

The Primary Sources of Entrepreneurial Passion Beyond Traditional Typologies

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore how entrepreneurs personally experience and interpret their passion throughout their entrepreneurial journey, identify the primary sources of entrepreneurial passion, uncover additional domains of entrepreneurial passion beyond traditional typologies, and examine the influence of culture on entrepreneurial passion. This qualitative study of 23 entrepreneurs and content analysis of the interviews indicate that entrepreneurial passion is multi-faceted, with autonomy, innovation, and relationship with stakeholders emerging as key sources of entrepreneurial passion. Passion for autonomy and self-development are also unexplored concepts in entrepreneurial passion literature by extending the traditional typologies. Finally, this study associated the dimensions of culture with sources of entrepreneurial passion.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial passion, entrepreneurship, qualitative research, passion typologies, culture

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has experienced a revival in the past decade. It is widely recognized that entrepreneurs are one of the leading forces behind economic growth and innovation in an increasingly complex, volatile, uncertain, and ambiguous world (Si et al., 2021). Given the significant role of entrepreneurs, scholars have developed a complex network of antecedents, processes, and moderators to understand entrepreneurial behavior better (Liao et al., 2022; Ruiz-Palomino and Martínez-Cañas, 2021; Nasution et al., 2022). Entrepreneurs are characterized by their ambitious ventures, economic impact, and pursuit of competitive advantage.

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Therefore, it is critical to examine the drivers of entrepreneurship through in-depth studies to understand their motivations. Many have highlighted how passion lies at the heart of entrepreneurship, including its moral underpinnings (Cardon and Murnieks, 2020; Lucas and Park, 2023). Passion is considered the ultimate origin of entrepreneurial behavior that has the potential to boost the creativity required for the exploration and exploitation of rewarding opportunities (Cardon et al., 2005). Accordingly, understanding the relationship between entrepreneurship and passion sheds light on the psychology behind what drives some ventures to remain successful to this day, and the reasons these companies endure over time (Al Issa, 2021). Besides, passion is the key source of convincing and motivating investors and employees (Mittiness et al., 2012; Cardon, 2008). Entrepreneurial passion is defined as consciously accessible and intense positive emotions that arise from engagement in entrepreneurial activities. These feelings are linked to significant and prominent roles concerning the entrepreneur's self-identity (Cardon et al., 2009). Moreover, passion is essential for the entrepreneurial drive to launch unique products and services and overcome the challenges of developing new ventures. More concretely, as the central component of entrepreneurial action, entrepreneurial passion reflects the coordinated entrepreneurial cognition and behavior that ignites the engine of motivation for consistent innovation and success (Brännback et al., 2006). Additionally, entrepreneurial passion can be also dangerous according to an article in the Harvard Business Review (Isenberg, 2010). Passion is an emotion that can blind entrepreneurs and mixing the oil of being passionate with the water of objective assessment is probably the entrepreneur's toughest task. Entrepreneurial passion has emerged as a significant construct in understanding the motivations and behaviors of entrepreneurs in today's dynamic business environment. As they embark on their entrepreneurial journeys, individuals often encounter complex emotions, experiences, and challenges that shape their passion for their ventures. However, despite the growing recognition of its importance, entrepreneurs' personal experiences and interpretations of passion remain relatively underexplored (Cardon et al., 2009, 2017; De Bernardi, 2020).

Moreover, an essential avenue through which entrepreneurial passion and behavior manifest is the inclusion of cultural considerations in academic research on entrepreneurial activities (Busenitz and Lau, 1996; Mitchell et al., 2000). Utilizing Hofstede's cultural dimension framework (Hofstede, 2001), the entrepreneurship literature often notes that the entrepreneurial process is more effectively supported in cultures characterized by a high level of individualism and masculinity and a low level of uncertainty avoidance and power distance (e.g., Hayton et al., 2002). Welij (2019) claims that cultural factors also exert an influence on entrepreneurial passion. Drnovšek et al. (2014) suggest that the role-identity component of passion is the means by which the connection between culture and entrepreneurial passion is sustained. Besides, cultural background significantly moderates the association between passion and entrepreneurial goals (Kyriakopoulos et al., 2024). Different cultures may experience types of entrepreneurial passion in varying ways. For instance, in collectivist cultures, entrepreneurial passion might be more closely tied to social goals and community achievements. In contrast, in individualistic cultures, it may be driven more by

personal success and individual innovation. By exploring these cultural nuances, researchers can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how entrepreneurial passion manifests and operates globally, ultimately fostering more effective entrepreneurship strategies tailored to distinct cultural settings. Therefore, examining the sources of entrepreneurial passion across diverse cultural contexts will fill a significant gap in the existing literature and will advance the literature (Lee, and Herrmann, 2021).

As the complexities of starting and managing businesses are navigated by entrepreneurs, the personal experience and interpretation of passion can significantly shape decision-making processes, resilience against challenges, and long-term commitment to entrepreneurial pursuits. Understanding how passion is perceived and utilized by entrepreneurs is considered essential for both theoretical advancement and practical implications in the field of entrepreneurship. Considering the impact of culture on entrepreneurial passion research, findings of a collectivist culture such as Turkey will highlight cultural variations.

