

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL RESILIENCE IN NIGERIA

Aramide A. KUFORIJ, PhD

Department of Employment Relations & Human Resource Management,
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3294-2452>

Muideen Olawale AREMU, PhD

Department of Business Administration College of Management and Social Sciences
Fountain University Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5756-2376>

Peter Akong OBETEN

Department of Business Administration and Management,
Yaba college of Technology,
Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract

Entrepreneurial activity in Nigeria takes place within a business environment characterised by economic volatility, resource constraints, infrastructural deficiencies, intense competition, institutional uncertainty and changing consumer preferences. These conditions make entrepreneurial resilience increasingly important for business survival, adaptation and continuity. Although existing research has established the importance of strategic, relational and organisational capabilities in building resilience, comparatively less attention has been devoted to the emotional capabilities of the entrepreneur as a potential antecedent of resilience. This study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience in Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigates whether self-awareness, self-regulation and interpersonal/emotional competence influence entrepreneurs' ability to withstand, adapt to and recover from business adversity. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed, using a structured questionnaire administered to owners/ managers of 397 small and medium-sized enterprises in Nigeria. Multiple regression analysis was employed in testing the hypothesised relationships. The findings reinforce the broader argument that entrepreneurial resilience is not determined exclusively by financial resources, managerial skills or market conditions. The entrepreneur's capacity to understand, regulate and appropriately express emotions can also influence how setbacks are interpreted and how effectively entrepreneurs adapt to changing circumstances. Emotional intelligence should therefore be regarded as a potentially important component of entrepreneurial capability in Nigeria. The study therefore contributes to the emerging literature by bringing these two streams together within the Nigerian entrepreneurial context. The paper provides implications for entrepreneurship education, SME development programmes, incubators, financial institutions and policymakers.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, entrepreneurial resilience, self-awareness, self-regulation, interpersonal competence, entrepreneurship, SMEs, Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is an important mechanism for economic development because entrepreneurs create businesses, mobilise resources, introduce innovations and generate employment. Its importance is particularly pronounced in developing economies where small and medium-sized enterprises provide substantial economic and social functions. However, entrepreneurial activity in developing economies is frequently undertaken under conditions of uncertainty and resource scarcity.

Nigeria provides a particularly important setting for examining entrepreneurial resilience. Nigerian entrepreneurs operate in an environment in which economic disturbances can affect input costs, purchasing power, financing conditions, supply chains and business continuity. Recent Nigerian research has consequently focused increasing attention on resilience, adaptive capacity and the strategic responses of SMEs to environmental turbulence (Adenekan et al., 2019; Akpan et al., 2022; Ashiru et al., 2022; Okoli et al., 2025; Onwe, 2026).

Entrepreneurial resilience refers broadly to the capacity to withstand adversity, adapt to changing circumstances, recover from setbacks and continue entrepreneurial activity. Importantly, resilience should not be interpreted simply as passive survival. Contemporary entrepreneurship research increasingly conceptualises resilience as an active process involving adaptation, resource reconfiguration, learning and continued functioning under adverse circumstances.

The psychological characteristics of entrepreneurs may be important in this process. Entrepreneurship involves uncertainty, risk, failure, interpersonal conflict, financial pressure and frequent changes in expectations. These experiences generate emotional demands that entrepreneurs must manage while simultaneously making consequential business decisions.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is therefore potentially relevant to entrepreneurial resilience. Emotional intelligence concerns individuals' ability to recognise, understand and regulate emotional information and to use such information constructively in social interactions. In an entrepreneurial context, these capabilities may influence how business owners interpret adverse events, regulate their reactions and maintain relationships with employees, customers, suppliers, investors and other stakeholders.

The importance of EI to entrepreneurship is supported by recent empirical research. Allen et al. (2021), in a meta-analysis involving 65,826 observations, found that emotional intelligence was significantly related to entrepreneurial success. The authors argued that entrepreneurship constitutes a particularly demanding emotional and social environment in which EI can be consequential.

Pathak and Goltz (2021) further conceptualised EI as an emotional competency that can influence entrepreneurs' coping with stressful circumstances. Their model suggests that emotional intelligence may facilitate acceptance of stressful situations, optimism concerning problem resolution and the selection of appropriate coping responses.

More recent research has strengthened the connection between emotional capabilities and entrepreneurial resilience. Zettel (2025), for example, demonstrated that entrepreneurial resilience is closely associated with the management of affective fluctuations during the entrepreneurial journey. Schmodde and Wehner (2024) similarly argued that emotion management, emotional intelligence and emotion-focused coping should be considered important components of entrepreneurship research.

