

An Investigation on the components of emotional intelligence as predictors of Intention to entrepreneurship

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ARTICLE INFO

Article type:

Research Article

Article history:

Received: 9 May 2024

Revised: 10 September 2024

Accepted: 15 November 2024

KEYWORDS:

Emotional intelligence,
Entrepreneurship,
Entrepreneur.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between the components of emotional intelligence and intention to entrepreneurship in students. The statistical population of the study included all students of Maragheh University. From the aforementioned population, 380 students were selected as samples using multi-stage cluster sampling. The Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ) and the Entrepreneurial Orientation Questionnaire (EOQ) were used to collect data. Pearson correlation and simultaneous multiple regression were used to analyze the data. The findings showed that with the exception of reality testing and impulse control in emotional intelligence, other variables accurately predict entrepreneurship in students ($P < 0.001$). According to the findings of the study, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence is a key skill for success in entrepreneurship and by increasing emotional intelligence in individuals, they can become more successful and effective entrepreneurs.

Introduction

The IQ of individuals has been measured individually for over a century. Recent discussions and challenges from the scientific community have brought into question the validity of the IQ test as the sole indicator of a person's learning ability (Sternberg, 2015). Numerous individuals obtained high IQ scores on university or institution entrance exams, but did not excel in their work and family life, while some with lower intelligence assessments have found success in their careers (Haier, 2020). In proportion to their quantity, this may be linked to an individual's emotional intelligence (EI) level or their capability to manage personal emotions (Elfenbein & MacCann, 2017).

Emotional intelligence refers to knowing the appropriate and inappropriate actions in social and emotional communication in specific situations (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023). This implies that an individual can maintain optimism in various circumstances, show empathy towards others, actively listen to others' emotions, prioritize long-term rewards over immediate gratification, and protect their mental clarity from worry (Conversano et al, 2010). To maintain motivation in all circumstances despite challenges (Joibari & Mohammadtaheri, 2011). Being emotionally and socially intelligent on an interpersonal level involves being aware of others' emotions, feelings, and needs, as well as being able to establish and sustain mutually satisfying, productive, and collaborative relationships (Bar-On, 2006). In



DOI: <https://doi.org/>

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Publisher: University of Sistan and Baluchestan

How to Cite: Afshari, A., Omid, J. (2024). An Investigation on the components of emotional intelligence as predictors of Intention to entrepreneurship. *Iranian Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 1(3), 36-42. <https://doi.org/>

conclusion, having emotional and social intelligence involves effectively handling personal, environmental, and social changes by realistically and flexibly addressing immediate situations, solving problems, and making decisions as needed. In order to achieve this, we must control our emotions to our advantage and maintain a hopeful, upbeat, and self-driven attitude (Lane & Smith, 2021). Those with greater emotional intelligence prefer to understand their emotions rather than categorizing situations and people (Landry, 2019). These individuals possess a greater creativity capacity compared to others, as they not only exhibit convergent thinking but also make use of divergent thinking, enabling them to solve problems with greater ease. These individuals possess numerous qualifications in the areas of work, leadership, and management (Sun, Wang & Wegerif, 2020). Studies have demonstrated the significance of emotional intelligence. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence exhibit traits such as increased motivation and interest in learning, reduced behavioral issues, positive emotions, enhanced empathy, better problem-solving abilities, increased optimism, and greater happiness (Shengyao et al, 2024). The concept of emotional intelligence, focuses on self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Antonopoulou, 2024). Understanding emotions plays a key role in the success of entrepreneurs. Managers with high emotional intelligence, able to effectively navigate their own emotions and understand and address the emotions of others, are skilled at market management (Humphrey, 2013). These individuals exhibit happiness and efficiency in both their personal lives and professional endeavors, displaying a remarkable ability to be productive individuals (Zhou, Estrada & Bojica, 2014). Actually, the organization's management needs to prioritize emotional intelligence to understand the direction, identify the perspective, and grasp the mission of the organization, before accomplishing both immediate and future objectives through marketing principles based on scientific theories (Melita Prati et al, 2003).