Drawing on these, this study aims to explore the intricate relationship between entrepreneurs and their passion by addressing three critical research questions in an emerging country with a collectivist culture setting. First, an investigation will be conducted into how passion is personally experienced and interpreted by entrepreneurs throughout their entrepreneurial journey, shedding light on the nuanced emotional landscapes that underpin entrepreneurial actions. Second, the primary sources of entrepreneurial passion, as articulated by the entrepreneurs themselves, will be identified. Third, additional domains of entrepreneurial passion that emerge through the lived experiences of entrepreneurs will be examined, extending beyond traditional typologies and providing a richer understanding of this multifaceted phenomenon.

The significance of answering these research questions is recognized by multiple stakeholders. For researchers, this study is expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on entrepreneurial passion, providing new insights that can refine theoretical frameworks and enhance the understanding of how passion operates in different contexts. Focusing on Turkey, this research uncovers the unique ways entrepreneurial passion is experienced and interpreted, thereby highlighting significant cultural variations that have been underexplored in current literature. For practitioners, it is anticipated that these findings will be beneficial in generating strategies to nurture entrepreneurial passion, which is crucial for improving entrepreneurial outcomes and fostering sustainable business practices. Moreover, by capturing the lived experiences of entrepreneurs, a more holistic understanding of passion that acknowledges its dynamic and context-dependent nature is aimed at being brought forth by this research. In doing so, advances in both theoretical knowledge and practical applications in entrepreneurship are aspired to be achieved. The structure of the paper is as follows. First, the conceptual background on entrepreneurial passion and then, the research design and findings of the empirical study will be presented. In the final section, the conclusion,

theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and future research directions will be assessed.

2. Conceptual Background

Entrepreneurial Passion

Entrepreneurs are those who explore and exploit promising opportunities through their ventures (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). The role of passion in understanding entrepreneurial behavior is considered to date back to Schumpeter's (1951) work (Zhao and Liu, 2023). Since then, there has been an exponential growth in the number of studies highlighting the role of passion in the context of entrepreneurship (Cardon et al., 2009; 2017; Mueller et al., 2017; Schwarte and Song, 2019; Warnick et al., 2018; Zhao and Liu, 2023). Passion is characterized as an intense desire to engage in activities that are intrinsically rewarding (Waalder et al., 2022). As posited by Chichekian and Vallerand (2022), passion emerges from an interaction between the individual and the activity, or it may stem from engagement with opportunities. This emotion enhances interest, arousal, and positive effect, contributing to a subjective experience of a fulfilling, meaningful, or purpose-driven life, while also reflecting belief in the transformative potential of the entrepreneurial process. Passion engages both cognitive and emotional processes and is intertwined with one's entrepreneurial identity. Schwarte et al. (2023) note that passion encompasses a range of heightened emotional experiences, including feelings of enthusiasm, excitement, and satisfaction, as well as negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and disappointment (Calvo-Porrall and Otero-Prada, 2021; Kumar, 2020). Interestingly, passion may serve as the constructive counterpart to negative emotions, as harboring negative feelings toward business opportunities can enhance affective commitment (Manieva, 2021; Elfenbein, 2023). Furthermore, while passion may not ensure success, the likelihood of achieving success without it is considerably diminished. The pursuit of exceptional performance is not a straightforward trajectory based solely on ability; rather, it involves a pathway marked by increasingly ambitious performance expectations, which are anchored in overarching performance goals (Pollack et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021). Passion can serve as an influential state that is later followed by cognitive and behavioral actions and dedication to the establishment of a new venture (Newman et al., 2021).

Entrepreneurial passion research has a diversity of viewpoints. Schwarte et al. (2023) posit that the literature has been scattered among three main perspectives of entrepreneurial passion. The identity-based perspective defines entrepreneurial passion as a process focused on how passion is activated and internalized, emphasizing that specific entrepreneurial activities must hold personal significance for the entrepreneur, typically leading to positive emotions. Research in this framework evaluates entrepreneurial passion by examining entrepreneurs' feelings and identity centrality. In contrast, the regulation-based perspective centers on the internalization process, recognizing that entrepreneurs differ in their ability to integrate entrepreneurial activities into their identities, which affects both positive and negative emotional experiences related to passion. Studies here assess

entrepreneurial passion by examining how well entrepreneurs manage this internalization. Finally, the expression-based perspective emphasizes the outward display of passion, suggesting that entrepreneurs manifest intense emotions through observable cues. Research in this area measures entrepreneurial passion by analyzing emotional expressions through facial expressions, body movements, and body language.

