

Influence of religion on the entrepreneurial mindset and the mediating role of entrepreneurial self-confidence: a study of the restaurant industry

Abstract

This study seeks to bridge a gap in the existing literature by exploring the role of religion in entrepreneurship among Christians and Buddhists, specifically within the restaurant industry. We use entrepreneurial orientation (EO), proposed as a critical component of high-performing organizations, to examine how religion affects the entrepreneurial mindset. Our findings show that religion has a significant and positive effect on EO dimensions such as autonomy, risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness in the restaurant industry. Additionally, the relationship between religion and these EO dimensions is mediated by entrepreneurial self-confidence, which refers to entrepreneurs' confidence in business competition.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Religiosity, Entrepreneurial self-confidence, Restaurant Industry

1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship affects society significantly by creating jobs (De Wit and De Kok 2014) and promoting economic growth (Koellinger and Thurik 2012; Simón-Moya et al. 2012). Numerous studies have examined the positive economic and social effects of entrepreneurship (Anggadwita et al. 2021; Arroyo-Vázquez et al. 2010; Jeong and Yoo 2022; Neumann 2021). For example, Stoica et al. (2020) analyzed 17 years of panel data from 22 European countries and found that entrepreneurship significantly affects economic growth. It is crucial to identify the determinants that shape entrepreneurial mindsets and actions to better understand what drives these actions. Previous research has shown that religion, among other factors, plays an important role in entrepreneurship by helping individuals develop a framework of implicit and explicit values that influence their decision-making and actions (Astrachan et al. 2020). Therefore, religion is a critical factor that affects individuals' lives by promoting specific economic behaviors, such as entrepreneurial actions (Giacomin et al. 2023).

However, religion has often been overlooked in entrepreneurship studies, because it is considered a sensitive subject (Farmaki et al. 2020; Kumar et al. 2022; Van Buren et al. 2020). Although the literature has thoroughly examined various determinants of entrepreneurship, research on the role of religion is scarce. Given that over 80% of people worldwide have religious affiliations (Rietveld and Hoogendoorn 2022) and a positive relationship between religion and entrepreneurship has been suggested, this topic has recently gained interest among researchers (Block et al. 2020; Giacomin et al. 2023). Several studies show a positive relationship between religion and entrepreneurship in various contexts (Alemayehu et al. 2023; Ganzin et al. 2020; Kumar et al. 2022; Liu et al. 2019; Neubert and Dougherty 2018).

The current understanding of how religion affects entrepreneurship is limited for several reasons. First, most research has focused on country-level variables (Audretsch et al.

2013; Henley 2017; Smith et al. 2021; Zelekha et al. 2014), highlighting the need to analyze individual-level data to improve our macro-level insights (Giacomin et al. 2023). Second, the predominance of studies with a Western-centric view on the intersection of religion and entrepreneurship necessitates the inclusion of perspectives from religions dominant in Eastern cultures (Kavas et al. 2020). In addition, while existing research primarily addresses general industries, the specific effects of religion on entrepreneurship within particular industries remain largely unexplored. **Lastly, it is important to examine the mechanism of how religiosity influences entrepreneurial orientation. While studies have revealed the influence of religion on entrepreneurship, the mechanism remains unexplored. It is anticipated that stronger religious belief leads an individual to develop stronger psychological capital (Zhang and Chun 2018). Thus, we examined the mechanism by examining a mediator, entrepreneurial self-confidence as personal psychological capital.**

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to bridge this gap in existing literature. To achieve this, we explore the role of religion in entrepreneurship among Christians and Buddhists, specifically within the restaurant industry. We measure entrepreneurial orientation (EO), proposed as a critical component of high-performing organizations, to examine how religion affects entrepreneurial mindsets (Covin and Slevin 1991; Lee and Peterson 2000; Lee and Lim 2008; Lim and Envick 2011; Wulandari 2023).

We found that religion significantly affects various aspects of EO in the restaurant industry, including autonomy, risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness. Additionally, the relationship between religion and EO dimensions is mediated by competitive self-confidence (CSC), which refers to entrepreneurs' self-confidence in business competition. This finding indicates a close relationship between available social capital and personal psychological capital, thus adding to the existing literature.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the related literature. Section 3 describes the research methods used in this study, including the participants, procedures, and measures. Section 4 reports the results of the data analysis. Lastly, Section 5 discusses the findings of the study and presents its limitations and future research directions.

