Reconceptualising Muslim Entrepreneurial Well-being: A Multidimensional Falāḥ Framework Grounded in Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah

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Abstract

Purpose: To reconceptualise entrepreneurial well-being (EWB) for Muslim business owners by adopting falāḥ as the evaluative referent, and to develop an individual-level multidimensional framework.
Design/methodology/approach: A conceptual article of the theory-synthesis type (Jaakkola, 2020). Literature was selected purposively by theoretical centrality from three streams that have developed in isolation: entrepreneurial well-being, Islamic entrepreneurship, and the operationalisation of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah. Synthesis proceeded through conceptual-misfit identification, cross-domain abstraction, structural mapping, and proposition development.
Findings: The prevailing EWB definition is this-worldly, individualistic, and treats religion as contextual, failing to capture the referent Muslim entrepreneurs actually use. The study defines falāḥ-oriented well-being as cross-temporal flourishing experienced when venture activity is perceived as aligned with the objectives of the Sharia, maps it onto al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams as five dimensions, and identifies four regulatory spiritual mechanisms — niyyah, tawakkul, ṣabr, qanāʿah — with their dark sides. Nine testable propositions are derived, three curvilinear.
Practical implications: Evaluations of Sharia-based enterprise development programmes should incorporate multidimensional well-being indicators, since assessing them by revenue growth alone neglects the outcomes beneficiaries value most. For Islamic financial institutions, contract literacy carries well-being value in itself through perceived purity of capital.
Originality/value: The first systematic attempt to bridge entrepreneurial well-being research with the operationalisation of maqāṣid at the micro-individual level — hitherto dominated by macro-national indices — anchoring the spiritual mechanisms in organisational psychology theory so the framework is testable.
Paper type: Conceptual paper.
Keywords: entrepreneurial well-being, falāḥ, maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, Islamic entrepreneurship, barakah.

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, entrepreneurship research has shifted attention from firm-level to individual-level outcomes. Wiklund, Nikolaev, Shir, Foo, and Bradley (2019) marked this shift by defining entrepreneurial well-being (EWB) as the experience of satisfaction, positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and psychological functioning in relation to developing, starting, growing, and running a venture. This definition has become the dominant reference and has stimulated a productive stream of research on entrepreneurial stress, resilience, and recovery (Ahmed, Ucbasaran, Cacciotti, & Williams, 2022; Hartmann, Backmann, Newman, Brykman, & Pidduck, 2022; Lerman, Munyon, & Williams, 2021).

That definition, however, carries ontological commitments that are seldom interrogated. It rests on two Western philosophical traditions: hedonism, which measures well-being as affect balance and life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), and eudaimonism, which measures it as the realisation of human potential (Ryff, 1989). Both terminate at the horizon of this-worldly life. When this framing is applied to Muslim entrepreneurs, a serious construct validity problem emerges: the highest referent Muslim business owners use to judge whether their life is successful is not this-worldly life satisfaction but falāḥ — success spanning this world and the hereafter (Chapra, 2008). Consequently, an entrepreneur experiencing objectively declining revenue yet perceiving the venture as clean, halal, and worship-bearing may report high well-being; conversely, an entrepreneur growing rapidly on capital of doubtful provenance may experience unease invisible to conventional EWB instruments. An instrument blind to this dimension risks producing systematically mistaken inferences.

The Islamic entrepreneurship literature, for its part, already supplies rich conceptual material. Gümüsay (2015) formulates Islamic entrepreneurship as the integration of three pillars — entrepreneurial, socio-economic/ethical, and religio-spiritual. Elfakhani and Ahmed (2013) and Kayed and Hassan (2010) elaborate its philosophical and ethical foundations, while Raza et al. (2023) develop a scale of Islamic entrepreneurship spanning business and spiritual perspectives. Yet the outcomes theorised in this stream are almost invariably venture performance, entrepreneurial intention, or ethical compliance. Entrepreneur well-being itself is rarely treated as a dependent construct elaborated conceptually or measured systematically.