There are three major conceptualizations of entrepreneurial passion. The first conceptualization addresses the general work passion Baum and Locke (2004) that demonstrates love or positive feelings towards work; the second conceptualization is the dualistic passion model (Vallerand et al., 2003) in which passion is the reflection of a strong tendency toward an activity for which people devote time and effort. The dualistic model covers two types of passion: harmonious passion and obsessive passion. In harmonious passion, there is harmony between the individual's identity and work with a good manner of self-control, whereas there are forced and hard-to-control intense feelings in obsessive passion. The third conceptualization is the role-based model proposed by Cardon et al. (2009) posits that passion serves as a driving force for individuals to engage in self-regulation through the monitoring of their internal emotional states and the implementation of reactive behaviors. This self-regulation aims to achieve personal goals while sustaining an optimistic psychological disposition. The model delineates two primary dimensions of passion: (1) Intense Positive Feelings (IPF), which refers to the heightened emotional experiences associated with one's pursuits, and (2) Identity Centrality (IC), which underscores the significance of the passion object in shaping an individual's identity and self-concept. Together, these dimensions illustrate how passion can underpin effective goal attainment and foster resilience in the face of challenges. Zhao and Liu, (2023) claim that the Passion for Work model, while straightforward, may be overly broad in its definition of "work," potentially failing to capture the unique characteristics inherent to entrepreneurship. In contrast, the Dualistic Model focuses on the harmonious and conflicting aspects of multiple identities rather than on emotional dimensions. Although it has been adapted in various ways by entrepreneurship scholars, the implications of these modifications for research outcomes remain uncertain. Lastly, the Role-Based Model incorporates both a feelings dimension and an importance dimension across three entrepreneurial domains. While this model offers a more nuanced approach, it presents complexities in its application and interpretation, as the Intense Positive Feelings (IPF) must be multiplied by the Identity Centrality (IC) within the same domain. Furthermore, the scores from the three domains cannot be averaged to yield an overall measure of entrepreneurial passion. Similar to the Dualistic Model, the Role-Based Model has undergone multiple adaptations by scholars, yet the effects of these variations on research findings are not well understood. Collectively, these models provide a framework for understanding entrepreneurial passion, each with specific limitations that warrant careful consideration in empirical studies.

Sources of Entrepreneurial Passion

Entrepreneurial passion plays an important role in motivating entrepreneurs to learn from experiences, demonstrate resilience, and dedicate themselves for days on end to ventures in the pursuit of their entrepreneurial journey (Emrizal et al., 2020). Recent theoretical and empirical research indicates that the specific object of passion plays a significant role. It has been posited that investigations into the nature of passion and its effects must commence by elucidating the particular domain or subject of that passion (Cardon et al. 2009, 2017; Murnieks et al., 2014).

Cardon and her colleagues (2013) identified three distinct domains of entrepreneurial passion, namely: founding, inventing, and developing. This self-reported measure integrates characteristics of emotional engagement and identity centrality by scrutinizing entrepreneurs' emotional responses associated with three distinct role identities: creator, founder, and developer. Entrepreneurial passion for founding focuses on establishing a new company and meeting demands via the establishment of new initiatives, while entrepreneurial passion for inventing refers to testing and investigating new possibilities. Entrepreneurial passion for developing primarily delineates the management and advancement of the firm, hence possessing long-term implications regarding future behaviors (Tabak et al., 2024). This assessment method enhances passion research in two significant ways. Initially, it emphasizes the deeper degrees of passion that entrepreneurs encounter by including extremely positive emotions and the significance of identity. This method, being both activity- and identity-driven, measures entrepreneurial performance for three different entrepreneurial activities and identities independently, facilitating constructive disaggregation and producing significant differences (Schwarte et al., 2023).

Cardon et al. (2017) assert that although there is recognition of the significance of the specific focus of passion, the prevailing approach in existing research continues to concentrate primarily on passion for activities. This tendency presents a limitation to the comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial passion. Hence, they made an attempt to delve into the sources of entrepreneurial passion in order to unearth the domains of passion by which entrepreneurs are inclined to their entrepreneurial activities. In the study of Cardon et al. (2017), they discovered six types of sources of passion domains that include passion for growth, people, product and service, inventing, competition, and social mission. Passion for growth denotes an entrepreneur's inherent motivation to expand their enterprise in terms of size, market reach, or product offerings. It embodies a commitment to continuous enhancement and development, with the aim of achieving greater success and accomplishments over time. Passion for people signifies an entrepreneur's strong dedication to cultivating and sustaining meaningful relationships with employees, customers, and other stakeholders. This concept underscores the significance of human interaction and collaboration within the entrepreneurial realm, emphasizing empathy and understanding in business engagements. Passion for product and service entails a profound enthusiasm for the products or services provided. It reflects the drive to ensure offerings meet high standards of quality and fulfill customer needs and desires, highlighting a

commitment to innovation and excellence. Passion for inventing encapsulates the drive to generate novel ideas, products, or processes. Characterized by creativity, it seeks to explore new opportunities and solutions, contributing to business renewal and market expansion. Passion for competition refers to the inherent motivation derived from the challenge of surpassing rivals. It incorporates a zest for the competitive facets of business, with the goal of excelling in the field and deriving satisfaction from outperforming others. Finally, passion for social mission relates to the commitment to effectuate social change through business initiatives. It demonstrates a dedication to addressing societal challenges and needs, often concentrating on solving issues faced by underserved communities.