2 Literature review and theoretical background

2.1 Religion and entrepreneurial mindsets

Previous studies have shown that religion significantly shapes human behavior. For example, Di Pietro and Masciarelli (2021) argue that religion acts as a macro-level social force affecting individual behavior. Van Buren et al. (2020) show how religion influences ethical behavior and decision-making in organizations, and Henley (2017) suggests that religion molds individual behaviors and attitudes by shaping cultural and social norms. Research has also explored the positive association between religion and economic activities, indicating that religious beliefs can encourage specific economic behaviors, such as entrepreneurship. For example, Neubert and Dougherty (2018) find that religious affiliation encourages a mindset conducive to entrepreneurship. Additionally, Giacomini et al. (2023) analyze how religious affiliation (Protestant, Catholic, or Muslim) affects entrepreneurial intentions and show positive relationships across these religions. This study measures the entrepreneurial mindset by using EO.

Entrepreneurs encounter various challenges when launching their businesses (Godwin et al. 2016). Previous studies have shown that religious individuals are often better equipped to handle these challenges, because religious beliefs provide a cognitive buffer that helps mitigate the risks associated with the uncertainties of entrepreneurial activities (Ganzin et al.

2020). Additionally, a longitudinal study by Judge and Douglas (2013) found that religious practices play an essential role in developing the resilience needed to manage limited resources and overcome obstacles. Because entrepreneurs must use their limited personal resources effectively (Godwin et al. 2016), their ability to cope with these constraints is likely a significant advantage in their pursuits.

Several studies suggest that religion significantly influences entrepreneurship by shaping entrepreneurial mindsets and providing religious social capital. Maselko et al. (2011) define religious social capital as the social resources individuals access through their connections within a religious community. This community enables the development of social relationships and strong bonds that encourage entrepreneurial actions (Deller et al. 2018; Kumar et al. 2022; Liu et al. 2019). Furthermore, Alemayehu et al. (2023) developed a framework showing how various dimensions of religious social capital (structural, cognitive, and relational) enable effective entrepreneurial actions.

However, the findings on the relationship between religious beliefs and entrepreneurship are not always consistent or unidirectional. Previous studies have shown contradictory results. Some previous studies indicated the important role of religion in developing an entrepreneurial mindset. For example, Rietveld and Hoogendoorn (2022) analyzed data from the European Social Survey and found that individuals with religious affiliations prioritize values related to conservation over values related to openness to change, whereas entrepreneurs prioritize openness to change over conservation. On the contrary, some other studies did not find any relationship between religion and entrepreneurship. For example, Audretsch et al. (2017) found no significant effect of religious beliefs on entrepreneurship in their US-based study. Similarly, Dodd and Seaman (1998) found no relationship between religion and entrepreneurship in their UK-based study.

2.2 The influence of religiosity on entrepreneurial mindset

Recently, studies have suggested that the previous studies showed contradicting findings of the influence of religion on entrepreneurship because there was no distinction between mere religious affiliation and religiosity (Giacomin et al. 2023; Rietveld and Hoogendoorn 2022). Giacomin et al. (2023) defined religiosity as the extent to which individuals actively participate in religious rituals or activities. Giacomin et al. (2023) have highlighted it because while many individuals identify as members of one of the religions, not all of them practice their religion with the same intensity. The more religious individuals are, the more likely they are to adhere to their core values and beliefs. In this light, examining religiosity is likely to reveal the effect of religion on entrepreneurship more accurately than simply considering religious affiliation. Therefore, our study examines the influence of religiosity on entrepreneurial mindsets and behaviors in the restaurant industry by analyzing data from Christian and Buddhist individuals.

2.3 EO for measuring entrepreneurial mindsets (EO)

According to Miller (1983), an entrepreneurial firm is an organization that innovates in the product market, undertakes ventures involving a certain degree of risk, and is the first to develop "proactive" innovations, thereby outperforming competitors. He quantified entrepreneurship through the dimensions of innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking. Previous research has used these three dimensions extensively to define the concept of entrepreneurship (Ahmad et al. 2024; Betakova et al. 2021; Covin and Slevin 1989; Lee and Peterson 2000; Lumpkin and Dess 1996; Tarabishy et al. 2005; Wulandari et al. 2023). Covin and Slevin (1989) agree with Miller (1983) that businesses are considered entrepreneurial if they are proactive, innovative, and willing to take risks.