A third stream — the maqāṣid-based welfare index literature — has in fact operationalised falāḥ into measurable indicators. Asutay and Harningtyas (2015), Zailani, Rosman, and Che Mohd Salleh (2022), and Suliswanto, Hakim, and Anwar (2024) demonstrate that the five objectives of the Sharia can be translated into welfare indices that rival the dominance of materialistic indicators. The difficulty is that nearly all such efforts operate at the macro level (country, province, or financial institution) using aggregate data, and therefore cannot be applied directly to read an individual entrepreneur's subjective experience (Suliswanto et al., 2024). No micro-individual translation of maqāṣid designed specifically for the entrepreneurial context is yet available.

A clear research gap therefore exists at the intersection of these three streams: no conceptual framework defines Muslim entrepreneurial well-being as a construct in its own right, maps it onto the maqāṣid architecture, and explains the mechanisms linking venture experience to that well-being. The gap is not merely a lacuna in the literature; it carries practical consequences. Sharia-based microenterprise empowerment policies evaluated solely through revenue and financing-access indicators risk overlooking the outcomes their beneficiaries value most.

This article addresses three research questions. (RQ1) How is entrepreneur well-being conceptualised in mainstream entrepreneurship research and in the Islamic entrepreneurship literature, and where do the two misalign? (RQ2) How can the construct of falāḥ be translated into a multidimensional well-being framework at the individual entrepreneur level? (RQ3) What mechanisms link venture experience to falāḥ-oriented well-being, and what propositions can be derived from them?

The article makes three contributions. Theoretically, it offers a definition and a five-dimensional framework of falāḥ-oriented well-being that bridges EWB research and Islamic economics — a bridging that, to the authors' knowledge, has not been undertaken systematically. Methodologically, it derives nine testable propositions together with a measurement development agenda, so that the framework does not remain a normative statement. Practically, it provides a basis for designing evaluations of Sharia-based enterprise development programmes that do not reduce success to growth figures.

2. Literature Review and Proposition Development

2.1. Entrepreneurial Well-being in Mainstream Research

The conceptualisation of EWB rests on two traditions. The hedonic tradition views well-being as subjective well-being, a composite of life satisfaction and affect balance (Diener et al., 1985). The eudaimonic tradition views it as psychological functioning encompassing autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989). Wiklund et al. (2019) unify the two in what is now the standard definition.

Subsequent research shows that the relationship between entrepreneurship and well-being is conditional rather than linear. The meta-analysis by Lerman et al. (2021) distinguishes challenge stressors, which enhance performance, from hindrance stressors, which erode well-being, and finds that entrepreneurs experience relatively better outcomes than non-entrepreneurs. Ahmed et al. (2022) integrate stress, resilience, and coping into a single process model, while Hartmann et al. (2022) map entrepreneurs' psychological resilience and highlight its dark side. The bibliometric review by Sierra-Casanova, Palma-Ruiz, and Torres-Barreto (2024) of 525 articles confirms that the field is expanding rapidly yet remains concentrated in secular-Western contexts.

Three limitations of this stream stand out when read from the perspective of Muslim contexts. First, its temporal horizon is confined to this-worldly life and thus offers no place for the hereafter orientation that, for Muslim entrepreneurs, is not an adjunct but the primary frame. Second, its unit of analysis is individualistic, whereas in collectivist Muslim societies entrepreneur well-being is tightly interwoven with family and community (Cruz & Basco, 2018; Seaman, Bent, & Unis, 2016). Third, this stream treats religion as a demographic or contextual variable rather than as a meaning system that constitutively shapes what counts as flourishing (Block, Fisch, & Rehan, 2020). The review by Balog, Baker, and Walker (2014) of religiosity and spirituality in entrepreneurship called for precisely this shift, yet the call has seldom been translated into the conceptualisation of well-being.

