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BRIDGING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCEAND ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS: A DATA-DRIVEN STUDY IN EMERGING ECONOMIES

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Abstract:
The future may be AI-driven, but the present belongs to EI-powered minds.Entrepreneurial landscapes today are not only navigated by strategies and skills, but also by the silent strength of EI.Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a vital role in determining entrepreneurial success (ES)in today's competitive and challenging business environment. The existing literature underscores the significance of cognitive and technical skills for entrepreneurship, but there is a lack of empirical research on the clear, measurable impact of EI on entrepreneurship, particularly in emerging economies. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the effects of different components of EI—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills—on ES, including business growth, innovation and resilience, through statistical methods.A sample of 150 corporate entrepreneurs from various sectors completed a structured questionnaire and the responses were analysed using multiple regression and Pearson's correlation techniques to examine the strength and significance of relationships. Overall, EI was found to be positively related to ES, with motivation and self-regulation showing the strongest relationships. Entrepreneurs high in EI also demonstrated greater adaptability, customer orientation and team management skills than others.The study's takeaway is twofold: first, it supports including EI in entrepreneurship training programs; second, it provides investors and incubators with evidence-based reasons to evaluate EI scientifically. These findings add to the growing evidence that EI is more than just a soft skill—it is a strategic asset that can be leveraged for sustainable entrepreneurial success.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence (EI), Entrepreneurial Success (ES),Business Growth,Entrepreneurial Competency, Innovation, Resilience, Emerging Economies etc.

Introduction:

Entrepreneurship has consistently been a major contributor to economic growth, innovation and job creation. Traditionally, its success has been linked to cognitive intelligence, technical expertise, market insight and access to capital. However, the dynamic, uncertain and often emotionally demanding realities of entrepreneurial ventures have broughtEI into sharper focus in both research and practice.

EI—the ability to perceive, manage and understand emotions in oneself and others—has increasingly been recognized as a crucial factor influencing leadership effectiveness, decision-making, conflict resolution and workplace relationships. In recent years, scholars have explored how emotionally intelligent entrepreneurs are better equipped to navigate the complexities of startup ecosystems, lead teams, manage setbacks and sustain long-term business growth.Despite growing interest, empirical research that quantitatively examines the link between EI and ES is still limited, especially in emerging economies. Many existing

studies remain conceptual or qualitative, offering only partial insights without broad generalizability or strong statistical validation.

This study quantifies how stronglyEI influences entrepreneurial outcomes through a data-driven approach. Using Goleman's five-dimensional model—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills—EI is examined alongside entrepreneurial success, measured by key performance indicators such as business growth, innovation, resilience, adaptability and leadership effectiveness.

Figure 1: Elements of EI

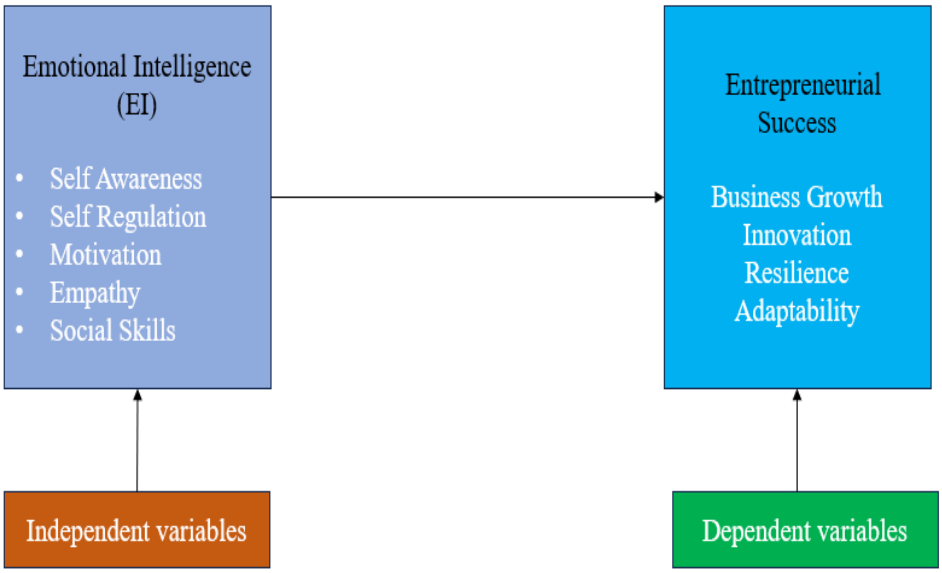


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework Diagram

Literature Review:

Peng, H. T., Yang, M., & Zhou, C. (2024) found that EI positively impacts entrepreneurial performance; innovativeness and proactivity mediate the relationship.Esteves, J., de Haro Rodríguez, G., Ballestar, M. T., & Sainz, J. (2024)discovered that EI is a significant antecedent of transformational leadership; others' emotion appraisal and emotion regulation are key EI subdimensions.Karim, M. B. M., Islam, M. B. I., Abdullah, M. I., & Bács, Z. (2025) suggested that Self-awareness, social awareness, self-control and adaptability significantly influence social entrepreneurial intention. Martin-Navarro, A., Medina-Garrido, J. A., & Velicia-Martin, F. (2023) provided validated measurement tool for entrepreneurial mindset, indirectly linked to EI constructs of self-control and adaptability. Ngah, R., Junid, J., Mohd Lajin, N. F., &Bakhodirov, G. S. (2024) investigated that EI significantly affects

entrepreneurial orientation but has a low direct impact on entrepreneurial inclination.Fatoki, O. (2019) proposed that EI positively relates to both organizational and personal success. Rutgers. (2021) suggested that EI significantly predicts entrepreneurial behaviour and success beyond cognitive intelligence.

Statement of Problem:

Despite increasing recognition of EI in entrepreneurial settings, its direct impact on measurable ES remains empirically underexplored. There is a need for quantitative evidence to understand how specific EI dimensions contribute to the success of entrepreneurs, particularly in the context of emerging economies.

Research Gap:

Despite growing interest, there is limited quantitative evidence linking specific dimensions of EI to measurable ES, especially in emerging economies.

Research Question:

How do the specific dimensions of EI influence ES in emerging economies?

Research Objective:

To examine the impact of key dimensions of EI—such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills—on ES in emerging economies.

Research Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis (H_0):

There is no significant relationship between overall EI and ES among the entrepreneurs in emerging economies.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

There is a significant relationship between overall EI and ES among entrepreneurs in emerging economies.

Research Design:

The present study adopts a cross-sectionaldescriptive research design to examine the relationship between EI and ES. This design is appropriate for understanding patterns, associations and predictive relationships among measurable variables at a specific point in time.By employing standardized EI scale (Goleman's EI InventoryScale) and structured questionnaire, the study seeks to gather primary data from a targeted group of entrepreneurs. The correlational aspect of the design enables the researcher to statistically analyse the strength and direction of relationships between EI dimensions (independent variable) and ES(dependent variable). Furthermore, regression analysis is used to determine the predictive power of EI on entrepreneurial outcomes.This design facilitates objective, data-driven conclusions and supports the generalizability of findings within the selected population.

- Type of Research:Quantitative
- Research Design: Cross-sectional Descriptive Design
- Sources of Data Collection: Structured Questionnaire
- Type of Data:Primary Data
- Research Instruments:Standardized EI Scale (Goleman's EI Inventory Scale) and a self-developed Entrepreneurial Success Inventory (based on performance metrics), MS Excel, SPSS
- Sampling Unit:Individual Entrepreneurs
- Population:Entrepreneurs operating in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across emerging markets/sectors
- Sample Size:150 respondents
- Sampling Technique:Purposive sampling (entrepreneurs with at least 1 year of business operation)

- Statistical Tool Used:Mean, Standard Deviation, Pearson's Correlation, Multiple Regression Analysis
- Scale Type: Likert-type scale (5-point: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Descriptive Statistics:

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Self-Awareness	150	3.87	0.62
Self-Regulation	150	4.01	0.58
Motivation	150	4.15	0.55
Empathy	150	3.94	0.6
Social Skills	150	3.89	0.63
ES	150	4.12	0.57

Table1: Descriptive Statistics: EI and ES

Interpretation:

- The mean values of EI dimensions and ES range between 3.87 and 4.15 (on a 5-point scale), indicating a moderately high level of both EI and success among the sample.
- Standard deviations are low to moderate, suggesting consistencyin responses.