Lumpkin and Dess (1996) define EO as the processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to new entry, emphasizing the behaviors administrators exhibit when acting entrepreneurially, rather than simply defining entrepreneurship as "new entry." They identify five key dimensions of EO (autonomy, innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness) that underlie most entrepreneurial processes.

According to entrepreneurship literature, EO and EM are conceptually distinguished. EM refers to “the ability and willingness of individuals to rapidly sense, act, and mobilize in response to a judgmental decision under uncertainty about a possible opportunity for gain (Shepherd et al. 2010, p. 62)”. However, since we focus on the entrepreneurs who already run their businesses in the restaurant industry, it would be more appropriate to measure entrepreneurial behaviors and beliefs at the firm level rather than solely examining entrepreneurial mindset (motivation and thought process) at the individual level. Therefore, the current study employs the EO framework developed by Lumpkin and Dess (1996).

2.4 The mediating role of entrepreneurial self-confidence between religiosity and EO

Self-confidence is an individual's self-perception of their skills and aptitude (Wilson et al. 2007). It is recognized as an important form of psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2004), because it affects how individuals perceive their ability to achieve goals (Kasouf et al. 2025). A high level of self-confidence enables individuals to sustain their efforts until they reach their goals (Moreno et al. 2007). Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) show in their meta-analysis of 114 studies that self-confidence is significantly associated with work-related performance in the business context.

Self-confidence has been extensively examined in the entrepreneurial context as the concept of entrepreneurial self-confidence (ESC) (Moreno et al. 2007; Gelaidan and Abdullateef 2017; Martins et al. 2018). Researchers have found that an individual's perception of ESC positively affects their entrepreneurial intent and mindset (Krueger and Brazeal 1994). For example, previous studies show that ESC is an important determinant of the ability to start new ventures (Pittaway et al. 2011; Piperopoulos and Dimov 2015). Krueger and Brazeal (1994) argue that individuals gradually develop a sense of ESC through previous cognitive, social, and physical experiences. We expect that a high level of religiosity increases individuals' ESC, because active engagement in religious practices builds social capital, which, in turn, contributes to the development of personal psychological capital (Maselko et al. 2011; Deller et al. 2018; Kumar et al. 2022; Liu et al. 2019). Based on previous literature, we propose that ESC mediates the effect of religiosity on entrepreneurial mindsets. Therefore, we also examine the mediating role of ESC. The study uses EO dimensions as a metric for individual-level entrepreneurial mindsets.

3 Method

3.1 Participants and procedure

This study collected data from small- and medium-sized restaurant owners by distributing a survey to participants at the annual meeting of the Food Service Industry Management Society of the Republic of Korea.

The questionnaire was developed using a two-step translation process, because the study's measurements draw primarily from prior research in English. The original questionnaire was prepared in English by the authors. Next, two bilingual professors specializing in tourism

and hospitality translated this version into Korean to facilitate its use in South Korea. Following this, a panel comprising academic experts and members of the Korean Food Service Association reviewed the Korean version, providing their insights and suggestions on the survey items. To ensure accuracy, two other bilingual professors in the hospitality field then translated the Korean version back into English, adhering to the double translation method. The two English versions showed no significant differences.

The analysis was based 250 responses, with 46% men and 54% women. The ages of respondents ranged from their 30s to 70s, broken down as follows: 15.2% in their 30s, 31.2% in their 40s, 38.4% in their 50s, 14.8% in their 60s, and 0.42% in their 70s. Regarding religious affiliation, 38% identified as Buddhists, 38.4% as Christians, 16.8% as Catholics, and 6.8% as other. Most participants worked in the Korean cuisine sector, which represented 57.6% (n = 114) of the sample, with the remainder involved in Japanese, Western, Chinese, and Italian cuisines. Table 1 provides a more detailed description of the respondent profiles. In this study, religiosity is defined as the extent of participation in religious activities, specifically measuring behavioral engagement through the frequency of prayer, worship attendance, and the practice of religious teachings. Non-religious individuals were excluded from the analysis, because religiosity cannot be measured or assessed in this group.

At the start of the survey, participants indicated their current religion and level of involvement in religious activities. They then completed questionnaires related to EO and, in a subsequent section, restaurant operations.