2.2. Entrepreneurship from an Islamic Perspective

Islamic entrepreneurship is understood as the harmonious integration of entrepreneurial, socio-economic/ethical, and religio-spiritual pillars, in which business activity is conducted in God-consciousness and intended as worship in pursuit of falāḥ (Gümüsay, 2015; Ramadani, Dana, Ratten, & Tahiri, 2015). Operationally, Muslim entrepreneurs are required to uphold truthfulness (ṣidq), trustworthiness (amānah), and justice (‘adl), while avoiding hoarding (iḥtikār), speculation (maysir), exploitation, and monopoly (Elfakhani & Ahmed, 2013; Kayed & Hassan, 2010). This foundation culminates in equitable wealth distribution through zakat and social care.

Empirical work supports the relevance of this framing. Gursoy, Altinay, and Kenebayeva (2017) find that religiosity shapes values and entrepreneurial behaviour differently among practising and non-practising Muslim entrepreneurs. Raza et al. (2023) show that both business dimensions (trustworthiness, honesty, truthfulness) and spiritual dimensions (taqwā, good intention, respect for religious obligations) positively predict SME performance. Ali (2024) proposes a two-dimensional model — īmān and asbāb — explicitly positioning falāḥ as the ultimate end, while Almobaireek, Alshumaimeri, and Manolova (2017) map the new venture creation process in the Muslim world. At the micro-process level, Ganzin, Islam, and Suddaby (2020) demonstrate that transcendent belief functions as a resource for future-oriented sensemaking — a finding that directly supports the mechanism argument advanced here.

Nevertheless, most such studies treat well-being as a residual outcome measured with conventional instruments rather than as a construct retheorised from within an Islamic frame. This is what distinguishes the present agenda.

2.3. Falāḥ and Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah as a Foundation for Well-being

Falāḥ in Islamic economics refers to success encompassing material welfare in this world and salvation in the hereafter (Chapra, 2008). It is conventionally operationalised through maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah, particularly al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams — the preservation of religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), life (ḥifẓ al-nafs), intellect (ḥifẓ al-‘aql), progeny (ḥifẓ al-nasl), and wealth (ḥifẓ al-māl) — as formulated by al-Ghazālī and al-Shāṭibī and developed in contemporary discourse (Auda, 2008; Ibn ‘Āshūr, 2006).

Several scholars have translated this framework into welfare indices. Asutay and Harningtyas (2015) develop a maqāṣid index to assess the social performance of Islamic banks. Zailani et al. (2022) review indicators for maqāṣid-based socio-economic development indices and find the faith dimension the most difficult to operationalise. Suliswanto et al. (2024) critique fifteen articles on maqāṣid-based welfare indices and highlight the weakness of uniform weighting when most scholars assign differing priorities to each component. The most consequential critique for present purposes is that virtually all such indices are constructed at the macro level using aggregate data, and therefore cannot capture development at the micro level. Table 1 summarises the position of the three streams and the gap this article addresses.

Table 1. Position of the three literature streams and the research gap

Literature stream	Principal focus	Level of analysis	Treatment of well-being	Limitation
Entrepreneurial well-being (Wiklund et al., 2019; Lerman et al., 2021; Sierra-Casanova et al., 2024)	Life satisfaction, affect, psychological functioning, stress and resilience	Individual	Focal construct, measured and validated	This-worldly horizon; individualistic; religion as contextual variable
Islamic entrepreneurship (Gümüsay, 2015; Raza et al., 2023; Ali, 2024)	Values, ethics, motivation, institutions, venture performance	Individual and organisational	Residual outcome, rarely theorised	Well-being measured with conventional instruments
Maqāṣid-based welfare indices (Asutay & Harningtyas, 2015; Zailani et al., 2022; Suliswanto et al., 2024)	Operationalising falāḥ into measurable indicators	Country, province, institution	Focal construct, measured in aggregate	Macro level; does not capture entrepreneur experience
Gap and position of this article	Muslim entrepreneurial well-being as a construct in its own right	Individual	Focal construct, retheorised from an Islamic frame	—

Source(s): Authors' own creation

2.4. Regulatory Spiritual Mechanisms

Synthesising the literature identifies four mechanisms linking venture experience to falāḥ-oriented well-being. All four can be read as psychological-spiritual resources within the conservation of resources framework (Hobfoll, 1989) and as cognitive appraisal devices within the transactional theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), yet with a distinctive theological content.