Certainly, it is widely accepted that managers must develop unique emotional abilities to transition into entrepreneurs and exhibit entrepreneurial actions, leading to high performance and achievement in both their personal and professional endeavors (Mortan et al, 2014). Scholars and psychology researchers have long pondered the extent to which certain traits and qualities can foresee future behaviors, exploring these skills and analyzing the impact they have on behavior (Kwapisz et al, 2022). Research has uncovered only some of these skills. For instance, Ahmadpour Daryani(2002) carried out a study in the field to pinpoint the qualities and traits of effective and entrepreneurial leaders for creating a blueprint for fostering entrepreneurial leadership. This study introduced two models of organizational success - entrepreneurship and training managers - based on literature review. It also discussed various variables related to entrepreneur characteristics such as personality, organizational, demographic, and success factors using two theoretical models and assumptions. It covered three elements of innovation, growth, and change within the educational process based on specific factors (Baum & Locke, 2004).

In their study "Entrepreneurial characteristics among university students," Gurol and Etsan (2006) found that students with an entrepreneurial mindset, possessing traits such as progress motivation, internal locus of control, innovation, self-confidence, tolerance of ambiguity, and willingness to take risks, outperformed students lacking such traits. In his study "Testing the Hypotheses of Entrepreneurial Traits" in 1996, Koh aimed to assess 6 entrepreneurial personality traits (progress motivation, internal locus of control, innovation, self-confidence, ambiguity tolerance, and risk-taking tendency) among MBA students at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. In his 2004 study titled "Emotional Intelligence and Happiness," Furnham found a strong link between emotional intelligence and happiness, with neuroticism, extroversion, and openness also showing a significant relationship. Regression analysis revealed emotional intelligence as a significant indicator of happiness, explaining over 50% of the total variance. Extraversion and neuroticism, when considered as aspects of intelligence, showed a strong relationship with happiness.

Individuals with a higher emotional well-being are typically more successful in handling environmental challenges (Cooper et al, 2019). Insufficient emotional intelligence can lead to failure and the existence of emotional issues. Bar-On (2007) states that individuals who lack skills in reality testing, problem solving, stress tolerance, and impulse control commonly encounter challenges when dealing with the environment. Bar-On & Maree (2009) beliefs is that emotional intelligence and cognitive intelligence both play an equal role in a person's overall intelligence, with each offering insight into their potential for

success in life. In a study conducted by Parker et al (2004), a group of undergraduate psychology students were examined, with their final grade as the main focus. The objective was to determine if emotional intelligence could forecast academic success, with the finding that only select emotional intelligence scales were able to predict academic achievement.

In recent years, attention to the problem of youth unemployment, especially among students, has led to entrepreneurship having a place in scientific and economic policies and to the recognition of entrepreneurship as one of the levers for achieving economic and social development goals. Considering the changes and developments that have recently taken place at the global level, including the downsizing of companies, privatization, attention to human resources as an irreplaceable advantage, and the importance of creativity, And innovation is the only way that can lead us to prosperity. Paying attention to entrepreneurship in the education system is important for students and students(Alzate et al, 2024).

A review of the background of the entrepreneurship discussion shows that a large amount of research has been conducted on the psychological characteristics involved in entrepreneurship and a number of effective characteristics in entrepreneurship have been identified. However, the weak point that is seen in the research is that, firstly, a limited number of characteristics have been examined and special attention has not been paid to the category of emotional intelligence and its components. Secondly, the diagnostic weight of each of the characteristics has not been considered. Therefore, it is felt that newer psychological variables, including emotional intelligence, should be used to overcome this deficiency. Considering the aforementioned, this study attempts to examine the relationship between the components of emotional intelligence and entrepreneurship.

Method

Sample and Sampling Method

The statistical population of the study included all students studying at Maragheh University in the 2022-2023 academic year. From this population, 380 people were selected as samples using a multi-stage cluster sampling method.