Despite these developments, the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience remains insufficiently investigated in Nigeria. Nigerian research has examined emotional intelligence in relation to entrepreneurial intention and has investigated resilience in relation to dynamic capabilities, strategic management and other organisational factors, but the direct intersection of EI and entrepreneurial resilience remains underdeveloped.

This study addresses that gap by proposing and empirically testing a model in which three dimensions of emotional intelligence; self-awareness, self-regulation and interpersonal/emotional competence, are examined as predictors of entrepreneurial resilience among Nigerian entrepreneurs.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian entrepreneurs operate within an environment in which economic and institutional shocks can threaten business continuity. Inflationary pressures, exchange-rate instability, financing constraints, infrastructure deficiencies and changes in consumer demand can place significant pressure on entrepreneurial ventures.

Recent empirical research demonstrates the importance of resilience in this environment. Akpan et al. (2022), for example, examined Nigerian manufacturing firms and found that sensing and reconfiguration capabilities were positively associated with organisational resilience. Their findings demonstrate that firms require the ability to detect environmental changes and reconfigure resources when confronted with uncertainty.

Similarly, Ashiru et al. (2022), using interviews with 42 Nigerian B2B SME owners, demonstrated that relational governance mechanisms enabled SMEs to activate dynamic capabilities during the COVID-19 crisis. This suggests that relationships and the ability to manage them are important elements of entrepreneurial adaptation.

More recent Nigerian research has further emphasised resilience. Okoli et al. (2025), studying 219 micro- and small-service enterprises in Nigeria, found adaptive capacity to be an important contributor to organisational resilience. Onwe (2026), using data from 413 entrepreneurs in Abuja, found that market acuity was related to resilience among nascent entrepreneurial ventures through entrepreneurial hustle.

However, these studies primarily emphasise organisational, strategic, relational and market capabilities. The psychological and emotional processes through which entrepreneurs maintain adaptive behaviour have received less attention.

This represents an important research problem. Entrepreneurs do not respond to crises solely through organisational routines. They also experience fear, anxiety, frustration, disappointment, uncertainty and pressure. How these emotions are perceived and regulated may affect the quality and persistence of entrepreneurial responses.

The issue is therefore not simply whether Nigerian entrepreneurs possess financial or organisational resources. It is also whether they possess the emotional capabilities necessary to use available resources effectively under pressure.

Nwibe and Ogbuanya (2024) provided evidence from Nigeria that emotional intelligence is relevant to entrepreneurial behaviour. Their study of 192 university students found relationships between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intention through self-efficacy mechanisms. However, entrepreneurial intention is conceptually different from entrepreneurial resilience. Intention concerns the desire or propensity to engage in entrepreneurship, whereas resilience concerns the capacity to continue adapting after adversity.

Consequently, an empirical investigation of emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience among Nigerian entrepreneurs is warranted.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the effect of emotional intelligence on entrepreneurial resilience in Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the effect of self-awareness on entrepreneurial resilience among Nigerian entrepreneurs;
- ii. determine the effect of self-regulation on entrepreneurial resilience among Nigerian entrepreneurs;
- iii. examine the effect of interpersonal/emotional competence on entrepreneurial resilience among Nigerian entrepreneurs; and
- iv. determine the joint effect of emotional intelligence dimensions on entrepreneurial resilience.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence has become an important construct in entrepreneurship research because entrepreneurial activity is inherently social and emotional. Entrepreneurs must evaluate opportunities, manage uncertainty, negotiate with stakeholders and respond to setbacks while maintaining sufficient motivation to continue (Eze et al., 2019).

Recent entrepreneurship research has moved beyond treating emotions as incidental aspects of entrepreneurial behaviour. Schmodde and Wehner (2024) reviewed research on emotional

intelligence, emotion regulation and emotion-focused coping and argued for an integrated concept of emotion management in entrepreneurship.

Similarly, Allen et al. (2021) demonstrated through meta-analysis that emotional intelligence has significant relevance for entrepreneurial success. Their analysis is particularly important because it synthesised a large body of evidence rather than relying on an individual sample.

Emotional intelligence is operationalised in the present study through three dimensions: self-awareness; self-regulation; and interpersonal/emotional competence. These dimensions reflect the entrepreneur's capacity to understand personal emotional states, manage emotional reactions and interact effectively with others.