Niyyah operates as a meaning-making mechanism that transforms the appraisal of workload: activity that is objectively exhausting is reappraised as worship-bearing. This parallels cognitive job crafting but draws on transcendent belief. Tawakkul functions as an anxiety buffer by separating responsibility for effort from responsibility for outcome, so that venture uncertainty is not wholly translated into personal threat. Ṣabr operates as a coping resource sustaining persistence through downturns. Qanāʿah functions as an aspiration-calibration mechanism restraining the escalation of comparative referents, so that the aspiration–attainment gap — a principal source of dissatisfaction — does not widen without limit.

P1. The stronger the framing of venture activity through niyyah as worship, the weaker the negative relationship between hindrance stressors and Muslim entrepreneurial well-being.

P2. Tawakkul moderates the relationship between environmental uncertainty and entrepreneur anxiety, such that the relationship weakens at high levels of tawakkul.

P3. Ṣabr is positively related to venture persistence during performance downturns; this relationship is curvilinear, however, in that very high levels of ṣabr increase the risk of escalation of commitment.

P4. Qanāʿah moderates the relationship between the aspiration–attainment gap and dissatisfaction, such that the negative effect of the gap weakens at high levels of qanāʿah.

These mechanisms also possess dark sides that are seldom discussed. Fatalistically construed tawakkul may reduce planning and risk preparedness; excessive ṣabr may turn into escalation of commitment to a venture that ought to be discontinued — paralleling the dark side of resilience identified by Hartmann et al. (2022); and disproportionate qanāʿah may dampen legitimate productive ambition. The framework therefore treats mechanism–well-being relationships as potentially non-linear rather than monotonically positive.

2.5. Institutional Context as Boundary Conditions

These mechanisms do not operate in a vacuum. Three layers of context function as boundary conditions.

First, informal institutions comprising family, community, and trust networks. Community-based social capital — including qarḍ ḥasan schemes and mutual-aid financing among members — dampens uncertainty and provides a sense of security. Yet the overlap of family and business roles generates work–family tension, while community expectations may become an additional burden (Cruz & Basco, 2018; Ghoul, 2017; Seaman et al., 2016). Social embeddedness thus has a turning point: beneficial up to a threshold, burdensome beyond it. That burden is unevenly distributed: Essers and Benschop (2009) show that Muslim businesswomen perform intensive boundary work in negotiating religious, gender, and ethnic demands — a burden not borne equally by male entrepreneurs.

P5. Access to Sharia-compliant financing is positively related to Muslim entrepreneurial well-being, and this relationship is mediated by the perceived purity of the capital source rather than by capital adequacy alone.

P6. The relationship between family–community embeddedness and Muslim entrepreneurial well-being is an inverted U-shape: social support raises well-being up to a point, beyond which kinship obligations reduce it.

Second, Islamic financial institutions. Avoidance of ribā, gharar, and maysir is not merely legal compliance but partly determines entrepreneurial equanimity through perceived purity of the capital source. Conversely, restricted access to Sharia-compliant financing is a tangible source of financial strain. The growth of Islamic fintech in Indonesia has substantially widened this access (Devi, Firmansyah, & Hidayat, 2023), although digital literacy remains the principal barrier to adoption (Adiba, Zulfikar, & Hidayat, 2025). Profit-sharing instruments such as mushārakah and muḍārabah transform the creditor–debtor relation into a risk-sharing partnership, while waqf operates as a social entrepreneurship model (Ratten, Rammal, & Ramadani, 2017; Salarzehi, Armesh, & Nikbin, 2010). This social dimension extends the referent of well-being from the entrepreneur to the beneficiary community (Mulyaningsih & Ramadani, 2017), while Sharia supervisory boards safeguard the ethical integrity of contracts (Rexhepi & Ramadani, 2017).