Reliability Statistics:

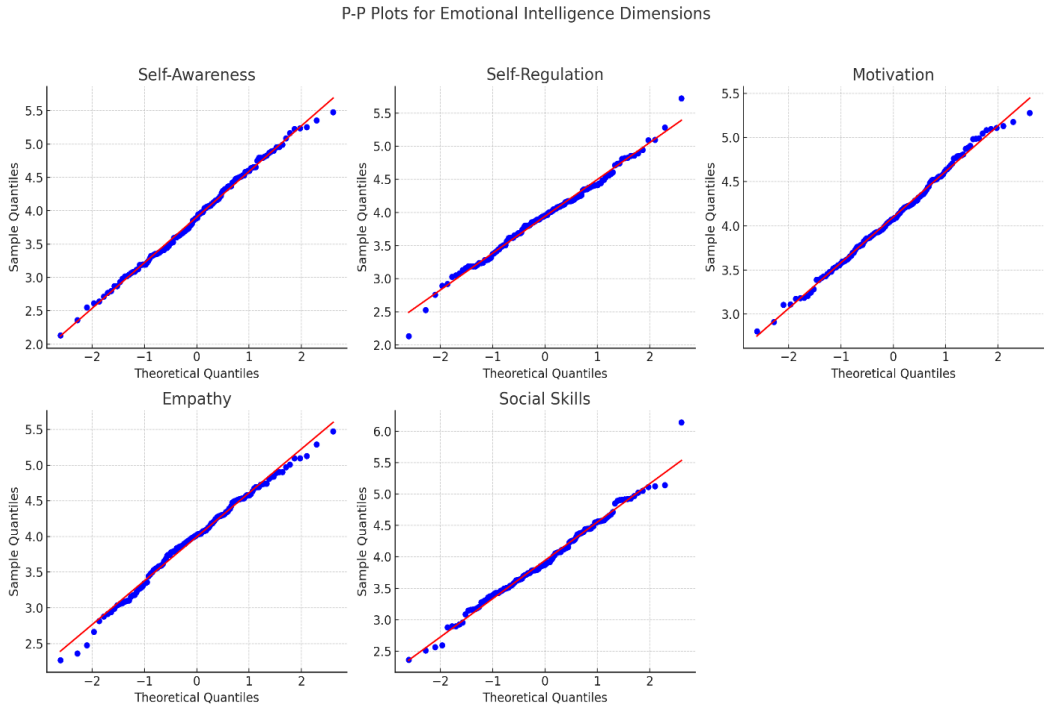
Constructs	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
EI	25	0.89
ES	10	0.86

Table 2: Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)

Interpretation:

- Cronbach's alpha values are 0.89 (EI) and 0.86 (ES), both exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7.
- This confirms that the instruments used are highly reliable and internally consistent for the constructs being measured.

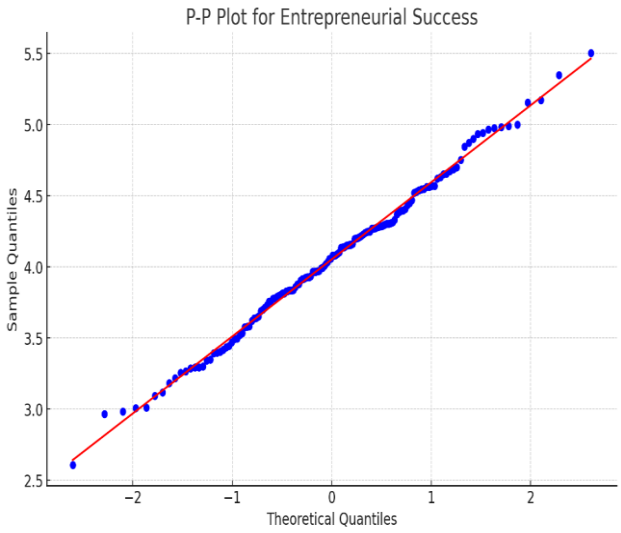
Normality Tests:



Interpretation:
Above are the P-P Plots for eachEI dimension:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Regulation
- Motivation
- Empathy
- Social Skills

The data points in all plots generally follow the diagonal line, indicating that the distributions are approximately normal, satisfying the assumption required for parametric tests such as regression and correlation.