Self-Awareness and Entrepreneurial Resilience

Self-awareness refers to an individual's ability to recognise and understand personal emotions, strengths, weaknesses, motivations and behavioural tendencies.

Entrepreneurial decisions are often made under conditions in which emotions and cognition interact. Entrepreneurs may experience anxiety when sales decline, frustration when suppliers fail to deliver, fear when financing becomes uncertain and disappointment following business failure.

An entrepreneur who recognises these emotional responses may be better positioned to distinguish emotional reactions from objective information. Self-awareness may consequently encourage more reflective decision-making.

The relationship is theoretically consistent with Pathak and Goltz's (2021) model, which conceptualises emotional intelligence as an antecedent to entrepreneurial coping. If entrepreneurs can recognise and understand their emotional states, they may be better positioned to accept stressful circumstances and determine appropriate coping responses.

Zettel (2025) further demonstrated the relevance of affective dynamics to entrepreneurial resilience, showing that resilient entrepreneurs experience smaller fluctuations in affect during the entrepreneurial process.

Based on this reasoning, the study proposes:

H1: Self-awareness has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial resilience among Nigerian entrepreneurs.

Self-Regulation and Entrepreneurial Resilience

Self-regulation concerns the capacity to manage emotional reactions, impulses and behavioural responses.

Entrepreneurship frequently involves emotionally demanding situations. An entrepreneur may need to respond to financial losses, employee disputes, customer complaints, regulatory uncertainty or business failure. The ability to regulate emotional responses can influence whether the entrepreneur reacts impulsively or engages in deliberate problem-solving.

De Cock et al. (2020) examined emotion regulation and venture survival among 183 technology ventures. Their findings demonstrate that emotion-regulation strategies are relevant to venture survival, although the effects depend on the type of regulation and venture performance.

This finding is particularly important because it cautions against assuming that all forms of emotional regulation are automatically beneficial. Emotional intelligence should involve constructive management of emotions rather than simply suppressing them.

Pathak and Goltz (2021) similarly argue that emotional intelligence can facilitate entrepreneurial coping by influencing acceptance, optimism and the selection of coping strategies.

In the Nigerian context, where entrepreneurs may face prolonged uncertainty and resource constraints, self-regulation may therefore represent an important individual-level capability.

The second hypothesis is consequently stated as:

H2: Self-regulation has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial resilience among Nigerian entrepreneurs.

Interpersonal/Emotional Competence and Entrepreneurial Resilience

Interpersonal/emotional competence concerns an entrepreneur's ability to recognise and appropriately respond to the emotions of other people and to maintain constructive interpersonal relationships.

Entrepreneurs rarely operate in isolation. Their ability to sustain relationships with employees, customers, suppliers, financial institutions, investors, regulators and business partners can influence access to information, resources and support.

This proposition is particularly relevant to Nigeria. Ashiru et al. (2022) found that relational governance mechanisms enabled Nigerian SMEs to activate dynamic capabilities during the COVID-19 crisis. Their findings suggest that business relationships can serve as mechanisms through which firms mobilise resources and respond to crisis conditions.

Emotional competence may contribute to this process because effective relationships require empathy, communication, conflict management and sensitivity to the interests of other stakeholders.

Recent research on entrepreneurial teams also provides evidence that emotional intelligence can contribute to resilience through emotion-regulation routines, team climate and constructive conflict management.

Interpersonal/emotional competence is therefore expected to contribute positively to entrepreneurial resilience.

H3: Interpersonal/emotional competence has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial resilience among Nigerian entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurial Resilience

Entrepreneurial resilience is the capacity of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ventures to maintain functioning, adapt to adversity, recover from setbacks and continue pursuing viable opportunities.

The construct is multidimensional. It may involve:

- persistence;
- adaptability;
- recovery following setbacks;
- resource reconfiguration;
- opportunity recognition;
- learning from failure;
- continuity of operations; and
- strategic flexibility.

Okoli et al. (2025) demonstrate the importance of adaptive capacity within the Nigerian SME environment. Their study of micro- and small-service enterprises found adaptive capacity to be the strongest contributor among the resilience indicators examined.

Similarly, Onwe (2026) found that market acuity and entrepreneurial hustle were associated with resilience among nascent entrepreneurial ventures in Abuja.

Akpan et al. (2022) also demonstrated that sensing and reconfiguration capabilities were positively related to organisational resilience among Nigerian manufacturing firms.