Third, digital technology and artificial intelligence. Digitalisation widens markets and efficiency, yet always-on culture and platform dependence demand ceaseless availability that conflicts with needs for recovery and worship. The finding of Purnomo, Adiyanto, and Rostiani (2026) on halal certification on Indonesian food-delivery platforms is instructive: certification raises customer ratings but has no significant effect on turnover, while triggering operational modernisation that consumes resources. Sharia compliance in digital ecosystems may thus yield reputational and spiritual returns without direct financial reward — a pattern legible as rational only if well-being is measured multidimensionally. The Islamic Knowledge Management framework (Yaakub & Othman, 2017) and the mechanism of ijtihād provide a governance basis for adopting frontier technologies.

P7. The intensity of digital technology use relates to Muslim entrepreneurial well-being in both directions; this relationship is moderated by self-governance discipline in the form of work-time boundaries protecting worship and family time.

P8. High falāḥ-oriented well-being increases entrepreneurs' willingness to sustain halal compliance even when such compliance is costly and yields no direct financial return.

P9. Falāḥ-oriented well-being predicts long-term venture sustainability better than well-being measured with conventional EWB instruments among Muslim entrepreneur populations.

3. Research Method

This article is a conceptual article, that is, a study whose principal contribution is a theoretical framework rather than new empirical findings. This genre has its own methodological canons, distinct from empirical research and from systematic reviews: what is required is not the reproducibility of data collection procedures but clarity in formulating the conceptual problem, internal coherence of the argument, and traceability of the resulting propositions (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015; MacInnis, 2011).

3.1. Type of Conceptual Development

Following Jaakkola's (2020) typology, conceptual articles may be classified as theory synthesis, theory adaptation, typology, or model. This article adopts the theory synthesis type: developing a framework by integrating concepts and findings that have hitherto developed separately across several literature streams, thereby yielding a new understanding of a phenomenon. The choice fits the problem addressed: the conceptualisation of Muslim entrepreneurial well-being is impeded not by a scarcity of material but by its dispersion across three streams that rarely converse — entrepreneurial well-being research, Islamic entrepreneurship research, and research operationalising maqāṣid.

3.2. Literature Selection Strategy

Literature was selected purposively on the basis of theoretical centrality rather than representativeness of the publication population. Three criteria were applied. First, seminal works defining the core construct in each stream, such as Wiklund et al. (2019) for entrepreneurial well-being, Gümüsay (2015) for Islamic entrepreneurship, and Chapra (2008) for falāḥ within the maqāṣid framework. Second, recent reviews serving as markers of the state of the field, such as Ahmed et al. (2022), Hartmann et al. (2022), Sierra-Casanova et al. (2024), and Suliswanto et al. (2024). Third, studies directly bridging two or more streams, or supplying empirical evidence for the theorised relationships, such as Raza et al. (2023), Azman, Rahman, and Ismail (2024), and Purnomo et al. (2026).

It must be stated openly that this purposive strategy does not claim to cover the entirety of the literature in the three streams. The claim advanced is theoretical — that the concepts synthesised suffice to build a coherent and testable framework — not that the framework subsumes all available literature.

3.3. Synthesis Logic and Proposition Development

Framework development proceeded through four sequential steps. The first is identifying conceptual misfit: tracing the ontological assumptions embedded in the prevailing definition of entrepreneurial well-being and testing their applicability to Muslim entrepreneurs. The second is cross-domain abstraction: drawing concepts from Islamic economics — falāḥ, barakah, ṭuma'nīnah, and the spiritual mechanisms — to a level of abstraction at which they can be compared with established psychological constructs. The third is structural mapping: arranging the abstracted concepts within the architecture of al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams to form a five-dimensional individual-level framework. The fourth is proposition development: formulating relational statements specific enough to be falsifiable, each grounded in an explicit theoretical mechanism.

So that the resulting framework does not remain a normative construction, the proposed mechanisms are anchored wherever possible in established organisational psychology theory — notably conservation of resources (Hobfoll, 1989) and the transactional theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This anchoring renders the propositions testable with instruments and designs already familiar in entrepreneurship research, while preserving the distinctive theological content of the synthesised concepts.