Table 1 Sample profile

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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Gender	Male	115	46.0
	Female	135	54.0
	Total	250	100.0
Age	30s	38	15.2
	40s	78	31.2
	50s	96	38.4
	60s	37	14.8
	70s	1	.4
	total	250	100.0
Religion	Buddhism	95	38.0
	Christianity	96	38.4
	Catholicism	42	16.8
	Others	17	6.8
	Total	250	100.0
Restaurant classification	Korean	144	57.6
	Japanese	16	6.4
	Western	13	5.2
	Chinese	14	5.6
	Italian	2	.8
	Fast-food	8	3.2
	Snack bar	13	5.2
	Others	40	16.0
	Total	250	100.0
Education	High school graduate	127	50.8
	College	55	22.0
	College graduate	60	24.0

	Graduate school	8	3.2
	Total	250	100.0
Number of employees	Less than 5	195	78.0
	5–9	30	12.0
	10–14	11	4.4
	15–19	7	2.8
	More than 20	7	2.8
	Total	250	100.0

3.2 Measures

The assessments for each construct in this study, which focuses exclusively on the restaurant industry, are based on items from entrepreneurship-related studies, but we have tailored them to our specific context. To measure ESC, we use self-confidence measures from Gelaidan and Abdullateef (2017). We assess the entrepreneurial mindset using four elements of EO: autonomy, risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness. Although Lumpkin and Dess's (1996) EO framework includes a fifth dimension (competitive aggressiveness), we did not include it in our study because we believe it co-varies with other EO dimensions, such as risk-taking and proactiveness. We rate all items using five-point Likert scales, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Table 2 provides detailed listings of these parameters.

Table 2 Measurements

Construct	Measurement items
Religiosity	How often do you attend church/cathedral/temple?
	(1) A few times a year (2) Once or twice a month (3) Every Sunday service (4) Every Sunday, Wednesday, Friday (5) Almost every day

	How often do you pray/ go on Buddhist pilgrimage? (1) Never (2) Only in emergencies, such as illness or accident (3) Regularly, a few times a week (4) Daily, but for a short time (less than 15 minutes) (5) Daily, for an extended period (15 minutes or more)
	How often do you read the Bible/ Buddhist scriptures? (1) Never (2) Occasionally (3) Once or twice a week (4) Daily, but for a short time (less than 15 minutes) (5) Daily, for 15 minutes or more
	How much do you follow the ** (1) Not at all (2) Occasionally (3) Not often, but somewhat (4) Often (5) Almost entirely
Entrepreneurial self-confidence	I am confident that once customer demand is understood. I can fulfill it more agilely than anyone else. Even if existing companies obstruct in new markets, I am confident in overcoming them and achieving successful entry and establishment. Even if I become a latecomer, I am confident that I will quickly surpass the early entrants.
Autonomy	When faced with important business decisions, I prefer to make my own decisions and take responsibility for them. Once I start something, I am determined to see it through, no matter the obstacles. I tend to execute any business ideas that come to mind.
Risk-taking propensity	I am willing to embrace the significant risks associated with pursuing big adventures if I see substantial opportunities for business success. Even if the future of a new venture appears uncertain, I believe in enthusiastically diving in. If I see a business opportunity, I think it is worth taking substantial financial risks to pursue it.
Innovativeness	I believe that, even if the existing menu is successful, there comes a point where it should be boldly replaced with new offerings. I am inclined to effectively incorporate employees' new ideas into management.
Proactiveness	I have a talent for discovering and exploiting niche markets. I excel at pioneering and leading in new trends. I possess the talent to develop entirely new menus and introduce them to customers, creating new demand.

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS to test convergent and discriminant validity. The CFA model fit the data well ($\chi^2/df = 2.014$, $p < .01$, IFI = .931, NFI = .872, CFI = .929, TLI = .899, and RMSEA = .064). All factor loadings of the measurement items were significant ($p < .001$), supporting the convergent validity of the constructs' measures (Comrey 1973). The average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded .5, indicating that the latent variables are highly reliable (Fornell and Bookstein 1982). As shown in Table 2, the square root of AVE is greater than any correlations among the constructs, demonstrating sufficient discriminant validity. Additionally, all composite reliability values for each construct exceed .60, suggesting that all constructs have sufficient internal consistency (Bagozzi and Yi 1988).