These findings suggest that resilience involves active adaptation rather than simply enduring adversity.

Theoretical Framework

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

The study is primarily anchored on the dynamic capabilities perspective. Dynamic capabilities concern the capacity to sense changes, seize opportunities and reconfigure resources in response to changing environments. Although dynamic capabilities are frequently examined at the organisational level, the entrepreneur is especially important in SMEs because the owner or founder often performs strategic, operational and relational functions simultaneously. Emotional

intelligence can therefore be interpreted as a micro-level capability that supports entrepreneurial adaptation.

Self-awareness and sensing

Self-awareness may facilitate environmental sensing because entrepreneurs who understand their own emotional responses may be less likely to confuse fear, optimism or frustration with objective environmental signals.

Self-regulation and seizing

Self-regulation may support opportunity exploitation by helping entrepreneurs remain sufficiently composed to evaluate alternatives and make decisions under pressure.

Interpersonal competence and reconfiguration

Interpersonal/emotional competence may facilitate resource reconfiguration by enabling entrepreneurs to communicate changes, negotiate with stakeholders, resolve conflicts and mobilise support.

This interpretation is consistent with evidence from Nigerian SMEs showing that relational governance can serve as an enabler of dynamic capabilities during crisis conditions (Ashiru et al., 2022). It is also consistent with Nigerian evidence that sensing and reconfiguration capabilities are associated with organisational resilience (Akpan et al., 2022).

Empirical Review

Emotional Intelligence and Entrepreneurship

Allen et al. (2021) provide one of the strongest recent empirical foundations for the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurship. Their meta-analysis of 65,826 observations found that both general mental ability and emotional intelligence were relevant to entrepreneurial success, with EI demonstrating a particularly substantial relationship in entrepreneurial contexts.

The finding is important because entrepreneurship involves distinctive social and emotional demands. Entrepreneurs must persuade stakeholders, tolerate uncertainty, manage failure and maintain motivation.

Nwibe and Ogbuanya (2024) provide Nigerian evidence. Their study of 192 university students from four federal universities in south-eastern Nigeria examined emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial intention using covariance-based structural equation modelling. Their findings establish the relevance of emotional competencies to entrepreneurial behaviour in the Nigerian setting.

However, the study focused on entrepreneurial intention rather than resilience. The present research therefore extends the Nigerian literature from entrepreneurial entry to entrepreneurial persistence and adaptation.

Emotional Intelligence and Entrepreneurial Coping

Pathak and Goltz (2021) developed an emotional-intelligence model of entrepreneurial coping. Their conceptualisation suggests that EI influences how entrepreneurs perceive stressful events, whether they accept stressful circumstances and whether they approach those circumstances with optimism.

The study is important for the present research because coping is conceptually related to resilience. Entrepreneurs experiencing adversity must not only recognise the problem but also determine an appropriate response.

Schmodde and Wehner (2024) subsequently integrated emotional intelligence, emotion regulation and emotion-focused coping into a broader emotion-management framework for entrepreneurship. Their review highlights the fragmented nature of previous research and calls for greater integration of these constructs.

Emotion Regulation and Venture Survival

De Cock et al. (2020) provide empirical evidence linking emotional regulation to venture survival. Using a sample of 183 technology ventures, they examined cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression.

Their findings indicate that the relationship between emotion regulation and venture survival is complex. Both forms of regulation were generally associated with lower survival likelihood, although the effects varied according to venture performance.

This finding is theoretically important for the present study because it indicates that emotional intelligence should not be conceptualised simply as “controlling emotions.” Effective emotional management may depend on the type, timing and context of regulation.

Entrepreneurial Resilience and Affect

Zettel (2025) examined resilience and affect in entrepreneurship using a daily-diary design involving technology entrepreneurs. The study found that more resilient entrepreneurs reported smaller day-to-day fluctuations in affect during the entrepreneurial process.

This finding strengthens the argument that resilience has an important emotional component. Entrepreneurial resilience is therefore not simply a strategic or organisational construct; it also involves how entrepreneurs experience and manage the emotional fluctuations associated with uncertainty and adversity.

Entrepreneurial Resilience in Nigeria

Recent Nigerian research provides evidence that resilience is increasingly important to enterprise survival and adaptation.

Akpan et al. (2022) examined 11 manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt and found positive relationships between dynamic capabilities and organisational resilience.

Ashiru et al. (2022) examined 42 Nigerian B2B SME owners during COVID-19 and found that relational governance mechanisms enabled SMEs to activate dynamic capabilities during different stages of the crisis.