3.4. Quality Criteria

Conceptual articles are assessed against criteria different from those applied to empirical research. Four criteria guided the writing of this article (Cornelissen, 2017; Jaakkola, 2020; MacInnis, 2011): (i) clarity of the conceptual gap addressed and of why it matters; (ii) internal coherence, that is, consistency among construct definition, dimensions, mechanisms, and propositions; (iii) testability, that is, the extent to which propositions translate into falsifiable hypotheses; and (iv) usefulness, that is, the extent to which the framework opens research directions and practical implications previously unavailable. The concluding section responds explicitly to these four criteria.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Redefining Muslim Entrepreneurial Well-being

On the basis of the synthesis, this article proposes the following definition. Falāḥ-oriented well-being is the cross-temporal state of flourishing experienced by an entrepreneur when venture activity is perceived as aligned with the objectives of the Sharia, manifested in inner tranquillity (ṭuma'nīnah), sufficiency held in gratitude, preserved family and community relations, and confidence in the otherworldly value of the work undertaken.

This definition departs from that of Wiklund et al. (2019) in three respects. First, its temporal horizon extends beyond this-worldly life, so that the assessment of well-being does not depend wholly on outcomes observable within a lifetime. Second, its evaluative referent is normative-external, namely alignment with the Sharia, rather than subjective evaluation of satisfaction alone. Third, its unit of experience is relational, encompassing the state of family and community as constitutive components rather than as external predictors. It should be stressed that the framework does not replace the conventional EWB construct but extends it; hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions remain relevant, positioned within a larger architecture.

4.2. A Five-Dimensional Framework Grounded in al-Ḍarūriyyāt al-Khams

The proposed framework maps falāḥ-oriented well-being onto the five objectives of the Sharia, with micro-individual translations presented in Table 2. This mapping answers the critique of Suliswanto et al. (2024) regarding the dominance of macro-level operationalisations of maqāṣid.

Table 2. Five-dimensional framework of falāḥ-oriented well-being at the individual entrepreneur level

Objective of the Sharia	Well-being dimension	Individual-level indicators (proposed)	Conceptual references
Ḥifẓ al-dīn	Spiritual	Construal of venture as worship; consistency of worship amid venture demands; perceived alignment of venture with belief	Gümüsay (2015); Ali (2024); Zailani et al. (2022)
Ḥifẓ al-nafs	Psychological-emotional	Ṭuma'nīnah; low venture anxiety; recovery and sleep quality; positive affect	Ryff (1989); Diener et al. (1985); Lerman et al. (2021)
Ḥifẓ al-'aql	Cognitive-epistemic	Sharia business literacy; clarity in decision making; learning and adaptive capacity	Yaakub & Othman (2017); Suliswanto et al. (2024)
Ḥifẓ al-nasl	Relational-generational	Work–family relationship quality; intergenerational venture continuity; contribution to community	Cruz & Basco (2018); Seaman et al. (2016); Randerson et al. (2015)
Ḥifẓ al-māl	Material-barakah	Income sufficiency and financial security; halal status of capital; perceived barakah in acquisition	Chapra (2008); Ratten et al. (2017); Devi et al. (2023)

Source(s): Authors' own creation

The spiritual dimension (ḥifẓ al-dīn) refers to the extent to which entrepreneurs construe business activity as part of worship and perceive coherence between work and belief. Niyyah frames everyday economic transactions as meritorious acts, so that hard work and hardship acquire meaning that does not automatically diminish well-being. Zailani et al. (2022) note that this is the dimension hardest to operationalise at the macro level; at the individual level, by contrast, it is the most accessible through perceptual measurement.

The psychological-emotional dimension (ḥifẓ al-nafs) encompasses ṭuma'nīnah, low venture anxiety, and recovery capacity. This dimension is closest to the conventional EWB construct but differs in the source of equanimity: tranquillity here derives partly from confidence in halal status and from entrusting outcomes to God rather than from control over outcomes alone.