Tools Used

Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ)

This questionnaire is a self-report list developed by Bar-On (1999). The EIQ has 90 questions and measures five general components and fifteen subcomponents: 1- Intrapersonal skill (including the sub-components of self-respect, emotional self-awareness, daring, independence and self-actualization), 2- Interpersonal skill (including the sub-components of empathy) , social responsibility and interpersonal relationships), 3- stress management (including the sub-components of stress tolerance and impulse control), 4- adaptability (including the sub-components of reality testing, flexibility and problem solving) and 5- Overall mood (including sub-components of optimism and happiness). Responses to the Barr-Ann Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire are set on a 5-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree). The internal validity of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha obtained by Bar-on (2003) showed that the average coefficients for all subscales are high. Reliability was calculated using the test-retest method, which is based on the temporal stability of the instrument (the stability of the test over time) for two groups of South African subjects. The retest rate was 85% after one month and 75% after four months (Rezaei et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurial Orientation Questionnaire (EOQ)

The standard entrepreneurial orientation questionnaire was developed by Hughes and Morgan (2007). This questionnaire has 18 questions in 5 dimensions. The questions of the questionnaire are designed based on a five-point Likert scale (completely satisfied to completely dissatisfied). This scale has 18 items and measures five dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation including risk-taking (items 1, 2, 3), innovation (items 4, 5, 6), pioneering (items 7, 8, 9), aggressive competition (items 10, 11, 12) and independence

(items 13 to 18). To measure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha has been reported to be above 70 percent (Hughes, Hughes & Morgan, 2007).

Results

Table No. 1 shows the information about the mean and standard deviation of predictor variables for two groups of entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs

Table 1- Results of the Mean and SD.

Predictive variables	non-entrepreneur		entrepreneur	
	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean
self-awareness	3/05	20/50	3/45	21/91
self esteem	3/21	21/17	3/33	23/52
Daring	3/52	18/32	3/47	19/11
independence	3/42	19/80	4/22	21/47
self-flourishing	3/22	20/90	3/74	22/50
empathy	3/15	22/77	3/03	25/04
Social responsibility	3/29	23/20	3/31	25/10
Interpersonal relationships	3/33	22/42	3/36	21/16
reality test	2/90	18/53	3/85	18/66
Flexibility	3/18	18/13	3/59	19/10
solve the problem	2/47	21/49	2/65	23/75
Stress tolerance	3/36	18/20	4/33	19/62
Impulse control	4/16	17/69	5/20	17/75
optimism	2/73	21/06	3/02	23/95
happiness	3/73	21/60	4/09	23/08

As can be seen in Table No. 1, the average scores of entrepreneurial people in emotional intelligence components are between 17.75 and 25.10, and in non-entrepreneurs between 17.69 and 23.20, and the standard deviation of entrepreneurial people's scores in the aforementioned components is between 2.65 to 5.20 and in non-entrepreneurs it is between 2.47 and 4.16.

As seen in Table No. 1, in all components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-esteem, daring, independence, self-development, empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships, reality testing, flexibility, problem solving, stress tolerance, Impulse control, optimism, happiness) the average of entrepreneurial people is more than non-entrepreneurial people. The higher average scores related to the components of emotional intelligence in entrepreneurial people indicate that the emotional intelligence of entrepreneurial people is high compared to non-entrepreneurs.

Table 2- Equality tests of group mean (entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs)

Predictive variables	Lambda Wilkes	F	Df1	Df2	sig
self-awareness	0/995	13/105	1	278	0/0001
self esteem	0/886	35/876	1	278	0/0001
Daring	0/988	3/302	1	278	0/070
independence	0/940	17/801	1	278	0/0001
self-flourishing	0/951	14/377	1	278	0/0001
empathy	0/881	37/644	1	278	0/0001
Social responsibility	0/923	23/196	1	278	0/0001
Interpersonal relationships	0/923	23/226	1	278	0/0001
reality test	1/000	0/117	1	278	0/733
Flexibility	0/980	5/764	1	278	0/017
solve the problem	0/837	54/244	1	278	0/0001
Stress tolerance	0/967	9/387	1	278	0/002
Impulse control	1/000	0/014	1	278	0/970
optimism	0/798	70/504	1	278	0/0001
happiness	0/965	9/945	1	278	0/002

As can be seen in Table No. 2, small Wilkes lambda, large F and its significant level show; The group of entrepreneurs and the group of non-entrepreneurs are well differentiated in all predictive variables (except reality test and impulse control). In other words, in general, the difference between two groups of entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs is significant, except for the variables of reality test and impulse control. Considering the contents of Table 4-2, we find that the variables of self-awareness, self-esteem, independence, self-development, empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relations, problem solving and optimism, all at the level of $p < 0.0001$, flexibility, at the level $P < 0.017$, daring, at $p < 0.070$ level, stress tolerance and happiness are significant at $P < 0.002$ level.