Okoli et al. (2025), studying 219 Nigerian micro- and small-service enterprises, found adaptive capacity to be an important contributor to organisational resilience.

Onwe (2026) examined 413 entrepreneurs in Abuja and found that market acuity was associated with resilience among nascent ventures through entrepreneurial hustle.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that Nigerian entrepreneurial resilience is influenced by adaptive, relational and market-oriented capabilities. However, the psychological mechanisms underlying entrepreneurs' capacity to sustain such adaptive behaviour remain insufficiently explored.

This provides the central research gap addressed by the present study.

3. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed for this study. The design allows the researcher to examine the statistical relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience across a relatively large sample of Nigerian entrepreneurs.

The population comprises 73,082 owners/managers of SMEs operating in Nigeria. Eligible respondents have direct responsibility for strategic or operational decisions within their businesses.

The sample provide representation across major sectors, including: manufacturing; retail; services; agriculture/agro-processing; technology; transportation and logistics; and professional services. Using Taro Yamane sample size determination formula, a sample size of 398 was obtained. Therefore, a sample size of 398 SMEs were used for the study.

A multistage sampling procedure was employed. Nigeria's major entrepreneurial centres were represented, with consideration given to Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Kano, Ibadan, Onitsha and Aba.

A structured questionnaire was used. The questionnaire contains five sections:

Section A: Demographic and business characteristics.

Section B: Self-awareness.

Section C: Self-regulation.

Section D: Interpersonal/emotional competence.

Section E: Entrepreneurial resilience.

Items were measured on a five-point Likert scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree.

Operationalisation of Variables

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness should be measured through indicators reflecting:

- recognition of one's emotional state;
- understanding of personal strengths;
- awareness of personal weaknesses;
- recognition of emotional triggers;
- awareness of the influence of emotions on business decisions.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation should include:

- ability to remain calm under pressure;
- ability to control impulsive reactions;
- ability to manage frustration;
- ability to recover emotionally after setbacks;
- ability to maintain constructive behaviour during crises.

Interpersonal/Emotional Competence

The construct should include:

- understanding employees' emotional states;
- empathy toward customers;
- ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts;
- ability to communicate during difficult situations;

- ability to maintain stakeholder relationships.

Entrepreneurial Resilience

Entrepreneurial resilience should be operationalised through:

- persistence following setbacks;
- recovery after business difficulties;
- adaptability to changing circumstances;
- ability to reorganise business activities;
- willingness to learn from failure;
- ability to identify alternative opportunities;
- continuity of business operations during adversity.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review involving researchers in entrepreneurship, organisational psychology and SME management.

A pilot study was subsequently conducted using 40 SME owners/managers in Ogun State, which was excluded from, the main study.

Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and the following values were obtained 0.79, 0.82, 0.73 and 0.88 for self-awareness, self-regulation, interpersonal/emotional competence, and entrepreneurial resilience, respectively.

The regression model is:

$$ER = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SA + \beta_2 SR + \beta_3 IEC + \varepsilon$$

The hypotheses should be tested at the 5% significance level.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Multiple Regression Results

Variables	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.846	0.219	—	3.863	.000	—	—
Self-Awareness	0.314	0.068	0.351	4.618	.000	0.614	1.629
Self-Regulation	0.287	0.071	0.306	4.042	.000	0.589	1.698
Interpersonal/Emotional Competence	0.239	0.064	0.274	3.734	.000	0.651	1.536

Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Resilience

Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
0.672	0.452	0.448	0.517	104.712	.000

The regression results indicate that emotional intelligence has a positive and statistically significant effect on entrepreneurial resilience. The three dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation and interpersonal/emotional competence have positive coefficients of 0.314, 0.287 and 0.239, respectively. Their corresponding significance levels are all below the 0.05 threshold.

The model explains approximately 45.2% of the variation in entrepreneurial resilience ($R^2 = .452$), while the adjusted R^2 of .448 indicates that approximately 44.8% of the variance remains explained after adjusting for the number of predictors.

The standardized coefficients indicate that self-awareness has the strongest relative contribution ($\beta = .351$), followed by self-regulation ($\beta = .306$) and interpersonal/emotional competence ($\beta = .274$).

The tolerance values range from 0.589 to 0.651, while VIF values range from 1.536 to 1.698. These values indicate that serious multicollinearity is not evident among the explanatory variables.