Interpretation:
Here is the P-P Plot for Entrepreneurial Success, showing that the data points lie close to the diagonal line. This indicates that the data is approximately normally distributed, which justifies the use of parametric statistical tests like Pearson's correlation and multiple regression.
The data points in all plots generally follow the diagonal line, indicating that the distributions are approximately normal.

Inferential Statistics:

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Self-Awareness	1					
2. Self-Regulation	0.58**	1				
3. Motivation	0.62**	0.60**	1			
4. Empathy	0.50**	0.53**	0.55**	1		
5. Social Skills	0.57**	0.59**	0.60**	0.58**	1	
6. ES	0.54**	0.65**	0.72**	0.56**	0.61**	1

$p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Interpretation:

- All EI dimensions show positive and significant correlations with ES (Self-Awareness r =0.54,Self-Regulation r = 0.65, Motivation r = 0.72, Empathy r = 0.56, Social Skills r = 0.61)
- This suggests that higher EI is associated with greater ES.
- The strongest correlation is with motivation (r = 0.72), indicating that it may be a key driver of entrepreneurial outcomes.

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.79	0.62	0.60	0.36

Table 4: Model Summary

Interpretation:

- The R^2 value of 0.62 means that 62% of the variance in ES can be explained by the five dimensions of EI.
- This indicates a strong explanatory power of the model.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	39.21	5	7.84	59.21	0.000**
Residual	24.10	144	0.17		
Total	63.31	149			

Table 5: ANOVA – Regression Model Fit

Interpretation:

- The F-value (59.21) is high and statistically significant at $p < .001$, indicating that the overall regression model is a good fit for the data.
- In simple terms, the combination of EI variables significantly predicts ES.

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	1.02	0.25	—	4.08	0.000
Self-Awareness	0.12	0.07	0.10	1.71	0.090
Self-Regulation	0.18	0.06	0.21	3.00	0.003
Motivation	0.27	0.07	0.32	3.86	0.000
Empathy	0.10	0.06	0.09	1.66	0.099
Social Skills	0.14	0.06	0.15	2.33	0.021

Table 6: Coefficients – Regression Output

Interpretation:

- Motivation (β = 0.32, p <0.001)andSelf-Regulation (β = 0.21, p = 0.003) arestatistically significant predictors of ES.
- Social Skills also contribute significantly **(**p = 0.021**),** though to a lesser extent.
- Self-Awareness and Empathy, while positively associated, are not statistically significant at the 5% level.

- The constant (intercept) is also significant, indicating a baseline level of success even without the predictors.

Key Findings:

The results strongly support the hypothesis that overall EI significantly influences ES, especially through motivation, self-regulation and social skills.

- Entrepreneurs in the sample demonstrated moderately high levels of EI across all dimensions, with the highest mean score observed in motivation (M = 4.15)**,** indicating strong goal-orientation and persistence.
- All EI dimensions showed significant positive correlations with ES. Motivation (r = 0.72)andself-regulation (r = 0.65) had the strongest associations, highlighting their critical role in business performance.
- Multiple regression analysis revealed that among the five EI dimensions, motivation ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$)and self-regulation($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.003$) significantly predicted ES. These variables were found to be statistically significant contributors to the regression model.
- The regression model explained 62% of the variance($R^2 = 0.62$) in ES, indicating that EI is a strong predictor of success in entrepreneurial contexts.
- While empathy and self-awareness were positively correlated with ES, their predictive values in the regression model were not statistically significant**,** suggesting their role is likely indirect or context-dependent.

These findings suggest that emotional competencies are not only essential soft skills but also strategic predictors of entrepreneurial performance.