Entrepreneurship in Turkey

Turkey is the 17th largest economy in the world, according to the IMF, with a GDP of \$1.024 trillion as of 2023 (World Bank, 2024). According to the Startups Watch report covering the nine months of 2024, Turkish entrepreneurs received a total of 709 million dollars in 388 completed investment rounds. Turkey ranks 4th in the European league, just behind Belgium. On the other hand, based on the first nine months of 2024, Turkey has become the top pre-seed investment recipient country in Europe. When we look at the MENA ranking, it ranks 2nd behind the United Arab Emirates. All this points to the importance of Turkey in the global entrepreneurship ecosystem. Numerous interconnected elements, including education, money, gender, religion, and family support, have an impact on entrepreneurship in Turkey. The Turkish government's support systems, such as KOSGEB and TÜBİTAK, have played a vital role in fostering entrepreneurship by providing financial and training support (Öner and Kunday, 2016). These programs aim to nurture an entrepreneurial ecosystem by encouraging innovation and technology-driven business models.

When the entrepreneurship literature in Turkey is examined, it is seen that recent trends in entrepreneurship, such as social entrepreneurship (e.g., Efeoğlu, 2023), digital entrepreneurship (e.g., Boz and Serinkan, 2022), women entrepreneurship (e.g., Halaç and Meşe, 2021) have been addressed and the impact of demographic factors such as wealth and educational achievement, as well as socio-cultural variables such as Hofstede's culture dimensions, family dynamics, religious networks on entrepreneurship, has been examined (e.g. Alpay and Çatı, 2021; Ozasir Kacar, 2023; Turnalar-Çetinkaya and İslamoğlu, 2024). On the other hand, entrepreneurial passion has limited attention in Turkish entrepreneurship literature. In their study, Okumuş and Bakan (2023) emphasized that entrepreneurship passion in Turkey differs according to demographic variables and variables such as the idea of business expansion and doing business with love. However, the sources of entrepreneurial passion have not been explored in depth or linked to cultural dimensions.

3. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design by using in-depth interviews. There is a growing consensus that qualitative research advances deep and rich insights into entrepreneurial phenomena and enhances the diversity of academic studies in the field of entrepreneurship (Javadian et al., 2020). So, the in-depth interview method is chosen to gain detailed insights into participants' perspectives, uncovering the nuanced and subjective nature of entrepreneurial passion beyond traditional typologies.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on entrepreneurs from diverse industries to capture a broad range of experiences. Criteria for selection included entrepreneurs actively managing businesses from different industries and those willing to reflect on their sources of passion. Within the scope of this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 23 Turkish entrepreneurs. The sample size is determined by the point of "saturation," where no new information or themes emerge from the data. In this research, data collection through in-depth interviews continued until saturation was reached. Semi-structured interview method was used, and all participants were given an interview protocol, and a consent form outlining the study's objectives and providing a basic sense of the layout of potential interview questions before interviews. The interviews with each entrepreneur lasted between 60-75 minutes on average. In the initial phase of the interview, the participants were familiarized with the researched topic using generic questions, such as "Could you tell us about your entrepreneurial journey so far during the idea development phase?". In the second part, it is asked to identify their entrepreneurial passion, including the aspects of their journey that excite them, the factors that motivate them, what makes them happy to dedicate time to while writing their entrepreneurial story, which elements of their journey reflect who they are, and what aspects of their entrepreneurial experience make them feel unhappy. In the third part, entrepreneurs filled the questionnaire which contains questions about harmonious and obsessive passion (Fisher, Merlot and Johnson, 2018); Hofstede's 4 cultural dimensions at individual level (Power Distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, masculinity) (Yoo, Donthu and Lenartowicz, 2011) and demographics. The original four dimensions of the framework have been widely used to understand how culture affects psychological, social, and organizational phenomena, even though Hofstede (2001) extended it to six dimensions. Thus, this study only focuses on four dimensions of Hofstede's classification. In addition, 7-point Likert scale was used to measure harmonious and obsessive passion and Hofstede's four cultural dimensions.

Following each interview's transcription by the authors, content analysis was applied in the data analysis phase to find codes and themes. Pragmatic double coding (Barbour, 2003) was used, and emergent themes were iteratively challenged and discussed within the team to ensure rigor and reliability. This process continued until a consensus was reached. Sentence-level coding was used for the interviews. Both inductive and deductive data analysis were employed, with themes in the inductive approach drawn directly from the data when prior knowledge was limited,

while predefined codes in the deductive approach were applied based on existing literature (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). The sentences were examined under the sources of entrepreneurial passion based on the literature review. The results of the content analysis revealed different dimensions that were not included in the entrepreneurial passion literature previously and these dimensions were discussed in the findings section.

4. Findings & Discussion

First, demographic analysis showed 23 entrepreneurs' profiles across various dimensions (See Table 1). The majority fall within the 30-39 age range (n=14, 60.9%), followed by those aged 20-29 (n=4, 17.4%). Males (n=14, 60.9%) outnumber females (n=8, 34.8%), and most entrepreneurs are married (n=15, 65.2%), with single entrepreneurs comprising 26.1% (n=6). When the educational background of entrepreneurs was analyzed, a significant number had graduate degrees (n=12, 52.1%), followed by postgraduate graduates (n=10, 43.5%) and high school degrees (n=1, 4.4%). Regarding work experience, the majority have previous employment experience (n=19, 82.6%), while a smaller group has not any previous employment experience (n=4, 17.4%). The entrepreneurs operate in diverse sectors, with the most represented sectors being restaurant-café (n=6, 26.1%), technology (n=4, 17.4%) and manufacturing (n=4, 17.4%), followed by marketing/advertising (n=2, 8.7%). Other sectors include project management, organization, medical services, boutique shops, and toy stores, each representing smaller portions of the sample.