Hypothesis Decisions

Hypothesis	Decision
H01: Self-awareness has no significant effect on entrepreneurial resilience.	Rejected
H02: Self-regulation has no significant effect on entrepreneurial resilience.	Rejected
H03: Interpersonal/emotional competence has no significant effect on entrepreneurial resilience.	Rejected
H04: Emotional intelligence dimensions have no significant joint effect on entrepreneurial resilience.	Rejected

Regression Equation

The estimated regression equation is:

$$\text{Entrepreneurial Resilience} = 0.846 + 0.314(\text{Self-Awareness}) + 0.287(\text{Self-Regulation}) + 0.239(\text{Interpersonal/Emotional Competence}) + \varepsilon$$

Thus, the empirical conclusion is that higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with greater entrepreneurial resilience among Nigerian entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs who are more aware of their emotions, better able to regulate emotional reactions and more capable of managing interpersonal relationships are expected to demonstrate greater capacity to withstand, adapt to and recover from entrepreneurial adversity.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal/emotional competence. The study was motivated by the recognition that entrepreneurs operate in environments characterised by uncertainty, resource constraints, market volatility, competition and business setbacks, making the capacity to manage emotions and respond constructively to adversity increasingly important.

The findings indicate that emotional intelligence has a positive and statistically significant effect on entrepreneurial resilience. Specifically, self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal/emotional competence each demonstrated positive and significant relationships with entrepreneurial resilience. The regression model further indicates that the three dimensions jointly explain approximately 44.8% of the variation in entrepreneurial resilience, suggesting that emotional intelligence constitutes an important behavioural and psychological resource for entrepreneurs.

Among the dimensions examined, self-awareness recorded the strongest standardised effect, followed by self-regulation and interpersonal/emotional competence. This suggests that entrepreneurs who are better able to recognise and understand their emotions may be more capable of assessing difficult business situations objectively, learning from setbacks, and maintaining constructive responses to uncertainty. Similarly, the ability to regulate emotional reactions may help entrepreneurs avoid impulsive decisions during periods of business pressure, while interpersonal and emotional competence may strengthen their capacity to maintain relationships with employees, customers, investors, suppliers and other stakeholders during challenging periods.

The findings reinforce the broader argument that entrepreneurial resilience is not determined exclusively by financial resources, managerial skills or market conditions. The entrepreneur's capacity to understand, regulate and appropriately express emotions can also influence how setbacks are interpreted and how effectively entrepreneurs adapt to changing circumstances. Emotional intelligence should therefore be regarded as a potentially important component of entrepreneurial capability in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

Entrepreneurship training institutions, universities, business development organisations and government-supported enterprise programmes should incorporate emotional intelligence into their curricula. Training should move beyond technical business skills to include self-awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal communication and constructive responses to failure.

Entrepreneurs should be encouraged to develop systematic self-awareness practices, including reflective learning, personal performance assessment, mentoring and structured feedback. Greater awareness of personal emotional triggers, strengths and weaknesses can help

entrepreneurs make more deliberate decisions during periods of uncertainty and business pressure.

Entrepreneurship support programmes should provide practical training on stress management, emotional regulation, conflict management and decision-making under pressure. These capabilities can help entrepreneurs respond to business difficulties more constructively rather than making decisions based primarily on fear, frustration or anxiety.

Entrepreneurs should develop interpersonal competencies that enable them to communicate effectively with employees, customers, investors, suppliers and business partners. Strong emotional and interpersonal capabilities can support trust, collaboration and constructive conflict resolution, particularly during periods of business disruption.

SME development policies should recognise entrepreneurial resilience as an important dimension of business sustainability. Beyond access to finance, support programmes should provide entrepreneurs with training in crisis management, strategic adaptation, emotional regulation, networking and recovery planning.

Business incubators, accelerators and entrepreneurial ecosystems should provide appropriate support mechanisms that help entrepreneurs manage the psychological and emotional demands associated with entrepreneurship. Such support can complement financial, technological and managerial assistance and contribute to entrepreneurs' capacity to remain productive during periods of adversity.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future studies should examine emotional intelligence and entrepreneurial resilience using larger and geographically diverse samples of Nigerian entrepreneurs. Longitudinal research would also be valuable for determining whether improvements in emotional intelligence lead to sustained increases in resilience over time. Future researchers could further investigate mediating or moderating variables such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, social capital, stress, access to finance, business experience and organisational resources. Studies comparing different sectors, firm sizes and regions of Nigeria would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship.

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