The cognitive-epistemic dimension (ḥifẓ al-ʻaql) encompasses Sharia business literacy, clarity in decision making, and learning capacity. Entrepreneurs who do not understand differences among contracts, for instance, experience persistent doubt that erodes equanimity even when their venture is factually compliant. This dimension is routinely overlooked in the EWB literature.

The relational-generational dimension (ḥifẓ al-nasl) encompasses the quality of work–family relations, intergenerational venture continuity, and contribution to community. The family entrepreneurship literature confirms that family is simultaneously a source of support and of strain (Cruz & Basco, 2018; Randerson, Bettinelli, Fayolle, & Anderson, 2015; Seaman et al., 2016).

The material-barakah dimension (ḥifẓ al-māl) encompasses income sufficiency, financial security, the halal status of capital, and perceived barakah. This dimension most clearly distinguishes the Islamic framework from its conventional counterpart: what is evaluated is not magnitude alone but also the quality and provenance of acquisition.

4.3. The Integrated Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 summarises the conceptual framework arising from the synthesis. It positions venture experience as the entry point, regulatory spiritual mechanisms as the process explanation, falāḥ-oriented well-being as the focal construct, and venture decisions and sustainability as downstream outcomes. Institutional context is positioned as a moderator, while the dark side of the mechanisms is displayed as a possible curvilinear relationship that restrains an unduly optimistic reading of the framework.

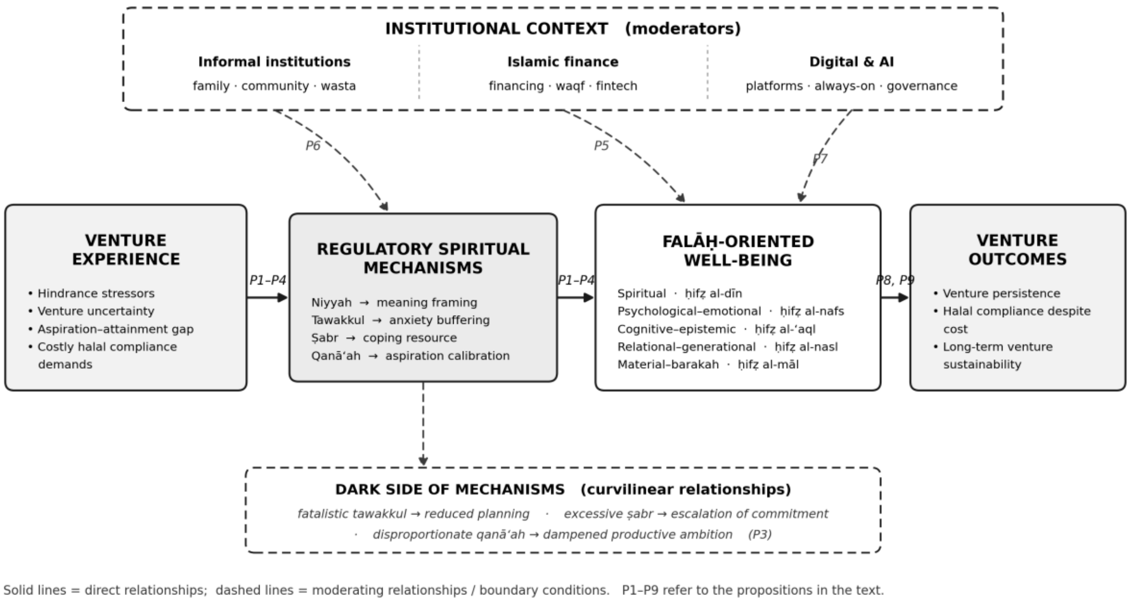

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of falāḥ-oriented well-being among Muslim entrepreneurs

Source(s): Authors' own creation

4.4. Unresolved Tensions

The framework is not intended to dissolve the conceptual tensions inherent in its object. At least three tensions warrant open acknowledgement.

