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1802-1.ch001>
- Masurel, E., Nijkamp, P., Vindigni, G. (2004). Breeding places for ethnic entrepreneurs: A comparative marketing approach. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 16, 77–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0898562042000205045>
- Mubarak, M. Z. B. (2014). *Keusahawanan Islam berasaskan ciri personaliti dan kerohanian di negeri Kelantan [Islamic entrepreneurship based on the personality and spirituality traits in Kelantan]* [Doctoral dissertation, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu]. Institutional Repository. <http://umt-ir.umt.edu.my:8080/handle/123456789/13434>
- Mubarak, M. Z. B. (2020). *Personaliti dan kerohanian usahawan berjaya [The spirituality and personality traits of a prosperous entrepreneur]*. UMK Publisher. <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/682>
- McClelland, D. C. (2010). *The achieving society*. Martino Fine Books.
- Mohanlall, P. (2012). *Syed Mokhtar Albukhary: A biography*. PVM Communications.
- Muñiz, J., Pedrosa, I., Garcia, E., Suarez, J. (2020). Enterprising personality. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3_1068
- Noon, E. J. (2018). Interpretive phenomenological analysis: An appropriate methodology for educational research? *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 6(1), 75–83. <https://doi.org/10.14297/jpaap.v6i1.304>
- Othman, M. R. (2006, 22–25 June). *The Arab migration and its importance in the historical development of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Malaya*. 15th Annual World History Association Conference, California, United States of America. <http://eprints.um.edu.my/id/eprint/25037>
- Raco, J., Ohoitumur, J., & Sobon, K. (2019). Spirituality: The power of entrepreneurship. *Emerging Markets Journal*, 9(1), 28–35. <https://doi.org/10.5195/emaj.2019.161>
- Saleh, M. A. K., & Manjunath, K. (2022). Dissemination of values: Entrepreneurial intention among Hadhrami youths in Yemen: The theory of planned behavior approach. *Journal of Advanced Research in Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 3(3), 53–73. <https://doi.org/10.47631/jareas.v3i3.549>
- Siregar, Z. A., & Marwan. (2020). The influence of family environment, entrepreneurship knowledge and entrepreneurship motivation on Students' entrepreneurship interest of Islamic Education Management Program of Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara. *Proceedings of the 4th Padang International Conference on Education, Economics, Business and Accounting (PICEEBA-2 2019)*, 566–574. <https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.200305.120>
- Subchi, I. (2019). The history of Hadhrami Arabic community development in Southeast Asia. *Episteme: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman*, 14(2), 229–256. <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2019.14.2.229-256>
- Sultan, N., & Al-Lail, H. R. J. (2020). The Islamic and cultural ethos of Hadhrami businessmen. In K. Tamzini & A. B. Salem (Eds.), *Understanding the relationship between religion and entrepreneurship* (pp. 104–130). <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1802-1.ch005>
- Sultan, N., & Weir, D. (2010, May 19–22). *Hadhrami: The great entrepreneurial leaders of Arabia*. Conference on European Academy of Management 2010, Rome, Italy.
- Ummah, S., & Suprihatin, C. T. (2020). Hadhrami cultural identity in Bafagih's Fatimah. *Proceedings of the International University Symposium on Humanities and Arts (INUSHARTS 2019)*, 183–186. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200729.036>
- Voléry, T. (2007). Ethnic entrepreneurship: A theoretical framework. In L.-P. Dana (Ed.), *Handbook of research on ethnic minority entrepreneurship*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781847209962.00009>
- Webb, J. W., Pryor, C. G., & Kellermanns, F. W. (2015). Household enterprise in base-of-the-pyramid markets: The influence of institutions and family embeddedness. *Africa Journal of Management*, 1(2), 115–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322373.2015.1024089>
- Wu, S. & Wu, L. (2008). The impact of higher education on entrepreneurial intentions of university students in China. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 15(4), 752–774. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14626000810917843>