Table 1. Demographic Profiles of Entrepreneurs

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Age	20-29	4	17.4
	30-39	14	60.9
	40-49	3	13
	50+	2	8.7
Gender	Male	14	60.9
	Female	9	39.1
Marital Status	Married	15	65.2
	Single	8	34.8
Education	Graduate Degree	12	52.1
	Postgraduate Degree	10	43.5
	High School Degree	1	4.4
Previous Employment Experience	Yes	19	82.6
	No	4	17.4

Source: Authors' calculations

The content analysis findings on entrepreneurial passion reveal multiple sources that fuel entrepreneurial activity. These sources can be grouped into several

themes, each highlighting different aspects of passion (Table 2). The most frequently mentioned source of entrepreneurial passion is “*autonomy*”, which appeared 62 times in the verbal statements of 18 entrepreneurs. This finding is important as “*passion for autonomy*” in entrepreneurship has hardly been mentioned as a source of passion in the literature before. Under the passion for autonomy category, entrepreneurs place a high value on “*freedom*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=37$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=16$). The next set of quotes highlights freedom as passion of entrepreneurship.

“It makes me happy to make my own decisions and to feel free, to set the rules of the game myself.” (Female Entrepreneur, 40-49 years old)

“When I get up, it is very motivating not to go somewhere for someone else, but to go for something I want, to enjoy it and to get the results.” (Female Entrepreneur, 30-39 years old)

“Freedom is the most important thing. Secondly, the fact that you have authority gives you self-confidence. Thirdly, there is no limit to what you can do, you determine what you do.” (Male Entrepreneur, 30-39 years old)

Additionally, autonomy also aligns with related motivations like “*being an influencer/pioneer*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=9$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=4$) and “*being different*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=8$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=5$). This suggests that many entrepreneurs are driven by a desire for self-direction, being different, independence, and the ability to make their own decisions, free from external constraints. In particular, the following statements represent the “*being an influencer/pioneer*” and “*being different*” respectively:

“Contributing to the story of modernization within the geography and being a subject in history rather than being affected motivates us” (Male Entrepreneur, 30-39 years old)

“If I am doing something that other people can't do every time, why shouldn't I keep doing it? When I start doing things that other people have started doing, I sell that project because it is something that other people can do, it is no longer entrepreneurship, it loses its excitement.” (Male Entrepreneur, 30-39 years old)

The second most prominent source is a “*passion for inventing*”, occurring 36 times among 14 entrepreneurs. This theme revolves around creativity, finding new ideas, problem-solving. The code “*creating things*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=24$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=11$) highlights the entrepreneurial drive to innovate, while “*scanning environment and exploring opportunities*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=6$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=2$) and “*finding new solutions*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=4$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=3$) emphasize the proactive approach entrepreneurs take to identify market gaps and develop new solutions to close market gap. The following representative quotations affirm participants' views on “*passion for inventing*”:

“I enjoy doing research the most. It is important to learn new things. I love dreaming about new things and then making those dreams come true.” (Male Entrepreneur, 30-39 years old)

“The feeling of not being ordinary and constantly innovating, changing the agenda every year, creating new stories are my important motivations.” (Female Entrepreneur, 30-39 years old)

“*Passion for people*” is the third most frequently mentioned source of entrepreneurial passion and defined as being passionate about working with family, satisfying customers, and building meaningful relationships with employees,

vendors, or affiliates in the previous literature (Cardon et al., 2017). According to content analysis applied in this study, engagement with stakeholders also plays a significant role, with 35 mentions in verbatims across 18 entrepreneurs. The interactions between entrepreneurs and stakeholders are essential, with activities like “*communicating with stakeholders*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=16$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=8$) and “*fulfilling stakeholders' needs*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=11$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=9$). This points out the relational nature of entrepreneurship, where maintaining favorable communication and relationships are critical motivations for entrepreneurs. Following verbatim highlights this dimension:

“I have always been known as a problem solver and practical person in my environment. Now my job is to find solutions to problems for the customer in the most practical and easy way.” (Male entrepreneur, 20-29 years old)

In this research, a different source of entrepreneurial passion has emerged as an interesting finding that differs from the prevalent literature: “*Passion for self-development*”, noted 27 times in interviews across 12 entrepreneurs. Codes such as “*enjoying challenges*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=13$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=5$) and “*learning*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=6$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=5$) with the highest mention frequencies reveal that entrepreneurship is viewed as a continuous journey of personal growth. Entrepreneurs often see their work as a way to challenge themselves and reach their full potential.