Table 3 Results of confirmatory factor analysis

Construct	Items	Standardized regression weights	C.R.	<i>P-value</i>
Religiosity	1	0.738		
	2	0.831	11.005	***
	3	0.692	9.613	***
	4	0.701	9.736	***
Entrepreneurial self-confidence	1	0.855		
	2	0.826	12.658	***
	3	0.571	8.892	***
Autonomy	1	0.778		
	2	0.833	10.333	***
	3	0.587	8.463	***

	1	0.795		
Risk-taking	2	0.682	8.595	***
	3	0.629	8.194	***
Innovativeness	1	0.574		
	2	0.848	6.731	***
Proactiveness	1	0.766		
	2	0.871	13.376	***
	3	0.82	12.855	***

Table 4 Average variance extracted and correlations between constructs and composite reliability

	RLG	CFD	ATN	RTP	INV	PAT	AVE	C.R.
Religiosity	.728						.530	.818
entrepreneurial self-confidence	.195*	0.828					.686	.864
Autonomy	.227*	.431	.807				.652	.846
Risk-taking	.006	.269	.233	.747			.559	.790
Innovative-ness	.194	.524	.440	.533	.785		.617	.757
Proactiveness	.084*	.476*	.086	.347	.403	.883	.780	.914

Note. The values on the diagonal are the square roots of the AVE. Values below the diagonal represent correlations between the constructs. * $p < .01$.

4 Results

A test was conducted using structural equation modeling analysis with AMOS. The fit statistics from this analysis indicated that the hypothesized model was a good fit for the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.436$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .076, NFI = .828, IFI = .891, TLI = .891, and CFI = .888).

The analysis results reveal that religiosity positively affects CSC ($\beta = .208$, $p = .009$). The path analysis shows that ESC positively affects autonomy ($\beta = .504$, $p < .000$), risk-taking ($\beta = .419$, $p < .000$), innovativeness ($\beta = .614$, $p < .000$), and proactiveness ($\beta = .694$, $p < .000$). Therefore, we confirm that the data support all proposed hypotheses. **Fig. 1** shows the results of the hypothesis test, indicating that increased engagement and participation in religion increase confidence in business operations, which, in turn, increases various entrepreneurial spirit factors.

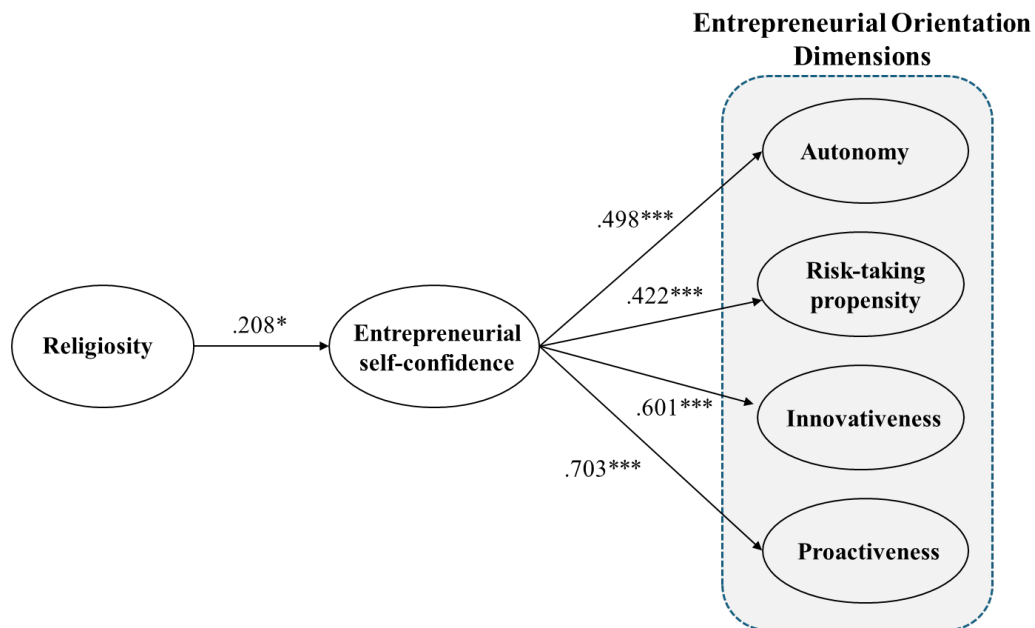


Fig. 1 Estimated model ($^{***}p < .001$, $^*p < .01$)

Table 5 Results of path coefficient

	Path coefficient	t-value	S.E.	p-value
Religiosity → ESC	.208	2.621	.050	.009
ESC → Autonomy	.498	5.547	.115	***
ESC → Risk-taking	.422	4.638	.120	***
ESC → Innovativeness	.601	4.878	.128	***
ESC → Proactiveness	.703	7.851	.111	***