The first is between the growth imperative and the demand for equanimity. Mainstream entrepreneurship research and policy ecosystems valorise scale and growth (Wiklund et al., 2019), whereas falāḥ-based well-being emphasises qanāʻah. The two are not always aligned: aggressive expansion may erode the very tranquillity that constitutes the core of Islamic well-being. This article does not claim the tension is resolved; what it offers is a reframing that positions growth as a means to falāḥ rather than as an end. This reframing shifts the evaluative question from how large the venture is to how blessed and tranquil the life lived through it.

The second is between profit orientation and maṣlaḥah, surfacing when financially attractive opportunities deliver limited social benefit. The third is between digital velocity and the deliberative caution of Sharia governance, which requires processes of ijtihād that are not instantaneous.

An epistemological limitation must also be recorded. The concepts of barakah and ṭuma'nīnah contain dimensions that are theologically not fully observable. The framework therefore measures entrepreneurs' perception of barakah rather than barakah itself — a restriction that must be stated explicitly to prevent overclaiming in derivative research.

4.5. Implications

Theoretically, this article extends the definition of EWB by adding a transcendent temporal horizon, a normative evaluative referent, and a relational unit of experience. This extension challenges the assumed universality of prevailing EWB instruments and opens a cross-cultural research agenda on measurement invariance in entrepreneur well-being. For the Islamic economics literature, the article contributes a micro-individual translation of maqāṣid in a domain hitherto dominated by macro approaches.

Practically, the framework suggests self-evaluation practices for entrepreneurs that do not stop at financial indicators, including work-time boundaries protecting worship and family as a form of self-governance in an always-on era. For Islamic financial institutions and SME support agencies, the finding on the role of perceived capital purity suggests that contract education carries well-being value in its own right, independent of its effect on venture performance. For policymakers, evaluations of Sharia-based enterprise development programmes should incorporate multidimensional well-being indicators; evaluating programmes by revenue growth alone risks neglecting the outcomes beneficiaries value most — as evident in the case of halal certification, which raises trust without raising turnover (Purnomo et al., 2026).

5. Conclusion

This article began from the misalignment between the prevailing entrepreneurial well-being construct and the lived well-being of Muslim entrepreneurs. Through a theory synthesis across three streams that have hitherto proceeded separately, it redefines entrepreneur well-being as falāḥ-oriented well-being, maps it onto the five objectives of the Sharia in a micro-individual framework, identifies four regulatory spiritual mechanisms together with their dark sides, and derives nine testable propositions.

The core message is simple but far-reaching: for Muslim entrepreneurs, well-being is not a by-product of growth but the alignment of venture, values, and life purpose. Positioning growth as a means to falāḥ rather than as an end changes not only how entrepreneurial success is measured but also how the policies supporting it are designed.

As a conceptual study, this article carries inherent limitations. First, the framework and propositions have not been empirically tested. Second, literature selection was purposive and oriented to theoretical centrality, so the framework does not claim to encompass all relevant scholarship; concepts not yet covered — including those developed in Arabic- and Urdu-language literature — may enrich or revise it. Third, the framework was developed primarily against a Southeast Asian Muslim backdrop, so generalisation to Muslim-minority and Middle Eastern contexts requires separate testing. Fourth, as is inherent to the conceptual genre, the selection and interpretation of literature involve authorial judgement; external validation therefore depends on subsequent empirical testing rather than on the reproducibility of the construction procedure.

Four research agendas are proposed. First, development and validation of a Falāḥ-oriented Entrepreneurial Well-being Scale through standard procedures: item generation from the five-dimensional framework, content validity assessment by a panel of Sharia and psychometric experts, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, and discriminant validity testing against established EWB and life satisfaction instruments. Second, process case studies with in-depth interviews to unpack the mechanisms of niyyah, tawakkul, ṣabr, and qanāʿah and to capture emic meanings of flourishing; a qualitative design is appropriate here because the questions are of the how and why kind. Third, testing the propositions through longitudinal or experience-sampling designs, given that several propositions concern temporal dynamics that cross-sectional designs cannot capture. Fourth, mixed methods studies integrating qualitative depth with quantitative path testing on broader samples.

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