“What energizes me the most, what excites me on the road is that it is challenging. Not that everything is neat and in the book, but I like that chaos part of life. I like the process and the learning, not going to the top.” (Male Entrepreneur, 30-39 years old)

“Competition is with a third party, whereas we are in a challenge with ourselves. I don't like competition very much. It's like Don Quixote fighting with something invisible inside yourself. We invest in businesses where we have no competition.” (Male Entrepreneur, 30-39 years old)

“I like learning things I don't know and spending time on the design side and doing graphic design. The part of turning the dream into reality is important. It is exciting to learn new things about what I do.” (ale Entrepreneur, 30-39 years old)

Additionally, growth and expansion drive entrepreneurial endeavors, and “*passion for developing and growth*” was mentioned 15 times by 10 different entrepreneurs. The focus on “*expansion*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=5$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=4$) and “*growing the business*” ($n_{\text{mentions}}=3$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=3$) reflect a forward-looking mindset where the goal is not just to establish a venture but to develop it sustainably. This is linked with efforts to enter new markets, improve products, and hire the right people, which are critical components of business growth. Another noteworthy source of passion is “*competition*,” which was mentioned 14 times by 6 entrepreneurs. The findings suggest that some entrepreneurs are driven by the need to prove themselves to others ($n_{\text{mentions}}=8$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=5$). This highlights the competitive nature of entrepreneurship, where proving one's abilities and achieving recognition are important motivators. Entrepreneurs also demonstrate a deep connection to their products or services ($n_{\text{mentions}}=14$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=9$). Emotional attachment ($n_{\text{mentions}}=7$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=4$) and personal interest ($n_{\text{mentions}}=6$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=5$) indicate that many entrepreneurs are passionate about what they offer to the market, which reflects the

importance of aligning business activities with rational and emotional aspects of passion for the product. “Social responsibility and mission-driven” entrepreneurship are mentioned 14 times by 7 entrepreneurs. Codes such as *being a contributor to others’ lives* ($n_{\text{mentions}}=10$; $n_{\text{entrepreneurs}}=6$) show that some entrepreneurs are motivated by a desire to make a positive impact on society. Last but not least, the desire to found new ventures is cited 10 times in verbatims by 8 entrepreneurs.

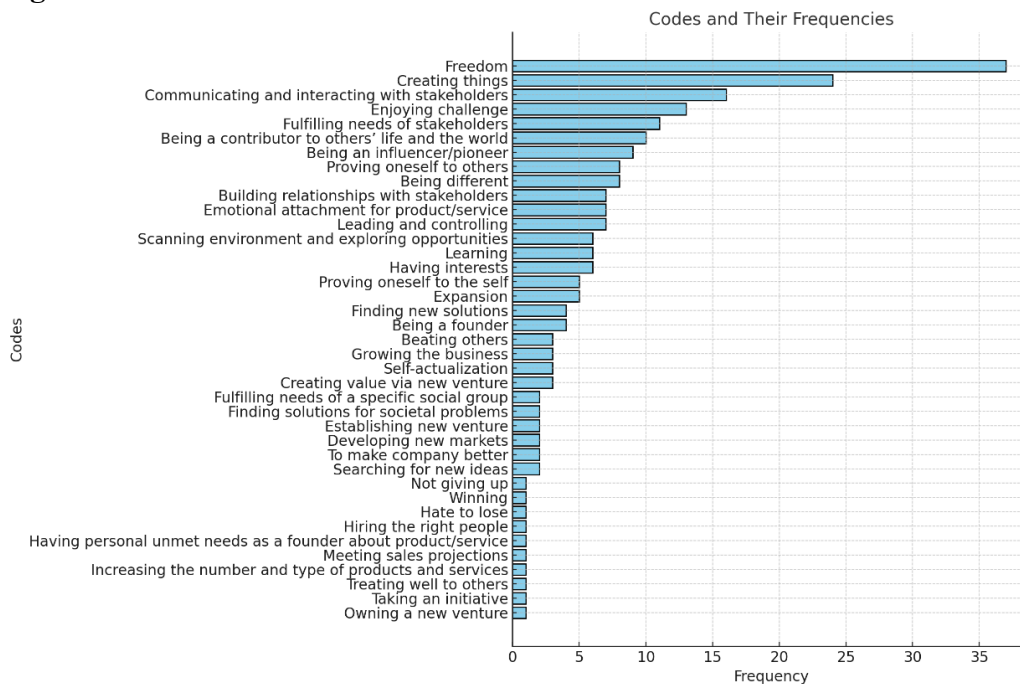
Table 2. Sources of Entrepreneurial Passion: Codes and Themes

Themes	Number of Mentions Across Contexts	Number of Unique Entrepreneurs Who Referred to the Theme	Codes	Number of Mentions Across Contexts	Number of Unique Entrepreneurs Who Referred to the Code
Passion for autonomy	62	18	Freedom	37	16
			Being an influencer/pioneer	9	4
			Being different	8	5
			Leading and controlling	7	4
			Taking an initiative	1	1
Passion for inventing	36	14	Creating things	24	11
			Scanning environment and exploring opportunities	6	2
			Finding new solutions	4	3
			Searching for new ideas	2	2
Passion for people	35	18	Communicating and interacting with stakeholders	16	8
			Fulfilling needs of stakeholders	11	9
			Building relationships with stakeholders	7	6
			Treating well to others	1	1
Passion for self-development	27	12	Enjoying challenge	13	5
			Learning	6	5
			Proving oneself to the self	5	3
			Self-actualization	3	2
Passion for developing and growth	15	10	Expansion	5	4
			Growing the business	3	3
			Developing new markets	2	2
			To make company better	2	2
			Increasing the number and type of products and services	1	1
			Meeting sales projections	1	1
			Hiring the right people	1	1
Passion for competi	14	6	Proving oneself to others	8	5
			Beating others	3	1
			Hate to lose	1	1
			Not giving up	1	1