We examined the mediation effect of ESC on the relationship between religiosity and EO using AMOS, and used bootstrapping with 5,000 samples to test the significance of the indirect effect, as recommended by Hayes and Preacher (2008). The results for the total, direct, and indirect effects are summarized in Table 6. The results show that while the total and direct effects are not statistically significant, all indirect effects are. The indirect effect through ESC is statistically significant, supporting the hypothesis that it fully mediates the relationship between religiosity and EO. The results show that ESC acts as a full mediator in this relationship, because the direct effect is not statistically significant, but the indirect effect is. This suggests that the influence of religiosity on EO operates entirely through ESC, meaning religiosity itself cannot directly enhance EO.

Table 6 Results of mediation test

Dependent Variable	Independent variable	Mediating Variable	Total	Direct	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval 95%	
						LLCI	ULCI
Autonomy	Religiosity	Entrepreneurial self-confidence	.166**	.104*	.062**	.016	.121
Risk-Taking	Religiosity	Entrepreneurial self-confidence	-.002	-.060	.058**	.015	.109
Innovativeness	Religiosity	Entrepreneurial self-confidence	.100	.030	.070**	.018	.133

		Entrepreneurial self- confidence					
Proactiveness	Religiosity		.092	-.011	.102**	.023	.185

We further examined whether our proposed model outperformed the best available rival model. Based on previous research that applies structural equation modeling, we assessed the models based on overall fit, the percentage of statistically significant parameters, and the theoretical interpretation of the paths (Algesheimer et al. 2006). The rival model, shown in **Fig. 2**, includes a direct path from religiosity to autonomy, risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness, with confidence as the outcome variable. We selected this model for comparison because it is considered the most realistic and conceptually reliable model available. The results indicate that our proposed model fits the data better than the rival model does ($\chi^2/df = 3.080$, RMSEA = .091, NFI = .787, TLI = .786, RFI = .713, IFI = .845, and CFI = .841). In the path analysis, out of eight paths in the model, only five were significant. In our proposed model, all five paths (100%) were significant, compared to only 63% (five of eight) in the rival model. Additionally, the standardized path coefficients in our model were higher than those in the rival model. Therefore, we conclude that our proposed model is superior. The results also show that increased engagement in religious activities and the strengthening of religious beliefs increase confidence in possessing capabilities superior to those of competitors in the market, thus strengthening the entrepreneurial mindset.

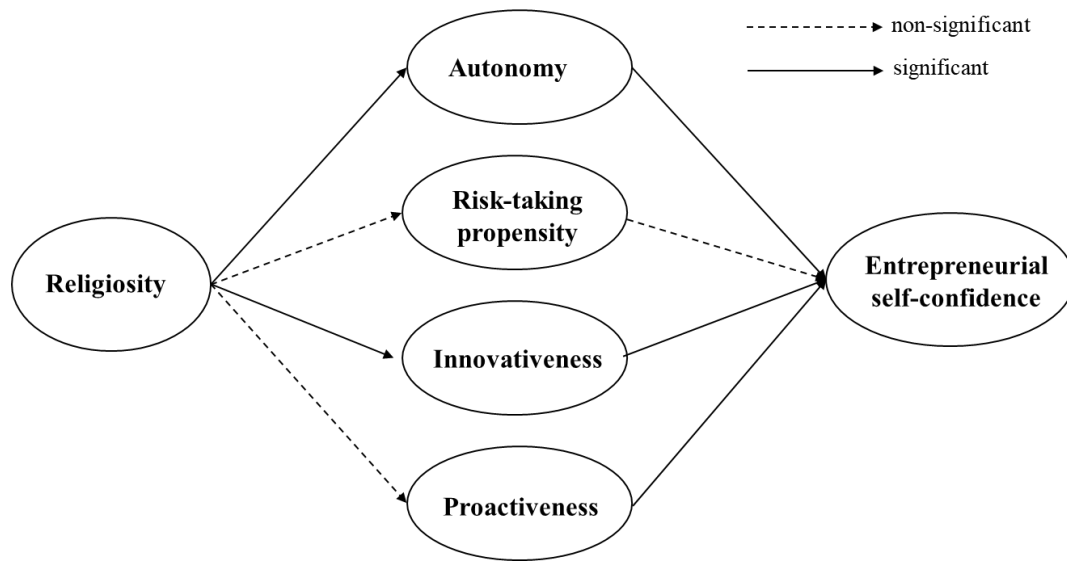


Fig. 2 Results of path analysis for a rival model

5 Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Theoretical implications

The primary goal of this study was to address a gap in the existing literature related to the effects of **religiosity** on entrepreneurship, specifically, among Christians and Buddhists in the restaurant industry. Our findings show that participation in religious activities significantly develops the EO dimensions of autonomy, risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness, within the restaurant service industry. Furthermore, the results indicate that the connection between religion and each EO dimension is mediated by psychological capital, which is ESC.