Discussion:

The results of this study provide robust empirical support for the assertion thatEI plays a vital role in determining ES. The significant positive correlations observed across all five EI dimensions suggest that entrepreneurs with higher EI are better equipped to handle the complex, uncertain and emotionally demanding nature of entrepreneurial ventures.

Among the dimensions, motivation and self-regulation emerged as the strongest and most significant predictors of ES. This aligns with prior literature suggesting that highly motivated individuals are more likely to persist through challenges, maintain focus on long-term goals and seize opportunities proactively—traits that are critical in entrepreneurship. Similarly, self-regulation enables entrepreneurs to manage stress, stay composed in high-pressure situationsand make balanced decisions, which are essential for sustaining and scaling a business.

Interestingly, empathy and self-awareness, although positively correlated, did not significantly predict ES in the regression model. This may indicate that while these traits support interpersonal harmony and reflective thinking, they may not directly influence measurable business outcomes such as revenue growth or innovation. However, they could play a mediating or moderating role in building long-term customer relationships or team cohesion, which warrants further exploration.

The high R^2 value (0.62) demonstrates that EI accounts for a substantial proportion of variance in ES. This finding reinforces the argument that EI should not be viewed merely as a soft skill but as a strategic psychological resource with tangible impacts on business outcomes.

Moreover, the validation of assumptions such as normality and reliability confirms the appropriateness of the statistical methods employed. The study also fills a significant research gap, especially in the context of emerging economies, where emotional agility and adaptive leadership are often necessary to navigate volatile markets and resource constraints.

These insights have practical implications for educators, policymakers and entrepreneurship trainers. Programs aimed at fostering entrepreneurial capabilities should integrate EI training, especially in areas such as emotional regulation, goal-directed behaviour and resilience.

Implications:

The implications are multifaceted: for aspiring entrepreneurs, the development of emotional competencies should be seen as a strategic asset; for business educators and policymakers, the integration of EI training into entrepreneurial development programs becomes crucial. In a world where adaptability, resilience and leadership are more critical than ever, nurturing EI may well be the key to sustained entrepreneurial growth and success.

Limitations:

The study is limited by its cross-sectional design. Additionally, the sample is restricted to 150 entrepreneurs from selected sectors, limiting the generalizability of the findings across broader entrepreneurial populations.

Recommendations:

1. Integrate EI Training in Entrepreneurship Programs
2. Policy-Level Interventions
3. Continuous Assessment and Coaching
4. Encourage Soft Skill Evaluation in Incubation

Future Research Directions: Future research can expand on above findings by exploring longitudinal impacts, sector-specific dynamics and cross-cultural variations to further deepen our understanding of this vital relationship.

Conclusion:

This study set out to examine the statistical relationship between EI andES among individuals engaged in entrepreneurial ventures. Drawing on Daniel Goleman's EIframework—comprising Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Motivation, Empathy and Social Skills—the research employed quantitative analysis to assess how these dimensions of EI contribute to an entrepreneur's overall success.

The findings of the study underscore a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between EI and ES. Specifically, Motivation and Self-Regulation emerged as the most influential predictors in the regression model, highlighting that entrepreneurs who exhibit a high degree of internal drive and the ability to control impulses and emotions tend to perform better in their ventures. Social Skills also showed a moderate but meaningful influence, reinforcing the critical role of interpersonal effectiveness in navigating business environments.

The multiple regression analysis revealed that the five components of EI accounted for 62% of the variance in ES ($R^2 = 0.62$), a substantial proportion, indicating that EI is not only relevant but also a powerful predictor in this domain. The statistical significance of the model ($p < 0.001$) further validates the robustness of this relationship.

This study bridges a notable research gap by providing empirical, data-driven evidence for the role of EI in entrepreneurship, an area often discussed theoretically but underexplored quantitatively. It advances the understanding that entrepreneurship is not solely a function of technical skills or business acumen, but is deeply rooted in emotional and psychological capabilities.

In conclusion, ***EI is not just a complementary trait but a foundational factor in the success of modern entrepreneurs.***

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