			Winning	1	1
Passion for product	14	9	Emotional attachment for product/service	7	4
			Having interests	6	5
			Having personal unmet needs as a founder about product/service	1	1
Passion for social mission	14	7	Being a contributor to others' life and the world	10	6
			Finding solutions for societal problems	2	2
			Fulfilling needs of a specific social group	2	2
Passion for founding	10	8	Being a founder	4	3
			Creating value via new venture	3	2
			Establishing new venture	2	2
			Owning a new venture	1	1

Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 1. Codes and Number of Mentions Across Contexts



Source: Authors' calculations

In order to make a comparison between the codes in line with the Table 2, Figure 1 presents the ranking of the codes according to the frequency with which entrepreneurs mentioned that topic. According to this table, the most frequently mentioned topics related to entrepreneurial passion are “freedom”, “creating things” and “communicating and interacting with stakeholders”.

Moreover, this study focuses on different themes of entrepreneurial passion and their relationships with cultural dimensions (e.g., power distance, uncertainty avoidance) and types of entrepreneurs (harmonious vs. obsessive). Table 3 reveals distinct patterns between different types of entrepreneurial passions and the influence of various cultural dimensions. In the quantitative data analysis, when calculating the Harmonious/Obsessive Passion and Hofstede Culture Dimensions values, the answers of entrepreneurs who expressed relevant entrepreneurial passion in the interview were considered. Namely, Table 3 presents each source of entrepreneurial passion and the average of the harmonious/obsessive passion and cultural dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, masculinity) scores of the entrepreneurs referring to that source of passion. Hence, average values of 6 items (harmonious & obsessive passion, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, masculinity) were calculated based on different numbers of entrepreneurs. So, according to findings, “*Harmonious Passion*” scores are consistently high across all themes, ranging from 6.3 to 6.6 (1=Lowest Level of Harmonious Passion; 7=Highest Level of Harmonious Passion). This demonstrates a kind of passion in which the entrepreneur's business endeavors organically fit with their identity, promoting balance and wellbeing and leading to engaging in an activity that is solely based on flexibility and free choice. “*Obsessive Passion*” scores, however, are lower (3.2 to 4.7) (1=Lowest Level of Obsessive Passion; 7=Highest Level of Obsessive Passion). This form of passion indicates a compulsive drive to pursue entrepreneurship, often leading to stress and conflict between personal life and business. The passion for social mission has the highest obsessive passion orientation ($AVG_{\text{obsessivepassion}}=4.7$) of entrepreneurs, suggesting that entrepreneurs driven by social causes may experience a stronger inner compulsion or duty.

Table 3. Entrepreneurial Passion Themes and Culture Dimensions

	Average Scores for # of entreps.	Harmonious Passion	Obsessive Passion	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Collectivism	Masculinity
Passion for autonomy	18 entreps.	6.3	3.2	2.3	5.3	4.2	2.3
Passion for people	18 entreps.	6.4	3.4	2.5	5.6	4.3	2.4
Passion for inventing	14 entreps.	6.6	3.4	2.7	5.4	4.3	2.1
Passion for self-development	12 entreps.	6.4	3.2	2.4	5.5	4.2	2.1
Passion for developing and growth	10 entreps.	6.6	3.4	2.5	5.9	4.4	2.3
Passion for product	9 entreps.	6.6	4.0	2.6	5.1	4.4	2.3
Passion for founding	8 entreps.	6.3	3.6	1.6	4.8	5.1	1.9
Passion for social mission	7 entreps.	6.4	4.7	2.0	5.2	4.3	1.6

Passion for competition	6 entreps.	6.6	3.2	2.0	5.8	4.1	3.2
1=Lowest Level of Harmonious / Obsessive Passion; 7=Highest Level of Harmonious / Obsessive Passion							
1= Low Power Distance/ Uncertainty Avoidance/Collectivism/ Masculinity; 7= High Power Distance/ Uncertainty Avoidance/Collectivism/ Masculinity							

Source: Authors' calculations

When examining cultural dimensions and entrepreneurial passion, most entrepreneurs, regardless of their passion, have low power distance scores (1.6–2.7) on a scale of 1 to 7. Kara and Dheer's (2023) findings reveal that low power distance cultures foster greater openness to new ideas, technologies, and processes, along with enhanced risk-taking and experimentation. So, being an entrepreneur with low power distance cultural values provides a motivation that drives individuals to embrace innovation, take risks, experiment with new approaches, and collaborate openly, all of which enhance entrepreneurial success and growth. Scores for avoiding uncertainty are moderate (4.8–5.9), showing that entrepreneurial passions align with the need for stability, though flexibility is still required. Collectivist tendencies are modest (4.1–5.1), with passions for founding and social mission scoring slightly higher, suggesting that some entrepreneurial activities value group harmony and social connections. The masculinity dimension scores (1.6–3.2) reflect the extent to which entrepreneurial passions are associated with assertiveness and competition. However, it seems that passion for competition is expressed by far fewer entrepreneurs than other sources of passion, which is consistent with low masculinity. Finally, competition-related passion scores higher, aligning with traditional masculine values like competitiveness and achievement.