The findings of this study offer significant theoretical implications for **the relationship between religion and entrepreneurship**. First, a major contribution of this study to the literature is its analysis of individual-level variables such as autonomy, risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness, whereas most research in this area focuses on country-level variables (Audretsch et al. 2013; Henley 2017; Smith et al. 2021; Zelekha et al. 2014). In this context, Giacomini et

al. (2023) emphasize the importance of analyzing individual-level data in studies of religion and entrepreneurship, because this approach can expand our current macro-level understanding. This study is particularly valuable, because it provides insights for relatively small businesses by examining the entrepreneurial spirit of individual owners in the specific business field of restaurants. This addresses a gap in the current literature that has overlooked the context of individual business owners in the restaurant industry.

Second, we extend the Western-centric focus on religion and entrepreneurship studies by including Buddhist samples. Researchers have argued the importance of broadening the scope of study beyond Christianity. To address this, previous studies have included Muslims (Giacomin et al. 2023; Kavas et al. 2020); however, studies that examine Buddhism in this context are limited. By including various kinds of religion in this study, we enhance the generalizability of the relationship between religiosity and EO dimensions.

Third, previous studies focused primarily on general industries, leaving a gap in industry-specific knowledge about how **religiosity** affects the entrepreneurial mindset. Recognizing this, we concentrate on the restaurant service industry, exploring how **the level of** religious engagement influences entrepreneurial characteristics in various types of restaurants, including Japanese, Korean, Western, and Italian. The restaurant sector, employing the largest workforce share and significantly contributing to the national economies of many countries (Lee et al. 2016), presents a critical area for examining factors that affect innovation and entrepreneurship. Previous research has examined how to drive innovation and entrepreneurship within this sector (Hu and Yuan 2020; Shah et al. 2023). Our findings show that **religiosity** positively affects EO in the restaurant industry, thereby extending the existing body of knowledge.

Previous research has highlighted the significance of religiosity in studies on individual EO. It is important to understand how religious beliefs shape entrepreneurship. While religious affiliation has received considerable attention in past studies, the effects of religiosity or religious engagement on outcome variables remain less explored. A prior study emphasized the need to examine the degree of religiosity to better understand how religion affects entrepreneurship, noting that active engagement in religious practices and mere affiliation can have different effects on developing entrepreneurial mindsets (Rietveld and Hoogendoorn 2022). This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the degree of religiosity and its relationship with EO dimensions. Our analysis reveals that religiosity positively affects various dimensions of EO, including autonomy, risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness. The findings highlight the significant role of religiosity as social capital, which can enhance entrepreneurial mindsets (Maselko et al. 2011). Additionally, our study shows that the positive relationship between religiosity and EO dimensions is mediated by personal psychological capital, namely, ESC. These results demonstrate a close relationship between available social capital and personal psychological capital, thus enriching the existing literature.

5.2 Practical implications

The findings of this study offer practical implications for the restaurant industry, part of the service sector known for its relatively low entry barriers in terms of startup costs and required expertise, but also being highly competitive and labor-intensive (Forbes 2020). Successful startups and operations in this field require thorough preparation, and entrepreneurship support programs need to be delivered more effectively. These results suggest several implications for policies that support entrepreneurship in the restaurant service industry. The finding that higher engagement in religious activities significantly improves EO can be used to develop more

effective entrepreneurship support programs. Many entrepreneurship support centers primarily provide technical knowledge on entrepreneurship, operational strategies, resources, and funding. This support is often segmented based on the specific business field or category that the entrepreneurs intend to enter. However, by using individual religious backgrounds, we can devise tailored support programs. For example, forming entrepreneurial communities or mentoring programs based on the religious backgrounds of entrepreneurs could enhance their religious bonds and beliefs, ultimately leading to improved EO. Community activities and mentoring based on the same religion can significantly and positively affect not only the technical aspects of business, but also mental support, further enhancing engagement in religion and strengthening the entrepreneurial spirit.