Table 3- Summary of the findings of the conventional discriminant function by the method of simultaneous analysis and step by step

Critical analysis by simultaneous method	Step by step method	Simultaneous method
The number of functions	1	1
Special amount	0/488	0/534
percent variance	100	100
Cumulative percentage	100	100
Canonical correlation	0/573	0/590
Root eta	0/328	0/348
Lambda Wilkes	0/672	0/652
Rich Rooted	109/443	115/760
degrees of freedom	5	15
Meaning of a distinctive subordinate	0/0001	0/0001
Data center for the entrepreneur group	0/692	0/728
Data center for the non-entrepreneurial group	-0/696	-0/828
Predicting group membership	%79/6	%79/6

As shown in Table 3 (both in the discriminant analysis using the simultaneous method, where the combination of fifteen variables were entered into the analysis, and in the discriminant analysis using the step-by-step method, which after presenting all the variables, 5 variables remained and were included in the analysis) with Paying attention to the small lambda value and the high chi-square value and the significant level of $p < 0.0001$, the discriminant function obtained from good diagnostic power to explain the variance of the dependent variable, i.e. group membership (at two levels of the group of entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs) has Therefore, the sixteenth hypothesis is confirmed.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the components of emotional intelligence as predictors of entrepreneurship in students. The results of the present study confirmed the multiple relationship between the variables of interpersonal relationships, adaptability, stress management, general mood, and entrepreneurship. Although students are in a better position in terms of entrepreneurship, they also have higher emotional intelligence. This finding is consistent with the results of studies by Elfenbein & MacCann (2017), Humphrey (2013), Kwapisz et al. (2024), and Mortan et al. (2014). In explaining this finding, it can be said that the entrepreneur faces numerous emotional conflicts during the entrepreneurial process. On the one hand, enthusiasm, and on the other, failure and anxiety. If an individual is not strong in terms of emotional self-awareness, he cannot identify the sources of enthusiasm or failure, and as a result, his probability of success becomes very low. On the other hand, an individual with high emotional self-awareness uses it as a driving force by identifying the sources of passion and analyzing and analyzing its factors, and reduces the role of these factors by identifying the sources of anxiety and planning (Antonopoulou, 2024). What has been stated shows that one of the basic characteristics of successful entrepreneurs is a high percentage of self-awareness. Successful entrepreneurs are those who, through

their words or actions, clearly influence their own and others' behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, and instill self-regulation in the organization. This study also found high levels of self-regulation in students who are entrepreneurs. In fact, students who are better at entrepreneurship are more likely to remain calm in times of crisis, avoid negative thoughts, and ultimately perform better in self-management. Most entrepreneurs have found that motivation is more essential than knowledge or technical skills, and that it is motivation that drives an individual to engage in entrepreneurial activity, and that if an individual is not emotionally mature, they are more likely to fail (Saoula et al, 2023). This article also found that students who are better at entrepreneurship have higher motivation than other students. Entrepreneurs must have high self-motivation, because there are few external incentives in their paths and without strong internal motivation they will not make much progress. The highway to attracting the support of others is emotions, and this is how you can attract the attention of others with satisfaction for the sake of cooperation. This requires high empathy (Caliendo, Kritikos & Stier, 2023). Students who have higher levels of empathy also perform better in terms of entrepreneurship. This means that successful and effective entrepreneurs have the ability to deeply understand the inner feelings of others and are able to establish intimate relationships and create empathy with others (Humphrey, 2013).

Studies of thousands of organizations show that about two-thirds of the abilities associated with high performance involve social characteristics (De Waal, 2006). This study also confirmed this, showing that successful entrepreneurs are better positioned than others in terms of social skills. For successful entrepreneurs, more effective social relationships lead to their activities being indirectly transformed into the desired result. Finally, considering the acquisition of emotional intelligence, it can be promised that by cultivating and improving emotional intelligence, the level of entrepreneurship will be strengthened and increased. Especially in our country, where unemployment is one of the main problems of society, more attention should be paid to this issue and, using appropriate education and training, the emotional intelligence of individuals should be increased in order to strengthen entrepreneurship. In any case, it seems that in order to create more successful entrepreneurs in society, the emotional intelligence of individuals should be strengthened.

Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all students at the University of Maragheh for their involvement in this research endeavor.

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