5. Conclusion

According to the content analysis, there are various sources of entrepreneurial passion, each of which reflects unique motivational themes that drive entrepreneurial action, and it is concluded that entrepreneurial passion is multi-faceted, involving a blend of personal, relational, and business-focused motivations. Passion for autonomy stands out among these as the most often mentioned source, highlighting the significance of independence, freedom, and self-direction, which have been largely overlooked in prior literature.

Additionally, passion for inventing highlights the entrepreneurial focus on creativity, innovation, and problem-solving, reinforcing the proactive mindset needed to explore new opportunities and address market gaps. While autonomy and inventing dominate as the most common sources of passion, the importance of relationships, personal growth, and social impact cannot be overlooked. Therefore, the relational aspect of entrepreneurship is also evident, with passion for people emphasizing the importance of engaging with stakeholders, including customers, employees, and business partners. This relational dynamic underscores the significance of building and maintaining meaningful relationships in achieving entrepreneurial success. Furthermore, passion for self-development reveals a novel

perspective, positioning entrepreneurship as a continuous journey of learning and personal growth, where challenges are embraced as opportunities for self-actualization. Entrepreneurship is perceived as more than just starting a business; it is assessed as a vehicle for personal fulfillment, innovation, and contribution to society.

Interestingly, passion for founding new ventures, though important, appears less frequently than all other sources of entrepreneurial passion. This indicates that entrepreneurs are not only focused on starting businesses but are more motivated to nurture and expand their ventures over time by drawing on other sources of entrepreneurial passion. In conclusion, these findings highlight the complex interplay of entrepreneurial passion that drives entrepreneurs. The passion for autonomy and creativity emerges as essential elements, with other factors like competition, relationships, and social mission adding layers of meaning and purpose to entrepreneurial endeavors.

This study also highlights the importance of understanding the balance between harmonious and obsessive passion in entrepreneurship and emphasizes exploring the role of cultural dimensions in shaping entrepreneurial behavior, providing further evidence of the intricate relationship between culture, passion, and entrepreneurial action. In general, regardless of entrepreneurial passion, Hofstede's cultural dimensions show that the interviewed entrepreneurs have low power distance and masculinity and high collectivism and uncertainty avoidance. This finding is inconsistent with the entrepreneurship literature, which indicates that the entrepreneurial process is more effectively supported in cultures characterized by high levels of individualism and masculinity and low levels of uncertainty avoidance and power distance (e.g. Hayton et al., 2002). These values of entrepreneurs in Turkey can be explained by high collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and relatively moderate masculinity in Turkish culture. However, the fact that passion for people is mentioned more frequently by more entrepreneurs can be associated with collectivism. In addition, passion for competition was mentioned by quite a few entrepreneurs, which is in line with the low level of masculinity of entrepreneurs.

From a theoretical perspective, the study expands existing literature by emphasizing the importance of autonomy as a critical motivational driver, a factor that has been largely underexplored in prior research. This insight challenges traditional views that primarily associate entrepreneurship with business founding and suggests that the desire for independence, freedom, and self-direction is central to entrepreneurial behavior. Furthermore, in contrast to frameworks that examine entrepreneurship beyond the establishment of ventures, the rise of enthusiasm for self-development offers a fresh viewpoint, presenting entrepreneurship as an ongoing process of self-progress and self-actualization. According to the literature, self-employed people's well-being is also a highly valued career outcome and a motivator for their entrepreneurial activities (Andersson, 2008). While these findings expand the understanding of how entrepreneurial passion is influenced by cultural dimensions, they also point to contradictory points between cultural dimensions and entrepreneurial passion.

From a managerial standpoint, these insights provide actionable guidance for entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship trainers/educators, and policymakers. Entrepreneurs can benefit from the knowledge that fostering their passion for autonomy, innovation, and stakeholder involvement is crucial to long-term success. To enhance team performance and innovation, managers working with entrepreneurial teams can create environments that support autonomy and stimulate creative thinking. More specifically, managers in entrepreneurial teams can foster an autonomy-supportive leadership style and team members can feel that they are empowered to make decisions and take ownership of their projects. Moreover, modules that foster personal growth, creativity, and interpersonal skills can be incorporated into business incubators, accelerators, and entrepreneurship education programs to assist aspiring business owners in striking a balance between their personal and professional objectives. In especially university education, entrepreneurship lecturers play a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurial passion by incorporating passion-focused modules into their curriculum. These modules can emphasize the connection between personal passions and business success, covering areas such as autonomy-driven decision-making and stakeholder engagement strategies.

Although this study develops a typology of entrepreneurial passion, its limitation lies in being conducted within the context of a single country. Therefore, it can be stated that causal and cross-cultural studies are needed to examine the relationship between cultural differences and entrepreneurial passion. In addition, passion for autonomy and passion for self-development are considered to be fresh avenues to be explored in entrepreneurship literature.

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