Stronger social support relationships are established by enabling individuals to share religious experiences and engage in activities together via community or mentoring programs. Furthermore, participation in religious activities standardized within a program is further enhanced. Moreover, when industries in the community organize their activities into small groups of similar members, this organization directly benefits the business. Relationships formed through religious-based communities or networks can evolve into valuable business partnerships, rooted in strong trust. Such tailored communities or networks not only enhance EO, but also positively affect practical business outcomes. This, in turn, strengthens engagement with and loyalty to the religious community, creating a virtuous cycle.

Several countries, including the United States, Israel, and Singapore, operate start-up support centers to revitalize their start-up ecosystems. In economically developed countries, there is a trend toward establishing infrastructure to support local start-ups. Within such environments, the Entrepreneurship Support Center can run linked start-up programs that encourage members of local religious organizations, such as churches, to engage in

entrepreneurship. In relation to major religious facilities corresponding to the scale of each region, it is feasible to implement programs that offer information on start-ups and operations, focusing on members who actively participate in religious activities. These programs can enable participants to express their entrepreneurial spirit by increasing confidence and a willingness to take on the challenge of starting a new business. If this connection demonstrates positive effects on start-ups or practical business management, it could result in increased royalties for religious organizations. In essence, this connection could significantly benefit religious organizations by enhancing their human and economic capabilities.

Lastly, the findings of this study are applicable to both individual entrepreneurship and organizational perspectives. EO is essential for individual entrepreneurs, corporations, and organizations alike. Corporate entrepreneurship (i.e., EO within companies) shows that the entrepreneurial spirit of individual members significantly affects the performance and growth of the company (Petzsche et al. 2023; Reibenspiess et al. 2022). Companies should encourage their employees to think and act like entrepreneurs within their organizations. This involves creating a work environment and culture that allows employees to propose and implement creative and innovative ideas across different corporate activities. Additionally, companies should support the formation of religious communities among their employees and promote a corporate culture that encourages individual religious activities. While many companies are investing more in improving employee welfare and working environments, support programs for religious activities or spiritual enhancement are still insufficient. Increased support for religious beliefs and engagement can be expected to affect innovative mindsets and increase a sense of responsibility related to organizational tasks.

5.3 Limitations and future research

The present study has several limitations. First, it focuses on the restaurant industry in South Korea when examining religious engagement, which limits the ability to generalize the findings across different industries and cultures. Because the country and religion are closely intertwined, variations are expected in cases such as Hinduism in India and Islam in the Middle East, where each country has a representative religion. Additionally, the cultural characteristics of a country can greatly affect the encouragement and development of entrepreneurship. For example, there may be differences in entrepreneurship development between the West, which values individual growth and individualism, and the East, which values the interests of groups and collectivism. As such, future research should conduct more in-depth comparative analyses with different cultures in various countries to better generalize the relationship between religiosity and EO.

Second, future research should conduct comparative studies among major religions such as Christianity, Catholicism, and Buddhism. Each religion emphasizes different attitudes and values in life, which are expected to affect entrepreneurial characteristics differently (Henley 2017). Such studies would provide a deeper understanding of the role of religiosity.

Third, this study extends beyond mere religious affiliation to examine the relationship between the degree of religiosity and EO dimensions. We define religiosity using the concept of institutional religion from social and behavioral perspectives, although previous research suggests treating religiosity as a multi-dimensional variable to better understand its influences. Giacomini et al. (2023) analyze believing, behaving, belonging, and bonding as four distinct dimensions of religiosity, each of which could affect the EO dimensions differently. Therefore, future studies should explore these dimensions of religiosity. Measuring religiosity in multiple dimensions, such as faith, religious values, and social capital, would enable a more thorough

analysis and clarify the relationship between religion and entrepreneurship, and thus the relationship between religiosity dimensions and EO.

Lastly, the current study uses a self-reported survey method with cross-sectional data collection, which is subject to biases that may affect the accuracy of the data. Measuring shifts in mindset and values influenced by religion using multiple-choice questions is challenging. Additionally, the degree of religious belief evolves over time, which can also alter its effect. Future studies could benefit from more controlled experimental research designs to produce more accurate findings. Moreover, the cross-sectional survey method may have limitations in establishing causal relationships between variables. Future studies should address this by incorporating qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and observations, or longitudinal study designs to provide deeper insights into the relationship between religiosity and EO.

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